

Little Brat's 161

Chapter 161: Ignite

The girls left the photocopy shop

Most students had already gone home, hence the smaller crowd.

Sun Huihui looked around as she walked, seemingly searching for something.

Whenever she walked past an alley, she would throw an extra glance or two.

Two small alleyways later, she still saw no one.

She frowned.

It felt strange. Her group of friends should still be waiting around the school area and Ning Li should not have gone far, but she did not see them or Ning Li anywhere.

What happened?"

"Sun Huihui, what are you looking for?" Cheng Xiangxiang asked.

"Huh? Uh... Nothing."

Sun Huihui's thoughts were pulled back to reality. She smiled awkwardly but it felt unnatural.

Cheng Xiangxiang turned around, pouting.

She found Sun Huihui quite vexing. If not for Ye Ci, she would not talk to the girl at all.

Just then, Sun Huihui's phone buzzed.

When she saw the notification on her phone, she was stunned.

[Sun Huihui! Why the hell did you tell us to go after Ning Li? She's not someone that we can afford to mess with! We're toast because of you!]

Sun Huihui stopped. The message petrified her.

What did it mean? Everything had been fine before the message.

Ning Li was not someone that they could mess with?

She wanted to call them, but she texted back instead since she was still with Ye Ci and Cheng Xiangxiang.

[What's wrong? Did something happen?]

She received a reply from the other side after a while.

[Watch your back! Tell Ye Ci she doesn't need to wait for Ning Li tonight. Ning Li is busy. As for us, this is it. We won't be talking anymore!]

Sun Huihui realized that something had gone extremely wrong. She texted back nervously.

[What's wrong?]

Her message failed to send.

Her contact had blocked her after the last message.

Sun Huihui's heart sank.

Something must have happened, but what? What had gone wrong?

A few steps later, Ye Ci and Cheng Xiangxiang noticed that Sun Huihui had stopped following them.

They turned around to find a pale-looking Sun Huihui.

Slightly stunned, Ye Ci asked, "What's wrong, Huihui?"

Sun Huihui kept her phone away, attempting to look and sound calm.

"It's nothing, It's just... Ning Li is busy and she told you not to wait for her."

"Ning Li?" Cheng Xiangxiang said disbelievingly.

"Are you still talking to her?"

After what had happened the other day, Cheng Xiangxiang had assumed that Sun Huihui would never talk to Ning Li again.

Sun Huihui knew she was being misunderstood but she was in no position to explain. Her lips tightened in silence.

Her thoughts were in disarray, everything felt out of control.

Inwardly curious, Ye Ci said, "Okay, I'll go home first. You go home early, okay? Please get some rest."

Sun Huihui nodded absently.

The three girls parted with each other at the junction.

...

"Miss!"

Zhou Hua had been waiting nervously for the girls because they were late. He was afraid that something might have happened again, so he had driven the car closer to the school.

He saw Ye Ci walking alone after searching around for a while. He heaved a sigh of relief.

"You're late. Did something hold you up?"

Ye Ci looked into the rear of the car.

"Sister Ning Li is not here?"

"No."

Ning Li must have gone off after leaving the school.

She smiled.

"I'm sorry, Uncle Zhao. I went to the photocopy shop with some friends. I told Sister Ning Li to tell you that I would be late, but it looks like she left first and was not able to let you know."

Zhou Hua opened the door for her. Contempt flashed in his eyes as he heard the girl's words.

"Miss Ning has always done as she likes."

What else could be expected of the manners of a girl from a rural city? He had seen what kind of girl she was back when he had brought her to Yunzhou.

She could have at least informed him since she had promised Ye Ci.

The girl had not even bothered to show up and had just left by herself.

Ning Li had stayed out for a whole night before, so this was nothing to her.

Ye Ci got into the car. She smiled, seemingly unaware of Zhou Hua's mocking tone.

"Let's go home so mom and dad won't worry."

...

After some time, the car arrived home.

When Ye Ci entered the living room, she saw a few gift boxes laid out.

One of the opened boxes seemed to have contained a model car that was now in Ye Cheng's hands.

Ye Ci was shocked.

The expensive car model was something Ye Cheng had desired for a long time, but his parents never usually spoiled him.

What had happened?

Ye Ming and Su Yuan were there as well.

Ye Ming seemed to be having some wine, and he looked happy.

“Dad, mom, what’s the occasion?”

Su Yuan went up to Ye Ci to help her with her bag.

She said with a smile, “Your dad just won the bid for a huge project. These are gifts to celebrate.”

Ye Ci noticed the new ruby ring on her mother’s finger.

That must also have been a gift from Ye Ming.

Ye Ming was generally a generous man but this was still considered rare. These gifts were evidence that the man was completely over the moon.

“Is it the Qinghe Bridge project?”

“Yeah.”

Ye Ming pushed a box towards Ye Ci.

“Lil Ci, look what I got you.”

Ye Ci opened the box that revealed a pair of diamond earrings.

Blushing, she smiled sweetly and thanked her father. "Thank you, dad!"

Ye Ming laughed. He was in a great mood today.

Based on their original bidding price, his company would not have gotten the project. Somehow, he had gotten wind about the Ji family's bidding price and it had given him the advantage.

He had altered his proposal at the last minute and emerged as the victor of the bidding war.

The Ye family had always been the Ji family's equal, but they would soon surpass their rival with this project.

Although they were still no match for the Cheng family, it was still good news worth celebrating.

Su Yuan looked at the door.

"Where's Ning Li?"

"Oh, I forgot to mention that Sister Ning Li didn't come back with me. She said she was busy and would be late."

The smile on Su Yuan's face faded a little.

This was not news to her and Su Yuan refused to care anymore, but Ye Ming was present and it would embarrass her.

Ye Cheng said as he continued to toy with his model car, "Maybe she won't come back today either."

Su Yuan frowned. "Lil Cheng!"

Ye Ming waved his hand. "The girl is... independent. Just give her a few words of advice when she comes back and let her know that her present is on the table. Remember to give it to her when you see her later."

Regardless of what he thought deep down, he had to save his face.

Su Yuan calmed herself down.

"Mhmm."

...

The car stopped in front of the entrance of the club named Ignite.

As Ning Li got out, she heard a familiar voice calling out to her.

"Ning Li!"

She turned around to see Gu Siyang standing by the door, waving his hand at her while holding his phone.

Chapter 162: Too Young To Get Caught

Ning Li went over to Gu Siyang.

"What a surprise to see you here."

"Me too!"

Gu Siyang put his phone away. He was slightly disappointed that he had not received the message he had been waiting for.

He grinned. "Ji Shu finalized his contract today, right? I'm here for the party as well."

Ning Li raised a brow at him.

"Do they know that you are..."

Gu Siyang gestured with a glance. "Shhh... They don't know my real identity. We only just met each other at Xiaosong Hill's race the other day."

Ning Li understood.

Gu Siyang had come to the party as a fellow racing enthusiast, not the boss of LY.

Ji Shu and friends came over and curiously sized both of them up.

"Hey, Sister Lili, do you guys know each other?"

Gu Siyang excitedly said, "Sister Lili, right? Her reputation precedes her. We ran into each other once before, the other day."

Ning Li nodded and played along to help him keep his identity a secret.

"Yeah. Once."

Delighted, Ji Shu said, "Great! I thought you would be uncomfortable around someone new, Sister Lili. But since you guys know each other, shall we go in together?"

