

Crossing to the Future, it's Not Easy to Be a Man

Chapter 5: Luckily Still a Girl

The learning device was just rejoicing over the fact that Ling Lan did not blame it when it registered Ling Lan's question. Its joy disappeared, and it explained hurriedly, "You've been asleep for two days and two nights for no apparent reason. Your mother has been crying so much that she hasn't been able to keep any food down due to worry. They've decided that if you still haven't woken up by tomorrow, they'll send you to the hospital. From what I could gather, admitting you to a hospital will cause them a lot of trouble. I felt that something wasn't right about the situation, so I rushed to wake you up."

A jolt ran through Ling Lan — she could not be admitted! Who knew if the technology here would be able to sense this fellow hiding within her mind? If it were discovered, she would most certainly end up as a lab rat. She must make sure this didn't happen.

For her own safety and personal freedom, Ling Lan decided not to fight it any longer. She allowed her throat to open up and started bawling, signalling to the people watching over her that she was awake.

Frankly, Ling Lan had only intended to make a little noise, maybe a gurgle or a soft whine, but the sound that poured out of her throat was alarmingly loud ...

The childish voice almost shut down in fear. Hesitantly, it asked, "Was it necessary to cry so tragically?"

Taken aback herself by the volume and emotion in her own cry, Ling Lan responded sheepishly, "Can't help it. My body's starving ..."

Losing to her own body's needs, Ling Lan felt that all hope was lost — there went her angelic baby image. Truth be told, she had really wanted to be an angelic baby, well-behaved and adorable, becoming the apple of her new parents' eyes. But it looks like that plan had gone up in smoke.

Because no matter how you look, a baby who would cry in such a frightening manner couldn't be described as angelic in any way ...

Ling Lan's energetic cries woke the person resting right beside her. Lan Luofeng sprang up and pulled her daughter into her arms, looking her over with joyful, yet shocked and fearful, eyes.

Her daughter had finally woken up! But she was crying so piteously — could there be something wrong with her?

The doctor on-call rushed over from the room next door. After a detailed examination, it was determined that Ling Lan was just really hungry.

Lan Luofeng looked down at Ling Lan suckling at her breast and felt her heart slowly settle back into her chest.

After drinking her fill, flushed with wine ... er, milk, Ling Lan finally had the strength to take a good look at the world around her for the first time.

She was in a large bedroom, so large that Ling Lan could not see the entirety of the bedroom just by turning her small head around.

The furnishings of the room were light and tasteful; no bold or garish colours were present. One of the first things Ling Lan noticed was that the bed she and her mom was lying on seemed very wide. Putting aside the space they had claimed, there was still more than enough space for her to roll around several times — that is, of course, if she could roll.

There were no bedside cabinets installed at the head of the bed, as was the fashion in her previous world, instead, there were several metallic-looking objects near the corners of the room. The design of the objects was rather strange, giving Ling Lan the impression of robots.

Within Ling Lan's range of sight, she could see no wardrobes or any other furniture of the like — that is to say, there was no other furniture she could see besides the bed.

Ling Lan did not think much of this. This is ten thousand years later after all — who knows how the world has developed? As long as she continued to live, she would surely find all the answers she needed. There was no hurry at all.

There was another person in the room, an elderly lady, who stood watch beside her mother. Ling Lan glanced at her curiously and found that she had a kind but serious face, and seemed to be very attentive to her mother's needs. She was probably not an elder in the family, but rather a long-time servant of the household.

Seeing this, Ling Lan was glad. This meant that the family she had been born into was rather well-off, so she wouldn't have to worry much about daily living. In her previous world, she had had to bear so much frustration and hardship due to the lack of money caused by her illness — she was glad that she could avoid all that in this world.

At this point, Ling Lan was still blissfully unaware that being the child of a well-off family could sometimes bring about even greater frustration and hardship. Of course, that is a story for another time, so we shall not talk about it for now.

After finishing her observation of her surroundings, Ling Lan turned her gaze upon her mother lying beside her, who had a soft smile on her face as she held Ling Lan's tiny

hand. Her mother was a great beauty — even as a female, Ling Lan was enthralled just staring at her.

Ling Lan was very pleased by this; no one wants to be plain after all. Her mother's beauty meant that she would also grow up to be beautiful. Even if she didn't end up a great beauty like her mother, she would still be attractive enough to turn heads.

Right then, a middle-aged man, roughly between the ages of 40 and 50, walked over to the bed. It was the chamberlain Ling Qin. He stood respectfully by the bed as he addressed Lan Luofeng.

"Mistress, everything has been handled with both the government and the military. In a month, the Federation will officially dispense young master Ling Lan's right to inherit." Ling Qin's tone was solemn — if it were at all possible, he would rather see his master, the mainstay of the family, alive to guard the mistress and the young miss. Not this, where the young miss would be forced to lead an abnormal life.

Young master Ling Lan? Ling Lan heard her name, and her spirits perked up in response. So this world had a boy who shared her name? Speaking of which ... she still didn't know what her current name was.

