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A Loud Sound

"It's fine." Long Fei smiled at Su Ruan's mother. "Auntie, I can be on my own."

Su Ruan halted when she heard his words. Just as she think that it was better for her to leave Long Fei alone, her mother made a gesture to her to stay by Long Fei's side.

After all, this was her grandpa's orchard. It wouldn't look good for her to leave him alone without anyone around.

Taking a deep breath, Su Ruan continued to follow Long Fei at a certain distance. She watched as Long Fei walked leisurely, looking around the place as if he was going on sightseeing.

She could not deny that walking around her grandpa's orchard can be very relaxing. The wind was blowing softly and the rustling of the leaves could be heard.

The surroundings in the orchard were too relaxing that she had fallen asleep under the shady trees while reading a book.

She really liked staying around this place.

After following him for a while, Su Ruan suddenly had this feeling as if Long Fei was quite familiar with the orchard.

Just as she was thinking about this matter, Long Fei suddenly stopped on his track and stared at a certain tree on his left side.

Seeing that he was in deep thought, Su Ruan followed his gaze and wonder what he was looking at. She really could not understand what was going on in his mind.

Then, Long Fei turned and flinched, as if he had only noticed Su Ruan's presence behind him. "Miss Su. Sorry, I only wanted to take a walk around this place. The surroundings around here are quite pleasing."

"It's fine." Su Ruan thought about his reaction when he saw her and immediately felt a little guilty that she was following him around without making a sound. After pondering for a while, Su Ruan decided to explain. "My mother was worried that you might get lost in this orchard. Once you get farther inside this orchard, everything around you might look all the same."

Long Fei raised a brow. "Have you gotten lost in this orchard before?"

"Only the first few times after I came over to this place. I think I'm getting familiar with the surroundings. It's fine as long as I didn't go too far."

The orchard was quite large.

Usually, Su Ruan did not dare to go further unless there was someone else with her. If she walked around absentmindedly, she might snap out of her trance without knowing how to return.

Long Fei lowered his head to hide the smile on his face. He seemed to remember that the first time he saw Su Ruan, the girl had also got lost in the orchard after playing around with her cousins. At that time, he had snuck into Old Man Ma's orchard as he was avoiding the lessons from the elders.

Somehow, he ran into that crying girl and helped her to return to the house. He told her not to mention his presence in the orchard and the little girl had obediently agreed.

"Miss Su, if you don't mind me asking, what kind of work do you do?"

Su Ruan hesitated to answer when she heard his question. "I used to be a journalist."

"Used to?"

Su Ruan flashed him a faint smile. "I quit my job due to some reasons."

Long Fei lowered his head and did not speak for a long time. "Then, are you planning to stay in this town for a while?"

Su Ruan heaved a breath of relief when he did not ask her further about her reason. "I guess so. After all, it wasn't easy for me to accompany my grandparents."

The two exchanged a look. Long Fei was the first to look away and spoke, "We should get back. Otherwise, that boy would start to panic when he did not see me."

Su Ruan nodded and did not inquire about the young man who came with him. She walked slowly until she realized that they were walking side by side.

Because of their closeness, Long Fei could smell Su Ruan's scent as the wind blew over. His hand tightened into a fist as he thought of how much her presence could influence him.

Perhaps, this was the reason that the elders were anxious to find her.

If they could get Su Ruan to their side, then it would be easier for them to control him.

A loud sound could be heard, coming from the mountain.

Su Ruan and Long Fei turned around simultaneously to look for the source of that sound. However, both of them could not see anything.

"What was that?" Su Ruan asked in panic.

Long Fei continued to scan around his surrounding. After a few seconds, his eyes narrowed as he focused in a direction. "Illegal loggers."

Su Ruan turned to the man beside her in shock. Then, the sounds that she had heard just now, was the sound of a tree falling to the ground?

It should be a very large tree for it to produce such a loud sound.

Moreover, judging from Long Fei's tone of voice, this doesn't seem to be the first time that such things happened.

The two of them were not the only ones who had heard the sound. From a distance away, Su Ruan could hear the workers whispering among themselves, questioning what was that sound and where did it come from.

