

## PROTEGE 196

### Chapter 196: THE FINAL PREPARATIONS

When the final cut was completed, Mushu leaned back, exhaling a slow breath. He wasn't one for sentiment, but even he had to admit... This was something special.

"Perfect," he murmured, sending the file to Ren for approval.

Within minutes, Ren had responded with a simple yet powerful reply: "It's breathtaking. Pharsa will synchronize the music with it."

That was all the validation Mushu needed. What he created was no ordinary video... It was a digital symphony that would immortalize the couple's love forever.

At the same time, Pharsa was deep in discussion with Camp Blaze. What had started as a simple request for accompaniment had evolved into something extraordinary.

Who would have imagined that amongst the three thousand soldiers, a complete orchestra could be assembled? Each member had once held dreams of music... dreams long buried beneath war and duty. Yet tonight, those dreams were being resurrected.

An elderly chef, hands weathered from years of cooking, stepped forward, his voice thick with emotion. "I was an orchestra conductor in my younger years," he admitted, nostalgia clouding his gaze. "But it wasn't stable, and I had a family to support. I retired and became a chef."

His confession stirred something in the hearts of those around him. The moment he picked up the baton once again, something shifted. He stood taller, pride rekindled in his spirit, and as he led the first rehearsal, the camp held its breath.

The symphony was raw yet mesmerizing — the clash of past and present fusing together into something undeniably beautiful.

With Mushu and Pharsa ahead of schedule, their tasks were not affected by the chaos during the past days.

As the sun ascended, the whole family devoured their breakfast with contagious enthusiasm. There was no idle chatter ... only purpose. Energy surged through every movement as they departed the mansion in silent anticipation, heading for Camp Blaze.

When they arrived, the scene was nothing short of 'electrifying.'

The entire camp was alive with anticipation, with every soldier, officer, and staff member working tirelessly to perfect the arrangements for the grand proposal. Soldiers and civilians alike bustled through the grounds, eager to contribute to the Supreme Commander's grand event. The excitement was tangible, every footstep, every whisper, every hurried breath carried the weight of something monumental.

Ren navigated through the chaos, eyes sharp as she inspected the progress of the decorations, followed closely by Shun. The space was transforming before her eyes; hanging lanterns glowed in iridescent hues, the air thick with the scent of fresh flowers adorning every surface, and the floor shimmered under soft golden lights.

"Everything is on track," Ren confirmed to herself before meeting with the Five-Star Michelin Chef she had personally invited. Tonight's feast wouldn't be just for their private celebration. Ren had decided to give the entire camp a well-deserved break, treating them to a grand meal.

When the soldiers caught wind of the news, cheers erupted across Camp Blaze. 'A feast and a proposal?' This was shaping up to be the most unforgettable night in their history.

Meanwhile, Lily, together with Fatty, supervised the fireworks team, ensuring every step followed strict safety regulations. Lily's brows furrowed as she double-checked the fire truck stationed nearby, leaving nothing to chance. 'Tonight had to be flawless... there was no room for error.'

After securing the safety measures, Lily and Fatty moved toward the dining hall, where the massive cake was being assembled. Layers upon layers were stacked with precision, every intricate detail carefully sculpted to perfection.

While others focused on decorations and festivities, Mushu remained in his technological domain, fine-tuning his presentation. Not once, not twice — but several times, he tested each gadget, ensuring every wire, every data stream, every connection was flawless.

"No errors, no delays, no glitches," Mushu muttered, running his final diagnostics. He wouldn't allow anything less than perfection tonight.

At the same time, Pharsa, with Chatty like a magnet who couldn't stay away from Pharsa, led the orchestra through their rehearsals, refining each note and ensuring the synchronization of the live music with Mushu's holographic display. 'It had to be seamless, each melody woven into the visual narrative like a heartbeat.'

As the music soared through the air, harmonizing perfectly with Mushu's holographic display, Four Eyes felt his chest tighten. 'This wasn't just a proposal but a celebration of love, family, and the bonds they had forged through hardship.'

Four Eyes was still reeling from the overwhelming gratitude he felt towards his loved ones. The grandness of the preparations made him feel humbled. 'How did they manage all this while dealing with the chaos of the past few days?'

