

I Want a Lifetime with You Chapter 466

Su Shaoqing's expression changed and he was noticeably annoyed. With a stern face, he said, "You stay out of my business!"

"I'm your mother! Who's there to mind you if I don't?" Lin Shuqin was peeved upon hearing Su Shaoqing's words. "I've let you be in any way you wanted in the past but this matter has to be the exception!"

Lin Shuqin was also a hard-nosed woman. "There're so many girls out there, why does it have to be Fu Ling? I thought you dislike her before?"

"What?" Su Shaoqing curled his lips, but the smile on his face was icy. "I don't even know what it means to like someone. But there's one thing for sure; since she's back now, I can't let her go this time. That's what I owe her."

"But sympathy is not the same as love, Shaoqing!" Lin Shuqin massaged her temples in frustration. "Do you understand? Remember how you've fooled around when you were young? Have your dad and I ever restricted you from doing anything you wanted? Yet, this matter is different. You should never have toyed with her feelings come what may. Now that you're all square, why are you pestering her again?"

"All square?" Su Shaoqing lifted his head. There was an utter bleak expression on his face, sending chills down the spine of anyone who set eyes upon it. His dark eyes fixated on Lin Shuqin. "I owe her a life. We'll never be even. That's enough. Since you've never meddled with my business when I was young, don't you interfere now. It's getting late, I should go back now."

"Stop right there!" Lin Shuqin was exasperated. "Just where did you get this temper from? Go back? Where are you going? This is your home!"

Su Shaoqing paused in his tracks but he did not stop.

Home?

To Su Shaoqing, it didn't really matter where he was. When he was young and naive, he did not like to be home because he did not want to be restrained. Now, he did not miss going

home because Fu Ling was not there. The only place he could call “home” was where Fu Ling was.

Su Shaoqing did not know what “love” was, but he was willing to be with Fu Ling for the rest of his life.

Su Shaoqing left the Su Residence and sat in the car for a long time. He smoked a cigarette and until it was entirely dark outside, he took out his phone and made a call to Fu Ling. “Are you going home?”

Fu Ling was keeping Bai’s company at the hospital. She did not intend to pick it up when she saw that it was a call from Su Shaoqing. However, Bai reached out, took her phone and pressed on the “answer” button, and even turned on the speaker mode. Su Shaoqing’s voice barged in abruptly.

Fu Ling was slightly stunned and before she could answer, Bai asked, “Mommy, is this uncle pursuing you?”

Fu Ling paused and looked at Bai with mixed feelings. “Do you understand the meaning of the word ‘pursuing’?”

“I do!” Bai nodded and looked at Fu Ling with a slightly puzzled expression. “There’re many uncles pursuing Mommy when we were abroad. But Mommy never liked them!”

Su Shaoqing, who was on the line, was dumbfounded when he heard Bai’s childlike voice. But as he listened to their conversation, fury started creeping into his dark eyes.

“Silly boy!”

“Bai is not silly! Bai knows it’s because of Bai that Mommy never said ‘yes’ to those uncles’ pursuits, right? Is Mommy afraid that those uncles would mistreat or abuse Bai?”

“Oh boy! Who taught you all these?” He’s only three. How does he find out about all this stuff? He even knows what “abuse” is. That made Fu Ling frown. “I’ve never taught you all these!”

“It’s the old lady next door who told me. She said that stepfathers and stepmothers are evil!” Bai put on a serious face as he said that, which looked as though he was in deep thought. Biting his finger, he added, “But Mommy, I think this uncle likes you!”

Fu Ling was stunned again, and then only she realized she was still holding the phone. She quickly hung it up. "What are you babbling!"

"It's real!" Bai blinked. "This uncle comes to see Bai every day and even plays with Bai. When Mommy's not around, he even took me out to play!"

"What did you just say?" Fu Ling squinted. "He took you out?"

Bai seemed to realize that he had said something wrong so he quickly pulled his finger out from his mouth and reached out to grab Fu Ling. "Mommy, please don't be angry. Bai... Bai just wanted to play outside. But Mommy can take Bai's word! Bai never ran about. Uncle was carrying Bai all the time, so please, Mommy, don't be angry!"

Bai looked at Fu Ling cautiously with a timid expression which made Fu Ling yielded instantly. How could I be angry with him? With her eyes brimming with tears, Fu Ling said, "I'm sorry Bai, it's all Mommy's fault!" She could have sent Bai for treatment if she had the money back then, or she could have gone to Qin Yanzhi earlier if she had realized Bai's illness, and then Bai wouldn't have ended up in this condition. At the end of the day, it's because of my selfishness and worries about seeing Su Shaoqing again that I did not return to this country earlier.

But so what if I see him? No one is more important than Bai.

"Mommy, please don't cry and don't be angry. Bai will never go out anymore, okay?" Bai got up from his bed and reached out to hug Fu Ling, making her cry even harder.

But Fu Ling was very anxious about Bai's health so she restrained herself. "No, Mommy's not angry. Bai, if you want to go out next time, just let Mommy know and Mommy will bring you out, okay?"

"Really?" Bai beamed in joy. "Then Mommy, bring uncle as well!"

"Why?" Fu Ling was surprised. There had been other men going after her but Bai had never really liked any of them. Why is Bai's attitude toward Su Shaoqing so amiable? Is it just because Su Shaoqing has brought Bai out to play a few times?

"Because Bai likes him!" Bai smiled shyly. "Bai thinks this uncle is very good-looking!"

Fu Ling was speechless.

So, my son is also someone who judges others based on their appearance?

“Doesn’t Mommy like uncle? But Bai can feel that uncle really likes Mommy!”

“How does a child know what it means to like someone?” Fu Ling did not take Bai’s words seriously. She thought that Bai was all about looks and Su Shaoqing happened to meet his preference.

On the other hand, the call was hung up on Su Shaoqing but before Fu Ling ended the call, he could hear distinctly that Bai said he liked him.

Su Shaoqing was delighted and he was smizing. Tossing his phone to the side, he stepped hard on the gas pedal.

Su Shaoqing went to buy dinner from Xinglong Square before going to the hospital.

