

## Chapter 241

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

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

Seeing the doll, he screamed in fright.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He did not dare to leave her side.

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

“Mommy.” Lin Xichen shivered, clutching Lin Xinyan’s clothes tight and not daring to move.

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

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

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

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

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

Then he returned to the room.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who could predict that it would bring so much trouble?

The staff member was full of regret.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Immediately, he rushed over.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nevertheless, in his mind, he was still fearful.

He was only pretending to be unafraid.

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

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

Lin Xichen was silent.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Xi," Lin Xinyan was worried.

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

Lin Xinyan was silent.

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

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

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

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

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

Thump, thump...

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

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

Lin Xichen understood his intentions.

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

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

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

Lin Xichen held Zong Jinghao's hand. Shaking his head, he said, "I don't regret."

He must not be afraid of a dummy.

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



He had overcome the fear in his mind.

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

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

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

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

### **Chapter 243**

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

He must not be afraid.

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

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

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

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

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

Just now when we arrived, mummy seemed upset.

What should I do?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"He's fine," Zong Jinghao sighed softly, "In future, please trust me. I know what I am doing."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lin Xinyan lifted her hand, pretending to hit him, "I'll beat you..."

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

Holding her hand, he placed it on his face.

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

She snatched back her hand, "Stop playing."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yao Qingqing smiled, "Very good."

The air was still.

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

The atmosphere was embarrassing.

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

"Yes," Yao Qingqing lowered her head.

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

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

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

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

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

How could she do something like that?

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

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

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

As she spoke, the elevator stopped.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“I never thought you would still keep it.”

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

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

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

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

She was a little upset.

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

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

There was nothing else.

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

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

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

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

“Let’s go.”

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

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

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

But Bai Yinning’s expression showed he had doubts.

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

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

## **Chapter 244**

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

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

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

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

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

Ding...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Then why are you angry?”

“I’m angry over what he mumbled...”

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the hotel.

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

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

It was a fear buried deep within the heart.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was just no way she would bring her again.

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

"Don't run so fast," he said as he bent down to pick her up lest she stumbled.

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

Lin Xinyan was speechless.

It was the same for Lin Xichen.

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

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

Lin Xinyan was again rendered speechless.

Zong Jinghao kept mum too.

Lin Xichen was also silent.



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

Where did she learn how to say such a thing?

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

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

He would never teach their daughter such nonsense!

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

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

Lin Xinyan was stunned.

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

Lin Ruixi blinked and asked, “What’s unhealthy?”

Zong Jinghao was again at a loss for words.

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

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

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

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

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

Lin Ruixi slapped his hand, complaining, “Don’t touch my hair.”

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

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

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

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

Lin Xinyan sighed. These two kids are two extremes.

One was too grown up, the other too innocent.

"Just now, you suspected it was me?"

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

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

"I'm sorry. I misjudged you." Lin Xinyan believed that she was wrong and she should admit that it was her mistake.

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

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

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

Zong Jinghao did not know how to reply.

Am I not serious?

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

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

"Give them instructions."

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

Lin Xinyan went silent.

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

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

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

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

Zong Jinghao was still star struck.

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

Anyway, who wants a kiss on the cheek?

He wanted to be kissed on his lips.

## **Chapter 245**

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

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

"Why don't you go to sleep?" Her voice was raspy as she was just waking up.

Zong Jinghao laughed, "You awake?"

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

This is an unusual way of waking someone up.

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

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

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

"It's just in the next room."

Zong Jinghao had arranged everything.

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

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

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

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

"You're here." Shen Peichuan put down the cup and stood up to greet her.

Lin Xinyan smiled, "You're still up."

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

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

Otherwise they wouldn't ask me to come.

"You've found something so fast?" Lin Xinyan was a little surprised.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He had not interacted with Shen Peichuan at all.

It was after their meal that he called them out.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Slap!

A palm landed on Yao Qingqing's face. The man in the leather jacket grabbed Yao Qingqing's collar and threw her to the ground, sat atop her body and squeezed her throat, "You'd better be honest with me. Otherwise I will publicize your scandal until you feel too ashamed to continue living."

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

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

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

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

Yao Qingqing sat on the floor and wept.

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

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

Lin Xinyan did not understand. "Why did she pay him?"

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

It was obvious she was hiding something from Bai Yinning.

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

Lin Xinyan nodded her head honestly.

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

“What ability?”

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

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

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

The purpose was obvious.

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

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

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

## **Chapter 246**

**Buzz! Buzz!**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And even asked her to treat him to a meal?

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

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

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

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

Zong Jinghao wanted to reject the invitation on her behalf.

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

Bai Yinning felt a hint of disappointment at the fact.

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

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

What 10086? I'm no customer service line!

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

The man landed a kiss on her forehead.

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

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

Knock! Knock!

Someone was knocking on the door untimely.

Speechless, Zong Jinghao turned to the door in displeasure.

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

"Mummy! Mummy! Are you inside?"

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

"Daddy! Daddy! Mummy is missing!"

Knock! Knock!

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

Once again, Zong Jinghao could only look on wordlessly.

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

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

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

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

How should she explain this to her daughter?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Succeeded?

Does hugging count?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Would Lin Xinyan think he was old too?

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

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

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

Was that narcissistic man really Zong Jinghao?

The man paused in his actions wordlessly.

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

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

Now Lin Xinyan was speechless at his question.

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

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

## **Chapter 247**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Were those sparks flying between them?

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

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

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

She had always thought he was pretty easy going.

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

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

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

The woman nodded without further doubt, "Yes."

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

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

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

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

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

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

The man rolled his wheelchair out and took the lead.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The horrified woman nodded honestly.

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

“The few kids who caught the puppy were slightly older than the two of us, hence they dared to do anything just to fill their stomachs, and even said that barbequed dog meat is nutritious and tastes good. Qingqing saw them doing that and let go of that puppy. We were stuck in the orphanage, so once the puppy escaped, there was no way to catch it back.

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

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

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

## **Chapter 248**

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Actually...”

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

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

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

Lin Xinyan eyed Bai Yinning wordlessly.

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

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

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

"No..."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What had she done for her to sleep so late?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Was he trying to seek justice for that woman?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just that...

Lin Xinyan heaved a heavy sigh.

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

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

"Did you find out something about her?"

## **Chapter 249**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lin Xinyan turned to the man in bewilderment.

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

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

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

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

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

"I'll go in first."

"Okay."

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

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

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

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

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

The woman nodded. "Where are the others?"

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

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

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

"Ok."

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

Now the woman was not used to his formal greetings.

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

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

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

The atmosphere was contrastingly down compared to the bright weather.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His anger would've flared up at that.

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

Zong Jinghao snorted at her words.

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

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

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

Wasn't it all a prank?

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

The woman still couldn't understand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Just like how he was now.

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

Including himself.

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

## **Chapter 250**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Are you blushing?"

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

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

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

Bang!

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

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

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

"Can you get off me first?"

Zong Jinghao turned to her in pain. "You're murdering your husband."

Lin Xinyan was speechless at his words.

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

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

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

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

The world went silent after that.

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

Cough! Cough!

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

"Get lost!"

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

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

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

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

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

Pfft!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Help me up.” The man reached out to her.

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

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

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

Lin Xinyan whispered discreetly, “What are you doing?”

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

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

Lin Xinyan was rendered speechless by his flirty words.

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

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

“Stop that.” She struggled.

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

This time, Lin Xinyan glared at him. “I’m getting mad if you don’t stop that.”

Poor Zong Jinghao had to let her go wordlessly.

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

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

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

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

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

His body pressed closer to her as he got up.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"How do you know that?" Shen Peichuan asked.

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

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

### **Chapter 251**

"She was from the same orphanage as Bai Yinning, so they're close friends." Lin Xinyan explained briefly.

Su Zhan turned to Zong Jinghao with a teasing grin. Then, his body went forward as he asked wickedly. "Sis, how did you know that? Bai Yinning told you that?"

The woman did not notice the trap in his words and answered honestly, "Yes."

If not from Bai Yinning, where else could she get such information? She didn't send anyone to check on such things in the first place.

"Wow, he trusted you so much to even tell you about his background. Don't tell me he likes you?"

Now Lin Xinyan realized she was trapped by the sly man.

Zong Jinghao's face darkened and his chest muscles tensed up suddenly. He had long seen through Bai Yinning's feelings towards his wife since they first met.

Lin Xinyan could feel the chilly rage emanating from the man beside her.

She didn't even need to look at him to know that her husband's face must be hideous now.

Lin Xinyan eyed Su Zhan and refuted flatly, "Oh? Then why don't I feel it? Don't tell me you can read his mind?"

Now it was Su Zhan's turn to be speechless.

Shen Peichuan laughed and roasted as well, "Oh yes! He may be a parasite living in Bai Yinning!"

Su Zhan glared at his friend. "Hey! Who's your friend now? Shouldn't you side me? Your sworn brother?"

He purposely emphasized the term 'sworn brother', reminding Shen Peichuan who he should side with.

Shen Peichuan stood behind Lin Xinyan and shrugged. "Of course I'm siding with sis! You have no money. What good can I get from siding you?"

Once again, Su Zhan was at a loss for words.

Lin Xinyan turned around and looked at Shen Peichuan in bewilderment. "I don't have money either."

"Yes, you don't. But Jinghao has the cash, and he's yours now. Even if his money doesn't belong to you, they'll be your son's. Either way, you're definitely richer than Su Zhan and I get to enjoy the best benefits if I stick to you."

Now that Lin Xichen was the only son of Zong Jinghao, he would inherit the Zong family's fortune sooner or later.

Ehh, that's right! Su Zhan too shifted himself and sat beside Lin Xinyan with a fawning smile. "If that's the case, I'm sticking to sis as well!"

He was not stupid, of course he had to stick with Lin Xinyan too. Even Zong Jinghao had to relent to her words.

The woman frowned at the sudden change. How could this man turn back on his words so fast? See that fawning face of his!

Wasn't he bickering with Shen Peichuan just now?

Why were they squeezing themselves nearer to her now?

"Sis..."

Pak!

Su Zhan wanted to grab Lin Xinyan's arms, but his hands were slapped away by the jealous Zong Jinghao.

Rubbing his sore hands, the man looked at his friend with a resentful gaze as he muttered, "What a jealous man."

“What did you say?” Zong Jinghao leaned in his direction, pretending not to hear him.

He was extremely unhappy over Bai Yinning’s feelings for his wife, and he needed a punching bag to vent out his anger.

Su Zhan admitted defeat instantly. “Nothing. I said nothing.”

Even if I said anything, I don’t have the guts to admit it!

Knock! Knock!

Lin Xinyan turned to Zong Jinghao. “It must be Xichen and Ruixi.”

Who else could it be other than the twins?

Plus, no tenants of other floors could access their place.

Zong Jinghao called them in flatly. “Come in.”

To their surprise, the one outside the door was not the twins. It was the bodyguard.

“Mr. Bai is looking for Ms. Lin.”

“Bai Yinning?” Su Zhan widened his eyes in disbelief. Someone must’ve overheard their conversation, otherwise how could he appear so coincidentally right after they talked about him?

The bodyguard nodded in confirmation.

Recalling how he had said he would spend the night in the hotel, Lin Xinyan was not the least bit surprised he would come and look for her here.

“Did he say why he wants to meet me?” she asked.

“No, he just said he wants to see you and asked me to invite you over.”

“She’s not meeting him,” Zong Jinghao rejected on her behalf before she could answer. This man had taken all means to lure her out and have breakfast together, even letting Yao Qingqing meet up with his wife!

Didn’t he know how dangerous was it to do so? Yao Qingqing was definitely not a good person. If something happened during the meetup, could he bear the consequences?

And now here he was, still trying to meet up with his wife personally?

Over his dead body!



“He’s gone.” Zong Jinghao wrapped his arm around Lin Xinyan’s shoulders. “Let’s go back to our room.”

Since they were free for the rest of the day, it would be good to spend the day with her doing nothing.

Bai Yinning wanted to see her now?

Wait for his next life then!

