

Little Brat's 271

Chapter 271: Friends?

In the next moment, Ning Li subconsciously stretched out her hand and pulled on his sleeve.

She could feel his shirt.

'It's really him...'

Lu Huaiyu froze for a moment, then looked down and swept a glance at her hand.

Her slim, fair fingers were a little reddish and seemed very cold.

She tightly squeezed the corner of his clothes until her knuckles turned white.

After a moment, he asked in a low voice, "Are you cold?"

Ning Li nodded but then shook her head again.

The corridor was colder than the wards, and she had just washed her face with cold water, so the coldness seemed to remain on her fingertips.

However, seeing him made her feel warmer.

"Second Young Master?"

A voice came from not far away.

Fang Qingyun parked the car before he went in.

When he went upstairs, he saw Lu Huaiyu at the end of the corridor with a lady standing in front of him.

Lu Huaiyu's tall and upright figure hid most of the girl's figure, so Fang Qingyun could only vaguely see a slender figure when he looked over from where he was standing.

Fang Qingyun looked on with some curiosity.

This voice immediately made Ning Li return to her senses. She realized that she was still tugging on Lu Huaiyu's cuffs, so she immediately let go.

However, just before she let go, a warm and strong palm held her hand.

His hand was much larger than hers, so he easily wrapped her hand tightly in his palm.

She could feel his warm body temperature on her hand.

Ning Li's heart jumped and skipped a beat.

Lu Huaiyu frowned slightly. "Your hand is so cold. Have you been standing here the whole time?"

Only then did Ning Li realize that her legs were a little sore.

Before she had time to say anything, Lu Huaiyu turned slightly and said to Fang Qingyun, "Uncle Fang, I'll be staying here for a while, so you can go back first."

Fang Qingyun understood.

Second Young Master was really protective of the girl.

Fang Qingyun smiled and nodded, "Sure!"

After Fang Qingyun went down the stairs, Lu Huaiyu pulled Ning Li to sit on a chair next to him.

Ning Li could tell that the man earlier was the Lu family's driver.

Did that mean that Lu Huaiyu rushed over from home as soon as he had received her call?

Ning Li looked down and noticed that Lu Huaiyu had not let go of her hand yet.

She struggled a little.

"Second Brother, I'm not cold anymore..."

'Second Brother.'

Lu Huaiyu raised his eyebrows slightly and held her hand a little tighter as he inclined his head to look at her.

"What did you say on the phone just now?"

Ning Li froze.

She had said so much on the phone earlier, so what was he referring to?

'I want to hear your voice?'

Looking into his deep eyes, Ning Li suddenly thought of what she had said to him earlier.

Lu Huaiyu came closer and smiled at her.

“You want to kick me out after listening to my voice?”

They were sitting next to each other, so when he moved forward a little, the distance between them was even smaller.

His deep relaxed tone felt like a hook to her heart.

Ning Li did not say anything and only felt the tips of her ears turning red.

Lu Huaiyu’s gaze shifted slightly and saw that her fair and delicate earlobes flushed red.

The redness gradually spread from her ears to her cheeks.

Ning Li argued in a small voice, “No...”

She did not know what to say.

Ning Li did not move and obediently placed her hand on his palm.

Her cold and numb fingers gradually turned warm. His refreshing fragrant cedar scent felt even stronger.

Ning Li’s thumb moved gently and subconsciously rubbed over the thin calluses on his palm.

She pursed her lips and gently hung her head.

Lu Huaiyu leaned back, aware of this small movement. He raised his head slightly, in a kind of tacit understanding.

He did not look at her and she did not look at him.

They both sat in silence without letting go of each other's hands.

...

The surrounding noises seemed to be distant at this moment.

The smell of disinfectant was also overshadowed by Lu Huaiyu's scent.

Many images flashed through Ning Li's mind, yet it seemed as if she was not thinking about anything.

After a while, she finally glanced sideways at Lu Huaiyu.

He did not ask her anything and had immediately rushed over after taking her call.

In fact, this was not the first time.

It seemed that he had never been hesitant in anything related to her.

'Does he...'

Buzz.

The phone in Ning Li's pocket suddenly vibrated.

Lu Huaiyu looked over.

Ning Li was startled. One of her hands was still nestled in his palm, so she answered the phone with her other hand.

Lu Huaiyu looked at her with deep eyes. His thin lips slowly curled up.

Ning Li was a little panicked and saw that it was Sun Qingyi calling.

She answered the call.

"Hello, Mr. Sun?"

"Ning Li, are you okay? What's taking you so long to come back?"

Only then did Ning Li remember that she had indeed been away for quite a long time.

"I'm fine. I'm just a little tired, so I'm resting here for a while."

The emergency building of Xijing University First Hospital was very large and her current location was right around the corner of the corridor of the Gastroenterology Department.

Thus, Sun Qingyi had not seen her after looking around for a while.

Hearing that Ning Li was fine, Sun Qingyi was relieved.

"That's good."

Thinking about it, it was tiring for Ning Li after having attended classes all day and having just finished an exam during the evening study period.

It was normal for her to be tired.

“Ye Ci will probably take another 30 minutes to finish. You can come back first. We’ll be leaving soon.”

There were so many random people in the hospital, so Sun Qingyi was worried for Ning Li to be alone.

“Okay, thanks Mr. Sun...but...”

Ning Li paused.

“I have a friend who’s also here at the moment, so you don’t need to worry about me. I’ll go back later.”

Lu Huaiyu’s eyes swept past their intertwined hands and raised an eyebrow.

Somehow, Ning Li did not turn her head but could already feel his gaze at this moment. She felt a burning gaze falling on her.

Sun Qingyi was a little surprised.

“Friend?”

‘Isn’t Ning Li from Yunzhou? Why does she have friends in the Capital?’

However, these were Ning Li’s private matters, so Sun Qingyi did not ask detailed questions after hearing that she was fine.

The elevator door suddenly opened and several medical personnel came out pushing a gurney.

“LPG explosion, severe burns, prep for surgery!”

The people around hurriedly moved aside.

Lu Huaiyu glanced over.

The middle-aged man lying on the gurney had a large area of burns on his body. His entire face had also been badly burned. It was deformed and looked very ghastly.

Ning Li subconsciously turned her head.

Lu Huaiyu frowned slightly and pulled her into his arms.

Ning Li was caught off guard and fell into his embrace.

Her view was instantly cut off.

“Don’t look,” Lu Huaiyu said.

Ning Li still had her phone in her hand.

Sun Qingyi also heard what was going on and a man’s deep and clear voice.

It felt inexplicably familiar.

Sun Qingyi asked with some hesitation, “Ning Li, are you with your friend?”

Ning Li lay in Lu Huaiyu’s arms with her forehead resting against his firm chest.

She blinked gently before she replied, “Mm.”

Chapter 272: He Said, Baby

Lu Huaiyu hugged Ning Li so tightly that her voice became a little muffled.

However, it was very noisy where they were, so Sun Qingyi did not hear much through the phone.

Since they were on the same floor, Sun Qingyi also heard the movement of the gurney and knew roughly where Ning Li was.

Her friend also sounded quite protective of her.

Thus, Sun Qingyi put his heart at ease and said a few more words before hanging up the phone.

The gurney passed by in a hurry.

The middle-aged man with burns was crying in pain that the whole corridor echoed with this heart-wrenching cry.

Ning Li's body stiffened.

Lu Huaiyu felt it.

His brow wrinkled slightly.

This kind of scene was not suitable for girls as it was too gory.

With Ning Li's character, she could even do a whole lap around Xiaosong Hill without changing her expression, so how could she be afraid of this?

There was also the phone call she had made earlier.

