

CHAPTER 301.

Eyes narrowed, Su Zhan's voice sounded frosty as he asked, "Sleep with you for one night?" "Who do you take me for? You're not the same Liu Feifei I'd known years ago. Where has your innocence and kindness gone? What has caused you to turn into this crazy woman?"

"I won't betray my wife," he uttered assuredly.

Taken aback by his words, Liu Feifei clenched her fists tightly and muttered, "I'm not asking you to sleep with me. I just want you to stay here to keep me company."

"Even if it may be as such, the answer is still no."

"Are you really that heartless?" The woman burst into maniacal laughter. "Step out of this door and the next time you see me, I'll be a corpse. I assure you that I'll keep my words. You can go ahead and leave if you don't believe me."

With that said, she crawled to her feet and moved to sit on the couch.

"You're forcing me to do this?" Su Zhan's eyes darkened in anger.

At this point, Liu Feifei knew that she would never be able to win him back, especially if she continued to act in such a magnanimous manner. That was why she would now do everything that she could to make him stay the night. If Qin Ya misunderstands and they decide to get a divorce, I'll get my chance to win him back!

Raising her eyes to gaze at him, she hissed, "You're the one who's forcing me to do this. Sure, I was the one who had left you all those years ago. However, I have never betrayed our love. You, on the other hand, have completely dismissed our relationship! How could you be so cruel as to do this to me? Since you refused to even hold a shred of mercy for me, why should I do the same?"

For a while, he stood there unmoving, merely staring at the woman, before he soon asked, "Were you being serious when you'd said that you would leave me alone from now on if I'd agreed to merely stay the night with you?"

She nodded. "Yes. Think of it as officially cutting off our ties. I'll leave you to your own devices after tonight."

Pondering over the idea, Su Zhan finally agreed. After all, the both of them had not actually met face-to-face, back then when she had left. Now, he had married Qin Ya, only for Liu Feifei to tell him the truth about what had happened all those years ago. Since she had not actually betrayed him, he felt obligated to break all the ties between them clearly.

In a way, he had given up on them first. Just keeping her company doesn't seem like such an unreasonable request.

"I'll have to make a phone call." At long last, Su Zhan finally decided to call Qin Ya, to let her know that she need not wait up for him. He would explain everything to her after he had gone back home.

Strangely enough, the call could not connect.

On the other side of things, Su Zhan's assistant was unable to get off of work due to Qin Ya's presence. All the other lawyers had already left the office long ago, and now, only the both of them remained.

"Are you going to keep waiting for Mr. Su?" the assistant asked.

Seeing as Su Zhan and Qin Ya did not conduct a wedding ceremony, here in B City, not a lot of people knew that they were married. He had not found the right time to announce their marriage either.

He had originally planned on finding a day where he could invite his colleagues together for a meal, to introduce her to them. However, it was close to the end of the year now and everybody was incredibly busy with work. Thus, he had been unable to do as he had planned.

Qin Ya dug out her phone to check the time, only to discover that it was already dead.

Lifting her head, she asked the assistant, "What time is it now?"

The man glanced at the time briefly before replying, "It's close to twelve."

Disappointment and loneliness flashed through her eyes. In the end, he'd still broken his promise.

She tried to put on a calm front, despite feeling a sense of pain emanate from her already shattering heart. When she spoke, her voice quivered, "Can you assist me in writing up a divorce agreement?"

As an assistant to a lawyer, such matters were his bread and butter. "Sure. Please wait for a moment."

He thought that she was just someone who had come here to hire Su Zhan for a court case. From the look of things, it was a marriage lawsuit too.

Unable to help himself, he questioned, "May I ask you of the reason for your divorce? Is it because your husband has cheated on you?"

These days, that was the main reason for divorce. Nearly ninety percent of the female clients that they had received were here for a divorce, due to their unfaithful husbands.

A bitter smile tugged upon Qin Ya's lips. "I guess you could say that."

Despite being a man himself, the assistant lamented on her behalf, "It's so hard to find a dependable and good man nowadays." She's young and pretty too! Why would he cheat on her? I guess what they say is true. The grass is always greener on the other side.

In little to no time at all, he finished drafting up the basics of the agreement. His tone turned professional as he inquired, "Do you have children? Or property disputes? What would you like out of this divorce? As your husband is the one cheating, he's in the wrong. Hence, we will strive to secure the best compensation for you."

The bitter feeling in her heart worsened and she shook her head. "We have no kids nor property disputes. We don't even have a marriage certificate. Only our parents were witnesses to our marriage. What should I do if I want to end this?"

The man blinked in surprise at her words. Without an official marriage certificate, she was technically still unmarried, in the eyes of the law.

Many rural areas, such as the countryside villages had such examples. A lot of the villagers got married before they were of age, which meant that they were unable to get their marriage certified. Most of the time, there would only be a wedding ceremony where the two families were witnesses.

"If that's the case, your only option would be a negotiation between both parties. If your husband brings up unreasonable demands, then you're allowed to sue him in court. However, that would not be a simple divorce lawsuit anymore. Instead, it would be considered to be a dispute case. Since you're not married in the eyes of the law, you can't take any legal actions, in that regard." This could only mean that if she wanted to end her relationship with Su Zhan, they would have to enter a negotiation.

"Do you mind waiting a moment? I'll have to ask my boss for his opinion on this matter." The assistant was slightly uncertain on how to handle this sort of issue, so he would need to call Su Zhan for confirmation.

With that said, he dialed Su Zhan's number.

Meanwhile, Su Zhan was sitting on the couch, while Liu Feifei dozed beside him. As she had previously promised, she had not pestered him again, after he had agreed to her proposal.

His phone rang and he hurriedly took hold of it, thinking that it was Qin Ya. When he saw that it was just his assistant, his face fell. Accepting the call, he asked a little coldly, "What is it?"

"There's a client here, who's looking for some legal advice, but I'm not too sure."

"Call Mr. Wang instead. His specialty is marriage lawsuits." Su Zhan was in no mood to deal with such matters right now.

Not waiting for a reply from his assistant, Su Zhan hung up.

The assistant stared at his phone for several seconds, seemingly stunned. Su Zhan had always been very serious when it came to work, so it was odd to see him brushing this matter off in such a manner. What's going on with him?

Qin Ya spoke up, breaking him out of his stupor. "Was that Su Zhan?"

It was only a guess on her part, as she thought that she had heard his familiar voice.

He nodded, mumbling, "Yes, that was Mr. Su. I'm not sure what he's been busy with. He has always been very patient in teaching me, whenever these sorts of issues arise. His response earlier was truly quite unexpected."

She chuckled ruefully. He's meeting up with his old flame now; of course he won't be in the mood to deal with work-related matters! He's probably forgotten all about me waiting for him! What's the point of me staying here any longer?

She stood up, the assistant quickly doing the same as he offered, "Mr. Wang is one of the best lawyers that we have, when it comes to marriage lawsuits. Would you like me to contact him for you?"

"I'll come again if I require your services."

With that said, she spun around and left the firm. For a good long while, she stood by the roadside, lost in her thoughts. It was still the same day, yet her heart was no longer the same, as it had been this morning. Maybe everything was a mistake from the start, and now, it's time to end it all.

At long last, she hailed a taxi to return home.

Grandma Su was not home so the house was quiet. She went to their room and dug out a suitcase, before beginning to pack her things. She did not have many possessions so it was easy to fit everything into one suitcase.

When she was done with that, she sat down upon the edge of the bed while staring down at her feet. This is where he slept on the floor last night.

Abruptly, a bubble of laughter escaped her lips, tinged with audible sorrow.

At first, she had thought that he was merely being considerate of her feelings, which was why he had chosen to sleep on the floor, as he refrained from touching her.

Thinking back on the matter, however, it was most likely because his dearly beloved had returned to his side. So he's not even willing to touch me now? What exactly am I to him? Am I supposed to be a mere outlet for his sexual frustrations?

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Abruptly, Qin Ya heard the door to the house opening. Next, she heard the maid and Grandma Su's voices, as the two entered the house while discussing something. From the joyful tone, she could tell that the old woman was in high spirits.

Since this was a private matter between her and Su Zhan, she did not want to let the older woman know of her problems. With her advanced age, she would probably be unable to accept this.

She was not doing this for Su Zhan, but rather, for the old woman, who had always been very kind to her.

Pulling her room door open, she saw the maid providing Grandma Su some assistance, in removing her jacket.

"Oh, you're home?" The old woman was visibly surprised to see Qin Ya. Soon after, a wide smile crossed her face. "Come, come, take a seat! I have good news!"

Obediently, Qin Ya took a seat on the couch. The old woman immediately clasped her hand in both of hers.

"What has gotten you so happy, Grandma?" The younger woman tried her best, to hide her despondent emotions, not wanting to reveal anything before the elder.

While they had not been around each other for long, the older woman's kindness and friendliness had touched her deeply.

No matter what had happened between her and Su Zhan, she did not wish to hurt the old woman.