Among the whirlwind of preparations, Four Eyes took a rare moment to breathe, bringing the twins along with his parents to the vast open fields. As he watched his children run through the grass, their laughter like music, a deep warmth spread through his chest.

"Pa... pa, catch Chin! Catch Chin!" Chin Chin shouts happily to her father, running around with her short legs while Kim Kim follows behind. Their Grandparents are watching them closely with joy.

The twins were too young to grasp the significance of tonight, but they felt the joy, the energy, the sheer magic surrounding them.

And in their innocence, their giggles became the perfect prelude to the celebration ahead.

While the preparations roared around him, Shi Min remained laser-focused on his personal mission. He had designed the engagement ring himself, each detail carefully crafted to reflect the essence of his mother.

The moment his subordinate arrived, Shi Min wasted no time.

"Young Master, here is the ring you ordered," the soldier said, his tone carrying the reverence this moment deserved.

Shi Min lifted the exquisite jewelry box, his fingers grazing the cool metal. Slowly, he opened it—revealing the ring he had poured his heart into designing.

The ring was more than just an exquisite piece of jewelry ... it was a masterpiece woven with meaning, love, and legacy. At its center gleamed a three-carat heart-shaped diamond, its brilliance symbolizing an unbreakable bond — bold, elegant, and eternal.

Nestled gracefully on either side were two delicate pink heart-shaped diamonds, each one cradling a silent promise... the gentle, radiant presence of the twins, Kim Kim and Chin Chin. Their warmth, their laughter, their innocent joy, all reflected in the soft, rosy glow of the stones.

Chapter 197: SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO WALK THIS JOURNEY ALONE

Ling Li stepped out to find Wushing and Butler Peng in tailored black tuxedos, their hair neatly styled.

'Murphy and Pharsa made an unexpectedly capricious demand; I can't help but wonder what significant announcement awaits.'

Ling Li tilted her head slightly, suppressing a smirk. "You both look dashing."

Butler Peng flustered, cleared his throat while Wushing chuckled.

'I only realized Butler Peng can be so cute,' Ling thought, giggling.

As they stepped outside, the air was thick with anticipation. The night stretched before them, a mystery waiting to unfold. And unbeknownst to Ling Li, her husband awaited—ready to present her with the surprise of a lifetime.

The rhythmic trot of the engine echoed through the vast countryside as Ling Li rode toward Camp Blaze, the crisp evening breeze kissing her cheeks as she rolled down the window to smell the evening breeze.

Ling Li's gaze softened as she looked toward the horizon, thoughts drifting to Murphy and Pharsa's impulsive demand. The curiosity lingered, but there was no unease — just quiet contentment.

'Whatever they had planned, it would unfold soon enough.' Ling Li exhaled slowly, brushing away a stray lock of hair as the evening deepened into a canvas of twilight hues.

Meanwhile, at Camp Blaze, tension twisted through the air like an invisible thread, pulling every soul into a state of eager anticipation.

Four Eyes stood near the grand pavilion, his posture stiff, shoulders squared, yet his hands trembled ever so slightly at his sides. He tried to steal them, flexing his fingers in rhythmic intervals, but the anxious energy refused to settle. His parents and his stepchildren, Shi Min, Ren, and Lily, hovered nearby, sensing his nervousness. Ren nudged Shi Min subtly, and Shi Min smirked, shaking his head as if to say, 'He's worse than expected.'

Kim Kim and Chin Chin ran circles around the pavilion, their gleeful laughter a stark contrast to their father's barely contained anxiety. The flickering lanterns reflected in their wide, curious eyes as they absorbed the beauty of the occasion, oblivious to the weight pressing on Four Eyes' shoulders.

Murphy and Pharsa, ever the architects of secrecy, whispered amongst themselves, ensuring that every last detail was perfect. Murphy glanced at the entrance every few seconds, checking, waiting. Pharsa's sharp eyes traced Four Eyes' every move, gauging his expressions with silent amusement. 'He is hopeless when it comes to his wife.'

Then, Shi Min stepped forward, his steps purposeful and unwavering. In his hands, he carried an exquisitely crafted jewelry box, its velvet exterior smooth beneath his grip. He stopped before Four Eyes, extending the box toward him.

