

Little Brat's 191

Chapter 191: Very Expensive

Ning Li had already read half of the book that she had borrowed from Lu Huaiyu.

Reading this one was indeed much better than reading the translated version.

When she flipped a page, her eyes suddenly widened.

There was a picture of a nebula on that page.

Since it was an astrophysics book, it was not strange to see such a diagram.

However, what stunned Ning Li were the handwritten numbers below this diagram.

8.17.

It seemed to be a date of some sort.

More importantly, the handwriting seemed to be Lu Huaiyu's, and it looked like it had been written a long time ago.

Since this was his book, it was perfectly normal for him to make notes in it. However, Lu Huaiyu was the type of person who would rarely leave any marks in a book.

When Ning Li had gone to his large study, she had looked through some of the books. She could see that while some books were more worn, some were still in pristine condition, even though he had probably read most of them.

However, all of those books were still clean without a single marking.

Thus, this number was very eye-catching.

8.17.

Ning Li suddenly recalled that the password of Yunding Fenghua had this number as well.

At first, she had not thought much about it, but now it seemed that this number was very important to him.

‘But... what did it represent?’

Ning Li fell into deep thought.

“Sister Ning Li?”

Ye Ci’s voice rang out and interrupted Ning Li’s thoughts.

Ning Li looked up and closed the book in her hand.

Ye Ci was standing next to Ning Li, who asked in a light voice, “Yes?”

Ye Ci’s eyes quickly swept over the book that Ning Li had pressed under her hand. It was a rather thick book with German words printed on the cover.

It was Ning Li’s extra-curricular reading material and it seemed to be a new book this time.

Ning Li would bring some of these books to read from time to time, and Ye Ci had not paid much attention to them. She figured that Ning Li read them casually to pass the time.

Ye Ci quickly withdrew her gaze and said, "Sister Ning Li, Mom said that she wanted to buy some clothes for you so she asked me to shop with you. When would you be free?"

She was certainly not referring to Ning Li's daily clothes.

The Ye family had some status in Yunzhou, so from time to time, they needed to be well-dressed to attend formal occasions.

Although Ning Li was an adopted daughter, she was now living with the Ye family and was considered one of them.

Su Yuan had wanted to prepare these things before, but Ning Li was stubborn and disobedient. That had made it difficult for Su Yuan to even talk to her calmly, let alone worry about these things.

When Old Master Cheng had celebrated his 70th birthday, Su Yuan had intended for Ning Li to borrow Ye Ci's gown first due to time constraints, but Ning Li had refused.

Su Yuan was angry with Ning Li, who had also made a scene at the birthday banquet, which caused a strain in the relationship between the Ye family and the Dai family. Thus, Su Yuan did not even consider shopping with Ning Li.

This Saturday, the Ye family was going to hold a celebration banquet at Jinsheng Hotel. They had invited many dignitaries in Yunzhou, so they certainly would not let Ning Li attend the event in just her school uniform.

That was why Su Yuan had asked Ye Ci to shop with Ning Li.

"I'm busy," Ning Li said.

Ye Ci frowned because Ning Li was merely reading a random book. If she had time to read these, she certainly had time to shop for a dress.

Ning Li was clearly doing this deliberately.

Ye Ci paused for a moment before saying nicely, "Sister Ning Li, this celebration banquet won't be as lavish as Old Master Cheng's birthday banquet previously, so you don't have to go through so much trouble to find a high-fashion gown. You can just pick a dress from this season's major brands. I can send you some of the catalogs, then you can take your pick and discuss it with Mom? Or, I could help you choose a few suitable ones for you first. I think GMY and Esya are both pretty good. That way, it won't waste a lot of your time."

She sounded so thoughtful.

"There's no need," Ning Li said, "You don't have to concern yourself with these things. I'll take care of it myself."

Ye Ci bit her lip.

Even if these brands were not high-fashion, the basic dresses from these brands already cost five or even six figures.

With Ning Li's background, how could she afford them?

Ning Li talked about it like it was nothing, insisting that she would take care of it. Why was she so confident?

Previously, Lu Huaiyu had bought Ning Li's gown. Was he going to buy another dress for her this time?

Ye Ci's voice was soft when she asked tentatively, "Sister Ning Li, even these dresses are not cheap. Our family isn't short of money, so it won't be appropriate if you still ask for Second Master Lu's help, don't you think?"

Several students around them looked over.

'Did Ning Li ask someone to buy her clothes?'

Ning Li wanted to laugh.

Not only did Ye Ci want to control her, but did she also want to control Lu Huaiyu?

Ning Li did not know who had given Ye Ci the confidence and audacity to do so.

She leaned back in her chair and looked at Ye Ci with slightly raised eyebrows and a smirk.

"Then, you should talk to him about this instead."

Ye Ci's face turned white.

She did not even have Lu Huaiyu's contact information, so how could she talk to him?

Besides, Lu Huaiyu had even cleared out the entire floor of HG just to pick a dress for Ning Li. It was clear as day that he was biased towards Ning Li.

Was there anything he could not do?

"Sister Ning Li, I didn't mean that. I... This celebration feast is mainly for you, so just think of it as respecting Mom and Dad, okay?"

They all knew who this celebration was actually for.

Ning Li laughed and said, "Ye Ci, I'm a little confused about what you mean by this. Didn't I already agree to attend the banquet? I've also said that I'll take care of the rest myself. How have I disrespected anyone? Of course, if Uncle Ye and the others can't trust me to do as I see fit and are worried that I'll be an embarrassment, I'm fine with not attending as well."

She had spoken with such nonchalance. Only she could speak such words so frankly.

Many people around them had heard it and could not help but marvel at Ning Li's boldness and unyielding attitude.

After the "self-reflection speech" that Ning Li had given in front of the school previously, everyone had gotten used to Ning Li's impertinence, so much so that they did not see anything wrong with what Ning Li had said this time.

Ye Ci furrowed her brows.

'How can Ning Li not attend? I only got fifth place while Ning Li got first place. If I go without Ning Li, what will other people say about it?'

"No, no, Sister Ning Li, please don't get upset. I-I just thought that you might not be familiar with these, so I wanted to help you pick one. Since you've said you can handle it, I'll talk to Mom."

They had offered to help Ning Li, but she had refused. If she made a fool of herself, it wouldn't be their fault.

Ning Li put her book away and took out a physics paper.

Ye Ci saw it and felt uncomfortable, so she quickly left.

He Xiaochen came over, feeling a little worried.

"Ning Li, those dresses do seem very expensive..."

Chapter 192: Her Last Name Is Ning

He Xiaochen had more or less heard about Ning Li's family background.

If Ning Li refused the Ye family's help, she certainly would not be able to afford those dresses herself.

He Xiaochen thought about it. This time, Ye Ci had come in fifth in the provincial physics competition, so the Ye family was sure to make a big show out of it.

Ning Li was sure to be pushed aside.

"Seems like it."

Ning Li thought about the brands that Ye Ci had mentioned earlier.

She could afford those dresses, but...she did not like them very much.

He Xiaochen cupped her cheeks, looking very worried.

"Then, what should we do? Obviously, you did much better than her in the exams..."

The Ye family had always been biased toward Ye Ci, and never gave Ning Li the same treatment.

"If only you could wear G&S's dresses! All of their dresses look stunning, but they're just too expensive!"

He Xiaochen had never really been a fan of fashion. However, her idol Tang Wei had recently become the brand ambassador for G&S, so she had brushed up on her knowledge on fashion.

Buzz.

Ning Li's phone on the table vibrated.

She took it out and looked at it. It was a message indicating a fund transfer from G&S's.

This was the first payment she had officially received after she had signed the contract with George.

It included the prize money she had received in the G&S Global Design Competition as well as the designer fees for the "Flower and Moon" collection and its related sales commission.

The "Flower and Moon" collection had a total of twelve ensembles.

This kind of luxury high-fashion was limited worldwide, and not many could get their hands on it even if they had money.