It was seven o’clock in the evening and the hospital became tranquil gradually. When the nurses saw Su Shaoqing, they quickly stood up and greeted him, “Director! You’re returning to the hospital at this hour?”

However, Su Shaoqing only placed his finger on his lips. “Shhh!”

The nurses went quiet immediately. Nevertheless, when they saw the direction Su Shaoqing headed, it was all abuzz again. “What do you think our Director has to do with the family of Fu Sibai? Could it be that the kid is actually our Director’s illegitimate son?”

“Hush! Don’t spout nonsense!”

Su Shaoqing walked toward the ward and heard the cheerful waves of laughter coming from inside. Bai was giggling and sounded gleeful.

Su Shaoqing’s eyes were also beaming with a hopeful glint. Just then, he heard Fu Ling say, “Alright Bai, no more funny business. Are you hungry? You said you weren’t just now but it’s quite late already, are you still not hungry?”

“I’m hungry!” Bai pouted. “Bai is hungry!”

“Only now do you feel hungry?” Fu Ling couldn’t help smiling. “Then what do you want to eat? Mommy will buy for you!”

"Bai wants to eat... uncle!"

Bai's eyes lit up and he sat upright immediately when he saw Su Shaoqing. "Uncle."

"Mmm. How does Bai feel today?"

Su Shaoqing pushed open the door and walked in. He was carrying the lunchbox from Xinglong Square which immediately caught Fu Ling's attention. She frowned. "Why are you here?"

"I'm here to see Bai. You haven't eaten, right? I've bought this from Xinglong Square. They're all your favorite!"

Su Shaoqing opened the lunchbox as he said that, while Fu Ling glanced over. Indeed, they're all my favorite. But... "I don't like all these!"

Su Shaoqing's hand which was still holding the lunchbox paused mid-air and his eyes dimmed a little. "Don't you like them? But Huan said you like these dishes, and I remember you like them as well when you were young..."

"That was before." Fu Ling cut him off. "What do you think you know about me? You don't know my favorite food and my preference has changed. I don't like all these!"

"You don't like them? Then what do you like? Just tell me, I'll take note and I'll buy for you next time." Su Shaoqing smiled and continued, "Let's eat these for now. Bai is still young; he can't go starving for too long!"

Fu Ling's eyebrows were knitted even closer together. If Su Shaoqing were still the same as before, she would have plenty of ways of dealing with him. However, Su Shaoqing had changed. No matter what she said, he would always go along with everything she said, rendering her to be at a loss for what to respond.

Seeing that Fu Ling did not respond, Su Shaoqing smiled again. "Eat first, don't starve yourself. Just let me know what you like to eat after you've finished eating later. I promise I'll never get them wrong next time!"

"Su Shaoqing, are you a worthless scamp?" Fu Ling couldn't help feeling a little dismayed.

A cold glint flashed across Su Shaoqing's eyes as he heard Fu Ling's words but he quickly concealed it and put on a smile. "Yes, indeed, I'm a scamp, a worthless scamp!"

Looking at Su Shaoqing's cheeky and smiley face, Fu Ling felt even more troubled. "Su Shaoqing, this will all be futile. I don't like a single thing you like!"

Su Shaoqing's face turned gloomy and just as he was about to speak, Bai cut off the conversation between them. "Mommy, aren't all these your favorite?"

Bai looked at Fu Ling with a perplexed face, and then he turned to Su Shaoqing and blinked his eyes. "Uncle, Mommy likes these."

Fu Ling froze on the spot. She knew very well that Su Shaoqing would not believe what she just said but when Bai unraveled her lies, Fu Ling felt as though she had been slapped in the face. That was a blazing sensation.

Fu Ling turned her head to the side in the gawky air.

Su Shaoqing curled his lips and reached out to pinch Bai's cheeks gently. "Oh, I see. Then maybe Mommy doesn't like them today?"

Su Shaoqing's mood turned bubbly and his gaze on Bai softened.

Bai grinned, showing his pearly white teeth. "Yes! It happens to Bai sometimes too! That's why, uncle, you must remember to ask Mommy next time before preparing any food for her!"

"Alright. Bai is such a good boy. Come, let uncle feed you!"

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Fu Ling became downhearted all of a sudden. She knew well that Bai was very young and he was at an age that he needed to learn by coming into contact with the outside world. Children his age were all studying in school but Bai had to spend almost all his time in the hospital.

Fu Ling turned away to avoid seeing the interaction between Bai and Su Shaoqing. She was particularly reluctant to look at Bai's eyes.

Over the past few years, Fu Ling thought that so long as she was good to Bai, Bai would be contented. However, Fu Ling had overlooked the fact that a child was always eager for a family and would always yearn to be loved.

I should never be the only member of Bai's family. It was all because of my selfishness that things turned out this way.

"Uncle, why isn't Mommy eating?" Su Shaoqing reached out to wipe the corner of Bai's mouth as he was feeding Bai.

Bai gave Su Shaoqing an innocent look and turned to Fu Ling. "Mommy, why are you crying!"

"Oh, no, I'm not crying. It's just something in my eyes!" Fu Ling quickly wiped away her tears and walked over to them. "It's Mommy's fault; Mommy shouldn't be picky. Now Mommy feels like having some of these, can I eat with Bai?"

"Okey-dokey!" Bai clapped his hands and pointed to his bedside. "Mommy, why don't you sit here and let uncle feed you as well? One spoonful for Mommy and another spoonful for Bai!"

The angelic look on Bai made it difficult for anyone to refuse him, but looking at Su Shaoqing made Fu Ling blush instantly. "It's okay, Mommy can eat on my own. Just let uncle feed you, alright?"

Of course, Fu Ling didn't want Su Shaoqing to feed her. It's not like I'm disabled! Furthermore, she had decided to stay away from Su Shaoqing. If it were not for Bai, she would never have allowed Su Shaoqing to be here.

Su Shaoqing turned to look at Fu Ling and for some reason, he wasn't against Bai's babbles just then. A picture formed in his mind where he was feeding Fu Ling.

The unrevealed emotion within his eyes became even stronger. "Here you go, eat!"

Despite that, Fu Ling turned away. Su Shaoqing's eyes grew dim as he saw that and when he was about to draw his hand back, Bai pouted sadly and asked, "Is it because Bai bit the spoon and Mommy feels it is dirty?"

