

## Little Brat's 71

### Chapter 71: Pick Your Seats

This time around, besides Sun Huihui, the others around her who heard He Xiaochen were stunned.

Lin Zhouyang almost fell off his chair in shock. He asked in disbelief, "You said Ning Li never takes down notes? Are you for real?"

He Xiaochen looked at him and said affirmatively, "Yeah, all she does is go through the study materials. What's wrong? Didn't you know that?"

Lin Zhouyang was silenced.

Who would have known that? More importantly, the fact that Ning Li never took notes sounded outrageous.

Which third-year student never took notes?

Lin Zhouyang himself had already used up several notebooks in the first semester.

He Xiaochen realized that other than Lin Zhouyang, the others also seemed unaware of Ning Li's freakish feat.

"Oh, right, you guys have never asked her for notes, so you wouldn't know that."

He Xiaochen had found out about it accidentally and had reacted no better than Lin Zhouyang back then. As time went by, she got used to Ning Li's superhuman capabilities.

No matter what the subject or notes were like, all Ning Li did was focus on the study materials, and when she mastered the formula or theory, she would have no use for notes.

However, when He Xiaochen revealed that to the class, the atmosphere became strangely quiet.

Meanwhile, the other students were subtly glancing at Ye Ci.

If what He Xiaochen said was true, Ye Ci never knew about this because she had never asked Ning Li for notes before.

Ye Ci kept quiet and misled everyone to think she had asked Ning Li for notes, but the latter had refused to lend her.

Ye Ci tightened her grip on Pei Song's notes, looking down as the expression on her face froze.

Lin Zhouyang anxiously bumped the boy beside him with a soft kick.

"Hey, you were in the competitive Physics class with Ning Li, weren't you? Notes! Gimme your notes!"

"Oh, yeah!" The boy nodded in realization and took his notebook out. "Ahem, my handwriting isn't good, so bear with it!"

His handwriting might have been horrible, but the notes were complete and at least they were still readable.

Ye Ci looked at the boy and forced a smile. She said softly, "Thank you."

In response, the boy awkwardly scratched his head. "It's nothing!"

Lin Zhouyang started to regret not signing up for the competitive Physics class.

Ye Ci then gave Pei Song back his notes.

As for the lessons that she had missed, she got notes from her other classmates instead of asking for Pei Song or Ning Li's help anymore.

...

The second period in the afternoon was the class meeting.

Since the parent-teacher meeting was held yesterday, Geng Haifan chaired the class meeting succinctly with a swift conclusion.

He took a glance at the clock on the wall. "There are still 20 minutes on the clock, so let's change seats."

Previously, the seats should have been swapped two days ago right after the results came out, but due to some scheduling conflict and unforeseen circumstances, it was delayed until today.

The class erupted into excitement when they heard about the seat change.

The seats were changed according to the placing of results. The higher the placement, the higher priority one would get to choose their desired seat.

The students walked out of the classroom and waited.

Geng Haifan waved at Ning Li.

"Ning Li, you first. Where do you want to sit?"

A lot of the students looked at her in jealousy. Before the results were announced, no one could see this coming since they did not expect her to get first.

When she first came to the class, all she got was a corner seat that no one cared about. Now, after the monthly test, she earned the right to pick her desired seat ahead of anyone.

Ning Li said without a second thought, "Mr. Geng, I think my previous seat is fine. I would like to sit back at my own place."

When she said that, everyone, including Geng Haifan, looked at her strangely.

What did she just say?

This was a huge opportunity, and yet she still chose the secluded corner seat? What was so nice about that little nook?

"Are you sure?" Geng Haifan asked.

"Mm-hm-mmm."

Geng Haifan nodded without asking Ning Li why. After spending quite some time with her, he learned that Ning Li was a person with her own thoughts.

If she had made her own choice, she must have had a strong reason behind it, so it was best to just let her have her way.

"Then, who do you want sitting next to you?"

Although Ning Li might have been a loner, there was someone who wanted to sit beside her. After all, her ice-cold bearing and insane results were not enough to deter the person.

He Xiaochen raised her hand.

"Teacher, me!"

The rare opportunity had finally arrived and she ought to seize it.

He Xiaochen had said she wanted to sit beside Ning Li before. When Ning Li announced she wanted her old seat back, she thought that He Xiaochen would give up. However, she did not expect He Xiaochen to be so persistent.

Nevertheless, Ning Li simply agreed.

Geng Haifan looked rather pleased with the arrangement. He was actually worried about Ning Li not having friends in the class, but since the lively and smart He Xiaochen wanted to be with her, he could put his worries at rest.

“Okay, you two can go in.”

Ning Li chose the other corner seat, which was nearer to the back door exit. It would be more convenient for her to leave from the back.

Since her new place was on the same row but on a different side, all she had to do was move her things a few seats away.

As for He Xiaochen, she ran back and forth as if she was moving her entire house. Other than the pile of papers and study materials, Ning Li also saw He Xiaochen grab a novel, a mug, and a few bags of chips.

Ning Li was speechless.

The next one to choose would be Pei Song. He, too, chose his old seat and Ren Qian tagged along as well.

Their original seats were at the back, and now, they were sitting beside Ning Li.

It was not because the two guys did not want to pay attention to the lecture in front, but the two of them were around 180 cm tall, so sitting at the back would be more suitable.

Now, there was only a little walkway in between Pei Song and Ning Li.

He Xiaochen's eyes were teary when she saw Pei Song sit beside Ning Li. 'Is this heaven? The most beautiful girl and the most handsome guy in school are sitting next to me! Aaah!'

Ren Qian glanced at the girl. "You're drooling."

He Xiaochen unconsciously propped her chin up and glared at the guy. She could not help but grind her teeth furiously when she realized that Ren Qian had been enjoying the company of the most handsome guy and the most beautiful girl for a whole month.

She swore she would make up for her loss in the upcoming weeks.

The top four students had grouped themselves up, which left the other students outside speechless.

"Great. The top four just teamed up."

"They are all sitting next to each other in the last row. There are basically no more places around them that we can choose."

"I give up. I guess I'll pick the front. I don't have the brains to learn, so sitting beside the geniuses won't help me much either!"

"What are you talking about? Can you be more confident in yourself? Do you even have a dream? Even if you don't have the brains, sitting beside the geniuses and basking in their presence is good enough for me! Don't you people snatch my place beside them!"

The others started to pick their seats, and everyone unconsciously picked a seat close to the top four.

When it was Ye Ci's turn, there were only two more seats around Pei Song and Ning Li, which were the two seats in front of Pei Song.

She did not pick those though. Instead, she chose the third row in the middle.

Cheng Xiangxiang stuck to her best friend as well.

Their original seats were only a row away from Pei Song and Ren Qian, but now, their new seats were two rows away.

More and more students chose the front seats.

Lin Zhouyang struggled for quite a long time and ultimately chose the seat in front of Pei Song.

The moment he sat down, Ren Qian ridiculed him, "Oh, look at this! This is rare! Why has thy cometh to us instead of taking the front?"

Lin Zhouyang nervously covered Ren Qian's mouth with his hand.

Chapter 72: This Is Your House, Not Mine

"Can you shut your mouth!?"

Lin Zhouyang liked Ye Ci, but he never said it out loud though almost everyone knew it.

Unlike Ding Xi, in his opinion, Ye Ci was perfect in every way, and since he liked her, he should not hold her back. He knew what a third-year high-schooler should focus on. Therefore, after some serious thought, he decided to sit further away.

Lin Zhouyang covered Ren Qian's mouth and pinned him down with an elbow strike.

"I, Brother Lin, grace you with my presence. Know your place and be grateful, you jerk!"

Ren Qian reached out to a pen and paper on the table and scribbled something.

Lin Zhouyang moved closer to see what Ren Qian was writing. “What are you—”

A few big words were scrawled on the paper: ‘I’d rather die!’

Lin Zhouyang widened his eyes.

The two guys were fooling around for some time before Pei Song spoke, “There’s a recitation during English class tomorrow. Have you guys memorized all the selected text?”

Lin Zhouyang froze. He returned to his seat and opened his English textbook to stare at the words as if he was looking at his arch-nemesis.

Recitation? He could barely read the question!

The rest of the class trickled in one after another, and the last student marked the end of the seat arrangement session.

...

Sunday arrived in the blink of an eye.

Ning Li had no class today, but she had trouble sleeping at night because she had a long and chaotic nightmare.