Thus, the number of transactions was very limited.

The good thing was that George was very sincere and had given Ning Li a sizable cut from each sale.

Looking at the few extra zeros in her bank account, Ning Li nodded her head in seriousness.

"Their brand is very premium..."

...

Yunzhou Airport.

George had just walked out of the airport when he sneezed violently.

"Why is Yunzhou colder than the Capital?" He muttered and rubbed his nose.

Many people nearby were looking at him.

With his towering height, proportionate body ratio, and exquisite sculpture-like face, George was easily the center of attention in any crowd.

His light chestnut hair moved with the wind and covered his sky blue eyes slightly, giving off an enchanting and beautiful vibe.

“Sir, where are you going? Do you need help?”

A stylish young woman approached him.

When she saw George’s face, she subconsciously blushed.

At a distance, she had already thought that this man was very handsome. She had not expected him to be so stunning up close. He truly was an extremely good-looking mixed-race man.

George swept a glance at the woman and smiled.

He was already handsome to begin with, so when he smiled, he just looked quite otherworldly.

“No, thank you.”

The woman was instantly disappointed, but she maintained her elegance and waved goodbye to him.

Looking at the woman’s gradually departing back, George shrugged regretfully.

If he had been on vacation, he might have agreed to this invitation. Unfortunately, he was on a business trip this time.

George was a man who always kept his private life and work very separate.

After looking around, George followed the signs and went outside. He soon saw a car parked at the gate.

A woman in a professional black suit saw him and quickly greeted him, "Welcome, Mr. George."

George looked at her and smiled. "Wen Qi?"

Wen Qi was stunned as she had not expected the heir of a prestigious family to actually know her name.

However, she was extremely professional and quickly smiled warmly.

"Yes, I'm Wen Qi. I didn't expect your Chinese to be so good."

George's trip had been very sudden.

They had only received news of it just before he got on the plane.

The regional and store managers of G&S in Yunzhou had an emergency meeting and had decided to send Wen Qi over to receive the heir.

Since Wen Qi had studied abroad before, it would be easier for her to communicate with the heir.

Now, it seemed as if they had been overthinking it.

However, it was reasonable for them to think that way. After all, George had only ever visited a small percentage of G&S stores worldwide.

Although Yunzhou was a big city, it was still no match for the Capital.

George followed Wen Qi to the car.

He had come so suddenly on this trip, that he had traveled light and had not brought anything with him.

Once the car was on the road, Wen Qi handed a document to George.

“Mr. George, this is the report for G&S’s three branches in Yunzhou...”

“I’m not going to read it.”

George simply refused as he leaned back lazily in his seat.

Wen Qi froze. ‘He didn’t want to look at it?’

“Then, I’ll put it aside for you tomorrow...”

“I won’t be looking at it tomorrow either.” George shook his head.

At first, Wen Qi had thought that George did not want to read it because he was tired from his journey, but it seemed like that was not the case.

The heir’s trip was not an impromptu inspection of Yunzhou’s branches performance.

“Then...”

“I’ll be taking a break tonight and strolling around Yunzhou tomorrow,” George said.

He had actually made this trip to look for Ning Li. He also wanted to see what kind of environment could have produced such a genius.

Wen Qi put everything away and nodded gently.

“Okay, I have booked the Presidential Suite for you at the Grand Hyatt Hotel. I’ll be at your disposal during your trip here.”

...

Saturday night.

Jinsheng Hotel.

The banquet hall on the first floor was very lively with people mingling around.

The Ye family’s princess had gotten fifth in the provincial physics competition, so the Ye family had specially invited many of Yunzhou’s dignitaries to celebrate her achievement.

“The Ye family really spoils Ye Ci. Even a celebration banquet is so grand.”

“She placed fifth in the entire province. Of course, they have to show off. I even heard that both of the Ye family’s daughters managed to get the provincial awards this time. Ning Li, the one they adopted some time ago, placed first in the whole province!”

A woman laughed. “This celebration banquet has been organized by the Ye family, but that girl’s last name is Ning.”

Chapter 193: Kid, Come Get Your Candy

Jinsheng Hotel was owned by the Ye family, so everyone knew who this celebration banquet was being held for.

After all, Ning Li was only Su Yuan's daughter from her previous marriage and not really related to the Ye family.

"That's true. In that case, the Ye family is being very nice to her. If she was still with her previous family, they surely wouldn't even be able to afford such a venue, right?"

"Actually, the gap between first and fifth place isn't that big. At the very least, it's not as big as the gap between their families."

"Yeah. I heard that the Ye family bid for the Qinghe Bridge project. They can definitely earn back whatever they spend now with that project."

The person who spoke looked envious.

"I heard that the Ji family's bidding price was extremely close and only missed by a hair. What a pity."

"Hey, they're here..."

The door to the banquet hall opened.

Ye Ming took the lead and walked in, greeting the crowd as he approached.

He was clearly in a good mood today.

With the Qinghe Bridge project progressing well and Ye Ci's achievement, it was no wonder he looked like that.

Tonight's celebration banquet was not very big. The Ye family had only invited less than thirty people of a certain status in Yunzhou that had good relations with them.

On the second floor.

Ye Ci was all decked out that night.

She wore a navy blue maxi dress and her hair had been pulled up with a diamond hairpin.

Ye Ci wore light makeup, which made her look very innocent and ladylike.

She walked out of her room and knocked on the next door, "Sister Ning Li, it's almost time. Shall we go?"

In the afternoon, Ning Li had said that she had an errand to run and would come to the hotel by herself in the evening.

It was almost time for them to go downstairs.

In a moment, the room door was opened from the inside.

When Ye Ci saw Ning Li behind the door, she was stunned.

Ning Li wore a white, knee-length sleeveless dress that revealed her beautiful and slender calves.

Her soft, lustrous long hair had been curled slightly at the ends and draped over her shoulders.

Ning Li did not wear any makeup, but her skin was flawless. It made her big eyes seem extraordinarily bright.

Her outfit was incredibly simple. The aloofness in her eyes made her seem more untouchable.

Even Ye Ci had to admit that Ning Li's face was truly impeccable.

Ye Ci smiled stiffly and covered up the jealousy that surged violently in her heart with a laugh.

“Sister Ning Li, your dress is beautiful. I’ve never seen it before.”

Ye Ci had seen every dress from all major brands, but she had never seen the one Ning Li wore.

‘Is this from an unknown brand? It doesn’t look cheap though...’

Ning Li stepped forward and closed the door behind her.

As she walked, the inconspicuous embroidery on the hem of her dress gradually appeared, like the gentle moonlight.

Ye Ci saw it and was suddenly shocked.

‘The embroidery on her dress seems to be from...G&S?’

Ning Li’s dress was indeed from G&S.

To be precise, George had sent it to Ning Li.

As the heir of G&S, George would sometimes participate in the design and release of certain products as a consultant of sorts.

Only occasionally would he personally design something when he was in the mood to do so.

However, those were usually not for sale to the public and were kept as a collection to be enjoyed by himself.

Because of this, he even had his own production line.

Previously, Ning Li had mentioned that she was looking for a dress, so George had immediately picked a few and sent her several boxes of them.

Ning Li had stored them all in her rented apartment and had gone there this afternoon to pick one.

As Ye Ci stood there uncertainly, Su Yuan called out to them. "Lil Ci, Ning Li, it's time to go!"

Ye Ci turned around and saw Su Yuan walking over as she lifted the hem of her gown.

"Mom, have you been waiting for a long time?"

She took Su Yuan's hand naturally and leaned in close.

Ning Li was one step behind as she followed them downstairs, with an indifferent look on her face.

...

"Hello, Uncle Sun."

"Auntie Liu, it's been a long time since I saw you."

The guests present were all acquaintances of the Ye family, so Su Yuan took Ye Ci around to greet them one by one.

The way they treated Ye Ci was also very cordial.

"Lil Ci, you're getting more beautiful by the day!"

