

Chapter 101 - Is This How Star Art International Treats Its Guests?

So she strutted to the center of the commotion and said in a voice loud enough for many people to hear, "Is this one of Star Art International's antics? You are pushing all the blame to her since you were unable to manage your employees properly?" "Tsk, since you want to defend Li Lanni, you can perish together."

Si Yulin was displeased, but this was Miss Ji, so she couldn't be impolite.

She summoned a young woman then looked at Li Lanni gently. "Let my assistant help you get changed, okay? I will shoulder all the damages and deal with this matter."

There was no need to kick up a fuss, so Li Lanni went to get her extra dress from Ji Xiehan's car before following Si Yulin's assistant to a changing room. Si Yulin's assistant had brought a dress, but Li Lanni had her own, so she turned it down. She sent a message to someone before proceeding to change.

The dresses were of the same color scheme, so she didn't need to redo her makeup and hair. This was also her mother's idea.

She was done in just a few minutes and exited the changing room.

A smile formed on her lips as she checked her phone. Ji Feifei, you still want to mess with me? I'll be happy to play along. She would be a fool if she still didn't know who was behind this drama.

She didn't know why the hell Ji Feifei would pull such a prank on her, but she had a feeling it was related to Ji Xiehan. Tch. Like she cared.

She went back to the banquet hall. Impressively enough, the drama was still on.

With Ji Feifei fanning the flames, it would be shocking if she let it end so quickly.

The chubby waitress even had an employee ID, so the situation was sticky. Si Yulin knew the employee ID was fake, but she couldn't prove it on the spot. That, and the fact that Ji Feifei was blowing the matter out of proportion.

The guests were currently lashing at Si Yulin for trying to evade responsibility.

Jiang Xingyu wanted to but in, but Ji Xiehan held him back. It wasn't sure what the man was thinking, but Jiang Xingyu did as he was told.

Just as the guests were getting impatient with this unnecessary drama, a series of claps rang out.

Everyone turned to the source of the sound.

Li Lanni was back.

Ji Xiehan grinned in a sense of pride. That was faster than he thought.

Li Lanni made her way to Ji Feifei with an amused expression. "What impeccable acting. Even I almost got fooled. We would give you a standing ovation if we were not already standing."

"What do you mean by that?" Ji Feifei snapped.

Li Lanni crossed her arms. "Don't you know what I mean, Miss Ji?"

You orchestrated the whole drama. I don't know what you wanted to achieve, but since you didn't achieve it, you went ahead to attack Star Art International instead? Girl, I admire your guts."

"I don't know what you are talking about." Ji Feifei cackled, then looked at Li Lanni spitefully. "You think this is about you? Pfft. You really think everything revolves around you, spoilt princess?"

Li Lanni rolled her eyes. Spoilt princess? Was she as spoilt as Ji Feifei, who could go as far as to seduce her own brother? Tch, Just thinking about it gave her goosebumps!

She would have blurted this out, but it wouldn't benefit her, and it would implicate the pervert, so she brushed it off. "I don't care what you want. If you think I wronged you, you should come to me. But why would you waste everyone's time? You know, you made the Jiang family lose face."

The Jiangs didn't feel it initially, but now that Li Lanni mentioned it, they did feel embarrassed. Everyone who attended the banquet were the top elites of the city and were no fools. When they heard Li Lanni's words, they felt something was fishy here.

"That girl is right. If Ji Feifei really created all this mess, then it's not good at all." Mrs. Jiang said in displeasure. Even though Mr. Jiang was silent, displeasure was written all over his face. Star Art International was a subsidiary of Jiang Corporation, after all.

A short distance away, Jiang Xingyu held his chin curiously. One statement from her influenced everyone's thoughts, including his parents? This little beauty was interesting.

"Since I know that I'm the one you're after, why don't we settle this in private?"

If this drags on, everyone will be displeased. You can tell me why you did this, but in private."

Just as she thought, Ji Feifei couldn't stand this. "No way! I will not let you bully me! You will only use the chance to tarnish my reputation again. Why the heck would I target you? Lanni, I thought we were friends." She sobbed, making Ji Xiehan cringe. Act on! I was scared you wouldn't act.

As expected, she gathered her skirts and ran to Mrs. Ji, clinging to her arm and crying.

Li Lanni really wanted to burst into laughter.

"Since this is what you want, why not? If that's the case, then I'll leave. But I have evidence of Miss Ji hiring someone to harass me. I don't know..." she pretended to think hard about it. "Would the court take it seriously if I said that Miss Ji has repeatedly been targeting me and making me feel my life is threatened?"

