

## Little Brat's 91

### Chapter 91: Exposed Relationship

Ye Ting had no interest to find out what Ning Li had prepared as a gift. She knew where Ning Li came from and heard that the girl used to work part-time just to earn enough to get by.

Given her poverty-stricken life, what kind of present could she possibly prepare? It was either a cheap gift or some artsy craft that she had made herself.

Su Yuan was a little surprised.

Given her understanding of her daughter's character, she was glad that Ning Li even showed up, but gifts? She did not even think about it.

"I have two things I want to give you." Ning Li then proceeded to unzip her bag and took out a small black box.

The square box was the size of her palm, but it looked rather old with one of the edges dented. At first glance, it was indeed some cheap gift.

Ye Ming did not say a word or react while Ye Ting scoffed silently.

Ye Cheng saw it and disgust was apparent on his face. "What garbage is that? How can you call this a gift? You might as well throw it into the garbage bin!"

Ye Ci had a quick glance at Su Yuan and noticed the surprise on her mother's face.

Then, Ning Li put the box on the table and pushed it to Su Yuan who reluctantly picked it up.

When she held it in her hand, she realized that it was an accessory box, and it indeed was in a worn-out state.

Why would Ning Li give her this?

With that in mind, she opened the box.

A pearl necklace greeted her sight.

The pearl's luster seemed standard, and its color was nothing stellar as well. It was definitely not an expensive gift. In fact, it looked rather cheap in this grand banquet hall, and it did not measure up to Su Yuan's delicate dress and makeup.

Ning Li said, "This is the present that Dad prepared for you, but he obviously can't make it, so I'm giving it to you on his behalf."

Su Yuan's heart skipped a beat. She suddenly realized something and looked at Ning Li in shock. She finally remembered where she had seen the pearl necklace before. It was from a distant memory that she had buried away.

Many years ago, on a certain day, she had walked past a shop and saw a pearl necklace that caught her eye. She coveted it, but at that time, Ning Haizhou did not have the money for it.

Back then, she soon grew weary of being with Ning Haizhou. In their shabby apartment located near the chaotic and noisy market, every noise that she heard was irritating.

They argued constantly without end.

Maybe because she had it with her life, or maybe because her accumulated anger and grievance exploded all at once, she decided to put it all behind her. After that final argument, she packed her things and left.

That fateful day was her birthday.

The very next day, Ning Haizhou met with a car accident.

The pearl necklace was said to be found at the scene of the crash, and it was returned to Ning Li's grandmother.

After her grandmother passed away, Ning Li got hold of the pearl necklace.

At this moment, Su Yuan's hands were shaking. Now, with her new life and status, the pearl necklace meant nothing to her. Back then though, maybe she did not really need the pearl necklace, but it was the fuse to that argument, or maybe it was just an excuse for her to leave.

"The paper underneath the necklace is my present for you."

Su Yuan spotted a piece of paper under the necklace, so she took it out. The paper was already yellowish; it must have been through a lot.

She opened it and realized that it was a sketch.

On the yellowish paper was a string of beautiful pearls. It was so realistic that one could feel the brilliance of each pearl.

Su Yuan's jaw dropped, her words stuck in her throat.

Ning Li's lips curved softly. "If you don't like it, just throw it away."

That day, Ning Haizhou and Su Yuan had quarreled fiercely in the living room, and Ning Li had been locked up in her bedroom.

The shouts and screams had filled her head, and she could not get them out.

In the end, she had picked up a pencil and paper and sketched the pearl necklace. She wanted to give it to Su Yuan after the argument ended. She wanted to tell her mother that when she grew up, she would buy her the world.

However, Su Yuan did not give her the chance to.

Ning Li grabbed her bag. "Now that you got my presents, I'll be going. I still have something to do."

Then, she got up and left.

"Ning Li!" Su Yuan unconsciously called her and the box fell out of her hand. The sketch fell to the floor as well.

Suddenly, Ye Cheng accidentally knocked over a glass.

Clank!

The glass broke and its contents soaked the sketch wet. Ye Ci had a quick glance at Su Yuan before she bent over, trying to pick the sketch up.

"What's that? Sis, don't pick it up. It's filthy," Ye Cheng ridiculed with resentment.

Su Yuan also held Ye Ci's hand, but her eyes on the sketch seemed complicated.

Ye Ting saw the entire incident as well but did not care in the slightest bit. She gestured to the attendant and commanded, "Clean this mess up."

The attendant nodded and swiftly came in to clean everything up. In a heartbeat, the broken glass and the soggy paper were all swept into the garbage can.

...

After coming out of Jinshen Hotel, the sky was already dark. The night breeze felt cold, so Ning Li zipped her school jersey up before she took a deep breath.

One man's trash was another man's treasure. In this case, it was the other way around.

Ning Li now believed that she should just throw the necklace and the sketch away. She looked around but did not know where to go, so she simply picked a direction and wandered aimlessly.

She was in the heart of the city. The lights were bright and people filled the street, hence it was quite lively given the current time of the day.

She drifted along with the crowd and the lights mindlessly. While she felt relaxed, at the same time, something felt like it was crushing her chest, so she held some tension in her body.

Moments later, she called Wei Songze.

He picked up swiftly and sounded surprised. "Yo! Sister Lili, to what do I owe the call?"

"Did you manage to get the place I told you to rent?"

"The place? That's what you wanna know? Right, I got it, but I don't really like the place. Why don't I find you a better place, Sister Lili? You have the money, don't you?"

Ning Li had told Wei Songze to find her a place in a specific location, but he did not like the location at all, so he planned to look for more choices for her.

"It's not necessary. That one will do. I'm heading over now. Can you give me the keys?"

"Now?"

“Are you busy?”

“No, no, I’m always free for you, Sister Lili! I’m going too. Wait for me.”

Wei Songze quickly hung up the phone.

Ning Li hailed a taxi and headed to the rented apartment. Then, she received a Weibo notification on her phone.

[The nation’s first love, Xu Yini, is dating a mysterious guy! Has her relationship been exposed?!!]

She simply scanned over the article, and a picture popped up.

Just when she was about to tap and zoom, her hand froze. The blurry picture showed Xu Yini and a guy standing together.

Even though it was just his back, Ning Li recognized it nevertheless.

It was Lu Huaiyu.

Chapter 92: Can’t Even Clarify It?

The location of the picture was a parking lot, and the two of them were standing in front of the car. Lu Huaiyu was leaning against the door, his towering back giving him away.

There was a clearer shot of Xu Yini compared to Lu Huaiyu. Half of her face was caught on camera with her tucking her hair behind her ear.

The picture might have been a blur, but there was a distinct smile on her face.

The comments below the picture were growing rapidly.

[I'm barely breathing in this flood of comments! Help!]

[NetiFlower: Sobs! I just became her fan, and she is in love with another man?]

[YiniDreamsANN: Don't believe in rumors! A picture is not solid evidence! Just wait for the management to release a statement! Believe in Yini!"]

[UpUpStone: You're right! Judging from her clothes, it must be a private meeting. Can't Yini meet a friend? Besides, they are quite far apart from each other, so how can you call that being in love?]

Xu Yini's fans came to her defense and started to suppress the malicious comments.

Ning Li refreshed the page and saw the comments from the fans being pushed to the top.

Xu Yini made her debut in a school romance comedy and was called the nation's first love for her performance. Her character had always been the innocent girl-next-door.

Now, with the scandal revolving around her relationship, her fans could not accept it while the others were shocked. There were even haters among the comments, bashing her ruthlessly.

[IDoNotWantToRevealMyName: I thought she claimed to be single on some variety programs. She said she has never been in a relationship. Look at her smile. You know what that means, right? That's a smile just for someone you like!]

[AnAnDoesn'tSleepSilently: I think so! Even if it's not a relationship, there must be something between the two of them!]

[OFail: Am I the only one that thinks the guy is kinda handsome?]

The comment about the guy received a lot of likes and replies in a short period of time.