“She’s not just pretty, she also has the brains! Lil Ci got fifth place this time in the provincial physics competition. Su Yuan, I really envy you guys for having such an outstanding daughter like Lil Ci. My child is a far cry from Lil Ci and only knows how to play games all day long...”

Although these were just perfunctory words, Su Yuan still felt very flattered.

She beamed as she took Ye Ci’s hand.

“It’s all because of Lil Ci’s efforts. She stayed up late every night just to study for this competition and refused to go to bed early. She insisted on finishing all her study materials before she was willing to rest.”

Ye Ci gently pulled her back.

“Mom, don’t exaggerate. I was just lucky this time and happened to study the questions that came out. Moreover, Sister Ning Li did better than me.”

When Ning Li was mentioned, the surroundings became quiet for a moment.

Although Ning Li had come with them, the crowd still ignored her presence and only talked to Su Yuan and Ye Ci.

It was as if they had all forgotten that Ning Li had done better than Ye Ci in the competition.

All the liveliness, celebration, and laughter had nothing to do with Ning Li.

“Speaking of which, why didn’t the Ji family come today?” Someone broke the silence. “I’ll make a phone call.”

A moment later, she hung up the phone with a confused expression.

Su Yuan asked, "What's wrong? Are they stuck in traffic?"

The woman looked embarrassed and replied, "No. They're...not coming tonight."

"Not coming?" Su Yuan frowned.

Even if they were still hung up about the Qinghe Bridge project, they should not be acting like that.

When had the Ji family become so calculative?

"Mrs. Ji said that they're attending Second Master Lu's party tonight."

The crowd was shocked.

"Second Master Lu? Lu Huaiyu?"

"I thought he laid low in Yunzhou and rejected most visits from people. Why would he hold a party this time?"

The woman clutched her phone and looked confused.

"I don't know either. All I know is that Second Master Lu seems to be having a party tonight at the Grand Hyatt."

Just as the woman finished her sentence, Ning Li's phone vibrated.

[Come get your candy.]

It was a message from Lu Huaiyu.

Chapter 194: I'm Coming to Pick You Up

There was an address attached to the bottom of the message.

Grand Hyatt Hotel.

Ning Li blinked.

“What kind of party is Second Master Lu suddenly hosting? I haven’t heard about any of his recent activity in Yunzhou.”

“Who knows? Anyway, Mr. and Mrs. Ji have already gone over there. It sounds like they’re not the only ones who went too...”

Several people whispered among themselves.

Su Yuan frowned.

At this moment, Ye Ming also walked over. “What’s going on? What are you talking about?”

Su Yuan turned back to him and told him what had happened.

The smile on Ye Ming’s face froze.

Ye Ci spoke hesitantly, “But...didn’t Uncle Ji already say that they were coming?”

They had sent out the invitations to the celebration banquet two days ago, and the Ji family had replied to the RSVP.

Now, they had bailed at the last minute.

This was quite rude of them.

The woman who had called the Jis earlier interjected, "Apparently, Second Master Lu sent out the invitation this afternoon, so..."

It looked like Lu Huaiyu was deliberately stealing their guests.

Ye Ci slowly clenched her fists, and her lips were tightly pursed.

The Ji family had disrespected the Ye family.

Ye Ming took a deep breath. "I'll go make a phone call."

He then walked off to the side and took out his phone to call Ji Wenyan.

Ye Ci looked at Su Yuan. "Mom..."

Su Yuan gently patted her hand to comfort her.

The other women present looked at each other. None of them said anything.

The situation has already come to this. What else was there to say?

The Ye family's invitation had been important, but how could it compare to Lu Huaiyu's?

Lu Huaiyu was very famous in the Capital and had been in Yunzhou for almost a year, but so far, he had been very low-key.

So many people wished to build a relationship with him, but people rarely saw him around.

This was the first banquet that Second Master Lu had hosted. Was it not surprising that no-one would not want to seize this opportunity to attend?

In comparison, the Ye family's celebration party for Ye Ci was not really worth mentioning.

Even if this irked the Ye family, the Ji family clearly did not care.

It was simply common sense as to which was the better deal.

Ye Ming returned after the phone call.

"Lil Ci, Uncle Ji said that he had some last-minute plans, so he can't come over today. He'll make it up to you another day..."

Before he could finish his sentence, his phone rang again.

He looked at it and went aside to answer it.

Ye Ci frowned because she had seen that the caller was Cheng Baiqing.

Just as the Ji family had said they were not coming, the Cheng family was now calling as well...

A trace of uneasiness surged in her heart.

Soon, Ye Ming returned with a glum face.

"Your Uncle Cheng also said that they're not coming..."

There was dead silence all around.

At this point, everyone could guess what was happening.

Lu Huaiyu had intercepted these people who were supposed to attend Ye Ci's celebration banquet.

He had even chosen to hold his party at the Grand Hyatt, which was right across the street from Jinsheng Hotel.

There was no way Lu Huaiyu had not been aware of the Ye family's arrangements this evening. It was clearly an intentional move, but what was his intention for doing that?

Su Yuan walked up to Ye Ming looking worried and anxious. "What's going on? Did we offend him?"

Ye Ming was also annoyed. "How would I know?"

He had not spoken more than ten words to that man. How could he have offended him?

As for the project, that was even more impossible.

They did not have any business dealings with each other. Moreover, the size of the Ye family's business was very small compared to the Lu Corporation, so there was no possibility of any competitiveness between them.

Ye Ming was also baffled.

The gentry of Yunzhou consisted of the Cheng, the Ji, and the Ye families.

Now that the Cheng family and the Ji family had refused to attend a banquet held by the Ye family, it was equivalent to a slap in the face for the Ye family.

Ye Ming suddenly remembered something and looked around.

At this point, it would have been reasonable for most of their guests to have arrived. However, only less than half of their guest list had attended.

Su Yuan's phone rang as well.

After answering the call, her face became even more sullen.

"Mrs. Yu and the girls aren't coming either."

It was clear as day where everyone who had not attended their party had gone.

News soon spread throughout the banquet hall, which made the atmosphere tense.

The Ye family had invited nearly thirty people, but half of their guests had gone to Lu Huaiyu's party at the Grand Hyatt across the street from them.

The remaining half had only stayed because they had not been deemed as qualified to receive an invitation by Lu Huaiyu.

This banquet that should have been a lively celebration had now become very awkward with everyone looking at each other apprehensively.

Ning Li turned around and walked outside.

Su Yuan immediately said, "Ning Li, where are you going?"

Ning Li said in a light voice, "I'm going to get something."

Su Yuan's brow furrowed even tighter.

What was Ning Li getting at this hour?

She did not seem to have left anything behind either.

Soon, Su Yuan realized that Ning Li was not heading upstairs, but towards the main entrance of the hotel.

Su Yuan took a few steps forward and blocked her way. She said impatiently, "What's so important that you have to get it now?"

She was already in a horrible mood because of the bad turnout at Ye Ci's celebration banquet.

It was at this precise time that Ning Li wanted to leave to get something. Was she too slow-witted to have noticed the situation?

"The banquet is starting now, so get whatever you need later."

No matter what, this banquet had to go on. Otherwise, it would be even more unpleasant if word got out.

Ning Li's eyes narrowed slightly. "It's very important."

She then bypassed Su Yuan to leave.

Su Yuan looked at her with disbelief.

She knew that Ning Li was stubborn and disobedient, but she had not expected Ning Li to behave like this in front of so many people.

Su Yuan grabbed Ning Li's wrist. "Ning Li! This is a celebration banquet for you and Lil Ci!"

Ning Li turned around and looked down at Su Yuan's hand that was holding her wrist.

Long ago, Ning Li had wanted this person to take her hand, but now, she loathed her touch.

"Please let go of me. I have something to do."

Su Yuan was so furious that she did not listen to what Ning Li had to say.

The Ye family had endured enough humiliation for the day. If Ning Li left now, it would be even more embarrassing for them.