Although Lu Huaiyu did not ask about it, he knew very well that she had not been in the right mental state at that time.

She was not sick, nor was she in any other urgent situation.

‘But...’

Lu Huaiyu patted her head gently, which gently stroked her heart.

“It’s okay. He’s already in the operating room.”

Next to him, a young woman walked over with a little boy around three or four years old.

The little boy was crying. “Mommy, I don’t want to get an injection...”

As his mother walked away, she said, “Baby, you’re a big boy now. How can you still be afraid of needles? You won’t be the bravest boy in class anymore, will you?”

The little boy pouted with tears in his eyes. Suddenly, he pointed to the side.

“But that big girl is scared too!”

He was pointing at Ning Li.

His mother looked over.

“This girl is older than me, but she also cried...”

When Ning Li heard this, she instantly recovered herself. She was at a loss for words and immediately tried to struggle out of Lu Huaiyu’s arms.

Lu Huaiyu suddenly laughed and lowered his voice to whisper in her ear.

“If you raise your head now, the kid will know what this crybaby looks like.”

Ning Li paused for a moment.

It would be shameful to lift her head.

Not lifting her head did not seem much better, but at least the little boy would not be able to see her face.

While Ning Li was dumbfounded, Lu Huaiyu looked at the little boy.

He smiled and said, “Kid, you’re a boy and she’s a girl, so you’re not the same.”

The little boy froze.

His mother also froze when she saw Lu Huaiyu’s face.

She looked at the two again and showed a look of understanding.

He was probably accompanying his girlfriend to see a doctor.

“A girl...”

The little boy murmured and thought that what this guy said made sense, but also felt that something was off.

“But...but...she’s old!”

Lu Huaiyu raised an eyebrow.

“Who said that? She’s still a little girl.”

The little boy probably had not expected someone to say this with a straight face and was immediately baffled.

‘That girl is obviously an adult! I’m not blind, okay?’

“Yeah, she’s still very young.” The boy’s mother took advantage of the situation to speak.

The little boy was confused, and the tears in his eyes stopped.

The boy’s mother hugged him and said softly, “Just like how you’re Mommy’s baby, the young lady is also that guy’s baby, so she’s still a little girl to him, right?”

The little boy bit his finger, looked at his mother, then looked at Ning Li and Lu Huaiyu.

‘Oh... Mommy’s hugging me. The guy is also hugging that lady...so that makes sense...’

“Okay, let’s go for the injection. You have to be brave and set an example for that girl, okay?” His mother coaxed him.

The kid was persuaded.

He wiped away his tears with his chubby little hand. His voice still had a crying tone, but he still nodded vigorously.

“Okay!”

His mother finally sighed with relief and led him inside.

The little boy wrapped his arms around her neck. He looked at Ning Li, clenched his little fists, and cheered for Ning Li and himself. “Missy, don’t cry... Don’t be afraid!”

Ning Li really did not want to raise her head at this moment.

Lu Huaiyu smiled and waved goodbye to the boy.

“Thank you... You’re braver than her!”

Hearing this compliment, the little boy felt greatly encouraged.

He shouted at Ning Li again in his baby voice, “Missy, my teacher said that brave children are all good babies, so you should be a good baby too!”

Ning Li closed her eyes in despair.

After hearing that the mother and son had finally left, Ning Li took a deep breath and struggled out of Lu Huaiyu’s arms.

Lu Huaiyu let go of her at the same time.

Ning Li moved back. Lu Huaiyu smiled and let go of his other hand.

A small distance separated the two of them.

Ning Li almost did not dare to look at him and tried to defend herself to regain her reputation. "I...I didn't cry..."

As soon as the words left her mouth, she regretted them.

'Why do I have to clarify and explain such things so seriously?!'

Lu Huaiyu leaned back in the chair and propped his head up with one hand.

"Are you angry?"

Ning Li froze.

"No."

She just felt very embarrassed, but not angry.

Lu Huaiyu's lips curved slightly.

"I said that he's braver than you just now. Don't take it to heart."

Ning Li shook her head.

'Why would I bother with this?'

"I didn't..."

“Because it’s okay if you’re not brave,” Lu Huaiyu said.

Ning Li was speechless.

The rest of her words were suddenly stuck in her throat. She lifted her eyes and met his gaze.

Lu Huaiyu looked at her.. He recalled the small episode earlier and inclined his head slightly. He laughed lightly as if he was joking and said, “Baby?”

Chapter 273: I Guess That Girl Really Likes You

Lu Huaiyu’s voice was very gentle, deep, and relaxed as if he was merely saying this casually, but Ning Li instantly blushed.

That woman had only said that to coax the child. How could Lu Huaiyu repeat it?

Ning Li quickly stood up.

“Second Brother, I should probably head back.”

Lu Huaiyu also stood up.

“I’ll see you off.”

Ning Li paused.

She was the one who had called him over, so this did not seem appropriate...

"It's better if I walk you downstairs."

Lu Huaiyu glanced at her and smiled as he responded, "Alright then."

The two of them went downstairs.

Ning Li avoided looking at him the whole time, and there was a half-step distance between them.

Once they were downstairs, Lu Huaiyu did not allow her to step out of the building.

"It's quite cold outside. Go back inside."

Lu Huaiyu looked at his watch.

"Let me know when you get back to school."

Ning Li nodded her head. "Okay."

She was not sure how she could look at Lu Huaiyu at this time.

Looking at Lu Huaiyu's back as he left, she was inexplicably relieved.

A cold breeze poured in when the main door opened.

She then realized that her face was still hot.

'He...didn't see it, right?'

Ning Li turned around to go back, but she ran right into Gu Siyang again.

“Eh? Ning Li, haven’t you gone back yet?”

Gu Siyang asked as he looked in the direction of Ning Li’s earlier gaze. He vaguely saw a figure in the darkness.

The man was tall, slender, and somewhat familiar, but he was not sure who it was because he could not see clearly.

Ning Li saw that Gu Siyang was still being followed by his small group of friends from earlier. They seemed to be leaving.

“Mm, soon.”

Gu Siyang pointed upstairs.

“My friend’s family is here, so we’re leaving first. Are you guys going back to Capital First High? I can send you back!”

A boy next to him immediately reminded him. “Siyang, didn’t your uncle forbid you from touching any cars?”

Gu Siyang gritted his teeth. “Would it kill you to keep your mouth shut?”

“Thanks for the offer, but there’s no need. Our teacher drove here.”

Ning Li knew that Gu Tinglan had banned Gu Siyang from driving because of the crash last time.

She had not expected that the ban still had not been lifted even after so long.

That car must have been of great importance to the Gu family.

Hearing what she said, Gu Siyang could only say, "Alright then, we'll get going first."

Ning Li said goodbye to them before she went upstairs.

...

When Ning Li went up, Ye Ci's second IV bag had almost finished.

Sun Qingyi saw Ning Li and finally felt at ease.

"Ning Li, you came back just in time. I was just about to call you."

He glanced behind Ning Li.

Ning Li felt a bit strange. "Mr. Sun, what are you looking at?"

Sun Qingyi asked, "Didn't you say your friend was also here? He's not here?"

Ning Li said, "He just left."

"Oh..." Sun Qingyi's voice drifted off.

It was fine as long as the student was fine.

Ye Ci also looked over at her with curiosity.

Sun Qingyi was not sure about Ning Li's situation, but Ye Ci was aware.

'Does Ning Li have any friends in the capital? Even if she did, how could it be such a coincidence that they ran into each other at this hospital?'

Since Sun Qingyi was here, Ye Ci could not ask more questions, so she could only suppress these suspicions for the time being.