[YouYoou: I agree! +1]

[OrangeJelly: Add me! \*Phone number\* It's only just a shot of his back, but the back of his head, his broad shoulders, his trim waist, and his lanky legs! He's at least 2 meters tall! I want to know everything about this man in a minute!]

[SugarSoup: He is just a normal person, isn't he? If he's someone in the industry, his perfect traits would have already made him famous! Please debut!]

Even though the man in the picture did not show his face, his regal bearing was unique, and it caught people's eyes.

One of the comments stood out from the rest.

[DownTTDown: Wash your face and dream on! Did you see the watch on his wrist!? That's a Gloye commemorative edition! It's \$35 million!]

The topic of the swiftly switched focus.

[OrangeJelly: Sorry, excuse me!]

[SugarSoup: Sorry, what?!]

[YouYoou: Wait, no way!]

The audience was in a riot when they found out about the watch.

Ning Li scanned through the comments before she had another look at the picture.



Did Lu Huaiyu go back to the capital for Xu Yini?

His face was hidden in the picture, but judging from Xu Yini's reaction, he should have been thrilled.

Ning Li tightened his lips and shut her phone.

...

In the waiting parlor on the third floor of Huanxing Entertainment, Xu Yini was sitting on the couch when her manager, Mei Li, came in in a hurry.

"Yini! What is this? Who is that man?! Why did you get your photo taken?!"

Compared to her anxiety, Xu Yini was rather relaxed. "Oh, it's fine. I just coincidentally ran into him."

Mei Li gasped. "Coincidentally? Yini, do you know how serious this scandal will affect your image?!"

She sized up Xu Yini doubtfully. "Tell me the truth. Are you in a relationship?"

Mei Li had been Xu Yini's manager since her debut and she knew the girl quite well. If Xu Yini had that smile on her face, she must be in love with that guy.

Frustrated, Xu Yini kicked the chair away. "No!"

She wanted to be in a relationship with the man as well, but despite so many years of effort, she still could not see a light of hope. She was actually quite pleased when she saw the scandal.

Mei Li sighed a breath of relief. "Good then."

As long as it was just a scandal, it could be solved.

The assistant said, “Yini, why don’t you post something on Weibo to clarify things? The fans are going wild.”

Xu Yini spun her phone softly but did not say a word.

Suddenly, Mei Li said, “Hold on. Let the fans have it for now. We can clarify things later.”

Xu Yini had not been getting any invites to be featured in movies or dramas recently. She only got invited to several variety programs, so the exposure was something she could use to her advantage.

Mei Li cautiously looked at Xu Yini and asked, “Yini, are you sure that’s the only picture that got taken? Is there anything else in the paparazzi’s hands?”

Xu Yini immediately knew what her manager meant. If it had been anyone else, Mei Li would have asked her to clarify it right away, but the man was Lu Huaiyu.

She shook her head and said, “No. That picture is from earlier today. I was having a meal with my parents, and I ran into him, so I went over to say hello.”

Mei Li finally sighed a breath of relief. “Great. We’ll wait for the traffic and attention to reach an all-time high later at night.”

All the exposure and attention could work as a sort of explanation to the fans and keep them at bay.

Xu Yini nodded in agreement. Then, her phone rang. She had a glance and the caller ID shocked her.

It was Lu Huaiyu.

Before this, the man had never called her before, but she knew why he was calling her at this sensitive timing.

Xu Yini got up and went to the side to answer it.

“Hello? Huaiyu?”

Lu Huaiyu’s voice came through the phone. “It has been 16 minutes since the news got out. Where’s your statement?”

His voice sounded colder than usual.

Xu Yini was stunned. Was he angry?

She explained nervously, “Huaiyu, don’t worry. The photo did not show your face and no one has found out that it’s you yet...”

“I want to see your statement before 7:00 p.m. tonight. If your team has poor time management and can’t do it on time, the Lu Corporation will step in and take over.”

Lu Huaiyu was not interested in talking to her. As a matter of fact, if it was not for the respect he had for the Xu family, he would not have even called her at all.

Xu Yini’s flames of excitement were extinguished by his stern words like a pail of cold water. Even if she was an idiot, she could tell how much Lu Huaiyu cared about this little incident, which went beyond her expectations. The man sounded like he did not want anything to do with her, even if it was just a groundless scandal.

She had a glance at the time. It was 5 minutes to 7:00 p.m. Lu Huaiyu was not giving her time to think about it at all.

Frustrated, she bit her lip. “Don’t be mad. I’ll deal with this as soon as possible.”

Lu Huaiyu then hung up.

Xu Yini tightened her grip on her phone. Moments later, she opened up Weibo.

The term 'Xu Yini's relationship' had reached 9th place on the trending chart. It was just a matter of time before it reached the top.

She posted a statement on her Weibo.

[XuYiniV: I had some free time to dine with my parents and even met an old friend that I haven't seen in a long time. Happy~]

What followed was a picture of herself and a table of meticulously presented dishes. The three sets of dinnerware were the main focus of the picture.

Chapter 93: Go Home Early

The moment Xu Yini posted her status, it went trended immediately.

[YiniDreamAN: Aaaah! My wife is here with an explanation! My wife is still mine!]

[UPUPRIGHT: It's just a meal with her family and she ran into a friend! Stop imagining things, people! Please pay attention to her work and not the scandals!]

[ZiDon'tTalk: Yini is the most beautiful girl! Where are those haters who spoke crap about her now? Isn't this the biggest slap in their faces? There will be no peace between us, haters! Never!]

Xu Yini's status swiftly gathered her fans to her defense.

Mei Li was shocked when she saw the status. She bolted up from the couch and said loudly, "Yini! Why did you post the status!? Didn't we agree to clarify things later at night?!"

Annoyed, Xu Yini said, "We are going to clarify it sooner or later, so it's better now than never."

“You—” Mei Li frowned.

It was a huge opportunity for some exposure, yet she had thrown it out of the window just like that. If it was another celebrity under her management, she would have blasted them without a doubt.

Xu Yini was different though. The girl came from an unusual family, and even though she was the best manager in the industry, she had to be courteous in front of Xu Yini and care for her like she was a princess.

Since Xu Yini had already posted the status, nothing she said would be useful now.

“Fine. I’ll tell the management to share the status and push it up to the first place in the trending topics.”

...

At the Lu family mansion, Lu Huaiyu kept his phone away, but he was still slightly vexed.

He was playing chess with his grandfather when he received a call from the PR department.

Someone in the PR department of the Lu Corporation was in charge of the family’s public image. The moment Lu Huaiyu’s picture went on the internet, they quickly responded.

Even though Lu Huaiyu was not a celebrity, he was still considered a public figure, and the curious netizens had already started to do background checks on him.

The people from the PR department knew about the relationship between the Lu family and the Xu family, and they were unsure whether the second master was in a relationship with Xu Yini, hence the phone call.

Lu Huaiyu only found out about the picture from the call.

Running into Xu Yini was purely a coincidence. As a matter of fact, only a handful of people knew that he was back in the capital, and Xu Yini was not one of them.

Back then, Xu Yini's parents had also been there and he greeted them out of respect. The meeting had lasted no longer than three minutes, so he did not expect his photo to be taken so quickly.

He had a look at the time.

6:58 p.m.

There were two more minutes until the self-learning class ended, but it remained quiet on Ning Li's side.

The scandal had erupted online when she had her self-learning class, so he wondered if she saw the news.

Therefore, he made a call.

...

Ning Li got out of the taxi in front of a particular neighborhood where Wei Songze was already waiting for her.

He quickly came over when he saw Ning Li. "Sister Lili, don't you have class tonight?"

Second High had night classes, and he knew that Ning Li had joined the competitive Physics class lately, so he was shocked when he received her call during this hour.

"Mmm, I didn't go to class. Where's the key?"

Wei Songze then passed her the key. "This is it."

Ning Li took it and softly rubbed it. "Thank you."

Feeling strange, he asked, "Sister Lili, why do you insist on getting a unit here? This is an old neighborhood and there are all kinds of people here. Even the neighborhood on the other street is better than this."

