

PROTEGE 146

Chapter 146: LEAVE EVERYTHING TO ME

Shi Min addressed the group, his voice filled with pride and encouragement. "We will see you all again, and congratulations on all your achievements in Mystic Mountain. We will give you formal recognition when we come back." His words were met with cheers and applause, the group's spirits lifted by the promise of future accolades. Shi Min's eyes scanned the faces before him, a mix of seasoned warriors and fresh recruits, each one wearing expressions of determination and hope.

The departure was swift. The entire group moved with practiced efficiency, their footsteps echoing in unison as they boarded the waiting aircraft. The plane ride back to Russia was filled with a mix of somber reflection and hopeful anticipation. Ling Li could see the fatigue etched on everyone's faces. Yet, there was a sense of camaraderie that had been forged in the crucible of Mystic Mountain. These bonds, she knew, would be tested and strengthened in the days to come.

Ling Li sat quietly, her head resting on Four Eyes' shoulder. The rhythmic hum of the plane's engines was a comforting backdrop to her turbulent thoughts. She knew the journey ahead would be challenging; Otako's task of taking over the Chinese government wasn't simple. Additionally, she hadn't expected to be pregnant again. She glanced at Four Eyes, who was lost in thought, his brow furrowed in concentration.

As the plane soared through the night sky, Ling Li closed her eyes and allowed herself a moment of peace. The darkness outside was punctuated by the occasional flash of lightning, a reminder of the storm the soldiers had just weathered.

Shun and Fatty were both eager to go home; they missed their girlfriends dearly and wondered if Ling Li had informed them of their return. The thought of reuniting with loved ones brought a rare smile to Shun's lips. At the same time, Fatty's usually jovial demeanor was tinged with impatience.

When they landed at Camp Blaze in Russia very early the next day, the scene was one of orchestrated chaos. Several limousines were waiting for them on the tarmac, their polished exteriors reflecting the dim lights of the airstrip. The group disembarked, their movements coordinated and efficient despite their fatigue.

Butler Peng stood by the entrance of the mansion, flanked by rows of servants, his demeanor impeccably composed. "Madam, Masters, welcome back." He greeted them politely with a bow, his

voice carrying the weight of respect and loyalty. The servants echoed his sentiments, their collective bow a testament to the group's status.

"Butler Peng, where are the children?" Ling Li asked as they walked into the mansion, followed by Four Eyes, Shi Min, and the rest. Her voice held a hint of urgency, betraying her longing to see her children.

Fatty and Shun perked their ears when they heard her question, anticipation flickering in their eyes as they awaited Butler Peng's reply.

"Madam, the twins are napping; Young Miss Ren is with Tutor Chen, while Young Miss Lily is training at the gym." Butler Peng replied with his usual calm efficiency.

"Thank you," Ling Li said and decided to stop by Lily first, knowing the twins were sleeping while Ren was studying. Four Eyes, Shi Min, and Fatty directly proceeded to the gym that was built solely for Lily's training. Shun, in a huff, disappeared from their side to immediately look for Ren in her study, which made everyone amused. On the other hand, Chatty was acting like a child clinging to Pharsa, which was entertaining to watch among the group.

"Tom and Jerry are back." Mushu couldn't help but joke when he saw the two quarreling and arguing, which made everyone laugh. However, Pharsa was losing her patience, her face turning red with frustration and embarrassment.

"Did you swallow an octopus?!" Pharsa angrily scolded Chatty with a snort, peeling herself from Chatty's arms. Yet, Chatty seemed to be immune to Pharsa's complaint, his expression one of mischievous delight, not wanting to let go of Pharsa.

Ren and Lily didn't know that everyone was arriving today; Ling Li had kept it a secret to give them a big surprise.

Fatty was extremely excited and was smiling from ear to ear as he walked towards the gym with the group; he was eager to see Lily dancing for the first time. However, when they entered, Fatty's face instantly contorted. All the lines on his face turned as black as coal.