The dream had started in darkness. She looked around but could not see a thing.

Then, soft light entered her sight, and before she knew it, she found herself in a room.



She wanted to leave, but when she turned around, she ran into someone.

When the refreshing and rich fragrance of alcohol entered her nose, she recognized the person right away.

“Lu Huaiyu?”

She looked up at the man.

The environment remained dark, but for some reason, his face was clear. She could see it all: his brows, his nose, his eyes...

He slightly leaned forward with a smile, staring into her eyes, and said, “Didn’t I tell you not to make me mad?!”

Ning Li shook her head. “I didn’t—”

Lu Huaiyu did not say a word. He stared at her with his abysmal gaze. It felt like a whirlpool sucking her soul in.

Before she knew it, he disappeared and the environment changed instantly.

She found herself in a white room with four walls. The refreshing fragrance faded and was replaced by a heavy smell of antiseptic.

Ning Li’s heart throbbed. It was the rehabilitation center!

Inside the room was a bed with a person on it.

The person looked thin, pale, and exhausted. It was herself, her old self!

The old Ning Li fought her exhaustion to get up. She had a phone with her and seemed to be talking to someone.

The phone did not belong to her. After she was locked up in the rehabilitation center, she was denied all means of contacting the outside world. Luckily, when she was released for some air, she managed to steal the phone from a janitor.

The phone rang three times before someone answered it.

A low and lazy voice of a man came through the speaker.

“Hello?”

It was Lu Huaiyu.

The old Ning Li’s body was weak and drained while her voice was so soft that it sounded like a whisper in the wind.

“Mr. Lu...”

All she got was a silent reply.

Hurried footsteps came from the corridor.

“She’s probably taken the phone!”

The old Ning Li gripped her phone tightly.

“Please! Please...”

Bang!

A loud bang sounded and pulled her back from the nightmare.

She opened her eyes and stared at the ceiling for quite a while before she separated her mind from the dream.

She realized that she was drenched in sweat.

Knock knock.

Her door shook violently as someone was thumping on it with a heavy object.

Frowning, frustration and ruthlessness appeared in her eyes as she got up and walked over.

Right after she opened the door, Ye Cheng's foot came through, but he missed the door. The loss of balance almost made him fall to the floor.

Ning Li looked down at him and had a cold glance at his foot for a moment.

The cause of the loud bangs and violent shaking became self-explanatory.

Ye Cheng did not expect Ning Li to open the door, so it scared him when he lost his balance.

Her icy cold gaze made him feel guilty for some reason. An unknown reverence even rose from his heart.

"Is kicking my door down that interesting?" Ning Li said coldly.

Ye Cheng replied stiffly, "It's none of your business! This is my house! I can do whatever I like!"

Ever since Lu Huaiyu taught him a lesson, Ye Cheng had the tendency to behave in front of Ning Li.

This time, however, he found out that his sister had gone to the hospital because of Ning Li.

Furious, he mustered up enough courage to kick down Ning Li's door early in the morning.

He stuck his tongue out at Ning Li and smirked mischievously. "You don't like it? Then, you can walk out of this house right away!"

Ye Cheng assumed that Ning Li would either lash out at him or put up with his insults.

If she lashed out at him or did anything to him, he would go to his parents because this was his house, not Ning Li's.

If she chose to put up with it, he would come back with more!

Both ways were fine to him because he could put Ning Li in a miserable situation. He was waiting for a reaction, but she smiled at him instead.

She did not seem angry at all. Instead, she took a step back and leaned on the door frame, seeming frivolous.

"You're right. This is your house, so of course, you can do whatever you like!" She raised her chin slightly.

"The door is just a small thing. The Purple Sand clay teapot and cups in the tea room, the Cuishan screens downstairs, the jade pearl in the study room...you can break whatever you like, and they'd all be better than a door. You can try and I'd like to see it."

Ye Cheng was stunned, not expecting this reaction from her. His round face blushed. "What, do you think I'm stupid? Do you think I don't know what you are trying to make me do?"

All the things Ning Li mentioned were priceless. Breaking any single one of them would result in his father skinning him alive.

Ning Li did it on purpose! She raised a brow at him. "Oh really?"

Ye Ming loved to mingle with men of knowledge and pose as an artsy person, hence his hobby of collecting art pieces and crafts. There was plenty of his collection around the house. Ye Cheng would not have smashed 10 million worth of his collection otherwise.

"I thought that you said this is your house and that you can do whatever you want." Ning Li raised her chin at Ye Cheng again while showing an intrigued look.

Ye Cheng felt aggrieved. He glared at her but could not speak a word although the embarrassment made him furious.

"Lil Cheng?" Su Yuan's voice came from downstairs.

She walked up the stairs as she called to Ye Cheng, and when she saw the confrontation between the boy and the girl, her smile froze.

"What is going on?"

"Nothing. He seemed to be interested in my door and..." Ning Li said lazily.

"Mom, don't listen to her!" Ye Cheng interrupted Ning Li.

Su Yuan already had a hunch about what happened. She called Ye Cheng over with a wave of her hand.

“Okay, come on. Let’s put this aside first. We have to leave now, or else we will be late.”

Chapter 73: A Visit

Ye Cheng finally calmed down.

“Okay, I’ll go.”

He reluctantly went downstairs.

“I told you, I don’t want to go! The equestrian class is boring!”

Ye Cheng had signed up for an equestrian class this summer. There were two classes per month, but the boy was not interested at all.

He had to change into an equestrian uniform every time, and the coach would lecture him about the correct poses. It was all very frustrating.

On top of that, the boy was heavier than the others, and it made him look clumsy every time he tried to climb up the horse. His clumsy movements made him a joke to his peers.

However, Su Yuan insisted on sending him to the class. No matter how much he disliked it or much he pleaded, he would always get the same answer: “you must go”.

Aunt Zhao waited for him at a side with the bag of uniform and helmet for the equestrian class.

Su Yuan frowned when he heard the boy’s complaint.

“Your sister’s equestrian skills are improving. You shouldn’t be left behind!”

All the children of wealthy families in Yunzhou had to undergo training and tuition for almost everything, equestrian being one of the popular choices.

Ye Cheng quietened down a bit when Su Yuan mentioned Ye Ci.

“Sis is always great.”

Su Yuan’s furrowed brows softened.

“When I sent your sister to equestrian class, she was only 8 years old, just a little younger than you, but she never skipped any of the classes and attended them no matter what. Why can’t you be more like your sister?”

Ye Cheng when silent.

“She had a rough start as well, but she persevered with sheer will and hard work. You can’t be lazy. If your sister finds out about it, she will laugh at you.”

Aunt Zhao smiled and said, “That’s right, little master. Madam canceled all her meetings today just to fetch you to class and accompany you. Besides, if everyone knows how to ride a horse but not you, you will become a joke to others.”

Ye Cheng scoffed and raised his voice, “Even so, I won’t be a joke!”

The boy subtly glanced at Ning Li behind him.

Su Yuan’s smile faded a little as she unconsciously looked at the girl as well.

Ning Li was still leaning on the door frame with a nonchalant expression, seeming to show no interest in all of this.

Then, Su Yuan looked away. “Your sister Ning Li didn’t have the chance when she was younger, but you do, so you must cherish it!”

Ye Cheng pouted sourly and went out.

Su Yuan followed him but turned around for one last glance before she walked out of the door.

At that point, Ning Li had gone back into her room with the door tightly shut.

Aunt Zhao was a little nervous. “Madam, I didn’t mean to...”

“It’s fine. You are telling the truth anyway. I did think of bringing her along, but she’s already in her third year, so it’s not suitable to distract her.” Su Yuan shook her head.

Besides, she believed that given Ning Li’s temper, the girl would never have agreed. She did not even show interest in attending etiquette class, let alone equestrian.

They soon arrived at the car.

Su Yuan took the bag from Aunt Zhao and did a quick check. “Got everything?”

“Everything is here. Don’t worry, madam. I packed everything according to your request list.”

“Good.”

Su Yuan then went into the car with Ye Cheng.

“Let’s go.”

...



Ning Li returned to her room.

Without the boy around, she regained her peace and quiet. She tried to sleep again but found that she was not sleepy anymore.

The thoughts about the dream she had earlier made her pull out her phone.

Before she even realized it, she was already calling the person. The call got through soon enough.

“Lili?”

The voice was familiar, sounding exactly like the voice in her dream.

Ning Li softly put her hand on her chest. “Second Brother?”