Ning Li smiled. "It's okay. I like it here."

Wei Songze decided to keep quiet since she insisted. Then, he said, "Okay, as long as you are happy. Do you want to go inside for a look?"

Ning Li nodded. "Sure."

The two of them went inside.

It was then that her phone rang. She saw the caller ID, and it was Lu Huaiyu.

A slight hesitation later, she answered the phone, "Hello. Second Brother?"

Out of the blue, a car drove by and honked loudly.

Lu Huaiyu frowned. "Aren't you in class?"

"Nope. There's no class tonight, so I left early. Is there anything?" she replied.

Her question left Lu Huaiyu speechless. He was at a loss for words.

Suddenly, Ning Li felt a sudden chill above her forehead. She reached out to her forehead and found her fingertips wet.

Wei Songze turned around and said loudly, "It's raining!"

Lu Huaiyu frowned on the other end. The voice sounded familiar. "Are you out with your friend?"

"Yeah, it's Wei Songze. You met him the other day."

As Ning Li strode inside, a bad feeling rose in Lu Huaiyu's heart. He knew about Wei Songze. He had met the boy at the police station, after all, so it was quite difficult to forget him.

"Aren't you going home yet?"

He assumed that Ning Li went back to the Ye residence after class.

Ning Li paused. "Not yet. I'll go back later."

The rain started to pour heavier. She raised her hand above her head to try to block the rain out.

"Second Brother, if there's nothing important, I have to go now."

Lu Huaiyu grunted as an agreement. "Find some shelter first. Call me when you get back."

"Okay."

...

Ning Li followed Wei Songze to a unit in the building.

There were only two units on a single floor, and the unit they were heading to was on the 9th floor.



Wei Songze pointed at the one on the right. "This is it."

Ning Li went to the door and slid the key into the keyhole.

"The landlord said that the last tenant left two months ago. When I rented the unit, he already had the place cleaned up, but that was a few days ago. You might have to clean it again."

He always carried out the tasks Ning Li gave him perfectly. Even though he disagreed with her renting the place, he did his part flawlessly.

Click!

The door was opened.

A musty smell wafted out from inside. It seemed like the place had been left idle for a long time.

Ning Li went in.

The place had three rooms, a living area, and a bathroom. It was also furnished with simple furniture.

"It's good." Ning Li put her bag down. "You can go now. I'll clean up the place myself."

"Huh? No, no, no! It's not appropriate for me to leave you like this. Sister Lili, I'll help."

Ning Li turned around to shoot a glance at the boy. "I think you've misunderstood me. I'm not telling you to go back and slack. Go back and gather all the draft paintings and the parcels I delivered to you earlier. Bring them here tomorrow."

Wei Songze was speechless. "Okay..."

Ning Li unzipped her bag, seeming to look for something. She then looked at Wei Songze. “Why are you still here?”

He felt disgust emanating from her gaze. He headed to the exit, and after he took the first step out of the door, he turned around with a concerned look. “Sister Lili, be careful. Go home early.”

“Yeah, yeah, okay,” Ning Li simply answered without looking at him.

Wei Songze finally left reluctantly.

...

The place had been tidied up before this, and there were only several pieces of furniture, so it was not a hassle for Ning Li to tidy up the place.

She sat on the only chair there and took out a pencil and some paper.

After a few strokes, she suddenly thought of the picture she had seen earlier. Curious, she took her phone out and tapped on Weibo.

The first trending phrase was ‘Xu Yini denies being in a relationship.’

That was quick.

Ning Li tapped on it and saw the status Xu Yini posted. The way she typed her status seemed subtle, but the meaning behind it was obvious.

Even her management team shared the status, and the comments under the status were all her fans’ confessions.

Ning Li scrolled down and saw a comment.

[NewtonIsNotNew: Speaking of the picture, did anyone save it? The account that posted the picture earlier was deleted. Even though Yini is not in a relationship, the guy is really handsome. If anyone has it, please send it to me! Pretty please!"]

Ning Li was stunned. She searched for the account that first posted the picture but could not find it anymore. It had been deleted without a trace.

Chapter 94: She Did Not Come Home

In addition to that, as Ning Li scrolled down, all the related pictures and mentions about the picture had disappeared without a trace.

If Xu Yini had not posted it on her status, one might have been mistaken that nothing had happened at all.

There was more than one comment asking for the picture of that guy. A lot of curious audience members had followed the traces and found the paparazzi's Weibo account.

A ton of comments on the page were asking for the pictures as well.

[I'll be frank. I like that guy already!]

[Whether it's Xu Yini or not, the girl's not the point. I want the guy on the other side.]

[Hand the picture over, and I'll spare your life!]

Ning Li was speechless when she combed through the comments. By the time she returned to the trending page, she realized that the terms related to Xu Yini were already gone.

...

“It’s gone?”

Mei Li frowned tightly as she stared at her phone in disbelief.

Given Xu Yini’s current popularity, she could easily occupy the trending list longer, but everything related to her name had vanished like it never even happened.

As for the trending term, ‘Xu Yini’s relationship’, it vanished into thin air.

“Although the traffic and discussions are impressive, it didn’t go on trending! Who could’ve spent a fortune to suppress the news?”

Mei Li quickly came up with several possibilities.

Xu Yini had quite a few rivals, but what good would suppressing a small scandal like this do?

If she had a break in any of her work or made any attractive performance in any variety shows, it would have been normal for her rivals to spend money to attack her popularity.

However, it was just a groundless scandal.

Those who hoped for her misery would pray that the scandal was real so that it would ruin her image. Why suppress the news at all?

Sitting on the couch, Xu Yini looked rather moody. She knew at first glance whose handiwork it was. He really did not want anything to do with her.

“Mei, I think you should just leave it be.”

Mei Li pondered at her words for a while and realized what she meant. "It's...is it the guy from the picture?"

Xu Yini did not say a word, which indicated silent acquiescence.

"Then, tell me, who is that man in the picture?" Mei Li asked as she had to understand who she might be facing.

"Lu Huaiyu," Xu Yini answered.

Mei Li immediately knew what was going on. She had been Xu Yini's manager for quite some time now, and she had heard that name from her more than once.

Of course, she also knew a thing or two about the man's background, but she had never seen him in person before. She took a deep breath and said, "That explains it."

Given Lu Huaiyu's image, he would never allow his reputation to be affected by such lowly scandals.

The paparazzi who had exposed the picture had poor judgment. He did not even find out who the man was and had simply posted the picture online.

The Lu Corporation would never let this run wild.

"If that's the case, why don't you call Second Master Lu out and apologize to him?"

Xu Yini slammed her phone on the table. "No need for that. He's not mad."

...

Time flew by, and Ning Li was still scribbling on her paper. She did not have anything else to draw with except her pencil.

Her frustration gradually calmed down as she drew stroke after stroke on the paper.

Bang!

The window was blown open by the wind, and the rain came in. Ning Li immediately got up and went to close the window.

It was dark outside but the rain remained heavy. The heavy downpour painted a layer of white splashes on the roof and the street.

She closed the window tightly and stood in front of it blankly for a while. Every year, she hoped that she could forget this day, but it was too difficult.

The painting kept appearing in her head.

As far as she could remember, she could not identify Su Yuan as her mother anymore. Su Yuan was Ye Ci's mother now. Ning Li's mother had disappeared from the face of the earth ever since that ominous night.

Her phone suddenly buzzed.

She took a glance at it to see a message from Ye Ci.

[Sister Ning Li, we've finished cutting the cake, and I kept a slice for you. I'll bring it back for you.]

What followed was a picture of a slice of mousse cake. However, she did not care. Instead, she sent a message to Lu Huaiyu.

[Second Brother, I'm back home.]

She then switched off her phone.

...

At 10:00 p.m., Su Yuan and her family returned home.

Ye Ci was holding that slice of cake that she had packed from the hotel while she had a glance at her phone.

“Sister Ning Li did not reply. I wonder if she saw my message. I’ll go deliver the cake to her.”