Just then, the last bit in the IV bag finished dripping.

Sun Qingyi called for the nurse to remove the needle.

"Okay, let's go back."

...

Ning Li and the two of them went downstairs.

Sun Qingyi said, "I'll get the car. You guys wait for me here."

Ye Ci was apologetic and grateful. "Thank you, Mr. Sun. I'm sorry to have troubled you today."

Sun Qingyi smiled and shook his head, then went to the parking lot.

Ning Li and Ye Ci were the only ones left at the main door.

Ye Ci looked at Ning Li and asked, "Sister Ning Li, Mr. Sun said that you ran into a friend here. Is that why you didn't come back just now?"

Ning Li's expression was dull as she looked at Ye Ci.

"Yes. Is there a problem?"

Ye Ci hurriedly said. "No, I'm just a little curious. I didn't know that you had friends here. Sister Ning Li... Mom wanted to say a few words to you just now, but you weren't there."

The corner of Ning Li's lips curved into a scornful arc.

She already knew what Su Yuan was going to say to her.

Ning Li did not want to hear that, so she had left.

"Whatever." Ning Li stuck one hand in her pocket. Her expression was calm as she said, "I won't disturb you guys."

Ye Ci bit her lip.

She could clearly hear the sarcasm in these words, but there was no way to refute it.

Ning Li really did not seem to care about this.

As for the question Ye Ci had just asked Ning Li, it was obvious that she would not get an answer.

Ye Ci closed her mouth.

...

Lu Huaiyu walked out of the emergency building but did not leave immediately. He went to the parking lot.

Fang Qingyun was waiting in the car.

Seeing that Lu Huaiyu came back alone, Fang Qingyun asked with concern, "Second Young Master, you're alone?"

Lu Huaiyu knew what he wanted to ask. He pulled open the car door. "Mm."

Fang Qingyun spoke hesitantly, "Then...that..."

He had not even seen the girl just now, so he did not know how to address her.

Only then did Lu Huaiyu say, "She's fine."

Fang Qingyun was slightly relieved. He looked at Lu Huaiyu's relaxed eyebrows and saw that he seemed to be in a good mood.

'I guess she's really fine then...'

Lu Huaiyu was about to get into the car when a surprised voice suddenly came from behind.

"Lu Huaiyu?!"

Hearing this voice, Lu Huaiyu turned around.

Sun Qingyi was driving his car and peeked out of the window.

When he saw Lu Huaiyu's face, which was still excessively cold and eye-catching even at night, he was shocked.

“When did you get back?”

Lu Huaiyu nodded. “Sun Qingyi, long time no see.”

Both of them, together with Zhou Fei, had been classmates in high school.

Although they had not had much contact over the years, they still had a good relationship.

Sun Qingyi was happy.

“It’s such a coincidence to run into each other here!”

Lu Huaiyu knew that Sun Qingyi had brought Ning Li and Ye Ci over, but he did not say much.

“It’s quite a coincidence.”

Sun Qingyi sized him up and sighed in his heart.

‘Sigh... What Zhou Fei said really made sense. If that photo on the Wall of Fame at Capital First High was replaced with Lu Huaiyu’s current photo, he would probably be even more popular...’

“I brought my student here, so I need to leave now. Let’s get together some other time?”

Lu Huaiyu nodded and got into the car.

Both cars drove out of the parking lot one after another.

When they were at a wider road, Sun Qingyi drove parallel to Lu Huaiyu and finally could not help but say, “Hey, you graduated so many years ago, yet there are still so many girls from our school that have a crush on you. No, no... Not only from our school.”

Sun Qingyi let out a long sigh.

“Even the girls from outside our school can’t escape your charm!”

Lu Huaiyu’s expression was calm and did not seem to mind until Sun Qingyi continued to murmur, “Even this time at the winter camp too...”

Lu Huaiyu paused for a moment. “Who are you talking about?”

Sun Qingyi lifted his chin.

“Over there... Do you see those two girls? The one with the black backpack secretly took your picture the other day.”

Lu Huaiyu followed his line of sight and raised his eyebrows slightly.

Sun Qingyi put his hand on his chin.. “I guess that girl really likes you.”

Chapter 274: You Can Still Want More

Lu Huaiyu’s thin lips hooked up slightly. The corners of his eyes were also tainted with a relaxed and lazy smile.

“Is that so?”

“Yeah, she was too shy to admit it when I caught her taking your picture, but it’s normal for a girl to be shy about these kinds of things.”

Sun Qingyi looked back at Lu Huaiyu and pondered.

“Since it’s such a coincidence, do you wanna meet her?”

Before Lu Huaiyu could answer, Sun Qingyi quickly shook his head.

“Ah, forget it! She’s attending the winter camp now, so she should concentrate on preparing for the national finals. You’d better not disturb her.”

Sun Qingyi thought that it was because Lu Huaiyu’s photo was too attractive and that Ning Li was just an ignorant girl that admired his looks, similar to chasing idols.

If Ning Li saw Lu Huaiyu in person, she might really fall head over heels for Lu Huaiyu, which would then be troublesome.

As Lu Huaiyu’s high school classmate, Sun Qingyi was all too aware of the charm of that face.

Lu Huaiyu thought for a moment and nodded.

“Mm... Okay.”

He agreed so smoothly that Sun Qingyi felt something was wrong and looked him up and down several times.

“Lu Huaiyu, have you become so good-tempered after going to Yunzhou?”

When did this Young Master become so good-natured?

Lu Huaiyu looked at the slender figure not far away and lingered for a moment. He let out a low chuckle and said, “Aren’t you the one who said that the girl is shy?”

He was usually cold and noble. Currently, his eyebrows were relaxed and his lips were hooked up. It felt like the moon reflecting on a lake that rippled in the gentle night breeze.

Sun Qingyi helplessly touched the back of his neck.

Even as a man, he had to admit that Lu Huaiyu looked amazing.

It was too easy for Lu Huaiyu to compel anyone.

'I can't let the girls see this man...' Sun Qingyi thought.

"Alright, you can go first. I'll pick up my students."

Sun Qingyi said as he drove towards Ning Li and Ye Ci.

Fang Qingyun also looked over.

'Hmm... The girl with the black backpack looks kinda familiar. Is she the one who was standing with the Second Young Master earlier?'

However, they had been a bit far earlier, so Fang Qingyun was not sure.

"Uncle Fang, let's go," Lu Huaiyu said.

Fang Qingyun recovered himself and stepped on the gas pedal.

The car drove away from Xijing University First Hospital. From the rearview mirror, he could see that slender figure getting into Sun Qingyi's car and disappearing.

Fang Qingyun recalled what Sun Qingyi had said and gradually came back to his senses.

‘Wait! The winter camp?! National Physics Competition? Does that mean that girl is still in high school?! Right... Previously the Old Master had said that the Second Young Master had been staying in Yunzhou to accompany someone to study...’

At that time, Fang Qingyun had not taken it seriously.

Now that he thought about it, it was very likely...

“Second Young Master, is that girl...”

‘Your crush?!’

Fang Qingyun did not finish the rest of his sentence, but the meaning was very obvious.

Lu Huaiyu said, “Don’t tell Grandpa first.”

Fang Qingyun was shocked.

‘It’s no wonder that the Second Young Master refused to tell us about her before... She’s still a high school girl?!’

Fang Qingyun looked at Lu Huaiyu from the rearview mirror.

Lu Huaiyu was leaning back in his seat and had lowered his head as he looked at his phone.

The corners of his lips were curved up in a faintly visible arc.

The waves in Fang Qingyun’s heart gradually subsided and were replaced by relief and joy.

