

Chapter 211

When she opened her eyes again, what greeted her was a resplendent chandelier that reflected the sunlight. Oh, it's already morning. She was calmer compared to the night before.

Having melatonin stored up in her made her frustrated, moody, depressed, and stubborn. There was also too much serotonin in her the night before, making her furious and impulsive. Luckily, they would be flushed along with her metabolism cycle, so she woke up refreshed and calm.

She sat up and saw that her wound was bandaged, perhaps when she was out of commission. Then, she got out of bed and opened the door.

Su Xuyan was sitting in front of his computer. When he saw her, he shot up and explained, "You fainted and had a high fever last night. You should stay in bed. I'll get the doctor to perform a checkup."

"Thanks, but I'm feeling a lot better now," Bai Rong refused his offer and scanned the room. "Where's my bag?"

"I didn't pay attention to it since I was in a hurry to send you to the hospital last night. When I sent someone to retrieve it this morning, they said someone took it. I think it's Gu Mingchen. Finding you through his phone should be easy," Su Xuyan guessed.

Bai Rong stared down, shadows of her eyelashes forming on her eyes. At the same time, he went up to her and whispered, "Rong, you want to go back to the United States, don't you? I can stay with you once i sell off my company."

“That was just some drunk nonsense. Don’t take it seriously,” she replied calmly.

“So are you just going to let Gu Mingchen and Zhou Hailan hurt you like that? Don’t you think you’ve suffered enough?” Su Xuyan asked in a fit of impulse, and he held her hand. “He loves someone else, but I only love you.”

“I don’t care who he loves, and that goes for you too. All I care about is who I love. Do you have a disposable toothbrush here? And take me back to the military base if it’s fine with you,” she said coldly.

“I don’t get you. It’s hell and you know it, but yet you’re still going back? Aren’t you worried you might see him and her together?” Su Xuyan frowned, feeling sorry for Bai Rong.

“I clawed my way back up from the depths of the hell called marriage. What else do I have to fear?” she sneered. “Perhaps the road to forgetting love is paved with irreversible injuries. Just like how I broke out from the cage you built for me.”

“That’s just asking for trouble.” Infuriated, Su Xuyan peered at her.

“Really?” She started tearing up, but her mind was clear. “Do you think I don’t want to forget about him? Do you think I don’t want to release myself from the pain? My heart aches when my mind goes the opposite way, and then I’d give in to my heart, because that pain is unbearable. I never want to live my life in pain anymore. I want to wake up from this nightmare, and the only person who can do that is Gu Mingchen.”

“Are you out of your mind, Bai Rong? Do you know what you’re talking about?” Su Xuyan couldn’t sit still anymore. He disagreed with her, and he didn’t want her

to go back to Gu Mingchen. He was worried she might stay with him forever. If that came to pass, he would be all alone again.

His accusation agitated her. Am I really out of my mind? She wasn't sure, but she could understand why her mother went insane. They'd rather be madwomen if the alternative was being a fool. That was why her mother would rather live in her own world than to ask for Xing Bachuan's help.

"I am my own person, and I will take responsibility for my actions. If you have no toothbrush, or if you won't give me one, I can deal with it myself." Bai Rong went to the door.

Su Xuyan held her arm, and beseeched, "Can't you give me another chance? I've changed. I won't hook up with anyone anymore. You promised you'd stay with me if I castrate myself. I love you, Rong, and I want to take care of you. I want to have babies with you. I won't let you down anymore. I'll stay with you in sickness and in health. I'll go with you to any place you want. I'll never let anyone hurt you anymore."

Tears streamed down her cheek. Three years ago, when she was still married, she wouldn't have accepted Gu Mingchen's advances, if he had told her that when they were still married. Perhaps she wouldn't have started seeing Gu Mingchen.

But he didn't. All he gave her was mockery, harm, extortion, and destruction. "I remember telling you that I don't have a big heart. I can only love one person at a time. I couldn't love Gu Mingchen when I loved you, and now I can't love you when I love him," Bai Rong said firmly.

Su Xuyan wiped Bai Rong's tears away. "I'll wait until you fall out of love with him then. I know it's going to be harder for you to love me again, but I'll wait."

Bai Rong pushed his hand and turned her head the other side. Just like how she didn't date Gu Mingchen even when Su Xuyan hooked up with other women during their marriage, she wouldn't date Su Xuyan even though Gu Mingchen liked Zhou Hailan. She didn't want to start a problematic relationship. Quality over quantity.

"I'm going now. Bye. No need to send me off." Bai Rong trotted out and went down the unfamiliar path. She was in a rather unpleasant condition. She had no money, no handphone, her hair was unkempt, her clothes were the ones she wore the night before, and she hadn't bath since yesterday. She reeked of weird odour and everyone cast her weird stares.

She ignored them and looked up at the blue, blue sky. Bai Rong didn't want much. All she wanted was a home to go back to no matter where she was.

She didn't need her husband to be powerful, rich, or handsome. All she needed was for him to stay by her side and listen to her whenever she needed to. All she wanted was a shoulder to lean on. All she wanted was for her to find someone beside her every day. Someone like that must be waiting for me out there, right?

Then, a few cars stopped before her, and Gu Mingchen came out from one of them before coming up to her "Where were you last night? I was worried sick."

Bai Rong felt like crying.

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“I went for a karaoke session.” She stared down, her eyelashes covering her eyes.

Gu Mingchen held her hands. They felt cold, just like two big ice cubes, and he tightened his grip. “I went there to search for you, but you weren’t there. I only found your handbag and phone.”

“You should have found out where I was easily. You’re the chief after all,” she retorted. A smile curled her lips, and her gaze was gentle, but there was no smile in her eyes. Gu Mingchen thought he was facing another woman, and he frowned.

He didn’t manage to find her. He did find her phone through GPS, but the surveillance camera seemed to malfunction. He couldn’t find out where she was, but when he finally saw her location after the night, he came for her.

The only one who could stop the camera from watching over her was Su Xuyan, and his eyes turned crimson. Gu Mingchen was usually someone who held his emotions back, but that day, fury welled up within him, burning his calm demeanor away. “What are you trying to do? Are you working with him to annoy me? Or are you getting back at me? What good does that bring?”

Bai Rong averted her gaze and gulped. She blacked out the night before, or she wouldn’t have gone with Su Xuyan. Fine. If that’s what he thinks then. ”Yes, it brings me no good. Give me my handbag and my phone. I won’t be going to the base. I’ll take the day off.” She wanted to calm herself.

“You can take the week off.” Gu Mingchen went back to his car and tossed her handbag out the window.

She felt as if her heart was stabbed. Bai Rong was a great psychologist, and she knew Gu Mingchen's action was filled with rage and disgust. Intolerance would grow the longer a couple stayed together. They became less tolerant because they didn't care for each other, because they found someone else to care for.

Her anger, edge, and trepidation were a double-edged blade. It hurt her enemies, but she also hurt herself. Everyone would stay away from her, worried that they might get hurt.

She picked her bag up and took the bottle of medicine from it with trembling hands. Then, she gulped one pill down without water, and her emotion that was almost rampaging calmed down.

She checked into a room in a nearby hotel and took a shower before rubbing some salve on herself. Once she was done bandaging her wound, she lay on the bed and stared at the ceiling.

Most egotistical men loved submissive women who'd act cute and look weak so they could stroke their ego. Their dream woman would be one with long hair, had an elegant walk, gentle, understanding, and needed their help.

However, because of their ego, they disliked their partner asking them questions they didn't want to answer, nor would they like it when they interfered with their life, especially when it involved another woman. They'd feel frustrated, and eventually, that frustration would turn into disgust. Gu Mingchen was such a man.

