

## PROTEGE 116

Chapter 116: THE NIGHT SO SPECIAL

\*\*\* WARNING \*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* MATURE CONTENT \*\*\*\*\*

When Four Eyes and Ling Li had finished washing, Ling Li gently took his hand and led him to sit beside her at the edge of their bed. The room was cozy, with soft candlelight flickering against the walls, casting gentle shadows and creating an intimate atmosphere.

“Honey, you will leave tomorrow and return after three months,” Ling Li began, her voice filled with a mix of concern and resolve. “This is another space ring that I want to give you. This one can keep anything alive inside. Just collect whatever you feel to keep from the mystical mountain and keep it here. Not all space rings can keep something living inside them and keep another space ring inside.” Ling Li handed Four Eyes the intricate ring, its metal cool against his palm, glinting mysteriously in the candlelight.

Ling Li continued, “Also, I would like you to have this top-grade spiritual sword.” With a smooth, practiced motion, Ling Li unsheathed the precious sword, and its blade shimmered, reflecting the light in mesmerizing patterns.

Four Eyes squinted, his gaze fixated on the sword.

“Since you have the Black Magic, this will be the best for you, and you can do this,” Ling Li said, her tone filled with confidence. She pointed the sword at the sofa facing them; with a subtle flick of her wrist, the sofa began to flip and move.

“Here, try it, just like you used your eyes. Focus on your target and your intent and send your ‘qi’ flow unto the sword,” Ling Li urged, her eyes shining with encouragement.

Four Eyes took the sword, marveling at how light it felt in his hand yet exuding an aura of immense power. He swung it experimentally, feeling a surge of energy course through him. “This is an exquisite sword,” he mumbled, almost in awe.

Four Eyes made a stance, his body instinctively falling into a practiced position. He pointed the sword at the sofa, concentrating as Ling Li had instructed. With a swift motion, he channeled his ‘qi’ into the

blade, and the sofa flipped flawlessly. Four Eyes was surprised by how effortlessly he could command the sword. He carefully placed it in his space ring, a new sense of purpose settling over him.

“Honey, remember you will be fighting real demonic beasts. You cannot waver. Your life is your priority,” Ling Li said, her voice thick with emotion as she approached Four Eyes and wrapped her arms around him in a comforting embrace.

Four Eyes held her tightly, feeling the weight of her words and the warmth of her love. This moment, tender and charged with unspoken vows, lingered in the air, a silent promise to return safely.

Four Eyes gently lifted Ling Li and carried her to their bed, his movements tender yet filled with a sense of urgency. He kneeled over her, his eyes locking with hers with great affection as if trying to memorize her face while running his fingers through Ling Li’s long hair.

Four Eyes wanted this night to be special that neither of them would forget. That Ling Li would always remember him while he was away.

Four Eyes kissed Ling Li gently and increased its force as if he hadn’t kissed her for so long that he could feel his hunger for her lips. Finally, ripping off both their clothes. His hand fondled one of her breasts while the other slowly reached between her thighs. Skillfully circling his finger around her clits, flicking it.

Blood rushed through Ling Li’s body. She moaned.

“Ahhhhhhh... Chu Yan...”

Four Eyes hook his finger inside her wet folds, hitting her most pleasing spot.

Ling Li’s hips started moving with his finger, expeditious and arduous. Four Eyes watched her as she closed her eyes and threw her head back as if it would crash the pillow under her head. Ling Li was lost in euphoria.

Ling Li’s whole body trembled, and Four Eyes could feel her shivering with his finger.

“You are mine...” Four Eyes whispered to her ears. “Only mine...”

Four Eyes snuggled against Ling Li, his lips and tongue stroking her neck down to her breasts. Nibbling and biting both nipples until both were saluting him. He ran his tongue on her neck until he captured her luscious lips again.

With their faces next to each other, Four Eyes thrust into her with one long, ravishing motion.

Ling Li could only deliver a loud moan. “Ahhhhhh... Hmmmmmm...” As she held Four Eye’s buttocks tightly.

After Four Eyes thrust into her once again, he held still to feel the warmth that enveloped his cock to his satisfaction when Ling Li started to move her hips, begging him to push demandingly. Ling Li’s hands tightly held onto his buttocks, her hips restless under him.