Lin Xinyan took a glance at the man who was hugging her. She knew how possessive her husband could be, so she wouldn’t be able to step out of their room this time. “Just tell him that I’m not free. If there’s anything, we’ll talk when we meet next time.”

“Ok.”

The bodyguard turned to leave.

Hugging his wife, Zong Jinghao had just opened the door when he heard someone calling after her.

“Mummy!” Lin Ruixi was calling from the corridor. Lin Xinyan turned around to see the little girl holding her art piece in her hand as she ran over in her little legs.

“Mummy! Is my work good?” Lin Ruixi showed her the drawing. She drew some people in a very abstract manner, but Lin Xinyan could see what she was drawing.

The mother knelt down and took a glance at her work. After examining her art, she commented on her work professionally. “Wow, you draw pretty well, Ruixi.”

“Really?” Lin Ruixi was excited by the praise. Like all children, she too loved to be praised.

Lin Xinyan nodded. “Really.”

The praise overjoyed the little girl as she pointed to each figure in her drawing. “This one is mummy. This one is me. This one is Xichen, and this one is...” She turned to Zong Jinghao, and then to Lin Xinyan again. “This one is daddy.”

The little girl suddenly turned serious. “Mummy, I have a daddy now! I am now a child with a daddy! No one will say I’m a bastard child anymore...”

Before she could finish her words, Lin Xinyan immediately covered her mouth and tucked her into her embrace while caressing her head. “Everyone has their own mouth, and each word uttered from each mouth will be different. If there are a hundred mouths, then there will be a hundred types of descriptions about you, so don’t need to take their words to heart. You are who you are, and most importantly, you’re my dearest daughter. Remember that.”

Lin Ruixi nodded forcefully while hugging her mother's neck. "Mummy, I just feel so happy now."

Why is this little girl being so sentimental today? Lin Xinyan couldn't help but wonder.

She then stroked her daughter's forehead and tucked her fringe behind her ear. "I know."

The woman could see that the little girl was much more cheerful than before. Her smile was displayed on her face every single day now.

This radiant expression could only be seen on children growing up in a normal and complete family.

"Mummy, can you bring me out to play? Staying indoors is so boring!" Lin Ruixi whined cutely in her mother's arms.

Zong Jinghao looked up at the ceiling dejectedly. Why was it so hard for him to spend some time alone with Lin Xinyan?

Why did so many people love to spoil his intimate moments?

"Please, Mummy. Please!" The little girl pleaded in her arms, determined to pester her mother into agreeing to go out with her.

"Fine." Lin Xinyan didn't want to turn down her wish since her daughter looked so happy now and she had the time to accompany the little girl anyway.

"Daddy, join us too!" Lin Ruixi lifted her head to look at her father. Tugging on his hands, the little girl swayed it back and forth in a cute manner.

With those pleading round eyes of hers, no one could reject the soft and adorable girl, especially Zong Jinghao.

The man's heart softened at the cute sight and he bent down to carry his daughter in his arms. "Alright then! Today, daddy and mummy will play with you."

"Yay! I'm so happy!" Lin Ruixi kicked her legs excitedly as she moved around in her father's arms.

The little girl left a few patches of dirt on his black pants.

Only Lin Ruixi could do that to him. Who else would the germophobic man allow to dirty his clothes like that?

## Chapter 252

Since they were going out to play, Lin Xinyan called out for her son to join them as well, as she was afraid that the boy would be too absorbed in his games and hurt his eyes.

Just when they reached the lobby, the family ran into Bai Yinning.

The man smiled at them and asked, "Going out?"

Zong Jinghao snorted. "Mr. Bai, you're one persistent man."

Instead of getting mad, Bai Yinning replied to the insult, "Thanks for the compliment, Mr. Zong."

Then he turned to Lin Xinyan. "I know a place that's suitable for kids to play. Let me lead the way."

Bai Yinning was not asking for their permission as he suggested like he had already planned the day for them, "Since this is my place, it would be my pleasure to entertain your family. Please forgive me if there's anything you're not happy with."

Since he had said so, Lin Xinyan couldn't find a reason to reject his offer anymore. Glancing at her husband, the woman smiled in reply, "We'll have to trouble you then, Mr. Bai."

"No problem." Bai Yinning smiled back. "I'm here to ask whether you want to go out anyway, since the kids will be bored if they stay in the hotel for the whole day."

Lin Xinyan forced out a stiff smile and explained, "Oh yes, I planned to bring them out, that's why I have no time to..."

Even if she didn't explain, Bai Yinning also knew deep down that it was Zong Jinghao who didn't want her to see him.

To annoy the jealous man more, Bai Yinning added with a smile, "Oh, by the way, we're going to meet each other often from now on. I have moved to stay in the hotel from today onwards."

"Uncle Bai, why do you need to stay in the hotel? You don't have a place to stay?" Lin Xichen asked with his hand being held by his mother.

"Hmm..." Bai Yinning lowered his head in thought. "So that it's easy for me to take care of you. I'm a local here and this hotel belongs to me. Everything will be much more convenient with me around."

Lin Xichen blinked his eyes in doubt. Well, they were equally good without him. As long as they have the cash, everything would be convenient for them wherever they went.

Obviously, Bai Yinning came for his mother.

The little boy once thought of letting this man fight for his mother with their father, but now he didn't want that to happen anymore.

If his parents really separated, then he would lose a father forever.

Plus, Zong Jinghao was much more handsome and richer than Bai Yinning. Adding to the fact that Bai Yinning was crippled.

Lin Xichen tightened his grip on Lin Xinyan's hands, afraid that Bai Yinning would actually snatch his mother from him.

"Let's go! It's getting late now. We can tour around the place and check out the musical fountain at night." The man rolled himself to the front and led the way, totally not taking himself as an outsider who had randomly joined in the family outing.

When getting in the car, Bai Yinning added, "My car is at the front, so just follow behind me later."

Zong Jinghao side-eyed him coldly. "You're really not taking yourself as an outsider."

Bai Yinning smiled in response. "Oh, I've known Ms. Lin for some time and I am your business partner. Of course I'm no outsider."

Zong Jinghao did not reply to him and got in his own car.

The bodyguards closed the door for him, blocking Bai Yinning from his sight.

Under Gao Yuan's help, Bai Yinning got into his own car.

The place Bai Yinning brought them to was close to the hotel- only a ten-minute journey. It was a new building built to mimic ancient Chinese buildings.

A long corridor stretched along the bank of an artificial lake. It was built with intricate designs of architecture, be it the tiles or wooden carvings, which showcased the impressive skills and detailed attention given to the decorations.

At the end of the corridor was an old mansion. The main door was majestic, similar to the royal mansions of ancient times. It gave off an impression of walking right into the ancient times.

In the clear waters of the lake, there were several red Japanese koi fish. The wooden boats floating on the water were all decorated with silk and red lanterns.

"You can feed the fishes from the boat," Bai Yinning suggested when he noticed Lin Ruixi's excitement.

"I want to feed the fishes from the boat!" Lin Ruixi yelled enthusiastically. Like most children, she was easily interested and satisfied with new things.

Even if it was not something spectacular, she would still want to try it once her interest was piqued.

The weather was good anyway, and boat rowing while koi feeding on such a day was an enjoyable activity to relax the mind.

"Ok, then let's do that! I'll get the fish food." Lin Xinyan made her son wait for her with her husband.

She then went to the fish food booth, which was located on the other end of the corridor.

Standing at the side of the corridor was Zong Jinghao, who had his eyes fixed on the clear lake water. The long seaweeds in the lake were visible from where he stood. Compared to the city, this place indeed had fresher air. A perfect place for family outings.

"If it's on weekends, this place will be crowded with people." The ancient-looking place was a popular spot among the locals for relaxing and strolling on weekends. They could enjoy basking in the sun or leisure feeding of the koi fishes in the lake.

Zong Jinghao eyed the other man insultingly. "That's considerate of you. Tell me, Mr. Bai. What's with all your efforts to please us?"

Bai Yinning did not hide his intention either. "I saved Ms. Lin and let her recover at my place because I mistook her as Cheng Yuxiu's daughter. My adopted father's last wish before he passed away was for me to marry his daughter. Unfortunately, she wasn't the one..."

Zong Jinghao's face remained unchanged, but waves of emotions were roaring in his heart.

Now that he mentioned about Cheng Yuxiu's past, he was even more interested in what he had to say.

It was obvious that his stepmother and Bai Hongfei were a couple. Then why did she end up marrying his father?

Bai Yinning paused before continuing without hiding his admiration. "Although I only spent a short time with Ms. Lin, I do harbor romantic feelings towards her. I also know your relationship with her is not as close as it seems. I believe I can still try to win her heart."

Suddenly, a cold wind breezed past the corridor. Zong Jinghao turned back and stared at the calm Bai Yinning, who was sitting in his wheelchair against the sunlight. Their gazes met in the air, sparkling with underlying meanings that were enough to speak a thousand words and fight a thousand fights.

Zong Jinghao replied calmly, "Mr. Bai, you're not just wrong from the beginning. You won't have the chance to win her. We are a very close couple."

He was not emphasizing, nor was he showing off their relationship. He wasn't even exaggerating or faking their closeness. The man simply stated this fact with domineering confidence.

And Bai Yinning knew that his strong confidence came from Lin Xinyan.

He could see her change in attitude towards her husband. She was no longer faking it like the last time. Her reaction was sincere and instinctive.

Now she cared about Zong Jinghao's feelings.

Just like how she turned to her husband when he suggested to lead the way, afraid that Zong Jinghao would be mad.

When a woman cared about a man's feelings, that could only mean the man had won a place in her heart.

Bai Yinning's smile turned bitter at his words. "Never mind. Who knows, one day she'll be tired of you? I don't mind being the spare when that day comes."

So this man was stooping so low to even disregard his honor?

Lin Xichen slowly moved to Zong Jinghao's side and tugged on his hand. "My mother is not an unfaithful person. We will never be separated."

The little boy could judge who was the better man for his mother and their family.

Zong Jinghao was his and his sister's father by blood. Their family could only be complete if his mother stayed by Zong Jinghao's side.

And he was not allowing anyone to disrupt their perfect family.

Bai Yinning tried to talk to him instead. "Xichen—"

Splash!

"What sound is that?" Suddenly, a sound of something dropping into the water came from the lake.

Lin Xichen looked around the place. "Why is mummy not back yet?"

Zong Jinghao eyed Bai Yinning warily before dragging his son with him. "Let's have a look there."

Bai Yinning rolled along too.

Along the road, they noticed spilled fish feeds everywhere. There were two fresh footprints on the grass, both not big in size; obviously belonging to two women.

Huge circles of ripples were formed on the lake's surface.

“Help...”

Zong Jinghao turned to the voice coming from the lake. The water was deep, and the head of the drowning person was floating up and down the surface.

Although he couldn't see her face, the man was sure that the person who fell into the lake was Lin Xinyan.

Putting down his daughter, Zong Jinghao took off his coat and jumped into the lake without further hesitation. It was already December and the weather had turned bone-chillingly cold. The lake water must be a few degrees even colder as it pierced like ice daggers into the man's bones.

### **Chapter 253**

However, Zong Jinghao didn't have the time to bother with the icy coldness. All he had in mind was to swim as fast as he could towards his wife.

Between the continuous floating and drowning, Lin Xinyan somehow saw her husband swimming in her direction. She wanted to wave and call out his name, but her body did not listen to her mind. She felt something wrapping around her legs and dragging her downwards.

Zong Jinghao! Zong Jinghao...

Big gulps of water entered her mouth and drowned her cries of help.

“Lin Xinyan!!”

Zong Jinghao took a deep breath before diving back down in search of his wife.

Soon, he found the woman struggling with the long seaweeds tugging on her legs. No matter how hard she tried, she simply couldn't get rid of it. The man swam to her swiftly and caught hold of her in his arms. Then he pressed his lips on hers and passed some air to her from mouth to mouth.

Lin Xinyan widened her eyes and hugged him tightly like she had caught a lifebuoy.

Zong Jinghao pushed her away and shook his head before diving deeper to pull off the seaweeds on her legs.