Ning Li frowned.

Just as she was contemplating what she should do, a deep, nonchalant voice suddenly came from behind her.

"Excuse me."

The entire banquet hall suddenly fell silent as everyone looked in the direction of the voice.

A tall, dapper young man appeared just outside the door of the banquet hall.

He had donned a black suit with a black shirt and casually stood there, attracting everyone's attention.

That was Lu Huaiyu.

Everyone was puzzled as to why Lu Huaiyu had appeared here.

‘Wasn’t he...’

Ye Ming was the first to react. He quickly stepped forward. “Second Master Lu...”

“I’m sorry to disturb your party, but...” Lu Huaiyu interrupted his words with a smile. Even as he apologized, his tone still sounded as noble and cold as usual.

Ye Ming paused in his footsteps.

Lu Huaiyu glanced at his watch before looking straight at Ning Li, who was in the hall. He raised his eyebrows and smiled lightly.

“Lili, why are you so slow? Everyone’s waiting for you.”

Chapter 195: Hold Hands

The banquet hall fell into a dead silence.

For a moment, there were too many hidden meanings in Lu Huaiyu’s words to process which caused everyone to be too stunned to react.

‘Lili? Was he calling...Ning Li?’

‘What did he mean when he said “everyone is waiting”?’

In an instant, an absurd conjecture surfaced in everyone’s minds.

Finally, someone looked at Ning Li in shock.

‘Could it be...?’

Was Lu Huaiyu’s party at the Grand Hyatt this evening meant for Ning Li?

Su Yuan was also frozen in place. She looked at Lu Huaiyu, then at Ning Li, momentarily speechless.

Lu Huaiyu’s gaze fell on Su Yuan’s hand. The glare from his eyes was icy.

“Mrs. Ye.” He spoke clearly and coldly. “I’m here to pick Ning Li up tonight. Please let go of her.”

His eyes were so cold that Su Yuan’s heart trembled, and she subconsciously let go of Ning Li’s hand.

Ning Li then walked towards Lu Huaiyu.

Everything seemed to happen in slow motion, and the air seemed to have frozen.

The only thing that moved was Ning Li, who kept walking forward.

Lu Huaiyu watched as she walked up to him.

It was rare to see her in a dress. Her wavy long hair fell softly over her shoulders, covering her slender neck. Her white knee-length dress showed off her slim waist and beautiful long legs.

The sight of her dress swaying gently as she walked taunted him.

His eyes turned slightly darker at this sight.

“Second Brother.”

Ning Li stood in front of him and tilted her head slightly to look at him.

Her small face was so fair and smooth. Her eyebrows were delicate and framed her sparkling eyes.

Lu Huaiyu looked at her intensely before his thin lips curled up slightly.

“Congratulations, Lili.”

This was the first congratulations Ning Li had received this evening, so she felt touched.

In the next moment, Lu Huaiyu pulled her wrist at the same spot where Su Yuan had grabbed her earlier.

His warm, strong palm easily wrapped around her small, slender wrist.

Lu Huaiyu’s fingers were slightly calloused, so his touch felt slightly rough.

Ning Li’s heart clenched.

Just as the two of them were about to leave, Ye Ci suddenly spoke. “Second Master Lu.”

Lu Huaiyu paused in his footsteps and turned to look to the side.

Ye Ci’s throat felt a little dry, but she still managed to gather enough courage and said, “Are you asking Sister Ning Li to be your female companion this evening? This celebration banquet tonight is specifically for me and Sister Ning Li. I’m afraid it would not be appropriate for Sister Ning Li to leave now...”

“Oh, is that so?” Lu Huaiyu laughed. “What a coincidence. The star of the party at the Grand Hyatt is also Lili. It would also be inappropriate if she doesn’t attend.”

Ye Ci's face instantly paled.

When she had heard Lu Huaiyu's words earlier, she had still held a glimmer of hope that perhaps she had been overthinking things.

With his status, why would he go to such lengths for a commoner like Ning Li?

He had been in Yunzhou for almost a year and rarely attended such occasions. He had not even hosted a single banquet during his time here. Why was he making such a big deal, just because Ning Li got first place in the provincial physics competition?

Lu Huaiyu looked around and took a glass of champagne from the waiter's tray next to him. He then gave a toast and said in his nonchalant tone, "I'm taking Lili away now, so we won't bother you all any longer. Enjoy your party!"

After saying that, he downed the glass of champagne and put down the flute. He then looked to Ning Li who was by his side and said in a deep voice, "Can you come with me now?"

...

The two figures quickly disappeared beyond the door and left the guests in the banquet hall looking at each other with confusion.

It was an extremely awkward atmosphere.

Even though everyone knew that this banquet was mainly for Ye Ci and that Ning Li was merely a companion, the situation felt strange now that Ning Li was gone.

The guests who were supposed to have come here were now at the Grand Hyatt across the street, waiting to celebrate Ning Li's achievement.

To put it bluntly, the ones who remained at Jinsheng Hotel were no one to Lu Huaiyu.

Many of them even began to secretly reflect on why they had not received an invitation from Lu Huaiyu.

How could the Ye family compare with Lu Huaiyu?

It was obvious which of the two parties a sane person would go to.

Even Ye Ming, who was usually calm, was now feeling a bit tense. He looked extraordinarily gloomy.

‘Should we even continue this party? Even if we continued, the star of the party was not even here! If we don’t, how should I clean up this mess?’

Su Yuan went over to Ye Ci and comforted her in a soft voice. “Lil Ci...”

Ye Ci’s head hung low, and the corners of her eyes were slightly red.

Seeing her like this, Su Yuan choked up and did not know what else to say.

Ye Ci lifted her head and forced a smile.

“Mom, I’m fine. Let’s continue, shall we?”

...

Ning Li followed Lu Huaiyu out of the banquet hall and left the hotel.

She looked over at Lu Huaiyu several times as she wondered if he was alright since he had downed that glass of champagne earlier.

Although the alcohol percentage in champagne was not high, Ning Li had witnessed Lu Huaiyu's low tolerance to alcohol. Thus, she was a little worried.

Lu Huaiyu could not help but laugh. "What are you peeking at? Am I too handsome?"

Ning Li blushed. Only then did she realize how misleading her actions were.

"I wasn't peeking," she said in a small voice.

Lu Huaiyu suddenly stood still.

Ning Li was stunned. She then felt Lu Huaiyu let go of her hand to take off his suit jacket.

In the next second, his jacket that still carried his body heat was draped over her shoulders.

Before she could come out of her daze, she suddenly felt his touch again.

He gently wrapped her hand in his.

Chapter 196: Bring Her

Ning Li's eyelashes fluttered gently.

In the next second, something was shoved into her palm.

She froze slightly.

Lu Huaiyu had already let go of her hand.

“I wanted to give this to you when you arrived, but you never came, so I had to come over.”

Ning Li opened her palm and saw a golden foil-wrapped spherical hazelnut praline chocolate candy.

She suppressed the slight ripples in her heart and said, “Thanks, Second Brother.”

Lu Huaiyu had never mentioned anything about hosting a party before this, so even she was stunned.

“Let’s go, Uncle Cheng and the others are waiting.”

Lu Huaiyu tightened his jacket around her as he said that.

Ning Li was already slim, so with his jacket draped over her, she looked even smaller.

It was almost winter in Yunzhou, so it was especially cold at night. It was fine to wear very light clothing in the hotel because of the heating, but it was cold when they walked outside.

Ning Li nodded and followed him out of the Jinsheng Hotel.

...

The Grand Hyatt was a bigger and more luxurious hotel that was just across the street from Jinsheng. It was also a landmark building in the whole of Yunzhou.

Just as Lu Huaiyu brought Ning Li to the entrance, someone immediately came forward to greet them.
“Second Master, Ms. Ning.”

Lu Huaiyu nodded gently and looked at Ning Li again. “Are you cold?”