Lu Huaiyu sensed a slight difference in her tone. He asked curiously, “I’m here. What’s wrong?”

‘Not Mr. Lu, but Second Brother...’ Ning Li said it silently in her mind. The suffocation in her heart felt a little less burdensome.

“Nothing in particular. I accidentally tapped on your number,” she said then looked outside the window. “I’ll hang up now, Second Brother.”

Lu Huaiyu paused for a moment and said, “Sure.”

The call ended.

Ning Li calmed her mind and adjusted her composure before she changed and went out.

...

After she got into a taxi, Ning Li called someone.

Yu Pingchuan picked up the phone swiftly, and his tone was obviously unhappy. "Finally, someone has decided to call me!"

Ning Li's eyes curved and she said, "Mr. Yu, are you home today?"

Yu Pingchuan paused for a moment before he slightly raised his voice. "Are you coming?"

Ning Li grunted softly. "The monthly test is over, and I don't have any class today. I thought of paying you a visit. I wonder if it's convenient for you."

Of course, it was convenient for Yu Pingchuan. The man barely stayed in Yunzhou in a single year and had come back this time because of the Huatsing Cup. A lot of notable people would spare some time for a visit to the master's house.

That was also the reason why Ning Li had picked a later date to visit.

Yu Pingchuan grunted. "Hmph! I'm glad you still remember that. I gave you the address before, so you should know how to come here. Or do you want me to send Lil Lin to pick you up?"

Lil Lin was Yu Pingchuan's assistant who was responsible for arranging meetings and schedules for the master.

"Thank you, but no thanks. I'm already in a taxi and will be arriving soon."

"Okay, be careful on the way here."

At the end of the call, Ning Li even heard Yu Pingchuan telling Lil Lin to buy more stuff for dinner.

Before she could reject him, the call ended abruptly and Ning Li was left speechless.

...

Forty minutes later, the taxi arrived in a neighborhood near the south of the city. It was an old neighborhood, and at first glance, most of the residents were senior citizens and children.

Ning Li had come to this place a few times in her past life, so she knew her way around.

She reached a unit and went up to the third floor. The unit was so old that there was not even an elevator.

A lot of people told Yu Pingchuan to move, but he insisted on living here. The man used to share the house with his wife a long time ago. After his wife passed away eight years ago, he had been living alone.

Even though he was not in Yunzhou most of the time, he would come back to his old house every time he returned. After all, he was no longer a young man, so moving would be a hassle.

Ning Li knocked on the door.

Thump-thump.

The door was opened, and a man in his 30s welcomed her with a bright smile.

“Lili, you’re here! Come in! Come in!”

“Uncle Lin, it’s been a while!”

Ning Li gave the man the basket of fruits and walked onto the porch.

Lin Yaohui courteously said, "Oh, it's too kind of you to bring us fruits. You coming here is more than enough!"

She smiled. "It's nothing precious anyway. It's just fruits that Mr. Yu loves."

She then peered inside but did not see Yu Pingchuan. "Where's Mr. Yu?"

Lin Yaohui cleared his throat and said, "He's in the kitchen. He said he wanted to cook a meal for you after knowing that you were coming. He's preparing fish soup."

Ning Li went silent for a moment. She had miscalculated. She should have come earlier.

It was then that Yu Pingchuan noticed the arrival of his guest. He came out with the spatula in his hand.

"Lili! There you are!"

Ning Li walked over to the man.

"Mr. Yu, I'm just here to visit. You don't need to go through all the hassle for me! Why don't I help you instead?"

She tried to take the spatula from him.

Chapter 74: Encounter At The Stable

"Ack!"

Yu Pingchuan held his spatula tightly and moved it away from Ning Li.

“What hassle? The soup is almost ready. Just sit back and wait!”

Ning Li tried to talk him out of it as she said, “I...I-I saw a painting last time and I have some questions for you. Can you...”

Yu Pingchuan finally gave in when he heard her. “Okay. Lil Lin, take over, will ya?”

Overjoyed, Lin Yaohui ran over and took the spatula. “Mr. Yu, it’s been a while since you’ve seen Lili, right? Go on, go have a reunion. I’ll prepare the meal.”

Yu Pingchuan took his apron off and passed it to the man.

“I thought of letting you taste my cooking, but don’t you worry. The soup is almost done. Just give it a few more minutes and you can have a taste!”

“Okay...” Ning Li said.

The two of them headed to the study room.

“Which painting were you referring to just now?” Yu Pingchuan curiously asked.

Ning Li gulped and simply came up with a name.

Yu Pingchuan thought about it for a moment. “That? That’s his earliest work. He was still not mature at that time, and his creative mind was a little extreme back then. There’s nothing stellar about it.”

“Oh...” Ning Li said.

“Yours, however...” Yu Pingchuan sat down behind the desk. “I still haven’t asked you about the last-minute change the other day. How long have you put your brush away for?”

Ning Li's heart skipped a beat.

"It's been a while, I guess. I just transferred to a new school and I have to take the monthly test, so I've been having a lot on my plate recently."

Yu Pingchuan softly grunted. "Brushing me off with those words again. How much have those trivial matters delayed your practice? Let me ask you, how did you fare in your monthly test?"

"I got first place." Ning Li was honest.

Yu Pingchuan took a glance at her. "What? You are that good now?"

She listened quietly. Her obedient expression reminded Yu Pingchuan of some old memories. He felt pity for her but did not lecture her about that.

"Your painting is still okay." He took a sip of tea and simply let it slip.

Ning Li smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Yu."

He grunted and was reminded of something else. "Oh, you are living in the Ye family's place, aren't you? How are you keeping up?"

She curved her lips into a smile again. "Okay, I guess."

Yu Pingchuan stared at her quietly. He had stayed in Lincheng for quite some time in the past and always thought Ning Li had lost her biological mother.

Who would have thought that her mother had remarried Ye Ming in Yunzhou and was living a decent life?

If Ning Li's grandmother had not suffered a sudden heart attack, the Ye family would never have wanted to contact Ning Li.

Since she was introduced to the family under such circumstances, how could she be doing just okay?

Ning Li seemed calm, so Yu Pingchuan did not press on that matter. He switched to other topics and she answered whichever topic that she found interesting.

A while later, Lin Yaohui called the two of them over.

"Mr. Yu, Lili, the food is ready!"

...

The table was filled with freshly cooked dishes.

Ning Li saw an unidentified object in the center. There were several pieces of leaves floating on top of the bowl of white liquid.

"Lili, come, sit." Yu Pingchuan waved at her.

The moment she sat down, he served her a big bowl of fish soup.

"Here, have a taste!"

Lin Yaohui looked at her sympathetically and then started to shove some rice into his mouth. He did not allow Yu Pingchuan to serve him a bowl of soup.

Ning Li picked up her spoon and ladled out a piece of charred fish. She bit the bullet and took a sip of the soup while Yu Pingchuan looked at her in anticipation. "How does it taste?"

Ning Li smiled. "It's...nice."

Yu Pingchuan was happy. He wanted a bowl for himself, but Ning Li held him back.

"Mr. Yu, the doctor said you can't drink soup like this. There's too much purine."

"Sigh. Fine." Yu Pingchuan put his hands down with a pitiful look. "Then, you can have more for yourself!"

Ning Li said, "Uh...Okay."

Lin Yaohui respected the girl from the bottom of his heart. He even gave her an imaginary thumbs-up.

After the meal, he looked at her. "Lili, do you want some fruits?"

When Ning Li nodded, Yu Pingchuan was overjoyed.

"Lil Lin, go cut us some fruits. I bought some yesterday—"

"Uncle Lin, why don't you cut the fruits that I brought!?" Ning Li interrupted the man.

"Ah, okay!" Lin Yaohui then took the basket out.

Yu Pingchuan had a quick glance at it and the smile on his face faded.

Pomelo, cucumber, tomatoes?

His eyes twitched helplessly. "You call these fruits?"



“Yeah!” Ning Li helped Lin Yaohui wash the fruits and brought them over.

“Don’t you like them?”

Yu Pingchuan had a lot of health problems given his age, and the doctor had told him to be cautious with his diet. However, the man had zero control over his gluttony. Even though Lin Yaohui was there to keep an eye out for him, the man would still consume fruits with high sugar levels.

Lin Yaohui caught the man red-handed a few times but did not know what to do about it.

Yu Pingchuan struggled when he saw Ning Li pass him the scarlet red tomato. In the end, he stiffly took the tomato.