Her words reminded Su Yuan of Ning Li’s expression when the girl had left. She said, “You’ve been busy for the whole day. Go wash up and take a rest. I’ll send it to her.”

Ye Ci nodded and then gave her mother the cake.

Su Yuan went upstairs. She stood in front of Ning Li’s door for a while to calm her mood before she knocked on the door.

Alas, there was no reply.

“Ning Li?” she called.

Truth be told, she was moved when she saw the present Ning Li gave her, but Ye Ming and Ye Ting had been there. She had to wait until the dinner was over to go to Ning Li. Maybe she could have a talk with the girl.

She waited patiently, but the door remained closed.

Ye Ci curiously looked at her mother. “Mom, is Sister Ning Li asleep?”

It was then that Aunt Zhao came in and said, "Madam, Ms. Ning isn't back yet."

Everyone was surprised. It had been hours since Ning Li left Jinshen Hotel, yet she did not come home.

Su Yuan took a heavy glance at the closed door. "I'll wait for her then."

The moment her voice subsided, Ye Ci looked at her in shock.

"Mom, Sister Ning Li has turned off her phone!"

...

Lu Huaiyu was playing a last game of chess with his grandfather when he saw Ning Li's message that had been sent to him an hour ago.

He assumed that she was still awake, so he wanted to reply.

When he typed the first word, he got a call from Cheng Xiyue.

Before he could say a word, Cheng Xiyue said in an anxious tone, "Second Master Lu, do you know where Little Ning Li is?"

Lu Huaiyu simply replied, "At home. What's wrong?"

Cheng Xiyue rubbed his forehead nervously. "Ye Ci gave me a call just now. Little Ning Li isn't home and she's turned off her phone."

Lu Huaiyu's nonchalant look suddenly turned sober.



“What did you say?”

Chapter 95: Worried

Cheng Xiyue knew that things just took a turn for the worse when he heard Lu Huaiyu’s answer.

“You don’t know where she is?”

Lu Huaiyu usually kept an eye on the girl, so Cheng Xiyue assumed that he would have known. However...

“She sent me a message an hour ago and told me that she was home.” Lu Huaiyu’s eyes were cold and his tone was flat.

Cheng Xiyue had goosebumps all over his body.

What was going on?

Did something happen to Ning Li? Or did she lie to Lu Huaiyu?

For a moment there, Cheng Xiyue could not tell which possibility was more dangerous.

“I’ll send someone to look for her,” he said.

Lu Huaiyu was in the capital, so it was up to Cheng Xiyue to handle the matter.

When Lu Huaiyu turned around, he saw his grandfather going back to the bedroom to rest.

“Alright.” He did not say anything else and just hung up the phone heavily instead.

The message from Ning Li was still open in his chat window.

“Huaiyu, shouldn’t you be going to bed now?” Lu Qishan asked.

Lu Huaiyu picked up his coat. “Have a good rest. I have to go back to Yunzhou for a while.”

Lu Qishan was stunned as he stared at his grandson blankly. “Now? It’s almost 11:00 p.m.. What’s the emergency?!”

“It’s quite serious, but you don’t have to worry. I’ll handle it.”

Since Lu Huaiyu insisted, Lu Qishan could do nothing but agree. “I’ll ask Qingyun to send you to the airport.”

The Lu family practiced a strict family rule—everyone in the family did things swiftly and precisely.

When Lu Huaiyu walked out of the door, he gave Ning Li a call, but her phone was still turned off.

“Second Master.”

Fang Qingyun drove the car over in a hurry. Even after Lu Huaiyu got into the car, he still failed to respond to Fang Qingyun. Although it was late, Lu Huaiyu wanted to fly back to Yunzhou just like that?

“Airport. Now.”

Lu Huaiyu then made another call.

“Chief Shao, I have something to ask you.”

...

Wei Songze was storing items in his own place.

A few parcel boxes were placed together while some miscellaneous items were piled up in the corner.

Two days before Ning Li arrived at Yunzhou, she had sent everything to him. She did not have the chance to take them until now, and he almost thought that she had forgotten all about them.

Fortunately, Wei Songze's house was quite empty, so he had the space to keep all the items.

Then, his phone rang all of a sudden.

"Who is this joker? Don't you know how late it is?" he grumbled as he looked at the screen of his phone.

It was an unregistered number, so he simply declined the call. However, the same number called him again, forcing him to answer.

"Hello?"

A familiar voice came from the other end of the call. "Wei Songze? I'm Lu Huaiyu."

As Wei Songze widened his eyes in shock, he shot another glance at his phone in disbelief.

Lu Huaiyu?

The noble prince that bailed him and Ning Li out from the police station the other day? How did the man even get his number?

He then remembered how polite and courteous the police chief had been the other day, then his question was immediately rendered unnecessary.

He answered nervously, “Y-yeah, I am Wei Songze!”

“Where’s Ning Li? Is she with you?” Lu Huaiyu asked.

“Sister Lili? No...After I sent her there, I came back.” Wei Songze was rather confused by the question.

Lu Huaiyu squinted his deep and cold eyes.

“Where did you send her?”

...

The rain showed no signs of stopping.

Ning Li stood beside the window until the lights outside slowly went dark. Only then she returned to her seat.

The only table lamp shed soft light over her face and body, tracing the lines of her body in the dark.

There were several pieces of paper on the table, and each of them had different scribbles on it.

At first, the scribbles started messily, but slowly, they started to form a shape. There was a sketch of a rotten apple in the kitchen, broken bowls and chopsticks on the ground, plus a street lamp on a rainy night.

Countless pictures flashed across her mind.

Some were merely sketches; some were so detailed that it looked real.

She had used a pencil to sketch all of it. Other than black and white, there was no color at all.

She leaned her body as she sat down and drew, as though she was trying to make a statement with her posture, but it also felt like she was just trying to kill time.

On the last piece of paper was a good-looking portrait of someone.

The person's hair was slightly messy and the eyes were sharp despite being half-closed. The thick and long eyelashes were clearly emphasized, as though they were the deepest impression left in her heart.

The nose was tall while the lips were slightly curved into a smile.

The lines on the face were smooth and clean, especially the sharp jawline. The sharpness of the look was toned down by the warmth from the smile, making the face look cold.

The eyes were deep as if a layer of endless mist prevented one from seeing what was behind the abysmal mystery they held.

Although the expression looked calm, it also had a subtle sense of intimidation plus a hint of dangerous hostility.

It felt like with every inch closer into his domain, one would be forever trapped within his grasp.

...

Cheng Xiyue made a few calls.

Ning Li had not gone back to Second High or Xiaosong Hill.

He was worried that things might get out of control, so when he asked for Ning Li, he did not reveal too much. However, after several fruitless calls, he started to get even more concerned.

Just when he was thinking about calling the police, he got a call from Lu Huaiyu.

“Airport now. At the B exit of T2 terminal.”

Cheng Xiyue failed to understand the meaning of his words. “Huh? Why? Why the airport?”

Lu Huaiyu said coldly, “I know where she is.”

“You found Little Ning Li?” Cheng Xiyue was thrilled at first, but he suddenly thought of something. “Wait, are you in Yunzhou?”

Lu Huaiyu had a look at his watch.

“You have 20 minutes.”

...

The night was dark. The heavy rain cleared the streets. Only cars sped across, causing water to splash in the wake of their trails.

While Cheng Xiyue was driving, he could not help but glance at the passenger seat from time to time.

Sitting in the passenger seat, Lu Huaiyu looked unfriendly. Ever since he got into the car, all he stated was the name of a location and nothing else.

Cheng Xiyue knew that Lu Huaiyu might have been worried about this, but he did not expect the man to book a flight ticket back right away!

Judging from the man’s reaction, something was not right.

“Um...Since we know where Little Ning Li is and her friend, that Wei guy, said that she’s staying there willingly, she should be safe, right?”

