

Bigoted 411

Chapter 411: My Wife Gave It to Me. My Wife Will Accompany Me

Shi Yan wiped away his sweat discreetly. What did he mean by saying that he was asking to be humiliated? He was probably referring to Xu Wei.

Xu Wei had already learnt of the matter in a report a while back. So when she heard Fu Tingyu's words, it seemed like he was mocking her for being the scion of a wealthy family whose money had been ill-spent – money that would have allowed her more opportunities to see the world than most.

Her face paled with embarrassment. "I know. Why?"

Fu Tingyu asked calmly, "Then, what do you think is the difference between a fondant figurine model created by a famous artist and these two?"

From how his question was phrased, Xu Wei thought Fu Tingyu was assessing her ability to appreciate art.

She did not know much about the art of fondant making, let alone any distinguished figures who designed them, so she had little by way of knowledge to assist her in making useful comparisons.

"A fondant cake crafted by someone famous will certainly be more exquisite than those already out on the market, and its value would make it as priceless as any other work displayed in an art collection."

Xu Wei was a worldly person. Although she lacked knowledge of the art form in question, she knew enough about the subject not to look dull.

"I think a regular cake in the market has more value than one made by some illustrious figure and put on a pedestal in an art collection. The difference lies in its meaning – the one perceived in the hearts of people."

As Fu Tingyu allowed his words to hang in the air, the eyes he directed at the dancers grew warmer.

Xu Wei was intelligent enough to understand the underlying meaning in his words. Nonetheless, it did nothing to take away the sting of having her answer shot down so quickly. It left her feeling somewhat embarrassed.

Fiddling with the fondant figurine in his hands, Fu Tingyu asked, "Miss Xu, do you know who gave this to me?"

Fu Tingyu's words snapped her out of the haze of awkwardness she had been mired in. She gave the fondant figurine another once over. How on earth would she know who had given it to him?

There were many women in the company with similar appearances. Just because there was a passing resemblance did not mean that the figurine was of her.

In any case, it could not have been Qin Shu who had given them to him.

Xu Wei looked at Fu Tingyu as if he had grown a second head. He was usually such a serious man. When did he become a love-sick romantic?

Fu Tingyu stared at the fondant figurine affectionately. Without waiting for Xu Wei's response, he volunteered the answer on her behalf, "My wife gave it to me as a gift."

The deep baritone of his voice rumbled as if he was speaking to himself.

Xu Wei listened slack-jawed.

Was the fondant figurine really from Qin Shu?

How was it possible?

Before she could react, Fu Tingyu's voice sounded in her ears, "Is there something you need from me, Miss Xu?"

Recalling the purpose of her visit, she answered, "I just wanted to see if you were busy. Would you like to pay grandmother a visit with me? Xiaoyan isn't around and she is rather lonely by herself."

"My wife will be back in a few days. I will go and see grandma with her. Thank you for your concern, Miss Xu."

The smile plastered on her lips froze in a comic caricature of a statue. Her cheeks flushed an ugly shade of reddish-purple. Fu Tingyu had not even bothered to look at her as he dismissed her invitation.

Xu Wei was at a loss for words. She had lost count of the number of times she had been disregarded so brazenly and the humiliation she suffered was at an all-time high.

"Is Qin Shu returning soon? Grandmother mentioned her a while ago. It will be a great showing of filial piety for her to visit grandmother. I shall go ahead of you to pay my respects."

Xu Wei was not sure how she had managed to coerce those words out of her but she ultimately did so and left shortly after.

Her background was not enough to cultivate a relationship with him and if she wanted to become his woman, she needed to make use of all the cards available to her.

Gritting her teeth, Xu Wei clenched her red designer handbag and stormed out of the park.

Meanwhile, in a sprawling forest stretching across a seemingly boundless mountain range, the fragrant aroma of cooking meat wafted in the air.

Qin Shu stared hungrily at the piece of roasted rabbit meat in Han Xiao's hands. It had been roasting over the fire pit for some time now and the aromatic smell of cooked meat lingered in the air. She could not help but swallow her saliva longingly.

Seeing that his roast rabbit was almost ready, Han Xiao picked up his clean hunting knife and severed its hind leg; plating it on a dish he had prepared earlier.

Han Xiao wielded the knife deftly, slicing the rabbit meat into thin and even slices.

Qin Shu observed his fluid actions with keen interest. He was surprisingly adept with a knife in hand.

The skilful weaving of his knife alone was enough to show how particular Han Xiao was.

If it had been Ye Luo preparing the meat, he would have simply torn the rabbit's flesh and eaten with his hands. He would not have used a knife to slice off the meat piece by piece before consuming it.

Han Xiao placed the neat slices of rabbit onto a dish and passed it over to Qin Shu. "Eat."

Qin Shu was practically starving. Her senses locked on to the fragrant dish of rabbit meat and soon she was shovelling food down her throat with a pair of clean chopsticks.

Han Xiao watched as Qin Shu cleaned the plate of cooked rabbit with ravenous ease. "How does it taste?"

It was her first time eating roast rabbit out in the woods. It tasted as good as any she had eaten in a restaurant, maybe even a little better.

"It's delicious. It tastes even better than those prepared by professional chefs. Your knife work was simply exquisite. I don't feel like I'm sitting in the middle of a forest eating roast rabbit but a Michelin starred restaurant that looks like one."

The greatest honour a chef ever receives is the joy in which their customers partake in the food they have cooked.

Han Xiao was a little different from a regular chef, though. Where a normal chef enjoys praise from those who relish in their cooking, Han Xiao only wanted recognition from one special person.

Although it was too early for him to say whether Qin Shu was that special person, Han Xiao was still happy to hear that she liked his cooking.

On the surface, however, he betrayed none of his emotions.

Instead, he channelled his energy into the small hunting dagger in his hand and continued carving up the hapless rabbit.

He had plucked out its bones, sliced its meat into bite-sized chunks, and plated it before picking up his chopstick to eat the meal he had prepared.

Qin Shu finished her share of roast rabbit in record time, feeling a little stuffed. Being able to eat meat in a mountain forest was a luxury and a sense of satisfaction rolled off her delicate form.

Han Xiao cleaned up the mess after he had finished eating.

Qin Shu sat by the side as he worked. She had offered to help him clean up but he would not let her. Han Xiao seemed to think that where there were men around, women had no need to lift a finger or offer a hand.

It was hard to imagine that a cold and quiet man like Han Xiao would not only look good but also be a competent cook, a knowledgeable man and a repository of life experiences.

Inferior. That was what she was in every shape and form. A sheltered woman like her could not hope to hold a candle to him.

Han Xiao was calm, reserved, and responsible.

Once he had finished packing up, Han Xiao made his way to Qin Shu's side and sat next to her. Her legs were splayed on the ground while her hands rested on her knees. She was staring at the dying embers of their bonfire.

"Since you already have a doctorate, why did you spend three years of your life in high school?"

Qin Shu hugged her knees, crossing her arms around her legs, and rested her chin on them. She had been meaning to ask Han Xiao this question for a long time now.

Han Xiao mulled over Qin Shu's question, weighing the answers that sprang to mind.

"You don't need to answer if it makes you feel uncomfortable. I'm just curious, that's all. Everyone has their own reasons for doing the things they do."

Qin Shu interpreted Han Xiao's hesitation as reluctance. She thought her question might have been too invasive, putting him in a difficult position. Qin Shu knew better than most that a person had a reason for doing the things they did – she was no exception.

When she had been reborn in her present body, there were many who were not able to come to terms with her sudden change or the actions she took thereafter.

She knew herself best and no one could tell her otherwise.

Eventually, Han Xiao broke the silence and said, "I'm looking for someone."

Chapter 412: She Was The Same Age as You, and It Was Her Instinctive Reaction

"You stayed at Hua Feng for three years just to look for someone?"

Qin Shu was indescribably surprised.

Back then, people harboured all sorts of suspicions towards Han Xiao, a heaven-sent genius who stayed at Hua Feng for three years without taking the college entrance exam.

No one would have thought that he was looking for someone.

The image of a certain someone came to mind. Was Han Xiao looking for that person?

The fact that he had stayed in one place for three years showed his patience and determination.

Han Xiao nodded. "En."

Qin Shu did not push him for details. After all this time, Han Xiao still had not found her and it showed in his expression of disheartened dejection.

Under his breath, Han Xiao whispered, "I've been looking for her for seven years."

Qin Shu's sensitive ears picked up his words and a question rolled off her tongue unbidden, "Xiao Budian?"

Han Xiao nodded. "En."

"Seven years... That's a long time. You were only sixteen then but you still insisted on looking for her. Your relationship with her must have been very good."

Qin Shu couldn't imagine the fortitude a person would have needed to persist in a desperate search for seven whole years.

Han Xiao and that girl were students from the same school. They shared an exceptional relationship akin to a senior and junior.

In those years long past, they had made a pact.

Han Xiao sent Qin Shu a thoughtful look. "You're nineteen this year."

"Yes, I will be." Qin Shu responded.

"That girl would have been the same age as you," Han Xiao mused.

"Does that mean she was only twelve when the two of you parted ways? She, a girl who had just entered middle school?" Qin Shu yawned. She had not meant to but she was feeling really sleepy after that delicious leg of roast rabbit. Feeling awkward, she covered her gaping mouth with her hand.

"They start going to middle school at that age." Han Xiao noticed Qin Shu's droopy eyelids and the way she struggled to stay awake. "Go get some sleep. We'll be up early tomorrow. I'll help you look for those medicinal herbs."

"Okay. You should rest early too."

She had spent the whole day running about in search of the medicinal herbs she needed, and bone-deep fatigue had settled over her. Qin Shu hobbled to her tent and drew the curtains shut. She was out like a light before she knew it.