"No!"

Hearing Bai's childlike and tender voice, Fu Ling waved her hand quickly. "Mommy doesn't think so!"

"Then why doesn't Mommy eat!" Bai glanced at Fu Ling with his doe-like eyes.

Fu Ling's heart softened completely and not a word of refusal could she bear to let out. "Mommy doesn't think Bai is dirty, it's just Mommy feels... feels..." How should I put this?

"Mommy doesn't want to be fed by uncle!" Su Shaoqing replied softly. "It's alright, Bai eats then!"

"I don't want to. If Mommy doesn't eat, then Bai also doesn't want to eat anymore!" Bai pouted. Tears started welling up in his eyes as though they would trickle down any second.

Fu Ling's heart started aching so she hurriedly lowered her head and grabbed Su Shaoqing's hand, taking in a mouthful. "See? Mommy loves Bai the most, how could Mommy ever feel Bai is dirty and dislike Bai, right?"

Chewing the food, Fu Ling was still holding Su Shaoqing's hand. "Bai, see, Mommy has eaten."

Su Shaoqing lowered his head and looked at his hand which was held by Fu Ling. At that moment, Su Shaoqing could feel his heart racing. He was astonished. He had never felt that way before.

Fu Ling must have felt it as well so she quickly let go of his hand. "Mommy doesn't eat with Bai because Mommy is an adult now and an adult should eat on her own and can't let someone else feed her. Moreover, Bai is so young and still growing, how could Mommy eat your food? Mommy will take her own food, alright?"

Fu Ling served a bowl of rice for herself and sat next to Bai, taking a spoonful for herself and feeding Bai alternately.

Bai took a spoonful from Su Shaoqing and then from Fu Ling. His eyes were brimming with joy and he clapped his hands, declaring, "Bai is the happiest baby in the world."

"Really? Why?" Su Shaoqing smiled lightly and fed Bai another mouthful of food. "Eat more vegetables."

With his mouth still full of food, Bai continued clapping his hands. "Because Bai not only has Mommy now, but Bai also has Daddy!"

Fu Ling's hand which was holding the chopsticks halted, so was Su Shaoqing's. He was dumbfounded and looked at Fu Ling with a hopeful glint in his eyes.

Fu Ling swallowed the food with some difficulty. "Bai, don't say something like that in the future. Mommy is not in that sort of relationship with uncle and Mommy will not get married in the future as well. Do you hear me? You have a Daddy. It's just that he's busy now, next time..."

"But I've never met him! He must be very bad and doesn't like Mommy and Bai. Bai likes uncle!" With that, Bai flipped the blanket aside and reached out to Su Shaoqing, holding onto his neck. "Uncle, is it okay if you like Bai and Mommy?"

A fervent gleam appeared in Su Shaoqing's eyes. His deep-set eyes fell on Fu Ling, making it untenable for Fu Ling to avoid his eyes. Su Shaoqing reached out to wipe the rice on the corner of Bai's mouth. "Sure!"

"Yay! That's good!" Bai clapped his hands. "Then Mommy must be with uncle and get married, and then give birth to a lovely little sister for Bai."

Fu Ling's hand was held by Bai and in his other hand was Su Shaoqing's. Then, he put their hands together. Fu Ling wanted to struggle but before she could even do that, Su Shaoqing got ahead of her and grabbed her hand tightly. His eyes were brimful with emotions and he wouldn't let go. "Ling!"

Fu Ling sneered, "Su Shaoqing, I would never have another kid anymore, never!"

Su Shaoqing was stunned. There was a shimmering glint in his eyes and his hand loosened a little. Fu Ling withdrew her hand at once and carried Bai from Su Shaoqing's arms. "Bai, be good, come eat now!"

Su Shaoqing pursed his lips. His eyes had darkened completely. Those words of Fu Ling were still lingering in his mind. "Never have another kid anymore"?

"What do you mean?"

Fu Ling ignored Su Shaoqing altogether. The air surrounding them turned into a complete silence ever since. After telling a bedtime story to Bai, Fu Ling looked at Bai who was deeply asleep and reached out to touch his face. There was a dotting beam in her eyes.

If her child were still alive, he or she would have grown to be around the same age as Bai. Would he or she be as good and lovely as Bai?

Thinking of that, she drew her hand back and glanced at Su Shaoqing. Her stare was frosty to the bone.

Fu Ling packed her things and got up while Su Shaoqing stood up too, following her.

Fu Ling had treated Su Shaoqing as thin air all the way until she got out of the hospital. When Su Shaoqing saw that she was going to get in a cab, he grabbed her by her arm and asked, "Where are you going?"

Fu Ling shook Su Shaoqing's hand off right away. "Where I'm going has nothing to do with Mr. Su."

"I..." Su Shaoqing paused in his tracks and was a little flustered when he caught the icy stare of Fu Ling. "Ling... I... Back then..."

"Enough. I don't want to talk about what happened in the past. I have nothing to do with you now and if it's not because you threatened me with Bai's illness, do you really think I'll be associated with you?"

Su Shaoqing's hand paused mid-air and his eyes narrowed. "Turns out Ms. Fu still remembers that you're the one who wants my help these days, huh? Since you're the one seeking help, then stop showing me your temper. Go back with me!"

Su Shaoqing reached out to grab Fu Ling's hand and pulled her into his arms. Fu Ling was caught off guard and fell into his embrace.

Fu Ling tried wrestling but her hand was locked within Su Shaoqing's grip. "Stop jostling!"

“Su Shaoqing, you’d only make me despise you even more this way.” Fu Ling struggled to free herself but very soon, she realized her strength was no match for his. She could only grit her teeth and berate.

To her surprise, Su Shaoqing let out a laugh. “Since you’ve already hated me, does it make any difference if your hatred toward me grew deeper?” Su Shaoqing drew himself closer to Fu Ling’s ears and gently let out a breath. His gaze turned complicated. “Ling, since you’re back now, I won’t let you leave anymore. Even if it means breaking your wings, I’ll make sure you stay by my side.”

“Su Shaoqing, you’re indeed a scamp!”