Four Eyes hesitated for a moment as if accepting it would seal his fate, then slowly reached out. His fingers brushed against the soft velvet before firmly taking the box. The weight was insignificant compared to the enormity of what it represented. 'This was it.' He inhaled sharply and opened the lid.

His breath stalled.

The diamond caught the light perfectly—a heart-shaped three-carat masterpiece, each facet gleaming with an ethereal glow. The two pink diamonds nestled on either side, symbolizing Kim Kim and Chin Chin, were radiant. His throat tightened, his pulse hammering inside his chest.

Then his gaze flickered to the three tiny blue diamonds perched delicately atop the band. His brows knitted together in confusion. 'Why are there three?' He admired their placement, appreciating their beauty, yet he couldn't decipher their significance.

Unbeknownst to him, Ling Li had yet to share the joyous secret of her pregnancy with triplets.

A quiet thought passed through his mind—perhaps it was purely aesthetic. He nodded slightly,

convincing himself of that notion.

Swallowing his emotions, he turned to Shi Min. Four Eyes' voice was low, thick with feeling. "Thank you."

Shi Min smirked, tapping his stepfather's shoulder with practiced ease. "Paps, you keep thanking me. I feel like an outsider." His voice carried teasing warmth, but his expression revealed something deeper — understanding.

Four Eyes chuckled, shaking his head. "You're not." His grip tightened around the ring box as if it grounded him, and he eventually placed it in the inner pocket of his exquisite custom-made tux. He turned his head slightly, scanning the pavilion.

Everywhere, anticipation bloomed.

Dressed in regal attire, dignitaries, commanders, and allies stood in silent expectation. Among them were the Russian President, the Chinese President, and the Cuban President, their formal expressions masking curiosity. El Padre and El Capitan, Ling Li's closest allies, stood with sharp eyes, their presence adding weight to the grand occasion.

Shi Min had informed Ling Li's elderly parents about the grand proposal, but he had deliberately omitted to invite them tonight, wishing to spare them the exhaustion of travel. They had readily agreed to the arrangement, preferring to attend the wedding in two weeks instead. Still, their excitement was undeniable—they had demanded a live update, unwilling to miss a single moment of their daughter's fate unfolding.

Across the ocean, in the quiet solitude of their home, Old Master Li and Old Madam Li sat side by side in their ornately furnished living room. The dim glow of the television cast a soft, flickering light upon their aging features as they sipped their tea, the delicate porcelain cups trembling ever so slightly in their wrinkled hands.

Old Madam Li sighed, her voice thick with emotion. "Old Li, I'm so happy that our daughter has finally found her lifetime partner."

She blinked, feeling the weight of the years press against her heart—years of watching Ling Li take on the world with unwavering strength, never once faltering but never allowing herself the luxury of companionship. "At last, she wouldn't have to walk this journey alone."

Old Master Li stared at the screen, his expression unreadable save for the glimmer in his aging eyes. After a long pause, he murmured, "You're right. I never doubted our daughter's capabilities. I made her head of the family at such a young age, and yet, the businesses that flourished under her leadership expanded more than a hundredfold. But..." His voice faltered slightly before he exhaled, steadying himself. "I've always been worried she was alone."

Old Master Li swallowed hard, shifting his gaze downward, watching the steam rise from his cup in slow, curling wisps. "Now... now I'm finally relieved."

#### Chapter 198: SOMETHING IS OFF

Old Master Li's grip tightened around the delicate porcelain as he fought to contain his emotions. Tears rimmed his weary eyes, though he made no effort to blink them away. Ling Li had always been the apple of his eye among his four children—his pride, his legacy, his most treasured creation.

He knew he was biased, terribly so.

But he didn't care.

Old Madam Li smiled softly, reaching over to lay a gentle hand atop his own, their fingers linking in quiet understanding.

As the live broadcast continued, their aging hearts beat in sync with the anticipation thousands of miles away.

Their daughter's destiny was about to change forever.

Back at Camp Blaze, the atmosphere was charged with reverence.

