

His Beloved 271

Chapter 271: protect_5

Being human is quite tough, always having to do things you don't want to do because of certain people.

But it doesn't really matter, a life without ups and downs isn't necessarily better.

She hoped that after experiencing all this, she would become calmer, composed, and cool-headed.

"I heard that Xiaoqing went on a blind date yesterday, did she like the guy?"

Feng Fanghua brought it up at the dinner table.

Upon hearing that, Jing Qing smiled lightly, set down her chopsticks gently, and replied with grace, "It was okay, but we had different ideals, so..."

"Hmph, the girl's standards are quite high, but she'll find someone suitable eventually."

As the elder spoke, his affectionate gaze rested on his granddaughter, as if he had full confidence in her.

"Of course, our Xiaoqing is both beautiful and smart, whoever marries her would be incredibly lucky,"

Feng Fanghua also offered compliments politely.

Jing Qing lowered her head, and there was a hint of sorrow as she picked up her chopsticks.

Qin Mu, sitting opposite her, caught every expression on her face, thinking to himself that if Jing Qing could let go of Mu Yichen and start anew, her future could be wonderful. But perhaps Jing Qing was unwilling to let go? The future was so distant, out of reach, who could really know when and where it would be?

"Indeed, such a great girl, the Mu Family has no fortune to claim her!"

The old man said with a smile.

"How can you say we have no fortune? Even if she can't be our daughter-in-law, she can still be our daughter. Fanghua and I watched Xiaoqing grow up, and we always treated her as our own child. You can't deny that,"

Mu Zihao said as he raised his glass to the old man in a toast.

"You're good with words, kid. I guess my trip here wasn't in vain,"

The Elder Jing scrutinized Mu Zihao with a sharp look, then drank with him.

Qin Mu suddenly felt as though she should be invisible, not feeling like an outsider anymore, believing she was part of this family, just not favored by these two guests.

Jing Qing would occasionally glance at Qin Mu, looking at her composed and serene demeanor as if everything and everyone here had nothing to do with Qin Mu, making Jing Qing feel involuntarily angry, though she managed to maintain proper decorum on the surface.

Jing Qing didn't believe that, when it came to acting, Qin Mu could outperform her, a professional actress who had won the Best Actress award.

Latter, Qin Mu went to wash her hands, and Jing Qing followed. The two washed their hands together in silence in the restroom, broken only by the sound of running water.

Qin Mu knew Jing Qing had something to say, so she kept silent.

Since Jing Qing stayed quiet, Qin Mu finished washing her hands and reached for a towel.

Then Jing Qing finally spoke, the corners of her mouth moving slightly: "I apologize for what I've done before, although I'm not willing to let go, from now on let's still be friends."

Jing Qing said softly, her words and facial expressions in perfect harmony.

Qin Mu gazed at her unflappably and after Jing Qing finished speaking, she smiled shallowly, "Alright!"

Surprise flickered in Jing Qing's eyes, and Qin Mu continued to smile calmly, "If possible, I hope you and Mu Yichen will always be like siblings. As for calling me sister-in-law, it doesn't matter to me whether you're willing to call me that or not. I like it when you call me Qin Mu."

Jing Qing...

Qin Mu nodded and left first, carrying the air of the young mistress of the Mu Family, but without being abrupt.

Yet now, Jing Qing was stunned by her words, unable to move for a long time. What siblings? What sister-in-law?

The reason why Qin Mu had said that was, of course, because Feng Fanghua and Mu Zihao spoke of raising Jing Qing as their daughter. If it weren't for the Mu Family, why would Qin Mu bother to listen to such insincere words?

When Mu Yichen returned home that night, Qin Mu indeed hadn't slept, just cuddling Huanhuan in their bed. Mu Yichen didn't know what she was thinking, only that she seemed troubled.

Her warm hand cradled his distinct, angular face: "Go wash up!"

"Hmm!"

He agreed and then looked lovingly at his daughter, kissing her forehead before leaving.

Qin Mu watched quietly, feeling warmth in her heart.

Nothing could bring her down as long as their family of three loved each other dearly.

She suddenly remembered the bowl of herbal medicine her aunt had brought her before Elder Jing and Jing Qing departed.

Elder Jing asked what the medicine was for, and Feng Fanghua obediently replied with a smile, "It's a tonic to condition the body. The young couple is planning for a second child, and the girl is a bit frail, so it's just to help her recuperate."

At that time, the expressions on Elder Jing's and Jing Qing's faces...

Chapter 272: protect_6

Qin Mu can't help but still find the memory fascinating.

After the grandfather and grandson left, Feng Fanghua said to her, "I intentionally said those words, do you understand what I meant?"

Qin Mu could no longer hold back a childlike laugh, and although Feng Fanghua was still giving her that look, Qin Mu knew it was the look of a mother watching her own child, a look that was protective despite seeming to scold her for not understanding.

Qin Mu thought about telling Mu Yichen about it later, knowing that he would surely admire his mother's composure at that moment.

The key was Feng Fanghua's demeanor at the time, like a gentle and proper daughter-in-law speaking to the Jing Family's patriarch, both submissive and appropriate.

Later, when Mu Yichen came out and saw his daughter still in bed, he didn't rush to take her away. He had become a father so quickly that for a long time, he was overwhelmed, until he got used to Huanhuan calling him 'Daddy,' and gradually he began to feel something was amiss, and by the time further events unfolded, he had already come to terms with them.

"If Huanhuan knew that her dad wasn't by her side when she was born, I wonder if she would be very sad."

"You've been by her side for many years since then, where would she find the time to be unhappy? She might even find it quite interesting."

Qin Mu responded to him, and as he lifted his gaze to look at her, the two simply looked at each other, as if their eyes had said all there was to say.

All things, good or bad, happy or not, actually depend on whether you can let them go.