"I met this fortuneteller today. He said that my fortune is smiling down upon me and that something very good will happen!" Many old people were deeply superstitious and believed in the art of fortunetelling.

Qin Ya twitched her lips into a small smile and questioned, "You believe him?"

In response, the old woman's eyes widened earnestly. "I didn't even tell him that I had a grandson, yet, he instantly knew just from looking at my face! He told me that I had a grandson who'd recently got married and that I should expect to have a great-grandchild next year! How could I not believe him?"

Beside them, the maid added, "Old Madam Su was so ecstatic she immediately gave him a huge red packet!"

The smile on Qin Ya's face faltered.

The old woman tightened her hold on Qin Ya's hand and leaned over. "Ya, whether I get a great-grandchild is up to you now."

Her gaze slowly drifted to Qin Ya's abdomen. "Who knows? Maybe it's already living inside there."

Qin Ya could not find it in herself to laugh, or say anything, that would make the old woman happy. Once Su Zhan returned home, they would part their ways amicably. What Grandma Su hoped would happen would never become a reality.

To repay the old woman for her kindness, Qin Ya got up and suggested, "Let me make some dinner for you."

This would be the first and last time that I'll personally cook for her.

"No, no! You don't have to do this. You should rest." The elderly woman tugged on her hand, insisting that she need not do such a thing. "Where's Su Zhan? Is he still busy with work? New Year is coming so he should be spending more time with you!"

"I think that he's still busy," Qin Ya managed to reply indifferently.

"That little brat must be itching for a good spanking! How could he place work before spending time with his family? Just you wait; I'll give him a beating when he comes back!" If he doesn't come home, how am I supposed to have a great-grandchild? It takes two to create a child, after all.

The skies slowly darkened, as the night approached. Still, there was no sign of Su Zhan.

Qin Ya ignored Grandma Su's protests, as she was intent on personally cooking for her.

She might not have possessed amazing cooking skills, but it was the thought that mattered.

Under the guidance of the maid, she was able to whip up several meals, of the old woman's favorite dishes.

In the end, she made radish stew with pork ribs, crispy-skinned tofu, garlic stir-fried shrimps and boiled yam.

After setting the table, she washed her hands and called Grandma Su for dinner.

Understandably, the old woman was still delighted, over what she had heard earlier.

Hence, she did not sense anything strange with Qin Ya at all. Instead, she was soon distracted by the fact that this was the first time the younger woman had cooked for her.

Inwardly, she was praising her grandson's choice for a spouse.

Since Su Zhan was not home yet and the maid did not eat with them, that only left Qin Ya and Grandma Su at the table. Despite her lack of appetite, Qin Ya forced herself to eat. She

did not want the other woman to realize that something was amiss. "I had heard that these were your favorites. I'm sorry if it's not as good as what you're used to..."

"No, no! They're all very delicious!" The old woman happily took a piece of crispy-skinned tofu. She may have been old, but her teeth were still working just fine. As long as the food was not too hard, she could still eat properly.

"Here, you should have some too!" The elderly woman ladled a bowl of stew for Qin Ya, stating, "White radishes in winter and ginger in summer. There's a reason people say that you know."

Smiling, Qin Ya nodded in appreciation as she finished the bowl of stew.

When they were done, she helped the maid clean up the kitchen before heading to the living room to watch television with Grandma Su.

By ten o'clock, the older woman was already growing tired and sleepy.

Qin Ya guided her back to her room. "Why don't you have a seat while I get you a basin of hot water? You'll sleep better if you soak your feet for a bit before you sleep.

There was a high probability that she would be leaving this house after today, so this was the last act of filial piety she would do for the woman whom she had used to call 'Grandma'.

In the bathroom, she tested the water temperature with her hand. Only after she was satisfied that it was not too hot did she emerge with a small towel. Setting the basin down, she carefully moved the elder's feet into the water, querying, "Is it too hot?"

"No, it's just right. It would be uncomfortable if it were too cold anyway." Grandma Su looked down at Qin Ya, reaching out a hand to stroke her head. "You're really a sweet child. Su Zhan is lucky to have you as his wife."

Qin Ya ducked her head to hide the tears that were spilling down her face, the salty liquid dripping into the basin with soft plops.

"I was fortunate to have met you, Grandma. No matter what happens in the future, you'll always be Grandma to me."

A little deaf with old age, the old woman misheard her words. Chuckling, she replied, "What nonsense are you speaking of? You've married Su Zhan, so of course, I'm your Grandma!"

Once the water became cool, Qin Ya gently removed the elder's feet and dried them. Then, she helped the other woman lay down, murmuring, "It's getting late so you should rest now."

Drowsy and relaxed from her soak, the old woman hummed. "You should have an early night as well. Call Su Zhan and tell him to come back soon."

The hands that had previously been moving to cover the elderly woman with the blankets froze. A beat later, Qin Ya nodded. "I will. You don't have to worry about anything. Just sleep."

Satisfied, the old woman soon shut her eyes. Qin Ya brought the basin into the bathroom and poured away the water. Wringing the cloth, she hung it up to dry before exiting the bathroom. By then, Grandma Su was already asleep so she tiptoed out of the room, shutting it behind her gently.

As the maid had already gone off to rest, the living room was empty and silent.

Qin Ya could practically hear her own breathing.

Returning to their room, she did not take a shower or sleep. Instead, she walked towards the window and drew the curtains open. Despite the late hour, she was not the slightest bit sleepy at all.

She gazed out of the window at the dark skies. Much like how she was currently feeling, it was bleak and desolate, with not a single star to illuminate the darkness.

She was finally paying the price for her foolishness.

She had thought that both she and Su Zhan could make things work.

She had thought that he would possibly fall in love with her.

She had thought that she had loved him.

As it turned out, she had only been right for her very last assumption.

She gave her heart out to him, only for him to deal her such a harsh blow in return.

Now, she was utterly defeated. All she could do was hide here alone in the dark, nursing her sadness and grief.

Yet, he was somewhere out there with the whom woman he loved, chatting long into the night. Even worse, he might be trying to rekindle their relationship, as they poured their hearts out to each other.

For the rest of the night, she stood by the window like a sentry. It was not till the faint light of dawn that Su Zhan had returned back home.

He pushed open the door to their room, revealing his haggard face. He had not slept a wink at all, last night. Spotting the figure of Qin Ya by the window, he was just about to ask her why she was up so early when he bumped into the suitcase that she left, by the bed. His heart skipped a beat in his chest.

"Qin Ya." His voice was low with a slight hint of fear. "Why did you bring out your suitcase?"

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Qin Ya slowly turned around, realizing that her legs were terribly stiff, from her hours of standing vigil. She leaned down to rub her aching kneecaps. Noting the action, Su Zhan hurried over to her side and glanced at her legs. "Are your legs bothering you?"

She ignored him.

He reached out to help her rub her legs, only for her to swat his hand away.

"I don't need your help."

Straightening up, he tried to explain himself, "I have to talk to you. Last night, I—"

"Was with Liu Feifei." She had uttered it as though it had been statement, rather than a question.

The man's eyes widened as he gasped out, "How did you know?"

She smiled grimly. "How did your reunion with your old lover go? Must have been intense, right?"

Unease welled in Su Zhan and he hastened to clarify, "Don't misunderstand. Nothing went on between us. She had only wanted me to keep her company for the night..."

"I know." She pointed at the lipstick mark on his neck. She's merely your ex-girlfriend, isn't she? It's just one night, right? I don't care about that, was what she had wanted to say proudly.

However, she was not as magnanimous as she had thought. She absolutely could not accept him cheating on her like this!

"I can clearly see the evidence of what you have done. Did you ever think of my feelings at all? Are you deliberately doing this to spite me?"

Confused, Su Zhan raised a hand to his neck and felt his fingers touch something sticky. Now that he had thought back on it, Liu Feifei had clung to him before he left, refusing to let him go. I thought I felt her brush her lips against my neck. She must have left her mark then!

"Please listen to me; I can explain myself. There's nothing between me and her anymore. She just kept pestering me! I've already made things clear with her..."

"Su Zhan!" Qin Ya cut off his rambling. She bowed her head, unwilling to let the tears gathering in her eyes fall down. "Let's just part ways peacefully. Thankfully, we did not actually get a marriage certificate yet. Let's just forget about that farce in Baicheng, okay? I've already packed up all of my things."

She took out the card that Grandma Su had given her a while back, and set it down on the bed, admitting, "I shouldn't have even accepted this back then. Now that I'm leaving, it

doesn't make sense for me to bring it with me. You can keep it or give it back to Grandma. It's all up to you. I don't want to kick up a huge fuss about our breakup."

Turning to stare at Su Zhan, it took all of her courage to squeeze a smile on her lips. It probably ended up looking more like a grimace. "I've said all that I'd wanted to. Finally, I would like to wish you a happy and blissful life with her."

With that, she grabbed her suitcase and headed for the room door. Su Zhan was quick to snatch the suitcase from her hands.