Han Xiao stared at Qin Shu's departing figure and fished out a cigarette before lighting it.

Was Qin Shu the one he had been looking for all this while?

If so, why didn't she react when he mentioned the pact?

Soft snores drifted in the air and chorused with the thousands of sounds that rustled or hissed in the night.

The next morning...

Qin Shu ate the sumptuous breakfast Han Xiao prepared before continuing her search. She dressed light and carried only the essentials she needed for her climb.

She trekked over to the mountain opposite her. Yesterday, she had left earlier than she would have liked so today she would begin her search from there.

At noon, they rested for a while, eating some bread and dried biscuits. After their short break, they redoubled their search efforts with vigour.

An hour into their hike, they arrived at a col. If they weren't careful they would fall in.

Han Xiao studied the slope, urging caution, "Qin Shu, be careful. The slope is steep. You might slip."

"I know."

Qin Shu moved cautiously as she looked for the herbs. Fortunately, there were rock shelves and places where she could rest.

Han Xiao tracked her movements closely. Although he had already warned her, he still worried for her safety.

The col really was quite deep. If she fell, she would fall into the depression below, putting her in a dangerous position.

Despite the low temperature in the mountain forest, Qin Shu had worked up a sweat. Beads of perspiration lined her forehead and trickled down the sides of her face. It soaked her palms, mixing with the soil, producing a slippery film of loam that made it hard for her to get a good grip on the trunk of the tree she was clinging to. She had to concentrate very hard not to lose her grip.

She was not far from her goal now. A short distance away was the Qizhu. It was growing in a crevice of the rock's face.

A wave of nervous energy suffused her skin. She had taken great pains to find the herb and, now that it was almost in reach, she found herself feeling extremely apprehensive. Qin Shu took a deep breath to collect herself, knowing that one misstep could prove fatal.

She steadily edged her way over. Excitement bubbled in her chest. It was an elation that few would ever understand. Qizhus were precious beyond belief. It was a herb similar in rarity to the other ingredient she lacked.

Qin Shu clasped the Qizhu in her hands and pulled. The surrounding soil had come loose and plunged into the dark maw below; revealing an emerald green snake as thick as a chopstick coiled around the roots of the herb. The snake was flecked in purple spots and had a blood-red tongue that tasted the air over her hand. Suddenly, she felt a sharp pain in the back of her hand. Two puncture wounds came into view.

Was the snake venomous?

Thinking of the poison, she felt a chill run down her spine. She was scared.

She did not carry any anti-venom on hand and even if she did, she needed to know what kind of snake had bitten her in order to administer the right antidote. If the snake's venom was toxic enough, she could very well die.

Qin Shu did not have time to consider her options. She raised her hand to her lips and sucked forcefully.

It was a subconscious reaction – probably one inspired by the many television programmes that she had seen.

Qin Shu sucked in a mouthful of blood, spat it out, and then sucked again. She repeated the process several times.

Qin Shu's conspicuous actions caught Han Xiao's attention. He inched closer to her and asked, "What happened?"

No sooner had he asked her what was wrong than Qin Shu's body tilted to one side and plummeted into the depths of the col.

Qin Shu's legs had collapsed beneath her weight almost as if they had turned into jelly.

"Qin Shu...!"

Han Xiao's pupils constricted, and the veins on his forehead bulged. Without thinking, he launched himself at Qin Shu and wrapped her in his arms, bracing for impact.

The mountains were rocky, therefore it was inevitable they would be injured hurtling down the steep sides of the col.

They tumbled all the way to the bottom and rammed against a tree.

Han Xiao ignored the searing pain ravaging his body and checked Qin Shu's condition. "Qin Shu, are you okay?"

He helped her up using his left hand. He could barely feel anything with his right hand and blood was seeping through the cloth along the same arm. It was probably lamed as a result of his recklessness. Still, he was more concerned for Qin Shu's wellbeing.

Little stars swirled in her eyes but she snapped to attention the moment she heard Han Xiao call out to her. Fumbling for words, she cried out, "... Qizhu."

Han Xiao knew that Qizhu was the herb Qin Shu was looking for. He surveyed her surroundings and saw a plant clutched in her right hand. The herb was called Qizhu because it had only seven leaves and the undersides of each leaf were red.

"It's in your hand."

Qin Shu raised her hand and saw the herb enveloped in it and heaved a sigh of relief. "I've got it! I've finally gotten it. It would near impossible to find another."

"Are you injured?" Han Xiao's black eyes sized her up, scanning her figure for any potential injuries she might have sustained. With her black suit on, it would have been hard to tell if she was injured, bleeding or worse. It made him even more anxious.

"I'm fine. My legs suddenly felt weak..." Qin Shu recalled the scene of her fall. Han Xiao had protected her. She scanned his body for injuries. "How about you? Were you injured?"

Han Xiao shook his head. "I'm fine."

Just as he finished speaking, blood dribbled down the side of his forehead, colouring his fair cheeks in a vivid shade of crimson. It painted a bloody scar on his cheeks.

Qin Shu saw the blood on Han Xiao's cheeks and her face paled. "You... You're bleeding."

Han Xiao wiped his face with the back of his hand. It was coloured a bright red. His head pounded in time with his heart and a headache threatened to explode from behind his eyelids. He must have hit his head while falling off the col's cliffs.

“Let me have a look.”

Qin Shu shook off her backpack, unzipped it, and stuffed the Qizhu into her bag. However, before she could examine Han Xiao’s head, she was stopped by a hand that grabbed her wrist. “There’s no need to look. It’s just a cut.”

Chapter 413: The Glasses Were Taken Off. Han Xiao Was So Excited

“You’re bleeding! How can it be just a scratch?”

Qin Shu didn’t believe for a second that Han Xiao’s injury was just a scratch. She wanted to examine his wound more closely but before she could do so, Han Xiao said, “Let’s head back. It’s too dangerous to stay here.”

“Please let me check your wound first.” Qin Shu refused to budge. She was not going to let Han Xiao brush her off so easily. She stood stubbornly where she was with her arms outstretched, touching his cheeks and then his head. As she did so, her lens on her spectacles fell out and landed on Han Xiao’s shoe.

As she raised her hands, she noticed that her lens on Han Xiao’s shoe so she paused and stared at it for a split second.

Han Xiao had shielded her in his arms as they tumbled down the slope so her glasses had not been knocked free from her face, however, as Han Xiao held her tightly against his chest the lens was dislodged from its frame.

Han Xiao saw the lens on his shoes and picked it up between his fingers, then he looked at Qin Shu and saw that her spectacles frame had snapped during their tumble down the slope, causing the lens to pop out.

Han Xiao had been so focused on whether Qin Shu had injured herself when they rolled down the slope in each other’s arms that he did not notice that her spectacle frame had broken and it was hanging precariously on her nose bridge.

Han Xiao had never seen Qin Shu without her glasses and he had always wondered what she looked like without them. He reached towards the broken frame and tenderly removed them, revealing her natural features.

As Han Xiao removed her broken spectacles, Qin Shu’s world came to a standstill.

Qin Shu was taken aback by Han Xiao’s gesture.

Qin Shu’s breath-taking beauty was unveiled, overwhelming Han Xiao and leaving him entranced. He traced the contours of her face, from her exquisitely formed brows to her limpid eyes, and they matched the features of his Xiao Budian to a fault.

The face before him was undoubtedly that belonging to his Xiao Budian. He was convinced that she was his Xiao Budian whom he had been searching for.

After seven long years wandering in search of her, had he found her at last? Han Xiao was so excited that he grabbed Qin Shu's arms without reservation, asking, "You are... The Xiao Budian, aren't you? It's me, Ling Han! I used this name while we studied martial arts together."

Ling Han was the name Han Xiao had gone by when he was learning martial arts.

It was not uncommon for people learning martial arts to employ fake names to hide their true identities in the martial arts school.

It was an unspoken rule they abided by as fellow students embarking upon the martial way.

Qin Shu was expecting Han Xiao's reaction the moment her glasses were removed.

It was a similar reaction Hua Wuyan had displayed when he had managed to catch a glimpse of her without her spectacles, albeit the reaction she had evoked in Han Xiao was greater than what Hua Wuyan's had been.

"I'm sorry, but you've mistaken me for someone else. I'm not the Xiao Budian you have been searching for, and I don't know anyone called Ling Han either."

Han Xiao stood stock still failing to process the information that had paralysed him like bolt from the blue. Qin Shu resembled the Xiao Budian in his mind too closely for him to have made a mistake. He could not have misidentified her.

"There are many people in this world with similar appearances. I really don't know of anyone called Ling Han." Qin Shu pursed her lips. "Let me take a look at your injuries. They may be more serious than you think."

Han Xiao had been searching tirelessly for his Xiao Budian for seven years. After mistaking her for someone else, his disappointment must have been immeasurable. Qin Shu did not know what she could say to comfort him.

She straightened her back and appraised the wound on Han Xiao's head. It was a bloody gash around four centimetres long. Blood from the open wound flowed out, soaking his raven black hair with no sign of it stopping.

"You've got a head wound. It's still bleeding. Hold still, I think I have some medicine in my backpack that will stop the bleeding." Qin Shu nervously rummaged in her pack for supplies.

Han Xiao stared at Qin Shu with narrowed eyes. He could see her smooth forehead and her thick, curly eyelashes that fanned out daintily. His Xiao Budian had long eyelashes and they too curled up naturally.

"Are you angry with me?"

"Pardon?" Qin Shu responded with a question of her own. She did not understand what Han Xiao was trying to get at.

Han Xiao's dark eyes bored into her with startling intensity. "Is it because I failed to find you for all those years?"

"I'm really not who you think I am. Don't dwell on it."

