

His Beloved 261

Chapter 261:

Qin Mu now knew that Qin Haiming often came to see her daughter; that evening she didn't lose her temper but simply let out a resigned, bitter smile.

Let it be!

Later, she went to coax Huanhuan to sleep, and Mu Yichen chatted for a bit downstairs before he went upstairs to find her.

He sat on the edge of the bed, beside mother and daughter, his eyes slightly downcast: "I've actually known about this all along, I didn't tell you because I was afraid you'd be unhappy."

Qin Mu listened quietly, not planning to say anything, but then she thought about it, turned around, and looked at him with eyes as tranquil as water: "Let him look if he wants to, after all, Huanhuan hasn't lost anything."

Mu Yichen hadn't expected her to say that, thinking she would have been furious and complain while crying and hugging him, just like the last time he tricked her into going to a birthday banquet.

He even thought she might leave in anger.

But she merely said so calmly.

"Go back to the room to sleep."

Qin Mu couldn't help but glare at him: you're punished to sleep on the couch tonight.

Yichen's heart shattered in an instant.

—

Qin Mu had recently begun to get busy preparing for the year-end show, and the controversy on Weibo had also reversed. That morning, as she looked at the webpage that lavishly reported on her work and career, she realized that she had been in this industry for quite some time.

Xiaomei whispered in her ear: "But the incident is still fermenting, there's talk on both sides, shall we continue to pin it up next?"

"No need, we've fought up to this point, if they still can't distinguish between truth and falsehood, then there's nothing worth our attention left."

Qin Mu glanced at the webpage one last time, then closed her laptop and turned to look at Xiaomei.

After hearing this, Xiaomei nodded: "That's better, I've been looking for pictures so much that I'm nearly short-sighted."

"But weren't you already nearsighted?"

"My astigmatism is just a bit more severe, okay?"

Xiaomei retorted, and Qin Mu couldn't help but laugh with resignation: Alright, alright.

"Your mentor called and said he's coming over this afternoon, it seems his health is getting better."

It was only when Qin Mu heard this that she finally sighed in relief, feeling genuinely reassured—for Jian Yan's sickness had truly unnerved her. And also, who told Mu Yi about her visiting her mentor?

She had even forgotten to ask him.

"Qinqin? Qinqin?"

As Qin Mu was lost in thought, Xiaomei called her several times.

Qin Mu lifted her eyes to look at her, still a bit dazed.

"Then, I'm going out first, okay?"

Xiaomei said, gesturing towards the door.

"Oh, sure!"

Qin Mu finally snapped back to reality, picked up her phone to send him a message, but then she thought it was better to talk about this kind of thing in person, so she put the phone back down.

Helian Hao would go see her later and get angry talking about what happened at the Jing Family's place, then feel helpless: "Why do I even bother? I've made up my mind. I'll never attend another Jing Family family meeting again, just to avoid upsetting myself."

Qin Mu put down the pen in her hand, unconsciously touching her slightly calloused fingertip joints and sighed: "Of course, happiness is the most important thing. What did Jing Feng say?"

"Jing Feng didn't say much, but I heard that even before he pursued me, he told the old residence's people that in the future, they should talk to him about such matters. Probably because he also doesn't want me to hear all that."

Qin Mu nodded, and unconsciously, she awarded Jing Feng some mental points.

As long as Jing Feng knows how to stay clear, he won't suffer losses with the Jing Family, thinking about it, she and her sister...

"I'm just angry for you. How can some people be so extreme? Clearly, it's not theirs, yet they insist on having it?"

"Mu Yichen is certainly not a 'thing.'"

After hearing this, Qin Mu couldn't help but clarify to Helian Hao with a straight face, then nearly laughed at the inappropriateness of her own words.

"Yes, yes, your Mu Yichen is not a 'thing,' he's a treasure, okay? But he's your treasure alone."

Helian Hao couldn't stand her being so sticky sweet about Mu Yichen, feeling it was mushy but couldn't help correcting her.

"Not really, the whole family treats him like a treasure."

"If you're going to put it that way, then people all over the world who think of him as a treasure are aplenty, from noble gentlemen to the entertainment industry's national heartthrobs who blur people's senses. But your Yichen has indeed surpassed them."

"If Jing Feng appeared more on entertainment headlines, I guess he wouldn't be far behind."

"I'd rather he never appears on them."

Helian Hao thought to himself, less trouble is always better than more. Who would want their man to be on other women's minds?

Qin Mu could only smile bitterly, not feeling that others were dreadful. But if you really think about it, Jing Qing can indeed be quite terrifying.

But what's the use of being afraid?

She had originally wanted a fair fight, but who knew that right from the beginning, it wasn't on the level.

Chapter 262:

It's said that she has recently changed her designer, and her fashion sense has significantly improved. As for Wen Runuan, she still takes the relaxed and simple approach.

What kind of female celebrities do the audiences really like?

The enchanting and seductive ones?

Or the elegant ladies?

Or perhaps the ordinary girl-next-door?

Or maybe it's each to their own, but there always needs to be a standout, and Wen Runuan must have her own style that never tires onlookers.

If Jing Qing ever finds it hard to continue at Jingshang, Qin Mu thinks she might at best be a supporting role; the key must be that Zhang always wants to help his own woman.

Mu Yichen said that Zhang has invited him to have lunch together at noon and asked if she would join, but after much thought, Qin Mu still felt it wasn't suitable for her, and when lunchtime came, she went to a hotpot restaurant outside with Helian Hao and Xiaomei to have a yin-yang hotpot.

Xiaomei cried from the spiciness but kept dipping into the unbearably spicy broth, while Qin Mu and Helian Hao calmly went for the mild flavor.

"Maybe you should stop eating; what if you get a stomachache in the afternoon?" As a doctor, she reflexively reminded her of the people she saw get injured.

"It's okay, the last time I ate it was even spicier. It's really satisfying to eat this once in a while. Don't believe us? Try it yourselves."

Qin Mu didn't dare, so she ignored the suggestion and quietly ate her own food.