"I'm not letting you go! Who gave you the right to end this just like that? Who gave you the right to say that this is all a farce? You put on a wedding dress and we got married right before my closest relatives and friends! Now you're going to leave just because...? Let me tell you this, Qin Ya. That will never happen!"

Qin Ya wiped away the tears sparkling at the corners of her eyes. "Su Zhan, you're a grown man now. Stop being so childish!"

"In what way am I being childish?" he retorted, while he drew closer to her.

She instinctively took a step back. While she could admit that she still liked him, she simply could not accept his disloyalty. Instead of enduring this silently, she would rather give up on him.

In a firm tone, she stated, "What you're doing now is very immature. If you won't talk about this like an adult, we can settle this matter in court."

Su Zhan's Adam's apple bobbed as he gulped. W-what did she just say? She wants to settle this in court?

"What do you mean by that?"

Clenching her fists, she struggled to maintain her resolve. "We don't have a marriage certificate, which means that we're not actually married in the eyes of the law. You've cheated on me so I have the right to cut all ties with you. In other words, you're not allowed to bother me in the future."

"I didn't cheat on you!" he emphasized. "I've already told you this. Nothing has happened between us!"

"You didn't come back for an entire night and there's a lipstick stain on your neck. Tell me, does that seem like nothing has happened? Do you seriously think that I'm a three-year-old kid?"

"Why won't you believe me? She had wanted me to keep her company for the night and she'd promised me not to bother us after that!"

Qin Ya burst into laughter at his words, while her tears finally spilled over. Her hand darted up to swipe the salty liquid away furiously. "Su Zhan, do you actually care for me?"

"Of course."

"Do you think of me as family?"

"Of course! We share the same bed, don't we? Of course you're my closest kin."

"Then are you hiding anything from me?"

At this, he fell silent.

Yes, I am. But it has nothing to do with Liu Feifei! It's about my parents. That's not really a big deal, is it?

"Doesn't everybody have secrets that they wouldn't want to tell anyone?"

"You told your ex-girlfriend but not me. Yet, you say that I'm your closest kin? Why does it appear that you're closer to her than you are to me? You share your secrets with her but I don't even get to know a single thing!"

Fed up with this argument, she decided that it was a waste of her time and energy to continue like such. Sucking in a deep breath, she tried to calm herself. "Give me back my suitcase."

Now was not the time to place the blame on him.

Since she had decided to leave him, there was no point in fighting over who was in the right anymore.

Dragging this on would only serve to bring her more heartache. It was better to make this a quick, clean cut.

"No," Su Zhan refused.

"Fine. It's not like there's anything important in there." Giving up on her suitcase was not a hard decision to make.

She opened the room door, intent on leaving.

"I don't agree to this divorce!" He wrapped his arms around her from behind, in hopes of stopping her.

"I've already said that our marriage is invalid so technically, I'm not divorcing you. Can't you just leave me with one last good impression before I leave?"

“No!” Su Zhan was growing desperate at how serious she had seemed. Her words and actions... She’s really set on leaving me!

“I swear that nothing has happened between me and her! She was drunk and she’d tricked me into going over-”

“What are you two doing?” Grandma Su had heard a commotion going on outside her room. Upon listening closely, it sounded like Su Zhan and Qin Ya were arguing. In her hurry to see what was going on, she had only put on a robe before exiting her room.

Oh no, they’re really having a spat!

Noticing the suitcase behind Su Zhan, the old woman was dumbfounded. “W-what... What’s going on here?”

Her growing panic had her pointing an accusing finger at her grandson. “You did something that made Ya angry, didn’t you?”

Su Zhan released Qin Ya and moved over to reassure the old woman, “It’s nothing. You should go back and rest some more.”

“How am I supposed to rest when you two are acting like this?” the elderly woman berated loudly before giving his back a hard smack. Then, feeling guilty for hitting her beloved grandson, she added, “You’re already a grown man, yet why do you still make me worry so much?”

“I was wrong,” he immediately admitted, not wanting her to get angrier.

“Tell that to Ya, not me.” She shoved him aside and walked over to grab Qin Ya’s hand. “Ya, if he makes a mistake, just hit him. Why are you leaving when you’ve just gotten married? Can you forgive him this once? For me?”

While Qin Ya did not want to hurt the old woman, she was even more reluctant to continue fighting with Su Zhan. “Grandma, this is not a matter of either of us being wrong or right. Our personalities are just too different. That’s why I thought that us breaking up would be the best option for both of us. I’m sure that he’ll find a candidate that’s even more suitable-”

“What’s this nonsense about ‘an even more suitable candidate!’” the older woman interrupted. “Last night, you’d made dinner for me and had washed my feet before I slept. You were already planning to leave then, weren’t you?”

Her eyes were red-rimmed as she tightened her hold on Qin Ya’s hand. “If there’s anything about him that you’re unhappy about, you can tell me. I’ll help you to teach him a lesson! Promise me that you won’t leave, please?”

Qin Ya lowered her head, the tears trailing down her cheeks like beads on a string. “I’m so sorry, Grandma.”

In response, the older woman's body swayed slightly. Her voice came out faint, "You're still insisting on leaving?"

Right then, the doorbell rang.

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At this point, the maid was also up and about. She had seen the argument going on but had not spoken up, as it was not her place to say anything.

Upon hearing the doorbell, she hurried to answer the door while muttering to herself, "Who can it be, this early in the morning?"

Opening the door, she saw a woman standing there. Not knowing who she was, she asked, "Who are you looking for?"

The woman- Liu Feifei- smiled and answered, "I'm looking for Su Zhan."

Turning, the maid informed Su Zhan of her arrival. "There's a woman here for you."

Grandma Su reacted faster than anyone else. Releasing Qin Ya's hand, she came over to see who it was. Upon realizing that it was Liu Feifei, her expression darkened and she snapped, "What are you doing here?"

Just then, Liu Feifei spotted Su Zhan and Qin Ya standing near the door. Behind the man was a suitcase. Is Qin Ya leaving?

Smiling, she acted like she did not notice the frown on the old woman's face. "Grandma, I'm here to see Su Zhan."

"I'm not your Grandma!" the elderly woman growled.

Years ago, when Su Zhan was still rather poor and dating Liu Feifei, he had brought her back home. He had not lived in such a nice house back then and she had been rather scornful of his living conditions. After that, she had even abandoned him and broke his heart.

Needless to say, Grandma Su did not like her at all. She thought that the younger woman was a woman who only cared for riches and she assumed that it had been the reason for her sudden departure years ago.

Since Liu Feifei would only get a chance with Su Zhan if Qin Ya left, she purposely raised her voice to add oil to the fire, "I'm here to return something of Su Zhan's. He left his watch at my place last night."

She took out the aforementioned watch from her bag, showing it to the older woman.

Upon closer inspection, the elderly woman realized that it was indeed Su Zhan's.

"W-what did you say? Su Zhan left it at your place?" She was utterly dumbfounded. "He was with you last night?"

"Yes..." Liu Feifei glanced at Qin Ya, stating, "Please don't misunderstand. He was with me but nothing happened between us."

Not wanting to look at the other woman, Qin Ya faced away from her. Her voice came out indifferent as she commented, "I didn't misunderstand anything. You don't have to explain at all, Ms. Liu."

Su Zhan strode closer to Liu Feifei, hissing, "Who said that you could come here? I thought that we'd agreed that you would never bother me--"

"I came to give you back your watch," she cut him off.

She had deliberately taken it off his wrist last night, when they were arguing. Lost in his anger, he had not noticed her actions.

Snatching it over, he dismissed, "Now leave!"

"Are you sure that you don't need me to explain it to her?"

"No," he bit out through clenched teeth. If it weren't for you, Qin Ya would not be leaving me now. You coming over is just making things worse! Your explanation is absolutely unnecessary and will only serve to further her misunderstanding!

Eyeing Qin Ya, Liu Feifei mentally chuckled. Let's see if you'll actually leave this time!

"I'll always be willing to explain if you need me to..."

"Just leave! Don't ever come to our house again!" Fury and loathing towards Liu Feifei roared, through Grandma Su. She's the reason that Ya wants to leave! Wait a minute, Su Zhan was with her last night?

Her heart trembled in her chest. No wonder Ya is so angry at him! I would be too, if this happened to me.

Plucking the watch from Su Zhan's hand, she tossed it out of the house. "Why are you taking back something you've lost!"

Then, she pinned Liu Feifei with her sharp gaze, yelling, "And you! You were the one who had abandoned Su Zhan all those years ago! Why are you suddenly pestering him now? Have you no shame?"

"Grandma, I--"

“Don’t call me that! Leave!” She was shaking, with the force of her anger.

Liu Feifei’s eyes darted to Su Zhan then to Qin Ya. Her lips twitched upwards imperceptibly even as she plastered an upset expression upon her face. “Alright, I’ll go. I wish all of you a happy and healthy life. I hope that you won’t fight amongst yourselves because of me.”

With that, she turned and left.

By then, Qin Ya had managed to take back her suitcase and was currently approaching the door. “Take care, Grandma.”