Qin Shu unscrewed the cap sealing the hemostatic medicine. It was in powdered form. She sprinkled the powder over his wound and cleaned up the excess blood around it.

She could do little else with what she had on hand. They had to get back to their campsite for her to do more. She had prepared a comprehensive first-aid kit with all the tools she would need for an injury like his.

“Let’s return first. Your wound is serious and it needs to be treated properly.”

Han Xiao’s hand clamped onto Qin Shu’s wrist, asking unyieldingly, “Are you really not Xiao Budian?”

Qin Shu shook her head and said, “No, I’m not.”

Han Xiao was taken aback by Qin Shu’s straightforward denial.

Had he really mistaken her for someone else?

If so, where had she learnt her martial arts from?

Han Xiao’s lips were drawn into a thin line. Though he did not want to believe that he had been mistaken, he could not think of any other method to identify his Xiao Budian. Slowly, he released her hand from the vice it had been locked in and muttered dejectedly, “Let’s go back first.”

Seeing Han Xiao’s sombre expression, Qin Shu empathised with his plight but did not know how to comfort him.

“Okay.” She scrambled to her feet, using her arms to support her weight as she did so, she felt dizzy and a pulsating headache throbbed behind her eyes. Perhaps she had sustained some injury during her fall after all. “We can’t go up the way we fell – the slope is too steep here. We’ll have to take a longer route if we are to return to our camp.”

Han Xiao mirrored her actions with as much grace as someone with multiple injuries could have had. If he hadn’t trained his body and improved his constitution, he probably would not have been able to stand up at all. Although he was in a lot of pain, it was still within a range he could endure.

His most serious injuries were undoubtedly his lamed right arm and bleeding head.

“Let’s go this way.” Han Xiao pointed to their right. He had taken the effort to survey the terrain as they scaled the steep slopes of the col. If they circled around, they would eventually return to where they were before at the col’s mouth.

Qin Shu noted the direction Han Xiao wanted them to take. It would be a long hike back but they did not have any other options.

They circled back the way they came, spending several hours longer on their return trip than they had when venturing into the col. Hours passed in excruciating tedium. Though they had not arrived at their campsite, it was but a little ways away from their current position.

Qin Shu had been suppressing her own condition to the best of her abilities but it was becoming harder to do so the further she trekked. Her legs were wobbling like jelly and her body alternated between bouts of extreme heat and cold. Her head was pounding; dizzying and dreadfully painful.

Was she coming down with a cold?

Qin Shu frowned. Falling ill at such a time would be troublesome.

Qin Shu's condition had deteriorated so far that it became obvious to Han Xiao who was ambling by her side. Her skin had paled drastically, her movements came with difficulty, and her breathing came in laboured gasps. "Are you alright?"

Not having any energy left to continue their march, Qin Shu leaned against him and wheezed, "I can't walk anymore. Let's rest for a while."

"Alright. You must be exhausted." It was then that Han Xiao caught sight of a large bruising discolouration on the back of her hand. Two small puncture wounds winked like a pair of snake eyes.

"What happened to your hand?"

Han Xiao studied Qin Shu's complexion and realised that she didn't look too good either.

"It was bitten by a snake. I've already sucked out the venom..." Qin Shu took a look at her hand. An ugly purple bruise had formed over it.

A bad feeling wormed its way into Han Xiao's heart when he heard that she was bitten by a snake. He hurriedly asked, "What kind of snake was it?"

"It was green and flecked in purple spots – a little larger than a chopstick in size," Qin Shu said as she pictured the snake in her head.

Han Xiao frowned. "I haven't heard of a snake that matches your description but judging from its colouring, it was probably venomous."

Qin Shu's heart turned cold. She had not been reborn just for a snake to kill her with its venom.

Han Xiao may have appeared calm but he was actually panicking. Snake venom, depending on its potency, could maim or even kill a person and it had already been half an hour since she had been bitten. If Qin Shu had not been able to extract all the venom that had entered her bloodstream, the consequences...

Chapter 414: I met Gu Yan halfway. What Did You Do to Her?

He did not dare pursue his train of thought.

At this point, she needed more than just general first-aid.

Bending down, Han Xiao swept Qin Shu into his arms in a bridal carry. He spoke urgently as he launched into a trot, "I'll carry you. We'll cover more ground that way. Snake bites aren't to be taken lightly. We'll need to get ourselves to the hospital as soon as possible."

Qin Shu didn't struggle or protest. All her energy had been sapped by their ordeal in the mountains. She surrendered control of her body to Han Xiao and hung limply in his arms. Han Xiao's words reminded her of the severity of her condition. If she really had been poisoned by the snake...

Qin Shu pushed her morbid thoughts aside. She was so dizzy that it made her feel nauseous. Leaning into Han Xiao's arms, her eyelids drooped heavier and heavier until they shut completely.

Despite his lamed right arm, Han Xiao was able to carry Qin Shu with little difficulty. She did not weigh much and he was strong enough to move unencumbered.

He stared at Qin Shu's vulnerable form. He was not sure if she had fallen unconscious or whether she was simply dosing out of fatigue. Her eyes were tightly shut. Han Xiao frowned with concern. He was both afraid and worried for her.

He quickened his steps.

Just then, he heard a sound emanating from the forest's depths.

Han Xiao scanned his surroundings warily and saw a group of people walking towards him. He grimaced in consternation. The last thing he wanted was to be accosted by strangers.

When they caught sight of Han Xiao, they were surprised. It seemed like they had not expected to meet people out in the wilderness.

Gu Yan was dressed casually in clothes that would not restrict his movements. He had ventured into the mountains to pick herbs. He did not expect to meet anyone this deep in the mountains. Yet, now he was face to face with two individuals – a man and a woman.

Believing it to be fate, Gu Yan strolled towards them and asked, "Are you both here to pick herbs as well?"

Han Xiao glanced at the man who had addressed him. He was accompanied by five bodyguards that stood behind him. Call it instinct but he could tell that they were well trained and each of them possessed combat capabilities reaching the gold tier.

He acknowledged the man with a calm tilt of his head.

Gu Yan's eyes landed on the woman in the man's arms. Seeing that she looked familiar, he couldn't help but take another step forward.

Han Xiao wrapped his arms around Qin Shu in a protective manner. He regarded the approaching man warily. "I'm sorry but I have urgent business to attend to, please excuse me."

He hurried past the man with Qin Shu cradled in his arms.

Being over 1.5 metres tall, Gu Yan was able to catch a glimpse of the figure resting in the man's arms and did a double-take. Was that Qin Shu?

Gu Yan hastily called out to the man who had brushed past with such urgency, "Wait a moment."

Han Xiao paused checking Qin Shu's condition as he responded, "What's the matter?"

Gu Yan marched to his side and studied the figure being carried by the man more closely. This time he was sure. It was Qin Shu.

He glared at Han Xiao angrily and demanded, "What did you do to her?"

Han Xiao's expression turned frosty. "What has it got to do with you? I have pressing matters to attend to. Step aside."

Gu Yan stopped him again. "Why shouldn't it be any of my business? You, on the other hand, look quite unfamiliar. Did you kidnap her?"

Hearing Gu Yan's words, Han Xiao glowered but asked, "Do you know her?"

Gu Yan surveyed Qin Shu's unconscious figure with some apprehension. She was pale, frighteningly so. His voice rose a few decibels in distress, "Of course I know her. What have you done to her? What is she doing here?"

Seeing as he did not seem to be lying, Han Xiao decided to explain a little of what had transpired. "She was bitten by a venomous snake. I'm taking her to a hospital to be treated."

"Qin Shu was bitten by a venomous snake?" Gu Yan blanched. "Quickly, put her down and let me take a look." Immediately thereafter, he said to Ji Fei, "Bring me my medicine bag."

"Are you a doctor?"

Han Xiao stared at Gu Yan apprehensively but still did as he was instructed. He squatted down and placed Qin Shu on the ground, allowing her upper body to lean against his chest for support. He lifted the hand that had been bitten, offering it to Gu Yan.

Gu Yan examined the back of Qin Shu's hand carefully. Her fair skin was mottled in a bluish-purple hue. Two puncture wounds stood in stark contrast, twisting his expression into a hideous scowl. "What can you tell me of the snake that bit her?"

"Its body was a shade of emerald green, and its skin was flecked in purple spots. It was only a little thicker than a chopstick. She tried expelling the venom by sucking it out with her mouth," Han Xiao recited.

"Is she tired of living? If she sucked the venom out with her mouth and ingested some of it by mistake she would have only poisoned herself instead."

Gu Yan was racked with anxiety and his forehead creased in concern. He did not expect to find Qin Shu wandering about in the mountainous forest.

A chill ran down Han Xiao's spine. He stared at her eyes that were glued shut and the ghostly pallor her skin had taken. Worriedly, he asked, "Will she be okay?"

It was not long before Ji Fei returned with Gu Yan's medicine bag. Opening it gingerly, he handed Gu Yan an antidote. "Young master."

Gu Yan picked up the antidote and administered it to Qin Shu as soon as he had taken all the necessary precautions. He hoped that his intervention had not come too late.

Disposing of the syringe that had contained the antidote, Gu Yan grabbed her wrist and checked her pulse. His expression clouded over quickly.

He turned to Han Xiao as he continued to assess Qin Shu's condition. "How are you related to her, and what were you two doing together?"

"She is a classmate of mine. My name is Han Xiao. I was just in the vicinity picking herbs." Han Xiao eyes were fixed on Qin Shu. She looked awful. "What's wrong with her?"

Gu Yan listened intently. When Han Xiao described what she had been doing, Gu Yan instantly knew for whom Qin Shu had been picking herbs. It could only be for Fu Tingyu. The question, however, was how did she know of such a remote location harbouring the herbs she was looking for?