Besides, she felt that as long as their love for each other remained strong, or even if it faltered in the future, as long as they could let it go, their children would naturally be able to do the same.

"We have guests at home tonight; guess who?"

Qin Mu looked at him and asked gently.

Mu Yichen looked up at her when he heard this, and thinking about her ease, he theorized that an unhappy person couldn't be so relaxed: "It's not Helian Hao coming to see you, is it? She hardly ever visits the Mu Family."

"No!"

Qin Mu said with a laugh, knowing he would never guess.

Unable to guess, Mu Yichen frowned slightly as he watched his wife laughing foolishly and sighed involuntarily, "Aren't you going to tell me? Or do I need to apply some family rules?"

"No, I wouldn't dare to experience your family rules so casually, Mr. Mu."

Qin Mu said with a laugh.

"I'll take our little treasure back to her room first, then I'll come back to deal with you."

Qin Mu turned her head to watch him pick up Huanhuan. Father and daughter were both in pajamas: one in pink, the other in light grey. The two colors together looked unexpectedly warm. He really held Huanhuan like carrying a precious treasure as he took her away.

Qin Mu then turned on her side, lying on the bed, waiting for him to return.

At that moment, she felt very happy.

Even secure, at peace!

If things could always go on like this, there would be nothing more wonderful in the world.

When Mr. Mu came back, "Come on, tell me, who is it actually?"

Qin Mu: "It's Jing Qing and her grandfather."

Mu Yichen was a bit puzzled: "Huh? The two of them came?"

"Yes!"

Qin Mu looked up, realizing his nervousness immediately raised her hand to cradle his astonishingly perfect face: "There were no issues, we just had a simple dinner and then they left."

As Qin Mu spoke, her eyes were full of honesty, but Mu Yichen suddenly fell silent, "Why did they suddenly come?"

"I don't know, they were just there when I got off work, my parents had them stay for dinner, being happy happened after that."

She thought about it and laughed again.

"What's there to be happy about when they come?"

His serious eyes looked at her, and his mood suddenly turned sour.

"Mom had the maid bring me some traditional Chinese medicine to drink before they left, telling them it was to prepare my body for a second child. The look on their faces when they heard that was priceless, it felt so satisfying to think about it."

"Idiot!"

Seeing her laugh so carelessly, he called her out in a low voice.

Qin Mu felt that seeing Mu Yichen like this was simply heart-wrenching.

The next day Qin Mu went to work, everyone was discussing Jingshang's movie festival event from yesterday afternoon, the aura PK between the Best Actress and the up-and-coming actor.

Jing Qing naturally exudes a powerful presence, something Wen Runuan lacks now, Qin Mu thought, possibly due to the environment Jing Qing grew up in.

But Wen Runuan is gentle and pure, her tranquil poise in the face of praise or insult makes her more approachable.

Looking at their outfits, Jing Qing wore a red V-neck dress that reached her knees, while Wen Runuan's blue gown was more formal than her usual attire, yet not overly showy.

Xiaomei mumbled: "I heard that the Weibo comments under these two famous Jingshang actresses' posts are overflowing, almost crashing the Weibo backend."

"Tell me about it."

Qin Mu leaned against a desk, watching the television hanging in space.

"Each side's fans think their idol is the best, so they praise them under their own star's Weibo and slander and fight under the other's Weibo. It's been quite a mess. Some say Wen Runuan is shameless for trying to steal Jing Qing's spot, climbing up by getting into the boss's bed and whatnot. The nastier the comments, the more there are. Also, Wen Runuan's fans are saying Jing Qing is getting old and is on the verge of fading away."

Xiaomei relayed the highlights she had seen on Weibo last night.

Qin Mu thought for a moment and chuckled: "Although the saying that actresses are washed up after thirty isn't reliable, imagining Jing Qing's reaction to those comments is pretty satisfying."

"Honestly, Jing Qing carries an air of being Jingshang's top actress. If she didn't scheme against others, I would think she's not a bad actress, but whenever I remember what she's done to our studio, I just..."

Xiaomei said and started shaking her head.

"Never mind her. The temperature has dropped severely these past few days. Remember to wear extra clothes to and from work. Those who need to buy a coat, I'll give you half a day off."

Outside it was still gloomy; after last night's rain, it was cold and damp. Qin Mu had felt the chill when she came in this morning. Knowing that they had just arrived and yet to experience the cold of Rong City, probably not having bought any winter clothes, she mentioned it before heading upstairs to work.

Those who were suddenly given a half-day off were excited for a good while before they reacted, then they high-fived each other and happily headed to the mall to shop for clothes.

Later, when Qin Mu was discussing business in Jian Yan's office and then returned to her own, she saw a girl standing inside her office, behind where she worked. On a closer look, it was Qin Mingzhu. She frowned unconsciously: "When did you get here?"

"Just now! I was going to have someone notify you, but the first floor was empty, not a soul in sight, so I came up myself."

Qin Mingzhu walked up to her with a smile.

Qin Mu looked down at the bag in her hand, and then her sharp gaze shifted back to Mingzhu.

"I don't really have anything, just wanted to ask if you'd like to come over for a meal. My mom said she's preparing lunch to host you."

Qin Mingzhu was still smiling, Qin Mu's brow furrowed slightly, and she simply replied: "I'm busy!"

"I know you're busy, so I won't bother you now. I'll come to find you another day."

Qin Mingzhu laughed, said her piece, and then turned and left.

Chapter 273: Scheme within a Scheme_1

Qin Mu later sat behind his office desk, seriously focusing on his drawing again. As for Qin Mingzhu, she really didn't believe that phone call was truly about her going to the Qin Family's house for dinner.

— —

"Mumu, your dad and I would like to invite you over for a simple meal, do you have the time?"

But in the afternoon, she did actually receive a call from Zhang Rujia.

"You've got the wrong number!"