At first, Cheng Xiyue thought that Lu Huaiyu had come back because he was worried about Ning Li’s safety, but now it seemed like it was more than that. It had been quite a while since he faced Lu Huaiyu’s pressuring presence.

Nonetheless, Lu Huaiyu remained silent.

Cheng Xiyue sighed.

Ning Li was still new in Yunzhou and only had so many friends, thus there were only a few places that she could go. She might still not have the chance to explore the streets of Yunzhou properly.

However, before they realized it, she had asked someone to rent a place for her and had gone there without telling anyone.

The car soon arrived at the neighbourhood entrance.

Cheng Xiyue had a glance from the outside. “We’re here. This should be the place.”

Lu Huaiyu then got out with an umbrella.

Chapter 96: Come With Me

Worried, Cheng Xiyue asked, “Do you want me to come with you?”

Lu Huaiyu turned around to shoot him a quick, cold glance.

Cheng Xiyue’s survival instinct told him to sit back and wait. He would be better off putting that thought away. “Um, okay, anyway, be safe. Call me if you need anything!”

Lu Huaiyu then walked away.

It was raining heavily in the middle of the night, and the ground was filled with puddles. A single step into the water saw the rain soaking his shoes and the hem of his pants, but he did not care.

With the umbrella wide open above his head, he walked towards the dark building.

...

Rat-a-tat.

Knocks came from the door, waking Ning Li up. She saw the portrait on the paper and frowned slightly. She had been sketching freely, but for some reason, she had depicted Lu Huaiyu's portrait at the end.

Just when she was about to crumple the paper, her eyes fell on the portrait again, stopping her in the midst of her action.

In the end, she put the other sketches on top of it and went to answer the door.

"Wei Songze?"

Who else could it be at this hour other than him? But why would he be back in the middle of the night?

A pleasant and rich voice came from outside the door. "It's me."

Ning Li was shocked as she thought that she heard wrongly.

"Second Brother?"



She looked through the peephole and saw Lu Huaiyu.

Should he not be at the capital? Why would he be here in Yunzhou, looking for her here?

An outrageous thought appeared in her mind as she opened the door.

Lu Huaiyu finally saw Ning Li. She was still wearing her school uniform and her soft hair was rather messy while her widened eyes were evidence of her astonishment.

Fortunately, she was well and fine.

“Second Brother, why are you—”

“You turned off your phone. Your family has been searching for you,” Lu Huaiyu said nonchalantly.

Ning Li frowned. She just wanted to be alone for the night to enjoy the peace and quiet. She did not expect her actions to catch Lu Huaiyu’s attention. Little did she think that he would have come back for her on this very night.

“Are you here alone?” he asked as he had a peek inside.

Ning Li nodded.

“Pack your things. Cheng Xiyue is waiting downstairs.” He sounded different from usual. She could tell he was mad, but...

She did not want to go back.

At other times, she would have gone back and been patient with her mother but not today.

Lu Huaiyu walked in and declared, "I'll help you pack."

Ning Li noticed that the hem of his pants was wet. It was pouring outside, and the man had flown back from the capital just like that. He probably did not even have a minute to rest on the way back.

Suddenly, a heavy feeling settled over her as if she had a rock on her chest.

Just when Lu Huaiyu was about to walk in, she tugged on his sleeve and held him back, so he paused and turned around to her.

The atmosphere started to get awkward, but she said it anyway, "I don't want to go back today."

Lu Huaiyu looked at her hand that was pulling his sleeve. A moment later, he said softly, "Then, we won't go back today."

Ning Li sighed a breath of relief. She realized that talking to him while pulling his sleeve felt inappropriate, thus she let go of him.

Lu Huaiyu walked into the apartment.

Surprised, Ning Li said, "Second Brother?"

Although he said that she did not have to go back today, he still came in nevertheless.

Lu Huaiyu spotted her bag. The place was quite empty, and the bag was probably the only thing she brought. Why was it that she would rather stay in this empty apartment than go back to the Ye residence?

"Come back with me." Lu Huaiyu grabbed her bag. "Yunding Fenghua can still shelter you for a night."

Then, he had a side glance at the papers scattered on the table. The first paper on the stack was just a mess of scribbles, and under it, he was able to see bits and pieces of a portrait.

“Are these yours as well?” he asked as he tried to take the papers.

Ning Li’s heart skipped a beat. She strode over and kept the stack of scribbles away before he could take them.

“Yeah, they are mine. I’m just doodling because I’m feeling down.”

Lu Huaiyu raised a brow but did not press the question. He simply gave her the bag.

Ning Li stuffed all the papers into her bag and zipped it up. “Second Brother, it’s late. Why don’t—”

She wanted to tell him to skip the hassle, but before the sentence could come out, she realized how inappropriate it was.

After all, Lu Huaiyu had come back from the capital for her and was travel-worn. He had probably gone through the mill before he even reached her. Besides that, his shirt was drenched.

He just kept quiet and looked at her as she silently shouldered her bag.

...

Cheng Xiyue waited in the car for quite a while before he finally saw the two came down. He sighed a breath of relief.

Lu Huaiyu held the umbrella for Ning Li to get into the car before he put it away and sat beside her in the rear seat.

Cheng Xiyue said, “I’ll call the Yes to tell them that we are sending Little Ning Li back.”

“She’s not going back. She’s going to Yunding Fenghua,” Lu Huaiyu said.

“Huh?”

Surprised, Cheng Xiyue stared at her through the rear camera. It seemed like Ning Li was in a conflict with the Ye family.

However, it was nothing surprising because the Ye family treated her poorly, and it was obvious even to an outsider.

Besides, it was Su Yuan’s birthday today, and the family was holding a dinner for her at Jinshen Hotel. He had a glance at the worn-down building beside the car and felt bad for the girl.

“Okay.”

...

Twenty minutes later, Cheng Xiyue dropped the two off at Yunding Fenghua and left.

When they reached the entrance, the rain had slowed down to a drizzle.

To Ning Li’s surprise, Lu Huaiyu then said, “000817.”

Ding!

The door opened.

“That’s the password for the door. If you don’t want to stay at the Ye residence, you can come here,” Lu Huaiyu said as he walked in. “The guest room is on the first floor. You can sleep there. The room is also equipped with an on-suite bathroom.”

There was another bathroom on the first floor as well, but the one inside the room would make the girl feel more comfortable.

Then, without looking at Ning Li any longer, he walked upstairs.

Chapter 97: She Looked Bulliable

“Second—”

Before Ning Li could finish her sentence, the words got stuck in her throat, and she was forced to swallow them back.

Lu Huaiyu had come back from the capital in the middle of the night and looked for her despite the heavy rain just to bring her back. He must be exhausted.

A normal person might not even be able to handle all the hassle and trouble, let alone Lu Huaiyu who was still in rehabilitation in Yunzhou. His body condition was not in the best condition, and running back and forth would surely take a toll on him.

It would be better for her to explain herself tomorrow.

“Good night, Second Brother,” she said before she headed to the guest room on the first floor.

Lu Huaiyu paused before he went up the stairs, taking one last glance at her. Holding her bag, the slender girl looked extremely lonely in the vast and clean space. He frowned slightly before he went up to the second floor.

...

Ning Li went into the room.

Lu Huaiyu had been living in this mansion alone. The guest room was decorated minimally, and it was obvious that no one had stayed here before.

She put her bag down. It was already 4:00 a.m., just a few more hours before dawn, and she still had to go to school in the morning.

She took off her uniform and held it in her hands. Then, she stood there and stared at the clean and tidy bed blankly as she was having a hard time settling down.

Along the way, her clothes had gotten wet and soiled because of the rain, but since she came in a hurry, she had not brought a fresh set of clothes to change into.

At that moment, someone knocked on the door.

She went to open the door and saw Lu Huaiyu standing outside with a pile of clothes.

“These are mine, but they are new. You can wear them for now.”

“Uh, it’s okay...” Ning Li said. Even though he had never worn them before, they were still his.

Lu Huaiyu noticed that she was holding her uniform. “Then, I’ll call them to bring your fresh clothes over right now.”