"You're injured too. Let me treat you."

From the moment he had seen Han Xiao's injuries, he knew that they must have been involved in some sort of accident prior to their emergence from the forest's depths.

Han Xiao shook his head and responded, "Let's head back first."

"Your injury is not light. It's better if you let me treat it for you before it worsens."

"It won't take long."

"... Okay."

Just as Gu Yan was about to lift Qin Shu off the ground, Han Xiao beat him to the punch and carried her with one arm as he made to leave.

"..."

Gu Yan followed shortly after.

Ji Fei packed up Gu Yan's medicine bag and trailed behind the young master alongside his four other bodyguards.

Back at their campsite...

Han Xiao gently laid Qin Shu on the floor of her tent. Her condition had not improved in the time it took them to return and the unease buried in his chest swelled.

Gu Yan made his way over and sat close by.

Han Xiao sent a questioning look at Gu Yan. "Why hasn't she awoken yet?"

Gu Yan noted the blood dripping down the side of Han Xiao's cheek and staining his sleeve. "I'll take care of her. Ask Ji Fei to bandage that wound of yours before you bleed out."

Han Xiao's eyes stared unblinkingly at Qin Shu, seemingly lost in thought, but eventually nodded and stepped out of the tent.

With Han Xiao's departure, only Gu Yan and Qin Shu were left in the tent.

Gu Yan recalled the promise he made to Qin Shu sometime ago. He had promised to help her in herb hunting. He had been the one to record all the medicinal properties of the herbs she wanted to find.

Never in his wildest dreams did he expect her to take the search of those herbs so seriously that she would knowingly endanger herself in a mountainous forest like this.

If Fu Tingyu saw Qin Shu in her present state, wouldn't he die from heartache?

No sooner had this thought flashed in his mind than he saw Qin Shu's eyelashes twitch. He knew she was about to wake up.

Qin Shu unconsciousness was not only a result of the venom in her system but also the immense fatigue she had accumulated.

Slowly, Qin Shu opened her eyes. The first thing she saw when she woke was Gu Yan. It left her bewildered.

Gu Yan heaved a sigh of relief. "You're finally awake. I really did not expect to see you here."

Qin Shu recovered from her surprise. "Why are you here?" She slowly sat up with the Gu Yan's help.

"It's just a coincidence. I was in the area and thought to have a look around." Gu Yan uncapped the bottle of mineral water by his side and offered it to her. "Have some water."

Qin Shu was indeed thirsty. She took the mineral water and gulped a few mouthfuls. "An old man who was out picking herbs pointed me in this direction. I managed to pick three of them."

Chapter 415: Back to Jiang City. She Could Not Bear to Part With Them

She opened her backpack and laid out the herbs one at a time. "Take a look at these three herbs. Do they possess the medicinal properties of the herbs you need?" Qin Shu asked.

Gu Yan reached out to inspect the herbs. He examined each of them carefully. They were all precious herbs that could not be bought on the market.

He met her eyes not knowing what to feel.

Qin Shu interpreted Gu Yan's silence as tacit disapproval for having obtained herbs that did not live up to his expectations. "Is something wrong? Should I look for more of these herbs? Do they not match the descriptions you provided me with?"

Gu Yan shook his head. "No, these herbs bear a strong resemblance to those that were lost. It's been hard on you. I underestimated just how much you would do for him."

Qin Shu exhaled the breath that she had been holding. As long as the herbs matched, all was well.

"I'm his wife. This is the least I can do for him."

"You have done so much for Fu Tingyu because you love him, don't you? I'm sure he'll be appreciative when he finds out," Gu Yan said.

"Don't tell him about me finding the herbs."

Gu Yan was puzzled. "Why? You have done so much for him and were even bitten by a venomous snake. Why shouldn't he learn of your sacrifices?"

“He doesn’t like me to do these things. When he finds out that I was bitten by a venomous snake, he will blame himself. He would rather get hurt than let me get hurt at all. If he finds out that I got hurt because of him, he would feel...”

Qin Shu didn’t finish her sentence. Fu Tingyu was a proud and stubborn man. If he learned that she had been injured, he would blame himself for not doing everything in his power to protect her. It would hurt his pride.

She did not want her husband to nurse such thoughts.

Gu Yan listened in silence. He knew how Fu Tingyu’s mind worked.

“Then wouldn’t he remain in the dark?”

“There is no need for him to know. My primary concern is his health. It won’t change the fact that I’m a sheltered woman living under his protection.”

Just as she said her piece, it brought to mind how Fu Tingyu had used his large hand to cover her eyes and the words that accompanied this action of his, “Don’t look.”

She couldn’t help but laugh.

Gu Yan nodded helplessly. “If you don’t wish for him to know, then it can’t be helped. Still, you’ll need to be treated. You poisoned yourself trying to extract the snake venom from your wound and your pulse is fluctuating. I haven’t had the opportunity to properly assess the severity of your condition with the inadequate medical facilities on hand. When we return, I’ll need you to undergo a full-body check-up.”

Her heart skipped a beat. Had she contracted some sort of disease?

“Then... have I been cured of my poisoning?”

“Are you stupid? Using your mouth to extract the venom was beyond foolish. You ended up poisoning yourself and allowing the toxins to take effect sooner.”

“I just emulated what I saw on television...” Hearing her own words, Qin Shu felt how stupid she really was. “When the snake bit me, the only thing on my mind was to survive. I thought that I would die in mere moments notice if I didn’t draw out the venom using my mouth.”

Gu Yan sighed. “It requires a certain level of skill for someone to remove venom that has entered the bloodstream using this method. Although I’ve injected you with a general antidote, it isn’t enough to eradicate the poison in your system.”

A sense of relief washed over her. As long as it was not life-threatening, she could live with whatever consequence ensued.

Gu Yan thought of Han Xiao who was waiting outside. “Is the man who was carrying you, your classmate? What happened to you both? He was badly injured by the time we met.”

Qin Shu nodded. “It’s all thanks to him that we were able to traverse the mountainous forest so easily. He has experience in the wild. I was bitten by the snake as I was picking the Qi Zhu, causing me to fall. At

that time, we were scaling the cliffside of a deep col. He shielded me with his own body when I fell. Were it not for him being there, I would definitely have suffered an even greater injury.”

Recalling the events that took place, Qin Shu recognised how lucky she was. Not just anyone would put themselves in harm’s way without so much as a thought.

If Han Xiao had not intervened, her injuries could have proven fatal.

Looking around her tent, Qin Shu did not see Han Xiao so she asked, “Where is he? His right arm was injured defending me from wolves. He must have aggravated his wounds while protecting me as we tumbled down the slope.”

Gu Yan was given a fright when he heard Qin Shu recount her escapades in the wild. Being attacked by a pack of wolves? Tumbling down the steep slopes of a col?

He didn’t expect Qin Shu to have experienced so much. No wonder she was in such a sorry state when he saw them.

“I asked him to go get his wounds treated. His injuries were quite serious. His sleeve was soaked in blood. He looked like he was going to bleed out.”

“I’ll go see him.”

Qin Shu’s heart tightened in her chest. Hurriedly, she darted to the entrance of her tent and out into their camp.

Gu Yan followed her out.

Han Xiao was sitting close by. He was wearing a light grey T-shirt. Ji Fei was tending to his wounded arm, bandaging it up. His head had already been cleaned of blood and wrapped in white sterile bandages.

She shuffled over and sat down in front of Han Xiao. She turned to Ji Fei, asking, “How are his injuries? Are they serious?”

“His right arm is infected...”

Before Ji Fei could continue, Han Xiao interrupted him. “I’m fine. More importantly, how are you? Do you feel any discomfort?”

Ji Fei kept his thoughts to himself having been interrupted. He simply wound a bandage around Han Xiao’s arms without further comment.

Distressed by Ji Fei’s report, Qin Shu asked him, “Did you bring any medicine?” She pointedly ignored Han Xiao’s own question as to her health.

“We have administered it already,” Ji Fei answered succinctly.

Gu Yan ambled over and sat next to Qin Shu.

Han Xiao shot Gu Yan a scathing look, frowning as he sat next to Qin Shu.

Gu Yan turned a blind eye to his hostile gaze. Han Xiao had done everything in his power to ensure Qin Shu's safety – that was more than enough for him to overlook the tiny bit of animosity being directed his way.

“Both of you should rest. We'll depart from the mountain soon. We've almost secured all the herbs we need. The environment may complicate the treatment of your injuries. It is better that we return as soon as possible.”

Han Xiao looked at Qin Shu as if waiting for her decision.

An indescribable wave of gratitude washed over her. Han Xiao had taken care of her throughout the length of their journey. He was a bastion of strength she could rely on.

“Han Xiao, thank you for accompanying me on this trip. You've suffered... We should return with Gu Yan. I need to go back to Jiang City anyway.”

When Han Xiao heard that Qin Shu wanted to return to Jiang City, he couldn't help but clench her thighs. “When will you return to the imperial capital?”

“I don't know yet. I don't think I'll be able to go back anytime soon.”

She had promised Fu Tingyu that she would accompany him in Jiang City for a time. She wanted to make him happy. Also...

He wanted to have a child.

Han Xiao glared at Gu Yan.

Gu Yan dipped his head in confusion. Did he do something wrong?

Han Xiao retracted his glare before turning to Qin Shu. “Then I'll wait for you in the capital. Come back soon or you'll miss some classes.”

Qin Shu beamed happily. “Okay.”

Meanwhile, Gu Yan instructed Ji Fei and his other bodyguards to take stock and prepare for their return.

Qin Shu remained where she was, resting her aching limbs. Her hands drifted to her calves and began rubbing them unknowingly. She fell because of the sudden weakness that overcame all sensation in her legs.