At that time, Qin Mu had just gotten to the studio from the factory. After hearing the call, she instinctively hung up, though she actually felt it was Zhang Rujia even as she was hanging up.

She even called her Mumu?

That's what her own mother would call her!

She was in a rather good mood, but after that call, she immediately tossed her phone aside and sat down on the sofa.

A serious yet dazed expression appeared on her beautiful face; she really couldn't wrap her head around it.

What on earth was Zhang Rujia playing at?

Meanwhile, Zhang Rujia was sitting beside Qin Haiming at the moment, in the Qin Family's living room. After hanging up the phone, she said to him, "I told you, as soon as I call her she's bound to refuse. Why don't you give it a try yourself?"

Zhang Rujia had the image of a good wife at this moment. Qin Haiming, after hearing her, couldn't help but frown. He too had heard Qin Mu's decisive rejection just now. Zhang Rujia losing face was a minor issue, but if he were to make the call...

"Forget it, if she doesn't want to, we'll talk about it some other day."

Qin Haiming seemed to have a sudden realization, saying this before he stood up.

"Where are you going now?"

Zhang Rujia asked worriedly as she saw him stand up.

"I've got some matters to discuss with Old Chen and the others later, I might dine out tonight."

After giving her a brief explanation, he left. Zhang Rujia remained seated, sighing involuntarily after he left, and then smiled wryly to herself.

How could she have imagined that one day she'd have to stoop so low to make that kind of call to Qin Mu? She would have preferred if Qin Mu had died in Paris back then.

Unfortunately for her, Qin Mu hadn't died abroad. After her return, she caused such a stir. Now, with Qin Haiming anxious to acknowledge her, Zhang Rujia thought, if father and daughter really did reconcile, where would she and her own daughter go? Qin Mu would surely not allow them to stay here; the way Zhang Rujia had schemed to get rid of Qin Mu back then, probably Qin Mu would kick them out the same way, wouldn't she?

A cold ruthlessness flashed in her experienced eyes; of course, she couldn't let that day come.

In the evening, Mu Yichen came to pick her up from the studio again. Qin Mu happily dashed out of the studio, while he stood in front of the car, his deep black eyes watching as she ran up to him.

"So happy today?"

"President Mu has so much on his plate, yet he still comes to pick me up after work. Of course, I'm happy."

Qin Mu was excited like a child, and Mu Yichen looked at her seriously for several seconds before turning to open the car door for her.

Qin Mu climbed into the car, and after he sat down, she told him, "Today, Zhang Rujia called me."

"Oh?"

"She invited me to the Qin Family's house for dinner, but I ruthlessly hung up."

She said this while fastening her seat belt.

"This is probably because of your father, but this shouldn't be the outcome."

Mu Yichen started the car and then commented.

"Yeah! Back then, she didn't hesitate to beat Qin Mingzhu until she was all bruised up, and then when she got back home she complained that I had hit her daughter. Think about it, coming back this year probably became a thorn in her side. Now she's lowering herself to call me in an attempt to please Qin Hai. Well, just wait, the real drama is still to come."

Qin Mu leaned back into her seat, having long since moved past those events of the past, and chuckled lightly at the thought of the drama that was just beginning between them.

After all, when she first returned, Qin Hai still harbored grudges against her. Now, Qin Hai whimsically had Zhang Rujia prepare a room for her, Zhang Rujia must be seething inside.

"You can still laugh about it?"

Mu Yichen glanced at her and then smiled too, though there was a hint of heaviness in his eyes.

Qin Mu had changed a lot since she came back, or maybe it was he who pulled her back into this maelstrom, but she had changed.

Actually, he just wanted her by his side, that's all. Everything that happened afterward was beyond his expectations. But now that they were married, he'd accompany her with every step they took from this point on, and if anyone dared to lay a finger on her...

His chiseled features were cloaked in coldness, and his gaze even more so, fierce and merciless.

The weather had turned cooler, and Qin Mu, looking through the rearview mirror, saw the pretty fallen leaves behind the car and found herself lost in their beauty.

She hadn't fully enjoyed her last outing to see the maple leaves, yet on the way home this time it was thoroughly satisfying.

This autumn seemed to be passing quickly. Just the other day she was wearing a thin trench coat, but in a few days, it had turned into a heavy overcoat, and even people were pulling out last year's down jackets when heading out in the morning.

Chapter 274: Scheme within a Scheme_2

That day, it was Helian Hao who accompanied her to the private hospital for a follow-up. After finishing those few prescriptions of traditional Chinese medicine, the doctor said her condition was mostly stabilized and instructed her to continue taking the medicine for a while to solidify the improvement. Qin Mu sighed with relief and had another two weeks' worth of traditional Chinese medicine prescribed from the pharmacy.

After leaving, Helian Hao couldn't help but sigh, "Actually, our hospital also has decent traditional Chinese doctors. Although this one is quite famous, in reality, as long as a Chinese medicine practitioner can take the pulse, they're all quite similar."

"Then next time I need to take Chinese medicine, going to your hospital should be fine, right? But I really don't hope for a next time,"

Qin Mu said with an involuntary bitter smile.

Perhaps it's a doctor's way of thinking that the hospital they work at is the best, whether or not that's actually the case.

Qin Mu walked with her arm in his, chattering away in high spirits.

"Mumu, I've always wanted to ask you, have you settled down now? In Rong City, with Mu Yichen."

Seeing her so good-natured, Helian Hao couldn't help but be amazed—it was completely different from the indifferent girl who had just returned to attend the Jing Family patriarch's birthday party.

"Settled... I suppose so, at least for now,"

Qin Mu thought about it briefly before quickly giving her reply.

She had been contemplating this question recently. She now knew her relationship with Mu Yichen was solid and that his feelings for her were genuine. Moreover, she had come to terms with the fact that, no matter what the future held, whether they stayed together or separated, she wouldn't hold any grudges and would gladly accept whatever came her way.