Just as she made her way to leave, Ji Xiehan stopped her. "What evidence do you have?"

"Huh?" Li Lanni wasn't expecting him to speak.

He put on a serious expression. "Threatening someone's life is a crime, and you are accusing my sister of it. How can you just drop such a bomb and saunter away? I will not let you go.. Go ahead and show us the evidence."

Chapter 102 - Unnamed

Ji Feifei was a bit panicked when she heard Li Lanni say that she had evidence against her.

That b*tch had already made life difficult for her. Not only had she been expelled, but recently, Old Master Ji didn't trust her. She was just lucky that Madam Ji trusted her no matter what happened.

If she lost Madam Ji's trust as well, she would be done for...

She was just about to rush forward and do something.

But she thought about something and she calmed herself instantly. She thought about how she had done everything discreetly. No one could figure anything out. Even if they did tie anything to her, it could at most only be a coincidence.

And when she heard Ji Xiehan's words, she was deeply elated and was even more pleased with herself.

Her dearest beloved brother was finally on her side. He was finally starting to see clearly what he deserved.

At the same time, Li Lanni tilted her head curiously when she heard Ji Xiehan's words. She was his companion, right? Why was he against her?

As she thought of this, Ji Xiehan spoke again. "You should know, I hate people who lie and bully others. It doesn't matter who you are. So, are you going to show the evidence or not?"

Li Lanni's mouth opened, but she had nothing to say so she just closed it. Was Ji Xiehan really saying such things with a straight face?

She could understand that although she was his companion tonight, he would definitely defend his family as a good son. But, seriously... hated liars and people who bully others? Ji Feifei was all of that, and he knew it! To be able to say such things without flinching, he was absolutely shameless!

"Should we assume you were only seeking attention and using a public gathering to pursue your personal grudges?" Ji Xiehan probed again.

Li Lanni thought she saw him wink at her and came to a realization. Was he pushing her to show the evidence? But did he not know that this might ruin the Ji family's reputation, right?

It took a few seconds for her to play along. "How can you say that? People who have acting skills don't need evidence, but we who can't act need to have strong evidence to support our words."

Ji Feifei stabbed her nails into her palm with a frown on her face. That witch was obviously talking about her.

But what was the use? She smirked and haughtily looked at Li Lanni as if she were looking at a clown. Ji Xiehan was siding with her anyway. It wouldn't be long before he kicked Li Lanni out of the face of the earth. Or so she thought!

Ji Xiehan and Li Lanni kept their little charade up for a few seconds.

The guests were no longer displeased. So what if this wasn't part of the banquet? Nothing was better than a free round of gossip, right? What they lacked was just a bowl of popcorn.

The young women were especially thrilled. Their broken hearts healed again. So they were fighting already. Trouble in paradise so soon? That happened faster than they thought.

They now stood a chance, right? Although Jiang Xingyu was a good match too, Ji Xiehan was more handsome and had a stronger presence. Not to mention his charming smile that could send confusion in everyone's heart and his eyes that seemed to see right into the depth of one's soul.

Thanks to this 'interrogation', they were now openly looking at Ji Xiehan with eyes full of infatuation.

At the side, Jiang Xingyu and Lin Jian rolled their eyes and exchanged looks, what interrogation? These two were obviously flirting! And they were even doing so in such a high profile way!

The charade finally ended with Li Lanni playing a video on her phone and passing it to Ji Xiehan.

Ji Xiehan watched it for a few seconds and had a 'shocked' expression on his face and then stared at Ji Feifei in 'disbelief'.

Ji Feifei trembled. Did that b*tch actually have evidence?

Madam Ji was curious too. She had been angry that Li Lanni was slandering her daughter yet again, but the look on Ji Xiehan's face gave her a bad feeling.

When everyone saw Ji Xiehan's shocked expression and disbelief, they were very much curious to know what was in the video.

Ji Xiehan knew everyone was curious; thus, he satisfied their curiosity by letting them see the content of the video.

It looked like a clip from a surveillance video. Two women were conversing; the waitress from just now and Ji Feifei.

Although no one could hear what they were saying, Ji Feifei obviously gave a stack of cash to the waitress.

No one needed to think further. She had obviously hired the waitress.

"It's not what you think!" Ji Feifei attempted to defend herself.

"Oh? Then why are you speaking to her? Why did you give her money?" Li Lanni probed.

"I... I owed her a favor. She came to me for help!"

"Stop it already. You sound ridiculous. Even a 3-year old kid wouldn't believe such lies. Would you need to act so sneaky if she only needed help?" Li Lanni sneered and took her phone back from Ji Xiehan.