Lily, on the other hand, without knowing that she had a sudden audience, was engrossed in her training and was dancing 'Rumba' with her dance partner.

'Rumba' is known for representing passionate love and flirtation and is also referred to as the 'Dance of Love.' It is considered the sexiest dance among all dances in dance sports. 'Rumba' prominently pertains to intense body movement that involves significant hip movements and body isolations, known as 'Cuban Motion,' contributing to its sensual appearance. The slow rhythm of 'Rumba' allows for deliberate and more expressive movement. At the same time, partners maintain a close hold throughout the dance, adding to the intimate feel.

No wonder Fatty's face turned black in an instant, his eyes narrowing as he watched Lily dance. Shi Min caught Fatty's gloomy expression and couldn't help but chuckle. Shaking his head, Shi Min tapped Fatty's shoulder, jolting him from his reverie.

"Bro, the boy dancing with Lily is Solaris. He's been her dance partner since they were little; he's mixed race. Oh, and he's more of a girl than a boy. No need to be worried." Shi Min tried to comfort Fatty, his voice gentle yet firm.

Shi Min's words somewhat calmed Fatty, but his heart still itched as he watched his little girlfriend dancing sexily with a boy. The intensity of Lily's movements and the way her body synchronized with her partner, wearing only hugging tights and a leotard with a matching dancing wrap skirt and stiletto, made Fatty's jealousy flare, even though he knew Shi Min's words were true.

Lily, who was immersed in dancing, finally realized her audience. She stopped mid-step, turning to see who had entered, and was totally shocked. She had thought they wouldn't be back for another month.

Chapter 147: TOO MUCH DOG FOOD TO EAT

"Mom! Paps! Brother! Quan Ye! You're back!" Lily cried out happily, her face lighting up with pure joy. She instantly ran towards the group and jumped onto Quan Ye, whom everyone fondly referred to as Fatty. Fatty, caught off guard by Lily's enthusiastic greeting, nervously caught her as she wrapped her arms around his neck. The presence of Ling Li, Four Eyes, and Shi Min made him shiver, especially since Lily had ignored her family to jump onto him first.

Ling Li and Shi Min exchanged knowing smiles and shook their heads at Lily's act. Meanwhile, Solaris, Lily's dance partner, watched with dimmed eyes. He clenched his fists and gritted his teeth, quickly masking his feelings with an innocent, child-like expression to avoid detection.

"Truly, as the saying goes, a daughter is like spilled water when they find their partner. Mom, don't you agree?" Shi Min declared, observing his younger sister hugging Fatty. In the past, Lily would have jumped onto him first, then their mother.

Realizing her mistake, Lily's face turned a deep shade of red. She quickly pulled herself away from Fatty and threw herself into Shi Min's arms. "Brother!" she called out, trying to act cute.

"Oh, my little sister finally saw me!" Shi Min replied with a teasing grin.

"Brother, how can you say that?!" Lily fretted before turning to hug her mother, Ling Li.

"Mom, why didn't you inform us that you were arriving today?" Lily asked, her voice filled with enthusiasm.

"Oh, now your mother is the last person that you recognize." Ling Li said playfully, causing Fatty to blush even more.

"Mom, you know you're the most important person in my heart," Lily said coquettishly, still hugging her mother, Ling Li.

"Alright, I know. You go back to your training. We'll go find the rest," Ling Li replied lovingly, patting Lily's head.

"Big Sister is in her study with Tutor Chen. It is also almost time for the twins to wake up. Paps, the twins miss you very much! It is good that you're back!" Lily informed them cheerily.

Four Eyes felt a warm rush of emotion and eagerness to see the twins nodding at Lily. However, he knew he should also give attention to Ling Li's other children as their stepfather.

"Alright, we understand. Let Fatty freshen up first while you continue your training," Ling Li declared before turning to look for Ren.

Fatty, who had been standing to the side, had no choice but to reluctantly freshen up as Ling Li had declared. He communicated with Lily through his eyes, silently promising to catch up with her later. Lily understood, giving Fatty a little wave and a big smile.