“That’s true, I am! Even more so after meeting you.” Su Shaoqing bit Fu Ling’s ear which made her tremble and wrestle with all her strength. “What are you trying to do? Let go!”

Nevertheless, Su Shaoqing held onto Fu Ling even more tightly. They looked like a quarreling couple from afar.

“Yes.” Su Shaoqing smirked. “Who else can I f*ck with? Surely you.”

“You are shameless!” Fu Ling was exasperated and trembling all over. “You let go! Let go!”

Su Shaoqing saw the scary scarlet in Fu Ling’s eyes which were exceedingly ferocious. He released her instantly but before Fu Ling could run away, Su Shaoqing caught her again. “Alright, I was wrong. I would not do anything to you but you must go home with me, okay?”

Su Shaoqing hugged her snugly from behind and they were extremely close to each other. Fu Ling could feel the warmth on her back and there was even something pounding at a racing beat. She was astounded. “You...”

Su Shaoqing swallowed and his eyes turned a little murky. “Be good, alright? I’m sorry!”

Fu Ling was greatly confounded by Su Shaoqing’s behavior. But she knew clearly that Su Shaoqing was someone who never went back on his own word. Hence, his apology was a surprise to her.

“Get in the car, let me send you home. It’s been such a long day.”

Su Shaoqing carried Fu Ling in the car and helped her fasten the seatbelt. "Regarding Qin Xiaoxiao, she's an orphan but have you ever thought about looking for her family members in the event that Bai couldn't be saved with Qin Yanzhi's cells?"

"You..." Fu Ling paused. She had clearly never thought about that and it was because there was only Qin Yanzhi left after Qin Xiaoxiao's death. Qin Yanzhi was Bai's biological father. Hence, it had never occurred to Fu Ling that he could not save Bai. "What do you mean?"

"Well, it may happen. After all, there's only Qin Yanzhi for now, what if his bone marrow does not match, have you thought about other ways?"

"What should I do then?" Fu Ling was agitated all of a sudden and grabbed Su Shaoqing's hand. "Qin Xiaoxiao was an orphan; no one knows who her parents are. If Qin Yanzhi's bone marrow doesn't match, would it work with Qin Xiaoxiao's parents'?"

Thinking of that, Fu Ling was even more anxious. "Su Shaoqing, you've promised me that you'd cure Bai of his illness. You can't go back on your words!"

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Fu Ling held on to Su Shaoqing's hand and refused to let go.

Su Shaoqing lowered his gaze to look at Fu Ling's hand. "Sure!" he muttered forcefully before pursing his lips. "I won't break my promise."

Fu Ling nodded, though she was too busy rejoicing in the fact that he had agreed to save Bai to register what he said after that.

...

Meanwhile, Shu Qing spent a couple of days being grounded at the Su family's residence by Su Huaibei.

The members of the Su family were known to be pushovers, but many of them had a few tricks up their sleeves as well. Shu Qing figured that Su Huaibei was no different from them.

Shu Qing was reluctant to face Su Huaibei or anyone else from the Su family for that matter, so she stayed cooped up in her room for two days straight.

On the third day, her manager came over to seek Su Huaibei's permission to let her out for an event that she was supposed to attend.

The manager was led into the Su family residence's yard by the butler, where they ran into Su Yunwan having tea with Su Huaibei and Lin Shuqin. "Sir, Ms. Shu is required to attend an event and a banquet this evening. Here is the list of attendees."

The manager handed the name list to Su Huaibei, who squinted at a particular name printed on it. "Why is she here?"

"She's the face of Xinhuang, Sir!"

Su Huaibei nodded. "Alright. Remember to send her back after it's over."

"Yes, Sir!"

After that, a servant in the house led the manager to Shu Qing's room, where she had been staring out of the window with a blank look on her face.

Shu Qing turned around and glared at her manager.

"Ms. Shu, there's an event and banquet this evening to celebrate the release of White Nights," the manager reported.

"What did he say?" Shu Qing asked without bothering to meet her manager's eyes. She stroked her arm absentmindedly as she spoke.

The manager froze for a moment before he put two and two together. Soon, he realized who Shu Qing had been referring to. "Mr. Su was fine with it."

Shu Qing smirked. "He's not worried that I might make a run for it?"

"You won't."

"Oh?" Shu Qing asked, raising an eyebrow. "Why is that so?"

“There’s something here that you care about.”

Her manager’s words made her expression change drastically. The hand that had been gently stroking her arm just seconds ago clenched, making her nails dig into her flesh painfully.

Her glare grew sharper for just a second. “What a loyal lackey!”

The manager glanced at her tentatively. “Thank you, Ms. Shu.”

Shu Qing was not pleased, at the very least. “What about my outfit? I can’t just wear this to the banquet, can I?”

“No worries. The stylists have already taken care of that,” her manager replied.

Shu Qing huffed and left the Su Residence with her manager.

Meanwhile, Su Yunwan glanced at Su Huaibei with a cup of tea in her hands. “You seem distracted.”

Su Huaibei was jolted out of his trance. “When did you come back?”

Su Yunwan frowned. “I’ve been back for several years already, you know.”

Su Huaibei grimaced. “What about Shengfan? Did he visit you?”

Jiang Shengfan!

Su Yunwan’s hands trembled, though she managed to keep her composure. “He came to visit a few days ago, but you weren’t home. I don’t know when we’ll get to meet him again!”

Su Huaibei chuckled. “Why don’t you head back? You seem to miss him a lot.”

“That’s enough. Let’s talk about your matters.”

“Me? What is there to talk about?”

“Shi Nuan!”

Su Huaibei's face fell immediately. "How did you know?"

"Looks like my suspicions are correct," Su Yunwan murmured, her face darkening. "Why didn't you tell us about it? Don't you know how badly she was treated, over at the Shi's?"

She placed her teacup onto the table and continued to glare at him. "The Su family is entirely capable of taking in another child. You should have just sent her here!"

Su Huaibei's brows were knitted together tightly. "Did Qing tell you about this?"

"It doesn't matter," Su Yunwan exclaimed, waving her hand in dismissal. "I know exactly what you'd done to her. She's such a wonderful kid!"