She remembered seeing the trees in the mountain while hiking with her cousin a few days ago. Looking at the sizes of those trees, Su Ruan could guess that some of them have been around for perhaps hundreds of years. It would be sad if someone cut down those trees.

The sound of his phone broke the silence. Long Fei accepted the phone call but did not say anything for a long time. After a while, he slid his phone back into his pocket and looked at Su Ruan apologetically. "I'm sorry, Miss Su, but I have to leave now."

Her eyes flickered, thinking that she had never seen Long Fei with such a serious look on his face before. After meeting him in this town, she had often seen him with a gentle side. The man often had a smile on his face.

Without waiting for her, Long Fei turned around and jogged back to his vehicle where Song Wei was waiting for him,

After exchanging a few words with Ma Hao Dong, Long Fei and Song Wei finally left.

Su Ruan turned to look in the direction where Long Fei was looking at before and frowned.

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Scare Them

When he returned to the residence, Long Fei sent Song Wei to rest in the courtyard before he left. When he came out, Long Yu Heng was already waiting for him with a tablet in his hand.

"Are you going to the mountain to check what was going on?" Long Yu Heng asked. "Otherwise, should we let them cut more trees in this area?"

D Town has been around for hundreds of years and the Long family has been protecting this land for a long time. He cannot let those illegal loggers do just as they pleased, destroying the ecosystem in this land.

Long Fei was about to leave again when Long Yu Heng grabbed him in the arms, stopping him.

His brow furrowed and he looked very furious.

"Ah Fei, this time, they are not illegal loggers," Long Yu Heng spoke quickly before Long Fei would get impatient.

His expression changed. Long Fei narrowed his eyes, staring dangerously at his right-hand man. "What do you mean they are not illegal loggers? This land is sacred and protected."

Long Yu Heng fumbled with the tablet in his hand and finally showed him what was on the screen. "This time, it seemed that the mayor had approved it."

Long Fei grabbed the tablet from his cousin to read what was written on the document.

"The mayor planned to develop the west part of the mountain and turn it into a tourism area," Long Yu Heng continued to explain what he knew about the situation.

The more Long Fei read, the angrier he got. His hand gripped tightly on the tablet until there was a crack on it.

Long Yu Heng quickly took away his tablet and heaved in relief upon seeing that it was not dead. He had lost count of just how many tablets Long Fei had accidentally destroyed because of his anger.

"Mayor Ding Wei?" Long Fei frowned as he recalled meeting the bald mayor last year. "Didn't he know that the Long family is in charge of this land? How dare he."

When Mayor Ding was chosen as the mayor, they have thought of him as someone who could help them to protect this town. Who would have thought that this man had changed his mind? Or was that after being in the position for a few years, this man had gotten greedy?

"What are you planning to do now?"

"Yu Heng, tell Fu Xing to investigate Mayor Ding for me."

Long Yu Heng nodded. He could already imagine how Mayor Ding's career would end after this.

Just as he was about to pick up his phone and dialed Fu Xing's number, Long Yu Heng saw from the corner of his eyes that Long Fei was about to leave again.

"Ah Fei, where are you going?"

"I still need to stop the loggers before Fu Xing could get the information we need," Long Fei answered.

It might take a day for Fu Xing to investigate. Meanwhile, he could not sit still and wait for the loggers to cut down a few more trees.

If the mountains are dying, then, the lake will die too. The lake was very important not only to the residents in this town but for their families as well.

Long Fei especially depended a lot on this lake. Someone with a strange body condition like him has to rely on the lake to live.

Without the lake, how could he, and the rest of his family still live their life? This was why the Long family has been protecting this land for years.

This time, Long Yu Heng could no longer stop Long Fei from leaving. He watched the man disappear from his eyesight and frowned.

The sky was going to turn dark in a few hours.

Long Yu Heng did not know what Long Fei was planning to do to stop the loggers.

After pondering over this matter for a while, Long Yu Heng finally turned around to head to their grandfather's courtyard.

In a situation like this, it would be better to let their grandfather know of the situation.

...

The sky had already turned dark.

