

Little Brat's 731

Chapter 731: Past and Future

Since everyone's eyes were on them, everyone heard this.

Xu Yini was apologizing to Shen Li.

Her words were vague. She said that she had trusted the wrong person's words, and she also said that it had all been a misunderstanding. Ultimately, she still had not given a clear explanation of what had happened back then, but this "sorry" was enough.

This meant that she tacitly agreed with what Third Master Gu had said.

She admitted that it had been her idea to expose the dirt. She admitted that the insults and accusations that had surged toward Shen Li had been instigated by her. She admitted that she had done all those things before and after!

There was no such thing as an impervious wall in this world. Whatever she did, traces would be left behind. Those who were well-informed could have already vaguely guessed that those things might have been done by Xu Yini.

In the end, however, those had only been speculations.

But now, it was different. She had admitted it in public!

So, from now on, this would become a stain that she would never be able to erase!

Everyone would clearly remember that on this night, in front of countless people, she had said "I'm sorry" to Shen Li!

Xu Yini had obviously realized this herself. That was why it was extremely difficult for her to say those words. With every word that she spoke, she felt as if she was slapping herself, again and again, loud and clear!

However, she had to admit that she had no other choice.

The moment the last word left her mouth, Xu Yini felt as if she was completely drained of energy. A sense of weakness from the inside to the outside surged up from every part of her body, making her feel extremely exhausted.

Right now, it was difficult for her to even lift a finger.

Gu Tingyun was not particularly satisfied with her performance, but since she had apologized, he did not bother to pursue the matter further since he was a fairly kind person.

“Tangtang, what do you think?”

Shen Li looked at Xu Yini and smiled.

“Since it was just a misunderstanding, it’s good that it’s out in the open. Besides, I think Miss Xu’s apology is sincere. This time, she even specially came to Hong Kong City to congratulate us. This is truly a rare friendship. So... we’ll let bygones be bygones.”

As she spoke, she took the initiative to hand over a glass of champagne.

“Miss Xu, may you have a good time tonight.”

...

Xu Yini stared at the glass of champagne without saying a word.

Have a good time?

It was Shen Li who was the happiest tonight, right?

How could she say such a thing?!

However, if she did not accept this, this matter would not be resolved.

She had even gathered the courage to say “I’m sorry”. In the end—

After holding herself back for a while, she finally said, “I’ve had a cold these past two days and have taken cephalosporin, so I’m afraid I can’t drink this wine.”

Shen Li called out to her and smiled.

“If this is not to Miss Xu’s liking, you can change it to something else.”

As she spoke, she put down the glass of champagne and took a glass of orange juice from the side instead.

This time, Xu Yini had no reason to refuse.

She stiffly raised her arm, accepted the glass of orange juice, and took a sip.

She did not feel the taste of the orange juice at all. All she felt was the cold liquid flowing down her throat, the coldness almost seeming to corrode her internal organs.

She held the glass tightly, her knuckles a mixture of red and white.

That was enough for tonight!

She put the glass down and said, "I have other plans tomorrow, so I'll need to take my leave now."

She could not stay in this place for another moment!

Shen Li smiled and nodded.

"I'll arrange for someone to send Miss Xu off."

Xu Yini was about to say that there was no need, but then she remembered that they were on Crescent Island. If she wanted to go in and out, whether it be through crossing the river or the bridge, she would need the Gu family's permission.

She could only forcefully swallow her anger and reply in a hard voice,

"... Then, thank you very much."

After saying that, she turned around to leave without hesitating any longer.

Shen Li gave some instructions to a waiter beside her, and the latter quickly followed after Xu Yini.

Xu Yi's beautiful figure quickly disappeared from the banquet hall.

However, the good show today had clearly given her enough limelight. Even if she herself left, the rest of the people were still in high spirits and discussing the matter with relish.

It would not be surprising that everything that had happened here tonight would soon spread. It would not be long before even the people in the Capital's social circles would know about it.

She had truly suffered a complete loss of face in Hong Kong City.

...

"Hey, Third Uncle, you're really amazing." Gu Siyang said as he walked over with a smile, "No matter what, Miss Xu is still a friend to my cousin, yet you're bullying her."

Gu Tingyun looked at him.

"Siyang, if you could wipe the smile off your face as you're saying this, it would be more believable."

Gu Siyang touched his face.

"Is it that obvious?"

"Besides, I was just trying to ease the relationship between them out of goodwill. In what way was I bullying anyone?"

Gu Tingyun smiled.

Gu Siyang made a silent "Tsk" in his heart.

It was rumored among outsiders that the Gu family's masters had the worst tempers but that the second master, Gu Tingchuan, was the hardest to provoke.

However, the fact was, that his third uncle was not any easier to talk to than his second uncle.

Gu Tingyun's temper always seemed to be good, but in reality, the people who knew him knew that if he were to get angry, he would be an absolutely dangerous person.

Wasn't tonight's incident the best example?

Gu Siyang thought that the pampered Miss Xu would never think of coming to Hong Kong City again.

Shen Li looked at Gu Tingyun.

“Thank you, Third Uncle.”

Gu Tingyun smiled.

“For what?”

Shen Li paused and said softly, “Actually, you’ve already helped me before. This time...”

Speaking of which, Xu Yini had already played tricks on her a few times, yet she had gotten back at her every time. Overall, she had never suffered much.

Therefore, she had not expected Gu Tingyun to specially invite Xu Yini over tonight to settle the debt.

Hearing this, Gu Tingyun gently patted her head.

“That was before, and so it will be in the future.”

Previously, it was because he had treated her as a junior who he had been fated to meet. It was because he liked her and felt somewhat close to her that he had helped her.

However, from now on, she would be Yin Yin’s daughter, a child of the Gu family.

Of course, this was certainly not the same.

Recalling the grievances she had suffered in the past, he now felt that he had not done enough back then. It had been too insufficient.

Shen Li felt something welling up in her heart, both a sweet and sour feeling.

She took a light breath, blinked, and said with a smile, "Don't worry, both you and Second Brother were there. I didn't suffer."

Gu Tingyun glanced at Lu Huaiyu.

That was... true.

However, Lu Huaiyu was Lu Huaiyu, and the Gu family was the Gu family. They still had to be counted separately.

Gu Siyang took a piece of semi-ripe cheese, his gaze sweeping over several people before finally landing on Lu Huaiyu.

A thought suddenly came to his mind and his eyes began to shine extremely brightly.

Sensing something, Lu Huaiyu raised his eyes slightly and looked over.

After briefly exchanging glances, Gu Siyang could not hide his excitement. He extended a hand, saying, "Second Master Lu, let's get reacquainted with each other again!"

Lu Huaiyu raised his eyebrows and immediately extended his hand in cooperation.

Gu Siyang was overjoyed.

"I'm Shen Li's cousin, Gu Siyang. You can call me cousin like her—"

Ow!

His hand!

Lu Huaiyu smiled.

“Young Master Gu, what’s wrong? What is it that I should call you?”

Chapter 732: This Was Mine to Begin With

Gu Siyang almost burst into tears.

“It’s... it’s nothing... You can call me... Just call me Gu Siyang...”

His hand was about to be crippled!

Lu Huaiyu’s smile did not change.

“Young Master Gu is too polite. With our current relationship, calling you by your full name would be a little strange. In the future, I’ll call you Siyang. Is that alright?”

How would Gu Siyang have a problem with that?

Even if he did, he did not have any problem with it now!

“Woo! Okay! Woo!”

Gu Siyang frantically nodded his head in agreement, as if he was afraid that Lu Huaiyu would change his mind if his reply was a little late.

Only then did Lu Huaiyu let go of his hand, with a rare expression of gentleness and friendliness.

“Sure, Siyang.”

Gu Siyang retracted his completely numb hand, his eyes brimming with tears.

Although his hands were not as precious as his cousin’s hands which were capable of drawing and driving, they were still healthy hands! How could they withstand such a beating from Lu Huaiyu!

He could not help but think of that distant day when Lu Huaiyu had agreed to go to the shooting range with him.

He had been especially happy as he had gone in, just like he had been just now.

Then, he had come out feeling especially devastated, just like he was feeling now.

Gu Tingyun watched from the side and pinched the space between his eyebrows.

Every time he saw Gu Siyang, he would consider himself lucky for being single.