Su Yunwan had always struggled to understand why Su Huaibei had abandoned Shi Nuan as a kid. "You shouldn't have brought her into this world if you were going to toss her out in the end. In fact..."

"Sis!" Su Huaibei uttered hurriedly, cutting her off. "I think that there's a misunderstanding here."

"Hmm?"

"I thought... I thought that she was dead... so that's why I..." Su Huaibei trailed off before he could finish his sentence. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath before continuing, "Jiang Yuan hates me, and that's why she wants revenge. Besides, I can't confirm that Shi Nuan's my daughter, at least not yet."

"She's definitely your daughter, Huaibei. She's such a loveable girl! I used to think that she was Bancheng's girlfriend or something," Su Yunwan pressed forth with a sigh. "I won't probe too much into your relationship with Jiang Yuan, but I need to know what your next steps are once you confirm that Shi Nuan's your daughter."

"I'll reclaim her," Su Huaibei admitted truthfully. "Though... I'm not sure if she'll accept me. I may have been misinformed, but I had abandoned her nonetheless."

That was the reason why Su Huaibei had been hesitant to get in contact with Shi Nuan. Other than the possibility of Shi Nuan refusing to accept his attempt to make up, he was also worried about how the psychological stress would affect her pregnancy.

Su Yunwan huffed. "That's great to hear, but that's not the most urgent matter right now. Good luck with convincing Fu Chengyan regarding this matter. You'll have to pick a suitable time to do it since Old Master Fu doesn't seem too happy about Fu Chengyan and Shi Nuan's marriage."

"Understood," Su Huaibei affirmed confidently. "I'll make sure to get it done."

...

Meanwhile, Shu Qing was exhausted after the event, but her manager ignored her fatigue completely as they rushed to the banquet. "As the female lead of White Nights, your presence is expected at the banquet with our collaborators from Xinhuang."

"Are you sure that this isn't going to ruin my reputation?" Shu Qing huffed, shooting her manager a cold glare. "I'm not going!"

"Ms. Shu, that's not something for you to decide," her manager chided, glowering at her. "Without Xinhuang's help, White Nights would never be released in Z Nation. It won't be very nice of you to ruin everything with your stubbornness."

Her manager's words were piercing, yet it was nothing short of the truth. There were some things that she simply did not have a choice in.

Shu Qing was unhappy about it, but the last thing she wanted was to mess everything up.

Seeing that she had calmed down, her manager smiled and continued, "The guest-of-honor for the banquet is the top shareholder of Xinhuang. By the way, she's a woman who admires you!"

Shu Qing looked up, visibly confused. "Really?"

"That's right," her manager confirmed. "Only that shareholder and a few executives from Xinhuang will be attending the banquet. There won't be any media personnel present, so you won't have to worry about incidents like the one from a few days ago occurring again."

"I'll mark your words!" Shu Qing spat out through gritted teeth. "I'll beat you up if that's not the case!"

"Don't worry!"

Xinhuang had scheduled the banquet at seven-thirty that evening at Yun Shui Jian, so Shu Qing made use of the time before that to get herself a new hairstyle at a salon.

When they arrived at Yun Shui Jian, the time was twenty minutes past seven in the evening. They made sure to arrive early to make a good impression, so as to improve Shu Qing's chances of rising to stardom in Z Nation. Besides, Xinhuang was affiliated with Shengyuan Group, and getting on good terms with them would almost guarantee the best commissions for Shu Qing.

Shu Qing was aware of that, despite not being well-versed with the unwritten rules of business.

Ten minutes later, the producers, advertisers, and security personnel from Xinhuang arrived at Yun Shui Jian. Most of them had met Shu Qing before during the collaboration and were familiar with her, but her scandal had come as a huge surprise to them.

Due to that, Shu Qing felt rather uncomfortable around them.

Upon greeting everyone from Xinhuang, Shu Qing noticed that a seat at the head of the table was left empty. That must be for that shareholder!

"Ms. Shu, our lady boss will be coming soon."

Lady boss?

Shu Qing furrowed her brows. I have a bad feeling about this... However, before she could register what was going on, the door to the private room was pushed open. A stern-looking, bespectacled woman walked in and immediately stepped aside. "After you, Ma'am!" she ushered, gesturing for someone outside to come in.

Another woman walked in, clad in a simple, dark green dress and flats. Despite the simplicity of her outfit, her domineering aura was as strong as ever.

The woman grinned and waved her hand at everyone in the room as they stood up to greet her. "Take a seat, everyone," she greeted before glancing at Shu Qing. "Greetings, Ms. Shu. My name is Shi Nuan, and I'm Fu Chengyan's wife."

Shu Qing was about to stand up as well, but Shi Nuan's words made her freeze in mid-air. Her gaze could have almost shot a hole into Shi Nuan's body.

Shu Qing's clenched her fists, as though she was going to punch Shi Nuan in the face at any given moment.

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Shi Nuan frowned for just a second before her smile returned. "Nice to meet you, Ms. Shu," she uttered, sticking her hand out for a handshake. Instead of reciprocating her actions, Shu Qing merely continued to stare at her.

Shi Nuan's hand hovered in mid-air, her smile still plastered on her face.

It caused Shu Qing to shiver, and she suddenly found herself at a loss for words.

It's Shi Nuan! It's that...

Shu Qing turned around and tried to leave, only to be dragged back by her manager. "What the hell are you doing?" he growled into Shu Qing's ear. "This is the lady boss of Shengyuan Group, the largest shareholder of Xinhuang! Can't you keep it down?"

Shu Qing's face paled. "It's you!" she gasped.

Shengyuan Group... Xinhuang Entertainment... Why are they under Shi Nuan's control now?

Oh, wait... Isn't Fu Chengyan the CEO of Shengyuan Group? He was the one that Shen Qianan was supposed to marry...

With that, the fear in her eyes was gone, replaced by a chilling coldness. "Ms. Shi," she responded.

Instead of addressing her as Mrs. Fu, she went ahead and referred to Shi Nuan by her maiden name.

Everyone gasped in surprise, confused by Shu Qing's attitude toward Shi Nuan. They had already noticed how the two of them resembled each other, but they could not figure out why Shu Qing was acting in such a manner in Shi Nuan's presence.