“Tell me what you want...” Four Eyes whispered hoarsely.

“I want you, deep, fast, and hard....” Ling Li replied, her back aching towards him as she offered herself to her ruler.

Hearing her words melted Four Eye’s heart and made his lips curve. He started to move and thrust into her, slowly accelerating his speed. He felt his cock’s muscles struggling to fight its urge to explode.

Four Eyes tossed his head back... as he shouted the gratifying sensation inside him.

“Uggghhhhhhh...Uggghhhhhhh...”

“Chu Yan...” Ling Li whimpered... “Ahhhhhhh...Mmmmmmm...”

They exchange the sound of their pleasure as if singing together in melodic harmony.

Ling Li acclaims Four Eyes' body grinding and crushing her.

"Yes... Chu Yan... you feel so good... Ahhhhhh..."

"I'm coming..."

Four eyes wanted this night to be perfect. He would pleasure his wife to his last drop.

Ling Li again convulsed under him. He could feel each intense spasm she gave that he had to release with her.

"Dear... I'm coming too.... Uggghhhhhh... Uggghhhhhh..." With his eyes closed, his head tossed back. He thrust harder and harder, the deepest that he could go until he could release every drop inside her.

"Ling.. dear... I love you..." Four Eyes whispered.

Ling Li didn't answer but rolled him over and started to ride him demandingly just as she would rock herself when she rides a fast-running horse.

Four Eyes, shouting his grunts while looking at Ling Li on top of him, like a goddess with her long hair swaying along as she moved, a soft golden light glowing all over her, both his hands fondling her breasts and stroking her body.

"Mmmmmmm Uggghhhhhh..."

Ling Li shuts her eyes with her legs clamped on Four Eyes. She, too, wants this night to last in their mind and soul. Her body emitting so much energy brought them up in the air.

"Ahhhhhhh..."

Together, they made the night so special for each other that lust and love unfolded from both of them.

## Chapter 117: WHO CARES ABOUT YOU

When Ling Li saw Four Eyes sleeping peacefully, wrapped like a cocoon in the blankets, a wave of warmth swept over her. The soft light filtering through the curtains cast a gentle glow on his sleeping face. With a quiet determination, Ling Li rose from the bed, careful not to disturb him.

Ling glanced around their cozy room, where the scent of their shared memories lingered like an unspoken promise. She tiptoed to the small wooden table, where she had set out an array of snacks, Four Eyes' favorites. Delicately, Ling Li picked up the neatly packed treats: a mix of crunchy seaweed chips, sweetened dried fruits, the last remaining lotus seed cakes, assorted biscuits, and beef jerky.

Ling Li deftly slid the snacks into Four Eyes' space ring; then she checked what clothes Four Eyes had prepared to realize the man didn't even bother to pack anything. With a sigh, Ling Li collected some warm clothes, an assortment of layers woven of soft fabric, extra pair of boots, just right for the chilly climate they were about to face on their expedition to the mystical mountain. She even picked out his favorite green scarf, the one that always made him look effortlessly charming, and tucked it neatly into the Four Eyes' space ring.

Ling's gaze lingered on the family portrait on the table. It had been taken during the twins' celebration. She took one last look at it, her heart swelling with love and nostalgia. Carefully, she slipped it into the ring, hoping it would surprise Four Eyes and remind him of the warmth they held within their family, no matter the distance.

Once Ling Li's preparations were complete, she returned to Four Eyes' side, feeling a mix of excitement and melancholy. Settling back down beside Four Eyes, she nestled into his side, inhaling his familiar scent—an enchanting blend of his cologne and something uniquely him. She closed her eyes, savoring the comfort of being so close to him, even if for just a little longer.

As dawn broke, casting a soft light across the room, the time came for them to say goodbye. At four in the morning, everyone gathered at the Camp Blaze, the energy buzzing with anticipation and nerves. The air was crisp, and the faint sound of laughter and chatter filled the atmosphere, mingling with the aroma of freshly brewed coffee from a quick morning fire.