Shi Min, known for his good sense of humor, couldn't help but comment. "Ah, what a poor singleton I am; Mom and Pap's keep feeding me dog food to eat right after Pap's returned. Now I have to eat another batch." He shook his head, his voice dripping with mock sorrow, causing Fatty and Lily to blush even more.

Ling Li, noticing the playful banter of the siblings, chuckled. "Come on, leave your sister alone. Let's go find Ren," she said, pulling Shi Min out of the gym.

"Ah, my big sister and Shun will definitely let me eat more dog food again; what sin did I do to deserve all these dog foods? I'm so full I might vomit." Shi Min continued to joke, earning a chorus of laughter from those around.

Mushu, always in sync with the mood, declared, "Young Master, I feel you," which made everyone merrily laugh once again.

Indeed, when Shun left their side to look for Ren in her study, he approached the door with a sense of urgency. His heart pounded as he knocked, knowing how strict Old Tutor Chen was about interruptions during study time. The knock reverberated through the room, causing Old Tutor Chen to frown and Ren to look up, surprised. The Old Tutor gave a strict order that no disturbance shall be made when they are studying.

Ren, anticipating something important might have happened that needed her attention, stood up and excused herself from the dissatisfied Old Tutor Chen and went to open the door. As she opened it, her breath caught in her throat. There stood Shun, a sight she hadn't expected for another month.

"Ren, I'm back!" Shun exclaimed, pulling her into a tight embrace.

Ren, still processing the surprise, finally found her voice. "Shun! It's you! I thought you'd be back in another month!" She couldn't hold back her tears as she wrapped her arms around his neck, overwhelmed by a rush of emotions.

“Why are you crying when I’m already back?” Shun asked gently, pulling Ren back to wipe away her tears.

“Shun, you don’t know how worried I’ve been and how much I’ve missed you!” Ren said, her voice choked with emotion.

“I know, I know. I’m here now,” Shun whispered, comforting Ren and giving her a tender kiss.

Old Tutor Chen, witnessing the young couple’s PDA (public display of affection), couldn’t help but snort in disapproval. “Cough... Cough....”

However, the young couple seemed oblivious to his presence, completely ignoring him, lost in their reunion. Old Tutor Chen, feeling indignant, crossed his arms and watched with a mixture of annoyance and resignation.

Old Tutor Chen, an elderly man who had dedicated his life to learning Chinese history, arts, and culture, took immense pride in his knowledge and teaching. His passion for sharing knowledge had kept him from marrying, and he traveled extensively to expand his understanding of his country. Ren’s mother, Ling Li, had called upon him to tutor Ren personally, and he had initially been hesitant, wanting to ensure Ren’s sincerity and eagerness to learn. Pay was never an issue for Tutor Chen; his devotion was to his students’ willingness to learn.

When Tutor Chen first came to test Ren, his expectations were tempered with caution. He had encountered many students over the years, each with varying degrees of enthusiasm and ability. As he entered the grand study hall, he was greeted by Ren’s poised demeanor and an air of quiet determination that immediately caught his attention.

Chapter 148: INDIGNANT TUTOR CHEN

From their first interaction, Ren demonstrated a sharp intellect and a keen eagerness to absorb knowledge. She listened intently, answered his questions with confidence, and displayed an impressive grasp of complex concepts. Tutor Chen’s initial skepticism melted away, replaced by genuine satisfaction. He could see in Ren the traits of a devoted learner, much like her mother, Ling Li, had described.

How could Ling Li's daughter be inferior? Impossible!

As days turned into weeks, Tutor Chen's enthusiasm only grew. Ren's excellent learning ability and relentless curiosity made each session a joy. She approached each lesson with an open mind and a hunger for more. More often than not, Old Tutor Chen stayed behind to discuss further, answering Ren's insightful questions. This earnestness and dedication reminded Tutor Chen of his own fervor for learning and teaching.