Ning Li’s eyes twitched as she quickly said, “It’s fine! I’ll just wear this!”

It would already be difficult for her to explain things if someone found out that she was in Lu Huaiyu’s place at this hour, and if she asked someone to send her a fresh set of clothes, things would only worsen.

Lu Huaiyu then passed her the clothes.

When she took the clothes off his hand, her fingers accidentally grazed his.

'They're cold,' she thought.

The weather had turned cooler recently, especially on such a rainy night, but Lu Huaiyu's hand was unusually cold as if he was a block of ice.

Something in her did not sit right. She did not care about what the Ye family thought of her, but to see Lu Huaiyu go through all sorts of problems for her in a single night, she felt bad.

After giving her the clothes, Lu Huaiyu wanted to walk away, but Ning Li held him back after a quick hesitation.

"I'm sorry."

Lu Huaiyu turned around and stood outside the door.

The lighting in the corridor was poor, so only half of his face was visible. His features were hidden in the darkness.

"Why are you apologizing?"

Ning Li tightened her grip on the clothes and took a deep breath. "I shouldn't have turned off my phone without informing anyone. As a result, I made everyone worried about me."

"Mm-hmm...and?"

And?

Surprised, Ning Li looked at him, seemingly confused about what he was referring to. "And...I shouldn't trouble you and Brother Xiyue..."

Lu Huaiyu stared at her with his deep eyes.

"Ning Li." His lazy tone suddenly changed into a strict and cold one.

Ever since they met, other than the first few times when he had called her by her full name, he had always called her Lili. It was the first in a long time since he addressed her by her full name. It had never been clearer that Lu Huaiyu was mad.

"Wrong answer. Think again."

Then, he went upstairs without saying anything else.

...

Think again?

After a quick bath, Ning Li came out of the bathroom. She was pondering what he said while drying her hair.

Whether it was that time when she had gotten arrested because of a fight or any other trouble, he had never been mad at her before.

This time, however,...

She looked at the clothes on the bed. The cotton pajamas were grayish-blue. The price tag was still attached, so they were obviously new.



She had washed her uniform while having a bath, thus it should be dry in the morning.

Now...

She sighed and changed into the pajamas as if she was resigned to her fate.

Then, she realized the pajamas were too big for her. The opening at the sleeves and the leg cuffs did not only gape but were way too long for her and concealed all four of her limbs.

She popped her hand out of the sleeve and went to bed with her phone.

When she turned on her phone, she was bombarded with a ton of messages. They were from Su Yuan, Ye Ci, Cheng Xiyue, and Wei Songze, but not Lu Huaiyu.

The last message in the chat window with him was the message she had sent earlier.

[Second Brother, I'm home.]

She finally realized why Lu Huaiyu was mad.

...

In the master bedroom on the second floor, Lu Huaiyu took a quick bath and came out in fresh clothes.

He went to the book rack and simply pulled one out for a quick read on the couch.

The soft night light drew a soft silhouette around his figure.

His eyes were half shut. He had gone through a lot for the day and should have been exhausted but he was not sleepy at all.

A moment later, he suddenly thought of something. He got up and went beside his bed to retrieve a folder. Inside was a stack of documents and the first paper inside it had Ning Li's name on it.

It was the documents that he had asked Cheng Xiyue for. He went through the contents and stopped on the third page.

The third page was about Ning Haizhou's life and the investigation about the car crash back then.

His eyes landed on the date of that ominous day. Coincidentally, the date matched today's date.

He furrowed his brows. The report clearly stated that Ning Haizhou had been involved in that car crash because Su Yuan had left him the day before, which was her birthday.

He shut his eyes and rubbed the center of his brows.

...

Ning Li was on the bed, but she could not fall asleep, so she got up to read instead. She was in Lu Huaiyu's place, after all, so she did not continue doodling.

When she switched on the table lamp and took her pencil and paper out, the table lamp flickered before dying out.

The whole room plunged into darkness.

Shocked, Ning Li looked outside and found that it was dark. It was a blackout. She turned on the torchlight app on her phone to shed light in front of her as she made her way out of the room.

The entire mansion was enveloped in darkness. Maybe the heavy rain earlier caused some damage to the power system.

Ning Li made her way upstairs and then knocked on the master bedroom door.

“Second Brother?”

Soon, the door opened.

Lu Huaiyu was surprised to find her in front of his room.

“Why are you not asleep?”

“The lights went out, and I can’t sleep.”

Lu Huaiyu nodded. “It’s a blackout, but I’ve called maintenance to fix it. The power should come back soon.”

It was then that he had a clear look at Ning Li.

She was wearing oversized pajamas. One of the sleeves was dangling like a monkey’s tail while her other hand was gripping her phone.

Her freshly washed hair softly draped around her shoulders, and her porcelain-white face was looking up at him. Maybe because she had just come out from the bath, her face was flushed and her charming eyes were crystal clear.

She looked tiny in the oversized pajamas as if she was a little newborn creature.

He looked at her deeply and found that she looked extremely bulliable.

Chapter 98: You Saw It

He stood at the door with one hand on the frame. While he showed no intention of coming out, he also had no intention of letting her in.

“Don’t worry. Go back to sleep,” he assured.

However, Ning Li did not move. A quick pause later, she said, “Second Brother, I remember that your master bedroom is connected to the study, right? May I...sleep here?”

Lu Huaiyu’s thin eyes squinted.

The moment the words escaped her mouth, Ning Li realized how wrong it sounded. “I...I can’t sleep in total darkness...”

Lu Huaiyu had a glance at the phone in her hand. She should be fine with the phone. It was not that he did not want to give the girl some comfort, but it was difficult for him to do so.

He was fine with Ning Li staying in the mansion. There were many empty rooms on the first and the second floors, so she was more than welcome to pick any one of those except his own room.

Did she realize how inappropriate it was to say those words to a young man in the middle of the night with no one else around?

Was it the blind trust she had in him? Or had she never taken him seriously as a man?

Finally, Lu Huaiyu said, “There’s only a couch in the study, and you won’t sleep well on it. I’ll get you a lamp shade, then you can use your phone—”

Beep!

The last bar of her battery died, and Ning Li’s phone went dark.

Lu Huaiyu was speechless while the air was silent.

Ning Li had been busy for the day, so she had forgotten to charge her phone. Even though she had the charger in her bag, they were experiencing a blackout. It might be a while before she could charge her phone.

Lu Huaiyu glanced at his phone at the tea table. He had flown all the way back from the capital and did not even bother to check his phone's battery.

His phone should also be down to the last bar and it would not last any longer.

A swift thought later, he said, "There should be candles in the house. I'll go look for them."

He then wanted to go back into his room, but Ning Li held him back by squeezing his arm.

Lu Huaiyu paused.

Ning Li let go of him swiftly and suddenly felt irritated. "Then...I'll wait for you, Second Brother."

Lu Huaiyu stared at her with a profound gaze. Her grip on his arm was strong and nervous as she reacted like a lost child trying to grasp onto something important. Was it really because she could not sleep in the dark?

"Hmm, wait for me here. I'll be back."

He then walked towards the study through his bedroom.

Ning Li stood at the entrance quietly. Everything was dark, so she could only see what was in front of her when the moonlight shed its soft glow through the window.

Meanwhile, Lu Huaiyu's footsteps were extra clear and crisp in the quiet night.

She sighed a heavy breath.

...

When Lu Huaiyu walked past the tea table, he grabbed the folder with the documents and put it away. His fingers stroked the rough folder softly as he tied it together. The expression on his face turned serious.

The documents did not mention anything about her current condition.

He put the documents back in the drawer beside his bed and then headed to the study. He opened the drawer with a row of neatly arranged aromatherapy candles that he used as sleeping aids. He used to light them when he slept, but he recently stopped using them.

He stared at the candles for a moment before he closed the drawer.

Then, Ning Li heard his footsteps coming back.

"The candles are finished," he said.

Ning Li was caught off guard by his words.

'If that's the case...'