Ren and Lily silently stood on the side, their eyes scanning the crowd for Shun and Fatty, who were finalizing their mission with the group of Ling Li and Shi Min. They knew what they were doing was extremely important, so they remained quiet and watched.

When Shun and Fatty finally spotted them, a rush of emotions flooded Ren, her heart a rebellious drum in her chest. She fought back tears, knowing she should maintain her composure, it was supposed to be a proud moment, not one shrouded in sorrow.

"Shun," Ren called out, her voice thick but steady. As Shun approached, the world around them seemed to fade, leaving just the two of them suspended in this bittersweet moment.

"I will wait for your return. Make sure to take care of yourself. Remember, I love you." Ren's voice quivered slightly, yet there was an unwavering strength behind her words, a firm belief that they could endure this distance.

Shun, with his kind eyes reflecting the morning light, stepped closer. "Don't worry too much," he reassured Ren, a playful grin lurking at the corners of his lips. "Paps is with me, and Fatty and Chatty are, too. We will protect each other." He reached for her, pulling Ren into a warm embrace that felt like a safe haven. Ren inhaled deeply, grounding herself in Shun's presence as if memorizing the feel of him before he left.

"I will worry if you don't take care of yourself," Shun murmured, his voice low, emanating a genuine concern that made Ren's heartache. With one last lingering kiss, full of promise and longing, he squeezed her hand tightly and stepped back, longing etched on their faces as they stood on the precipice of separation.

Everyone slowly walked towards the airstrip where their plane was waiting.

Lily stood by the airstrip, her hair whipping around her face in the wind. "You, don't act brave and get killed," she told Fatty, her tone firm yet affectionate.

Fatty chuckled, his hearty laugh carrying over the noise of the preparing aircraft. "Alright, alright. I'll be careful. You, on the other hand, should focus on your training. I want to see you shine out there," Fatty said, ruffling her hair with a gentle fondness that belied his usual tough exterior.

"Sure I will," Lily grinned, her eyes sparkling with mischief. "And you better be there to watch, or I'll come and find you just to beat you up."

On the other side of the tarmac, Pharsa was giving Chatty a stern look. "Remember, you must look after Master Shun. He is the most important person to protect. Also, Master Chu Yan. Ensure their safety at all costs."

Chatty pouted, feeling a pang of jealousy. "And what about me? Don't you care if I make it back?"

Pharsa's eyes softened just a fraction before she retorted, "Who cares about you?"

Chatty "...."

He was speechless.

Silence hung between them until Chatty suddenly pulled Pharsa into a tight embrace. Chatty felt Pharsa stiffen in surprise, but then her arms slowly wrapped around him as well. "You must come back," Pharsa whispered, her voice breaking.

Chatty was overwhelmed. "I will. I promise," he said, his voice thick with emotion. Then, in a bold move, Chatty leaned in and kissed Pharsa, catching her off guard. Pharsa pushed him away, her eyes wide with shock, but then Chatty pulled her back into his arms, holding her close.

"Take care of yourself, Pharsa. And always stay close to Madam." Chatty whispered in her ears.

Pharsa snorted, trying to mask her concern. "Just make sure you come back in one piece. I can handle myself."

Just before they reached the airstrip, the plane's engine hummed with the low murmur of trainees' conversations. But Shi Min's authoritative voice shattered the calm like a lightning bolt. "Everyone, listen up!" His tone demanded immediate attention, slicing through the air and silencing the room in an instant.

Chapter 118: THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON

All eyes turned to Shi Min, their anticipation palpable. "We are about to board the plane," he announced, his gaze sweeping over the assembled group with a steely determination. "The most important person to protect is Shun."

A wave of confusion rippled through the trainees. They exchanged bewildered glances, murmuring among themselves. 'Shouldn't it be Master Chu Yan, the Supreme Commander's husband? Surely, his life holds more weight.'

Shi Min's eyes blazed with unyielding resolve as he raised a hand for silence. "Do everything to ensure his safety," he reiterated, his voice resonating with an undeniable urgency. "And remember, nothing must happen to him during this training. His safety is paramount."

Shun "...."