By the time he caught her again, the woman had lost conscious.

She was deprived of oxygen for too long. That one mouthful of air was not enough to sustain her underwater.

Soon enough, Zong Jinghao brought his wife out of the water.

“Daddy! Mummy!” The twins yelled when they saw their father carrying their mother ashore. “Let’s go back now,” Zong Jinghao said, and the twins followed him up the car.

Bai Yinning was about to approach them but was ignored by the other man.

Judging from the footsteps along the bank, Lin Xinyan did not fall into the lake by accident.

Since Bai Yinning introduced them to this place, Zong Jinghao had every reason to suspect him, hence he refused to speak a word with him.

Before everything was clear, Bai Yinning was one of the suspects.

“Gao Yuan, check the CCTV’s.” Bai Yinning had an ugly face as well.

Since he was the one who brought them here, he had the responsibility to investigate Lin Xinyan’s accident and give Zong Jinghao an explanation.

Gao Yuan nodded in compliance. “I’ll go now.”

In the car, Lin Xinyan finally regained her consciousness after Zong Jinghao’s repeated CPR. Her vision was blurry with tears, but she could vaguely see the silhouette of her worried husband.

The woman immediately hugged him. She was almost frightened to death this time.

This was her second drowning experience. The moment she went beneath the water, she could feel the Grim Reaper right beside her. She was terrified she would leave him and her kids like that.

“I... I’m so scared!”

Zong Jinghao hugged her comfortingly as he kissed her wet forehead. “Don’t worry, you’re safe now.”

Both of them were completely drenched, causing Lin Xinyan to shiver violently in his arms. She was feeling so cold! So terribly cold!

“Turn up the heater!”



His breath, his rage and his livid roar were all conducted to her body like an electric current. Lin Xinyan could feel his fear and guilt, in which she responded by hugging him tightly. This was not his fault at all.

It was her fault for being careless and did not let the guards follow her. That was why she almost drowned in the lake.

Upon recalling how she met Yao Qingqing on her way back from buying the fish feeds, Lin Xinyan buried herself in her husband's arms as she muttered in a frightened tone, "I did not fall in the lake by accident. It was Yao Qingqing."

She was on her way back when Yao Qingqing suddenly appeared before her.

"Ms. Lin, can I talk to you?" The other woman still looked as innocent as she was in the morning.

Although she did not know much about her, Lin Xinyan was still cautious around the woman as she smiled, "Well, there's no one here. You can tell me anything. But be fast; I'm busy."

Yao Qingqing eyed the fish feeds in her hands and grinned. "That's fun." The woman checked out the sky. "The weather is good today. Perfect for family outings."

Her expression changed so fast that Lin Xinyan didn't have time to react when the woman neared her and gripped her shoulders hard. Her gaze was murderous as she interrogated darkly, "Why are you being such a slut? You already have a husband, yet you still want to seduce Yinning?"

At that moment, Lin Xinyan finally understood where her hatred towards her came from.

So it was really because of Bai Yinning!

"You're unworthy of him! Unworthy of him! You slut!" The woman raised her arms to slap Lin Xinyan. The latter was not stupid. She wouldn't allow her to slap her like that.

Successfully avoiding her slap, Yao Qingqing was ashamed into anger over the missed move.

Lin Xinyan realized things were turning bad for her. Yao Qingqing was being impulsive and irrationally mad. The woman tried to escape when Yao Qingqing grabbed her again. "Don't you dare to leave! I know you're trying to call for help!"

Lin Xinyan forced herself to explain as calmly as she could, "I think there must be some misunderstanding. There's nothing going on between us. Go and ask Bai Yinning if you don't believe me."

"Do you think I'm so stupid? Yinning is now head over heels for you. How will he listen to me when he's so protective of you?" Yao Qingqing yelled intimidatingly as she eyed the fish

feeds with a cold snort. "I'll rather feed you to the fishes! Die now! Once you're dead, you can't seduce Yinning anymore!"

"Zong-

Lin Xinyan wanted to call for her husband, only to have her mouth covered by Yao Qingqing while she dragged her to the lake. A man or woman driven by madness tended to have unnatural strength and Lin Xinyan couldn't pry Yao Qingqing's hands off her mouth at all! The stones along the bank were slippery, and the poor woman slipped off the stones and fell into the lake.

Zong Jinghao tightened his hug around her. "Ok, I know that."

"Aren't you cold?" Lin Xinyan's hands were still wet and cold as she stroked his handsome face.

The man covered her hands with his and shook his head. "Not at all."

The heater was switched to the maximum and it was getting warm inside.

A while later, the vehicle arrived at the hotel. Zong Jinghao carried his wife inside while the twins were carried in by the bodyguards.

Su Zhan had dragged Qin Ya out for a date, leaving Shen Peichuan alone in the hotel. He was lying on the sofa playing games on his phone when he heard sounds coming from outside. The man peeked out, only to see a drenched Zong Jinghao carrying an equally drenched Lin Xinyan. Immediately, he walked out to them. "What happened?"

Weren't they out to play?

Why were they back so fast and completely drenched?

"Don't ask now. Get a doctor here." Lin Xinyan must've caught a cold as her body was running a high fever.

"Okok." Shen Peichuan let the guards bring the twins to his room while he went downstairs to get a doctor.

"I'm cold. So cold." Lin Xinyan shivered violently in her husband's arms. She was feeling dizzy and her consciousness was slipping.

Zong Jinghao had no idea how to comfort her and could only quicken his footsteps to his room. Once he placed her on the bed, the man began to strip her clothes. Her fever would've worsened if he didn't remove the wet clothes now.

Zong Jinghao threw her wet coat on the floor and then proceeded to remove her sweater. Lin Xinyan hadn't lost her consciousness completely and could feel her husband removing her clothes. The woman immediately caught hold of his hands.

Her voice was hoarse as she pleaded, "Don't! I, I'm not ready yet. Give, give me some time..."

Zong Jinghao was speechless. He didn't expect her to blurt such words now.

Yes, he wanted to sleep with her. He was desperate to take her to bed!

There were so many times he had a boner at the mere sight of his gorgeous wife.

Maybe he had been holding back his urges for too long.

But right now, he didn't have any such thoughts at all. He just wanted to remove her wet clothes.

Zong Jinghao lowered himself and kissed her dry lips. "Don't worry, I'm not doing anything now. Even if I want to take you, I will only do it when you're fully awake. I want you to feel me inside of you clearly."

## **Chapter 254**

Lin Xinyan's mind was addled because of her fever, so she didn't really hear what Zong Jinghao said. She only heard him say 'I won't touch you', and then she relaxed her arms in relief.

Zong Jinghao took off her sweater and there were still some traces of water on her pale skin. She was shivering because she was cold, so she twisted her body around to find a warm place to snuggle in. Her body was exposed.

Zong Jinghao's Adam apple bobbed up and down, he had to admit that she looked very tantalizing to him. The flushed cheeks that her fever brought upon her, along with her damp hair that was stuck onto her cheeks, resembled the exhausted and alluring appearance of a woman who had been tormented on her bed throughout the night.

Zong Jinghao felt his body heat up, and he definitely wouldn't hold himself back if she wasn't sick.

He took a deep breath to control himself before he dared to take off her underwear. She had given birth before, so her breasts were still perky. They didn't sag and they resembled teardrops. While she lay down, her breasts still stood firm like two small hills. Zong Jinghao averted his gaze and pulled the blanket up to cover her. He then proceeded to take off what's underneath her.

He found a button underneath the blanket and undid it. He then took off her pants and underwear.

She was completely naked in no time, but she still felt very comfortable because she was warmer this way. Her wet clothes made her feel very cold. She then reached for the blanket and hugged it tightly.

Zong Jinghao turned up the heater in the room, picked up the clothes off the floor and threw them into the bathroom. He then closed the bathroom door and prepared some warm water. He started to take a hot shower after he took off his own clothes.

After the shower, he took a dry towel in one hand and dried his hair with his other hand. He then walked to the side of the bed where he threw the towel on the table, and used another dry towel to dry Lin Xinyan's face and hair.

He only dared to touch her now because he was warmed up by the hot shower. He carried her up and placed her underneath the blanket.

Lin Xinyan felt his warmth and snuggled in his arms just like a small kitten. Her head was buried in his chest.

It was as if someone had pressed Zong Jinghao's vital spot, because he suddenly went motionless and his body tensed up. His heart started to race because Lin Xinyan was naked and she was snuggling in his arms with her soft body.

He had self-control, but when it came to this woman, his so-called self-control was a joke.

Lin Xinyan was groggy and didn't know what kind of situation she was in right now. She just wanted a warm place to snuggle in because she was cold, and that place was Zong Jinghao's embrace.

Her hands wandered around because she realized that there was something insulating her from the warmth. She wanted to rip that thing away.

Zong Jinghao lowered his head and saw her unruly hands tugging at his bathrobe. His expression then darkened.

He swallowed nervously and his voice was low, "If you keep doing that...I'm scared that I'll not be able to control myself."

I'm a man too. Please don't test me this way.

But Lin Xinyan couldn't hear anything he said. She only wanted to feel that 'warmth'.

He didn't have a choice and he restrained her wandering hands.

"Mm..." She felt uncomfortable because she was restrained, and she frowned as she tried to break free from his grasp, "Mm, let go of me-"

“I’ll let go of you if you stop doing that,” Zong Jinghao couldn’t control the evil desire in him, “If you keep doing that, I won’t control myself anymore. I don’t care if you’re unconscious. I’ll just give it to you one more time when you wake up.”

It was unclear whether Lin Xinyan heard Zong Jinghao’s words, because she didn’t move anymore. He let go of her hands and indeed she remained motionless.

Zong Jinghao looked down at her and heard her regular breathing.

Zong Jinghao was speechless.

She fell asleep?

He blinked. This is too fast. I was about to lose control and now she’s asleep?

She fell asleep after teasing me?

Just like that?

Knock knock-

“I asked the doctor to come over,” Shen Peichuan’s voice could be heard outside the door.

Zong Jinghao got off the bed and tucked Lin Xinyan in. She was completely covered except for her head.

Once she looked modest enough, Zong Jinghao opened the door.

There was a bespectacled doctor standing beside Shen Peichuan and he was carrying a first-aid kit.

Zong Jinghao didn’t let them in immediately.

Shen Peichuan knew that Zong Jinghao had his doubts, so he said, “I found him personally.”

Nobody compromised him.

Zong Jinghao then only tilted his body and said flatly, “Come in.”

“She’s on the bed,” Zong Jinghao walked towards the bed and the doctor followed him. The doctor placed his first-aid kit on the table and took out a thermometer. He then placed the thermometer in Lin Xinyan’s ears and pressed its button to measure her temperature.

The doctor frowned, “Why is her fever so high? It’s already 41 degrees. How did she get this fever?”

“She fell into a pool of water,” Zong Jinghao answered.

The doctor put the thermometer back into his first-aid kit. No wonder she has a fever. In this weather, the water must be freezing. "Let's let her fever subside first. I'll prescribe some medicine and she'll get better soon."

The doctor prepared the medicine as he instructed, "She must be very cold because she fell into freezing water. You need to prepare some ginger tea to warm her up."

"Alright," Zong Jinghao looked down at the woman lying on the bed and noticed that she flushed even more than before.

After the doctor finished preparing the medicine, he wrote down the recommended form of dosage and placed it on the table, "Give it to her now. She'll get better once she perspires a little, which means her fever is subsiding."

"Thank you. I'll send you off," Shen Peichuan said.

The doctor closed his first-aid kit, picked it up, and followed Shen Peichuan downstairs.

After some time, Shen Peichuan came back up carrying two bowls of ginger tea.

"You're wet too, so I asked the chef to prepare two bowls," Shen Peichuan passed the bowl to Zong Jinghao.

Zong Jinghao took it and finished it quickly. He passed the empty bowl to Shen Peichuan and took the other one as he said, "Wait for me outside."

"Mm."