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He really did not know how his big brother and sister-in-law had survived all these years.

“You guys have fun then.”

He had come here this time mainly to resolve the matter of Xu Yini. Now that she had left, it would be better to let the juniors relax together.

Before he left, he took another look at Gu Siyang.

“Behave in a more restrained manner please.”

Even if Lu Huaiyu wanted to call him cousin, it would not be that easy. Gu Siyang, on the other hand, was the first to attempt it.

Gu Siyang felt wronged.

Understood.

Had he not just been thinking of celebrating the situation? Was that wrong?

After all, as long as a person was alive, he had to have some pursuits!

After Gu Tingyun left, Gu Siyang wiggled his fingers. Hiss... They were still numb.

He glanced at Lu Huaiyu and saw him smiling as he looked over, with his brows slightly raised.

“What’s wrong, Siyang?”

Gu Siyang was shocked by how he addressed him.

He subconsciously leaned closer to Shen Li.

“Cousin!”

He was really no match for Lu Huaiyu. After thinking about it, all he could do was ask his cousin for help!

Shen Li had seen everything clearly from the side. How could she not know what Gu Siyang meant?

When her eyes met Gu Siyang's accusatory gaze, in his hope that she would help to uphold justice for him, Shen Li fell silent.

To be honest, even she did not really want to call him "Cousin" anymore.

"I think it'd be better to call him as before," she said tactfully.

Gu Siyang was still unwilling to accept it.

"Cousin, how can you be so biased? Besides, am I not doing this for his own good? I'm the only one in this family who would be the easiest to win over!"

The Gu family was still brooding over the matter of Lu Huaiyu getting into a relationship with her on the last day of her seventeenth birthday!

1

He was giving Lu Huaiyu such a great opportunity to win him over. Was he actually giving it up?!

Lu Huaiyu remained calm and composed. After a moment of contemplation, he spoke objectively.

"You might be dragging us back. There's no need to be so anxious to fight for it, right?"

The current situation was already difficult enough to deal with. Would it be of benefit to bring Gu Siyang over to his side?

Would that not be bringing trouble upon himself?

Gu Siyang, “???”

He stuffed the semi-ripe cheese into his mouth and angrily left.

This conversation could not go on!

Seeing that Gu Siyang had finally left, Lu Huaiyu tilted his head slightly, bent his head closer, and asked in a low voice, “Ah Li, do you want anything else to drink?”

Shen Li shook her head. She had not finished the peach juice in her hand yet.

As she replied, she took a sip, the sweet taste spreading between her lips and teeth.

Seeing that Lu Huaiyu had not taken anything yet, she was a little surprised.

“Second Brother, aren’t you going to drink something?”

Because there were more people coming tonight, they were very well prepared with a variety of drinks.

In addition to all kinds of alcoholic drinks, fruit juice, milk tea, and other drinks were also available.

However, from the moment she had seen him, she had not noticed him taking anything.

Lu Huaiyu’s gaze fell on her moist red lips, pausing for a moment before giving a slight smile.

“I do seem to be a little thirsty.”

Shen Li did not notice the expression on his face, but upon hearing his words, she asked, “Then what would you like to order? Champagne? Or fruit juice?”

She half-turned around and swept her gaze across the beverage section.

“How about... strawberry juice? Or mango juice?”

Lu Huaiyu suddenly laughed.

“Peach juice will do.”

Shen Li replied, “Okay.”

As she spoke, she went to the side to get a cup for him.

Lu Huaiyu took half a step forward, suddenly closing the distance between the two of them.

At the moment, only the two of them were in this small area.

As he got close to her, his tall and straight figure easily enveloped her. In the eyes of others, they looked as if they were just getting a drink together.

Shen Li turned around with the peach juice in her hand. Only then did she realize that he was exceptionally close to her. However, after a short moment of surprise, she did not pay too much attention to it.

She stretched out her right hand and handed over the cup of peach juice.

“Second Brother.”

Lu Huaiyu did not take it. Instead, he raised his hand slightly and took the cup that was in her left hand.

Shen Li was stunned.

“Second Brother, I drank from that cup before—”

Before she could finish her sentence, Lu Huaiyu had already brought the cup of peach juice to his lips.

However, he suddenly stopped and took the cup away again. His gaze fell on the cup, and his eyebrows twitched slightly.

Shen Li thought that he had finally realized that he had taken the wrong cup, so she immediately handed the other cup over to be exchanged with him.

“Second Brother, this cup is yours—”

Her voice came to an abrupt halt.

That was because Lu Huaiyu did not want to exchange cups with her.

He stared at the cup in his hand for a few moments. Then, with a slight movement of his fingers, he turned the cup slightly in a different direction.

On the edge of the cup, a light red mark could clearly be seen.

It was her lipstick mark that had accidentally been imprinted on it.

The next moment, his thin lips covered the spot, matching them with the light red mark.

1

Shen Li's face instantly burned up!

Even though she had hugged and kissed him before, and were no strangers to behaving fairly intimately with each other, at this moment, they were in an area where the lights were bright and it was noisy. His secretive and ostentatious behavior made his actions seem even more provocative.

His expression remained normal, and his movements were natural and smooth, as if he did not realize that anything was wrong at all.

As he took a sip of the peach juice, the tip of his tongue curled slightly to savor the remaining sweetness at the corner of his lips.

Shen Li gripped the remaining cup in her hand as the tips of her ears turned red.

The cup that she had been drinking from had been in her left hand while the one she had taken for him was in her right hand.

One cup was only half full while the other was still seventy percent full. How could he not recognize which one was new?

He had deliberately wanted to drink from the cup that she had been drinking from!

As the two of them stood here, he stood in front of her, blocking her from everyone's view.

No one had seen that he had taken the wrong cup of peach juice.

Lu Huaiyu tilted his head slightly, as if he was savoring the taste of the peach juice.

After a moment, he met her gaze and said with a low laugh, "This was mine to begin with."

Chapter 733: Ambiguous Confrontation

'It was mine to begin with.'

Of course, he was referring to more than just that cup of peach juice.

The surrounding clamor was incessant, and countless gazes were looking in their direction.

If anyone came forward and got closer, they would be able to see or hear what he had done.

Yet, he still continued to behave so brazenly.

However, he still seemed to feel as if that was not enough. His eyes met her slightly embarrassed gaze and he deliberately asked with a smile, “Ah Li, why is your face so red?”

This man always liked to tease her, and he often succeeded.

She could not allow him to feel so pleased with himself.

At the thought of this, Shen Li suddenly beckoned to him, as if she had something to say.

In fact, they were already very close to each other, and there was no one nearby. Whatever she wanted to say would already be heard clearly, even at this distance.

However, since she had taken the initiative to signal him, and he was used to spoiling her, he also went along with her wishes. He slightly bowed his head, leaned his ear close, and let out a low laugh.

“What’s wrong?”

Shen Li looked at the beautiful side profile in front of her.

His black hair fell over his forehead. The lines between his eyebrows and the bridge of his nose were smooth and perfect. His thin lips were slightly curved, and there was a casual smile on his face.

He looked noble and cold, but also very patient.

Anyone who saw him now would not realize what he had just done or said.

“Second Brother.”

She called him softly. Having deliberately lowered her voice, her usually clear and pleasant voice was especially sweet and soft, like melted chocolate, which seemed to be like smooth silk that easily wrapped around him.

Lu Huaiyu had never been able to resist her, let alone such a coquettish voice with a hint of provocativeness.

The look in his eyes became more and more gentle, as he answered in a low voice, “Hmm?”

Shen Li’s red lips moved slightly, as she whispered in his ear, “What is it that you want? Why don’t you just come and take it?”

Her tone was naive and curious, as if she was really only asking a casual question— ‘If you want to drink peach juice, why don’t you come and take it yourself?’

Or, if you wanted something else, that would be fine too.

It was as if something had exploded in his ear, an indescribable numbness began to spread from the tip of his ear all the way to the bottom of his heart.

Lu Huaiyu instantly froze.

He had clearly just drunk the peach juice, but now he suddenly felt thirsty again.

It was as if there was a fire burning from somewhere, and it was extremely hot.

His Adam's apple bobbed, and he immediately turned his head to look at her, his deep and dark eyes staring intently at her.

However, by the time he looked over, she had already tactfully backed away.