‘Previously, Dr. Gu had said that the Second Young Master’s condition had improved a lot in recent months... Is it because of this? That’s good then...’

Fang Qingyun said, “Yes, of course, Second Young Master. Old Master has been worried that you’re unrequitedly in love with someone else!”

‘At least the young lady has feelings for the Second Young Master!’

Lu Huaiyu recalled something and laughed.

“Yeah. I told her before that she can’t date while still in school.”

Lu Huaiyu thought, ‘That admonition was not so much to educate the girl, but to remind myself...’

“Yes, yes... It’s important to focus on studies...”

Fang Qingyun smiled.

He had watched Lu Huaiyu grow up and knew that he had always been very responsible, so Fang Qingyun was very relieved.

‘Anyway, there are only four months until the college entrance exam, so it’ll go by quickly. If the girl can participate in the winter camp for the physics competition, she must be very outstanding! Second Young Master always had a good eye.’

Lu Huaiyu laughed lightly and nodded his head. “Mm.”

...

Ning Li came to the passenger side and buckled her seatbelt. She raised her eyes and saw a car in front of her driving away.

The license plate number was familiar.

That was the Lu family's car.

Lu Huaiyu should be inside.

Sun Qingyi caught a glimpse of Ning Li's gaze and was secretly glad that he asked Lu Huaiyu to leave first.

Ning Li thought about it and took out her phone to send a message to Lu Huaiyu.

[Second Brother, sorry for the trouble today. Thank you.]

When she had been at the hospital, she had not been in a good state of mind.

She had called Lu Huaiyu and held his hand as they sat in the corridor.

He had even jokingly called her baby.

Ning Li had been so nervous and embarrassed that she had not known how to respond, So much so that she had not even had the time to thank him when she accompanied him downstairs.

She was in a mess tonight.

After sending the message, she turned off the phone screen and leaned back comfortably in the seat as she looked out the window.

The warm air in the car blew on her face and made her feel a little hot.

Her eyes were unfocused as she thought about a lot of things.

After a while, her phone vibrated.

She took it out and looked at it.

[It's no trouble. Kids who are scared of the hospital should've gotten more when they're sick.]

Ning Li stared at that message for a long time until her eyes were slightly sore, before closing.

Lu Huaiyu was smart, so he could easily guess this without asking anything.

She thought she had hidden it very well, but she could not, especially when he was around.

'Gotten more...'

Ning Li took a light breath and put the phone in her pocket.

Lu Huaiyu waited for a while but did not receive a reply from Ning Li.

He tapped on the phone screen twice.

'Does this girl know that besides wanting to hear my voice, she could want more than that?'

...

When they returned to Capital First High, it was already close to 1:00 am.

The door of the room was not locked, so the two girls walked in.

Cao Jingxuan seemed to be awake. When she heard the movement, she poked her head out of bed and asked in a small voice, "Ye Ci, Ning Li, you're back?"

Ye Ci whispered, "Yeah, why are you still awake?"

"I was a little worried about you guys. By the way, how are you feeling?"

"I'm fine. It's just gastroenteritis, so I just got an IV drip and some medication."

"That's good. Then you guys should get some rest too."

"Okay."

Cao Jingxuan looked at Ning Li and wanted to say something, but in the end, she did not speak and laid back down again.

...

The night passed quickly.

They had class the next day.

In the afternoon, the results of the previous night's exam were revealed.

Li Guangyuan came in with the papers.

Cao Jingxuan turned back to Ye Ci.

“Ye Ci, you left halfway through yesterday’s exam... How is that going to be counted?”

Chapter 275: Questioning

This was also the question that Ye Ci was thinking about.

Ye Ci looked at Li Guangyuan who was on the podium and shook her head.

“I don’t know...”

Since Ye Ci had left halfway through the exam, she was not considered to have completed the exam.

So, her paper should not have been graded and included in the final assessment either, right?

“Your results are out. Just like before, I’ll read out your names according to your ranking.”

Li Guangyuan took out the results sheet.

“When I call out your name, please come up to get your own paper.”

The classroom immediately became silent, and everyone subconsciously became tense.

The last test had already killed their arrogance. The arrogance they had when they had first arrived had almost dissipated.

It was only here that they realized how fierce the competition was. The ones who did particularly poorly in the last test were expected to make a comeback to gain back their reputation.

Not to mention, this time, the results would be credited in the final evaluation.

“First place, Ning Li. Full marks.”

Li Guangyuan read.

After a short silence, the class stirred up.

“She’s first again?! Another perfect score?”

“She has a good foundation so she scored well in the last test, but the test this time was what we learned in the past three days... Did she actually solve them all?”

“This is insane... We really can’t compare to her. How many times do you think she can get a perfect score for this winter camp?”

“She probably has a solid spot at Xijing University...”

Ning Li got up, walked over, and took her paper.

Her expression was always calm even with so much chatter surrounding her, as if she did not care very much.

“Second place, Pei Song. 147 marks.”

Everyone looked at Pei Song again.

Someone murmured.

“What?! Is Yunzhou Second High determined to bag the top two places for this competition?”

They had sent three students from their school!

“Don’t worry... There’s still Ye Ci, so at least it can be evenly distributed...” Another girl lowered her voice and scoffed.

Ye Ci instantly felt like her heart had been stabbed.

She turned her head and looked to the side.

The person who had said this was Zhang Yanyan, the one who had repeatedly mocked her before.

Sensing Ye Ci’s gaze, Zhang Yanyan also looked over.

She was not afraid that Ye Ci had heard that and even sneered as if she was concerned that Ye Ci could not understand the contempt and mockery she was showing.

Previously, Zhang Yanyan had been in 15th place. Although she could not compete with Ning Li and Pei Song, she was definitely considered one of the top students.

Especially when compared to Ye Ci, Zhang Yanyan had scored so much better.

Zhang Yanyan was also from another province and had been a top student since she was young, so she was very arrogant.

Even after coming here, she was still the same.

Ye Ci gripped the pen in her hand, but finally held back.

“Third, Tan Ruiqun. 143 marks.”

The top three were the same as the last time.

However, Pei Song and Tan Ruiqun, who had originally been tied for second place in the last test, now had a slight gap between them.

Of course, one test did not mean anything. It only proved once again that these three had extremely strong learning abilities.

In fact, the top ten were basically the same people with not much change.

Cao Jingxuan and Song Mengtang's rankings had been swapped, and Song Mengtang was now in front.

As for those at the back, the ranking had changed quite a bit.

Some people were happy about their scores while some were disappointed.

The further Li Guangyuan read, the more nervous Ye Ci became.

She did not know what would happen to her paper.

"51st place, Li Peng. 93 marks."

That boy had expected this ranking, but compared to his last score, at least he had passed this time.

Ye Ci was the only one left.

Many students looked at her.

Li Guangyuan looked at the last paper in his hand and said, "Ye Ci did not complete the examination yesterday, so it counts as missing the examination and her results won't count in the final assessment."

Ye Ci breathed out a long sigh of relief.

She walked to the podium and took her paper with both hands.

“Thank you, Mr. Li.”

Li Guangyuan asked, “Are you feeling better?”

Ye Ci nodded. “Much better.”

“That’s good.” Li Guangyuan was relieved to hear that. He paused for a moment before he said, “Work hard and try to do well in future exams.”

Ye Ci felt that his tone was a bit strange, but she still nodded.

After she returned to her seat, she inadvertently glanced at her own paper and suddenly stiffened.

There was a score on her paper.

The number 37 in bright red ink stabbed her eyes like a sharp knife.

Ye Ci subconsciously picked up her books and covered up the score.

Her heart was still beating fast and her limbs felt cold.