At this point, it wouldn't matter whether or not she had more evidence. Everyone's opinion was already shifting.

Of course, Li Lanni would grab this opportunity. "Is it such a coincidence that right after she came to you for help, she served drinks and 'accidentally' bumped into me, then unnecessarily started hurling insults at me? I also want to know how come she didn't appear in the hall before meeting you?"

By this time, Si Yulin had retrieved the list of waitresses that had gone to the banquet. It had taken a while because it was past working hours, so she had to call the manager of their cafeteria and get him to check the records. He had only sent the list right now.

True to Su Yulin's words, the chubby waitress was nowhere on the list.

All this evidence pointed to one direction; Ji Feifei had really hired her. Everyone's gaze towards Ji Feifei became strange.

To add oil, Li Lanni further asked, "She even made a fake employee ID and gave it to the waitress. This makes me think that the two of them have not just done this one thing together. Could it be that they have been involved in more shady business?"

Si Yulin raised an eyebrow then glared at the waitress. Star Art International's opponents have been finding out classified information against them lately... she needed to investigate this 'waitress' further.

Li Lanni was not interested in the drama that followed. It was already enough that she had publicly embarrassed her. She did have evidence of Ji Feifei bribing her former bodyguard to cause an 'accident,' but she would be a fool if she used it here. She had a feeling the Jis would still defend Ji Feifei.

She was initially not planning to do anything significant to Ji Feifei, but now she changed her mind. The girl was more brazen than she thought.

Li Lanni was too immersed in her thought, and she didn't notice the non-verbal exchange between Ji Xiehan and Jiang Xingyu.

At the same time. In Goldenwing Apartment.

"Damn! It!" Xia Luna dropped her phone.

"Girls shouldn't curse. It's rude." Cheng Yu said, glancing at her friend.

"Tell me about decorum later. That Ji Xiehan knows my codename."

"What?" Cheng Yu exclaimed. "How did that happen?"

Xia Luna didn't know where to start. "Lanni is at Star Art International's banquet.

Someone played a dirty trick to shame her, so she sent me a message and asked me to check the surveillance for her." She paused and sighed at Ji Feifei's stupidity. Did she really know how to scheme, or was she still a rookie at it? She could make such a low level mistake even after being a schemer for years?!

"Whatever it is, I quickly checked for the footage, but she must have chosen a blind spot. So I checked the security camera from the street across, and I did find something. I sent it to Lanni.

Who would have known that Ji Xiehan knew Lanni would ask for my help, and used this chance to track me? I don't even know how he did it and damn it! He must have already known what his sister had done."

Cheng Yu was dizzy just from listening. "Why does that sound like something from a sci-fi movie?"

Xia Luna ignored her and speculated. "Perhaps he had an inkling of my codename, and he only used this as an opportunity to confirm his suspicions."

Cheng Yu shrugged. "What use is a codename anyway?"

Xia Luna frowned. This oblivious girl. "Don't you get it? If he is so good at programming and hacking that he has found out my codename, or if he knows someone that is that good, it means that he can easily find out everything else about me."

The mood in the room turned solemn.. She didn't want anyone to find out about her past. Ji Xiehan, please don't do this!

Chapter 103 - The Pervert Who Takes Advantage

"Enough about me. Why aren't you at that banquet?" Xia Luna quickly changed the topic.

Cheng Yu's stopped thinking about those serious things. She didn't like the solemn mood, either. "I went to an exhibition with your mom." Her eyes sparkled with joy when she reminisced about her visit to the exhibition with Li Yuming. This was one of the advantages of being a famous artist's disciple. She had been treated with much more respect than she had recieved all her life.

She proceeded to talk about many things at the exhibition, none of which Xia Luna was interested in but listened anyway.

"How come I didn't know about that exhibition? You didn't tell me about it."

"I didn't know about it either. She only remembered to ask me today, and I didn't have anything to do after my class, so I tagged along."

"You didn't go with Lanni?"

"Someone had to go to the banquet." That, and the fact that Li Lanni would have preferred to go to the banquet if Li Yuming asked her.

"I see..." Xia Luna was clearly lost in her own world.

Cheng Yu suddenly asked, "Luna, do you miss your mom?"

Xia Luna stopped what she was doing and smiled. "She left when I was just a baby. There isn't an ounce of familiarity between us. What's there for me to miss?"

Cheng Yu nodded slowly.

Although that was what Xia Luna said, Cheng Yu could see it in the depth of her grey eyes. She did miss her mother. How could she not miss her?

Every child would if they had been separated from their mother for that long. Not to mention, Xia Luna had one of those stepmother that are usually labelled as scheming stepmothers in novels. All the more reason for her to want to be with her biological mother.