"Let's go to the living room," Lu Huaiyu suggested.

Ning Li looked at him in confusion. "Why?"

"I can't sleep as well, so why don't we have a chat?"

Lu Huaiyu then closed his door.

There were several floors in the mansion which was still spacious despite the number of rooms. However, the best place to chat at the moment would be the living room.

Ning Li sighed a breath of relief when she heard that. "Sure."

...

The living room on the first floor was huge with a ceiling height of 5 meters. The huge floor-to-ceiling windows were also crystal clear.

A set of black couches were placed in the middle, facing the yard through the window.

Ning Li sat in the left corner of the couch whereas Lu Huaiyu sat in the single-seater. The two of them were quite far apart from each other, but she could hear his voice and see him. His presence calmed her down.

"What did you eat for dinner?" Lu Huaiyu asked.

'Did he mean dinner last night?'

Ning Li shook her head. "I didn't eat dinner last night."

She had left Su Yuan's birthday dinner after giving her mother the gifts. She did not even have a glass of water.

Then, she had gone to the apartment with Wei Songze. When the rain got even heavier after that, she decided to stay indoors. However, she had not felt hungry at all.

She wondered why Lu Huaiyu asked her about dinner. Her heart throbbed when she looked at him.

At that moment, he leaned back on the sofa in a lazy but elegant manner. The expression on his face was rather vague due to the darkness, but his perfect jawline remained obvious.

Given Lu Huaiyu's influence, it should be easy for him to find out what happened yesterday.

She said, "I was just feeling down and wanted to take a walk outside—"

"So, you turned off your phone?"

"I just don't want the Ye family to find me. I didn't expect to cause you so much trouble." Ning Li admitted her mistake.

Lu Huaiyu looked at her and said nonchalantly, "Did it occur to you that turning your phone off doesn't only shut you off from the Ye family but also me?"

He sounded like he was trying to interrogate her, so Ning Li frowned.

"But you are in the capital and I thought that you were busy. I didn't—"

"Busy?" Lu Huaiyu interrupted her, "Busy doing what?"

She parted her lips and said softly, "I don't know...having a meal with a friend?"

Lu Huaiyu froze for a moment as he looked at her. The girl had a throw draped across her even though she was sitting on the couch. Her eyes were bright when she said that as if she was ready to defend herself. However, her voice was soft like a cat's purr.

The frustration and irritation that troubled him for the whole day faded, only to be replaced by a strange feeling.



As though she sensed his gaze, Ning Li suddenly felt guilty and looked away.

Lu Huaiyu chuckled. "You saw that?"

Sometimes, a glance was all it required to convey a message. He knew what Ning Li wanted to say, and she also had the same feeling.

She tightened the blanket around her and curled up like a piece of marshmallow. To be honest, what she said was the truth.

The capital was Lu Huaiyu's turf, and his friends and family were there. The man had stayed in Yunzhou for quite some time, and going back to catch up with a friend over a meal was common.

However, Lu Huaiyu's answer told her that something was off.

"I went back because of my grandfather."

She kept quiet, so Lu Huaiyu continued, "I haven't gone back in months. So, I played chess with him, chatted with him, and we even went out for lunch together. As for friends, I didn't have the time to meet any of them.

"I went back on short notice after all. Other than my family and you, no one knows about my trip."

Even Cheng Xiyue only found out about his trip after the man flew back to Yunzhou. He said all that with calm and confidence, but the more Ning Li heard, the stranger she felt.

She grumbled, "You don't have to tell me the details of your trip..."

Lu Huaiyu curved his lips. "It's not very detailed. You also messaged me when you got home."

## Chapter 99: Drink Milk and Grow Taller

Ning Li knew she would eventually have to face this! To her surprise, she realized Lu Huaiyu was a calculative person.

She was afraid to trouble him, hence the excuse. She did not expect him to use it against her and put her in such an awkward situation.

The living room was deathly silent.

Finally, Ning Li gave up and said, "I'm sorry."

Lu Huaiyu raised a brow. "Hmm?"

"I shouldn't have lied to you," she said in a muffled voice. She knew that out of everything that happened today, Lu Huaiyu was extremely displeased with the fact that she had lied to him.

"I won't do it again."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Ning Li put her hand out and tried to make a vow, but she realized that her sleeve was too long. It swallowed her hand whole, so all she could push out was a tiny knuckle.

Exasperated, she rolled her sleeve up and revealed two tiny but fair fingers. "I swear."

Lu Huaiyu tilted his head as he watched her struggle with her oversized pajamas. Finding it amusing, he chuckled out loud. "If it's that troublesome for you to make a promise, just forget it."

Ning Li was already embarrassed, and his words put her in an even more awkward position. “Hey, it’s not my fault. It’s your oversized pajamas.”

Lu Huaiyu propped his head on his palm and smiled wider. He simply nodded lazily to brush her off. “Yeah, it’s my fault.”

Ning Li’s face flushed.

She was sitting on his couch, wrapped in his throw and wearing his pajamas, but she claimed that it was his fault because the pajamas were too big. Even she herself realized that she was being unreasonable.

“You don’t need to swear on it.”

Lu Huaiyu laughed at her for quite a while before he ultimately showed her mercy and spared her, mostly because he enjoyed her bashful expression.

“You said it.” Ning Li did not swear on it as her heart raced and she unconsciously looked at him.

The two of them locked eyes.

His eyes remained curved because of the amusement. The way he looked at her felt intense. His eyes were as deep as whirlpools with the deadliest seduction. Even though it was obviously dangerous, one would fall unconsciously and uncontrollably closer and deeper.

She looked away nervously while her tiny hand under the blanket was placed on her chest.

...

Time felt extremely slow.

The topic of their conversation varied from heaven to earth.

Lu Huaiyu was a perfect conversation partner. He had knowledge in every single aspect, and as long as he willed it, he could start any conversation fluently. His rich voice was pleasant to the ears, and it carried a casual but notable presence. His voice somehow sounded calming in the quiet night.

Eventually, Ning Li fell asleep without realizing it. She had a good sleep without any dreams.

The sky outside slowly turned bright.

Lu Huaiyu sat opposite her. She leaned on the couch and buried herself in the throw, her dark hair seeming rather messy. Half her face was hidden behind the throw. Her eyes were closed, and her curly eyelashes resembled two beautiful fans fanning out.

She seemed quiet and obedient.

He stared at her for a long time with his gaze appearing inconceivably warm and caring.

“She’s really a little girl who’s afraid of the dark.”

...

It was the fragrance of cooked rice that woke Ning Li up.

She opened her blurry eyes, and the first thing she saw was an empty seat in front of her. She rubbed her eyes.

“Are you up already?” Lu Huaiyu’s voice came from behind.

Ning Li turned around.

The first floor of the mansion had an open-concept kitchen. The man was standing behind the kitchen island in fresh clothes.

“Go wash up and then come down for breakfast.”

Ning Li had a glance at the table and saw a spread on it. The fragrance that she smelled was from the rice on top of the table.

“Second Brother, do you know how to cook?” She thought that she knew the man well, but his culinary prowess surprised her.

“A little.”

Lu Huaiyu came from a perfect background, but he was not a good-for-nothing playboy. He knew all the basic skills that a normal person should have though he did not have the chance to show them off.

“Oh.” Ning Li then went off to wash her face.

A while later, she came back in her school uniform. “Second Brother, your clothes—”

“Sit.” Lu Huaiyu did not care about the clothes. “Have a taste.”

Ning Li sat down and had a good look at the dishes. There were sandwiches, fresh salads, and century egg porridge.

The man barely had meals at his own house, so the ingredients available to him in his refrigerator were limited.

Ning Li took a bite of the sandwich and the taste made her widen her eyes in shock. “It’s so delicious!”

She was not merely being courteous; it was a true compliment of his cooking.

Lu Huaiyu sat down opposite her and poured her a glass of milk. "Have more if you like it."

Ning Li stared at the glass of milk. She actually disliked the taste of the white beverage.

"Second Brother, can I not...?"