“Of course, I like them...”

Lin Yaohui sighed a breath of relief from the side.

Ning Li had always been able to persuade the man. Yu Pingchuan would have thrown both the basket of fruits and the person out if it was someone else.

Yu Pingchuan took a big bite and found that it was almost tasteless. He looked at Ning Li with a mournful gaze. “Lili, I have some lychees and peaches in the refrigerator. Why don’t I—”

The second Ning Li glared at him, he swallowed the rest of his words and ate his tomato. He then said, “My friend sent me a horse a few days ago. Do you want to go have a look, Lili?”

Surprised, Ning Li said, “You bought another horse?”

The man barely had any hobbies except for painting and rearing horses.

“No, no, I didn’t buy it yet.” Yu Pingchuan waved his hand. “They sent the horse to the stables, and I haven’t gotten a chance to visit it yet. Since you are also in Yunzhou, why don’t we have a look?”

The equestrian club in Yunzhou had a lot of horses. Some of the horses were there for equestrian training and some were for racing. The racehorses would be sent to Gangcheng for races in the future.

She shook her head. “I’ll pass. Besides, you’ve bought a few horses already. Aren’t they enough?”

Yu Pingchuan decided to take a step back and said, “Then, why don’t you take it as accompanying an old man for a walk in the stables? I won’t buy it. I’ll just have a look.”

Ning Li said frankly, “You just want to see whether the horse is worthy of your investment if it was used for racing.”

He looked guilty. “Ahem, If you want to put it like that, I guess that’s true.”

Because Ning Li had not spent time with the man for a long time, some thought later, she nodded. “Fine, I’ll go with you this time.”

...

Lin Yaohui drove the two of them to the stables. It was close to their place, so they arrived in less than half an hour.

It was a private stables for equestrians, and it was quite large.

Yu Pingchuan had obviously called the place a while ago because there were attendants waiting for him the moment they arrived.

The car drove in.

Ning Li looked around through the window and accidentally had a glimpse at someone who looked familiar, but the car went too fast, so she did not get a clear look.

Nevertheless, she was not overly concerned.

When the car stopped, she followed Yu Pingchuan out of the car.

Chapter 75: How's This?

"Master Gu, what is so interesting that's got you carried away?"

Tang Ziqing looked in the direction Gu Tinglan was staring, but all he saw was just a vague, slender figure.

Gu Tinglan kept his gaze away. "It's nothing. I must have seen it wrongly."

"I think you are exhausted. You have been traveling between Yunzhou and Lincheng so often recently. How is it? Is there any progress?" Tang Ziqing said with a smile.

Gu Tinglan shook his head. "It's as old as ancient history. It's not easy to find the truth."

Tang Ziqing noticed that Gu Tinglan was not in the mood to talk, so he toned down his smile and patted the man's shoulder. "Well, all you have is that tiny bit of clue, so that's what you have to work on. If it isn't in Lincheng, maybe it's somewhere else with the same name."

Gu Tinglan was in deep thought. "Maybe."

"Never mind that. Since you are here today, let's just put that away for now. It's been a while since we last saw each other. I have a few new horses in the stable. Wanna have a look?"

Gu Tinglan then kept his thoughts away. "You have been rather passionate about this for the last few years."

Tang Ziqing shrugged. "Compared to your family, mine is just child's play."

Gu Tinglan chuckled when he heard that because the Gu family's club in Gangcheng was the most influential in the industry. "If you have your eye on it, you can't go wrong."

Tang Ziqing mischievously scoffed. "If it can catch your eye, that's it."

The car then rumbled into the club.

...

Ning Li followed Yu Pingchuan into the club, and the attendant led them inside. While she was making her way in, she had a quick glance at the direction where the car had driven off to.

Usually, visitors' cars were supposed to stop here. Even Yu Pingchuan had to park his car outside. However, the car she saw drove inside without any problem.

The attendant noticed Ning Li's concern and quickly explained, "That's our boss's car."

Ning Li nodded in realization. No wonder the car could drive inside without any problem.

"Mr. Yu, are you going to the stables right away?"

Yu Pingchuan was an enthusiastic horse lover, but he asked for Ning Li's opinion regardless. "Lili, what do you think?"

Knowing that the man was itching to see the horse, she said, "Fine, let's go."

...

The club had been established for many years, and the facilities and services were considered the best in Yunzhou. The place even had several tracks inside that were categorized into different sections according to the visitor's status.

Su Yuan was also at the club with Ye Cheng. The boy was having his equestrian class in the VIP section.

The equestrian class was conducted one-on-one by a private coach. The fee for the class was exorbitant, but those who could step foot in this place were all wealthy people.

Other than Ye Cheng, three more children of the same age were having their equestrian class with other coaches.

Meanwhile, Su Yuan was standing outside the tracks with the bags.

The rest area was a little further away from the tracks, but she could not sit there and wait in peace because she was worried about Ye Cheng. The boy already disliked the class, and if Su Yuan was not close by to console and encourage him, he might cause a scene.

Ye Cheng rode the horse for a few rounds and was already exhausted. He panted strongly while his head was covered with sweat.

The horse was a little rebellious as well, thus the bumpy ride gave his stomach a hard time. He finally made it through halfway, and the coach released him for a quick rest.

As Ye Cheng struggled to get off the horse, Su Yuan sent some water to the boy, feeling bad while looking at his exhaustion.

"Lil Cheng, how are you feeling?"

Ye Cheng drank some water although he was still breathing heavily. His plump cheeks were shaking as he gulped and breathed for air.

He grumbled when he heard his mother's question, "What else can I feel? I'm on the verge of dying! Riding a horse is torture!"

He had said that he did not want to come. He knew that the other kids were laughing at him because of his skills and physique.

Nonetheless, Su Yuan caressed his sweaty head. "I know it's tough for you, but just try to hold it together, please?"

Ye Cheng kept quiet in a fit of pique.

While Su Yuan was having a headache because of the boy's attitude, a familiar voice came from behind her.

"Auntie Su Yuan? Lil Cheng?"

Su Yuan turned around and saw Cheng Xiangxiang with two other girls. The girls looked familiar. They must be from a wealthy family as well.

"Xiangxiang, you are here today as well!"

Cheng Xiangxiang nodded. "Yes, Auntie."

Due to her lousy results in the monthly test, her parents had nagged her endlessly back home. Frustrated, she decided to come here for some horse riding to ease her mood.

She thought of calling Ye Ci along, but the girl got hurt the other day and was in no shape to perform intense exercise, so she came with other friends instead.

Ye Cheng looked at them as if he just saw his saviors. "Sister Xiangxiang! Are you going to the horse-racing area? Can I go with you?"

He was learning equestrian in the teaching area, which consisted mostly of children. He found it boring despite being a child himself.

If he could follow Cheng Xiangxiang, things would probably be more interesting. He might not like equestrianism, but he liked watching horse races.

Su Yuan frowned. "Lil Cheng—"

Cheng Xiangxiang immediately knew what was going on. She blinked swiftly and said, "Auntie Su Yuan, I think Lil Cheng is tired. Why don't I take him to the horse racing area to relax for a bit? We'll bring him back here later. I heard from my brother that the stable has welcomed several decent horses a few days ago and they are having a test run today. Maybe Lil Cheng can learn a thing or two by watching. What do you think?"

Although Su Yuan did not want to agree, she knew that the boy hated the class and Cheng Xiangxiang's suggestion made sense.

A quick thought later, she decided to let him go.

"Okay, go have some fun. I'll wait for you guys here."

Ye Cheng might not have a good time if she insisted on following them.

Cheng Xiangxiang smiled and looked at Ye Cheng. "Let's go, little man!"

...

Ning Li followed Yu Pingchuan into the private stables. On the west side of the stable was a row of sheds with numbers labeled on them.

They stopped in front of shed No. 7.

Ning Li had a look inside. The horse was a chestnut thoroughbred. It had a strong physique and shiny fur which made it look beautiful.

“Mr. Yu, this is the horse that I told you about the other day.”

Yu Pingchuan fell in love at first glance. “Lili, what do you think about this one?”

Chapter 76: She Looks Like You

Ning Li nodded.

“It looks good, but—”

She pointed at another horse.

“I think that one is better.”

Yu Pingchuan looked in the direction that she was pointing and his eyes sparkled.

The attendant smiled and said, “You have sharp eyes, Ms. Ning. This one here is the only Akhal-Teke from this batch. It’s purebred, but it has a temper. Two of our staff have already been hurt by this feisty one, and our boss ordered this one for himself.”