Long Fei jogged up the mountain until he could hear the voices from a distance away. Squinting his eyes, Long Fei began to hide behind a tree to cover his presence.

This man has been running around for a few hours, climbing up the mountain. However, he did not show any hint of tiredness. His expression and breathing were calm as if he had just come back from a leisure walk.

Long Fei snuck slowly until he reached closer to the place where the group of people was camping. From his hiding place, he could see them eating and drinking while laughing out happily.

Seeing the scene in front of him made him furious.

This was not the first time that he had to drive away from the unwanted guests from the mountain. The last time he had appeared, the illegal loggers were too scared that they never come back for their equipment.

Some rumors spread and he thought that no one would dare to come again.

Since then, it has been more than a year since the last time someone dared to intrude on the mountain.

Long Fei continued to observe the situation. There were at least half a dozen men drinking around the campfire.

His eyes narrowed as he scanned the surroundings but could only find another one who was inside the tent.

After assessing the situation, Long Fei began to make a move.

He closed his eyes and took in a deep breath. In just a few seconds, his body began to change. The blue and purple scales began to appear on his skin and his hands turned into claws. Once he thought that his size was enough to scare them, Long Fei began to move.

The group of people was still drinking and chatting happily. They thought about the amount of money they were going to receive after cutting down some trees in this mountain and could not stop laughing.

Suddenly, one of them stopped abruptly. The smile on his face faded and he was looking at the dark woods with a pale look on his face. "Did you guys see that?"

His friends turned in the direction where he was looking but could not see a thing.

"Old Yu, don't scare us like this. You have done this trick so many times. There is no way that we are going to believe you again," the man with the thin mustache spoke.

"No. I'm not tricking you." Old Yu spoke. "Listen carefully."

The group heaved a sigh. Seeing the anxious look on Old Yu's face, they all decided to entertain him.

The surroundings became quiet. Suddenly, everyone saw it. The movement in the woods. It was moving fast that they could not see clearly what it was.

Their faces turned pale. Just when everyone had thought that their mind was playing tricks on them, they finally saw the creature.

"S-snake! A giant snake!"

Their screams reverberated in the mountain.

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Injured

Su Ruan woke up with a jolt.

Her forehead was sweating and her breathing was erratic. Su Ruan pulled both knees to her chest and buried her face into them.

A deep frown appeared on her face as she tried to recall her dreams but she could not remember anything. All she knew was that this time, it was not the same dreams that she usually had.

It took her a while to calm down. Su Ruan stretched her hand to grab her phone on the side table. A deep sigh escaped her when she saw the time.

Ever since she came to this town, she would often get up from her sleep around the same time. Perhaps, her biological clock was getting used to waking up this early.

Taking a deep breath, Su Ruan climbed down her bed and walked over to the window.

Each night that she woke up at a time like this, Su Ruan like to walk to the window and to feel the cold wind while watching the night scenery.

She pushed the window and looked at the moon and stars. No matter how many times she had watched this scene, Su Ruan thought that she would never get tired of this view.

It seemed that she had made the right decision when she decided to return to this town. After staying in the city for years, being in a small town like this made her feel more at peace.

The scenery was good and the air was fresh. She no longer has to rush around to get to work or face her annoying boss.

The cold wind blew to her face, making her shiver. Just as Su Ruan was about to close the window and return to the bed, her eyes caught sight of something in the sky.

Su Ruan rubbed her eyes and tried to focus on what she was seeing.

From a distance, Su Ruan could hear a soft puffing sound. And just like that, the shadow she saw in the sky plunged down.

Su Ruan stood at the window for a long time, unable to react. She was still having a hard time believing what she had seen with her eyes.

The thing that had fallen from the sky... what was it?

A lot of thought went into her mind but Su Ruan still could not guess what she had just seen.

Su Ruan snapped out of her trance and closed the window. She went back to her bed, intending to get more sleep.

However, as soon as she pulled the blanket over her body, Su Ruan had a nagging feeling that she should not be sleeping.

Her mind kept on thinking about the scene she had seen just now.

After pondering over this matter for a while, Su Ruan jumped out of her bed. Putting on a thick jacket and grabbing her phone, she then left her room quietly.