She couldn't force herself to be gentle or dependent on someone else. Bai Rong wouldn't beg for his return even after he left her in the dust. Maybe we're incompatible to start with.

She rested up, trying to push her thoughts aside, then she went to the mall to purchase two sets of expensive clothing and a set of makeup products. Gotta love myself more when nobody is loving me.

She changed her clothes, wearing an off-the-shoulder top and black skirt. Bai Rong tied her hair into a ponytail and dolled up, looking elegant and beautiful.

She went to the rehab center and visited Bai Bing furtively. Bai Bing was reading in her room. She was recovering well, her face looking brighter than ever. The murkiness in her eyes was gone, replaced by a bright gleam. She was immersed in her world where she became better.

Bai Rong couldn't show herself. If she did, Bai Bing would question her about Xing Bachuan. If she was let down time and again, it would ruin the recovery. All she could do was stay back and watch as her mother regained her own mind.

Suddenly, her phone rang. It wasn't anyone she knew, but she took the call after a moment of hesitation, then she went to the front door.

"Hello. Do you still remember me?" The man's voice was pleasantly deep. Bai Rong had a good memory, and she knew it was the man whom she called randomly that day. The one who had a heart-to-heart with her.

"I do. What is it?" she asked politely.

"I'm in A City now. I want to see you," he said.

Bai Rong's lips twitched. "It's better if we don't meet," she refused.

“Don’t take this the wrong way. My condition’s improving ever since you counseled me. I came with a friend. His son is... problematic,” he requested earnestly.

“My fee is not cheap. Ten thousand an hour.”

“He’ll pay you a million an hour if you can heal his son, let alone ten thousand.”

Bai Rong kept quiet for a while. She might have lost her love, but she needed her career. If she let herself fall from grace, she’d be looked down at. The more she was abandoned, the better she must become.

“Meet me at Fairie Café in Shuiyue International.” Then, she hung up.

Her phone rang when she was almost at Shuiyue International. ‘Room Eliza,’ the man texted.

Bai Rong kept her phone. She got off the cab and went inside Fairie Cafe and knocked on Room Eliza’s door. “Come in,” a man said.

Bai Rong entered, and only one man was inside. He was wearing a blue suit with a white shirt within. He was handsome, his hair curly, the type Gen Z would like. A faint scent of men’s cologne wafted from him, and he looked young. It was a stark contrast to his voice.

Bai Rong sat across from him, and his eyes were still glued to her. “I didn’t expect you to be this gorgeous.”

Bai Rong tapped the table. She wasn't as welcoming or calm as he was. "Where is your friend?"

"He went to buy some cigarettes, but he'll be back in ten minutes. You're earlier than I expected. I'm Cheng Jinrong, and you are?" he asked.

She wasn't here to be friends with him. "Tell me about your friend's child. I want to know his condition." She took out her notebook and pen from her handbag.

Cheng Jingrong smiled. "Are you always this cold?"

"I just don't find the need to be welcoming. No need to give off the wrong signal. That will bring nothing but trouble," she said sternly.

"Oh, but you're such an understanding, proper, beautiful, and mature lady. However could someone not appreciate you?" Cheng Jinrong sighed.

The corner of Bai Rong's lips twitched. "Roses are gorgeous, but they'll prick you if you pluck them. And once they're plucked, they'll wilt in days. It's normal for a wilted flower to be abandoned, no? If you're here to pry into my personal matters, then I shall be leaving now." She kept her notebook and pen into her bag and stood up.

Cheng Jinrong stood up. He was a tall man, measuring 1.9 meters. "I apologize if I have offended you in any way. I won't ask any further questions. I did bring my friend, and he has business with you."

Someone opened the door the moment he said that, and when Bai Rong saw who it was, she froze. It's him!

Chapter 213

She had an unfulfilled wish.

Because of her desire to date Gu Mingchen, she went to Tangqian Village on an investigation mission regarding Governor Cheng's murder, and there, Tang Xiaojiu died because of her.

Before his death, Tang Xiaojiu gave her the evidence. She promised him she would fulfill his wish and promised she wouldn't date Gu Mingchen if she didn't arrest the culprit behind the massacre.

Maybe I still couldn't date Gu Mingchen because I went back on my promise. She had to carry the burden of a village worth of human lives.

The man before her was Lu Xingzhou, one of the most suspicious people she found out back then. The other was Lu Liangcheng.

Lu Liangcheng and Lu Xingzhou shared a great relationship, as Lu Liangcheng rose through the ranks thanks to Lu Xingzhou's help.

When he was still mayor of Jin Yang City. Lu Xingzhou was already deputy secretary for the state.

Back then, Bai Rong took the CCDI test so she could look into Lu Liangcheng in Jin Yang City. Once she became an exchange supervisor, she used her connection to get into Jin Yang City's Discipline Inspection Office.

Gu Mingchen had interfered in that matter. They could have worked together and finished the mission, but then Gu Mingchen lost his memories, and she was emotionally hurt. Since she wasn't as powerful as Gu Mingchen, and since she couldn't do anything much, she left A City.

She never expected the meeting with Lu Xingzhou to come in such a way.

"Hello." Lu Xingzhou extended his hand formally. He looked stern and unapproachable.

"Hello." Bai Rong shook his hand formally.

"Jinrong told me you know a lot about psychology, and he cheered up a lot after taking your advice." Lu Xingzhou sized her up.

"I do have experience in that area. I'm Bai Rong. If you have any friends who work in this field in the US, they should know me." She smiled with dignity.

Cheng Jinrong stood up. "Don't just stand there. Take a seat. We're friends."

Bai Rong looked at him, and he gave her a genuine smile. She stared down and took a seat. "Tell me about your child's condition." She tapped the table.

"I would like to sign an agreement with you before that, Ms. Bai. The payment details will be written on it, but I'll need to add a nondisclosure clause in it. You'll have to pay me a million if someone finds out anything from you," Lu Xingzhou made a ridiculous demand.

"Keeping my patient's details confidential is what I should do. I uphold my ethics, but I'm sure we're not the only ones who know about your son's condition. How can you be sure that I'm the one who spreads the information, not them? If you distrust me, then there's no need for me to be here." She stood up.

"Mr. Lu doesn't mean that. We know you can keep a secret. You're being too hasty," Cheng Jinrong said the last part gently.

Bai Rong was just playing a psychological trick. From the moment she knew her client was Lu Xingzhou, it was destined that she would definitely take the case.

She went back to her seat and peered at Lu Xingzhou. "Mr. Lu, your son's condition is a scandal to you, while my patients' confidentiality determines whether I have a job or not. If I'm someone who'd tell everyone about my patient's condition, do you think anyone would come to consult me? There's no need for you to worry."

Lu Xingzhou hesitated. "Why don't you come to me after you've thought this through? There's no point hiring me if you're going to suspect me of misconduct," she said calmly.

Lu Xingzhou sighed. “Not only is my son a peeping tom, he’s a lingerie thief, and he even...” Lu Xingzhou didn’t continue.

Bai Rong smiled and finished his sentence, “Raped someone.”

Lu Xingzhou frowned, looking awkward. “Luckily the family’s very understanding, but I’m worried something like this might happen again. I can settle it once or twice, but eventually, he’ll get into something I can’t settle. Once someone exposes, he’s done for.”

“Peeping and rape are all part of an exploratory process for him. If he’s stopped when he started peeping, he wouldn’t steal any lingerie, nor would he end up raping someone. Since you’ve settled it with money, he’s going to think that his father can settle everything for him. This won’t be the last. There will be a second time, a third, and eventually, he’ll murder someone,” Bai Rong said coldly.

“Can you save him? He’s still young, so I think his problem can be rectified. I have introduced a girlfriend for him. He has a partner, so why did he do that?” Lu Xingzhou looked very disappointed.