The Akhal-Teke horse, also known as the Golden Horse, came from a prestigious Turkmen breed. The one before her eyes had perfect muscle contour while its fur glowed in gold under the light. It was simply breathtaking to just look at it.

Yu Pingchuan shook his head regrettably. This Golden Horse was the best out of the batch, but since the boss of the club had reserved it, it was not appropriate for Yu Pingchuan to take it.

He looked at Ning Li. “Lili, why don’t you give this one a try?”



He pointed at the chestnut horse.

Just when Ning Li wanted to reject him, Yu Pingchuan's phone rang. Ning Li had a quick glimpse at the number and realized that the number was calling from the capital.

"Lili, excuse me. I have to take this. Take a look around yourself. If you want to go on a test ride, just tell them."

Yu Pingchuan then headed to the waiting parlor to answer his phone.

The attendant looked at her. "Ms. Ning, do you want to give it a try?"

Ning Li held the reins, but before she could say a word, an astonished voice came from behind her.

"Ning Li?!"

Ning Li's eyes turned cold when she heard the voice.

What bad luck!

Cheng Xiangxiang was in disbelief as she almost thought that she was seeing things. She came over and sized up Ning Li from head to toe repeatedly.

"Why are you here?"

"If you are here, why can't I be here?" Ning Li retorted.

Cheng Xiangxiang looked at her suspiciously. They were in the VIP area where normal visitors were not allowed.

Even Cheng Xiangxiang herself had to use her brother's name to get in, but Ning Li...

On the other hand, Ye Cheng was not much of a thinker. He simply felt frustrated to see Ning Li there.

"That horse looks fine! Sister Xiangxiang, do you want to give it a try?"

Cheng Xiangxiang also had her eyes on the horse that Ning Li was holding the reins of.

"Sure."

The attendant reacted bitterly. Master Cheng and the club boss were quite close, and of course, he dared not disagree with the daughter of the Cheng family.

However, Ning Li came here first with Yu Pingchuan, and based on a first-come, first-served basis, it was not appropriate to let Cheng Xiangxiang jump the line.

"Ms. Cheng, I'm sorry, but Ms. Ning is taking the horse for a test ride first."

Cheng Xiangxiang reacted like she was listening to the biggest joke of the century. "She? Does she even know how to ride a horse?"

The attendant was silenced. He had seen Ning Li come in with Yu Pingchua, and she looked like someone who knew horses well, so he assumed that she knew how to ride a horse and did not ask about it. "Ms. Ning, do you have the...relevant experience?"

Ning Li simply nodded. "Mm-hmm."

Cheng Xiangxiang mocked her and said, "You do? Ning Li, he's asking about the correct way to ride a horse, not the fun rides at the circus that cost 10 bucks a ride on a horse's back."

The two girls behind Cheng Xiangxiang laughed as well while Ye Cheng rolled his eyes. "How would she know? When my sister took the equestrian class, she was still fighting with others in some random corners and alleys."

Ye Cheng was just a boy, but his parents pampered him too much, resulting in his poor manners.

He had heard a lot of rumors about Ning Li, so with his limited knowledge, he pictured Ning Li as such. He disliked her in every possible way.

The attendant was placed in a difficult situation.

"I..."

He could not afford to offend either party, so the situation came to a standstill.

...

Gu Tinglan and Tang Ziqing were walking towards the stables.

"I heard you called someone over today."

Gu Tinglan nodded. His side glance then caught a towering figure further away and he smiled. "There he is."

Tang Ziqing clicked his tongue when he saw the person. "You sly fox. How long have you been back, yet you got to call him out? I've asked him a few times, and all I got was 'no'."

Gu Tinglan walked over in a welcoming manner. "Second Master."

Lu Huaiyu came in casual wear, which made him look free and easy with a hint of a regal presence. "I see you are in the mood for a vacation, so you called me here, Dr. Gu."

Tang Ziqing went over as well and said with a sigh, "Second Master Lu, you are really mean! I invited you here yesterday, and you turned me down without a second thought. Gu Tinglan simply called you and you came?"

Lu Huaiyu pocketed his hands. "I had some free time."

Gu Tinglan looked to the side and said, "Why don't we have a look inside?"

...

The men chatted as they walked into the stables.

Gu Tinglan carefully sized up Lu Huaiyu a few times along the way. The man looked normal like there was nothing wrong with him.

Lu Huaiyu sensed Gu Tinglan's gaze, so he asked, "What's wrong?"

Gu Tinglan smiled. "Nothing."

Lu Huaiyu frowned. Right before he could ask further, his side glance caught a familiar figure. He paused and stared into that particular direction.

Gu Tinglan and Tang Ziqing stared towards that figure as well.

"Is that...Cheng Xiyue's sister?"

Tang Ziqing and Cheng Xiyue were close, and he knew Cheng Xiangxiang.

However, he soon found out that both Lu Huaiyu and Gu Tinglan were not looking at Cheng Xiangxiang but at another girl.

...

“If you claim you can ride, why don’t we have a race?” Cheng Xiangxiang raised her chin and taunted Ning Li.

However, Ning Li was not moved. “Not interested.”

Cheng Xiangxing froze. “What’s wrong? Scared?”

Ning Li said in a lazy tone, “No, I just don’t want to waste my time doing meaningless things.”

Then, she wanted to pull the horse away.

Cheng Xiangxiang continued to mock Ning Li, “That’s it? I guess so, huh? Did anyone ever teach you to behave like a normal person outside?”

Ning Li paused and looked at her with an icy cold gaze. “Okay, since you insist on it, let’s have a race.”

She then swiftly and smoothly got onto the horse and looked down at Cheng Xiangxiang, who was shocked.

“Don’t regret it when you lose.”

...

Tang Ziqing watched from afar and could not help but comment, “Second Master Lu, the way the girl got up the horse really looks like your riding style.”

## Chapter 77: Meeting

Indeed, it did look similar.

Lu Huaiyu watched the girl climb up the horse with his abysmal gaze. From her motility alone, a single glance was all it took to know that she had previously received professional equestrian training.

Gu Tinglan looked at Lu Huaiyu. "Did you teach her that?"

The horse was tall, and it was difficult for a novice to climb up its back, but Ning Li got up easily. Given her background, she should not have had any chance to go near a horse, thus the only explanation would be Lu Huaiyu.

Lu Huaiyu slightly furrowed his brow but did not answer.

Tang Ziqing widened his eyes in shock when he heard Gu Tinglan's question. "That girl? Second Master Lu, do you know her?"

Gu Tinglan scoffed softly. Not only did Lu Huaiyu know Ning Li, but the special treatment the girl got was also one-of-a-kind in Yunzhou, or even in the entire capital.

He then explained, "She's Ning Li, the daughter of the Ye family, who was taken in just recently."

Tang Ziqing did not react when he heard the name Ning Li, but when he found out about her background, he was hit with a sudden epiphany.

The Ye family?

He had heard rumors of Lu Huaiyu beating up some guy at Old Master Cheng's birthday dinner for some girl. The girl before his eyes must be the infamous one!

Tang Ziqing had another glance at the girl, and the first thought that came into his mind was: no wonder.

Even though he was some distance away, he could see the girl's beautiful face and slender figure. She was said to come from a poor background but judging from her looks, she had great quality.

He smiled. "I see. Well, why don't we invite her to come over?"

Lu Huaiyu shook his head. "No."

While Tang Ziqing felt that his reaction was strange, he saw Lu Huaiyu march forward toward the girl.

...

Cheng Xiangxiang did not expect Ning Li to agree to race.

When she saw how skilled Ning Li was in climbing up the horse, her heart skipped a beat and something told her that this was a mistake.

'Ning Li knows how to ride a horse? Judging from her movements, she might be better than me! Her standards are comparable to those with many years of riding experience. How on earth did she—'

"What's wrong? Scared?" Ning Li raised a brow at Cheng Xiangxiang.

Rage gushed up into Cheng Xiangxiang's head. "Scared? Never!"

She looked at the attendant and said, "No. 15, bring me my brother's horse."

Although the Chengs might be rich with her being a regular at the club, she still did not have her own horse. However, Cheng Xiyue had a steed of his own in the stables, and it was a professional racing horse.

The attendant felt troubled because things were getting out of hand, but since she had commanded him so, he could not do anything but try to reason with her.