Her cheeks were slightly flushed, and her peach blossom eyes were bright and moist. It was as if the spring breeze had stirred up a pool of lake water, stirring one's soul.

She blinked and asked openly, "Second Brother, what's wrong?"

Lu Huaiyu pressed the tip of his tongue against the upper palate of his mouth and he smiled.

He moved closer. His phoenix-like eyes narrowed slightly, looking as if they were filled with a bottomless vortex.

It was as if he could easily entice her with just one more look.

His voice was slightly hoarse as he enunciated each word.

"Shen Tangtang, are you deliberately teasing your boyfriend, hmm?"

She knew what he wanted, yet she had still thrown out this kind of bait.

Here, at this moment.

Originally, taking her cup of peach juice had been the last resort.

The greed and desire that he had suppressed with great difficulty were easily aroused by her words, so it had become even more difficult to control than before.

It almost destroyed what little rationality he had left.

From the moment she had appeared at the entrance of the banquet hall today, his impatience and greed had silently spread within the depths of his heart.

He had seen her in many different forms, but tonight was especially different.

For so long, he had always treated her as a little girl, holding her in his hands, spoiling her, and giving her candy to eat.

Today, however, he suddenly realized that the little girl had actually grown up.

Dressed in a qipao, which enhanced her slender waist and long legs, the young girl's innocence and sensual charm were intertwined.

So many people were looking at her Everyone was looking at her.

The throbbing that he had finally calmed down was easily provoked by her again.

Shen Li finally noticed that at this moment, he was surrounded by an inexplicable dangerous aura.

She blinked her eyes. Perhaps this joke had been a little too much for her to handle?

However, he had teased her so many times. What was wrong if she retaliated once?

Thinking of this, her confidence increased.

She raised her small face and said confidently, "Am I?"

Looking at this young girl's arrogance, Lu Huaiyou laughed. Then, he took a step forward with his long legs and moved even closer to her.

Shen Li immediately felt his suit trouser-covered legs slip past the slit in her qipao, which exposed her legs slightly.

It was just a slight graze, but the feeling was all too clear.

And then, with a slight click, his foot landed by her side, so that one of his leather shoes and one of her high heels were close to each other.

Her whole body instantly tensed up.

Even though they were not really touching, the pressure from his body was too strong to be ignored.

He did not say anything either. He merely approached her gently but aggressively at the same time, leaving her nowhere to run.

Lu Huaiyu whispered into her ear, "Your clothes..."

Shen Li held her breath slightly. His hot breath fell upon her ears and neck, causing her to tremble.

Finally, she could not hold it in anymore and subconsciously took half a step back.

She was already standing next to the drinks table. Now that she stepped back, the narrow distance was lessened even further and she was about to crash into the edge of the table.

Lu Huaiyu raised his hand to grab her waist.

The material of the qipao was extremely soft and smooth against her waist, causing her to almost slip out of the palm of his hand.

Almost immediately, he exerted force with his hand and grabbed her waist, pulling her into his embrace.

“Don’t move,” he said with a low laugh. “It won’t be good if you bump into this table.”

Hearing this, Shen Li was about to turn around to take a look when she heard a familiar voice.

“Tangtang.”

The atmosphere seemed to freeze for a moment.

Shen Li turned her head and looked at Shen Zhijin who had seemingly appeared out of nowhere, feeling momentarily stunned.

Shen Zhijin’s expression was calm.

“There’s a professor from Morley University over there who wants to meet you.”

These words were addressed to Shen Li, but Shen Zhijin was not looking at her. He was looking at Lu Huaiyu instead.

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Lu Huaiyu’s expression remained calm. He took half a step back, released his hand, and said with a smile, “Ah Li, then you should go over with Teacher Shen.”

Shen Li coughed lightly and walked over.

“Dad.”

Shen Zhijin took one last look at Lu Huaiyu before leaving with Shen Li.

It was not until they had moved a little further away that Lu Huaiyu quietly tensed.

As Shen Li walked forward, her phone suddenly vibrated.

She took her phone out of her handbag to take a look. It was a message from Lu Huaiyu.

[I miss you. Please wear it alone for me to see.]

Chapter 734: Fakes

Shen Li's finger gently tapped on the phone screen.

This man...

She held her phone as she followed Shen Zhijin.

“Zhijin.”

A 40-year-old blonde-haired, blue-eyed male foreigner smiled and greeted Shen Zhijin. However, his gaze fell on Shen Li who was behind him.

“So, this is your daughter, Tangtang?”

The man spoke fluent Chinese.

Shen Zhijin nodded and introduced the two of them.

“Tangtang, this is Professor Carroll from the Department of Art History at Morley University.”

“Carroll, this is my daughter, Shen Li.”

Shen Li assessed the man in front of her. He had deep-set eyes and angular facial features. He was extremely handsome.

Even though he was already 40 years old, he still looked extremely charming.

He smiled and extended his hand.

“Hello, Tangtang.”

The corners of Shen Li’s lips curved slightly. She shook his hand.

“Hello, Professor Carroll.”

Carroll winked and smiled.

“I was your mother’s schoolmate at Sutton Public School in Baicheng. You may just call me uncle.”

Shen Li looked at Shen Zhijin and saw him nod slightly.

Sutton Public School was a noble college in Baicheng. The tuition fees were high, and the students were all from wealthy families.

Gu Tingyin had attended high school there.

Shen Li was a little surprised. She had not expected Gu Tingyin's former classmate to have come tonight.

It sounded like he had had a pretty good relationship with Gu Tingyin.

In Shen Zhijin's case...

Being able to get Shen Zhijin to specially introduce them was already enough of an indication.

Shen Li followed his advice.

"Uncle Carroll."

Professor Carroll was obviously very happy. His gaze lingered on Shen Li's face for a long time before he looked at Shen Zhijin and smiled.

"I used to be very curious about what the daughter produced by both you and her would look like. Now that I look at her, she's even more beautiful than I imagined."

Shen Li's face perfectly combined the best of Shen Zhijin and Gu Tingyin's features.

Her brows and eyes resembled Shen Zhijin's. The bridge of her nose and the corner of her lips were extremely similar to Gu Tingyin's.

She appeared to have a cold temperament and when she looked over with her pair of dark and clear peach blossom eyes, she appeared to be even more indifferent and cold.

However, when she smiled, her dimples were faintly discernible, and that raised arc was almost a perfect copy of Gu Tingyin. It was rare for her to reveal some sweetness, so it had unknowingly diluted the distant feeling, merging into a unique and beautiful beauty.

Upon hearing the praise for Shen Li, Shen Zhijin's handsome face also relaxed into a faint smile.

"Tangtang is more like Yin Yin."

Shen Li became more and more curious. To be able to talk to Shen Zhijin like this, the relationship between them seemed to be even closer than she had expected.

"Is the 'Seventeenth Night' is your painting?"

Carroll asked with a smile.

Shen Li was Ning Li, so naturally, she was also Tree's Shadow.

Ever since she had revealed her identity previously, it had caused quite a stir in the local art circle.

However, she had not expected Carroll to have also heard about this matter.

He came from abroad and was a professor at Morley University. Logically speaking, he should not have paid too much attention to the things that happened locally here.

However, when she thought about how he taught art history theory, it seemed to make a lot more sense.

"Yes."

She nodded slightly.

Carroll said, "Speaking of which, I once saw that painting at a student's place."

Shen Li was stunned. "What? You've seen it before?"

How was this possible?

When that painting had been completed, she had sent it directly to the Yunzhou Art Association and had them auction it off on her behalf.

The person who had bid for the painting was Lu Huaiyu.

From that time until now, Lu Huaiyu had kept the painting well hidden and had never taken it out.

Even if Carroll had seen it, it should have been at that auction and not at the students' place.

As if he could read her mind, Carol shrugged and smiled helplessly.

"I only found out a while ago that it was a fake."

Shen Li frowned.

A fake.

She had also seen a fake of "Seventeenth Night" in a gallery in the Capital.

"When I saw that painting, I had admired it greatly. Unfortunately, I found it to be slightly flawed, and I kept feeling that it looked a little strange. At that time, I only thought that the painter was not talented enough and felt that it was quite a pity. I didn't expect it to be because it was a fake painting."

Carroll said this, seemingly with some regret mixed with some relief.

"I merely said that the overall appearance of that painting could have been better."

There was still a huge gap between a real painting and a fake painting.

