

A Love
So Beautiful

致我们 单纯的小美好^①

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To Our Pure Little Beauty • 致我们单纯的小美好

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Chapter 1

Comrade Old Chen, aka my dad, formally retired February of this year. Old Chen who had been doing hard labour his whole life couldn't sit still after just spending half a month idling at home. It so happened that the Senior Citizen's club in our town was recruiting members, so off he went. Once he got there, he then found out that his 50-something age was considered the young backbone in the Senior Citizen's club where the average age was 70. Because of that, Old Chen's passion from long ago was ignited. Every day, he'd be pedalling his bike towards the club to organize their recreational activities. This kind of passion, is the kind that has been burning for years.

It's just that his passion also hasn't been burning for quite some time, and had only given him an initial show of strength for the first few years. This old man got on a stool to hang their activity banner when his foot stepped on air, causing him to fall down.

When I got a call from my mom, I was on the highway, looking out at the billboards. My entire body broke out into a cold sweat though it was one sunny day. Even though I was always being beaten by Old Chen when I was young, I was also thinking of beating him as soon as I grew up. But despite that, I really love him.

On the way to the hospital, I kept on crying while talking endlessly with the cab driver about how good my dad is. The driver, a 7-feet tall sturdy-looking man, was seemingly moved by me, and floored the gas to its maximum extent. When I paid him, he offered to just round up the fare, and told me, "Young child, remember my plate number, XXXX, by all means, don't flag down my cab again. I have a blabbermouth wife and mom at home so when I listen to other people talking nonstop I can't help but tremble. Forgive me, I wish your father a speedy recovery."

.....

I rushed inside the hospital crying, when I got there my mom was paring apples while scolding my dad: "Your weary old body is still considered backbone? Fall one more time and I'll push you straight to cremation. Your backbone I'll upgrade it into bone ash.

I held unto the door frame, in tears, "Mom, how's dad?"

Mom looked up at me, "Oh, stop crying, what are you crying for, I've endured so much to raise you just so your face won't be covered in snot and tears."

I held back my tears and went over to sympathize with the old man who has been oppressed for such a long time, "Dad, are you alright?"

My dad looked helplessly at the apple mom was holding, "No, your mom already pared three apples, and didn't even give me one to eat."

I've been thinking there was no way of knowing things straight from their mouth, hence, I simply picked up the thermos and said, "I'll go get hot water."

I went straight to the nurse's station carrying the thermos, and didn't mind my mom who was crying out behind me, "This damn child, the thermos is full!"

Probably because I looked too menacing, the nurse quickly got the doctor. The doctor described my dad's condition with a blank face, he said the fall affected his lower back — the vertebra was compressing the nerves. In other words, he needs to go through surgery, and made me prepare 30,000 bucks.

I asked the doctor a few specific questions but he gave me a pointed look, "If I would tell you, you still wouldn't be able to understand it, just prepare the money alright? Leave the rest to us doctors." I asked again, "Then, when's the surgery?"

He said impatiently, "Line up, when it reaches your turn then we'll do it."

I was itching to cough out a big mouthful of thick phlegm on his face, and then tell him, "Sorry, I have tuberculosis."

But I couldn't, I could only fish out a few hundred bills from my pocket, and force it on him, "Then, I can only bother you to take care of it....."

He glared at me and pushed away the money, "What are you doing?! I understand your sentiments as a family member but this is against the hospital regulations! You really don't have to worry, I will find time to give you a detailed explanation."

I was so beside myself with guilt, thinking that I pinned my narrow-minded yardstick* to gauge a gentleman's heart. Indeed, some doctors were just born ill-tempered. As I was deeply reflecting on my personal integrity, the doctor then turned around to leave, but before leaving, he raised his chin and gave me a meaningful look. I pondered for a long while if he was having cramps or if he was implying something else with his action, till I copied him and raised my chin as well, only then did I understand — a CCTV was mounted on the wall..... (T/N: To judge a person's actions with one's narrowed perspective.)

I was just about to ask the nurse where the doctor's office was located when my phone rang. I took it out and looked at who it was. My heartbeat quickly went downhill at lightning speed, as if stepping on an accelerator, that I've almost wanted to go to to the Cardiology department to have myself checked.

Jiang Chen, my ex-boyfriend.

Shaking, I politely picked up the call, "Hello?"

I've been saying 'hello' for a very long time, but all I could hear

was a cacophonous of noise, it seems as though he had just accidentally pressed the phone. I was about to hang up the call but I heard a delicate female voice saying, "Doc, I'm having chest pain."

It was only then that I remembered how Jiang Chen as a doctor now, was said to have a bit of reputation. I hung up the phone, confused for a while, then finally decided that if I have to wallow in the darkness of our motherland's healthcare system, I might as well be transferred to the hospital where Jiang Chen was working. On the account that I've helped him peel around thousands of tea eggs back in the days, he has to consider that somehow, right?

I went back to tell my mom regarding this matter, and she told me, "Jiang Chen, that kid whom you had a puppy love back then?"

Uh.....your memory sure knows the more important parts.

Mom asked again, "If we go to the hospital he's working at, will he help us? I mean does both of you still have mutual affection?"

Truly a "hit the nail on the head" question, I stammered, "He will help us that's for sure, it's just that....."

"Just what?"

"It's only that, our current situation is something scissors couldn't sever, and when sorted out, is tangled again*." (T/N: too complicated)

The old lady scoffed, "Stop using big words on me. Can't cut with scissors then you shave it all up! You are going to contact him right now. Your dad must be transferred tomorrow. I can't stand that bastard doctor here anymore. I was expecting for my mom to tell me lovingly, 'Child, we must have integrity, ex-boyfriends and what not, one shouldn't go around bothering them.' But sure enough, I've really overestimated my mom this time.

Jiang Chen showed no hints of being surprised when he got my call

that it makes me want to become a doctor, so used to seeing strong winds and big waves*, even dead bodies and internal organs don't scare him, how can I, an ex-girlfriend, scare him. (T/N: difficulties, struggles)

I was stuttering the entire time I was explaining the situation to him, but managed to tell him in the end, "Is it okay to transfer my dad to your hospital?"

"Okay." He replied concisely that I was too ashamed to mention the thing about peeling tea eggs.

He added, "Get everything ready, I'll find an ambulance to pick up your dad for the transfer."

Finally, he was silent for a long time, and then asked me, "You okay?"

Okay.

After hanging up the phone, I clutched my chest and leaned against the wall of the lobby, breathing heavily. A young nurse next to me helped me up, "Are you alright?"

I shook my head, also feeling very glad that at long last I have finally seen the light of humanity in this hospital.

She then went on, "Who did you just call? Seems like you're going to be transferred. Do you know some bigshot in other hospitals? Can you introduce me? I only have a month before I finish my internship yet I still haven't found a hospital who would hire me. Can you help me? My grades are actually very good, it's just that I don't want to accompany hospital directors to bed."

There's really no other way but for me to be entangled with her, so without any better option I said, "Actually, that person I called is a janitor in a hospital, I promised to accompany him to bed, so he promised to help me ask around and see if I could transfer."

.....

Three hours later, Jiang Chen, with an ambulance whizzed in front of me. I haven't seen him in 3 years yet I didn't dare raise my head to take a good look at him. I just kept on staring at what seems like a very expensive fountain pen in the pocket of his white coat. I don't know if he already learnt how to write the new characters used in medicine.

When I was at university, I've always been worried about Jiang Chen, for fear that his beautiful penmanship's small script would face difficulties in the medical profession. In order for him to achieve a penmanship that would let him evade responsibility even if he prescribed the wrong drug, I once forced him to copy my penmanship. It's a pity that in the end, he failed to learn its true essence.

Discharging procedures, admitting procedures, Jiang Chen settled everything by himself. My mom and I were terribly idle, just chatting near the hospital entrance, each with an apple.

Mom said, "This young man is indeed whom I looked after growing up, really good."

She made it sound like she should be given credit for looking after him when growing up because he turned out be a good young man, really shameless.

She added, "Such excellent goods, how did you miss it back then? You've almost succeeded."

I took a bite out of the apple, "Dad is bored being alone in the ambulance, you go eat an apple and make him watch."

Mom heaved a sigh, then gladly and diligently went to where the ambulance was, yelling while running, "Old man, your daughter made me eat an apple for you to watch."

Jiang Chen was holding a large document and some small receipts when he chanced upon this scene, he smiled and looked skeptically at me, "You're really too filial."

I looked up at him, he was slightly bent over, bowing his head to look at me. The tips of his hair that were drooping were glowing in the morning light. He smiled at me like how he used to, his left cheek was squeezing out a deep dimple, it was as though we just ate and watched movies together yesterday.

I averted my gaze, this is a sinister dimple. Back then my little heart was drunk and fell in this dimple. Now that I think about it, this pit in his face was just a giant fraud.

Jiang Chen's existence used to be just like one of those lamp post in the alley. He lives in the house across ours, the mayor's son, the class monitor, looks good, could play the piano, writes calligraphy, has good grades, and speaks nice Mandarin. Television and novels label us boys and girls who are friends, and live awfully close together since young as "childhood sweethearts", moreover, they generally divide it into two categories: one, the "in love with each other" type. Two people who are close together like siblings, poking honeycombs and getting stung by bees together, stealing sweet potatoes and getting beaten together. By the time the two would look back, only then would they realize that the friendship from long ago has slowly blossomed into love. The other one is the "sees and hates each other" type. Two people who opposes the other with equal intensity, already itching to rush ahead to bite the other when spotted from a distance. When they get the chance, they'd pull the tire valve of each other's bikes. But later on, when the two would grow up, they would suddenly realize — Ah! This is true love.

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forget the content in our homework, I would press the doorbell of their house. He would always mock me, and impatiently ask why I didn't remember. Probably, because I'm seeking out a favour, so I never bickered with him. Of course, it might also be because I don't like to argue with people since young. I'm someone calm and collected, a bit extraordinarily.

Summer vacation of 2nd year middle school going 3rd year, our class secretly organized a picnic after the exams. During the picnic, Jiang Chen and I was assigned to wash the sweet potatoes. There were 40 people in our class but we bought 44 sweet potatoes. Jiang Chen just washed those four extra sweet potatoes, and after that, played skipping stones with the boys on the side.

I was crouching at the lakeside, forced to keep my anger in check as I was washing the potatoes. The more I wash, the more I get mad. By then a small slab of rock was dropped right in front of me and splashed me on the face. As I looked up, Jiang Chen was putting on an air of nonchalance as though nothing has happened. He raised his hand, and a stone skipped across the water surface, piercing its stillness in four beautiful successive skips, along with it were ripples of varying sizes, colliding together and then dissolving.

It was pretty logical for me to have scolded him, splashed water on him, pressed his head into the water, or perhaps, pushed him into the lake to drown.

But I did nothing. I just stared at him with a silly look on my face.

The breeze lifted his loose, white school uniform. The sun was casting a golden light on his lashes and the tips of his hair. The slightly raised corner of his mouth was squeezing out a proud smile adorning his left cheek.

Right there and then, time and space froze leaving only the furious thumping of my heart.

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Translator's Corner:

Hi! Dolly here. I don't know how people found out about this translation (which was intended for my real-life friends who were bugging me about it) but thank you for reading.

Chapter 2

After summer, we stepped into the busy year of Junior 3. I have always prioritized important matters above everything else, hence things like immersing myself in romantic love were promptly kicked to a side. Plus, Meteor Garden was airing fervently back then, so I changed to being crazy about Dao Ming Si instead.

The event that caused me to confirm my resolution to have being infatuated/fangirling over Jiang Chen as my life goal happened half a year later. The night before the mock exams, amidst my mom's beatings and scoldings of, "How did I raise up such a forgetful pig-headed daughter like you?!", I hurriedly rushed to the Xue You* Bookshop to buy the 2B pencils I needed to shade the OAS for my mock exams the next day. (T/N: direct translation of Xue You - study friend)

Even though Xue You Bookstore claims to be a bookstore, but it sells a variety of things - from books and stationery to stickers and toys, basically, whatever was trending among students, it would sell. Later on after muddling through life in the outside world, I discovered that the two words "Xue You" was a name that all non-franchise stationery shops and book shops in the country liked to use. I didn't know if this was because this name would cause numerous students to feel a sense of familiarity akin to seeing a friend, or if it was because everyone was lazy to come up with names. But if there was a day where I decide to give back to society, I would also want to open a Xue You shop, on the surface it would sell books and stationery, but it would actually be a centre of students to pay a fee and make friends, especially female students, though if there were special requests, we could also sell male students at a high price.

I entered Xue You and grabbed a bunch of 2B pencils. At that point in time, using computers to mark papers had just come into vogue. I thought that the 2B pencil would appreciate in price in the near

future, and I had to stock up. But the truth proved otherwise. While the price of pencils did rise by ten cents, there were many pencils specially made for shading the OAS that were produced. While everyone else was using mechanical pencils to shade their OAS, I still had to pitifully use a knife to shave my pencils. Prophets are all lonely people.

As I clutched a bunch of pencils, about to pay, Jiang Chen entered through the door. Perhaps out of a strange adolescent voyeuristic mentality, I subconsciously grabbed a book off the shelf, using it to block my face as I secretly watched him.

Jiang Chen upon entering made an immediate beeline for the counter. The lady boss saw him, and smilingly carried up a pile of books from under the counter. "The embroidered collector's edition of the Four Classic Novels of Chinese Literature* you wanted, I specially went into the city to obtain its stock." (T/N: namely Romance of Three Kingdoms, Journey to the West, Water Margin and Dream of Red Mansions)

Jiang Chen smiled and said, "Thank you Lady Boss, how much is it?"

"853 RMB, I'll take 850 from you." The lady boss took his money. "I'm not even counting in the transport fees."

Jiang Chen smilingly nodded his head. "Thank you Lady Boss."

At that point in time our school fees were 200 RMB per semester, Jiang Chen was using money worth two school years or four semesters to buy a few rotten books, if he had so much spare money, he might as well... Actually I also didn't know what he might as well have done, I've never had so much money, so I was really didn't understand. Previously, someone told me this joke - a news reporter asked an old woman who lived deep in the mountains, "What would you do if I gave you 100000 RMB?" She replied, "Eat vegetable steamed buns everyday." He asked again, "What if I gave

you 200000 RMB?" She replied, "Eat meat steamed buns everyday." Lastly he asked, "What if I gave you 1000000 RMB?" She replied, "I would have a vegetable steamed bun in one hand and a meat steamed bun in the other everyday." I actually really empathized with the old woman's plight.

"Gege*, gege." A child who had come out of nowhere was calling as he tugged on Jiang Chen's trousers. (T/N: meaning older brother)

Jiang Chen squatted down and caressed his head. Blinking, he asked him, "Little friend, are you a boy or a girl?"

The little child sucked on his tiny thumb, and very seriously replied, "Boy."

Jiang Chen was dissatisfied. "I don't like boys."

He was preparing to get up as he said that, the little child hurriedly tugged on his clothes. "I'm a girl."

Jiang Chen laughed. "So you're actually a girl. Okay then, what did you call me for?"

The little child fished out a box of colour pencils and two crumpled ten-cent notes from the large pocket of his overalls, lifting them high up to demonstrate how he couldn't reach the counter. "I'm buying this."

Jiang Chen took the box and stood up to pass it to the lady boss. "Boss, how much is this?"

"Ten RMB."

Jiang Chen fished out ten RMB. After paying the money, he then squatted back down to pass the box to the little child. He patted his head and said, "Here, your color pencils."

The little child chortled as he took the box. "Thank you gege."

After saying “you’re welcome”, Jiang Chen prepared to stand up straight. The little child once again pulled at his trouser bottoms, so he could only squat back down again. The little child clumsily opened the box of colour pencils, and picking out a pink coloured one, said, “Drawing is very pretty.”

“I don’t know how to draw.” Jiang Chen said as he smiled. “You keep it for yourself to draw.”

The little child shook his head, and pointing at the books in his hand, said, “No, I draw.”

Jiang Chen stared blankly for a moment, then his face broke into a smile. He took out “Romance of the Three Kingdoms” and handed it over to the little child.

The little child held up the book and sat on the floor, lowering his head to draw something on it very seriously, while muttering something to himself. At last he clapped his hands and said, “Done.”

I tiptoed and stuck out my head to peep at it, that design looked like a rabbit at first glance, then looked like a dog when you looked more closely, yet its poise and charm also somewhat resembled a tiger.

Jiang Chen, taking back the book, looked at it very seriously, then said seriously, “The dog you drew is very beautiful, thank you.”

The little child, fluttering his round eyes, said, “It’s a cat.”

Jiang Chen did a double take, then laughed. “So it’s actually a cat.”

I stared at his dimple, it seemed to have deepened somewhat, I really wanted to go up to him and poke it.

What is known as “being stunned by beauty”, what is known as “being killed in a second”. Li Bi Hua* once said – being stunned by beauty back at that time, was wholly because one had seen little of

the world. But this wasn't the case for me, in the times to come, I would repeatedly embellish these two scenes in my mind, just like the post-production editing for movies and television. I would adjust the angle of the scene, add light and shadow variation, layer on sound effects..... (T/N: a famous Chinese author/scriptwriter - she wrote Farewell My Concubine)

"How long are you going to squat at the hospital entrance for?"

"Ah?" With my great post-production editing project being interrupted, I was momentarily a little lost. Gazing into Jiang Chen's somewhat impatient-looking face, I again sounded, "Ah?"

"Get up." He stretched out his hand and with one grab pulled me up from the floor, dragging me towards the ambulance. In fact, I really wanted to ask him if he had forgotten to let go of my hand, and also if he was in poor health lately, his hand was so sweaty...

When we got onto the ambulance, the driver and my mom simultaneously showed facial expressions looking like they had just caught us in bed together. I helplessly rolled my eyes, and peeped at Jiang Chen a little apprehensively. He on the other hand seemed to be totally unaffected and sat by my side. "Little Li, start driving."

After that, he turned his head around to tell my mom, "Auntie, I've already spoken to my colleague in orthopedics, when we reach the hospital, we'll take another x-ray, if there is no issue, we'll do the operation this afternoon. Please do not worry, my colleague is one of the very best orthopedic surgeons in the industry."

My mom hurriedly nodded her head incessantly, and gave a really motherly smile. "We're really troubling you."

"It's no trouble, it's what I should do." Jiang Chen was also really smiling like a filial son.

"So noisy!" My dad suddenly spoke up loudly.

Ever since my dad was informed that we were going to transfer hospitals with the help of Jiang Chen, he had been throwing a tantrum. Later on, the moment my mom walked away, he gave me a tongue-lashing, its contents being nothing else but one word – backbone! He felt that after how Jiang Chen’s mother treated me back in the day, I should stay far, far away from him. It was best that I spit him in the face with saliva when I saw him to express my disdain, but now I had gone as far as to accept his favor!

Three years ago, I graduated from X University’s art design faculty. Jiang Chen was studying both his bachelor’s and master’s degree consecutively in medical school and had to study for seven years, but due to his excellent performance, he had already begun to intern at the various major departments at X University’s subsidiary hospital by his fourth year.

Back then, Jiang Chen was really good to me, the moment he saw me receive my graduation certificate, he said that he wanted to marry me. Of course, this was mainly because I was always making baseless fabrications about a bunch of the so-called elite in society to scare him. For example, the manager who helped me open the door every day (whose original form was the security guard of our company, for I always forgot to bring my entrance card to tap in and out); the director who was always giving me flowers (whose original form was the person who sold flowers downstairs – when I was working overtime late into the night, I would always run into him throwing away the spoilt flowers that couldn’t be sold while on my way home, with my fervent hints, he would give the flowers to me); the client who treated me to watch a movie (whose original form was indeed a client, and I did indeed watch a movie, it was just that I had to write a publicity proposal report for them after watching it)..... An artistic creation requires an original form.

Once Jiang Chen heard that I was so popular, he became anxious, he said that the four years’ worth of breakfasts he delivered in university must not be delivered in vain, we had better get married.

I agreed with no sense of shame whatsoever. My thoughts were very simple, the faculty of medicine in X University was ranked no. 1 in the entire country, and Jiang Chen was getting the top-tier scholarship every year, there was basically no suspense that he was a stock with great potential. I had to capture him as soon as possible, such that when he became a blue chip stock*, I would be the grain-husk wife who had suffered trials and tribulations together with him, if he dared to divorce me, I would dare to ask for a half of his assets.....(T/N: aka stocks of financially stable and well-known companies that have good returns)

Of course, actually the simplest thought was that I loved him very much, and I was afraid he would be snatched away by someone else. One time, I went to the hospital he was interning at to look for him, and within one hour I saw three patients giving him their business cards, with one of them even being a guy. This society was too terrifying, and Jiang Chen's charisma seemed to slay both men and women.

It was just that back in the day, I was almost completely poisoned by television dramas and novels, and I thought that my love was invincible. But Jiang Chen's mother made me realise, once my love experienced disturbances, it changed as it pleased.

One fine afternoon, Jiang Chen's mother paid a visit to my mom. My mom's status in my household, being a professional housewife, was akin to that of Wu Ze Tian*, but for the first time, I saw that plucky mother of mine being at such a complete loss of what to do, becoming meek without herself even noticing. To be fair, Jiang Chen's mother didn't say any undue remark, and she hadn't fished out a cheque and said, "Leave my son, tell me how much money you want." She was calmly discussing with my mom some wedding customs, but it was just the condescending attitude, like she was lowering herself to talk to my mom, that she exuded that caused my mom to be filled with trepidation. Watching my mom from the side as she rubbed her hands, saying, "We'll cooperate, we'll cooperate", my

heart was tart and painful, like it had been soaked in old vinegar. (T/N: the only female emperor in the history of China)

Jiang Chen's mother then sought me out one-to-one for a chat. She gave me a few pieces of paper and told me to take a good look, and if I agreed, to give my signature. It was a prenuptial agreement, with its contents roughly being something along the lines of how I was not marrying Jiang Chen for his family's money, and if we divorced, I wouldn't be able to get any assets, etcetera.

At that point in time, I was really bewildered. His dad was just the mayor of a small town, how much money could he possibly have? Was there really a need to act like we were in a television drama?

I've already forgotten what I was thinking at that time, perhaps it was some noble matters like love and self-respect, but later I simply could not make up my mind, so I went to ask my dad. All I can say is that, that was a historic mistake.

Jiang Chen's dad was my dad's indirect supervisor. My dad felt that he was already such a wimp, being bullied and pushed around by these supervisors on a day-to-day basis, but for the family of his supervisor to bully his own family members, this was a matter that he simply couldn't stand. Therefore he told me that if I dared sign, he would disown me as his daughter.

Thus, I again did yet another stupid thing, which was to give Jiang Chen the prenuptial agreement for him to return it to his mother. Jiang Chen was really agitated and furious, and went home to quarrel with his mother. Later on, his mother gave me a phone call, with the main idea being, if I dared get married to Jiang Chen, she would dare to die at our wedding. Back then, I had little experience in society, so I was immediately psyched out by her. I totally didn't think of any other ways to resolve the issue, for example to not hold a wedding ceremony, so that she wouldn't have a place to die.....

The matter of marriage was hence left unsettled just like that, after

that, I didn't know why, but perhaps work started to get busy, I was busy getting scolded by my manager, while Jiang Chen was busy attending classes and interning. Plus, most likely I started bearing grudges in my heart, I would incessantly nit-pick and needle him, and would provoke him over the most trivial and inconsequential matters. I tested our love by testing his tolerance.

When I said, "Jiang Chen, let's break up."

He was silent for a long time before saying, "Don't you regret it." Then he slammed the door with a bang and left.

I thought that for two people who loved each other to break up, there should at least be some large-scale major event, for example, a third party; for example, suddenly discovering that I was his father's illegitimate daughter; for example, either him or I contracting a terminal illness..... But in fact, there was no need for that. Uneasiness, busyness and weariness were enough.

We split up just like that. It was quite amazing, two people who had originally agreed to be together for a whole lifetime, now had absolutely nothing to do with each other in just a flash. For a long period of time, I even suspected that perhaps someone had pressed the fast-forward button for us, causing me to omit some plot circumstances that made the break-up an inevitability.

My dad was the happiest about my breakup with Jiang Chen. He most likely felt that this was one victory he had in his confrontation with those of a supervisor social class. But towards a later stage, my constant inability to find a boyfriend caused him to feel that the fruits of victory were sometimes bitter as well.

So I guess my dad's feelings towards Jiang Chen were complicated. On one hand, he hoped that there would be someone who would take over the slow-moving product* that I was, yet on the other hand, he also felt that he would much rather I be a slow-moving product than to sell me to Jiang Chen. He was probably experiencing internal

turmoil akin to that of the capitalists existing during the Great Depression mentioned in our high school politics textbook who would rather pour milk into the river than give it to the poor. (T/N: meaning a product that sells poorly)

What I didn't tell my dad was that actually, that person wasn't even intending to buy from you.

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Translator's Corner:

Hello lovelies Dolly here! I will be working with Amy from now on so you guys can expect faster updates yay!

Chapter 3

My dad underwent the operation early in the morning the next day. Jiang Chen had recommended a female doctor, her surname was Su, her beauty had an air of intelligence and intellect to it, and standing next to Jiang Chen, together they were a talented man and beautiful woman.* (T/N: a Chinese idiom referring to a very well-suited ideal couple).

Initially, my mom didn't trust Doctor Su very much, she felt that all beautiful women were in general, quite useless. Because of this stubborn notion she had, I used to think that my mom considered me a beautiful woman in her heart for the longest time.

Doctor Su pointed out that she previously had, with bare hands, beaten up a gangster till his shoulder joint dislocated, then once again with bare hands relocated the shoulder joint. We, one after another, professed our utmost confidence in her medical expertise.

Jiang Chen accompanied us at the entrance of the surgical theatre. My mom clutched my hand tightly, while I patted the back of her hand comfortingly.

After sitting for about ten minutes or so, my mom started to forget about her uneasiness. She first looked at Jiang Chen and me, her eyes spinning back and forth between the two of us, then she gave a motherly smile. "You see, back when you and Xiaoxi were dating, we didn't have the time to sit down and chat, instead now....." She paused, then gave a long sigh. "The heavens makes fools of us all."

I was basically in a frozen state, and I wanted to dig a hole and dive right into it.

Jiang Chen smiled, and said, "I wasn't sensible back then, and didn't know how to cherish Xiaoxi."

I couldn't help but take a stealthy glance at Jiang Chen. Such a beautiful pleasantry.

My mom chuckled, "That's not the case, it's our Xiaoxi who doesn't have the good fortune."

Time passed quickly under their sham exchange of pleasantries. Perhaps because it wasn't a complicated surgery by far, or perhaps it was because of Doctor Su's excellent medical skills, in any case, the lights of the operating theatre dimmed and Doctor Su came out wearing a mask.

My mom suddenly grabbed my arm again. Her fingernails dug into me till I really wanted to send greetings to my maternal grandmother. (T/N: basically Xiaoxi is cursing)

Doctor Su unhurriedly took off her mask, revealing her upturned corner of her mouth. "The operation was successful."

My mom let go of my hand and leapt onto her, looking like she wanted to hug and kiss her. Thankfully, all she did was just hold and pull on Doctor Su's hand, patting it repeatedly. "Thank you so much, thank you so much."

I was extremely moved and intoxicated by this display of how the miraculous hands of a healer could move the heavens. Jiang Chen standing by my side used his elbow to gently bump against me, and spoke softly, "If you don't pull your mom away soon, Doctor Su's hand is going to become crippled."

I took a look. Indeed, there was a large patch on the back of Doctor Su's hand that had reddened. My mom had lately been learning paisha* from the old Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor on the Hunan channel and had achieved quite some success. There was one day when she couldn't find a knife to smash garlic, so she used her bare hands to smash the garlic into pieces on the chopping board. ((T/N: a traditional Chinese medicine healing method where you hit

the skin to produce light bruising to release toxins in your body etc)

I hurriedly went over to pull my mom away. "Mom, you should hurry and see Dad."

My mom struggled out of my hands and reproached me. "Your dad's anesthesia hasn't worn off yet, what is there to look at? I need to thank Doctor Su properly."

Doctor Su took two steps back and repeatedly waved her hands. "Auntie, don't be so courteous, this is what I ought to do. I still have a surgery later, I'll head off first."

Tch, a white-clothed person who fled when defeated.

My mom with great disappointment turned towards Jiang Chen. "Jiang Chen-ah, thank goodness for you this time 'round..."

Jiang Chen placed his two hands behind his back, leaned over till he was beside my ear and softly said, "Save me."

I couldn't help but shrink my shoulders back. Suppressing a rush of emotion that made me want to bite my tongue and commit suicide, I pushed my mom and said, "Hurry and go take a look at Dad, Jiang Chen has outpatient clinic later on."

Just at that moment, the nurse came out pushing my dad's hospital bed, and so my mom followed them away.

There was just me and Jiang Chen left. I swallowed my saliva, raised my head and smiled as I said, "Thank you this time round."

He nodded, "It's nothing, I'll head off first."

The word escaped out of my mouth. "Huh?"

He smiled. "I have outpatient clinic."

I watched Jiang Chen walk away, rubbing my ear and smiling

stupidly.

It was the first year of university back then. Jiang Chen had gotten into X University's medical school, while I, as an arts exam candidate had scraped through and just made it into X University's art school. Jiang Chen's faculty was having a welcome dinner for the freshman, and I had shamelessly begged him to take me along as someone who had had a one-sided love for him for many years with no results. This was mainly because I had heard that at the welcome dinner, the seniors would foot the bill no matter how much you ate, and I was really pleased with this way of doing things. Later on when I became the senior, whenever there were welcome dinners, I would have a stomachache and be unable to attend them.

There were quite a lot of people that day, with eight tables reserved at the small restaurant at the North entrance of the school. By the time Jiang Chen and I reached, there weren't many seats left, and him and I were thus separated to join two tables. I gazed at him from afar, thinking that this was really great, for there was no one who would bother/manage me even if I ate too much.

After sufficient food and alcohol, the seniors brought the juniors over to the field to play games. There was a game which had originated from God-knows-what random place and then became a trend all around the world called "truth or dare."

That beer bottle spun and spun till it stopped in front of a girl. Given that the student before her who had chosen to do a dare had had to pull at a stranger and say, "You see, this is my left liver lobe, this is a gallbladder sac, this is the right lung lobe, this is the kidney, here, there is a straight tube called the ureter.....", the girl therefore chose truth.

A male senior who was like a big grey wolf guided the questioning in a skillful and methodical manner, saying, "Junior, do you have a

boyfriend? Or someone you like? Who is it?

I thought to myself that this question was too kind, for he should at least ask the color of her underwear or something along those lines. Then when that girl blushed and nodded, her eyes were flickering uncertainly towards Jiang Chen, I suddenly felt that this question was too hard-hitting.....

Everyone started to hoot and cheer and wanted Jiang Chen to declare his stand. Jiang Chen who all along had been standing behind my back suddenly leaned down and spoke beside my ear, "Save me."

I was momentarily dazed, feeling his breath from those two words tickling my neck causing it to itch. After scratching my neck, I grew some wits in the midst of anxiety and said, "My..... My..... stomach hurts."

Behind me, Jiang Chen gave a long sigh, put his hands on my shoulders to support me, and said, "Everyone, sorry, my girlfriend's stomach hurts, I'll send her to the school hospital."

I was dragged along by Jiang Chen for a few steps before I came out of my reverie and realised that what he had said just now was "girlfriend", so I asked him while trembling, "I that.... That.....just now, I seem to have..... Heard you say 'girlfriend'....."

I seemed to see his face redden strangely, before he spoke boldly and with conviction*, "That's right, what about it?" (T/N: referring to being assured when you think you are on the side of reason)

My heart rate sped up instantaneously, and I almost vomited. Stammering, I said, "Nothing, about that... Welcome you."

Every time I reminisced about the past, I was able to not feel regretful about wasting my years away, and not feel ashamed for not having much achievements. But I really wanted to die for saying

something similar to the welcoming words of those in the female special services industry* at such a crucial moment. (T/N: referring to prostitution)

At night, I stayed in the hospital to take care of my dad, and made my mom go back to my place to rest. That old lady refused to initially, later on after I told her a few of the hospital's ghost horror stories, she said that she suddenly felt utterly exhausted physically and mentally, and that she had better go back to rest, so that she could have sufficient vitality to take care of my dad tomorrow.

Tonight, Doctor Su was on shift duty, after doing her ward rounds twice, she just settled herself down in my dad's ward, and insisted on pulling me to chat.

Taking into consideration her status as a benefactor, I could only strive to prop up my eyelids and accompany her to chat.

She asked, "How did you and Doctor Jiang know each other?"

I answered, "Schoolmates."

She muttered to herself, "I thought you were a couple, but seeing as how he didn't stay behind to accompany you tonight, I guessed that too."

After she had finished talking to herself, she asked again, "What kind of schoolmates?"

I answered, "Kindergarten, primary school, middle school, high school, university."

She thought this merited much astonishment, and also pointed out that this was a fate that was hard to come by, she said, "Yo yo yo, childhood sweethearts, growing up looking at each other's reproductive organs since young, you are really fated."

I was so taken aback that my mouth that was open from yawning

only closed itself after a long time. I wiped away the tears squeezed out during my yawn, and was just about to say something, when Doctor Su yet again asked a question. "Does he have a girlfriend or not?"

I replied honestly. "I don't know."

She enigmatically moved close to my ear. "I'll tell you something, you can't tell Doctor Jiang."

I nodded.

She smiled with the air of a gossip monger*, "We all suspect that Doctor Jiang is gay." (T/N: the original term literally means three-eight, often used to describe a woman being improper, frivolous, talking behind someone's back)

I stared at her in astonishment, she then explained, "He never appears bringing a woman, plus he maintains his distance from all female doctors, female nurses and female patients. But it's not surprising for people in our line to have such a problem, once you understand the female body too well, it loses its sense of mystery."

I hesitated for a moment, and then asked still, "It seems like this industry of yours also understands the male body very well, right?"

She thought for a while dazedly, then clapped a hand to her head, suddenly enlightened and said, "That's also true."

Thus, both of us separately pondered for a few minutes. During these few minutes, the whole time I was pondering how exactly could I send her away to leave, I was really sleepy. Regretfully, Doctor Su asked again, "You've known him for so long, have you ever seen him have a girlfriend before?"

My sleepiness dissipated in an instant, I gave two forced laughs. "I have."

“Ya, that’s such a pity.” She sighed in disappointment.

I gingerly probed. “What’s a pity? You like him?”

She laughed bashfully. “No, I have a partner. My partner is doing his PHD at X University, he’s studying psychology, the direction of his topic for his graduating thesis is the analysis of the psychology of homosexuals, mainly to research into the psychology of homosexuals belonging to the elite class in society. He was just vexing about being unable to find research subjects.....”

After thinking for a bit, I suggested, “Why not you go online and find some novels for him to read? Aren’t danmei* novels in trend currently? Those male leads inside are CEOs, doctors, lawyers and military men, there’s every single elite industry. Art originates from real life, let your boyfriend see if he can find anything useful.” (T/N: boy-love novels)

She waved her hand and said, “I thought of that long ago, and I’ve researched into it before, I think it’s not reliable, those novels are almost all written by females. In the minds of females, men are animals who think with the lower halves of their bodies, and when two animals who think with their lower halves of their bodies gather together, if they are not using their lower halves of their bodies, they are using their lower halves of their bodies frequently and excessively. It’s not helpful for academic research.”

I thought for a bit, and felt that that made quite a bit of sense, so I made an “oh” sound to assent.

She then said, “Do you think Doctor Jiang has any tendencies towards homosexuality? I saw that those novels all say that you can make a man who isn’t gay become gay, what’s the scientific name for it again? Oh, it’s called “breaking crooked*”, why not I break him crooked, how about that?” (T/N: common phrase online, given that in Chinese, being straight is also called 直 which literally means straight so to break someone crooked is to become gay.)

I opened and shut my mouth repeatedly, and stammered as I said, "That's... Not very good..."

She patted my shoulder. "Don't be nervous, I was joking with you, you don't get my humor."

.....

"Oh right, you make a guess as to why I chose to study medicine? And also why I chose orthopedics?" She requested suddenly with great excitement.

I hadn't yet recovered from her previous display of humor, and said feebly, "Your family members are all doctors?"

She shook her head.

I guessed again. "You saw someone who suffered greatly because they had a bone disease when you were younger?"

She was still shaking her head.

I became serious. "You resolved to hang your gourd bottle and save the world?* You and your boyfriend agreed to try for medicine? You accidentally filled in the wrong college application choices during the time of the national college entrance examinations?" (T/N: in olden China, doctors would hang a gourd outside their shops to signify that this was a clinic. This idiom means to practise medicine to rescue the people of the world from their suffering)

"All of them are not," she said triumphantly, "My family sells pork, I would feel very excited every time I saw my dad chopping pork."

.....

The corners of my mouth quirked. "Hehe, influenced by what you see and hear."

She once again hit my shoulder hard. “You believed it again, you really don’t get my humor. All of my family members except for my younger brother are doctors.”

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Translator’s Corner:

Here we finally meet the quirky Dr. Su! (Also my favorite character!) Hope everyone enjoys this update. Also another translator is joining me and Amy, let’s welcome Xri! All links for our SNS accounts are on the header if you want to talk to us or have questions. ^^

Chapter 4

Last night Dr. Su and I had a long, intimate talk until 5 in the morning, after which she high-spiritedly patted my ass and said, “I’ll go prepare the endorsement for the next shift, I’m off-duty today.”

By the time I slept, I had no idea whether I was asleep or awake. In my drowsy state, it was as though there was a person standing right in front of me, I even asked him if he was a ghost. It also seems as though I’ve explained to him about the karmic relationship of involving third parties when settling things.

This kind of sleep akin to being in a trance was the worst, my brain was running rapidly with past memories, not even neglecting the smallest of details. I couldn’t tell if I was dreaming or remembering the past. Many people would say there’s no worth looking back at one’s past, but my past is very worthy. It’s the most proactive, lively, cheerful, morale booster, inspiring, reverse courtship in history, and can be called the “The Successful Story of a Bright Girl*”. (T/N: referring to Jang Nara’s 2002 drama)

I had a crush on Jiang Chen that time. It was after one week of careful deliberations that I combined information from novels, manhwa, and dramas, and was able to come up with three plans: a love letter, by passing it on, and a direct confession. It took yet another week of conducting a comprehensive analyses of these three plans. The disadvantage of letters: first, I’m not good with words, and second, Jiang Chen often receives letters but he almost never reads them. The disadvantage of passing it on: first it’s easy to pass on the wrong message, and second, from what I’ve gathered in the numerous love conspiracies in novels and dramas, I found out that the person who would pass on the message will end up with the male lead, so in the end, I was left with only this road to confession.

We always think that there are countless possibilities in life, afraid

of doing this, afraid of doing that, but in the end, there would still be only one remaining possibility.

I flipped through the Yellow Calendar*, and picked an auspicious burial date to confess to Jiang Chen. He was on student duty at that time, so I was following him from behind and then I called him. He turned around, along with the broom he was holding, giving me a mouthful of dust from the action. (T/N: a special calendar which gives information whether a particular day is propitious)

I said, "Jiang Chen, I like you, puh, puh, puh."

At first, he gave me a blank stare, and then furrowed his brows saying, "puh, what?"

I was very vexed and hurriedly explained, "I'm not puh-ing at you, I just ate a mouthful of dust, I said I like you."

He continued the act of furrowing his brows, two creases were scrunched in between his brows, making him look really good.

He said, "I don't like you."

It was an era where everyone loves to engage in ambiguous relationships, and also at that time, there wasn't a song that tells about the grievances suffered by people involved in such, so even though it's not really what they feel, most of the people would opt to say: "I'm not suitable for you, you deserve someone better." or, "We're still too young, we should study well and enter a good university first.", and such nonsense. Jiang Chen's chop the nail and slice the iron* rejection made me think that his ruthlessness really stands out from the rest. Hence I've decided to become even more determined in liking him. (T/N: firm and resolute)

So Jiang Chen was pestered by me. Every day, I'd wait very early in the morning in the alley between our houses. When Jiang Chen comes out, I'd put on a bright smile with the radiance of spring, and

say, "What a coincidence, I'm on my way to school too." I'd also pack my things before the dismissal bell would start ringing, so when it rings I'd rush to the stairs, wait for Jiang Chen to walk past me, and then I'd say, "What a coincidence, I'm also leaving school."

I was so muddleheaded that I choked on my own saliva, I woke up, blinked my eyes at the ceiling a few times, and began to get in a trance again. I saw myself on the stairs, smiling at Jiang Chen. In the blink of an eye I was pulling on Jiang Chen's bag, pleading him. "Wait for me for ten minutes, okay? I'm going to hand over my work to our English teacher."

He pulled back his bag, "What were you doing in class? Li Wei is waiting for me downstairs." After a pause, he added, "We're going to buy some things for the class meeting."

Maybe, my heart made a little rebound because I've been disguising as someone virtuous and submissive for a long time. Maybe, I was just turning mad from anger. In short, I aimed for his shins and gave him a kick, "Go find your Li Wei!"

He probably didn't expect it, and yelled while hopping on one foot, "Chen Xiaoxi, you lunatic!"

I leaned on the railings afterwards, watching Jiang Chen and Li Wei walk towards the school gates. It was nearly dusk, an orange sheet was draped in between heaven and earth looking as if someone knocked over a bottle of Sunkist in their hurry, dyeing everything in orange.