The synergy between teacher and student became palpable. Tutor Chen found himself eagerly looking forward to their daily sessions, driven by Ren's remarkable progress and unyielding dedication. Every meeting with her left him more invigorated and inspired, reaffirming his belief in the importance of his life's work. It was rare to find a student who matched his passion for knowledge, and in Ren, he had found a kindred spirit. This bond of mutual respect and enthusiasm transformed their lessons into a shared journey of discovery.

After Fatty left the gym to freshen up, Ling Li, Shi Min, and Four Eyes continued down the hall toward Ren's study, escorted by Mushu and Pharsa, who was being pestered by Chatty. They exchanged whispers and laughter, eager to reunite with Ren. The anticipation was palpable, and as they reached the door, Ling Li gently knocked before pushing it open.

Inside, they found Ren and Shun locked in a tender embrace, whispering softly to each other. Old Tutor Chen stood to the side in his traditional Chinese clothes, his arms crossed, and a look of indignation etched on his face. His stern expression was a stark contrast to the warmth radiating from the young couple.

Old Tutor Chen cleared his throat loudly, "Cough... Cough... Cough..." hoping to draw their attention. However, Ren and Shun seemed oblivious to his presence, lost in their own world, totally ignoring Tutor Ren. Despite his stern expression, there was a hint of understanding in Tutor Chen's eyes. Tutor Chen knew that Shun, Ren's fiancée, was away for several months for training.

Ling Li couldn't help but smile at the sight of her daughter so happy, silently sighing in her heart with indulgence. She stepped forward, her voice gentle but firm. "Ren, Shun, you have guests."

Ren looked up, her eyes widening in surprise and delight when she heard her mother's voice. "Mom! Paps! Brother! You're back!" she exclaimed, quickly disentangling herself from Shun and running to embrace her mother. The joy in her voice resonated through the room, bringing warmth to everyone's hearts.

Shi Min chuckled, shaking his head. "Looks like we've interrupted something; I told you we will be fed with dog food," he teased.

Shun, letting go of Ren's hand, turned to the group with a red face. "Brother! You! What are you talking about?! Brat!" Ren reacted to her younger brother, Shi Min teasing her; Shi Min only gave her a playful snort.

The old tutor huffed, his expression softening slightly, and cleared his throat once again. "Cough... Cough... Well, it's about time you all arrived. Ren has been working hard, and she deserves a break," he declared, his voice carrying a hint of pride.

Shun, feeling a bit awkward, shifted from foot to foot. "We didn't mean to intrude," he said, glancing nervously at Old Tutor Chen. The old master looked at Shun from head to toe, like a father checking on his future son-in-law, and harrumphed, which amused Shun.

Ren beamed at the praise, her eyes shining with gratitude. "Thank you, Tutor Chen. Your lessons have been invaluable."

Ling Li nodded in agreement. "We are grateful for your dedication, Tutor Chen. Ren's progress is a testament to your excellent teaching." When Ling Li came back to visit the children for a while, she witnessed Ren's progress. She was very elated.

Old Tutor Chen's stern facade cracked, and a small smile tugged at the corners of his mouth. "It is my pleasure to teach such a dedicated student," he said with pride.

The group settled into the study, the atmosphere warm and filled with laughter. Old Tutor Chen found himself enjoying the lively company. Despite his initial annoyance, he couldn't deny the joy that filled the room. It was moments like these that reminded him why he had dedicated his life to teaching – the connections, the growth, and the shared journey of learning. Old Tutor Chen's heart swelled with pride and satisfaction. He knew that with students like Ren, his legacy would continue to thrive.

After exchanging a few more words, the group headed off to find the twins, who had just woken up from their nap. As they approached the nursery, the sound of soft giggles and babbling reached their

ears. Ling Li gently opened the door, revealing the two adorable girls, Kim Kim and Chin Chin, sitting up in their cribs, rubbing their sleepy eyes.