Ji Shu and Gu Siyang had only met a few times, but they were both racing enthusiasts. One was even an up-and-coming racer.

Gu Siyang might suck at racing but he had clicked with Ji Shu pretty well.

Ning Li nodded.

...

Ignite was a club run by Ji Shu and his friends. Both floors of the club were designed with a post-apocalyptic concept.

There was already a crowd in the club at this hour and a band was playing music at the stage on the first floor, boosting the already present liveliness of the place to the next level.

Ji Shu led the group up to the second floor. They were able to see the downstairs view from the railing from the second floor which was relatively quieter.

Ning Li sat on the single-seater couch while the others crammed together on the longer one.

Ji Shu and Gu Siyang sat on either side of her.

Ji Shu ordered some beer and a glass of lemonade just for Ning Li.

The waiter served a platter of mixed fruits to Ning Li.

“This has been prepared specially for Sister Ning Li. None of you monkeys are allowed to have any of it.”

Gu Siyang was impressed. He had heard that Ji Shu and Ning Li were close, but had not expected such special treatment.

He had actually competed in several races with the group and they had socialized a lot. These were outwardly proud and short-tempered young men, but in front of Ning Li, they were like obedient little lambs.

It felt strange because the last time Gu Siyang had met Ning Li, she had given him the impression of being a quiet and obedient girl.

If not for the racing clip, he would have thought that they were different people.

“Come on guys, relax.”

Gu Siyang leaned back against the couch.

“We are friends, just relax! Order whatever you want!”

Ji Shu and his friends looked at him strangely.

This was their club, not his.

Gu Siyang ignored their stares and turned to Ning Li.

“So Ning Li, today’s a Friday. It’s rare to see you out on a weekday.”

Ji Shu uncorked a bottle of beer with a pop.

He cackled. “Of course Sister Lili is here! She’s here to celebrate my big day! She’s here because of me!”

He raised the bottle to perform a toast for Ning Li.

“Sister Lili, I couldn’t have done it without you.”

If not for Ning Li’s advice, he would have signed on to FN and LY would not have happened.

FN was a great place but after considering all aspects, his heart leaned towards LY.

He was glad that he had taken Ning Li’s advice.

Ning Li raised her glass of lemonade to clink with his bottle.

Her lips formed a smile as she looked at the happy boy. “Congratulations, Ji Shu.”

The wheel of fate had been deflected since a certain point in time.

Ji Shu was over the moon.

“Bottom’s up! Sister Lili, just do the best you can.”

He drained the bottle of wine to the last drop while the others cheered him on.

“Ji Shu, one bottle is not enough! You’ve signed with LY and Sister Lili is here! I think you have to finish a dozen!”

“I know, right? You are the best out of all of us!”

“Sister Lili can’t drink, but she can watch you drink! Am I right, Sister Lili?”

The others stared at her, waiting for her permission.

Gu Siyang found it strange but amusing at the same time.

“Why do you guys have to ask for Ning Li’s permission to drink?”

They were like children begging for permission from their guardian.

The young men shot a wry look at him.

This dumb new guy from Jingcheng knew nothing about the custom here.

Ning Li grinned. “It’s Ji Shu’s big day, you guys go ahead and have fun. But, no one is allowed to get behind the wheel for 3 days.”

The boys were over the moon with her permission at first, but then they froze after a fraction of a second.

“Three days?! Three days are enough for a bird to nest in my car!”

“I’m still young and my metabolism is still strong. How about one day? Or two?”

“Sister Lili!”

Ning Li glanced at them.

They were silenced together as they slowly retreated.

“Hmm, three days sounds okay.”

“I stayed up late recently. I’ll be able to sleep at home for three days now! Thank you, Sister Lili!”

“Sister Lili, you are the best!”

Ji Shu opened the other bottles of beer with the opener and joked, “Three days? You guys are a bunch of wimps!”

Ning Li turned to him.

The glare from her made him sit up straight instantaneously.

“I’ve called my driver! He will fetch me around for the next week!” Ji Shu surrendered almost instantly.

The other boys ganged up on him.

“You wimp!”

Gu Siyang was impressed.

The Ning Li he was seeing tonight was unlike the Ning Li he had seen when she was with Lu Huaiyu.

He could not put his finger on what the difference was, but something was definitely different.

He then finished half a bottle of beer in one go.

The flashy lights shone across Ning Li’s face. She leaned back with her glass of lemonade and relaxed with a lazy smile.

Gu Siyang accidentally caught a glimpse of her and a thought came into his mind.

‘Hmm? Ning Li looks a little familiar... she’s like...like...’

Buzz!

His phone on the table suddenly buzzed and the caller ID gave him a moment of epiphany.

Lu Huaiyu!

Ning Li resembled Lu Huaiyu when she was laid-back and relaxed! The similarities were uncanny!

He grabbed his phone, put his finger to his lips, and hushed the others.

“Quiet! Quiet! I have a call coming!”

Ji Shu and the others quieted down.

One of the boys teased, “At your age, do you still have someone checking up on you?”

“Shoo!” Gu Siyang gave a look of disgust.

“It’s a call from my God of Prosperity! Shut up and everything will be on me tonight!”

There were only a few people that Gu Siyang called the God of Prosperity.

Ji Shu and his friends exchanged a quick look before zipping up their mouths.

Ning Li took a sip of lemonade.

Gu Siyang answered the phone and said eagerly, “Second Master Lu!”

Ning Li almost choked on her lemonade.

Chapter 163: You Are Afraid Of Him

Cough!

Ning Li coughed.

Gu Siyang turned to her to ask, "Hey, Ning Li, are you okay?!"

Ning Li flushed as she pointed at his phone.

The call was still connected, why was he talking so loudly?

Gu Siyang failed to understand her. He grinned and said, "Ah? This? It's Second Master Lu on the phone!"

Ning Li was exasperated. She had heard him clearly the first time he mentioned the man's name!

On the other end of the call, Lu Huaiyu paused to look at his watch.

9:50 p.m.

The girl's night self-learning class should have ended by now. However, by the sound of it, she must have gone out instead of going home.

He said, "Is Ning Li there?"

Gu Siyang nodded honestly. "Yeah, she just choked on some water..."

“Are you guys at a club?”

The noisy background was distinct.

“Yeah, at a friend’s place. Ji Shu got signed to LY, right? So there’s a celebration tonight. Ning Li came as well.”

Gu Siyang knew Ning Li called Lu Huaiyu second brother even though they were not related, but their relationship seemed thicker than blood.

Since her brother had asked, he felt compelled to answer honestly.

Lu Huaiyu went silent for a moment before he smiled.

“Oh, are you having fun?”

Gu Siyang felt chills run down his spine, but he maintained his lighthearted tone.

“Okay, I guess. I’m more happy hearing from you.”

He had called Lu Huaiyu earlier, but it had not gotten through.

His uncle had advised him never to try and call Lu Huaiyu twice, so he had given up.

He had not expected Lu Huaiyu to respond this quickly.

Ji Shu and friends went up to Ning Li with paper towels; some of them even wiped the table.

“Sister Lili, are you okay?”

“Sister Lili, how are you feeling?”

“Sister Lili!”

Lu Huaiyu heard all of it.

He bolted up and grabbed his coat.

His coat was hanging over his arm by the time he reached the door.

“Put Ning Li on.”

Gu Siyang nodded and passed the phone to her.

“Ning Li, Second Master Lu asked for you.”