I was only 16 years old that time — the first time in my life when I felt utterly sad.

The scenes in my dream kept on switching over randomly. This time, I was standing on the classroom door blocking Jiang Chen, "I have something to say to you."

He gave me a quick glance with his arms folded across his chest, "Speak."

After kicking him on his leg, his responses to me were even less than before. I let love and pride battle it out for a few days. Later on, love annihilated pride so I came over to apologize.

I bowed my head and said softly like a whisper, "I shouldn't have kicked you that day, I'm sorry."

He didn't give me an answer for a long while, so I looked up and saw him looking absentmindedly at the basketball court downstairs. I got angry again and shouted loudly, "Jiang Chen!"

He lowered his head to look at me, "I'm not yet deaf, you said sorry, right? It's nothing."

After saying that, he turned around and walked away.

I was looking at his fleeing back, my heart was suddenly filled with deep sadness, like when my mum burnt the braised chicken wings and how its thick smoke irritated my nose leaving it with a tingling sensation.

I subconsciously rubbed my nose and called him, "Jiang Chen."

He looked back.

I said with a bitter laugh, "Hehe. Do you think, I like to be unlucky?"

He stared dazedly at me for a moment, and replied, "I just want to go down to play ball."

I said nothing, the deep sadness in my heart made me think that it

would be better for this heart to die from such sadness.

He stood in front of me for a long time, and finally said with a slight anxiousness, "I really didn't mean any of that, our team is losing very quickly."

I nodded in understanding, "Go quickly, jiayou! (T/N: lit. add oil, it's the equivalent of hwaiting in Korea and ganbatte in Japan)

He turned around and ran, after running a few steps, he suddenly stopped and called me: "Chen Xiaoxi."

"Why?"

"Help me go to the corner store to buy a bottle of water." He said with a smile, his dimple was filled with the rays of the setting sun.

Before I could respond, he took three steps and then two steps*, and ran down the stairs. (T/N: means walking hurriedly in big steps lit. describing the manner of walking where three worth of strides becomes two)

I still went to the corner store. I was torn between Yi Li water and Nongfu Spring water for quite a while but eventually picked Nongfu Spring as it was 50 cents cheaper.

There were a lot of girls at the sides of the basketball court, I even saw Li Wei. She was holding a bottle of Mai Dong which was more expensive than my Nongfu Spring by two and a half bucks.

During halftime, Li Wei called Jiang Chen so that she could hand over her drink, I blankly followed her from behind, sighed as she was walking at lightning speed, scurrying like she was about to fly.

Jiang Chen didn't accept her drink, instead, he gave me a quick glance and said a bit awkwardly, "I already told Chen Xiaoxi to bring me water."

"I bought a sports drink with added electrolytes. If not you then who else would be able to drink it, quite wasteful." Then she smiled softly and tenderly.

I thought I couldn't let her be this embarrassed, so I placed the Nongfu Spring on Jiang Chen's palm and closed it with a squeeze, snatched the Mai Dong from Li Wei's hand, twisted the lid open, took one big gulp, and wiped my mouth with the back of my hand saying, "Not wasted, not wasted. I just ran over from the corner store and sweated a lot, thank you very much."

She bowed her head in shame, like Xu Zhimo's writing about that very shy lotus flower or whatever. I like reading that poem, it's truly a masterpiece.

"Xiaoxi, Xiaoxi, Xiaoxi!" My mum's continuous shouts roused me from my shy lotus flower dream. I rubbed my eyes and yawned. "Mum, making loud noises is prohibited in the hospital."

My mum gave me a sideways glance, "Just now you were talking about losing face in your sleep."

"What did I say?" I asked her while removing the eye gunk at the corner of my eyes.

"Lotus, shy or something." She replied.

"'The tenderness when you bend your head low, is like a lotus flower too shy to stand the cool blow.' A poem* by Xu Zhimo. Indeed, our Xiaoxi is like me, possesses the sentiments of a poet." My dad thrown in his input on his side of the hospital bed, looking immensely proud.

I turned to look at him, and talked nonsense, "I dreamed of my language & literature teacher in Senior Year, she asked me to recite 'Second Farewell to Cambridge'."

My dad's face suddenly turned black, "This is not 'Second Farewell to Cambridge'! This is 'Sayonara'!" (T/N: Both are poems by Xu Zhimo)

My mom chimed in, "Jang Nara right? I know her! A Korean bangzi*.

(T/N: The pinyin for Jang Nara is Zhang Na La while Sayonara is Sha Yang Na La so her mom misheard. Bangzi lit. means long, sturdy stick in Chinese, a term referring to Koreans, in the olden days during the Japanese invasion in China, they give Koreans stick instead of guns to beat the Chinese with, hence the origin of the term.)

I looked at my mom in a different light, she puffed out her old chest, "Ever since our home has been installed with the internet, the housewife has become liberated."

As a member of the lurking club for a long time, I was prompted by a sudden impulse and logged in to Tianya Club. I discovered that I actually replied to a lot of forum posts, not only that, most of them were about handsome guys. I initially thought that I was just honestly confronting my inner desires while sleepwalking, only to find out later on that I accidentally enabled our home computer to automatically log in to Tianya. The saddest thing in the world that nothing could ever surpass is to have a Tianya Club mom. (T/N: Lurking means someone who reads forum posts but never replies or comments. Tianya Club or End Of The World Club in English is a popular internet forum site.)

After eating lunch, my Tianya Club mom shoved on my arms a bag of fruits my dad's colleague brought over this morning, and forced me to look for Jiang Chen to express gratitude. I think that by sentiments and by logic, I ought to earnestly and seriously thank Jiang Chen, so I went out and carried the large bag of fruits.

When I got to the doctor's office, only then did I begin to get a bit nervous. This is Jiang Chen and I's exclusive and first official meeting

after not seeing each other in over the last 3 years.

I knocked on the door, the reply coming from the inside was, "Please come in." I pushed the door open and found Jiang Chen buried in his desk writing on something, he also raised his head to give me a quick look, and said dully, "Find a chair to sit on."

As an ex-girlfriend, in the face of such a generous* ex-boyfriend, I feel immense pressure. (T/N: idiom used is not literally about being generous but to describe someone's open-mindedness, natural and carefree manner not being the slight cautious.)

I placed the bag of fruits on the table, pulled a chair to sit face-to-face from him across the table, and pleasantly said, "My mom asked me to bring some fruits for you."

He casted a look at the bag of fruits and said, "Thank auntie for me. I went to take a look at Uncle Chen this morning, his condition is very stable. I reckon that he can be discharged in two or three days. He can come back after a week to get his stitches removed."

When he was done talking, he bowed his head down to write some things with an "I am very busy." look. I awkwardly sat for around two minutes and then got up to leave, and also to conveniently express my gratefulness to him. In the end, I hypocritically and politely said the lines, "Thank you for your help this time, I really don't know how to repay you."

He actually stopped twirling his pen, smiled at me and said, "Then introduce me to a girlfriend."

I carefully observed his expression, he really wasn't joking. I was depressed. This action of asking an ex-girlfriend to introduce a new girlfriend is a bit inhumane. Like when you're fired, your boss would still write you a recommendation letter; or when caught cheating, your teacher would offer you the answers; or when remarrying, you'd ask your ex-wife to be one of the bridesmaids.....

All sorts of feelings were welling up in my heart, like, in his mind, just how magnanimous does he think my personality really is.....

I heaved a deep sigh, and forced a hollow laugh, "What kind of girlfriend do you want?"

He sized me up for a while, my heart was caught in my throat as countless lines were flashing through my mind such as, "Someone who is just like you would be good." or, "Actually, I've never forgotten you....."

"A little taller, and thinner than you would be good enough." He said.

My unrequited, little precious heart quickly resumed its normal beating, I smiled stiffly, "Your requirement isn't very high, I'll help you look around."

The pen on his hand was twirling beautifully between his fingers as he said, "Then, I'll thank you in advance."

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Chapter 5

It's a double update! Happy holidays everyone, and Happy Birthday to Hu Yitian!

My dad was discharged after two days, and the operation wound was healing well. As it was too cumbersome to travel back and forth, my dad removed his stitches at a local hospital. According to my mom, right after the day his stitches were removed, my dad went straight back to the Senior Citizen's club. I praised my dad's warrior-like spirit over the phone.

When I woke up this morning, half of my pajamas are wet. I quickly changed and rushed to the train station. Once I entered the train, while the air-conditioning was blowing, I realized that my clothes were again half drenched in sweat. As I was wearing a white top, it became a little see-through. I looked around, there were quite a few men who looked wretched. But none of them seemed to have intentions of looking at me. I decided not to admit that I am the one without charisma. But instead, it was due to the hot weather that the indecent looking uncles are too lazy to be indecent.

Fu Pei* came up to me the moment I entered the office. (T/N: Xiao Xi's Boss)

"Chen Xiaoxi, why don't you go and take photos for the product catalogue today. Don't you love to take photos?"

I looked out at the skies outside, starting to feel a little miserable, I stated, "My dad mentioned that this name which I have symbolizes that there is always hope in life. No matter how big or small, it will always be good. But he didn't expect that 20 years later there is a young man called Chen Guan Xi*. He also didn't expect that said

young man is a film lover and an arts lover, and even more so, a young man who gained fame from a work, kickstarting a series of “rated*” trend. This means that there are always unexpected things in life. So please do not think that because I am called Chen Xiao Xi, means that I love photography.” (T/N: Chen Guan Xi = Edison Chen, an actor. For “rated”, the original word used in the novel translates to “door”. I did a bit of research and found out that Edison Chen had abit of scandal on nudes and stuff. So I decided to use “rated” instead.)

Fu Pei took out his calculator from the drawer, “Talking back to boss minus 2% salary, took leave minus 3%, late minus 1%.....”

I nodded, “Sure, just deduct it, but give me my salary for last month first.”

He set aside his calculator slowly... “Miss Xiaoxi, please rest. I’ll take care of the product catalogue instead.”

I nodded again, and went to sit below the air-conditioner.

I’ve been with this company for over two years. When I broke up with Jiang Chen, I quickly found a new apartment and a new job. I’m not afraid of him finding me, but afraid of him not finding me. I’m as low as a human can get.

The company has a total of 3 persons: the boss, Fu Pei, accountant, Situ Mo. I’m in charge of designing. We are a small enterprise, and count largely on Fu Pei to take in orders to continue our business. We have decent reputation. But ever since Fu Pei dated and broke up with an ex-customer, she went to spread bad rumors about the company and caused our sales to drop badly. We even encouraged Fu Pei to sell his body to snatch projects, but he refused. We do not understand why, as from our understanding of his viewpoint in love, this is a double win for him.

Fu Pei has left the office. Situ Mo has been away for almost a week

as her kid is running a fever. As such, I'm left alone in the office. I brewed a cup of tea and strolled to my computer. I drank my tea and waited for the computer to auto-login applications such as QQ, MSN, SKYPE. All messenger apps. There are more and more messenger systems but less and less things to talk.

The first thing to pop up on MSN is Zhuang Dong Na, a customer. Last year end, our company designed a gift hamper for her company. There are gift cards, cups, calendar, etcetera. It was a pleasant deal, and we can be counted as an acquaintance. I introduced her to Jiang Chen last week. She's a decent woman. Taller, prettier, slimmer, had better temper and more successful in career than me. The only thing that she cannot compare is that my feet is smaller than hers.

I heard that they are getting along pretty well. Jiang Chen even initiated a few dates with her. According to my experience, this doesn't come by easy. It was a little depressing to hear about it. I even felt like tearing them apart, but I controlled myself.

I opened the chat with Zhuang Dong Na, she repeatedly sent a few "Are you there". I realized she didn't put question marks. What a disappointment to our punctuation marks.

I slowly typed, "I'm here now."

I specially used red for the full stop* and increased it by one size. Hopefully she will feel ashamed. (T/N: The period for Chinese is a full stop.)

Zhuang Dong Na says, (10:16): Help me with something?

I saw the question mark and felt pleased. Hence I quickly replied: "Tell me about it."

Zhuang Dong Na says, (10:20): Jiang Chen has a patient who is holding a banquet to celebrate his full recovery tonight. He has a bring-a-date along to the banquet, but I have to go Shanghai for a

business trip tomorrow afternoon. Can you go with him on my behalf?

I hesitated for a while and typed, "I don't think that's a good idea.."

Zhuang Dong Na says, (10:24): Why not? I already told Jiang Chen, and he agreed. Also, it is better to bring along a date in this kind of occasion. I heard that the patient is a big shot, and wants to matchmake Jiang Chen. You don't wish for us to end our relationship when we just started right..

I'm speechless from looking at her reply. When I introduced her to Jiang Chen I already told her that we used to date. She doesn't mind. Even if she doesn't mind, at least respect the ex-girlfriend. There's a saying, 'Kindness is when someone is hungry, I don't munch loudly when eating meat.' Not only are you munching loudly, but you are even asking me to take tissue to wipe your mouth. That's so uncivilized..

Zhuang Dong Na says, (10:25): Xiaoxi please please please please I beg you I beg you I beg you

Look at this person. Once anxious she forgets about punctuation. Have you ever thought of the punctuations marks' feelings.

I sighed, and replied, "All right, since you guys don't mind."

Zhuang Dong Na says, (10:28): Xiaoxi I love you so much, thanks thanks thanks thanks thanks. Jiang Chen will pick you up tonight and bring you to buy a cocktail dress. He'll pay.

I drank a huge mouth of tea and typed, "Okay."

I pressed the enter key and thought, "My whole life is messed up due to my kindheartedness." When I was young, I still remember my form teacher during primary school whom everyone hated fell sick. Nobody wanted to visit her, but I did. She was elated. She gave me all the fruits and eggs and whatever from her ward. I was so full I couldn't walk properly. All because I was too kind.

My day passed by absentmindedly. When Fu Pei came back, he took two pictures of me sitting at my desk. He uploaded it to the computer for me to see. It was taken pretty well, like an elderly with dementia who has lost her way.

I was in the squatting toilet when my phone rang. I have a problem of needing to use the toilet whenever I am anxious. I always spent the last 15 minutes before national examinations in the toilet.

I lifted my pants, and took out my phone. Indeed, it was Jiang Chen. I took a deep breath and realized this isn't the best place to be doing so. Instead, I pinched my nose and said, "Hello?"

"It's me."

"I know."

"Why are you speaking in a low muffled voice?"

I walked out of the toilet, released my nose and said, "I'm not."

"Were you in the toilet?" Jiang Chen chuckled while saying.

I looked around in shocked.

"How do you know?"

"Guessed. Have you knocked off (from work)?"

"If you're so good at guessing you can continue guessing then." I replied curtly.

"I'm under your office. Just come down when you're done."

I packed up and walked down. I looked around but didn't see him. I was thinking if this is his idea of revenge for all the times I was late for our dates 3 years ago.

After sneaking around for a while, a car stopped in front of me and

honked a few times. I bent down to take a look but was unable to see through the tinted window. When I wanted to take a closer look, there was honking again. I backed a few steps away in shock. I was enraged and wanted to start scolding, but the window winded down slowly and Jiang Chen instructed, "Get on."

I opened the door and went in. He frowned and asked, "Why are you so slow, I thought you knock off at 5:30 PM? Put on your seat belt."

I put on a face and mumbled to myself, "Chen Xiaoxi, you just ended work? Sorry to trouble you tonight, and thanks."

Jiang Chen gave me a look, "You're welcome."

I twitched my lips, "So polite."

I secretly looked at him. He was wearing a black suit with a sapphire blue tie. So handsome.

He suddenly leaned towards me. I quickly pulled and fastened my seat belt and said, "I already fastened it."

He opened the compartment in front of my seat and took out a bottle of water. He passed me the bottle and snorted.

I felt like dying when I took the bottle over. If I die, Jiang Chen will probably write the death cause as 'thinking too much' or 'died from shame'.

When we were on the road. I drank the water in small sips. I'm actually not thirsty, but my throat's a little dry.

It was eerily quiet in the car. I started to tear the bottle label in boredom. I didn't know where to throw it after I tore it out. So I asked him where to throw it.

He turned his head to look at me, "That compartment I opened just

now.”

I opened the compartment and threw in the wrapper. Feeling a little guilty, I asked, “You are still drinking Nongfu Spring water?”

I always see him drinking Nongfu Spring water ever since I bought him that for the first time. At that time I was quite contented with myself. Even though I bought Nongfu Spring because I wanted to save 50 cents, I didn’t expect to buy what he would’ve come to love. It really is like sowing fruits even when you didn’t plan to plant, two hearts beating as one.

But he simply replied, “Hospital gave it for the festivities, there’s still a box of it at the back seat.”

I turned my head and saw the carton of Nongfu Spring. Casually praising his hospital, “Your hospital is not bad! Giving out gifts during festivals. Unlike my company, there’s only overtime during festival seasons.”

He was driving attentively and didn’t reply.

Seeing how he has no intention in responding to me, I stopped talking. As I grow older, I stopped doing things like being excessively passionate to a cold shoulder*. This coldness from him is nothing to me. I used to do it regardless of his reaction, but not anymore. (T/N: stick hot face on cold buttocks)

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Translator’s Corner:

Please thank the lovely Xri for this chapter. See you on the next!

Chapter 6

Jiang Chen's car stopped in front of the LV flagship store, I jumped in shock, basically I only ever saw this brand in a certain famous author's books, in real life, I was still more familiar with AV* instead. (T/N: referring to p*rn videos)

The central control of the car doors unlocked with a knocking sound. Jiang Chen said, "You get down and wait for me, I'll go and park the car."

I got off the car and loitered at the same place waiting for him to return, sneaking wily peeks at the LV store through the glass windows from time to time. Perhaps it was a figment of my imagination, but I just felt that the orange coloured lights appeared to be especially opulent and luxurious.

"Let's go." Jiang Chen was standing behind me since who-knows-when.

I jumped in shock and stammered, "It's better we don't, it's really expensive, plus it seems like all they sell inside are bags, I didn't see any formal clothes at all."

He followed my line of sight and took a look, "Did you think I was going to bring you to enter LV?"

"Were you not?"

He looked at me like how he would a lunatic. "You're not my wife, why would I buy LV for you!"

.....

He led me to make a detour around LV. We entered an alley and came to the entrance of a clothing store. I raised my head and

looked; this store's name was too honest – “Can't afford to buy LV”.

I pointed at the signboard and told Jiang Chen, “Look, it's mocking you.”

He lifted his head to take a glance, “It's mocking you.”

I curled my lip, “Wait till I become wealthy, I will go to each and every famous brands' stores, and just tell the shop assistant, ‘I don't want this item, I don't want this item, wrap everything else up.’”

He shook his head and said, “You might as well say, ‘Wrap this item and this item up, wrap everything else up and mail them to the Red Cross Society.’”

His skills* were more profound than mine..... (T/N: referring to skills/abilities that are built up through religious practice – a Buddhist concept)

The shop owner was a young lad, his looks were not bad. Looking at him, I kept on thinking that he looked familiar, most likely in my subconscious, I wanted to get familiar with all handsome men.

The young lad came forward to welcome us. “Doctor Jiang, bringing your girlfriend to buy clothes?”

Jiang Chen pushed me forward and said, “Help her coordinate a set of clothes that she can attend a banquet in.”

The young lad's eyes swept over me from head to toe, he said, “Will do, the beautiful lady's aura is especially matching of my shop's clothes, I will immediately coordinate several sets for you to choose.”

Indeed, my aura is an aura of not being able to afford to buy LV.....

While the shop owner was picking out clothes, I asked Jiang Chen, “You know him?”

Jiang Chen nodded. "He is Doctor Su's younger brother."

Younger Brother Su's ears were working especially well, and he joined in our conversation. "I am called Su Rui, my sister might come over in a while."

I lowered my head to look at him. He was squatting on the floor choosing shoes, and his butt was sticking high up in the air. His low-waisted jeans caused a large part of his waist to be exposed, it was quite slim.

"Chen Xiaoxi." Jiang Chen suddenly called me.

"Ah?" I took back my gaze that was fixated on that slim waist, and turned my head back to look at him.

He pointed at my foot. Lowering my head, I saw some green creature that was similar to a lizard stopping beside my foot, its long tail swaying slightly. On reflex, I used the tips of my toes to kick it away at lightning speed, then hid behind Jiang Chen's back while shrieking at a high frequency.

The green creature rolled once on the floor, flipping over to reveal a belly that was somewhat light-coloured, it's four legs treading disorderly in mid-air.

Su Rui straightened his body and walked over, beamingly picking up the green organism. Placing and displaying it on his arm, he told me, "Don't be afraid, don't be afraid, this is the lizard that I am rearing."

I stuck my head out from behind Jiang Chen's back. "Is it poisonous or not, will it bite humans?"

"It won't, it won't, it is very obedient." Su Rui extended his arm out, and invited me with great enthusiasm, "Touch it and see."

I had difficulty rejecting such great hospitality, and stretched out

my trembling hand. Just as my hand reached in front of the lizard, it suddenly stuck out a fleshy forked tongue with a hiss. I was so scared that I rapidly pulled back my hand, and went back to hide behind Jiang Chen once again.

Su Rui laughed heartily. "Xiaoxi, do not scare jiejie*, she didn't kick you on purpose just now." (T/N: jiejie: means older sister, can be used to refer to women older than you.)

"Xiaoxi?" Jiang Chen repeated it once, and began laughing too. (T/N: Xiao 小 - means small. Our main character's name is 小希, where the 'xi' means hope - i.e. her name means Little Hope. Su Rui's lizard is called 小蜥, where the 'xi' means lizard - i.e. its name means Little Lizard.)

I impetuously replied him before I realised, and was considerably indignant. "It's also called Xiaoxi?"

"Also?" Su Rui was very excited. "Who else is called Xiaoxi? This really is a good name."

I, who had a good name, raised my hand up slowly. "Me, Chen Xiaoxi....."

"Too fated!" Su Rui moved around till he was behind Jiang Chen and stopped in front of me.

Stroking the lizard's head, he said, "Su Xiaoxi, this jiejie has the same name as you, you two are too fated, greet jiejie, come and give jiejie a kiss."

With a forced laugh, I moved 'round till I was in front of Jiang Chen, stuck out my head and waved my hand. "Hello, hello, there should be no direct contact between men and women, there's no need to kiss, no need to kiss." (T/N: there is some wordplay here, the idiom makes use of the word 亲, which in the context of the idiom means "personal" - i.e. no personal contact between men and women (this

is a Confucianism concept). But 亲 also means kiss, so Xiaoxi is playing on the double meaning here.)

Su Rui gave an appearance of being insulted. "Xiaoxi is a girl."

Jiang Chen pulled me away from hiding in front of his chest. "Go and change your clothes."

Only then did Su Rui put Su Xiaoxi down and took several pieces of clothing from the clothes rack to pass to me. "Try them first, what shoe size do you wear?"

Basically, my feet were abnormally small, being asked my shoe size was humiliating for me.....

Hence, I said, "35."

Jiang Chen slanted his head and looked at me, saying, "Size 33 and a half, 34 with a semi-insole is also okay."

.....

Su Rui scratched his head and told me, "I need to search and see if there are shoes that are size 34, you can go in and change your clothes first."

I clasped the clothes and went in to change, but met with trouble when changing into the first set. The zipper at the back was entangled with my hair, and it got stuck halfway, I couldn't pull it up nor could I pull it down. Helpless, I could only give a cry for help towards the outside, "Su Rui, the zipper is stuck, it doesn't move when I pull it."

The curtains were lifted open, but instead it was Jiang Chen who came in. I stared at him blankly. He didn't say anything, and directly moved round to behind my back. He drew up my hair and lifted it high up with one hand, while using the other hand to pull up the zipper in one swift motion. After he pulled the zipper up, he walked

away abruptly. I was in deep admiration of his craftsmanship.

I changed into quite a few sets of clothes, and finally Su Rui helped me choose a light green muslin evening gown. It was light as a feather when I wore it on myself, causing me to have a sense of panic that I wasn't wearing any clothes.

Su Rui with great difficult managed to search and produce a pair of light yellow high heels that were size 34, after adding a semi-insole, I could, just barely, wear them and maintain my stability.

Su Rui praised my new manner of dressing till I was an extraordinary beauty of the celestial and mortal worlds. Even though I couldn't find a slightest sliver of the stunning/breathtaking appearance that he was talking about when I looked into the mirror, but I felt that what he said was indeed too true, I sincerely wanted to befriend him.

Su Xiaoxi tried to approach me a few times, but was always scared off by me giving her a look that said, "If you dare come over I will use my high heels to grind and kill you."

Jiang Chen sat on the sofa inside the shop, lazily sizing me up with a few glances from time to time. Of course, I didn't dare hope that he would be like what normally appeared in television shows or novels, where he would hold his breath and be blown away by my beauty, but at the very least, he shouldn't appear like he was watching the news broadcast.

"Are you done?" He stood up from the sofa.

"I'm done, you can pay the cash." I lowered my head and studied the collar of my gown, the edge of the V-necked collar was folded into very pretty looking little pleats, like green waves of wheat*. (T/N: referring to the waves of wheat in the field that appear when the wind blows and causes the wheat to move up and down)

Su Rui announced noisily. "Forget it, forget it, they have too much fate, just regard it as a gift from Xiaoxi to Xiaoxi on their first meeting. 800 in total, the gown is 500, the shoes are 300."

I glared at him, this was a ripoff, similar clothes could be obtained on Taobao* with 80RMB, shipping included. (T/N: online shopping website)

Su Rui smiled at me. "Don't give me a look as if you regard me as an evil unscrupulous businessman. These clothes of mine are not the kind that can be found all over the street, they are all personally designed and made by me, there's only one piece of each."

Jiang Chen, contrariwise, didn't say anything, after paying the money, he said "Thank you" and pulled me to leave.

I put on my makeup in the moving car with great difficulty. Fortunately the road conditions were not bad, on the whole, after finishing putting on makeup, my facial features were still normal.

While waiting for the red light, Jiang Chen suddenly started laughing, his eyes filled with mischief, and said, "Your makeup skills have improved considerably."

I gave him a disdainful look, I knew what he was laughing about.

At that point in time, it was Senior Year 3. We were battling the national college entrance examinations day and night. In faraway places, there were a few fellow people similarly battling the national college entrance examinations who couldn't withstand the pressure and ended their own lives. This news was passed around the various major departments, and after being passed around for a long time, only then did it trickle down to this school of ours in a faraway small town. The school principal urgently called for a meeting, and after that, one month before the entrance examinations, the teachers

decided to organise an evening party for us children deep in the abyss of suffering. The evening party's name was "Heading towards tomorrow". I personally felt this name was very meaningless, unless you died, everyone had to head towards tomorrow. The programme items were prepared by the Senior Year 1 and 2 students, recitals, chorus singing and so on, in short, programme items that would cause people to not want to live till tomorrow at all when they watched it.

Before the evening party took place, the teachers were stumped by a matter. The students were to go on stage, and had to put on makeup. There were only a few teachers in the school who knew how to apply makeup. Just applying makeup for one choral group, it would be daylight by the time they were done. Hence the school at the last minute decided to let the students in the arts class share part of the large responsibility of applying makeup. As the leading student in the arts class, I thought to myself that everything was within my control, but I didn't anticipate that it would turn out that a human face was quite different from a canvas. Every girl that had me apply makeup for them cried after looking at themselves in the mirror, and further expressed that if they had to go on stage looking like this, they would choose to bid farewell to tomorrow. And at that point in time, Jiang Chen just so happened to walk past that classroom. I was surrounded by a group of crying junior girls, at a loss of what to do, while he stood outside the classroom laughing till his hands were dancing and his feet were stamping*. The junior girls, on account of being jeered at by an influential figure, cried themselves hoarse even more distraughtly. (T/N: meaning to be really animated (dancing, gesticulating, etc) with joy)

Even though it had been many years since then, but the moment I recalled this incident, my temples still pulsated and throbbed, and it was like the undulating cadence of weeping sounds were still lingering on by my ears again.

"Reached," Jiang Chen said, and the car slowly came to a halt as he pulled over.

I rubbed my temples, gave a sigh and grumbled, "Next time, don't make me recall these sorts of incidents that I can't bear to recollect."

The car had stopped for quite a while at the same place, yet he did not open the car doors at all. I turned to look at him, puzzled. His eyebrows were creased tightly, his eyes gazing out into a distance, his jaw was braced tautly, and his two hands clenched the steering wheel, with his knuckles turning white.

I knew he was being angry, but I was a little unable to make sense of his sudden onset of anger.

I asked him in a low voice, "What's the matter?"

He seemed to take a deep breath, and he slowly let go of the steering wheel, turning his head around to smile at me. Perhaps I shouldn't call it a smile, he was only pursing his lips together into a line, squeezing out a deep dimple on his left cheek. He said, "It's nothing, my stomach hurts."

"Ah? That what should we do?" Once I become nervous, I become a little incoherent and confused. "Why would your stomach hurt? Did you not eat anything? Do you have medicine or not? Let's go to the hospital..."

"I'm alright," he said.

"How could you be alright? Do you know that if your stomach hurts, it could be a hemorrhage of your stomach, or a stomach ulcer, or a stomach perforation, or stomach cancer....."

He looked at me, smiling. "What else?"

I said uncertainly. "Your stomach tearing apart?"

I said with emphasis, “No matter what, let’s go to the hospital quickly, you could possibly die in the next second!”

He suddenly stretched out his hand and pushed my forehead, smilingly saying, “Are you the doctor or am I the doctor?”

I was puzzled and perplexed by his sudden good spirits, only repeatedly verifying with him that his stomach would not tear apart. He also repeatedly guaranteed me that he was already alright, and finally, with great helplessness expressed that if any unforeseen misfortune were to happen to his stomach, I would be the one operating the surgical knife during the surgery.

Hearing that he was willing to die in my hands, I then set my mind at rest.

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Chapter 7

Another double update! Enjoy.

Before entering the banquet hall, Jiang Chen who had been walking ahead of me suddenly stopped and walked a few paces back to stand by my side. He bent his elbow and looked at me as though he was offering it.

I looked back at him suspiciously, "Do we have to strike a pose? Who's taking the pictures for us?"

He glared at me so I quickly laughed it out, squinting my eyes, "I'm just joking with you."

After I was done talking, I slipped my hand into the crook of his arm, and lightly held unto it, "There's a thing in the movies where everyone has to be arm-in-arm when making an entrance."

I looked at my hand that was clutching on his black suit when all of a sudden, a knot seems to form in my chest, I couldn't help but grasp his arm firmly. He bent his head to look at me, and said softly as if trying to gently calm me, "Go look around as if you're watching a movie."

I looked around the banquet hall. A large crystal chandelier was hanging down from the ceiling, twinkling in a multitude of brilliant lights and vibrant colors. Under the chandelier were wandering men and women with wine glasses all lively. Long tables were covered in tablecloths the colour of champagne, and filled with food which makes one's mouth water. This is definitely a movie about gourmet.

"Chen Xiaoxi, don't just look at the food, smile." Jiang Chen suddenly bent over and whispered quite close to my ear, his hot breath tickling it. I couldn't help but shot him a glare.

“Smile.” He said once again.

I followed his line of sight — a group of people were slowly walking towards us, all the while crowding around a small, familiar-looking old man.

Jiang Chen half dragged me towards them. I asked him through the forced smile plastered on my face, “Which one is your patient?”

“That old man in the middle.”

When I looked at said man, he was rather beaming in the pink of health, and doesn’t look like someone who just recovered from a serious illness so I asked again, “What’s his illness?”

“Heart disease.”

Jiang Chen was just about done with his reply when we’ve finally reached them.

They greeted each other with a simple handshake, I heard Jiang Chen calling him Secretary Zhang* and it dawned on me where this feeling of familiarity came from — I saw him in the local news, not only that, I saw him a couple of times. The fact that I watch the local news no more than ten times an entire year, his appearance in them is certainly very high then. It would be nice if we’re introduced, after all, he’s a very sought-after member of the ruling class* of society.

(T/N: secretary means a chief official of a branch of a socialist or communist party. The ruling class refers to the elite, upper echelons of society)

Secretary Zhang was all smiles, looking at me, “Is this Little Jiang’s girlfriend?”

I shot a quick look at Jiang Chen and thought to myself if I should send the Buddha to the furthest of West*, I put on a smile and nodded, “Hello, my name is Chen Xiaoxi.”

(T/N: Sending the Buddha to the West is a proverb meaning if you're helping someone then help them till the end, not giving up halfway.)

Secretary Zhang also nodded. Men of this age are rather kind, when he smiles his appearance looks like that of a mere mortal who finally achieved immortality through cultivation, "Miss Chen looks really beautiful, indeed a talented man and a beautiful woman*. I was actually thinking of introducing my granddaughter to Little Jiang, it seems like my granddaughter doesn't have enough luck." (T/N: means ideal couple)

I don't know what to answer to that, so I just smiled apologetically. Jiang Chen decided to tackle on the subject himself, "Secretary Zhang's favor and high regards, I dare not make presumptions*." (T/N: lit. dare not pull myself up high, a humble phrase of someone not daring to make friends or settle as relatives with people in a higher status than themselves.)

Secretary Zhang laughed and suddenly announced in a clear, distinct voice, "Ladies and gentlemen."

His voice wasn't particularly loud, however, there was a strange summoning force to it. The hall packed with people went silent and seemingly turned their heads towards our general direction. My hand that was pulling Jiang Chen's arm subconsciously tightened, he extended his other hand and gently patted the back of my hand.

Secretary Zhang raised the wine glass in his hand, "This is my benefactor, Doctor Jiang. I'm asking everyone here to help me thank Doctor Jiang and his girlfriend with a glass of wine. Thank you!"

When he was done with his toast, we were then handed a glass of wine each.

Jiang Chen also made a toast to him, "I'm simply doing my job."

Honestly speaking, I was really terrified, I've never meet people of this calibre. In my memory, the biggest crowd I've ever faced was when I joined a choir competition during grade school. At that time I was right in the middle of a group of children, singing with our mouth wide open. My legs on the other hand, were trembling as that of someone with infantile paralysis.

Now, a bunch of people were looking our way in unison, moreover, every single one of them was part of the ruling class — elites, tycoons, influential officials, and such. I wanted to say I'm just an ordinary person who just came over to watch a movie so please don't look at me.

Fortunately, the limelight was on us for only a short while. When everyone was done drinking, they quickly resumed to where they had left off, only then did I also notice that in my nervousness, I spilled wine on my hand.

It was only Secretary Zhang who seems as though he has no intentions of letting us go, and toasted another glass of wine to us again.

"Little Jiang, when you get married, remember to send me an invitation."

"We will surely send out an invitation but you mustn't drink anymore wine, your heart can't stand it." Jiang Chen said smiling, in a tone laced with strong authority unique to that of doctors.

Secretary Zhang actually let out a smile and put the glass down. I was thinking about how to escape unharmed, and looked down languidly at the skirt I was wearing, analyzing which part should I wipe my dirty hand on where the stain wouldn't be too obvious.

"Chen Xiaoxi, go to the restroom." Jiang Chen said before he was whisked away by Secretary Zhang.

After I was done washing my hands, I spotted Jiang Chen and Secretary Zhang from a distance, surrounded by a group of people. I hesitated for a moment, I think it's more fun to stay right beside the long table and stuff myself. Anyway, I've already shown my ability of blocking the Secretary's granddaughter, now I can finally show the ability of my stomach.

I stood right beside the table, observing it for a moment. I found out that the food looked the same when they were taken out, as the few people who went to table stayed there for no more than ten seconds. So I felt reassured and took a big plate, ready to eat everything from the beginning of the table right till the end, and to satisfy my desire to exploit the ruling class.

I was only able to eat four dishes when I encountered an obstacle. Of course it wasn't about me being full, I'm very confident about my stomach.

In front of me was a group of women. They were chatting by the table, and were naturally dressed to the nines for the banquet with brands that I obviously can't afford. It's hard to say if they look beautiful, as their makeup was done by someone with the hands of the gods. Indeed, the true features of the human race already cease to exist.

As the table was pushed right against the wall, and by the looks of it, these women were going to stand there forever, I thought I probably wouldn't be able to try every food there is before the banquet is over. Just by the thought of it, I was already itching to set this group of women on fire.

I silently walked past them, intending to eat the dishes placed at far end of the table. When I passed by their side, I was called over by a woman, "Hello, Doctor Jiang's girlfriend."

I turned around, the girl who spoke to me looked beautiful, even though she was also dress to the nines and was wearing thick

makeup, she was able to look amorous and refined. She looked quite a bit like the Cleopatra in my middle school's World History textbook, and also amazingly tall wearing a pair of high heels which I reckon, is more than ten centimeters — a look that can't be put together without breaking through the roof of the banquet hall.

I smiled at her, "Hi."

She came closer to me and pulled my hand, "My grandfather being able to recover this time was truly because of Doctor Jiang. I was in the hospital looking after our old man when he got sick and I can say that Doctor Jiang is really dedicated to his patients. For around half a month, I hardly ever seen him leave the hospital. It's fortunate that he has a girlfriend like you who is understanding of such things."

I know that I'm quite sensible, but this really has nothing to do with me.....

I was still holding the big plate on one hand, the other was pulled by her. I had no choice but to stare at her hand that was holding mine, so soft as if there was no bones, her fingers long and slender like pared scallions, her nails coated with a layer of pale pink, looking like the layer of brine sauce dripping from a first-rate Hong Kong-style chicken feet.

Perhaps she noticed my awkwardness and loosen her hold on my hand. "I think Doctor Jiang is still being dragged around by my grandpa. Being alone you'll get bored, come and join our chat."

I had to put my plate down, then assumed an air of enthusiasm, listening to them talk. I've managed to catch bits of their topic, Ivy League schools abroad, holiday resorts, famous brands.....I really don't understand these things, so I wasn't interested.

Now they were talking about whose rich family's miss was raising a dog with a very long breed name, whose rich family's miss was rearing a foal, etcetera.....This animal topic soon switched to food.

A woman with a ferocious mouth of a beast* said, "The French truffles that XX restaurant air-freighted has already arrived. I just went to eat yesterday, it was pretty good."

(T/N: means someone who looks very covetous or greedy)

"Really? I'll have my boyfriend take me there tomorrow."

"I heard that the blackfin tuna in YY restaurant is good too. "

"Really? Then we'll go there in another day. But I still prefer Kobe beef. "

.....

"If I want to eat truffles, I'll fly to either France or Italy, French black truffle is pretty good, Italian white truffle is alright too. I don't eat blackfin tuna. Kobe beef is something I have no choice but to eat when going to Japan. However, I'd rather eat caviar and only the freshest. If the globules look plump and smooth, then without any seasoning or other food, I'd use a spoon made from ivory and eat a spoonful from a chilled glass bowl." A sweet and charming voice strangely made this group of rich, young misses miraculously turn silent.

I look at the woman who just spoke, she was leaning lazily against the table, smiling yet not smiling, and is very beautiful. Her beauty is not that of a goddess from the heavens who doesn't eat worldly food*, her beauty is aggressive, you can even say flashy. It's the kind that when a man sees her, they couldn't help but indulge in their own fantasies, and when a woman does, they couldn't help but want to throw sulfuric acid on her beautiful face.

(T/N: According to folklore, the Daoists believed that celestial beings never ate cooked food. Later on, this phrase was used to describe a person who has otherworldly qualities similar to that of celestial beings – a pure beauty.)

She was wearing a customized greenish coloured qipao* embroidered with red flowers. The dress doesn't have exaggerated slits or a plunging neckline but only clung to her curves like a glove. For the first time in my life I finally saw someone look tempting in clothes that's actually conservative. (T/N: a close-fitting Chinese dress with a mandarin collar and slits)

I also noticed that when she spoke, the women around showed a look of disdain, so much that some even whispered "vixen" under their breaths.

When I heard the word "vixen", I felt completely relieved, that's right, growing into such a bad vixen is truly a waste of talent.

Perhaps because the conversation has gone stale, the granddaughter of the host, Miss Zhang, suddenly turned to me with a smile and asked, "What does Miss Chen usually like to eat?"

I was caught off guard by her question, don't know if she was trying to save the show or trying to embarrass me, so I replied evasively, "I don't have something I particularly like to eat, I usually just eat at random."

"I saw Miss Chen eating a lot of stuff just now, surely you've done quite a research on food, don't keep your secret so selfishly."

"It's like this." I rubbed the back of neck, a bit distressed. "I think Nissin's egg instant noodles is quite delicious. Master Kong is alright too. I also like mine a bit soggy. And then the eggs, it's best to have two; crack one and mix it with the noodles, the other one is poached at the side. When it has come to a boil, only then will you add the seasoning, don't add any more than that, just that bit to make it palatable, a lil' salt, and some soy sauce. Truly delicious."

.....

There was silence as though the Grim Reaper came.

See? Why must you let me share my expertise? I really didn't want to.

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Chapter 8

After receiving a valuable lesson on instant noodles from me, the group of ladies suddenly had no more interest in chatting. They were all looking for excuses to leave. I think this is a bad gesture, a gesture of tearing down the bridge after crossing the river.* (T/N: Partly to “abandon” the person who helped you after achieving your goals. She probably meant imparting her instant noodles knowledge to them.)

When I was preparing to lift up my plate to continue eating every dish on the long table, I realized the vixen is still leaning on the table. Unsure of when she had another glass of red wine on her hand, she gently swirled her wine and asked, “What is your name?”

I looked left and right to make sure that she was talking to me and answered, “Chen Xiaoxi, the ‘Xi’ from hope.”