Han Xiao sat opposite Qin Shu. His thoughts roamed distractedly within the confines of his mind. He did not know when they would meet again and his brows furrowed like ebbing waves on his forehead.

Qin Shu remembered how Han Xiao mistook her for his Xiao Budian. Knowing that she was not his Xiao Budian, she decided to encourage him, “You will definitely find your Xiao Budian. Where there's a will, there is a way.”

Han Xiao squinted at Qin Shu. Her features matched his Xiao Budian's and were filled with an aura, not unlike the one he was familiar with.

Chapter 416: Explained The Reason Why He Was Blocked

Having spent two days together, Han Xiao felt that they were a lot alike.

Just as Hua Wuyan once said, a woman changes eighteen times as they grow up but the one thing that remains the same is the shape of their eyes and the line of their brows.

He pursed his lips and after a while, he said, "I feel that you are my Xiao Budian. We learnt martial arts together on Mount Qi. Hua Wuyan was there with us, and so were the others. We all used fake names."

Qin Shu knew that regardless of how she tried to explain herself, Han Xiao was unlikely to believe her.

She sighed. "Whether you believe it or not, I'm really not your Xiao Budian. My mother never sent me to learn martial arts on Mount Qi. I would still like to be your friend, though. I have heard that Mount Qi is quite far away.

An indescribable feeling welled up in her chest. They had not spent much time together yet, for some odd reason, she felt a trace of familiarity in his disposition.

That feeling had grown in the past two days. It was almost a sense of *déjà vu*.

"You didn't learn your martial arts on Mount Qi?" Han Xiao frowned, a trace of scepticism creeping into his voice. "Then where did you learn your martial arts? Who told you of Mount Qi?"

Walking over, Gu Yan patted her shoulder and urged, "We should go. It's best if we reach the foot of the mountain before dark."

"Alright." Qin Shu strapped on her backpack and readied herself for the trek back to civilization.

Gu Yan's bodyguards carried the rest of their provisions.

Han Xiao mirrored her actions, lifting his camping pack, and kept pace with her.

They hiked for some time.

"Do you really have to return to River City?" Han Xiao tilted his head towards Qin Shu and asked.

Qin Shu nodded. "Yes, I do."

Seeing Qin Shu nod in confirmation, Han Xiao asserted, "I spent three years in River City, studying in the school next to yours, yet not once did I notice your existence."

"Huh?" Qin Shu peered at Han Xiao, a look of perplexion hovering over her face.

Han Xiao continued, "Whether or not you are Xiao Budian, the fact is, I never noticed you except for that one time when you fought with three girls on the field. I hid in a tree nearby. You're not what I expected. You're different from how the rumours make you out to be."

Recalling the events of her past, Qin Shu drew a vague picture of the timeframe Han Xiao was referring to.

"I didn't know you had a habit of spying on people." Laughter bubbled in her throat when she heard that Han Xiao had been hiding in a tree. "Honestly, If it weren't for you, they wouldn't have found trouble with me."

Han Xiao was startled by Qin Shu's frank admission. "It was because of me?"

"It was because of you. One friendly game of basketball and your photo became the hottest topic on the school's forum. You achieved celebrity status overnight. There were so many girls who liked you. In the end, a rumour began making its rounds describing an illicit relationship I was supposed to have had with you. Things spiralled from there and they wouldn't stop hounding me." Qin Shu complained half-heartedly.

Hua Wuyan had mentioned this matter, but he had not paid much attention to it back then. "That was a private photo. I didn't take any or sent them to anyone. I didn't know that it would cause such trouble for you."

Qin Shu believed Han Xiao's words. An intensely private person like Han Xiao was unlikely to have circulated those photos on purpose.

"You still brought a mob to denounce me, though. Had I not known better, I would have thought you a gangster with the way I was surrounded by a group of strangers at the school gate." Qin Shu grumbled. It was an intimidating experience, to say the least.

"Hua Wuyan was the one who dragged me there. Everyone else just wanted to join in on the fun..." Han Xiao responded earnestly. It was apparent that he had been an innocent party in the whole debacle.

It was the first time someone dared announce that they had dated Han Xiao, so Hua Wuyan wanted to see who had the gall to make such a claim.

That was how Hua Wuyan dragged everyone to Linxi. Those who wanted in on the fun naturally wouldn't allow such an opportunity to slip by.

If Han Xiao had told her this before, Qin Shu probably would not have believed a thing he said. Now, she was inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt. She did not believe that Han Xiao would deliberately stop her at the school gates over a piece of trivial gossip.

Gu Yan, who trailed behind them, studied their intimate interaction with a frown on his face. "Why are they chatting so happily?"

He asked Ji Fei who strode at his side.

"I don't know, young master," Ji Fei replied.

"They seem to be on good terms," Gu Yan commented with a questioning lilt.

"It seems so." Ji Fei was just about to repeat himself when he changed his words at the last second.

Gu Yan stared at Ji Fei for a long time, before asking, "Could it be that Han Xiao harbours those kinds of thoughts for her? He did save Qin Shu twice, after all. He even got injured in the process."

Ji Fei was puzzled. "What thoughts? Don't all friends behave in this way? We can't just leave him in the lurch..." Ji Fei's voice grew softer as he spoke, becoming little more than a whisper as he finished his sentence.

Gu Yan considered Ji Fei's words for a moment, conceding. "That's true."

It took them a while to reach the parking lot at the foot of the mountain.

Qin Shu hugged the strap of her backpack tightly. She took a peek at Han Xiao. His expression was as cold as ever but it seemed more wooden than usual. Pursing her lips, she mumbled, "You're injured. You'll need to be careful on the return trip. I'll ask Gu Yan to have a bodyguard of his drive you to the city."

Gu Yan chimed in, "You can't drive with how severe your injuries are and with night approaching, it would be safer if someone drove you back."

Han Xiao regarded Qin Shu and then Gu Yan, rejecting him almost immediately. "There's no need."

Han Xiao's rejection twisted her insides into knots. "How can you drive yourself back? It's almost dark and you're injured. Safety is of the utmost importance. I would never forgive myself if anything happened to you."

Han Xiao's gaze never strayed from Qin Shu's form. Without her annoying glasses, he could see the delicate curve of her brows and the light that shone in her eyes. It left him transfixed.

Gu Yan interjected more firmly, "Qin Shu is right. You're injured. You shouldn't be driving. It's better to have someone act as your driver so that you don't tax your body further. My bodyguards are all handpicked by me so their competence is beyond doubt."

Gu Yan could not help but compare Han Xiao's temperament with a certain someone. They both liked to put on a brave front.

Han Xiao did not refuse a second time. He inclined his head in Gu Yan's direction, "If you insist... Thank you for your kindness."

"Alright, it's getting dark. Everyone into the cars."

Gu Yan marched to the car.

Qin Shu waved at Han Xiao, bidding him farewell. She then fastened the belt of her backpack and got into the car.

Han Xiao watched as Qin Shu left with Gu Yan. He stood there, rooted, as the car slowly sped off into the distance.

A bodyguard of Gu Yan's walked over. "Mister Han, it's getting late."

Han Xiao nodded in acknowledgement and ambled his way to the waiting car.

The bodyguard stepped behind the wheel as soon as Han Xiao was safely strapped in.

With someone else driving, Han Xiao did not need to expend his energy. He leaned against the seat, his camping pack on one side, and closed his eyes to rest.

Xiao Budian's figure constantly flashed in his mind, appearing in Qin Shu's form.

—

—

Jiang City.

Evening.

Fu Tingyu retired to his study having had dinner.

It was quiet.

Stacks of documents, pending his signature, sat on his desk.

The silence was broken by the ringing of his mobile phone. Glancing at the caller's ID, Fu Tingyu's brows curled in intrigue. It was Mo Chengyu.

He answered the call and heard Mo Chengyu's voice on the other end. "Brother Yu, are you free to join me for a drink. We'll go to our old haunt."

Fu Tingyu pondered for a moment and replied, "Mm."

Chapter 417: Keep Your Wife's Body as A Jade and Find A Woman to Accompany You

When Mo Chengyu heard him agree, he couldn't help but laugh. "Then I'll order us some good wine. Don't keep me waiting for long."

Fu Tingyu hung up his phone, noting the time on its display. He would join Mo Chengyu as soon as he wrapped up his paperwork for the day.

Elsewhere, in a private room numbered 808...

Mo Chengyu pocketed his phone and said to Yun Qichen, "Brother Yu will be here shortly. Drink as much as you'd like. You shan't leave till you are drunk tonight."

Yun Qichen eyed the girl seated next to Mo Chengyu. Her name was Yang Yuan. She was a student who had just entered university. She was an astounding beauty with a body to die for. Unlike other women in the bar, Yang Yuan was dressed differently. With her head lowered, she looked the very picture of demure innocence.

Worry clouded his thoughts. "Chengyu, are you sure it is wise to have her drink with brother Yu?"

Mo Chengyu snuck a glance at Yang Yuan who was seated next to him. "But of course! It took me ages to find a woman as good as she is. The most important thing is that she's clean. She's far better than those women loitering in the bar."

Yang Yuan stared at the floor. Her cheeks were flushed a vivid rouge. It was hard to say if she was feeling afraid or embarrassed.

Mo Chengyu noticed her scarlet cheeks, the hands gripping the hem of her blouse tightly, and whispered in her ear, "Are you nervous?"

Yang Yuan recoiled like she had been burnt. Mo Chengyu was too close to her. Any closer and his lips would have brushed against the tip of her ear. It made her ear tingle.

Shaking her head, Yan Yuan murmured, "No."

Mo Chengyu paused. "He likes girls who are timid."