Ning Li wanted to kill Gu Siyang, and then herself.

Her instinct told her that if she answered the phone, the man on the other end would kill her. However, If she did not answer the phone, it would be a fate worse than death.

After a deep breath, she braced herself and put the phone to her ear.

“Hello, second brother.”

Lu Huaiyu sounded flat but succinct. “Location.”

Ning Li knew what the man wanted to do based on that single word. “Second brother, I’m just here for a drink, I’ll be leaving soon! You don’t need to—”

Lu Huaiyu chuckled. “It’s okay. If it’s fun, stay a little longer. What kind of club is it? I want to go have a look.”

“You really don’t have to...”

Before she could finish, she heard him walking down the stairs.

She facepalmed herself in helplessness.

No one could stop Lu Huaiyu once he had decided on something.

Even if she kept quiet, he would have a way to find her location and be there in a jiffy.

Be frank and she would be forgiven; be dishonest and things would be difficult for her.

Ning Li sighed as she told him the location of the club.

“Mhmm. Wait for me.”

“Okay.”

Ning Li handed the phone back to Gu Siyang.

Gu Siyang blinked helplessly. He had not even spoken to Lu Huaiyu, but the phone call had already ended.

He looked at Ning Li. “Is second master coming over?”

Ning Li stared at him blankly. The look on her face had said it all.

Delighted, Gu Siyang added, "I heard that when second master was in Jingcheng, he rarely came to this kind of place, but now he's agreed to come here! Ning Li, your second brother is really caring!"

The others had never actually seen Lu Huaiyu in person before, except for Ji Shu.

"Second master? Second Master Lu?"

"Huh? Do you mean the guy who sat in the passenger seat next to Sister Lili during the race?"

"That's the man."

Ji Shu sent a sympathetic gaze to Ning Li.

He knew how things were different when Ning Li was with Lu Huaiyu.

Lu Huaiyu was like a possessive God who controlled even Ning Li's homework.

How would that God feel when he found out that Ning Li had come to a club on a Friday night?

The thought of it gave him goosebumps

Ji Shu pondered for a while and asked, "Sister Lili, do we need to... wait at the entrance? At least we can make ourselves clear."

Ning Li found it difficult to meet his gaze.

Gu Siyang spotted something in Ning Li's eyes. It was fear, fear of Lu Huaiyu.

Any guardian would be angry when they found out that their child went to a club at night.

That explained Ning Li's nervous look when she answered the phone.

He said, "It's fine, Ning Li! Look, you didn't do anything wrong and you didn't even have a drop of alcohol."

Ning Li said expressionlessly, "You would be more convincing if you threw those empty bottles of beer away."

"I didn't drink all those..." Gu Siyang furrowed his brows.

He then whispered, "When I was 16, I snuck into my dad's wine cellar and drank three bottles of wine. I ended up fine."

Except that he had been beaten up like a dog.

Ning Li was not Gu Siyang.

Would Lu Huaiyu beat her like an angry parent?

Frustrated, Ning Li grabbed her bag.

"You guys continue, I'll go downstairs to wait."

Ji Shu's suggestion might be stupid, but it might be stupid enough to work.

"Sister Lili, let's go down and wait together! We can be your witness!"

The others wanted to support Ning Li.

Ning Li wanted to stop them, but remembering that Lu Huaiyu was already aware of the group around her, she sighed.

“Whatever.”

She strode down immediately.”

...

Ning Li and her friends stood at the entrance for around 10 minutes.

Lu Huaiyu finally showed up in a taxi.

As he got out, he spotted Ning Li with the other boys. There were six boys to be exact.

He stared at them... and smiled.

Chapter 164: Spotcheck

Ning Li automatically stood up straighter when she saw Lu Huaiyu.

Gu Siyang noticed the girl’s reaction. He whispered, “Ning Li, are you really that afraid of your second brother?”

He had always assumed that Lu Huaiyu was kind to Ning Li.

Would he really punish Ning Li just because of a rare tiny mistake?

Moreover, Ning Li had only drunk a glass of lemonade. Why was she acting as if she had just killed someone?

Ning Li ignored him as Lu Huaiyu walked towards them from across the road.

He appeared to be in a hurry.

The sky was dark but it did not dampen his noble bearing. His unique presence made his surroundings pale into the background, creating a strong contrast.

Ning Li subconsciously clenched the sleeves of her school uniform.

She had never even felt this nervous whenever she was called out by the whole school,

Step by step, Lu Huaiyu came closer. Each step felt like he was stomping on her heart.

The closer he got, the faster her heartbeat became.

Finally, Lu Huaiyu's imposing figure stood in front of her.

"Second brother," she said.

The others said en masse, "Second brother!"

Ning Li had never been so embarrassed.

Lu Huaiyu's eyes scanned over the group.

The breeze carried the scent of alcohol.

Ji Shu and the others had obviously had a drink or two.

That was understandable. It was a big day for Ji Shu, after all.

He nodded as a sign of greeting before turning his gaze to Ning Li.

“Why are you here?”

Ning Li cleared her throat. “I was planning to leave.”

Lu Huaiyu looked at her inquisitively.

“This place seems interesting. Are you not going to invite me in?”

Ji Shu wanted to step aside, but he hesitated when Ning Li stood as still as a monolith.

She shook her head. “It’s not that interesting. It’s boring, so you don’t have to go in.”

Ji Shu and his friends felt as if they had been slapped in the face.

If Lu Huaiyu had not been in front of them, they would surely have argued with Ning Li.

For some reason, Lu Huaiyu’s presence intimidated them.

Even just simply standing there, his presence unnerved even the boys, let alone Ning Li.

They even sensed a hint of danger in his presence, hence the silence.

Lu Huaiyu seemed a little disappointed.

“Oh, really? Then you must have wasted the past 1 hour and 15 minutes after your night self-learning class.”

Ning Li realized that the man liked being calculative, but she was the one being judged here as she had been caught red-handed.

She could not do anything else but accept the judgment.

“Second brother, I want to go back.”

She kept to her tactic.

Lu Huaiyu looked down at the girl in front of him.

She had to raise her head to stare into his eyes. The hint of nervousness in her eyes made her look pitiful.

“Can you take me home?”

Yes, she was asking to be pampered.

Lu Huaiyu raised a brow.

She only behaved this obediently when she did something wrong. She was smart, she knew what to say to silence the man.

She had so many ways to manipulate his emotions, and he... could do nothing about it.

After a moment of silence, he nodded.

“Let’s go then.”

He stretched his hand out and Ning Li handed him her bag.

She took her phone out. “Should I call for a ride?”

“It’s okay. Let’s go for a walk to get rid of the alcoholic smell.”

Ning Li gulped as she put her phone away.

Lu Huaiyu looked at Ji Shu and the others.

“I’ll take Lili back now. You guys may continue.”

Ji Shu responded almost instantaneously, “OKAY! Second master! Be careful!”

Gu Siyang’s jaw dropped.

“Uh! Second master, I’m going the same way, can I tag...Ouch!”

Ji Shu stomped on his feet before pulling him back with an awkward smile.

“Come on, Master Gu, there’s still a few more bottles left. You can’t leave us now!”

Gu Siyang widened his eyes in shock. ‘Since when did I owe you guys that many bottles? I thought everyone was having fun!’

Ji Shu tossed a glance at his friends and everyone helped to drag Gu Siyang back.

“Come on, Master Gu, you can’t do this to us!”