“Ya!” The old woman tugged on her arm, unsure of what to say to stop the younger woman from leaving. She glared at her grandson, hoping that he would do something.

“Qin Ya, please believe me. Nothing has happened between me and her!”

Su Zhan stepped forward to grab her arm as well. “I’m sorry. This is all my fault for not thinking about your feelings. Please don’t go!”

Twisting her head to look back at him, Qin Ya uttered, “This is not your fault; it’s mine. I shouldn’t have agreed to give you a chance when you’ve already had someone else in your heart in the first place. You should have told me that, not kept it a secret. I was a fool for so easily agreeing to your proposal. I guess that I was destined to suffer this pain and there was no way I could avoid it.”

“Ya...” The elderly woman was getting increasingly anxious. Will she ever come back if she leaves now? I can’t let her step foot out of this house!

Suddenly, her body swayed before her eyes rolled up and she fell unconscious.

“Grandma!” Fortunately, Su Zhan had been nearby and was able to catch her before she had hit the floor.

“What’s happening?” Qin Ya cried out in shock.

The man did not hesitate in pinching her philtrum, hard. The old woman had actually faked herself falling unconscious to hopefully stop Qin Ya from leaving. She had not expected her grandson to use so much force and her brows furrowed at the pain.

Making a show of opening her eyes slowly, she murmured weakly, “Su Zhan... Is it... Is it my time now?”

Immense relief swept through Su Zhan when he saw her awaken. He was practically babbling as he reassured her, “No, no, you’re fine! You’ll live till you’re hundreds of years old!”

“How can I possibly live so long when I’m about to explode in rage for what you have done?”

She gently pulled on Qin Ya's hand, pleading, "Ya, I don't think that I can survive it if you leave..."

"Grandma, don't speak such nonsense..."

Abruptly, the old woman pinched her grandson's thigh. Come on, you fool. Say something!

The words lodged in Su Zhan's throat when he took note of his grandmother's healthy appearance. She did not look like she was ill at all. Could she have been faking it earlier? To keep Qin Ya from leaving?

"Maybe you should take Grandma to the hospital for a checkup. After all, she's already quite old and it's unusual to suddenly faint like that," Qin Ya suggested to him.

"I don't want to be poked and prodded at by the doctors!" the old woman refused. Snatching up one of the younger woman's hands, she continued, "I want you to keep me company."

Pursing her lips, Qin Ya replied, "You can have Su Zhan keep you company."

With that, she pried the old woman's fingers off of her.

"Qin Ya," Su Zhan grabbed her wrist, "Are you really so cruel?"

"I'm merely standing firm in my decision, Su Zhan. I'm not like you, who has a heart that's always flip-flopping around." Tightening her hold on her suitcase, she headed for the door.

Grandma Su punched Su Zhan on the chest, clearly wanting him to stop her.

However, Qin Ya was resolute in her decision to leave. Evidently, words alone would not be enough to persuade her otherwise.

He cradled his grandmother's head, crying out, "Grandma, why did you fall unconscious again? Wake up!"

At first, the old woman was unable to react. It was only after he had bowed his head and gave her a pointed look that she understood what he had wanted. She promptly acted like she had fainted again.

Hearing that the older woman was unconscious again, Qin Ya instantly halted in her tracks. However, the moment she turned around, she realized that something was not quite right. If there was really something wrong with Grandma Su, there was no way that he would still be cradling her like this. He should have been rushing her to the hospital instead.

"Su Zhan, do you think that acting so childishly is going to make a difference?" Her tone was incredibly chilly.

"Grandma is unconscious," came his robotic reply.

Oh no, has she seen through our act?

“If she really is unconscious, shouldn’t you be taking her to the hospital?”

CHAPTER 305.

Su Zhan’s heart skipped a beat. I can’t send Grandma to the hospital; that would reveal that everything was a trick! Especially since Qin Ya is so suspicious already!

Just as he was debating on what to do next, Grandma Su suddenly felt an agonizing pain shoot through her head. Her body began to convulse uncontrollably.

Thinking that she was still pretending, Su Zhan did not worry about her. His mind was preoccupied with thinking about how he could stop Qin Ya from leaving. “So you’ll believe me if I send Grandma to the hospital?”

Qin Ya was absolutely speechless at the man.

The old woman’s convulsions were getting worse, while her breathing grew erratic. One corner of her lips drooped lower than the other side and she was barely able to stutter out, “S-S-Su Zhan...”

Sensing something was truly wrong, Qin Ya urged, “Quick, send Grandma to the hospital. I don’t think that she’s pretending anymore!”

It was only then that Su Zhan detected the tremors running through his grandmother’s body. Tensing, he swiftly gathered her into his arms and strode outside.

“She’s not wearing suitable clothing!” The old woman was only clad in a thin nightgown, an article of clothing that was in no way able to protect her from the cold outside. Dropping her suitcase, Qin Ya ran back into the house to fetch the elder’s mink coat before rushing back to Su Zhan’s side.

He placed his grandmother down in the backseat of the car, whereupon Qin Ya draped the coat on top of her. “Go drive. I’ll look after her.”

Su Zhan stared at her, his emotions coiling inside of him. “Qin Ya, I-”

“Drive!” she snapped. It was obvious that something was severely wrong with the old woman as she was foaming at the mouth.

Panicking at the sight, he slipped into the driver’s seat and sped off towards the direction of the hospital.

In the backseat, Qin Ya was holding Grandma Su in her arms. The elderly woman’s consciousness was fading and she did not react when Qin Ya called out to her.

In his desperation to get to the hospital as swiftly as he could, Su Zhan ran several red lights and came close to having a traffic accident a few times as well.

What should have been a twenty-minute journey took them only ten.

Su Zhan carried the old woman into the hospital and headed straight for the emergency room with Qin Ya hot on his heels.

In no time at all, the old woman was whisked away by the doctors. Su Zhan demanded, "What's wrong with my Grandma?"

Instructing the nurses to wheel Grandma Su into the operating theater, the doctor replied, "Primary diagnosis suggests that she's suffering from a sudden cerebral hemorrhage. Please wait out here." He then shut the doors to the operating theater.

For a long while, Su Zhan was stunned. Cerebral hemorrhage? That's something very serious, isn't it? She could die from that!

He had thought that she was acting at first, which was why he had not thought much of it at the time. Now, he was wondering if his neglect would affect the efficacy of her treatment. Furious at himself, he punched the wall in frustration.

The thud his fist made sent shudders down Qin Ya's spine.

A nurse approached them, asking, "Are any of you her family members?"

Since Su Zhan was lost in his self-blame and worry, Qin Ya neared the nurse and stated, "I am."

The other woman handed her a bill. "Here's the bill. Please pay it downstairs."

Accepting the piece of paper, she answered, "I'll do it right away."

She, too, was worried about delaying Grandma Su's treatment. With the mink coat still in hand, she rushed downstairs to pay the bill.

Once she was at the payment counter on the first floor, she used her own card to pay.

Returning to the operating theater, she saw that Su Zhan was sitting on one of the chairs lining the corridor, with his head buried in his hands. His knuckles were bleeding from his earlier punch.

She went to his side to inspect the wounds better. As she had thought, he had split the skin of his knuckles and it was now bleeding heavily.

“You should get that looked at. Grandma will worry if she comes out and sees that you’re injured.”

At the sound of her voice, Su Zhan lifted his head to stare at her with red-rimmed eyes. “She’s raised me ever since I was young and she’s my only family left in this world. If anything happens to her-”

“Stop that. Nothing will happen to her,” she interrupted in a firm tone.

“Really?”

He was feeling so lost and empty. All he wanted presently was for someone to give him a definite answer.

She assured him, “Really.”

Standing up, he pulled her into a hug. When he spoke, his voice came out hoarse, “Thank you.”

Although she tensed up at the unexpected action, she did not push him away. “There’s no need to thank me. It’s not like we’re strangers. Besides, Grandma has been really good to me too.”

Su Zhan remained silent, merely tightening his hold around her. The only time he felt alive was when he was hugging her like this. Just having her in his arms sent warmth suffusing him.

How long had it been since he had felt like this?

For the life of him, he could not remember. All he knew was that it had been way too long.

He spoke up lowly, “Liu Feifei was my first love. We had met when I was in my second year at university. Right before I graduated, she left me without any warning. Because of that, I was absolutely devastated for a time. Things got so bad that it was only because of Shen Peichuan and Jinghao that I’d managed to survive. I admit that I used to love her a lot. However, she abandoned me for ten years. Whatever feelings that I had for her have long since faded into nothing.”

Qin Ya’s body was stiff, while she listened to his story. By the end, she was almost moved by his words. The feeling did not last long as she swiftly squished it.

She could not lower her limits just because he was honest. The fact of the matter was that he had not returned home for an entire night. The fact that Liu Feifei was his first love was also true.

Everyone was always saying that the first love was the hardest to let go of. After all, there were only so many firsts that one could have. The first kiss, the first touch, all of these were usually offered up to the first love.