Because she was already very content.

The more than ten years she had spent drifting outside, coupled with the initial place of stability he gave her upon her return and the comfortable family life she enjoyed now, made her feel that even if she could live her life over again, there likely wouldn't be a second man who'd be so good to her.

"It seems Mu Yichen's efforts have finally paid off. It hasn't been easy for him."

Helian Hao walked slowly out of the hospital with her, thinking back to the times when Mu Yichen's face lacked even a smile. She hadn't known before how stubborn a person could be in love, not until Mu Yichen returned from Paris, and in the years since then, as he studied and worked here while persistently flying to Qin Mu's side. Helian Hao suddenly realized that love could indeed transform a man who was initially cold-hearted into someone with a second personality.

"Who would have thought our little Hao is so compassionate? I wonder if Jing Jian will get jealous if he finds out?"

Qin Mu gently bumped her shoulder, and Helian Hao couldn't help but laugh: he's certainly not like Mu Yichen, the complete picture of a jealous husband.

"Oh?"

Qin Mu made a funny face, not believing a single word Helian Hao said.

"Ah, why did we start talking about him again? Let's talk about you. Has Jing Qing been bothering you lately?" Helian Hao asked her.

"I heard she's been matchmaking recently, and it seems she's gone to film now. That time we had dinner at the Mu Family's place, she said she wasn't willing to let go but had given up."

Helian Hao said nothing, just listened to Qin Mu's words, believing that Qin Mu didn't believe them either.

"I'll keep an eye on her and also on Zhang Rujia and Qin Mingzhu, so don't worry about it."

Qin Mu knew she was concerned for her and eventually stopped teasing her with a smile.

"Even if I'm worried, what help can I offer? I'm just hoping that these people sober up sooner rather than later, so they stop wasting their time on you. Wouldn't it be better if everyone just minded their own business?"

Helian Hao spread her hands, and after that, the two of them headed to Helian Hao and Jing Feng's apartment by car.

"But it's not like everyone thinks so simply, right! Sigh!"

As Helian Hao drove, Qin Mu sat in the passenger seat with her hands propped behind her head, sighing helplessly as she gazed out the window.

Helian Hao felt that Qin Mu seemed to have developed a carefree attitude, as if she wasn't afraid even if the road ahead was rough and full of thorns.

The two had hot pot at noon at home, and Helian Hao said, "My mother-in-law came to see me a few days ago. Do you know what for?"

Qin Mu was about to cook some food when she heard this and looked over curiously, "She's not rushing you to have kids, is she?"

Helian Hao's eyes widened, "How did you know?"

Qin Mu didn't respond, simply placing the vegetables in the pot and smiling wryly.

Helian Hao immediately understood; to married women, nothing seems more important to the elders than having children, even more so than the wedding itself.

"Sigh! What kind of fate do you think we sisters share?"

Helian Hao also shook her head, unable to comprehend why the elders were so eager to have grandchildren, almost as though they feared they couldn't have any.

"If I were to give birth to a daughter, do you think the Jing Family would disown me as a daughter-in-law?"

Chapter 275: Scheme within a Scheme_3

Jing Qing later asked.

"It shouldn't come to that, besides, whether it's a boy or a girl, would you separate from Jing Feng just because the Jing Family doesn't like it?"

Qin Mu replied, speculating.

"Of course not, if he wants to divorce me, I will just use a scalpel on him while he's asleep, hmm-hmm."

Qin Mu couldn't help but laugh; this didn't sound like something Helian Hao would say, but hearing such soft-natured words from Helian Hao made Qin Mu think he was very cool.

"Actually, I'm really excited. He took me to get our marriage certificate, although it was your family's Mu who came up with the idea."

Helian Hao said.

"I was also very excited when you called me, although I still gave Mu a good scolding."

Qin Mu said.

"If those two start scheming against us again, then we'll just scheme against them."

"Reliable!"

Qin Mu picked up the juice, and the two gently clinked their glasses. The afternoon was not too bad, but she still felt a bitter taste in her mouth when she carried the medicine home in the evening.

Feng Fanghua was more excited than herself upon hearing that her health was well-regulated: it seems my grandson is hopeful.

Qin Mu held back a laugh: After finishing the medicine, it will still take some time before we can try.

"After the New Year's, you two should definitely put this matter on the schedule, right?"

Feng Fanghua looked at her, her eyes not permitting her to disagree.

Qin Mu nodded. Now when talking about a second child, she was actually quite looking forward to it.

Feng Fanghua was even more excited to see her being so obedient and had her sit down on the sofa: I bought you fruits from the supermarket in the afternoon, you like tangerines, don't you? But tangerines are cooling, so eat less.

"Thank you, Mom!"

Qin Mu looked at Feng Fanghua, utterly surprised.

Her gaze at that moment was beyond words.

Feng Fanghua was looking forward to holding her grandson. Now that she had a granddaughter, to have a grandson too, she felt her life with Mu Zihao was complete. Of course, she also hoped this girl would pay more attention to her son. Remembering that Qin Mu couldn't even cook, Feng Fanghua was somewhat anxious; to think her husband couldn't even taste his wife's cooking was indeed quite sad, wasn't it?

But her silly son didn't mind, just sticking close to the girl in front of him. Feng Fanghua sighed helplessly, thinking if everything is destined, then they must accept it.

Qin Mu, unaware of Feng Fanghua's thoughts, was just about to eat the fruit when she heard Huanhuan run in from outside, sweetly calling out: "Mommy, Grandma..."

She put down the tangerine she had just picked up and Huanhuan flung herself into her arms.

"Mommy, Huanhuan missed you so much."

Huanhuan opened her arms, hugging her and speaking in her soft, mushy voice.

"Huanhuan only misses Mommy. What about Grandma?"

Feng Fanghua felt a bit jealous and leaned over to ask the beloved granddaughter in her daughter-in-law's arms.

