

Little Brat's 111

Chapter 111: Ning?

After getting off the plane, Gu Tinglan exited the airport with Ning Li.

A black sports car was already waiting outside with the hazard lights on.

Gu Tinglan looked at Ning Li. "Where are you heading? We can give you a lift."

However, she rejected his offer, "Thank you, but I'll just take the taxi."

Gu Tinglan looked slightly concerned. "It's getting dark..."

"It's quite safe here in Jingcheng. Dr. Gu, you really don't have to worry."

Since Ning Li insisted, he did not force her. He nodded and said, "Okay, tell me when you reach your place." He sounded like he was talking to a child.

When she heard him, Ning Li felt helpless. After all, she was just 17 years old and could not blame Gu Tinglan for treating her like a child. Eventually, she nodded and said, "Okay."

The black sports car honked.

"Dr. Gu, your friend is calling you."

Gu Tinglan parted ways with her and went to the black sports car with his briefcase.

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“Way to go, man! You just came back and you’ve already got a little girl by your side.”

The moment Gu Tinglan got into the car, he heard Gu Siyang ridiculing him.

Gu Siyang looked at Ning Li through the window. It was getting dark and she was quite far away, so he could not see her face properly, but he was able to see her slender legs. With just a glimpse, he could tell the girl was a beauty.

“Say...is she a university freshman?”

Gu Tinglan did not react to his words. He simply said, “A third-year high schooler.”

“WTF?” Gu Siyang was shocked. It took him quite some time to digest the information.

Nevertheless, Gu Tinglan was not bothered by his reaction. “Drive.”

Gu Xiyang stepped on the pedal, and the car blasted off. The strong acceleration pinned Gn Tinglan to the seat.

“No wonder you wrecked three cars in a year.”

Gu Siyang was mad when he heard Gu Tinglan commenting on his driving skills. “That’s my fault? You’re actually the one to blame! Do I need to remind you that you are 30 years old now, uncle?”

He emphasized the term ‘uncle’ before continuing, “If Grandfather knows about this, you will lose your legs.”

The Gu family was a huge one with Gu Tinglan alone having three elder brothers.

Gu Siyang was his elder brother’s son, which made him Gu Tinglan’s nephew. The boy was a whole decade younger than him.

Gu Tinglan thought of something and scoffed. "It's not my problem."

Gu Xiyang knew what his uncle meant. If Gu Tinglan really liked the girl, he could have brought her along and not left her behind. However, judging from his tone, he should know the girl quite well.

"She came here on her own. We ran into each other at the airport."

Gu Siyang sighed a long breath. "Great, I guess you get to keep your legs for another day. That's worth celebrating."

Gu Tinglan did not play along with the boy's quips.

A yellow convertible sports car drove past their car all of a sudden.

Gu Tinglan had a glance and saw a familiar face in that car. "It's driving at this speed here?"

Gu Siyang had a glance at the car and complained, "Gosh, what a pain. I see him everywhere, even here in the capital."

Gu Tinglan already knew who the driver of that yellow car was. "I thought he was living abroad. Why is he here all of a sudden?"

"I think G&S is having a press conference later. That guy is a strange one. Who knows what he is doing here?" Gu Siyang shrugged.

G&S had a considerable market share throughout the globe, and a single press conference would not attract that man's attention at all.

Gu Tinglan looked back again, but that yellow car had disappeared from his sight. "I think he's going to the airport. If he's driving, is he picking someone up?"

Gu Siyang tutted. "I think he's just taking a drive. Who could be so important that he has to pick the person up himself?"

Gu Tinglan nodded. "I guess you're right."

...

Every inch of land in the capital was expensive, especially in the city center. Therefore, those who owned a private club in the city center were no common folks.

The banquet hall on the third floor was filled with beautiful lights and exquisite decoration.

Xu Yini entered the hall in a flaming red dress. Since she was maintaining her image as the nation's first love, she put on shallow makeup most of the time.

However, she picked a bright red lipstick for the night and planned to use it to stand out from the crowd. The events held by G&S were all glitz and glam, and if she was not bold enough, she would not be able to stand out.

The moment she walked into the hall, she turned heads.

A lot of the guests were astonished by her arrival.

"Whoa."

A man in his 30s came over. He had blonde hair and blue eyes and towered over most people, which was typical of a Caucasian male.

He was deeply impressed by Xu Yini based on his sparkling gaze.

“Miss Xu, you look wonderful tonight,” the man spoke in German.

Xu Yini smiled elegantly.

“Danke.” Her pronunciation was clear and it felt natural coming out from her mouth. This alone had added points for her performance during the last meeting with the man.

She looked around. The place might be lively, but she had yet to see the prestigious son of G&S.

As though he noticed her confusion, the man, Edmond, shrugged. “I’m sorry. I forgot to tell you that he might not be showing up tonight.”

Xu Yini was shocked. “He’s not coming? Is there any holdup?”

If that particular person was not coming, the value of this meeting would be greatly diminished. After all, he was the one who decided who got the title of G&S brand ambassador.

Xu Yini would have to wait a little longer then.

“I don’t know about that but...” Edmond winked. “I know he’s in a good mood.”

...

At the airport, Ning Li waited for a while by the side as the night breeze caressed her face.

All of a sudden, a yellow convertible sports car came and stopped beside her. The man in the driver seat was smiling brightly.

“Ning?”

Chapter 112: I Am Here To Talk To You About A Business Deal

The man was a beautiful mix. His curly hair coupled with his sapphire blue eyes, snow-white skin, and pronounced facial features made him look like a living statue.

He looked like he was in his mid-20s. His silk shirt softly fluttered in the breeze and wrapped his body tightly, showing off his perfect physique.

He smiled and looked at Ning Li in delight and astonishment. Then, he stepped out of his car and opened his arms to welcome her with a hug.

“George.”

Ning Li was shocked. She heard that G&S would send someone to pick her up, but she did not expect the son of the owner. She nodded and reached out to him for a handshake instead.

“Nice to meet you.”

George noticed her reaction. He smiled and changed his hug to a handshake. “I heard from Edmond that girls here are all pretty conservative, so I guess it’s true.”

Despite his looks, he was able to command fluent Mandarin.

Ning Li shook his hand for less than a second. “Thank you for picking me up.”

George whistled. “Aside from your sketches, you alone are worthy for me to come here myself.”

He had seen countless beautiful women, but Ning Li stood out from the rest. His frank attitude and enthusiasm would make a lot of girls giggle in bashfulness, but Ning Li had heard of him before, so she did not take him seriously.

George was the son of the owner of G&S. He had the best resources in the fashion world, and his wealth was immeasurable. With that beautiful face of his, he was able to shuttle his way around many beautiful women.

Rumor had it that he changed his girlfriend every three months and was a regular name in the gossip column of newspapers or magazines.

He was extremely charming with his words, especially with a mix of sincerity in between the lines. He was able to win trust easily which became one of his specialties.

He lifted his chin at his car and said, "Hop in."

...

The yellow sports car sped through the highway and the scenery on both sides became a blur.

Ning Li tried to sightsee as much as she could.

The night view of Jingcheng was astonishing as it was prosperous and lively. Lights were everywhere and everything seemed extra vivid. It has been a while since she saw such a lively and beautiful scene.

"I didn't send my picture over, so how did you recognize me?" she asked George.

George smiled brightly. "I don't need a picture to know it's you."

Before he came, he had her sketches for a long time. A person's temperament was usually reflected in his or her work. It was a strange and indescribable feeling, but he had known that it was her.

"But—"

He smiled and winked at Ning Li. "You are a lot shorter than I expected."

Then, he saw the bag in Ning Li's hand. "Is that all you brought?"

"I will be only staying for the weekend," Ning Li replied succinctly.

George was shocked. "Two days? That's too short. The press conference is next Saturday. Are you not going to wait for that?"

Ning Li nodded. "I still have classes to attend."