Shun stood on the periphery, feeling a rush of heat flood his cheeks. His heart pounded in his chest, a mix of embarrassment and bewilderment swirling within him. Four Eyes was his future father-in-law, the great Master Chu Yan, who commanded respect and admiration from all. How could his life be deemed more important? The honor felt both immense and overwhelming.

Four Eyes' calm and knowing gaze met Shun's, a silent reassurance passing between them. Shun nodded subtly, though his mind raced with the gravity of the situation. He squared his shoulders, determined to live up to the responsibility thrust upon him.

Shun couldn't help but feel the weight of their collective expectation pressing down on him. He took a deep breath, steeling himself for what lay ahead. This training was not just about survival—it was a test of his worthiness, his strength, and his readiness to stand by the Supreme Commander's side and Otako's trust in him.

Shi Min turned to Jack, handing him a solemn responsibility. "Little Jack, I am now formally turning over your group to you. You are their official leader. Aside from Master Shun, you have three other Masters in your group. Their safety is in your hands."

Jack straightened, saluting with unwavering determination. "Yes, Grand Master."

Ling Li approached her children before boarding. "Ren, Lily. Your brother and I will be back after we've taken them to the mountain."

Lily looked at her mother, her eyes silently pleading. Ling Li nodded, understanding without words. Lily then ran to Fatty, hugging him tightly.

Fatty was momentarily taken aback but quickly wrapped his arms around her.

"Take care, okay?" Lily said, her voice muffled against Fatty's chest.

"I will. You take care, too," Fatty replied, kissing her on the temple. "We have to go now. Lily, I love you."

Lily's ears turned red, and she nodded, too shy to say the words back. She let go, stepping back with a brave smile.

Ren, her eyes glistening with worry, turned to her mother. "Mom, Shun will be safe, right?"

Ling Li placed a reassuring hand on her daughter's shoulder. "Don't worry. Otako won't let anything happen to Shun. And you heard Shi Min. Shun is well protected.

"We need to go. Go back and rest again. I'm leaving Reginald to you." Ling Li declared.

"Thank you, Mom; you and Brother Shi Min should take care." Both Ren and Lily said with a wave in their hands.

As everyone boarded the plane, the weight of unsaid words hung in the air, mingling with the crisp scent of adventure ahead. Ren watched as Shun settled into his seat from the lighted cabin through the window, her heart pulling taut with every passing moment. Still, Ren held onto the belief that love could bridge any distance.

As Ling Li boarded the plane, the weight of unspoken emotions settled over the group. She found her seat next to Four Eyes, glancing back to see if everyone was settled.

The plane loomed ahead, a silent sentinel waiting to take them on a journey fraught with challenges. The hum of the plane's engines was a constant backdrop to the lively chatter inside the cabin as they took off. The group of trainees and their mentors were seated, sharing stories and laughter to ease the tension of their upcoming mission.

"My wife wept last night when I told her we are going to the Mystical Mountain instead of Amazon," one of the trainees said, his voice tinged with both amusement and regret.

Another chimed in, "My girlfriend asked if she could hide inside the space sack and come with me!"

The cabin erupted in laughter, the camaraderie palpable. Shun, sitting near the front, joined in with a grin. "Well, I was packing extra clothes last night; Ren thinks I should bring the whole closet!"

Shi Min, seated nearby, couldn't help but laugh out loud. He could vividly imagine his eldest sister fussing over Shun's packing. "Ha ha ha ha! Mom, did you hear that?" Shi Min called out.

Ling Li, who was seated a few rows back, was laughing too. "I heard it, son," she replied, her eyes twinkling with amusement.

Turning to her husband, Ling Li said, "Honey, I prepared some warm clothes for you and put them in your ring." She wanted to make sure Four Eyes knew he had everything he needed.

Four Eyes looked at his ring, his eyes widening in surprise at the sheer amount of items Ling Li had packed. There were clothes, his favorite snacks, and a picture of their family that caught his eye. He took it out, a soft smile spreading across his face.

"Oh, you found it," Ling Li said, a bit embarrassed. She had hoped he would discover it while they were in the mountains.

"Thank you," Four Eyes whispered, leaning in to give her a sweet kiss.

"Did you bring the knife I gave you?" Ling Li asked, her voice soft with concern.