Three thousand soldiers, dressed in their full military uniforms, stood tall and proud. Their formation was flawless, a testament to their loyalty and discipline. They weren't merely attendants — they were witnesses to their Supreme Master's pivotal moment.

The tension peaked.

Every breath in the pavilion seemed suspended, every heartbeat syncing to the same rhythm of anticipation.

At any moment now, Ling Li would arrive.

And the world would never be the same.

Ling Li's car approached the grand pavilion, her sharp eyes catching sight of the soldiers lined up in two perfect rows stretching over a kilometer. Their formation was impeccable, swords gleaming under the torchlight, reflecting the night sky like celestial blades.

Her gaze shifted, and she spotted Old Tutor Chen and Old Tutor Ma entering the ceremonial path between the soldiers. The moment they stepped forward, the soldiers raised their swords high in a synchronized motion, creating a formidable archway of steel and honor.

Ling Li blinked.

"..."

Her lips curled into a smirk as she clicked her tongue. 'What a splendid entrance,' Ling Li mused, unable to deny the impressive display.

The car rolled to a stop, and Butler Peng swiftly stepped forward, opening the door with practiced precision. Ling Li barely had time to process the grandeur before Wushing extended a hand, ushering her down with respectful formality.

The Camp Commander was already waiting. He stepped forward and bowed lightly. "Welcome, Supreme Commander. We are honored by your presence."

Ling Li took a measured glance at the soldiers standing tall before her.

"Are all the soldiers lined up?" She asked, her voice laced with curiosity.

"Yes, Supreme Commander," the Camp Commander replied.

Ling Li raised a brow. "All three thousand of them? And I have to walk through all of them?"

Her tone was neutral, but internally, she bristled. She shifted her weight slightly, feeling the sharp point of her stiletto heels pressing against the ground. 'What the hell is Pharsa thinking?' She cursed inwardly, already imagining the endurance test she was about to face.

"Madam, please," the Camp Commander gestured toward the entrance.

Ling Li exhaled sharply, shaking her head before stepping forward.

The soldiers, dressed in flawless military uniforms, radiated eagerness as they raised their swords higher, their disciplined stance unwavering. Their excitement was palpable — this was not just a formal procession. It was an acknowledgment of their Supreme Commander's might, an unspoken vow of loyalty.

Ling Li moved swiftly, keeping her pace brisk. She wasn't one for ceremonial grandeur, especially not when she had to navigate it in heels. However, she suddenly frowned, recalling that Old Tutor Chen and Old Tutor Ma had entered ahead of her. By all calculations, she should have caught up to them by now.

Yet, they were nowhere in sight.

Something was off.

Unknown to Ling Li, the two elderly tutors had unknowingly become part of a grand scheme. The moment they had entered the corridor of soldiers, Mushu and Pharsa had been waiting just ahead, concealed in the shadows.

With swift and merciless efficiency, the two figures lunged, gripping the elderly scholars by the arms before soaring into the air.

Old Tutor Chen and Old Tutor Ma barely had time to gasp before the ground disappeared beneath them.

Air rushed past them, their robes violently flapping as they soared toward the grand pavilion at an alarming speed. Neither of them was a martial artist. Scholars, intellectuals, men of knowledge, yes. But fighters? Certainly not.

"W-We're going to die!" Old Tutor Ma finally found his voice, his eyes squeezed shut in sheer terror.

Old Tutor Chen, despite his panic, still had the presence of mind to curse through gritted teeth. "Damn that Shi Min!"

Their landing was abrupt.

Mushu and Pharsa released their grips, and both elderly tutors stumbled, barely catching their footing before colliding with the floor.

They stood frozen for a moment.

Then, realization dawned... both of them were pale, their long beards and mustaches in complete disarray. They looked utterly miserable, their scholarly dignity reduced to a pitiful mess.

"!!!!"

Ren and Lily, upon seeing the disaster that had befallen the two elders, hurriedly stepped forward to assist. Their hands hovered uncertainty.

"..."

Ren and Lily exchanged a look.

'But how could we tidy their beards? Can we touch them casually?'

Their silent dilemma stretched between them, unspoken yet understood.

Shi Min sighed, shaking his head before stepping forward to spare his sisters from their internal agony.