The look on George's beautiful face froze for a moment. Since when did G&S's influence become so weak?

"There's also a prize-giving ceremony. Aren't you attending that either? I'm already planning how to introduce you to the press in the grandest way possible."

"I'm not here for the press conference or the prize-giving ceremony," Ning Li said, "I'm here to talk to you about a business deal."

George stepped on the brakes. He turned to her and put his hand around the seat while sizing her up with an intrigued gaze.

"A business deal? You and me? You knew I was coming?"

He had come for Ning Li, but no one else knew about it. Judging from Ning Li's tone, however, it seemed like she knew he was coming to the event.

Ning Li nodded.

"Due to personal reasons, I cannot be officially under G&S, and G&S has to make sure that they won't reveal any of my information to the public. I don't need fixed pay. All the profits will be shared. I want

commissions from all the products that I design. On top of that, I will have the right to end the collaboration any time unconditionally.”

George stared at her for a moment and smiled. “Ning, no one negotiates terms with G&S like that.”

Ning Li smiled. “Well, I’m not no one.”

She then looked down at her watch. “If you can’t agree to my terms, maybe I can still make it back on the next flight.”

He did not say a word while cars were whizzing past them at every moment.

“You have to show me that you are sincere,” he finally said.

Ning Li replied evenly, “Me being here is the biggest form of sincerity.”

A long while later, George laughed. “Great. I’ll tell them to draft up a contract and show it to you tomorrow. I suppose by then, I can have whatever’s inside your bag, right?”

Ning Li reached out for a handshake. “I’m looking forward to working with you.”

...

“This is my first time sealing a deal on the road,” George admitted as he drove.

It was a huge gamble. If he was not fascinated by Ning Li’s design, he would never have agreed to Ning Li’s terms.

Ning Li smiled. “Me too.”

George sent her directly to the Aqua Front Hotel.

...

The event continued, but Xu Yini lost interest in staying.

Since George was not around, no one could decide on the upcoming fashion show, and staying back would be a waste of time. However, leaving like that would hurt her image, and it was still a great chance to win some favors from Edmond.

Edmond was quite influential among the executives of G&S, and winning his favor would definitely help her future development.

“I heard that you used to study in the States, I didn’t expect you to command such a high level of German,” Edmond said with praise.

Xu Yini looked at the man. “My secondary subject back at university was German. It was purely out of personal interest.”

Edmond looked at her with a ridiculing gaze. “It’s because of someone, wasn’t it?”

Xu Yini was shocked.

Edmond’s eyes were as clear as crystals as if he saw through the girl’s thoughts. He leaned forward and said softly, “Speaking of which, the way your eyes sparkle is exactly the same as when you confessed on camera the other day.”

She knew what Edmond was referring to. Everyone thought that she was talking to her fans, but in fact...

She smiled helplessly and blushed.

“I really can’t keep secrets from you,” she indirectly admitted.

Edmond knew it and was not surprised. He exclaimed, “I wonder which lucky b*stard that is.”

Xu Yini smiled. She did not go along with his topic and changed it instead.

The two of them continued chatting and they attracted people’s attention.

“It seems like Xu Yini is getting the spot.”

“You can’t say for sure. George isn’t here tonight, and Edmond can’t make the decision by himself.”

“I know, but Edmond is a strange guy as well and Xu Yini was able to have a good chat with him which proves how good she is. Besides, Edmond’s opinion is also important. I think the chances for the others are slim...”

Half an hour later, Xu Yini excused herself from the event with Edmond sending her off himself.

When she was in the corridor about to leave for the parking lot, she caught a side glance of something that shocked her.

Chapter 113: We Share the Same Fate, Don’t You Think?

The person that walked past her seemed a little familiar, but all she had was a glimpse, so Xu Yini was not sure.

Edmond looked in the direction of her gaze. “It seems like he is back.”

Xu Yini’s heart raced. “You mean—”

Edmond looked at her and smiled helplessly.

“Miss Xu, I’m sorry that I can’t take you to him today. The guest beside him is his VIP for the day, and he’s been talking about her for quite some time now. Even I cannot interrupt him tonight.” Edmond was being frank.

Disappointed, Xu Yini could not do anything either. “It’s fine. I’ll take a rain check.”

Being the gentleman that he was, Edmond called the elevator for her.

“Miss Xu, have a good evening.”

Xu Yini looked away and lifted her dress before walking into the elevator.

...

George left after he sent Ning Li to her hotel room. Even though he wanted to chat further and hoped that he could have a glance at the sketches Ning Li brought, she insisted on seeing the contract first.

In the end, he could not do anything but go back and draft the contract for her first.

Ning Li shut the door. When she was tidying her bag, she found Gu Tinglan’s name card. She remembered what he had told her earlier, so she texted the man.

[Dr. Gu. I’m already at the hotel.]

A few minutes later, she received a friend request from Wechat.

It was Gu Tinglan, hence Ning Li accepted it.

[Great. Have a good rest.]

Ning Li simply thanked him and left the conversation.

As she scrolled down, she saw Lu Huaiyu's contact. She had not told the man that she came to the capital.

Ning Li rubbed the center of her brows. If Lu Huaiyu did not ask her, she did not plan to tell him as well.

After all, it was just for a weekend, and it would pass in the blink of an eye. However, after hearing what Gu Tinglan said earlier, the words circulated in her mind.

She thought of when she had lied to him the other day. Finally, she sighed and tapped on his contact.

[Second Brother, I'm currently at...]

Before she could finish, she stared at the message that she had typed and found it strange. The man did not ask her for a single thing, yet she planned to tell him where she was. It felt wrong.

She deleted it and retyped something else.

[Second Brother, are you asleep...]

It felt wrong as well.

Ning Li deleted and retyped her message a few times and was still unable to come up with a conclusion.

...

At Yunding Fenghua, Cheng Xiyue put the contract on the table and sat down like a boss.

“You said you would give me a point. You can’t go back on your words now.”

Even though it was troublesome to go through the tedious procedure, if Lu Huaiyu signed it, Cheng Xiyue would be on the winning side.

Lu Huaiyu leaned on the couch while scrolling his phone. He raised his brows and showed a profound gaze as he scrolled.

Cheng Xiyue waited for a reaction, but the man showed no signs at all. He leaned closer for a peek.

“What are you watching? You’re getting sucked into your phone. Are you trying to avoid signing it?”

Cheng Xiyue had climbed out of bed in the middle of the night and had to endure mental shock and torture just to get the contract. If Lu Huaiyu refused to sign, he would flip the table in front of the man.

Unfortunately, Lu Huaiyu still did not react.

Cheng Xiyue had a closer look at the phone, and it seemed like Lu Huaiyu was chatting with someone.

[XXX is typing...]

The name was...

It was then Lu Huaiyu stared at him. Cheng Xiyue felt chills running down his spine. He awkwardly cleared his throat and looked away.

“Umm, I saw nothing. Please continue—”

Lu Huaiyu looked at his phone, but he still did not get a message. In the end, he kept his phone away and signed the contract.

...

George was extremely efficient. On the next afternoon, he went to Ning Li with the newly drafted contract.

Since Ning Li said that she did not want her personal information revealed, George only brought two lawyers with him to the meeting. Edmond wanted to join the meeting at first but was rejected.

After Ning Li checked all the terms and made sure everything was fine, she signed the contract.

At the same time, she gave George some of the sketches that she brought. She had completed half of her mission of coming to the capital until this point.

Much to his dismay, Ning Li rejected the lunch invite for George and went out on her own.

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King's One was a residential district in the west of the capital where the Gu family had several mansions.

Gu Siyang brought Gu Tinglan to one of the mansions for a short stay.

In the study room, Gu Tingfeng looked at Gu Tinglan. "Are you saying you didn't find anything at Lincheng?"

Gu Tinglan nodded. "But the trip was on a short schedule, so I plan to go back for a second time."