“Um, it has always been with me,” Four Eyes replied, patting his side where the knife was securely strapped.

Ling Li’s face lit up with relief. She remembered something important and leaned closer to him. “Honey, Shun has a powerful skill. He has learned how to use it with Shi Min’s guidance. It’s very powerful, but using it might attract other beasts around you,” she said in a low voice.

Four Eyes nodded, urging her to continue.

“Shun has firepower. He can control fire,” Ling Li explained, her voice barely above a whisper.

#### Chapter 119: ROCKIE IS SICK

Ling Li’s eyes shimmered with worry as she clung to Four Eyes, her voice a soft whisper filled with anxiety. “Honey, remember your safety is your priority. Use your power if it will save you, and never hesitate. Demonic beasts are called demonic beasts for a reason.”

Before Ling Li could continue, Four Eyes silenced her with a tender kiss, drawing her into a protective embrace. Her initial shock quickly dissolved into a serene acceptance as she melted against him, savoring the moment of closeness.

“Don’t worry too much. I will come back for you and the children,” Four Eyes assured, his voice unwavering and full of promise. The firmness in his tone was a stark contrast to the vulnerability he felt inside.

Ling Li’s eyes glistened with unshed tears, her voice trembling with raw emotion as she whispered, “Chu Yan, I love you.”

“Um, I love you too,” Four Eyes replied, holding her close. Their hearts beat in unison, and they drew strength from each other.

Ling Li’s worry faded for a moment, replaced by a mischievous sparkle. “Did you see Pharsa and Chatty earlier?” she asked, a playful grin lighting up her face.

Four Eyes chuckled, "Um, I'm happy for them."

Their tender exchange was suddenly interrupted by Pharsa's voice, laced with irritation. "Madam, I could hear you, you know," she whined, clearly having overheard their conversation.

Ling Li turned towards Pharsa, a playful smile curling her lips. "Ha ha ha, why are you seated with Mushu? You should sit with Chatty and not poke your ears at us."

Pharsa crossed her arms, huffing in annoyance. "Who wants to sit with him?" she retorted.

Ling Li shook her head, chuckling softly. "What a stubborn woman."

After a three-hour flight and another hour's drive, the group finally arrived at the base of the Mystical Mountain, its towering presence looming ahead of them. The air was thick with anticipation and the scent of pine.

Shi Min's voice boomed across the gathered crowd, his authority undeniable. "This is it, everyone. Little Jack, lead your troop to the mountain. We will meet you back here in three months." His words carried a weight of finality and expectation.

"Good Luck and all the best. You may go," he declared, Shi Min's final words echoing like a commandment.

With purposeful strides, Shi Min walked towards Shun, Chatty, and Fatty, tapping each on the shoulder in a gesture of camaraderie and encouragement. Then, he moved to his mother, who stood with his stepfather, a pillar of strength and support.

"Paps, you must take care. I will take care of Mom and the rest. Don't worry about them," Shi Min vowed, his voice filled with filial piety and determination.

His stepfather's eyes softened with gratitude. "Thank you."

"We need to go," Four Eyes declared, his voice firm. He gave Ling Li one final kiss and embrace, the goodbye tinged with a mixture of hope and uncertainty and turned away without another glance.

Ling Li, Shi Min, Mushu, and Pharsa stood together, watching as the twenty eight men team walked into the thick forest. Their figures gradually were swallowed by the dense foliage until they disappeared from sight. The forest seemed to hold its breath, embracing the warriors within its ancient and mysterious grasp.

"Let's go back," Ling Li said, her voice resolute but tinged with a lingering sadness.

As they turned to leave, the enormity of their journey ahead weighed heavily on their hearts, each step back to the car filled with silent prayers and steadfast resolve.

As Ling Li and the others returned to their grand estate in the heart of Russia, she swiftly moved to address the pressing matters at hand. Her voice, a mixture of authority and concern, broke the momentary silence as they settled in. "In two days, we will go to Camp Phoenix. I must arrange for Ren and Lily and settle them well before we leave."

Shi Min's brow furrowed with curiosity. "Mom, I heard Lily is joining the Dance Sports Competition and will be training; what about the business she is taking over from Ren?"