Ning Li shook her head.

The temperature outside was indeed low, but the two hotels were only separated by one street. It had not been a long walk, so she felt fine.

“Little Ning Li, you’re finally here!”

Cheng Xiyue walked towards them and smiled as he teased. “I was wondering what was taking Second Master Lu so long to pick you up. I thought that maybe he had abducted you.”

Lu Huaiyu gave him a sidelong glance. “Nonsense. The Ye family were having a party. Since I was there, it was only right for me to congratulate them.”

Cheng Xiyue rubbed his chin as he thought, ‘Tsk tsk... What is he even saying? If not for him, half of the Ye family’s guest list wouldn’t be here. He was even hosting the banquet right across from Jinsheng as a blatant slap to their faces. Congratulate them, my *ss...’

He was surprised that Ye Ming had not gotten a heart attack from the anger.

It was bad enough to offend Lu Huaiyu, but today, Cheng Xiyue had found out that offending Ning Li was even worse.

With the mind games Lu Huaiyu liked to play, he knew just how to torment the Ye family.

The entire Yunzhou would know about both parties today.

By then, the Ye family would become the laughing stock of the city.

Ning Li said, “Brother Xiyue, I’m sorry to have kept you guys waiting.”

Cheng Xiyue laughed and said, “I’m just kidding. You’re the star of the day, so everyone can’t wait to see you! Let’s go and show them what it’s like to be number one in the provincial physics competition!”

...

At the VIP banquet hall on the ninth floor of the Grand Hyatt Hotel.

As Ning Li entered with Lu Huaiyu and Cheng Xiyue, she saw many familiar faces.

Besides the Cheng and the Ji families, there were also some others with considerable status and prestige in Yunzhou.

There were not many people in attendance, but all of them were extremely influential.

Lu Huaiyu walked ahead. "I've kept you all waiting."

The crowd hurriedly responded.

They had all been dying to meet Second Master Lu since his arrival in Yunzhou, but had never got the chance to. Now that they had received his rare invitation, it was nothing for them to have to wait a while.

Except for Cheng Xiyue and a few others, most of the guests had not known the purpose of Lu Huaiyu's party tonight. It was not until Lu Huaiyu had left the table and brought back a young lady with him that things started to become clearer.

After all, some guests present were well-informed. Thus, it was during the time Lu Huaiyu had gone to pick Ning Li up that everyone found out the details about the situation.

— Second Master Lu's party tonight was for Ning Li.

— Who was Ning Li? Was she the Ye family's adopted daughter that they picked up some time ago?

— What was their relationship that made Second Master Lu behave so attentively towards her?

The last question was what they were most concerned about.

Someone then remembered that Lu Huaiyu had even hit someone at Old Master Cheng's 70th birthday, all because of a girl. That girl appeared to be Ning Li.

The most intriguing point was that at this moment at the Jinsheng Hotel across the street, the Ye family was hosting a celebration banquet for Ye Ci.

Anyone with a discerning eye could see that Lu Huaiyu had done this as a show of support for Ning Li.

Thus, everyone's gaze fell on Ning Li with curiosity and scrutiny.

...

"Sister Li." Ji Shu took the lead and walked over.

Ji Shu had always been frank and unrestrained, unlike other people who were reserved and polite. Plus, he had also known that today's party had been specially organized by Lu Huaiyu for Ning Li, so he had an even more relaxed attitude.

Someone would always give her what the Ye family did not.

"Sister Li, how could you not tell me? If I hadn't heard my parents mention it, I would've missed the celebration!"

Originally, Ji Shu's parents had planned on going to Jinsheng and wanted to take him along.

However, he could not be bothered to deal with the Ye family and had refused without much thought.

Just as his parents were about to leave, he had heard that there had been a last-minute change and that they were going to Lu Huaiyu's party at the Grand Hyatt instead.

Ji Shu had met Lu Huaiyu several times, so he had immediately asked Cheng Xiyue about it. He found out that his guess had been right. This party was being held for Ning Li.

He had then hopped into the car and came over with his parents.

Ning Li smiled a little helplessly. "I didn't know about this beforehand either."

"What?" Ji Shu was a bit surprised, but looking at Ning Li's sincere expression, he knew that what she said was true.

He scratched his head. After a while, he smiled. 'Second Master Lu is really something...'

"Second Master Lu, so this young lady must be Ning Li?"

Ji Wenyan and his wife walked over and looked at Ning Li with kind eyes.

"Ji Shu has mentioned Ning Li several times. We only met very briefly at the Cheng's mansion previously. I didn't expect that she would achieve such outstanding results!"

The first time most of them had seen Ning Li was at Old Master Cheng's birthday banquet. However, at that time, the topic surrounding her had been inseparable from her origins.

Almost no one had cared about what she was really like.

However, it was completely different now.

Ning Li had come in first at the provincial physics competition as well as first in the city for the midterms. These facts were enough to change everyone's opinion about Ning Li.

Moreover, Lu Huaiyu was standing beside her now.

There was also another reason Ji Shu's parents were so affectionate towards Ning Li.

It was because Ning Li had been the reason that Ji Shu had stopped riding motorcycles.

There was nothing wrong with boys liking these things, but in their opinion, it was too dangerous. They had tried to advise Ji Shu many times, but he had always refused to listen.

Somehow, he had stopped because of Ning Li.

Thus, they had always had a good impression of Ning Li.

Today, after getting a closer look at her, they liked her even more.

Even without her excellent grades, the girl was beautiful with such a rare and calm temperament.

"If only Ji Shu was half as good as you, then we wouldn't need to worry so much."

As Mrs. Ji said this, her eyes were full of appreciation and admiration as she looked at Ning Li.

"You're welcome to come to our house any time!"

When the other guests saw this, they were stunned.

How was it that Ning Li had such a good relationship not only with Lu Huaiyu, but also with the Ji family?

Ning Li was about to speak when Lu Huaiyu, who was beside her, suddenly laughed and said, "I'll definitely bring Lili over to visit you someday."

Chapter 197: Strict Family

Ning Li was speechless.

'Mrs. Ji only invited me, didn't she? How did Lu Huaiyu somehow involve himself?'

Mrs. Ji's eyes hovered over Lu Huaiyu and Ning Li for a moment. Her smile deepened as she said, "Then, that's a promise!"

Ji Shu was beside them, feeling a bit confused as he listened.

His parents were aware that their son and Ning Li were close, so it would be normal for them to invite her to their house. How had it turned into Lu Huaiyu bringing Ning Li to visit them?

Ji Wenyan liked Ning Li very much as well.

The relationship between the Ji family and the Ye family was not very close. After the Ye family had won the bid for the Qinghe Bridge project by a hair, Ji Wenyan was now even less fond of them.

He had only agreed to attend their event this time purely out of courtesy.

Thus, the moment he had received an invitation from Lu Huaiyu, he had immediately changed his plans.

Although Ning Li now lived with the Ye family and was their nominal adopted daughter, everyone could see how they treated her.

Since Ning Li's last name was not Ye, everyone did not treat her as part of the Ye family.

It was not easy for a young girl from a poor background to grow up to be so outstanding.

Their son was simply no match for her.

No wonder Lu Huaiyu and Cheng Xiyue were so protective of her.

Her gentle, docile look really tugged at people's heartstrings.

Cheng Baiqing walked over with a smile on his face. "Ning Li, I heard that you will be participating in the national finals soon? There are only five representatives in the whole province, right?"

Ning Li nodded her head.

Cheng Baiqing gave her a thumbs up. "You're so much smarter than Xiangxiang."

Cheng Xiyue snickered. "Dad, with Cheng Xiangxiang's grades, it's already a miracle that she can handle the college entrance exams, let alone this competition. Why did you even mention her?"

His father glared at him. 'How could this boy talk about his cousin like that?'

Unfortunately, Cheng Baiqing knew that what his son had said was the truth, so there was no way he could refute it.