Gu Tingfeng thought about it. "Okay. It's been a long time, and it's normal to not find anything on your first trip. You'll have to put in more effort in searching."

“Alright.”

Gu Siyang was also there with his uncle and father. He said, “Dad, putting Uncle in charge of this is a little too tiring. Why don’t I tag along next time?”

Gu Tingfeng grunted. “Do you want to go to Lincheng or Yunzhou? I know what you are thinking.”

Gu Siyang was exposed on the spot by his father. He did not mind it though and simply brushed it off with a smile. “If you already know what I want, why don’t you let me go? Staying here is getting boring.”

He had heard of Xiaosong Hill at Yunzhou and wanted to go have a look for himself. However, he did not get the chance to travel.

“If it’s boring here, why are you out all the time? Besides, your uncle is there for serious business. You won’t be much help, and I don’t want you to drag him down,” Gu Tingfeng said. He knew what his son was planning.

Gu Siyang argued, “Dad, come on. You are being prejudiced. How do you know I won’t be helpful? I just stopped my dear uncle here from stepping onto the wrong path yesterday.”

Gu Tinglan looked at the boy pointedly as Gu Siyang replied with a subtle wink. He was trying to ask his uncle to play along.

Gu Tingfeng frowned. “What are you talking about?”

Gu Tinglan smiled. “It’s nothing. I ran into a friend yesterday at the airport and we had a little reunion together. Siyang seemed to have misunderstood something.”

Gu Tingfeng sharply sensed something was wrong. He unconsciously sat up straight and asked, “A friend? A girl friend? Or a boy friend?”

Meanwhile, Gu Tinglan helplessly sighed and rubbed his face.

Gu Siyang grunted and said frivolously, “It’s a girl! But that’s it! The girl is only 17 years old, a third-year high-schooler. If Uncle is any good, he won’t get someone that young, right?”

Gu Tingfeng looked disappointed. “A girl?”

Gu Tinglan was silenced.

The Gu family had four brothers with Gu Tinglan being the youngest. All three of his brothers were married and had given birth to many children.

That was the reason why Gu Tinglan’s father did not urge him to get married.

Only his elder brother, Gu Tingfeng, was concerned about his relationship status.

“I thought you just came back a while ago. Have you befriended a little girl that fast?” Gu Tingfeng stared at him cautiously. There were less than a handful of people whom Gu Tinglan considered a friend, which piqued Gu Tingfeng’s interest.

Gu Tinglan smiled. “No, it’s just that the girl is a mature one, and we keep running into each other. She’s also allergic to peanuts.”

Gu Tingfeng was shocked when he heard that.

Gu Siyang also looked at his uncle in astonishment. “Huh? Isn’t that—”

Chapter 114: Puppy Love

It was then that Gu Siyang paused. He carefully had a glance at Gu Tingfeng. He noticed that his father was looking down with a blank look as if he was sucked into a whirlpool of memories.

A while later, Gu Tingfeng regained his senses and said, “What a coincidence.”

Gu Tinglang simply grunted as a reply.

The atmosphere in the room somehow turned strange. Gu Siyang felt nervous, but it was Gu Tinglan who broke the silence.

“If Siyang really wants to go, just let him tag along. It’s not good holding him back every time.”

Gu Siyang’s eyes sparkled with excitement.

Gu Tingfeng did not want his son to disturb his uncle’s business, but for some reason, he ultimately compromised and agreed.

“As you wish.”

...

Ning Li only spent two days in Jincheng.

George asked her out several times, but she rejected all his invites. He had no idea what Ning Li was so busy with. Although he wanted to ask about it, he could not find the perfect timing to do so.

Ning Li booked a flight back to Yunzhou on Sunday night. This time, she took a taxi to the airport instead of asking George to send her.

Her flight was at 8:00 p.m. Since she had to arrive at the airport earlier, she stopped by the cafe at the airport for a cup of espresso.

She picked a seat in the corner and waited alone.

Then, the glass door of the coffee shop opened and a familiar figure came in. Soon, that familiar yet cold voice requested, "A latte, please."

Ning Li turned in the direction of the voice. The person also noticed her gaze and turned to Ning Li.

The moment the two of them locked eyes, Ning Li was deeply stunned. She strongly believed that it was not a good day to travel.

It was Pei Song. He was also in the capital for the weekend.

Pei Song was also stunned.

Ning Li nodded politely while he replied with the same nod.

Then, he noticed Ning Li's bag. It was the same bag that she brought to school, so he surmised that she left school on Friday and flew all the way here for the weekend.

After Pei Song got his cup of latte, he sat down at the table next to Ning Li but did not strike a conversation with her.

However, he clearly remembered that Ning Li had said she was going back to her home in Lincheng, so he did not expect to see her in the Jingcheng airport. He believed that even the school and her family did not know where she had gone.

Suddenly, it rained outside.

Ning Li turned to the airport apron through the window and frowned at the downpour. Judging from how heavy the rain was, she started to wonder if her flight would be delayed.

Twenty minutes later, she got her answer from the broadcast. Not only was her flight delayed, but most of the flights were also temporarily stopped because of the sudden downpour.

It was getting late and the sky turned dark as the pitter-patter of the rain was getting louder.

Then, she realized that Pei Song's flight was only an hour away from her own, and since her flight was delayed, her flight would depart at the same time as Pei Song's.

She took a sip from her cup of coffee.

...

Seconds turned into minutes.

It was autumn in Jingcheng, so the night was already chilly. Coupled with the rain, the temperature dropped drastically for the night.

Ning Li had only brought one bag on this trip, and she was still wearing the same white hoodie and jeans.

Passengers from the delayed flights already wrapped themselves with blankets and lay down on the cafe bench for a quick rest.

Ning Li was down to her last drop of coffee, and she still had no idea when her flight would resume.

Pei Song took his coat off and gave it to her. "Why don't you have some rest first?"

Ning Li was surprised before she shook her head. "It's okay. Thank you."

Staying up late was normal for her, and it was difficult for her to close her eyes in public.

Pei Song put his coat on the bench beside Ning Li before he went to the counter. A while later, he came back with two cups of warm water. "Here."

Ning Li reluctantly took a cup. "Thank you."

...

The rain got lighter around midnight, so the airport apron and flights were being resumed.

Ning Li and Pei Song then parted ways.

"I have to go now," Ning Li said.

Pei song nodded.

As Ning Li walked towards her boarding gate, Pei Song stared at the black coat that he had put beside Ning Li's bench.

Ning Li did not even touch it. He picked up his coat and went in the other direction.

...

At 6:00 a.m, Ning Li got off the plane. She returned to her rented unit to wash up before going to school.

At 7.30 a.m, Ning Li stepped into the classroom as the bell rang. However, she noticed that something was not right with the class.

Everyone was looking at her with a strange gaze. She frowned as she walked to her seat.

He Xiaochen looked at her nervously. She seemed worried and anxious.

“What’s wrong?” Ning Li asked.

He Xiaochen covered her mouth and said with a muffled voice, “Ning Li, did you go to Jingcheng during the weekend?”

Ning Li’s heart skipped a beat.

Judging from Ning Li’s reaction, He Xiaochen knew it was true, so she got even more excited.

“D-did you go with the class monitor?”

Ning Li frowned. “What?”

He Xiaochen got even more anxious. “Someone saw you in the Jingcheng airport and took a picture of the two of you! It’s on the campus forum now, so everybody knows about it.”

Ning Li took her phone out and realized that the campus forum was talking about her and Pei Song. The hottest thread on the forum was pinned on the top page.

[Breaking! The most handsome guy and the most beautiful girl appeared at the airport in Jingcheng together! Is this proof of their relationship?]

Ning Li frowned as she tapped on the thread.

A picture popped out. The background was the Jingcheng airport, and the boy and the girl in the photo were evidently Pei Song and her.

It was obviously the work of a paparazzi. Even though the picture was taken from afar, their faces were clear. More importantly, the picture was showing Pei Song giving her his coat.