Just then, the door to their private room was pushed open. Fu Tingyu's svelte silhouette strode in. His eyes immediately latched onto the seated woman in the room, causing his brows to furrow.

Mo Chengyu was the first to greet the man who had entered. "Brother Yu, you've kept us waiting for quite a while! Come sit with us. As punishment, you'll have to drink three glasses of wine..

Fu Tingyu closed the door behind him and settled next to Yun Qichen.

True to his word, Mo Chengyu filled three glasses with wine.

Yun Qichen laughed. "I heard that you've been very busy lately. Chengyu has asked you out a few times but today has been the only occasion you have accepted his invite."

"Yes, I have been a little busy with a project of mine." Fu Tingyu inclined his head in the woman's direction. His voice sounded in an emotionless monotone. "Is she your new girlfriend?"

"Brother Yu doesn't know me well at all. Her name is Yang Yuan. She is a student. I invited her over for a drink." Mo Chengyu picked up the glasses of wine he had poured and handed them to Fu Tingyu, a gaudy smile hanging on his lips.

"You've invited me out for a drink quite a few times already. It would be impolite of me to reject you again. I'll happily accept the punishment of drinking three glasses of wine." Fu Tingyu brought his glass of wine to his lips and relished the rich, full-bodied taste of the alcohol.

Pleased by Fu Tingyu's candid actions, Mo Chengyu poured Yang Yuan a glass of wine too.

"A toast." Mo Chengyu offered a glass to Yang Yuan.

Yang Yuan hesitated for a few seconds but eventually received the proffered glass. She sidled over from where she sat and positioned herself opposite Mo Chengyu.

Previously, Mo Chengyu had spent a considerable amount of time educating her on Fu Tingyu's preferences and right down to his appearance.

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. No matter how well he tried to describe Fu Tingyu's likes or dislikes, Yang Yuan would only know how to respond when she actually met him.

Fu Tingyu's appearance was, by far, more impressive than she had ever imagined. He was an adonis made flesh but one who gave off a cool, unapproachable feel.

Mo Chengyu informed her that everyone simply referred to him as fourth young master.

Yang Yuan raised her wine glass in a toast and called out, "Fourth young master."

Her tone was neither cold nor warm. It trembled with a note of nervousness.

Fu Tingyu returned her greeting and raised his own glass of wine to his lips.

Yang Yuan stood where she was with her glass still raised, at a loss as to how she ought to proceed.

Mo Chengyu understood Fu Tingyu's personality well. Laughing heartily, he explained, "Brother Yu has mysophobia. He doesn't drink wine that others toast. I'll drink it on his behalf." Mo Chengyu swiped the wine glass out of her hand and downed it in one gulp.

Yang Yuan: "..."

If he knew Fu Tingyu was a germaphobe, why on earth did he insist that she offer him a toast?

Clearly, he was just trying to make a fool of her.

Seeing Yang Yuan's stationary form, Mo Chengyu prompted her, "Don't just stand there. You should have a drink too."

Yang Yuan chewed on her lips in embarrassment but she still picked up the wine bottle and poured both Mo Chengyu and herself a glass of wine. Bringing her wine glass to her mouth, she savoured the velvety taste of the wine.

Mo Chengyu sat up, picking up his glass of wine, and took a sip.

Yun Qichen glanced at Mo Chengyu. He was not sure what Mo Chengyu was scheming. Putting his behaviour out of his mind for the moment, Yun Qichen chatted with Fu Tingyu. "I tried looking for Gu Yan yesterday but he was not around. I couldn't get through to him on his phone either. Have you been in touch with him?"

Fu Tingyu paused for a moment before replying, "He went into the mountains to pick herbs. There's no signal out there."

"No wonder." Yun Qichen sipped his wine contemplatively. "There's a class reunion tomorrow. Are you going?"

Fu Tingyu shook his head, "I don't have time."

Mo Chengyu drank a few glasses of wine. He put down the glass in his hand and placed his hands on Yang Yuan's shoulders. He angled her towards Fu Tingyu's and asked with a smile, "Brother Yu, what do you think of Yang Yuan's looks?"

Fu Tingyu considered Yang Yuan's figure with an arched brow. He chuckled, "Are you fond of women like her?"

Mo Chengyu's face darkened in displeasure. "I'm the one asking you, not the other way around. She's on the timid side and looks a little like Qin Shu."

Yang Yuan: "..."

"I can't tell." Fu Tingyu turned away disinterestedly, pouring himself another glass of wine while doing so.

"Of course you can't tell. You'll know if she looks like Qin Shu after you get to know her better." Mo Chengyu leaned in closer to Fu Tingyu suggestively. The corners of his mouth curled up into a knowing smile. "Brother Yu, Qin Shu is far away in the imperial capital anyway. We're both men. I understand. How about letting her accompany you for a drink or two?"

Mo Chengyu's words drifted into her ears with absolute clarity. Clenching her wine glass firmly, she mustered her resolve and drank a mouthful of the alcoholic beverage.

Fu Tingyu's eyes narrowed into slits. The more he looked at Mo Chengyu, the more it seemed like he was asking for a beating. "Keep it to yourself. Are you impotent?"

Yang Yuan choked on the wine she failed to finish. Had she any less control over herself, she would have spewed it all out. Sputtering, she tried her best to swallow the giggles that threatened to escape. Though it was not loud, the sound of her muted laughter tolled like bells in their ears.

Mo Chengyu glared at Yang Yuan. She had the nerve to laugh at him. Turning to Fu Tingyu he spat, "Brother Yu, I'm doing this for your sake and you have the cheek to call me impotent! I have no lack of women by my side."

"Neither do I" Fu Tingyu finished the wine in his glass and poured himself another. He sipped at it slowly.

"Don't tell me you are a virgin? Which man hasn't played with a few women before? Must you be that conservative?" Mo Chengyu needed.

"I've never laid my hands on a woman either." Yun Qichen knew Mo Chengyu was trying to provoke a reaction from Fu Tingyu so he interjected hastily hoping to defuse the situation.

Mo Chengyu's face fell. "Why don't you just become a monk?"

Yun Qichen: "..."

Fu Tingyu sent Mo Chengyu a withering look. His eyes were two pinpricks of cold obsidian.

A chill ran down Mo Chengyu's spine as he felt the full weight of Fu Tingyu's flinty gaze. It was not long before Mo Chengyu surrendered in defeat, "Brother Yu if you have something to say, just say it. Please don't stare at me like that. It's creepy."

Fu Tingyu spoke faintly but with an edge of steel in his voice, "You're right. I'm remaining celibate for my wife. All that is mine is hers and hers alone. No one else can dream of taking it from her."

Chapter 418: The Girl She Was Going to Marry Watched Bao'er Walk over

Mo Chengyu was horrified by Fu Tingyu's revelation. "Brother Yu, does your wife know how infatuated you are with her?"

Fu Tingyu sneered. "Does your future wife know how promiscuous you are?"

For some inexplicable reason, Mo Chengyu felt a film of cold sweat form on his back. "... So what if she finds out? What's she to do?"

"I heard that your future wife has returned from abroad. Apparently, she's a ninth dan black belt in Muay Thai. Auntie seems to have arranged quite a formidable wife for you." Fu Tingyu sized up Mo Chengyu and what he found made him laugh. "Someone like you is not even worthy of a sparring partner."

Mo Chengyu studied his body with a critical eye. Though he was not skinny, he was not exactly muscular either. His chest and abdominals were lined with faint muscles that weren't obvious to the naked eye.

Yun Qichen had also heard of Mo Chengyu's fiancée. He smiled gloating in at Mo Chengyu and said, "You'd best restrain yourself. If your future wife were to learn of your unsavoury habits, the days following your marriage will be challenging."

"I-I won't marry a woman with violent tendencies. Even if I'm beaten me to death, I won't marry her."

Yang Yuan picked up the bottle of red wine, refilling the empty glass in Mo Chengyu's hand. She then poured herself another glass, savouring its rich flavour; seemingly lost in her own thoughts.

Mo Chengyu gulped down some wine to calm his nerves.

It was eleven in the evening.

They had all drunk quite a bit, by then. Mo Chengyu was so drunk that he could barely walk without tripping over himself and had to rely upon Yang Yuan for assistance.

They bade farewell to one another, separating at the bar's entrance.

With an arm slung over her shoulder, Yang Yuan supported Mo Chengyu to his car. She used her free hand to fumble for the keys she thought were in his shirt pocket.

Mo Chengyu snorted in discontent, words slurring in his inebriated state. "W-what are you-u looking f-for?"

"Where have you kept your keys?"

Yang Yuan did not manage to find the keys in her shirt. In the end, she fumbled through her pants pocket and finally found the car keys. Then, she opened the lock.

Not managing to find his keys in his shirt pocket, Yang Yuan tried her luck with the pockets sewn into his pants. She found them swimming in a pocket and fished it out like an angler reeling in her prey.

In one swift motion, she unlocked the car's doors and stuffed the intoxicated Mo Chengyu into the car.

Parked opposite Mo Chengyu's car was Yun Qichen and Fu Tingyu's cars.

Yun Qichen glanced at the figure of Yang Yuan supporting Mo Chengyu. "That Yang Yuan is surprisingly strong."

Fu Tingyu turned to face Yang Yuan. She had just shoved Mo Chengyu into the car.

Neither of them thought much of the action nor did they move to stop her; too drunk to form coherent thoughts. They got into their respective cars with great difficulty. Thankfully, they both had chauffeurs.

Having chucked Mo Chengyu into the car, Yang Yuan stepped into the driver's seat, started up the engine and set her sights on the private villa he owned.

Meanwhile, at Sheng Garden...

A luxurious car, painted with a silver-grey gloss, rolled to a stop at the entrance of Sheng Garden.