She raised her glass towards me and bottoms up-ed the wine. She then said, “Hu Ran Ran, the “Ran” from having affair with people.” (T/N: To have an affair with people (plural sense) is 跟人有染 (Gen Ren You Ran). The same ‘Ran’ in Hu Ran Ran’s name.)

I looked around, unable to find any glass of wine to return her toast. So I lifted my plate of sushi to return her the toast instead. I ate the sushi in one mouth, almost choking to death. Finally I rubbed the tear off the corner of the eye and said, “Nice meeting you.”

“You don’t have to cry from feeling moved.” She said as she passed a tissue to me. I was quite shocked from the fact that she didn’t seem to have any clutch or bag on her. Her dress was stuck onto her like a second layer of skin that will burst upon breathing. I don’t think that she can stuff any tissue in that.

I took the tissue and said thanks.

She just leaned on the table while looking at me walking back and forth the table and eating happily, she asked if it's delicious.

"Its delicious! Do you want some?" I pointed at the cakes in my plate. Only then did I think of her caviar analogy and felt that it was unnecessary.

She pointed at her qipao that she was wearing and said, "It will burst if I eat."

I nodded and open my palm to show her the tissue that she passed to me and said, "Your dress is too scary. Where did you put the tissue?"

She pointed in between her legs and said, "Stuck it against my inner thighs, together with my phone."

I looked her at smooth legs that were not donning any stockings. I twitched my mouth and looked at the tissue on my palm. It didn't feel right to be holding or throwing it away. I'm having mixed feelings knowing that it was taken out of her inner thighs.

Hu Ran Ran laughed out loud and said, "I'm just joking! How cute. I took it from the table."

I sheepishly rubbed the back of my neck and laughed along, "I only have eyes for food."

I finished eating 58 dishes with her looking at me. I took a piece of serviette and imitated her by leaning sultrily on the table and wiped my mouth.

Hu Ran Ran turned her head to looked at me and asked, "Are you the doctor's girlfriend?"

I touched my nose and replied, "Sort of."

Also secretly adding a “used to” in my heart.

She tucked her hair behind her ears and said, “Zhang Qian Rong will snatch from you.”

“Ah? Who?” I asked while trying to stop myself from staring at her dark brown wavy hair.

Her hairstyle is my favorite big, wavy, hairstyle. I wanted to do it when I was in university. But Jiang Chen said I looked refreshing and natural in short hair. That was how I donned a mushroom bob hair for four years. It was only until we broke up that I grew out my long hair. Now that I think of it, how is refreshing and natural a compliment? It’s more like a line in an air freshener commercial.

“Zhang Qian Rong, Old Zhang’s granddaughter. There, she’s currently walking towards your boyfriend.” Hu Ran Ran said while pointing with her chin.

I followed her line of sight and saw Zhang Qian Rong walking towards Jiang Chen and Secretary Zhang. Swaying her hips like she was performing a ribbon dance.* (T/N: A traditional Chinese dance.)

“Old Zhang is really old.” Sighed Hu Ran Ran. “The most a few more years to live.”

I looked at her in surprise. She laughed and said, “If I said I’m his mistress would you believe?”

I forced out a laugh not knowing what to reply.

She continued, “I used to be a nanny in their house.”

I couldn’t control myself and went, “Ho..w...?”

I wasn’t able to find the right words to phrase my question. Thankfully she continued it for me.

"How was I able to climb onto Old Zhang's bed? Whenever he is the only one left at home, I'll mop the floor wearing a low-cut nightgown."

"I see..." I dragged my words as I am not sure what to reply. I can't be praising her for that, neither can I wish for her to succeed. Even more impossible for me to be calling her shameless. Ah, what a difficult situation I'm in.

She was laughing and seemed to be enjoying my embarrassment.

I'm glad to be of amusement to you.

"Your boyfriend's coming." She said while covering her mouth.

"Ah?" I looked up, and Jiang Chen was already standing in front of me. I couldn't help but praise him saying, "You sure walk fast."

Jiang Chen politely nodded to acknowledge Hu Ran Ran's presence. Then he looked at me and said, "Let's go."

He walked off right after finishing his sentence. I waved goodbye to Hu Ran Ran and ran in small steps to catch up to him while asking, "We can leave? But the banquet hasn't ended yet."

He stopped walking until I'm beside him. We walked out side by side as he answered, "We're going back. I still have an operation tomorrow."

"Oh," I followed him out.

He went to get his car while I waited outside the hotel. Suddenly remembering that he didn't seem to have eaten anything. Moreover, he had gastric pain before coming. Hence I decided to discreetly return to the banquet to get some food for Jiang Chen. I only took two steps before hearing a honk. I turned back to open the door and propped half my body in to say, "Aren't you having gastric pain? I see that you didn't eat anything just now, I'll go take some food for you."

Will be back soon.”

Just as I turned to walk back in right after finishing my sentence. Jiang Chen repeatedly shouted my name behind me. I had no choice but to walk back and said, “Don’t worry. The food’s really great inside. There’s nobody eating it anyways. No one will mind even if I were to take some.”

“Get on.” He said while tapping the steering wheel impatiently.

I came to a sudden realization that ever since we met again, he has been strangely losing his patience with me often. I’ll give you an analogy. It’s like you when only raised a dog with the intention of slaughtering it to eat. However, not only won’t the dog grow any meat, but he thinks that he is a beloved pet, always trying to get attention from you. Don’t you think it’s annoying?

I entered the car silently, closed the door and put on my seat belt.

“I live at XX neighbourhood XX street. If it’s not convenient you can just drop me off at any bus stop. I can take bus back.”

He stared at me for quite some time. They say the eyes are the windows to one’s soul. Hence I stared at his windows for a while, only to think that his dark circles are quite severe. However say the saying goes, “Even if you walk a cow to Beijing it is still a cow.”* Even when a handsome guy grows dark circles, he is still a handsome guy but with dark circles. (T/N: this is translated literally.)

In the end I was still unable to see anything from his eyes. Eyes are indeed the windows to one’s soul. However, some people’s eyes are anti-theft windows. Those without enough skills can only feel distraught.

Nonetheless, Jiang Chen still drove me to my house. I thanked him for sending me home, but he didn’t seem to have any gratitude towards me accompanying him for the night. But I decided not to

fuss about it.

I got out of the car and prepared to close the door. While I was closing I couldn't help but peek a look at him. This is the after-effect of being in a one-sided love for too long. Even during the four years that we were together, I still peek at him subconsciously. To the point where when he was taking ophthalmology he suspected that I had suffered from strabismus.

His right hand was on the steering wheel and left arm pressed on his stomach. He was frowning as though he was waiting for the sound of the door to close.

In the end, I didn't close the door. I stick my body in and asked him like a plea, "Why not you come to my house? I'll cooked noodles for you. Will be fast, I can do it in ten minutes."

He shook his head, "It's okay, I'll be fine after taking medicine."

I went in the car fully and sat down with my arms crossed. "Up to my house for noodles! If not, I won't get out of your car."

Jiang Chen turned to look at me and sighed, "Let's go."

I smiled and hopped out of the car. Bringing him up four storeys of stairs to my rented apartment.

I poured him a cup of water and went to the kitchen. Thinking that since instant noodles isn't very healthy, I cooked vermicelli and added two eggs for him instead. When I came out with the noodles, he was already asleep while leaning against the sofa's armrest.

I placed the bowl on the table, squatted in front of him thinking whether I should wake him up or not. I even contemplated for a long time whether I should secretly kiss him like how it is in the movies. Or should I used my finger to outline his features? Or should I just silently watch him sleep while I cry.

In the end I just tapped on his shoulder and said, "Jiang Chen, the noodle's ready."

Some things are like being in a competition. Since you decided to withdraw from the match, you have no rights to compete again. You can only watch in agony. That's why, Liu Xiang, I understand your pain in withdrawing from the Olympics.

Jiang Chen's eyelids fluttered a little, opening slightly to look at me, and shut it again.

Hence, I pushed him again, "Wake up, the noodle's getting soggy."

He made a "tch" sound and pushed my hand off with his eyes closed. "Stop fooling around, I'm very tired."

Perhaps he sounded as though it was meant to be, I thought it felt a bit intimate..

I hugged my knees while seated on the floor, looking at him absentmindedly, or at a corner. Suddenly I felt like I'm really pitiful until I entered a dimension with no one else.* (T/N: I'm guessing she fell asleep.)

After I was done feeling miserable, I looked up and saw Jiang Chen eating the noodles and watching television. The volume's very low, but he was watching it attentively.

I turned to look at the television, it's currently airing a basketball match. A black man's head slammed onto the armpit of a white man who was shooting. The white man fell to the ground and tossed around in agony.

If I'm the black guy I would have reported the white man. Armpits vs Head, this is obviously racism.

Jiang Chen finished the noodles, asked for a tissue to wipe his mouth and said that he will be going.

Since there aren't any excuses to make him stay longer, I can only tell him to drive back safely.

When he walked to the door, he turned back to look at me, as though he was hinting something. I had no choice but to stand up and walked towards him saying, "I will just send you to the door. I wore heels for the entire night and my legs are breaking. If I were to send you down I still have to climb back up four storeys again."

Jiang Chen leaned on the door waiting for me to walk in front of me. He suddenly said, "Chen Xiaoxi, have you never, ever felt that you have done me wrong?"

This is a classic reverse questioning. An obvious answer hidden within the question to prove a point. After a short breakdown of the question I decided, that Jiang Chen probably thinks that I should and must feel that I have done him wrong. The only thing that I'm not sure, is that whether this question is meant for the breakup three years ago, or it's for my laziness in not wanting to walk him down the apartment.

I thought for a while. No matter what he is referring to, I will still be the one in the wrong. It's not that I can't apologize. Therefore, I put my legs together, arms by my side and decidedly to apologise sincerely in an army position. But Jiang Chen didn't even wait for me to finish my series of actions. He gave me one last look and went down the stairs.

This time round I understood his expression. Nothing but dislike, detest, disgust, etcetera. I could understand that, as I felt disgusted by myself too.

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Chapter 9

T/N: Everything in bold are written as is in English.

Happy New Year! I wish you all will be happier, healthier, wealthier this year!

After a few days, Zhuang Dong Na who had returned from her business trip made a phone call to express her gratitude, the general idea being that she had come to know that Jiang Chen did not properly express his thankfulness towards me, and she felt that her family's* Jiang Chen was too unthoughtful. Her original words were, "You know this, our family's Jiang Chen doesn't really care for the ways of the world*, but this is also his strong point, I kinda like it, hehe." (T/N: "our family's" is kind of an intimate way to refer to someone, meaning something like "our") (T/N: "ways of the world" - i.e. how to be diplomatic, how to establish relationships and connections, how to conduct yourself in society etc)

Zhuang Dong Na graduated majoring in English, she always liked to intersperse her speech with English, in the past, she also loved to mix English in when she chatted online, for example, "I'm going for a business trip this weekend, we'll have a meeting when I'm back", she will type, "I'm going for a business trip this weekend, we'll have a meeting when I'm back."

Later on there was once when Situ Mo said that she simply could not stand it any longer, so she innocently and guiltlessly asked Zhuang Dong Na, "You are always switching between input methods, are you not tired?" Zhuang Dong Na readily accepted good advice and corrected this foible of input methods, Situ Mo was deeply gratified about this.

Zhuang Dong Na suggested that to express their gratitude and to make amends, they would like to treat me to a meal. I rebuffed the

offer tactfully, but perhaps I was too tactful, to such an extent that she was totally unable to understand my unwillingness. In short, she self-involvedly announced the time and place and then hung up the phone at once.

As I was going to be forced into being treated a meal, I was therefore in a very bad mood. Hence Fu Pei and Situ Mo being my colleagues were unfathomably insulted by me quite a few times, causing Situ Mo to be so angry that she said that she wanted to resign and go home and have her husband support her. I keyed in to this matter of her moving out her husband as a backer and reviled her once again, and finally forced her to admit that she herself was unworthy of the cultivation/training/education that our motherland gave her, and that she was a parasite utterly devoid of a heart and a conscience. Only then did my mood grudgingly improve.

Before I got off work, I received a phone call from Su Rui. After the banquet, we somehow inconceivably became friends.

I had thrown the dress for that banquet into the washing machine, and after it came out, no matter how I looked, I felt that it looked like a mass of rotten vegetable leaves, hence I carried the dress to go and find Su Rui. He used a machine that looked like a vacuum cleaner to iron the dress back into its original light-green floaty appearance. He told me that that machine was called a garment steamer, I told him that in my mind that was a vacuum cleaner. After that, we then got into an argument, he said I wasn't respecting him, I said he was making a mountain out of a molehill. We argued till it was time to eat, and as such he then brought me out to eat. After we finished eating I paid the cash, he then announced that we had now become friends through fighting*. (T/N: the original phrase is 不打不相识 which literally means if you don't fight, you won't become friends.)

Su Rui said that he was running errands near our office, and asked if I wanted to eat together after I got off work. I told him that I was

going to have a meal with Jiang Chen and Jiang Chen's girlfriend. He expressed his sympathy towards me, and volunteered to accompany me there. He said that he wanted to go to help me boost my courage, I felt that he wanted to go to scrounge a free meal.

I considered it for a while, and thought that it was really a little desolate to go and meet the 'husband and wife' pair of my ex-boyfriend all alone by myself, so I brought Su Rui along.

When the two of us reached the restaurant, they had not yet arrived. We chatted for a while till we discovered that we couldn't see eye to eye and nearly ended up in a fight. Hence Su Rui then borrowed two pens from the waiter, we both separately unfolded paper napkins to draw designs, he drew costume designs, I drew illustrations. After we finished drawing, Jiang Chen and co still hadn't arrived, therefore as such we then exchanged our drawings for evaluation. Su Rui said my illustrations were childish, and were for little children to see; I said his clothes were ugly, and weren't for mankind to wear..... Thankfully Jiang Chen and Zhuang Dong Na arrived before we broke out into a terrible fight.

"You guys have come at long last." I smiled as I reproached, forcing myself to move my eyes away from those five claws that she had tucked into Jiang Chen's arm. "If you were any slower you would be just in time to collect my dead body."

Zhuang Dong Na laughed as she explained, "I said we were to come here separately, but he insisted on making a detour to the office to pick up me, so we went on a longer roundabout route, sorry." After she finished speaking she paused, looked to Su Rui and asked, "This person is?"

"I am Su Rui, Xiaoxi's friend, my older sister and Doctor Jiang are colleagues too. I originally wanted to arrange to have a meal with Xiaoxi today, she said she had already made arrangements with someone else, I then shamelessly followed along to come and scrounge a meal, you guys don't mind, right?" Su Rui fought to reply

before I did.

“Of course no, it’s more lively when there are more people,” Zhuang Dong Na replied and turned her head back to smile sweetly at Jiang Chen who was in the process of helping her to pull out her chair.

After we all were seated and had finished ordering our food, suddenly nobody opened their mouths to speak again, the scene solidified/condensed for a moment. I looked towards the two persons opposite me, it seemed like they didn’t have any intent to rescue the situation. As someone whose back would turn numb when faced with awkward silences, I could only look at Su Rui pleadingly for help.

Su Rui easily grabbed the paper napkin on the table top and passed it to Zhuang Dong Na, saying, “This is the drawing of the design I customised for Xiaoxi according to her measurements.”

Zhuang Dong Na took it, looked at it in detail for a while and praised, “You are so talented, this dress is very beautiful and fits Xiaoxi very well.” After she finished speaking, she even pushed it till it was in front of Jiang Chen and said, “What do you think.”

Jiang Chen’s gaze swept over it indifferently. He nodded and said, “Mm, not bad.”

As someone who had just insulted this dress a few minutes ago saying that it was not for mankind to wear, in the face of such compliments, I could only tearfully give a hollow laugh and echo in agreement.

Su Rui rubbed his head and laughed bashfully, “I drew this at random. I don’t know why, but Xiaoxi is really suited to the fashion style that I design, I discovered this already the last time when Doctor Jiang brought her to my place to buy clothes. However back then I thought that they were a couple.”

I hurriedly explained to Zhuang Dong Na, "That was the time when you had me accompany him to the banquet on your behalf."

Zhuang Dong Na smiled and didn't answer, instead it was Jiang Chen who lifted his head and swept his gaze over me. This was the first time he had looked at me directly since he came in till now, probably I was accustomed to being bullied by him for many years, for the moment I saw him look at me, I hastily gave a fawning smile. After my smile was returned with his apathetic gaze, I then thought, why was I so f***ing subservient.....

The dish that Jiang Chen ordered was the very first to be served. The medium-well steak sizzled on the slate plate. He took a fork to prick and break open the poached egg that was still undulating by the side. The egg yolk slowly flowed into the plate that was giving off smoke, and the hot oil spurted once and crackled and splattered all over. Jiang Chen smoothly picked up the paper napkin beside his hand to block the splattering drops of oil, and after it was all over he even used the napkin to wipe the edge of the plate all around.

I knew that that paper napkin was Su Rui's design drawing, seeing Jiang Chen conveniently knead that paper into a wad, I inexplicably felt a sense of satisfaction in my heart.

Su Rui and Zhuang Dong Na were chatting about everything under the sun, I would also join in and say a few sentences from time to time. On the other hand, Jiang Chen was practically silent, even if the topic of conversation shifted to be about him, he would also flatly divert the topic of conversation away.

However, eating this meal was still incomparably depressing* for me. Even though Jiang Chen didn't talk, yet Zhuang Dong Na from time to time would lean beside his ear to whisper privately, as she did so her eyes would spinningly gaze at me and it seemed like she was smiling yet not smiling at the same time. (T/N: original phrase is 堵心 which literally translates into stifled/suffocated heart)

Su Rui was so upset he couldn't stand it, and imitated her by leaning beside my ear to speak softly, "It's obvious she's provoking you. She really has no moral character."

I pushed him away with a slap. "Don't speak while leaning into my ear, it's disgusting."

Su Rui laughed good-naturedly. "Don't tell me that you even know how to be embarrassed?"

I held up the corn puree. "You can give it a try and see if my shame will turn into anger*." (T/N: original idiom refers to when one is so humiliated and embarrassed they fly into a rage)

Su Rui hastily waved his hands. "I was wrong, okay?"

I arranged the bowl back to its original position, satisfied. Only then did I discover that Zhuang Dong Na was just watching us attentively, smiling with a face full of interest. I cast a glance at Jiang Chen out of the corner of my eye, he was cutting up his steak nonchalantly. Silent, skilled, graceful.

His expression suddenly made me recall how back during our university times, I often accompanied him at the hostel as he used pig skin and pig intestine to practise suturing and tying knots. That silent and serious energy he had always made me feel like I was watching a movie about a perverted surgeon murderer or something along those lines.

"Xiaoxi, I feel that Su Rui is quite good to you," Zhuang Dong Na smilingly said, and she even turned her head to ask Jiang Chen as if she was seeking assistance, "Isn't that right?"

Jiang Chen ran his eyes over us once with a look of examining a patient, and flatly spat out a word, "Right."

Su Rui didn't know to have the slightest degree of shame at all, and he parroted while gesticulating joyfully, "Chen Xiaoxi, you see,

they all say that I am good, you are the only person who isn't discerning."

I don't know why I suddenly lost interest in bickering with him, I replied him dispiritedly, "I also think that you are really good."

I don't know if it was that my tone of voice had warped as it transmitted through the air, or if the obstructive items such as earwax in Su Rui's ears were too numerous causing distortion of sound. In short, he seemed to have taken it seriously, he first stared blankly, then he suddenly gazed at me with both eyes soft and gentle like water. He smiled at me bashfully, his face unreasonably reddening all over.

I was so shocked that my four limbs went cold, I rubbed my neck and said, "Why are you blushing for no reason, don't smile at me, it's ridiculous, the way you are smiling."

Su Rui smilingly watched me be at a complete loss of what to do. I watched as the red flush on his face mystically disappeared in a flash just like the ebbing tide, and asked suspiciously, "You're playing with me, right?"

He glanced at me, not saying a word, lowered his head and began eating the seafood paella quietly.

His sudden shyness made me feel uneasy from head to toe, it was like a crowd of ants climbing slowly in military formation from the soles of my feet up my body, climbing to my scalp.....

I practically wolfed down the remaining pasta in swallows, and even nearly choked while doing so. Su Rui very kindly patted on my back and said, "You be careful, don't be choked to death."

I was just about to say, "Is that the way to talk?", when Jiang Chen suddenly opened his mouth. "Don't worry, she won't die, even when noodles spout out of her nose, she still won't die."

I waved aside Su Rui's hand and glared at Jiang Chen viciously.

He was talking about something that happened during our first official date. At that time, we had gone to the only Western restaurant near our school. Back then, I was feeling especially nervous in my heart. There were feelings of luckiness that the pie pasty that dropped from the heavens* had just so happened to be picked up by me, and there also was apprehension due to fear that that person who had thrown the pie pasty into the mortal realm would regret and come and ask me to return it to them. (T/N: reference to a Chinese idiom referring to one enjoying readily available things without putting in effort for it – to reap where one has not sown. The idiom alludes to Exodus in the Bible where God provided manna for the Israelites)

Lost in thought, I ordered a plate of pasta, and after that just kept on engrossing myself in eating the pasta. Just as my eating was in full swing, Jiang Chen who was sitting opposite me abruptly said a sentence – “Chen Xiaoxi, accompany me tonight.” Excessive fright caused me to choke till my tears and mucus overflowed, and most frightfully, a violent cough resulting in me spouting out the noodles in my mouth from my nose.....

I looked at the strand of noodle that was wobbling on the edge of the drinking glass, every hope in my heart turning into dust, and begged Jiang Chen to break up with me as I wept, further promising that I would never pester him ever again in the future.

Jiang Chen used a paper napkin to help me wipe my tears and mucus while he comforted me, saying, “I didn't see anything, I really didn't see anything.....”

I cried and collapsed into his embrace. We forsook holding hands, laying hands on each other's shoulders, holding waists and such other incremental steps to directly leap into hugging each other on the first date, this could also be considered as a gain.

Later, Jiang Chen said that he had merely wanted me to accompany him to the overnight classroom to study, because they were very soon to sit for one of the “Four Famous Resits” of the study of medicine – the Pathology examination. This matter was always used for a very long period of time after as evidence for Jiang Chen to accuse me of having dirty thoughts.

I glared at Jiang Chen fiercely, Jiang Chen glanced at me coldly, it was as if there were flames in the air crackling as they burned.

“I’m sorry, our family’s Jiang Chen is joking.” Seeing that the atmosphere was amiss, Zhuang Dong Na hurriedly came out to smooth things over.

“No worries, our family’s Xiaoxi won’t mind.” Su Rui said, seemingly to help me strive to vindicate myself.

..... The corners of my eyes spasmed. There, even becoming one family.

I suppose, there was only one patriotic song that was popular when we were young that could explain the degrees of familiarity and distance in this section of conversation of theirs – “We all have one family, its name is China..... Our large China, one really big family.....*” (T/N: Lyrics of a patriotic song “Large China”/ 《大中国》 – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPkOUfhUHMY>)

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Chapter 10

Triple updates ahead! Brace yourselves.

After dinner, Zhuang Dong Na, in order to assume the role of a generous and polite hostess, offered to have Jiang Chen send us home. Taking into account the location and time, as well as the cost of taking a cab, Su Rui and I graciously and shamelessly accepted this blessing.

I thought Zhuang Dong Na would accompany us throughout the trip, but I didn't expect that Jiang Chen, with a doctor's practical and realistic way of handling things efficiently, would plan the most convenient route according to the geographical location of our addresses. Hence, Su Rui alighted the car ten minutes later, Zhuang Dong Na also got home, but not before throwing me an intense look as she got off which I interpreted as that of, "You better stay away from my boyfriend. You're an unwanted third party who caused me not to kiss my boyfriend goodbye!"

When it was only me and Jiang Chen left inside the car, in order to avoid swords being drawn and crossbows being bent*, I had to close my eyes and pretend to be asleep. Only that I have no idea why, but the car suddenly came to a stop at the roadside and the engine was slow in turning over, making my little act of pretending to be asleep very hard to perform. (T/N: Swords drawn, crossbows bent means be in mutual hostility)

Just when I was struggling whether to carry through the act till the end or to wake up to know what was happening, Jiang Chen's voice suddenly reached my ears, "Chen Xiaoxi, stop playing dead in front of me. The car stalled, get off and give it a push."

As I am certain that I could never afford even a single tyre in this lifetime, I only have the most superficial, and the most literal

understanding of a car's brand and structure. For example, BMW is the most expensive of all cars, because its name has the word "treasure". Mercedes-Benz is the fastest of all cars, because it is called "run fast". Shanghai Volkswagen is the most common/popular car, because its name is very familiar, and besides, all the cabs in the city are Shanghai Volkswagen. The rest of the car brands are just there to buy soy sauce*. (T/N: BMW is "Bao Ma" in Chinese with the word "bao" meaning treasure. Mercedes-Benz is "Ben Chi" with "ben" meaning to run and "chi" meaning fast therefore run fast. Shanghai Volkswagen is "Shanghai Da Zhong" with "da" meaning big and "zhong" meaning crowd, therefore big crowd/ masses, also "popular" when put together. "Buy soy sauce" is a buzzword meaning irrelevant (in this context) or to express disinterest. It was popularized when a passerby was asked his opinion regarding Edison Chen's scandal and his reply was "I don't give a sh*t. I'm just out buying soy sauce.")

Jiang Chen's car is a soy sauce car.

In the TVs, cars also frequently stall, hence I just calmly accepted the fact that Jiang Chen's soy sauce car broke down.

I don't know if it was that I was as strong as an ox or if a soy sauce car stalls its engine in a "soy sauce" way, in short I just casually gave it a push, and it lurched forward. I even got a sense of achievement which I find embarrassing to have.

I set off at a quick trot after the car to pull the car door open, only to find out that Jiang Chen had locked the car door which infuriated me instantly. Using a lowly person's mind, I guessed Jiang Chen's little act of making me get off the car was just to play with me. Hence I turned on my heel, and walked away at an exceptionally slow pace. My walking away was just to show I can still walk away with my head held high with my ego intact. I really don't intend to leave him as it's a terrible location to hail a cab.

Fortunately, Jiang Chen reversed his car and was keeping up with

me, I figured that since he isn't my boyfriend now, it's rare that he's still willing to lend me a hand out of an embarrassing situation, as such, "When there are steps for you to descend, do not hesitate to descend. Do not wait till there are no more steps and you can only stomp your feet in vain*." So I hurriedly opened the car door, but it was still locked.....(T/N: Giving someone steps to descend" is a Chinese way of describing allowing someone the chance to save face. The sentences here are a play on a poem from the Tang dynasty "Golden Thread Robes" where the original subject matter of these two lines were about flowers - "Do not hesitate to pick the twigs when flowers are in bloom, do not wait till the flowers wither and picking the twigs will be in vain.)

I couldn't help but scold him, "Jiang Chen, you can't insult me like this, if you don't want to send me home then say it outright, you, not opening the car door, what are you trying to get at!"

The window of the front door slowly rolled down, and Jiang Chen stuck his head out, "Chen Xiaoxi, you're freaking sick ah. Come take the front seat!"

.....

I fiddled with the handle, and embarrassedly opened the front door, after I got in and put on the seatbelt, I sincerely and earnestly told Jiang Chen, "I was, of course, only joking with you just now, but it was wrong for you to swear."

Jiang Chen ignored me, one foot was stepping on the gas pedal to its maximum extent. I burst with joy when I felt the seatbelt on me. Fortunately I've fastened it right away, otherwise, I would have long flown through the windshield, and ten minutes later, the police officer uncle would have arrived to outline my corpse with a chalk.

Jiang Chen whizzed through the road. Perhaps he started to contemplate how truly precious one's life is, and slowed down little by little. I felt relieved — put away my look as though I was greedy

for life and afraid of death, and switched it to a tranquil face as though I was accustomed to seeing strong winds and big waves.

The entire drive to my place went in silence, Jiang Chen finally stepped on the brakes and said, "We've reached."

As I was undoing my seatbelt, I thanked him as well, "Thank you for the dinner and for sending me back."

To this he nodded faintly, there was no sign of wanting to initiate small talk with me. I opened the car door preparing to get off, my feet haven't even stepped on the ground when my phone rang. Hence, I was fishing for my phone inside my bag while getting off the car, only when I got on the ground did I manage to find my phone, it was Su Rui.

"Hey."

"Chen Xiaoxi, did you got home?" Su Rui's voice was indistinct.

"Just arrived." I turned around and closed the car door. Just as I was about to lean on the car window to wave Jiang Chen goodbye, the car lurched forward like a shooting arrow, leaving a cloud of dust on its wake.

".....conspicuous." A bunch of indistinct words from Su Rui went through my ears, I put down my hand that was hanging mid-air with a wry smile, "Speak properly, I can't hear you clearly."

Su Rui said, "I'm eating ice cream, I said I was afraid Doctor Jiang giving you a lift was to destroy your corpse not leaving any marks. After all, when doctors kill, they're the most inconspicuous."

I replied with a snigger, "You're such a girl, actually eating ice cream."

"Who said eating ice cream is girly!" Su Rui yelled, "My dad also eats ice cream!"

I laughed heartily, "It only proves that your dad also has feminine qualities."

"Hey, when it comes to my dad, I only feel sad." I could detect from Su Rui's voice that he was laughing. "I've always suspected that him marrying my mom, and giving birth to jie jie & I were just a pretense. I also made my brother-in-law take away my dad for his research. It's a pity he did not dare do so."

"It's better to have given birth to a piece of barbecued pork* than you." I replied while almost turning my bag upside down, looking for the building key. "Hey, is there anything else? I can't find my key, I have to concentrate in looking for it." (T/N: a popular, wacky expression more popular among the Cantonese speaking regions used to voice a mother's disappointment over a misbehaving child (implying a piece of char siu is much more appealing than their child at this point, lol.)

"Nevermind, you're so heartless, bye." Su Rui's words were indistinct. I reckon he ate ice cream again.

"Bye." I threw my phone into my bag, and was rummaging through it under the faint light emitted by the lamp post when suddenly, a car was approaching with its headlights glaring. I subconsciously grabbed my bag to block my eyes with. I thought the car was just going to pass by quickly, but it came to a stop not far away, its headlights were not turned off and seemingly looked brighter and more dazzling. I tried hard to adjust my sight on the strong light and slowly lowered my bag, looking at the person in the strong light beam walking unhurriedly towards me.

Jiang Chen.

The Jiang Chen that accompanied me through my most pure, most beautiful years. The Jiang Chen who is my favorite, looking as though he just crossed over the merciless times, the prehistoric universe, and was suddenly standing in front of me again.

I bit my lower lip with a wry smile. It's no wonder that in action movies, cops love to use bright lights when interrogating criminals, it turns out that it could help make people want to instantly pour out and reveal some things buried in the depths of one's mind.

"Chen Xiaoxi." Jiang Chen called out my name whilst looking at me.

I lifted my gaze to meet his, put on a strong act, and smiled at him with such calmness, "Why did you turn around back here?"

I desperately tried to suppress the surging from deep inside my heart, I desperately tried to ignore the voice in my heart that continuously clamored at me to chase back this stupid guy who wants to take my life.

He reached out his hand to me, and opened his palm, "You dropped your keys in my car."

"It probably fell out when I was looking for my phone." I picked up the keys from his palm. "Thank you."

In the movies, those travel-worn male leads who are on their way home, would never return just to hand over a key. I really am not fated to become the female lead.

Jiang Chen, however, didn't turn away like what I have imagined, he was just standing there looking at me, which made me strongly doubt if I ought to give him a bow or kneel in front of him in order to express my gratitude.

I also don't know how long it took before he said, "Chen Xiaoxi, I'm very busy, I have a lot of things to do, do you understand?"

I smiled apologetically, "I understand, I'm sorry for troubling you to make another trip."

He still did not budge, "You know I'm not talking about this."

I shook my head, "I don't know."

His face suddenly looked angry, "Do you have to make me explain it to you clearly?"

I nodded, "Explain clearly."

He's really angry, because when he gets angry he would squeeze his mouth tight which would make a dimple slightly deeper than that of when he smiles, appear. I zeroed in on the dimple which looks darker than the rest of his face in this backlit state when my heart suddenly had a strange impulse. Before I could react, I've long reached my hand out to poke his dimple twice with my index finger.

He certainly did not expect me to suddenly do such an action because I also didn't see that coming too.

What both of us didn't expect made us very shocked, so he was looking at me, and I was looking at him, in mutual silence.

Finally, he let out a cough twice, "What do you mean?"

I casted him a sincere look, "I really don't know."

Jiang Chen gave a long sigh, and grudgingly said, "Why do you not know anything at all?"

I bit my lips and replied, "Since you know everything, you tell me."

He stared at me for a moment with a complex expression, looking as though he had made up his mind on something and is determined, like he's about to smash an already cracked pot to pieces*, he said with a deep voice, "Apologize to me." (T/N: it means writing oneself off as hopeless in the midst of a setback so they act recklessly, and let things unfold on its own for the worst.)

I froze for a moment, "What?"

“Apologize to me.” He repeated with his deep voice.

I found it a bit unbelievable, using such calm and collected, mature voice for a childish request like this, acting as if it’s the rightful thing to do, what’s up with him?

“Apologize.” He urged impatiently.

When it comes to Jiang Chen, I always have this indescribable feeling of being small, this feeling makes me involuntarily take his every word, so I squeezed the key tightly in my hand and uttered in a low voice, “I’m sorry.”

He breathed a sigh of relief, “There won’t be a next time. Got it?”

I nodded, with a vague feeling that we don’t seem to be talking about the same thing, as a matter of fact, we’re really not talking about the same thing as Jiang Chen suddenly gave me the most gentle smile, and said, “Come over here.”

I didn’t know I’ve already taken two steps towards him, he leaned over, and kissed me.

It’s quite a long kiss, if I have to describe it, I think it’s like I swallowed roughly around a can of cola of Jiang Chen’s saliva.

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Chapter 11

After experiencing a series of what feels like I've been struck by lightning, naturally I don't remember how I went back home to wash up and lie on my bed.

After lying on my bed for about half an hour, only then did I slowly start to regain back my composure. I started thinking if this is me dreaming at night about what I was thinking in the day*, or there's something wrong with Jiang Chen's brain; or did I fantasize too much, or was Jiang Chen possessed by a ghost. No matter what I thought off, I still couldn't think of a reasonable answer. Hence, I could only tell myself to treat it as though I got bitten by a dog. (T/N: a Chinese idiom that describes if someone is continuous thinking about something in the daytime, you will end up dreaming about it at night. It's quite true. Happens to me quite a lot!)

I slowly fell asleep while recollecting the flavour of been bitten by a dog.

When I woke up the next day my cheek muscles were hurting badly. Probably because last night I was dreaming endlessly. In the dream it was all about the kiss with Jiang Chen. Because of that kiss, we constantly overused our lips and tongues. I think this is not good, I am a little shy.

While on the way to work on the train, my phone rang. I stared at the 3 words that were flashing on my phone screen – Zhuang Dong Na. I was so scared I shuddered. At this moment I really admire the mistresses in our community. How strong are they psychologically to be able to withstand that guilt when facing the legal wife?

I swallowed my saliva and answered the call, "hello."

"Hey it's me. How was last night?" Zhuang Dong Na said with a

happy tone to it.

I almost bit my tongue the moment I opened my mouth, "Dong Na... I.... That..."

"Which?" She asked.

I wanted to apologize to her, but I also felt that I was quite innocent. Therefore, I couldn't finish what I wanted to say. Instead I quickly said, "I am on my way to work, the train is too crowded. I will call you back later."

I hung up straight away. There is actually not much people this morning. The mere six or seven people in the cabin all looked at me when I dropped the call. The looks on their faces seem to be saying: "Look at you blatantly telling a lie, your face just looks like a mistress face, you won't die a good death..."

The me who won't die a good death gloomily hid to a corner of the cabin and call Situ Mo. I briefly explained to her about what happened and sought her advice as a person's wife - whether I deserve a death penalty or not.

Situ Mo comforted me and said, "You don't have to be scared. Woman like Zhuang Dong Na will the most grab your hair and bang you into the wall for revenge. She won't find people to gang rape you."

She also told me to call Fu Pei since she thinks that he, as a role model of someone who toyed with countless of girls but has yet to be thrown to jail, he should be able to tell me how to handle such situation.

Fu Pei was dismissive after hearing my description of what happened, which I avoided the important points but harped on the insignificant. He said, "You called early in the morning to disturb my sleep just for this small thing? Obviously, the guy should be the one

to solve this problem. What are you worried for?"

As expected of a player, his words woke me up.

I hung up my call with Fu Pei and called Jiang Chen. In order to give me enough confidence, the moment the line engaged I started to ramble on, "Jiang Chen you listen, I don't care about why you kissed me last night, but a kiss is a kiss, I have to point out that your action is extremely wrong, you have a girlfriend now, you kissing me means you are forcing me to walk a road of being a mistress. My mom said, a mistress who destroys other couple's relationship will have bad karma. That's right, I still love you, but you should stop looking down on people, I will definitely not be a mistress....."

I stopped to take a breath, realized that the other side of the line was quiet and thought that Jiang Chen was reflecting, I decided to take advantage and fired again, "I mean, if you think that you were acting on impulse last night, I can act as if nothing happened. If you say you still have feelings for me, then lets take it step by step. You settle with Zhuang Dong Na first, then you have to woo me..... Why are you not talking?"

"Er.... I'm Doctor Su." A female voice came through the line, "Doctor Jiang is not around, I saw that his phone was ringing for quite long, and the screen shows your name, so I helped to answer."

For that moment it was like a bolt from the blue. The thought that those shameless words I said just now had gone to her ear, I felt like killing myself by swallowing my phone.

I gritted my teeth and grumbled, "Why didn't you say anything when you picked up the phone?"

"You spoke too fast, I wasn't in time to make a sound." She replied.

I thought that wasn't right and continued, "But I clearly stopped in between to take a breath."

She answered, "Oh, at that time I got addicted to what you were saying, felt that it was too exciting so I didn't have the heart to make a sound."

.....

I really don't want to use vulgarities to greet our benefactor, so I can only restrain my anger and said, "Alright, please get Jiang Chen to return a call to me."

"Wait, wait, If you really like Doctor Jiang, then what about my brother?" Doctor Su asked worriedly.

I'm confused. "What's it got to do with Su Rui?"

She said, "My brother likes you ah*. How about I give you an idea. You shouldn't be a mistress that eats back from the same pasture**. It's lack of moral. You should just be with my brother. In a few more years he will be legal to marry and you two can just register for marriage." (*T/N: ah is like an exclamation.)(**T/N: There is a Chinese idiom that goes, "a good horse doesn't come back to eat the same pasture", meaning that one should not go back to one's past experiences in any circumstances.)

I didn't quite understand. "What do you mean? How old is Su Rui this year?"

She said, "17. He didn't want to attend the national college entrance examinations last year, said that he wants to start his own business, so he opened a shop. The clothes in his shop are all designed by him. I feel that my brother is a genius, he has a lot of potential. You should just be with him, our family won't mind that you are old."

17 ah.... Why does this kid look so old?

I said without strength, "You should stop joking, I will be sent to jail for seducing a minor."

She continued to advise, "Furthermore, I think an older woman and younger man relationship is pretty good, you can use my brother's yang to replenish your yin*, you won't seem old easily that way too." (T/N: The idiom used in the novel is 采阳补阴 "take yang replenish yin", though the correct idiom should be 采阴补阳 "take yin replenish yang". It is believed that yin is female and yang is male. In ancient times, a male will borrow a female's yin to strengthen himself through sleeping with her. Dr. Su exchanges Xiaoxi and Su Rui's roles here, that's why the yin and yang words are switched in the novel version.)

....I sincerely feel that, the Su siblings were sent from the heavens to catch me for spreading happiness in the human world.

Therefore I moved my phone a little further from me, my voice drifting away from the phone, "What... ah... the sig..nal... in train... not good... I need to work..... Bye...."

I kept my phone and heaved a sigh of relief. I looked up and saw at all the people in the cabin are staring at me, with despise in their eyes. I opened my mouth in an attempt to explain something, but ultimately decided to turn around and face the cabin's wall.

Behind me came voices of people in conversation, "Ay, young people these days, can't even lie properly, working on a weekend?"

"It's you who can't keep up with times, some careers will only have good business on weekends and night time."

"Seducing minor ah.. Should be shot to death."

"Ay this you do not understand. There is no gender, age, height differences in love."

"Then why not we don't categorize at all, we can date chicken, duck, cow, sheep, or dog."

.....

I escaped the train at the next stop and took the opposite train back home. Why did I forget that today is a weekend....?

It took me about 1 hour plus for me to finally reach home. At this time, I am also too tired and lazy to care about the tangled and complicated feelings anymore. I decided to make use of this beautiful holiday to take a long nap. I even specially turned off my phone. Even a soul-stirring romance cannot go against the carefree-ness of being able to sleep without any trouble.

I switched off my phone, changed into my pajamas, tossed around in my bed but was unable to find peace. In my head is all the stares and looks from the people in the train. I have this feeling that if I don't do anything, I will definitely go to hell when I die.

Therefore, I got up and took my phone and prepared to call Zhuang Dong Na. My finger hovered above the call button for a few seconds, but was unable to find the courage to. In the end I only sent out a short message: Jiang Chen kissed me last night, I swear I didn't seduce him, sorry.