There were more than 1,000 comments in the thread, and the number was climbing fast.

[Orange123: My God! What am I seeing?!]

[DragonKing: It's proven now! This isn't Photoshopped. It's real!]

[MorningStick: I heard the two of them applied for leave last Friday. Did they go to Jingcheng for a weekend getaway? My gosh! I thought Pei Song was an ice prince. Who knew that he was this warm?!]

While Ning Li looked through the comments with a blank stare, He Xiaochen was nervous.

“The class monitor was called to the teacher's office just now, and you—”

Before she could finish, the class went silent.

Geng Haifan was standing at the entrance. “Ning Li, a word, please.”

Chapter 115: Mr. Lu?

Everyone stared at Ning Li.

Ning Li remained calm as she left the classroom with Geng Haifan.

When the two of them walked away from the class, the rest of the students went wild.

“I knew it! There was something strange when the two of them applied for leave together last Friday! Not just Yunzhou, but the two of them also went to Jingcheng?!”

“Many girls like Pei Song, but he's never cared about any of them. Now, he's taking his coat off for Ning Li?! She's really something...”

“I think it’s because one of them is the most handsome guy and the other is the most beautiful girl in the school. They are also first and second in the previous monthly test! You can say they are the best match for each other.”

“The school forbids students from being in a relationship. They are practically challenging the school’s rules. Damn, I can’t spot a thing when they are in school. I wonder how the school will deal with this.”

Second High had always been strict with their rules, even more so when the two best students of the school were involved. The school could not just sit back and turn a blind eye to this.

The discussion was heated, and even Ren Qian became a target for the barrage of questions.

“Qianzi, do you know about this?”

Irritated, Ren Qian said, “It’s not true. Don’t talk nonsense.”

“It’s not nonsense, right? The picture is real! If it had been somewhere else, it would still be fine, but in the Jingcheng airport in the middle of the night? The coincidence is uncanny!”

Ren Qian scoffed and rolled his eyes.

It was quite difficult to explain this to the class.

Pei Song had gone back to the capital because of some urgent family matters but Ning Li...had said that she went back to Lincheng to deal with some family matters.

Lin Zhouyang pulled his chair over and said with a bitter look, “Qianzi, come on. Tell me the truth. Is Brother Pei in a relationship with Ning Li? How come I don’t know anything about this?”

Lin Zhouyang felt he was being left out.

A few days ago, Sun Huihui had spoken about them having a meal at the cafeteria, and he had still defended them righteously. Now, he realized that he had been kept in the dark for the whole time.

Ren Qian had a glance at Ning Li's empty seat, and for a moment there, he kind of believed the picture. However, he was able to clear the doubts from his head. He rolled his book into a bat and smacked Lin Zhouyang on the head.

"A picture doesn't explain everything. Stop with the wild guesses."

...

In the teacher's office, when Ning Li entered the office with Geng Haifan, Pei Song was already there.

He looked at the entrance when he heard the footsteps. Despite being called to the teacher's office, he still appeared proud and cold.

Geng Haifan pulled his chair out and sat down. He looked at the two of them for a few moments. He had something on his mind that he wanted to say but had a difficult time translating his thoughts into words. It felt inappropriate no matter how he put it.

He rubbed his hand slowly and somehow his temples started to swell. He had been a class teacher for many years and was considered a veteran teacher in the school.

He had dealt with students being in a relationship before, but the top student and the second-top student being together was a first for him. The boy and girl before him were the best among the third-year students.

During normal times, the two of them concentrated on their studies and looked like mature young adults who knew their priorities. If he had not seen the picture in the forum, he would never have believed that the two of them were in a relationship.

A while later, he finally found some suitable words to speak his mind. "Which one of you is going to tell me what happened?"

Pei Song looked rather calm. "I've told you what happened. We really ran into each other at the airport."

Geng Haifan looked at Ning Li. "Ning Li, what about your reason for leaving the other day?"

She had claimed that she went back to Lincheng, but she appeared in the Jingcheng airport. It was a bold lie.

Ning Li sighed. "I lied to you about going back to Lincheng, but I am not in a relationship with Pei Song. We are nothing but classmates."

Pei Song looked down slightly while his eyes behind his glasses had a hint of gloominess.

"The coincidence is uncanny."

Geng Haifan had a feeling that the two of them were not in a relationship, but it was a little too coincidental and Pei Song had even taken his coat off for Ning Li.

Were they really just classmates?

Geng Haifan thought about it for a while. He sighed and tried to persuade the two of them, "Actually, I was once young like you guys, and it's normal for your age to be interested in the opposite sex. It's nothing to be afraid of. There's nothing for me to hold you responsible as well, but you guys have to understand that this is not the time for you to be in a relationship. Your focus should be the entrance exam."

They were in a sensitive period and could not afford to be distracted by puppy love. He sounded like he already acknowledged their relationship.

"Mr. Geng, I know what you are trying to say, but it's not true. Why should we admit something that's not true?" Ning Li said.

Geng Haifan found himself in a difficult situation. "This has already gotten out. If you guys don't have solid evidence to prove it, I'll have to call your parents."

The school had always been strict with students being in a relationship, even more so when it involved Ning Li and Pei Song.

As a matter of fact, even the other teachers also knew about this. Even if he wanted to, he could not lay low anymore.

"My parents are not in the country now, so I'm afraid they won't be able to come. I went back to Jingcheng because my grandmother is sick, and it was just a last-minute visit. No one else is involved," Pei Song said.

Geng Haifan then looked at Ning Li. "What about you?"

He knew Pei Song's family background, hence the reason was acceptable.

What about Ning Li though?

She had lied and gone to Jingcheng. If it was not a date with Pei Song, why would she have gone to the capital on a weekend?

Ning Li kept quiet. If she were to clarify it, she would have to be honest about the purpose of her trip.

"This is a private matter, so I ask for your understanding."

Geng Haifan could not understand her persistence. He stared at the two of them. He had to admit that when the two of them stood together, they really looked perfect for each other.

After seeing the picture on the forum, he carefully thought about it.

Usually in school, Pei Song barely talked to Ning Li. In fact, the two of them seemed rather distant, so no one would have related them together.

However, there were situations in which two people looked extremely distant from each other but were couples in the dark.

Geng Haifan was worried about the second possibility.

Pei Song was honest and cooperated, but Ning Li refused to cooperate and even lied about the reason for her leave.

Geng Haifan could not just turn a blind eye to this. “Ning Li, this is a serious matter. I hope for your honesty.”

Ning Li said, “I’ve told you all that I have to say. I am not in a relationship with Pei Song.”

The atmosphere in the teacher’s office froze in awkwardness.

A while later, Geng Haifan sighed. “If that’s the case, I’ll have to call your parents and ask them why you went to Jingcheng for the weekend.”

Then, he took his phone out and walked to the window to make a call.

A hint of irritation appeared in her eyes. Su Yuan would never come to the school for this kind of reason. She never really cared about Ning Li’s wellbeing anyway, let alone Ning Li’s troubles. The worse that could happen was Su Yuan being mad because she was lied to and that was it.

Ning Li did not really care until she heard Geng Haifan’s voice.

“Hello, Mr. Lu?”

Ning Li's body froze.

Chapter 116: Our Ning Li

Geng Haifan called Lu Huaiyu.

From past events, he already knew that Su Yuan, the mother, treated Ning Li and Ye Ci differently.

Aside from the time that Su Yuan had assumed that Ning Li cheated in her exams, she had not bothered to attend the parent-teacher meeting, which had been important to Ning Li. He believed that there would be no point in calling her.

He could also tell that Ning Li listened to Lu Huaiyu. Thus, he believed calling him would be more effective.

Lu Huaiyu glanced at his phone and noticed Geng Haifan's number on the screen.

Geng Haifan only called him when Ning Li was involved. Still, it was strange that he would call at this hour.