All the first times were unforgettable experiences, of that she believed. No matter how much time had passed, those experiences would always leave their mark on a person.

He had told her that Liu Feifei kept pestering him. Why could he not have told her about it then? Why did he have to wait till after the fact before he tried to explain things?

“Su Zhan, you don’t have to tell me all this; I’ve already made up my mind. You can’t give me the stability nor sense of security that I want. We’re not suited for each other at all. It’s not too late to discover that fact now. We’re both still young so there’s still time to find the one who’s more suited for us.”

His eyes widened and he clutched her shoulders desperately. “Are you really so determined to do this? You’re not going to consider what we have at all?”

She laughed hollowly. “And what do we have?”

“What do you mean?” Su Zhan stared at her with surprise.

“How long have we known each other? Two, maybe three months? What feelings could we possibly have for each other in that short amount of time? In fact, what kind of good feelings could possibly come from a one-night stand? If you really insist on talking about feelings, then it should be the ones between you and Ms. Liu. Technically, my leaving would give you the chance to rekindle your relationship. You should be thanking me.”

For several long beats, Su Zhan was unable to find his voice. At last, he managed to croak out, “We may not have known each other for long, but time should not be a measurement for our feelings!”

“Then what should we use?” she retorted.

At that moment, the doors to the operating theater opened, cutting off their bickering. Su Zhan and Qin Ya hastily made their way over to the doctor, who was still dressed in surgical scrubs. Taking off his mask, he reported, “The patient suffered from a sudden cerebral hemorrhage, more commonly known as a stroke. Thankfully, you managed to send her here in time. For now, she’s out of the danger zone. However, she’ll need to remain hospitalized for a while to recover from this.”

“Thank you, Doctor.” What was most important to Su Zhan was that his grandmother was out of danger.

“The nurses will be wheeling her out shortly. Due to her advanced age, I suggest a round-the-clock care for her,” the doctor continued.

“I understand.” Su Zhan was already planning on taking care of her personally.

He was quite wealthy now and he no longer needed to spend so much time and energy on earning a living. His law firm was also coming along nicely. Even if he did not go in for work, it would operate as usual and he would still have income.

Shortly after, the nurses pushed Grandma Su out, on a bed. Although she was no longer in danger of dying, one side of her mouth was still drooping lower than the other.

Su Zhan was well aware of how vain his grandmother was. He was sure that she would be unable to accept her new appearance once she woke up and saw it.

“Doctor, can anything be done for my grandmother’s mouth?”

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“No need to worry too much. It might take some time due to her old age, but she’ll recover eventually. However, I must warn you that it would be impossible for her to fully recover. There will definitely be some lingering side effects,” the doctor answered honestly.

Nodding in understanding, Su Zhan followed, as the nurses wheeled his grandmother to a room.

The doctor checked her over and made sure that the machinery hooked up to her was working fine. After that, he instructed them on what to look out for, before stating, “This is just a temporary room for her. You can choose either a normal room or a VIP room according to your financial situation. Please head to the In-patient Department to settle this matter.”

“I want the VIP room, of course!” Su Zhan did not even need to think about it. He had worked so hard to earn money just so his grandmother could enjoy the rest of her remaining years.

The doctor nodded in reply before leaving with the nurses.

Qin Ya draped Grandma Su’s coat on the back of the chair and offered, “I’ll go handle the hospitalization procedures while you stay here with her.”

Silence met her words.

With how close he is to his grandmother, he probably wants to be left alone right now. Hence, she quietly stepped out of the room and set off for the In-patient Department.

In truth, Su Zhan had heard her but deliberately kept quiet. His mind was in a mess and he thought that they both needed some time to calm down. Only when their minds were clear could they actually talk.

By the time Qin Ya had finished the hospitalization procedures, one hour had passed. The hospital was filled with people and she had wasted a lot of time because she had to wait in line, everywhere she went.

With the help of the hospital staff, Grandma Su was soon brought to a VIP room. Su Zhan had just finished tucking her under the blankets when his phone rang. Fishing it out, he saw that it was Shen Peichuan.

He accepted the call. "Peichuan."

"Are you free tonight? Let's have a meet-up! I've already called Jinghao."

Su Zhan hesitated. With his grandmother in the hospital like this, he could not exactly leave her alone.

Not knowing that Grandma Su was ill and that Su Zhan was on the outs with Qin Ya, Shen Peichuan teased, "What, have you forgotten us buddies, now that you have a pretty wife at home? How could you put a woman before your friends?"

Not waiting for Su Zhan to answer, Shen Peichuan continued in a serious tone, "That matter with He Ruize has been settled. You had wanted to teach him a lesson, right? Now's your chance to do as you please."

"Where?" Su Zhan queried.

"The usual place."

"What time?"

"Seven."

"Got it. I'll be there." With that said, Su Zhan hung up. When he turned back around, he was surprised to see Qin Ya wiping the old woman's face and hands.

His expression tightened. "Qin Ya..."

She did not even lift her head as she replied, "I'm not taking care of her because of you. She has treated me very well so I feel obliged to do the same. That's just how us human beings are."

Pursing his lips, he uttered, "Can I ask you for a favor?"

Afraid that he would bring up their relationship again, she remained silent.

"Shen Peichuan invited me out so I was hoping that you could look after Grandma for me." Worried that she would refuse, he added, "That issue with He Ruize has been settled. He called me and Jinghao over, probably to talk about it."

Mulling over this briefly, Qin Ya agreed, "Sure."

She did not trust anybody else to take care of Grandma Su anyway.

He came closer to her and opened his mouth but then paused. After a while, he shut it with a click and sighed. Turning, he left the room.

The law firm was already closed for the New Year holidays. All across the city, the streets were bustling with people, hurrying to go home while a happy and lively atmosphere enshrouded B City.

Su Zhan spent the rest of his day at the hospital and did not even stop to eat. Despite that, he found that he had no appetite. He was the first to arrive at their usual haunt, so he ordered a bottle of alcohol for himself. Shen Peichuan was next to arrive. Upon noticing that his friend drinking alone, he shut the private room door and teased, "Hey there, Mr. Groom, what's wrong? Why are you drinking all alone?"

He was ignored.

Knowing that Su Zhan would normally not have taken that tease lying down, the smile on Shen Peichuan's face vanished. He took a seat beside the other man. "Why are you drowning your sorrows in a bottle?"

Taking another gulp from the bottle, Su Zhan answered, "Liu Feifei is back."

Shen Peichuan's eyebrow twitched. How did he find out so quickly?

Acting like he had not known that, he asked, "What do you plan on doing then? Qin Ya is a good woman, you know. Don't do anything that might hurt her."

Su Zhan simply looked at him before drinking another mouthful of alcohol. "She's changed."

"Duh. As if you haven't changed? How many years has it been? Look, you've even gotten wrinkles at the corners of your eyes now!" Shen Peichuan reached out to poke at the eye bags beneath the other man's eyes.

It had been more than twenty-four hours since Su Zhan had last slept and he had terrible dark circles underneath his eyes. In fact, his face was rather pale too.

He glared at the other man, growling, "Don't touch me."

Pouring a glass for himself, Shen Peichuan answered flippantly, "You think that I'd want to touch you? You're not some pretty woman."

"Qin Ya wants to divorce me." Su Zhan breathed a long sigh. "My grandmother had a stroke this morning and she is currently in the hospital."

A solemn look crossed Shen Peichuan's face and he asked in concern, "Is your grandmother alright?"

"She's out of danger for now."

"That's good... Qin Ya found out about Liu Feifei?"

"Yeah. There was a misunderstanding, and now, she's determined to leave me." Just thinking about her now had Su Zhan's heart clenching in his chest.

"What are your thoughts?" his friend questioned.

Su Zhan shot him a glance from the corner of his eyes. "What do you mean?"

Is there any hope for this man? Shen Peichuan sighed and clarified, "I mean, do you still love Liu Feifei or do you love Qin Ya now? How could you not understand this? It's not like you're still a young boy. With how things are currently, you have to look deep into your heart. Think about who you actually love now. If the answer is Liu Feifei, then you'd better tell Qin Ya before it's too late and do your best to compensate her. Unfortunately, I don't think that even money would be able to make up for this kind of hurt."

Pouring a full glass for himself, Su Zhan downed it all in one gulp. His brows furrowed. "I don't love Liu Feifei anymore. Those feelings are long gone."

Shen Peichuan perked up in interest. "So that means that you love Qin Ya?"

"But she wants to leave me," Su Zhan moaned in frustration. "I don't know what to do! She doesn't trust me at all!"

"You have to earn it." Shen Peichuan patted his shoulder comfortingly. "The only way to earn her trust is if you're honest with her."

Nobody can help you in this sort of situation. It's all up to you, man.

Creak. The door to the private room was pushed open and the two men's heads whipped around to take a look. Zong Jinghao appeared in the doorway before striding inside.

His gaze calmly swept across the alcohol bottles on the table. Pulling out a chair, he sat down.