Shi Nuan, on the other hand, knew everything. She was still smiling, but Shu Qing's glare sent shivers down her spine. "It's fine. You may call me whatever you wish. Please take a seat, Ms. Shu."

You'd better sit down, or I'll take it as an insult toward myself and my companies.

The executives from Xinhuang trembled in their seats. Since when did Shi Nuan become the top shareholder? Isn't she the wife of Fu Chengyan?

Everyone had been bewildered when they found Shi Nuan and Zhou Zheng in the CEO's office that morning. They had anticipated an announcement from Zhou Zheng, but none of them had expected to witness Shi Nuan being sworn into office.

The truth was, most of them had questioned her identity before, but they were still shocked to find out about her new post in the company.

Everyone respected Shi Nuan, but Shu Qing did not seem to care at all.

Shi Nuan seemed unfazed by Shu Qing's rudeness. Upon placing her orders with the waiter, she smiled at everyone present and urged, "No need to feel uncomfortable around me. I'm a newbie in the entertainment industry, so I'll need all of your help from now on."

Her words sounded like music to everyone's ears, which was a breath of fresh air from the CEO and Zhou Zheng's way of speaking.

Shu Qing, however, simply huffed and glanced away in silence.

Shi Nuan smirked. "I've heard that you've come from Jiang City, Ms. Shu. What a coincidence! Any comments on its recent development?"

"Comments?" Shu Qing scoffed. "I have none. There's nothing for me to comment on after being away for so long."

Shi Nuan's heart sank. "Did you miss anyone when you were away, Ms. Shu?"

She stared into Shu Qing's eyes as she spoke, to keep track of every little change in her expression.

Pursing her lips, painful memories flooded through Shu Qing's mind.

Shi Nuan gripped her teacup so tightly that her fingers turned white. The bespectacled woman who had held the door open for her earlier on, who was one of Fu Chengyan's secretaries by the name of Xu Yue, rushed forward and urged, "Mrs. Fu, Mr. Fu has said that you shouldn't be drinking tea during your pregnancy!"

Shi Nuan was jolted out of her trance. "Alright. Can you get me some warm water then?" she requested with a smile.

Xu Yue scurried off to carry out her request, while Shu Qing snickered coldly. "It looks like he's treating you well!"

Shi Nuan looked up. "Of course. He's my husband, and I'm his wife. He has the obligation to treat me well, doesn't he?"

Her smile was gentle, yet it felt jarring to Shu Qing's eyes. There was nothing she could do about it, and it made her uncomfortable.

Shu Qing lowered her gaze. "I don't miss anyone or anything. Who hasn't made mistakes or gone through some hardships in their youth? I don't think there's a need to dwell on the past," she uttered, looking up at Shi Nuan. "What about you, Ms. Shi?"

"Not false. Reminiscing about the past should be done in moderation," Shi Nuan admitted, taking the cup of warm water that Xu Yue offered her and sipping from it to moisten her lips. The food arrived at that moment, and each dish looked incredibly appetizing.

The guests at the table bantered, but there was still a heavy sense of awkwardness hanging in the air. After all, Shu Qing did not seem too happy about Shi Nuan's presence.

Everyone chose to ignore it since Shi Nuan did not seem bothered by it. However, they could not help but feel rather annoyed with Shu Qing.

It was common knowledge that artists would tend to act differently onscreen and offscreen, but Shu Qing's recent scandals made her appear like she was a complete hypocrite.

“Even so, we have to stay rooted, am I right?”

Shu Qing paled at Shi Nuan’s comment. She stood up abruptly and uttered, “Apologies, Ms. Shi. I need to use the bathroom.”

She was genuinely frightened by Shi Nuan’s words, and they baffled her.

She had felt nothing but remorse in front of Shen Qianan, but Shi Nuan terrified her.

How could she be so resilient?

Shu Qing stood before the mirror in the bathroom and stared at her reflection. She was getting on in her years, and the wrinkles were getting harder to conceal. She had forced herself to take medications for that, over the past few years, but late nights alone continued to frighten her.

Splashing her face with water, she tried to pull herself together. Unfortunately, it was to no avail.

Suddenly, a shadow emerged from behind, and she whipped her head around to see Shi Nuan standing there and staring at her. Her legs turned to jelly in an instant, and she staggered backward while keeping her eyes trained on Shi Nuan.

Shi Nuan advanced, that chilling smile of hers still plastered on her face. Her footsteps were light but also careful.

She was already three months pregnant, and it was starting to show. Walking over to the sink, she started to rinse her hands underneath the tap. “You don’t seem to like me that much, Ms. Shu,” she commented.

Shu Qing bit her lip and remained silent, refusing to avert her gaze. She tried to figure out what Shi Nuan had been thinking, but she found herself unable to do so.

As a veteran in Shengyuan Entertainment, Shi Nuan knew the unwritten rules of the industry like the back of her hand. She had more control over her facial expressions than Shu Qing, despite the latter being an actress.

Shi Nuan grinned. “Don’t you think that we kind of... Resemble each other?”

Shu Qing's eyes widened as she bolted out of the bathroom. Shi Nuan, on the other hand, stayed put. Her smile melted off her face slowly as time passed.

After a few minutes, Xu Yue hurried into the bathroom, worried that something had happened to Shi Nuan. "Mrs. Fu?"

Shi Nuan blinked and grinned at Xu Yue. "Why are you here?"

"I'm worried about you!" Xu Yue exclaimed. "Mr. Fu had instructed me to follow you around at all times."

"There's no need to be worried about me," Shi Nuan proclaimed. "Let's go!"

"Mrs. Fu..." Xu Yue called out as she jogged over to catch up with Shi Nuan.

"Hm?" Shi Nuan hummed, focused on putting one foot in front of the other.

Xu Yue trailed behind her and pondered over her words. "Why are you being so tolerant toward Shu Qing?"

That was something that she could not understand.

Everyone respected Shi Nuan, but Shu Qing did not seem to care. In fact, she looked as though she hated Shi Nuan from the bottom of her heart.

Xu Yue despised women like that, and she had heard of those scandals that Shu Qing had gotten tangled up in recently. She was not impressed with how Shu Qing acted toward Shi Nuan during the banquet as well.