It was not even time for the first class of the day at Second High, yet he was receiving a call from the teacher?

Lu Huaiyu answered the phone.

"Mr. Geng, what is the matter?"

Geng Haifan cleared his throat and thought through his words before speaking.

"Mr. Lu, there is something I would like to inform you about regarding Ning Li. If you have the time, please drop by the school today."

Lu Huaiyu frowned.

“What’s wrong with her?”

Geng Haifan paused. “Ning Li... Might be in a relationship.”

Lu Huaiyu thought he heard wrongly. “WHAT?!”

Geng Haifan turned around to face the two students in front of his desk.

“With... Pei Song.”

...

Ning Li started to feel regretful when she heard Geng Haifan calling Lu Huaiyu.

Geng Haifan stood quite far away, so she could not hear what they were talking about. However, she had a feeling that the situation would become dangerous.

Even though the rumors were untrue, if Lu Huaiyu was informed about this matter...

She took a deep breath and walked over to Geng Haifan.

“Mr. Geng, I can explain. You don’t need to call my second brother to the school. He is busy—”

Geng Haifan hung up the phone and said, “He said he’s on his way.”

Ning Li was speechless.

Pei Song looked at her.

Even though it was only for a split second, he was able to spot the nervousness on Ning Li's face.

She was nervous not because her guardian or her parents had been called but because of the man that Geng Haifan called, the man she called second brother.

Geng Haifan pointed at the two of them.

"You two, stay here."

...

The bell rang.

The first class of the day had started but Ning Li and Pei Song had yet to return.

The whole class was restless and suspicious.

Being in a relationship was already big news, let alone between the two best students in the school.

Coupled with the picture they had seen on the school forum, it was difficult to believe that it was merely a misunderstanding.

Students from other classes had also found out about this. Even though classes were still going on, many students from the other classes looked into the class curiously as they walked past.

After knowing that both of them had been called to the teacher's office, the students went there in groups. They came up with all kinds of excuses just to go in to catch a glimpse of the infamous duo.

Some of the students saw Ning Li and Pei Song sitting separately as they were detained in the office. Even an idiot could guess that something must have happened.

Knowing that his students were busybodies, Geng Haifan shut the door and the window.

It was not until the second class had started that things started to quiet down.

Ning Li borrowed a book about ancient literature from Geng Haifan to pass the time but was unable to read much of it.

It was not the prying gazes that bothered her but the...

Knock, knock.

There was the sound of knocking at the door.

Ning Li instinctively sat up straighter.

Pei Song looked towards the door.

Geng Haifan got up and opened the door.

“Mr. Lu, you’re here.”

Ning Li sat with her back facing the entrance but when the door opened, she felt a sharp gaze on her.

Lu Huaiyu’s rich and lazy voice sounded, “Mr. Geng.”

“Come in, Mr. Lu.” Geng Haifan invited him in.

Ning Li got up and turned around.

It was getting cold outside. Lu Huaiyu came in wearing a black trenchcoat, which further complimented his perfect physique. He carried himself very naturally with an aristocratic air.

He shook Geng Haifan’s hand and nodded at him.

Geng Haifan went behind his desk and poured a cup of tea for the man.

“Mr. Lu, please have a seat.”

Lu Huaiyu sat down beside Ning Li.

“Second brother,” Ning Li said.

She had been fine with Lu Huaiyu attending her parent-teacher meeting the other day but now, he had been called to the school due to some rumors. She had no idea how she would be able to face him any longer. She looked down quietly after calling him.

Lu Huaiyu glanced briefly at her before turning his attention to Pei Song.

The young man had a slim build, with a cold and distant look about him.

Lu Huaiyu remembered him.

Pei Song felt the weight of a stare upon him. When he looked up, he locked eyes with Lu Huaiyu.

The man's deep and lazy gaze was profound and mysterious. It was difficult to return his gaze for too long.

Even though Lu Huaiyu was a few years older than them, he had a powerful presence.

Fortunately, Lu Huaiyu looked away and focused on Geng Haifan.

Geng Haifan crossed his hands. "Here is what happened, Mr. Lu. As you know, this is a critical time for them both. Any distraction would cause them to fail in the upcoming exams. As part of my duty as their teacher, I hope to be able to discuss this with you openly. Pei Song has informed me that his parents are not in the country, so they will not be coming today. That is why I called you here first."

Lu Huaiyu nodded,

"You're right, Mr. Geng. But before that, may I ask where the rumor about them being in a relationship originated from?"

Geng Haifan replied with a question of his own, "Mr. Lu, did you know Ning Li went to Jingcheng during the weekend?"

Lu Huaiyu squinted his eyes.

Judging from his expression, Geng Haifan could tell he had not known where Ning Li had gone.

He briefly updated the man on what had happened and handed him the phone.

Lu Huaiyu had a glance and saw the picture of Ning Li and Pei Song.

He squinted his eyes at the picture and it immediately felt as if the temperature in the room had suddenly dropped.

There was a sudden tension in the air.

A while later, he tapped his fingers on the table before he leaned back. He scoffed lightly saying, "Our Ning Li would never be in a relationship at such an early age."

Chapter 117: Strict Rules

Ning Li shook her head. "It's okay."

She paused and added, "I didn't take Pei Song's coat either."

Lu Huaiyu looked at her. The feeling of frustration and suffocation that lingered in his chest faded a little.

He grinned and grunted softly.

"Let's go."

Ning Li was stunned. 'That's it? No more questions?'

She had thought that Lu Huaiyu had been determined to get to the bottom of this.

"Second brother, you believe me? You believe that I am not in a relationship with Pei Song?"

Lu Huaiyu walked closer to her and patted her on the head.

"You wouldn't dare."

...

Geng Haifan and Pei Song waited outside. They could not hear a word inside the document room.

A while later, the door opened.

Lu Huaiyu and Ning Li exited one after another.

Geng Haifan went up to the man with a serious look.

Lu Huaiyu smiled. "Mr. Geng, this is what happened: Lili had gone to Jingcheng because she had an argument with her family. She went to visit a friend there just to get away for the weekend. She was embarrassed to tell you because it's a family matter."

Geng Haifan felt something amiss but he also remembered Su Yuan's treatment of the girl, so he tried to be an understanding teacher.

He sighed and looked at Ning Li with a pitiful gaze.

"I see..."

It was not news that Ning Li had a difficult relationship with her mother and it was normal for them to have arguments in such a tense environment.

Moreover, since Ning Li was a teenager in her rebellious phase, it was understandable that she had behaved impulsively.

Lu Huaiyu nodded.

"She went there for a short getaway and even visited Xijing University."

Geng Haifan's eyes sparkled.

“Really?”

“Yeah...” Ning Li said.

Geng Haifan felt relieved.

It was wrong for Ning Li to lie and run off to Jingcheng, but judging from the explanation, Ning Li was still focused on her studies.

She had even visited Xijing University during her getaway.

Could it mean that her university of choice was Xijing University?

Geng Haifan’s worries were replaced by delight.

“Great, that’s great.”

The situation was nothing more than a misunderstanding and it was understandable. Ning Li came from a complicated background and was also a little stubborn.

“If that’s the case, things will be a lot easier to handle. I’ll tell the school about what truly happened.”

Everything had been settled on a good note.

Geng Haifan then looked at Ning Li.

“Ning Li, if you are feeling down, there are many other ways for you to release your stress. Next time, try not to do something so impulsive. It will only cause more trouble and misunderstanding. It might even be dangerous. It will only cause those who love you to worry.”

“Thank you, Mr. Geng. I won’t do it again.”

Geng Haifan sighed a breath of relief when Ning Li apologized so sincerely.

“It’s okay, as long as we have cleared up all the misunderstandings.”

He took another glance at Ning Li before looking at Lu Huaiyu. He was impressed by the man’s care of the girl.