As I expected, the phone rang almost immediately. Zhuang Dong Na told me a shocking news, she said that she and Jiang Chen had never dated, she was only asked by Jiang Chen to play along with him. The remuneration is that she can receive family-like-care when if needs to go to the hospital to see the doctor. I am not sure what to reply, I can only express my shock about this deal. After all, the remuneration is also not very auspicious....

Lastly, Zhuang Dong Na asked if I can introduce her to Su Rui whom we had dinner with together last night, I told her that he is only 17 years old. She used a single word starting with 'F' to end our call. (T/N: Yes, its probably that 4 letter word.)

Xri | Dolly | Amy

Chapter 12

Thank you for patiently waiting! Let's welcome Wu Bosong.

Hanging up the phone, I felt that there was a need for me to sort out my own state of emotions properly. Hence I clasped a cup of tea and sat by the window, constructing an artistic mood of me being deep in thought.

Having broken up for three years, I really wasn't waiting for Jiang Chen. I wanted to find a person, perhaps his eyes would resemble his, perhaps his dimples would resemble his, perhaps he would like to drink Nongfu Spring just like him, and yet perhaps he wouldn't resemble him in any way..... Then we would have a romance, get married, and rely on each other for a long time. I would love him, just like how I loved Jiang Chen, not in the least holding back.

Yet that Jiang Chen whom I was not waiting for, mistakenly via a combination of unexpected random factors, had returned in front of me again. Furthermore, it seemed like he was unlike me, he was waiting for me. If he wasn't, I also decided to continue misunderstanding it as such, for who asked him to find a shill*? In television drama serials, the male and female leads' shills were all used to stir up the other party's jealousy, even though the remuneration he offered Zhuang Dong Na made me suspect that it was more probable that he was actually helping the hospital to solicit customers. (T/N: shill - "an accomplice of a confidence trickster or swindler who poses as a genuine customer to entice or encourage others" [Definition from Oxford Dictionaries])

In my heart, I silently fashioned Jiang Chen into a person who was painfully awaiting my return and who would stop at nothing for me, moreover feeling that upon analysis, this matter was quite entertaining. For a while, I also didn't know how I ought to evaluate Jiang Chen's IQ for doing such a childish thing. But Jiang Chen's IQ

when it came to relationships had always not been very high, I had profound experience in this aspect.

For example, our first kiss.

At that time, Jiang Chen and I had been dating for the greater part of a month, our progress had always stopped at the kind of superficial stage such as holding hands to exchange the perspiration on our hands. Occasionally Jiang Chen's male hormones would be in excess, and he would kiss my cheek, it was very pure and of small beauty.

However, after Lin Xiao from our dorm who had ample experience in romance pointed out that such progress was severely lagging when compared to the general romances of young men and women, I was very vexed. I thought that it was because I myself had insufficient charm that was not enough to cause Jiang Chen to generate towards me the urges that young men ought to have. For this reason, I called the entire dorm over to inspect my shortcomings together, and finally the conclusion of the inspection that we arrived at was that I was not feminine enough. And for us, this group of humankind who had never left our ivory towers, femininity equalled wearing a dress, and it had better be a low-cut one.

Actually, this was a prejudice, femininity really had no relation to whether you were revealing your two bare legs or the two pieces of flesh in front of your chest.

My omnipotent roommates helped me find a dress that revealed my chest, I twirled around a few times showing it off in the dorm, one after another, they expressed that they did feel my feminine fragrance assail their nostrils. (T/N: in Chinese, femininity translates directly to "woman smell", hence assailing nostrils)

After that, I went off alluringly to go on a date with Jiang Chen. As we sat on a long bench beside the sports field, Jiang Chen indeed appeared to have a heart of a monkey and the mind of a horse*, I felt

very accomplished, hence I also pulled the hem of my skirt up, only to see a few red bumps that came from mosquito bites lying side by side on my thigh. I could only pull the hem of my skirt back down.

(T/N: idiom describing someone with disorderly messy thoughts that are as uncontrollable as monkeys/horses, means something like being frisky/capricious etc)

Jiang Chen told me about the interesting anecdotes of their medical faculty. He said that there were a few senior guys in the cohort before his who stole a sheep leg after finishing their experiments to bring back to the dorm and cook hotpot, after they were done eating the entire dorm drowsily slept for two days, it turned out that that sheep had been injected with a great amount of anesthesia; he also told me about a time when their faculty's dorm caught a thief, the whole group of them surrounded the thief and beat him up wildly, the thief really couldn't endure it any longer and hence pretended to be dead, someone produced a stethoscope from their dorm and diagnosed that this person's heartbeat was strong and powerful, hence everyone beat him up even more happily; he also said.....

In short, Jiang Chen suddenly became a chatterbox, and being his girlfriend, I could only laugh with him, moreover, I laughed till I was like a blossoming sprig trembling disorderly*, if not it appeared like I wasn't giving him face*. (T/N: a Chinese idiom describing the physical movement of a beautiful/wanton woman laughing heartily) (T/N: 'giving face' is a phrase that is a direct English translation from Cantonese which means showing someone respect and honour. This whole concept of 'giving face' is really important in Chinese culture - e.g. if your employer says something wrong, even when you correct him, you have to be tactful and ensure you are 'giving face' to him at the same time.)

He talked and talked, then he suddenly asked me, "Did you spray perfume?"

I didn't, so I firmly shook my head.

He looked at me suspiciously, took a deep breath and said, "I definitely smelled something."

I with great exertion took a few breaths, then with a sudden epiphany said, "Oh, you are talking about this? This is the smell of eau de toilette, my thigh was bitten fiercely by mosquitoes."

He skeptically said, "It doesn't smell like eau de toilette."

I took a moment to recall, scratched my head and said, "Eau de toilette wasn't cooling enough, I applied some medicated oil as well."

.....

He didn't say anything more. I also didn't know what I had said wrongly, but I roughly guessed that he did not like the smell on myself at all, hence I quietly shifted myself to the furthest end on the bench. Half my butt was hanging in the air.

Just like this, we remained in a deadlock on a stone bench beside the sports field.

Finally, he suddenly said angrily, "Chen Xiaoxi, come over here."

I thought, "He isn't going to beat me up, is he?" I had heard of a type of boyfriend who derived enjoyment from beating his girlfriend. However, I still shifted my butt horizontally across while asking him, "Whatever for?"

"Give me a kiss," he answered.

I turned rigid at the one-third position of the bench, not knowing what to do. Even though it was my final goal to have him put forward this request, but I still failed to live up to expectations and was scared out of my wits. I most likely am that sort of people they talk about who has the heart of a thief* yet has no guts of a thief. (T/N:

meaning evil intentions)

“Hurry up,” he urged.

“Oh.” I subconsciously shifted to his side quickly. The stone bench was a little ice-cold at the region by his side, I rigidly sat up straight, it was like there was a slab of stone vertically erected on top of a slab of stone.

Jiang Chen turned my shoulders over with immense strength, causing me to have to sound out an “Aiya!” to remind him to not wring and dislocate my shoulders.

He said, “What are you saying “Aiya” for, why are you so unromantic*?” (T/N: the original Chinese idiom means to not understand when the other party has romantic intentions towards you, to be unromantic/insensitive)

As soon as he finished speaking, his lips came over and pasted against mine, I thought, “You can’t do this, you can’t not give me time to defend myself after criticising me and just block my mouth, it’s not like you are paying me hush money over here.”

Later on, I asked him if he was attracted by my swaying, elegant appearance when I wore a dress, he said, “No, your calves are quite thick,”; I then asked him if it could be that he was attracted by the smell of eau de toilette combined with medicated oil, he said “No, it smells like Formalin,”; I refused to drop the matter and asked if it could be that the calling sounds of the insects at the sports field had awakened his animalistic side, he said, “Are you nuts?”; I said, “Then what is it exactly?”, he said that he just wanted to kiss and see if the tactile sensation of the skin tissue of the lips was any different from that of normal skin.

.....

That flower-petal like romantic dream about my first kiss of mine

was ruthlessly defiled by him just like that, I might as well have given my first kiss to someone else.....

Just as I was vexing about not having given my first kiss to a stranger back in the day and recalling the most handsome stranger I had seen in my life, the doorbell rang. My heart dropped as it thumped a few times, like the feeling of weightlessness you get in a descending elevator. I took a deep breath, and prepared to deal with Jiang Chen with the face of a cold stepmother*, perhaps I could get a few pleading cries in exchange from him, to make up for the many years of hardship chasing him when I was young.

It was just that I was too happy, my hand as I reached out to wring to door handle was trembling as if I was holding a cheque for 20 million RMB.

I tremblingly opened the door, before I saw clearly who had arrived, I was almost strangled to death by a bear hug. I thought that it was Jiang Chen erupting with passion, and gratifyingly patted his shoulder and said, "Don't be emotional, don't be emotional."

Just as I finished speaking, I smelled a strong scent of Eau de Cologne, hence I with great force pushed away the person who was hugging me.

The person who was standing before my eyes had slender eyes, the outer corners of his eyes were slanting up, he was giving a lopsided smile, from the corners of his mouth were two arcs, it was really devilish with a hint of uninhibition.

He was Wu Bosong.

I have to admit, I have never been a brave or persistent person, in my entire life, the most brave and persistent thing I have done was to chase after Jiang Chen, but even with regards to this matter, the evaluation that Jiang Chen gave of it was not good. He said, "You are like a cat who has only ever eaten cat kibble, when you see a rat, you

only know how to pursue it based on natural instinct, but if you see a fish, you would also be enticed away very quickly by it.” In this inspired and masterful analogy of his, I was the cat and he was the rat, and Wu Bosong was – that fish.

In other words, Wu Bosong was a brief interlude in the thorny road of me having unrequited love for Jiang Chen, I described this brief interlude as another small beauty I picked up enroute of not being able to obtain love. Jiang Chen’s description was more direct and hard-hitting, he used two idioms involving plants to describe it, he said, “Temperament like water, like a poplar tree*; the red apricot tree growing over the garden wall*.” I felt that he truly was mistaken. (T/N: the first idiom describes a woman who is fickle minded and frivolous and who is not single-minded in love) (T/N: the second idiom describes a wife who is having an affair/illicit lover)

Wu Bosong transferred to our class in the second semester of Senior Year 3 from another part of the country. Carrying his schoolbag on his back, he entered the door following behind the form teacher’s back. With our creepy/wretched form teacher whose forehead was balding and who foamed at the corners of his mouth when speaking serving as a foil, the transfer student’s appearance with a thick head of chestnut hair that grew past his ears, smiling with the corner of his mouth slanted was very stunning, just like a celestial being.

He smiled as he nodded, saying, “Hello everyone, I’m called Wu Bosong.”

The moment he lowered his head, I felt like there was a ray of light flashing, only then did I realize that there was a shiny reflective object on his earlobe, it was most likely a stud earring.

Towards a transfer student of unknown origin, everyone’s hearts were all surging with curiosity, and towards a transfer student of unknown origin who was wearing a stud earring on one ear and yet was not forced by the teacher to chop off his ear, everyone’s

curiosity was surging even more turbulently to the maximum possible limit.

As the head of the “Curiosity Sect”, I was pushed forward by the flowery, elegant words of everyone who was shameless and had placed all their hopes and expectations on me to have a chat with the transfer student.

Hence, my opening words were, “Classmate who has just arrived, let’s have a chat.”

He was in the process of shoving books into the belly of the school desk, when he heard my words, his hands paused for a moment, and he lifted his head to take a look at me. “Chat about what? Handing in protection fees?”

I scratched my head and asked unknowingly, “What protection fees?”

He stuffed the last stack of books in his hands into the desk, straightened his body, and laughed while crooking the corner of his mouth, “I’m joking, I’m called Wu Bosong, what about you?”

I could clearly hear a few sounds of people sucking in breaths from behind my back, and noises of “Chen Guanxi”..... The more I heard, the more angry I was, I turned around, put my hands on my waist and shouted at the female classmates behind me, “What Chen Guanxi! I’m called Chen Xiaoxi, how many times must I tell you guys, this is not funny, not funny not funny not funny!”

Even though back then Edison Chen’s great and noble pioneering work of the “gate” series* had not yet happened, but there were still quite a few senseless people who liked to repeatedly use our names to make jokes, I was often pressured by this till it drove me mad, it wasn’t funny, it wasn’t funny, what exactly was so funny about this..... (T/N: mentioned in an earlier chapter was Edison’s photo scandals, because it was so far-reaching and so widely publicised, it’s

often called the “Gaudy Photos Gate” in Chinese media, like how scandals are often labelled with the -gate suffix)

A group of classmates were baffled by me shouting at them, only after quite a while did someone faintly say, “We were saying that he looks like Edison Chen when he smiles, you are too sensitive.....”

.....

I, that... I don't want to live.

Wu Bosong behind me laughed as he asked, “You're called Chen Xiaoxi?”

With my back facing him, I nodded. “Yes, welcome to our class.”

After I finished speaking, I escaped back to my seat without looking back, leaned forward and laid down on the desk pretending to be dead. Just as I was pretending to the point of perfection, till even I myself thought that I had really died, something poked me from the back. I turned my head around weakly, Jiang Chen who was sitting at the desk behind mine was dangling a ballpoint pen that was sandwiched between his thumb and index finger. “Your pen dropped.”

I took it easily. “Oh.”

“Meddling in other people's business, right.” Jiang Chen's whole face was rejoicing in my misfortune. “Edison Chen is staring at you and smiling.”

I inclined my head and took a look at Wu Bosong, indeed he was looking at me while smiling, I could only squeeze out a smile reluctantly in response. Turning my body around, I collapsed my upper body on Jiang Chen's desk and wailed in anguish, “It's so embarrassing, I'm not going to live.”

He used the practice book in his hand to tap me on the head.

“Serves you right, if you think it’s embarrassing, in the future, don’t go and join in the fun blindly.”

I had since long ago trained my entire body to be completely impervious to Jiang Chen’s blows, I could even shamelessly ask him, “If I were to look for him to play*, would you be jealous?” (T/N: meaning to hang out)

He looked askance at me. “I’ll thank him.”

.....

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Chapter 13

Wu Bosong's arrival instilled a new force into the male students of our remotely located school. For a point in time, the female students were also falling over each other in their eagerness to spread the news: Class 6 of first year high school came out with a fresh good whose style was considerably unconventional, and a smile which resembled that of Chen Guanxi's.

Wu Bosong's limelight has overshadowed Jiang Chen for a short while, I've endlessly felt so sorry for Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen on the other hand, only commented that there was something wrong with my brain.

In order to express my support for Jiang Chen occupying the number one male position in the entire campus. I kept on showing my disdain towards Wu Bosong's appearance, and on more than one occasion, has publicly made high criticisms with regards to his look. Included among these, was his brown hair which countless of girls have beautified as that of a Japanese hairstyle, together with his Western-style stud earring — I said a yellowish hair was naturally due to malnutrition, and that wearing stud earrings, was naturally effeminate. I've also said, he made himself look like a bad boy, his performance in school must be very poor, and that surely he isn't a good person, a delinquent, and perhaps is someone who takes drugs and kills people.

I don't know why the younger me must have to shamelessly slander Wu Bosong this way, perhaps all the exam-oriented education was wrong. If at that time I committed murder and arson, perhaps it's also the mistake of this education. In short, a thousand mistakes, were all my mistakes.

However, Wu Bosong in my unflagging efforts of slandering him, showed magnanimity that was rare within people of our age.

Whenever our gazes would meet, he would give me a faint smile, his eyes filled with mirth, as that of a father watching a mischievous son.

With regards to this matter, it was Jiang Chen's behavior which surprised me. There was a time when he suddenly called me over to a dusky corner, I was thinking that he either wanted to confess his love, or collude in scheming with me. Hence, my heart was anxious from too much excitement.

It turned out that, he only gravely and seriously gave me a warning, "Chen Xiaoxi, I don't want to hear you speak ill against Wu Bosong again."

I tried to suppress my frustration and asked him, "Why?"

"Making rumors is wrong." He simply said so.

I could only nod like pounding garlic* and express regret for my past deeds. (T/N: The expression pounding garlic refers to nodding one's head (also commonly kowtowing) lots of times as though one's head looks like a pestle pounding a garlic.)

At that time, I had some kind of a very inexplicable tendency to worship Jiang Chen. Even if he'd say that the sky is green, the clouds are blue, the color of poop is that of a rainbow, I would only nod and say, 'Yes, you are right.'

Of course, I'm also quite fortunate that I've worshipped such a person during my moronic phase. He'd point out to me some things that were wrong, and indeed those things were wrong.

So as to convince Jiang Chen that I've sincerely repented and mended my mistaken ways, I ripped a page from my desk mate's notebook which has a photo of F4 at the very top, and wrote a very touching apology towards Wu Bosong on this tiny slip of paper during our Math class.

I've long forgotten what I wrote word per word, but I remember

receiving his reply which was written on a scrap paper, "It's alright, but my name is Wu Bosong, not Wu Songbai.

(T/N: The characters for Wu Bosong's name is 吴柏松 with 柏 'bo' being an identical character to 'bai' which means cypress, and 松 'song' meaning pines individually, but when interchanged will become 松柏 'songbai' which is a collective word for 'pines and cypress' in Chinese.)

His correction has made me realize that his name was extremely confusing. This reminded me of a topic in my homework during the summer vacation of grade school: 'Write down words that have similar configuration* as the following words 'bee (蜜蜂 mifeng) - honey (蜂蜜 fengmi)'. And the reason why this was so deeply ingrained in my memory was because my answer made Old Chen give me a ruthless beating - flow downwards (流下 liuxia) - vulgar/obscene (下流 xialiu).

(T/N: The question was to come up with words that can be reversed and still come up with a word that is closely related to the original word, another example would be cow (奶牛 nainiu) - milk (牛奶 niunai) but of course Xiaoxi's mind doesn't work like that.)

After this matter has passed through, my favorable impression towards Wu Bosong has naturally increased significantly, I felt that he was truly a virtuous man who requite evil with goodness, furthermore I thought that the stud earring on his ear was truly sparkling, especially attracting affection.

But strangely enough, Wu Bosong was surprisingly so good to me. He would buy me all sorts of snacks from the corner store. He would teach me English and Math (I guessed it right, his grades were indeed very poor, besides English and Math of which he is unexpectedly ranked first in the entire school, his scores on the other subjects were of single digit.) He would give me his jacket when it suddenly gets cold.....There was once I was left behind after dismissal to update the bulletin board, he even cooked instant

noodles for me and carried it over to the classroom (he's the only student in school who stays at the teacher's quarters), and that bowl of noodles even comes with an egg. The steam from the noodles made my eyes sting, I was slurping noodles while asking Wu Bosong who was helping me color on the bulletin board, "Why are you so nice to me?"

I'd drawn a girl on the bulletin board, the girl was virtuously holding a book with both hands, at that time, Wu Bosong was coloring the cover of the book yellow, he said that it was called 'a girl looking at a yellow* book'. (T/N: Porn is literally yellow book in Chinese.)

Wu Bosong didn't turn his head when he replied, "There are plenty of reasons why."

I gave it a thought, this guy shouldn't have taken a liking to me, right? But I believe that it might also be possible, after all, he isn't blind.....Actually, my self-confidence had long been spooked away by Jiang Chen, leaving it to scatter into pieces, that I reckoned a senior monk who has already achieved the Dao could never beckon it to come back.

Hence, I just simply ate the noodles while he continued coloring, with chalk dust flying about. Occasionally, I would also ask him a question or two, "Where did you study before? Why did you transfer to our school?"

He was already coloring the girl's skirt pink, "X province, my dad wants me to study second year high school abroad. He has already contacted the school and planned everything, so I said I wanted to go back to grandfather's hometown to have one last look."

"Ah? Then aren't you leaving soon?" I suddenly felt quite disappointed that he was going to leave. Who's going to fill up my stomach which has just been going through puberty in the future?

He threw away the chalk, and turned around to sit on the desk facing me, "Why? You can't bear to part with me?"

I reached out my hand and patted his legs that were shaking in front of me, "Stop shaking, it's making me dizzy, it's just that I'll go through starvation when you're gone."

He didn't say anything, just looked pensively out the window, I also foolishly followed suit, and saw Jiang Chen standing by the window. Shrouded by the faint light of the coming evening, he was using his extraordinary temperament to aptly convey the ghost part in 'A Chinese Ghost Story'.

I don't know why, but watching him, because he was situated in a poorly lit area, as well as his sorry lump of a figure, I suddenly had a feeling of being caught, like a maiden guilty of being defiled on the bed. As I was holding the bowl of steaming noodles with both of my hands, I was itching to knock my head unto it.

Jiang Chen raised his knuckles and knocked on the glass window, "Chen Xiaoxi, I bumped into Uncle Chen at the alley just now, he asked me to call you home for dinner."

After he was done saying it, he left without another word.

I placed the bowl on the desk and hurriedly ran out. Wu Bosong was calling me from behind, a few words and 'Chen Xiaoxi'. When I made it to the door, I heard him say, "You haven't finished eating yet."

I replied in one breath, "You can throw it, I'll eat at home."

I ran out, but I couldn't find Jiang Chen, obviously because his legs were surely a lot longer than mine.

I spent a few minutes idling in the playground, and returned to the classroom to retrieve my bag. I stood in front of the classroom door watching from afar, Wu Bosong was still coloring the girl's skirt, the

golden hue of the twilight was pouring forth to the room, from the windows, the door, as well as all the little gaps, the chalk dust was dancing in magical flurry as the light catches them, the hot steam visible in the light was rising slowly from the bowl of noodles. I thought that the back view of a person, surrounded by the fluttering chalk dust, and the hot steam looked really nice.

I walked over to where he was, "I forgot my bag, and I also haven't eaten the egg in my noodles."

He turned around and smiled, showing a perfectly eye-catching set of pearly whites, "I've eaten the egg."

I was astonished, "You're really too fast."

He grumbled with much grievance, "You told me to throw it away ah, an egg is wasting an extra 50 cents."

He wasn't done talking but I've long seen the poached egg lying on top of the noodles, so I rolled my eyes and said, "You're too bored."

He shrugged and turned around to continue coloring, I took the chopsticks and poked through the egg with it, when I was holding it to stand upright it looked like an umbrella, so I very excitedly told him to take a look at it, "Hey, do you think this looks like an umbrella?"

He glanced sideways with a very scornful look, "If you won't eat it then I'll eat it."

He suddenly went silent, and then the egg that was skewered on the chopstick was snatched away by him using his mouth. I was holding my now empty chopstick, stunned. He must have been trained to snatch things with his mouth, right.....

Perhaps, that day when Jiang Chen left hurriedly, it has briefly took away my infatuation for him, and perhaps knowing that Wu Bosong was going to leave so soon, it made me cherish the friendship

between us even more. In short, I no longer hovered around Jiang Chen all day long, and instead suddenly became very close to Wu Songbai, as though he was an old friend of many years. But in the eyes of our schoolmates, we already looked like young sweethearts. I also don't know if we thought it was something not worth doing, or just because we wanted to uphold the principle of 'a clean hand needs no washing*' but we didn't do so much as explain ourselves. Anyway, things like 'feeling like old friends at first meeting*' was something too profound that these brats who only got into high school would never understand. (T/N: The entire saying is 清者自清, 浊者自浊 literally 'one who is pure is naturally pure, one who is impure is naturally impure' which means no matter how much an innocent person is implicated, they're still innocent. And no matter how much a vile person denies their wrongdoing, they're still vile, as such that they are both innocent then it will show, or in this case, let the truth speak for itself.)(T/N: Means they clicked/ hit it off right away.)

He only studied in our school for one semester, and went abroad summer vacation of first year high school. He had to ride the sleeping bus to go to the city, and then transfer on a train for X province, and from X province he would fly to New Zealand. I sent him off to the bus station, tugging on the strap of his backpack with reddened eyes, "You must remember to send me snacks back from New Zealand....."

He patted my head, cupped his fist with the other hand, and then winked at me, "I'm sure we'll meet again someday."

When the bus started moving, I waved my hand as hard as I could, he opened the window and stuck his head out, "I'll send you snacks from New Zealand."

I tearfully tried my hardest to nod, "You have to send the most expensive and delicious. Also, we will always be best friends."

He smiled and then shouted, "Alright."

I remember running into Jiang Chen at the mouth of the alley on my way home, his back was against me, standing in front of the electric meter box of their house. He was using a screwdriver to pick the wires, the back of his white t-shirt was soaked in sweat, and the cottony material was softly clinging to his back, showing a faint skin colour.

I couldn't help but be curious and ask him, "What are you doing?"

He inclined his head towards me, and said a bit distracted, 'You cried?'

I rubbed my eyes and replied, "Wu Bosong left."

He let out a grunt, and faintly said he also knew, and then whipped his head back to pick on those red, yellow, white, and green wires.

I asked again, "But what really are you doing?"

Jiang Chen suddenly thrust the screwdriver into the pocket of his jeans, and snapped at me, "Counting the wires, couldn't I?"

I was confronted by such temper which was a bit ridiculous so I yelled, "Alright! I just thought you were repairing the fuse or whatnot."

His face became livid and then blanched, it took him a long while before he softly mumbled, "I'm crazy." After which he turned around and went inside their house.

I closed the electric meter box that was opened widely for him. In fact, I also thought that his action of counting wires really did make him look a little bit crazy.

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We're about to head out of the drama plot soon so I'm gonna stop putting in header photos. (and not because I was too lazy to look for one hahaha *nervous laugh*)

Dolly | Xri | Amy

Chapter 14

Chen Xiaoxi , don't you think letting your guest wait at the door is a very ill-mannered thing to do?" Wu Bosong knocked on the opened wide metal gate, creating a clanging sound.

I leaned on one side to let him in, he sat on the sofa and laughed at me. I was still too immersed in memories and shock to snap out of it, I blinked and blinked my eyes, he was still there.

I fixed my eyes on him, from his ocean blue striped polo-tee to his Nike track shoes, then to his youthful 17~18 years old looking face. Su Rui should really learn to take care of his skin from Wu Bosong.

He suddenly took something out of his pocket and held it out in a fist towards me, "The New Zealand snacks that I owe you."

I spread out my palm doubtfully, he shifted this fist above my palm and let go of a packet of long green sweet. That packaging, that outlook, that is quite an international sweet - Wrigley's Doublemint Chewing Gum.

He is still smiling at me. I turned my head, having a sudden urge of wanting to cry. It's not that I want to be pretentious, but he's the friend that treated me the best during my youth, and he just suddenly disappeared, and suddenly appeared again, as though he had never missed a part of my life.

Furthermore, he still looked so young. Time didn't bear to slash his face but hacked mine into pieces. How can I not be sad? How can I not cry?

Wo Bosong was caught off guard, "Why are you crying?"

I stomped my feet and roared at him, "Where have you been all these years? When I fought with my boyfriend I couldn't find you,

when I fell out of love I couldn't find you, when I lost my job I couldn't find you, when I was hungry I couldn't find you too...."

He laughed while watching me make a fuss and pulled me down to sit on the sofa to say, "Calm down, I'm not your Chen Shi Mei*, it's not good to cry like that." (T/N: Chen Shi Mei was a heartless man who abandoned his wife and child for riches and politics influences in the Qing dynasty. Since then his name is used to represent a heartless man.)

I glared at him tearfully. I was crying like a pear blossom*, I was so pitiful, I was paying respect to our long-lost youth, crying for our incomprehensible friendship, stop putting gold to your own face**.(T/N: Originally used to describe Yang Gui Fei crying. She was one of the four beauties of ancient China. Now it is used to describe how loving/delicate a girl looks when crying.)(**T/N: self-praise)

After that we sat cross legged on the floor before the sofa, drank plain water and talked about our past.

Wu Bosong said, "After I reached New Zealand for half a month, when things were finally all settled down, my father called me to tell me that his company had declared bankruptcy."

I have never experienced bankruptcy, neither does my family's financial ability have the qualifications to declare bankrupt. The most we can only declare that we have no money. Therefore I was not able to understand the seriousness of that. But I didn't want to appear as ignorant, so I said in great sympathy and sadness, "Ah! How can that be....."

Heavens and earth know that my words were euphemistic terms of expressing comfort, its to lament the state of the universe and pity the fate of mankind. However, Wu Bosong still explained in detail about how his father trusted the wrong person, how the business went downhill, how there were cash flow problems. He explained till my eyes, expressions were lifeless. Finally he said, "Even if I tell you

too much you also won't understand."

After saying that I wouldn't understand, he carried on as though I understood. He explained more on the terms of bankruptcy law, and I had to act as though I was very sad even though I couldn't understand anything. At last I couldn't take it anymore. I interrupted him and said, "Stop talking, I am too sad. If you continue to talk I will even feel like donating money to you."

Wu Bosong looked into my eyes very seriously, "You don't understand, right?"

I shrugged, "I think I don't understand. Why not you start talking from why you disappeared?"

He laughed bitterly. "Sister, I went from being a young master* to having to work night and day to survive at a foreign country. You say where do I have the time to show concern about you?" (T/N: Young master is like Korean equivalent of a chaebol. Meaning a kid from a well to do and rich family.)

I nodded my head to show my understanding, "So, you returned with a successful business?"

He glared at me, "Don't you think that you should show care for the me who had suffered so much the past years?"

I said, "I will. But the level of care will depend on how successful you are."

Wu Bosong acted like he wanted to pour the cup of water on his hand on me, "These few years that we didn't see each other, you've become wittier."

I was feeling smug, "Our ancestral land's education is good."

What he continued saying was basically about how a man strived in a foreign land. Working part-time, applying for scholarship,

entering a multinational corporation.... Anyways it was pretty positive and inspirational. I listened till my blood was boiling with passion, making me want to strive for the best.

I asked him, "So your company sent you back here?"

Wu Bosong nodded, "That's right, just came back and I still can't acclimatize. Have been having diarrhea for three days, and I met Jiang Chen in the hospital."

"Jiang Chen told you I am here?" Only then did I remember my issue with Jiang Chen, so I told him what happened while adding oil and vinegar*. (T/N: adding other things or exaggerating on certain things that might have/ did not happen.)

Wu Bosong sighed, "I have to say, Jiang Chen is really unlucky to have met* you." (T/N: original word used here is 摊上. Usually used with negative things or trouble that one might have gotten into.)

I got really angry hearing it, I jumped up and threatened to use a broom to sweep him out.

He stood on the floor as though he was the ocean-quieting needle* , and said very calmly, "Have you ever thought about it, you finally managed to catch him after chasing after him so shamelessly. You then unreasonably broke up with him, but you still hope that he will one cry, two make a fuss, three hang himself** to plead to you. Aren't you making things too difficult for him?" (*T/N: Referencing from Journey to the West, lit. translation of 定海神针, which is a loooooong and huge pole that stands on the Dragon King of the East Sea's palace that no one could move until Sun Wu Kong came along. This same pillar later became his Ruyi Jingu Bang.) (**T/N: lit trans of 一哭二闹三上吊. Which just means to make a big hoo-ha if the person doesn't get what s/he wants.)

I said, "You can't be like this. We have to have principles. You are a friend on my side. Your principle is to back me up. If I were to kill

someone, then you must destroy the corpse for me, this is principle.”

Wu Bosong drank a mouth of water, “I didn’t contact you even after leaving for so long, that is because I believe even without my care you can still live very well, Jiang Chen will take care of you well.”

I said, “You are too much. You abandoned our friendship and made it sound so dignified, everything is correct from your point of view, you think you are a parent?”

Wu Bosong spoke again, “Do you know during the times we were always together, I could always feel Jiang Chen’s faint gaze. His feelings towards you is definitely not lesser than your feelings towards him.”

I said, “Wu Bosong you really have no shame. You can use a faint gaze to determine Jiang Chen’s feelings towards me. So why can’t you see from my faint gaze that I am going mad from your lecture? You should just return to New Zealand and sleep together with the koalas on the tree.”

Wu Bosong continued, “You think that it is impossible for you guys to be together, that his Mother will not agree. Don’t you like to watch romance, like to watch idol dramas? Wouldn’t true love triumph over everything else? If true love doesn’t triumph over everything why would it be freaking called true love. Also, koala belongs to the Australians*, not New Zealand. (T/N: not sure why the author used Australians here instead of Australia.)

I think we can’t come to a consensus even if we were to talk half a day, so I solemnly suggested, “Forget it forget it, let’s not talk about it, let’s talk about something serious.”

Wu Bosong said, “What serious thing?”

I said, “You just came back from overseas, you should have some imported goods, right? Anything to eat, wear or use, or even if it’s

just plastic bag, give me one. I really look up to foreign things.”

Wu Bosong sighed again, “I just hope you correct your attitude, stop faking, I thought you are some kind of invincible youth or pretty girl.”

I said, “It’s wrong of you to say that. Speak properly. What kind of hero are you to attack people’s age? Furthermore, I was also 15 ten years ago.”

Lastly, he threw a bomb, “Jiang Chen got me to tell you that he has a big surgery this afternoon, and he will be on duty at night. He has no time to eat dinner, asked you to deliver it to him.”

I said, I am not his maid, not delivering not delivering I am not delivering.

He shrugged, “We shall see you will deliver or not.”

Wu Bosong really just stayed at my house and refused to go. He laid on my sofa and tormented my 10 years old antique TV. Speaking of which, products nowadays are really getting from bad to worse, this 10 years old antique TV’s remote control batteries can last for a year. My (parents) house recently bought a new LCD TV. The remote control’s batteries have to be replaced once every month. Every end of the month when I call back home my mother will always scold about the LCD TV’s controller running out of battery again, it’s all your dad’s fault, insisted on changing a good solid TV to an LCD one.

It was time to eat. I really could not endure it anymore, so I took my bag and said to him, “Wu Bosong, treat me to a dinner, I’ll give you a feast to welcome you back.”

He stopped for a while, and frowned, “Your logic is quite shameless.”

I accepted his praise modestly. Insisted on cheating him to the highest class and the most luxurious, a restaurant that I can usually only look at from afar. He held on to the taxi's door and said he refused to leave the car no matter what. He said, "I can tell from one look that the ingredients in this restaurant are all like me, they just got shipped over from overseas. Even if you want to build up Jiang Chen's health you also shouldn't use my money to do it. My money is hard-earned money. My dad's bankrupt."

The taxi driver looked at the meter fare that is increasing. The evil black smile on his face is as equally heartwarming as a melted chocolate. He said, "Aiya* you two young couple stop fighting, talk nicely, I'm not in a rush, young couples are all like that." (T/N: A form of exclamation.)

I felt very helpless about our citizens who are in the transportation line and their love to pair up boys and girls. Actually that's not correct, all of our homeland's citizens in every trade like to pair up boys and girls that they see. Their pairing logic is also often immoral. There was once me and my dad went to a department store to buy shoes. The sales lady persistently praised the leather shoes that me and my dad were trying on. "Miss your taste is amazing, the shoes you picked really suits your boyfriend....."

We ultimately ended up at a good quality but affordable restaurant. I don't know why, the restaurant that I suddenly felt like eating at was near the hospital. I guess this is fate.

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Chapter 15

After we finished eating dinner, Wu Bosong suggested that we hang around at that unlucky restaurant to drink the instant milk tea which we could have unlimited refills of. He originally suggested drinking the instant coffee that similarly had unlimited refills, but I thought that this act was very shameless, and furthermore, was shameless in a very bourgeois way, so we changed to drinking milk tea.

However, after the fifth time that we got the waiter to help us refill our milk tea, we both didn't dare to drink it, for we kept on suspecting that that waiter who looked very sour-faced had spat saliva into it.

I watched the sky outside the window darkening slowly, felt for my mobile phone in my pocket, and interrupted Wu Bosong who was vividly describing just how fresh, tender and succulent the lamb chops in New Zealand were. "I think you must be tired, you had better go back home and get over your jet lag."

He cast a glance at me. "I've returned for a week, what jet lag is there to get over?"

I spoke again, "Didn't you say that you hadn't yet acclimatised and had diarrhoea? This proves that though you think you have gotten over the jet lag, the jet lag is not letting you off."

Wu Bosong snorted. "You want to go and deliver food right, I'll go together with you, I can conveniently go to the hospital for a return checkup at the same time."

This person sure was shameless, he had the nerve to go for a return checkup for diarrhoea, this type of illness that had never seen the world*, he truly was wasting our homeland's medical resources.

(T/N: “seeing the world” – a phrase usually used to refer to people undergoing experiences, getting familiar with the ways of the world, enriching themselves with life experiences etc)

I swept at my hair, held up the milk tea and drank one mouthful, then recalled how this milk tea possibly had been spat at with saliva, immediately I felt incomparably indignant. “Who said I was going to deliver food! Do I not have dignity*, do I!” (T/N: the original phrase ‘犯贱’ is a slang/modern phrase which refers to when someone insists on doing something while knowing that they will get hurt/it is not right/it will take away their dignity; stooping to a new low, bringing on himself humiliation, cheapening themselves)

He nodded his head, and expressed appeasement, “If you’re not delivering, then don’t deliver, what are you getting so stirred up for? He won’t die by not eating one meal.”

A hundred claws were scratching at my heart as I watched the sky darken little by little. One moment I was fantasising about Jiang Chen getting a stomach haemorrhage and collapsing on the operating table; the next I fantasised about him getting so hungry till he gnawed on his own fingernails to satiate his hunger; then I fantasised about his stomach being so painful till he turned mad, and used the surgical knife to cut open his own stomach.....

In my brain dwelt a horror movie director, I was suitable to dwell in a mental hospital.

I gazed at Wu Bosong sitting opposite me who was unperturbedly and calmly watching me be brassy and restless, and suddenly came to a realisation. If I were to be looked at like a laughing stock, this old woman* would also reserve (herself) for Jiang Chen to look at, staying on here to amuse this chap who was now being sold domestically despite being initially produced for exports*, just how severely ill was I exactly? (T/N: colloquial slang which can refer to yourself) (T/N: a Chinese business term, referring to products that were meant to be sold overseas, but now are sold domestically [these products can’t be

sold in the international market for whatever reason, and hence must be sold domestically to minimise losses on the businessmen's end])

Hence I slapped the table and shouted, "Waiter!"

The waiter feebly strolled over, he was even clutching a glass pot of milk tea in his hands. With waning enthusiasm, he asked me, "Refill the milk tea, right?"

"One seafood baked rice, one chicken soup, takeaway." I glared at Wu Bosong as I spoke.

He whistled loud and clear, and teasingly said, "You are still able to eat?"

I watched as he lifted that cup of milk tea that was plausibly spat at with saliva and drank a mouthful. I said, beaming, "I'm delivering food to go and give to Jiang Chen."

He put down the cup and smiled. "That's more like it, all who make life difficult for themselves are fools."

His smile inexplicably caused me to sense a trace of sorrow, it was as if he had experienced the impermanence of time*. (T/N: original phrase – 沧桑 – short form of the idiom “沧海桑田” which literally means “blue seas, mulberry fields” – how over time, the blue sea turned into cropland for mulberry trees, and how the cropland for mulberry trees turned into sea. The idiom refers to great changes, how things of the world are fickle and change easily, etc)

I stretched my hand over to pat the back of his hand. "If you love me, you have to let me know, only then can I reject you."

He glared at me, and slowly spat out two words*. "Get lost." (T/N: Okay tbh in the original text it is one word, I'm adapting it to English :P)

I ignored him, and continued speaking, "Really, some people are

like me, comparatively more stupid and comparatively having a greater inferiority complex. If you don't make it clear, she won't know."

Wu Bosong turned his hand over to pat my hand. "Not everyone is as lucky as you are, to have the opportunity to start afresh."

After he finished speaking, he smiled bitterly. His gaze seemed to have penetrated through me, and was looking at a faraway place.

People like me who aren't often melancholy and moody are very scared of these sort of scenes which require sighing and lamenting. Often I would be at a loss of what to do, and often I didn't know how to comfort people. Thankfully we were very good friends, even if our separation had caused us to no longer be familiar with each other's stories, but we weren't scared of this type of awkwardness.

I carried the bento box and walked towards the hospital, Wu Bosong stood across the road waving his hand at me, looking like the lucky cat* in a display window. (T/N: for those not in Asia (?), this is referring to the Japanese lucky cat (a cat figurine which has a paw that moves back and forth) that is often placed at the display windows of shops and restaurants in Asia, meant to bring about good fortune)

I still remembered the location of Jiang Chen's office. Even though I'd only been there once, and even though I was a person who a poor sense of direction, but I could just remember it, I knew I had to turn left, turn right, go up the stairs, and see a fire hydrant.

It was just that I stood at the entrance, fixing my gaze on "Doctor Jiang" on the door plate for a really long time., so long till a sanitation worker auntie came up to use a wet rag to wipe the door plate and even said, "You aren't sent here by the supervisors to inspect hygiene, are you? I actually wipe these door plates everyday."

I thought that I couldn't let the auntie be overly terrified, so I could

only hurriedly smile at her, and say, "No, no, I'm here to find Doctor Jiang."

The auntie let out a breath and said, "I've dwelled in this hospital for so long, I haven't yet seen anyone who goes through the back door by bringing a bento box."

I said, "No, no, my bento box is actually all filled with hundred-dollar notes."

She said, "Your bento box is only that big, how much money can you pack in? Nowadays, other people are all giving credit cards, you truly don't know to keep up with the times."

I still wanted to say something when the door opened. Jiang Chen expressionlessly said to me, "Come in."

The moment I entered the door, he seized over the bento box in my hands. He said, "Do you want to starve me to death."