Four Eyes excitedly stepped forward, his heart swelling with emotion. The twins stared at him for a long moment as if trying to recall who he was after months of separation. Their big eyes blinked in confusion, but slowly, recognition sparked and lit up their faces. They both cried out in unison, "Papa! Papa! Papa! Papa!" Their tiny arms stretched out towards him, eager to be picked up.

Four Eyes felt an overwhelming rush of love and joy as he scooped up Kim Kim and Chin Chin, holding them close. He could feel the warmth of their little bodies against his chest, their familiar scents filling his senses. "My sweet girls, Papa's missed you so much," Four Eyes whispered, his voice thick with emotion. The twins giggled and clung to their father, their little hands patting Four Eyes' cheeks and tugging at his hair. Their laughter was like music to Four Eyes' ears, soothing the ache of months spent apart.

Chapter 149: MY PRECIOUS GIRLS

Kim Kim, with her chubby cheeks and sparkling eyes, patted her father's face with her tiny hand. "Papa!" she exclaimed, her voice filled with pure delight.

Chin Chin, with her soft curls and infectious giggle, tugged at his hair playfully. "Papa, up! Up!" she demanded, wanting to be lifted higher.

Four Eyes couldn't help but laugh, his heart overflowing with love. He lifted them higher, spinning them around gently, eliciting more giggles and squeals of joy from the twins. "I've missed you so much. Papa's here now," he murmured, kissing the tops of their heads. The twins nestled against him, content and happy to have their father back. He felt a sense of completeness; a piece of his heart that had been missing was now restored.

Ling Li watched the heartwarming scene with tears in her eyes, her heart swelling with love and pride. Shi Min and Ren stood nearby, smiling at the touching reunion. Shun, feeling the warmth of the family moment, wrapped an arm around Ren's shoulders and whispered, "Family is everything, isn't it?"

Ren nodded, her eyes shining with happiness. "Yes, it is," she replied, leaning into Shun's embrace. The sight of their father and the twins made her heart feel full.

The twins, still clinging to their father, suddenly noticed their mother and brothers' presence. "Mama! Brudder! Sisser!" they called out excitedly, reaching out their arms towards them.

Ling Li stepped forward, her eyes filled with love. "My precious girls," she murmured, gently taking one of their tiny hands in hers. Shi Min and Ren joined in; the twins' joy was evident in their bright eyes and wide smiles.

When Shi Min stepped forward, Kim Kim reached out her tiny arms to him. Shi Min happily scooped her from Four Eyes. Shi Min, with a playful grin, ruffled Kim Kim's hair. "Missed your brother, huh?" he teased, earning a giggle from the little girl while patting Shi Min's face and giving him tiny kisses on his cheeks.

Ren, her heart full, kissed Chin Chin's cheek. "You've grown so much," she said softly, marveling at how much the twins had changed in such a short time.

Shun stood beside Ren, looking fondly at the twins. "It's amazing how much they've grown," he added, his voice filled with wonder.

The room was filled with a sense of peace and belonging, the bonds of family stronger than ever. As they stood together, sharing this tender moment, they knew that no matter the challenges ahead, they would always have each other. The laughter, the tears, and the shared affection created a tapestry of memories, binding them closer together in a way that words could barely describe.

After sharing these precious moments, the group decided to leave the nursery to freshen up and rest. The men had just returned from Mystic Mountain, and fatigue was beginning to set in. As they walked down the corridor, Four Eyes kept a close eye on Ling Li, his worry evident. He had witnessed her turning pale suddenly when they were about to eat breakfast the day before which made them fly back home immediately, and it had left him deeply concerned.

"Are you sure you're okay, Honey? You should really rest," Four Eyes urged, his voice filled with concern, and held her hand.

Ling Li, though touched by his worry, gently reassured him. "I'm fine, really. You just got back from a long journey. You need to rest, too," she insisted, giving him a gentle smile.

What Four Eyes didn't know was that Ling Li was keeping a secret from him. She was pregnant with triplets and wanted to surprise him with the news on their wedding day, just a month away. Despite her own need for rest, her priority was ensuring that Four Eyes took care of himself.