"Su Ruan, are you sure that this is a good idea?" She mumbled to herself.

Even though she knew well that it would be safer to stay inside the house, her instinct was telling her that she should go out and look at what happened.

Taking a deep breath, she snuck out of the house and headed to the orchard, to the place where she had seen that thing fall.

...

Long Fei groaned lowly in anger.

His heart would not stop muttering some cursing words as he thought of how he had fallen for this trap.

When he entered the mountain and encountered the group of people, Long Fei was only planning to scare them to leave the mountain and never come again. He and the others before him had pulled this trick quite a few times and they had always worked.

It was dark at night and the others could not see anything clearly. The workers would think that they had encountered a giant snake and escaped.

Then, they would ask someone to spread some superstitious story and convinced them that they had angered the mountain's keeper.

After witnessing the slithering creature coming at them, the workers would be convinced.

However, Long Fei did not expect that this time, the group had brought along someone from that troublesome group.

Ever since he was a little boy, Long Fei would often hear from his grandfather and parents that he needed to be careful not to reveal himself.

There was a group outside who loved creatures like him and wanted to kill him for money. The elders often reminded him that if he was caught by this group, then he could only wait for his death.

The moment he saw that old man, coming out from the tent, Long Fei knew that he had fallen for his trick. This was not the first time that they have met. Long Fei always knew that this old man was leading a group to catch creatures such as him.

That vicious old man had brought along some equipment that would make it easier for them to hurt him and weakened him.

Long Fei had no other choice but to escape. However, he should not panic and fly up. Because of that, he was shot and had suffered greatly. Because of his injury, he could not shift to another form.

Initially, Long Fei was planning to return to the lake. The water had a magical power for the Long family and he could heal faster if he plunged into the water.

But thinking that there would be a few people waiting for him to enter the water, Long Fei quickly made a turn.

At this time, the only thing that could heal him was to get closer to Su Ruan. As the woman's face appeared in his mind, Long Fei sneakily entered slithered into the orchard. But before he could reach closer to Su Ruan, his body was unable to take it anymore and he fell to the ground.

Long Fei could only stay there and prayed that Long Yu Heng would come quickly to save him. Otherwise, if their enemy found him first, then everything would be chaotic.

If the group knew who he was and get his family, then, everyone, whether they have this power or not, will be killed.

Leaning on the shady tree behind him, Long Fei closed his eyes, to bear with the pain. Su Ruan's image came to his mind. At a time like this, he was longing to see her.

The sounds of footsteps snapped him out of his thought. Long Fei bare his teeth and looked in the direction where the sound had come from.

If the old man or his apprentices came to catch him, then, he will fight them to death.

However, as the sounds of footsteps got closer, Long Fei began to lower his guard. His nose picked up the scent of someone familiar.

Just as he thought that it would be impossible for Su Ruan to appear at this place, the woman came out from behind the trees.

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A Dragon

Su Ruan had thought that she had imagined things a while ago.

When she walked into the orchard with nothing other than her phone, Su Ruan had thought that she would find nothing. She was ready to walk a little bit before she would turn around and leave before she got too further into the orchard.



However, just as she was about to turn around, Su Ruan heard the soft rustling sound.

Her heart was pounding loudly and she decided to go and check at what it was. Her hand gripped tightly on her phone. At the first sign of danger, she was ready to make a run for it.

She turned into a corner and finally saw what she was looking for.

Her body went rigid and she was too stunned to see what was in front of her.

At this time, Su Ruan was wondering if perhaps, this was only a dream. After all, the creature in front of her resembled the creature that often showed up in her dream.

Her hand covered her mouth and Su Ruan forced herself not to make a noise lest she would attract the creature's attention. Her legs were a little wobbly but Su Ruan forced herself not to be weak.

Under the moonlight, Su Ruan saw the blue purplish scale on the creature's body. Although its body was long and resembled a snake, the small claws on its body were proof that this creature was not a snake.

Su Ruan wanted to look away but accidentally met the creature's eyes.

It scare her so much that she started to whimper.

She told herself to turn around and make a run for it. However, there was a voice in her mind that told her not to be afraid of this creature.