But before he could speak, Old Tutor Chen turned to him with unbridled indignation, his mustache quivering as he scolded, "Shi Min! How could you torture us two old bones like this!"

His voice trembled with fury, but his limbs remained stiff—he was still too shaken to express his rage properly.

Meanwhile, Old Tutor Ma remained entirely dazed, his wide eyes unfocused.

"Hmph!" Old Tutor Chen huffed dramatically, though his posture betrayed his weakness.

Old Tutor Chen flicked his sleeves with practiced elegance, his steps purposeful as he strode toward the other guests. His presence was commanding, a pillar of wisdom amid the grand pavilion's growing anticipation. Old Tutor Ma, his expression distant, followed behind like a shadow, as though pulled by an unseen force.

Suddenly, Mushu's voice cut through the murmurs, firm yet urgent: "Madam is coming."

A breathless hush settled over the gathering. The dim lights flickered and, without warning, plunged into absolute darkness. A collective gasp filled the room. The shift was so abrupt that even the steadiest hearts pounded with unease, especially Four Eyes.

Chapter 199: WILL YOU MARRY ME?

Four Eyes' heartbeat thundered in his chest, erratic and unrestrained, as if a war drum had taken residence inside him. 'Thump-thump-thump-thump.' His grip tightened around his sleeve, fingers trembling against the fabric.

At the center of the scene, Mushu and Pharsa whispered their final instructions to the attendants, their tones measured but laced with urgency.

Ling Li, adjusted to every shift in the atmosphere, narrowed her eyes. 'Something is really off..' A flicker of unease passed over her features before she scoffed, her resolve hardening.

"Hmph!"

Without a moment's hesitation, she soared into the air, the air around her rippling from the force.

'What is she doing?!'

Her soldiers had been eagerly awaiting the moment she would step into the aisle, but now they stood frozen, mouths slightly ajar.

"...."

Their anticipation turned into bewilderment as they watched Ling Li land lightly at the aisle's end, her feet barely making a sound. But what greeted her was not the expected brilliance of the pavilion... it was still absolute darkness.

For a fraction of a second, silence reigned. Then, as if the universe itself had conspired for this exact moment, the music from the orchestra swelled into existence. The first haunting notes sliced through the air, raising goosebumps on the skin of every witness. One by one, holographic images shimmered into life before Ling Li's astonished gaze.

Her breath hitched.

The air felt heavier as she took a step forward, her movements almost instinctual. The moment she recognized the images, her chest tightened... her heart clenched with an unexplainable ache. The projections were no mere decorations; they were fragments of her past with Four Eyes. Memories lay bare before her, as tangible as the emotions they stirred.

Ling Li stepped closer, eyes tracing the images with a reverence she hadn't realized she possessed. The first flicker of nostalgia took form... the memory of her and Four Eyes sitting across from each other in the kitchen, both biting into sandwiches late at night. She had been so embarrassed then, their first real moment of closeness outside of battle and duty. She chuckled now, soft and barely audible, the warmth of the memory melting through her.

Another step. Another image. The emotion within Ling Li swelled as she saw herself lying in bed, pregnant, fragile, unmoving — in a coma. But beside her, Four Eyes sat vigil, his hand wrapped around hers, devotion written across his weary face. Her vision blurred as fresh tears welled up. She had always known he had stayed by her side... but seeing it like this, experiencing it through these projected moments... it struck her in a way she hadn't been prepared for.

Ling Li paused.

Her fingers trembled as she wiped away her tears with the back of her hand, gathering her resolve. She forced herself to keep moving, knowing that the images wouldn't stop—and neither could she.

One after another, snapshots of their life together unfolded before her. The arrival of the twins. Their laughter, their struggles, their victories. Their love.

Then, darkness.

Everything vanished. The music stopped. Silence rushed in, suffocating in its weight.

Ling Li stood frozen, trying to steady herself against the wave of emotions threatening to drown her. The quiet stretched impossibly long... until the grand pavilion suddenly erupted into brilliant light.

And before her, kneeling on one knee, was Four Eyes.

His face was a tapestry of emotions. His lips quivered, his hands clenched around a small, glimmering box. Inside, a ring caught the light, glowing like a promise carved into eternity. His voice was unsteady, thick with raw emotion as he spoke words that held the weight of his entire heart.