“Thank you for coming over, Mr. Lu. If not for your trust in Ning Li which revealed the truth behind this incident, this situation would surely become more complicated.”

Usually, parents would be suspicious if they suspected that their children were involved in a relationship at such a young age. However, Lu Huaiyu undeniably trusted the girl and never doubted her for a second.

It was because of his trust that Ning Li had listened to him.

Lu Huaiyu nodded. “The final year in high school is important to them. I’ve talked to her about what she should focus on and what she should avoid. She has always been an obedient girl.

Geng Haifan was delighted.

“Yes, yes. Mr. Lu, you seem like someone who upholds strict house rules. With you watching over Ning Li, us teachers will have less to worry about.”

Geng Haifan strongly believed Su Yuan was hopeless. He made a note to only discuss matters involving Ning Li with Lu Huaiyu in future.

Lu Huaiyu raised a brow and smiled. “You’re absolutely right.”

The bell rang and the class was over.

Music then sounded through the broadcast. It was time for a P.E session.

Geng Haifan looked at the time and said, “We’ve used two class periods for this discussion. Pei Song, Ning Li, you may both go back to class.”

“Hold up.”

Lu Huaiyu walked up to Pei Song.

He held out his hand for a handshake. “I still haven’t thanked you for looking after our Ning Li.”

The tone of his voice seemed as lazy and unconcerned as always, but every word was uttered clearly.

A handshake was an official sign of gratitude.

Pei Song held out his hand.

The two of them shook hands.

Pei Song looked up into the man’s eyes.

He had mysterious-looking eyes. They looked calm but when you looked closer, there was something unsettling inside the darkness.

For a moment, Pei Song got the feeling that Lu Huaiyu was a fierce beast and he felt as if he had accidentally trespassed onto the beast’s territory. His gaze was a sign of warning.

Fortunately, that feeling only lasted for an instant. Lu Huaiyu pulled his hand away quickly.

He maintained his gentlemanly bearing throughout the handshake.

Pei Song said, "You don't have to thank me."

Lu Huaiyu smiled. "I do. Lili is a stubborn girl and she doesn't like to be in someone's debt.

Pei Song felt slightly nervous, so he did not say a word.

Geng Haifan asked, "Mr. Lu, I'll see you out."

"It's okay, Lili can do that."

Geng Haifan assumed the two of them still had some unfinished business, so he nodded.

"Okay, see you later, Mr. Lu."

...

During the P.E session, students came out of the class and went to the field.

Ning Li and Lu Huaiyu came out from the teacher's office together.

Normally, Ning Li alone was capable of turning heads. Lu Huaiyu walking beside her was an even more intriguing sight.

A large number of students eyed them curiously, eager to find out what had happened.

“Is that Ning Li? I heard she was called to the teacher’s office because she was suspected to be in a relationship with Pei Song. Who is that next to her? He’s so handsome!”

“I think that’s her brother. He used to pick her up after night self-learning class, but it was too dark and too far for me to see clearly at the time. He’s even more handsome than I thought!”

“Brother? As far I know, she doesn’t have a brother, at least not an older one. I heard her mother does have a son but he is younger.”

“He’s not her real brother but they are quite close. I remember he came for her during the parent-teacher meeting the other day.”

“So does it mean that the rumors are true? Is that why he was called here?”

“I’m not sure. If it was true, at the very least the school would announce it or post a notice. I saw Pei Song walking back to his class alone and it didn’t look like he had been charged with anything.”

The students were in a heated discussion.

Ning Li did not really care about the way other people looked at her. However, with Lu Huaiyu by her side, she felt bothered and anxious.

Lu Huaiyu had remained silent since he came out of the office.

She snuck a glance at him.

His handsome features showed only calmness, but his brows looked as frigid as ice which made him look distant.

She wanted to say something but did not know what was appropriate.

Lu Huaiyu looked at her and asked, "How's Jingcheng?"

Ning Li was caught off guard as she had not expected this question.

"What?"

Lu Huaiyu rephrased his words and said, "Compared to Lincheng, how was Jingcheng?"

Lincheng was a rural city while Jingcheng was the capital of this country.

"Second brother, I don't think you can compare both places with each other."

Chapter 118: Cold?

His voice was soft but firm.

His voice rang out extra clearly in the quiet office.

Ning Li felt an imaginary breeze by her ears, tickling her and numbing her senses.

'Our Ning Li...'

Ning Li glanced at Lu Huaiyu.

The profile of his face was perfect. He lifted his head slightly, showing off his well-defined jawline; his eyes were calm and steady.

He was not trying to argue with Geng Haifan but he was merely making a statement.

Pei Song blinked several times when he heard Lu Huaiyu.

His statement sounded a little...

Geng Haifan was stunned. He had not expected Lu Huaiyu to deny the facts even after being shown the picture.

“But Mr. Lu, both Ning Li and Pei Song traveled to Jingcheng and back together—”

“You guys went to Jingcheng together?”

Lu Huaiyu turned to Ning Li and asked.

Ning Li shook her head.

“No, we came back on different flights.”

She looked into Lu Huaiyu’s eyes and added, “We never even met while in Jingcheng. Due to the heavy rain, the flights were delayed and we ran into each other at the airport.”

Lu Huaiyu nodded.

“You heard Lili, Mr. Geng. If you don’t believe her, I can ask someone to bring me the flight schedule so that you can verify it yourself.”

Geng Haifan was skeptical.

Both students had applied for leave on the same day and appeared at the airport together. It would be difficult to convince him to believe otherwise.

However, as Lu Huaiyu said, he would be able to find out the truth just by searching for the flight schedule. Ning Li had no reason to lie about this.

If they were both really in a relationship, surely they would have gone there on the same flight.

“As for this picture...”

Lu Huaiyu smiled and looked at the phone.

“It was raining in Jingcheng yesterday and the temperature had dropped drastically. As a friendly classmate, wouldn’t lending her his coat be something normal?”

Geng Haifan agreed with what Lu Huaiyu said but...

“Mr. Lu, both Ning Li and Pei Song are amazing students. The school thinks highly of them. It was for that reason that we tried to get to the bottom of this. Ning Li applied for leave on Friday and told me that she was going back to Lincheng.

However, her picture had been taken in Jingcheng. Even after I questioned her, she refused to reveal her reason for being there. If not for her stubbornness, I wouldn’t have called you either. What do you—”

Lu Huaiyu had a glance at Ning Li.

“Friday?”

“Yeah.”

Ning Li averted her gaze. She felt as if Lu Huaiyu could see her thoughts.

A moment later, Lu Huaiyu said, “I would like to talk to Lili alone. May I have this room for a moment?”

Geng Haifan believed it would be a good way to get the truth out of the girl.

She might not want to reveal the truth to her teacher but she might come clean to her second brother.

“You can use the office next door. It’s used to store documents so no one is inside. If you don’t mind, it’s that way.”

Geng Haifan pointed at the door.

Lu Huaiyu got up and headed out.

Ning Li was stunned.

At the door, Lu Huaiyu turned around to glance at her and said, “Lili.”

Ning Li took a deep breath and reluctantly walked out.

...

The document room was not big by any means. Other than a desk and a chair, all three walls were filled with document racks.

There were also boxes on the floor filled with paper. The place was packed and could not hold more than two people at once.

Lu Huaiyu leaned against the desk and crossed his legs slightly before looking at Ning Li.

Ning Li closed the door and managed to secure a tiny spot for herself.

They stood about one step away from each other.

“Tell me, why did you go to Jingcheng?”

Lu Huaiyu got straight to the point with his unique lazy voice.

Although his tone was normal, his gaze was sharp and made Ning Li feel as if there was nowhere for her to escape.

She pursed her lips.

She had not cared when Geng Haifan questioned her, but for some reason, she felt guilty when Lu Huaiyu asked her the same question.

“To deal with something.”

After a slight pause, she finally gave a vague answer.

Lu Huaiyu suddenly laughed.