“There are a lot of reasons for his twisted personality, with his environment and the internet being the most prominent. Curing his fetish won’t be easy. You’ll need a long-term plan and many distractions for him. Guide him and don’t try to put him under house arrest. It’ll worsen his condition,” she explained.

Lu Xingzhou’s face fell. “He’s locked up at home.”

“How old is he?” Bai Rong asked.

“Eighteen. Grade eleven. His classmate told me he likes the school belle. I’m worried he might rape her, so I didn’t let him go to school,” Lu Xingzhou answered, but he sounded impatient.

“You can lock his body, but not his heart. Did you get a home tutor for him?”

“Yes, but it didn’t work. Nobody wanted to teach him, and I’ve aged a lot because of him. He’s my only son, so I’m at a loss now.” Lu Xingzhou looked despondent.

Bai Rong squinted at him. Humans are weird creatures with all kinds of idiosyncrasies and complexities. Some of them are serial killers, but they’re nice to their parents. Some are stingy, but they could donate everything they have in an instant. Lu Xingzhou loved his own son dearly, but he cared nothing about someone else’s children. Or he wouldn’t have ordered that massacre then?

“I’ll treat your son as his home tutor, and it’ll run for three months. I’ll be there from Mondays to Fridays, eight to four. Eight hours a day, so that makes it eighty thousand a day. Twenty two days a month, so that makes one million seven hundred and sixty thousand. I’ll need you to pay that in advance once we sign the agreement. It’s payment in advance the minute we sign the agreement.

“We’ll stop it after a month if you think I am not of any help, but if you think I managed to help, then you’ll have to pay me in advance for the second month. I promise I’ll cure him in three months, or I’ll only charge you for the first two months, and you must do as I say, or the contract is void. What do you think?” Bai Rong proposed.

“You’ll cure him in three months? But even if you can’t, you have already charged us for more than three million.”

“I promise I can cure him,” Bai Rong guaranteed. “Call me once you’ve considered it. I have some other business to settle, so I’ll be leaving now.” The moment she left the café, Bai Rong bumped into Gu Mingchen.

Chapter 214

Bai Rong was surprised to see him. I thought he left this morning. Didn’t he say I could take the week off? He even tossed my handbag out. Why is he showing up here now?

“You seem to have a lot of free time on your hands, Chief,” Bai Rong mocked. Her gaze pierced him, and every word she said was meant to hurt.

Gu Mingchen stared back at her, his gaze quiet. Bai Rong felt bored, for her flames of fury weren’t reciprocated. Instead, it fizzled out when it met Gu Mingchen’s calm demeanor. Thus, she kept her silence too.

They looked at each other, there was oddity in the air.

“Are you still mad?” Gu Mingchen asked in a gentle tone. He was infuriated when he left, but he didn’t go back to the base. When he traced her location, he could see that she went to the hotel and the rehab center. But the moment he saw that

she went to the café, he couldn't sit still anymore. Even though they were fighting, but he still came to the café and waited for her.

Bai Rong stared down, composing herself in the moment of silence. Being angry won't solve anything. It'll only poison me and I don't need that. "You came just in time. I just got a case that will need me to be away for three months," Bai Rong cut to the chase.

Gu Mingchen frowned, his chest heaved as his breathing turned heavier. "You think I'll agree to that?"

"I can get Mu Xiaosheng to send someone if you urgently need help at the base. It won't hinder your work."

Gu Mingchen glowered at her. "I have specifically asked for you," he growled.

"Everyone in the research institute is a pro in psychological tests. They're on par with me. Working with you is a volunteer job, while the patient I took is related to my career and livelihood. You can't force me to do anything I don't want," Bai Rong justified her action.

"I can pay you too. You can ask for any amount you want. I can even pay you anything they offer you too," Gu Mingchen pressed on.

Bai Rong was frustrated, a frown creasing her forehead. "Is there no room for negotiation?"

“What do you think? You have only given me three months, and that’s all gone once you take this job. This is unfair to me, Bai Rong,” Gu Mingchen replied as calmly as he could. He knew what she was thinking.

“I’m being unfair? What about you? Have you ever been fair to me?” The things he told her the last two days scrambled her mind. She didn’t want to think, and all she could feel was frustration.

“How have I been unfair to you?” Gu Mingchen stared at her.

She didn’t want to keep on complaining. It’d make her look like a wench. “Gu Mingchen, as a professional psychologist, I can tell you that we’re incompatible. Since there’s no point in us seeing each other anymore, why you are still forcing this?” Bai Rong stood her ground.

Her statement was like an ultimatum, and it infuriated him. He snapped, anger welling up in his eyes, threatening to burn her up. “I can’t be as capricious as you and I have a responsibility to Zhou Hailan. Why must you force me to choose between the two of you? Must you be this obsessed? You’re being unreasonable.”

He made her sound like a harsh, unreasonable, selfish, and distant person. She recalled him telling her that Gu Mingchen wouldn’t fall for a cold woman like her. He liked women who were cute, lively, sunny, and vivacious. Nope. That’s just not me.

Ever since she was a child, she grew up in a dark, cold world. She wasn’t forcing him to choose. Instead, she was just giving up.

There was no longer an ounce of warmth in her gaze. She had decided to leave and start afresh. There was no point staying with someone who couldn't understand her, admire or love her. "What do you want me to do then?" She looked into his eyes.

"Leave it to me. I'll handle it. I'll marry you as promised. Just give me some time," he said.

"The three months I'm gone for work won't be counted toward the three months I gave you. You'll still have three months once I come back, making it six months. Is that enough?" she negotiated.

Gu Mingchen knew this was the most she could do. He cooled his head off and looked at her. At that point, he didn't know if there was any love between them. "So you can only tolerate me for six months?" he snapped back, his gaze sharp.

Bai Rong's heart ached. "It's not too late to find out that I'm this kind of woman. You'll find out even more flaws, Gu Mingchen. The day where you realize I'm not the person you like comes; will you still stay with me, even if it pains you? Or will you cut off the source of the pain?"

"Don't make any rash decisions before you fully know what kind of person I am, and don't force me to give you my all. You know nothing about me. You have no right to ask me to do that," she shot back.

She knew her reply would cut all their ties off, but she thought enough was enough. She was hurt too much, and she was keeping everyone out. Never would she give herself to anyone that easily anymore.

"Let's go back to the base for now." Gu Mingchen didn't answer her question.

Since her luggage was still in the base, she went into his car as suggested.

Lieutenant Song was driving. Gu Mingchen looked tense and pensive like he was deep in thought while Bai Rong just looked outside.

She used to love reading magazines. Some talked about the things young ladies should know, while some talked about the little things in life, gleaned through years of experience. She remembered a story she read before.

'After marrying her husband, a gorgeous woman stopped dressing up or taking care of herself. All she cared about were chores and her children. In the end, her husband ended up feeling disgusted with her, who was no longer beautiful, and he found himself a mistress. The woman decided to get a divorce and went back to her old self. She started taking care of herself and dressed up once more.

'Then, the woman's ex-husband bumped into his ex-wife on a business banquet. She was shining bright like a diamond, elegant and inspiring, walking with her new husband, chatting with the people in the big leagues. A woman could be an angel or a demon. It all depends on the man they chose.

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'If the man she chose treats her like a goddess, then a goddess she shall be, but if the man she chose treats her like trash, then that shall be all she can be.'

The more she stayed with Gu Mingchen, the harsher and harder to communicate she would become. She used to abhor having arguments, conjure up conspiracies, and being cold to everyone, but then she became the kind of person she hated the most. I can't keep this up any longer.