Ordinary people might think that they were not that different and looked pretty much the same, but Carroll was a professional.

He taught the theory of art history and was also a famous expert art appraiser.

An excellent original painting would definitely be imbued with the painter's thoughts and emotions.

Every stroke on the canvas, in addition to skill, would reflect the painter's own thoughts.

It was a complete and natural work.

However, a fake painting was not.

Having to follow the same pattern, the strokes were mechanically stiff. They were just following the path of others, step by step, like a puppet without a soul.

Therefore, even though Carroll had not known that it was a fake at that time, he still had a hunch that something was wrong with the painting.

"I heard that the real painting is in... his hands?" Carroll said and raised his chin in a certain direction.

Shen Li turned around and saw Lu Huaiyu talking with two men.

Of course, Carroll was referring to him.

"Yes, it's with him," Shen Li said.

Carroll nodded and said with a smile, "Tsk, how enviable. I wonder if it would be convenient for me to see the real painting in the future?"

There were too many people who wanted the paintings produced by Tree's Shadow. However, there were only so many paintings that she had produced in the past few years. Moreover, the moment each painting that had been released had quickly been bought for private collection.

No one else could even take a look at it.

Shen Li smiled.

"Then, I'll ask him later."

Although it was her painting, it belonged to Lu Huaiyu now. It was still necessary to ask him.

Carroll could not help but laugh.

"Would he be willing to refuse you?"

During tonight's banquet, Shen Li and Lu Huaiyu had not interacted much with each other.

However, Carroll could clearly see that Lu Huaiyu's gaze had never left her.

His intention could not be more obvious.

"Carroll," Shen Zhijin glanced at him.

He was still the same as before, completely unrestrained. He was even teasing Tangtang.

However, Carroll did not heed his words and lightly clicked his tongue.

“In the past, when you pursued Yin Yin, you weren’t much better than that kid.”

And now he was putting on airs.

Shen Zhijin, “...”

The corners of Shen Li’s lips curled into a smile. It was rare to see Shen Zhijin being defeated.

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Then, she thought of another matter– the fake “Seventeenth Night” painting.

At the moment, she was not sure if the one he was talking about was the one that had appeared in One Gallery.

However, she had a hunch– Perhaps, it was possible!

She deliberated and said, “Uncle Carroll, you said that you saw the fake one at a student’s place. I wonder if it would be convenient for you to reveal who that student is?”

Chapter 735: The Holy Capital of Art– Leland

Carroll was a little surprised.

“There’s nothing that I can’t say about this, but you’re asking about...”

Shen Li explained.

“You just mentioned that you only found out that it was fake a while ago. If I’m not mistaken, you must have heard about One Gallery.”

Carroll nodded.

“Yes.”

If Shen Li had not personally come forward to verify that the painting was fake, the fake painting would have been sold at a high price.

This matter had spread like wildfire within the art circles in the country. Carroll had also heard someone mention Tree’s Shadow later, so he had specifically gone to find out more information about the whole story.

After looking more into it, he understood that the painting that he had seen earlier was fake.

Shen Li said, “The origin of the fake painting in One Gallery is unknown, and the source has yet to be found. Therefore, I suspect that the one you saw earlier is...”

“I see.”

When she said this, Carroll instantly understood.

“Are you still investigating who the artist that painted the fake painting was?”

“Yes.”

In fact, there was never a shortage of fake paintings within the art market.

The huge temptation to profit from it was there. Thus, the production of fakes was endless. It was impossible to investigate all of them.

However, the one that had appeared in One Gallery could almost be mistaken for the real one.

Shen Li had to investigate thoroughly.

Carroll looked regretful.

“Tangtang, I’m afraid I’ll have to disappoint you. The actual painting wasn’t in my student’s hands. He was merely copying a photo of “Seventeenth Night” at that time, which was why I saw it.”

“According to him, he happened to see it in an art gallery in Leland, and because he liked it a lot, he had taken that photo.”

The name ‘Tree’s Shadow’ had not been very famous abroad at that time, and Professor Carroll had only learned about it from that photo.

Shen Li’s eyebrows jumped.

“Leland? So that means that the fake painting first made its appearance over there?”

Why did it have to be there?

Leland and Bai City were more than 300 kilometers apart, but they belonged to two different countries.

Unlike Bai City, which was an international first-tier city, Leland’s economy was relatively less developed, and the pace of life was slow. It was a tourist destination for many art lovers due to its proximity to the sea, its suitable climate, and its extremely long Renaissance history and strong artistic atmosphere.

“This may not be the case. Someone may have brought that painting to Leland.”

Carroll said.

Shen Li fell into deep thought.

What he said was not without reason.

“Then could you tell me, when did your student see that painting?”

Carroll pondered the question for a while.

“Probably at the end of September last year, right?”

That had been before the art exhibition that had been held in One Gallery.

“Then, do you know the name of that art gallery?”

Carroll shook his head.

“I’m not sure about that, but if you want to know, I can help you ask around.”

Shen Li heaved a secret sigh of relief in her heart.

“Thank you very much, then.”

She lowered her eyes slightly.

Other than a name, she had not received any other information about the painter of the fake painting yet.

Perhaps it was time to start investigating in Leland, but... It just had to be Leland. It might be more troublesome.

"It's just a small matter. Why are you so polite?"

Professor Carroll seemed to be very interested,

"However, you seem to be taking this matter very seriously? Oh, that's right. After all, it's your painting that the other party copied. It is better to investigate this matter."

"This is one of the reasons," Shen Li pulled her thoughts away from a distant memory and looked up at Professor Carroll, "Another reason is that the fake painting appeared in One Gallery. You might not know this, but their art exhibition had been co-organized with the National Art Association. It was also the master's idea to investigate this matter."

The National Art Association would cooperate with some of the top galleries every year. A trip to the gallery's art exhibition was a common activity.

However, a fake painting had been featured in it. This could be considered a major mistake.

Before the truth was revealed, there was no guarantee that none of the members of the National Art Association were involved in this, secretly tampering with the paintings.

Mei Yanqing was the chairman of the National Art Association. He hated this kind of thing to the core. Now that Shen Li's painting had been faked, he had specially instructed the entire arts association to conduct a strict investigation from top to bottom.

However, he was now elderly and had just undergone surgery not too long ago. Although his recovery had gone well, his energy was limited.

Ultimately, this matter had fallen into Shen Li's hands.

Professor Carroll nodded in understanding.

In this case, it was understandable.

Shen Zhijin looked at Shen Li, noting that she rarely put so much effort into one thing. That showed that she attached great importance to this matter.

“Why haven’t I heard you mention this before?” He asked in a low voice.

Shen Li smiled.

“Well, it’s mainly the people from the art association who are running the investigation. However, because there haven’t been many clues available, the matter has been put on hold. That’s why I didn’t mention it much. I didn’t expect to get a breakthrough from Uncle Carroll, so it’s been an unexpected surprise.”

She thanked Professor Carroll again.

“Speaking of which, Tangtang, when you have time in the future, you should visit Leland to take a look. The scenery there is very nice.” Professor Carroll took a sip of red wine, “That is where the Renaissance originated. It’s the true capital of art. It would be a pity if you don’t make a trip there.”

Shen Li had a great talent for painting. She would probably like that place.

Hearing his words, Shen Li’s eyes sparkled. She smiled and nodded.

“I hope that there will be an opportunity.”

...

Professor Carroll did not engage in conversation with Shen Li for too long. Although he liked her very much, it was her family acknowledgment banquet tonight, and many important people had come.

She still had to go and exchange pleasantries with those people.

The Gu family had organized this family acknowledgment banquet in such a grand manner to officially acknowledge her identity and allow her to enter this social circle.

In fact, she had already met some of these people the last time she had come to Hong Kong City.

However, from tonight onwards, she would be meeting them again as Shen Li of the Gu family.

The family acknowledgment banquet did not end until ten o'clock in the evening.

The guests then left one after another.

Shen Li finally followed Old Master Gu and Old Madam Gu back to Suyue Mountain.

...

Of course, even though the family acknowledgment banquet had ended, there was still a lot of excitement associated with it.

In addition to the fact that the family acknowledgment banquet had been prepared with great effort by the Gu family, the extravagant manner in which Gu Tingfeng and the other masters of the Gu family had given Shen Li various gifts just to make her happy, had stunned everyone.