“Yeah! Just like what Master Gu said, everything tonight is on him!”

The group’s noise drowned out Gu Siyang’s voice in an instant and he was dragged away before he could react.

Ji Shu smiled at Lu Huaiyu.

“I’ll leave Sister Lili in your hands then, Second Master Lu.”

He did not forget to toss another glance at Ning Li, telling her to be careful.

As the two walked away, Ji Shu put his hands together and prayed for Ning Li in his heart.

Amen. May God bless you, Sister Lili.

He waited until both of them disappeared from his sight before entering the club again.

When he got back to the second floor, the others surrounded him.

“Holy sh*t! That’s Lu Huaiyu? He’s really something! Look at how Sister Lili behaved in front of him!”

“Yeah! Damn, I’ve known Sister Lili for so long and this is the first time I’ve ever seen her so afraid of someone.”

“Tsk. I guess we learned something today. Even Sister Lili has her weak spot.”

Ji Shu grunted.

“If you guys are going to speculate, why don’t you think about whether the second master will blame you guys for this.”

...

Ning Li strolled side by side with Lu Huaiyu.

The atmosphere had gotten so quiet, to the point that it felt tense.

A moment later, Lu Huaiyu asked, “Are you sober now?”

Ning Li pouted. “Second brother, I really did not drink.”

Lu Huaiyu stopped and turned to her; Ning Li followed suit.

His eyes were deep, so deep that it seemed like it contained something alive in there.

He then reached out for the back of her head and moved her closer to him as he bent slightly over her.

The distance between them shortened immediately.

Shocked, Ning Li widened her eyes. Her heart raced.

Lu Huaiyu moved closer to her face. The high bridge of his nose grazed her dainty nose as he moved towards her lips for a sniff.

He said with his rich voice. "Let me check?"

Their lips were next to each other.

Chapter 165: Return The Favor

He held the back of her head gently with his strong but warm and steady hand, yet she could not break free from it.

She could see the high bridge of his nose and his long eyelashes. She even smelled the faint cedarwood scent of his breath.

The distance, his posture, it felt like he was going to...

The slightest movement and his lips would touch hers.

She could feel the warmth of his body and it made her blush.

She was frozen to the spot as if his scent had cast a spell on her.

She had not taken any alcohol but at that moment, she felt a little tipsy.

She even lost track of time. It felt like an eternity had passed and as brief as a moment, all at the same time.

Lu Huaiyu stared at her plump, soft lips as he warred with his own thoughts.

In the end, he curved his lips into a smile and said in his signature lazy tone, “You don’t smell like alcohol.”

He let go of her and straightened up.

His lips and his eyes curved into a casual smile on his face.

“Good girl.”

The words entered Ning Li’s ears like rumbling thunder, pounding in her eardrums fiercely.

Thud!

Ning Li heard her heart sink. A dangerous feeling rose within her that was steadily growing out of control. She could not understand what was happening to her.

She instinctively wanted to escape or even stop him, but she felt helpless against it.

Her heart pounded furiously, every beat that she heard felt like a warning to the danger.

As her heart beat faster, she felt as if it would pop out of her chest at any second.

Lu Huaiyu scrutinized her face, before suddenly reaching out to touch her forehead.

“Are you not feeling well?”

The back of his hand was a little cold but to Ning Li, it felt like molten lava wherever he touched her.

Without thinking, she took a step backward. “No.”

Lu Huaiyu's hand was left hanging in mid-air. He raised a brow at her flushed earlobes and he smiled.

He pulled back his hand and said, "Great. Then let's go, I'll send you home."

...

The taxi stopped in front of Jingyue Residence, where the Ye family's mansion was.

"We're here. I have to go now, second brother."

Ning Li put her hand on the door handle. Before she could open it, Lu Huaiyu opened his eyes from his little catnap.

"Hold on."

Ning Li froze.

Lu Huaiyu handed over her bag with a chuckle. "You didn't even drink, but you almost forgot your own bag."

Embarrassed, Ning Li took the bag. "Thank you, second brother."

She quickly got out of the car and walked towards the gate.

Looking at her back, she gave the appearance of someone who had finally escaped a tiger's den.

Lu Huaiyu watched her go in before he sighed a breath of relief.

Almost...

The girl always made mistakes, but he would always be the one to suffer the consequences.

It looked like there was still a long way to go in educating her.

...

The night breeze's chill calmed Ning Li down a little, now that she had left Lu Huaiyu.

She slowed down but her mind kept replaying the scene back there.

This was not their first intimate interaction.

When she had been in Yunding Fenghua, they had been in his bedroom and even closer than this. However, he had been drunk at the time and was barely conscious, so it did not count.

Today, his eyes were clear and he was thinking straight.

She had heard the beating of his heart as he came near her.

She looked up ahead.

The Ye family's mansion was still brightly lit at this hour.

She remembered that today was a day that the Ye family would have deemed worth celebrating.

She took a few deep breaths to calm her thoughts before she strode forward.

...

"Ms. Ning, you're back."

Aunt Zhao was the first to greet her.

She smiled, but it was not because of Ning Li's return.

She smiled because the generous Ye Ming had also bought gifts for her and the other servants.

Su Yuan came down from the second floor when she heard her enter.

"Why are you so late?"

Ning Li said, "I had some things to do."

Su Yuan had not expected a clear answer. She had only asked her out of habit. Moreover, today was a happy day and she did not want Ning Li to ruin her mood.

She put the matter aside and said, "Your Uncle Ye bought you a present, it's on the tea table. You may go and take it."

Ning Li saw some messy wrapping papers left on the tea table.

Ye Ming had bought gifts for everyone in the house.

His joy must have stemmed from the Qinghe Bridge project. The plan seemed to be progressing smoothly.

Ning Li grinned. She walked to the tea table and picked up the square box.

“Thank you, Uncle Ye.”

She had given the Ye family a huge ‘present’, so it was only courteous of them to return it with a tiny favor.

Su Yuan was surprised. She had thought Ning Li would reject it.

She could turn a deaf ear to Ning Li’s excuse for coming home late, but the present was from Ye Ming. If Ning Li refused to take it, it would have embarrassed her.

Because of Ning Li’s arrival, she could barely lift her head in front of Ye Ming. If the girl continued to be rebellious, the situation would go out of control.

She had actually prepared a lot of things to say to persuade Ning Li to accept the gift.

Ning Li’s compliance stunned her.

The words that she had prepared were stuck in her throat, but she was thankful that it had happened. It saved her a lot of trouble.

“Your Uncle Ye has already gone to bed, so you don’t need to thank him yourself now. You can get some rest.”

Su Yuan breathed a sigh of relief after Ning Li entered her room.

A hint of contempt flashed in Aunt Zhao’s eyes.

The girl behaved rebelliously, yet she happily accepted the present.

It seemed as if the girl was just another snotty brat from a rural city.

...

Ning Li tossed the gift into the drawer of her desk without even opening it.

She glanced into the mirror, the corners of her lips catching her attention.

The scene with Lu Huaiyu replayed in her mind again. She felt as if she could still hear his rich voice and feel his breath.

She looked away nervously.

After she had forced herself to calm down, she took her phone and a thumb drive out. A few minutes later, she put the thumb drive away.

...

Sun Huihui stormed into her room the moment she arrived home. She pulled her phone out to make a call. She soon realized that her friend had blocked not only her Wechat contact but her phone number as well.