Su Zhan and Shen Peichuan instantly kept silent.

"He Ruize is in prison." Since his crimes were not enough to warrant a death sentence, the judge merely added more years to his prior sentence.

Zong Jinghao hummed in acknowledgment, seemingly in a foul mood as well.

After Shen Peichuan had finished speaking, silence descended upon the room. The three men sat there quietly, the atmosphere growing increasingly tense and awkward.

“How about we order something to eat? I haven’t eaten yet. Have either of you eaten?” Shen Peichuan tried once more to break the silence.

Nobody answered him.

Su Zhan filled his glass and downed it, the soft thunk as he slammed the glass down being the only sound in the room.

Shen Peichuan could not help but think, Just what is going on here? Why are they both in such a bad mood?

“Let’s eat! We can chat as we eat, right?” He called a waiter over as he placed his order.

“Jinghao, you’re in a terrible mood too?”

He could understand that Su Zhan was plagued by his relationship problems. However, Zong Jinghao was a married man with a kid to boot. His career was also on the up and up. What did he have to worry about?

No matter how he looked at it, he could not fathom why Zong Jinghao seemed so troubled.

CHAPTER 307.

Shen Peichuan requested for a fresh cup from the waiter and poured a cup of wine for him. “Tell me about it.”

Zong Jinghao gave him a sidelong glance. “Since when were you so nosy?”

Shen Peichuan sighed. “I wanted to invite the two of you for a gathering, to talk about He Ruize, but I didn’t expect to see Su Zhan drinking himself to oblivion here. I figured that he’ll feel better with you around, but it looks like you’re not in a good mood either.”

Zong Jinghao picked up the cup of wine and downed it in one shot before slamming the cup onto the table. As for Lin Xinyan, she had gone to pay a visit to Cheng Yuxiu with her two kids.

He could tell that Lin Xinyan was close to Yuxiu, even though they did not know each other for long.

That alone made him uncomfortable.

Their proximity to one another could only mean one thing; they had been spending time together behind his back.

Lin Xinyan had not spoken a word about her relationship with Yuxiu, and he did not bother to ask her about it.

“How do you think I can impress Qin Ya, Peichuan?” an intoxicated Su Zhan drawled as he slung an arm around Shen Peichuan’s shoulder while swaying on his feet. “She left me before I could even react...”

Shen Peichuan frowned and tried to push him away. “You reek of alcohol! Get away from me!”

However, Su Zhan merely hugged him closer. “I pity you! You’re getting on in your years, and yet, you’re still single...”

Shen Peichuan fell silent.

“I would have left you too if I was Qin Ya!” Shen Peichuan muttered out of spite.

Su Zhan ignored him with a pained expression in his eyes, which was out of character for him.

Shen Peichuan sighed. “Look at how drunk you are! If you want her back, make sure that you’re honest with her! I think that you should clear up the whole Liu Feifei situation with her and give her the security that she wants.”

“Security? What’s that?” Su Zhan slurred, slapping his chest like a gorilla. “I told her everything! I told her that Liu Feifei was my first love, but we’ve since lost interest in each other. She just won’t believe me!”

“Are you sure that she didn’t catch you meeting up with Liu Feifei?” Shen Peichuan asked.

He knew that Qin Ya would not be so decisive if she had no evidence to back it up.

Su Zhan sniffed. “Liu Feifei left me because she didn’t want to burden me with her fertility issues, but she came looking for me the other day and told me to spend a night with her...”

“What?” Shen Peichuan exclaimed, slamming his palm against the table. “Are you crazy, Su Zhan? You’re a married man! Why are you sleeping with your ex-girlfriend?”

“We didn’t do anything...” Su Zhan protested, as his voice grew softer with guilt by the second. “I had merely spent a night at her house since I felt that she didn’t do anything wrong back then.”

He began to regret his actions. “What should I do now?” he asked.

Shen Peichuan shrugged. "I don't know, but if you're sincere enough, I'm sure that she'll..."

Buzz, buzz...

Suddenly, Zong Jinghao's phone began to vibrate in his pocket. He pulled it out to see who the call had been from before accepting the call and pressing his phone against his ear.

"It's me," a low voice rang out.

Zong Jinghao mumbled affirmatively.

"Bring them to me tomorrow."

"Alright," Zong Jinghao agreed.

He put down his phone after the line was cut.

Shen Peichuan glanced at him. "Was that your uncle?"

Zong Jinghao ignored him as his expression turned grim. Shen Peichuan smiled and picked up the bottle of wine to pour some for him. "I know that you're not interested in riding on the Wen family's coattails or taking advantage of their power, but I don't think that there's anything to worry about."

"Lin Xinyan and Yuxiu seem pretty close..." Zong Jinghao announced before he was interrupted by someone coming in.

He pursed his lips and glanced at the visitor before leaning backward and disappearing into the darkness.

The waiters wearing identical outfits stood in a row and took turns placing the dishes in their hands onto the table.

"Please tell us if you need anything else, Sir," one of them announced after that.

Shen Peichuan waved his hand. "Understood. Please leave."

The waiter that spoke bowed and led the group out of the room.

Shen Peichuan lowered his head for a moment before saying, "Your mother's case made your father and the Wens drift apart. Are you worried that the Wens will retaliate if they've discovered Lin Xinyan and Yuxiu's friendship?"

Zong Jinghao took another gulp of alcohol. "I don't like it either."

He had a hunch that Wen Xian had died because of Yuxiu.

Why else would my father marry Yuxiu within a month of Wen Xian's death?

I don't think that Yuxiu would have agreed to it so quickly, even if she did have feelings for him...

He could not let it go, no matter how hard he had tried to.

Shen Peichuan did not enjoy the meal a single bit. The two men beside him seemed to be brooding over the women they cared about, which made him appear as though he was a carefree loner.

After the meal, Shen Peichuan helped to send Su Zhan home, as he was passed out drunk.

Even on the car, Su Zhan continued to toss and turn while muttering something unintelligible. Shen Peichuan tossed a glance at him and sighed. "Why is your alcohol tolerance so low?"

"It hurts..." Su Zhan moaned, ignoring him completely.

"We'll deal with that later," Shen Peichuan affirmed. He had originally planned to send him home, but he realized that it might have been a better idea to send him to the hospital, where his grandmother and Qin Ya were. He had wanted Qin Ya to know that Su Zhan had drunk himself to oblivion because of her.

He made a turn at a junction and headed towards the hospital.

Su Zhan's grandmother had yet to wake up, and Qin Ya had dared not leave her side.

Suddenly, the door to the room opened, and Shen Peichuan entered with Su Zhan slung over one of his shoulders. Qin Ya stood up in shock and asked, "What has happened to him?"

"He's drunk," Shen Peichuan answered as he looked around for a place to set Su Zhan down. The only viable option seemed to be a narrow sofa by the side.

The VIP room that Su Zhan's grandmother had stayed in was fully equipped with every amenity they would ever need, however, it lacked an extra bed for caregivers.

"Oh! The nurse said that we can request for an extra bed. I'll go and tell them now," Qin Ya informed him, knowing how uncomfortable it would be for Su Zhan to stay curled up on the tiny sofa.

She still cares about him! Shen Peichuan thought. "Sure. Thanks a lot."

Qin Ya ran over to the nurse station and made a request for another bed. Her request was answered within minutes, and another bed was set up in their room quickly.

Shen Peichuan heaved Su Zhan's body onto the bed. "He's heavier than he looks..."

Qin Ya handed him a cup of water. "What happened?"

Shen Peichuan took a few gulps of water to calm himself down before answering. "He's in a bad mood," he uttered, looking at her intently. "I think that it's got something to do with you."

Qin Ya spun around and lowered her head.

Shen Peichuan put his hand on her shoulder reassuringly. "He failed to think things through before meeting up with Liu Feifei, and he regrets it. Why don't you give him another chance?"

CHAPTER 308.

Qin Ya lowered her head. "I don't think he knows why I'm mad."

All she ever wanted was for him to tell her the truth, be it about Liu Feifei or his parents.

She valued honesty in a relationship.

He had emphasized how nothing had happened between him and Liu Feifei that night, but she was mad at him for not telling her about the meeting earlier.

He had plenty of opportunities to do so, yet he had neglected to inform her about it.

"I don't feel secure around him. I think that it's time we part ways," she announced.

Shen Peichuan was surprised by her decisiveness.

Looks like Su Zhan has to work hard to win her trust again... You're on your own now, Su Zhan!

"Alright then, I'll leave him with you. I have to go now, but if you're too busy taking care of his grandmother, I'll get someone to help you out," Shen Peichuan urged. His statement might have been a lie, but it was necessary to create some space for the both of them.

"There's no need for that. I'll find a temporary helper if it comes to that," Qin Ya affirmed.

"Alright then. Call me if you need anything," Shen Peichuan reminded her.

Qin Ya nodded in response.

She watched as Shen Peichuan exited the hospital before returning to the room and closing the door behind her.

Su Zhan was sprawled on the bed, still in his coat.