After hearing what Ling Qin had to say, Lan Luofeng's eyes turned red, and crystalline tears fell. "Ling Xiao would definitely be happy about this."

Lan Luofeng's reaction sent the old servant beside her into a fluster, and she only managed to calm Lan Luofeng down after some difficulty.

Lan Luofeng wiped away her tears. She knew she had to control her sadness. She could not let herself fall — all that remained of Ling Xiao and her baby Ling Lan needed her protection. Even if Ling Lan were to successfully inherit everything of Ling Xiao's, there were still many dangers lying in wait for her as she grew up. Lan Luofeng knew she could not let down her guard.

Lan Luofeng bent over to kiss Ling Lan on the cheek. "Ling Lan, my child, mummy is sorry. From now on, you are the young master of the Ling family — you can only be the young master of the Ling family!" The guilt Lan Luofeng felt for forcing this upon her daughter was undeniable, however, the determination in her eyes was also immovable.

Lan Luofeng's words sent Ling Lan into a tailspin. Young master Ling Lan? Me? F*ck! I was reincarnated into this world as a boy? No no no, I must have heard wrong ...

Perhaps Lan Luofeng had pushed herself to the limit over the last two days fretting over Ling Lan, for she fell asleep soon after she finished speaking.

Meanwhile, when the old servant turned away to do some other chores, Ling Lan subtly moved a small hand downwards to explore between her legs ...

It's flat! Ling Lan's heart calmed immediately.

Luckily I'm still a girl, she thought. Without that extra appendage down there, she wouldn't have to live the strange life of being neither man nor woman and worry about her mind being a mess.

Of course Ling Lan was also very happy that she could still go by the name Ling Lan. She had been called by that name for over twenty years after all — it would have been a little hard to accept if she had to suddenly change her name.

However, her happiness did not last long before it was driven away by a wave of anxiety.

If the phrase 'young master' had the same meaning as it did in her original world in the past, then she was in some pretty deep trouble. There must be some unavoidable reason why she would have to dress and present herself as a man.

The guilt in her mother's eyes was clear. Despite that, her mother still chose this path. This could only mean that the situation was already so bad that Ling Lan had no other choice but to be a man to salvage the situation.

Chapter 6: A Shameless Person

Very quickly, a month had gone by, and it was time for the Federation to officially announce the inheritance.

During this month, Ling Lan did not do anything besides eat or sleep. Of course, Ling Lan's 'sleep' was actually a training trance.

That said, Ling Lan was much smarter about it now. She assigned Little Four the task of waking her up whenever it was time to eat — she had no intention of misjudging her training time again. She did not want to be dragged to the hospital for a check-up after all, and risk exposing her secret and the existence of Little Four only to become a lab rat.

Who is Little Four, you ask? Who else could it be but that little fellow who claimed to be a mecha learning device?

Two weeks ago, under its guidance, Ling Lan had managed to pull together a mental network after around ten days of experimentation. Using it, she had explored her mindscape and managed to find the main body of the learning device deep within it. She had then successfully unlocked the virtual learning space of the device. In the future, it would be much more convenient for her to meet the learning device — she

would just have to will it, and her consciousness would be brought into the virtual learning space.

Ling Lan still remembered how she had almost spewed blood when she first saw Little Four's virtual body.

In truth, Little Four's appearance was very charming. It looked like a little boy of only three to four years old, with a bright and innocent smile on his face. In the words of modern-day slang, extremely 'moe' [1]. Ling Lan couldn't help but find it adorable.

The only problem was ... the little fellow had been too excited, and had flounced up to her completely naked, butt jigging.

And so tragedy befell poor Little Four — he had been immediately scooped up and spanked soundly, until his white and bouncy little behind had been imprinted with the shape of Ling Lan's palms.

Dammit, why did he have to show her his dick? Although his dick was so small that it could almost be ignored ... but it was still a dick, wasn't it? How could he do that to a pure and innocent maiden like her?

Of course, although the spanking relieved Ling Lan's embarrassed anger, the little boy became angry in turn. In protest, he hid away in the depths of her mind and refused to come out again.

At first, Ling Lan did not take it to heart, but when the situation showed no signs of improving after two days, Ling Lan gave in.

She needed the little fellow to help wake her up after all. Resigned, Ling Lan patiently cajoled the little fellow out and promised to never resort to this sort of domestic violence ever again. Only then did the little boy return to his bouncy happy self.

The two started talking a bit more, and when Ling Lan asked how she should address him, the boy's response annoyed Ling Lan once again.

This little rascal actually wanted her to call him 'Master Four'? He didn't even have any body hair yet and he wanted this older sister to call him 'Master'?

Even though Ling Lan had promised to never again use domestic violence, she still had other tricks up her sleeve. Under the full force of her logical-illogical-rational-irrational arguments, the little fellow agreed without question to be called 'Little Four'.

Victory! Ling Lan was uncharacteristically proud of herself for this.