Shi Nuan screeched to a halt all of a sudden. "Is there anyone that you particularly care about?"

Xu Yue froze, a little confused by her question. She nodded and replied, "Of course. I'm sure that everyone has someone whom they deeply care about."

"That's right," Shi Nuan agreed.

"So... Are you saying that you care about Shu Qing?" Xu Yue asked.

Shi Nuan shook her head. "That is incorrect."

"Then..."

"Let's go back. We shouldn't keep them waiting," Shi Nuan urged, cutting her off. Realizing that she might have overstepped her boundaries as a secretary, Xu Yue pursed her lips and followed Shi Nuan back to the room.

When Shi Nuan returned to the private room, she took note of the tension in the air. Shu Qing was nowhere to be found, and neither was her manager. The producer, Qin Hong, stood up the moment she entered. "Mrs. Fu..."

"No worries. Let's carry on with the banquet, shall we?" Shi Nuan announced.

"Mrs. Fu, Ms. Shu is unwell, so she's taken her leave. She says that she would like to apologize to you for the earlier mishaps," Qin Hong explained.

Shi Nuan merely smirked. "Alright."

Shi Nuan saw Shu Qing's early departure coming, but she would never have guessed just how much Shu Qing hated her. Her heart sank as a million questions flurried through her mind.

Are you my mother, Shu Qing?

What's the deal with you, Shen Qianan and the entire Shen family?

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Shu Qing practically fled as if her life depended on it. She couldn't tell where her fear had stemmed from, but one thing she knew was that she was afraid of facing Shi Nuan.

She sat in the car, gazing off into the distance. When her manager saw the look on her face, his brows furrowed slightly. "Ms. Shu, you really shouldn't have spoken to Ms. Shi in such a manner just now!"

"Then tell me, how exactly should I have spoken?" Shu Qing sneered. "You knew from the beginning that Shi Nuan was going to come, didn't you?"

Shu Qing's eyes bored into her manager, but the latter shifted his gaze away instead.

The manager's reaction was enough of an answer for Shu Qing. "You clearly knew that I didn't want to see her. So why did you take me there anyway?"

"Ms. Shu, unless you don't want to develop in Z Nation anymore, you'll have to see her one way or another. Not just today, but even in the future if she wants to meet you. There's really no way for you to reject her invitation!"

"You..."

"Don't forget, Ms. Shu. You still have to rely on Xinhuang now, and Xinhuang belongs to Shengyuan. You should know your priorities well. Besides, turning back isn't an option. There's no way for you to go back there anymore."

"Enough!" Shu Qing cut her manager off. "You don't need to keep reminding me. I know my own past better than anyone else. Aren't you just waiting to watch me turn into a joke? Not just you, but Su Huaibei too. You're merely Su Huaibei's dog!"

Her manager snorted coldly, but remained silent otherwise.

He dropped Shu Qing off at the Su family's residence. Then, he reported everything to Su Huaibei. Su Huaibei had a dark expression on his face. No one could determine the thoughts that were running through his mind.

"You can go now. Come here again tomorrow."

After dismissing the manager, Su Huaibei remained in his study for a while longer before heading to Shu Qing's room. Shu Qing was taking a shower in the bathroom. It was as though she was trying to scrub off a thick layer of dirt on her skin. She only came out after one full hour.

The moment she exited the bathroom, she was met with the sight of Su Huaibei standing on the balcony. She walked toward him as if she were in a trance. With a towel in her hands, she lifted them up. In that transient moment, countless scenarios emerged in Shu Qing's mind.

Push him. Push him down. All of your pain and troubles will cease to exist.

However, Shu Qing's hands froze midair. Her whole body trembled, but she did not dare to move any closer.

Her eyes seemed to shimmer with a layer of mist as she gazed at the man in front of her. She only needed to steel herself and push with all her might, and this man would undoubtedly die. Even if he didn't, he would be bedridden for the rest of his life.

The whispers of the devil on her shoulder seemed to almost drown out everything else, and she felt overwhelmed by her poisonous thoughts.

Su Huaibei had been looking straight ahead the whole time, not seeming to have sensed Shu Qing's presence.

This opportunity was one in a million. If she failed to grab it, it would slip out of her reach forever.

Shu Qing closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Just as she was about to thrust her palms forward, the man's voice sounded out from above her head. "It seems like you still can't bear for me to die!"

Shu Qing's eyes flew wide open, her gaze meeting Su Huaibei's eyes that resembled bottomless pits; dark and terrifying. She jolted with fright and backed away two steps. Drawing in another deep breath, she leveled her gaze with his.

Su Huaibei stared at Shu Qing with a smile tugging on the corners of his lips, but his eerie smile did nothing to make her feel better.

Shu Qing bit her lips and balled her fists. "Su Huaibei, you deserve to be thrown into hell!"

"Is that so? Well, perhaps! However, if I go to hell, I'll be sure to drag you down with me. It's too bad that you'd lost such a great opportunity just now, hmm?" Su Huaibei lifted Shu

Qing's hand. Only then did he notice that her fists were clenched together tightly, her whole body trembling like a leaf.

A chuckle escaped Su Huaibei's lips all of a sudden. "I didn't know that you knew fear too!"

"Let go of me, you b*stard!"

"I've said this before. If you can't kill me, I'll make sure that you'll stay by my side. Be it dead or alive, you're mine forever." Su Huaibei coldly flung Shu Qing's hand away. "Furthermore, look, you actually can't bear to see me die. Otherwise, you wouldn't have hesitated for such a long time just now!"

"You think I wouldn't dare to do so? I was merely worried that I'd get my hands dirty with all your filth!"

"All my filth? Am I any filthier than you, someone who has slept around with the entire entertainment circle? How many rich heirs have you spread your legs for?" Su Huaibei's eyes were filled with indifference.

Shu Qing's body quaked violently at that. "Su Huaibei, you're such a b*stard. B*stard!"

Shu Qing raised her hand and was about to bring it down on Su Huaibei's face, but his hand shot out to grab her wrist before she could do so. "I'm a b*stard? Even if that's the case, you still gave birth to a daughter for me, didn't you?"

"You mean that b*stard child..."