Anxiety rose in her heart. She nervously paced around the room in circles while holding her phone.

What happened?

After thinking seriously for a while, she texted Ye Ci.

[Lil Ci, are you home yet?]

Ye Ci saw the message as she was drying her hair. She pondered the meaning of the message.

Sun Huihui had seen her get into her driver's car and many hours had passed since then.

It was strange for Sun Huihui to ask Ye Ci this question at this hour.

It was obvious that her question was actually about something else.

[I'm home.]

After a slight hesitation, Sun Huihui typed another question.

[Then... is Ning Li home?]

Ye Ci realized what was going on

[She got home about 10 minutes ago. What's wrong?]

[It's nothing. I'm just asking. It's a little dangerous for her to walk alone at night.]

[Thank you for your concern, but Sister Ning Li seems fine.]

Sun Huihui gripped her phone tightly.

Ye Ci's answer was evidence that Ning Li had not run into any danger.

Why? How could this be?

She thought her friend had sent a group after Ning Li, but Ning Li had returned home just fine.

Just then, she received an anonymous email.

Feeling uneasy, she tapped on it.

Chapter 166: Lemon Is Sweet

A video automatically started to play when she tapped on it.

“10 seconds left...”

The voice of a woman came through.

Sun Huihui quickly realized that it was Ning Li’s voice.

She tried to get a closer look but the screen was dark. Something was covering the camera lens which had only allowed for the sound to be recorded.

“10, 9...”

Nothing showed on the screen but Ning Li’s voice grew cold.

Thud!

A heavy thud sounded all of a sudden. It sounded like someone dropping to their knees.

Smack!

The noise of the slap that followed rang out extra clear in the quiet room.

The slap also caused Sun Huihui's heart to skip a beat.

"I'm sorry, Ning Li!"

The fear that she heard from the voice in the video stunned her.

"This...this is...They told me they would teach her a lesson, but they knelt and apologized to Ning Li instead?!"

"7."

Ning Li's voice sounded as indifferent as ever. The icy cold tone of her voice could send chills down one's spine even without her physical presence.

After a vigorous shake of the camera, the screen revealed something shocking.

All of Sun Huihui's friends were kneeling on the ground one by one.

The thud that had sounded as their knees hit the ground felt as heavy to Sun Huihui as rocks pounding on her heart.

There was also a glimpse of a Second High uniform followed by a pair of legs and half of a black bag.

Sun Huihui could tell that the person was Ning Li.

It proved that the one who had done the countdown was indeed Ning Li.

Before Sun Huihui could react, the sound of slaps and apologies were heard from her friends.

"I'm sorry!"

“I’m sorry!”

The whole bunch seemed terrified as they slapped themselves with all their might. It was painful to watch and listen to.

Ning Li said evenly, “Three...”

Her flat tone was a stark contrast to the trembling apologies.

“Two.”

The group finally stopped slapping themselves.

Ning Li nonchalantly made the final announcement, “One.”

The video stopped abruptly.

Sun Huihui’s legs turned to jelly, her face as pale as paper. She fell limply onto the chair.

Until her phone automatically went dark, she was still drowned in fear.

“How did it... What exactly happened? Why did they kneel and slap themselves in front of Ning Li?”

The video had been unintentionally taken by someone present at the scene. It might not have shown Ning Li’s face but judging from the voice and the glimpse of the pair of legs and uniform, Sun Huihui was certain it was Ning Li.

More importantly, who had sent her the video?

It could not have been her friends because it was humiliating to them.

Therefore, it must have been...Ning Li!

This video was a warning to her!

Sun Huihui trembled uncontrollably.

She finally knew what her friend had meant and why her friend had blocked her.

Her friends had been humiliated in front of Ning Li and of course, they blamed it on her.

She could not figure out what Ning Li had done to force them to do this, but there was nothing she could do about it now.

She was drowning so much in her own fear that taking revenge was no longer the priority. Now, she only hoped that she could escape Ning Li without suffering too much.

A while later, she mustered up enough courage to check the mail for clues.

Unfortunately, it had been sent anonymously. There was nothing there other than the video.

Sun Huihui spent the night in fear. She could barely sleep, the sound of someone counting continued in her head and she could almost feel the slaps on her own cheeks throughout the night.

On the second day, she caught a fever again.

...

Sun Huihui skipped the Saturday morning class again.

Ye Ci frowned at the empty seat behind her.

After the short reply last night, Sun Huihui had gone silent and had even skipped class this morning.

“Xiangxiang, do you know why Huihui didn’t show up today?”

Cheng Xiangxiang glanced at the empty seat. “She’s sick, I think. Who knows?”

She did not want to have anything to do with Sun Huihui.

Ye Ci was silenced by her reaction.

Everything had been fine until this morning.

She then turned her attention to Ning Li.

She asked Cheng Xiangxiang about Sun Huihui because she tried to find out what happened last night.

If she was right, Sun Huihui must have attempted to do something to Ning Li but failed.

Ning Li looked as normal as always but Sun Huihui was absent.

It was strange.

Ye Ci took out a piece of paper.

...

Cheng Xiyue arrived at Yunding Fenghua.

“Second master? Second master?”

There was no one on the first floor.

Lu Huaiyu lived by a different clock compared to normal people. Usually, he would already be awake at this time, so it was rare to see no one in his mansion at this hour.

He went up the stairs and stood in front of the bedroom door.

Just as he was about to knock, the door opened.

Lu Huaiyu’s hair was disheveled. He looked rather tired, but it did not detract from his handsome looks.

“What?” The hoarse voice was proof that he had just woken up.

Before Cheng Xiyue could say a word, he picked up on the faint scent in the air.

He widened his eyes in shock. “Did... you use scented candles last night?”

Lu Huaiyu kept a lot of scented candles in the house to aid his sleep, but it was only used when he had a tough time sleeping.

“No.” Lu Huaiyu closed the door slightly to prevent Cheng Xiyue from peeking in.

“It’s only a few pieces of lemon.

“Lemon?” Cheng Xiyue showed disbelief. “Since when did you like this scent?”

The scent of whatever it was, was quite obvious. If it really was lemon, how many slices had he cut?

Lu Huaiyu paused. He smiled and said, "Only recently. I find it quite... sweet."

...

Fever troubled Sun Huihui for a whole day and night, she only got better on Sunday night.

She had lived her weekend in fear. She was worried that something bad might happen to her.

Fortunately, other than her friend blocking her, nothing else had happened over the weekend.

Her anxiousness gradually lessened.

Her friends would never reveal this humiliating experience to anyone, and neither would Ning Li.

She had placed first in the city for the midterm, and she was highly valued by the teachers of Second High.

Fighting outside the school premises would only stain her unblemished record.

Perhaps the video was only meant to be a warning, telling Sun Huihui to mind her own business.

She should be fine for now but if Ning Li tried to hurt her, she could release the video and ruin Ning Li's future and reputation!

With that thought, Sun Huihui decided to put the matter aside.

...

At 6 a.m., a barrage of notifications woke Sun Huihui up.

She searched for her phone with blurry eyes. The third-year chat group of Second High was flooded with messages.

There were 99+ unread messages from the group.

“What had happened so early in the morning?”

Sun Huihui tapped on the group and saw that the messages were still spamming. The more she looked at it, the more uneasy she felt.

She scrolled up and saw something that horrified her.

The video had been released by an anonymous user!

Chapter 167: I'll Do It Myself

The video was the exact video that she had received yesterday.