Jiang Chen swept out a little corner of his office table and placed the bento box on the table, and then began to eat self-absorbedly. I was left hanging at the side. I watched as he wrinkled his brow, picking out the onions in the rice. He said, "Chen Xiaoxi, why did you order a meal with onions!"

I wanted to say, "How can you be so shameless, I bought food for you and you're still despising it," I wanted to say, "Go on being arrogant, see if I'll still bring food for you next time....."

But I did not, I thought about how very long ago, when we were still attending university, I brought his clothes and blanket back to my dorm to wash and dry. In the hostel, washing and drying kept me fully busy for almost three days, yet when I went back, he told me, "Chen Xiaoxi, you got dye onto my clothes." Back then I already said, "How can you be so shameless, where else can you go to find such a considerate girlfriend, don't think that just because it was I who

chased after you, you can take advantage of me.”

He said, “Are you nuts, I’m using the standards of my future wife to make requests of you, if you’re not willing, then forget it.”

I pasted myself onto him and shook his arm, saying, “No, no, where is it dyed? You tell me, I’ll change the next time round.”

Huh, that time.

“Chen Xiaoxi.” Jiang Chen brandished the chopsticks, waving it a few times in front of me. “What are you in a daze about?”

I shook my head, and said laughingly, “I thought of that shameless mouth and face of yours, always despising this and that when I helped you wash your clothes in the past.”

He picked up a piece of squid and stuffed it into his mouth, and said unclearly, “How can I compare to you in terms of shamelessness.”

I stared blankly at him, yes, how could he compare to me in terms of shamelessness, coming as soon as I said I would come, leaving as soon as I said I would leave, and actually daring to look back despite being like this.

Jiang Chen suddenly lifted his head, and fixed his gaze on me while saying, “I’m talking about that matter of the library.”

Oh, so it’s actually about that, caused me to deprecate myself for a moment there. (T/N: if this sentence is unclear, basically Xiaoxi thought Jiang Chen calling her shameless was about her breaking up with him after being the one to chase after him, so she was self-deprecating herself, but turns out that he was just talking about something else.)

That seemed to have been the winter of our third year in university, everyday I was accompanying Jiang Chen as he studied in the library. Libraries in southern schools had no such thing as central heating, I was scared of the cold, but yet I also wanted to keep him company by his side, so I could only dress myself slightly thicker.

My basic outfit was one thermal underwear, one hoodie, two woollen sweaters, one jacket, one thermal pants, one pair of jeans, two pairs of socks, one pair of ankle-length boots, one scarf and one pair of gloves. I remember that when I wore all these clothes on myself, my wardrobe appeared very much to be completely empty.

This slightly thick outfit of mine caused my movements to appear somewhat inconvenient, and the most prominent manifestation of this inconvenience was on the issue of reading novels. That thick woollen gloves caused my fingers to be extremely clumsy, I always could not accurately rub out one piece of thin paper such that I could then advance into the action of turning the page.

And I don't know if fellow student Jiang Chen was frozen to the point of foolishness or frozen to the point of stupidity or frozen to the point of enlightenment, in any case, after he discovered that that I had been staring blankly at the same page of the novel for ten minutes, he took the initiative to help me flip that page over. After that, we slowly built up a strange rapport – I would quietly read my book by his side, and when I read till the point that I needed to flip the page I would then use my arm to bump against him, he would then, without even lifting his head, stretch out his arm to help me flip the page of the book.

This matter actually was not shameless at all, and basically could even be considered as warm. The shamelessness was an accident that extended from this warmth.

As we were conducting this daily activity of “bumping and flipping” in the library everyday, a certain reporter from our school paper was just sun tanning idly on the lawn outside the library. Through the

large glass window of the library that reached the ground, she unintentionally discovered the interactions between Jiang Chen and I, and furthermore believed that this interaction was extremely suitable for a theme that she was going to plan out next – “The little beauties in the school campus”. Hence, she laid in wait for us in the library for many days, and with complete disregard for our rights of publicity carried out a 360 degree omni-directional secret photo-taking of us. What was shameless was that, after she finished taking the photos, she had to do post-production editing of the photos, upon hearing that I was from the arts faculty, she directly called on me, and what was even more shameless was that, under her continual and persistent persuasion of how we shouldn’t leave blank spaces in our youth, I gladly agreed to do post-production editing with Photoshop and the like for this set of photos at no cost. Moreover, I edited it such that the resulting effect was extremely dreamy and aesthetically-pleasing, extremely like a storybook couple of immortals, extremely like a pair of birds flying together*, extremely like a pair of mandarin ducks frolicking in the water*..... (T/N: “A pair of birds flying together” – refers to a couple that is very loving, that accompanies each other and doesn’t leave) (T/N: In Chinese language/culture, mandarin ducks are a symbol for a couple as the mandarin ducks often stick together as a pair when you see them in ponds. Mandarin ducks are often used in songs/poetry/etc to describe/be analogies for beautiful romantic love.)

That series of photos caused a very huge sensation after it was published on the school paper, the school paper and school forum took advantage of this to act together and launch a comparative evaluation of “school campus lovers”, Jiang Chen was chosen to be one of the top three contestants. Competing side by side with him was a certain dear friend from the Chinese faculty who jumped into a river to fish out a ring for his girlfriend and another dear friend from the History faculty who personally made a set of hanfu* for his girlfriend. Compared to them, Jiang Chen’s performance seemed to be comparatively more insignificant, but it was worth mentioning that the dear friend from the Chinese faculty looked like Tao

Yuanming* in our Chinese language textbooks, and the dear friend from the history faculty had looks that were very much characteristic of academia – he looked like the restored sculpture of the Peking ape-man*. Hence, fellow student Jiang Chen from the medical faculty who didn't look at all like a medical specimen bravely seized first place with a poll count that remained high throughout, and was honoured with the title of "School Campus Lover". This result tells us that you need to depend on looks to make a living in society. (T/N: hanfu – traditional Han Chinese costume/dress) (T/N: Tao Yuanming – a famous and great writer and poet from the Jin dynasty) (T/N: Peking ape-man/Peking man – *Homo erectus pekinensis*, of human lineage, his fossils were discovered near Beijing in the 1920s)

I felt that as the only science student in this competition, Jiang Chen had really gained honour on behalf of science students.

So I didn't know why Jiang Chen upon knowing the entire sequence of events of this matter was so angry that he nearly whirled me to go hit the wall.

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Chapter 16

Jiang Chen emptied the bento box in less than ten minutes, after which, he even bossed me to throw it out when he was done. As I was outside, carrying the plastic bag with me, I happened to chance upon the sanitation worker auntie again while she was taking out the trash, she greeted me kindly, "Little girl, has your 'gift' been sent out?"

Her voice calling me little girl made my heart feel very comfortable with her, hence I replied truthfully, "Actually, I didn't come here to give him a 'gift', I'm just delivering his meal."

She insisted, "Did Doctor Jiang give you a scolding? Don't be scared, no family has one member, no matter young or old, who isn't suffering from an ailment, give something to the doctor so your heart would feel at ease, I've been working in this hospital for quite a few decades, I've seen this scenario countless times, rest assured I will not run my mouth."

I gave it a thought, if I didn't explain things clearly, it would surely tarnish Jiang Chen's medical ethics, something I really don't care about, what I couldn't take was how this auntie indirectly cursed my family, so I said with my whole chest, "Actually, it's like this, Doctor Jiang and I used to be a couple, and until now there's still a bit of affectionate ties."

The auntie looked at me, clearly a little bit taken aback, and then sized me up meticulously for quite a long time. In the end, she let out a sigh and wheeled the trash away. Right before leaving, she mumbled under her breath, "So young, it turns out it was to get her mental illness looked at."

.....

When I returned to Jiang Chen's office, he was engrossed in writing something, I walked over and knocked on the table hence he looked up.

I told him, "There's nothing for me to do, I'm going home."

Jiang Chen's right hand was holding the pen, scribbling on his notepad, his other hand was used to turn over its leaves, he said with nonchalance, "Chen Xiaoxi, if you walk out that door right now, we're over."

I thought that the content of his words sounded very intense, it should have been expressed with feelings likened to waves surging forth, yet he said it so flatly like stagnant water, all was said in one breathe without any slight pauses, one can seriously consider this as a talent.

I was standing. He was sitting. But even though I was towering over him, I also felt like my imposing aura was rather losing ground a little bit. I was looking at him. He was also looking at me. But even though we were so close, I couldn't even guess what's going through his mind.

I said, "There's no need to put it so seriously, I just saw that you were quite busy, didn't want to disturb you."

Jiang Chen's fountain pen was twirling between his fingers, he said, "Doctor Su told me, you called me this morning to clear the air, so I'll make myself clear right now as well, and you can leave when you're done listening.

I swallowed a lump in my throat, and let out an "en" to indicate that I was fine with it.

He asked, "Three years ago, it was you who suggested of breaking up, right?"

I replied yes.

He added, "The reason of our breaking up was because of my mom, is that right?"

I replied yes, but immediately took it back and said it also doesn't seem to be it, and that actually I wasn't too sure of what I've said.

He threw the pen on the table with a thump, and my heart tightened all of a sudden, that's probably a very expensive Parker pen.

He pinched the bridge of his nose, and said with a hint of weariness, "Chen Xiaoxi, tell me, have you ever thought about me in the past three years?"

This conversation was fast becoming emotional, I wanted to speak, yet it seems like I was choking on something.

The first week after I broke up with Jiang Chen, almost every night, I would suddenly rouse from my deep sleep, strands of hair sticking on my moist cheek and neck, when I'd touch my pillow, and the chest area of my duvet with my hand, it would feel wet.

It was too painful for me to bear, I really wanted to go back and beg him, say it's all my fault, and that I've changed, I've changed.....

As a matter of fact, I really went over to see him. One morning, I stood across the hospital, around lunch time, I've seen him with his colleagues chatting and laughing until they arrived at a small restaurant nearby to have their meal. I looked at his smiling face from afar, I could even see his dimple, filled with such radiance. I felt hatred, I felt bitterly disappointed, I felt so foolish, I thought I should have rushed to the middle of the road and get run over by a car, I don't believe that he would still be able to continue eating his meal right next to my blood.

At that time, lots of thoughts flashed through my mind, but in the

end, I chose to return home – I wanted to buy a pineapple bun at the bakery downstairs but probably because I was crying so hard which astounded the world*, it frightened the kind-hearted lady boss who gave me three instead, and even told me how there's no difficulties in life that one couldn't overcome. If I could act well enough, I'd go there every single day to cheat her on those bread. (T/N: Used when a person's words and/or actions are unusual that most people are shocked.)

Longing for someone can tear one's heart as well as rip one's lungs. So much that some people dare not touch these words — longing for someone. I've always said I was never a brave person, I'm afraid of pain, I'm afraid of sadness, I've put my longing towards him in a box, and affixed a seal, "If you dare open this you will suffer in pain to death, serves you right."

It was truly effective, hence, I haven't thought about him.

Jiang Chen hit the table impatiently, the tone of his voice was harder, "Is the question really so difficult."

I was suddenly filled with hate that could topple the mountains and overturn the seas, I doubled my fist, clenched my teeth very fiercely, and spat out a word, "Difficult."

He sneered, "Chen Xiaoxi, why really are you so bold with your convictions?"

Sneering, are you? Who didn't know how to do that, once I bare my teeth I become the Emperor of Sneering they talk about!

I "humph"-ed a few times as I sneered, and asked in reply, "What about you? Why didn't you look for me? Why didn't you coax me? Why did you really break up with me when I suggested to break up? Why did you ask me if I was thinking of you or not? Why are you sitting while I'm standing....."

Jiang Chen was a bit confused by my series of questions, so it took him a moment before he stood up slowly. When I saw him standing up, I panicked. I took a few steps back and said, "Why are you standing up?"

But he instead, suddenly smiled, reached out his hand to grab my wrist, dragged me forcibly, pushed me to sit on his chair, and then said, "Now, you're the one sitting while I'm standing, happy?"

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, I think Doctor Jiang's sense of humor came off a bit awkward, even though I was known for having a rather odd 'haha point' but I really couldn't laugh at it no matter what. (T/N: haha point means the threshold of which one can laugh like how having a low haha point means someone is easily amused.)

With his hands propped on both armrest, I was caged between him and the chair. This action is rather nice, very ambiguous, like a set for when an ordinary male lead wants to act like a rogue towards the female lead.

He smiled and leaned close to my face, stopping at a distance where I could feel his hot breath fanning my face, "You were the one who suggested about breaking up, why should I lower my voice and stifle my anger in order to coax you?"

I shrunk down in my seat, "You're a man, shouldn't you coax me?"

He was gazing at me calmly, "At that time, I felt very tired."

I've also calmed down a lot, "You were tired for a long time."

Those words sounded very sarcastic, but there's really nothing much to it, it just slipped from my mouth, that's all.

He let out a sigh, "I actually looked all over for you."

I was shocked when I heard it, and worked hard to rack my brain

for my memories of those days for fear that at which intersection which male friend have I hugged or held hands with or blew the dust off my eyes, by which resulted to a misunderstanding, but there was none. Those days, I was wandering around like a spirit. Unless they're fans of the movie 'Ghosts', men would never want to be near me, so I retorted with confidence, "You're talking nonsense, where did you try to look for me?"

He was about to say something when his phone that was placed on the desk suddenly let out a ring so he turned around to look at who was calling. And then in a blink of an eye, I found him facing me while he leaned his body over me. I held my breath. Here it comes, here it comes, the time to act as a rogue has come. His hand went pass my shoulder and my heart gave a vicious contraction. But in fact, he was only trying to pull out his white coat that was hanging from the back of his chair. He was donning on his white coat while explaining to me, "Emergency room's number."

The phone on the desk with it most simple ringtone started ringing again, Jiang Chen grabbed the phone and answered it while walking outside, knocking the door open and then knocking it shut. I'm alone in a room filled with loneliness, I think the timing that was picked for when the phone would ring just now was too good, was there a director who yelled action somewhere?

I was thinking he won't be back for quite a while, so I boringly pushed my feet against the floor, driving on the wheels attached under his working chair, and sliding it all across the room, but my last slide came off a bit too hard, and I suddenly heard a clicking sound — the chair went out of balance and I befriended the floor, followed by the chair, with my forehead hitting first.

It was truly a pretty strong hit, if one would capture a shot of it from a distance, it would be sort of how a fish would look like, right when the chef is about to kill it, placing it on the chopping board while it flips everywhere, and then giving it one clean smash to make

it lose consciousness.

I held unto the chair on the ground for a while, in a daze, it took me a long time before I was able to handle it. When I slowly stood up, I thought I have to go to the emergency room to look for Jiang Chen, I'm in an emergency too, if undetermined intracranial hemorrhage from cerebral concussion was deemed as one.

I followed the hospital signage, and was moving slowly, feeling the wall with my hand. Deep inside I was really scared, this cerebral concussion and intracranial bleeding have something to do with body fluids and so on. If I walk rapidly, perhaps these brains or blood would slosh tremendously making it gush out.

With great difficulty, I've managed to arrive right at the door of the emergency room, I supported myself with the wall, and whimpered for the inside, "Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen. Come out quickly, I'm Chen Xiaoxi."

Jiang Chen didn't come out, instead it was a nurse, she yelled at me with a scowl on her face, "This is a hospital! A hospital! Why are you so loud!"

I dare not say that she yelled louder than I did, I'm afraid she'd quickly yell even louder that the sound waves emitted would go through my eardrum, and send vibrations to my brain. Also, my head feels very fragile at that moment.

So I said slowly, "Can you please help me call Doctor Jiang Chen?"

She casted a glance at me, "Doctor Jiang went to the restroom."

I wasn't expecting this answer, I thought that when he went out in a hurry just now, there must be something like a fractured head with blood gushing out, the intestines eviscerated from the abdomen which needed prompt treatment. I can't believe he still has time to empty his bladder.....

The nurse went back inside the emergency room, I leaned against the wall, waiting for Jiang Chen to return.

The hospital's incandescent lights were glaringly pale as always, but I believe that my complexion was perhaps even paler, because Jiang Chen started running a hundred meter dash towards me. I thought it was very romantic, just like how Yi Ping* ran towards Shu Huan at the train station. We were just swapping roles. (T/N: She's referring to the ending scene of Romance In The Rain, a 2001 drama starring Zhao Wei as Yi Ping and Leo Ku as Shu Huan.)

I seem to softly collapse into the arms of Jiang Chen, he was supporting my head with one hand, the other was trying to pry open my eyelids. His hands shaking like that, I was, however, scared that he was going to poke my eyes blind.

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Chapter 17

After quite some time of chaos, it turned out that all I had was just a mild cerebral concussion. Those symptoms where I was giddy and my head was spinning were all just me scaring myself till I became ill, and by association Jiang Chen was also frightened quite terribly. Here, I must criticise Jiang Chen's psychological strength for a bit, as a doctor who had spent countless years in the foul wind and bloody rain*, he really appeared like he had never seen the world before. (T/N: referring to a ruthless, treacherous atmosphere/environment of an insane massacre.)

According to the statement of the eyewitness – the sour-faced little nurse, Doctor Jiang Chen had cradled my head while displaying his lion roar towards the emergency room, "PENLIGHT! STETHOSCOPE!"

The little nurse staggered out holding a penlight and a stethoscope. While Jiang Chen was tremblingly flipping over my eyelids to use the penlight to shine and look at my pupils, she, carrying an attitude of "there is no harm in trying", used strength distinctive of nurses to pinch my renzhong* once, immediately I shrieked and bounced awake. (T/N: Renzhong: the "human centre" acupuncture point – you can feel it by feeling the area beneath your nose where there is a depression. It is a key acupuncture point to press when restoring consciousness of someone after they faint)

Seeing me become awake, Jiang Chen's complexion was not very good, he probably thought that the nurse had stolen the limelight from him as the doctor.

He used the tiny penlight to shine at my pupils and looked at them carefully for a while, only then did he keep the tiny penlight in the pocket of his white coat and ask me, "What happened to you?"

I pulled myself up by holding on to the arm that he had looped

around me and sat up straight, "I fell down and hit my head."

He wrinkled his brow and felt the back of my head with his hand. His fingers passed through my hair, carefully pressing on my scalp. He pressed till I made a "chi" sound expressing pain before he stopped, after which he then pulled my hand to feel that area of scalp, "Look, a bump has risen up here."

The way he spoke was calm like a gentle breeze and a floating wisp of cloud, as if the bump on my head was caused by a mosquito sting.

I pressed on that projecting lump, it was about as big as a quail egg. Pressing on it, it was softer than an egg with its shell intact, yet it was harder than an egg with its shell peeled, its hardness was just nice.

Jiang Chen pushed aside my fringe and asked me, "Is there anywhere else that got hurt when you fell?"

I shook my head and said that there wasn't, he clutched my neck, "Don't move your head! Where did you fall?"

"Your room." I patted his hand as I spoke.

He held me by the arm as we stood up, "Why didn't you give me a phone call to ask me to go over?"

I glimpsed at him, feeling aggrieved. "I forgot to."

I supported myself by holding on to his shoulder, and followed him, walking slowly towards the emergency room. That nurse followed behind us, expressing her delayed concern, "Hey, if I had known earlier that you were Doctor Jiang's friend, I would have let you come in to sit."

Jiang Chen made me lie down on the hospital bed in the emergency room, "I'll go get medication."

The little nurse dragged a chair over to sit by my hospital bedside, and asked me beamingly, "Are you Doctor Jiang's girlfriend?"

I didn't feel like replying her, I was busy pressing that bump on the back of my brain. Just applying a slight force immediately caused a sort of numbing pain to spread from my forehead to my toes, it was very satisfying.

The little nurse waited for quite a long time and didn't manage to wait for my reply. Knowing herself that it was meaningless, she dragged her chair away and went to sit in front of a tiny window.

Jiang Chen returned holding a steel tray, on it was a cup of water, a medicine jar, a few cotton buds and a few white pills.

He picked up the pills and placed it on his palm, I then picked up the pills from his palm and threw them into my mouth, then I flooded (my mouth) with water to send them down.

After I finished eating the medicine, he made me sit cross-legged on the bed with my back facing him. He wanted to help me apply medication, that little nurse tried a few times to come over and help, and every time was always sent away by my fierce glare.

Jiang Chen first flipped over my hair. As my back was facing him and I couldn't see his expression, I hence automatically fitted him in my mind with a facial expression of him lightly creasing his brow, with a tender and pained* gaze. However, very quickly, I soon overthrew this gentle expression ruthlessly in my mind, for he had used the cotton bud to, while exerting all his strength, fiercely and crazedly jab at that bump on the back of my head. (T/N: "pained" – the original expression is "心疼" which literally means "pained heart", usually refers to when your heart hurts/you feel sorry for someone you love dearly who is going through a hard time)

Immediately, hot tears filled my eyes, I turned my head upwards and backwards to look at him. "Be gentler, don't jab out my brains."

With his hand, he supported my head till it was straight, and said, "Got it."

After that, he threw away the cotton bud, what then next plastered on (the back of my head) was his fingers. His fingers were warm, mixing together with the cooling ointment as he slowly kneaded my scalp.

I suddenly felt a burst of tartness and limpness in my heart. I slowly leaned back, lightly leaning on his body. His fingers paused momentarily, before he once again dug out a lump of ointment and smeared it on my scalp.

The little nurse had originally been sneaking peeks craftily from the side, but for some reason, she suddenly gave two forced chuckles towards us, and with an air of sternness and righteousness, proposed that she was going to go out and conduct a ward round. With regards to her abrupt transformation into someone so industrious, hardworking and dedicated to her work, we can only term it as a moment of enlightenment.

Jiang Chen allowed her moment of enlightenment, she then went out to conduct ward rounds, looking back three times for every step she took*. (T/N: literal translation, meaning to be reluctant)

Just like that, I leaned on Jiang Chen's third, fourth and fifth ribs. He silently kneaded my head, kneading kneading kneading kneading, he was kneading for too long a time, I then felt spooked and scared, thinking if he wanted to knead my skull and scalp till it became thin so that it would be easy for him to poke a straw in with a "pop" sound to suck up my brains.....

Thankfully Jiang Chen did stop. He used that hand of his covered in ointment to encircle my shoulder from behind my back.

He said, "I have been waiting for you to regret all along, waiting for you to come back and plead with me. I would definitely have to mock

you properly, then make you face the surgical knife and vow that you would be hacked to pieces if you ever dared to say the two words - 'break up' - in the future."

I wanted to turn my head over and tell him, "This mentality of yours is too unhealthy, plus how can you say such gory words to me when I am such an adorable girl? I'm very cowardly, I will be scared."

But Jiang Chen was holding my shoulder bone with a death grip, with a manner quite like he was going to crush me to pieces any moment, therefore I didn't say a word.

He spoke again. "But you unexpectedly never came."

I thought to myself, that's you not seeing it, I even saw you ordering a meal of char siu* rice in the restaurant. (T/N: char siu - a particular way of preparing barbequed pork in Cantonese cuisine that is sweet and savoury)

He said that he went to look for me after more than a month, he said that it was the first time he had watched helplessly as a person died in his hands, he said that the situation back then was truly out of the ordinary and his emotional state was truly fragile, he needed a girlfriend to give him support and encouragement, so he decided to make the first move and forgive me. Hence, he went to look for me, but downstairs from my house, he saw me directing a few huge men to move my luggage downstairs, after which he then returned to the hospital in a fit of pique.

I sighed, the heavens ought not to be so merciless and cruel, making trouble without reason.

This matter was like this, at that time, after I finished saying the words "break up", Jiang Chen threw down a sentence - "Don't you regret it" - and following that swung the door and left. After he swung the door, that old, feeble, diseased and spoilt door gave up on barely maintaining its existence while being on its last legs, and

breathed its last without turning back.

And coincidentally, the next day was the day that that balding landlord of mine dropped in to collect rental fees. He looked at that door on the verge of collapse*, and most likely he thought of those strands of hair of his on the verge of dropping out*, so he was furious. (T/N: in the original text, the words used to describe the door and the hair are exactly the same, I changed the translations in each situation a little to fit both contexts)

He faced the spoilt door, reviling me. My landlord's educational level was very high, he reportedly was a postgraduate student from ancient times. He escalated this matter to the high degree of how university students in the present age generally had no cultivation, furthermore insisting on his belief that the financial crises, droughts, earthquakes, floods and even bird flu were all the fault of university students. I did attempt to explain that it wasn't my fault that droughts occurred, because I only washed my clothes once a week, but he didn't listen, he insisted on me paying a thousand RMB for the cost to replace the door.

Even though I appear to be dim-witted, I wasn't stupid. This lousy wooden door was at most worth 200 RMB, with one turnover he raised the price by 5 times, this was even more dishonestly profitable and more shameless than real estate. Of course, a few years later, I discovered that I was wrong, nothing could be more dishonestly profitable and more shameless than real estate.

Due to the matter of this door, the relationship between my landlord and I completely broke down. He was determined to ask for compensation of one thousand RMB, I was determined to compensate five hundred. Stuck in this deadlock, he made me get out from his apartment, I hence got out. And the day that Jiang Chen came, I was doing the preparatory actions to get out.

I mournfully told Jiang Chen the story of me being bullied in every possible way by that landlord, after Jiang Chen had finished hearing

it, he gave a deep sigh and said, "Then let's reconcile."

I was extremely perplexed, look at how he said these words, so in his mind, these three years of ours was just an endless quarrel?

Perhaps I was silent for too long, Jiang Chen spoke again, he said, "Chen Xiaoxi, I am a doctor. I've gotten used to the sight of life and death, struggles and suffering. According to your logic, my life ought to have transcended worldliness greatly, why must I be intertwined and entangled up with you? The moment I turn around there is a pretty nurse, the moment I nod my head I can have a new life, why should I keep thinking about you."

I listened, this wasn't right, these words were completely different from that request to reconcile, could it be that that brief silence of mine was thought by him to be me putting on airs, and he had decided to no longer entertain me?

I turned around and hugged his waist, "Okay, let's reconcile."

He didn't speak for a long time, I got anxious, saying while wringing his clothes with my fingers, "You can't play this sort of love games with me where you welcome me while desiring to reject me, I'm already old enough to marry and have children."

Jiang Chen patted my back, "I got it."

I let go of his waist, and raised my head to look at him. "What do you mean?"

He lowered his head and leaned in close, I covered my mouth with lightning speed, and spoke with a smothered voice, "Are we reconciling or not after all, if you don't make it clear I won't let you kiss me."

He tilted his head looking at me, and smiled. "Okay, we'll reconcile."

After he finished speaking, he pushed aside my hand, and kissed me.

As our lips and tongues rolled and turned, I tried hard to stay clear-headed and reflect on a question. Initially it was him who asked to reconcile, why was it that in the end it again became me who begged him to reconcile? Furthermore, I even had to stoop to seducing him to ask for reconciliation?

But my clear-headedness only lasted for about three seconds, after which my long-neglected lips then ruled over that mind of mine that didn't have much of its own opinion.

Really, our embrace and kiss were very romantic – the disinfectant smell that was specific to hospitals, the minty smell emanating from the ointment on my head, the medicinal smell and soap smell on Jiang Chen's body, along with the faint taste of Wrigley's Doublemint chewing gum in his mouth, these various flavours mingled together, it was very beautiful. If time could be like a DVD player, I wanted to press "pause", and freeze the frame at this second.

Unfortunately, even if time was a DVD player, I also didn't have a remote control in my hand.

That head of mine that had just suffered serious trauma suddenly experienced a burst of pain under a state of a great increase in blood flow. It was so painful that I wrung at Jiang Chen's back with tears gleaming in my eyes, "My..... head hurts."

He let go of me and crouched down to look at me levelly, I held on to his shoulder and took deep breaths with great effort.

He fished out the little penlight from his pocket, and then stretched his hand out to flip my eyelids, even using the little penlight to shine at my eyes. That ray of light shone at me till I really wanted to shed tears.

Finally Jiang Chen let out a breath and supported me to lie down. After that he used the stern tone of voice distinctive of doctors and reproached, "There's no problem, lie down and rest for a while, you can't be overly excited when you have a cerebral concussion."

Speechless, I gazed at the gleaming white ceiling, who exactly was the one who had caused me to be excited.....

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Translator's Corner:

To end off the chapter, let us visually appreciate Jiang Chen's "lion roar" for his penlight and his stethoscope, which we can only catch a glimpse of in the music video for "Is this a dream", because for some unfathomable reason, they decided to edit out this particular part from the final version of this scene in the drama. :")

Chapter 18

I slept for a little in the emergency room, in which I was woken up twice. The first was when Jiang Chen shifted a green folding screen from God knows where to separate the beds. The screen probably was not maintained for years, it created loud cracking sounds like a firecracker when pulled. I think I glared at him resentfully, then turned back to sleep. The second time is now, the other side of the screen came low groaning sounds of a man, the sound went “ah, ya, ah, ya”, it was very ambiguous.

I sat up, and wanted to peep, but was startled by the valiant words of the nurse.

She said, “Can you not yell so disgustingly, we are not even giving you a colonoscopy.”

In my heart I was calculating the distance between the large intestine and the entrance of a colonoscopy, I couldn’t help but laugh.

The person the other side already transitioned from a yell to a high-pitched scream. I heard Jiang Chen reprimanded, “Keep your mouth shut, don’t disturb other patients.”

I detoured past the privacy screen, then I regretted on why I even did that.

The person was probably a young chap, I said probably is because I determined from his hair which was like a bunch of exploded straw. As for now, I am unable to determine his age from his face as it was stained with fresh red blood. There were even green pieces of glass stuck into him, it looked like those from a beer bottle. Amongst the pieces were two which were stuck onto each side of his cheeks, and it even came with the brand logo. I squinted my eyes for a better

look, one probably had the word “纯” and the other, “生” *. (T/N: 纯 – Purified. 生 – Live. It is a standalone word by itself but when put together, it is a type of beer that is non-pasteurised, only filtered to remove the yeast.)

I really wanted to take a camera to capture his face and upload it to a forum with the title – X College Art Student’s Bloody Graduation Project, Appeal for Society’s Concern on , *, , , etc of the Never-Ending Beauty of a Human Being. The Caption has to be Long. (T/N: 1st life is life as we are living, and the 2nd life is a human life.)

Trust me, any form of art that is anomalous will become viral.

Jiang Chen was the first to see me come out. He pointed at me with the tweezers he was holding and said, “Go in. Why did you come out for?”

I have yet to speak, the Glass Face person scolded rudely, “F*ck, what the heck are you looking at, ah...F*CK!”

His last “ah...F*CK!” came abruptly as a loud piercing scream. I stumbled backwards from shock and stared blankly at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen threw the piece of glass with the word “Live” to the plate on the push cart beside him, “This is a hospital, speak more cleanly.”

When he said that, that was no other expression on his face, even his tone was dull without any intonation. But I feel that he was very handsome/cool.

The Glass Face person used that face of his to express a ‘dare to show but dare not speak’ expression. He also spoke very modestly, “I got it, doctor can you be gentler.”

Jiang Chen agreed to him and looked at me to say, “You, go in.”

I went back behind the screen and sat cross legged on the bed to

day dream.

I heard Glass Face using a fawning tone to say, "Doctor, your girlfriend? She's pretty."

Jiang Chen seemed to acknowledge by making a sound. Then Glass Face continued, "Doctor, bringing your girlfriend on the hospital bed, exciting ohhh."

As expected, Glass Face screamed for his mother again. You see, this kind of pain only deserves two words – served you right*. (T/N: served you right is 活该 in Chinese. That's why its two words.)

Not sure how long have past, I started to doze off while sitting cross-legged. When I regained my consciousness, I realised my legs were numb to the point I didn't dare to touch it.

"Chen Xiaoxi, are you meditating?" Jiang Chen stood beside my bed while removing the white rubber gloves off his hands.

I wriggled my toes, a tingling pain of numbness climbed through my cells up my entire body, I made a crying face and replied him, "Jiang Chen, my legs are so numb they are going to be crippled."

He threw the gloves to the dustbin at the corner, walked over to the bed and sat down. He stretched out his index finger to poke on my leg, I screamed, "Don't, it's really numb."

Jiang Chen suddenly extended his arm to push me, I was like a spoilt roly-poly. I swayed futilely and stayed in my cross-legged position while I fell sideways onto the bed.

My left thigh was then crushed under my right thigh, I was so numb I cried out loud.

Jiang Chen seemed really happy. He crossed his arms and turned his head to look at the me who was slanted on the bed and laughed endlessly. He laughed till his dimple looked like it was going to fly off.

Then he gently entangled my left and right legs, laid them straight and patted on my calves.

Every hit of his palm on my legs, I felt like my blood was circulating back to my two legs, I was numb, I was in pain, I was numb to pain.

After about five to six minutes, my legs finally went back to normal. I gave Jiang Chen a kick, to indicate that my legs are good enough to be able to kick someone. I also indicated that I was very unhappy when he took advantage of when I was unable to move freely and treated me like a roly-poly.

Actually, I wasn't very brutal with that kick, but Jiang Chen fell back onto the bed from my kick. He held onto his stomach and said, "Chen Xiaoxi, are you a female wrestler?"

I gave him another kick, "Are you an Academy Award Best Actor?"

Jiang Chen was still clutching on his stomach and not moving. I was even starting to feel that he was starting to perspire on his forehead. I started to feel that something was wrong. It can't be that this numbness caused my legs to become a Shadowless kick* leg. A gentle kick can take a person's life? (T/N: A type of martial arts kicking technique made by a famous Chinese folk hero – Wong Fei Hung.)

I climbed over to pat his back, "Are you okay? You okay? Don't scare me."

He suddenly turned to hug me, "Are you an idiot, I am clutching onto my stomach why are you patting my back!"

He hugged really tightly, as though he was putting his entire weight on me, I was a bit breathless. I said, "What's wrong? Don't suffocate me."

He said he's fine, and that he has a bit of gastric pain, and asked to let him hug for a while.

I gently patted on his shoulder and said, "Are you hungry? How about I buy some food for you? Or where's your medication? I will take it for you. Why are you always having gastric pain? That's not good, you have to take good care of yourself."

He rested his head on my shoulder and said, "Chen Xiaoxi, I can't take care of myself well."

My maternal instincts as a female overflowed as I heard that line, I stroked his head and said, "Jiang Chen, I'll take care of you then."

"Okay." He said.

After Jiang Chen handed over his duty to the next shift, he listed a series of clauses on how to take care of him while he was driving back me home. Most of these clauses were no stranger to me as he gave me a list before when we were in university. For example, he was in charge of delivering breakfast to me, and I delivered him his lunch and dinner. Another example, if he were to eat any type of food with shell, I would have to remove the shell for him, this was mainly meant for tea eggs. Or another example, every week I have to wash his worn clothes (for the week) and beddings for him.

I sat at the passenger seat and flipped back and forth noisily on the two pages of medical prescription form that was given to me. However, he remained unmoved. I finally could not take it anymore and waved the two pages of paper in front of him and said, "Why do I have to deliver you dinner?"

He said, "That was based on the list from our university days."

I protested, "University was nearby ah! It was convenient. Furthermore, you delivered me breakfast during university."

He said, "That was because I had to wake up early to read, so it was convenient. Also, didn't I remove the clause on having to deliver lunch?"

I was lost for words, "But.. but I still don't want to deliver dinner to you."

He side-glanced me, "Who said she wanted to take care of me?"

There was nothing for me to say, I could only give in and analyze the clauses. On the 6th clause, Jiang Chen wrote: 'Have to clean up my house every 3 days.'

I shook the paper and said, "Look at the 6th clause. We didn't have that in university."

He tapped on the steering wheel while waiting for the red light. He leaned his head towards me and said, "We lived in dorm during university. I can't let others take advantage."

.....

Alright, I was wrong. It was me whom in the 3 years of memories, beautified him too much. As such, I was only able to remember his good, and totally forgotten about his bullying. The reason why memories are so beautiful, is because no one is able to go back.

Actually, during this long time I have known Jiang Chen, hidden under his gentleness was a heart of absolute unrestrained tyrannical abuse towards me. For example, the library incident, what everyone saw the him flipping my book for me. In actual fact, it was so cold that day, how I wished I could just snuggle in my bed in the dorm. However, he insisted on forcing me to accompany him to the library. He said a student should be diligent in studying, he even said that when he thought about him studying so hard in the library and all I will be doing is sleeping so hard in my dorm, he felt very uncomfortable, and psychologically unbalanced. He is a medicine student who has to study diligently everyday so as to prevent misdiagnosing and killing someone. However, I study arts. If you force me to go to the library every day, that's murdering my freedom of creativity. So the reason why I could not become Vincent van

Gogh, or Picasso, was actually all caused by Jiang Chen.

“We’re here.” Jiang Chen patted on my head. I looked out and said distractedly, “You went to the wrong place, this isn’t my house.”

He released his seatbelt, “I know this isn’t your house. This is my house, come up and cook me something to eat. At the same time, you can tidy the place a bit.”

.....

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Chapter 19

In the end, I wasn't able to go inside Jiang Chen's house — his house was on the 9th floor, when the elevator that we were in arrived at the 2nd floor, he got a call telling him that something came up with his patient, he pressed open the elevator door for the 3rd floor, then threw a bunch of keys at me, and instructed, "903, find something to eat first, and then sleep."

I watched him turn around and hurriedly run for the stairs as the doors of the elevator slowly closed.

I took the elevator up the 9th floor, and stood in front of the door of Jiang Chen's house for a while, deciding if I had better not go inside. One, my good upbringing doesn't allow me to willfully enter someone's house in the absence of the owner. Two, I am afraid that without the owner watching me attentively, if I went in and saw something valuable, I might not help but take it with me. Oh! My excellent upbringing!

So I took the elevator again and went at the breakfast shop downstairs to buy wonton and tea eggs for breakfast, and then flagged down a cab to return to the hospital.

How silly a woman is, how silly am I being.

At the entryway of the hospital parked a long row of luxury sedans. I already said I have no knowledge when it comes to cars, but those cars all looked polished, I also wanted to know whether they're really that nice. This principle is the same as that of clothes, if it's only a few ten bucks worth of clothes, and soy sauce was poured on it, I won't bat an eyelash, if it got dirty then throw it away. But if it's a few hundred bucks worth of clothes, if I spot a soy sauce even from a distance, I would quickly run away, if it got dirty then I'd kneel on the ground, and rub every little part clean.

.....

I have not walked through the hospital doors when two men in black suits wearing sunglasses barred me from entering and asked me in unison, "What are you doing here?"

I lifted my head and read the 'hospital' sign, too lazy to explain myself so I just casually replied, "To go see a doctor."

Suit Man A, glanced at his wristwatch and countered, "The hospital is still close, what do you want to seek consultation for!"

I replied, "I'm going to register myself in the emergency room?"

Suit Man A countered once more, "Which part does it look like you need registering in the emergency room? Say it, which TV station are you from?"

I blanked for a moment, then bashfully scratched my head, and humbly replied, "Hehe, I'm not working in any TV station, although many people have commented that I would look great on TV."

Suit Man A and B looked at each other, and callously asked in unison, "Cut the crap, which publication* are you from?"

I shook my head, "I came here by myself in a cab, you also saw it just now, where would someone be able to carry* me, besides, I'm not lacking in arms and legs, why must someone have to 'carry' me?"

(T/N: I think Xiaoxi was a dumb dumb and mistook 报 bào (newspaper/ publication) with 抱 bào (carry) that's why her reply doesn't make any sense.)

They don't seem to feel my sincerity because there was a knot on their facial expression as though they've been suffering from constipation for several days.

As I felt that there was no way around it, I was left with no choice but to lift my hand that was carrying our breakfast and reasoned again, "Actually, I am a doctor in this hospital, I came to work."

Before I was done speaking, someone patted me on the shoulder making me turn my head towards them — it was Doctor Su looking at me with a huge grin, "When did you become a doctor in our hospital?"

I let out a sigh, this time, in the minds of these men in suit, my identity is even more confusing. I looked at them, their eyes has a certain alertness to them as though I was a terrorist armed with a bomb and they're ready to pull out their guns from their pockets and fill my body with holes at any given time.

I said helplessly, "If I'd say my boyfriend works here as a doctor, and I'm here to give him his breakfast, would you believe me?"

Suit Man A retorted, "Cut the crap, are you a journalist? What are you going to do inside the hospital. I'm telling you, this is a private matter, you can't report it!"

I pushed Doctor Su in front of the two men in suit, "I'm really not a journalist, she is Doctor Su, a doctor in this hospital, she can testify, I'm really here to look for my boyfriend."

Doctor Su nodded foolishly, "I'm a doctor in this hospital. I know her boyfriend."

Suit Man A said, "How can you prove to us that you're a doctor in this hospital?"

Doctor Su looked clueless, and hesitantly replied, "I.....I'll perform surgery?"

I pinched the bridge of my nose and made a suggestion, "I think your license is more convincing."

Doctor Su felt the pockets of her trousers, then slipped her hands inside them, and naively declared it outright, "I left my license inside the hospital."

Even I myself wouldn't be convinced that this damn, stupid looking girl is actually a doctor.

Hence, ten minutes later, Doctor Su and I were crouched right outside the big doors of the hospital peeling tea eggs.

I passed an already peeled tea egg to Doctor Su, "How could this happen? Who are they? What should we do if we can't get in?"

Doctor Su bit a mouthful of tea egg and surmised, "It's probably some bigshot celebrity coming to get their rotten disease examined. What are you worrying for? You don't even work here.