Helian Hao shook her head, "I can't do it. My stomach hasn't been great recently. You should go to the pharmacy and buy some medicine to take back after eating."

"Okay!" Xiaomei agreed while giving Helian Hao a deep look, scaring her into a shiver.

"Ah, if our Xiaomei went into showbiz, she might actually make it big for a while." Qin Mu couldn't help but remark upon seeing so much expression on Xiaomei's face.

"I don't want to go; it's so chaotic! What if some director takes a fancy to me? Do I follow them or not? You know I have trouble making choices."

Xiaomei immediately hugged her shoulders, looking very frightened.

Helian Hao couldn't help but laugh, "Now I finally understand why you two get along so well."

"Why?"

Qin Mu looked up curiously and asked, the steam from the pot separating the three of them.

"You complete each other; one's too serious, the other's not serious enough."

Helian Hao said as she put some noodles into the pot to cook, because she had to work in the afternoon, she said, "I'll have to leave after eating these. It'll probably be busy this afternoon."

"Yeah, eat up then. We can chat more when you're free." Qin Mu suggested as she poured her a cup of water and brought it to her.

"Miss Helian, will you and Mr. Jing have a wedding ceremony?"

Xiaomei asked curiously.

"Maybe, but that seems like a distant event," Helian Hao said while stirring the noodles in the pot and sighed after finishing.

"When the time comes for Miss Helian to have a wedding with our Qinqin, I'll be your bridesmaid, hahaha. I can definitely ask for a hefty red envelope." Xiaomei dreamed big.

"Which bride are you going to block the door for then?"

Qin Mu couldn't help but ask, her almond eyes bright yet profound.

"Uh..."

Xiaomei suddenly thought, that's right!

"Also, you shouldn't call me 'Miss Helian' anymore; it feels so distant. Since you call Mumu Qinqin, just call me Helian or Xiaohao. The patients in our department even call me 'Doctor Hao'."

The two women about to eat couldn't help but laugh.

That afternoon, when Qin Mu and Xiaomei returned to the studio, they saw Jian Yan. Knowing he was coming, they had specially brought him a cup of coffee from the café. Jian Yan smiled faintly at the sight of the coffee on the table: "You two are thoughtful, even getting coffee for me while out for lunch."

"It was mainly Xiaomei's idea."

Qin Mu said with a wry smile, holding her water cup while sitting across from him.

"Yeah, when have you ever cared about me?"

Always reciting 'one day as a teacher, a lifetime as a father'...

Qin Mu, feeling somewhat ashamed as Jian Yan's gaze seemed to speak those very words, lowered her head.

Xiaomei, seeing the way Jian Yan looked at Qin Mu, helplessly turned her head to continue working. When would he truly see her efforts?

After Xiaomei left, Qin Mu recalled some words she had said to her. Thinking about Mu Yichen's unusual behavior because of Jian Yan, and then looking up at Jian Yan again, she felt a bit guilty.

Jian Yan, noticing her evasive gaze, softly asked, "Did you do any drawings this morning? Let's check them out."

"Sure!"

Qin Mu carried her water cup upstairs, followed by him, and the cup of coffee remained untouched on the table.

Jian Yan and she worked in an office, occasionally exchanging words, but Qin Mu frequently saw Jian Yan frown and instinctively asked, "Are you still feeling unwell?"

Chapter 263:

"Gone!"

Jian Yan lifted his eyes briefly, then lowered his gaze again, having intended to sketch, but in the end, he pushed the paper aside: "I'm going back to the office to check some materials; if you need me, come find me there."

Qin Mu nodded subconsciously, his eyes never leaving him, until he stood up and left. Qin Mu was still staring at the door, lost in thought for a while.

Not long after Mu Yichen finished drinking with President Zhang, he went to find her, but he didn't go to her office and instead went directly to the room where she used to sleep to rest.

As Qin Mu was pouring water, she saw that the door was ajar. Approaching softly, she pushed it open and saw him lying on the bed, instinctively stepping forward: "When did you get here?"

No one answered. Was he asleep?

Qin Mu, holding the empty cup, walked to the edge of the bed: "Mu Yichen?"

Mu Yichen still didn't utter a sound. Qin Mu thought he was probably tired, then she put down the cup and reached over him to pull the inside covers over him.

"You have a phone call."

Xiaomei reminded softly from outside.

Qin Mu didn't even have the time to take another glance before standing up and walking towards the door. Xiaomei handed her the phone with a mischievous giggle, muttering, "I went to bring you water just now and heard your phone ringing."

Qin Mu laughed involuntarily, thinking what did I say that has you looking so scared.

Later, when Qin Mu went to get her cup, she casually mentioned to him, "Will you be here all afternoon?"

"Yeah, waiting for you to get off work."

"Cut it out, waiting for me to get off work smelling like booze?"

"Still remembering to find you after getting this drunk, what does that tell you?"

President Mu looked at her holding the cup at the door, then asked.

Qin Mu raised her eyes to the doorframe, pondered for a moment: "It means it's true love."

"Hmph!"

Mu Yichen turned over and ignored her further, Qin Mu...

True love just gets a hmph?

So defiant!

Afterward, Qin Mu concentrated on her sketching in the office, while Mu Yichen got up from sleeping and went to Jian Yan's office. Jian Yan smiled at his arrival but didn't put down the cigarette he was about to light: "President Mu, would you like one?"

Mu Yichen, hands in pockets, walked in with an aristocratic air and indeed sat beside him on the couch, took a cigarette from the box on the coffee table, and hung it in his mouth.

Jian Yan sighed involuntarily at his roguish air: "Isn't President Mu busy at this time?"

"With so many people under me, if I still had to work all day and night, what use would they be?"

He lit his cigarette and took a drag before replying.

Jian Yan knew Mu Yichen's temperament; a great man could bend and stretch, could be tempestuous or modest to the extreme.

"That's something you would say."

Jian Yan took a deep drag and leaned back nonchalantly in the couch, eyes drifting over the cigarette box on the coffee table.

Mu Yichen lifted his gaze: "I heard from Qin Mu that you haven't been well lately? But it's not bad enough to need someone to look after you, right?"