The video did not show Ning Li's face but her name was in there.

The slaps and the casual counting from Ning Li were shocking to anyone who saw it.

[What is this? Am I hearing this right? Is that girl apologizing to Ning Li?]

[You are right because I heard it as well. And it seems like several of them knelt down to apologize to her.]

[This is freaky. What is Ning Li doing? A violent fight? How could she tell someone to kneel and slap themselves to apologize to her?]

[What's the big surprise? Ning Li almost pushed someone down the stairs when she came to the school. This is nothing. Besides, this isn't her first rodeo.]

[Scary. I thought she was a kind person. I didn't...]

Messages flooded the screen.

Many of the users were anonymous and they were talking about all kinds of things.

Sun Huihui's mind went blank.

She was not the one who had released the video. She had thought about it but she had only meant it to be a last resort.

She was horrified by Ning Li's intimidation in the video.

Who would have thought that the video would already be online when she woke up.

Suddenly the admin of the group removed the anonymous function and silenced everyone.

There was also a teacher from the school in this group.

If the students had seen it, the teachers must have seen it as well.

The whole group was silenced but there were many other private groups among the students, so there was no way to stop the students from talking about this.

Someone had already downloaded the video and spread it around.

Not only the third-year students knew about this. The whole of Second High eventually heard about it and in just one morning, almost everyone in the school had seen the video.

The situation escalated quickly and Ning Li swiftly became the center of a storm.

...

Geng Haifan's first reaction to the video was nothing short of terrible.

The video might not have shown Ning Li's face but from all the clues, everything pointed to her.

She had already caused a scene once before when she threatened to push someone off the stairs, but there had been a reason for that. Moreover, that had only been a threat. No actual harm had been done. This, however, was a different matter.

She had forced a group of boys and girls to kneel and told them to slap themselves. That was cruel.

No matter what, there was no way she could talk herself out of this.

Besides, the video had appeared so suddenly that by the time the teachers had noticed it, it had already spread all over the internet.

Geng Haifan's phone was blasted with endless calls from his superiors.

Moreover, today was the Monday that Ning Li was meant to give a speech at the assembly under the flag.

The speech was scheduled to happen at 7 a.m.!

What should he do about this?

Geng Haifan called Ning Li right away.

“Ning Li, what is the meaning of that video?”

Ning Li had just been packing her bag before heading to school.

She paused and said, “Mr. Geng, I’m sorry to cause this much trouble to you and the school.”

Geng Haifan had not expected Ning Li to admit it in such a straightforward manner.

He rubbed the center of his brows.

“Tell me the truth, was there a reason for this?”

Two months had passed since Ning Li’s transfer here and so far, she had been behaving well.

It was difficult for him to relate the person in the video to the Ning Li that he knew.

Ning Li curved her lips into a smile as she heard the teacher’s intention to protect her.

“Mr. Geng, I will clarify this matter in front of the teachers and the student body during the speech at the assembly later.”

“What? Geng Haifan was stunned before realizing that her suggestion was probably the best way out of this situation.

“Since I started it, I should be responsible for it. I hope the school gives me a chance to make this right,” Ning Li said.

Geng Haifan could tell Ning Li was serious. The matter had gotten out of control, so an explanation was needed immediately. In considering that, he was compelled to agree to the suggestion.

“Okay. We’ll talk when you come to school. This matter is huge and the higher-ups are concerned about this. Please be prepared.”

“I understand. Thank you, Mr. Geng.”

Ning Li hung up. She went out with her bag but ran into Ye Ci.

“Sister Ning Li.”

Ye Ci frowned and walked over with a worried look. She looked like she had something to say but the words were stuck in her throat.

“Are you... okay?”

Her phone was in her hand, which meant that she must have seen the video.

In fact, she herself had been shocked when she had first seen the video. However, she soon related it to Sun Huihui’s unusual behavior yesterday, so she had put two and two together.

Sun Huihui had felt aggrieved after Ning Li had locked her up in the janitor’s room for a whole night. She had gotten her friends to teach Ning Li a lesson as a form of revenge.

To her surprise, her friends had failed to do the job and Ning Li had forced them down to their knees instead.

That explained a lot about Sun Huihui's reaction.

The shock in Ye Ci had soon been replaced by a hint of delight.

Ning Li had been involved in a fight outside of school and it could get her expelled.

Second High was a strict school and this matter had already gone out of control. It had to be dealt with openly and strictly.

Even if Ning Li was the No.1 student, she could not escape the punishment.

Ye Ci sized up Ning Li carefully, attempting to find a hint of fear or anxiety but she failed to find anything.

There was nothing on Ning Li's face. She looked as cold as usual.

"I'm fine," Ning Li said.

Ye Ci choked on her words. Had Ning Li not known about the video?

"Sister Ning Li, have you seen the group? The video..."

"What video?"

Su Yuan overheard the conversation and came over.

Ning Li kept quiet immediately. "No, it's nothing."

Su Yuan frowned.

Her daughters were acting strangely in front of her.

“What happened?”

She noticed the phone in Ye Ci’s hand.

“Show it to me.”

“I—”

Ye Ci bit her lips, looking conflicted. She also snuck a glance at Ning Li.

Even a blind person could tell it was about Ning Li again.

“This.” Ning Li said impatiently.

She took her phone out and showed the video to Su Yuan.

The slaps that Su Yuan heard in the video stunned her. Ye Ci was also stunned.

She looked at Ning Li in disbelief.

What was she trying to do? Was it something that she should be proud of? Why would she show it to her mother so brazenly?

After the video ended, Ning Li showed a plain look at Ye Ci.

“The video is done. You don’t need to hide your phone now.”

Ning Li always had a way to pry into Ye Ci’s heart. Her words always accurately represented Ye Ci’s thoughts.

It made Ye Ci feel like a fool.

Ye Ci reacted bitterly; as did Su Yuan.

She was shaking when she said, “You! I sent you to Second High to study, not to start fights outside! Ning Li, can you stop giving me problems just for a minute?!”

Ning Li thought about what Geng Haifan had told her earlier. The teacher had asked if there was a reason behind this.

She related her teacher’s words to her mother’s furious reaction and then smiled.

“Don’t worry, I’ll deal with this myself. It won’t be a problem for you.”

Chapter 168: Clarification In Front Of The Flag

Su Yuan raised her voice. “You? How are you going to deal with that yourself? How will the school tolerate you anymore? This is a fight outside the school!”

More importantly, a video had been taken and it was solid evidence against Ning Li.

How would other people look at Ning Li now? How would other people look at Su Yuan now?

Why did she have such a rebellious daughter?

Even she was shocked when she saw the video. What more would other people's reactions be?

Ning Li had not shown herself in the video. Even though all she had done was count to 10, that was not the attitude that a 17-year-old girl should have. It was abnormal.

Ye Ci tried to calm her mother down. "Mom, wait, calm down. Maybe there's a misunderstanding—"

"Misunderstanding?" Su Yuan found it outrageous.

She pointed at Ning Li and yelled, "What kind of misunderstanding could make someone kneel and slap themselves for her?!"

Ning Li looked away. "If you are that concerned, why don't you follow us to school?"

Su Yuan was rendered speechless in her anger.

She had thought that Ning Li was starting to change recently and had finally learned how to accept her new family. Clearly, she was wrong.

The girl was as rebellious as ever.