"Huanhuan missed Grandma too!"

As she said it, she reached out to touch Feng Fanghua's face, and Feng Fanghua couldn't help but reach out to touch her.

When Mu Zihao came to sit on the sofa, he casually explained why he came back late: "I happened to run into Old Li and his grandson at the early education class, so we talked for a while, and before I knew it, it had gotten dark."

"I'm just glad he didn't drag you off for a drink."

Feng Fanghua remembered that old friend of theirs who loved to drink, especially with Mu Zihao. The two families had come up together, and these two men, from their youth up until now, had persisted in their drinking.

Mu Yichen didn't come back until dinner time. He kissed his daughter for a long while before going to eat. After dinner, he immediately pulled Qin Mu back into their room. Qin Mu, puzzled, looked into his somewhat worried eyes and asked, "What's wrong?"

Her eyes were full of confusion as Mu Yichen sighed and said in a low voice, "I have to go to Australia tomorrow."

Upon hearing this, Qin Mu immediately thought that he hadn't been on a business trip for a long time, and now he was explaining it to her so seriously, there must be some issue his subordinates couldn't resolve. She immediately nodded: Okay!

"Okay?"

Mu Yichen saw how understanding she was and, as the haze cleared from her eyes, he couldn't help but give a faint smile.

"Yeah, okay!" Qin Mu nodded, seeing that he seemed dissatisfied with her response.

"Mrs. Mu, your husband has to go on a business trip to Australia for half a month, and you just agree without even asking why?"

Mu Yichen looked at her earnestly, annoyed, bumped her forehead with his, and Qin Mu, feeling the pain, lifted her hand to touch her own forehead but was blocked by his. She looked up forcefully at him: Then don't go!

She suddenly exclaimed.

Mu Yichen really couldn't understand, seeing her as if she genuinely didn't want him to leave.

Chapter 276: Scheme within a Scheme_4

"I don't want you to go on a business trip, especially not for such a long time, when it's so cold at night now."

Her coquettish whine somehow made his heart feel uneasy.

Mu Yichen had thought she would just casually dismiss the matter.

"Fine, I won't go!"

His deep voice replied.

Qin Mu knew she shouldn't take his words seriously at the moment, but she couldn't help but long for them to be true.

"Mumu, call me 'husband'."

"I like calling you Mu Yichen!"

Everyone loved to call him 'President Mu' or 'Young Master Yichen', or many women secretly called him 'husband', but very few women directly addressed him by his name, Mu Yichen.

"Call me 'husband' now."

He coaxed in a low tone.

"Husband!"

"Will you wait for me to return?"

Mu Yichen pressed his forehead against hers.

"Mhm! I'll wait for you to come back!"

How could she not wait? That was all she could do.

Ever since she came to Rongcheng, he hardly went on business trips. She suddenly remembered the past and couldn't hold back a low chuckle, asking him: "All those business trips to Paris before... you were actually going to see me, weren't you?"

"Who else, if not you?"

Mu Yichen also laughed helplessly. For whom else in his life would he go to such lengths?

Lying to her about going on business trips, acting coldly on purpose as if he didn't want to spare her another glance, making her think he went to see her out of pity for her being alone there. But actually?

He did it all for her; everything he did, even gaining power in the days to come, was all for her.

He hoped that one day when she returned, he wouldn't be limited by others everywhere he went, he wouldn't be unable to provide her with a warm home.

He doted on her and asked again and again. It was only a month, but he really couldn't let go. No matter how composed she could be now, he was just afraid – afraid that she would be bullied, afraid that she would be hurt, even though she might pretend she didn't care.

"On the days I'm not here, I've already told Zhao Huai and Jiang Zhiyuan to be at your beck and call. You can seek them out for anything, and also, you have to call me, okay?"

He gazed at her, earnestly instructing.

"Mhm!"

Qin Mu agreed, and seeing how worried he was, she truly wished she could become something small that he could keep in his pocket and take with him.

"Don't agree so readily now and then not tell me anything later. If I have to hear something I shouldn't from someone else again, I'll be seriously upset."

"Don't worry, I won't let that happen!"

He cherished her, so she cherished him all the more.

The bedroom became increasingly quiet. Huanhuan was still waiting in grandma's arms for Dad and Mom, not expecting to fall asleep without seeing them.

Later, Feng Fanghua went to put Huanhuan to bed, and out of curiosity, she approached their bedroom door. But finding no sound inside, and not one to eavesdrop at doors, she quickly left.

In truth, she felt sorry for her granddaughter; it was just a business trip, and yet they made it seem as if they would be parted for years. Even with their elders and Huanhuan around, they seemed oblivious to all but each other.

Later, Feng Fanghua returned to her own room and said to Mu Zihao, "Your dear son is utterly spoiled by that girl. A simple business trip turned into a scene of life-and-death separation. There are elders here, and there's Huanhuan, but he cares for nothing and nobody except for his woman."

Mu Zihao changed into his pajamas and looked up at the woman who was going on and on: "Mrs. Mu, can't you lay off the jealousy a bit?"

"Who says I'm jealous?"

The woman, who had her suspicions pinpointed, expressed her resistance.

"You're not jealous, you're not jealous," Mu Zihao nodded repeatedly.

"Hmph! Can I ever be jealous enough? How many years did he leave me behind for that girl since he was young? He didn't even want to come home for the New Year. Do you remember how I begged him to come back for the New Year those years?"

"But he has come back now, hasn't he? Not just the elder one, but he also brought you a little one. Aren't you happy to see Huanhuan?"

Mu Zihao knew she was just venting, so he spoke in ways that would soften her heart.

"Well, that's true; of course, I dote on my granddaughter. But Qin Mu, that girl, really is the bane of my life."

Feng Fanghua let down her hair, which had been tied up all day, and muttered as she headed to the bathroom.