Shen Peichuan took the empty bowl and walked out of the room. Zong Jinghao placed the bowl of ginger tea down first before he helped Lin Xinyan up. She was sleeping soundly, so she was quite annoyed when someone made her get up. She frowned.

Zong Jinghao coaxed her patiently, "Come, you can sleep after you drink some ginger tea and take the medicine."

He put the medicine in her mouth, but maybe because it was too bitter for her, she spat it out.

Zong Jinghao was at a loss for words.

"Come, take your medicine," Zong Jinghao took out two pills again, but she didn't even open her mouth this time. She murmured, "It's bitter."

But medicine is always bitter.

He didn't have a choice. Zong Jinghao put the pills into his mouth and delivered to her while kissing her lips.

Lin Xinyan turned her head away as she tried to shake him off, but Zong Jinghao held her in place and didn't allow her to move. He stretched his tongue into her throat, and she felt like something was stuck in her throat. She felt very uncomfortable and tried to gag but nothing came out. She could only try to swallow it but there wasn't any water, so the pill was just stuck in her esophagus.

Zong Jinghao took a mouthful of ginger tea and approached her lips again to pass her the tea. This time, Lin Xinyan was very cooperative, because she needed some water.

The medicine managed to find its way into her stomach.

Zong Jinghao repeated this procedure and made her finish a bowl of ginger tea.

He then placed her down and tucked her in to let her sleep.

After she drank the ginger tea, her body warmed up. She wriggled around, found a comfortable position and continued to sleep.

Zong Jinghao sat on the side of the bed for a while to make sure that she was soundly asleep. He then left the room.

Shen Peichuan was standing outside the room and when Zong Jinghao came out, he asked, "Is she better now?"

"She just took her medicine..."

"I want to meet Mr. Zong."

"I'm sorry, only authorized people are allowed in here. You can't come in."

Bai Yinning and a bodyguard's voices could be heard from the elevator lobby.

"Bai Yinning?" Shen Peichuan looked at Zong Jinghao.

Zong Jinghao expression darkened. He came just at the right time. Bai Yinning needs to give me an explanation of what happened.

## **Chapter 255**

"I have something to discuss with Mr. Zong," Bai Yinning tried his best to convince the bodyguard, but the bodyguard's attitude was very firm. It was his job not to let any unauthorized people in, so no matter what Bai Yinning said, the bodyguard wouldn't let him in.

Bai Yinning frowned. Why is this person so stubborn?

“I have something important...”

“What important matters do you have?” Zong Jinghao stood at the corridor and asked. His expression was indecipherable- his lips were slightly pursed and his gaze was as sharp as a knife.

Zong Jinghao looked powerful even though he was just standing far away. He had an intimidating aura. “Don’t tell me Mr. Bai is here to give me an explanation because you’ve already investigated the incident today thoroughly?”

Bai Yinning felt guilty and he apologized, “It was my mistake. Yao Qingqing figured out my location and that...”

In actual fact, Bai Yinning wasn’t even looking out for Yao Qingqing, which was why Yao Qingqing could track him down that easily.

After he sent Gao Yuan to investigate the incident, he realized that Yao Qingqing was the reason why Lin Xinyan fell into the lake. He clenched his armrest tightly, “Is Ms. Lin alright?”

“How do you plan to solve this?” Zong Jinghao didn’t answer Bai Yinning’s question directly. What Zong Jinghao wanted was an explanation.

Bai Yinning still had a bit of hope that Yao Qingqing was just careless and that she wasn’t really an evil person.

Shen Peichuan could tell that Bai Yinning was still hesitating, so he reminded, “Mr. Bai, you shouldn’t trust your instincts blindly. You can’t just give her an infinite amount of trust just because you have known her since young. Actually, you can try investigating her past. I think there will be some surprises there for you.”

“What do you mean?” it was obvious that Shen Peichuan was insinuating something.

“It’s better if you go and ask her yourself. Oh right, about the horror case the last time, I think you should give us an explanation as well. After all, it happened in your territory. You won’t be thinking about ignoring it or harboring someone right?” Shen Peichuan leaned against the wall as he fiddled with his wrists, “Even if it happened in your territory, no one could stop us if we want to mess around. Making a woman pay for her sins is easy, but it’s a crime. However, harboring someone is also a crime.”

He’s threatening me. It’s obvious that he’s threatening me.

Bai Yinning could of course understand what Shen Peichuan was trying to say. If he was to harbor Yao Qingqing, then Zong Jinghao definitely wouldn’t cooperate with him anymore. Furthermore, they would definitely become enemies.



He smiled bitterly, "I need to take responsibility for the drowning incident of Ms. Lin. I will give an explanation as well. I definitely wouldn't harbor someone if I find any evidence about the horror incident."

He wasn't giving up on Yao Qingqing but instead, through that incident, he realized that something really is wrong with her.

He never thought that Yao Qingqing could do something like that to Lin Xinyan.

"Is Ms. Lin alright?" Bai Yinning asked again. He didn't just ask because he felt responsible for the incident.

Instead, it was because he genuinely cared about Lin Xinyan's condition.

"She's my wife. I don't need the concern of someone else," Zong Jinghao was annoyed with Bai Yinning hovering around Lin Xinyan like a fly. He needed to use this opportunity to tell Bai Yinning clearly that Lin Xinyan is his, so Bai Yinning shouldn't even think about her!

"Coveting the wife of another isn't what a moral person should do. I think Mr. Bai is a reasonable and moral person," Zong Jinghao said casually, but his words rendered Bai Yinning speechless.

"Where is Yao Qingqing? Mr. Bai, please show us the way," Shen Peichuan was raring to go to interrogate Yao Qingqing as he was very curious about the secrets that she kept.

Bai Yinning inhaled sharply. He made up his mind not to defend Yao Qingqing if there was evidence that she was the one behind it.

"How about this. We'll wait until Ms. Lin wakes up, and then she can interrogate Yao Qingqing. Please give me a little bit more time as well. It'll be for the best if she confesses, but if she doesn't, I'll pass her to you," Bai Yinning hoped that Yao Qingqing would confess to him.

Shen Peichuan couldn't decide on matters like this, so he looked at Zong Jinghao.

After a moment's silence, Zong Jinghao said, "I hope that Mr. Bai will bring us good news."

After which, he turned around and entered the room.

Bai Yinning raised his arm to ask Gao Yuan to push him into the elevator.

Shen Peichuan looked at Bai Yinning and said, "Mr. Bai, I won't be sending you off."

Bai Yinning didn't say a word. After they stepped into the elevator, Gao Yuan said softly, "Ms. Yao is in the villa."

Gao Yuan would've never believed that Yao Qingqing was the one who pushed Lin Xinyan into the lake if he didn't see the surveillance footage. He said, "She looks so honest and kind, how can she do something like that?"

Bai Yinning's expression was gloomy as well. He didn't want to think of Yao Qingqing that way, but the evidence was incriminating.

The horror incident is probably masterminded by Yao Qingqing as well.

Gao Yuan could tell that Bai Yinning didn't want to talk about this topic, so he read the room and shut up.

They stepped out of the hotel and boarded the car. They then reached Bai Yinning's villa in no time.

Yao Qingqing didn't come to Bai Yinning's villa very often. The last time, Bai Yinning had brought her here after they had known each other for a very short period of time.

She sat down anxiously, as Liu stood at one side and stared at her. Why did Young Master ask Yao Qingqing to come here?

Maybe she likes Bai Yinning too. Liu could feel that Yao Qingqing fancied Bai Yinning as well.

I would rather Bai Yinning be together with Lin Xinyan than Yao Qingqing.

She was just a helper, so she could only conceal her affection towards Bai Yinning. After all, Bai Yinning was to get married and he shouldn't marry someone like her. She couldn't really pinpoint Yao Qingqing's bad qualities, but she just felt that Lin Xinyan seemed more considerate, and so she thought that Lin Xinyan suited Bai Yinning more.

At that moment, Gao Yuan came in with Bai Yinning. Liu immediately approached them and greeted, "Young Master."

Bai Yinning wasn't in a good mood, so he didn't feel like talking. Instead, he waved Liu off. He then said to Yao Qingqing, "Qingqing, come with me."

After which, he wheeled himself to his study.

Yao Qingqing stood up from the sofa and followed him.

In the living room, Liu slowly approached Gao Yuan and asked, "What happened to Young Master today? He looks quite displeased and troubled."

Liu took care of Bai Yinning's personal life while Gao Yuan was Bai Yinning's right-hand man at work, so naturally they were both close to Bai Yinning and to each other.

Gao Yuan sighed when he saw the door of the study closing. He then said, "Um, Ms. Yao brought some trouble for him."

"What trouble did she bring?" Liu glared.

Sure enough. Yao Qingqing is not suited for Bai Yinning.

Gao Yuan gave her a look and said, "Just take care of yourself. Don't question too much about other people's affairs."

"But, Young Master..."

Liu wanted to question even more, but he had already walked away and he seemed quite unwilling to talk about that issue.

Bai Yinning didn't like people discussing his affairs behind his back.

Liu pouted and stared at Gao Yuan. He's so selfish.

I won't tell him anything if he asks about something the next time.

In the study.

Bai Yinning sat behind the desk and casually flipped open and browsed a document file.

Yao Qingqing stood in front of the desk and didn't dare to make a sound.

It was almost as if Bai Yinning had forgotten that someone was there with him. After a moment, he asked casually without even looking up at Yao Qingqing, "Where did you go today?"

"Looked for work."

Yao Qingqing's fists were clenched tightly at her side as Bai Yinning's words rattled her severely.

Why did Bai Yinning ask me to come over just to ask such a irrelevant question?

Bai Yinning's expression didn't change but he still didn't look at her as he continued asking, "Besides looking for work?"

"What do you actually want to ask?" Yao Qingqing couldn't take it anymore.

Did he find out about what happened today?

Bai Yinning placed down the file in front of him and looked up at her, "Don't you have anything you want to say to me?"

If she's willing to confess her sins, I believe Lin Xinyan will give her a chance to turn over a new leaf.

Yao Qingqing laughed, "What do you want me to say?"

Bai Yinning frowned and thought that he didn't recognize the woman in front of him anymore. She wasn't like this. She was honest and kind, but why is she so dubious right now?

"It's for your own good," Bai Yinning said thoughtfully.

He hoped that Yao Qingqing could turn over a new leaf.

Yao Qingqing laughed even louder and her laughter was filled with mockery, "You asked me to come here because of Ms. Lin right?"

Bai Yinning didn't deny that.

"She's already married and she even has a child. She doesn't deserve you, so why are you treating her so well?!" Yao Qingqing suddenly slammed her hands on the desk and leaned forward, closing the distance between Bai Yinning. She looked at his eyes and said, "Yes. I met her today and I accidentally pushed her into the lake. She brought everything upon herself because she's not clear of her own position. She's already married but she's still seducing you. It's clear that her intentions are immoral, and she's just a promiscuous lady!"

Bai Yinning leaned backwards on the chair. A hint of disappointment flashed on his face.

He was disappointed at Yao Qingqing.

"How do you know that she's seducing me?"

"She's messing around with you even when she's married. If this is not seduction, what is?" Yao Qingqing sounded very firm and determined, as if her word was the law.

Bai Yinning laughed, "How do you know that I'm not the one messing around with her..."

"You're not that kind of person. She must be seducing you," Yao Qingqing interrupted him before he could finish.

Bai Yinning stared at Yao Qingqing and he was speechless.

She's so stubborn she's like a mule.

Bai Yinning didn't want Yao Qingqing to have any misconceptions about Lin Xinyan, so he felt the need to clarify this incident to her.

"I'm telling you seriously now that Ms. Lin never messed around with me before. I am the one messing around with her. She's very different from a lot of women, and she's the most unique lady I've ever seen. I fancy her. I know that she is already married and she already

has children, but I still can't control my feelings towards her. If you want to blame someone, blame me, don't blame her. If you apologize to her about this incident, she wouldn't blame..."

"Yinning!" Yao Qingqing was extremely agitated. She didn't, or maybe she couldn't, believe what Bai Yinning said, so she retorted, "Did she drug you or something? Why do you like her?"