They had already thought that the New Year's Day celebration had been extravagant enough. Who would have thought that even more astonishing things would come after that?

The whole of Crescent Island, the five docks, the new art gallery, Dutian Racecourse...

Any one of these gifts would be enough to make people envious.

Not to mention that all of them had been given to Shen Li alone.

Also, the most important thing was that these were only the tip of the iceberg.

With the Gu family's assets, there were probably even more things that had not been announced.

At the same time, there were two pieces of gossip that were quickly spreading among the circle of influential people in Hong Kong City.

They were about Yan Fei and Xu Yini.

Chapter 736: Don't Step Foot in Leland Again

At the Gu family's family acknowledgment banquet, the series of absurd actions by Yan Fei and Xu Yini had been witnessed by many of the people who were present.

Yan Fei had been overestimating herself. As a guest, she had been outspoken enough to "welcome" Shen Li to the Gu family's territory, thus making a big fool of herself.

Not to mention that all the well-known people present at the banquet were people of great importance. It was not the place for a junior like her to interrupt. Even if she wanted to speak up, there were already quite a number of legitimate young masters' daughters present. It really was not her place to say anything.

Although the Yan family was one of the three great aristocratic families in Hong Kong City, Yan Fei's status was special. Even though her academic qualifications, abilities, and temperament over the years had all improved her standing in the eyes of others, the identity of an illegitimate daughter was like a brand. This brand was something that she could not shake off, no matter how hard she tried.

There were already many people who looked down on her level of status. That, in addition to what had happened that night, directly exposed her high estimation of herself. Everyone's evaluation of her had immediately plummeted after.

Even Yan Baocheng and the entire Yan family's reputation had been affected.

Many people secretly sneered. Yan Baocheng had two daughters. Yan Zhen was famous for being arrogant and willful. All she knew was to entangle herself with Zhong Haoqi and jealously compete with different women. People had thought that Yan Fei was a good person, but who would have guessed that she would be so careless?

What's more, this time, Yan Fei's situation was even more serious. Of all people, why did she offend Shen Li?

Everyone could see how much the Gu family doted on this one and only young miss. Wasn't she overstepping the line with the Gu Family by offending her in this way?

How could there be anything good for her from now on?

As for Xu Yini... that had been even more exciting.

In front of everyone, the third master of the Gu family had forced her hand and made her apologize to Shen Li. She had admitted that she was the one behind all the scandals about Shen Li on the Internet.

This was like slapping herself on the face.

What could be more interesting than this?

That night, before Xu Yini had even flown back to the Capital, the news of the banquet had already spread rapidly.

Even the people in the Capital had heard about it.

Many people had ridiculed her in private. They were thankful that even though Miss Xu was no longer in the entertainment industry, she was still able to devote herself to entertaining everyone by putting on such a good show. She added enough fodder for them to gossip and joke about to liven up their boring lives.

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Such selflessness was really rare.

...

As for Shen Li, as the absolute focus of this family acknowledgment dinner that had shocked the whole of Hong Kong City, she was actually very calm. It did not seem as if she had been affected in any way by the slightest bit of the excitement.

After returning to the Gu family mansion, she had a very good night's sleep.

She woke up at around six in the morning, sat up, and rubbed her temples.

Recalling what she had said to Professor Carroll yesterday, she lifted the quilt to get out of bed. Then, she pulled the chair over and sat down in front of the desk. She then turned on the computer before sending out an email.

Since she did not bother turning on the lights and the curtains were closed, the room was very dimly lit.

Only the bright blue light from the computer screen reflected onto her face, making her skin appear porcelain white and her eyes dark.

After sending the email, she leaned back in her chair, her slender white fingers tapping on the table as she waited lazily and patiently.

Seven minutes later, she received a reply through the email.

[You should not step foot in Lelang again.]

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Shen Li calmly typed a sentence.

[I'm just checking something. I don't intend on going back.]

The other party seemed to be relieved and quickly replied.

[Okay, then just leave it to me.]

Seeing the other party's affirmative reply, she did not send back another reply. She cleared up all the emails and related traces.

After confirming that everything had been erased, she looked at the time again and went back to bed to catch up on her sleep.

...

At eight o'clock, Yan Qiu sent a group of data packets to her.

[Junior Sister, this is the data that was just released from Fino's laboratory. Please take a look.]

Since they were in the same research group, the overall direction of their work was the same even though everyone's experiments were different.

Since Shen Li was not in the Capital, Yan Qiu had helped to forward the data over.

“Okay, thank you, Senior Brother.”

Shen Li took the whole morning to process the data, so it was only after eleven o’clock when she finished analyzing all the data.

Right now, it could be considered that a big step forward had been taken in the progress of the thesis.

She stretched before turning off the computer.

Her phone suddenly rang.

She casually took it and looked at it. It was a promotional message.

[Good news! “Hibiscus” has broken the one billion mark at the box office!]

Her eyebrows raised slightly before she clicked on it. She discovered that just an hour ago, the national box office of “Hibiscus” had officially broken the one billion mark. The official Weibo account had even specially posted a congratulatory poster.

From the time of the official release of “Hibiscus” at Christmas until now, “Hibiscus” had gone from being underrated at the beginning to eventually turning the tables just through word of mouth. Later on, “Hibiscus” became the box office champion of this New Year’s holiday season.

Until now, the popularity of the other films had already been exhausted. Only the single-day box office earnings for “Hibiscus” were still rising steadily.

The final box office earnings had definitely reached more than one billion.

She casually scrolled through the comments. Most of them were fans of “Hibiscus” who were celebrating together.

Some people had said that Ge had finally proven his talent again. Some people commented on how well domestic love films could actually be shot. Some people were even thinking that the investors of “Hibiscus” must have been really discerning this time. Surely, they must have made a fortune.

In short, it was a joyful atmosphere.

Shen Li observed this for a while before she logged out of Weibo.

Knock, knock, knock.

“Cousin, are you there?”

Gu Siqi’s excited voice came from outside the door.

Shen Li put away her phone and stood up to open the door. She saw that the two brothers had come.

“Cousin, Grandma asked us to come over to ask you to eat with us!”

Shen Li knocked on his forehead.

“Did you guys come over today just for a meal?”

“Hehe.”

The two brothers smiled in tacit understanding.

“Cousin, Uncle said that there’s a new batch of horses coming to Dutian Racecourse. Can you come with us to take a look?”

As expected, they wanted to go and have fun.

Shen Li closed the door and followed the two of them to the dining room.

When Old Madam Gu heard the two brothers' words, she could not help but laugh.

"You two don't want to see the horses. It's obvious that you both want to go horse racing with your cousin."

Shen Li smiled.

"Grandma, it just so happens that I don't have anything to do today. I can take them there."

The brothers cheered in unison.

Old Madam Gu scolded, "You shouldn't spoil them."

Gu Sicheng asked curiously, "Cousin, you seem to be in a good mood today!"

Shen Li's lips curved in a slight smile.

"Yes."

Chapter 737: I Am a Substitute

Hearing her say this, Gu Siqi's eyes lit up.

"Then Cousin, could you grant me a wish today? Would you be willing to agree to anything?"

Shen Li scrutinized him as she raised her eyebrows slightly.

Of these two brothers, Gu Sicheng was a straightforward person, while Gu Siqi was quick-witted.

If Gu Sicheng had been the one to make this request, she would have immediately nodded her head. However, since it was Gu Siqi, she would have to consider it carefully.

“It depends.”

However, this answer had clearly exceeded Gu Siqi’s expectations, and he immediately became even happier.

“Thank you, Cousin!”

Shen Li reminded him.

“All I said was that it depends on the situation. I haven’t actually agreed to it yet.”

“That’s already very good!”

Gu Siqi was overwhelmed with emotion.

“Cousin, I don’t even have this kind of treatment at my parents’ place!”

Forget about his mother. If he dared to speak like that to his father, what would await him would be a good beating.

Receiving Shen Li’s response “It depends” was already a milestone on the road to revolution for him!

As long as there was a little hope, he would be able to persevere!

Moreover, at the moment, his cousin had the highest status in this family.

Her words were more effective than anything else!

Shen Li smiled and patted the brothers on the shoulders.

“Alright, let’s eat first. I’ll take you over there in the afternoon.”

“Thank you, Cousin!”