Lu Huaisu said succinctly, "Drinking milk will make you grow taller."

The girl was left speechless. She thought she heard it wrongly. She was 168 cm tall and was by no means short.

"I think my height isn't that bad," Ning Li responded softly.

Lu Huaiyu smiled. "You said the pajamas were too big last night."

Utter shock with a hint of embarrassment overtook her. She had to force the words out of her throat. "That's because they were yours..."

It was reasonable that she could not fit in his pajamas.

Lu Huaiyu profoundly nodded. "You're right."

He should start to buy clothes in her size and keep them in the house.

Speaking of clothes, Ning Li asked, "Oh, right, I'll take your pajamas back to clean and return them to you later."

She had been giving him trouble for almost a day and a night. She could also return the book together with the pajamas later.

Lu Huaiyu's house was actually equipped with a washing machine and a dryer. He even had a cleaner who came every week to clean the place.

Nonetheless, he nodded. "Okay."

Chapter 100: Still Can't Get Used to It

Ning Li woke up a little later than usual. When she arrived at school, the morning session of self-learning class was over.

Lu Huaiyu suggested that she take a day off for a good rest, but she insisted on going to school.

She snuck into class through the backdoor.

When she sat in her seat, He Xiaochen looked at her in shock. "Ning Li?! Didn't you get some sleep last night?"

Her eyes had red veins around the edges, and she looked like she had burned the midnight oil.

Nevertheless, Ning Li shook her head. "I'm fine."

She had not planned to sleep at all, but she fell asleep in the end without even realizing it. It was the first in many years. Even though she only had an hour of sleep, it was the best sleep she had in years.

He Xiaochen felt bad for the girl. She took her water bottle and said, "I'll get you some water. Meanwhile, get some rest."

Before Ning Li could stop her, Ye Ci's voice came from in front. "Sister Ning Li! I'm glad that you are fine!"

Ning Li frowned.

Ye Ci came over when she saw Ning Li walk in.

While holding two water bottles in her hand, He Xiaochen was stunned when she heard Ye Ci. Ye Ci's words sounded like Ning Li had almost gotten involved with something dangerous.

Ning Li leaned back in the chair and looked at her. She asked, "What could possibly have happened to me?"

Ye Ci feigned a relief sigh. "You didn't come home last night. We were worried about you, especially Mom. She waited for you in the living room for the entire night and only went to bed in the morning."

She intentionally raised her voice when she explained the matter to Ning Li. The class already knew the strange relationship between her and Ning Li. Furthermore, she turned heads when she walked over to Ning Li's seat. When the class heard what she said, the lively ambiance died off quite a bit.

Many other students turned around and looked at her.

Last night, Ye Ci and Ning Li had left school together, yet Ye Ci claimed that Ning Li did not go home for the entire night and that her mother had stayed up all night for her.

Ning Li raised a brow. "Really? What a surprise. I think that's her first time staying up for me."

The look on Ye Ci's face froze for a moment.

Ning Li smiled in a profound manner. "I still can't get used to it."

Ye Ci felt embarrassed. It was Ning Li's fault for staying out the whole night, yet when the words came out of her mouth, it sounded like others had wronged her.

Ye Ci paused slightly before she asked, "I heard from Brother Xiyue that you spent the night with Lu..."



Before she could utter Lu Huaiyu's name, Ning Li was already glaring at her. "What are you trying to get out of me?"

Ye Ci was diffident in front of Ning Li's glare as if all her thoughts were exposed under the light. She unconsciously altered her words. "N-nothing."

Ning Li had a glance at her watch. It was a minute away from the start of Mathematics class, the first class of the day. She said to He Xiaochen, "I'll go have a nap in the office, and I'll come back for the next class."

Lin Zhouyang, who had just come back from the English teacher's office, was devastated after hearing what Ning Li said.

Ning Li was inhuman! Not only did she sleep in class, but she even wanted to sleep at the office!

"Is this the privilege of being a genius?" Lin Zhouyang grumbled softly.

He Xiaochen gave him a sympathetic look. "There, there. There are also privileges as a poor student. Look, with a trip to the English teacher's office, you won't need to write your report anymore."

Lin Zhouyang was speechless.

Ning Li simply left the classroom, leaving an embarrassed Ye Ci behind.

Ye Ci was petrified for a while before she returned to her seat with a long face.

Cheng Xiangxiang was there as well. She noticed Ye Ci's sour expression and Ning Li's ruthless figure walking away.

"Lil Ci, did you say that Ning Li didn't go home last night?"

Ye Ci nodded. "Let's just put it aside for now. I'm glad that she's fine. How about you? How are you keeping up?"

The mention of her condition made Cheng Xiangxiang angry, but she was embarrassed to reveal that much in front of the class. She had lost to Ning Li in the race and almost fell off the horse in the end. She would undeniably be the joke of the class if the news got out.

"I'm getting better. It's not that serious anyway."

"Great."

Ye Ci took her Mathematics textbook out and opened it, but halfway through, she could no longer concentrate anymore. She heard from Cheng Xiangxiang that Ning Li had won the horse race and that Lu Huaiyu had also been present.

Last night, Ning Li seemed to have spent the night at Lu Huaiyu's place as well.

Why did she do that?

Although the two were not related by blood, Lu Huaiyu treated Ning Li like his family.

...

Ning Li went to the Physics teacher's office.

Zhou Fei generously gave her his spot and went to class.

She claimed that she wanted to have a nap, but she was not tired at all. She simply shut her eyes and lay down on the table.

She only needed a little amount of sleep, even more so after she came back to life.

In her past life, when she had been locked up at the rehabilitation center, Ye Ci had told the doctor to inject her with a large number of sedatives. Back then, her mind had always been muddled, and she could not even tell night from day.

She hated the feeling. Even until now, she still could feel the heavy sensation occasionally in her head.

...

In the capital, Xu Yini emerged from the set and got into her car. She got her phone from her assistant and quickly scrolled through it.

There were two missed calls and a bunch of messages, most of which were from the producers and directors.

Her debut film was a box office hit with her performance winning the critics' hearts. She became popular overnight and was the hottest star in the industry at the moment.

Combined with the connections and background from the Xu family, she never had to worry about resources. The invitations that she got from movies, dramas, and variety programs were endless.

Sitting in front, Mei Li said, "I've filtered through the scripts that we got recently, and there are two decent ones. Have a look."

Xu Yini simply answered without even looking at her manager, appearing to be engrossed in her thoughts.

After the call from Lu Huaiyu last night, nothing happened. She posted the status on Weibo and even sent him an apology message, but she did not get a reply at all. She wondered if he was still mad at her.

Xu Yini had known the man for many years, and he had always given her the cold shoulder, but nothing had been close to the fierce tone he had adopted last night.

She told Mei Li that she did not make him look bad, but deep down, she knew she had stepped on a landmine this time.

A slight hesitation later, she decided to call Lu Huaiyu. However, he did not pick up, so she sent him a message.

[Huaiyu, are you free tonight? I want to have dinner with you. Consider it an apology.]

Lu Huaiyu did not reply as well. She waited for a long time, and her patience eventually wore thin.

Some thoughts later, she decided to call the Lu family instead. Fang Qingyun picked up.

“Miss Xu?”

Xu Yini asked, “Hello, Uncle Fang. Is Huaiyu at home? I have something to tell him, but he’s not answering my calls.”

Fang Qingyun knew what this call was about, and he subtly sighed.

After all, everyone knew that Xu Yini fancied Lu Huaiyu. Frankly speaking, be it her background or her looks, Xu Yini was a decent girl and was quite a match for the second son of the Lu family.

However, Lu Huaiyu did not like her, and there was nothing his family could do about it. Moreover, the scandal had ended on a rather bitter note as well.

“Miss Xu, Second Master isn’t home.”

Surprised, Xu Yini asked, “He’s not? Where did he go?”

“He actually flew back to Yunzhou last night.”

Yunzhou?

What urgent matter could he have in Yunzhou that required his utmost attention?