Li Guangyuan had said that her exam was considered a missed exam and would not count as an official grade, so Ye Ci had thought that she had escaped it.

She had not expected that Li Guangyuan would have actually marked half of her paper and given her a score!

Although she had only used half of the time, the questions she had solved were far less than half.

That was why she had gotten this extremely embarrassing score...

Ye Ci quickly lifted her eyes and glanced at Li Guangyuan.

As a teacher with many years of teaching experience, Li Guangyuan saw the paper that was only partially written and could already judge Ye Ci's real standards.

That was why he reminded her to work hard.

On the one hand, he had indeed worried about Ye Ci's health, but on the other hand, he did not want to embarrass Ye Ci in front of so many students.

However, Ye Ci knew very well that Li Guangyuan understood everything.

She just felt so dizzy and muddled.

The afternoon passed by in a flash.

When the bell rang, Li Guangyuan called for Ye Ci. "Ye Ci, come with me."

Chapter 276: Have You Seen the Exam Paper in Advance?

Ye Ci was startled and was not quite sure why Li Guangyuan had called her over at this time.

'Is it to ask about my health? Or my half-done paper? Or is it...about the results of the last test?'

In an instant, countless speculations surfaced in her mind, but she still responded, "Yes, Mr. Li. I'll be right there."

Ye Ci was about to follow Li Guangyuan and had just taken two steps out, but she then backed up, folded the papers on the table, and stuffed them in her book before she left.

After Ye Ci went out, the students started discussing.

"What did Mr. Li call her for?"

"I don't know... Maybe because she's sick?"

"She said that she had gastroenteritis. That's not very serious, so it shouldn't be a big deal, no?"

Zhang Yanyan glanced over at Ye Ci's desk.

She hid her paper so tightly... Is she afraid of letting people see her score?

Ning Li got a perfect score and was not afraid of letting others see her paper.

Ye Ci had only done half the paper but had covered it up so tightly. How interesting...

...

At the office.

Ye Ci went over only to find that the other two lecturers were also present.

Generally, these three teachers would not be in school at the same time, especially Xijing University's physics professor, Zhu Jingyuan. He had the least classes and would usually leave right after his class.

What was going on today?

"Ye Ci? Have a seat first."

The one who spoke was the teacher from Capital Fifth High, Zhao Ping.

He had an elegant temperament and was considered the most amiable one among the three teachers.

The feeling of uneasiness in Ye Ci's heart grew stronger.

It looked like Li Guangyuan was not the only one who had called her here, but these three.

She sat down in the chair next to her.

Li Guangyuan put down the class materials and poured her a glass of water.

"Don't be nervous. I called you over today because there are some things we want to ask."

Ye Ci held the disposable cup.

The water inside was warm, but her hands felt cold.

She nodded.

"What do you want to ask me?"

Li Guangyuan and the other teachers looked at each other and seemed to be deliberating how to speak.

Zhao Ping lifted his chin at Li Guangyuan.

It was more appropriate for Li Guangyuan to talk about this matter.

Li Guangyuan thought for a moment before he looked at Ye Ci and asked, "Ye Ci, how do you feel about the winter camp these days? Can you keep up with the course content?"

This question was not meaningful.

They had collectively marked Ye Ci's two test papers.

Thus, they were clear on her level.

At first, they had doubts about whether Ye Ci had deliberately done poorly on the test.

After all, she had gotten fifth place in M Province, so it had been impossible to get that score.

However, after a few days of observation, they unanimously confirmed that she was clueless.

Ye Ci consistently used the wrong formula and mixed up the steps, so it was too obvious.

They had encountered students who deliberately tested poorly, but judging from the information Yunzhou Second High had sent over, Ye Ci would not do so.

She had always performed very well before.

Besides, Ye Ci had already gotten the fifth place in the province, so why would she deliberately flunk her tests here?

These results would be included in her final assessment. If it was bad, it would inevitably have some impact on the audit from major universities.

There was no benefit to deliberately failing the tests.

Ye Ci's face stiffened. "It's...a little difficult to keep up."

She really could not give another answer in front of these teachers.

Li Guangyuan paused for a moment and finally said, "Ye Ci, how did you get fifth place in your province?"

Ye Ci's heart jumped. "Mr. Li, what do you mean by that?"

Li Guangyuan waved his hand.

"Don't misunderstand. We're just curious because it's quite strange."

He said as he took out two papers from the drawer.

"These two papers...one is the preliminary test paper, and the other is the answer sheet of your last test. You only did the types of questions that coincided with the preliminary test, but the other questions were either blank or wrong. Don't you have anything to say about this?"

Ye Ci was breaking out in cold sweat.

Her face turned red for a while.

What she feared most had really happened.

When the results of the first test came out, Ye Ci had secretly compared it with the preliminary test papers.

She knew that what Li Guangyuan had said was true.

From that time on, she had been afraid that they would catch this.

However, since nothing had happened after a few days, she thought that it could be swept under the rug.

Unexpectedly...

Ye Ci put the glass of water on the table next to her and forced herself to calm down. She asked, "Mr. Li, are you suspecting me of cheating in the preliminary round?"

Li Guangyuan and the others had not expected her to say it so directly, so they were a little stunned.

Ye Ci took a deep breath and continued, "I can guarantee that I didn't cheat in the preliminary exams! If you still have doubts about this matter, you can investigate it. The examination rooms are all monitored, so if I really did anything I shouldn't have, it should be caught on camera. In addition, I only went to school and home before and after the exams. I did not do anything other than concentrate on preparing for the exams. You can also check on this."

She became more confident as she spoke.

"I'm willing to cooperate with any investigation procedures, but if my innocence is proven, I hope that you all can apologize to me."

Her voice was calm, but it also carried a hint of suppressed anger and grievance.

She sounded like she had been wrongly accused.

‘What did I have to be guilty about? I didn’t cheat during the preliminary round. I only looked at the notebook that Ning Li gave me, which happens to be highly similar to the paper from the preliminary round... In that case, it would be Ning Li who had cheated...’

Seeing her attitude, Zhao Ping comforted her.

“Ye Ci, take it easy. We believe you. The physics competition invigilation is extremely strict, so if someone had done something, it wouldn’t have taken so long to be discovered.”

Li Guangyuan looked at the two papers in his hand.

He had deliberately asked Zhou Fei to check it out before.

However, Zhou Fei had said that Ye Ci did not cheat.

Zhou Fei applied to re-watch the preliminary exam surveillance video with Yunzhou Second High’s school leaders. Throughout the exam, there was indeed nothing unusual about Ye Ci.

Ye Ci had completed that test independently.

If she did not cheat on the spot, it was likely that she had gotten the test paper from other sources in advance.

Thus, they had also checked on Ye Ci’s activity half a month before the exam and found that there was indeed no evidence that she had done such a thing.

Li Guangyuan had then put this aside, intending on waiting for these exam results to see if he had been overthinking it.

However, that half of Ye Ci's test paper really could not convince him that she could have gotten fifth place in her province at her level.

"Ye Ci."

Li Guangyuan put the paper down and pointed at the paper. He asked in a deep voice, "Did you see the preliminary exam paper in advance?"

Chapter 277: Ning Li Isn't Clean Either

Ye Ci pursed her lips tightly and her hands under her sleeves were tightly clenched.

That was a direct question asking if she cheated.

"No." Ye Ci answered decisively. "The results of the preliminary round are my own effort."

"Then how do you explain these two exams, as well as your recent progress?"

Li Guangyuan stared at her closely.

"You should know that your competitive physics class teacher, Zhou Fei, used to be a student in Capital First High as well. I taught him back then. According to him, your performance in the competitive physics class in Yunzhou Second High in the past several months had been mediocre. The only good score you have is from the preliminary round."