Ling Li nodded thoughtfully. "Yes, I was going to discuss it with you. Lily is training not only for dance sports but also for the Asian Olympic gymnastics. You have to build her training area as soon as possible.

I will take over Ren's jewelry business since buying resources for our jewelry needs expertise." Ling Li expressed her thoughts.

Shi Min acknowledged his mother's plan with a decisive nod. "I understand. I will have my staff design and construct Lily's training area."

Ling Li turned to Mushu, her trusted aide. "Mushu, find Lily a confident assistant. Also, please inform the head of 'RS Bijou' to report to me."

RS Bijou, the prestigious jewelry company Ren had taken over and renamed, was a testament to their family's legacy, with its exquisite custom designs sought after by clients worldwide.

Later that evening, the family gathered for dinner, the room filled with the comforting aroma of a homemade feast. Ling Li suddenly remembered someone. "Pharsa, please call Goldie," she said, realizing she hadn't seen him since his trip to the casino.

Almost on cue, Goldie's cheerful voice rang out from the doorway. "My Queen! I'm here."

Ling Li's smile widened. "Join us for dinner, Goldie. I heard you worked hard and won a lot in the casino. So, what do you plan to do with your money?"

Goldie beamed with pride. "I gave it to Mushu, my queen."

Curious, Ling Li turned to Mushu. "Mushu, what did you do to the winnings?"

Mushu explained with a respectful nod. "Master Shi Min gave me his winnings and instructed me to put them under Rockie's account. Since it was official work, I divided Goldie's winnings between Rockie and him."

Goldie frowned, trying to recall the name. "Rockie? Rockie?"

Ling Li's eyes softened. "Don't you remember Rockie?"

Goldie's eyes lit up with recognition. "Rockie, I know Rockie! He is my best friend! Where is he? Where is he? Is he here?" he exclaimed excitedly, clasping both his hands.

Mushu's expression turned somber. "Goldie, Rockie is sick."

Goldie's face crumpled with worry. "What happened to him?" He began to sob like a child. "I want to see him. Where is he?" he asked, his voice breaking with emotion.

## Chapter 120: HOW DID IT HAPPEN

Mushu looked to Ling Li for approval, who nodded silently. "Come. I will show you, Rockie." Mushu led the way, Goldie following obediently with Tod, his aide, beside him. Ling Li and Shi Min trailed behind, their hearts heavy with concern.

They entered a quiet, dimly lit room in the infirmary where Rockie lay, surrounded by the steady hum of medical equipment. The sight of Rockie, frail and hooked up to machines, brought a fresh wave of tears to Goldie's eyes.

"Rockie! Rockie! Why are you sleeping with all the devices?! Wake up! Wake up!" Goldie cried, shaking Rockie desperately.

Miraculously, Rockie stirred, his eyelids fluttering open to the astonishment of everyone present. Slowly, Rockie seemed to recognize the tube in his mouth and, with surprising skill, removed it himself. Mushu, breaking out of his stunned silence, rushed over to assist him.

Rockie's voice was hoarse but filled with the familiar edge of his personality. "Why are you so noisy? I was sleeping, and you were yelling!" he scolded Goldie, though his eyes betrayed a glimmer of affection.

Goldie's face lit up with a mixture of joy and relief. "Rockie! My best friend! You are awake?!"

Rockie smirked weakly. "Who wouldn't wake up with your loud voice flying all over?"

Mushu returned with a glass of warm water, helping Rockie take small sips. "Rockie, you have been in a coma for over a year," he explained gently.

Rockie's brows knitted together in confusion. "Where are the nurses and the doctors in charge of Rockie?" Ling Li demanded, her voice steely.

Just then, two nurses and a doctor entered, chatting animatedly, unaware of the gravity of the situation inside. They froze in their tracks upon seeing the stern faces of their superiors.

"Madam, Master, Chief..." the doctor stammered nervously.

"Tell me where you were. And why is Rockie left alone?" Ling Li's tone was fierce and uncompromising.

The doctor's voice shook as he replied, "We...we just had our supper."