"It hurts...everything hurts..." he muttered in his sleep.

Qin Ya walked over, as she towered above him. "Where does it hurt?"

She could not tell if Su Zhan was actually passed out drunk or if he was just pretending to be unconscious. She watched as he flipped over and continued to moan, "Everything hurts...my heart hurts..."

After a long internal battle, she finally conceded defeat and muttered, "Fine then. I'll take care of you this once since we'd used to be so close."

She bent over to yank his coat off his body, but he refused to cooperate.

She frowned. "Su Zhan..."

"Hmm?"

"You won't be comfortable sleeping in your coat. Let me take it off for you," she offered.

Su Zhan opened his eyes and stared at her face before breaking out into a grin. "Oh, it's Qin Ya..."

Qin Ya stared back in silence.

How much did he even drink?

He grabbed Qin Ya's clothes. "Don't go...I can't live without you..."

Qin Ya pursed her lips together.

"I'll be sad if you'd left... Are you mad at me for drinking so much?" Su Zhan asked, rubbing his face against her clothes. "Qin Ya..."

Qin Ya pushed him away. "You're drunk."

"I'm not!" Su Zhan growled, as though he was troubled about something. "Why can't you just believe me?"

Qin Ya lowered her gaze. "I wanted to, but you never gave me a reason to do so."

Suddenly, Su Zhan flipped over and stared straight into her eyes. His eyes were swollen and his voice was raspy as he asked, "I'll listen to everything that you say from now on. How about that?"

Qin Ya froze. Isn't he drunk?

She stared at him in silence.

“A-Are you drunk?” she asked.

He closed his eyes instead of replying to her question.

“Hey, Su Zhan!” Qin Ya called out, shaking him.

He remained silent, and Qin Ya could hear soft snores coming from his throat after a short while.

Looks like he’s passed out drunk again...

Qin Ya stared at him, exasperated.

She heaved a sigh of relief. It’s fortunate that he’s drunk! I won’t know how to tell him about it if he had been sober.

She proceeded to take his coat off his body, now that he had flipped over like she had wanted him to.

After hanging up his coat, she took off his shoes and placed them on the floor beside the bed before pulling the blanket up over his body.

She made her way to the bathroom to get some warm water to clean his face and hands.

Su Zhan’s grandmother had yet to awaken, but the doctor that came around in the evening assured her that everything was fine. She collapsed onto the sofa after cleaning Su Zhan up.

Qin Ya had not slept a wink the previous night, and she could feel the fatigue settling over her like a mist. However, just before she fell asleep, she heard Su Zhan calling out to her.

“Thirsty...I’m so thirsty...” he muttered. His stomach and throat felt as though they were on fire.

Qin Ya got up immediately to pour him a cup of water.

“Thirsty...” Su Zhan moaned without moving from his bed.

Qin Ya sighed and brought the cup of water to his lips, tilting it just slightly to moisten his lips.

Su Zhan immediately started to gulp down the water, and it cured him of his sore throat immediately.

“Do you want more?” Qin Ya asked.

Su Zhan did not answer. Sighing, Qin Ya put down the cup and pulled his blankets over his body, stealing a glance at his peaceful expression.

Meanwhile, Zong Jinghao returned to the Zong family residence after his drinking session. He was reluctant to meet Yuxiu, but with Lin Xinyan and the two kids staying over, he had to go there nonetheless.

He could hear the laughter in the house from miles away. Pushing the door open, he saw Zong Qifeng watching TV in the living room as Lin Xinyan made dumplings with the kids, who seemed to enjoy it very much.

Mr. Feng walked over and bowed. "Welcome back, Young Master."

Zong Jinghao handed him his coat and walked into the house.

"Daddy!" Lin Ruixi squealed, running over to him with a dumpling that she had been making. "Look, Daddy! I made this! Is it pretty?"

Zong Jinghao bent down and picked her up, smiling in approval.

"Daddy, why don't you join us? Mommy has made veggie dumplings, egg dumplings, beef dumplings... Which one do you like?" Lin Ruixi asked.

Zong Jinghao pinched her tiny nose. "I like the ones you've made!"

"Do you like the ones I've made?" she chirped, handing him the dumpling in her hand.

Zong Jinghao's eyelashes fluttered as he stared at the sad lump of dough in his daughter's hand. I wouldn't have known that it was a dumpling if she hadn't told me...

"Who taught you how to make dumplings?" he asked.

"Mommy did!" the little girl answered proudly.

Zong Jinghao walked over to the table. Sitting on the table were two types of dumplings; one group was made up of beautifully shaped dumplings, while the other group was made up of sad lumps, just like the one in Lin Ruixi's hand. He smirked at the sight of it. "Looks like you haven't gotten the hang of it yet."

His daughter blinked in confusion.

Lin Xinyan looked up into his eyes. "You don't like the ones I've made?"

He shook his head. "They're alright."

They're beautiful...

Lin Xichen handed Zong Jinghao a dumpling that his mother had made. "Mommy made this. How is it?"

It was not a sad lump unlike the others, and it vaguely resembled a dumpling.

Zong Jinghao glanced at his son. "Didn't you make this?"

"Mommy made it," Lin Xichen insisted.

Zong Jinghao looked at Lin Xinyan in a quizzical manner.

"I've...never made dumplings before," she confessed. Cheng Yuxiu had taught her how to make the dumplings just recently.

In fact, the pretty ones on the table were made by Cheng Yuxiu as well.

"Grandma made the pretty ones! Don't you like them?" Lin Xichen asked.

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Zong Jinghao's smile had melted off his face, as it was soon replaced by his usual chilly expression.

Meanwhile, Cheng Yuxiu emerged from the kitchen carrying a plate of cooked dumplings, only to see him glaring at her from the dining room.

She grimaced inwardly and forced a smile onto her face. "The dumplings are ready. Do you want some?"

Zong Jinghao glanced at the dumplings on the plate and noticed that all of them were the beautifully shaped ones, which further annoyed him. He ignored Yuxiu completely and pulled out a chair to sit down with his daughter on his lap.

Cheng Yuxiu stood by awkwardly, unsure of what to do next.

The two kids were so engrossed in making the dumplings and they did not even notice Cheng Yuxiu standing there with the cooked dumplings.

Lin Xinyan was about to sample one when Zong Qifeng walked over and sat down by the head of the table. "Give it to me."

Cheng Yuxiu obeyed him, with her gaze downcast.

"I'll get the vinegar!" Lin Xichen announced, sliding off his seat and rushing into the kitchen. Zong Qifeng watched as he disappeared into the kitchen with a gentle smile on his face. His own son had distanced himself from him and Cheng Yuxiu ever since their marriage, yet his little grandson turned out to be a caring soul.

Lin Xichen grinned upon returning with a bottle of vinegar. "Remember to give me lots of red packet money, Grandpa!"

Usually, Lin Xinyan and Zhuang Zijin would be the ones giving him red packets every Chinese New Year, and he loved the thrill of receiving them.

After all, New Year's was just another occasion for celebration and fun.

Zong Qifeng chuckled. "Sure, boy."

Lin Ruixi began to grow jealous. "I want one too!"

"Of course! I won't forget about you, Ruixi!" Zong Qifeng cooed, stroking her head lovingly. "Come here. Grandpa will feed you some dumplings. Let's see if they're yummy or not!"

Lin Ruixi clambered onto Zong Qifeng's lap immediately at the mention of food. Zong Qifeng picked up a dumpling with his chopsticks and blew on it before setting it onto her plate. "Blow on it first before you eat it, or it's going to burn your throat."

The little girl giggled in his embrace.

Lin Xichen managed to get a small bowl of vinegar and other condiments with the help of the kitchen maids before hurrying back to the dining room.

Zong Jinghao sat alone, completely detached from the happy scene before him.

Feeling left out, he stood up to leave, only for Lin Xinyan to call out to him.

"Can you help me?" she asked, hoping to strengthen their familial bonds.

"I don't know how to," he answered.

"I'll teach you," she offered, smiling.

Zong Jinghao glanced scornfully at the dumplings that she had made. You'll teach me? How?

Sensing his disdain, Lin Xinyan tossed a glance at Cheng Yuxiu and suggested, "Mom's pretty good at this. Why don't you ask her?"

Cheng Yuxiu tensed up, her heart rate speeding up as she waited for a response.

What if he agrees to it?

She looked down in anticipation.

However, he simply looked away and muttered flippantly, "Not interested."

Cheng Yuxiu felt as though her heart had fallen into a bottomless pit. Looks like he's still not ready to accept me into the family...

Zong Qifeng's eyes were on the kids, but his words seemed to be directed at Zong Jinghao. "Do you like Grandma?"

"Of course!" they chirped in unison.

Zong Qifeng stroked Lin Ruixi's head lovingly. "Yeah... You won't even have time to regret it when you lose them."

Ruixi stared at him and blinked in confusion. "A grandpa gave us gifts the last time we came to visit Grandma..."

Zong Jinghao looked up with a start. When was the last time they came?