"Maybe in your past life, you were mother and daughter!"

Mu Zihao mused, thinking of how people say that enemies from past lives become family in this one. Maybe Qin Mu and Feng Fanghua had a similar relationship. As Feng Fanghua reached the bathroom door, she heard this comment and involuntarily glanced back at him, chuckling helplessly before pushing the door open and entering the bathroom.

—

In the morning, when Qin Mu opened her eyes, he was already gone. She had woken up at the sound of the door, but since he couldn't bear to say goodbye, she didn't call out to him.

It had been a long time since the two of them had been apart for so long. Just thinking about the upcoming month without him at home, unable to have meals with him or sleep beside him, made her heart feel especially hollow.

Chapter 277: Scheme within a Scheme_5

Gradually, it seemed like they really couldn't be separated anymore.

Smelling his scent on the pillow, Qin Mu hugged the pillow tightly.

It wasn't completely light out yet when Qin Mu fell back asleep with his pillow. She got up early to accompany her daughter, at Feng Fanghua's request, to the early education class, then headed to the studio.

Xiaomei, hearing that she had taken Huanhuan to the early education class, couldn't help but complain, "Then why didn't you bring her over for us to see? How long has it been since we've seen her?"

Qin Mu gave a helpless laugh, thinking that now she couldn't even hug her daughter whenever she wanted, how could she care about others' feelings? But upon further thought, she still soothed Xiaomei promisingly, "I'll bring her to see you in a couple of days, I keep my word."

"Really? You better not be lying to me, I'm not a three-year-old kid. If you can't bring her, you can't bring her; I know now you don't have the final say over her."

Xiaomei was excited, but then her excitement faded.

"If I said I'd bring her, I'll bring her. Her grandma isn't unreasonable. She's just worried about me feeding her takeout, that's all."

Qin Mu laughed again unconsciously as she remembered being scolded over this in the past, and seeing that Xiaomei believed her, she hurriedly went upstairs before she couldn't help but burst into laughter.

However, when looking at several drawings on the table, a hint of hesitation flashed in her clear apricot eyes, but quickly she decided, then grabbed the drawings in her hand and tore the three drawings together into shreds.

Jian Yan happened to see that scene as he approached, "What's wrong?"

"These drawings can't be used!"

"You spent so much time on them; is there a problem?"

Qin Mu shook her head helplessly, "You'll see in due time, the result should be out soon."

Jian Yan didn't say anything, watching her throw the shredded paper into the trash can, but it reminded him of something, so he didn't ask further.

"It's gotten cold recently; aren't you going to buy some thick clothes?" She suddenly became worried seeing that he was still dressed in a shirt and trousers.

"When did I become so frail? Besides, the studio isn't without air conditioning."

Qin Mu thought about it and agreed but still felt a bit worried.

"How about I ask Xiaomei to accompany you to buy clothes, or better yet, have her buy them for you?"

"If you care, you go buy a couple of sets of clothes for your teacher yourself. If you're busy, why bother ordering others around."

"Otherwise, I'll have the factory make two down jackets for you."

"Whatever!"

Jian Yan said dispiritedly, then went to light a cigarette.

Qin Mu noticed that he had been smoking a lot more recently.

"Master..."

"Why did you always used to call me Jian Yan?"

Qin Mu was about to stop him from smoking when she heard his question and was at a loss for words for a moment.

"To be honest, I was afraid Mu Yichen would be unhappy."

Qin Mu's eyes flickered, feeling a bit awkward, but she told the truth nonetheless.

Perhaps, at that moment, she wasn't even aware that she was already making some very wise decisions in her heart, or maybe it was that her brain already sensed Jian Yan's feelings for her, prompting her without her full awareness.

Jian Yan didn't respond, just looked up at her. Qin Mu felt even more uncomfortable under his gaze, and, lowering her head, continued, "He gets jealous over nothing, it's not just about you."

Jian Yan took a deep drag from his cigarette, his sharp eyes dropping to the cigarette in his hand. She was afraid of Mu Yi getting jealous, but when had she ever changed her own life for fear of making someone else unhappy?

In the end, he let out a resigned laugh, "Continue with your work; I'm going out to finish this cigarette."

As Qin Mu watched him leave, she called out to him, "Master, if you don't like what others make, I'll make it for you myself. I can make down jackets too."

"Whatever!"

He stopped walking but didn't turn around, just gave a faint reply and continued on his way, back straight.

Qin Mu watched his retreating figure, which seemed somewhat frail, feeling a prick in her heart. Just as she hesitated whether to forcefully take him to the hospital, a sudden thud came from the next room.

Qin Mu's dark apricot eyes stalled, and she instantly ran towards the noise.

"Jian Yan!"

He lay on the ground, his once tall and sturdy frame now curled into a ball, his face pale as paper.

She turned pale with alarm and rushed forward to crouch in front of him, wanting to help but at a loss where to start, instinctively kneeling by his side, "Jian Yan? Jian Yan? Wake up, please?"

She gently patted his face, but he was unresponsive. Qin Mu called his name a few more times anxiously.

Indeed, she preferred to call him Jian Yan.

Seeing him lying on the ground like that, she forgot everything. She was afraid to hug him too tightly and turned to shout towards the door, "Someone, come quickly..."

Chapter 278: Scheme within a Scheme_6

Xiaomei and the others heard the sound and immediately ran upstairs. When they saw Qin Mu holding the unconscious Jian Yan, Xiaomei stood at the door with tears welling up, scared and covering her mouth tightly, while another male colleague hurried over.

"Go to the hospital!"

Tears were already in Qin Mu's eyes as he gave an extreme order, and the male colleague carried Jian Yan on his back. The two of them ran out together, and Xiaomei, regaining her senses, immediately turned her head to follow.