“Ms. Cheng, I’m sorry. I don’t have the right to bring the horse out. Please confirm with Master Cheng again.”

Stunned, Cheng Xiangxiang pointed at her nose and said, “Don’t you know who I am? Are you saying I can’t even ride my brother’s horse?”

The attendant was clear with the rules, so he stood his ground. “I’m so sorry. This is our policy. Anything related to the horse must have permission from the owner.”

The policy overrode everything else, especially for Cheng Xiyue’s horse.

To outsiders, Cheng Xiyue and Cheng Xiangxiang were cousins, but those who understood the Chengs’ situation better would know that Cheng Xiyue was not close to Cheng Xiangxiang at all.

At least, he had never come to the club with his so-called cousin.

Now that Cheng Xiangxiang was asking to ride her cousin’s horse, it was natural for the attendant to be nervous and cautious about it.

Cheng Xiangxiang was furious, but she dared not ask Cheng Xiyue for permission to use his horse.

On top of that, if Cheng Xiyue knew that she was having a race with Ning Li because of her ego, he would never say yes.

Ning Li glanced at her. “Why the hassle? There are a few more horses that came with this one. Just simply pick one that you like.”

“You!” Cheng Xiangxiang wanted to argue, but when she saw Ning Li’s horse, she shut up.



Since Ning Li had simply picked a new horse in the stable, Cheng Xiangxiang did not have a reason not to do the same. However, the new horses might still be untamed, and if the horses decided to run wild, things would go out of hand fast.

Ning Li said nonchalantly, "If you want to admit defeat, now is the chance."

"Who's admitting defeat!?" Cheng Xiangxiang was furious. She spun around and simply pointed at a horse that caught her eye. "That one!"

"Ms. Cheng, are you sure?"

"I'm sure! That one!"

The attendant went over and led the horse out of its section.

This horse was of the same breed as Ning Li's, and its physique was highly similar. However, when the horse was brought over to her, Cheng Xiangxiang realized that it was bigger than the horse that she usually rode.

The horse dragged its hooves against the ground, appearing to be a little grumpy.

Cheng Xiangxiang felt nervous, and so were the two girls beside her.

"Xiangxiang, can you do this? These are all professional racing horses, and they are not easy to ride!"

"Yeah, do you want to...like...give up?"

They were just here to have some fun and to kill time; no one wanted anything to happen.

Ye Cheng, however, failed to realize the potential problem, so he encouraged her to give it a try, “Sister Xiangxiang! You can do it! She can never beat you!”

Because Ning Li came from a poor background, he assumed that she had never learned any riding techniques.

Cheng Xiangxiang nodded. She took a deep breath and got into the saddle, staring at Ning Li with a scoff.

“Hmph! She isn’t even in full gear yet she wants to race against me?”

“Don’t worry. I’m winning today!” Ning Li had one last glance at Cheng Xiangxiang before she squeezed the horse with her thighs and rode off to the field.

The field had tracks drawn out for racing.

Cheng Xiangxiang frowned, intending to give chase, but the horse did not want to budge from the stables. It kept going around in circles on the spot.

She pulled the reins and squeezed her legs tightly before she managed to get it to move.

The others went after her and settled down at the spectators’ seat.

...

Ning Li was riding forward when she felt a gaze scrutinizing her. With widened eyes, she saw a handsome towering figure walking toward her.

‘Lu Huaiyu? Why is he here?’

Behind him were Gu Tinglan and another unfamiliar man.

The moment Ning Li saw Gu Tinglan, she finally remembered the familiar figure she had seen when she came in with Yu Pingchuan earlier.

The figure she saw earlier was indeed Gu Tinglan. The man beside him should be the owner of the club, Tang Ziqing.

It was not surprising to see Gu Tinglan here. The Gu family had a private horse club at Gangcheng as well, and it was one of the biggest in the country.

It was no surprise to see Lu Huaiyu in the club as well because he was good at riding.

However, the two of them appearing at the same time seemed strange.

She was in deep thought and she did not realize the blank look on her face. She looked like she was fascinated by Gu Tinglan.

Consequently, Lu Huaiyu frowned slightly. Tang Ziqing had a feeling that the atmosphere suddenly felt colder while Gu Tinglan smiled awkwardly and slowed down.

Lu Huaiyu walked to Ning Li and she looked him in the eyes.

This was the first meeting between them ever since she left him in his drunken state.

She stared into those deep eyes of his and could not help but think of the scene that had happened the other day.

Her grip on the reins then tightened.

Chapter 78: Overprotection

“Lili,” Lu Huaiyu called out to Ning Li.

Ning Li pulled herself back from her trance and discarded the images out of her mind.

“Second Brother.”

Lu Huaiyu sized her up. “Wait a moment.”

Ning Li felt his request was strange but nodded nevertheless. “Okay.”

Lu Huaiyu then walked to the VIP rest area.

When Gu Tinglan saw this, he had a hunch about what would happen next. He did not follow Lu Huaiyu. Instead, he stood there and looked at Ning Li with a warm smile. “I never thought that we would see each other here.”

“Mr. Gu,” Ning Li courteously greeted the man.

“Nice horse you have there.”

She shook her head. “I didn’t pick this horse. I’m here with someone else today.”

It was not difficult for Gu Tinglan to know that. After all, only VIPs could enter the club. Ning Li might be a daughter of the Ye family by name, but everyone knew she was not Ye Ming’s own daughter; Su Yuan barely cared about this daughter of hers as well.

Otherwise, Su Yuan would not have abandoned her for 11 years before taking her in. It was obvious that Ning Li had no place in the Ye family, so someone else must have brought her in.

Who could it be?

It was neither Lu Huaiyu nor Cheng Xiyue, so...

It was then that Cheng Xiangxiang came with her horse. She saw Lu Huaiyu on the way and her heart raced.

For some reason, whenever she saw him, an unknown reverence rose from her heart, even more so after seeing Lu Huaiyu beat Dai Li up.

“Brother Ziqing.” She could only speak to Tang Ziqing, the only person she knew.

Tang Ziqing had a quick glance at the two girls. He had been quite far away when the girls were still in the stables and did not hear what they were talking about. However, he knew something was not right between them.

Any sane man could tell that the two girls were having some kind of fight, and it seemed like Cheng Xiangxiang had started it.

Having seen Cheng Xiangxiang a few times before, he could call her an acquaintance and should show some hospitality as the club owner. Unfortunately, she paled in comparison with the other girl.

This girl was able to catch Lu Huaiyu’s attention.

Tang Ziqing smiled and nodded before greeting Ning Li.

Lu Huaiyu then came back.

When Ning Li saw the item in his hand, she was slightly surprised.

“Come down,” Lu Huaiyu said as he stood beside her.

Hesitating for a bit, Ning Li decided to comply.

Lu Huaiyu was holding a helmet. "This is mine. Use it first," he said as he passed the helmet to her.

Ning Li accepted it. "Thank you, Second Brother."

He had gone to get her safety gear.

To be honest, Ning Li did not care about the race with Cheng Xiangxiang. She did not expect Lu Huaiyu to be more concerned than her. Anyway, it was always better to be safe than sorry, so she put the helmet on.

Lu Huaiyu bent over.

"Give me your leg."

Ning Li froze for a moment. She then saw Lu Huaiyu with a pair of knee guards, indicating that he wanted to put it on for her. She wanted to refuse, but he was quick as he put the knee guards around her knee before she even realized it.

Her slender legs looked distinctly beautiful in his hands.

His long fingers pressed against her knee. With only one layer of cloth between them, she could feel the heat from his fingers.

She instinctively wanted to pull her leg away, but he caught her.

"Don't move." He sounded unconcerned but firm.

Ning Li looked down and saw his black hair covering his brows. She had a glimpse of his tall nose and sharp jawline. She could not do anything but stand still and let him tie the knee guards around her knee.

The atmosphere suddenly went quiet.

Tang Ziqing widened his eyes in shock as he thought that he was seeing things.

Lu Huaiyu was known for his hot temper and arrogance. He was always the one giving the command, people had to bear with his temper and treat him like a king, not the other way around.

In the blink of an eye, Lu Huaiyu had strapped both the knee guards to her knees.

Then, he got up. They were so close to each other that Ning Li had to slightly lean back to look at him.

Lu Huaiyu looked into her eyes before he moved even closer and reached out to her.

Ning Li then realized that because she was carried away for a moment there, she had not worn her helmet.