"How can I not like her?!" Bai Yinning lost his patience.

Stubborn, unreasonable and unaccommodating. These words can't even begin to describe her.

She's even more obstinate than a mule.

"She doesn't deserve you!" Yao Qingqing shouted.

Bai Yinning thought that she was going crazy, but she thought that he was going crazy instead.

"She's pretty, kind, considerate and she has her own job. She's independent and strong while I'm just a disabled man. I'm a pitiful man that was adopted by someone, so how can she not deserve me? Instead, I think I don't deserve her."

"No, no..." Yao Qingqing shook her head violently and grabbed Bai Yinning's arm, "Yinning, you are blinded by her. She's not your savior..."

Bai Yinning looked at her insanity and frenzied expression and laughed coldly, "And are you?"

## **Chapter 256**

It was as if thunder struck Yao Qingqing. She stood motionless and then slowly let go of Bai Yinning's arm. I don't deserve him. I'm tainted. My body is tainted.

I don't deserve him anymore. I don't deserve him.

She was panicked and helpless. She stepped back because she was scared that her dirtiness might taint Bai Yinning.

I hate it. I hate it. I hate the person who tainted me. She thought that the world was unfair to her.

"It's still not too late to turn over a new leaf," Bai Yinning advised her with whatever patience he had left. He hoped that she could understand what he was trying to say and that she

would confess her sins. He thought that Lin Xinyan would definitely give her a chance to turn over a new leaf because of Lin Xinyan's kindness.

"Ha, Haha..." Yao Qingqing laughed, and her laughter grew louder and louder. Her eyes turned bloodshot as she met Bai Yinning's undeniably disappointed gaze, "The one who needs to turn over a new leaf is you, is you, Bai Yinning!"

Bai Yinning closed his eyes. He knew that there was no salvation left for Yao Qingqing anymore.

He did all that he could and he upheld his moral values. No one could save Yao Qingqing now that she had forced herself onto a path of no return.

"I have done all that I could. Please don't blame me in the future and I hope that you won't regret your decisions," Bai Yinning took out his phone and called Gao Yuan.

Gao Yuan picked up very quickly. Bai Yinning didn't even look up at Yao Qingqing when he said, "Send her there."

Yao Qingqing's hazel eyes protruded out and she looked demented when she said, "Who? Who are you sending me to?!"

Bai Yinning didn't speak. He didn't even want to look at her.

"I'll ask you again. Where are you sending me?" Yao Qingqing rushed to him and grabbed his arm again. Veins popped out across her thin arms as she said, "Are you sending me to them so that they can do whatever they want to me?"

Bai Yinning remained silent. He didn't want to show her any emotion even though he felt pain in his arms.

She's not worth it.

She has utterly disappointed me.

I advised her because of our relationship we used to have, and now she wants to cut things off.

I can't do anything else.

"Are you sending me to them to please that woman?" Yao Qingqing seemed absolutely deranged. She just wanted an answer. An answer that she wouldn't be able to accept, but a truthful answer nonetheless.

"Have you forgotten that winter? There was a huge snow and our blankets were very thin. The only reason you survived the cold was because you took my blanket and cuddled with

me for warmth! Now you're sending me out just to please a woman. We were childhood friends and now I'm not even worth as much to you as that woman?!"

She felt utterly hopeless. I just want the best for him and now he's sending me out just to please a woman?

Ha, Haha...

"Bai Yinning, am I blind, or have you forgotten our relationship?"

Bai Yinning was finally willing to look up at her. But he wasn't willing to speak to her anymore.

Because he knew that no matter what he said she would never listen to him.

Nobody can wake up someone who's only pretending to sleep.

Click, the door opened and Gao Yuan entered with two men. Once he saw that Yao Qingqing was grabbing onto Bai Yinning, he immediately asked the men to capture her.

"Don't come here, don't come here-" Yao Qingqing was absolutely terrified. She knelt down below Bai Yinning and grabbed onto his pants, "Yinning, I'm just doing it for your sake. Are you really pushing me away?"

Bai Yinning looked at her. I spent all my patience trying to advise her, but she still doesn't want to turn over a new leaf. All she wants to do is blame me.

He suppressed his anger, "This is your last chance. If you apologize sincerely to her, I'll make sure that you won't get hurt..."

"Never, I will never apologize to her!" Yao Qingqing screamed at the top of her lungs.

"Gao Yuan, take her away." There wasn't any hesitation in his voice. This time, Bai Yinning made up his mind. He felt that he was too naive for trying to wake Yao Qingqing up.

She has already walked on a path of no return. No one can wake her up from her madness anymore.

"No, no..." Yao Qingqing was struggling to break free, but the room was only that big, and the two bulky men captured her easily. It was impossible for her to try to escape.

"Yinning, Yinning, you can't do this to me..." Yao Qingqing was scared, but she didn't want to admit that Bai Yinning could sacrifice her for the sake of Lin Xinyan.

She didn't know that she was in the wrong.

She just thought that she was doing it for Bai Yinning's sake.

Bai Yinning is blinded. He only cares about Lin Xinyan.

Her heart ached profusely.

“You’ll regret it, you’ll regret it...”

Bai Yinning’s expression was thunderous. Gao Yuan knew how to pick up on cues like that, so he asked the two men, “Can’t you hear that it’s too noisy in here?”

The men understood at once and they covered Yao Qingqing’s mouth. They then dragged her out regardless of her struggling.

Yao Qingqing’s voice disappeared from the study in no time. Gao Yuan stood at the door and asked Bai Yinning again, “Do we send her over?”

He was scared that Bai Yinning was acting on a whim.

Bai Yinning tugged on his collar in frustration. He wanted to undo his button, but he couldn’t do it. He lost his patience and just pulled it off and asked, “Don’t you understand what I just said?”

Gao Yuan didn’t dare to speak anymore. He lowered his head and retreated from the study.

In the hotel.

Lin Xinyan felt that she was unbelievably hot and she felt sweat covering her entire body. She then twisted her body to get rid of the blanket. Zong Jinghao was caught up in playing with Lin Ruixin in the other room. After a while, he came to Lin Xinyan’s room.

But when he opened the door, he realized that the blanket on Lin Xinyan only covered her private areas and wide patches of her skin were exposed. Zong Jinghao lost his balance at the sight and fell at the door. He then hurried inside and locked the door.

He walked towards the bed and as he tried to cover her up, she turned her body and took all the blanket with her. She was practically naked. Zong Jinghao froze on the spot. He saw the voluptuous body on the bed and blood rushed to his head. He swallowed nervously and his throat dried up. Nothing could relieve him from his distress except the woman on the bed.

“Mm...”

Lin Xinyan turned around again. She felt that her body was extremely hot.

“Lin Xinyan?” Zong Jinghao called out softly as he bent down and propped himself beside her.

She felt like someone was calling her, but she was so sleepy she didn’t want to open her eyes, so she wriggled her body and continued to sleep.



At that moment, her naked body was exposed to him.

He didn't know if it was because of the medication or not, but she perspired a lot. Her body was sparkling red from within and there were beads of sweat on her. Her lips especially- they were luscious and moist.

She was just like a freshly-washed cherry begging to be tasted. At that thought, Zong Jinghao tasted her. He lowered his head and nibbled at her lips.

The room was hot because Zong Jinghao had turned the heater up, and he felt warm in no time as well. He felt heat rising within his body as he kissed her, and a layer of perspiration coated his back. A light tasting like this couldn't satisfy Zong Jinghao anymore, so he slowly moved downwards from her lips. He kissed her neck and collarbone. A light fragrance exuded from her body. It was a mixture between the smell of perspiration and her own body scent, but it was aromatic and tantalizing nonetheless.

When his lips grazed her collarbone, Zong Jinghao looked up to see if she was waking up. Her eyes were closed and it seemed like she was sleeping soundly.

The dim light couldn't conceal his enthralled expression. At that moment, he lost himself, and he had only one thought- he wanted to contain her with his body.

He approached her and his large palm fell gently on her face. Her face was even smaller than his palm, and he could feel an egg-like outline beneath his hands. He was loving yet controlled, and he was a bit hesitant when he touched her. He was scared that he might hurt her, and he was afraid that he might wake her up.

He leaned over and kissed her forehead, "I'm human too..."

He had desires, especially after touching her.

He felt his blood boiling.

"I'll be very gentle." His body slowly enveloped hers as he kissed her earlobes and delicate shoulders.

Lin Xinyan vaguely felt an itchiness on her body, as if an insect was crawling between her neck and ears. She felt as if a mountain was pressing down on her as well and that made her a little bit breathless.

"Mm-"

Her eyelashes fluttered and she slowly opened her eyes.

Zong Jinghao looked up at her and said in a low tone, "You're awake."

Lin Xinyan responded with a low mm. She frowned and said, "I don't feel so good..."

“Where do you not feel good?” he asked gently.

“I...”

She looked down and realized that there wasn't a piece of clothing on her. She opened her eyes up widely and tried to move her legs, before she realized that something was pressing on her legs.

“Zong Jinghao.” Her voice was shaky and she sounded like she was about to cry.

What's happening?

Zong Jinghao heart clenched when he saw her dazed and helpless expression. He hugged her and said, “It's me, it's me...”

Lin Xinyan tensed up and looked around the room. At that moment, she realized that she was completely naked.

She wasn't sleepy anymore. She was completely awake now.

“You said before that you would respect me...” She held on tightly to the bedsheets and trembled unwittingly in his embrace.

Zong Jinghao caressed her back and consoled her as he tried to coax her, “I have been waiting for so long already. If you let me wait any longer, I'll go crazy. I promise I'll be very gentle and careful.”

He caressed her forehead and kissed the corners of her eyes. He then took her hands and placed it on his chest, “Touch it. It's filled with you.”

Lin Xinyan opened her mouth but she couldn't say anything. She felt like her body was being baked in an oven and she was parched dry. He was on top of her and she could see a fire in his deep eyes. The fire was blazing brightly, but he was trying his best to restrain it.

She knew that he was waiting for her answer.

Her hands slowly clenched up until they were balled into fists.

Her voice was low, “Do you love me? Do you like me?”

“I love you, I like you...” He kissed her nose and it was a little hot and ticklish. Lin Xinyan wrapped her arms around his neck, and as if she was giving him an answer, she lifted her chin and kissed him on his lips softly. Just as she was about to break the kiss, Zong Jinghao pressed her against him and forced himself on her mouth. He forced her to open up as wide as she could to be able to contain his desire. The primal and passionate kiss lasted for a few minutes.

Lin Xinyan was breathless after the kiss. Her mind went blank and she tried to devour the air around her. She sucked on his tongue reflexively to acquire his breath.

To Zong Jinghao, that was her answer, so he didn't hold back anymore.

Desire burned through the room and a primal possessiveness engulfed them.

## **Chapter 257**

The whole world tossed and turned along with them, and they kissed each other so passionately it was as if they were the only people left in the world.

Zong Jinghao took off his clothes and pressed down on her again. But before they could complete their ritual, someone knocked on the door.

"Jinghao, Bai Yinning sent her over already," Shen Peichuan's voice could be heard, and that helped Lin Xinyan regain her senses.

She reflexively pushed Zong Jinghao away.

At that moment, Zong Jinghao's expression was thunderous. He was tense and disappointed.

"Are you not questioning her now?" Bai Yinning knew that Lin Xinyan was having a fever.

Zong Jinghao wouldn't take advantage of her right?

So he thought that the reason why Zong Jinghao was in the room was purely because Zong Jinghao wanted to accompany Lin Xinyan.

He didn't think about anything else.

Lin Xinyan could feel Zong Jinghao's tense body and stifled emotions. She held his hands and said, "I have already promised you. I won't go back on my word. We'll do it next time."

The dim light concealed his twitching eyes and arms which didn't want to let go of Lin Xinyan.

Knock knock-

The door was knocked on again.

Lin Xinyan pushed Zong Jinghao again and she shook her head.

Zong Jinghao closed his eyes, took the blanket and wrapped her inside it just like a caterpillar in a cocoon.

He got off the bed and buttoned himself up. He then opened the door.