Ling Li's eyes narrowed. "There are three of you, but you decided to leave Rockie alone and have your meal at the same time? Who is your superior?"

"Dr. Gao." The young doctor replied.

"Dr. Gao? Dr. Gao from Camp Phoenix?"

"Yes, Madam."

"Who hired you? And these nurses?" Ling Li asked.

"It is Dr. Gao who hired us as well."

"Where is Dr. Erik?"

The young doctor looked puzzled. "Dr. Erik? Madam, we heard you dismissed him."

Ling Li exchanged a look with Shi Min. "I forgot," she admitted. "Check on Rockie. He has woken up, and I want a thorough report."

Rockie and Goldie began bickering as if no time had passed. To everyone's shock, Rockie slapped Goldie several times.

"Sober up!" Rockie yelled with his hoarse voice. "Compose yourself and face reality!" Another slap. "How long do you want to stay foolish?!" he said, giving one final fierce slap.

Goldie, teary-eyed and dazed from the beating, fell to his knees beside Rockie's bed. Mushu helped him to his feet, embracing him tightly.

"Mushu, I have been a fool, yet all of you were very good to me," Goldie confessed, letting go of Mushu.

Ling Li's face softened into a warm smile. "Welcome back," she said, hugging Goldie.

Shi Min clapped Goldie on the shoulder, a rare display of affection. "I'm glad to see you back, Goldie."

From his bed, Rockie coughed, drawing attention back to himself. "Oh, you have taken the limelight from me," he joked, earning a round of chuckles.

"You too, buddy; welcome back!" Mushu told him, his eyes misty with emotion.

"Welcome back, both of you," Ling Li chimed in.

"I will wait for you to be on your feet again," Goldie vowed to Rockie.

"Now, you are pointing at me!" Rockie replied with a smirk.

Goldie laughed. "Oh, I will be the twins' security. Don't even think about taking my position."

"Twins? What twins?" Rockie asked, his confusion deepening.

Mushu grinned. "Ha ha ha, buddy, you have been sleeping for a while. Madam gave birth to twins."

Rockie's eyes widened in surprise. "Madam, congratulations! You! How could you deprive me of the twins?" He turned to Goldie with mock indignation.

The room filled with laughter as the old friends resumed their banter, their bond unbroken by time or circumstance.

Ling Li's voice cut through the laughter, gentle yet firm. "Rockie, you need to rest, and don't overdo yourself. I will arrange for your therapy. All of you, let's go and let Rockie rest. I want Rockie's test results by tomorrow," she instructed the doctor, her tone leaving no room for argument.

When they went back to the main house.

As they settled into the grand drawing room of their Russian estate, the tension was palpable. Ling Li's mind was a whirlwind of thoughts. Her eyes darted to Mushu, the loyal aide who rarely left her side.

"Mushu, did you hear what that young doctor said? Dr. Erik was dismissed by me. How did it happen? And Dr. Gao seemed to have taken over." Her voice carried a sharp edge of confusion and determination.

Mushu nodded solemnly. "Yes, Madam. It seems there are some things we need to uncover."

Shi Min, pacing the room thoughtfully, paused and turned to his mother. "Mom, how did we hire Dr. Gao?"

Ling Li's brow furrowed as she recalled the details. "The Chinese President referred to him," she replied immediately, her frown deepening. "I trusted the recommendation without questioning it further."

Shi Min nodded slowly, the pieces of the puzzle starting to come together in his mind. "Looks like we are getting several pictures together," he uttered, his voice laced with suspicion.

Ling Li's resolve hardened. "We have to find out what is happening as soon as possible. Mushu, I'm assigning Reginald to Ren. We need one for Lily as well."

Mushu, ever efficient, responded promptly. "I can dispatch Leeroy to be with Lily."

Ling Li nodded in agreement. "Yes, I remember him. Send him in." She paused, her gaze softening as it landed on Goldie. "Goldie can join us on behalf of Reginald."

In the subsequent days, Ling Li was a whirlwind of efficiency at the office. She meticulously consolidated her work, ensuring every detail was captured before her impending departure to Camp Phoenix. She was acutely aware of the urgency and complexity of the task ahead, and the thought of not knowing how long it would take weighed on her mind.