"Hmph! Did Mumu tell you?" Jian Yan's smile was very sincere.

"Of course."

Hearing that "of course," Jian Yan really didn't feel well inside, yet he had to admit that he could only be jealous.

"I've told you before, don't worry about me competing with you. I can't win, and I won't compete."

"Then why are you staying here?"

Mu Yichen asked directly, his cold and devilish eyes staring at the man across from him.

"I'll return to Paris after her show this year. Whether I'll ever come back is uncertain," Jian Yan said with a bitter smile, as if he harbored some unspeakable secret.

"No wonder she said you've been acting strange lately."

"Mumu?"

"Yes, she's been fantasizing lately that you have some terminal illness."

Jian Yan's expression flickered with momentary surprise, then he laughed: "Truly worthy of being my good disciple."

"If there's something wrong, say it. Don't play mysterious games; she respects you like her own father."

When President Mu said the word "father," he even glanced up at him, but Jian Yan didn't mind the intentional dig: "Having me in her heart is enough for me."

"Hmph!"

Mu Yichen chuckled disdainfully, annoyed that Jian Yan seemed so unfazed.

That evening after work, the two of them went home together. In the car, Qin Mu curiously asked him, "What were you and master talking about? Xiaomei said you guys had a secret meeting for over an hour."

"Is a man's topic something you should listen to?"

Mu Yichen turned to look at her and then back at the road ahead.

"What's there that I can't listen to?"

As Qin Mu spoke, she sneaked more glances at him, finding President Mu uncharacteristically unable to stay serious, clearly amused.

Qin Mu continued to pester him for an answer, but without success, she gave up, not expecting to come home to find Huanhuan's grandfather there.

Chapter 264:

Yes, Huanhuan called out for Grandpa, tugging at him and insisting to have dinner with him.

"You should stay and leave after dinner," she said.

Seeing her granddaughter clinging to him, not letting him go, Feng Fanghua also persuaded him to stay.

"Better not, Mumu should be back soon," he replied.

They had only finished work half an hour early today. As soon as Qin Mu and Mu Yichen walked through the door, they heard the conversation. Qin Mu was actually very conflicted inside, but most of her rationality suppressed the impulse.

Mu Yichen wrapped his arms around her shoulders as if to give her strength, and Qin Mu glanced at him subconsciously before they walked into the living room together.

"Young Master and Young Mistress are back," said the butler.

The butler had been watching inside and only realized someone had walked past him when he snapped back to reality and immediately asked.

The living room fell silent in an instant as the three elders and a little girl all turned to look at them uniformly.

"Mommy, Daddy, it's Grandpa!"

Huanhuan immediately let go of Qin Haiming and ran to her parents, starting to introduce them.

Qin Mu lowered her eyes and smiled at her daughter's excited demeanor, picking her up: "Do you like Grandpa a lot, Huanhuan?"

"Mhmm!"

Huanhuan looked at her mother's gentle gaze and immediately nodded.

Feng Fanghua could see that Qin Mu was soft-hearted and immediately greeted cheerfully, "Then please stay."

Qin Haiming still glanced at Qin Mu one more time to make sure she wouldn't be angry before he nodded, "Then I will accept your hospitality tonight."

"Why all the formalities between our families?"

Mu Zihao invited him to sit, and the kitchen was still preparing dinner, which naturally would be sumptuous. Outside, Mu Yichen also joined in drinking tea, while Qin Mu took Huanhuan to wash her hands in the restroom. Watching her daughter scrub the soap on her own, she couldn't help but sigh with the thought of how fast her daughter was growing up, and suddenly her own childhood came to mind.

Back then, she too would stand on a little stool in front of the washbasin to wash her hands, intentionally doing it when Qin Hai came home from work since he would always become frightened and go to pick her up whenever he saw her on that stool.

Time flies. In the blink of an eye, she was a mother and no longer experienced the feeling of being a daughter.

Now he was in her in-laws' home, whether as friend or foe it suddenly seemed less important. Could she let go of the resentment of being sent abroad, could she forgive her mother's death?

Qin Mu didn't know, but that evening, she had to face it calmly.

Dinner time was livelier than usual with the family gathered at the table. Mu Zihao and Feng Fanghua naturally treated the mayor of Qin City as a close relative and were very hospitable. As the junior, Qin Mu kept quiet, and the task of feeding her daughter fell upon her again, so she quietly helped Huanhuan with her meal, picking out fish bones.

Mu Yichen, seeing that she wasn't eating much herself, started to put food on her plate. Qin Mu, as if she didn't see, focused solely on feeding Huanhuan.

"Let me toast to you first. It's been such a long time since their wedding and they have never had a formal meal together. It's our fault as the groom's side, so this drink is to apologize to you," Mu Zihao said, holding up his glass of white wine.

Qin Haiming held up his glass as well but laughed lightly: "This has nothing to do with you. It's my fault for being an incompetent father. If anything, I should be the one toasting to thank you for taking care of my daughter."

"Since we are all family here, let's just drink this one together," Feng Fanghua proposed, lifting her glass.

Mu Yichen turned to Qin Mu: "Mumu is taking herbal medicine recently and can't drink alcohol, so I'll drink in her stead."

"I'll drink water instead!"

After hearing this, Qin Mu picked up her water glass, still composed.

Feng Fanghua and Mu Zihao were puzzled, and Qin Haiming was even more surprised. Since Qin Mu had returned, he had tried many times to have a meal with her, always to be refused. Now Qin Mu had surprisingly agreed to drink a toast with him using water instead of wine, how could his heart not feel it?

But Mu Yichen just smiled slightly and stood up, holding his glass out to perform the courteous toast.

Later, as the elders chatted, Qin Mu whispered, "I'll take Huanhuan for a bath first."

"Oh, alright, go ahead!"

Feng Fanghua didn't stop her, and Qin Mu then left with Huanhuan in her arms.

After she had left, Mu Yichen also exhaled in relief. That the dinner went by so peacefully was not an easy feat. She certainly struggled a great deal internally before barely convincing herself to attend.