Huh...looks like they have been doing something behind my back!

Lin Xinyan glanced at her daughter but chose not to say anything. After all, Lin Ruixi was not as mature as her brother, and there was no point trying to explain things to someone as sensitive as Zong Jinghao.

Cheng Yuxiu however, began to panic. She nudged Lin Xinyan and uttered, "Hey, you should take a break. The food will be ready soon."

Lin Xinyan understood what she meant and turned to Zong Jinghao. "Let's finish this."

Cheng Yuxiu sighed. I might have been the one who had ruined the mood here...

Lin Ruixi munched on the dumplings, completely unaware of the tension in the air. "I want the vinegar!"

"You're so greedy!" Zong Qifeng exclaimed, tickling her nose. He picked up a dumpling with his chopsticks and dipped it in the vinegar. "Here, I've done it for you."

Lin Ruixi giggled and took a bite out of the dumpling.

Zong Jinghao exited the dining room and retreated into another room in silence.

Cheng Yuxiu took the plate of dumplings in Lin Xinyan's hand and urged her, "You should go and check on him."

Lin Xinyan pursed her lips together. "He's ill in the mind. He won't recover without the right intervention."

Truthfully, she knew Zong Jinghao pretty well. If she had been Zong Jinghao and if her father had married another woman within a month of her mother's death, she would have rebelled as well.

"I'll go check on him," she announced, tugging the apron off her body and walking upstairs.

Cheng Yuxiu had cleaned out the upstairs room for Lin Xinyan's family to stay in while she and Zong Qifeng stayed downstairs.

When Lin Xinyan entered the room Zong Jinghao was in, she saw him standing by the wide-open window, as the cold wind blew.

She walked over to him and shut the windows. "Aren't you cold?"

"My heart is cold," Zong Jinghao replied without moving an inch. I'm disappointed because my wife isn't on the same page as me!

Lin Xinyan paused for a moment. "You're mad at me?"

"Why would I be mad at you?" he retorted.

"You're mad that I'm close to her, and that I tried to rope you into helping her out?" Lin Xinyan asked without holding back.

Zong Jinghao stared at her in silence. Doesn't she know what's going on between us?

Why is she being so blunt?

Lin Xinyan hugged him and rested her head against his chest. "I know that you have your reservations, but can't we let bygones be bygones?"

Zong Jinghao did not hug her in return. I can't just let it go...

I really can't...

He had been told that Wen Xian had injured her leg while trying to protect him from a car accident. When he was five, he had knocked over a pot of hot soup by accident, and Wen Xian had burnt herself trying to push him away from the spill. The scar that it had left behind had never healed properly.

He could never forget those injuries.

He feared that Wen Xian would come back to haunt him if he made friends with Yuxiu.

"I can't do it," he refused flatly.

Lin Xinyan frowned. "So you're not going to address the problem?"

“So what?”

I won't accept Yuxiu into the family no matter what!

Lin Xinyan opened her mouth to protest but was interrupted by a knock on the door.

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“Young Master, Young Mistress, the dumplings are ready. Ma'am requests for your presence,” Mr. Feng informed them.

Lin Xinyan swallowed her words. “Let's go.”

Zong Jinghao had been drinking on an empty stomach, and the mention of food made his stomach growl.

“Alright,” he hummed in response.

Chinese New Year was months away, but Cheng Yuxiu cooked up a feast anyway, considering the fact that they had four more mouths to feed. She hoped to get on Zong Jinghao's good side as well.

She did not know what Zong Jinghao liked, so she cooked a variety of dishes.

Lin Xinyan caught on immediately and glanced at Zong Jinghao intently.

Zong Jinghao merely evaded her gaze and pulled out a chair to sit down.

Lin Xinyan walked into the kitchen just as the maid turned off the stove. She picked up a ladle and offered, “I'll do it.”

Everyone's dumplings were mixed together in the pot, making the ugly ones look increasingly jarring, next to the pretty ones.

Lin Xinyan scooped the dumplings into one giant bowl, which confused the maid.

“I wouldn't eat that if I were you,” the maid warned her. “I don't think that anyone can finish that!”

Lin Xinyan grinned. “Someone will.”

I'm doing this on purpose!

Didn't you refuse to eat Cheng Yuxiu's dumplings? How about the ones the kids and I had made?

Try eating it all, you picky jerk!

Lin Ruixi was already full, so Lin Xinyan filled three bowls with dumplings- one for herself, one for Lin Xichen, and one for Cheng Yuxiu. She handed the three bowls to the maid to help her set the table.

Lin Xinyan set the giant bowl of misshapen dumplings right before Zong Jinghao. "I'm sure that you won't reject this? I made this for you along with the kids."

Zong Jinghao stared at the giant bowl in shock. This is enough to feed a whole litter of pigs!

"Make sure that you finish it, Daddy!" Lin Xichen reminded him, echoing Lin Xinyan's thoughts. He pulled his sister over and asked, "Look! Daddy's eating your dumplings! Aren't you happy?"

"Yes! Of course!" she chirped. "Do you like my dumplings, Daddy?"

Zong Jinghao fell silent.

How am I going to say no to her?

He picked his spoon up and stirred the suspicious mixture of dough and vegetables that looked nothing like dumplings.

"Why aren't you eating, Daddy?" Lin Ruixi asked curiously. She had looked forward to the moment that her father had tasted the dumplings she made.

Lin Xinyan poured him some vinegar. "It'll taste better with vinegar."

"Yeah, Daddy! It tastes better with vinegar!" Lin Ruixi echoed.

Cheng Yuxiu stood at the side, wringing her hands together anxiously. How is he going to finish that huge bowl of dumplings?

She hesitated for a moment before walking up to him with an empty bowl and saying, "Give me some, I'll help you finish it."

Zong Jinghao ignored her completely and scooped a mouthful of the doughy mixture into his mouth. He figured that he could stomach anything that his wife and kids had made.

To Cheng Yuxiu, however, it was an indication that Zong Jinghao would rather suffer on his own than accept her help.

She felt bitter on the inside as Lin Xinyan scooped a few dumplings into her bowl in an attempt to comfort her. "Mom, I can't finish these. Can you help me?"

Cheng Yuxiu forced a smile onto her face. "Sure."

Zong Jinghao spent the night tossing and turning on his bed, his stomach bursting at the seams.

The next morning at the hospital...

Su Zhan woke up several times throughout the night begging for water, while his grandmother returned to consciousness for a brief moment in the middle of the night before falling into a deep sleep again.

As a result, Qin Ya did not sleep a wink that night. She collapsed onto the sofa at dawn, and not even the rising sun could wake her up.

Su Zhan woke up that morning aching all over. Flipping over and opening his eyes, he took in the unfamiliar surroundings as the events of last night flooded into his mind; he had been out drinking with Shen Peichuan and Zong Jinghao, after which he left with Shen Peichuan. He could not recall anything else beyond that point.

He sat up and surveyed his surroundings. Did Shen Peichuan just send me to the hospital?

He looked to the side and saw Qin Ya sprawled on the sofa without a blanket. The heater was on, but the cold wintry winds could still seep through the cracks between the window panes.

Standing up and yanking the blanket off his body, he walked over to Qin Ya and covered her with it, only to notice the dark bags beneath her eyes.

She hasn't been sleeping well...

Did she stay up the entire night? She looks so tired...

Qin Ya squirmed under the blanket, enjoying the newfound warmth. She found herself in a more comfortable position as she continued with her nap.

Su Zhan stayed by her side and stared at her face, noticing how angular and pale it had become.

She must have been heartbroken by all the drama with Liu Feifei...

Su Zhan sighed. He loved her wholeheartedly, yet he had hurt her without realizing it.

Suddenly, the door to the room creaked, and Su Zhan stood up immediately, thinking that it was a doctor doing his rounds.

However, to his horror, Liu Feifei was the one standing at the doorway, holding a basket of fruits and a bouquet of flowers. "I heard that Grandma fell sick, so I'm here to visit..."

The truth was, she had concealed herself behind the Su residence that day and watched as Qin Ya left the house. She had planned to go back in afterward but was cut short by Su Zhan running out while carrying his grandmother in his arms.

She found out about his grandmother's illness after following him to the hospital, but she did not dare to visit the previous day in case he got suspicious.

"What are you doing here?" Su Zhan asked, his face darkening.

"I had just wanted to visit Grandma..." she uttered pitifully. "She's met me before, and I've called her Grandma before...I don't think there's anything wrong with me visiting her!"

Qin Ya stirred, as though she had heard something that she did not like.

Su Zhan pulled the blanket over Qin Ya and glanced at Liu Feifei. "Let's go out," he whispered.

Liu Feifei shivered at the sight of him taking care of Qin Ya. He used to do that to me...

She balled her fists but forced herself to remain calm. "I'll put down the gifts first."

After setting the flowers and fruits on the table, she turned to Su Zhan and announced, "I'm done. Let's go."

Su Zhan stepped out of the room without uttering another word as Liu Feifei ran to catch up with him.