Gu Yan spoke to Qin Shu. "You should go and rest. It'll take two days to prepare the medicine. I'll see you when it's ready."

"Okay." Qin Shu got out of the car and shut the door behind her. She watched as the car drove out of the compound before turning towards the entrance of Sheng Garden. At this hour, Fu Tingyu was probably still in his study.

The thought of meeting him again formed butterflies in her stomach.

Excitedly, she quickened her steps in anticipation of their reunion.

The security guard saw someone approaching and stuck his head out. When he determined that it was Qin Shu, he hurriedly opened the gates.

"Young Madam, why are you back so late? Please hold on for a minute. I'll inform the staff inside immediately."

Qin Shu motioned the security guard to stop. "There's no need. It's already very late. Everyone should be in bed. I'll let myself in."

"Alright then. By your leave, Madam." The security guard smiled, locking the gates behind him. The young madam was truly a considerate person.

Sheng Garden was quiet at this hour.

Qin Shu strolled into the living room deserted living room, not a waking soul in sight. She climbed the stairs up to the second floor.

Before she did so, she became cognizant of the fact that she was absolutely filthy. She had not changed her clothes since she hiked down the mountain and her body was covered in a noxious film of sweat and soil. It was a truly unpleasant combination.

Deciding against meeting Fu Tingyu in her present state, Qin Shu ambled to the washroom with the intention of making herself presentable.

She pushed open the door to the master bedroom and switched on the lights. The pitch-black room was instantly illuminated.

A brief scan of the room told her that its furnishings were untouched since she left.

She stepped into the study and placed her backpack on the desk before walking out.

Opening her closet, she retrieved her silken nightgown and made a beeline for the bathroom.

It took her half an hour to shower and ten minutes to blow dry her wet hair before she walked out.

She spent half an hour in the shower and another ten minutes drying her hair with a blow dryer.

Her nightgown was a comfortable fit. It hugged her body in all the right places.

She stepped out of the master bedroom and headed for the study.

—

—

Fu Tingyu got out of the car the moment it stopped at the front porch.

Shi Yan hurried out of the car to lend his aid. "Fourth young master, please allow me to help you."

"No."

Fu Tingyu dismissed him with a wave of his hand, walking in alone. His steps were shaky and uneven. It looked like he was about to fall at any moment. Yet, despite all odds, he managed to stagger his way to the master bedroom.

He flung open the doors of his closet, grabbed his bathrobe, and teetered his way to the bathroom. It was not long before the sound of running water could be heard emanating from within.

It took him almost double the amount of time he usually needed to shower with his head spinning in circles.

Eventually, the bathroom door opened, and he walked out in a light-coloured bathrobe. His dizziness seemed to have been exacerbated by his shower which was reflected by the scarlet flush staining his fair cheeks.

His empty bed beckoned and he found himself drawn to it like a moth to the flame. He wanted to have a smoke before he slept but he could not resist the dizzy spell that struck him. Instead, he collapsed onto the bed and decided to rest for a while.

Qin Shu had wanted to give Fu Tingyu a surprise but when she pushed open the door to the study, she found herself shrouded in darkness. Flicking the light switch on did little else. It merely revealed that the study was empty.

She checked the lounge and then their bedroom. Both sites were bereft of his presence.

If he wasn't in his study, where had he gone?

Qin Shu did not dwell long on this particular mystery. She decided to head back to their bedroom. She would use the landline there to give him a call and ask him where he was.

Wandering back to their bedroom, Qin Shu was dumbfounded by the sight of Fu Tingyu sprawled over the bed.

He had not been in the room earlier when she had gone looking for him so it came as quite a surprise to her.

He must have returned in the time she had taken to visit him at his study. Did he even shower before crawling into bed?

Stealthily, she made her way over.

Just then, Fu Tingyu rolled in her direction. His back that had been facing the door was now replaced with his front profile.

Fu Tingyu narrowed his phoenix-like eyes, staring at the elegant figure framed by his doorway. When he caught sight of who it was that stood there, he froze; thinking it a trick of the light. He blinked, willing the illusion away, and realized that he was not stuck in a dream. She really was there, and she approached him with muffled steps.

Qin Shu noticed Fu Tingyu's unwavering gaze as she drew closer to him. The way he refused to move or speak to her was unlike him and she could not help but wonder if he was still angry with her.

She approached his bedside and drank in his motionless form. His hair was wet and drooped down to his long eyebrows in messy strands of tangled beauty.

She called out, "Baby Yu."

Chapter 419: More than just Thinking

Fu Tingyu froze. It was the first time any woman had ever called him Baby Yu. It was a childish nickname but it felt intimate.

His lips flattened into a thin line. "You have finally decided to return."

He spoke softly as if he was talking in his sleep. If she had not been close enough to him, she would not have heard him speak.

Qin Shu rested a hand on the bed and leaned closer to him. The heavy smell of alcohol clung to him like a second skin. No wonder she hadn't seen him in the study. Did he go out for a drink?

Brushing aside the messy locks that concealed his eyes and forehead, Qin Shu stared into a pair of sharp eyes glinting with a terrifying light. "I've missed you," she whispered.

Her voice was soft and sweet, like a burbling spring or the gentle thrum of a zither.

With his hair out of the way, Qin Shu's beauty shone through. He saw her in his dreams and each time he did, a smile would bloom on his lips from the light she radiated.

Ah. As expected. Dreams really were different when one was drunk. She even said that she missed him.

An uncomfortable silence lingered in the air, prompting Qin Shu to ask, "Did you miss me?"

Fu Tingyu arched his phoenix-like eyes.

His voice rumbled in her ears, "I miss you so much that my heart aches."

Tears welled up in her eyes and her nose felt stuffy. She wouldn't cry. She wouldn't.

Suddenly, Fu Tingyu grabbed her arm and pulled her into bed with him. He wrapped his strong arms around her, nuzzling her soft hair against his cheeks.

His actions had been so abrupt that Qin Shu did not have the chance to protest. Lying in Fu Tingyu's arms, breathing in his comforting scent, listening to the stable beat of his heart, she never felt more at ease.

The arms around her tightened, as if fearing she would disappear they were to slacken in the slightest.

When he came back from the capital, he really hated the empty feeling in his arms. He didn't know how to spend the long night without the smoke accompanying him.

When he returned from the capital, Fu Tingyu hated the emptiness that beset him – the absence of a familiar weight in his arms. He had lost count of the number of nights spent alone with only the cloying smoke of his trusty cigarettes accompanying him.

All was still, for a time.

–

–

Meanwhile, at Mo Chengyu's villa...

Yang Yuan helped Mo Chengyu into the villa. She supported him up to the master bedroom on the second floor and threw him onto the large European-styled bed that occupied the greater part of the room.

Though Mo Chengyu was dissatisfied by how rough Yang Yuan was treating him, he was so drunk that everything in the room seemed to spin in dizzying circles. Even getting up was a struggle in and of itself.

Yang Yuan clapped her hands together in disgust, dusting off an imaginary layer of filth. Ignoring Mo Chengyu's garbled protests, she turned a curious eye around the room. It was tidier than she thought it would be and the furnishings were tasteful.

The picture painted by Mo Chengyu's room seemed at odds with the image of a playboy he projected.

Mo Chengyu got up with great difficulty. Though his steps were unsteady, he managed to stagger his way to the bathroom. He did not bother closing the door behind him. He simply stripped himself, turned the faucet, and relished in the warm water that spouted out of the shower head.

The sound of running water could be heard. Yang Yuan tilted her head to look at the bathroom and realized that the door was open.

Yang Yuan tilted her head in the direction of the bathroom and realized that the door had been left ajar. She could hear the sound of running water gushing within.

“...”

Having nothing else better to do, Yang Yuan made herself comfortable on the couch. She picked up a magazine sitting on the short table beside her. It was a rather popular periodical overseas. Flipping to the first page, she immersed herself in the world within.

It was not long before she heard footsteps approaching her. Looking up, she saw Mo Chengyu exiting the bathroom. Around his midriff was a white towel. His black hair had taken on a glossy sheen with the water soaking it through, and his cheeks glowed with a heady flush.

Mo Chengyu was 1.86 meters tall and had a well-proportioned figure. Although he was not muscular per se, his body was reasonably toned.

His skin was supple and as fair as jade – it was in no way inferior to a woman's.

Aside from a scar left by a knife wound at his waist, his skin was flawless.

It was this knife wound that lent him a dangerous air that men should have.

In his inebriated state, Mo Chengyu was not conscious of the fact that there was a woman in his room. Yang Yuan took this opportunity to size him up, critiquing his looks without restraint.

Mo Chengyu sauntered to his bed groggily. He slipped out of his shoes and laid on the soft bedding he knew to be his own – the familiar scent was a dead giveaway. He fell asleep the moment his head landed on his fluffy pillows.

Putting the magazine back where she had gotten it, Yang Yuan made her way over to Mo Chengyu's side. A cursory inspection was enough for her to ascertain that he had fallen asleep.

Seeing that she would not be disturbed, Yang Yuan picked out a nightgown from Mo Chengyu's closet and went for a shower.

When she stepped out of the bathroom a while later, she wore a navy blue nightgown that was a few sizes too big for her. Since it was supposed to fit a man and not a woman, it was to be expected. Mo Chengyu was larger than she was, after all.

It was not a comfortable fit but there was nothing she could do about it. Sighing, she decided to make do with what she had.

Trudging her way to the other end of the bed, she slipped off her heels and laid down to rest. She did not have any energy left to be bothered by Mo Chengyu anymore. Sleep came swiftly, and soon she was out like a light.