She leaned back against the seat and rested her eyes. Gu Mingchen glanced at her. He noticed that her eyelashes were trembling, telling him she wasn't sleeping well. His heart ached, and his breathing turned heavier. When Bai Rong felt him breathing down her face, she opened her eyes and saw his glance.

"What is it?" she drawled.

"Is your wound getting better?" he asked calmly, his rage from earlier gone.

"Yes. The scab should be forming now. It'll heal in no time," she answered. Bai Rong was telling that to herself. Time will heal everything, including this pain I'm feeling.

"Are you really going to be gone for three months?" Gu Mingchen relented.

"I want to take this case." Bai Rong wouldn't budge.

"When will you leave?"

“Not sure. Have to wait for their call.”

“Don’t just leave and never return,” he warned her.

Bai Rong felt sad. I might do just that. Many things could happen in three months. She said nothing, for she didn’t want to make a promise easily.

Gu Mingchen noticed what she was trying to say. He felt gutted, and his breathing became shallow. He held her hand tightly, his warmth flowing into her.

“I know I shouldn’t have gone away during our wedding night. I didn’t know you were hurt. I have a lot to handle lately, and I couldn’t keep myself in check. I know I’ve raised my voice at you, and...” Gu Mingchen paused. He didn’t want to cover his mistakes or push his responsibility away. “I’ve thought about it, and I want to marry you,” he said.

Bai Rong smiled. It was a calm, gentle smile. “You want to marry me because you have raped me before, and we even have a kid, so you think you’re responsible for me. Or maybe you think you should marry me because you proposed to me before she showed up. You have a great sense of responsibility, and that’s why you’ll be wildly successful, but you’ll lead a harder life than everyone else.”

“I want to marry you because I like you,” he answered her, finally facing their relationship problems.

Bai Rong paused. It was a simple answer, but she was stirred by it. Should I trust him? Does he really feel nothing but responsibility toward Zhou Hailan? Can I live with the fact that he’ll keep taking care of another woman? Bai Rong looked away. Her mind was in a mess, and she needed time to think over everything.

Gu Mingchen looked outside too. It had been days since he last slept, and he was exhausted, but he didn't let her hand go, though they didn't speak for the rest of the journey.

Gu Mingchen had fallen asleep when they reached the military base. He opened his eyes and looked at Bai Rong in panic. He thought she was gone, but she was still there, sleeping, her head leaning against the window. She looked lonely.

His heart ached for her. Gu Mingchen took off his suit and covered her with it. Then, she woke up and looked outside. "We're here, huh?"

"You can go back to sleep after this. You look tired." He rubbed her face.

Bai Rong stared down, keeping her silence. The car went in and stopped in Gu Mingchen's yard.

An orderly came to open the backseat's door, and out came Gu Mingchen. Bai Rong came out from the other side.

"You're back, Mingchen." Zhou Hailan trotted to him with a smile and wrapped her arms around him. "Mr. Gu said you've gone through with the procedure to take me out, so I don't have to go back to the lab alone anymore, right?"

Gu Mingchen peered at her in silence, his lips pursed, his face inscrutable.

Bai Rong looked at Zhou Hailan, who was hugging Gu Mingchen, and she stared down. They look like a perfect picture. Who am I to judge them? She shifted her gaze to Gu Mingchen's house.

Gu Tianhang and Song Xiyu looked down at her like they were gods. She blinked at them, and her heart ached. She spent three years being bullied by Xiong Daini, though she didn't need to deal with her father-in-law then. But after dating Gu Mingchen, his parents doubled down on her with the hardships.

At least Xiong Daini only treated her with disdain. She never introduced any other woman to her son, but Gu Mingchen's parents did it.

Bai Rong took a deep breath and decided to stop struggling. "I'll be taking my luggage now. Send someone to give me a ride, Mr. Gu." She looked at Gu Mingchen.

Gu Mingchen looked at her, his fists clenched, his face tense. She smiled. He didn't stop me.

That was how a love triangle worked. The moment the man hesitated, the one who looked independent would be hurt. He would think the softer one couldn't live without him, while the independent one didn't need him.

Since she was already the independent one, she had to go on no matter what, for nobody would help her even if she fell. She went into Gu Mingchen's house without looking at his parents.

Song Xiyu followed her inside and mocked, "I told you Mingchen loves someone else, but you just had to be stubborn. Now that Hailan's back, you should stop being the third wheel now."

Bai Rong felt humiliated. When she stood against Song Xiyu, she remembered how dignified she was, but at that moment, she knew she was nothing but a

clown to them. Nothing was left. Nothing but embarrassment. And that was thanks to Gu Mingchen.

She pretended not to hear it and unzipped her luggage. Once she confirmed everything was in there, she zipped it and stood up.

Song Xiyu was enraged by her arrogance, and she stood before Bai Rong. “Did you not hear me? Or are you putting on airs?”

“Mrs. Gu, I am leaving right now. Why are you stopping me? Do you want me to stay? I know, why don’t I stay the night then?” Bai Rong shot back coldly.

“Don’t be a homewrecker,” Song Xiyu warned her and stepped aside.

Bai Rong came out with her luggage in tow. The wheels screeched against the ground, keeping her from hearing anything she didn’t want to. When she came to the gates, she could see Gu Mingchen and Zhou Hailan standing together.

Chapter 216

She did not want to look back as she walked indifferently towards the guard.

She had no idea how she had come out from Gu Mingchen’s place. The only thing she knew was that she had walked hastily with her back straight, trying her best

not to look pathetic. Even as she lost her relationship and had her heart broken, she did not want to lose her dignity.

A car pulled over next to her, and Lieutenant Song appeared behind the window. “Chief asked me to send you.”

She did not want to stay here any longer, not even for a second. So, she promptly opened the door and put her suitcase on the backseats before sliding into the car. As she closed her eyes and rested her back against the backrest, she said, “Please bring me to Shuiyue International and wake me up when we arrive.”

“Noted.” Lieutenant Song answered.

Gu Mingchen stood by the window and watched broodingly as Bai Rong entered the car and left.

Just then, his phone rang.

It was a series of numbers, but he could remember that it was the number of the director of the Civil Affairs Bureau. He answered the call gloomily, “What is it?”

“Um, Chief, the marriage certificate for you and your wife has been replaced. You can come and collect it whenever you’re free,” the director said apprehensively.

“Didn’t you say we need to retake the photograph?” Gu Mingchen was astonished; his eyes were filled with uncontrollable excitement.

“It was supposed to be like that because all your information was lost as the marriage certificate was gone. But a colleague of mine secretly duplicated the photograph of you and your wife. She didn’t mean any harm; she just thought that both of you looked so good-looking. I’m sorry for her wrongdoing.”

The photograph was so important to him that he could close his eyes to the employee’s fault. “Is the information keyed in now?”

“The colleague thought both of you were celebrities and she even made a copy of your household register. I’ll definitely give her strict punishment. So, Chief, now that your information has been recorded into the system, you and your wife are legally married. The status is displayed on the official government website too,” the director explained.

Gu Mingchen frowned and stared ahead as the image of her leaving unswervingly flashed through his mind.

I want to be with her. ”Send me the marriage certificate to my military base now. Call me when you arrive.”

As soon as he hung up the call, Zhou Hailan opened the door and came into the room.

She smiled brightly and excitedly said, “Chen, don’t I already have the title of ‘lieutenant’? Uncle Gu asked me to come to the Special Forces Military Base to be a drill instructor, but I’d have to start as an assistant drill instructor to adapt to

the job first. I think it's a good idea, but I have to ask your opinion first. What do you think?"

Looking at her gloved hands, he did not think so. "The training in the Special Forces Military Base is extremely strict. Most of the time, even the instructors have to accompany the recruits outside regardless of weather conditions. Now that you're still recovering, this kind of harsh training is definitely not suitable for you. However, If you really want to find a job, I can assign you a clerical job."