“This is how you adjust it.” Lu Huaiyu slightly leaned forward and adjusted her helmet. His fingers unconsciously grazed her chin.

It was ticklish, hot, and sensual all at the same time.

Ning Li looked at him. She noticed his concentration, and it seemed like no distance was too close for him.

The angle of the sunlight was just right. She could even see the shadow of his eyelashes against his eyelids. With his gaze hidden under the shadow of his eyelashes, he seemed deep and unpredictable.

The side view of his jawline was perfect and smooth. From the ridge of his brows to the tip of his nose and to his slightly curved lips, everything was perfect.

He was a lot taller than Ning Li, and with him slightly leaning over, she clearly saw his tightened chin and bulging Adam's apple.

He had been even closer the other day back in his bedroom than he was now.

Ning Li thought of the kiss on the back of her hand and it still felt like a dream to her. However, it seemed like he did not remember anything from the other day.

"Second Brother?" she said softly.

Lu Huaiyu looked at her.

"Mm-hmm?" His eyes were crystal-clear yet enigmatic. He looked nothing like himself from the other day.

She did not say a word.

It was at that moment that Lu Huaiyu was done prepping her.

"Okay." He let go and took a step back.

If she remembered correctly, this should not be the reaction she expected. Ning Li blinked. "Thank you, Second Brother. I'll get going."

He then nodded.

...

The two horses lined up side by side.



The second the whistle blew, Ning Li squeezed her legs and the horse dashed out.

Cheng Xiangxiang was a fraction of a second late. Nervously, she shook the reins as well. “Hyak!”

The two girls sprinted away on their horses.

Lu Huaiyu then walked towards the spectators’ seats at the endpoint.

As Gu Tinglan watched the race, he asked Tang Ziqing, “Who do you think will win?”

Tang Ziqing stiffly turned to him and looked at him in disbelief. “Are you really thinking about the race now?”

“Then, what should I think about now?”

“No, didn’t you see that??” Tang Ziqing gestured nervously and stared at Lu Huaiyu’s back.

What was going on?!

Was he seeing things or had Lu Huaiyu gone mad?

If those folks at the capital saw this, they would lose their minds.

Gu Tinglan chuckled. “Didn’t you hear what she called Lu Huaiyu?”

“I heard. Second Brother, wasn’t it? Even if they are real brothers and sisters, this is a little too much. Moreover, they are still—”

Gu Tinglan patted his shoulder and stopped him from talking. “I’m glad that you know.”

...

After Yu Pingchuan came back from his phone call, he could not see Ning Li anywhere.

However, he heard the galloping hooves of horses from afar. He turned to the tracks and saw her familiar figure and sighed a breath of relief.

He walked over to the spectators' seats and saw Lu Huaiyu who also spotted him.

"Mr. Yu."

Yu Pingchuan was surprised to find him there. "Huaiyu, why are you here?"

"A friend called me over. Did you come here today to find a new favorite?"

Yu Pingchuan laughed. "I really can't keep secrets from you. There, that's the one."

Chapter 79: Mine

Lu Huaiyu looked in the direction Yu Pingchuan was pointing and then raised a brow.

Yu Pingchuan was pointing at the horse that Ning Li was riding.

The man was a VIP of the club, and since the horse caught his attention in the first place, he would not simply let someone else ride it on the track.

In other words...

"Ning Li came here with you?"

It was Yu Pingchuan's turn to be shocked. "You know Lili?"

Judging from Lu Huaiyu's tone, the two seemed close as well. He would not have called the girl's name otherwise.

Lu Huaiyu nodded. "We ran into each other just now, and I was wondering who brought her here. I did not expect it to be you."

He had thought of many possibilities but did not consider Yu Pingchuan at all.

After all, Yu Pingchuan was a national-level painter who was famous and reputable in his field, a respectable figure, to say the least. A lot of people wanted to lick his boots for a favor but were always denied. Who would have thought that the man would know Ning Li?

If Yu Pingchuan could bring Ning Li to the club, it would mean that the two of them were close as family.

Yu Pingchuan smiled. "That's right. I have some free time today, so I thought of bringing her along." His love for the girl was overflowing in between his lines.

Lu Huaiyu looked at the girl and chuckled. 'This little girl knows someone this influential. That's some connection...'

"Is she having a race with someone?" Yu Pingchuan asked. He had just gone away to answer a phone call, and a lot seemed to have happened.

Lu Huaiyu briefly explained the situation, "That girl is her classmate. They ran into each other, and she asked for tips about riding a horse."

Gu Tinglan and Tang Ziqing heard what Lu Huaiyu said as they walked closer. Both of them were stunned for a moment.

Gu Tinglan was able to recover quickly, but Tang Ziqing had been stunned more than once today, and he had yet to recover from his astonishment. He really wanted to clap his hands out loud.

It was only a few words, but Lu Huaiyu had turned the situation around. If Cheng Xiangxiang heard what he said, the girl would erupt like a volcano.

'This man is really...'

Yu Pingchuan nodded but was surprised. "Her eyes are quite sharp."

The other men were surprised at his words. Judging from Yu Pingchuan's tone, Ning Li should have outstanding riding skills. Even though it was already obvious, they were still quite surprised.

"Mr. Yu, you seem to be quite close with Ning Li. Why haven't I heard you talk about her before?" Lu Huaiyu asked nonchalantly.

"I remember you were in Lincheng for quite some time, am I right?" Yu Pingchuan smiled.

"I have to give it to your memories," the man admitted indirectly that he knew Ning Li back in Lincheng. Lu Huaiyu stopped asking any more questions after that.

"Hmm? Where did she get her helmet and knee guards?" Yu Pingchuan asked curiously when he spotted the extra protective gears on the girl.

Lu Huaiyu said, "They are mine."

"You bought them?"

"No. They are my personal gear."

Yu Pingchuan finally realized what Lu Huaiyu meant. A slight surprise later, he said, "I thought you bought them at the front."

The club was huge, to begin with. There were racing tracks behind and a grand parlor at the front; there was also a shop specializing in horse-riding gear such as saddles, whips, and boots.

"Really? I'm not a regular here, so I'm not that familiar with all this," Lu Huaiyu said nonchalantly.

Tang Ziqing reacted to his words in disbelief. 'If you are not a regular here, why would we have a special rest room just for you?'

'Why would you have custom-made gear? Are you so rich that you decided to spend money on things that you are going to throw away after one use?'

Yu Pingchuan found Lu Huaiyu's words strange as well. Given his understanding of Lu Huaiyu, the man would never take the initiative to lend someone his belongings.

As though he sensed Yu Pingchuan's doubts and suspicion, Lu Huaiyu explained, "It's better to keep the girl safe."

Yu Pingchuan nodded in realization.

Safety first, indeed.

Everything aside, Lu Huaiyu's own protective gears were of good quality and they fit Ning Li nicely.

"Good, good protection."

Lu Huaiyu smiled. "Mm-hmm, it's what I should do."

...

A while after the race started, Cheng Xiangxiang started to regret her choice. She realized that Ning Li's skills were better than hers but not overpoweringly so.

After Ning Li seized a head start, Cheng Xiangxiang had to play catch up. She was able to shorten the distance but the track was huge and she still could not catch up or overtake Ning Li after half a lap.

Soon, the distance between the horses shortened to less than 5 meters.

Cheng Xiangxiang got excited. She accelerated and shouted at Ning Li, "Is that all you've got?"

Ning Li looked asquint at her. Cheng Xiangxiang did not know what her narrowed eyes meant, but it made her uncomfortable.

In the next moment, Ning Li shook her reins and her horse accelerated, so the distance between them widened again.

Cheng Xiangxiang was immensely frustrated—she was so close to overtaking Ning Li!

She tried to chase after Ning Li again. She could lose to anyone but Ning Li; she would not be able to sleep well otherwise.

In the spectators' seat, Ye Cheng was also cheering excitedly, "Sister Xiangxiang, go, go! Overtake her!"

Cheng Xiangxiang's years of experience allowed her to adjust her posture for another acceleration.

The distance between them shortened gradually.

She clenched her teeth. 'I have to overtake her this time no matter what!'

However, right when she tried to overtake Ning Li from the outside track, Ning Li's horse accelerated again.

This time, Ning Li was faster than before.

Cheng Xiangxiang was stunned. She soon realized that Ning Li had done it on purpose.

Ning Li intentionally slowed down and waited for Cheng Xiangxiang to catch up before she accelerated again to draw the distance. She repeated the taunt over and over again as if it was child's play to her.