Perhaps it was the bed or the unfamiliar surroundings she found herself in but Yang Yuan's sleep was a restless one. Despite how tired she was, she found herself waking up at odd hours throughout the night.

The next morning...

Mo Chengyu woke with a terrible hangover. The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes was the sleeping face of a woman lying beside him. Stunned, it took him several seconds to shake off the drowsiness that plagued him.

Yang Yuan had awoken some time ago but she was too lazy to open her eyes. When she felt Mo Chengyu stir from his slumber, she opened them and beheld his handsome face in hers.

She did not say a word and waited for Mo Chengyu to speak.

Mo Chengyu quelled his agitation after a few deep breaths. "What are you doing here? I thought we agreed to have you..."

Yang Yuan interrupted him before he could finish. "You were the one who prevented me from going with him last night."

After saying that, Yang Yuan lowered her eyes, refusing to look at Mo Chengyu.

In his eyes, Yang Yuan's refusal to look at him was a result of her shy nature. Did something unspeakable happen the previous night?

Mo Chengyu sat up. The towel draped around his waist slid to the ground as he did so. Hastily, he bent down to retrieve it, wrapping it around his midsection with his back turned to Yang Yuan.

He then walked straight to the bathroom.

By the time he exited, he was already dressed neatly. The embarrassment from before had been replaced with his usual flamboyant persona. "What is it you want?"

Yang Yuan tugged at the hem of her nightgown, not once meeting Mo Chengyu's gaze. Instead, she stared out the window and said, "I need a set of clothes."

"I'll have someone to send a set over."

Mo Chengyu had a butler of his prepare a set of women's clothes for Yang Yuan as soon as she made her request.

Whoever served Mo Chengyu was certainly efficient and it did not long for a set of women's clothes to be sent over.

Mo Chengyu received the clothes and handed them to Yang Yuan. "Try it on. Let me know if it does not fit."

"Okay." Yang Yuan accepted the clothes and walked into the bathroom.

Mo Chengyu glanced at the bathroom, a hint of annoyance wound its way around his features. Did he have too much to drink last night?

Regret weighed heavily on his shoulders. Just then, the bathroom door opened and Yang Yuan stepped out, carried her sling bag and was preparing to... leave?

Mo Chengyu was bewildered by abrupt actions. He did not know where she was going and hurried after her.

He chased her down shortly but decided against stopping her. Rubbing his temples, he tried to piece together what she had been trying to convey.

What did she mean when she said he had prevented her from going with Fu Tingyu?

Did she mean that nothing transpired last night?

Mo Chengyu watched as Yang Yuan rounded a corner and disappeared from his line of sight. He felt a pang of inexplicable guilt eating away at him. Maybe he was just overthinking things...

Chapter 420: Threats Turn into Love Talk

Mo Chengyu followed Yang Yuan's figure as it disappeared around the corner, an inexplicable sense of guilt gripped his heart. Maybe he was overthinking things...

—

—

Sheng Garden, the master bedroom.

Two individuals were sound asleep on the warm bed.

They had gone to bed late last night.

Wisps of light filtered through the curtains and the temperature slowly began to rise.

Fu Tingyu's eyes fluttered open, revealing the bare ceiling above. He had dreamed a dream last night. It felt so real that it could have hardly been a dream. In it...

He paused. In his arms...

He was still feeling a little sleepy but it soon faded with the dawning reality of who it was in his arms.

A woman was nestled against his chest, half-asleep. Her ebony hair draped down the side of her neck, caressing her cheeks and the nape of her neck.

She looked so peaceful and enticing as she rested.

He was mesmerized and could not peel his eyes off her. He could not believe that the love of his life whom he thought was miles away was in actual fact right there beside him.

He continued to gaze at her in disbelief, his breath came in start-and-stops as his heart pounded against his chest. He was in heaven. He tenderly stroked her delicate cheeks as if to confirm that she was not a dream.

He confirmed she was real as he continued to stroke her gently so as not to wake her up.

Qin Shu's sleep was disturbed. She felt an irritating sensation against her cheek. Annoyed by it, she turned over and continued to sleep.

Fu Tingyu looked at Qin Shu in his arms and thought she was like a kitten, soft and cuddly. However much he looked at her, he simply could not get enough.

He realized that he could not let go – even though he knew that he would not live long.

He could not bear the thought of any other man holding her in his arms. He was immediately jealous of the prospect.

She was his wife. In this life, in the next life, and in the life after.

However, he did not want her to suffer.

He pulled her closer into his chest and took her breath away.

Qin Shu woke with a start and tried to wriggle herself free.

When the man realized that the person in his arms had woken up, he loosened them a little. He lowered his eyes and looked at her. "You have finally decided to return."

His voice was a little hoarse but it was extremely pleasant to her ears.

Fu Tingyu had asked the same question last night, but his tone now was a little different from back then. Qin Shu understood what he was trying to say and could detect the bitter undercurrent of resentment in his tone.

“I told you, I’ll be back in a few days. I never lied to you.”

He did not want to ask why she took so long to return since she was already in his arms.

Fu Tingyu stroked her hair and smelled its sweet fragrance. He could not love her more than he already did.

“When did you come back? Why didn’t you call to let me know you were coming home?”

“I took the evening bus back. I originally wanted to give you a surprise but I didn’t expect you to be drunk again.”

Fu Tingyu had drunk too much with his friend, Mo Chengyu.

Qin Shu looked at Fu Tingyu lovingly. Asking in a soft voice, she asked, “Are you still angry?”

Fu Tingyu didn’t answer her. Instead, he diverted, “How long do you plan to stay with me this time?”

“I’ll return to the capital when you’re feeling better.”

The effects of Gu Yan’s medicine were still unknown and she wanted to be there for him in case he suffered an adverse reaction.

She wanted to be around for him. She wanted to keep him happy and positive.

Fu Tingyu was touched by Qin Shu’s words but he knew that in the end his days were numbered.

Silence filled the bedroom.

Fu Tingyu suddenly spoke. “What if you can’t help me?”

Qin Shu eyed him in surprise. “How long do you plan to stay angry with me? It’ll affect our relationship as a couple.”

Fu Tingyu stared at her with his lips pursed. Recalling Qin Shu’s reluctance to return with him while they were in the capital, he was struck by the irony of her words. If she had insisted on staying in the capital and not returning to Jiang City with him, would not that have affected their relationship as husband and wife, anyway?

Taking the initiative to hug him while he mulled over words, Qin Shu mumbled faintly, “That time at the hotel... You left me. It was the first time you had ever left without me. You left me in a foreign land, in a place so unlike our own home here. Weren’t you afraid that something could have happened to me?”

Though she spoke in a coquettish warble, it did nothing to hide her dissatisfaction.

Fu Tingyu’s glacial heart instantly softened.

“... I-I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“You did do it on purpose. You left me there alone, storming out without so much as a word of goodbye. You did not even pick up the phone w-when I called you.”

Qin Shu refused to let the matter drop. By the end, her voice had taken on a faint tremble and her last few words came out as a choked mess.

She ranted for an hour, while he remained silent and expressionless.

The more he listened, the more he felt uncomfortable.

Tightening his arms around her slender waist he thought how he could not have left her behind if it weren't for unforeseen circumstances. Leaving her behind was the last thing he would ever do.

If it weren't for the fact that he had been unconscious, he would not have wilfully ignored her calls?

Nothing in this world was more precious than his Bao'er.

"Bao'er, it won't happen again. I promise."

Qin Shu looked him in the eyes and asked uncertainly, "You're not lying to me, are you?"

Fu Tingyu returned her timid gaze with one that spoke of unwavering determination. "I'm not lying to you."

Qin Shu's limpid eyes curved in crescents, but her words rattled harshly in her chest, "If you leave me again, this will be the last conversation we ever have together."

He listened to her intently. Every word sounded like sweet honey to his ears. He liked the tone of playfulness in her voice and the way she would tease him with her words.

"Alright." Lowering his head to rest on hers, Fu Tingyu murmured, "Bao'er is getting so affectionate with her words..."

"I am not being affectionate. I am threatening you."

Qin Shu huffed unhappily with her head leaning into the crook of his neck.

"They are just words of affection, to me at least."

Alright.

Qin Shu did not wish to argue any further. It only mattered that he liked what she said, that was enough for her.

Tilting upwards, she asked, "Are you still angry?"

Fu Tingyu pulled away, answering without a trace of hesitation, "No."

"Oh."

Qin Shu stared at her feet. Just then, her empty stomach rumbled in protest. Perhaps he would not be so angry after eating a meal with her? "You must be hungry. I have heard that a person's mood will improve after a good meal."

Fu Tingyu's eyes darkened. "Yes, I am hungry. I didn't get to eat my fill last night."

"Then you should go and wash up... hmm..."

...

...

Shi Yan always woke early. Looking at the time, he noted that it was 8:30 in the morning. Usually, the fourth young master would already be awake at this time. Recalling how drunk he was last night, Shi Yan supposed that it was normal for him to sleep in.

He waited for half an hour before climbing the stairs to the second floor where the master bedroom was located. He knocked on the bedroom door twice.

After waiting for a while, he reached for the door handle and heard master four's cold and stern voice.

Receiving no response, Shi Yan reached for the doorknob and prepared to wake the young master up a little more forcefully. However, he was stopped by a cold and stern voice sounding from within.

"Get lost..."

Shi Yan was stunned into silence. What was the fourth young master doing?

Seeing as the fourth young master did not want to be disturbed, Shi Yan respectfully withdrew.

Walking down, he could not help but take a second glance in the direction of the master bedroom. What was wrong with the fourth young master?

"Meow"

Suddenly, a cat meowed. Shi Yan retracted his gaze and saw President Ba running towards him with a piece of paper in his mouth.

Shortly after, he saw Ye Luo running in as well.