"Would it be at your military base?" Zhou Hailan asked.

"I'll see first."

It meant that she might not be assigned to the Special Forces Military Base.

So, she tugged on his arm lightly and pleaded, "It's okay. I can persevere with the training. Chen, I want to be with you. If I can't even overcome the harsh training, how could I overcome greater challenges in the future? Chen, please let me stay in the Special Forces Military Base. No matter how hard it is, I can live through it."

A hint of slyness appeared in Gu Mingchen's eyes. "Are you sure you can overcome all the difficulties?"

"I can," she answered firmly.

"Is it okay if I arrange you to live with the recruits?"

"I can live here with you. There's ample space here."

“Yes, it’s spacious and quiet here. There are even orderly to serve you. But, as the recruits’ instructor, do you think it is appropriate to enjoy such privilege?”

She paused for a second before continuing to say, “Then, let me be your orderly. I can take care of you. Anyway, no matter what’s your arrangement for me, I just want to be with you.”

“Hailan, you’re once a soldier. You should know that as a general, I can’t let you be here with me. Please go out now. I need to change my clothes.”

She giggled. “You’re thirty-three this year, but you’re still as shy as your 23-year-old self. I am your girlfriend. Is there any part of you I can’t see?”

“Hailan, I’m a married man,” he said solemnly.

Zhou Hailan looked at Gu Mingchen incredulously. “How is it possible? How could you be married? If you’re married, where is your wife then? If you’re married, why did your parents still want us to be together? Besides, I’ve never heard of you getting married. Chen, please don’t make this kind of joke. I don’t like it. My heart can’t take it.”

“I’m not joking. You’re now a free person and you’re no longer held in captivity. If you want to continue your life as a soldier, I can help you to adapt to the military again. If you want to live a simple, comfortable life, I can also help you with it.” He gave her a somber look.

Her body began to tremble as she stared blankly at the floor, muttering to herself, “The person who Chen loves is me. He only loves me and he’ll marry me. He’s not fickle. I want to find him now.”

“Zhou Hailan,” Gu Mingchen called out to her.

She did not seem to have seen Gu Mingchen in front of her. As Zhou Hailan walked out of the room, she saw Song Xiyu and quickly stepped forward to ask her, “Hi, have you seen Chen? He is Gu Mingchen, a tall and handsome soldier in the Special Forces. One day, he’ll definitely become a commander.”

Song Xiyu glanced at Gu Mingchen who was standing behind Zhou Hailan.

Following her gaze, Zhou Hailan saw Gu Mingchen and ran over. “Excuse me, have you seen Chen? He is very tall, about 185cm. And he is quite handsome, too. He works in the Special Forces. Actually, he’s my boyfriend, but I can’t find him anymore.”

Gu Mingchen furrowed his eyebrows as he looked at Zhou Hailan who had gone crazy again.

“Mingchen, what’s happening to Hailan?” Song Xiyu asked, completely baffled by her strange behavior.

“Mingchen? You’re Chen? Why did u pretend not to know me? Is it because of my burn scars? So, you don’t love me anymore?” She held his arm as tears streamed down her face. “Since you don’t want me anymore, I also don’t want to live anymore. Why am I still alive?”

As soon as she finished speaking, she ran towards the wall, trying to end her life.

Seeing this, Gu Mingchen instantly grabbed her and she was thrown into his arms from the force he exerted.

She started to sob and pleaded with him, “Chen, I don’t want to lose you. Please don’t abandon me. You’re the only one I have. Without your love, I have nothing to live for.”

Instead of acknowledging what she said, Gu Mingchen stared into the distance and said, “I’ll let someone come and fetch you back. You’re tired. Go back and have a rest.

“No, I’m not tired. I want to stay here with you,” she said, hugging him tightly.

He felt a wave of irritability.

Chapter 217

If Zhou Hailan came back before he knew Bai Rong, he probably would let her stay and take care of her.

But he had Bai Rong in his life now.

If he let her stay, Bai Rong definitely would be angry and upset.

He could not bring himself to ignore Bai Rong's feelings because he cared about her.

"Hailan, this place is not suitable for you," Gu Mingchen said as he tried to change her mind.

"Why? When I was locked up, every single day, you're the only thing I thought about. Now that I'm back, I want to spend the rest of my life with you, to replace the eight years we've lost. But you want to chase me away now?" As Zhou Hailan talked, her emotion became unstable again.

"Gu Mingchen." Calling his son's full name, Gu Tianhang reprimanded, "In order to protect you during the mission, she was half-burnt, caught, and tortured by the enemies. You know how cruel and inhuman the enemies were. By the time she was rescued, her body was covered with injuries, and she's even mentally disturbed. Her condition was so awful that she had to be restrained during her treatment. Besides, due to her burn, she went through skin grafting procedures, suffering intense postoperative pain multiple times. These were not something ordinary people could bear. Apart from that, you've known her a long time, and both of you were even a couple. Zhou Hailan didn't do anything wrong. If you abandon her now, you'd be a fickle, ungrateful man. And who the hell is that Bai Rong? She's nothing but a b*tch who's been divorced, and she even seduced you when she was still a married woman. What a shameless slut. Even if she's married to you, she won't be loyal to you, and I don't want to lose my dignity, having such a promiscuous daughter-in-law. If you marry her, your political prospects would all be gone. Stop obsessing over Bai Rong, Mingchen. Start thinking straight and do the right thing."

"Chen, you've fallen in love with someone else?" Zhou Hailan asked breathlessly.

“We’re already married. I’m sorry. I’ll let someone send you back.” Gu Mingchen turned and instructed the orderly.

Gu Tianhang disagreed, “She’s not going anywhere. She will stay here today because I allow her to do so.”

However, Gu Mingchen paid no heed and strode out of the place solemnly and determinedly.

He could take care of Zhou Hailan forever to help her recover. However, he knew that his heart had changed.

All my mind now is on Bai Rong.

Every word she says and every expression she wears tug at my heartstrings.

With such thoughts, he called Lieutenant Song and asked, “Where did she ask you to bring her?”

Lieutenant Song looked in the rear-view mirror and saw that Bai Rong was asleep. “Shuiyue International.”

“Bring her to the Blue Sky Apartment instead. I’ll be there soon.” After hanging up the call, he dialed the director up. “Where are you now?”

“Chief, I’ve departed, on the way to the military base,” the director reported respectfully.

“On your way here, you’ll pass by a paddock, so you should go to the East door of the paddock and wait for me there. I’ll arrive there in half an hour.” With that, he hopped into his car and sped away.

Meanwhile, Zhou Hailan looked in the direction where Gu Mingchen had left. “Chen doesn’t want me anymore?”

“Don’t worry. As long as I’m here, he won’t be with that wicked woman,” Gu Tianhang reassured.

In response, she glanced at Gu Tianhang dolefully.

“From now on you will live here,” Gu Tianhang said in a serious manner.

Upon hearing that, Song Xiyu knitted her brows and looked towards her husband, and then at Zhou Hailan.

Eventually, arrangements were made and Zhou Hailan rested in Gu Mingchen’s room.

“Are we putting too much pressure on Mingchen?” Song Xiyu asked Gu Tianhang worriedly.

Gu Tianhang pondered for a while and voiced out his analysis, “He can’t marry that b*tch, Bai Rong, no matter what. She used to be Xiong Daini’s daughter-in-law, and Xiong Daini is Su Zheng’s sister-in-law. I don’t want to lose my dignity in front of them. Moreover, she knew that we were the ones who kidnapped her, and she even had the audacity to threaten us. How could such a person be my son’s wife?”