"Fine. Fine! So, you said that you will deal with this yourself, right? I want to see how you do it! This time, the Ye family will not help you at all! Whatever the punishment the school gives, you will have to accept it. If you are expelled, you will be transferred back to Lincheng!"

Su Yuan stormed away after shouting at Ning Li.

"Mom!" Ye Ci tried to call her but did not get a reply.

A slight hesitation later, she looked at Ning Li.

“Sister Ning Li, what are you going to do?”

Ning Li glanced at her. “You will know when you reach the school.”

...

Second High was extra lively on this particular day.

Close to 7 o’clock, all the students and teachers had gathered at the field for the assembly.

There were groups of students gathered around, talking excitedly. Many of them stood around, full of curiosity and excitement.

“Have you guys seen the video? Ning Li from the first class is really something!”

“I heard she was always involved in fights back in Lincheng. Looks like the rumors are true. Seeing is believing. I wouldn’t want to get on her bad side.”

“Who released the video anyway? This is such sensitive timing. I heard Ning Li is going to give a speech in front of the flag later.”

“A speech? At this time? Is it appropriate? Will the school say yes to this?”

“I don’t know either. Who knows what the school will do to her now. Expel her? But she’s the best student in the whole city, would the school really expel her because of this matter?”

“So what if she got No.1 in the city? She made a mistake and now she’ll have to live with it.”

The students then arranged themselves into lines according to their year.

Each year had 12 classes; girls in front, boys in the back.

The third-year first class was the best of the best. Their existence was eye-catching enough already but now with this incident involving Ning Li, the spotlight was completely focused on them.

All eyes of the students and teachers were focused on the first class as they came over.

He Xiaochen was standing in line, looking worried.

After she had seen the video, she texted Ning Li. However, Ning Li had assured her that everything would be fine and she did not have to worry.

How could she not be worried after seeing the video?

“Ye Ci, where’s Ning Li? I thought she came to school with you?” the girl in front of Ye Ci asked.

“She’s in the teacher’s office.”

A few of the girls exchanged glances.

Ning Li had to report to the teachers first after what happened.

Everyone wondered what the school would do to her.

At the end of the line, a few boys from the other classes were laughing and joking.

“Let me just say, Ning Li is really beautiful but she’s a feisty one. She’s so fierce, no one could possibly tolerate her attitude.”

“I saw her from a distance once. She’s beautiful but... I’m quite curious about her life in Lincheng.”

“Speaking of Ning Li, I find her quite attractive with that feisty attitude—”

The boy who was speaking was suddenly bumped on the shoulder.

He turned around angrily but saw a pair of icy cold eyes glaring at him.

“B-Brother Pei Song!”

The boy stuttered. He noted the air of danger that emanated from Pei Song.

Ren Qian followed behind Pei Song and asked with a giggle, “So, you asked what Ning Li did to force that group of boys and girls to kneel down and slap themselves?”

The boys were instantly silenced.

Ren Qian tapped on the boy’s shoulder. “Shhh.”

“As one of Ning Li’s classmates, I have to give you a little reminder. You and your friends are out of Ning Li’s league.”

“You!”

The few boys reacted bitterly but before they could do anything further, several other boys came to support Ren Qian.

They looked like they were about to start a fight to defend Ning Li’s name.

Ren Qian took a step back with a bright smile.

“You guys have no idea but our entire class has been bestowed by her glory, so... be careful of your words.”

Even if the boys believed they could win in a fight against the first class, they were in no position to pick a fight with them.

They knew the school would favor the first class over any others.

One of the boys grunted. “Let’s pray that your little goddess can stay on in Second High.”

...

Ning Li had gone straight to Geng Haifan’s office the moment she arrived.

Geng Haifan had persuaded the school to give Ning Li a chance to clarify her actions at the assembly.

There was no other way.

The school anthem played throughout the broadcast and the flag slowly rose up the pole.

Ning Li slowly walked towards the field.

Chapter 169: Clarification

Her arrival at the field attracted a lot of attention.

“Isn’t that Ning Li?”

“Is she going to give a speech? No way!”

“My god! If I was her, I would be too ashamed to show up at school.”

“She took on multiple guys at once and forced them to their knees, what is this to her?”

The crowd grew restless.

Some people were worried, some took pleasure in the situation, while some were curious.

The principal and other teachers observed Ning Li seriously.

Ning Li turned a blind eye to everything. She stood a little further away from the podium, seemingly still determined to give her speech.

Sun Huihui was standing at the front, relatively close to Ning Li.

Her legs were shaking and her lips were pale.

If she looked at Ning Li, it would remind her of the video.

Ning Li raised her head and looked in her direction.

She looked calm and mostly expressionless. She quickly averted her eyes as if it had only been an unintentional glance, but Sun Huihui was sure that Ning Li was looking at her!

What was that glance about?

What could Ning Li do in front of all these people?

Sun Huihui could hear the whispers from other students and it boosted her confidence a little.

The video had already been revealed and Ning Li was shown to be guilty! Sun Huihui had nothing to do with it!

The whispers were correct. No one knew if Ning Li would be allowed to stay in Second High after today.

Sun Huihui had nothing to be scared of.

She straightened her back confidently.

Ning Li had done a lot to her, so now, it was payback time!

...

Sun Quan stepped onto the podium.

"Today, someone reported to us about the involvement of Ning Li, from third-year first class, in a fight outside of this school. The school treats this matter seriously."

His words silenced the whole field.

Everyone was all ears, listening to the school's verdict.

"This is a serious and terrible matter which has caused a harmful impact to the school. The school will investigate this thoroughly and uphold our rules strictly. We will get to the bottom of this as soon as possible.

Now, Ning Li is to make a clarification in front of the whole school."

Everyone was flabbergasted.

The speech in front of the flag was to become a clarification!

The difference in meaning was like the distance between heaven and earth.

Everyone looked at Ning Li.

No one possibly could remain calm under this much pressure, but Ning Li was different. To her, there was no difference between a speech and a clarification.

While all eyes were on her, she took the mic from Sun Quan and got up to the podium.

Everyone was curious how Ning Li would make her clarification.

However, even if she admitted her guilt, it would be difficult for her to escape this unpunished.

Amid the tense atmosphere, Ning Li tapped the mic, making sure it was loud and clear.

She nodded and then took her phone out.

Sun Quan, the principal and the other teachers were stunned.

“What are you doing, Ning Li? Are you going to read your clarification from your phone!? Geng Haifan, is this what you call an apologetic attitude?!”

Geng Haifan was also stunned.

Ning Li had been completely apologetic on the phone earlier. No one expected her to do something this surprising.

Second High's rules specifically stated that no phones were allowed in classes. However, since phones had evolved into a daily necessity, the school tended to be lenient to the students on this matter.

As long as the students kept their phones away during class, the school would not care or confiscate them.

Now, Ning Li pulled out her phone in front of the student body!

She could have written it down on a piece of paper!"

"I, Ning Li from third-year first class, clarify that..."

Ning Li started to 'read' from her phone.

Her calm voice echoed across the field.

Geng Haifan had to fight his urge to not seize the phone away from Ning Li.

"Just... let her finish."

Stopping her halfway would make the situation even worse than it already was.

Ning Li ignored everything that was happening behind her.

She tapped her phone and then something played.

"You are Ning Li, right? Do you know why we are here?"

The intimidating voice of a woman sounded through the broadcast.

The voice stunned everyone once again.

That was not Ning Li's voice and it sounded like...