Cheng Xiangxiang was enraged when she realized she was being insulted. The angrier she was, the more she could not afford to lose!

She accelerated without saying anything.

However, Ning Li had the race under control. The result was in the bag before the race even started.

Ning Li purposely slowed down so that Cheng Xiangxiang could play catch up, or else the latter would never be able to get close to her.

Evidently, their skills were on both different levels.

Therefore, Cheng Xiangxiang was already panting heavily when she was just halfway through the lap. She was already fatigued. If it were just a normal sprint around the track, she would not have exhausted herself.

It was Ning Li's taunting with her carefully controlled speed that infuriated Cheng Xiangxiang.

Cheng Xiangxiang messed up her breath after the first gibe, and she did not bother to adjust it anymore.

As the vicious cycle continued, it got worse for Cheng Xiangxiang. She was on the verge of giving up.

It was then that Ning Li slowed down and turned around to Cheng Xiangxiang for a mocking glance. "It seems like this is the best you can do."

Her words destroyed Cheng Xiangxiang's intention of giving up.

If she simply allowed Ning Li to insult her like this, she would not be able to face the girl in the future.

Right before she could say a word, Ning Li sprinted away. Clouds of dust were left behind in the wake of the horse's gallops.

Mad with rage, Cheng Xiangxiang gave chase without a second thought.

This time around, Ning Li did not hold back anymore. Her explosive sprint widened the distance between the two horses.

Just when she was about to reach the finish line, she slowed down and pulled the reins. The horse stopped right in front of the finish line, so she was literally one step away from crossing it.

Then, she turned her horse around to face Cheng Xiangxiang while slightly lifting her chin and curving her lips into a grin.

She put her right hand out and beckoned Cheng Xiangxiang with her finger.

Chapter 80: Ning Li Likes It

Cheng Xiangxiang's rage and grievance rose to its boiling point.

Although Ning Li could easily win the race, she refused to cross the finish line. She was one step away from the line, and yet she decided to turn around to taunt Cheng Xiangxiang.



This was even more insulting to Cheng Xiangxiang than Ning Li winning the race straightforwardly. Furious, she kicked the horse's belly to vent her anger.

"That's it!"

She wanted to get off the horse, but her kick was a little too strong for the horse. It lifted its front hooves angrily and tried to shake off its rider.

"Aaah!" Cheng Xiangxiang screamed in shock as her body fell backward. She was almost flung towards the ground.

The attendants beside the track were shocked and anxious as they screamed, "Hold on to the horse's neck!"

Anxious as she was, Cheng Xiangxiang accidentally grabbed the horse's mane.

The sudden tug on its mane put the horse in even more discomfort. It neighed sharply and struggled violently.

Cheng Xiangxiang buckled up and down, the violent movements almost rearranging her organs.

The attendants quickly came around and yanked at the reins. Several attendants were watching the track at all times, and once they noticed the horse trying to cause a scene, they jumped in right away.

After struggling for quite a bit, the horse finally calmed down.

One of the attendants helped Cheng Xiangxiang down.

She was exhausted. Her hair was messy as if she had just gone through the mill while her hands and inner thighs were severely chafed.

“Ms. Cheng, how are you feeling?”

Cheng Xiangxiang took a moment to catch her breath before she mustered enough strength to shake her head. She looked as pale as a sheet.

Appalled, her two friends ran over from the spectators' seats.

“Xiangxiang, are you okay? Are you hurt?”

Ye Cheng followed the girls into the track, but he was horrified and did not know what to say.

“It seems like your training hasn't been teaching you the necessary skills,” Ning Li said nonchalantly

One of the girls cried out, “Ning Li, you are really mean!”

They noticed that Ning Li had been fooling around with Cheng Xiangxiang during the race.

Aside from putting Cheng Xiangxiang through all the insults and the scary experience, she even mocked the poor girl at the end, which was a little harsh.

Ning Li looked at the girl. “I didn't propose to race, did I? Besides, she doesn't understand her horse well and still treated it poorly and scared it. After she frightened the horse, she could not even protect herself from being flung off. I'm just telling the truth. How mean does that make me?”

The girl was silenced as she had no words to argue with.

When Ning Li stepped up, the two girls took a step back nervously.

Cheng Xiangxiang patted her chest repeatedly to catch her breath. It was then that she saw a pair of slender legs in front of her. Her heart almost stopped because she could clearly feel Ning Li's gaze above her. It was brazen and somewhat intimidating.

“Here’s a piece of advice: know your place. I’m not that easygoing every time,” Ning Li said coldly. She was soft, but her tone was firm and there was an indescribable aura around her when she said that.

Cheng Xiangxiang’s lips moved. She wanted to argue, but all she could think of was Ning Li taunting her in front of the finish line.

Her rival’s gaze was cold and sharp. Cheng Xiangxiang had never experienced such a fearsome gaze before. It felt so sharp that it could penetrate her.

However, in the blink of an eye, the sharp gaze disappeared. It was replaced by a pair of charming and bright eyes. There were no signs of the sharp and intimidating gaze at all

...

Ning Li was not surprised to find Yu Pingchuan beside Lu Huaiyu and the others.

She greeted everyone.

Yu Pingchuan had a quick glance at Cheng Xiangxiang. It was obvious what had happened and who had started it. Fortunately, he did not have to interfere because Ning Li had solved it on her own.

He slightly lifted his chin and looked at the girl with anticipation. “How is it?”

Some thought later, Ning Li shook her head. “It’s okay, but it’s not the best. You can wait a little longer.”

Yu Pingchuan knew that Ning Li did not agree with him on buying this horse.

The man sighed heavily. “Well, okay then.

Tang Ziqing could not help but laugh at Yu Pingchuan's sigh. "Mr. Yu, you brought Ning Li here today because you want her to help you make a decision which horse to buy?"

Before this, he thought that Yu Pingchuan had simply brought Ning Li here for sightseeing, but now, it seemed like the elderly valued her opinion.

"Yeah. If that's the case, I guess that's it for now." Yu Pingchuan did not try to hide his brazen affection and trust for Ning Li.

Tang Ziqing said, "Mr. Yu, are you sure you don't want it? That horse is a very valuable breed. If you don't want it, we might not be able to find a better one in the foreseeable future."

Yu Pingchuan was slightly moved, but after another quick glance at Ning Li, he ultimately clenched his teeth and shook his head. "I don't want it!"

Tang Ziqing smiled. "How unfortunate."

He did not expect the young Ning Li to have such insights for a horse. She did not even like the horse that she had ridden just now. If he had not witnessed the race earlier, Tang Ziqing might have thought that the girl was simply choosing a horse that looked pretty.

Now, he thought otherwise. Ning Li obviously knew a lot about horses.

"If that's the case, what I have currently might not be up to your expectations, Mr. Yu, Ms. Ning.

"That's actually wrong," Ning Li said, "We had our eyes on one of the horses back at the stables, but too bad it already has an owner."

Tang Ziqing immediately knew which horse Ning Li was talking about. "Are you talking about the Akhal-Teke?"

Ning Li nodded.

The attendant told her and Yu Pingchuan that the horse was reserved for the club owner, hence no one would have the chance to take it.

Tang Ziqing immediately knew what happened. He did not know whether to laugh or to cry. "Ms. Ning, the horse that you like belongs to Master Gu."

Gu Tinglan?

Ning Li and Yu Pingchuan looked at the man in surprise.

"I thought it was your horse, Mr. Tang..."

"He actually had his eyes on the horse some time ago and spent quite a fortune to bring it from another country back to our motherland. I'm just fostering the horse for a while.

Meeting his horse was one of the reasons why Gu Tinglan came to the club. He did not expect Ning Li to like his choice.

Gu Tinglan eased his furrowed brows. "I was planning to send the horse to Gangcheng, but if you like it, Mr. Yu, I can give it up."

Yu Pingchuan was slightly moved when he heard that, but he quickly wrung his hands. "No, no, a gentleman should not steal another's choice.

Gu Tinglan chuckled elegantly. "Well, Ning Li likes the horse as well."

The atmosphere turned quiet again.

Tang Ziqing noticed the unusual silence and he looked at Ning Li. "What is Gu Tinglan trying to do? Why did it make it sound like he was close to Ning Li?"

Lu Huaiyu slightly opened his eyes and stared at Gu Tinglan.

Gu Tinglan turned a blind eye at the man and continued to stare at Ning Li, asking, "So, what do you think, Ning Li?"