Ren, noticing the exchange, decided to accompany Shun to their room to freshen up and rest. She led him by the hand, a sense of contentment settling over her.

As they departed, Shi Min lingered for a moment, looking around at everyone. He shook his head with a sigh, thinking to himself, 'It is truly pitiful to be single and surrounded by people showing their PDAs.'

The group slowly dispersed to their respective rooms, each person feeling the weight of their travels and the need for rest. Four Eyes, still worried about Ling Li, kept stealing glances at her as they walked. Ling Li, on the other hand, was filled with excitement and anticipation for the moment she could reveal her joyous news.

Finally, as they reached their room, Four Eyes couldn't hold back his concern any longer. "Ling Li, please promise me you'll take it easy," he pleaded, his eyes searching hers for reassurance.

Ling Li placed a gentle hand on his cheek, her eyes filled with warmth. "I promise," she said softly. "But only if you promise to rest, too."

Reluctantly, Four Eyes nodded, his heart heavy with worry but also with love. He pulled her into a tender embrace, holding her close. "I love you," he whispered.

"And I love you," Ling Li replied, resting her head against his chest, feeling the steady beat of his heart.

Meanwhile, Ren and Shun settled into their room. Shun sank into the plush armchair by the window, exhaustion etched on his face. Ren moved to his side, gently running her fingers through his hair. "You should get some rest," she whispered.

Shun looked up at her, his eyes softening. "Only if you stay with me," he murmured.

Ren smiled, her heart swelling with affection. "Always," she promised, leaning down to kiss his forehead.

As Ling Li, Shi Min, and Four Eyes left the nursery to rest, they dismissed Chatty and Pharsa together with Mushu. Chatty, brimming with energy from his recent breakthroughs, was practically bouncing on his feet. He couldn't contain his enthusiasm and kept clinging to Pharsa, much to her irritation.

Pharsa, struggling to maintain her composure, felt a wave of embarrassment wash over her. She glanced nervously at Mushu, who seemed to be stifling a laugh. Her cheeks flushed as she tried to push Chatty away. "Chatty, stop it! You're behaving like a child," she hissed, her voice a mixture of annoyance and embarrassment.

Chapter 150: SILENT BATTLE OF WITS

However, no matter how hard she pushed, Chatty clung to her even more persistently. 'This man has grown very strong after coming back from Mystic Mountain,' Pharsa thought, her frustration mounting as she resisted Chatty's advances. He was acting worse than an octopus clinging to her, his grip firm and unyielding. Though Pharsa could still trample Chatty with her strength, she didn't want to stomp Chatty's ego with his newfound fulfillment from Mystic Mountain.

"Honey, you don't know how much I missed you!" Chatty exclaimed, his eyes shining with excitement. His newfound strength from the condensation realm was evident in the way he easily held onto her despite her attempts to break free.

Pharsa sighed, her shoulders slumping in defeat. "Chatty, I understand you're happy, but could you at least try to behave in front of our Masters?" she pleaded, her eyes darting to Mushu, her immediate superior, who was now openly laughing.

Mushu, unable to contain his amusement any longer, chuckled. "Pharsa, it seems like Chatty's training at Mystic Mountain has turned him into a force to be reckoned with."

Chatty grinned, puffing out his chest with pride. "Indeed! I've had several breakthroughs, and I'm now in the middle of the condensation realm," he declared, his voice filled with pride. He finally released Pharsa, who took a step back and adjusted her disheveled appearance.

"Congratulations on your progress, Chatty," Pharsa said, forcing a smile. "But remember, strength comes with responsibility. You need to learn to control your energy and respect personal space."

Chatty nodded enthusiastically. "You're right, Honey. I'll try to be more mindful," he promised, his eyes still twinkling with excitement, which made Pharsa snort.

Mushu clapped Chatty on the back. "It's good to see your progress, Chatty. Just remember, strength is not just about physical power but also about wisdom and restraint."