The dream she used to have almost every night reappeared in her mind. In that dream, the dragon had told her not to be afraid of him and that he will never hurt her.

As she looked into the creature's eyes, Su Ruan knew that this creature will never do anything that would hurt her.

However, why does she feel as if the creature's eyes were a bit familiar?

The creature continued to look at her as if guessing what she wanted to do next, now that she had seen him.

Seeing that the creature continued to stay there without moving, Su Ruan slowly let her guard down. Su Ruan averted her eyes and took a step back.

Then her gaze fell on the pool of blood under his abdomen.

All of the sudden, the fear disappeared.

Su Ruan took a small step toward the creature, wanting to take a good look at the injury, and noticed the creature's discomfort. "You're injured."

The creature let out a low grunt before he lay his head on the ground.

His action was telling her that she should not be concerned about him. When she took another step towards him, the creature raised his head again to look at her. He bared his teeth, telling her not to get too close to him.

"Don't be scared." It was not known whether Su Ruan was saying these words to the creature or to herself. She swallowed and took another step to him. "I will only take a look at you. If you promise not to harm me, then I won't do anything to you."

The creature huffed before he turned away, looking unconcerned with her presence.

Su Ruan braved herself to get closer to him. Her eyes continued to look at his face, hoping that he would not make any sudden movements.

A breath of relief escaped her when she finally reached his side. Su Ruan shifted her gaze towards the injury around the creature's abdomen. She raised her hand and touched the injury softly.

The creature flinched and snarled at her.

Su Ruan raised both hands up, looking at the creature in panic. "I'm sorry. I was only trying to look."

The creature narrowed his eyes at her.

Su Ruan touched the injury again and noted that it was a gunshot injury. Her eyes widened in surprise, wondering just who was braved enough to harm such a creature as this.

Her touch was much gentler this time. Seeing that the creature did not make a move, Su Ruan began to feel her hand around his body. A sense of amazement filled her.

She had always thought that this creature was nothing but a myth. However, he had appeared in her dreams quite a few times and now, she was touching his body, feeling his scale on her finger.

Soon, Su Ruan began to notice that the creature began to shrink back. He was not in pain but it seemed that her touch had made him... uncomfortable. It was the first time that he had felt such feelings and it was making him embarrassed.

"I will go and get someone to look at you." Su Ruan stood up and was about to leave. However, the creature caught the hem of her jacket with his claws.

As their gazes met again, the creature bared his teeth at her.

Surprisingly, Su Ruan could understand just what was he trying to say to her. "Alright. I know. I won't tell anyone. I won't leave. I'll stay here to accompany you for a while. Is that alright?"

The creature lay his head on the ground again, looking unbothered.

Su Ruan heaved in relief. She looked at the creature and spoke, "You're... a dragon, aren't you?"

The creature only replied to her with a huff.

Su Ruan thought that it was amazing that this creature seemed to understand what she was saying to him.

"Do you understand my words?"

The dragon moved his head as if he was nodding at her.

Su Ruan smiled. Cautiously, she moved to touch him again. "How did you get injured like this? Who hurt you?"

Looking at the blood dripping from his body made her feel distressed. Su Ruan cupped her hand softly on the injury, wanting to stop the bleeding.

However, she soon realized that something strange. Su Ruan retracted her hand quickly and stared at the injury for a long time. Then, her gaze shifted to her pair of hands.

Was she imagining things or did his injury did not look as bad as it was after she had touched the spot?

Su Ruan looked at the dragon's face and saw that he too was looking back at her.

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Dig Out Bullet

Long Fei had thought that Su Ruan would run away and scream the moment she saw him. It was unexpected that she would stay around and even dare enough to touch him.

Other than his mother, it was the first time that another woman had touched him like that.

Initially, Long Fei had thought that her touch was quite comfortable. However, after a while, he started to feel a little itch. It gave him the urge to push her away but yet, he wanted her to continue touching him.

A heat spread all over his body, making him feel a little feverish.

Long Fei was embarrassed by this feeling. However, he realized that the pain in his body gradually disappeared with Su Ruan close to him.