“You were going to tell me the other night. What happened? What changed your mind?”

Ning Li’s heart skipped a beat and looked at him. Her charming eyes were as wide as golf balls.

That night, she had intended on telling Lu Huaiyu about the Jingcheng trip. However, she had been so hesitant that she eventually gave up.

How did Lu Huaiyu find out?

She quickly reacted and said, “You saw it?”

Lu Huaiyu did not say a word but the silence was an obvious answer.

Ning Li was left speechless.

She regretted her hesitation back then. She should not have typed and deleted the message repeatedly.

Even though it had been brief, Lu Huaiyu had somehow seen the typing in the chat.

Frustrated, she accepted defeat and said, "I went to see a friend and have a little getaway."

A groundless answer.

Lu Huaiyu said lightly, "A friend? Is it Pei Song?"

"No!" Ning Li denied and frowned.

"What I said back there is the truth. There's nothing between us. I don't even know if he was in Jingcheng for the weekend as well. We just happened to run into each other at the airport."

After a slight pause, she added, "Dr. Gu can prove that."

If Gu Tinglan was involved, Lu Huaiyu would believe it.

Lu Huaiyu widened his eyes slightly in realization. He looked at her intensely and said, "Oh? Gu Tinglan is also involved?"

...

Jingcheng, King's One.

Gu Tinglan was arranging one of his old photo albums.

The edges of the album were worn out due to its age and repeated use.

He turned a page and suddenly sneezed.

He rubbed his nose and grumbled, "Someone is talking bad about me..."

...

"It's also a coincidence."

Just as the words escaped her mouth, Ning Li realized that the more she tried to explain, the more complicated it became.

Even she herself was fed up with the word 'coincidence.'

However, considering Gu Tinglan's credibility, she had to bring the man into the conversation.

Lu Huaiyu was silent as he contemplated the situation.

It seemed like he had gotten an explanation for the other night.

However, the girl was still hesitating on revealing any further details.

"What did you say last time? You even vowed never to lie again."

Ning Li said softly, "I didn't lie and you didn't ask."

Lu Huaiyu scoffed.

Who would have expected that Ning Li would go to Jingcheng on a weekend?

The girl did not sound guilty but her demeanor somehow resembled someone.

"I didn't ask, so you didn't plan on telling me?"

Ning Li was confused. 'Duh, why would I tell you? I didn't even tell Su Yuan about it.'

She was not obliged to tell Lu Huaiyu her whereabouts but she also dared not tell Lu Huaiyu to stay out of her business.

After a slight hesitation, she said, "Second brother, you can call Dr. Gu and ask him about it. I'm telling the truth."

"It's okay."

He knew Gu Tinglan went back to Jingcheng on the weekends. He had even spoken to the man yesterday.

However, Gu Tinglan had not said a word about Ning Li.

Ning Li did not know how to continue the conversation either, so she kept quiet.

The room was already small enough. With the two of them inside, coupled with Lu Huaiyu's brazen stare, Ning Li felt as if the room was closing in on her.

A while later, Lu Huaiyu said softly, "Is Jingcheng cold?"

Confused, Ning Li said, "What?"

Lu Huaiyu thought of the picture.

The picture had been taken at the airport lobby. The rain was visible through the window and it was dark outside.

Some passersby wore a trench coat, some of them even had blankets around them and many people were seen to be walking around.

The girl in the picture wore only a white hoodie while carrying a simple bag.

She looked thin and lonely.

"It was raining at the airport. Were you cold?"

Chapter 119: Your Second Brother

"Of course there's something you can compare. As long as you want to, there is always something to compare."

Lu Huaiyu did not find his question strange at all.

Ning Li pondered the question. "Actually, it's almost the same."

If it had been before Yunzhou, she would have definitely said Lincheng.

Now, places did not matter anymore.

Lu Huaiyu grinned. "I always thought you liked the place you call home."

The girl was just 17. No matter how much she had been through, she was still a minor. How could she not miss her home?

Ning Li narrowed her eyes slightly as she smiled. However, the smile on her face was weak.

"Mhmm, it used to be."

In the life she used to have, she had loved her home. In fact, she had devoted her life to her 'home' and given everything she had to it. In the end, however, everything had crumbled into pieces.

She finally understood that home was not where her family was. Since that ominous night, she had completely lost her home.

Lu Huaiyu stared at her intensely.

Ning Li was a lot more mature than her peers and she was always able to conceal her emotions.

However this time, she sounded a little off and he could sense great loneliness in the tone of her voice.

The contrast was obvious when she stood amongst the other youthful and lively students. She seemed to be like the odd piece of a puzzle that did not fit.

Without proper care, she would probably disappear without a sound.

The moment the thought popped into Lu Huaiyu's head, a painful feeling erupted from his heart. It felt as if something from the deepest part of his heart had stung him and the aching pain spread uncontrollably.

It was subtle yet painful.

Lincheng was no longer home to Ning Li.

She had been abandoned and forgotten there.

He should not have asked her that question.

Lu Huaiyu sighed and said seriously, “Jingcheng is a great place. I’ll take you sightseeing there next time. Maybe you will like it better then.”

Ning Li smiled till her eyes curved into half-moon shapes.

“Okay.”

...

The P.E session had ended by the time she had finished seeing Lu Huaiyu off, so Ning Li went back to the classroom.

Pei Song was already at his seat.

Lin Zhouyang was leaning against his table, being a busybody.

“Brother Pei, Brother Pei! What did Mr. Geng talk to you guys about? Are you two really—”

He covered his mouth all of a sudden and gulped as if he was forcefully swallowing his words back. He looked around as if he was afraid that someone else might hear him.

Ren Qian rolled his eyes at his foolish behavior.

“A little louder and everyone else will come here looking for an answer.”

Lin Zhouyang pouted.

He was curious about what happened.

In fact, everyone else was just as curious as he was.

“So what happened between you and Ning Li? Did you—”

“It was just a misunderstanding. Mr. Geng has already been informed,” Pei Song said.

Everyone else in the class was ready and eager to listen. They were afraid that they would miss out on any important parts.

However, everyone was confused when they heard Pei Song’s answer. No one believed him.

Lin Zhouyang had always been Pei Song’s most devoted believer but even he was not sure about his explanation.

Pei Song’s reaction was as cold as ever.

“Then... the picture...”

Pei Song said evenly, “If you are cold, I can also take off my jersey for you right now.”

Lin Zhouyang faltered and fell back in shock. He tightened his collar.

“No! Brother Pei, you can’t!” Lin Zhouyang was straight and he was unwilling to accept any implication that he was not.

Ren Qian could not take Lin Zhouyang's exaggerated behavior any longer.

“Look into the mirror. What makes you think you are even worthy of receiving Brother Pei's jersey?!”

Lin Zhouyang sighed a breath of relief. Ren Qian was right. He did not have anything to worry about.

He rubbed his head and said, “I guess you're right. We will know what's true and what's false when the school announces it in a few days.”

According to Second High's custom, if Pei Song and Ning Li really were in a relationship, they would still receive strict punishments even if they were the top 1 and top 2 ranked students.

Making groundless guesses was useless.

Ren Qian continued reading his book.

“What's so interesting about rumors and gossip? If you have the time to be a busybody, you might as well use it to study. The upcoming midterm is a combined exam among all the schools of Yunzhou.”

His words shocked many others and caused everyone to go back to studying again.

When Ning Li entered the classroom, she still attracted attention from some of her classmates but it was not as overt as it had been in the morning.

She turned a blind eye to the curious stares and went back to her seat.

When she sat down, He Xiaochen temporarily took her focus away from her studying and grabbed her hand excitedly.

“Ning Li! Ning Li! The guy who was walking with you just now, is that your second brother?”

Ning Li nodded.

He Xiaochen’s eyes sparkled like stars in the night.

“Oh my god! Holy cow! I knew he was handsome but when I had a closer look at him today, he seemed more like a walking angel!”