“Ling, dear... will you marry me?”

His voice cracked, just barely, as he forced the words out. His breath felt shallow, and his body trembled despite his usual composure. He needed to hear Ling Li's answer — he needed her to say it.

Ling Li was stunned. Her eyes, overflowing with tears, locked onto his desperate, love-stricken gaze. Her lips parted, but only a shaky breath escaped.

“You!...”

Ling Li let out a chuckling sob — a sound that was neither entirely joy nor completely sorrow. It was everything.

Four Eyes felt his heartbeat hammer violently in his chest, his lungs forgetting their function. He was hanging on the edge of a precipice, teetering between elation and sheer terror.

Then, Ling Li lifted her hand.

“Yes...” She inhaled deeply, steadying herself as she let the words fall, clear and undeniable. “Yes, I will marry you!”

The moment Ling Li uttered her “yes,” the world erupted in celebration.

The pavilion exploded with cheers.

Four Eyes barely registered the noise; his entire world was now condensed into the woman before him... the woman who had just said yes.

Fireworks crackled and burst across the sky, illuminating the vast expanse with dazzling streaks of gold, crimson, and sapphire. The vibrant explosions mirrored the whirlwind of emotions coursing through Four Eyes’ veins—a mixture of disbelief, overwhelming joy, and sheer adoration for the woman who had just agreed to spend eternity with him.

Still reeling from her answer, he carefully slid the exquisite ring onto Ling Li’s slender finger, his hands trembling with emotion. The diamond gleamed under the pavilion lights, its facets catching the brilliance of the fireworks above.

Then, he stepped closer, his eyes locking onto hers. His heart pounded as he pressed a kiss to her forehead... a silent promise, an unspoken vow. But his restraint only lasted a moment. With a surge of passion, he tilted her chin slightly upward, capturing her lips in a tender yet fervent kiss.

The crowd erupted into cheers, their voices blending with the deafening fireworks.

For two full minutes, time seemed suspended, the couple lost in their own world. Around them, guests whistled and clapped, their joy tangible.

Murphy smirked, nudging Pharsa. "I think we can call this a success," he muttered, crossing his arms.

Pharsa scoffed, but a satisfied smile tugged at her lips. "Did you ever doubt my genius?"

Meanwhile, the single guests—the— the so-called 'single dogs' — let out exaggerated groans, shaking their heads as they watched the romantic display unfold before them. Some grabbed their wine glasses, downing their drinks in mock sorrow. Others lamented their fate of being painfully single at such a spectacular event.

#### Chapter 200: THEY'RE HUMAN

The celebration roared on, waves of clinking glasses, laughter, embraces, and cheers filling the pavilion. Ling Li stood at the center of it all, her hand still entwined with Four Eyes'. This was no ordinary victory—this was a triumph carved from blood, battles, and fate itself.

And in her heart, she knew—

This was only the beginning.

Everything else faded away.

For tonight, at this moment, it was just the two of them.

And a promise sealed under the fireworks.

As the last of the guests departed, leaving trails of laughter and well-wishes in their wake, Ling Li stood amidst the lingering warmth of family and soldiers who remained behind, their presence a testament to unwavering loyalty. The grand pavilion still shimmered in golden lights, casting elongated shadows that danced with the gentle evening breeze. Only El Padre and El Capitan stayed behind.

With a knowing smile, Ling Li reached into her embroidered pouch and took out her phone. She fiddled for a moment and sent out red packets, each one bearing a sum equivalent to three months' salary.

The effect was immediate.

An uproar exploded from the ranks, a chorus of cheers ringing out like a war cry of victory. Soldiers gripped their phones in disbelief, staring at the generous gift as if they had just been handed a golden key to fortune.

"This isn't just for Camp Blaze," Ling Li announced, her voice clear and firm, carrying across the pavilion. "Every single camp and company under my command will receive the same."

If the soldiers had been overwhelmed before, now they were completely undone. Men and women alike erupted into celebratory shouts, some practically lifting each other in excitement.

Far beyond the pavilion, employees who had already settled into their beds jolted upright as notification after notification flooded their work chat groups. Confusion turned to elation as they logged in to see the announcement spreading like wildfire.