Just as he had thought, being around Su Ruan would make him feel more at ease. Other than the lake water, Su Ruan was the only one that could make him feel better.

Long Fei continued to watch Su Ruan from the corner of his eyes. A low chuckle escaped him as he watched Su Ruan cup her hand on his injury, wanting to stop his bleeding.

However, both of them did not expect that the moment she did that, his bleeding would gradually stop.

The two of them looked at each other in surprise. None of them had expected that such thin would happen.

Long Fei huffed. He knew very well that the bullet that the old man had used was a little special.

His scale was thick and it would be hard to injure him. However, that old man managed to do just that. Because of the bullet, it would take a while for the injury to heal.

Therefore, he was surprised to see how it had slowly healed with Su Ruan's touch.

Even submerging under the lake water could not work this quickly.

His thought went back to the words that his father had once told him when he was a little boy and Long Fei began to look at Su Ruan with a serious look on his face.

This was the reason his grandfather had always reminded him that he could not be with another person other than Su Ruan. This was the reason his grandfather was too anxious for him to find her.

A thought came to his mind.

Perhaps, she would be able to help him.

Long Fei wondered if he should make this gamble.

Seeing that Su Ruan was still looking at him with a dazed look on her face, Long Fei stretched his claw to his injury. Using his sharp claw, he began to dig into the injury.

The blood that had stopped a while ago began to drip on the ground again and this time, the wound was torn wider.

Long Fei let out a low groan as the pain hit him. However, he could only bore with the pain and keep on going. The only thing that he wanted to do was to remove the bullet from his body.

He did not know whether Long Yu Heng knew what was going on with him and could not wait until Long Yu Heng found out his whereabouts.

"What are you doing?" Su Ruan grew anxious as she watched the blood gushing out of the dragon's body. She stretched her arm, wanting to stop him.

At this time, the fear she had for the creature had long gone.

However, before she could touch him, Long Fei shrunk back and hissed at her.

Her heartbeat accelerated and Su Ruan did not dare to get close to him. Her eyes continued to watch his action with worry.

Everything was fine a few seconds ago. Why would this creature suddenly turn crazy?

Su Ruan looked at him anxiously but she did not know what she could do to stop him.

Just then, there was a soft ding on the ground.

Su Ruan followed the direction of the sound and saw a bullet. She inhaled a deep breath and her bottom hit the ground. Her legs were too weak to stand up.

It turned out that he wanted to dig out the bullet.

But why does he have to be cruel to himself?

Digging out the bullet with his own sharp claws... Su Ruan could not imagine just how painful it must be.

She stretched her shaky hands, wanting to take a look at it. However, the dragon had stopped her movement with his claw.

She raised both her hands up again, wondering what was this dragon wanted to do.

Her breath stuck in her throat as she watched the creature moving his head closer to her. Just a while ago, Su Ruan had convinced herself that this dragon would not make any move to hurt her. But after seeing how he had hurt himself to dig out that bullet, Su Ruan was not too sure.

"Relax. I won't do anything that you did not like," Su Ruan tried to convince him. "I won't touch the bullet if you won't let me, alright?"

Long Fei raised his head and noticed the fear in her eyes. He let out a huff and nudged her hand with his head.

Su Ruan continued to watch his action with a puzzled look on her face. Her mind was blank and she could not understand what he wanted her to do.

Seeing that the girl continued to stare back at him in a daze, Long Fei continued to nudge her hand again.

Didn't he just stop his bleeding and helped him heal a moment ago? Why wouldn't she do the same this time?

Long Fei stared at her anxiously, hoping that she would quickly heal his injury.

However, Su Ruan was too scared and had thought that the dragon was acting aggressively and could not understand what he wanted her to do.

Frustrated that she could not understand his words, Long Fei opened his mouth to complain but had accidentally bit at one of her fingers. A tiny drop of her blood touch his tongue and a strange sensation spread all over his body and the pain on his body gradually disappeared.

Long Fei shrunk back, wondering what was this strange feeling.

He looked at the injury on his body and watched as it slowly healed. The energy in his body had strangely returned.

A light flashed in his eyes as he tried to understand what was going on.

He did not notice that Su Ruan was staring back at him.