

Golden 97

Chapter Ninety-Seven: The Troubles of Gifts

In March, Pengcheng was already bursting with spring. Every willow tree along the roadside was sprouting tender buds, its branches swaying gracefully in the warm spring breeze. Walking through his teachers' residential compound, Zhuang Rui smiled and greeted his familiar old neighbors before opening his front door.

Zhuang Rui was sent out to buy groceries by his mother early in the morning. He had just entered the door when he was surrounded by the little white lions. He didn't even have time to answer the phone when he heard it ringing in his room.

"Xiao Rui, what are you busy with? The phone has been ringing for ages, go answer it."

Mrs. Zhuang looked at her son, who was playing with the little white lion, with a smile on her face. This little guy was really intelligent. Under Zhuang Rui's guidance, he was very affectionate towards Mrs. Zhuang, Zhuang Min, and Xiao Nannan. Liu Chuan was extremely envious and kept scolding the little white lion for being biased.

"Hello, oh, it's Xuanbing. How did you get my phone number?"

Zhuang Rui searched for a long time before realizing it wasn't the home landline. It seemed he would need to set a special ringtone.

He pulled his phone out of his pocket and answered it. It was Qin Xuanbing. But as soon as he said it, he wanted to slap himself. It was wrong of him to buy a SIM card and not notify her. And now he had asked such an idiotic question.

"If I don't call, are you not going to contact me anymore?"

Sure enough, Qin Xuanbing's tone immediately changed. She was also a little conflicted. Since returning from Tibet, Zhuang Rui hadn't called her once. He didn't mention it on the way back, but now, judging by the time, they should have been back in Pengcheng for two days. And Zhuang Rui's phone number was obtained from Lei Lei. Thinking of this, Qin Xuanbing pursed her lips and bit her lower lip slightly.

"Xuanbing, I'm so sorry. I just got a new SIM card yesterday and wanted to send you a text message, but I'm so clumsy! I fiddled with it for ages and couldn't figure it out. Then people came over and I forgot. Don't be angry, I actually prepared a gift for you.

Zhuang Rui isn't usually this glib, but when he talks to Qin Xuanbing on the phone, he feels particularly relaxed, as if he's talking to a friend he's known for years, and he starts rambling on and on.

What gift?

Qin Xuanbing's attention was indeed diverted to the gift Zhuang Rui mentioned, and she pressed him for details over the phone.

"Of course, I'm giving you a gift to surprise you. It wouldn't be worth much if I told you about it. I'll give it to you then when you have the chance to work at Zhonghai after I go back to work there."

Zhuang Rui didn't have any gift for Qin Xuanbing. His words just now were purely to stop the young lady from dwelling on the fact that he hadn't called him. One lie naturally requires more lies to cover it up, and Zhuang Rui was now caught in this vicious cycle.

"Xiao Rui, is that Qin Xuanbing? When did you two become so familiar?"

As soon as Zhuang Rui hung up the phone, he saw his mother looking at him with amusement, and he immediately felt a headache coming on.

"Mom, I went to Dachuan's house. The Tibetan medicine I brought for my godmother is still with me. I won't be back for dinner tonight."

Zhuang Rui really didn't know how to explain it to his mother. Should he say that he had rescued a damsel in distress on the grassland? Oh no, that seemed to be the wrong story. If Qin Xuanbing hadn't shot down a few wolves, he probably wouldn't be standing here unscathed. He made up a few things to his mother and fled the house as if he were escaping. A white shadow darted out behind him, and it turned out to be the little white lion.

"This brat is joking around with his mom too."

Seeing her son's flushed face, Mrs. Zhuang couldn't help but smile to herself. To her, it didn't matter who her son dated. Even if Qin Xuanbing came from a wealthy family, Mrs. Zhuang wouldn't think that her son was unworthy of her.

Zhuang Rui had arranged to have dinner at Liu Chuan's house today. Liu Chuan's mother had always treated Zhuang Rui well, like her own son. Even the thank-you banquet for Zhuang Rui when he got into university was organized by Liu Chuan's family. Zhuang Rui's purpose for going today was to use the excuse of the Living Buddha giving him medicine to get his godmother's health improved. Zhuang Rui knew that although his godmother hadn't said it, she was incredibly envious of his old friend's improved health.

However, Zhuang Rui wasn't thinking about how to cure his godmother's illness. Instead, he was still thinking about the phone call Qin Xuanbing had just made. He was currently worried about Qin Xuanbing's gift. In a few days, he would be going back to work in Zhonghai, and Qin Xuanbing would also be there. If he couldn't come up with anything, he would lose face big time.

Looking at the little white lion nimbly moving between his feet, Zhuang Rui was still at a loss. From childhood to adulthood, except when he was five years old and offered a lollipop to the little girl sitting next to him in kindergarten and was refused, Zhuang Rui had never had the experience of giving gifts to girls.

"Damn it, these taxis are bullying people. They won't stop even when there are no passengers. I'm going to buy a car tomorrow."