Before Shu Qing could finish her sentence, Su Huaibei grabbed her chin hard. The force of his grip caused her jaw to be dislocated.

Tears of pain gathered in Shu Qing's eyes, streaming down her cheeks and pooling on the space between Su Huaibei's thumb and forefinger.

He continued pinching her chin as his eyes reddened with anger.

"I dare you to repeat that again! Do you really think that I wouldn't do anything to you? Huh?" Su Huaibei's rage was channeled into his fingers on her chin. The force of it was just like it had been previously when he had seen Shu Qing coming out of Shen Feng's room. He had almost snapped her neck.

Shu Qing reached out to slap Su Huaibei's hand away, trying to say something. To her misfortune, the pain in her jaw was so bad she couldn't speak.

When Su Huaibei saw Shu Qing in such a condition, he extended his other hand to caress her face. "Tell me. Why are you always so disobedient, hmm?" He moved his hand to her forehead. "If you behaved better, I wouldn't need to treat you this way."

Still trembling all over, Shu Qing's eyes were filled with fear.

"Don't ever speak ill about that child again, understand?"

Shu Qing shook her head, then nodded again, looking as though she was about to fall. Su Huaibei held her up with a smirk on his lips. "Did you show her your long face today? Hmm?"

Shu Qing didn't utter a word, but the fear in her eyes was evident.

"You made her suffer during the first twenty years of her life. You know what? I can let all of that go. However, she's living a good life now. If you or that useless daughter of yours dare to give her trouble again, you should know what will lay in store for you, right?"

Shu Qing nodded. When Su Huaibei saw her response, he finally released her.

Shu Qing immediately fell to the ground from the immense pain that she felt. She stretched out to cover her chin, wanting to speak. Unfortunately, drool gathered at the edges of her mouth and she couldn't speak at all.

Shu Qing raised her head to stare at Su Huaibei pitifully. Reaching out to tug on Su Huaibei's trousers, she pleaded with words that were barely coherent, "I-I... b-b..." I beg you!

Despite knowing what Shu Qing was trying to say, Su Huaibei stood his ground and peered at her from above. "It's late. Rest first and I'll call Qing to come back tomorrow morning. He's a doctor."

"Don't..." Don't go!

Shu Qing pulled at Su Huaibei's trousers, refusing to let go.

Su Huaibei crouched down to pry off her fingers one by one. There was not a trace of emotion in his eyes when he uttered, "This is your punishment for misbehaving. You know

that I'm fine with letting you do whatever you want, but if you speak ill of Nuan, I'll make you understand that there's no limit to my cruelty!"

Shu Qing lifted her head to look at Su Huaibei, her heart growing colder by the second.

On the other hand, Su Huaibei didn't spare her a second glance. Instead, he turned on his heels to leave her room as he locked the door behind him. Shu Qing stared at the door as despair crept into her heart. She felt as though she was born only to live in darkness.

Su Huaibei, why? Why are you so cruel to me?

Shi Nuan returned to the Fu Residence, completely exhausted. She had only just stepped into the house when the servant rushed over to take the things from Shi Nuan's hands. "Welcome back, Young Mistress."

Shi Nuan nodded in response. "Where's the Young Master?"

"Young Mistress, the Young Master is in his study playing chess with the Old Master." The servant peered closely at Shi Nuan before asking, "Are you feeling tired, Young Mistress?"

Shi Nuan waved her hand and answered, "I'm fine. Why don't you put my things in my room first?"

"Alright!"

When Shi Nuan walked further into the house, she saw Ning Xin and Song Zhenyan in the living room. These two women who were previously always at loggerheads with each other seemed to be getting along quite well now.

Shi Nuan went over to them with a smile. When Ning Xin saw that Shi Nuan was back, she waved her over and chirped, "Shi Nuan, you're back! Come here and sit with us!"

"Aunt Ning!" Shi Nuan called out. She paused to look at Song Zhenyan and greeted, "Mom."

Song Zhenyan blinked in surprise upon hearing that before she stared at Shi Nuan with mild incredulity. She pursed her lips slightly with a faint, stern expression on her face. Shi Nuan's smile remained intact and Ning Xin couldn't help but stare at her in surprise as well.

She never expected Shi Nuan to be such an open-minded woman. Hence, Shi Nuan scored a few more brownie points because of this. "Zhenyan, are you so happy that your words have failed you?" Ning Xin couldn't help but tease.

Song Zhenyan abruptly regained her senses, but there was a layer of mist in her eyes. Her lips twitched slightly, a small smile tugging at the corners of her lips as she hummed a reply.

Shi Nuan's smile broadened at that. "What are the two of you looking at?"

"Nothing much!"

Song Zhenyan was still not used to hearing Shi Nuan address her in such an intimate way.

She initially thought that with how badly she treated Shi Nuan last time, Shi Nuan would definitely hold a grudge against her even if she didn't voice it out loud. Never in a million years did she expect Shi Nuan to take the lead in patching up their relationship before she could even take a step forward.

Song Zhenyan suddenly felt embarrassed, but Shi Nuan seemed unperturbed. If it was for the sake of Fu Chengyan, she was willing to take that step. It was because she loved him.

Shi Nuan stayed to chat with Song Zhenyan and Ning Xin for a while before she headed upstairs. Just when she reached the top of the stairs, she saw Fu Chengyan coming out of the study.

Fu Chengyan saw her as well as he waved his hand. Shi Nuan came over to him and asked, "Done playing chess with Grandpa?"

Fu Chengyan nodded and reached out to stroke her head. "How was today?"

His voice was gentle and had a soothing effect to it, gradually warming Shi Nuan's initially chilly heart.

She reached out to give Fu Chengyan's hand a rather hard pinch. "Were you aware of it from the beginning?"

Fu Chengyan's brows furrowed. "You found out?"

Shi Nuan nodded. "I'm not an idiot, you know?"

“She didn’t want to acknowledge you, and she’d even...”

“That’s enough. I’m not a three-year-old kid. Do you really think that I’m that fragile?” Shi Nuan was actually very happy that Fu Chengyan was always looking out for her. However, she did not want to live under his protection forever. “Don’t worry. I won’t be affected by these things. I’ve gone through much worse.”