Shen Peichuan seemed to have thought of something, so he was about to leave, but the door was opened. He turned around and saw Zong Jinghao's furious expression and he tensed up immediately.

He was so nervous he forgot how to speak.

Zong Jinghao stood with his hands behind his back and his sharp gaze swept over Shen Peichuan's astonished expression. After a while, he calmed himself down and said, "Where is she?"

"At Bai Yinning's place." They weren't at a secluded place, so it was great that Bai Yinning could offer his own place. That way, they didn't need to spend their time and effort to find another location.

"Mm. Go and make the preparations first. I'll come later." After which, Zong Jinghao shut the door.

Shen Peichuan stood motionless for a while. After he regained his senses, he patted himself on his chest. Thank God I didn't mess up somehow.

Zong Jinghao entered the room, but Lin Xinyan was already dressed. She was brushing her hair in front of the mirror in the bathroom. Her long hair was a little messy and damp. She gathered her hair and tied it backwards into a ponytail. When she saw that Zong Jinghao came in, she asked, "Did you capture Yao Qingqing already?"

Zong Jinghao approached her and hugged her from behind, "She can't escape anyway."

If Bai Yinning didn't capture her, he would do it personally.

Yao Qingqing is a nameless woman. Where can she escape to?

Lin Xinyan sighed, "She's actually quite pitiful."

She lost her parents since young and she wasn't loved even though she was adopted. Her life was very tough.

Zong Jinghao took Lin Xinyan's hands and held them, saying, "A pitiful person is always detestable in some way."

He looked up at her, "You can stay here. I'll go..."

"I'll go with you," Lin Xinyan knew that he was about to go and interrogate Yao Qingqing and she wanted to join him as well.

After a moment's silence, he said, "Ok."

After Lin Xinyan finished packing up, Zong Jinghao brought her out. Qin Ya, Su Zhan and the bodyguards remained in the hotel to take care of the kids, and only Shen Peichuan followed them along.

Shen Peichuan was the one driving. He said, "The reason why Bai Yinning passed Yao Qingqing to us is probably that he didn't get any information from her."

Lin Xinyan asked Shen Peichuan, "Bai Yinning captured her?"

"Yeah."

Lin Xinyan fell into deep thought. She could tell that Bai Yinning cared about Yao Qingqing a lot, and that he really appreciated their childhood friendship.

It must've been very tough for him to hand Yao Qingqing over right?

After a while, they stopped at the location Gao Yuan had sent Shen Peichuan.

It was an abandoned factory and it was empty apart from the trash scattered around it.

Yao Qingqing was bound on the floor and her mouth was covered by tape.

Gao Yuan was waiting for them at the door. When he saw them approaching, he said, "Mr. Bai is upstairs. He'll just watch from there and he won't intervene. We have already passed her to you, so we wouldn't interrupt your work."

What he meant was that they wouldn't object no matter what Zong Jinghao would do to Yao Qingqing.

Zong Jinghao was very pleased at their stance. He was neither a bad guy nor a good guy. A lot of bad things had happened, so he would definitely investigate the incidents thoroughly. Last time, Lin Xichen was absolutely terrified, and this time, Lin Xinyan almost lost her life. The two incidents had challenged Zong Jinghao's bottom line.

Gao Yuan made a welcoming gesture as he said, "She's right inside."

Shen Peichuan walked in front to clear the path while Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan followed behind him as they held each other's hands. The floor was dirty and there was a lot of trash lying around, so Zong Jinghao reminded her to walk carefully.

Lin Xinyan was in deep thought and she didn't hear him.

Zong Jinghao grabbed on her waist tightly to make her notice him before he asked, "What are you thinking about?"

“Nothing much,” Lin Xinyan forced a smile while answering.

She was actually thinking that if Yao Qingqing could admit her mistakes, then she would ask Zong Jinghao to not press the issue further for the sake of Bai Yinning.

Once they stepped into the factory, it was tangibly much colder than before. The decrepit windows were open and the roof blocked the sunlight, so it made the whole place seem very dim.

Yao Qingqing’s limbs were bound as she lay on the floor. She glared furiously at Lin Xinyan when she saw them entering.

It was as if Yao Qingqing was trying to bore into Lin Xinyan with her gaze.

Zong Jinghao’s squinted a little and his aura was oppressive and intimidating, “I’ll dig your eyes out if you continue to look at her that way.”

Yao Qingqing trembled and she didn’t dare to look at Lin Xinyan anymore. She wriggled on the floor as she tried to escape her predicament.

But no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t move an inch.

Lin Xinyan took a look at Zong Jinghao. His temper is just like that. I hope Yao Qingqing is a little wiser so she can suffer less.

They were both women, so Lin Xinyan pitied Yao Qingqing.

Even if Yao Qingqing wanted to put her in harm’s way, she was still willing to give Yao Qingqing a second chance.

Gao Yuan prepared two clean chairs, and Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan sat on them.

Shen Peichuan squatted in front of Yao Qingqing and tore the tape away from her mouth, “Tell me, did you ask someone to send the doll? Besides that, why did you push my sister-in-law?”

Yao Qingqing remained silent as she looked down.

She had a very obstinate expression.

Shen Peichuan licked his dry lips and laughed, “Are you trying to get yourself punished?”

“If you want to kill me, just kill me. Why do you need to ask so many questions?” She was still looking down when she said, “The powerful prey on the weak and that’s the truth of this world. I’m just an ant and you can do whatever you want to me. The reason why I’m in this predicament is not because I made a mistake, but rather it’s because you are powerful and wealthy people.”

“Hahaha!” Shen Peichuan was so infuriated he laughed. Is she saying that we’re bullying her because we’re powerful?

“Hey. You messed with us first, right?”

“She tried to seduce Yinning first!” Yao Qingqing finally looked up, but she didn’t dare to look at Lin Xinyan. Instead, she glared at Shen Peichuan.

Shen Peichuan laughed again because he was so furious.

Lin Xinyan seduced Bai Yinning?

Did Lin Xinyan blind herself? She has Zong Jinghao, why does she even need to seduce Bai Yinning?

Is this woman right in her mind?

Shen Peichuan finally realized that he couldn’t get any information from her this way, so he changed his strategy, “You’re an orphan adopted by the Yao family. Your stepparents originally couldn’t bear any children, but when you came to their family, your stepmother got pregnant and gave birth to a boy. That boy is your brother.”

Shen Peichuan showed her the photo of the man wearing a leather jacket which was screenshotted from the video, “He’s your brother right?”

Yao Qingqing was utterly dumbfounded.

They investigated me and they even know that I have a brother. In that case do they know that I have given birth to a child before?

Does Bai Yinning know?

## **Chapter 258**

“Did you investigate me?” Yao Qingqing frantically tried to jump up and fight Shen Peichuan because it was her secret, and she couldn’t allow anyone to know about it.

But her legs were tied. The moment she tried to jump up, she fell back down again.

Shen Peichuan smiled. He knew that this was her weakness, so he continued to provoke her, “You were pregnant at 16 years old and you even gave birth to child. However, your child...died.”

“Shut up, shut up!” Yao Qingqing shrieked. She shook her head violently because Shen Peichuan’s words struck her like lightning, splitting her into half and separating her flesh from her bones.

Then, she went into a frenzied state and sometimes she lied motionless on the ground like a puppet.

On the second floor.

Bai Yinning frowned deeply. Shen Peichuan's words were very easy to understand, but it shocked him to his core. Yao Qingqing got herself pregnant when she was 16? And she even gave birth to the child?

This was a piece of shocking news even for him.

16 year old girls are considered underage.

He understood what Shen Peichuan meant about a 'surprise'.

He held on to his armrest and stared at Yao Qingqing. He needed to question her personally about certain things.

With his help of his driver, he went downstairs.

Yao Qingqing's head was lowered down and her hair was messy. Through the slits of her hair, she could vaguely see Bai Yinning approaching her on a wheelchair.

Bai Yinning?

She looked up instantly and stared at Bai Yinning. He's here too?

Does that mean that he heard what Shen Peichuan said?

"Yinning..."

"Tell me what happened. Why did you hide the fact that you gave birth to a child when you were 16?" He frowned. At that moment, he realized that he didn't know her at all.

She wasn't willing to talk about it and he had never took the initiative to investigate the matter.

He had always thought that her stepparents had treated her badly, but he never thought that...

It was obvious that it had to do with her family because she was underage when she got pregnant.

Yao Qingqing was extremely affected by his words and she curled up into a ball. She wanted to hide and disappear. She didn't want anyone to see her in this state.



“Say something!” Bai Yinning growled.

“I can’t!” Yao Qingqing’s voice was even louder than his. She wanted to escape this place and disappear. She didn’t want to face him or anyone else.

I’m in so much pain. Don’t force me!

“How can anyone help you if you don’t say something?!” Bai Yinning’s expression had an unprecedented darkness.

Yao Qingqing looked at Bai Yinning and laughed. Then she cried when she looked at him again.

“No one can help me. I’m already tainted...” Her lips trembled as if she recalled something horrific. Her flushed cheeks turned deathly pale. Her gaze was lifeless when she stared at Bai Yinning, “Are you disgusted by me?”

Bai Yinning shook his head.

But Yao Qingqing knew that he was lying to her.

“Yes. I gave birth to a child, and it’s my stepfather’s child.” After she said that, she started to laugh. Her tears then started to stream down her face as she laughed, “He raped me when I was thirteen and it lasted for three years...”

Yao Qingqing had just turned thirteen that year. Her body wasn’t fully developed yet, but one could still see that she was adorable. Her brother was just a few years old at that time and he often cried at night. Her stepfather used the excuse that her stepbrother was too noisy for him to avoid sleeping with her stepmother.

One day, it was raining very heavily and thunder rumbled loudly. Even the cows that were restrained to her house were kicking viciously at the walls because they were afraid of the thunder.

She was hiding in her malodorous and thin blanket because she was afraid too.

Suddenly the door opened with a creak-

“Qingqing?”

It was her stepfather’s voice. Yao Qingqing looked out of her blanket. Her stepparents treated her badly on a daily basis because they forced her to work every morning. She was tasked to cut the hay to feed the cows, do the chores and tend the land. She only stopped working when she was asleep at night.

The villagers had chastised her stepparents for being heartless and mean for not sending her to school and forcing her to work everyday. Her stepparents couldn’t stand the harsh criticisms anymore, so they sent her to school.

But her workload didn't decrease. She had to feed the cows, wash the clothes and finish all the chores before daybreak before she was allowed to go to school.

Her stepfather treated her slightly better than her stepmother.

However, she was still afraid of him. She asked very carefully, "Dad, why are you not asleep yet? Do I need to do any work?"

"It's already so late. There's no work to be done." Her stepfather sat on the side of the bed and smiled, "I'm just here to see you because I'm worried that you're scared of the thunder and rain."

Yao Qingqing immediately shook her head, "I'm not scared. Dad, you can go to sleep."

Her stepfather's hands reached underneath the blanket and grabbed her ankles, "You're not scared but I am. How about I sleep with you tonight?"

Yao Qingqing was horrified. She panicked and said, "Dad, what are you doing?"

She didn't know about anything when she was thirteen, so she didn't know what her stepfather was doing. All she knew was that she was absolutely petrified.

"I already taught your mother a lesson because she doesn't treat you well. I'll treat you well from now on." As he said that, he uncovered the blankets and pressed down on her.

She reflexively tried to kick and push him away, but her defiance angered her stepfather. He used ropes to tie her hands together. The strength of a thirteen year old wasn't comparable at all to the strength of a middle-aged man.

She was trapped, so she could only scream, "Mom..."

Her screams were drowned in the thunder. Her stepfather had a menacing expression as he slapped her viciously, "I'm treating you so well and you don't want it!"

Half of her face went numb and she could taste the taste of blood in her mouth.

Her stepfather covered her mouth, tore her nightgown and raped her.

From then onwards, her stepfather frequently sneaked into her room at night. If she resisted him, he would beat her up and starve her the next morning.

After some time, she didn't dare to defy him anymore. Three years then passed just like that.