"Look! Look at the screen!" Someone suddenly shouted.

In front of the field was a huge LED screen for display slides on special occasions.

It was only turned on during events.

The screen was dark but that was where the voice came from.

Everyone turned to the screen curiously. Even the students at the back started to push themselves forward.

"What is going on?"

"Is that voice calling out to Ning Li?"

Sun Quan and the other teachers were stunned.

Before the teachers could react, Ning Li's voice came from the screen.

"Are you here to teach me a lesson?"

Then, a man's voice also with an intimidating tone could be heard.

“Quite bright, I see.”

The black screen vigorously shook and the camera was turned on.

Ning Li appeared on the screen in her uniform, black bag and she was looking at the camera calmly.

The voice of the first woman could be heard again. “Kneel down, slap yourself 10 times, apologize and we will call this a day. How about that?”

Someone finally realized what was going on.

“Wait, this voice sounds like the voice of the girl who apologized in the video earlier!”

Everyone soon caught on.

The dots were soon connected and the bigger picture had been revealed.

These people had to pick on Ning Li first.

Ning Li said through the mic, “I clarify that, first, I will never kneel to anyone.”

Chapter 170: Tolerate Even If You Can't

The entire field plunged into silence, even the air seemed to have frozen.

Ning Li was making a bold move.

The other boys and girls in the video jeered, agreeing to their friend's suggestion.

Ning Li looked towards the camera and grinned.

“That’s it?”

She put her bag down as the group continued to mock her.

“Hey, little girl. What do you mean? Are you trying to challenge us? With that tiny body of yours? Do you really think that you are capable?”

Ning Li grinned into the camera.

“Oh, I’m not going to fight you guys.”

The screen then showed Ning Li grabbing her bag before moving to sit down on the side stairs.

Ning Li continued as she stood on stage, “I would like to clarify that when those people tried to start a fight, I refused. I then reasoned with them and made them realize their mistake.

Before I knew it, they said they wanted to kneel down and apologize to me. I didn’t stop them, so that was my fault.”

The entire field remained quiet.

The principal and the other teachers reacted bitterly.

Reasoned with them? Made them realize their mistakes?

If Ning Li had really reasoned with them, she would not have been the one counting 1 to 10.

Who would believe her? It was a blatant lie!

However, the video had clearly shown that Ning Li was not the one who had started the fight.

What would the school do about this now?

The screen then went black, seemingly marking the end of the video.

No one said a word even after the video had ended.

Ning Li's bold move shocked everyone.

She was really audacious. How had things ended up like this?

She then turned to where her class was standing.

Sun Huihui felt as if someone was looking at her.

She froze, and when she looked up, she happened to lock eyes with Ning Li.

Her gaze was calm and cold and injected anxiety into Sun Huihui's heart.

Sun Huihui's heart pounded fiercely, a strong unpleasant feeling spreading from the bottom of her heart.

Then, a familiar voice came from the dark screen.

"What else can I do? What's done is done! Should I trick Ning Li into going to the janitor's room again? Why would she believe me?"

The frustrated voice from the screen sounded extra irritated in front of the quiet audience.

Sun Huihui's eyes widened in shock—that was her voice!

The crowd gasped in shock.

“What’s going on? The video isn’t finished?”

“No way! This voice sounds different from the first one.”

“I think so, it sounds like another girl.”

The students from first class knew who the voice belonged to—Sun Huihui.

Everyone turned to her and saw her pale face.

“But you... You got locked up for a night and almost got punished by the school. Look at her now...”

Someone else was talking to Sun Huihui.

The girl who was talking to Sun Huihui was actually from the fourth class. Her face became as pale as paper when she heard her own voice.

The others around her stared at her suspiciously.

Those who were familiar with her had recognized her voice.

“She’s under the spotlight now! The first place in the city! Even the school looks at her differently now!”

“The girl with the good score is always right. The school is just going to cover it up for her. What can I do?”

“Oh right, Lil Xuan, I remember that you know some guys outside of school, right?”

The girl known as Lil Xuan was petrified when she heard her name from the screen.

Now, not only Sun Huihui, but even the other girl had been dragged into this.

The voices on the screen talked about finding someone from outside the school to ‘teach’ Ning Li a lesson. They discussed an elaborate plan, having made up their minds that they wanted Ning Li to pay.

The voice recording was only two minutes long, but it felt like an eternity to Sun Huihui and Lil Xuan.

Everyone finally realized that this whole thing had started because of Sun Huihui.

She had tried to lock Ning Li in the janitor’s room but had gotten locked inside instead.

She hated Ning Li for it, so she had found someone from outside the school to take revenge for her.

Ning Li had been a passive participant from start to finish. She had been forced to counterattack to protect herself.

It was clear that Sun Huihui was the culprit behind all this.

Ning Li put her phone away and looked at Sun Huihui.

“I would like to clarify that when Sun Huihui tried to lock me in the janitor’s room, I jumped out from the 2nd-floor window. Not only did I fail to fulfill her intention of locking me inside, but I also got angry and locked her inside instead.

I am willing to sincerely apologize to Sun Huihui because of that and I am willing to pay her medical and mental compensation.

Also, Sun Huihui got angry because of what I did to her and asked Xue Xuan to call her friends to 'teach' me a lesson. I did not appreciate that. Someone even took a video of me 'teaching' them a lesson, which has caused a problem for the teachers and the students.

I am sorry and I hereby promise that I will..."

She paused halfway and threw a sharp gaze at Sun Huihui.

"...Count faster."

Sun Huihui wanted to dash up to the stage and snatch the microphone away from Ning Li. However, her limbs were cold and numb, and her mind had gone blank. Her whole world was spinning and she could not move a muscle.

There had never been another moment in her life where she had felt so ruined—she was done for.

"I would like to clarify that recently, I have brought a lot of trouble to everyone and the school. I wholeheartedly accept the punishment from the school and promise that I will correct my attitude.

Lastly, I have two more things to say."

Ning Li grinned at Sun Huihui.

"I will still be the No.1 student and I will never learn to take a beating without fighting back. I ask for everyone to be more patient with me in the future. If you still can't put up with me, I ask you to try harder.

That is all for my clarification. Ning Li from third-year first class, thank you."

...

Back at the disciplinary office, Ning Li stood in front of Sun Quan, whose head was still hurting.

The man had not been able to calm down after the little farce that Ning Li had pulled on stage.

“You!”

He was pacing his office with his hands behind his back. He attempted to scold her a few times, but each time he choked on his words.

He did not even know where to begin.

He had taught many students before, but Ning Li was the first to make him feel so helpless.

Compared to him, Ning Li looked rather relaxed.

Geng Haifan looked around, rubbing his face in distress.

Sun Huihui and Xue Xuan were in the other office with their parents present.

Ning Li’s evidence was solid and it had been played in front of a crowd.

The school had to be strict in how they dealt with it.

Minor squabbles among classmates were almost inevitable but this was the second time that Sun Huihui had made a mistake.

The first time had been a serious matter, but the school had been lenient because it had been her first offense and she suffered for it.

Plus, the school had been careless the first time, so it had ended with both sides compromising.

This time, however, was different.

Reaching out to gangsters outside the school to bully one of her classmates was very serious. It was, to a certain extent, a crime.

Sun Quan's head hurt from thinking about the troubles that this situation would be causing. Things would only snowball from this point onwards.

"Ning Li, what kind of clarification was that?"