"This child is really not like what I had imagined," Qin Haiming murmured after she left.

"What do you think of her? Or do you just assume she's as your wife has described?" Mu Yichen asked bluntly after Qin Mu had left.

Chapter 265:

Qin Haiming looked at him, and for a moment, his mind went blank.

"Yichen, don't talk nonsense,"

Feng Fanghua immediately intervened.

"Nonsense? My wife has spent so many years abroad. After coming back, did Mr. Qin, as her father, sincerely want to make up for the past? Not to mention initially wanting to move my mother-in-law's grave from the Qin family burial ground, let's talk about a few days ago when your wife and daughter went to make a scene at her studio. Whether my wife takes after you or my mother-in-law, is she the kind of person who would strike someone first? Yet, you listened to your wife and daughter's provocations and demanded an apology from her, disappointing not just her—"

Mu Yichen's words trailed off there; he knew Qin Haiming understood his point. His words were heavy, serious, and unkind—so much so that at this moment, his stern demeanor almost made him seem like the host of the table.

"Yichen, stop talking!"

Even Mu Zihao, the perennially gentle man, couldn't help but call for a halt after his son finished his speech.

Mu Yichen naturally did not continue but instead picked up his glass, "As a junior, I have no place to say these things, but as my wife's husband, I must speak up for her. If I have offended, consider this drink as my apology."

Mu Yichen then picked up his glass, without the slightest hesitation.

At that moment, the dining room fell silent.

The three older generations watched him finish his drink and remained silent for a long while.

"I admit I haven't trusted Mumu enough. She's been away for so many years, and upon returning, she's become so cold. Of course, she turned out this way because of me, but—as for many things—it's not easy to explain,"

Mu Zihao and Feng Fanghua naturally could not say much; they just listened quietly.

"Actually, after being apart for so many years, some harmonization is necessary, but we're still family after all. Don't think too much."

"Yes, life goes on. Besides, we understand you don't have time to tend to family matters,"

Mu Zihao and Feng Fanghua would then speak in his defense after a while.

"Yichen spoke well just now. In the future, I'll use my eyes to see and my heart to discern. Am I satisfying you with this statement?"

Qin Haiming looked at his son-in-law sitting across from him. Actually, he wasn't very satisfied with Mu Yichen. Even though Mu Yichen normally was sparing with his words, Qin Haiming was aware that he harbored many things in his heart. Today, since Mu Yichen was willing to talk so much, he naturally would not fail to respond.

"I'm looking forward to it,"

Mu Yichen tugged at the corner of his mouth.

"Then, can those rumors of you leaving Rong City to develop elsewhere also disappear from the city?"

Upon hearing this, Mu Zihao and Feng Fanghua couldn't help but look at their son curiously. None had expected Mu Yichen would pull such a stunt, and it really did scare some people.

"Those weren't my words. Although I indeed have some projects elsewhere, I never said I was leaving Rong City,"

Mu Yichen leaned back in his chair, speaking as if it were all true.

His sharply contoured face was devoid of emotion, and while his words were slick, they didn't give the impression that he was brushing you off.

After hearing him, Qin Haiming nodded: "With your word, I am relieved."

Qin Haiming gave a light smile and drank with him.

Mu Yichen, not saying much more, poured himself another glass.

Qin Mu had been upstairs with Huanhuan all along, bathing her and then reading her fairy tale books. Usually, these were tasks for Feng Fanghua, and she rarely had the chance. Tonight, she finally got her wish.

"Mommy, is grandpa still here?"

"Mhm!"

In the warm bedroom, on the bed that belonged to the little princess, mother and daughter lay talking. Huanhuan was actually close to falling asleep, but her concerns lay downstairs.

"Will grandpa live with us?"

"Does Huanhuan want grandpa to live with us?"

"Mhm!"

"Grandpa has his own home and can't live with us. But grandpa will come to see Huanhuan often, right?"

"Right, and he will bring Huanhuan a lot of gifts."

Qin Mu gently stroked her daughter's hair. A child is always so pure; as long as someone treats her well and buys her gifts, she will greatly like them.

But how many people in this world genuinely care for others?

She wasn't sure if Qin Haiming's feelings for her were genuine, just as she wasn't sure if she could continue to bear everything silently.

Later, Mu Yichen also returned upstairs first. Qin Mu was still in her daughter's room. He crouched beside the bed and watched her. Since Huanhuan had fallen asleep, she was watching her phone. Putting down the phone and glancing sideways at him: "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Chapter 266:

"Mrs. Mu, you always manage to surprise me!"

He gazed at her, his deep black eyes filled with profound affection.

"There might be even more surprising things in the future," Qin Mu smiled as a reminder.

Mu Yichen chuckled, then took her slender hand, only then noticing the slight roughness between her fingers, the result of years of holding a pen.

He lowered his head to look at her hands.

Qin Mu lay quietly beside the bed, watching him, her heart also seeking, searching for the very thing in him that moved her.

Could she, towards him, ever let go as easily as she once did?

Later, the two of them went back to their room to rest, and Mu Zihao chatted over tea with Feng Fanghua. "Your daughter-in-law has changed her ways today; last time she left without a word."

"She understands the relationships involved, now that she has chosen to stay in Rongcheng," Mu Zihao nodded and said.

"Hmph, I don't believe that girl is so calculating,"

Feng Fanghua unintentionally sighed as she finished speaking. In truth, she had a thought in her mind, that Qin Mu might be doing it for the Mu Family, but since Qin Mu didn't mention it, she too remained silent.

"No matter what, it's not easy for Mumu to make such a compromise, so go easy on her,"

Mu Zihao spoke quietly to his wife, fearing a louder voice might displease her.

"I get it, nag!"

Feng Fanghua glared at him.

On the way home, Qin Haiming also seemed relieved as he looked into the distance and asked the driver in front, "Old Wang, how many years has it been since Mumu's mother left?"

"Miss was seven that year, so it's been over sixteen years,"

The driver glanced through the rearview mirror, his voice wavering with emotion.

The car was quiet, the laughter of Qin Haiming barely reaching the front.