I think so, too. Anyway, it's almost time for the hospital to open, I'd be free to go inside so I very kindly helped worry for Doctor Su's stead, I said, "What to do if you're late?"

She waved a hand dismissively and said, "No worries, my dad is the chairman."

I swallowed down my surprise inwardly and nodded my head in understanding, "No wonder your medical skills are superb, it turns out it's in your blood."

My mind was like: Her father is the chairman of this hospital, Jiang Chen is a doctor of this hospital, so I'd curry favor from the chairman's daughter. I really envy Jiang Chen for having such a good wife.

Doctor Su furrowed her brows and asked in reply, "What do you mean? My dad runs a veterinary hospital.

I tried to explain, "No, you said you're not worried because your dad is the chairman, so just now I said.....said, ai, don't

misunderstand.”

She let out a ‘humph’ and said, “I wasn’t worried because if worst comes to worst and I lose my job I can always go back home to help my dad run the veterinary hospital.

I replied, “Hehe, so it’s like that. Going back to help run a veterinary hospital is also very good.

Her expression darkened, “What are you saying ‘is also very good’? You think that being a chairman of a veterinary hospital isn’t high-ranking enough?”

I hurriedly shook my head, the more I speak, the more mistakes I make, I had better shut up.

Doctor Su with a straight face, quietly finished eating that piece of tea egg, after which her expression changed again and said, “Actually, I’m just joking with you. My dad is really the chairman of this hospital.”

I, who has not yet swallowed the egg that was in my mouth, after hearing her say so, choked at once — in order to not spray onto the beloved chairman’s daughter, I forcibly swallowed it down which had me choked up in tears.

The chairman’s daughter humbled herself to be one with us common folks to help pat my back, she let out a sigh, “When are you going to finally get my humour, my dad really runs a veterinary hospital.”

.....

I totally don’t understand this person anymore, hence I gave out a big, hearty laugh, “Hey, you think you’re funny, I was also joking with you, I knew it from the start.”

Actually, I don’t know anything at all. I’m still not sure whether her

father is a doctor for humans or a doctor for animals, but it's okay, she doesn't know whether I knew, or didn't know, or knew but was feigning to not know.

Doctor Su looked at me suspiciously, but after a long time, she smiled, "I appreciate your humour."

.....

We were crouched in front of the hospital door, eating a breakfast for three people. I've prepared two sets to give to Jiang Chen, I originally thought I'd share a set with Doctor Su, at least leave a set for Jiang Chen, but I didn't expect that Doctor Su would eat so much. To sum up she ate a total of four tea eggs, two servings of dry wonton, and one steamed dumpling.

I stood up to throw the plastic bag in the garbage bin. When the men in suit that were standing at the doorway saw me get up, their right foot took a step back in a lunge position. I waved my hand back and forth, gesturing to them that I was just a weak woman, and would not charge towards them.

After I threw away the trash, I told Doctor Su, "I'll go buy breakfast again."

Doctor Su gave me a brief nod and said. "I also think that I'm not yet full, buy another steamed dumpling for me please."

.....

When I got back from buying breakfast again, Doctor Su was already laughing and talking with those two men in suit, when she saw me, she beckoned me over, "Let's go in."

We were already inside the hospital while the two men in suit were looking at us with a smile on their faces so I asked her, "How did you manage to convince them?"

She replied, "I gave each of them a hundred bucks."

"Ah?!" I could not help but exclaim in surprise.

She patted me on the shoulder and said, "Kidding! I called the security office and had someone come out to prove it."

I huffed, "Why didn't you call earlier?"

She said, "Wasn't I eating breakfast just now."

I've long given up carrying a conversation with her using the logic of a normal human being, hence I replied, "That's right, eating breakfast is the most important, not eating breakfast is not good for the brain."

As I was done speaking, the nurse who was walking our way was pulled by Doctor Su, "What's going on? How come there's two people standing at the entrance?"

The nurse replied, "That high ranking official who underwent operation in our hospital before had gotten a heart attack again."

Doctor Su asked, "Which one? Cardiology department? Doctor Jiang's patient?"

The nurse replied, "En, Doctor Jiang is now in the operation room to save him." She then looked around before whispering, "I heard he had a heart attack on a woman's bed."

Wow.

We were making rustling noises, gossiping for a while. The content was all about how intense a 'bed exercise' was to have given someone a heart attack. As medical professionals, they've offered a lot of professional insight, among them were an elevated blood pressure, increased pulse rate, body secretions.....when I heard these two words, my cheeks flamed up in embarrassment which

made both of them look at me with disdain, “Hey, what’s with that vulgar expression on your face, we were only referring to sweating.”

As I am thin-skinned, and found it embarrassing to continue the ‘discussion’ with them, I excused myself saying I’ll be in Jiang Chen’s office to wait for him.

Jiang Chen’s office wasn’t locked, I swept a corner of his working desk to place the breakfast, and swept another corner to doze off.

It’s just that, my ability to sleep on the table back when I was still studying seemed to have deteriorated — I couldn’t fall asleep. Hence, I had no choice but to lean over the table in a daze, my fingers were fumbling on the hideous mess on his desk that was his files. He left urgently leaving the things on his desk in a disarray so I arranged it for him.

Jiang Chen sat behind me during high school, you would find it hard to imagine that he was such an outstanding student, his desk was always a mess, reference textbooks for examinations were left lying around. But he is amazing, whenever I ask him for something, it would only take him a moment and he would be able to fish out exactly what I was looking for from his pile of things. The most ridiculous was that one instance when I borrowed his test papers from Chemistry, his gaze was fixed at around 20 test papers, and muttered, “Chen Xiaoxi, are you here to compare answers?” Then he pulled out a test paper from somewhere in the middle, and asked me if it was the test paper that I was asking for. I’ve always felt that his supernatural abilities and the common folks’ skill of ‘feeling the bones*’ have different melodies* but are played with equal skill.

(T/N: [1] Feeling the bones is a technique by fortune tellers to determine things (personality, luck, etc.) depending on the appearance of a person’s bones. [2] A metaphor for having various approach but the outcome is the same.)

Sometimes, he would also allow me to help him tidy up his desk, but every time I’m tidying up his things, he would always lean back

on his chair with both of his arms folded across his chest, looking meticulously at me. I'd ask him what he was looking at and he would tell me he was looking at where I was putting his things, it made me feel like I was actually causing him such inconvenience, but I just continued to relentlessly inconvenience him further.

Jiang Chen's desk right now looked much better than before, only those medical charts that were stacked were a bit in a clutter. I picked them all up to stack them neatly but didn't expect that that the door would suddenly swing open which scared me and made me let go, sending the medical charts crashing to the floor.

Jiang Chen said, "What are you doing here?" Then he looked at the heap of medical charts on the ground and continued, "Did my medical charts offend you?"

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This is why Doctor Su is my favorite character, she's crazy!

Dolly | Xri | Amy

Chapter 20

I squatted down to pick up the medical charts and said, "I was afraid you might have gotten gastric pain again from being over hungry, so I brought you breakfast."

Jiang Chen squatted down to help pick up the medical charts, "Hospital's cafeteria has breakfast."

I looked up at him, "So have you eaten?"

He took the medical charts from me and threw them on the table, "Too tired, no appetite."

Indeed, his face was a face of weariness, a slight greenish color on his lower eyelids, face and lips were slightly pale.

I said, "I bought you tea eggs."

He removed his coat and said, "I will eat if you peel it."

I took over his coat, dragged him to a chair and sat him down, beamed at him and said, "Doctor, you need more protein for supplement. I will peel an egg for you right now."

He looked at me, shook his head and laughed. I stretched out my hand and poked his dimple and laughed along with him.

I held out the peeled egg to his mouth side and asked carefully, "How was the surgery?"

"Successful." He took one bite off the egg, "Help me take a bottle of water, it is at the lowest compartment of the document drawer."

I opened the lowest compartment of his drawer, it was filled with at least thirty to forty Nongfu Spring water. I took one out, opened it and passed it to him, "Why does your hospital only give out Nongfu

Spring?”

“How would I know?”

Jiang Chen reluctantly ate two tea eggs, and leaned back on his chair, and said, “I don’t want to eat anymore.”

I tore apart a disposable chopstick and persuaded him, “Eat a few more dumplings.”

He very unwillingly swallowed down a few dumplings, I saw that he was really tired, so I didn’t persuade him anymore, I only said, “You didn’t sleep the whole night, and you had a surgery, you should go home and rest.”

He shook his head, “The patient’s anesthesia has yet to wear off, we still need to do close monitoring. I can’t leave the hospital.”

I felt a little distressed for him and gave a pat on his head, “It’s been hard on you.”

He dodged my hand, “Your hands just peeled tea eggs.”

I was angry, “Your hands have touched dead people!”

He said gravely, “I washed my hands.”

.....

I said, “You can rest your head on the table and take a little nap, or I can ask Doctor Su if there’s any empty ward for you to sleep for a while?”

He didn’t answer me, he only stood up and walked behind a shelf and dragged out a foldable bed.

I exclaimed, “Well equipped ah.”

He opened up the foldable bed against the wall, then he threw

himself on the bed with a 'thump' sound, just like a corpse.

I stared blankly at his tightly shut eyes, thinking if I should leave or stay and wait for him to wake up? Shouldn't he at least warn me before sleeping...

I stared at him for a while and sighed. I squatted down to remove his shoes for him.

I placed the shoes under the bed and cleared the egg shells on the table. Just as I was about to leave the room to throw the rubbish, Jiang Chen said, "Chen Xiaoxi, where are you going?"

I turned back, he didn't even open his eyes. I said I was going to throw rubbish.

He asked if I will be coming back.

I said I will be.

He then said, "Okay, then you go."

I thought in my heart that I didn't even asked for your permission, why do you flatter yourself?

After I returned from throwing rubbish, Jiang Chen suddenly opened his eyes while I was closing the door. I got a shock, it was actually very scary. Just imagine, being in a gloomy dark room, the person whom you thought were asleep suddenly opened his eyes and looked at you. Basically, all you want to do is to rush towards him and stick an amulet on him.

I asked him frightenedly, "Why are you not asleep?"

He said, "Nope, I fell asleep, it was just a light sleep."

I thought about it and didn't know what to reply, so I could only parrot his last line, "That was a really light sleep."

Jiang Chen closed his eyes again, I stood in the middle of the room at a loss of what to do. Just as I was thinking If I should leave first and come back in the afternoon, Jiang Chen opened his eyes and said, "Why are you still standing there? Come here and accompany me to sleep."

I was really taken aback. However, I usually express my feelings wrongly in front Jiang Chen which ended up being awkward or creepy, I concluded that the indecent sleeping I was thinking about is not the pure sleeping he was talking about. So, I calmly walked to his bed side and said, "You move in a bit."

He moved in, and I lied down after removing my shoes.

Then I asked him, "Do you have pillows?"

He said he doesn't.

After a while he suggested, "Why not you rest your head on my arm?"

I think a surgeon's hand is very costly. If I slept till it became numb, and after it went numb it would become crippled, then I would have committed a big offense. Therefore, I rejected him.

We slept with our backs against each other for quite some time, I asked him, "Are you asleep?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Is it too squeezey?"

He replied, "No."

I said, "Then why can't you fall asleep?"

He said, "I want to hug you to sleep. But I recalled that you stayed in the hospital for the entire time since last night and didn't bathe."

I turned over and said angrily, "You also didn't bathe, I didn't even avoid you!"

I squinted his panda eyes and was immersed in his thoughts, after a while he said, "You are right."

After that he extended his arms and pulled me into a hug, he then patted on my head and said, "Alright, it's no longer squeezezy. We can sleep now."

I rested on the hollowness between his shoulder and chest. It was not too hard nor was it too soft, it was pretty comfortable. But I kept having the feeling as though I was being fooled. In order to show my disdain, I said, "You have a disinfectant smell on you."

He made an agreeing sound then proceeded to ignore me, so I said again, "You have too many bones, it's killing me."

Only then did he open his eyes, "We have the same number of bones, 206 pieces."

As he brought the conversation onto a professional level, my qualities could no longer keep up. I could only think of ways to change the topic, and I thought of Doctor Su. I said, "Oh, do you know what Doctor Su's dad do for a living?"

He embraced me tightly and said, "Her dad is our faculty's dean, Old Man Su. Why do you ask?"

This is Old Man Su, that is also Old Man Su*, this person loves to joke, despite how lame the joke is, he thinks that it is very funny. It makes everyone limp and numb, this person, is Old Man Su. (T/N: 2 different types of Su were used here namely, 酥 and 苏 respectively. There is no meaning to it, just a different word used for the surname.)

Old Man Su and I had a chance encounter that was like a thunderstruck. It was a day where leaves were swirling in the air. I

waited for Jiang Chen (whose class was delayed) to end class at the corridor. While I was leaning on the railing looking at the people who were walking on the school ground, an old man came to me and asked, "Miss, what class is inside? Why are they not dismissed yet?"

I said, "I also have no idea, I am just waiting for my boyfriend."

I smiled at me and said, "Which one is your boyfriend? Can you point to me?"

At that time I was still naïve, so I pointed inside proudly. However, the elder before me suddenly gave a very solemn look. "Student Jiang? No wonder he seemed really inattentive in my class recently, so it was because he is dating. I say you kids these days, being young is the best time to absorb knowledge nutrients, but you all choose to waste it on boy girl relationships. That is too insensible. Looks like I will have to re-discuss with his class tutor on the scholarship nominees."

I quickly kept the pride on my face, I was shocked till I was a little unstable, I quickly used my about-to-cry tone to explain to him, "Teacher, it is not like that. Actually, student Jiang Chen doesn't like me, it was me who shamelessly stuck myself to him, it has nothing to do with him."

He made a 'hmpf' sound and said, "You need two hands to clap."

I clenched my teeth and said, "Teacher, I will tell you the truth. I am a mythomania. I am always fantasizing on having an extraordinary relationship with each and every boy in the medicine school. The day before yesterday was student Lee. Yesterday it was student Zhang. Today it is student Jiang. According to your professional medical perspective, do you think there is a cure for this kind of illness?"

Old Man Su stared at me with his eyes enlarged, he then slowly asked after a while, "Which faculty are you from?"

“Arts.”

I muttered to himself, “Arts students are all crazy people. You only fantasize yourself with the medicine school male students? How about the medicine school male teachers?”

I suspect that his question has a smell of self-recommendation. With the mindset to protect Jiang Chen, I went all out. I fumbled on my shirt edge and looked at him with eyes full of tender feelings, “Actually... actually I do too.”

Old Man Su held onto his arms and stumbled backwards. He said, “This student, actually I was just joking with you just now.”

I asked blankly, “Which one was a joke?”

He said, “The scholarship nominee. Also, I don’t teach his class, I only know him.”

My only thought at that time was, “Is it a crime to hit teachers? Or is it better to hit him in a rucksack? Or should I hire someone to assassinate him?”

He saw that I was silent, he continued, “This student, I have a wife, we have very deep feelings for each other.”

I shook off my idea, and said to him coldly and dismally, “It’s okay, I will just look at you from a distance then.”

I even looked down to wipe tears off my eyes after I finished talking. From my peripheral view I saw Old Man Su walked backwards a few more steps. I think I shouldn’t scare the elderly too much, just as I was about to look up to tell him I was joking, an arm came from behind my back and held on my shoulder, “Chen Xiaoxi, why is your head down? Did Old man Su bully you?”

Old Man Su came to a sudden realization, he pointed at me with trembling hand and stumbled half a step and said, “You.... You are

too much!"

.....

Jiang Chen whispered to my ears, "Lets go quick, his acting addiction is starting again."

Doctor Su and Old Man Su, they are really from one family.

I looked up, Jiang Chen already fell into a deep slumber, I rested on his chest while smelling the weird disinfectant smell on him as I too, fell into a faraway dream land.

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Chapter 21

When I woke up, Jiang Chen had already disappeared. He left a note at the bedside, asking me to return home after I woke up.

I searched out my phone and looked, it was already past eleven o'clock, I could eat lunch. Thinking that Jiang Chen hadn't really eaten much in the morning, I wanted to buy some food for him to eat before leaving.

Hence, I swept and parted my hair for a little while before leaving the room. Upon leaving the room, I so happened to run into that sanitation worker auntie, I very happily went up and asked her, "Auntie, where is the hospital canteen?"

She looked at me, then looked at the door of Jiang Chen's office, and said, "I don't know."

Her tone of voice was very harsh, as if I was scum.

I said again, "Haven't you been working in the hospital for a few decades, how can you not know where the canteen is?"

She used a gaze of looking at faeces to size me up from head to toe, and said with revulsion, "Even if I know, I won't tell you."

I was shocked by her frankness, and felt that she really was an honest person who made a clear difference between what she loved and what she hated, and who really poured out her whole heart and soul* to tell it as it was. (T/N: original idiom directly translated means to fish out your heart and your lungs (掏心掏肺), meaning to devote yourself entirely to a matter)

After she finished speaking, she then walked onwards pushing the rubbish bin, before she turned round the corner she even loudly lamented, "People nowadays deliver gifts till they deliver on the bed,

really disgusting.”

Facing the glass window of the corridor, I took measure of myself, my clothes were a little wrinkled, my hair was a little messy, but it didn't appear like I had been ravaged too. I felt grieved that I was always being misunderstood, at the same time I also felt grieved for this auntie's humanity. She would rather believe that I was a nutcase or that I was on the casting couch*, yet she was unwilling to believe that we were only a couple that loved each other. Of course, this could also be because I had a face that didn't look like an innocent woman, but it was also more possible that Jiang Chen always had extremely terrible rumours and comments about him, causing the masses of society to lose faith in his conduct. (T/N: “casting couch” referring to the practise where actresses must trade sexual favours to be casted in roles)

In order not to encounter such a cold countenance like that of the sanitation worker auntie again, I decided to depend on my own strength to search for the mysterious whereabouts of that canteen. Just as I was wandering about in the hospital, Jiang Chen called.

He said, “Have you woken up?”

I said, “Just woke up.”

He said, “Then be more careful on your way back.”

I went silent for a little while, before speaking, “Have you eaten?”

He said, “Mm, I'm eating with the family members of a patient.”

I spoke, “Okay, I got it, I'll go back.”

Nowadays, even doctors had to accompany their clients for meals. And I didn't know why I was a little disappointed, perhaps it was that I was hungry and yet he didn't invite me to freeloading a meal together. What is known as “going into battle, it's best to have father and son as soldiers*”, freeloading meals, it's best to have a couple doing so,

he really wasn't sensible. (T/N: a line from a proverb meaning that in times of life and death, family members are the most dependable people to work with)

I took a shower when I got home, then changed into a set of comfortable clothes and sat on the bed lost in thought. This weekend was endlessly long, fragmented into bits and pieces such that it wasn't real at all. One moment my heart would swell till it was full, the next moment it would be sucked out till it was empty. Hesitatingly, I curled my legs up in front of my chest and hugged them, this pose was to match with the current apprehension and worries about loss and gain* in my heart. The pose in addition to my mentality, I felt that I really was a flower-petal-like young woman. (T/N: a Chinese idiom meaning to worry that you can't obtain something, yet worrying that you will lose it once you do obtain it)

I took up my telephone and made a call to Wu Bosong, the phone only rang twice before it was picked up, proving that he was very idle.

Wu Bosong said, "Chen Xiaoxi, child, have you and your lover reconciled yet?"

I said, "We've reconciled."

He said, "Aiyaya, why does your voice sound so downcast?"

I went silent.

His tone of voice started to become serious. "It's not that after you reconciled with him, only then did you discover that the person you love most is me, right?"

I rolled my eyes, "Screw you."

He laughed twice, before saying indifferently, "Speak, what's up?"

I first gave a long, long sigh to express that I really was very

distressed, after which I then recounted once through to him the process of us reconciling according to how it really happened. Finally, I asked him, "Would you think that this sort of situation of ours is very absurd?"

He asked, "Why would it be absurd?"

I said, "It was very flippant, how can we inexplicably break up and inexplicably get back together, this makes me appear like I'm very wanton."

He said, "Give me a break, I thought that once Jiang Chen beckons you over with his finger, you will fly over and throw yourself (at him)."

.....

I spoke again, "But they all say that girls who chase guys won't be cherished, this actually has been a hidden worry in my heart all this while."

He said, "Then you can go and look for someone else, let someone else chase you, let someone else cherish you."

I said, "What are you being so angry for, can't you just talk me around nicely? You say, it's been three years already, why am I such a loser?"

He said, "Alright then, I thought what you needed now was a wake-up call*, I didn't expect that what you want now is a caring older brother. Since this is so, I'll be a little more tactful, you're simply idiotic plus infatuated, once you mention Jiang Chen you will smile nauseatingly, once you see Jiang Chen your two eyes will light up just like how a fly does when it sees poop. Don't speak of three years, even if it were thirty years, you also can't escape from Jiang Chen's palm." (T/N: original idiom is 当头棒喝 – literally meaning a blow and a shout to one's head. Alludes to the Buddhist practice where the

master would just randomly club a novice's head or shout at a novice to demand an answer for no reason, to test the novice's progress in comprehending Buddhist concepts. The idiom refers to methods to make one wake up to reality, or to give someone a severe warning)

..... Your definition of 'tactful' is very unique.

I believed that what he said wasn't wrong, in this world, there really existed matter which "reinforced each other and subdued each other*", for example, Sister Furong* was the bane of Tsinghua University, Sister Feng* was the bane of the plastic surgery industry, and Jiang Chen was the bane of my life. Uh, it seems like this analogy isn't very elegant. Let's put it this way, there are some people who just are that calamity* in your life, no matter if you love it or hate it, nothing can compare to one sentence of his. (T/N: The original phrase - 相生相克, refers to the five phases of Chinese philosophy - wood, fire, earth, metal, water. Each phase reinforces/develops another phase, and each phase subdues another phase too. To give an example: fire gives rise to earth, because after fire burns things, the matter will turn to ashes, which becomes earth, but fire subdues metal, because fire can melt metal.) (T/N: Sister Furong/Furong Jiejie is a woman who is notorious on the internet and is an internet celebrity. She initially gained notoriety for her posts on the Internet forums of Tsinghua University and Peking University after she tried a few times but failed to get a place in these schools for postgraduate studies. [Btw, Tsinghua and Peking are the top two universities in Beijing/China]) (T/N: Sister Feng is another internet celebrity who became famous due to a lot of outlandish comments/things she did. In 2010, she announced that she was going to do plastic surgery, saying that she was going to do plastic surgery till she looked like Fan Bing Bing/Shu Qi etc, and apparently her doing plastic surgery (among many other things) caused a nationwide sensation) (T/N: an ancient Taoist macroscopic concept relating to time, referring to bad luck, adversity, catastrophes that are destined to happen in your life.)

I said, "Then Jiang Chen's mother doesn't like me, and my dad also doesn't like Jiang Chen, we still don't have a future."

Wu Bosong said, "This way, I'll tell you a story."

He told me a story about a young man and woman, this story could almost reach the top and take the number one position among all the ridiculous stories I have ever heard.

The boy and the girl loved each other, and after that they wanted to get married. The paternal grandmother of the boy didn't approve of it, because the girl was born in the year of the dog*, and the grandmother had been bitten before by a dog when she was small. This signified that if the girl married into the family, she would clash with the grandmother's good fortune, so the grandmother refused to let the two get married for the life of her. You see how ridiculous this was, to me, being born in the year of the dog at most symbolised that after the girl married into the family, whenever she found the grandmother unfavourable, she would have an excuse to bite her only. Later on, that boy couldn't bear to be disobedient to his grandmother, and hence left. Before he left, he promised that he would definitely return to marry the girl. Many years later, the boy returned, the girl became his father's mistress, and even gave birth to a big fat baby for his father in the year of the dog. And just when his father was in the midst of seeking a divorce from his mother in order to give this girl a status, his grandmother was made so angry by her new grandson born in the year of the dog that she was hospitalised. You see, this girl's method of seeking revenge wasn't only just ridiculous, it was also quite sinister - if I can't become your wife I'll become your mother, if I can't marry your grandson I'll marry your son, you don't want a granddaughter-in-law that's born in the year of the dog, I'll give birth to a grandson born in the year of the dog for you. (T/N: The Chinese zodiac calendar operates in cycles of 12 lunar years, with an animal representing each year in the cycle. Being born in a certain year represented by a certain animal is often thought to influence your personality and your fortune.)

After I finished listening, I sounded an “ah” in astonishment, and asked him, “Is this your story?”

He said, “It’s not.”

I said, “If it’s not, what are you telling it to me for, don’t tell me that you want me to go and seduce Jiang Chen’s dad?”

He said, “I just want to tell you that there are some people in this world who are very ridiculous, they like to interfere in other people’s lives boldly and with conviction, yet you totally can ignore them. For example, the boy and the girl in this story, they totally could have gone to register their marriage themselves or make an agreement with each other to elope, if that was really out of the question, waiting till the old woman died would have resolved it, there was no need to ruin each other’s and other people’s lives.”

I said, “So you mean for me and Jiang Chen to elope?”

He said, “What elope, you are so stupid, where can you elope off to.”

I said, “Then what exactly do you mean?”

He said, “Actually there’s also not much meaning, I just suddenly wanted to tell you a story.”

I said, “That’s not it, this really is your story right, if you are afraid of me knowing why did you need to tell me?”

He said, “This really isn’t my story, this is the story of my mother and my older brother. I’m just telling you about my confusing life history to let you feel more balanced in your heart.”

Once again, he succeeded in making me sound an “ah” in astonishment.

We then chatted randomly and blindly about some trivial rubbish,

after hanging up the phone I suddenly was filled with confidence in the future of Jiang Chen and I, because I felt that since I was born in the year of the dragon, and this sort of creature that the dragon was was comparatively more mythological and imaginary, it wasn't too possible that I would be able to bite Jiang Chen's family members, so in any case I wouldn't be reduced to the same state that Wu Bosong's mother was in.

You see, us humans are always like this, we need an even more miserable story to decorate our own misery, we use other people's sorrows to balance out our own sorrows. How did that powerful sentence go again - when I was complaining about how I didn't have shoes to wear, I discovered that there were people who didn't have legs. I had legs, I also wasn't born in the year of the dog, how blessed was I.

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Chapter 22

The end of the weekend seemed to signify that Jiang Chen and I have also ended contact. I've been working for three days and only then did I get a call from Jiang Chen. He simply called me to explain that he was very busy and didn't say anything else. I still insisted and gave him three calls, two of which went through but nobody answered, and one went through with us giving hurried greetings to each other, he's still able to eat much rice*. (T/N: It means to do something deliberately to show people the state of things.)

Situ Mo would often taunt me, saying, "Why does your boyfriend seems to be there but not there, and seems to be hidden but also visible ah."

I cursed her saying her husband and the female scientist in the laboratory would make a test-tube baby or something.

Early morning of Thursday, I was in the office doing a 'case' which was the design on the box for a certain brand of blow dryer. It's actually very easy, put a photo of the product, put the logo of the brand, put a brief info regarding the product's function, put the lines needed for promotion, and it's over. I don't like this kind of job but I like my co-workers here, because I'm someone who can't handle complex human relationships, and my two co-workers, Fu Pei and Situ Mo, are both relatively simple people.

But I was exceptionally irritable at work today, I hit the table and told Situ Mo. "What's the point in living like this, doing these pointless things every day, I can't see any future."

Situ Mo fished out a lollipop from her bag and threw it at me, "I'm giving you my son's candy, don't say such childish words again."

Don't say such childish words again. But day after day, we are all

moving forward in uncertainty, just like walking in the dark, no one knows what our every footfall would step on, or what kind of future it would take us.

I said solemnly, "I ate your son's candy, I'll dedicate my body and soul to him, okay."

Situ Mo said, "Get lost you pedophile."

Speaking of pedophilia, I can't help but think of Su Rui, he called me last night, saying his life was dull. Design? Empty. Business? Miserable. The final conclusion was that he was lacking a muse that would lead him through his chaotic life with zero inspirations, and under his considerations, I vaguely think I was probably 'that' muse.

I said I reconciled with Jiang Chen. He said, "It is said that in the great affairs of the world under the heavens, that which is long divided must unite, and that which is long united must divide*."

(T/N: This quote originated from the Chinese historical novel, The Romance of the Three Kingdoms which concerns contention, initiated by a sovereign power, Shu, against another, Wei, by colluding with the third sovereign power, Wu, wherein Shu and Wu would often breach their agreements in the then China of 220-280. Now, it is used to describe how things are constantly changing.)

I said, "How about I introduce you to a possible girlfriend? I guarantee that she is more mature, stylish, and beautiful than I am, and will satisfy all your fantasies of a love between an older woman and a younger man." He said, "Falling for you only proves that I don't want someone mature, stylish, and beautiful."

I felt unbearably angry so I just hung up the phone, holding myself back from quickly giving Doctor Su a call to rat him out. This 'tell one's parent to sue the teacher' behavior is really shameless, I didn't do it when I was a kid, it's impossible to grow up when you break a precept.

But I didn't think that just because I didn't do it, doesn't mean Su Rui also wouldn't do it. I got a call from Doctor Su around lunch time, more or less the content was about how her younger brother no longer thinks about drinking tea and eating rice* because of me, and that if I don't want her to go to Jiang Chen and directly tell him that I was a fickle woman, I would have to carefully think of a way to fix it. In the end, she told me seriously, that her threat about telling Jiang Chen was just a joke. Damn, her black humor. (T/N: Denotes losing the ability to function from the loss of a very important thing or an obsession about a certain thing to the point of neglecting basic necessities.)

I gave Su Rui a call, he said he was still cocooned in his blanket, also, a girl's voice and laughter went through the phone, "Little buddy, your jie jie asked me to talk to you."

He said, "Who is your little buddy, what do I have to talk to you about?"

The completely awkward 17-18 year old tone of his voice was really cute

I said, "Okay then, forget about it, just don't let the grown-ups worry for you, bye."

I was done talking, about to hang up the phone when he let out a shout that made my head swim, "Chen Xiaoxi, you dare hang up on me again!"

Why wouldn't I dare hang up, I fear nothing in heaven or earth, besides Jiang Chen's phone call which I dare not hung up.

Two seconds later, Su Rui roared and yelled, "Chen Xiaoxi, you are too much, I really like you."

I said, "Thanks, but I already like someone else."

He said, "You always like only him, only one person, don't you feel

that your life is very boring?”

I said, “A little bit, so I advise you to quickly go out and like a few more.”

Su Rui furiously threw his phone, breaking it. He unexpectedly reminded me of something, and made me decide to visit the man who made my life boring after I knock off work. When I came up with such a thought, I felt that I was so stupid before — he’s busy while I’m the one who’s free, and I still had to wait for him to find time to look for me, what is wrong with me!

When I got to the hospital, it was already past 6 o’clock, I couldn’t find Jiang Chen everywhere, so I gave him a call, “Where are you?”

“Hospital.”

“Where in the hospital?”

“In a ward, are you here?”

“En. Which floor? Which room number? I’ll go find you.”

“No need. Just go to the lobby and wait for me. I’ll go downstairs to find you.”

I picked a conspicuous place among the many rows of benches in the lobby and sat down, even at this hour, there were still a lot of people sitting, standing up, walking back and forth all around the lobby, their faces looked more or less worried. But I was too busy to observe them, I was busy staring at every single entrance. I don’t know what’s wrong with me, I was suddenly so nervous about seeing him, like back in our student days, every time I’d hear his name, even when I was just chatting with my classmates, my heart would secretly skip a beat.

“What are you doing?” Someone poked the back of my head, I was, of course, leaning forward, craning my head to look at the corridors, I

was laxed, so when I was poked, I almost face-planted on the floor but the person held me back. I turned my head, Jiang Chen was looking helplessly at me, "Why are you sitting unsteadily?"

I looked cluelessly at him and smiled, "Why didn't I see you coming?"

He pointed at the staircase behind me, "I came down from upstairs."

I chuckled, skipped over to his side, held unto his arm, and said, "I'm asking you out for a meal."

He said, "What are you so happy about?"

I said, "I'm just happy to see you."

He gave me a sideways glance, like a joke and also like a request, he said, "If you're happy, then come here every day."

I nodded frenetically, "I think that you're so busy, in the future, I'll just frequently come here to keep you company okay."

He smiled and patted my head, saying, "I'm not used to you being so considerate like this."

I think the words he spoke wasn't said in the commanding heights of reality, faced with him, in fact I'm very considerate most of the time.

He looked at his watch, and said, "What do you want to eat? I can't walk too far off from the hospital."

I said, "Then which one around here is the most expensive to eat at? My invitation, but you'll be the one paying."

Jiang Chen said with a laugh, "You're very shameless."

"Exactly." I am very proud, "My principle in life is, 'After eating,

wipe my mouth, and wipe my ass, then leave.”

My voice fell, I myself was stunned, Jiang Chen hesitated for two seconds, then he burst into peals of laughter, a doctor in white, paying no heed to his image and laughing heartily in the hospital lobby. This unkind and unsympathetic behavior, even though his laugh is very nice to look at, he ought to be dragged out to get 30 beatings from a huge plank.

Jiang Chen led me out the back door of the hospital, he said he was going to take me to a very good hotpot place.

I said, “You’re taking me to eat hotpot in summer?”

He said, “That place is open all year round, they have a ‘lovers’ pot’ and I heard that it’s very delicious, I’ve been wanting to take you there for a long time now, I can’t wait for winter.”

I’ve been wanting to take you there for a long time.

I stopped walking. I could feel my nose tingling the way it does when I’m about to cry.

Jiang Chen turned his head to look at me and wondered, “What happened?”

I stretched out my hand at him and said, “You take me.”

He looked left and right, let out a sigh, and held my hand, “Why are you still so childish.”

I watched him, his dimple was slowly showing on his left cheek, tch, aren’t you childish yourself.

The steam from the hotpot soon filled in between Jiang Chen and I. Besides being covered in the steam, I had the smell sticking all over me with sweat seeping through my pores making me feel very filthy, and also because I’ve told Jiang Chen about the thing with Su Rui, my

filthy heart was looking forward that he best eat 'a little' vinegar, scratch that, eat 'a lot' of vinegar. It doesn't matter if he'd flip this hotpot table over, as long as the boiling hot soup doesn't pour on the both of us. (T/N: Eating vinegar means being jealous to a rival in love)

However, Jiang Chen just picked a slice of lamb meat and threw it in my bowl, "Stop being so conceited."

Ai, my conceitedness was spoken with tact, but he's still able to see clearly the downy feather* of autumn. (T/N: A Chinese idiom meaning to notice the minutest details in everything.)

I said, "Su Rui asked me, if it isn't boring to like only one person for a lifetime. What do you think?"

He said, "It might be a bit boring? I haven't tried."

I was stunned, mulled over it for a long time before I came to understand, tapping the edge of my bowl, I asked, "Can you say that again?"

He threw another piece of lamb meat into my bowl, "My grandma said, 'Tap your bowl and you'll become a beggar.'" (T/N: It is poor table etiquette to tap on your bowl with your chopsticks as beggars make this kind of noise to attract attention.)

I neither overlooked nor spared* things and pressed on, "Who else did you like?" (T/N: Treat something seriously without listening to excuses.)

He turned his eyes upwards in contemplation, and said after a long while, "Anyway, I'm not bored."

I was watching that dead look on his face, and said in bitter anger, "Okay, I also don't want to resign myself to being the only one who likes you for a lifetime anyway."

Jiang Chen also tapped on the edge of his bowl and said, "I actually

think it's nice to just like only one person for a lifetime, just like performing surgery, only paying attention to speed and accuracy."

Those three phrases, not leaving out one's profession.....

When our discussion regarding the serious, 'mountain collapsing, earth splitting' topic about 'one true love' has come to an end, Jiang Chen seemed to remember something and asked me, "Have you been going to my place recently?"

"Ah?" My brain couldn't get a grasp on it. "Go to your place?"

He glared at me, "Isn't my key there still with you?"

"I had a sudden epiphany but a little puzzled, "I forgot, your key is still here with me. You haven't been home these past few days?"

He said, "Wasn't able to, the patient I operated last Sunday is very influential, the higher-ups wanted me to be on call for 24 hours."

"Who?" I placed my bag on my lap, on one hand, preoccupied with rummaging my bag to look for the key, on the other hand, asking things casually.

"That Secretary Zhang whose banquet I took you last time. I have a spare key in my office."

I scratched my head, "Why are you leaving your key with me?"

Could it be, he wants me to sneak up on him in the middle of the night? The nerve of this guy.....

He threw another piece of lamb meat into my bowl. "To let you clean up my house, you're acting like you have amnesia. Your bowl's already full, are you going to eat or not?"

I have no idea when I piled up so much meat in my bowl, I could only praise on how really fast Jiang Chen was.

This was probably the fastest hotpot I've ever had, it only took us about an hour from ordering to being done with eating. After eating, we looked at each other, the image was as if we were walking past each other under the rain, but what we were really thinking was that we're very smelly.

Back in the hospital, Jiang Chen went to their quarters to take a shower, I stayed in his office waiting for him to come back, to come back and give me a week's worth of smelly clothes to wash and dry under the sun.

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Chapter 23

I carried a big bag of clothes while walking along the hospital corridor. An enchanting woman came walking towards me. She first shot me a glance, then she nodded her head while smiling at me, "Hello, Chen Xiaoxi."

I too, nodded while smiling, "Hu Ran Ran, hello."

To be honest, I recognized her from afar, that strong sinister aura she has, even if she was burnt to her ashes, her aura can still choke me. It's just that I didn't dare to greet her first, in case she looked at me without guilt and say to me, "I'm sorry, you are?"

To act acquainted, that is the most embarrassing thing.

Hu Ran Ran wrinkled her nose and smelled, she pointed to the big, black plastic bag that I was holding and blinked her eyes asking, "You killed your boyfriend, and mutilated him?"

I remembered what the nurse said, that the person had a heart attack on a woman's bed. The woman was most probably Hu Ran Ran, I think her method of murder is of the highest class.

I said, "These are his laundry, the foul smell you smelled is probably mine because I sweated too much."

She pouted her red lips and whistled, "Virtuous ah."

I looked down and smiled lightly, modestly expressing that I am indeed more virtuous than most people.

As I was about to leave after exchanging a few words, Hu Ran Ran said, "Can you accompany me for a smoke?"

I was thinking, she doesn't even mind my company even when I

smell like a decomposed corpse, that is a friendship that is very precious. It doesn't seem right if I were to reject her, so I nodded. I followed her left and right to a secluded staircase.

She passed one cigarette to me, and I held it between my fingers and examined. It's white and slim, the cigarette butt even has a pretty red heart engraved on it.

She first lighted up her own cigarette, then came out to help me with it. I was a little awkward, so I could only hard-headedly move forward to her lighter. Only when I moved forward did I realize that she has really good skin. I originally thought that it was the flawless canvas of a thick makeup, little did I know she wasn't wearing much, alright, she was born beautiful.

Hu Ran Ran very quickly took a puff of cigarette and blew out smoke, which slowly dispersed around her. She looks like those demon vixens that appears while swaying their hips in Journey to the West.

I stared at the cigarette between my fingers. I felt like those bad girls who were brought to the staircase in those movies, it was pretty cool. I prepared my heart and brought the cigarette to my mouth, bite it with my teeth, and took a deep breath. The smoke went straight to my throat, choked me till I couldn't stop coughing, there were tears in my eyes.

Hu Ran Ran laughed at me, and puffed out another ring of smoke, "Chen Xiaoxi, aren't you quite useless."

I hit on my chest to circulate the air, and answered her, "I... *cough cough*.... Never smoked before."

After coughing, my mouth tastes like mint, I asked, "Are cigarettes all mint flavoured?"

She shook her head, "No, this is for woman who put on an act."

I sincerely felt ashamed, I couldn't even put on an act properly.

I leaned on the staircase railings with Hu Ran Ran, I tried to conquer the cigarette again, but I only looked at it burning slowly, why did she ask me here?

She finished her cigarette, and threw the cigarette butt down the stairs and said, "Zhang Qian Rong is seducing your man in the hospital every day."

I shook off a long stretch of ashes, "Secretary Zhang's daughter?"

"Granddaughter," she corrected me, "Have you forgotten that the old man is so old that he can just die already?"

This kind of question feels like a trap to me, I was afraid that if I agreed, there will suddenly be people dressed in black attacking me from all directions and capture me, so I didn't make a sound.

Hu Ran Ran said, "I just wanted to warn you, don't let her get her way."

I thought, sister, your care about my marriage is more than my parents'.

I said, "Won't, I am quite reassured about him."

Hu Ran Ran suddenly became very agitated. She single-handedly banged her hand on the wooden staircase till it rattled. She said, "You are reassured? You actually trust men?"

I thought, to trust men isn't a big sin, why are you so agitated...

She continued banging the staircase, "You are too naïve, no one gets into a relationship like you do!"

I thought, she sounded as though she experienced my relationship...

As my relationship belongs to the failed-but-subsequently-reconciled category, so I very modestly sought her guidance on how a relationship should be like. She was caught off guard, shook her head and confessed, "I have never gotten into a relationship, my strength is on being a mistress."

.....

We were speechless for a while, and she lighted up another cigarette and said, "Whatever the case is, you better ask your man to distance himself from that family, the further the better, I won't harm you."

I do believe that she won't harm me. After all, there is no benefit in harming me. I am also not challenging. As the saying goes, don't use a knife meant for beef to kill a chicken*. (T/N: aka don't use a sledgehammer on a nut.)