...

After accompanying Old Master Gu and Old Madam Gu to have lunch, Shen Li went back to take a nap.

At three in the afternoon, she drove Gu Siqi and his brother to the Dutian Racecourse.

The black car drove steadily along the road while the two brothers sat in the back seat of the car.

“Cousin, Cousin Siyang said that you’re a very good driver. Is that true?”

Gu Sicheng asked curiously.

The whole Gu family knew that Shen Li had signed with Gu Siyang and the LY racing team. However, she had not stayed in Hong Kong City for long and this was the first time that the two brothers had sat in her car, let alone seen her racing.

Gu Tingfeng and the others had seen the video of Shen Li driving in Xiaosong Hill and LY training base, but they had not shown it to Gu Siqi and Gu Sicheng.

It was not until they had seen Shen Li driving today that the two of them remembered to ask this question.

"I'm okay," Shen Li said casually.

"Cousin, the next time you race, please remember to call us!" Gu Sicheng said quickly.

Shen Li thought for a moment.

"If you two are on vacation at that time, then that will be fine."

After this month, they would still have to go back to Bai City to study.

It would not be so convenient then.

"Eh? Cousin, does that mean that you won't be competing in the near future?" Gu Siqi immediately grasped the key point. "But isn't the domestic professional racing rally about to start? Aren't you going to participate?"

Shen Li looked in the rearview mirror and smiled.

"You seem to know about it very well."

Gu Siqi raised his face proudly.

"Of course! If cousin is participating in the race, we all have to go and cheer for her!"

Shen Li thought for a moment.

Every year, several large-scale professional racing events would be held in this country. This rally was just one of them.

Of course, because of the high value of the event, this event was very important and made a lot of noise.

Ji Shu and the others had participated in two other events before and had achieved good results. However, this national rally was the most important event.

If they could win the championship in this rally, it would be of great significance to Ji Shu and the others, as well as to LY.

Recently, Ji Shu and the others had been so busy with their training that they did not even complain anymore.

Shen Li turned the steering wheel and said, "I won't necessarily go on the field."

Gu Siqi was stunned. "Huh? Really? Why?"

Shen Li smiled.

"Because I'm a substitute."

If the driver in front of them successfully completed the race, then she, as a substitute, would indeed not need to compete.

The two boys who were sitting in the back seat of the car were stunned, their faces full of astonishment.

"A substitute?"

Gu Siyang mentioned this matter in front of them so many times, saying how amazing his cousin's racing skills were until even the two of them were full of anticipation.

So... how could she just be a substitute?

Generally speaking, the most outstanding team member in a team would be the starter, right?

Then their cousin... as a substitute...

“Cousin, Cousin Siyang said that you were busy with the college entrance exam. Is this the reason why you haven’t managed to train enough which has caused you to become a substitute?” Gu Sicheng asked.

After thinking about it, he felt that this guess was the most likely answer!

Gu Siqi also felt that what he said made sense.

“That must be it. Didn’t Cousin Siyang say that the LY team does closed-door training 24/7? Cousin Ah Li has other important matters to attend to, so she would definitely be at a disadvantage in this aspect! Cousin, if you had enough training, you would definitely be better than them, right?”

The corners of Shen Li’s lips curved up, but she did not answer him. All she said was, “Being a substitute is pretty good too.”

She did not have to compete, yet she would still get paid.

Most importantly, her signing bonus was the highest amongst the entire team. She felt that it was a pretty good deal.

Seeing that she seemed to be really open-minded about this matter, the two brothers did not continue to dwell on this matter.

Since their cousin was so calm, if she really went to compete, she was sure to be very outstanding!

A call suddenly came in. Shen Li saw that it was Lu Huaiyu and picked up the call through Bluetooth.

“Second Brother?”

Gu Siqi and Gu Sicheng immediately quieted down obediently.

“Ah Li.”

The man’s deep and languid voice sounded in the car,

“Where are you?”

Shen Li said, “I’m taking Siqi and Sicheng to the Dutian Racecourse.”

Lu Huaiyu smiled and responded with a “Hmm”.

“I heard that a new batch of racehorses had just arrived and I thought you might want to go.”

When Shen Li heard that she said, “Then, will Second Brother be coming to take a look too?”

Lu Huaiyu smiled and agreed.

“Yes.”

Chapter 738: You Are the Same as Him

Twenty minutes later, Shen Li and the two boys arrived at Dutian Racecourse.

Since they had already communicated with the staff here, they went straight to the stables.

There was a total of twenty horses in the new batch of racehorses and all of them had been temporarily placed in Zone Z.

As Shen Li led the two brothers over, she spotted a tall and straight figure in the distance.

It was Lu Huaiyu.

Beside him stood a horse trainer who was describing the horses to him respectfully.

Lu Huaiyu seemed to be sizing up the horses in the stables. With one hand in his pocket, he had a languid posture.

Hearing their voices, he turned his head to look over and the corners of his lips curled up into a smile.

“Ah Li.”

The horse trainer beside him also hurriedly greeted her.

“Miss Ah Li.”

Dutian Racecourse had originally been built for the fourth Miss Gu. Now that Shen Li had returned, this racecourse had officially been placed in her name.

The horse trainer looked at the two people behind Shen Li.

“Young Master Siqi, Young Master Sicheng.”

Lu Huaiyu’s gaze fell on the two boys.

Gu Siqi immediately called out obediently.

“Hello, Second Brother!”

Gu Sicheng followed suit.

“Hello, Second Brother!”

Actually, they had already met Lu Huaiyu the night before, but they had not had the time to greet him properly.

Coming face to face with Lu Huaiyu now, the two brothers were inexplicably nervous when faced with his naturally imposing aura.

Lu Huaiyu’s thin lips curved up slightly.

“You can call me Cousin-in-law.”

Shen Li, “...”

He was extremely straightforward...

The two brothers clearly had not expected him to say this, so they were momentarily stunned.

After a short moment of shock, Gu Sicheng hesitantly said, “Well...”

It did not seem like their father would let them...

Shen Li shot Lu Huaiyu a glance.

“He’s just joking with you. Just call him Second Brother.”

Secretly, Lu Huaiyu thought it was a pity. However, since this was what she said, of course, it would be up to her.

Only then did Gu Siqi and his brother relax.

Shen Li asked, "Why is Second Brother here so early?"

The hotel that Lu Huaiyu was staying at was the Half-Sen which was very close to this place. However, no matter how close it was, it did not seem like he would have had the time to pack up his stuff and rush here in such a short time, right?

Moreover, it looked like he had already been here for a while.

Lu Huaiyu answered frankly.

"I had almost reached when I called you."

Shen Li, "..."

Lu Huaiyu's lips curled into a smile.

"I came here this time to pick a horse."

Shen Li nodded in understanding. This made sense.

In fact, all new racehorses would be sent to Zone Z first. After they had been reappraised and verified, they would be sent to different zones for people to choose from.

Ordinary people were not qualified to enter Zone Z to choose horses.

But of course, Lu Huaiyu, was not an ordinary person.

He definitely had the qualifications.

“Then, does Second Brother fancy any particular one?” Shen Li asked as she looked into the stables.

Lu Huaiyu raised his hand and pointed to one of the stalls.

“That one is not bad.”

Shen Li followed his hand and saw that it was a white horse.

White horses were precious, especially this one. It looked very sturdy, with smooth fur, and it was full of vitality.

It pawed the ground with its hoof as its eyes revealed a hint of wildness.

It had to be said that Lu Huaiyu had an exceptional eye for horses.

Shen Li said, “Second Brother, if you like it, you can give it a try.”

That was precisely what Lu Huaiyu intended on doing, so he nodded.

“Okay.”

The horse trainer beside him became nervous.

“Miss Li, Second Master Lu, this horse has only just been delivered. It hasn’t familiarized itself with the environment yet, so I’m afraid it might still be a little volatile—”

The trainer was already being very tactful, but there was a hint of a reminder in his words.

Horses were very delicate creatures. The purer the bloodline, the more competitive it would be, and the prouder the temperament.

This horse had only just been delivered, and they had not even had time to classify it yet. It would definitely be very dangerous to try it out without careful consideration first.

Second Master Lu had a distinguished status. If anything happened to him, it was likely that they would be held responsible for it.

Lu Huaiyu raised his eyebrows.