Speaking of Bai Rong made him exasperated, so he paused to take a deep breath before continuing, “On the other hand, Zhou Hailan has made meritorious contributions and had been Mingchen’s comrade-in-arms before the incident. If Mingchen marries her despite her disfigurement, his reputation would boost dramatically and stand a chance to be elected as the next commander-in-chief.”

“I don’t like Bai Rong either, but there’s something off with Zhou Hailan as well. So, she is not the daughter-in-law I like.” Song Xiyu let out a sigh. “It’s a pity that Wanning can’t be my daughter-in-law. In fact, she is my favorite one.”

“What can we do? Your son doesn’t have feelings for Su Wanning. He didn’t want to marry her and even severed his finger to threaten us not to force him into marrying her. In the end, it’s the Su family who called off the engagement, not us. Anyway, it’s important to know that love never lasts long enough to sustain a marriage; it’s the benefits that the couple gets from one another that sustains it. Mm, we shall see,” Gu Tianhang said solemnly.

Hearing his words. Song Xiyu guessed that her husband had other plans in mind.

At the same time, she was deeply disheartened by what he had said. Love never lasts long? Is he saying about us? So, there’s no more love between us, and all that’s left is benefits? Yet, I was the one who had traded my youth to bear him a child.

She lowered her head and glanced away. “I’ll stay here to take care of Zhou Hailan. After all, it’s not right for the male orderlies to take care of her. You can’t remain here as well.”

“Since she’s going to live long-term here, she needs to have a female orderly anyway. So, let me settle that later and we can go back now. You still have matters to attend to in the company. It’s a waste of talent for you to stay and take care of a person,” Gu Tianhang said.

“Should I thank you for your high praise for me? Or I should thank myself for having the skills and background that make me exceptional enough to be the wife of the Deputy Commander?” Smiling sarcastically, she turned around and walked away without bothering to see his reaction.

He frowned, baffled by her behavior. “I have no idea why you’re acting like this again.”

Song Xiyu stopped in her tracks and looked at him dejectedly. “It’s not that you don’t know. It’s because you don’t want to understand why I’m behaving like this. Gu Tianhang, you get what you give.”

“I’m telling you about Mingchen, and you’re telling me about reciprocity. What are you trying to say? You want to quarrel with me?” he said, utterly infuriated.

I don’t even want to argue with him anymore. He’s been imperious all his life. Even if it’s his fault, he’ll always blame the fault on others. What a stubborn, domineering dictator.

Heaving a sigh, she cast her eyes down and continued her steps. “I’ll head back first.”

Bai Rong woke up and felt a hand on her waist. As she turned her head to look, she found Gu Mingchen sleeping next to her.

Looking at the intravenous line in the back of her hand, her mind went blank for a moment.

**Why is he sleeping here? Why am I on intravenous infusion? Is this his place?
Blue Sky Apartment?**

**As soon as she moved, Gu Mingchen woke up from his nap. He looked at the vial hanging on the drip stand and found that she still had half of the vial to finish.
“Don’t move around. You’re still on intravenous fluid.”**

Chapter 218

“Why am I here?” Bai Rong asked, feeling perplexed. I remember I’ve asked Lieutenant Song to send me to Shuiyue International. And isn’t he with Zhou Hailan?

Gu Mingchen saw the question in her eyes and patiently explained, “I’ve let Lieutenant Song send you here. You were having a fever and fell unconscious. So, I brought you to the doctor and changed the wound dressing on your chest. The wound hasn’t recovered yet. You are a doctor. Why are you not taking good care of yourself?”

The more he spoke, the greater the heartache he felt for her. She is too independent; she wants to bear everything alone. Even if she can’t bear it alone, she will not ask for help.

Bai Rong nodded as she understood how she had gotten here, but she had not quite understood another matter. “Aren’t you at the military base? Where are Zhou Hailan and your parents?”

She’s asked the question too calmly. His eyes dimmed. Then, he turned off the alarm on his phone and placed it aside. He sat up straight and looked fixedly at her in the eyes. “I have something to tell you.”

Staring doubtfully at him, she asked, “What is it?”

When he saw her trying to sit up, he was worried that she might accidentally tear the wound, so he promptly helped her up and put a pillow behind her.

“Thank you,” she said politely.

“You’re way too polite. We don’t need to thank each other.”

She lowered her gaze and did not respond.

Gu Mingchen disliked her behaving like this: unfathomable and obscure. It was as if she would disappear at any moment. “The director of the Civil Affairs Bureau called me. He said that our information has been uploaded into their system, and one can see the registration of our marriage on the official website of the Civil Affairs Bureau. Therefore, we’re technically legally married.”

A look of utter disbelief sprawled across her face. “We are a legally married couple? How? I tore the marriage certificate.”

“Nowadays, all the information is digitalized. It doesn’t matter if the marriage certificate is gone, they can just print out another copy.” He opened the drawer of the nightstand, took out their marriage certificate, and handed it to Bai Rong. “It’s exactly the same as the one we had before.”

With trembling hands, she took the document and opened it.

Both of them smiled sweetly in the photograph.

But she felt as if the persons inside were not them.

She clearly remembered she had torn it, and Su Xuyan also said that as long as the marriage certificate was torn, there would be no record left at the Civil Affairs Bureau. How is this so?

“Gu Mingchen...” She looked expectantly at him.

“No,” he rejected. He knew that she didn’t want to be married. “Bai Rong, you can stay where you are. It doesn’t matter if you step back because I’ll pursue after you. But please don’t hide. I’m afraid of not being able to find you.”

She frowned and turned her face away from him.

“We are husband and wife. If one of us has any problem, we can solve it together,” he said gently, holding her hand.

Woman is the softest, yet the strongest person in the world.

If she loves a man, even if the man is a tad bit good, she will give him her entire world.

As long as the man wants to reconcile and there's still love between them, she will forget the scars he's left.

If she doesn't love the man, even if this man loses his life for her, she will not stay with him.

Marriage, Zhou Hailan, and her illness frustrated her; she did not have any strength left to fight against destiny.

Normally, when she could not make a decision right away, she would give herself more time to ruminate over the options available. After all, life is not going to end tomorrow. Everything will go away with time, and time will also verify everything. Therefore, whenever I'm having difficulty in making decisions, I'll let time to solve the problem.

"Didn't you say Zhou Hailan's having mental issue? If you trust me, I can help her," Bai Rong offered.

A grin spread across Gu Mingchen's face as he held her hand tightly. "With your help, I believe that she can recover in no time."

"But you didn't allow before," she blurted out.

Taken aback, he stared at her before saying, “I didn’t know Zhou Hailan and my parents were coming at that time. Besides, I’ve told her we’re married.”

With her eyes lowered, Bai Rong took a deep breath and turned to him. “Actually, it’s not hard to read children’s emotions because the way they express themselves is not as complex as the adults. That’s why we can easily predict what they’re thinking about.”

Pausing, she gave him some time to digest the information before she continued, “For example, a kid passes by an ice cream shop and wants some ice cream. If the kid doesn’t get the ice cream, he might cry, throw a tantrum, and even hit other people. As the kid’s parents, what should they do?”

He mulled over the question and then answered honestly, “Mm, if I were the parent... If it’s a boy, I would not grant him what he wants, no matter how much he cries for it. If he throws a tantrum, I’d ask him to face the wall as a punishment. If he beats people, I’d need to discipline and reprimand him. However, if it’s a girl, I would spoil her a bit.”

“Kids are still young. They don’t know how to persuade their parents with words, so crying is their only strategy to tell their parents that they want the ice cream. When they’re unhappy, they’d use their parents’ love to get what they want. Thus, if they’re given ice cream after they cry, the tantrums will become worse next time. It’s because they know that this method is effective,” she explained.