Xiaomei, Qin Mu, and their male colleague David were all waiting outside the operation room, only then they found out that Jian Yan had a serious stomach problem. Qin Mu was reminded of Jian Yan's changes over the past few days, and the things he said about how everything would belong to her in the future.

Qin Mu finally understood why he said those things, but before the diagnosis was confirmed, whenever the doctors asked about Jian Yan's condition, she couldn't answer any of them.

As his only apprentice, and possibly the person closest to him now, Qin Mu suddenly felt so incompetent.

She always talked about "once a teacher, forever a father", but had she ever treated him like a father?

She hadn't, other than cooperating at work, she had given him nothing.

Thinking of those years in Paris, how he had taken great pains to teach her to be a designer, and how he had elevated her career step by step, where would she be without the name Jian Yan? Without it, she wouldn't have had so many opportunities or the qualifications to design for so many top brands.

It all stemmed from being JY's beloved apprentice.

When the doctor said his condition had worsened and was moving towards gastric cancer, she stood dejectedly against the wall, bowing her head, remembering the first time she met him.

Suddenly, she felt that she had caused him so much trouble, and he...

She hoped that he did not know about his illness; otherwise, even knowing that he might leave, he still insisted on staying by her side, and she really felt that she had let him down.

The whole corridor was very quiet, except when a nurse suddenly called out at the window, "Family member of the patient, please come here."

Xiaomei and Qin Mu both looked up, then ran over together. Yet, when Xiaomei saw the consent form, she stepped back with a grief-stricken face.

Qin Mu felt her heartbeat pounding overly hard. Looking at that consent form, she probably knew what it was about, her hands tightened, her eyes clear yet steady.

"Who are you to him? His wife?"

The doctor, wearing a mask, had a sharp look in his eyes.

Qin Mu involuntarily glanced at the person inside the window and then calmly said, "Daughter!"

The doctor's gaze couldn't land on her face, and only after seeing Qin Mu sign did he go back in.

Qin Mu continued to stand there. This was the first time she was in a hospital waiting for news about life and death.

Xiaomei, hearing Qin Mu say "daughter," also subconsciously looked at her. She was very worried for a moment, worried that Qin Mu would nod, but when Qin Mu said "daughter," she finally felt at ease.

Then, watching Qin Mu continue to stand there, Xiaomei approached her, "Qinqin, will he be okay?"

"He won't!"

After who knows how long, she managed to squeeze those two words out of her throat.

Of course, he wouldn't be okay. He hadn't even said a word to her about anything; he couldn't possibly have something happen to him.

But then, thinking about the words Jian Yan had said to her recently and the instructions he had given, she hadn't cried for so long—not even when her biological father humiliated her numerous times did she shed tears—but at this moment, her curved eyelashes were wet with tears, heavy and soon falling down, streaking her already pale skin.

She realized that among her elders, only Jian Yan had been the closest to her, and she was closest to this man.

How could they possibly just be master and apprentice?

After conservative treatment, Jian Yan was pushed back to the VIP ward. Qin Mu stood outside the door listening to the doctor's instructions for a while before turning to look at the man inside and the girl standing by his bed with her head down. She saw Xiaomei's shoulders trembling; she thought Xiaomei must be terrified.

But as for herself, she felt much calmer now.

However, after seeing the scene inside, she leaned back against the cold wall without hurrying to push the door open.

Xiaomei wanted to be alone with him for a while; as his apprentice, shouldn't she find a companion for her master?

Chapter 279: Scheme within a Scheme_7

But what should I do next?

The medical conditions in China are no comparison to those in Paris, and Jian Yan's sudden arrival in Rongcheng was something she understood clearly by now. What she needed to do was to send Jian Yan back to Paris for recuperation and treatment.

It wasn't until Xiaomei came out of the room with eyes red from crying, that Qin Mu went in again.

The bed had been raised. He lay there, bloodshot eyes staring at her as if he could see through all the twists and turns in her heart without her saying a word. She was silent to an extreme, but her face bore the word "stubborn."

"I won't die, don't worry," he soothed gently.

Qin Mu didn't even lift her eyes, but stubbornness persisted in her gaze beneath her long eyelashes.

He said he wouldn't die, but back when he suddenly collapsed in the office, she truly thought he was dying.

"Why don't you say something? Aren't you usually good at talking back to me?"

Although weak, Jian Yan was somewhat worried to see Qin Mu so obstinate. She was used to keeping things bottled up inside for too long. At this moment, she should have a lot of grievances to vent against him.

"Mumu!"

"Now there are three people in this world whose calling me Mumu is most warming to my heart. The first is Mu Yichen, the second is Helian Hao, and the third is you. You three are more precious to me than anyone else, and yet you, being so precious, you actually..."

Qin Mu couldn't go on, just biting her teeth hard, her eyes filled with anger as she looked at the man on the hospital bed.

"So I'm one of your most precious people, you should have told me sooner,"

Jian Yan said, laughing softly.

Qin Mu saw that he could still laugh and was even more angry, "Wait until you're a bit better and then go back to Paris for treatment. Promise me!"

Jian Yan laughed again at her stubborn appearance, "The reason I came to Rongcheng was to give you one last bit of help as your mentor, your 'father'."

When he said the word "father," he looked at her with particular intensity, his gaze not one of reprimand, but of indulgence.

Qin Mu knew that he hated being made to feel old by her, given that he was actually quite young. Realizing this, she looked down again, "You're alive, you can help me for many more years, and although it's getting worse, as long as treatment is timely and we prevent the cancer cells from spreading..."

"Mumu, my father died from gastric cancer on the operating table. The doctors said it was benign, that there was a good chance, but what happened? He was a corpse when he came out."

"So what? You won't accept treatment? You have a disease that could clearly be cured, but you want to drag it out until you die?"

Qin Mu was finally angered, though she hadn't wanted to quarrel with him so soon.

Hearing him talk about his father pained her as well, and she could understand how he felt at the time. But there are some things that simply must be done.