The horse trainer wanted to say more, but the manager beside Shen Li interrupted him.

“If Second Master Lu wants to try it out, just bring the horse out.”

As he spoke, he nervously looked at Lu Huaiyu.

This man was well-known for his equestrian skills. How could they question him?

Lu Huaiyu did not seem to care. He merely bowed his head slightly and said to Shen Li in a low voice, “I’ll go change.”

Shen Li’s heart moved slightly. She nodded and said to the manager beside her, “Please bring Qingfeng and the twins’ horses to the horse racing area as well.”

The manager quickly said, “Yes, miss.”

“Yes, miss.”

...

The men’s and women’s changing rooms at the horse farm were adjacent to each other.

Shen Li turned around to head in the opposite direction from the others and changed into a red riding outfit.

Then, she headed straight to the horse-riding area.

The horses had already been led there and were waiting.

Then, right before her, a tall figure wearing a black riding outfit could be seen walking in that direction.

She paused her footsteps, feeling as if her breathing had stopped for a moment.

This was the first time in her life that she had seen Lu Huaiyu in a riding suit.

The tailored riding suit perfectly outlined his figure, emphasizing his broad shoulders and narrow waist. His long legs walked at a lazy pace, exuding a carefree and noble temperament.

Beneath the helmet, the man’s side profile was smooth and elegant.

It cast a shadow on his deep brows and eyes. This made him look even more aloof and restrained, unapproachable.

He came to the white horse that he had chosen. He stretched out his white-gloved hand and pulled on the reins.

The white horse, which had been arrogant and unrestrained a moment ago, seemed to sense this powerful aura and lowered its head slightly.

Lu Huaiyu seemed to smile.

Then, he quickly turned and swiftly mounted the horse!

Shen Li stared at him.

"Cousin?"

The two brothers, Gu Siqi and Gu Siyang, had also changed their clothes and had just come out. They had just happened to see Lu Huaiyu getting on the horse.

Gu Sicheng could not help but ask, "Hey, Cousin, the way that Second Brother got on the horse is similar to the way you do it!"

Shen Li's eyes moved slightly.

At that moment, Lu Huaiyu seemed to sense something and looked over.

However, before he could move, a man who looked to be in his thirties suddenly rode over and began chatting with him.

"Let's go."

Shen Li gathered her thoughts and walked forward. The brothers quickly followed.

Seeing them come, the man who had been chatting immediately stopped and looked at Shen Li. He smiled and said, "So this horse farm belongs to this beautiful lady?"

He spoke with a fluent English accent.

Shen Li nodded.

"Yes, this horse farm used to belong to my mother."

She replied in English as well.

As soon as she finished speaking, the man suddenly seemed stunned. He looked at Shen Li, then at Lu Huaiyu before smiling.

"I didn't expect this lady to have a Leland accent. Miss, have you have been to Leland before, just like this gentleman?"

Chapter 739: Go With Me

Shen Li's pupils contracted.

Most people would only think that her English accent was similar to Lu Huaiyu's, but they would not be able to tell that it was a Leland accent.

She had just replied without thinking too much about it when this man had spoken to her earlier. She had not thought that she would be recognized just like that.

However, it was too late to change the way she spoke now.

Lu Huaiyu also looked over, with his brows slightly raised, as his black eyes carried some interest.

Although the native language of many countries was English, due to geographical, historical and cultural factors, there were usually differences in accents.

It was the same in Leland.

Compared to the standard accents of domestic students in English classes, the pronunciation of many words in Leland, as well as the light and heavy accents, had subtle differences.

It was indeed unusual for Shen Li to have this accent.

“No,” Shen Li smiled faintly. “I’ve never been to Leland.”

“Really?”

The man seemed to be unconvinced.

“But from what I heard, your pronunciation and intonation are a very standard part of the Leland accent.”

As he spoke, he laughed again, with a look of pride on his face.

“Moreover, because Leland has a long Renaissance history, its vocabulary and grammar are closer to ancient English. Occasionally, it sounds a little similar to French. It’s not easy for the average person to speak it well.”

Hearing his words, Shen Li instantly guessed something.

“Sir, are you from Leland?”

The ability to recognize Leland’s accent in an instant, be so knowledgeable about Leland, and more importantly, be filled with a stubborn pride in Leland’s history and culture.

This man had all of these elements. Basically, it was clear that this man was a native of Leland.

Sure enough, the man smiled and nodded.

“It seems that this young lady is not only beautiful, but also smart. Hello, I am Amos.”

Shen Li was not surprised.

“Hello, I am Shen Li.”

“I’ve heard about the young lady of the Gu family in Hong Kong City.” Amos winked as he teased, “I just arrived in Hong Kong City yesterday and already heard about the grand family acknowledgment banquet.”

It had been so grand and lively that everyone knew about it, even if they had not been invited to Crescent Island.

It was just that Amos had not expected to meet this rumored local figure here by chance today.

Perhaps it was because Shen Li had spoken in the standard Leland language that he was so attentive towards her.

“Miss Shen has never been to Leland, yet she can speak so standard and fluent. That’s a truly rare occurrence. When I heard it just now, I thought that Miss Shen had spent a long in Leland before.”

It seemed impossible that she would be able to learn the accent of that place so well in such a short period of time.

As he spoke, he raised his chin.

“Just as this gentleman said, he has been to Leland many times before.”

Lu Huaiyu held the reins in one hand, and the corners of his lips curled up slightly.

“I’m somewhat interested in the history and culture of Leland. Moreover, the scenery of Leland is nice. It’s a good place to relax.”

He had spent a year in the headquarters of Fino Laboratory in Bai City, but in fact, whenever he had some free time, he had a preference for driving over to Leland on his own.

That was when he had developed his Leland accent.

This was something known to many.

Shen Li lowered her eyes. Her throat felt a little tight, and her fingers curled up slightly.

However, she concealed this subtle change of emotions extremely well.

Then, she looked up and met Amos’ gaze. A faint smile appeared on her lips.

“It’s true that I’ve never been to Leland, but after all, it’s the holy capital of art. I’ve always secretly yearned for it. While I was studying painting, I specially studied the history of Leland for a period of time. And because there happened to be a painter who I liked very much from Leland, I deliberately found quite a number of relevant courses and lectures to listen to. It’s probably... how I subtly developed a Leland accent.”

Amos looked surprised.

“Oh? Then, I wonder which painter is so favored by Miss Shen?”

Shen Li said, “Ronai.”

“So it’s him!”

Amos instantly understood, a pleasantly surprised expression on his face.

“He is indeed a very outstanding oil painter! I like his paintings very much as well.”

Ronai had been born in Leland and was an internationally renowned oil painting master on par with Mei Yanqing.

Lu Huaiyu’s gaze fell on Shen Li. He had not expected her to like Ronai’s paintings.

The style of this painting was very different from Mei Yanqing’s. The two of them followed different schools of art. Shen Li was Mei Yanqing’s disciple, so it was somewhat unexpected that she would be so fond of Ronai’s paintings.

However, art was free, to begin with. It would be quite normal for her to appreciate and like different styles of paintings.

Shen Li said, “Yesterday, I met an uncle who told me that I should visit Leland when I have the chance.”

Amos nodded in agreement.

“Yes! It’s really worth going there!”

Shen Li replied softly, “I think so too.”

As she spoke, she came to Qingfeng’s side, and took the reins from the horse trainer, then she mounted the horse.

Her shoulders were straight as she held the reins with one hand. Her long and straight legs gently clasped the horse's belly, and Qingfeng immediately took two steps forward.

Although she held the horsewhip in her other hand, she had almost never used it before. Qingfeng was smart, and he was very cooperative with her.

He was capable of immediately understanding any command that she gave.

Amos looked at Shen Li, then at Lu Huaiyu, and smiled.

"Both of your equestrian movements seem to be very similar."

Lu Huaiyu was also looking at Shen Li.

Actually, this was not the first time he had heard such comments before. Tang Ziqing and the others had said the same thing back at the Yunzhou horse farm.

Equestrianism had its own set of standards. Logically speaking, there should not be much difference between them.

However, both Shen Li and him really did have similarities.

"Is that so?"

Shen Li turned her head. There was a smile playing on the corners of her lips and her pure eyes.

Gu Siqi and Gu Sicheng were already on their horses. When they heard this, they could not help but nod in unison.