When she was sixteen, her first period came. Not long after, she got pregnant, but she didn't know it yet. She was often starved, so her belly was small, and she didn't know that it was abnormal if her period didn't come.

Until one day, her stomach suddenly started to hurt a lot during the afternoon. Her stepparents thought that she was ill, but they didn't want to spend any medical fees so they just threw her back into her room to fend for herself.

She was in pain for ten or more hours and she gave birth to a child at night.

Her stepmother only found out what happened between her and her stepfather then.

Her stepmother was absolutely furious and she scratched Yao Qingqing's stepfather's face. They weren't even willing to take care of Yao Qingqing, and the reason why Yao Qingqing could stay with them was because she could work. Naturally, they wouldn't take care of a child.

Besides that, Yao Qingqing's child was an illegitimate child with her stepfather, so of course her stepmother didn't want to take care of them.

"This girl is still underage. If word gets out, you will be convicted as a rapist. You'll go to jail." Her stepmother used the law to threaten her stepfather.

He didn't dare to defy her, so he said, "So what should we do now?"

Her stepmother slapped him again, "You only have a sense of urgency now?!" Her stepmother was livid. A disloyal husband was a disgrace to her.

Her stepmother relieved her anger on Yao Qingqing. She slapped, kicked and punched Yao Qingqing. She rested for a while when she ran out of energy, and continued to beat Yao Qingqing up once she regained her strength.

Yao Qingqing thought that she was going to die.

If I die, I'll be free.

Her stepfather tugged on her enraged stepmother, "Don't beat her. If she dies, we'll be doomed."

Her stepmother's anger subsided. Since things had already progressed like that, she needed to find a way to take care of the issue at hand.

"We'll just say that she slept around and got this baby. Don't we have a well outside? We can just throw it outside. She's already grown up now, so she can work."

They all say that once a woman becomes a mother, they gain extraordinary willpower and strength, and the 16 year old mother was no exception.

Yao Qingqing dragged her weak body and held onto her stepmother's legs, "I'm begging you. Don't... don't hurt my child. I can eat less and give him some. Please don't throw my child into the well."

Her stepmother was angered. She knelt down and tugged on Yao Qingqing's hair, "If you eat less, the rest goes to the family. This bastard needs to die!"

### **Chapter 259**

Yao Qingqing knew that begging her stepmother was useless, so she crawled to her stepfather instead, "Please save him. He's your son too. You can't just watch him get thrown into the well."

"B\*\*\*\*!" Yao Qingqing's words angered her stepmother. Her stepmother took the baby and his umbilical cord wasn't even cut off yet. He was naked and slippery and Yao Qingqing's blood stained him. The moment Yao Qingqing's stepmother raised him up, he cried.

His cries were extraordinarily loud.

Yao Qingqing grabbed onto her stepmother's legs and a trail of blood followed behind her. She started to kowtow. She kowtowed until she bled, "I'm begging you, please don't throw my son away. I'm begging you, I can be your slave. I'm begging you..."

"Fat chance. Don't think that I don't know that you want to steal our family's property from our son using this baby." Her stepmother then kicked her away.

Yao Qingqing became unconscious.

When she woke up, she was still lying down on her bed. The sun was shining and she didn't know how long she was out cold for. She was parched and she ached all over but she didn't even have the strength to get up.

Her stepfather was under the control of her stepmother, so Yao Qingqing didn't get any food or water.

She didn't complain and she just laid there. She wanted to die along with her child.

Maybe their neighbors heard the crying of a baby, so they questioned Yao Qingqing's stepparents. Her stepmother told them that Yao Qingqing acted immodestly in school and got impregnated, but the baby died shortly after birth.

The villagers only found out what actually happened after Yao Qingqing's little brother accidentally exposed to them that her stepparents threw the baby into the well. But the villagers didn't pity Yao Qingqing because they all thought that she was the one acting immodestly.

Yao Qingqing then had a fever. Her fever lasted the entire day and she went unconscious.

Coincidentally, some government officials carried out an inspection on Yao Qingqing's family, because they heard that the family had adopted a child. They wanted to be seen as contributing to society, so they expressed their solicitude towards the family. It didn't matter to them whether they offered any financial help or not because their appearance was already enough.

The stepparents had to send Yao Qingqing to the hospital.

They couldn't let the government officials find out that they were abusing Yao Qingqing.

Yao Qingqing's life was saved just like that.

Yao Qingqing's bloodshot eyes opened widely and the veins spread across her eyes just like a spiderweb. She said, "I didn't dare to tell anyone this because I'm scared, I'm scared that they will judge me, I'm scared, I'm scared..."

She curled up in fear as if she was reliving the traumatic experience, "I'm even more scared that you'll find out about this, because I'm scared that you'll be disgusted by me. I'm scared that you'll look down on me, that you'll detest me. I'm so scared. I'm so very scared."

After which, she casted her gaze at Lin Xinyan and said, "Yinning fancies you so I'm jealous, envious and abhorred...Haha, I deliberately, deliberately, sent my son to you...Haha"

Lin Xinyan's hands clenched tightly because Yao Qingqing's words were like a wrecking ball that smashed into her heart.

She shuddered.

Zong Jinghao held her tightly clenched fists.

Yao Qingqing casted her gaze back on Bai Yinning and said, "I hate her. She has so much already but she still wants to mess with you. I envy her because you fancy her. I'm jealous of her because she can raise her kids so well, and her life is so great."

Bai Yinning looked at her and was speechless.

Emotions boiled within him, and it made him feel uneasy. A person's experiences really can change them.

She used to be a naive and innocent kid but now she has been through so much suffering.

"I thought I would be free when I grew up and left my family behind. I could begin again and start a new life, but I was still living in hell. They hovered around me like demons and they threatened me for money...I acted behind your back because I'm scared that you would know about his existence. If you find out about him you will know about my past, and I don't want anyone, especially you, to discover the truth."

Yao Qingqing raised her bound hands as she wanted to touch Bai Yinning, but she didn't dare to, because she wasn't worthy of him.

In her eyes, Bai Yinning was the best person in the world, and no one deserved him.

She stared at Bai Yinning for a very long time and said, "I wanted to forget about it but I couldn't. I can hear my son's cries when I sleep every night. Nightmares plague my dreams, torturing me. I'm tired of it. I felt like dying, and I have actually considered suicide, but I didn't make it because someone rescued me. My fate is so doomed that I can't even die if I wanted to.

Sometimes, I wonder if the reason why my life is so cruel is that I used to be an executioner in my past life. I lost all hope in life and I have been living like an empty shell until I met you. You brought light into my bleak and dark world, and it made me want to work harder. I wanted to try my best to survive because of you. Because you gave me hope in this world.

I was depressed when I saw you lose your temper over a woman for the first time in the clothing store because I liked you. But I know that deep in my heart, I'm not worthy of you. I didn't dare to show it to you, and I didn't dare to let anyone know about it.

I took the chance and closed the clothing store because I didn't want my brother to know about your existence. Ultimately, I was scared that you might find out about my past."

Yao Qingqing smiled subtly and squinted at Bai Yinning. She looked at him carefully because she wanted to remember his appearance. She said, "Please don't blame me. Don't blame me."

Emotions roared in Bai Yinning's heart when he looked at Yao Qingqing. Don't tell me I can't even console her?

What language can comfort a damaged soul?

What words can make up for the pain she suffered?

His voice was low, "I don't blame you. I've always had hope for you."

Yao Qingqing smiled, "Thank you. Thank you for not blaming me."

She thought that if she was to have a next life, she wouldn't want to be reincarnated as a human again.

"Mmm." A low moaning could be heard and blood flowed out of her mouth.

"She wants to kill herself!" Shen Peichuan grabbed her chin to prevent her from biting her tongue.

Her whole mouth was filled with blood.

“Gao Yuan!” Bai Yinning shouted, “Send her to the hospital immediately.”

Gao Yuan ran and carried her out of the factory.

A few drops of blood were splattered on the ground.

Bai Yinning called Gao Yuan and said, “No matter how much money it takes, make sure she’s saved.”

Bai Yinning hung up after Gao Yuan replied in agreement.

His thoughts still lingered on Yao Qingqing’s final expression of despair and her forced smile.

How hopeless can a person get to want to kill themselves by biting their tongue?

He unwittingly clutched his armrest as he trembled.

Lin Xinyan stood up from the chair and approached Bai Yinning, “You can go to the hospital too.”

Bai Yinning looked up at her and said, “Thank you. I apologize on her behalf.”

Lin Xinyan shook her head, “I’m leaving anyway. I don’t want to press the issue any further.”

She couldn’t hold Yao Qingqing responsible for her actions, because no one would ever want to be like Yao Qingqing. Yao Qingqing’s experiences really did affect her personality and mental health severely.

Everyone is kind in their nature.

She was corrupted by this cruel world.

Lin Xinyan patted Bai Yinning’s shoulder to console him.

Bai Yinning wanted to shake her hand, but he put his hand down immediately after he raised it. He then said, “I won’t be sending you off.”

He needed to go to the hospital.

But Lin Xinyan said there was no need for him to anyway.

His driver pushed Bai Yinning away and left, while Lin Xinyan turned around. Zong Jinghao was suddenly behind her and she almost bumped into him. She frowned, “Why are you so quiet when you walk?”

“It’s not that I’m quiet, it’s that you didn’t hear me because you were zoning out,” Zong Jinghao caressed her forehead, “You didn’t cause her misfortune.”

Lin Xinyan lowered her head. She knew that, but she just felt bad for Yao Qingqing anyway.

She felt bothered by it.

Shen Peichuan coughed and said, "Um, I'll go to the car."

He then left immediately after. It was obvious that he was third-wheeling them.

"Let's go," Zong Jinghao held Lin Xinyan as he rubbed her arms. He wasn't actually an evil person but he felt that a lot of unfortunate incidents happen all around the world every single moment, and he didn't have the power to change that. He felt that all he could do was protect the people he cared about.

He was clearheaded about everything except for matters related to Lin Xinyan.

Lin Xinyan was silent during the ride back. She kept looking outside of the window and it was obvious that Yao Qingqing's story had shaken her up a fair bit. An unfortunate childhood can really ruin someone's entire life.

When they got back, she locked herself in her room.

Zong Jinghao wanted to accompany her but she said she wanted some time alone.

So Zong Jinghao had no choice but to get out of the room.

"Mom, what happened?" Lin Ruixi asked Lin Xinyan. Once they reached their house, her brother and her were hugged by Lin Xinyan, and they didn't even have their dinner yet. They remained silent as they sat in front of the window.

Lin Xinyan looked down at her daughter and kissed her forehead, "I'm fine. I just wanted to hug you."

Lin Xinyan didn't know what she was thinking as well. She was suddenly afraid that her children would be kidnapped away by some criminals.

The news always reported that healthy children would all be mutilated in some way after they get kidnapped, and they would be put on the streets to beg for money. When Lin Xinyan heard about news of that nature, her heart would ache a lot.

Besides that, Yao Qingqing's story had made her a little paranoid, so she was scared that her children might get hurt. That was why she hugged them; because she wanted to stay close by their sides.

This incident had come to a close and Zong Jinghao decided to rest here for one last night because he would have to return to B City tomorrow.

After dinner, he arranged his departure tomorrow and gave Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan clear instructions. When he returned to his room, he saw that Lin Xinyan was still hugging



her two children. When he left her, she was hugging the children, and when he came back, she was still sitting there, and her position didn't even change.

He approached Lin Xinyan and took the children out from her arms, saying, "Let's go and play."

Lin Xichen was quite annoyed that Lin Xinyan hugged them for so long, so he held his sister's hands and said, "Let's play with Uncle Su and Uncle Shen."

"Don't go running about," Lin Xinyan reminded them because she was worried. She was about to follow them out before Zong Jinghao stopped her.

"What are you doing?" Lin Xinyan looked up at him.

He frowned, "What happened to you?"

"I'm fine." She didn't feel that anything was wrong with her.

Zong Jinghao laughed once, and his laughter was cold and mocking.

Lin Xinyan was stunned, "What do you mean?"