Li Guangyuan did not mean to suspect the students, but Ye Ci was indeed suspicious.

Anyone could see that there had to be a problem there.

Ye Ci's heart turned cold. She suddenly understood that these teachers had started to investigate her some time ago.

For a while, Ye Ci was shocked and vexed, but also very humiliated.

There were 52 students in the winter camp from every province, but they only suspected her.

They had already secretly investigated these without her knowledge.

“Even if you had guessed the questions, you couldn’t have guessed so many.”

Even an old teacher like Li Guangyuan, who had many years of experience in competitions, could only bet on a few questions.

How could Ye Ci have coincidentally guessed almost all of them correctly?

“So...you suspect me of cheating?”

Ye Ci asked with a slightly raised voice. She seemed to be somewhat agitated.

Zhao Ping said, “Ye Ci, we want to reiterate that we’re not suspecting that you cheated. We just hope that you can explain this matter clearly. Now, there are two solutions. Either you tell us the original story and give us a proper reason, or you can redo the provincial preliminary round’s spare paper. This backup paper is equivalent in the difficulty level to the version that was used before. Everything will be clear to us once you get a good score on that paper.”

Li Guangyuan took out another sealed file bag from the drawer as Zhao Ping spoke.

It was very thin.

“Exam paper B is in here.”

Li Guangyuan put it on the table and looked at Ye Ci.

“You can choose for yourself.”

The office was dead silent.

Ye Ci felt like she was sitting on pins and needles. Her chest felt like it had been compressed with a boulder till she felt it hard to breathe.

After a while, she looked at the teachers.

At this time, the expression on her face was calm.

“I didn’t see the preliminary exam paper in advance. I was able to do well on the exam because...I looked at Ning Li’s notebook before the exam. Almost ninety percent of the topics in her notebook coincided with the preliminary exam paper.”

After Ye Ci said that, all three of the teachers were shocked.

“You said...Ning Li?!”

Ye Ci had just dropped too much information on them at once.

If that was true, then the one with the problem was probably Ning Li!

Ye Ci nodded her head.

“Yes, Mr. Li. Previously, my performance in the competitive physics class was indeed very average. I was able to score well in the preliminary round because I had read Ning Li’s notebook. I never hid it as well. I even mentioned it in front of Mr. Zhou Fei and the others that a big part of why I could get into the finals was because of her. At the very beginning, I didn’t know that there was something wrong with that

notebook until I finished the preliminary round and realized that almost all of the questions on the paper were the same.”

Li Guangyuan frowned.

“If that’s the case, why didn’t you tell Zhou Fei at that time?”

If there were really so many questions that coincided, Zhou Fei would have noticed the problem.

Ye Ci pursed her lips and said in a soft voice, “I thought it was strange at that time, but because her grades have always been good, I didn’t care too much and thought it was just a coincidence. Plus...she’s my sister, after all...”

Li Guangyuan and the other teachers had some understanding about the complex relationship between Ning Li and Ye Ci.

What Ye Ci said was already very obvious.

At first, Ye Ci had felt that something was wrong, but because it had involved Ning Li, she did not make it public.

“Do you know what this entails?”

Zhao Ping shook his head disapprovingly.

Cheating in the provincial competition had extremely serious consequences once discovered.

The relevant awards would be withdrawn and would lead to a series of problems.

Ye Ci lowered her head. “I’m sorry...”

Li Guangyuan pondered for a while and waved his hand.

“Now is not the time to pursue this. The key is...”

‘Did Ning Li cheat or not?’

“Ning Li has outstanding grades and talent, so there’s no reason for her to do this, right?”

Li Guangyuan admired Ning Li.

Zhou Fei was his favorite student, and Ning Li was taught by Zhou Fei and now himself.

He had read her papers and discussed some questions with her.

Ning Li had a quick mind and was extremely perceptive.

Li Guangyuan had been leading the competitive physics class for so many years, and Ning Li was definitely among the top students he had seen.

There was no need for such a genius to do this.

Zhu Jingyuan, who had not spoken, finally opened his mouth.

“Where is that notebook now?”

Ye Ci paused and said softly, “In my dorm.”

Li Guangyuan’s brow furrowed.

'She had actually brought that notebook along with her to the winter camp?'

Zhu Jingyuan nodded. "Good, then go and bring that notebook over now. Also, have Ning Li come over as well."

Chapter 278: I Wrote the Notes

When Ye Ci found Ning Li, she was eating dinner.

There were many other winter camp students in the cafeteria.

Ye Ci walked over.

"Sister Ning Li, Mr. Li wants you to go to the office as well."

The few people around who were closer heard this and looked up with curiosity and confusion.

'Mr. Li had called on Ye Ci earlier and now wanted to call on Ning Li as well?'

Seeing Ye Ci's expression, it did not seem very good.

Cao Jingxuan looked over and said, "Ye Ci, you haven't eaten dinner, right? I'll order one portion for you."

Ye Ci smiled reluctantly.

"No, thanks. I don't have much of an appetite right now. I'm going to go over with Sister Ning Li later."

Ye Ci could not eat anything right now.

Ning Li glanced at Ye Ci and saw the bag that she was carrying.

It seemed to contain a book.

Ning Li raised her eyebrows slightly.

“Okay. I’ll go as soon as I finish eating.”

Ye Ci was speechless. ‘How can Ning Li still think about dinner at this moment? She can’t imagine what’s coming for her next, right?’

Thinking of this, Ye Ci sneered in her heart.

‘Ning Li was only calm and relaxed now because of her good grades, right?’

In this winter camp, Ning Li had gotten a perfect score in the test and formal exam.

It was no wonder that she was so arrogant.

‘Let’s see if Ning Li can still be so calm when she gets to the office...’

“Then take your time to eat, Sister Ning Li. I’ll wait for you.”

Ye Ci sat down opposite Ning Li.

Ning Li did not care about her.

Since Ye Ci was willing to wait, then she would make her wait.

The people around them looked at each other.

The situation did not seem right.

Moreover, knowing that Ye Ci was waiting for her, Ning Li still ate slowly.

Cao Jingxuan said, "Ye Ci, you have gastroenteritis, so you should at least have some porridge. I brought an insulated lunch box, so I can bring some back for you."

Ye Ci hesitated for a moment before finally agreeing.

"Okay then, thank you."

Cao Jingxuan smiled brightly.

"You're welcome."

Ning Li had not said anything since the beginning, as if these things had nothing to do with her.

After being here for a few days, everyone could see that Ning Li and Ye Ci had a very average relationship even though they were a reorganized family.

Fifteen minutes later when Ye Ci was already anxious from waiting, Ning Li finally got up.

"Let's go."

Ye Ci felt annoyed and silently grabbed her bag.

'Let's see how long Ning Li can be smug for!'

...

The two of them went into the office one after the other.

Seeing that all three teachers were there, Ning Li figured out what was going on.

This was Ye Ci's investigation, but Ye Ci had dragged her down again.

'Very well then...'

"Ning Li, Ye Ci, please have a seat."

Li Guangyuan looked at Ning Li with a complicated expression.

He had not expected the investigation to involve Ning Li.

In fact, several of them felt that with Ning Li's grades, there was really no need for her to cheat, but Ye Ci had said it so blatantly that they had to investigate.

Otherwise, they would not be able to explain it.

Li Guangyuan weighed his words.

"Ning Li, we called you over because of Ye Ci's preliminary round results. She said that before the preliminaries, she read your notes, and most of the questions on it coincided with the test paper. Did such a thing happen?"

Ning Li seemed to be a little surprised.

“Is that what Ye Ci said?”