Mushu, always quick to seize the moment, uploaded a photo he had personally captured that night, the very moment Four Eyes had knelt before Ling Li, the brilliance of the ring reflecting in the emotion-filled depths of their eyes.

The reactions were instant.

"Madam, Congratulations! You are truly generous!" came one message.

"The wedding proposal—did you see? The whole nation's talking about it!"

"Wait, did we just get a massive bonus? Someone confirm before I wake up my entire neighborhood!"

The news shot through the ranks at the speed of lightning, faster than any official announcement could have hoped to travel.

Then, as the chaos of celebration simmered, the Camp Commander stepped forward, clearing his throat meaningfully.

“Master, Madam,” he addressed them with great formality, yet there was a distinct twinkle of excitement in his eyes. “The soldiers have prepared something special for you.”

At his words, the pavilion shifted as the gathered soldiers moved with practiced discipline, positioning themselves in perfect formation. It wasn’t until the first notes swelled into existence that Ling Li realized what was happening.

The orchestra began to play, but there was no hired ensemble.

It was her soldiers.

Ling Li’s eyes widened, utterly bewildered. She had fought with them, commanded them, and trusted them in the battlefield — but she had never imagined they could wield music with the same discipline as they did their weapons.

Before she could even voice her astonishment, Four Eyes stepped forward, his stance as steady and confident as ever. With practiced grace, he bowed before her, his hand stretched toward hers.

“May I have this dance?” His voice was warm, laced with a teasing reverence, his expression soft yet unwavering.

Ling Li was momentarily speechless.

She could command armies, bring nations to their knees, and wield influence unlike any other. Still, here, standing before Four Eyes under the shimmering glow of celebration, she felt delightfully powerless.

With a smile, Ling Li placed her hand in his, allowing him to pull her into the moment gently.

The second her fingers brushed his, Four Eyes wasted no time, he effortlessly spun her into the dance, leading her across the pavilion with fluid precision.

He pulled her close, his voice a whisper in her ear, sending tingling shivers down her spine.

“Dear, you look so wonderful tonight.”

Ling Li chuckled, grinning from ear to ear. “Honey, you look very dashing yourself.”

Four Eyes raised an eyebrow, his smirk deepening. “What’s with the look? Are you not convinced?” His tone dropped into playful accusations. “Hmph! Let me think—how should I punish you tonight?”

Ling Li narrowed her eyes at him, the corner of her lips twitching.

‘Who the hell said I’m not convinced?! You’re just making an excuse to make a hooligan move legally!’

Ling Li snorted at her own unspoken thoughts.

Four Eyes, as if reading her mind, only chuckled in response, tightening his grip just slightly, ensuring she remained within the intimate space of their dance.

And as they twirled under the glowing lights, surrounded by music, soldiers, and the echoes of a night that would be remembered for a lifetime, Ling Li realized—

This wasn’t just a proposal.

It was a moment of fate, a defining Chapter sealed in time.

As Ling Li and Four Eyes glided across the pavilion, lost in their world of whispered affections and intimate smiles, their twin daughters, Kim Kim and Chin Chin, stood at a slight distance, watching intently. Though barely a year old, the two had an uncanny ability to perceive the world beyond their age, silently exchanging thoughts in a battle of wits only they understood.

Kim Kim, ever the serious one, furrowed her tiny brows, arms crossed in deep contemplation. She meticulously observed her parents... the way Four Eyes effortlessly guided Ling Li across the pavilion, how her mother followed without hesitation, their steps synchronized as if the dance had been rehearsed a thousand times over.

Her sharp eyes lingered on the way her father pulled Ling Li closer, hands steady, movements fluid.

A strange realization stirred within her.

'They're human.'

Not just warriors. Not just leaders. Not just untouchable figures who commanded nations and armies.

But real.

Her lips twitched slightly, amusement flickering across her delicate features. 'Interesting.'

Her musings, however, were abruptly interrupted by her subconsciousness.

'Hey, Kim Kim... how could you even think Mama and Papa aren't human? What are they, mythical beasts? What if they find out you've been doubting their existence, huh?'