I thought about it, and said, "Okay, I will let him know, thank you, I will go home first."

She waved her hand and said bye.

And so, I left. After about 2 to 3 mins, I realized I couldn't find my way out. I have a shortcoming, and that is I can only memorize route by the symbol/mark. For example, the colour of the road signage, the colour of the dustbin, or whether on the wall was it written "Peeing and Defecating Prohibited". When I followed her, I forgot to take note of it, and so now I have no idea how to get out.

I could only return back to the staircase, she was still leaning there, using her sobs to smoke lonelily. (T/N: Is lonelily even a word? LOL.)

I originally didn't want to disturb her desolated back view that can cause tears, but I really have no choice, so I coughed two times to get her attention. I said, "Uh... I couldn't find my way out..."

The beauty of her sobs was interrupted by me, she threw away the cigarette on hand and said, "Follow me."

I extended my leg and stepped on the cigarette to extinguish it, and followed her back to the original corridor.

From where we are, we saw a crying Zhang Qian Rong sitting on the long bench of the corridor. In order to correspond with the scientific law of romance, the person sitting beside her is Jiang Chen.

Hu Ran Ran turned to look at me, "See, she's gotten herself on him."

I got worried hearing it, I couldn't see well as I have mild nearsightedness. I hurriedly asked her, "On where? On where?*"

Hu Ran Ran asked distracted, "What 'on where'?"

I said, "Didn't you say they're touching? Where did Jiang Chen put his hand on her? I can't see properly, I'm nearsighted."

Hu Ran Ran rolled a snow-white eye. "I said she has hooked up on him."

I heaved a sigh of relieve, "You should have said it earlier, you gave me a scare..."

She frowned and mumbled to herself, "Why do I feel that to hook up is more serious.."

We probably attracted attention because we were standing in the middle of the corridor, we were spotted after a short while. Jiang Chen looked at me suspiciously and waved at me to go to him.

The moment I took a step, Hu Ran Ran pulled me back and said loudly, "Let him come here, why should you go there!"

I looked at Jiang Chen for help, he frowned, but still stood up to

walk towards us.

“Why are you still in the hospital?” He pulled me away from Hu Ran Ran’s grasp.

“Uh, I was about to go.”

Hu Ran Ran gave a cold laugh, “Why are you in such a hurry to chase your girlfriend away?”

I lifted my head to look at Jiang Chen and gave him a awkward bitter smile, indicating that I also have no idea what wrong medication did this madam take.

Jiang Chen was about to say something, but Zhang Qian Rong also came over suddenly. She stretched out her hand to hold onto mine, looked down, and droplets of tears dripped down onto the back of my palm. She said, “Please do not misunderstand Doctor Jiang, I was only... only too depressed, he’s just consoling me.”

I forced a smile and retrieve back my hands, I said, “No no no, I understand, I didn’t misunderstand.”

At the same time, I was secretly moving my hands to the back of Jiang Chen, and wiped off the tears on the back of my palm on his coat.

Jiang Chen casted me a look.

“Hng, console, I think it seems more like comforting*.” Hu Ran Ran gave a cold laugh again. (T/N: This comfort is the comfort from ‘comfort women’.)

I was shocked by her talent. This (console) and (comfort) is obviously much more outrageous than the (flow downwards) and (vulgar) that I wrote years ago in my workbook. (T/N: please refer to chapter 13! Console and Comfort are written as 安慰 and 慰安, so they are written the other way. However, both console and comfort

can still mean 安慰.)

“You... Nonsense!” Zhang Qian Rong stomped her feet, then proceeded to cover her mouth and started acting out a ‘wronged till she was choked with emotions’ episode. She looks really pitiful like this.

I spoke in an almost silent volume and asked Jiang Chen, “What to you? Why not you console her a bit? If not comfort her a little?”

Jiang Chen didn’t bother about me, he said to Hu Ran Ran, “Miss Hu, Mr. Zhang was looking for you just now when he woke up.”

After that he patted my head and said, “It’s so late, it will be better if I send you home.”

He then pulled me along.

He pulled me till I was taking one step and staggering the other, I kept looking back, but I only saw them standing in the middle of the corridor staring down at each other. Just as Jiang Chen took a turn, a slap came from behind us.

I got a shock. I wanted to look back but Jiang Chen dragged me away by my head.

I was very curious, wondering who was the one who slapped the other? In the ordinary course of events, Hu Ran Ran is very valiant, it is possible that she will hit someone. However, her status is a mistress, so it is possible for her to be beaten as well. This is such a hard to solve mystery, its too difficult to understand. For my IQ, this is a tough question. However, if I were to visit the hospital tomorrow, and just ask any nurse, there will be immediate detailed and polished answers to my question. Perhaps, there might even be an HQ video recording. This shows that to be people-oriented, to rely on technology, any problem will be solved in a jiffy.

Jiang Chen dragged me to the entrance of the hospital, I said,

“Don’t you have to stay in the hospital to standby?”

He took off his coat and passed it to me, “Bring this back to wash too, it’s full of her perfume smell, it’s too smelly.”

I squeezed the coat into the plastic bag, “Are you going to send me back?”

He contemplated for a moment and said, “Can you go back on your own?”

I nodded, “Yes.”

He said, “Alright, you take care on the way back, call me once you have reached home.”

I nodded once again, “Ok.”

He turned his back and walk away completely contented.

I scratched my head and sighed, at least watch me flag down a taxi before going right...

I stood at the road side for a long time, I was ignored for the 3 times I tried to flag down a taxi. I decided that one day I will take revenge on Jiang Chen’s unromantic-ness and insensitivity. For example, when he is fixing his gaze on me with deep feelings, I will tell him that he has gum in his eyes; if he holds my hand, I will say he has sweaty palms; if he kisses me, I will tell him that he has a smelly breath. If I am ruthless enough, I will definitely say he has vegetable stuck between his teeth.

A car slowly came and stopped in front of me, this car is a little familiar. A head popped out from within, this head is very familiar, he said, “Get on, I will send you back home.”

I said, “Then.. what about standing by?”

He said, "There are other doctors."

I said, "Is there really no problem?"

He said, "If there is a problem I wouldn't bother about you, talk lesser, are you coming in or not, if not I will go back."

I hugged the plastic bag and entered the car, smiling the entire way back, I couldn't stop myself from humming a few songs. I only stopped when Jiang Chen turned up the car's audio to the max volume.

In the end Jiang Chen couldn't take it anymore, he said, "Why are you smiling so disgustingly for?"

Dazzled, I said, "No, I am just happy that you came back to fetch me."

I am so thankful that you can come back, and we can return together.

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Ahh yes, the last sentence was actually Xiao Xi's thoughts in the novel haha.

Chapter 24

We drove the car till we reached downstairs of my house. The car headlights shone, there was a person standing below the electric pole by the roadside, he was reclining against the electric pole with the pose of a male lead from an idol drama, there even was a cigarette stick sandwiched between his fingers. The red beam of light glittered and gleamed.

A minor smoking, this was certainly bad, I had previously seen the warnings on some cigarette boxes in Hongkong – smoking can cause impotence! Young person don't be impulsive, being impulsive will have its penalty.

Jiang Chen asked me, "Why would he be here?"

I shook my head and said, "Don't know."

He spoke again, "You really don't know?"

I said, "I really don't know, but if you carry out cruel punishment and question me under torture, I will then confess that I actually invited him over to have an affair."

Jiang Chen glanced over horizontally at me, and said, "Get off the car for me and handle it well, I'll watch you in the car."

I said, "Why not you drive the car directly over, and crush him flat against the electric pole, I once watched a movie called 'The electric pole has a ghost'* when I was young, it was very interesting." (T/N: A 1995 Hongkong comedy – its English name is 'Love in the Time of Twilight')

He said, "You get off the car, I'll hit you too, it'll be called 'The electric pole has a pair of ghosts'."

Embarrassed, I got off the car. I'd only taken two steps when Su Rui dashed in front of me. He pointed at the car and interrogated, "Why are you together with him?"

I dragged out my words, saying, "Let me think - oh - if I remember correctly, he is my boyfriend."

Su Rui stared blankly for a moment, I saw a flash of sorrow in his eyes. My heart softened a little, I shouldn't have made a judgement that his feelings were just a joke because he was young. When I liked Jiang Chen back in the day, I was even younger than he was.

I aimed a quick look at the cigarette in his hand, my tone of voice softened considerably, "Smoking is bad for your body."

He threw the cigarette down and used his foot to step on it and put it out. "I'll quit smoking, can you....."

"I can't," I rushed to speak, "Don't be like this, I don't like you."

He rubbed his nose, "But I really do like you very much."

I nodded my head, "Mm, I know."

He said, "I will never like someone else like how I like you again."

No, you will.

I attempted to relieve the atmosphere, "Hey, don't be like this, wait till you take a fancy to a 15-year-old beautiful lady, you will then doubt your current taste."

Silent, he slowly squatted down, lowered his head and hugged his knees. I stared blankly for a moment, turned my head back to look at Jiang Chen's car, then turned back again and lowered my head to look at him, at a loss of what to do. "What happened to you?"

I didn't get a reply for a long time, I could only squat down too, and

pat his shoulder, "What happened? Where are you not feeling well?"

His muffled voice travelled over, "I'm fine, don't care about me."

I said, "Are you not feeling well somewhere, why not let Jiang Chen help you take a look?"

He suddenly raised his head and bellowed, "Go away, don't bother me!"

I jumped in fright, not because of his bellowing, but rather because of his tears.

My nose tingled a little. He was only 17 years old, perhaps I was the first setback he had experienced in his life apart from examinations, just like me back then, (I) liked Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen didn't like me. The person you like not liking you, how deserving of sorrow this matter was.

"You can go, your boyfriend is waiting for you in the car." He seemed to have calmed down considerably.

I made a gesture of "you go back first" towards Jiang Chen's car. He sent a text to my mobile phone, he said, "Then I'll go back to the hospital first, after you are done handling (the matter) give me a phone call."

Just like that, I accompanied Su Rui in squatting by the roadside. I didn't speak, mainly because I didn't know what to say, plus he also was busy crying. The street light stretched us into two long shadows.

Just as I was thinking that we would have to continue squatting down for a boundless infinite time period, a primary school student carrying a backpack, wearing her school uniform with goat-horn braids walked past. She fished out a handful of money from the pocket of the skirt of her school uniform, the money was brightly-coloured and was of quite a large amount. She picked out a one-dollar note from inside and passed it to me, she said, "Auntie, buy an

ice-cream for Gege* with this one dollar, coax Gege to not cry.” (T/N: Gege = older brother)

I watched the primary school student trample on my shadow with an innocent and guiltless face. I bared my fangs, “This! Little! Friend! For what reason is he an older brother and I am an auntie!”

The primary school student gripped on to the one dollar note and walked away crying.

Only then did Su Rui open his mouth to speak, he said, “Leave the money behind before you leave……”

I laughed and shoved at him, “Hey—”

He wiped his face, sighed and said, “F***, truly humiliating.”

I comforted him, “I’m the one who’s humiliated, that child called me auntie.”

He also comforted me, “She’s jealous of your maturity and allure.”

After he finished speaking, he stood up, and easily pulled me up as well.

He said, “I’m all right now, you can go back home.”

I said, “Are you really all right?”

He said, “Probably, it depends on whether I’ll still use you as inspiration for designing clothes in the future.”

“Ah! Speaking of clothes……” I suddenly recalled, and clapped my head, “I left behind that bag of clothes in Jiang Chen’s car.”

He pretended to be dissatisfied, “What clothes? You bought clothes without coming to my shop? Not letting your friends earn money when you have money, this is too much.”

I glared at him, "That's Jiang Chen's clothes, I'm bringing them back to wash."

Su Rui curled his lip, "He let you help him wash his clothes? So inconsiderate?"

I said, "Su Rui, child, sowing discord is useless."

"I'm not sowing discord, if it were me, I definitely wouldn't let you do these things." He was unhesitating, "My older sister said, women are to be loved dearly."

I nodded my head and said perfunctorily, "Your older sister has taught you well."

He spoke again, "Yes, my older sister also taught me, if you refused to yield, to force myself on you."

On my guard, I took two steps back. "This is a joke, right?"

He patted my shoulder and praised, "It seems that you have done quite some research into Su-type humour."

.....

Modestly, I kept my face blank, "I've looked into it cursorily, I've looked into it cursorily."

Su Rui made me leave first, he said he would leave once he saw me go upstairs. I refused unyieldingly, I said, "It's better that I watch you leave, so as to avoid you taking advantage of me turning around and going upstairs to fish out a gun to shoot me dead."

Unexpectedly, he also wasn't angry, he said, "Don't worry, even if one were to die it would be me dying, not you."

I thought about it for a moment, and still insisted on him leaving first, I said, "I have to watch you walk far away, if you want to die you

have to die far away, if you die here you will affect the property prices in our vicinity.”

He was disdainful, “Isn’t it better if the property prices here fall, only then can you afford to buy.”

“Wrong wrong wrong.” I shook my index finger, clicked my tongue and said, “Even if they fall I also can’t afford it, my one year salary is roughly enough to buy one toilet brick, so I hope that the property prices in the vicinity don’t fall by all means, if I can’t afford it everyone also shouldn’t be able to afford it together, just like 2012, if one were to die everyone should die together, it’s fair.”

He rolled his eyes and rushed off in anger.

I watched his shadow lengthen and shorten and shorten and lengthen under the street lamps. I merely hoped that when he remembered this again, what he remembered would be he himself leaving with his head high and chest sticking out, and not him sorrowfully following with his eyes the view of my back that didn’t turn around at all.

Of course, it was also possible that I was oversensitive, perhaps what he would recall when he thought back would only be my short carrot legs climbing the stairs with difficulty.....

I returned home and switched on the lights. The moment the lights went on my mobile phone rang, I was startled, and subconsciously looked to the left and the right before fishing my mobile phone out, it was Jiang Chen.

I answered the call, “Hello, are you downstairs?”

“No, why?”

I said, “The moment the lights in my house lit up your phone call came through, the timing is too accurate, it’s like the plot of a horror movie.”

He laughed in a low voice on the other end, "You watch too many trashy movies."

I retorted, "In the past, who was it who kept on tricking me to go to his dorm to accompany him to watch horror movies?"

He said, "Then who was it again who kept on making noise, saying that she wanted to watch but didn't dare to watch alone?"

I brought up old scores, "But there was one time you made me watch your educational video! That was even more frightening than a horror movie!"

Jiang Chen said, "I don't think that was frightening in any way."

I started shouting, "How was it not frightening, that knife was cutting a U-shape on the scalp like it was slicing tofu, then it tore open, then a hole was drilled into the skull, then that round piece of skull bone was taken away, and a tweezer was used to stir here and there inside that bank of bloody things."

He said, "Not bad, you remember the surgical procedure really clearly."

"How can it not be clear?" I wailed mournfully, "When they were tearing the scalp open I turned my head and saw you smiling strangely by the side while your hands were imitating that movement and slowly tearing at my sketchbook! I was so scared that my eyes didn't dare leave the screen after that, I was afraid of again seeing you do some perverted actions once more."

I felt that the most frightening horror story was someone by your side turning into a ghost..... or a monster..... or a pervert..... or an enemy.

Because harm suffered when you didn't set up defences hurt the most.

Jiang Chen went silent for quite some time before he said, "If I remember correctly, at that time I was looking at the drawings in your sketchbook, if I remember correctly, there were many character portraits that I felt all seemed very familiar, furthermore their actions were rather terrible, for example me kneeling on the ground crying etcetera."

.....

It was now my turn to go silent. I had a stack of sketchbooks, their outer covers were all about the same, but a few of them in that stack were specifically for me to draw to vent and gratify myself when I argued with Jiang Chen. I had drawn many cartoons pledging female sovereignty inside: for example, Jiang Chen kneeling on the ground, streams of tears as thick as noodles flowing down as he begged me for forgiveness, saying that everything was his fault, saying that he was worse than a beast; also for example, Jiang Chen crawling on the floor as I high-and-mightily threw a whip towards him to thrash him; also for example, him kneeling as he scrubbed the floor while I lay on the sofa pressing the remote control, I said, "Pour a glass of water for me", his actions were a little slow, I kicked him in the butt, he fell to the ground and rolled around, then stood up and bowed, saying thank you.....

Hence I changed the topic of conversation and said, "You must have called to ask me about how the matter of Su Rui was handled right?"

Thankfully he was willing to cooperate, he said, "Then how are things?"

I said, "Currently both parties' emotions are stable, the female has no intention of cheating, the male has no intention of coming out of the closet, or lying across the railway tracks*." (T/N: meaning to commit suicide)

He said, "If you can't handle it, hand it over to me, don't forget

that in your mind I am a perverted doctor.”

I chuckled and gave two forced laughs, and said, “How can that be, how can that be.”

He then said, “Oh right, that bag of clothes for you to wash was left behind in my car, I will leave it for you to wash. Oh right, tonight you can draw me kneeling on the washboard in the balcony.”

.....

When it came to the matter of him mercilessly mocking me, deriding me, and attacking me, he really enjoyed it and never tired of it, taking advantage of every single opportunity to do so.

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Translator's Corner:

Been seeing lots of comments saying that Jiang Chen is colder ahahaha ouch my heart breaks /3 As someone who likes novel Jiangchen as much as drama Jiangchen (in some ways I like novel Jiangchen more too) just want to encourage you guys to hold out and wait~~ After all, we only see novel Jiangchen from Xiaoxi's pov and we don't have the benefit of 3rd party omniscience like we do in the drama ☹ - Amy

Chapter 25

Fu Pei was in his office, venting out his spleen*, the reason being he purchased a new photocopying machine a while back but it has never been used. Situ Mo was holding a cup of tea, humming a tune in her seat, watching with glee as Fu Pei blows his top off, this kind of scenario has always been especially delightful to her. (T/N: In China, the spleen is counted as the seat of one's temperament, hence 'venting one's spleen' has become an expression to 'getting angry'.)

The business has been slow these days, we were idling as our everyday work only revolved around killing time, but to show consideration for our Boss Fu Pei's self-esteem, we would often assume an air of being very busy, this truly makes a person physically and emotionally exhausted.

There was a banging sound as Fu Pei was done wrestling that thing, afterwards, he told us he'll be heading out to talk business, as he was walking out, Situ Mo slid her chair next to me wearing a filthy smile, "Who was that handsome little fella yesterday?"

"Who?"

Situ Mo said, "When I knocked off work yesterday, I was stopped downstairs by that handsome little fella. At first I thought he took a fancy on my beauty and wanted to coerce me into doing it.....okay, get rid of that look in your face, my husband always think I'm as pretty as a flower. Yesterday, that handsome fella asked me for your address, did he go look for your afterwards?"

I put away my expression of restraining myself from throwing up, and said indignantly, "You don't know him yet you gave him my address, what if he was perverted?"

"Stop fussing over nothing, from his mouth, he called me 'little

beauty', not only did I gave your address to him, he asked for my help to drug you and I agreed."

I said, "The thing you're mainly happy about was the word 'little' before 'beauty'."

Situ Mo laughed mischievously, "You're really clever, so who is he?"

"The younger brother of Jiang Chen's colleague."

I gave her a brief run-through regarding our situation, but as Situ Mo has always felt like her charming points have reduced a lot from being a married woman, hence I, in order to not get on the 'jealous, envious, and hateful*' nerves of a married woman, have to especially belittle myself. I said, "I feel strange, I am such an average person, I don't understand what our motherland's flower boys have really seen in me. (T/N: In 2009 Zhang Weiping posted a blog post concerning criticism of Zhang Yimou's recent film "A Simple Noodle Story". He wrote on his blog, "You guys are just jealous, envious, and hateful." It has become an internet meme afterwards.)

She comforted me saying, "You don't have to unduly humble yourself, the younger a person is, the harder it is to pin down their thoughts, even my son thinks that the prettiest female in the world is Mei Yang Yang." (T/N: The Chinese character for beautiful/pretty is 'mei', Mei Yang Yang or Tibbie is a cartoon character, a whole goat lol.)

Why do I feel like her words are indirectly implying something else.....

She added, "Actually, I think he's not bad, 'an old cow eating tender grass*', good for the teeth." (TN: This proverb fiddles with the phenomenon of one partner being significantly older than the other — in English, a cradle robber.)

I glared at her, "Go to hell."

She said, "It's better than you looking at your phone 10-20 times a day, always waiting for your man's phone call that never comes."

I fished my phone out again and made sure it was working, "I'm willing."

She looked askance at me, then suddenly uttered in all seriousness, "I was thinking about something. Right! When you get married, can my son become your page boy, that way I don't have to prepare a red packet?"

Would you look at this woman, whenever she opens and closes her mouth, it's always about money, I feel lonely, we don't have a common topic to talk about.

My righteous words indignantly rebuke her, "Even if your husband turns out to be my groom, you would still not want to hand out that red packet."

Fu Pei never came back till afternoon, hence an hour before getting off work, Situ Mo and I made our stealth escape. For fear of Fu Pei checking up on us the last minute, we've let all office calls go through our phones, even though we don't look like we're adept in escaping from work, actually we really.....very often escape from work.

Before, every time I'd escape from work early, I used to sit around the subway station near my home. After arriving in my station, I'd be sitting on the waiting chairs, listening to my MP3 as I watch the peak hours of the subway, get packed with ever-changing office workers knocking off work, just like a conveyor belt in a factory, transporting somewhat a can of human beings to various places.

It brings me pleasure to watch while I sit at one corner. I was thinking that I really got a deal by escaping the office crowd.

But now that I'm somebody with a boyfriend, I have to abandon this lowlife hobby, when I get off work early, I have to go to the hospital to rub my ear against his shoulders*. (T/N: An idiom meaning 'act intimate' describing exactly how close one is to the other in proximity.)

Since I've been wasting 3 years in this matter with my virgin boyfriend, so my heart generally feels a little guilty, this tiny guilt is probably a part of being in a business I'm unfamiliar with.

When I was finally at the hospital's lobby, I gave Jiang Chen a call, when the call went through but of us spoke simultaneously, "Where are you?"

I said, "I'm in the hospital lobby."

He said, "I'm on my way to your office."

I said, "Ah! Then what should we do?"

He said, "If you turn right after you get out of the hospital, you can find a drink shop, you can drink something there while waiting for me."

I thought about it for a moment and told him, "I'll just wait for you in the lobby."

Mainly because Fu Pei already delayed two months worth of my salary, and also, the consumption around the hospital were certainly more expensive than in other places, the last time I bought tea eggs around here, they were 50 cents pricier than anywhere else.....look at my state of poverty.....

"Then you stay in the lobby, and don't run around. I'll be there soon." Jiang Chen said. "Okay, drive carefully."

Half an hour later, when Jiang Chen found me near the hospital entrance, I sat trembling under the shade of a tree by the roadside.

To be born, to grow old, to get sick, and to die. This world is very unpredictable, the occurrence of incidence in the hospital is also unpredictable, I was in the hospital lobby for thirty minutes, and already encountered an unpredictable moment in time.

Half an hour back, I hung up my call with Jiang Chen, with a nauseating smile on my face distinctive to that of people who were in love, I looked for a place to sit down.

About ten minutes later, there was suddenly a woman's scream from upstairs, accompanied by banging, messy, and hurrying footsteps, then before I could react, a woman with disheveled hair came tumbling down from the second floor, and landed heavily in front of me, just about five paces away.

I looked at her frightened eyes, filled with tears.

I looked at her twitch like a dying fish on the ground, and then became still.

I looked at the foam, slowly coming out from the corner of her mouth.

I looked at a group of doctors and nurses who were rushing downstairs, yelling, "Quick! Give her a sedative."

I looked at the thick needle, going into her arm.

I wanted to say, "Are you guys f*cking crazy?! She's already not moving yet you still want to shoot her with some sedative! Why do you f*cking love to give injections so much?! You're f*cking doctors not wasps!"

However, forgive me for not being able to say a single word.

"Chen Xiaoxi? Chen Xiaoxi?" Jiang Chen crouched right in front of me. He was waving his hand before my eyes, he looked deeply worried, "What's wrong with you? What happened?"

I looked at him in horror, opening my mouth to speak, yet nothing would come out.

Jiang Chen reached out his hand to grab mine, then looked me in the eye, his voice was unusually calm, "Xiaoxi, look into my eyes, don't be scared. I'm now going to ask you questions, just nod or shake your head. Got it?"

I nodded.

He said, "Are you hurt?"

I shook my head.

He squeezed my hand, "You saw something which really scared you?"

I nodded.

He paused for a moment, and asked softly, "A car accident?"

I shook my head.

Then he said, "That person....."

He delayed asking me. He simply hugged me, and gently patted my back saying, "This is a hospital, no matter what you see, don't be scared, they just get sick, or get injuries, or....."

Or their time is up.

In the scorching summer of July, Jiang Chen hugged me so tightly, when added together, it actually made me feel very hot.

He hugged me for a while, and probably also felt hot, he pulled me up from the ground, and led me to sit inside his car, he said, "I'm going outside to make a phone call, I'll be back soon."

I gave him a brief nod, I've actually calmed down a lot, it's just that

I looked scared out of my wits in front of him a while ago, if I suddenly return to normal, it's going to be a bit embarrassing, so I had to continue putting on a delicate front of being terrified.

When Jiang Chen came back, his complexion looked a lot more relaxed, he said, "I know what happened, that patient is fine, just suffered a fracture and concussion, not life-threatening."

I let out a sigh, I think that a doctor's life is really tranquil, so long as no one dies, it's no big deal.

I nodded my head in understanding.

Jiang Chen didn't start the car, he sat sideways and looked at me, "Still scared?"

I shook my head, I'm a bit hooked in this kind of silent communication.

He reached out to ruffle my hair, "She was in a break-up, she attempted suicide in front of her ex-boyfriend by swallowing laundry detergent, the ex-boyfriend sent her to the hospital to have her stomach pumped, she refused to be saved, her struggling caused her to tumble down from upstairs."

Jian Chen knows me too well, he knows that I love gossip, so he used gossip to pique my curiosity, to distract me, and to somewhat lessen my fear.

I blinked my eyes, and said, "Then, what was her ex-boyfriend's reaction?"

Jiang Chen pinched my cheeks, "How should I know? You can talk now ah."

"I really was scared before." Then, somewhat carrying a tone of a spoiled child, I said, "Who asked you to leave me alone in the hospital."

He didn't argue that, 'I told you to go out but you insisted to stay inside the hospital.' He just said, "No more next time, also, I will take you along to visit that patient in two days."

I said, "I don't want to be near the hospital anytime soon."

Jiang Chen said, "It's not a good habit to run away from your fear."

I wanted to demonstrate my infamous 'brat stomp', but because of the inconvenience of sitting down, I could only pout and say, "But I really dare not."

Jiang Chen said, "In the future, don't also come as you wish."

My face sank, my heart felt aggrieved and indignant, he has always been like this. Back when we were on our third year in high school, he tutored me in Math, I got 9 and a half answers wrong in a 10-item test, the other correct half was for a quadratic equation in one variable which has considerably the easiest solution. There was a time when I was writing and got angry, I threw my pen away and said, "I won't write." My Math teacher said, "It's not good to make multiple choice and fill in the blanks questions in Math."

Jiang Chen said, "Do as you wish, but later on, don't say anything about testing for the same university with me, our grades are different."

He spoke words that were so hurtful when my heart was so immature, of course I had to bury my head on my desk and cry. When I thought I have cried enough, I lifted my head, Jiang Chen was still next to me, so absorbed in correcting my test paper.

I moved closer and craned my head to get a look — the little writings were densely packed and multi-colored, black for the correct solution, blue for the rationale behind the solution, red for the formula, words in yellow highlight was added to understand the method of 1st solution, 2nd solution, 3rd solution.....

I wiped away my tears and said, "What do you see my test paper for by scrawling unto it to this state. There are too many solutions, I can't remember."

Later on, a lot of students have been borrowing every single one of my Math test papers to get it photocopied, I found it precious. I was then considering charging the people who kept on borrowing from me, and at the same time, was also considering how to best repay Jiang Chen. In the end, I drew a woman with a goddess-like beauty on his Math textbook. On the first page, the beauty was wearing a cotton-padded jacket, in every flip of the page, she would take off one clothing item, from hair accessories, jewelries, clothes, shoes, socks, finally, taking into account the standard problem, I covered her chest and gave her hot pants. And in order to prove that I'm doing something meaningful, I would occasionally combine it with teaching content, for instance, next to the Pythagorean Theorem, I would draw the beauty exposing her butt crack.....I think this thing reflects that I'm a person who returns a favor when helped, in this world where people would usually bite the hand that fed them, this wasn't likely.

Jiang Chen started the car, I was sulking on the side, I wanted to quarrel with him, I wanted to curse him 'son of a b*tch', but I dare not.....

I'm a coward.

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Dolly | Xri | Amy

Translator's Corner:

Even though Jiang Chen's words are sharp, but he just wanted Xiaoxi to become better, right? Right? Anyways we have good news and bad news for you. GOOD NEWS = We're halfway through the novel *shakes booty* but BAD NEWS = We're skipping a week's

worth of updates starting Monday next week because of Chinese New Year *stops shaking my booty*. So yeah! That is all folks – Dolly

Chapter 26

I am very scared of Jiang Chen getting angry. In fact, I'm afraid of anyone who is angry at me, but Jiang Chen isn't just anyone. I'm scared of him more than anyone, or should I say, no one makes me as flustered as he does when he gets mad. That is because I often have no idea when he's angry, and if I have no idea whether he is angry, how do I know whether I should be scared or not? So, I get scared of not knowing whether I should be afraid or not.... Seeing that I am already spouting nonsense like this, I guess you somehow will understand.

Therefore, I secretly observed Jiang Chen the entire ride. The more I see, the more I feel that he is angry. As for the reason, I have no idea. Honestly, I didn't see any spider's thread and horse track*, but if I say that he is angry, then he is angry, if not, you can bite me. (T/N: lit. translation, it means like traces/hints/clues.)

I reached out to tug his shirt's cuff, my finger even stroked his arm twice, "I am hungry."

He glanced at me sideways, "Mmm."

"Mmm what?" I flirtatiously stroked his arm with my finger once more, "Bring me to eat something nice..."

He shook his arm to cast my hand off, "Driving, stop it."

I pouted and obediently sat back on my seat.

After 10 seconds, I said, "Would it be good if I get myself a driving's license?"

"Not good."

"Why?"

"You can't afford a car."

.....

"I think I can afford a Chery QQ."

"You will definitely hit someone if you drive, it will add burden to the medical transportation services."

Excuse me.... Isn't this curse a bit too evil?

I could only change topic, "Then do you think it's good if I perm my hair?"

He took a glance at the rear-view mirror, "Not good."

"Why?"

He leaned to look at me, "Ugly."

Endure.

I gave an obsequious smile, "Would it be good if I cut my hair short then?"

"Not good."

I protested, "Didn't you say you like me in short hair in the past! You even said I looked very refreshing and natural!"

He turned his head and looked as though he was seriously sizing me up, then he said, "Did I? I probably said it without thinking it through."

.....

That's it, I completely gave up on engaging in a friendly conversation with him.

Hence, I roared at him in an exceptionally imposing manner, "JIANG! CHEN!"

"Hmm?" He remained calm and collected, and didn't even look here.

I clenched my teeth, with ample guts I told him, "I will still find you at the hospital to eat together tomorrow!"

He was a little bit startled, "You don't have to."

I was startled too, I didn't think that even after backing down to this level, he can still put on airs.

Jiang Chen suddenly smiled, "I am on leave tomorrow."

I made an "oh" sound and said, "Then I will go the day after tomorrow."

He repeated another time, "I am on leave tomorrow."

I looked at him strangely, something tells me that he seems to be waiting for me to say something, however, my IQ is not enough, so I could only honestly ask him, "So what if you are on leave?"

He didn't answer me question, he only emphasized that, "I am rarely on leave."

I have no other choice, so I could only show that I am as elated as he is, and said while beaming, "It's good that you are on leave, that's very rare, congratulations!"

He got annoyed, and glared at me for a few times, till I was so guilty. I was thinking, does he want me to celebrate for him by fasting* three days, to bathe and change clothes*? (T/N: This actually implies more on when ancient Chinese are preparing to offer sacrifice and pray to ancestor/God, they are required to fast (as in abstain from wine/meat) and make sure that they are clean before

proceeding with the prayers.)

He continued cruising slowly, and he went back to what seems to be an angry composure. I feel that I managed to make him happy with great difficulty, he just suddenly decided not to be happy anymore. He is really capricious.

Therefore, I became silent too. I took out my phone to play a game, and vented my anger on the keyboard. I repeatedly struck the snake till its ashes scattered and smoke dispersed*, I felt really happy. Look, Jiang Chen bullies me, I bully the snake, is this how fair the world is. (T/N: Think she's playing slither.io, but I don't think that game is available in China. So she might be playing the classic snake game instead, but kills the snake instead of eating the apple. Also, that is lit. translation for annihilating something so bad its ashes scattered and smoke dispersed.)

The car suddenly stopped moving, I thought we were waiting for the red light, so I didn't pay attention. I continued to attentively kill the snake. After a long time, when I have killed about ten snakes, the car still didn't move. I looked out, not sure when the car pulled over at the side of the road. I turned back to look at Jiang Chen, to my surprise, he was staring at me.

I asked him, "What happened?"

He said, "Call your boss, take a leave tomorrow."

I didn't get it, "Ah? Why? My pay would have to be deducted."

He said with strong conviction, "Just take it as I asked you to."

I looked at him in a daze, he avoided my eye and looked a little awkward. I blinked my eyes and came to a sudden realization....

I called Fu Pei, "Hello, Boss Fu ah?"

"Darling, I'm the real boss, not the deputy boss," said Fu Pei. (T/N:

a deputy boss is called 副老板 (fu lao ban). Xiaoxi asked for 傅老板 (fu lao ban) Which is Fu Pei's surname name + designation. That's why he said he is the real boss and not the deputy boss.)

I rolled my eyes: "Not funny, I have to take a leave tomorrow."

"Take a leave for what?"

I said, "My boyfriend is on leave tomorrow, he wants to me take a leave to accompany him."

I looked over at Jiang Chen with my peripheral vision and saw that his expressions turned rigid.

After I took my leave, I bit my lips to stop myself from laughing, "I have taken my leave."

He gave an uncomfortable cough and said, "Nng."

"HAHAHAHAHA...." I couldn't control in the end, "I.... haha.... you... haha.... why so cute.... hahaha... if you want me to accompany you... you can... haha... just say it straight... haha"

"Shut up!" Jiang Chen glared at me, and started the car.

Someone's flying into a rage out of humiliation oh.

Jiang Chen drove the car to the basement carpark of a supermarket, I asked oddly, "What do you want to buy?"

He said, "Food."

I mumbled, "Can't we eat first then buy, I'm about to die from hunger."

He removed his seat belt and leaned over to release mine, "Buy to cook at home."

"Ah?" I said, "I have no idea how to cook, I only know how to make

noodles.”

He said, “Then we will make noodles.”

Jiang Chen lied to me, the food in the trolley was piling up, there’s even a chicken, a whole complete chicken, with head, with leg, with butt.

I looked scaredly at the chicken as though I saw an extinct dinosaur, “Why did you buy this for?”

Jiang Chen said, “To stew soup.”

I said, “You know how?”

“I don’t.” He said matter of factly.

I thought, if you weren’t my boyfriend, I would have whacked you.

For the entire shopping process, my only contribution was a packet of cream-flavoured melon seeds, but this wasn’t enough to make me feel useless, as my skin is thick enough.

Jiang Chen carried the big and small bags, I offered to help him share the load, so he gave me a bag of vegetables.

I said I can carry two more bags, he told me to save my strength to ponder on how to cook, I wanted to cry but there were no tears.

I stood once again in front of Jiang Chen’s house, I leaned on the wall to wait for him to find his keys, he glared at me and said, “Open the door!”

Only then did I remember that his keys were with me, I buried my head in my bag for a very long time just to find a bunch of foreign keys and said, “Which key opens which lock?”

Finally, I entered Jiang Chen’s house, it is neither big nor small, two rooms, two halls, not much decorations, and looks like a specimen

lab. I stood at the door to look around, he walked past me to enter and took the bag of vegetables that I was holding along with him as well.

I hurriedly followed behind him, "Did you rent or buy this place?"

He turned back to stare at me, eyes deep with mystery, "Why? Want to marry me?"

I replied honestly, "Not that, but I just feel that if it's rented, then it's too wasteful to have an empty room."

Only after I finished my reply did I realise something, I didn't move, only made a crying face and said, "Did you just propose to me? If that's so, can I reply again?"

He said, "No, cannot."

I pouted, he should have removed the pause between the two words. (T/N: His answer can also actually be vaguely translated to: Not that, you cannot. So if the pause/breakage is removed between his 1st and 2nd phrase, it would mean not that you cannot (reply me again).)

"Why are you still standing there, come here to help."

"Oh."

After 3 minutes, we looked at each other and looked at the kitchen counter that was full of vegetables.

I said, "What should we make first?"

Jiang Chen frowned and said, "Soup, we might have to stew the soup for a long time."

I said, "Then, let's do it, how do we stew it?"

He said, "Chop it up and throw it into the pot to boil."

I said, "Then you can do the chopping, you are a doctor, you are used to holding a knife."

He said, "That's a scalpel."

I said, "Then do you have a scalpel in here?"

He thought about it, "I do, it's at the drawer under the TV."

I ran out to grab two scalpel and passed it to him "There, your knife that you are used to."

He held onto the scalpel and cut across the chicken lightly, the skin tore and the flesh was exposed.

I couldn't help but made a "wah"

Jiang Chen turned back to look at me and said, "Now you know, put down the scalpel, lives might be at risk."

I swiftly put down the scalpel I was holding on onto the kitchen counter, "I'm going to wash the vegetables."

The water was splashing down and I took a peek at Jiang Chen's progress, I couldn't help but ask, "What are you doing?"

He said, "I'm removing the skin and retrieving the meat."

I said, "Do we need to remove the skin and retrieve the meat to stew a soup?"

He said, "Do we not? Then why did you give me a scalpel? A scalpel can't chop bones."

....

After 10 minutes, I asked, "How do we cook the cauliflower that I just washed?"

Jiang Chen said, "Chop it up, throw it in the pot."

After another 10 minutes.

I asked again, "What about the ribs?"

Jiang Chen Said, "Chop it up, throw it in the pot."

After another ten minutes.

I want to try for a last resort, "How about we go out to eat, we can buy two recipe books back along the way, and we will research on how to cook next time."

The hand that was chopping the ribs stopped, he held up the chopper and looked at me gloomily, "If we can't finish making the dishes today, then we shall never eat again."

.....

Darling, must we put on such a strong front?

Because every dish is done by chopping it up and throwing it into the pot to cook, we finished it pretty fast. It took less than an hour for every dish to be on the dining table. My favourite pastime was to sneak up silently, to eat on sly when my mother puts the dishes on the table. My mother would chase me behind my butt and whack me with a pan. However, Jiang Chen is here, so I've completely given up on this interest. I rather be a boring person.

We sat at the dining table, I looked at him and he looked at me, none of us dared to touch our chopsticks.

Jiang Chen picked up a cauliflower and brought it to my mouth, he said while smiling, "I think I have never given you a flower before, come, this flower is for you."

I couldn't dodge it in time, and could only eat it. It tasted normal,

just like boiled vegetable, as long as it is not overcooked, it won't be too bad.

Jiang Chen saw that I didn't have any bad expression, so he took one to eat as well. After swallowing he frowned and said, "Chen Xiaoxi, did you forget to add salt?"

I was expressionless, "You were the one in charge of salt."

He shrugged, "Too much salt will cause high blood pressure."

I bit my chopsticks and asked Jiang Chen, "Then where shall we go tomorrow?"

He took my bowl to ladle out some soup, "We are not going anywhere, we'll just stay home to watch films."

I said, "What film?"

He suddenly looked at me and smiled sinisterly, "A film*." (T/N: Porn.)

In terms of being vulgar and obscene, I usually refuse to do worse than others, I held onto my chin and threw flirtatious glances at him, "Little dimple, you are so naughty and lecherous."

He trembled, and spilled his soup.

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Xri | Amy | Dolly

Translator's Corner:

As mentioned, we will be taking a week's break next week for Chinese New Year! Have a prosperous year of dog everyone~ Gong xi fa cai!!

Chapter 27

After I finished eating my food, I obediently went to wash the dishes. When I was washing the dishes, Jiang Chen came into the kitchen to pour himself water once, at that point in time my mind was in the process of fantasising about that most trite tableau – me washing the dishes, Jiang Chen encircling and hugging my waist from behind my back.

So when Jiang Chen entered I was very nervous, in order for this hug to achieve the best state, I specially took in a deep breath with great force to suck in my underbelly.

But Jiang Chen only paused for two seconds behind my back, and said a sentence, “You’ve put too much dishwashing liquid.”

After that, he then walked out, I exhaled a large breath, and unwillingly let my underbelly off.

As I was walking towards the living room while flinging and shaking off the water on my hands, Jiang Chen who was lying horizontally on the sofa shouted, “Help me check if the water has boiled or not.”

I saw that there was an electric kettle plugged in on the dining table, the kettle was emitting hot vapour. I really didn’t know which tooth of the gears turning around in my brain had gotten wedged in the wrong position, I was ruminating on whether the water had boiled or not, then I readily stuck my hand onto the kettle, only to hear a sizzling sound. I shrieked in shock, but what flashed through my mind was first steak teppanyaki, after that pain then flashed through.