Qin Haiming looked up at the night sky: "Sixteen years, it feels like something from a past life."

His voice was low and heartbreakingly tender.

"Yeah, blink of an eye, and Miss Mumu is a mother,"

the driver responded.

"Mm! Although she seems cold on the outside now, her heart is still like when she was a child. Just take tonight, for instance, she let me stay at the Mu Family for dinner and even had a drink with me, all because Huanhuan said she likes me,"

Qin Haiming suddenly laughed, as if it was the sweetest thing to happen in years.

"Yes, every time I see Miss Mumu, she's always very warm, but it seems like she's afraid of being too warm. I can tell, she's still as sensible as when she was a child, it's just that too many things have happened, and only when she came back did she harbor some hard feelings,"

The driver glanced at the rearview mirror, recalling the beautiful little girl from the past.

"It's also my fault, how could I agree to Rujia's request to move her mother's grave out of the family cemetery? How could I do such a thing?"

Qin Haiming spoke more to himself.

"Don't be too hard on yourself. It's normal for feelings to fade after so many years apart as a father and daughter, but looking at how things are now, I'm sure you won't be separated again,"

"Never again!"

Qin Haiming shook his head, and the car safely arrived at the house.

As soon as Qin Haiming entered, he saw Zhang Rujia waiting for him on the sofa, and couldn't help but think of his daughter who had been wandering outside for many years, then sighed deeply as he walked forward.

"Haiming, which hotel were you entertaining at tonight? Why are you back so late?"

"I didn't go to a hotel. It was the Mu Family, had a simple meal and chatted a bit,"

Qin Haiming was still in his neat suit, casually walking to the sofa to sit down.

Zhang Rujia just got up to greet him as he sat down and then settled next to him.

"Really? Did you go to see Qin Mu?"

"To see Huanhuan, but she and Mu Yi were also home. We just ended up together. Why? Aren't you pleased?"

He turned to look at her and asked.

"No, how could I be unhappy? I also look forward to our family being happy together. She's your daughter, and naturally, I treat her like my own,"

Zhang Rujia said as she went to help him with his coat.

Qin Haiming nodded.

The living room lighting was warm, casting a cozy yet slightly dim glow on the sofa. Qin Haiming said in a low voice, "Xiaojia, as long as you don't make things difficult for her, this is my only request. Then, we, as husband and wife, can be happy like before, okay?"

"Look at what you're saying. I'm not some kind of cruel stepmother,"

Zhang Rujia muttered as she hung up his coat and poured him water before she went to look for him again.

"Also, keep an eye on Mingzhu. She has been pampered at home since she was young and shouldn't be causing trouble with Mumu anymore."

"Okay!"

"And one more thing, prepare a room for Mumu."

Qin Haiming said, looking down, to the woman beside him.

"Prepare a room? She's going to move back in?"

"That's not possible, but if she occasionally comes back to her parental home, surely she should have her own room? Prepare the best room on the second floor for her, buy a big bed, and also for Huanhuan. If she comes back, she will certainly bring her daughter."

Qin Haiming had everything planned out perfectly, to the point that just thinking about such future days excited him.

However, Zhang Rujia watched him talk calmly, while she felt very uncomfortable inside.

"Okay, I'll do as you say!" But she agreed outwardly.

"You know, I was thinking, they should have a wedding. When it's time to pick up the bride, we should personally send her off from our house."

"Okay, whatever treatment Mingzhu gets, she gets the same, no biases. What do you think?"

Zhang Rujia asked him with a smile.

"Okay. If you can do that, then I can focus on my work with peace of mind."

"Just relax. From now on, as long as she doesn't trouble me, I absolutely won't say a bad word about her."

Qin Mingzhu hadn't slept either. She had wanted to go downstairs to get a drink, but after overhearing the couple's conversation, she felt an immense sense of grievance, holding back tears in her eyes.

Yet she didn't step out until the next morning when she finally went to ask Zhang Rujia, who sighed helplessly, "If I hadn't agreed to your father right then, would he have let me off the hook?"

"But you shouldn't have agreed to make a room available for her, saying she'll get the same treatment as me. What right does she have? These years it's you who have taken care of Dad. Her mother died a long time ago and did nothing. Why should she enjoy the same treatment as me?"

Angry, Qin Mingzhu sat on the edge of their bed, while Zhang Rujia checked herself in the mirror, ensuring there were no wrinkles on her clothes, then turned indifferently to Qin Mingzhu and said, "Just because one says something, does that mean they must do it?"

Qin Mingzhu, puzzled, looked up at her.

"But we must first appease your dad. Right now, he just wants to make up with his eldest daughter. If you stand in the way, this family will fall apart."

Zhang Rujia spoke deliberately, as if she was confident she could handle the situation well.

"Is it that serious? You've always taken such good care of Dad; didn't he say he couldn't live without you?"

"He says he can't live without me, but now that he has Mu Yichen as a son-in-law, does he still care about a woman like me?"

"So what should we do?"

Worry immediately gripped Qin Mingzhu; she wasn't willing to lower herself to Qin Mu, nor was she willing to make room for her.

"Just humour her,"

"But..."

Just as Qin Mingzhu was about to ask more, her cellphone in her pocket rang. She looked down, saw it was labeled 'Sister Jing Qing', and immediately muttered, "What does she want with me?"

"Who is it?"

"Jing Qing!"

"Answer it first!"

Zhang Rujia guessed it wasn't good news, but felt the caller could still be of use, so she told her daughter to answer the phone.

That morning, after Qin Mu went to the studio, she gathered everyone for a meeting on the first floor. Everyone took their respective seats, with Qin Mu standing beside Xiaomei's desk. Jian Yan remained upstairs, not coming down.

Qin Mu had hardly spoken a few words before the door was pushed open from the outside. Everyone curiously turned to look, only to see a woman in a pink coat entering. Delighted, she ran towards Qin Mu with her purse in hand: "Sis, I've come to see you."

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"Sis, Dad told me that from now on, we sisters should get along well. I swear, I will never hang out with Jing Qing again. From now on, I'll be your little sister! Your dear little sister!"