Zong Jinghao knew what she was worrying about. She looks tough on the outside but she's actually quite fragile on the inside.

He caressed her cheeks and said, "You're not alone."

From now on, I'll protect you and the children. You're not alone, so you don't have to be scared anymore. No one will judge you anymore too. You now have a husband, a family and two children.

Lin Xinyan looked at him for a very long time.

Zong Jinghao took her into his arms as he caressed her back.

The next day, they set off to B City after they had their breakfast.

The weather was cold and the wind was howling. An elderly woman blocked the hotel entrance as they stepped out.

## **Chapter 260**

The old lady was wearing a fur coat and her silver hair was neatly tied to the back of her head. She was holding onto a bag and her tired expression indicated that she had just arrived here.

Su Zhan's expression changed drastically. He looked at Zong Jinghao. Did he tell my whereabouts to my grandmother because I cracked a joke last time?

Zong Jinghao ignored him. He wasn't the kind to snitch on other people.

"Don't look at him. I was the one who told your grandmother," Shen Peichuan was astonished when he saw the old lady too. A few days ago, the old lady had called him to cry and whine, and Shen Peichuan had no choice but to tell her the address here. He never would've thought that the old lady would actually come here.

"You..." Su Zhan was seething. How could you tell my grandmother my whereabouts?

Once his grandmother latched onto him, he would lose all his freedom.

"What do you mean 'you'?" The old lady pinched and twisted Su Zhan's ears, "Little brat, you think I'm very gullible because I'm old right? You said that you are gonna get married at the end of the year, so I want to see how your girlfriend looks like!"

Lin Xinyan was dumbfounded when she watched this scene unfold.

Zong Jinghao explained the situation to her. He whispered in her ear, "This is Su Zhan's grandmother. His parents passed away when he was young, so she was the one who raised him."

Lin Xinyan finally understood.

No wonder Su Zhan's expression changed entirely when he saw the old lady.

It's my first time seeing Su Zhan being so afraid of someone.

"Ahhh, Grandma, Grandma, I am wrong, I am wrong. Please don't embarrass me in front of so many people, okay? You're even pinching my ear; it's so embarrassing!" Su Zhan apologized and begged for mercy.

The old lady looked around and saw Qin Ya. She then continued to look around until her gaze finally rested on Lin Xinyan, before she perused Lin Xinyan carefully. She smiled and said, "And you are..."

"My sister-in-law," Su Zhan answered before Lin Xinyan could because he didn't want his grandmother to have the wrong idea of things.

But I never heard about anyone getting married. The old lady observed Lin Xinyan again and she realized that Lin Xinyan was standing very close to Zong Jinghao. She kind of understood what was going on, but she wasn't entirely sure. I know Zong Jinghao and Shen Peichuan are Su Zhan's good friends, but I never heard that one of them got married.

"Why didn't you invite me to your wedding if you got married?"

But there wasn't a lavish ceremony for Zong Jinghao and Lin Xinyan's marriage. They only had their marriage certificates, and Guan Jing was the one who brought Lin Xinyan to get her marriage certificate.

The only people who knew that Zong Jinghao got married were the few people who were close to him.

The old lady's question stumped Zong Jinghao.

If he knew that something like this was going to happen, he definitely would've organized a luxurious wedding ceremony to announce to everyone that he was marrying Lin Xinyan.

"We didn't organize a wedding ceremony, so..." Lin Xinyan helped Zong Jinghao out.

"Oh, I see..." The old lady then only realized that there were two children standing by her side. The two children were wearing down jackets because of the cold. Lin Ruixi wore a light green jacket with a fur collar along with a short black skirt. She wore short boots and her hair was tied back in a ponytail to reveal her wide forehead. She had big and sparkly eyes and her lips were rosy pink. She pouted slightly when she talked and she looked absolutely adorable.

"Grandma," Lin Ruixi was very polite and she greeted the old lady at once.

The old lady placed her hands on her chest and thought that the child was so adorable and pretty.

"Hi..."

Su Zhan interrupted his grandmother before she could finish her response, "Eh, you can't call her 'Grandma'."

Su Zhan squatted in front of Lin Ruixi and explained to her, "Ruixi, she's your uncle's grandmother, and your uncle is of the same generation as your father, right?"

Lin Ruixi completely didn't understand what Su Zhan was trying to say.

She blinked. Uncle Su called her 'Grandma', so I should call her that too right?

"Ruixi," Shen Peichuan interrupted, "Don't call Su Zhan 'Uncle' anymore. You should call him 'Brother' so it's less confusing."

"Shen Peichuan!" Su Zhan exploded in rage. If it wasn't for him who told my grandmother the address, would I have been caught?

He still had the audacity to ask Ruixi to call me 'Brother'?

Doesn't that mean I'm of the younger generation now?

“Why are you shouting? You’ll scare the children!” The old lady pinched Su Zhan’s ears again and tugged him to one side, “Don’t bully Peichuan.”

“Eh, eh, I’m your grandson here. Who are you siding now?” Su Zhan was hurt.

“Peichuan wouldn’t lie to me- unlike you. If you don’t get married by the end of this year, I’ll break both of your legs. Look, look...”

The old lady pinched Su Zhan’s ears and made him look at the two children, “They are so cute, tsk...”

The old lady exclaimed in joy when she saw Lin Xichen. This boy is quite handsome and he looks quite a bit like Zong Jinghao. The outline of his face makes it seem like he’s casted from the same mold as Zong Jinghao.

She didn’t need an introduction to know that the two children were definitely Zong Jinghao’s children.

Su Zhan exclaimed in admiration as well. Who can be as lucky as Zong Jinghao? He had twins out of nowhere. And besides that, it was one boy and one girl. The two children even inherited their parents’ good qualities. The boy is smart and the girl is adorable. Zong Jinghao has all the luck in the world. Isn’t it infuriating?

“Don’t even think about it. Even if I was to get married, I wouldn’t be able to have twins.”

The old lady gaped in surprised. Twins?

She observed Lin Ruixi carefully and then moved her gaze to Lin Xichen. They looked quite alike, but Lin Xichen was slightly taller. She thought that the two children were from two separate pregnancies, so she was astonished when she found out that they were twins. The old lady was even more expectant of Su Zhan now, and she said, “Look at them, look at them. They must’ve done a lot of good deeds in their past life to be able to have such an adorable pair of twins out of nowhere.”

Su Zhan wanted to slap himself. His grandmother had been pressuring him because he wasn’t married, and she would definitely step up her game now that she knew that Zong Jinghao had a pair of twins. She must’ve been very envious of Zong Jinghao.

Su Zhan was in a very tough spot.

“Jinghao, can we go back one day later?” Even though Su Zhan wasn’t pleased with his grandmother’s pestering, she was still his closest family member. He wanted his grandmother to take a rest after her long journey since she was of old age now.

Zong Jinghao was in a good mood and he responded softly in agreement.

Even though he was a prominent presence in the business world, he was still a normal person. And as a father, he would definitely be overjoyed if someone praised his children.

In the end, he needed to thank Lin Xinyan. She was the one who gave him a chance to be a father and have a pair of lovely twins.

He wrapped his arms around Lin Xinyan's waist.

Lin Xinyan glared at him because it was an inappropriate thing to do when so many people were around. She stepped back subtly so that Zong Jinghao's hands couldn't reach her. However, he didn't give up, and as he tried to hold her again, Lin Xinyan squatted down and carried her daughter up. She stepped a few steps aside and smiled, "Su Zhan, go and accompany your grandmother. It's so early in the morning- she probably hasn't eaten yet. There should be breakfast in the restaurant."

"Alright," Su Zhan held his grandmother's arm and said, "Grandma, it's so early, you probably haven't eaten yet right? I'll make you something to eat."

Su Zhan's grandmother smiled at Lin Xinyan. She felt overjoyed when she saw the child in Lin Xinyan's arms even though it wasn't Su Zhan's child.

Between Shen Peichuan, Zong Jinghao and Su Zhan, their ages weren't too different even though Shen Peichuan was the eldest of the bunch. At most, they were only one to two years apart.

Su Zhan's grandmother pointed at Shen Peichuan and then at Su Zhan and said, "You two are not as smart as Jinghao. Look at how pretty Jinghao's wife is and how adorable his two children are, then look at yourselves. What do you have?"

Lin Xinyan was speechless.

She felt quite embarrassed because she received such a direct compliment.

Shen Peichuan scratched his head. What does this have to do with me?

Su Zhan covered his face in embarrassment.

Yes, I'm not as capable as Zong Jinghao, but can you not say it out loud?

It hurts, alright?

Zong Jinghao was the happiest of the bunch. His lips curled upwards and his eyes sparkled. Was there anything that could make him prouder than someone praising his wife and children?

"Grandma, let's go," Su Zhan pulled his grandmother along and said, "If not, the food will run out."

“All you know is food! I’ll skin you alive if you don’t find a wife!” Su Zhan’s grandma threatened.

Su Zhan smiled, “If I get skinned alive who’s gonna take care of you?”

“Do I need you? I can just go to the old folk’s home myself,” Su Zhan’s grandmother wasn’t playing around.

Lin Xinyan smiled. She figured that Su Zhan got his personality from his grandmother.

They are both optimistic and carefree.

This personality is great. Her hair is completely white now, but she looks very energetic. She even looks livelier than a lot of youngsters nowadays.

Carrying her child, Lin Xinyan turned around. As she was about to go upstairs, she realized that Qin Ya, who was standing by her side, didn’t look too pleased.

She passed her daughter to Zong Jinghao and said, “Take care of both of them.”

She wanted to have a word with Qin Ya.

When Zong Jinghao took his daughter from Lin Xinyan, he approached her ears and whispered, “My wife is so capable. She gave me two children at once.”

Lin Xinyan looked up at him. This man...

He recoiled quickly and carried his daughter while holding his son’s hands, announcing, “Let’s go.”

“I’ll follow you,” Shen Peichuan tagged along. They were staying for another day and all their matters had been resolved, so he needed to find a way to while away the time, “The four of us is just enough for one table.”

“One table of what?” Lin Xichen asked.

Shen Peichuan answered, “For playing cards, of course.”

Zong Jinghao gave him a side-eye, “If you want to play, go outside and play.”

Don’t corrupt my daughter.

Shen Peichuan smiled, “I’m just joking.”

“Uncle Shen, let’s play Gunner together,” Lin Xichen let go of Zong Jinghao’s hands and ran towards Shen Peichuan. He discovered a very fun game recently and he wanted someone to play it with him.

Shen Peichuan was quite interested when he heard the name of the game, and he instantly agreed, "Okay!"

Both of them had aligned interests, so they went upstairs first.

Meanwhile downstairs, Lin Xinyan approached Qin Ya and asked, "Let's go outside for a walk?"

Qin Ya nodded.

It was breezy outside so Lin Xinyan zipped up her jacket. They were strolling on the side of the street.

The wind rustled in their ears.

Lin Xinyan didn't initiate the conversation because she didn't know how to. After all, it was Qin Ya's private matters.

After some time, Qin Ya started, "Su Zhan's and my relationship is just pretend."

She confessed, "We drank a little too much and I was embarrassed when you stumbled upon us, so he proposed the idea that we are in a pretend relationship."

Lin Xinyan understood. She felt that something was amiss when Su Zhan didn't introduce Qin Ya to his grandmother.

"What do you think? I think Su Zhan..."

"A pretend relationship is fake. He's not my type," Qin Ya declared her stance clearly.

Lin Xinyan didn't continue her sentence. She sometimes felt that Su Zhan had taken a fancy to Qin Ya, but she needed to respect Qin Ya's decisions.

Only the person wearing the shoes would know if they fit or not.

As a close friend, she could only give a suitable amount of solicitude. She shouldn't interfere in Qin Ya's business.

She respected Qin Ya.

She held Qin Ya's shoulders and said, "I'll support your decision no matter what it is."

Qin Ya smiled. She really liked Lin Xinyan because Lin Xinyan was very considerate.

Buzz-

At that moment, Lin Xinyan's phone buzzed in her pocket. She took it out and the person calling her was...