Chatty nodded, his expression turning more serious. "I understand, Chief. I'll work on it," he said earnestly to Mushu.

Pharsa, feeling a bit more relaxed now that Chatty had calmed down, smiled genuinely. "I'm proud of your progress, Chatty. Just don't forget the importance of balance in your training." Pharsa was Chatty's trainer with the rest before they departed for Mystic Mountain.

The three of them continued down the hallway, the atmosphere now lighter and more relaxed. Chatty's boundless energy and enthusiasm were infectious, and despite her earlier irritation, Pharsa couldn't help but feel a sense of pride in her fellow disciple's achievements.

As they walked, Chatty couldn't resist sharing stories of his time at Mystic Mountain. "You wouldn't believe the challenges we faced there! The trials were intense, but they pushed me to my limits and helped me grow stronger. But my greatest achievement is animal telepathy; I can communicate with animals!"

Pharsa listened intently, her earlier frustration forgotten. "It sounds like you had quite an adventure. I'm glad you're back and stronger than ever," she said, her voice filled with genuine admiration.

Mushu smiled, his heart warming at the sight of his colleagues bonding and supporting each other.

"Remember, every challenge you face is an opportunity to grow, not just in strength but also in character," he reminded them, his voice filled with wisdom.

Meanwhile, Fatty, feeling a mix of excitement and anxiety, hurried to freshen up. His shower was so rushed that it seemed like he had an aversion to water. As he hastily put on his shirt, he realized in the mirror that he looked more disheveled than before.

"!!!!" Fatty exclaimed, bewildered by his own reflection. "What happened???!!!" he wondered aloud. 'Really, Fatty, do you know what you're doing? How you look is your masterpiece.'

Determined to look presentable, Fatty quickly tidied himself and dashed out of the room, eager to return to Lily's side.

At the same time, Lily and her partner, Solaris, were in a meeting with their dance coach, receiving corrections and pointers. Fatty stood by, not wanting to disturb them. Solaris noticed Fatty's presence and, with a smirk, wrapped his arm around Lily's waist.

"...." Fatty's eyes narrowed, and he snorted in return, silently conveying, "Brat! I'll teach you a lesson!"

Solaris, unfazed, met Fatty's gaze with a challenging look as if to say, "I'll be waiting for you! Let's see who will teach who."

The two men engaged in a silent battle of wills, their eyes locked in a fierce exchange.

"Are you paying attention?" the coach asked, noticing Solaris's distracted look.

"Of course, coach. I've heard everything you said," Solaris replied, flashing an innocent, child-like smile.

Fatty snorted again, annoyed. "It seems this person is not simple," he thought. "I may need to tell Chu Yan about this and remind Madam Ling Li to be wary of this little guy."

After a few more words with Lily and Solaris, the dance coach dismissed them for the day. As Lily turned around, she saw Fatty waiting and immediately grabbed her gym bag, running to him.

Solaris's eyes darkened as he watched Lily leave his side, his thoughts unreadable.

"How long have you been waiting? Why didn't you rest? You just came back from your training; you must be very tired," Lily said, concern evident in her voice.

Fatty ruffled Lily's hair affectionately. "I can rest later. You've been training hard; you've lost a lot of weight," he said, his heart aching for her.

"Of course, I need to lose weight. I can't dance in front of the judges with flabs and a bulging belly!" Lily retorted.

"Well, I don't mind them at all," Fatty replied, gazing at her lovingly.

"You! It's different!" Lily's face flushed with embarrassment.

Fatty chuckled at her reaction. "I know. What are you doing next?" he asked.

"I have a four-hour break before Coach Carlos arrives for my gymnastics training," Lily replied.

Fatty's heart ached even more for her. "Then you should rest first," he said, the distress evident in his voice.

"I'm not that fragile," Lily said with a smile, trying to comfort him. "Let me shower first, then let's have an early lunch together; what do you think?"

"Sounds good to me. Let me send you to your room," Fatty agreed.

The two chatted as they walked, their bond growing stronger with each step.