However, when she found out later why Little Four had first wanted her to call him Master Four, she found herself speechless.

Little Four explained that it had found that the title 'Master' was extremely popular in books, TV, and the internet back on Earth, and since his designation had so many fours, what else could he be called but 'Master Four'?

Ling Lan felt that she had been mistaken. She should never have tried to probe the motivations of a machine — doing so was an insult to her intelligence.

Once Ling Lan had managed to establish a connection with Little Four, she could freely access the virtual learning environment. Besides that, within this month, she had also picked up from the conversations between her mother and the chamberlain Ling Qin that her father of this world had died on the battlefield, which is why she had to inherit her father's military benefits by posing as a man.

Ling Lan couldn't help but sigh — it seemed that sexism existed everywhere. Gender equality had been a struggle back on Earth, and now, ten thousand years in the future, when humanity had already expanded beyond the solar system, gender oppression was still thriving.

The current Ling Lan had no clue what the military benefits were referring to. Although she could get the eager Little Four to look it up for her, she ultimately decided to take things one step at a time. There was still much she didn't know about this era, and it was probably wiser to take her time growing up to slowly understand the world around her instead of taking a shortcut.

Ling Lan was a very patient and tolerant person. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been able to live over twenty years suffering the inhuman pain of her body breaking down. This tolerance of hers was definitely far above the average person.

Initially, she had been worried about the two-year time limit that Little Four had mentioned — however, after some research, Little Four found that the Qi exercises she had been doing were an extremely effective way to increase physical fitness. According to Little Four's estimations, even if she did nothing else but practice those exercises for just ten hours every day, she would still be able to easily resolve the danger she would have faced in two years time.

And so, now that she knew her life was not on a timer, Ling Lan did not intend to hurry through life. She was still very young and did not want to stand out as a genius. Taking things a step at a time would be the safest and surest way to live. Ling Lan understood very well, after all, that the tree that grows above the tree-line gets toppled by the wind [2].

Living freely was the most important thing!

Soon, it was time for the Federation to hand over the inheritance documents. On that day, Ling Lan could clearly sense the sorrow and distress emanating from her mother. Once the document was handed over, her father Ling Xiao's death would officially be announced to the public, and her mother would no longer be able to avoid the reality of his death.

Early that morning, Ling Lan sensed a disturbance in the typically peaceful household. However, since she was in the bedroom, she could not tell what was happening.

However, she was soon picked up by a servant and brought downstairs. As they moved down the stairway, Ling Lan could see the glorious lights hanging from the ceiling, their edges brushing the sides of several tall columns.

Yep, assessment complete. This was a grand and luxurious hall. Her family was indeed of the upper echelon.

Before Ling Lan could observe her fill, she had already been transferred into her mother's arms. Lan Luofeng's sombre mood improved considerably as she observed Ling Lan and her curious and roving eyes. Fortunately, Ling Xiao had left her this beautiful baby, giving her the strength to oppose those greedy wretches.

She grasped at her daughter's little hand, and calmly announced, "This is Ling Xiao's son Ling Lan! Only he shall inherit all that belongs to Ling Xiao."

At that moment, an old but strident voice spoke up, "We need to ensure that Major General Ling Xiao's sacrifice is not in vain. We are not denying Young Master Ling Lan's right to inherit, but only wish that the Ling family would choose the most outstanding child to inherit Major General Ling Xiao's premium military benefits, so that Major General Ling Xiao's unfinished duties can be taken up by the most suitable candidate."

Lan Luofeng turned a sharp gaze towards the old speaker. About seventy years old, he still stood proud and tall. He was the grand elder of the Ling branch family — Ling Suren, and even Ling Xiao had had to address him respectfully while he was still alive. He was also the one appointed by the branch family to protest Ling Lan's inheritance of Ling Xiao's possessions.

Ling Lan could feel Lan Luofeng's chest trembling as she tried to suppress her anger at Ling Suren's words.

Honestly, she had never met such a shameless person. Look at the way he spun words to justify taking away a child's right to inherit from his birth father — if his words were to be believed, what was the point of military men risking their lives to protect their country? When they died, did it mean that it was open season on their unprotected families?

Ling Lan pulled at her mother's fingers and gurgled.

Darn it. If only she were bigger, she would certainly spit upon that person's body to shame him for his shamelessness.

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[1] 'Moe' is a Japanese slang loanword that refers to feelings of strong affection mainly towards characters in anime, manga, and video games. Moe, however, has also gained usage to refer to feelings of affection towards any subject. (Directly taken from Wikipedia.) The usage here is referring to the utter adorableness of Little Four, which is capable of drawing out strong feelings of affection and fan-squeeing.

[2] The meaning of this is similar to the Japanese saying 'the nail that sticks out gets hammered down'— outstanding people become the common enemy. Since there is no real English equivalent I could find besides this Japanese borrowing, I decided to keep it as close to the literal Mandarin saying as possible since I think the meaning still comes across pretty clear.