As Qin Mingzhu spoke, she looped her arm through Qin Mu's, looking smug and oh-so-genuine.

Today, Qin Mu wore a light grey shirt with a dark cashmere vest over it. She looked down at her slender arm, now invaded by another hand, and couldn't help feeling uncomfortable.

"What's gotten into you?"

Qin Mu murmured, her brows slightly furrowed.

"Crazy? How can you say that about your own sister? Remember, we both share Dad's blood. He's had Mom prepare a room for you at home, waiting for you to move back in. He even said he wouldn't recognize me as his daughter if I didn't get along with you. You've got to play along with me in this act for Dad, right? It won't do you any good if I get thrown out."

The way Qin Mingzhu said it... it sounded so real.

Qin Mu just looked at her with that low gaze, and after listening to her speak, she couldn't help but let out a snort of laughter, "Actually, there are some benefits!"

Qin Mu's voice wasn't loud, but her words surprised everyone present; Qin Mingzhu was especially shocked, her eyes nearly bulging out.

"How could it benefit you if Dad throws me out?" Qin Mingzhu grumbled with a frown.

"It's satisfying!"

Qin Mu said evenly, as Qin Mingzhu nearly choked with indignation, tears threatening to spill.

"My goodness, what a waste not to be an actress!"

Xiaomei couldn't help but sneer in admiration of Qin Mingzhu's performance.

The colleagues who were in a meeting also curiously watched Qin Mingzhu put on her act in front of Qin Mu.

"I am not acting, don't spout nonsense. I'm here to genuinely seek reconciliation with her."

Upon hearing that, Qin Mingzhu immediately defended herself.

Xiaomei...

"We're in a meeting. If you don't have anything else, please leave."

Qin Mu figured this girl could make a fuss all day and night if she wanted to, and they had serious business to discuss, so she bluntly told her to leave.

"I won't leave; I'll wait for you. Since you're in a meeting, I'll go wait for you upstairs. Where's your office? Oh, no need to tell me, I'll find it myself!"

With those words, Qin Mingzhu finally let go of her and ran upstairs, bounding joyfully like an un-grown child.

"Is it true or false?"

Xiaomei suddenly wasn't sure of her own thoughts anymore, looking at Qin Mingzhu's foolish innocence, she turned to everyone with a puzzled gaze, then looked at Qin Mu.

Everyone else was also confused, and even two girls hadn't understood what Qin Mingzhu had said, but they guessed from her expressions.

Jian Yan watched from the second floor as Qin Mingzhu came up, and she glanced at him before moving past him.

Jian Yan instinctively turned to watch after Qin Mingzhu; Qin Mu's office had her name on it, so of course, it was easy to recognize. Still, he couldn't help but follow her.

Downstairs, Qin Mu sighed helplessly, finding it all too unbelievable.

Would that girl really come to seek peace with her just because of a few words from Qin Haiming?

"Let's continue with the meeting!"

Qin Mu addressed everyone.

"But she's upstairs!"

Xiaomei reminded.

Qin Mu chuckled, and Xiaomei looked up to see Jian Yan seemingly following Qin Mingzhu into the office before she breathed a sigh of relief. Xiaomei had seen and heard about too many incidents of famous

designers' work being stolen in such dramatic ways, so if Jian Yan wasn't there, she truly wouldn't dare let Qin Mingzhu stay upstairs.

Qin Mingzhu examined the surroundings of the desk and then looked down at the drawings on the table. Just as she was about to flip through them, she noticed Jian Yan standing at the doorway. Her heart skipped a beat, and she couldn't help but ask out of curiosity, "Who are you?"

"My surname is Jian. You're Qin Mingzhu?"

Jian Yan said with a light smile, exuding harmlessness and elegance.

"Yes! You look decent enough, but could you not stand there?"

Qin Mingzhu quietly suggested, her smile equally benign.

Jian Yan nodded slightly and moved further inside with a smile.

Watching him enter, Qin Mingzhu looked at him in bewilderment: "This is my sister's office."

"I know!"

Jian Yan replied calmly, then took a seat in the sofa inside, looking up comfortably at the girl standing by the desk.

"Then why are you coming in?"

Qin Mingzhu was a bit angry, the displeasure already showing on her face.

"She calls me 'Master'!"

He replied with a calm smile, and Qin Mingzhu...

Master?

Jian Yan?

In a flash, Qin Mingzhu remembered the person Jing Qing had told her about, and a flood of emotions filled her eyes.

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Jian Yan still smiled, but Qin Mingzhu thought for a moment, then chuckled twice towards him, with a bit of awe, a bit of nervousness, and frustration.

"Miss Qin, if you have something to wait for Qin Mu, you can sit down and wait."

"No, no need!"

Qin Mingzhu laughed, took another uncertain look at him, slightly lowered her head in an unnatural way, and suddenly said after a long thought, "Ha, I heard you have a good relationship with Qin Mu, is that true?"

"Not good, how could I be her master?"

Jian Yan was always in control, sitting there looking at the girl who was performing for him. In fact, how could he not see through what the girl was thinking in her heart? He could clearly understand every little expression she made.

"Is that so? Qin Mu is quite attractive, there must be many men who like her, right?"

"You are also pretty good-looking, there must be a lot of men chasing you, right?"

Qin Mingzhu was taken aback, then laughed again, "There are some, but I'm still young. My parents don't plan to let me date so early."

"Is that so? I didn't realize Qin Family's family education was so strict."

Jian Yan always spoke with composure, which caught Qin Mingzhu off guard again. It took her a while to understand the meaning of his words, but she just felt it was abrasive.

"Miss Qin, if you have nothing else, would you sit down and chat with this old man?"

As Jian Yan spoke, he glanced at the sofa next to him.

Qin Mingzhu was still standing there, glancing subconsciously at the sofa and then at Qin Mu's desk, before smiling and saying, "I think I'll wait for another day to come."

"Then I won't see you out!"

The spark in Qin Mingzhu's eyes was completely extinguished by a bucket of cold water in that moment. She had never met a man who talked like this before, seeming easy to talk to, but with words that always made the listener think there was more to them.