Nodding, he understood what she was trying to convey.

Bai Rong gave him an encouraging smile. “The same applies to Zhou Hailan. If she gets whatever she wants when she cries, she’ll throw a tantrum that’s going to be worse than before.”

“What do I do then?” He looked at her quizzically.

She gave him a counterquestion. “Why do you think parents are reluctant to buy ice cream for their kids?”

“Because of the high sugar content, and cold food is not good for kids. And perhaps, they can’t afford it.”

“As kids, their values and life perspective are not formed yet. Therefore, parents are guardians who protect them as they know what is good for them and what is bad for them. Gu Mingchen, what do you think is good for Zhou Hailan?”

“I hope she can regain her confidence, lead an independent life, and find the people whom she truly needs.”

Bai Rong smiled. However, there are some words she wanted to say, but she could not bring herself to tell him. If she was facing the family members of an ordinary patient, she would speak them out without thinking too much.

But the one sitting in front of me now is Gu Mingchen, and the patient is his ex-girlfriend. As his current partner, saying those words would make me sound like a petty person.

Therefore, she did not say them out. Instead, she said, “If Zhou Hailan rejects me, I can recommend someone else to you. My senior was a legend in our university. He’s even more famous than me, definitely an excellent doctor as well.”

“I trust you,” Gu Mingchen said in a serious tone.

Upon hearing his words, her eyes gleamed. She finally voiced out the things she wanted to say, “I’d need you to keep your distance with Zhou Hailan and don’t

give her any false hope. Can you do that? Only when you stop giving her hope can she find the one she truly needs, become independent, and retrieve the confidence she's lost. If you continue to spoil her, you're actually keeping her in a cage where she can never get out of. Besides, our relationship will also hurt her deeply, making her feel inferior and dependent."

Chapter 219

"Okay," he responded.

It was just a simple word, but Bai Rong felt as if it had turned into crashing waves that splashed against a large boulder in the sea.

The trust he had given her, after numerous hardships they had been through, warmed her heart.

Her usual blank expression cracked as she smiled gently at his word. She lowered her gaze and slowly leaned against the headboard.

"Do you want to lie down?" Gu Mingchen immediately stretched out his arm to get a pillow.

Smiling, she stopped his hand and asked, "Have you had dinner? I'll cook for you later."

"You're sick now. How can I let you cook for me? Let's go out for dinner. Do you have anything you want to eat?" He stroked her hand and gazed adoringly at her.

Bai Rong thought for a moment before saying, "When I was studying in the United States, the foods I missed the most were braised chicken, roast duck, and steamed fish head. I remember we have a famous restaurant near my university. Would you like to have dinner there with me?"

He beamed. "I like the foods you've just said as well. By the way, do you know what's my favorite dish?"

A sheepish grin appeared on her face as she shook her head in response.

Gu Mingchen was not a picky eater when he was with Bai Rong; he would eat whatever she had prepared.

"I only know that you can't eat lobsters because you're allergic to them," she replied.

"Well, my favorite dish is braised pork. It's so nice to be eaten with rice. However, I rarely eat it when I was at the military base because I don't want other people to know about it. Do you know how to cook braised pork?"

Wow, I did not expect that answer. I thought he would like expensive delicacies, instead of an ordinary dish.

Nodding her head, she asked, “Do you like it sweet? Because that’s normally how I cook it.”

“Yeah, I’m fine with it.” He gave her a half-smile. “When we eat at home next time, I’ll also make some dishes, too. We can prepare our meals together.”

The way he smiles resembles his temperament, but he looks great whenever he smiles.

Smiling at her own thoughts, she teased, “Then, I’ll be the chef and you’re my assistant.”

“No problem.” Gu Mingchen let out a chuckle before moving to sit beside her on the bed and looked at her with his blazing eyes. “I’m sure you’ll be a good mom.”

Bai Rong’s heart sank. “You’ve found our child?”

He shook his head and said, “There’s no information at all. It’s like looking for a needle in a haystack.”

Her eyes dimmed with sorrow. “I thought our baby was dead at one point. But as long as the body’s not found, I’ll always have a glimmer of hope in my heart.”

“Let’s have more kids. This time I’ll protect them well. I don’t mind if it’s a boy or a girl; I like them all. Especially after listening about children and ice cream just

now, I'm starting to look forward to having kids with you," he said with a gleam in his eyes.

Yeah, I'm twenty-eight now. It's time to have a baby, but I'll need to stop my medication if I want to conceive. I'm worried my illness might get out of control once my medication stops.

Suddenly, her phone rang, interrupting her thoughts.

As she searched for her bag, Gu Mingchen took it out from the bedside drawer and gave her phone to her.

Bai Rong saw an unsaved number on her phone, but she knew that it belonged to Cheng Jinrong. Probably because Lu Xingzhou asked him to call.

She promptly answered the call; she had been waiting for his call for a long time.

"Rong, it's me, Cheng Jinrong. Have you eaten dinner?" he greeted cheerfully.

She wanted to go out for dinner with Gu Mingchen, so she replied, "I'm going out to eat with someone else. What's the matter?"

"Uh..." He did not expect her declination. "How about tomorrow? Let's have lunch tomorrow at noon. Mr. Lu still has some details to go over with you."

"Alright. Let's meet at Tianyu Tea House in Shuiyue International around eleven." She hung up the call.

“Who are you going to meet at 11 A.M. tomorrow?” Gu Mingchen tried his best to conceal the hint of jealousy in his voice, but he failed miserably.

Holding his hand, she told him the truth, “A client whom I’ve mentioned to you before. You even know him. His name is Lu Xingzhou.”

He gaped at her. “What? How did you know him?”

“I knew him by coincidence. His son has a mental health problem, and he just happened to find me,” she explained. “By the way, did u find anything on Lu Liangcheng?”

He pondered for a while before saying, “Lu Xingzhou’s the mentor of Lu Liangcheng. We know that Jin Yang City is a historical city, so there might have buildings built over many possible archaeological sites. After Lu Liangcheng becomes the mayor, he has secretly established Xingzheng Construction Company to excavate antiquities and illegally trade them. All of these are done under the disguise of regular building construction of his company.”

With his chin on his hand, he looked over to Bai Rong and continued, “In fact, the evidence of his crime has long been there, and the cultural relics he put in the black market are all seized. It’s just a matter of time for him to be caught. However, we still can’t find any connection of this matter with other people.”

“It’s been more than three years. I think it’s time for him to be detained. If he escapes, all manpower and resources used would go down the drain. Besides, other people involved in this crime are obviously harder to be dealt with. But we might have a breakthrough discovery from Lu Xingzhou.”

“Yea. He’s meticulous and conscientious, so it’s definitely more difficult to deal with him than Lu Liangcheng. Obtaining breakthrough information from him is

not going to be easy. What's more important is your safety. It's too dangerous for you to go alone."

"I've promised Tang Xiaojiu to find the murderer. If not, we can't be together. It's been three and a half years now and yet I have not found any useful information. So, I must go." Bai Rong determinedly said.

Gu Mingchen frowned.

I don't have any memory of the past three years, so I can't remember the details of being with Bai Rong. I know Lu Liangcheng is related to the Tangqian Village genocide, but I have no idea of the promise she gave to Tang Xiaojiu. Too many things happened in the past three years. I didn't even have time to think much on this matter.

"Okay. But I'll let someone go with you," he said, compromising.

Bai Rong remembered that he also secretly sent someone to protect her when she went to Jinyang City by herself before. She was very touched at the time.

However, she could not risk herself getting caught. So, she tried to convince him. "But it might make me more suspicious. Don't worry, I promise I'll take care of myself."

"I allow you to go, but you must have someone with you. If not, I won't be at ease."