Besides, Cheng Xiyue was the most outstanding among the younger generation of the Cheng family, so he was indeed qualified to say this.

Cheng Xiyue was fearless.

His father loved his brother and had always been very lenient towards his niece. However, Cheng Xiyue was not.

Cheng Xiangxiang was spoiled, willful, and presumptuous. Even after being reprimanded several times, she was still unrepentant.

After a while, Cheng Xiyue did not bother to pay any attention to her.

Since her parents had taught her to be that way, there was no one else to blame.

They were all talking to each other in a small group, which puzzled the other guests a little.

“What’s going on? The Ji and the Cheng families seem to be very fond of Ning Li.”

“How else can they treat her? Lu Huaiyu’s so protective of her. Wouldn’t this be normal?”

“I don’t think it’s because of that... They just seem to be quite close to Ning Li...”

“Didn’t they say she came from a very average background? Then what is this...”

The waiter served some champagne.

Lu Huaiyu took a glass for Ning Li.

Ning Li looked at it and saw that it was only juice.

It was clear that Lu Huaiyu had ordered it beforehand.

Another person came over to exchange pleasantries. “Second Master Lu, you seem to be in such a good mood today!”

The corners of Lu Huaiyu's lips curved up slightly. "That's mainly because this kid did well on her exams."

That man immediately congratulated Ning Li with a smile.

Ning Li's grades were excellent, but Lu Huaiyu was also known for his excellence in academics.

Even if he had scored like this on his own exams, he probably would not have done anything so grand.

Thus, it was not difficult to see how important Ning Li was to Second Master Lu.

One after another, more people came over to shower Ning Li with compliments.

Ning Li was no longer standing there as the adopted daughter of the Ye family.

Lu Huaiyu stood next to her protectively.

"You should rest for a while. I'll be back later," Lu Huaiyu said as he leaned down slightly.

Ning Li nodded.

She knew very well that this party was hosted by Lu Huaiyu and that these people had only attended it because of him.

They were only here to meet Lu Huaiyu.

In any case, he had to socialize a little.

Just as Lu Huaiyu was about to leave, she looked at the jacket she was wearing and said, "Second Brother, your coat..."

Lu Huaiyu's gaze fell on her body.

She had already taken off half of the suit jacket, revealing her smooth shoulder and beautiful neckline. Her skin was so delicate and clear as if it could glow.

His eyes focused on her a while before he smiled and said, "Drape it on. It's cold."

Ning Li paused in her movements.

'Cold? I think that the heating in the Grand Hyatt is quite sufficient.'

However, when she saw Lu Huaiyu's eyes, she silently swallowed her words. "Okay..."

Lu Huaiyu saw her draping the jacket over her shoulders before nodding in satisfaction. He then turned to leave.

"By the way..." Ning Li suddenly remembered something and took a step forward.

Lu Huaiyu turned to her. "What's wrong?"

At this moment, everyone else had already scattered about, which left them standing there close together.

Lu Huaiyu looked down and saw that the hem of her dress was touching his clothes.

However, she did not seem to be aware of this. She only looked up at him slightly and spoke with a little hesitation, "Second Brother, you...should drink less."

Lu Huaiyu had only hosted this party for her.

Otherwise, with his usual style, he would have never hosted a party in Yunzhou.

Thus, Ning Li truly appreciated it.

If Lu Huaiyu got drunk this evening, she would feel guilty.

Thinking about the way he looked the last time he was drunk, Ning Li felt that she had to persuade him not to.

Lu Huaiyu tilted his head to look at her for a while before he laughed. "Okay."

....

Once Lu Huaiyu went over to the other side of the room, someone came up to him with a drink in hand.

Lu Huaiyu put the glass down and politely declined. "Sorry, I'm not drinking today."

The person across from him looked surprised.

"I heard that Second Master Lu has quite a high alcohol tolerance. Are you..."

"Don't misunderstand."

Lu Huaiyu raised his eyebrows and chuckled.

"My family is strict, so I'll drink tea instead of wine."

Chapter 198: Lu Huaiyu's Scent

The man was a little surprised by Lu Huaiyu's words.

The Lu family was prestigious, and Lu Huaiyu himself was infamous for his proud and arrogant attitude in the Capital.

He had always done things on his own accord.

The man had even heard that Old Master Lu was not able to control him. However, Lu Huaiyu was indeed a rare talent, so the old man had eventually turned a blind eye to his behavior.

Now, Lu Huaiyu said that his family was strict with him?

Old Master Lu was thousands of kilometers away. How could he keep an eye on Lu Huaiyu?

However, since Lu Huaiyu had said that he would not drink, no one dared to persuade him otherwise.

Besides, they had not come over to drink today.

The other party quickly smiled and responded, changing the topic of conversation.

...

Ning Li sat down on the sofa next to her.

Ji Shu looked around, feeling bored, so he went over to Ning Li.

“Sister Li, I’ll be going to the Capital soon.”

Ji Shu pulled over a chair and sat down next to her.

Ning Li thought about it for a moment. “Is LY’s training going to start?”

Ji Shu smiled and his face lit up with excitement at the mention of this.

“Yup!”

After signing the contract, Ji Shu had officially joined LY.

His daily training and preparation for the competition would gradually increase.

Ji Shu was incredibly excited. “It’s a pity that you can’t come along, Sister Li.”

This was the only thing that Ji Shu felt regretful about.

Ning Li glanced at him. “It’s only so that you would have someone to fix your car whenever and wherever you want, right?”

Ji Shu’s thoughts were exposed, so he immediately retorted. “I wouldn’t do that, Sister Li! Do I look like that kind of person to you?”

Ning Li nodded seriously. “Yes.”

Ji Shu was speechless, but he still wanted to show his loyalty.

“Sister Li, I swear! I really didn’t think of that. Okay, maybe just a little... Like really, really only just for a moment.”

He stretched out two fingers and made a tiny gesture.

“I’m just afraid that no one will be there to guide me if I go over by myself...”

Ning Li took a sip of juice. “LY is very professional in this area. You don’t need to worry.”

Ji Shu was very talented and full of enthusiasm. It was only a matter of time before he made his mark in the industry.

He was destined to be on the track.

Ji Shu shrugged his shoulders and sighed.

He did not deny this, but he was not sure whether those people would be better than Ning Li.

“Sister Li, it’s just too bad that you’re not going.”

Ning Li did not say anything because Ji Shu did not know about Gu Siyang’s offer to her.

Thus, Ji Shu was unaware of the fact that Ning Li had agreed to consider joining LY after the college entrance exams.

There was no need to tell him at this stage. It would not be too late to cross that bridge when it came to it.

Ji Shu crossed his leg, looked inside the banquet hall, and sighed.

“Speaking of which, Sister Li, Second Master Lu must be crazy about you.”

Ning Li’s heart stuttered slightly.

Ji Shu raised his chin.

“He’s been in Yunzhou for so long. Yet, this is the first time he’s hosting a party and it’s all for you. I don’t think a biological brother would do this, right?”

Aside from a biological brother, even Ning Li’s own biological mother was across the street at the Jinsheng Hotel celebrating with Ye Ci instead.

Ji Shu could not help but laugh and tease her. “What is he thinking anyway? Does he actually treat you like his own child?”

Ning Li put her glass down on the table, which made a slight thud.

Ji Shu saw it and recalled what had happened the last time they were at the bar.

“Oh, right, did anything happen last time when you went back?”

Ning Li was expressionless. “No.”

Ji Shu rubbed his chin and nodded. “I knew it. Although it’s not good to be in a bar, you didn’t even drink. Second Master Lu’s quite strict. Look at my parents! They don’t control me, but I still turned out well, right?”

Ning Li looked at him and said, “It’s not that they don’t want to, it’s that they can’t control you.”

Ji Shu was a wild child. The more they controlled him, the more rebellious he got.

That was why his parents were not strict with him. Otherwise, no one would know what else he would be up to.