Later, just as Qin Mu was about to announce the end of the meeting, she heard Qin Mingzhu's high heels descending the stairs and turned her head unconsciously.

Qin Mingzhu caught Qin Mu's sharp gaze on her and couldn't help but mock herself, "I'll come to see you another day."

The sudden change in the girl's way of communicating was indeed a bit surprising, and Qin Mu watched with a questioning look as Qin Mingzhu left in dejection. Xiaomei muttered beside her, "Who knows what kind of mischief she's planning this time?"

After Xiaomei spoke, she looked up at the stairs, confusion also in her gaze.

"Let's finish up here!"

After addressing everyone, Qin Mu patted Xiaomei's shoulder gently to bring her back to reality. Xiaomei looked at her, "Shall I boil some hot water for you?"

"Sure, thank you!"

Xiaomei cast a resentful look at her and then left.

When Qin Mu turned to see that everyone had started working and looked through the window at Qin Mingzhu outside staring at her, that look...

It was like hatred!

Qin Mu thought, could it really be that after having a meal with Qin Haiming, he went back and told Zhang Rujia and Qin Mingzhu to prepare a room for her?

What a joke, did he really think they could reconcile like it was over a decade ago?

With that in mind, Qin Mingzhu's behavior didn't surprise her at all.

When Qin Mu returned upstairs, Jian Yan was still sitting there, having just lit a cigarette. When he saw her come in, he raised his hand, smoke curling from the cigarette. With a half-smile, he said, "It's already lit, let me finish it."

Qin Mu laughed, walked over, and sat beside him, "Enjoy it to your heart's content!"

"You let Mu Yichen enjoy it to his heart's content as well?"

He asked with a smile, still as serene as ever.

"Uh, he's very restrained in front of me."

Initially, Qin Mu's mind wandered elsewhere since Mu always used that word "enjoy" with her, but then she remembered he was her master and promptly straightened up.

"No wonder the master is not like him."

He chuckled softly and then took another deep inhale from his cigarette.

Hearing this, Qin Mu couldn't help but feel a bit of sorrow, a master and a man were naturally different concepts after all.

When she looked at Jian Yan again, Qin Mu noticed that he really had lost a lot of weight from the last time, looking as if he had not been eating well.

"Master, you seem to have been losing weight continuously since you got back, is your stomach upset?"

Qin Mu asked curiously, with a trace of concern in her eyes.

Looking at her, Jian Yan silently smiled faintly, "A bit, — but it's not serious, don't worry."

Qin Mu's heart tightened upon hearing this, but she felt a bit relieved when he said it wasn't serious.

"If it gets too bad, you should go to the hospital for a check-up right away. That kind of thing is no joke."

"Do you think your master would joke with his own life?"

He looked at her as if he was serious.

Qin Mu thought that nobody should joke with their own life, but at this moment, she felt an ominous feeling inside.

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Jian Yan had also been hospitalized for gastritis before, and the more she thought about it, the more uneasy she felt.

"Stop overthinking and focus on preparing for the show at the end of the year."

As she spoke, Jian Yan stood up with a cigarette clamped in one hand and the other hand tucked into her pants pocket, gave her instructions, and then left.

Qin Mu clasped her hands together, her elbows resting on her knees as she leaned forward. She couldn't help but turn her head to watch him as he walked away.

She couldn't quite explain it, but she had a very bad feeling in her heart.

Xiaomei came upstairs to bring her a drink, and upon entering her office, she saw that she seemed to be deep in thought and curiously asked, "What are you thinking about? I added a few roses to it for you."

"It's nothing. Is this for Master?" Qin Mu asked quietly as she smelled the coffee aroma, Jian Yan's favourite coffee.

"Yes!"

Xiaomei nodded her head; she had searched all over Rongcheng for this brand and wanted to make it for Jian Yan.

"Don't give it to him for now, make him some lily tea instead."

Qin Mu said softly, then looked up at Xiaomei. Knowing that Xiaomei would be puzzled, she added, "Master's stomach hasn't been good lately, and if he drinks coffee..."

"Then I'll go change it for him right now!"

Xiaomei turned and left upon hearing this.

Qin Mu...

How could she not understand? Xiaomei's feelings for Jian Yan might already run bone-deep.

But Jian Yan, being the way he was, made Qin Mu worry. She wanted to create opportunities for them but feared it might backfire. Yet doing nothing made her feel sorry for Xiaomei.

Maybe loving someone means...

...being willing to humiliate oneself for that person?

So had Mu Yichen really loved her back then when he was always by her side?

Qin Mu continued to gaze at the door with a puzzled look, her memories suddenly being pulled back to a few years ago.

Given Mu Yichen's indifferent nature, how could he possibly see her every so often if he had no feelings for her? It was said to be on business trips, but in reality, was it just to see her?

The more Qin Mu thought about it, the more she felt that their relationship probably traced back many years, and there were even some scenes she could no longer clearly remember, but those feelings were piercingly heartfelt.

How about her feelings towards Mu Yichen?

If he had always been giving, shouldn't she give back a little more?

It was only after work when Director Mu called her to say he had a dinner engagement and needed to take leave that Qin Mu, standing by the office window looking outside, said, "Then drink less alcohol."

"Hmm! Will you wait for me after dinner?"

Mu Yichen was also standing at the window in his office. Hearing her caution him to drink less, his heart stirred, and he then asked for her opinion in a deep voice.

"If you come back too late and I'm too tired, don't blame me."

"Be good."

His voice was soft and soothing. They talked for a while longer before he finally hung up the phone.

After Qin Mu hung up the phone, she couldn't help but sigh and allowed herself a small, involuntary smile.

However, her good mood dissipated suddenly as she got home and saw that the Jing Family's patriarch and Jing Qing were visiting.

Still, considering the respect due to an elder, she approached and stood before him with neither obsequiousness nor arrogance: "Grandpa Jing!"

Feng Fanghua and Mu Zihao, seeing her return, felt a bit apprehensive, but they were reassured when they heard her respectful greeting.