After waving his hand for a long time on the roadside without seeing a single car stop, Zhuang Rui took out his phone in frustration and called Liu Chuan. The Hummer was still in Liu Chuan's hands. Song Jun was taking a flight from Beijing to Pengcheng this afternoon, and they had already arranged to meet in the evening.

Less than ten minutes later, Liu Chuan, the man who had been soliciting, drove up in his Hummer. He rolled down the window and complained to Zhuang Rui, "Hey, you're not short of money for these two taxi fares, are you? This car is a gas guzzler. The gas cost is more than the taxi fare. Hurry up and get in, or Brother Song will scold you again."

Although the trip to Tibet was a complete success, and Liu Chuan even got an extra purebred Tibetan Mastiff puppy, the Hummer was badly damaged. Aside from the wolf claw marks on the body, the Persian carpet inside, worth tens of thousands of yuan, was utterly ruined. Bloodstains from Zhuang Rui's injury, small holes burned by Liu Chuan's cigarette ash, and scratches from the white lion's claws—all combined, it was basically just a tattered piece of cloth, practically worthless.

"It's not that I don't have money. I've been standing here for ages, and not a single car has stopped. Am I just having a run of bad luck?"

Zhuang Rui answered Liu Chuan irritably as he got into the car with the little white lion in his arms. At that moment, he was still thinking about what gift to give Qin Xuanbing.

"Are you out of your mind? Woody, besides me driving this car, I doubt any taxi would dare to take you."

Liu Chuan looked at Zhuang Rui as if he were a rare animal, and pointed to a sign next to Zhuang Rui.

"Damn, I didn't notice, they're gone, they're gone. It's been so long since I've had my godmother's cooking."

Following Liu Chuan's finger, Zhuang Rui realized that parking was prohibited in this area. He blushed and quickly changed the subject.

"Hehe, it must be Xiaoxuan calling you. Leilei told me that the girl asked for your phone number. I'm telling you, buddy, you should take the initiative. Don't think being a virgin is something to be proud of and cling to it."

Liu Chuan looked at Zhuang Rui with a lewd grin. As expected of someone who grew up with Zhuang Rui, he guessed almost exactly what was going on.

"Get lost! Should I tell Lei Lei about your Hummer-driving antics?"

"Hey buddy, I'll treat you to lobster and abalone tonight."

Liu Chuan, that bastard, would slow down and flirt with any girl he found pleasing to the eye whenever he saw her in the Hummer. Zhuang Rui's words hit his sore spot.

"Okay, I'll tell Brother Song tonight that you're planning to pay the bill, so make sure you bring enough money."

From childhood to adulthood, Liu Chuan had never gained the upper hand over Zhuang Rui in a verbal exchange, and the same was true now. He could only vent his frustration on his right foot, stepping on the accelerator instead of the brake.

Upon arriving at Liu Chuan's house, the two Tibetan mastiff puppies immediately surrounded him. After Zhuang Rui used his spiritual energy to cleanse their bodies, it was clear that Liu Chuan's status in their hearts had immediately dropped to second place. This also led Liu Chuan to repeatedly offer Zhuang Rui the position of chairman of the yet-to-be-established mastiff kennel.

"Woof...woof...woof..."

The little white lion had already started barking, but its bark was different from that of a normal dog. It came from deep in its throat, and the sound was very low, more like a roar. When it entered the room and saw the other two little guys surrounding Zhuang Rui, the little white lion immediately became angry. It didn't care about the old friendship of traveling together for several days, rushed up and slapped the two little guys away.

The three Tibetan mastiffs were about the same age, all born around one month old. However, the little white lion was significantly larger than the other two, almost reaching Zhuang Rui's knees. It's worth noting that it usually takes at least three or four months for a Tibetan mastiff to grow to that size, and Zhuang Rui was already having some difficulty holding it.

"Xiao Rui's here! You two brothers went to Tibet and each brought back a dog? Wow, this little guy you brought back is quite domineering. You know, Da Chuan is such a good-for-nothing, even his dog is just like him, no proper manners..."

Right now, those two little guys are being bullied by the little white lion, their tails tucked between their legs, running around the house, which greatly displeases Liu's mother.

"How can you talk about your son like that? He's better than a blockhead, isn't he? Ask him, he's still all alone."

Liu Chuan was very dissatisfied with his mother's attitude. She couldn't even distinguish between friend and foe. This was unacceptable, so he quickly started to criticize Zhuang Rui.

"You've had quite a few girlfriends, seven or eight in the last few years, haven't you? Every time I set my sights on one, you dumped her. Let me tell you, Liu Chuan, I think Lei Lei is a great girl. If you dare to mess around again, I'll have your dad beat you up..."

Liu's mother was a teacher all her life, and disciplining her son had become a habit. Besides, she also had a father who used his fists to reason with him. Hearing this, Liu Chuan could only obediently slip into the kitchen and take on the role of a waiter.