Li Guangyuan nodded.

Ye Ci sat on the side with her head slightly bowed.

“Sister Ning Li, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to say this, but...they had doubts about my preliminary results, so I can only tell the truth. I really didn’t cheat... I only scored so well because of your notebook. Sister Ning Li, you can testify for me, right?”

Ye Ci wanted Ning Li to prove that she did not cheat. It had all been because of that notebook, but that only meant that Ning Li’s notes were fishy.

Zhao Ping asked, “Ye Ci, did you bring that notebook?”

Ye Ci nodded, took it out of her bag, and handed it over.

Ning Li looked at it and said in a light voice, “I can’t imagine that you would be so attached to this notebook that you even brought it with you from Yunzhou...”

Ye Ci bit her lip and did not say anything.

Since Ye Ci had gotten fifth place in the province and knew that she still had to participate in the winter camp as well as the national finals, she had been afraid that such a situation would arise.

Thus, she had been carrying this notebook with her.

It really came in handy now.

Zhao Ping took the notebook.

Ning Li suddenly laughed and said, “Ye Ci, didn’t you tell the teachers that I specifically wrote these notes for you?”

Ye Ci suddenly stiffened.

Li Guangyuan looked at the two.

“Ning Li, what do you mean by that?”

‘Specifically wrote it for Ye Ci?’

Ning Li leaned back in the chair.

“When Ye Ci couldn’t keep up with the competitive physics class which had affected her other grades, our teacher asked me to help by tutoring Ye Ci. I never take notes for any class, including the competitive physics class, so I wrote this one specifically for her. The content in this notebook does have a large number of colliding parts with the preliminary exam paper. However, it’s just the knowledge points and types of questions, not the actual question itself.”

Ning Li lifted her chin.

“You can take a look at it. The questions on here are partly what Mr. Zhou Fei has taught us. Part of it was purposely selected from the past years’ papers for the physics competition. Of course, those are also the key points that Mr. Zhou Fei has mentioned. For each key point, I’ve only done one question, but each question had the types and derivations which were related to the provincial physics competition exam questions in the past ten years. Since I had limited time and energy, I only wrote a part of it for her first. This is just the first revision.”

The corners of Ning Li’s lips slowly curved into an extremely faint arc.

“There’s a second revision which I just finished writing encompassing the topics that weren’t covered in the previous revision. My intention was to give it to Ye Ci sometime during the winter camp. Unfortunately...”

Ning Li looked at Ye Ci, whose face was already white, and said lightly, “She doesn’t seem to need it anymore.”

Chapter 279: You Should Withdraw From the Competition

Ye Ci’s mind went blank.

‘Another notebook?! Ning Li even wrote the next book?’

Zhao Ping flipped open the notebook and looked at it seriously for a while before handing it to Li Guangyuan.

“Mr. Li, please take a look.”

Li Guangyuan took it.

The office was so quiet that a pin drop could be heard. There was only the sound of pages turning.

Ning Li leaned back in the chair with a relaxed posture and looked calm.

Ye C held her breath.

Li Guangyuan looked at it for quite a long time before he looked up at the two girls.

“The questions on this can’t exactly be considered the same as the preliminary exam questions.”

Ye Ci’s heart suddenly sank.

Zhao Ping nodded. "I thought the same thing too."

According to what Ye Ci had said earlier, they had thought that the notes would be highly similar, but after looking at it carefully, they realized that this was not the case.

Just as Ning Li had said, Ning Li had done a lot of organizing for every relevant knowledge point.

Besides the types of questions that had appeared on the test paper, Ning Li had also listed other derivative topics.

The questions on the preliminary exam were included in this notebook, or rather, a part of it.

At best, it was just the same knowledge points.

From this notebook, it only proved that Ning Li had studied all the papers from the past decade's physics competitions thoroughly.

Li Guangyuan and Zhao Ping both led many competitive physics classes. Even if the two of them had come together to write a notebook, they might not be able to do it better than this.

How could a student that had such strength and confidence cheat?

Ye Ci could not help but ask, "But...but... How was it so coincidental that the topics tested in the preliminary round were also in the notes?"

'This probability is also extremely low!'

The competition covered such a wide range of topics, but there were limited questions on the notes and they were all tested.

'Did Ning Li really not get the preliminary exam papers from other sources?!'

Li Guangyuan pondered for a moment and asked, "Ning Li, where's the second notebook that you just mentioned?"

"In the dorms."

"Then can you bring it for us?"

"Okay."

Ning Li got up and went out.

Ye Ci sat there and felt that her limbs were cold. Her ears buzzed and she still had not reacted to the situation.

Li Guangyuan handed the notebook to Zhu Jingyuan.

"Professor Zhu, you should take a look at this."

Time seemed to pass by excruciatingly slowly at this point.

Ye Ci wanted to defend herself, but none of the three teachers spoke.

She looked at the notes in Zhu Jingyuan's hand and the two papers on the table, as well as the sealed preliminary exam's spare paper, only to feel that it all seemed to form a huge net that engulfed her, making it difficult to break free.

The office was well heated, but Ye Ci felt extremely cold.

Soon, Ning Li came back, holding a notebook.

“Here.” She handed over her notes.

Li Guangyuan took it, flipped it open, and read it.

It was the same as the previous one, except that the knowledge points covered were those that were not in the previous notebook.

Ning Li sat down next to Ye Ci, and at a glance, she could already see Ye Ci’s pale face.

She smiled faintly and quickly withdrew her gaze.

In her past life, Ning Li could send Ye Ci to the national finals, so of course, she could do the same this time.

At that time, Ning Li had tutored Ye Ci and gone over all the learning content in detail with her, but now, Ning Li had only given Ye Ci a notebook.

She had carefully selected and organized this notebook.

At the same time, Ning Li had only given Ye Ci an appropriate amount of time that was enough for Ye Ci to memorize all the topics on the notes, and only those topics.

When Ye Ci came to the winter camp, her real level would be exposed.

“There are no problems with these notes,” Zhao Ping said.

Ye Ci’s hand clenched up tightly.

If the notes were fine, then Ning Li was also fine!

Ye Ci's lips twitched. She finally could not help but ask, "Is there really no problem with the last notebook too?"

The moment these words came out, several people in the office suddenly looked at Ye Ci in unison with a strange expression.

Ye Ci's heart thumped.

She hurriedly said, "I'm not doubting Ning Li. I just want to make sure. After all, the only reason I was able to get fifth place in the province in the preliminary round was because of these notes. If others find out about this later and involve Sister Ning Li..."

"So what if it involves me?"

Ning Li looked at Ye Ci with a raised eyebrow as if she found it amusing.

"If I'd read the papers in advance, I would've kept it to myself. Why would I have gone to such great lengths to leak the questions to you?"

Ye Ci was instantly dumbfounded.

'Right...this made sense...'

The competition was fierce and they were not comparable.

Moreover, it was not difficult to know Ning Li and Ye Ci did not have a good relationship as long as one inquired a little.

Ning Li did not have any motive or reason to help Ye Ci like that.

That notebook was at best just a “coincidence”.

Ye Ci opened her mouth, but she did not know what to say and only felt her heart sinking.

Her whole body felt like it was slipping into an abyss. She knew that there was danger below, but she could not escape and did not even have the strength to struggle.

Li Guangyuan finished reading it and gave it to Zhao Ping. He then looked at Ning Li.

His expression was somewhat complicated for a while before he let out a soft sigh.

“Ning Li, I believe that you’re innocent.”

Ye Ci’s eyelids twitched.

“Mr. Li?”

‘It’s settled just like that? Just from reading those two notebooks? They really won’t continue looking into it?’