"Yes! We think so too!"

Gu Sicheng's gaze swept over Shen Li and Lu Huaiyu. Suddenly, his eyes lit up.

"Cousin, have you ever competed with Second Brother before?"

Judging by the similar equestrian movements of the two of them, their standards should be about the same. If that was the case, who would win if they were to compete?

Shen Li shook her head.

"No."

Lu Huaiyu looked at her and suddenly smiled.

"Then, why don't we give it a try?"

Shen Li hesitated for a moment and shook her head.

"Qingfeng and I are already very familiar with each other, but Second Brother's horse is still in the trial stage. It would not be very fair to compare it this way."

The two brothers were a little disappointed, but they felt that Shen Li's words were not unreasonable.

Lu Huaiyu actually did not mind about these things, but since she had said so...

"Alright, another day then."

As Lu Huaiyu said this, he rode his horse to her side.

As if sensing some kind of danger, or as if he was naturally vigilant against a formidable enemy, the moment the white horse approached, Qingfeng anxiously raised his leg.

Shen Li called out to him in a low voice, "Qingfeng."

Almost at the same time, a hand reached out.

Lu Huaiyu helped her hold the reins. With a slight pull, Qingfeng instantly became obedient.

"Ah Li."

Lu Huaiyu easily restrained Qingfeng. He raised his eyes to look at her, as his thin lips curled into a smile.

"If you have the time in the future, will you go to Leland with me?"

Shen Li's heart jumped, and she abruptly raised her eyes to look at him.

Chapter 740: The Little Girl Needs to be Taught a Lesson

Lu Huaiyu met her gaze and raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Hmm?"

Shen Li observed his expression and confirmed that he was only asking this question casually. Feeling slightly relieved, she retracted her gaze.

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"Sure."

She agreed casually.

It was one thing to plan, but whether it could be carried out was another.

Gu Siqi came forward and asked excitedly, "Second Brother, I heard that you have very good horsemanship as well. I heard that you even won first place in an international equestrian competition before?"

Lu Huaiyu tilted his head slightly and said with a smile, "That was a long time ago."

At that time, he had been in Bai City, and the international equestrian competition for that year had also happened to be held there.

Originally, he had not been interested in this kind of thing. However, at that time, he had just won a champion horse and had coincidentally made a bet with someone, so he decided to participate in the competition. In the end, he had won first place.

After that, the International Equestrian Association had invited him to participate in the competition, but he had refused.

Because of this, there was very little information on the Internet. All anyone could find was a short video of him participating in the final of the equestrian competition in Bai City.

As for anything more, there was none available.

The equestrian competition had been held abroad, and several years had already passed. Many people in the country did not know much about it. At most, all they knew was that the second master of the Lu family in the Capital liked to raise horses.

The reason the twin Gu brothers knew about it was because they had been studying in Bai City. Also, coming from the Gu family in Hong Kong City, they knew a lot about horse racing.

Shen Li said, "Second Brother, you should go ahead and test ride the horse. I'll take the two of them for a walk."

Gu Sicheng hurriedly said, "Let's watch Second Brother first!"

No one had ever broken Lu Huaiyu's record in the equestrian finals in Bai City. The brothers were a little excited to see him on the field with their own eyes.

Boys were always prone to develop admiration for the strong.

Lu Huaiyu responded with a smile. Only then did he release Shen Li's reins. He tilted his head slightly and said in a low voice, "Then, just wait here obediently for me to come back."

Shen Li met his gaze.

"Okay."

...

The horse racing area was extremely vast and had been divided into several areas.

Some people were having equestrian lessons, while others were having small-scale horse races.

However, when Lu Huaiyu appeared, everyone's eyes were involuntarily drawn to him.

Shen Li observed him from afar.

It was clearly his first time riding that horse, but his movements were still standard and smooth without any obstructions from the beginning to the end.

Lu Huaiyu's equestrian skills had already reached such a level.

Gu Siqi and Gu Sicheng were both extremely excited as they watched him.

Gu Siqi sighed.

"Cousin, Second Brother is indeed worthy of taking the first place in the international equestrian competition! If only I were half as good as him!"

Shen Li raised her chin.

"Isn't this a good opportunity to learn from him?"

Gu Siqi let out an "Ah" sound.

"Just watching him like this, I reckon that there's a limit to what I can learn..."

Shen Li said, "How can that be? You just need to put in more effort."

One could naturally follow and learn just by observing more.

...

Lu Huaiyu was very satisfied with the white horse, so he quickly settled on it. At the same time, he officially gave it a name— Star-Tread.

That day, Star-Tread was moved from Zone Z into a private stall, where it was to be screened.

By the time everything was done, it was already 4:30 pm.

Gu Siqi and Gu Sicheng left early and went to the rest area for a drink. Shen Li and Lu Huaiyu then came out of the VIP center together.

Shen Li looked at the time.

“Second Brother, shouldn’t you be going home to rest?”

Lu Huaiyu would usually take a nap around this time in the afternoon.

She was not sure if he had been delayed from it.

As if he had seen through her thoughts, Lu Huai smiled casually as he walked.

“There’s no need.”

Recently, his sleeping time in the afternoon had been reduced to one hour. A slight change in time would not have much of an impact.

Hearing his words, Shen Li was relieved.

“That’s good.”

“But now that you mention it, I seem to feel a little sleepy.”

Lu Huaiyu said.

Shen Li asked, “Then let’s go back first—”

“Ah Li.”

Lu Huaiyu interrupted her.

Shen Li turned her head. Seeing that he was standing still, she stopped as well. “Hmm?”

At this moment, they were in the corridor. On the right was a row of rooms, while on the left was a clear window.

The afternoon sun shone in from the window, bright and warm.

It was quiet, only the two of them were there.

He slowly took off his gloves and stepped forward. His knees pressed against her legs, easily trapping her in this narrow space.

Because he was against the light, his face was hidden in the faint shadows, so she could not see it clearly.

However, she could still feel his silent, greedy gaze landing on her face.

“Actually, I came here today because there’s another thing that I have to do.”

He smiled deeply. In the next moment, he cupped her chin and lowered his head to kiss her.

He had come to get what he wanted.

...

This kiss had been a long time coming. It was filled with longing after a long separation. Of course, it also carried a little bit of revenge for the teasing she had intentionally done last night. It was passionate and forceful.

Shen Li was caught off guard, her soft lips already conquered by him.

Her eyes widened slightly. She was about to step back when she realized that her back was already pressed against the cold, hard wall.

She felt a slight pain. Only then did she remember that the wall behind her was specially decorated. The whole wall was uneven so there was no way for her to press herself flat against it.

His other arm stretched out and wrapped around her slender waist. As he kissed her, he said gently, "Are you in pain? Then, come closer."

Come closer?

She could not move back, so she could only move into his embrace.

However, they were already so close to each other!

His tone was especially gentle, but as he kissed her, there was an inescapable feeling of eagerness and dominance.

Since yesterday, he had waited for an opportunity to finally teach her a lesson. So, how could he let it go so easily?

She was surrounded by these two conflicting feelings, and her heart beat violently.

Finally, she raised her hand, hooked it around his neck, and tentatively pushed the tip of her tongue toward him.

He quickly noticed this small action.

He tightened his palm, burying her deeper into his arms to ask for more.

She had gone almost completely limp in his arms, and a soft gasp came out from the corner of her lips.

“... Lu... Lu Huaiyu...”

She gently tugged on his clothes and raised her flag in surrender.

His chest trembled, and he smiled deeply. Finally, he showed mercy and kissed her face gently.

“Do you know your mistake?”

Shen Li rested her forehead on his shoulder and gave a low “Mm”.

“Do you dare to do it again next time?”

She was quiet for a while before obediently nodding.

“Mm.”

There was a moment of silence.

Lu Huaiyu raised his eyebrows and pulled her out of his arms. He stared into her eyes and said lazily, “Say it again?”

This little girl really deserved to be taught a lesson.

As Shen Li met his gaze, her mind was filled with the scene of him as he rode the horse in the horse racing area today.

This was real, true and so close at hand.

There was also the sentence that he had said with a smile in English— “The scenery in Leland is nice. It’s a good place to relax.”

She leaned over to quickly kiss him on the lips.

Even if she could no longer step into Leland, she still thought that Leland was a good place.

Because he had been there.