Jing Qing, however, seeing her standing there, politely smiled and said, "Even Yichen calls him Grandpa, so you don't have to call him 'Grandpa Jing.' Come over here and sit."

Jing Qing patted the empty seat beside her, inviting Qin Mu to join with a smile.

Qin Mu returned the smile lightly, then looked at her daughter and, as she sat down, said to Huanhuan, "Come to Mommy for a moment."

Huanhuan immediately scampered from Feng Fanghua's arms to hers, and Qin Mu kissed her forehead, "In Mommy's car, there seems to be some chocolate that Auntie Sophia sent over from Paris. Shall we ask Nanny Zhang to fetch it for you?"

"Yes!"

Upon hearing that the chocolate was from Auntie Sophia, Huanhuan's eyes lit up. She gave her mom a big kiss on the cheek before running off to find Nanny Zhang: "Nanny Zhang, Nanny Zhang..."

Nanny Zhang had heard and approached, taking Huanhuan by the hand, the two of them happily going to retrieve the chocolate.

Watching them from the side, Jing Qing couldn't help but smile and lower her head, "I don't know where you get your good fortune from; not only did you bear him a child, but you also married him."

Qin Mu, hearing the faint sadness in her words, simply replied softly, "Perhaps it's fate."

Jing Qing turned to look at her, as if she found Qin Mu's words disagreeable.

"Hmph! Whether it's fate or playing the sympathy card, I suppose only you would know best," Jing Qing said, not raising her voice, but she did not consider saving Qin Mu's face at all, her piercing eyes fixed on her as she spoke.

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At that moment, Qin Mu felt she was not considered a junior in the old man's eyes, but rather insignificant.

"What Elder Jing says isn't without reason. If playing the pity card could get me what I want, why would I not be happy to do so?"

If the elder didn't treat himself as an elder, then why should the younger generation act like juniors?

Since he looked at her with that kind of gaze, why should she tolerate him with a hypocritical gaze? So at that moment, Qin Mu's eyes also flashed with sharpness like drawn swords and blades.

"Hmph! You certainly know how to play the game. But such behavior is really contemptible."

Elder Jing laughed, his gaze still filled with disdain and sarcasm.

"If I behaved properly, would you look at me as you would look at a junior, or even a normal person?"

Qin Mu countered, her gaze still keen.

Jing Qing listened silently, instinctively disliking the way Qin Mu spoke to her grandfather.

As for Feng Fanghua and Mu Zihao, they didn't think too much, only fearing that there might be a fight.

The old man straightened his back and stretched his neck to look at the girl sitting diagonally opposite him. Despite her young age, she had an extraordinary presence, and he couldn't help but snort coldly: You're too green to fight me.

"I never thought about fighting with you. With your years and experience, having weathered so many storms, how could I, a young woman in her early twenties, compare? I just hope that Elder Jing would spare me a path to live, as I've never intended to be an eyesore to you."

"What do you mean by that?"

Jing Qing turned her head and suddenly questioned her.

Qin Mu glanced at her but said nothing more.

However, Elder Jing of the Jing Family chuckled, his eyebrows arching high as he retorted, "Qin Mu, you have quite the sharp tongue, but it's not yet certain who will have the last laugh between you and Xiaoqing."

"It's me who is laughing now!"

Qin Mu said calmly, looking towards Jing Qing beside her.

Jing Qing immediately felt humiliated and looked at her unhappily.

"Qin Mu, don't push people too far!"

Jing Qing suddenly stood up, as if swallowing a mountain of grievances.

"I was merely stating a fact to Elder Jing, with no intention of insulting you."

Qin Mu looked up at her, composed and with commanding presence.

"Xiaoqing, sit down!"

Commanded the elder of the Jing Family in a low voice.

Only then did Jing Qing reluctantly sit down, her eyes filled with stubborn tears.

"Are there no elders present? When has our Jing Family's upbringing become so inappropriate?"

The old master scolded, and Jing Qing could only look up and apologize to Mu Zihao and Feng Fanghua: Uncle, Auntie, I'm very sorry!

"We're all family here, what's there to be sorry about? Elder Jing, please don't be too hard on the child. Let's go have our meal."

As a younger member of the family, Feng Fanghua could only speak to the elder with a polite tone.

"Hmph, a meal, I'm afraid somebody can't stomach us grandfather and grandson having this meal, can they?"

Elder Jing of the Jing Family asked with a cold tone, his eyes still on Qin Mu.

He deliberately made it difficult for Qin Mu, who had anticipated this the moment she walked in. Hence, she chuckled: It's just a meal, after all. Guests are to be welcomed, and as a junior, I must abide by the arrangements of my elders.

Qin Mu easily shifted the topic, and both Feng Fanghua and Mu Zihao felt reassured inside because Qin Mu's conduct had been appropriate; she wasn't abject just because she was ridiculed, nor did she lose composure when she was confronted.

"Madam, the dinner is ready!"

The maid announced promptly.

"Then, Elder, please take the seat of honor."

Mu Zihao was even more courteous, giving face to the elder by letting him lead the way.

"I won't stand on ceremony then, but if we are to drink, we'll have to wait for your father to return. I can drink with him, but with you, you're still lacking."

"Yes, yes, when he returns, we'll make sure you have a good drink."

Mu Zihao continued, maintaining a calm and soothing smile the whole time.

Everyone stood up to let the elder go first. Jing Qing felt somewhat relieved seeing her grandfather treated with such regard. She couldn't afford to act inappropriately in front of Mu Yichen's parents. After some thought, she followed along.

Qin Mu, walking at the rear, saw her daughter who had already eaten some chocolate and was playing with the maid in the dining room. She smiled unconsciously at her daughter, and Huanhuan smiled back with sheer joy.

"The little miss has just been fed by me. You all eat; I'll go bathe her."

The maid asked.

"Go ahead!"

Qin Mu said softly, watching her daughter leave before taking her seat last.

In fact, she wanted to accompany Huanhuan upstairs but knew she couldn't do so, or it would give people something to talk about, and it would provide others with more reasons to mock her.