Zhao Ping seemed to have read Ye Ci’s thoughts and sighed. He tapped on those two notebooks.

“Ye Ci, you may not know this, but if Ning Li is capable of writing these two notebooks, there’s actually no need for her to attend the winter camp classes at all. As long as she takes the exam normally, she’s sure to win the prize at this year’s National Physics Competition.”

Moreover, it was highly likely that Ning Li would win the gold medal.

In this batch of winter camp students, none of them could compete with Ning Li for the time being.

Zhao Ping had put this euphemistically, but it was incomparably harsh in Ye Ci's ears.

'I may not know? He's saying that with my level, I can't even understand Ning Li's true strength? That I don't even know what the winter camp and the national finals even mean?'

Ye Ci had only gotten fifth place in the province, yet she was constantly questioned by people about all kinds of things. What about Ning Li?

It was as if everyone felt that Ning Li deserved to be number one and that all the prestige and honor should also be hers.

'Does everyone think that I deserve nothing?!'

Ning Li gently nodded and said, "Thanks, Mr. Zhao."

Li Guangyuan looked at Ye Ci again. His brows were slightly furrowed as if he was hesitating about something.

"As for Ye Ci...your results in the preliminary round is indeed your own effort, and we're all very sorry that we suspected you. However, your situation is indeed special. Why don't you go back and think about whether you should withdraw from the winter camp?"

Chapter 280: Maybe She'll Do Well on the Exam

'Do you want to quit the winter camp?'

Ye Ci never thought that she would hear such a question.

She froze.

Li Guangyuan had actually not wanted to say this so directly, but since it had come to this point, he thought twice before saying this out of consideration for the students.

“Ye Ci, I heard that you used to be one of the top students in Yunzhou Second High. Even if you didn’t participate in the physics competition, it wouldn’t be a problem for you to get into the top universities in the country with your grades at that time. You should know very well how time and energy-consuming the physics competition is. Continuing to stay in the winter camp won’t be meaningful to you. At the end of the day, it won’t help you get a guaranteed slot in the top universities and may even affect your college entrance exams. Although the winter camp’s intensive training is only two weeks long, it’s actually much longer than that, between now and the finals. It’s really not worth it for you to waste all this time on the competition. Assuming you quit now and go back to prepare well for the college entrance exams, it’s still not too late to catch up.”

Li Guangyuan was very sincere, but Ye Ci did not hear his good intentions.

She sneered in her heart.

It turned out that to them, her participation in the competition was “a waste of time and energy” and would also “affect her college entrance exams”.

Zhao Ping comforted Ye Ci. “This isn’t as serious as you think. Every year at winter camp, some students drop out halfway.”

Those who could come here were all bright students, but it was rare that they could get an award.

Some students knew their own standards and gave up on their own.

Some others gritted their teeth and insisted on carrying on, but in the end, they did not get an award and even failed the college entrance exams.

They eventually end up with nothing.

Usually, the teachers would not talk to students about quitting so frankly, but Ye Ci was different.

It had been a fluke that she had been able to enter the winter camp.

In fact, her standard did not allow her to continue learning here.

Not to mention the preliminary rounds, she had not even finished half of the test paper from last night's exam, so that was enough to explain the problem.

Ye Ci lowered her head.

Ning Li gave a surreptitious glance at Ye Ci.

These words were sincere from the teachers.

Unfortunately, it was a loud slap in Ye Ci's face, which crushed her self-esteem and self-confidence.

Ye Ci had been proud and was used to being praised for so many years, so she had always looked down on other people.

Now that she was here, she had become the worst performer, so much so that she could not even continue to stay here.

What could make her more ashamed and angry than this?

Li Guangyuan added, "Of course, this isn't a trivial matter, so you can go back tonight and discuss it with your family first, or ask for Zhou Fei's opinion..."

"I want to stay."

Ye Ci suddenly spoke, interrupting Li Guangyuan's words.

Several teachers looked at each other, looking a little helpless.

In fact, they had expected this.

Ye Ci getting fifth in the provincial preliminaries had been broadcasted to all of Yunzhou Second High for so long that everyone knew that she had come to the winter camp to prepare for the national finals.

If she withdrew from the competition, she would certainly be talked about by many people.

Such a huge sense of disparity was indeed difficult for the average person to bear, especially since she had always excelled in her studies.

Such a "good student" often had a harder time accepting such a situation.

However, it was not the time to think about pride.

Li Guangyuan could not help but say, "Ye Ci, we understand your feelings, but this is related to your future, so we hope that you will consider this carefully."

Zhou Fei had told Li Guangyuan about Ye Ci's situation.

After Ye Ci joined the competitive physics class, Ye Ci had shown mediocre performance. She was at best only slightly above average in her test scores.

Moreover, perhaps the competitive physics class had taken up a lot of energy, Ye Ci's performance in several school-wide exams had also declined sharply.

Ye Ci was not particularly outstanding compared to others either, let alone compared to talented students like Ning Li and Pei Song.

Zhou Fei also said that several other students in the class that were better than Ye Ci had not even managed to get into the winter camp, but Ye Ci had made it.

It was true that Ye Ci had not cheated, but she was also not qualified to remain in the competition.

In the class of 52 students, even Li Peng, who ranked 51st in both tests, was better than Ye Ci by a large margin.

What was the point of Ye Ci staying on here?

Besides looking for trouble for herself and wasting her time and energy, there was no other benefit in her staying.

Ye Ci's lips were tightly pursed.

After Li Guangyuan finished what he had to say, Ye Ci took a deep breath and said, "Mr. Li, I understand what you guys mean, but I still want to stay. I don't want to quit halfway."

Li Guangyuan and the other teachers felt an oncoming headache.

'How is this considered halfway? This is considered cutting losses!'

However, Ye Ci was insistent and no one could pull her back.

Their reaction made Ye Ci feel suffocated again.

She clenched her teeth.

‘Why? Why do I have to quit?! I finished the paper myself! I deserve to be in the winter camp!’

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There were already many in Yunzhou Second High who were privately gossiping that there was something wrong with Ye Ci’s preliminary results. If she quit now, she would only be confirming their suspicions.

How could she continue to stay in Second High if that happened?

Besides, the Ye family had organized a celebration banquet for her in Jinsheng Hotel, and the dignitaries in Yunzhou knew about it.

How was she going to explain it to everyone?

Ye Ci simply had no choice.

“I’d like to ask you all to trust me for once. There’s still some time before the finals. I’ll do my best and accept whatever the results are.”

Li Guangyuan shook his head with a sigh.

‘Does she not understand that this competition isn’t about how hard she works, but on her talent?’

Without that talent, it would be the same even if she did more practice.

There were only four more months until the college entrance examination. If Ye Ci continued to delay her studies, she might not pass...

Since they had already tried to persuade her by saying what they needed to and Ye Ci had not accepted their advice, they could not do anything else.

After all, the final decision was on her.

The office was quiet and seemed to have fallen into a stalemate.

After a while, Zhu Jingyuan said, "How about this...Ye Ci, you can call home and explain the situation clearly. If your parents are as insistent as you, then we'll respect your decision."

'Her parents should realize the seriousness of this matter and persuade Ye Ci to go home, right?'

Ye Ci did not move.

She was not willing to make this call.

Li Guangyuan shook his head. "It's better if you..."

"Since she wants to stay, let her stay." Ning Li suddenly spoke.

Ye Ci looked up in shock.

Ning Li inclined her head and looked over with a smile.

"She didn't cheat, so there's no reason to dissuade her, is there? Moreover, since she was able to get into the top five in the provincial preliminary round, it proves that she still has some strength.. Maybe, she'll also be able to do well in the finals."