He was a tall and handsome guy. Moreover, the trench coat had looked extremely good on him.

“Thank you, Ning Li! Sob! Thank you for asking him to come here! If not, peasants like me wouldn’t be able to see angels with my own eyes!”

Ning Li’s hand froze as she took her book out.

She knew He Xiaochen was just being dramatic like always. However, today it seemed a little different.

‘Dear Ning Li...’

Lu Huaiyu’s ridiculing words echoed in her ears.

He Xiaochen cleared her throat. “Ahem. I didn’t mean it like that, please don’t take it the wrong way!”

“I know.”

Ning Li rubbed the area between her brows.

She had not expected the school to call her parents, or her guardian in this case, just because of some allegations.

More importantly, the person who had come had been Lu Huaiyu.

Judging from her reaction, He Xiaochen could tell that nothing had happened between Ning Li and Pei Song.

It was understandable because she sat beside them both all day, every day. If there really was something between them, her keen eyes would have noticed something.

Therefore, she had never doubted that Ning Li was not involved in a premature relationship.

She was more curious about this other guy, or rather, Ning Li's second brother.

She whispered, "Ning Li, does your second brother have a girlfriend?"

Ning Li froze.

Chapter 120: I Wonder Which B*tch Will Get Him In The Future

"I don't think so," she said.

Ning Li had already known Lu Huaiyu for two lifetimes but had never heard of him having a girlfriend in either one.

"Huh? No? Impossible!"

He Xiaochen was shocked.

"With his looks, he could have a line of girls fighting to be his girlfriend wherever he goes!"

She spoke the truth. Lu Huaiyu had a lot of admirers, even someone as popular as Xu Yini.

However, for as long as anyone could remember, he had remained single. It had nothing to do with the girls, but everything to do with himself.

Gasp!

A thought suddenly came to He Xiaochen's mind and her eyes widened in shock.

"If he doesn't have a girlfriend, does it mean he likes men?!"

Ning Li was speechless.

He Xiaochen was talking nonsense.

"No." Ning Li instinctively denied it.

"Huh? Why?"

He Xiaochen strongly believed it was possible. She held her fingers out and started to count. "Look, with that kind of body and appearance, I'm sure girls have been lining up for him since his student days. You can imagine how that number has probably increased by now.

"Besides, think about it. If his standards for girls are so high, it's impossible that he would not have been with anyone till now, right? He's one-of-a-kind yet he doesn't have a girlfriend. Why do you think that is?"

He Xiaochen pictured Lu Huaiyu standing with another man and started to tear up.

"A man like him would be an angel amongst the gays! He's a man amongst men! The strongest—"

Ring!

The bell rang.

He Xiaochen shut up and returned to her book. She tilted her head slightly and sighed.

“Sigh. I wonder which b*tch will have him in the future.”

For a moment, Ning Li was shaken.

Lu Huaiyu was in his early 20s now and it was normal for him to not have a girlfriend.

However, in her past life, Lu Huaiyu had not been with anyone even up to the time he was in his late 20s.

This was no longer as easy to explain away with the excuse of not having met the right person yet.

Somehow, the sketch that he kept in the book, The History of Time, came to her mind. She had found it in his study room.

Lu Huaiyu had revealed the password to his mansion to her, yet he did not want her to see the sketch.

Judging from the secrecy, it was obvious that the sketch held a special meaning for him.

What could it be?

Ning Li suddenly felt as if she was suffocating. The room felt stuffy.

“It’s time for class.”

A little while later, she pulled out her phone and went on to the school forum.

The thread about her and Pei Song being in love was still pinned at the top and the comments were increasing by the second.

All kinds of guesses had been made there due to the vivid imaginations of the various students.

She sent the link to Wei Songze.

[Delete the thread.]

At the time, Wei Songze had been scrolling through the comments as he enjoyed a snack from his comfortable seat.

When he received the message from Ning Li, he dropped his bowl of snacks on the floor.

Ning Li had been involved in many scandals and gossip before. Some had been even worse than this, yet she usually did not care.

Why would she be so concerned this time and want the thread deleted?

He sent her his question.

[Sister Lili, this is fake right? So why bother?]

He knew why Ning Li had gone to Jingcheng. Why would it have anything to do with Pei Song?

It was only after some time that Ning Li replied with a brief message.

[It's irritating.]

Wei Songze was baffled.

Irritating? It was just a rumor about a premature relationship. How irritating could it be?

“Is it because Sister Lili is trying to become a good student again? Is that why she is so concerned?”

Wei Songze felt emotional for a minute. Ning Li seemed like a different person ever since she came to Yunzhou.

He quickly replied. [Okay.]

...

15 minutes later, the thread disappeared without a sign.

Many users blamed the person who had made the original post which made him feel aggrieved. He had to start a new thread to clarify that it was not him who deleted the thread.

The poster had posted the picture anonymously, so no one knew where or how to find him other than replying to the thread.

More and more threads opened up to accommodate the increasing discussions. However, whenever any discussion showed any words related to Ning Li or Pei Song, it would be censored.

Slowly but surely, everyone's interest in the pair eventually died down and the topic was soon forgotten.

Other threads soon replaced the top spot and it was as if nothing had ever happened.

...

After night class, Ning Li went home to the Ye family mansion.

She saw that Su Yuan was waiting for her in the living room as soon as she walked through the door.

Ye Ci had been walking in front of Ning Li when they returned.

Su Yuan told Ye Ci to go upstairs before she looked looking at Ning Li.

“Ning Li, I have something to discuss with you.”

Maybe because she had been rejected on the few times she had tried to go to Ning Li’s room to have a conversation, she finally chose to wait for Ning Li in the living room this time.

Ning Li froze.

“Yes?”

Su Yuan looked displeased.

“You said that you went back to Lincheng last Friday but you went to Jingcheng instead. Is that true?”

Ning Li was not surprised that Su Yuan had found out about it.

“Yeah, what’s the problem?”

“What’s the problem? Is that even a question you should be asking?”

Su Yuan could not believe the tone of Ning Li's voice.

"Ning Li, how many times do I need to remind you that this is Yunzhou, not Lincheng! No one cared before when you were roaming around wild in Lincheng. You are living under my roof now, so you have to follow my rules!"

Su Yuan had already been angry when Ning Li did not come home the other night. This time she had done something even worse.

Ning Li thought about it. "Then, should I leave you a note next time?"

Su Yuan was furious.

All she had wanted was to have a conversation with Ning Li but Ning Li never wanted to cooperate.

Even if she had the patience to debate with Ning Li, it would surely be worn out by now.

She took a deep breath to calm herself. She said coldly, "You'd better stop with that feisty attitude of yours from now on. I don't care what you do outside or where you want to go next. In the coming month, no matter how busy you are, you will have to tutor Lil Cheng for an hour every night."

Ning Li objected without a second thought. "I'm busy."

"How can you be busy? That boy is only in elementary school. Tutoring him won't take up a lot of your time."

Tutoring him was actually Ye Ci's responsibility but in the past few days, Su Yuan had noticed the dark circles on Ye Ci's eyes and dispirited look.

Su Yuan felt bad and guilty about it.

Ye Ci had always been the best. She tried her best in everything, including studying and competing in the Physics competition.

She regretted her earlier decision because it had put an unnecessary burden upon Ye Ci.

Ye Ci had said she would continue but Su Yuan had told her to stop.

Su Yuan had noticed that Ye Ci had been looking at pictures of test papers on her phone as she did her practice. After asking, she found out that those papers that Ye Ci had taken pictures of belonged to Ning Li.

It was then she found out that Ning Li had aced the competitive Physics class and set the bar quite high. Her papers were being used as an example by the teacher.

Ning Li had a more relaxed attitude in competitive Physics class compared to Ye Ci.

However, both girls were Ye Cheng's sisters. If Ye Ci could tutor the boy, so could Ning Li.