Bai Rong did not want to argue over this matter. "Okay, you can do as you want, but don't let me know who it'll be. I'm starving. Let's go out and have dinner."

He took a glance at the vial hanging above. “But you’re not done with your medication.”

After nimbly removing the cannula from her hand, she hopped down the bed and said, “I’m a doctor. I know how much of this is enough.”

He felt sorry for her as he grabbed her hand and look at the bandage. “Bai Rong, you don’t have to remove it yourself. I know how to remove the cannula, too.”

Bai Rong simply smiled.

I’m used to depending on myself. Once I start having someone to depend on, I’m scared to be vulnerable when I lose the person.

“Fine. Let’s go. You’re rich, so you pay this time.” She walked out of the room first.

With her hand in his, he followed her and went out of the apartment.

Chapter 220

Bai Rong went to a place near the university.

That restaurant was located in an alley where cars weren’t allowed.

Therefore, they parked the car elsewhere and went there on foot. Along the way, they passed by Bai Rong's alma mater.

There were students drifting in and out of the university.

She had graduated for almost seven years. Looking at her alma mater after so many years, she still felt a sense of familiarity for some inexplicable reason.

"Do you know what I thought about all the time when I was in university?" Bai Rong asked Gu Mingchen.

The latter gazed at her and made a guess. "Graduation?"

Hearing that, Bai Rong cast a smile as her eyes curled into a crescent shape. "You're right. I wanted to get out of the university so badly," she answered.

"Why? You got good grades, didn't you?" Gu Mingchen asked in confusion.

"Actually, I think people's beliefs and values are shaped by their university life. There are too many influencing factors—the disparity between the rich and the poor, emotional issues, relationship problems, difficulty in coping with university life, peer influence, endless temptations, and so on. A person's beliefs and values

usually change after encountering an unfortunate or traumatic event,” Bai Rong lamented.

“I remember that there was a counseling room in every school, and there were a few part-time counselors on duty.” Gu Mingchen went with the flow of her topic.

“Many of those who work in Mu Xiaosheng’s research institute are working as part-time counselors in various high schools. However, many people have insufficient knowledge and awareness about mental illnesses. Most of the time, people just deny having such illnesses because they think it’s an embarrassment. Some of them don’t even think they are mentally ill. As a result, the number of suicides due to depression grew significantly over the past decade,” Bai Rong chatted casually with Gu Mingchen.

“I’m no expert in psychology, but I can see that more and more people are suffering from mental illnesses. I once attended a lecture and learned that mental illnesses are prevalent nowadays. Almost everybody has shown symptoms of mental illnesses, more or less. According to the statistics, two out of ten people have depression. In fact, I’m curious. What made you decide to become a psychologist instead of a gynecologist?” asked Gu Mingchen.

Suddenly, a student riding a bicycle sped out of the university.

Reflexively, Gu Mingchen held Bai Rong’s waist and pulled her toward him.

She didn’t push him away and just allowed him to hold her in his arms.

The streetlamp glowed dimly, shrouding the pair in a cloak of warm light.

Bai Rong looked into Gu Mingchen’s eyes.

There were several reasons why she opted for psychology.

Other than the fact that she met Mu Xiaosheng by coincidence and her mother was a psychiatric patient, another reason was that she realized she had a psychological problem other than depression and wanted to treat herself.

However, she didn't want to tell him about her psychological problem. "All kinds of reasons, I guess. After my mom recovers, I'll bring you to meet her."

"Alright," Gu Mingchen replied before he fell silent.

Bai Rong didn't say anything further as she was enjoying the pleasant ambience while they were together. The chilly wind was blowing, but it wasn't as cold as she thought it would be.

Gu Mingchen took off his coat and wrapped it around her.

Pulling the coat tighter, Bai Rong smiled at him. "Thank you."

He held her hand in his. "Is the place far from here?" asked Gu Mingchen.

"No. It should be just around here." Bai Rong scanned the surroundings and frowned.

The area had undergone a lot of changes. Many high-rise buildings had been erected, and the small shops that she used to visit were all gone.

“I remember that there was a shop run by a married couple. They had a cute daughter who couldn’t differentiate words like ‘I’ and ‘you.’ If you told her, ‘you’re naughty,’ she would reply, ‘I’m naughty.’ The couple were really good cooks. The fish broth they made was exceptional, and it cost only ten a bowl. Usually, I would add on a bowl of white rice. Then I could enjoy a full meal that cost me only eleven. Another dish that I liked was the pork ribs soup. It was so delicious and only cost fifteen a bowl.”

Bai Rong’s eyes lit up as she recalled her favorite dishes.

“I can’t wait to try the dishes,” Gu Mingchen said with a soft smile on his face.

Bai Rong giggled. “Oh no... What a wasted trip! Well, it’s too bad that we’re getting nothing today.”

“Isn’t there a lot of restaurants here? Let’s just pick one.” Gu Mingchen took her to a small restaurant.

It was dinner time, and the restaurant was crowded with people. A group of enthusiastic male students was watching the live broadcast of the NBA finals.

Seeing that, Bai Rong instantly felt like she was back to university life.

They seated themselves at a table, which Bai Rong cleaned with a piece of tissue paper.

A waitress walked over. “May I take your order, please?”

Bai Rong was excited to see the waitress. “Lady boss, it’s you! Wow, you’re running a big restaurant now!”

“Hehe... We’re no longer renting the small store. We bought this restaurant a few years ago,” replied the lady boss.

“You deserve the best, lady boss. You’re a very good cook. Are the fish broth and pork ribs soup still available?” asked Bai Rong.

“Yes. They are our signature dishes. Anything else?” The lady boss handed the menu over.

“Do you have braised pork with preserved vegetables? What about pot-roast chicken?” asked Bai Rong.

“Yes, we have them all.”

“Then I would like all four of them. Could you please use fresh fish for the broth? I’d like to have a big bottle of Sprite too,” Bai Rong ordered.

“Sure.” The lady boss headed to the kitchen after taking their order.

Bai Rong turned to look at Gu Mingchen, who was staring at her with a smile.

“What are you smiling at?” Bai Rong was puzzled.

“You were very distant the first time I met you. Your face was always expressionless when dealing with matters, and you rarely smiled. Even when you

did, you only did it out of courtesy. I was so curious about you. But as I got to know you better, I realized that you're actually very bright and breezy," replied Gu Mingchen.

"Well, let me tell you something. Actually, every person has multiple hidden personalities. They can be kind, grim, aloof, enthusiastic, and so on. Personalities often shift depending on one's mood, goals, and environment. That's why it's said that a person behaves differently when dealing with different people in different situations.

"For example, there was an infamous case of dismemberment in Bera. The murderer was a gentle and knowledgeable lecturer who delivered lively and interesting lectures. Not only was he a good-looking man who was kind to everybody, but he was also a perfect husband and father to his family. Everyone thought he was a flawless man.

"The day when the incident happened, he was working in the university while his wife and son traveled abroad. He was surfing the pornographic website in the hostel. Right then, a female student seduced him, and he ended up sleeping with the girl. After that, the girl blackmailed him with their sex tape and forced him to marry her. The professor was so mad that he killed the girl. Everyone was clueless about the murderer as the method he used to commit murder was ruthless yet impeccable. The professor only turned himself in after twenty years."

After Gu Mingchen patiently listened to her story, he kissed her on her forehead.

However, Bai Rong merely stared at him in a daze.

"We were looking into each other's eyes, and I kissed you. How could you remain this calm?" Gu Mingchen couldn't help but feel disappointed with her reaction.

Bai Rong propped her head with one hand and pointed at the table near the corner.

Gu Mingchen followed her gaze and turned around.

There was a young couple cuddling and kissing as if no one was watching