Jian Yan didn't say anything more, looking at her as tears nearly fell. He suddenly felt that nothing else mattered.

"I know all surgeries come with risks, like when I gave birth to Huanhuan, wasn't there also talk of a risk to life? But Jian Yan—, we must accept treatment. You won't have any problems."

She knelt in front of his hospital bed, clutching his hand forcefully. Just a few hours had passed, and her eyes had become deeply sunken and red.

Jian Yan just watched her, this girl he had known and understood in only a few years, but now as she stood by his hospital bed, he felt a sense of solidity he had never known before.

One could say that in forty years of life, this was the first time he felt a sense of belonging, as if he wasn't alone anymore.

Her hand was soft, warm, and even though she didn't love him, she was the person he loved most.

He felt the palm holding his own was moist with sweat.

— —

Qin Mu's phone suddenly rang, piercing the silence of the hospital room.

When she finally realized what was happening, she still reluctantly didn't want to answer it until Jian Yan urged her, "Answer it first, what if it's an emergency?"

Qin Mu unwillingly lowered her head to take out her phone from her backpack, her dark apricot eyes trembling as she looked at the number on the screen. She answered with a feeble greeting, "Teacher Han, hello!"

"Qin Mu, as you expected, what do you plan to do next?"

Chapter 280: secretly came back to see her_1

"These design drawings are exactly like yours, and the thief is a girl named Yang Qianxi, who, according to the information, has just returned from studying abroad. Do you intend to pursue her legal responsibility immediately?"

What Han Teacher meant in Qin Mu's mobile phone was to immediately pursue legal responsibility, but Qin Mu actually had other plans.

Later, Qin Mu was sitting in the chair next to her when Jian Yan curiously asked, "Was it Qin Mingzhu who stole your designs?"

"Mm! She thought I didn't know, let alone that I have surveillance cameras installed in my office."

Qin Mu nodded and wasn't really interested in the plagiarism matter, as she hadn't yet moved past Jian Yan's issue.

"Perhaps this girl was used by someone else? With her intelligence, she probably couldn't have thought of this."

Jian Yan remembered the time he met Qin Mingzhu; she seemed clever, but in actuality, she was probably the type that was frequently made a scapegoat by others.

Qin Mu looked up at Jian Yan, unconsciously sighing at his concern for other matters, "You're in this state, don't worry about these trivial things. Once you're a bit healthier, you should rush back to Paris, that's the priority."

What does it feel like to be scolded by your apprentice?

"I originally planned to go back to Paris after your show at the end of the year."

Jian Yan seriously shared his initial plan with her.

"Then why didn't you hold out until the end of the year?"

Now that she saw him getting better, she could get fierce and didn't want to let go of the fact that he had concealed his illness from her, thinking back on how he insisted that he just had a fever, probably the illness was getting worse by that time.

Jian Yan was so blocked by her questioning that he couldn't say anything and sighed helplessly, "Then what do you suggest we do?"

"You have one week to get better and then immediately go back to Paris for me. Also, I will send Xiaomei over to take care of you."

Qin Mu's voice was less sharp at the end as she looked up to observe Jian Yan's expression, to which Jian Yan helplessly smiled faintly, "Okay!"

At that moment, as long as she was at ease, he felt like he could do anything.

Helian Hao knew Mu Yichen was away on a business trip, so he called Qin Mu to ask if she wanted to have dinner that night, but instead learned she was keeping a bedside vigil upstairs. When Helian Hao arrived and saw the teacher and apprentice together, he unconsciously frowned but was already smiling by the time he knocked.

"Hearing that Brother Jian is recuperating at our hospital is truly an honor for us."

Helian Hao had already heard about Jian Yan's condition, but there wasn't much he could say, so he just joked harmlessly.

Since Jian Yan wasn't familiar with her, he responded with only a polite smile.

"Brother Jian, you rest first, I need to talk to Mumu for a moment outside."

"Okay!"

Once Jian Yan agreed, Helian Hao pulled Qin Mu with him and headed outside. Qin Mu, noticing something strange in her expression, didn't ask and just followed him out.

The door was closed from outside, and Helian Hao, after ensuring Jian Yan wasn't paying attention to them through the window and was preoccupied with his phone, said to Qin Mu, "You can't stay here with him tonight, no matter what."

"Why?"

Qin Mu asked, puzzled.

"You tell me why? You are now Mrs. Mu, what would people say if you're here attending to another man? It would tarnish your reputation."

Helian Hao solemnly reminded her.

Qin Mu wanted to refute, but the thought of Mu Yichen made her unconsciously sigh and she subconsciously looked inside: what about Jian Yan? He doesn't have any family here.

"The hospital has plenty of professional medical staff; they know much more than you do. What are you worried about?"

Helian Hao's voice was soft, but Qin Mu felt somewhat uneasy.

Jian Yan already had no other family, and as the only person close to him now, she knew his feelings would be hurt if she just left.

"It's not the same!"

Qin Mu murmured with her head down, something flickering in her eyes. She wasn't without concerns, especially after what Helian Hao said to her. The memory of Feng Fanghua and the Jing Family came to her mind. If she stayed with Jian Yan until dawn tonight, whether it was the Jing Family or Feng Fanghua, none would spare her.

But if she left...

He had given her so much, and was she really unable to even muster the courage to receive it?

"But you are married now. Don't others know, don't your in-laws know, doesn't the Jing Family know? I've heard that Jing Qing is still having people follow you. If you stay here tonight, I guarantee that by tomorrow morning, rumors will start to spread."

Helian Hao continued to whisper to her, then pulled her closer to his ear, "Besides, even if Mu Yichen is broad-minded enough to hire a caregiver for your master, he wouldn't let you keep vigil day and night like this. If Jing Qing was in trouble and Mu Yichen stayed with her in the same way, just think about how you would feel, and you'll understand his point of view."