Ji Shu coughed. "Sister Li, you can't say that. You can't expect everyone to be as obedient as you. I just think that Second Master Lu is really something... I guess the average person wouldn't dare challenge him."

Lu Huaiyu had such an indescribable aura that even just standing there inexplicably made others feel apprehensive.

'Sigh... Now that I think of it, it makes sense why Sister Li listens to him!'

Ning Li suddenly got up.

Ji Shu froze for a moment. "Sister Li, what's wrong?"

Ning Li's expression was distant. "It's a bit stuffy here, so I'm going to walk around for a while."

Ji Shu wanted to tag along, but when he saw Ning Li's expression, he swallowed those words back.

"It's cold outside, so don't wander around too long."

Ning Li gave a faint "mm" and left.

....

The Grand Hyatt was located near the river. There was a huge terrace across the banquet hall.

Standing there, one could see the river winding through the city.

There were plenty of buildings on both sides of the river with bright and colorful lights.

The cool breeze whipped at her face, making her feel more alert.

Ning Li tightened the suit jacket around her body.

Ji Shu's words kept echoing in her ears, which made her heart feel indescribably suffocated.

Of course, she knew that Lu Huaiyu had deliberately held this party for her.

She was grateful, but...

Ning Li reached into the jacket pocket and fumbled around for the chocolate candy.

Although a few of the creases in her heart had been smoothed out, this gold foil-wrapped candy seemed to cause more ripples to appear in her heart.

Ning Li looked around and saw an untouched glass of champagne on a small table nearby.

She walked over and picked up the glass.

The champagne was sweet with a very slight hint of alcohol. It tasted quite nice.

She quickly finished the glass and felt the heat warm up her throat and cheeks.

Ning Li stood there for a while before taking off the jacket. She had initially intended on putting it down, but after thinking about it, she held it in her arms instead.

When the wind blew, she felt that she could smell the wine quite strongly.

She hesitated and lowered her head slightly. The tip of her nose touched the jacket and she gently sniffed it.

It was the scent of crisp cedar.

This was Lu Huaiyu's scent.

"Ning?" A familiar voice sounded.

Ning Li turned back.

Chapter 199: Have You Been Drinking?

The person who was walking over was none other than George.

He wore a white shirt with beautiful embroidery emblazoned across his left shoulder to the waistline. It was as if someone had accidentally knocked over a paint palette on white canvas with great flair.

His fitted suit pants outlined his long slender legs. His shirt was half tucked in, while the other half hung down casually, highlighting the perfect proportion of his body.

This outfit might look pompous on others, but on him, it was a most fitting expression of his casual aura.

His features were extremely prominent. The evening breeze tousled his chestnut hair, which covered his azure eyes slightly, giving him a more gentle and charming look.

Ning Li had not expected to see George here.

"Why are you here?"

‘Shouldn’t he be in the Capital or out of the country by now?’

The “Flower and Moon” collection had been a big success, and the launch had also been completed. According to George’s usual behavior, he should be on vacation by now.

‘How had he ended up in Yunzhou?’

George walked over on his long legs before standing two steps away from Ning Li. He did not immediately answer her question, as he sized her up with a look of amazement and satisfaction in his eyes.

He had been feeling bored in his room and had happened to hear that Second Master Lu was hosting a celebration party downstairs, so he had come down to take a look.

George had heard of Lu Huaiyu countless times.

He had not expected to meet Ning Li as soon as he arrived.

What was even more surprising was that the dress Ning Li was wearing tonight was one of the dresses he had sent to her earlier.

When he first chose this dress for her, he had thought that she would look extremely beautiful in it. Seeing her in person today, he realized that it was even more amazing than he had imagined.

“You look so beautiful tonight!” George admired her with all his heart. “No one fits the G&S look better than you.”

George was of mixed-race and had grown up abroad, so he had never been stingy with his compliments.

He was romantic and sentimental by nature, and was a born sweet talker.

Ning Li was calm when she heard the compliment and replied, "G&S does suit me."

George was slightly stunned and could not help but clap and laugh.

Her words sounded fine at first, but with a slight tweaking of his words, the meaning became completely different.

She did not say that she fit G&S well, but that G&S fit her well.

George took a step back and scrutinized Ning Li for a while.

If someone else had said this, George would have scoffed at them. However, this had come from Ning Li. Paired with her aura, it was indeed irrefutable.

George's gaze fell on the jacket that Ning Li was holding.

It was obviously a man's suit jacket.

"Who is the lucky man who left his jacket for you?"

The terrace was windy and cold, so it was not enough protection if she only wore that dress.

With his knowledge of Ning Li, their relationship must not be a simple one if she could accept this man's jacket.

Ning Li ignored his question.

George looked behind him.

This terrace was connected to the VIP ballroom, so if he guessed correctly, Ning Li had probably come from there as well.

‘But... Wasn’t that Lu Huaiyu’s party? Why would she be there?’

Noticing his line of sight, Ning Li asked with some suspicion, “Are you also here for this banquet?”

She did not actually think so.

Lu Huaiyu and George did not seem to have had any personal interactions, so it was reasonable to say that Lu Huaiyu could not have invited George here.

Besides, even if Lu Huaiyu had invited George, George would not have made his appearance only now.

“Of course not.” George smiled up. “I came here for you.”

...

“Second Master Lu, do you have plans to return to the Capital soon?” A middle-aged man asked carefully.

Lu Huaiyu smiled lightly, “There are no such plans for now.”

A few people next to them secretly exchanged glances.

Lu Huaiyu had been in Yunzhou for quite some time. He had put off most of his social engagements and work, leaving him with only a handful of problems that he dealt with personally.

Even the top management of HG found it hard to be able to meet with him once a week.

Now, it seemed that he still wanted to stay on for a longer period.

The man was about to ask him something else, but Lu Huaiyu's eyes were focused on the terrace, where Ning Li was. However, there was another man next to her.

Lu Huaiyu could not see the man's face clearly as there was a floor-to-ceiling window and some distance between them. However, he could clearly see the figure of the man who was standing in front of Ning Li with his body leaning against the railing in an intimate posture.

Lu Huaiyu's expression changed.

"Please excuse me for a moment."

He put the wine glass down and walked towards the terrace.

...

Aside from work-related content, Ning Li only ever believed one-tenth of George's words.

Thus, when she heard him say that, her heart did not flutter and she only said faintly, "Is that so?"

George looked disappointed and shrugged his shoulders. "You don't believe me? I'm being serious."

Ning Li was about to speak when she heard Lu Huaiyu's voice coming from behind her, "Lili."

She turned around and saw that Lu Huaiyu, who had been in the banquet hall earlier, was already walking over.

The crystal chandelier in the hall was brightly lit. With his back to the light, his cold and handsome face was in the shadows, which prevented her from seeing his expression clearly.

The evening breeze blew against his shirt, outlining a firm figure.

It was clearly a very sexy body, but he gave out a cold and distant aura like the moon. He was just so noble, ascetic, and untouchable.

Ning Li watched as he walked over and inexplicably felt a burning sensation in her throat.

She looked down at her hands and saw an empty glass. She had not taken another drink again.

The aftertaste of that champagne had seemed a little strong.

“Lili?” George raised his eyebrows.

‘So that’s how they address her by her Chinese name. That sounds nice.’

However, as soon as he said that, George felt a dangerously stern gaze on him.

George was extremely perceptive and immediately realized what was going on. He slowly stood upright and looked at Lu Huaiyu with interest.

“Second Brother,” Ning Li called out. “Aren’t you busy? Why did you come over?”

Lu Huaiyu walked over to Ning Li and saw that she was hugging the jacket that she had taken off. His eyes were stern.

“No, I’m not busy. Aren’t you cold?”

Ning Li shook her head. “It’s not cold.”

As he got closer, he could smell the faint scent of wine as she spoke.

Lu Huaiyu narrowed his eyes. "Have you been drinking?"

Ning Li pointed to the glass next to her. "Just one glass."