Jiang Chen rushed over and grabbed my hand, dragging me towards the kitchen. The way he was dragging was a little boorish, as if he was dragging a dead dog, but I forgave him for he was simply too anxious.

Water rushed onto my hands with a crashing sound, I felt that it was scorchingly painful, in order to divert my attention, I said, "I've confirmed, your water probably has boiled."

Jiang Chen's face was very sour, he let go of my hand and walked out, "Continue flushing, I'll be right back."

He came back holding an ice cube tray. He flexed (the tray) to produce a handful of ice cubes and stuffed it into my palm, saying, "Hold them."

After holding for a while, I felt that it was so icy that I was turning numb, only then did I relax my hand, Jiang Chen again held a handful of ice and pressed them on my palm.

He helped me ice (my hand) for roughly ten minutes, only then did he ask me while furrowing his brows, "Is it still painful or not?"

I was afraid that he would continue to ice me, so I promptly shook my head and said it wasn't painful.

He pulled my hand till it was before his eyes and carefully examined it for a while, only then did he put it down and say, "Not bad, it's rare*." (T/N: rare as in how a steak is rare.)

Very rarely could I encounter Jiang Chen's humour, so I seemed to be overwhelmed by this favour shown. To express that I had thoroughly comprehended his humour, I said, "Reporting, I'll strive to achieve medium-well next time."

His face clouded over, and he began to carry out a segment of criticism towards me that extended for ten minutes, its contents being nothing else but: "Do you think your hand is a thermometer?", "Why don't you simply stick your head in too to boil?" and other similar friendly comments and suggestions.

I quietly appreciated the way he blew his top, sincerely feeling that his facial features were truly pretty and good-looking, his temper was

truly irritable, everything was truly very good.

He flipped out for a while, then discovered that I was very self-confident and believed that I was in the right, so he ran to the living room to sit on the sofa, panting with rage. Have pity on me, a scalded person, I dragged my unsteady footsteps and walked towards the living room, to evoke his sympathy, I even staged a scene of weakness where I stumbled with every three steps I took.

Jiang Chen watched me coldly, and said, "Did you scald your hand or scald your foot?"

Embarrassed, I walked over, just as I sat down, I heard my phone ring in my bag. I fished it out and took a look, it was my old mother.

I connected the phone call, and miserably said, "Hello, mum....."

"Xiaoxi ya, why does your voice sound like it's dying?"

"My hand was scalded."

"Aiya, how so? Are you okay now? Is it serious or not?" My mother started to make a huge fuss.

Indeed the song "In this world, only Mum is great"* wasn't without basis. (T/N: A classic Chinese children's song)

I placated her, "It's all right, it's all right, it's already been handled properly."

She said, "How did it get scalded?"

"Uh... I used my own hand to touch the boiling water kettle."

There was silence for a good few seconds on the phone, after which a word faintly travelled over: "Moron*." (T/N: The informal phrase for "moron" in Chinese is 脑残 which directly translated means disabled brain.)

I was stunned, having your own mother use such an insightful word to evaluate you, was really a wonderful experience.

My mother suddenly softened her voice and said, "Oh right, mama has something to tell you."

The bottom of my heart couldn't help but quiver, every time my mother benevolently called herself "mama", there would always be some matter ominous to me that would occur.....

"That, mama's good friend has a son, he lives in the same city as you, he's a good-looking man, and has had success in his career....."

I sighed helplessly, "Mum, get to the main point."

"The main point is, her son heard that you are also in the same city, and wants to get to know you, and share about his desolation in a foreign land."

I pinched the bridge of my nose, "Do you guys nowadays all talk about blind dates in such an indirect manner?"

Jiang Chen turned his head to glance at me, I returned him a bitter smile.

My mum became tough, "Then how is it now? Are you going or not going?"

I raised my head that would rather die than submit, "Not going!"

"Say that one more time?"

"Not going!"

I was just getting stirred up, when my palm suddenly went cold. Lowering my head, I saw Jiang Chen in the process of applying medication on my palm.

My mother raised her volume and said, "Don't think that you are

still a Lolita because you are a moron! You are his mother's* leftover woman, leftover woman*." (T/N: "his mother's" is Chinese profanity which normally would be translated to f***ing) (T/N: 'Leftover woman' is Chinese slang for a woman who has been "left on the shelf", i.e. of a certain age and yet still not married/single.)

I said, "This madam, I'm not going to lie to you, my mother is you, also, can I bother you to go and mop the floor or play mahjong if you have nothing to do, don't go onto Tianya* anymore!" (T/N: Tianya is one of the biggest public Internet forums in China)

"I don't care, even if you don't go, you still have to go!"

"I won't go since I said I won't go, if you have the guts, beat me to death and drag me there!"

"Don't think that I wouldn't dare to, I'll break your leg, and let him go to the hospital to visit you."

"Do you think I'm scared of you? You come then."

"I'll go and buy train tickets right away, I'll break your leg."

"You come then, I'll wait for you." "You just wait, I'll come at once."

"You come then, I'll wait for you." "You just wait, I'll come at once."

.....

This repeated for more than ten times, Jiang Chen suddenly snatched the phone over, went straight for it and said, "Hello Auntie, I am Little Jiang."

I was startled, and subconsciously wanted to jump up and snatch the phone. Jiang Chen single-handedly grabbed both of my wrists and held them tight, after which he then continued to chat with my mother as if nothing had happened, "Yes, the Little Jiang from across, Jiang Chen."

“Mum.....” I said anxiously, Jiang Chen lowered his head and glared at me fiercely, I withered at once.

“Mm, that’s right, Xiaoxi and I are together now, okay, no no, it’s me who’s in the wrong, I didn’t take note of it, I will definitely go and pay a visit to you both, yes, okay, I got it.....”

Finally Jiang Chen said, “Auntie, then can Xiaoxi not go for the blind date?”

I heard two of my mum’s signature forced laughs coming through the phone, after which they then mutually said their goodbyes.

Jiang Chen threw the phone to me, “Settled.”

I pinched my mobile phone, wanting to cry but not having any tears*, how was I going to face that father of mine that hated the rich following this..... (T/N: A phrase that describes one having complex emotion that they cannot describe/being anxious etc)

I held my mobile phone and lifted it in front of my chest, thinking of a countermeasure for a very long time with the appearance of a young lady praying, for example, telling my dad that Jiang Chen can’t not have me, I can’t not have Jiang Chen; our need for each other was just like fish and water, water and fish, the people and the Chinese yuan*..... (T/N: The Chinese name for the yuan is renminbi, which directly translated means the people’s currency)

Just as I was lost in deep thought, the clock struck ten times with a “ding dong” sound, I became aware of the fact that there was an even more pressing matter that I had to resolve, which was – should I propose to go home already?

I personally believed, the time at which you suggest to your boyfriend to go home is very important, and will affect the extent of harmony in the relationship between you two. The timing can’t be too early, because he would suspect that you feel like a day drags

past like a year when you spend time with him, and you want to escape early on; the timing also cannot be too late, because he would think that you aren't reserved enough, and are too clingy.....

And based on my many years of putting it into practice and research, the most perfect time ought to be – I too didn't know, so at random, since the clock struck at ten o'clock, this was also considered to be fate, let it be ten o'clock then.

Hence I told Jiang Chen, "It's getting late too, I want to go home."

He was just carrying two cups of water, "Let's talk about this again after you finish drinking this?"

"What's that?" I stretched out my head to look.

"Iced lemon tea."

"Oh, oh." I took it, and cracked a joke without thinking, "You wouldn't have drugged it, would you?"

He drank a mouthful, tilted his head, looked at me and smiled, "I can execute you on the spot any time."

I laughed hollowly, "Hehe, I was joking."

He smiled and said, "I was joking too."

That shameless joke of mine caused me to sink into an uncomfortable circumstance as if I was sitting on pins and needles, yet Jiang Chen had an appearance of being calm and unruffled, drinking the tea and smiling eerily at me. That dimple especially, it was sinister and cunning and so deep and unmeasurable that it was like a wine cellar*. (T/N: this analogy was given because dimple in Chinese is 酒窝 which literally means "wine pit")

I raised my hands and surrendered, "I was wrong, I shouldn't have cracked jokes randomly, I shouldn't have used a joke to probe into

your ethics and moral conduct, I'm vulgar."

He nodded his head to express his agreement, and still persisted unflinchingly in looking at me while smiling.

In the past, I liked his smile so much, yet currently I was itching to tear out his smile, or..... tear my own clothes, lie down and say, "Come on, the earlier I die the earlier I'll be reincarnated*....." (T/N: a commonly used phrase which means 'get it over and done with')

Of course I didn't do that, that would make me appear to be not reserved, and being reserved was one of my life rules, so I suggested again, "I've finished drinking my tea, send me home."

Jiang Chen said indifferently, "If not, stay here tonight."

I swallowed my saliva, not knowing how to reply for a moment. I could only hold my breath, wanting to hold my breath till my face turned red to express that I was extremely shy.

Jiang Chen also appeared to be a little uncomfortable, he coughed and explained, "I'm saying this so as to avoid fetching you back here tomorrow, in any case I have two rooms over here."

I let out a radiating "ah" and said, "Two rooms ah....."

He said, "You're very disappointed?"

His judgement of my tone of voice was very accurate, but I was afraid that he would become proud because of this. Our education has told us since we were young, pride causes people to fall behind. In order to not let him fall behind, I could only fervently deny it, I said, "How can that be, you're talking nonsense, I, that..... is because I didn't bring clothes to wash up and change into."

I saw that he didn't really seem to believe me, so I rushed to explain again, "Really, I've already slept together with you in the hospital, even if I had any devious intentions I would have carried it

out long ago, so I really don't care about sleeping together with you."

This great country has a great common saying, called "the more you describe, the darker it gets*", I currently was deeply afflicted by this. (T/N: this saying means that the more you try to explain something, the more suspicious you appear)

In this moment, Jiang Chen appeared to be especially magnanimous, he said, "I understand."

In this moment, it was already no longer good for me to investigate what exactly he had understood, so I stubbornly pretended to be open and candid and said, "Then look for a set of pajamas for me, I want to wash up and sleep."

My thoughts were like this – being open and candid was the most effective strategy to conceal my guilty conscience.

Jiang Chen was even more open and candid than I was, he sized me up, and said, "You are so short, I can give you a t-shirt and it would be able to cover you up completely."

.....

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Translator's Corner:

Hello! We are back after the Lunar New Year ☺ Hope it has been an enjoyable time of feasting and visiting family and friends for all who celebrate! – Amy

Chapter 28

As I don't have a pair of long, slender legs, I couldn't pull off that kind of subtle, natural sexiness when wearing men's clothes, so I just wore Jiang Chen's basketball shorts, they were just short shorts for him, yet were capri pants when I was the one wearing them. When I came out of the bathroom, Jiang Chen looked at me and quickly smiled, saying, "Are you going to perform in an opera? I used to think that you were just short, but now, I just noticed that you really are 'that' short."

I lifted my 'pants' and was going to beat him. I just don't understand how we ended up being lumped together when I was only giving him a beating. Probably because couples are akin to two pieces of magnets with north and south poles, when they've been parted and then got too close with each other, they'd impatiently, hungrily and thirstily stick together.

Jiang Chen tackled me to the ground, his gaze pinned me for around two, three seconds, or rather two, three minutes. Anyway, I swallowed past the lump in my throat three times, but I wasn't able to take a good swallow on the third time as he quickly covered my mouth with his, it was a lemon-scented kiss. At the start, I felt like I was kissing an air freshener, but afterwards he bit my lower lip making me feel relieved — air fresheners don't bite people.

His kisses contained an unprecedented passion, burning every inch of my skin where they touch making my temperature rise rapidly, especially when he'd caress my waist with his slightly callused fingers. I think the temperature of that part of my waist has already surpassed the temperature limit a human being could tolerate. It's rapidly burning fat. I expect my waist is likely to melt under his touch, slim it down, and ultimately snap me into half.....

When Jiang Chen was about to lift my top, he especially asked me,

“Scared?”

I obstinately replied, “Not scared.”

“You sure?”

“I’m sure.” I lifted my head and kissed him on the mouth.

He took it seriously, and peeled my top off in a blink of an eye.....

Hence two seconds later, my act of screaming so suddenly made him feel very puzzled. His hand which was working on the lock of my undergarment stopped, and he asked, “What’s wrong?”

I said, “Can I.....not do it?”

He froze for a moment, and then asked me, “Aren’t you not scared?”

I pathetically let out a hollow laugh, I thought that this handsome lad already knew that fickleness is a woman’s privilege.

He looked at me viciously for quite a while, a sigh washed over me, then he lay down on his side and took a deep breath.

I covered my chest with clothes in a flurry, and had wanted to quickly look for a place to hide so I got up, but then I had second thoughts, so I assumed a look of being timid and asked, “Are you angry?”

Jiang Chen turned his back on me, “Nonsense, as if you wouldn’t be angry if it were you!

I poked his back, “Then which room do I sleep in?”

“Which one would you like to sleep in?”

“Oh.” I took two steps and couldn’t help but say, “Then what about you?”

"I'll give you a suggestion, if you don't want to help me resolve it then just shut up, enter the room, and lock the door." His voice sounded like it was cracking, with traces of his anger.

I mulled over it for a moment and said, "Do I really have to lock the door? I don't seem to be convinced by you. Or say, do you actually have the key? If you do have the key, then whether I lock it or not, there's essentially no difference, can we not do this formality?"

"Chen! Xiao! Xi!" He sat up, fuming with rage between gritted teeth.

I said, "I'll give you a suggestion, it'll be more useful to call Chen Guanxi, he has more expertise in this field." (T/N: Yes, the Chen Guanxi/ Edison Chen with sex scandals. He appears so prominently in this novel, like half of the chapters we've translated features him lol)

After I was done talking, I quickly fled into one of the rooms, closed the door shut and locked it, then I heard the slippers swishing in the air, hitting the door, sliding, then falling down the floor.

What a pleasant night.

I looked around and found out that the room I casually rushed into was actually the room Jiang Chen usually sleeps in as there were few pieces of his clothes strewn on the bed, as a matter of fact, I've described it quite modestly, his clothes and books were actually piled up on his bed.

I tidied out a corner, sat cross-legged, and casually fished out clothes folding them neatly in a pile. The room is filled with the flavor of Jiang Chen, I've been familiar with this flavor since I was 16 years old, I'm just hoping that this flavor would also fill my life.

A knocking sound came from the door twice, and then Jiang Chen's voice followed, "Open the door."

“What are you doing?” I held a piece of clothing in front of my chest out of reflex, and realising that I was being ridiculous, I folded it with a grin on my face.

“Getting a change of clothes for shower.” He said.

“Really?”

“Fake.” He snapped.

I went to open the door, I was wondering that once I open the door, would he throw me on the bed, and then do this to me, and that, this and that. Aiyo, I’m really sorry.

To be quite frank, I look forward to this kind of embrace and yet I wanted to act all reserved, let me think of a not so elegant saying — to erect a monument*. (T/N: The entire saying is “To lead the life of a whore but still want to erect a monument for one’s chastity which means harboring ill intentions but still want a good reputation.)

Unfortunately, Jiang Chen must have lost his focus, he thought I really wanted a good reputation, hence he waltzed in, took his clothes, and walked out, he didn’t even spare me a glance, and I even walked him to the door.....

I just simply finished in tidying up Jiang Chen’s room, and was about to go to bed when another knock came from the door, my heart went up my throat.

Jiang Chen said, “Hey, I’m going to sleep. Good night.”

“Good night.”

The heart which I’ve mentioned slowly lowered down. Doctor Jiang, don’t bring such loneliness to your girlfriend’s heart.

When I entered the world of dreams with a sweet smile, my overwhelming happiness must have made the Duke of Zhou, that old

man, think I'm unpleasant to look at, he arranged a segment of that girl jumping off from the second floor and replayed it countless times like it was on a video cassette tape until I screamed and woke up from that dream. (T/N: Duke of Zhou is also known as the "God of Dreams" – in legend, he lets people know via dreams when something important is going to happen to them.)

Look, even if he's a god, he's also 'envious, jealous, and hateful'.

I felt around to switch on the lamp, then hugged a pillow in a daze.

There were two knocks at the door, I hugged the pillow tightly, and shrunk at the bedside.

"Xiaoxi? It's me. Are you okay?" Jiang Chen's voice can be heard from the other side of the door. I heaved a sigh of relief, living alone for a long time made me forget that there were two people in this house tonight.

"Can I come in?" He knocked on the door twice again.

"Well, the door isn't locked." I said.

The door opened, Jiang Chen came in holding a glass filled with white liquid, if I'm not mistaken, it's probably milk, if it's something else, I can only say that he broke free of conventional thinking, in English it's called, Thinking out of the box.

I suddenly felt like a princess trapped in a tower and my prince came to rescue me with his sword, I truly didn't grow out of my childish innocence.

Jiang Chen handed the glass to me, "Had a nightmare?"

I drank a mouthful, it really is milk which proves that Jiang Chen doesn't have an innovative spirit.

"I dreamt of that girl who jumped off the second floor today." I

drank another mouthful of milk, he didn't put any sugar in it so it was really hard to drink.

He sat down at the edge of the bed, and patted me on the head, "Don't be scared."

I placed the glass on the bedside table, and moved over to lean on his shoulder, I squinted my eyes and asked, "What time is it now?"

"Around three o'clock."

Leaning on his shoulders gave me so heavily drowsy and I let out a yawn, "I'm sleepy."

"Then go to sleep." He held my head upright, "Lie down and sleep well, I'll go out once you're asleep."

I lay down on one side of the bed, and patted the other side saying, "Let's sleep together."

I must stress that my mind is clouded, whether it being scared or being sleepy, I must insist that my mind is clouded. If not, I wouldn't be able to forgive myself for this act of taking the initiative to invite a man to sleep together with me. This is not in line with the rich image of me being tormented by the ideologies of the remnants of feudalism.

Jiang Chen hesitated for a moment, but eventually reached out to switch off the lamp and laid down.

I also hesitated for a moment, but eventually rolled over and hugged his waist from behind, and buried my face between his shoulder blades, closing my eyes to sleep.

He froze, afterwards he covered my hands that were wounded around his waist with his.

In the dark, I could hear the frantic beatings of his heart which then

slowly calmed down, I asked, "Are you asleep?"

"No."

As my ears were stuck on his back, his voice sounded muffled as though it came from a distant place.

I said, "Jiang Chen, I forgot that I've never told you, I love you."

He turned silent for quite a while, I heard his heart which was beating like a drum. When I was about to fall asleep, he turned his body around and hugged me, then he kissed my forehead, "Let's sleep, if you talk once more I won't be courteous to you anymore."

There's something wrong with me, I call it the "sudden talk back illness". The worst manifestation of this illness occurs when my consciousness is muddled, for instance, I remember once in the History of Western Art class. I was dozing off and was caught by the teacher who made me stand up to answer a question, "Why did Verocchio let Leonardo Da Vinci draw an egg?" From the lack of sleep, I turned impatient at being thrown an idiotic question which has already appeared in my grade school textbook, I replied, "Because he likes to eat eggs." At this, the teacher was angered to death, and with a big sigh, lamented that I could never be as great as Leonardo Da Vinci. I tactlessly retorted him, "Of course, that's because you're no Verrochio either.".....I'm not going to conceal this, even though this class was just an elective, but I had to take remedial exams no less than five times, it broke our faculty's record of remedial exams taken, I can be regarded as a historical figure.

Now, my illness has suddenly flared up, when Jiang Chen said, 'if you talk once more I won't be courteous to you anymore', I subconsciously retorted a sentence, "Who asked you to be courteous?"

Jiang Chen replied, "What you said, don't regret it."

I retorted once again, "Who's regretting? Tch ——"

Two seconds later, Jiang Chen was above me, he probably realised that if he were to drag this one again, it would be like asking a repeat of the previous time's disaster, hence before he regained his clear consciousness, he quickly and mercilessly removed all the clothing barrier on the both of us.

I said, "Wait.....oh....."

My mouth was covered by his mouth.

I think that since the both of us already don't have the so-called fig leaf, then you can figure it out. From this you can tell that my attitude towards life is that however it may be, take the rough with the smooth.

When Jiang Chen's kisses trailed down to my collarbone, I entered a state of trance, this kind of trance was akin to being seasick, like how the undulating waves would make one feel dizzy, I don't know how long this trance lasted. In a word, Jiang Chen guided me to learn some things that schools wouldn't teach. I want to insist again on practicing this several times, and then we'll become self-taught geniuses.

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Chapter 29

The second day's breakfast was prepared by Jiang Chen. While he was making the breakfast, I went to the bathroom while wrapping myself up with the blanket. I asked him why he set the entire house's air-conditioning to such a low temperature, he said it was so that I can sleep in a bit later. After I'm done going to the bathroom, I walked into the kitchen along the way and wrapped my arms around his waist from his back, leaned my face on his back and took a nap. It felt really comforting, but he asked me instead, "Did you wash your hands after going to the bathroom?"

.....

I rubbed my eyes and went back to the room to sleep.

Not long after, he scooped me out of bed, he said it's time to eat breakfast, and I said that I never had the habit of eating breakfast, then I crashed back on the bed.

He scooped me back up again and said, "You are not going to eat the breakfast I prepared?"

I remembered that his apartment has scalpels, so I could only get up and force a very energized look, "Go go go, let's eat breakfast!"

It's just that my energy couldn't last me till I get out of bed. While I was on the edge of the bed searching for my slippers with my feet, I couldn't help but close my eyes. Jiang Chen laughed. I said while yawning, "Don't laugh, help me find my slippers."

He squatted down to put on my slippers for me, but just as my feet were about to touch the ground, he princess-carried me. I laid my head on his shoulder and instructed him, "Walk slower, let me sleep for another two seconds."

Jiang Chen didn't let me sit on the chair, but on his lap instead. And so, we started our sweet-feeding process. I felt overwhelmed by his favor with this arrangement. I used to beg him to do this in the university's cafeteria, but he rejected every time with, "do I look like a crazy person?" or "just kill me" or "just how thick is your skin".

I ate half a sunny side up that he had forgotten to add salt to, and said, "Hey, I'm full, carry me back to sleep."

Jiang Chen pinched on my cheeks and said, "You are instructing me like it's all meant to be huh."

I agreed, "I'm shameless."

He could only shift me back to the bed in the room, so I tucked myself in and fell asleep.

By the time I woke up, it was noon. I laid on the bed and screamed, "Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen."

Jiang Chen came in wearing spectacles, like a refined rascal. I pointed at his spectacles and asked surprised, "When did you get myopia?"

"When you weren't around."

I coughed, "Why don't I see you wearing spectacles usually?"

"Contacts are much more convenient. Why did you call me in?"
(T/N: HOW ARE CONTACT LENSES MORE CONVENIENT??? Takes me years to put one on.)

I said, "I just wanted to notify you that I'm awake, and that I'm hungry, and carry me out to wash up."

Jiang Chen took off his specs, pinched his nose, and put back on his specs, "Have you gotten addicted to ordering me around?"

I scratched my head and said shamefully, "I think a little."

He shook his head, and turned to leave. My eyes were sharp and hands were fast enough to pull him by his shirt. I dragged on his shirt and refused to let go, after we pulled and dragged for a while, he finally turned back helplessly and said, "The most I'll piggyback you to the hall."

I cheered and climbed onto his back, "Lets go~"

I cooked noodles for lunch. After I finished and cleaned up, it was already 1 in the afternoon. I asked him, "What were you doing in the morning?"

"Reading." he said.

I sighed, "You're reading even on leave?"

He said, "Someone took leave to accompany me, but slept like a dead pig, what can I do?"

I answered back sarcastically, "That was because you made me really tired."

After saying that, my face turned red rapidly, how shameless must a person be, to be able to say such words...

Jiang Chen was startled, his face also turned red.

In order to hide my own face, I pointed at his face and laughed out loud, "What are you blushing for? Aren't you a doctor? Shouldn't you be very familiar with a human's body structure? What strong wind and big waves* have you not seen, why are you even blushing?" (T/N: difficult situations)

Jiang Chen pointed out, "You yourself have also drawn so many art models, why are you blushing?"

I thought about it and it makes sense, but I had to persevere, “You have seen more than me.”

He probably was too vexed over my mockery, he said coolly, “The ones I’ve seen are mostly specimens.”

.....

I shivered from the cold, and decided to end this conversation. I said, “What are we doing in the afternoon? Didn’t you say we are going to the movies?”

He said, “What do you want to watch? How about we rent one to watch?”

“Forget it, I don’t feel like watching anything.” I said disinterestedly.

He pushed up his glasses, “Then what do you feel like doing?”

I muttered to myself for a moment, and suggested excitedly, “How about I lay motionlessly on the floor, and let you kick me around?”

Jiang Chen’s astonished face lingered for a long time.

Only after a while did he continue, “Chen Xiaoxi, your mental level is always exceeding my imagination.”

I replied modestly, “You’re too kind, you’re too kind.”

In the end we still went out to rent a movie – one which the store owner strongly recommended saying that it’s the best product for couples to watch together.

The best product had rolling captions for the first 5 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of pure music, followed by a bunch of expressionless people walking around for 5 minutes. In this 15 minutes, Jiang Chen leaned on me and fell asleep.

His hair was on my neck and cheek, and I turned my head to watch his sleeping face. His brown hair was in a mess, long eyelashes were perked against the lens of the spectacles. With a slight smile, the dimple of his left cheeks was slightly peeking through.

I gently removed his spectacles and tidied up his hair. I sighed from my heart, the person I love has the cutest sleeping face in the whole wide world. Why should I stare at at this freckled woman in the TV and listen to her endless chatter?

My head was propped against Jiang Chen's head, I slowly closed my eyes. I can hear the traffic and noises from outside, but I can also hear the sunshine and breeze. This moment seems tranquil and beautiful because I am with him.

The best product solitarily, lonelily, played finish. The final of the finale, was that the best product is an original French movie, hence I could not even remember its title.

Not sure after how long, Jiang Chen pushed me awake. He used his thumb to wipe away the drool off the corner of my lips and asked, "What was the movie about?"

I looked at the blue screen on the TV, shook my head sleepily, "I'm not sure, there was a woman who was talking nonstop, then I fell asleep. Let's return this to prevent him from collecting another day's worth of rental if we were to leave it till tomorrow."

Therefore, we walked hand in hand and returned the film. The owner enthusiastically asked for our opinions on the film, as I didn't bare to hurt his feelings, I could only face him and bullshit my way through. I said that I felt that the movie has a strong artsy feel to it, and it was very cinematic. The actors and actresses had amazing acting skills and the story's climax was incredible. The main point is that this movie was able to dissect the underlying emotions of a human being in another point of view.

The owner was so emotionally touched that he couldn't control himself. The hand that was holding onto the film was shaking wildly.

"You are so right, what a great explanation, you are my best friend, I don't need the rental fee for this film anymore, I can't have it, if I were to collect it then I am not a human!"

In order to let him continue his status as a human, we had to bite the bullet and leave without paying.

We then went to a bookstore, with thoughts of buying a few recipe books back to make dinner. Jiang Chen took a lot of books and asked me, "Can you use your tricks on the owner just now to trick this owner into giving us these books for free?"

I looked at the bookstore owner, indicated that as the owner is a female, it was not under my purview.

Therefore, Jiang Chen went over to pay. He showcased his dimple, and the lady boss automatically gave him a 20% discount.

On the way home, we were both extremely proud of each other's charisma. Alright, I was actually just extremely proud of saving those ten over dollars. Forgive this commoner's 3 customs* heart. (T/N: 3 customs, aka 三俗 is for, being vulgar, having low taste, and to pander to one's vulgar taste.)

Jiang Chen is really a good material for studying. After flipping through a few recipes, the entire aura became really strong. Yesterday he was still hand busy and leg messy* in the kitchen, today he looks just like a reputable chef, planning strategies neatly and orderly. (T/N: struggling)

Innate knowledge changes one's outer appearance, the him yesterday, is no longer the him today.

I sat cross-legged at the dining table, took the chopsticks and knocked onto the bowl, as I knocked, I hurried him, "Chef Jiang, I am

hungry, Chef Jiang, I am hungry....”

Chef Jiang was furious in the kitchen, “Chen Xiaoxi, you get in here and help out.”

I popped my head into the kitchen, “Aren’t you handling a butcher’s cleaver with ease yourself?”

He picked up a garlic and threw it at me. The garlic knocked onto my forehead and bounced out.

I picked up the garlic and placed it on the counter, I went over to look at him doing up the dish — stir fry beef with broccoli. The pot over at the other side was stewing chicken soup. Seems like he was determined to turn over the plate for yesterday’s dinner. I secretly took a sip of the soup, Jiang Chen was cursing at the side, “Scald die you.”

I blew on the soup and drank, my eyes were watery, “Jiang Chen, lets not be doctor, lets open a small eatery instead, you are so talented.”

This soup really, that kick of freshness, as though once you finish drinking there will be a flock of chicken appearing and dancing with you. You will be turning and spinning in chicken feathers that fill the sky, steeped in pure happiness and smiles – alright, I will admit I’m just copying the scene from Stephen Chow’s “The God of Cookery”.

I was moved to tears by every dish that Jiang Chen made. I finished every dish till the plate was showing. If not for Jiang Chen stopping me from aside, I would have licked every plate once more.

After eating I spontaneously went to wash the plates, Jiang Chen also came to help out, but I’m guessing he only came to supervise me so that I won’t lick his plates.

I washed the plates and he wiped the plates. Exchanged a few sentences, but he suddenly said, “Do you want to move in and stay

with me?"

I was holding a plate in my hands. I contemplated if I should drop the plate to indicate that I was shocked by his suggestion. However, as I contemplated too long, I missed the right moment to do so. I could only silently pass the plate over to him.

He took it over to wipe, and asked another time, "Do you want to?"

"Uh..... I think.... not?" I said.

"Oh." He paused for two seconds, then asked, "Why?"

"Uh... I snore when I sleep."

He said, "You don't."

....

I actually couldn't come up with any reasons, I rubbed my neck and said, "I just think that it's not a good idea."

He didn't ask anymore questions, he nodded and said, "If you think it's not good then we won't."

I asked him carefully, "Will you be unhappy?"

He gave me a gentle peck on my lips, "I won't."

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Chapter 30

Lovers always have conversations about this and that to chat about between them, especially if one of them is a chatterbox. When I questioned Jiang Chen closely for the twelfth time why did he like me back in those days or when did he discover that he liked me, he took up the car keys and said, "We have to go to work tomorrow, I'll send you home."

I sighed in disappointment, this doubt had existed from that day we got together, no matter how I threatened and bribed him or pulled down my clothes to reveal my delectable shoulder to seduce him, Jiang Chen didn't speak, which was a pity for there was actually also a youthful and sprouting heart underneath my prattling exterior.

As I was being squeezed into the car, I was still thinking of ways to make him what I wanted to hear, I said, "Do you know, back then I felt that if I continued to like you like this, but you continued to not like me, my youth would be gone."

"Oh, so it's actually like this." He said.

I glared at him, "You are really very horrid."

He simply couldn't be bothered to pay attention to me, he was paying attention to the road condition very seriously.

I often thought, even if two people are very intimate, it is entirely impossible to know each other's thoughts. Even if there is the occasional telepathy between two hearts linked as one, for example him knowing that you want to pour a glass of water to drink when you stand up, him knowing that you are in a bad mood when you look outside of the window not speaking..... These also are all only accumulated cognition from living habits. You are eternally unable to know whether the person in front of you loves you or not after all,

you can only depend on trust.

When I had finished expressing that paragraph of opinion above, Jiang Chen said, "What exactly are do you want to express?"

I said, "You see, I stayed for ten months in my mother's stomach, I still don't understand what pleasure she derives as a married old madam from going onto Tianya every day to look at young handsome boys, you say, if she had an "uncle complex", I would still be able to comprehend it slightly better. So we need to communicate, you have to tell me why exactly do you like me, to strengthen my trust."

Jiang Chen said, "You are really very bothersome, how many times must I say "I don't know" for you to believe me, I know how to cut open a person's chest, I know how to do a heart bypass surgery, I know how to change a heart valve, but I really don't know why I like you."

I've said it before, when the dialogue ascends into a professional plane, I am unable to understand what I hear.....

Sometimes, the more my hopes are dampened, the braver I become, so I said, "Then you tell me, when you felt that you liked me."

He took a deep sigh, and turned the steering wheel with great force, the car went around a corner, "I don't remember, why are you so insistent on being hung up on this?"

The things that women want to be hung up on are plentiful, our face, our skin, our hairstyles, our figure, money, housing, who loves whom, who doesn't love whom..... Too bad, I'm also a woman.

Unable to get the answer I wanted from the beginning till now, I felt very dejected, so I was prepared to not say anything anymore, whoever resented the oppressive atmosphere could open his mouth

first. Unfortunately, Jiang Chen didn't resent the oppressive atmosphere for the entire journey, I concede, it was very possible that he had even slept in the mortuary before, this little bit of oppression was really nothing.

The car reached downstairs of my house, as I opened the car door I said, "I'm going back."

"Let's have a goodbye kiss." Jiang Chen pressed the horn lightly, the horn let out a short cry that sounded like a fart.

I said, "Don't want."

He said, "I won't despise your bad technique."

If this could be tolerated, what couldn't be tolerated? I stuck up my adorable middle finger at him.

He stared blankly for two seconds, then said sinisterly, "Chen Xiaoxi, if you don't want to go to Doctor Su for emergency treatment, put away your finger, come over here and give me a kiss."

I dragged my footsteps and moved around to the car window on his side, he rolled down the car window and stuck out his large head. He smiled as he hummed, "You and I kiss goodbye, on a street with nobody around.....*" (T/N: Lyrics of very classic and famous Mandopop song "Goodbye Kiss" by Jacky Cheung in 1993, one of the "Four Heavenly Kings" of Cantopop)

He had a good voice, that I'd always known, moreover, a handsome face like this, unhurriedly humming while smiling like this, was indeed very deserving of a kiss.

I cupped his face, moved close to him and gave him a big kiss, then I rubbed my nose against his, and kissed him again. His lips were soft and warm, his smell was mild and familiar, I believed I could kiss for a very long time, as long as he didn't resent his neck hurting.

He didn't resent his neck hurting, but on the contrary it was me who resented not having enough air. Pushing him away, I panted heavily and said, "It's not counted as having bad technique this time round, I didn't take a deep breath beforehand."

Jiang Chen covered with his hand his head that had struck the car window frame when pushed by me and said, "I recommend that you go and learn first aid, including a course on CPR."

I stuck up two fingers and wanted to pierce his eyes, he laughed and pulled away. "I really don't remember, though I do remember that there was one time you roared and shouted at me on the sports field."

After he finished speaking, he drove off with his car whizzing away, I stayed on the spot covering my skirt which had almost been blown at and lifted up, only after a long time did I realise that he was replying my previous question.

Sports field? Roaring and shouting? Honestly speaking, the times I did such things during that valiant student era were numerous, you really have to let me think properly, let me think properly.

It was when I was showering that I suddenly remembered, I was so stirred up that I almost slipped and fell head first into the toilet bowl. Thankfully I pulled on the shower tubing, though pitifully I had to change to a new tube the next day.

That was the level-wide basketball competition in the second semester of Senior Year 2. In the aspect of sports, us arts students were destined to be looked down upon, so our entire class all didn't really set our hearts on it, on the other end, Jiang Chen was in Sciences Class 3, which reportedly could have a show-down to determine who was male and female* with the sports class, uh, that's not right, they were all males, a show-down to determine life and death, a show-down to determine life and death. (T/N: "a show-down to determine who was male and female" - a Chinese idiom with its

origins from 'Records of the Great Historian', which means a showdown to determine who is the victor and who is the loser. In this case, "male and female" is an analogy for "victory or defeat" (in the context of where the idiom came from, it was Xiang Yu challenging Liu Bang to a battle to determine victory and defeat)

The first match was our class versus Jiang Chen's class, of course I had to watch, actually I went to watch every match of my Jiang Chen's class.

That match was really the most crappy competition I had ever seen, our class with great difficulty had pooled together a basketball team. Forgetting about the fact that they played ball like they were taking a stroll, our class monitor hugged the basketball that had come into his hands and stood on the spot as if he was hugging his child that he had been separated from for many years and refused to let go, all that was lacking in the end was him lifting up his shirt to feed milk. I really wanted to pretend that I didn't know them.

Jiang Chen was different, his dribbling skills surpassed others, his three-pointer, his three-step layup, so handsome, the peak of perfection throughout the ages.

Our class only participated in two rounds before we were kept far away from the basketball post, while Jiang Chen's class under his leadership raided all the way into the finals, and finally was to have a showdown with the sports class.

That was a wan winter day, our form teacher insisted on extending class beyond the bell to talk about some matters that he thought were very important, for example, the blackboard not being wiped clean, there were too many paper bits on the floor, puppy love..... I looked out of the window at the masses of people gathering together and moving around on the sports field, worrying helplessly, if he loved occupying time so much why didn't he occupy lesson time?

With great difficulty, I endured till the old man was willing to

release us, when I dashed to the sports field I heard a long whistle, the competition had ended. I randomly pulled at a stranger and asked, he said that Sciences Class 3 had suffered a crushing defeat. I thought, at such a time, how could Jiang Chen not have me by his side, hence I again dashed all the way to the classroom of Sciences Class 3.

My sound of “Jiang Chen” was choked at my mouth, there were only two people left in such a big classroom – Jiang Chen and Li Wei, they were facing each other as they sat with a table in between them. Their heads were very close to each other as they were in the process of talking about something, at that time four words flashed through my mind – “adulterous man, wanton woman*.” (T/N: meaning an adulterous couple)

The two of them looked at me uniformly, Jiang Chen’s complexion wasn’t very good, after giving me a glare, he didn’t speak.

I thought for a while and (decided that) I had better explain, “Our lesson extended past the bell.”

Jiang Chen didn’t reply, the atmosphere was momentarily a little awkward. Li Wei smilingly said, “Chen Xiaoxi, thankfully I still helped Jiang Chen prepare water today.”

I forced myself to smile. “Thanks to you.” I paused, then couldn’t help but ask Jiang Chen, “How was that competition of yours?”

Jiang Chen turned a deaf ear to me, his face was expressionless and I also didn’t know where his line of sight was falling on.

Li Wei said, “Today our class didn’t have a very good display.”

“Oh, it’s like this.” I fished around in the trouser pocket of my school uniform, wanting to return the rest of the money to Jiang Chen, only then did I discover that I had placed the money in my schoolbag and had forgotten to take it, I could only say, “Uh... that, I

just wanted to come over and take a look, I'll go off first."

Jiang Chen didn't spare another glance at me, he didn't even take the trouble to snort a word from his nose to send me off.

I teared and ran off the moment I turned around, the heart of a seventeen/eighteen-year-old girl was not to be used for attacking like this.

Later, I returned to my classroom to take my schoolbag, when I came out, I surprisingly met Jiang Chen at the sports field. After hesitating for a moment, I still went over and said, "So coincidental, do you want to leave together?"

I don't know why he was suddenly very impatient, he said, "Can you not always follow after me."

As a matter of fact, ever since we went into separate classes, I had very little opportunities to follow after him, moreover this time it really wasn't that I wanted to follow after him. This sort of situation was called a "chance encounter" in the explanation in the Xinhua dictionary, but I didn't point out the unreasonable nature of these words of his, I was busy being broken-hearted and sad.

Afterwards, he probably again said some unpleasant words, I most likely also rebutted him with some words, these are all a little vague, but I remember him saying, "Did I ask you to like me?"

After that, I cried loudly on the sports field, fishing out wad after wad of money from my school bag to throw onto the ground with great force. Liking a person was such a careful affair, even though I was so sad, I also didn't dare to smash the money onto his body.

I remember me saying, "I won't pay attention to you anymore in the future, a lifetime is so long, I will definitely not only like you alone!"

What a pity, until now, I still only like him alone, this proves that

when conducting yourself, one shouldn't speak too soon, there will be retribution. I let out a sigh, even though this was all water under the bridge, thinking about it now still made me feel very sad.

I gave Jiang Chen a phone call while drying my hair. "Have you reached home?"

"I've reached."

I said, "I've recalled it, that time on the sports field."

He laughed on that end of the mobile phone, "You were crying really wretchedly."

I said, "Then?"

"Then I felt that I had better not cause you to cry so wretchedly in the future."

I rubbed my tingly nose and said, "I want to ask you a question now, you must reply me honestly, don't deceive me just because you want to save face."

He said okay.

I spoke, "Then after that, did you go back to the sports field to pick up the money and leave or not?"

..... That end of the phone sunk into an abnormal silence.

I questioned closely, "Did you or not? Hello? Did you hear me?"

"I didn't." The pronunciations of the two words was very articulate.

I sighed in disappointment, "Good for the student on duty that day."

"Don't tell me that you would still go back later to pick up those few dollars after you cried till you were in that state!" Jiang Chen's

tone of voice was sinister.

“How is it a few dollars, there was at least fifty or sixty dollars left.” I explained, “After I left I felt that you being this sort of person with an eccentric temperament would surely not pick the money up, so I returned again to pick them, but not a single cent was left.”

I originally thought that if I returned to pick them, the money I picked up would be considered to belong to me.....

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Translator's Corner:

The song that Jiang Chen was humming! One of the classics from the 90s ☐ If you are interested, the line he hums starts at 1:38.

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