Lu Huaiyu looked in the direction she pointed. There were several glasses of champagne on the small table, and one of the glasses was empty.

He leaned over to pick up the glass and sniffed it lightly.

It smelled similar to cider, but the alcohol percentage was quite high.

'She drank this?'

Lu Huaiyu put down the glass and looked at Ning Li.

Her cheeks were slightly red, but her round eyes were still clear, so it did not look like it had affected her much.

"No more drinks," Lu Huaiyu said.

As he said that, he took the jacket out of Ning Li's arms and draped it over her again.

Ning Li just stood there obediently.

She also seemed a little guilty and lowered her head, before answering in a soft voice, "Okay."

After she finished, she remembered what Ji Shu had said earlier, so she inexplicably added, "Actually, it wasn't much."

Chapter 200: Why Did You Just Come?

Lu Huaiyu was slightly stunned. He tightened the jacket over her and said in a deep voice, "You're not allowed to drink anymore."

Ning Li stopped talking and looked down at her toes.

George took the initiative to extend his hand, smiling as he said, "Mr. Lu, I've heard a lot about you."

Lu Huaiyu swept a glance at his hand without moving to take it. "Mr. George, I don't think you came all the way from the Capital just to say this to me, right?"

Prior to this, the two had not had any personal encounter whatsoever.

This was actually their first official meeting.

However, George had appeared in various entertainment magazines for years, and his highly distinctive face was hard not to recognize.

In contrast, Lu Huaiyu was extremely low-key.

The reason George could recognize him at a glance was because of Lu Huaiyu's stunning face and noble aura that were unique only to him.

There was also another reason.

"Of course not. I came here for someone else, but getting to meet Mr. Lu is a pleasant surprise." George smiled as he spoke sincerely.

George swept a glance over the two of them.

“You guys...know each other?”

Lu Huaiyu smiled lightly and said, “This party is being held for Lili.”

George was slightly stunned.

Of course, he could see that Lu Huaiyu and Ning Li had an unusual relationship, but he had not expected this.

“Mr. George, I didn’t know that you’d be here, so I didn’t send you an invitation. I would ask you to stay for a drink, but...” Lu Huaiyu looked at his watch. “The party’s almost over. It would be better if we take a raincheck.”

George was speechless. He could have sworn that Lu Huaiyu had no intention of letting him stay since the beginning.

He shrugged his shoulders and laughed nonchalantly. “Fine, but Mr. Lu, you do need to buy me a drink.”

Lu Huaiyu raised his eyebrows slightly, then he heard George sigh and say regretfully, “After all, my ex-ex-ex-girlfriend broke up with me because of you. She even smashed three bottles of whiskey on her way out.”

Lu Huaiyu’s eyes turned cold.

Ning Li looked up and glanced at George and Lu Huaiyu.

‘Wow... Was there such drama between these two?’

Lu Huaiyu’s voice was cold and sullen. “Mr. George, you should watch your words.”

“Does the name Lulu ring a bell?” George frowned with some annoyance. “She’s also from the Capital. A very beautiful girl called Yu Lulu. We were fine until the day she got drunk. She suddenly cried and said that she had held a crush on you for three years and that she still couldn’t forget you even after being with me. Then, we broke up.”

George shrugged his shoulders.

He was a frank person who did not like to get entangled in complicated situations. Thus, he always dated and broke up with women with ease.

However, this incident had left a deep emotional scar on him because it had been very frustrating.

As the heir to G&S, George had never faced any problems in dealing with women. This was the first time he had ever been ditched by a woman.

Although it had not been overly difficult to break up with her after that incident, the image of her hugging a bottle of wine as she cried out that Lu Huaiyu’s name was something he could not forget.

If not for this, George would not have come downstairs to check out the party.

However, after seeing Lu Huaiyu in person, George felt relieved.

It was not that bad to lose to such a man.

“No, it doesn’t.” Lu Huaiyu looked at George coldly. “My apologies for that, but I’m not interested in knowing about your relationships. I need to send Lili home soon, so please excuse us.”

After saying that, Lu Huaiyu then pulled Ning Li’s wrist and walked away.

George was puzzled as he had not expected this man to leave so quickly. “Hey, but Ning...”

He was just about to chase after them when Ning Li suddenly looked back at him.

George instantly stopped and pondered.

Ning Li had previously insisted on keeping her identity a secret. Now, it seemed that even Lu Huaiyu did not know about it?

He remembered the dangerous gaze that Lu Huaiyu had given him earlier and could not help but rub his chin and smile.

When his ex-ex-ex-girlfriend had gotten drunk and cried about her love for Lu Huaiyu, she had cursed Lu Huaiyu for rejecting her and not understanding her feelings.

She had pursued him for so many years, but he did not even spare her a second glance.

At that time, she had also cursed him by saying that such a heartless man deserved a lifetime of solitude.

Now, it seemed that would be hard to achieve.

However, Lu Huaiyu did not seem much better off either.

Meeting Lu Huaiyu in person was completely different from what he had expected when based purely on his former girlfriend's description.

'That's interesting...'

...

Lu Huaiyu noticed Ning Li looking back at George. His eyes grew cold.

Objectively speaking, George was indeed very handsome.

With his wealthy background and infamous considerate, gentle, and affectionate personality, George was loved by all women.

He certainly had the capacity for it.

“Did you have a nice chat just now?” Lu Huaiyu asked in a light voice.

Ning Li looked back at him. She could feel the slight coldness in Lu Huaiyu’s voice, but she thought that it was because he was still angry about her having a drink.

“No, it was just a casual chat,” Ning Li answered softly.

Lu Huaiyu glanced at her.

Her soft hair draped over her shoulders and her fair, delicate face had a hint of blush. From his angle, he could see her thick curly eyelashes that fluttered gently, which was tantalizing to his heart.

A bright pearl would always attract attention.

Lu Huaiyu suddenly felt a trace of regret.

‘I should keep her hidden...’

“You should focus only on your studies now.”

Ning Li froze slightly. ‘Wasn’t that what she had been doing all along? Why was he saying this...’

“Okay...” She responded. Ning Li had sensed the slight hostility that Lu Huaiyu had shown towards George earlier.

A moment later, she hesitantly asked, “Second Brother... Are you unhappy because of what he just said about his ex-girlfriend?”

Lu Huaiyu paused for a moment. “It’s his ex-ex-ex-girlfriend.”

‘Could she not see what kind of person George was?’

“Also, I don’t know or recall such a person anyway.”

His voice was aloof and indifferent.

Ning Li lowered her eyes.

‘Right... There are so many people who liked him. How could he possibly remember each and every one of them?’

She rubbed her head that now felt slightly aggravated.

“Second Brother, I want to go back.”

Lu Huaiyu was worried that she might feel uncomfortable after drinking that glass of wine and standing in the cold breeze on the terrace, so he agreed right away.

“Wait for me next door. I’ll be there soon.”

Ning Li nodded. “Okay.”

...

Ning Li went into the small sitting area next door by herself.

It was quiet and peaceful all around.

She felt a little sleepy, so she lolled on the sofa as she leaned back to rest her eyes.

After a while, Ning Li heard the sound of footsteps.

She opened her eyes and saw Lu Huaiyu standing in front of her.

He leaned down slightly and said in a low and gentle voice, "Lili, come on, let's go."

Ning Li looked up at him dazedly. "Lu Huaiyu."

She had not called him Second Brother.

Lu Huaiyu had come over after greeting his guests. As soon as he came in, he saw Ning Li lying haphazardly on the sofa.

Hearing her voice, he paused for a moment and felt that Ning Li was not in the right state of mind.

He frowned slightly and reached out to touch her forehead.

Ning Li suddenly held on to his hand and looked at him in a daze. Her eyes and the tip of her nose were red. She whispered, "Why did you only just come?"

Lu Huaiyu's body stiffened.

She buried her face in his palm, looking very dependent and aggrieved.

“Why did you come so late?”