She just didn't want to admit it. And from her look right now, she didn't want to talk about it. In fact, she had never wanted to talk about her mother.

Seriously, what exactly had happened between Li Yuming and the Xia family?

...

Back in the banquet hall,

Ji Feifei couldn't cry her way out of this predicament.

"Feifei, why did you do it?" Madam Ji asked. She was so embarrassed that she didn't know where to show her face. How could her daughter do such a thing in a public setting? She was even involved with a fake employee with a questionable identity.

"Mother, I didn't mean to. I really didn't mean to." She bowed her eyes out, clinging onto her mother like she had been bullied.

'Someone give her an Oscar's already.' Li Lanni harrumphed her way out of the banquet hall.

Ji Xiehan followed her out too. He was not interested in the spoiled daughter-loving parent's drama either.

When he came out of the hall, he saw that Li Lanni was languidly waiting beside his car.

She didn't know it, but she looked like a little girlfriend waiting for her boyfriend to finish his business and drop her home.

"Did you wait for too long, my little fiancée?" He teased.

Li Lanni shot him a look, 'Who are you calling your little fiancee?' but she was too embarrassed to admonish him, so she swallowed her words. She was the one who had thrown his name around carelessly, so she shouldn't be mad at him for teasing her.

She didn't dare to look up at him. "Sorry I had to do that... your friend sounded like... he would be a pain in the butt if I didn't knock him off... you will not mind, will you?" Even she didn't know what she was saying.

"No." Ji Xiehan said to her relief. If there was any gains from her little fiancé act earlier, it was he who had gained. Despite this, he wouldn't be Ji Xiehan if he didn't grab the chance. "But I played along with your little act. How are you going to thank me?"

Li Lanni's eyes widened. Wasn't he going to let her off? Sure enough, he was business profiteer through and through!!

"Eer... I thought you were defending your sister as the good brother you are? Why did you turn against her and side with her nemesis instead?" This was what kept her puzzled all the while; she didn't expect him to support her. She was even prepared for his rebuttal.

Ji Xiehan leaned against the car close to her and shrugged. "Of course, I would side with my little beauty. You got the evidence pretty fast." He complimented before adding, "And you have something else to thank me for."

"What?" Li Lanni blinked.

"Just then, you were going to give up, and I helped you. Are you really not going to thank me?"

Li Lanni shook her head with a frown. "I was not giving up. I had a plan!"

Ji Xiehan closed in on her, then pressed a hand against the car, almost trapping her between his body and the car. "But I did help you. And you didn't reject my help. Are you really going to be ungrateful?"

Li Lanni widened her eyes. Why did it feel like he did it on purpose?

But she didn't want to bicker with him. He did make it easier to get rid of the trouble. "Fine. You helped me a great deal. Thank you very much."

Ji Xiehan looked pained like he had been bullied. "Lanni, how can you be so insincere?"

Li Lanni almost rolled her eyes. How thick was his skin?! But what could she do about it? "Fine. I'll bake you cupcakes. How about that?"

Ji Xiehan was going to ask to meet her again, but when he heard the offer, he almost drooled. What was better than his little beauty's handmade cupcakes?

But, he still couldn't accept that. She had baked cupcakes for another man before. Qiao Luna was his assistant. Of course, she would report that.

Full of jealousy, he acted like a spoilt little boy throwing a tantrum. "I don't like cupcakes."

Li Lanni wanted to kick him in the guts, but she couldn't because she would owe him again. "What do you want, then?"

"I love..." he thought for a while. He didn't know much about pastries because he didn't like them, but he was not going to let go of this heaven-sent chance. "I prefer strawberry cookies."

Li Lanni gulped. She didn't know how to bake cookies.

But she knew someone who did. "Deal."

Ji Xiehan smiled evilly. He had killed two birds with one stone. Not only would he get to eat cookies made by his little beauty, but she would also have to deliver them in person, and in the process, he would make her spend time with him.

Of course, this could still get better. "That is to thank me for helping you with Ji Feifei's matter. But I still got Lin Jian off your hair."

Li Lanni really wanted to faint. What had she gotten herself into? 'If given an inch, you want a mile.' This pervert was not going to let her off easily. Her chest heaved in exhaustion. "Just say it."

Ji Xiehan pretended to rack his brains for a while, enjoying her nervous expression. The favor he wanted from her couldn't be granted so easily. He would save that for later.

"How about.... you let me kiss you?"

"No way!" Li Lanni refuted with a blank face.

He was disappointed at how quickly Li Lanni refused him, but then he asked again, "Then how about you kiss me?"

Li Lanni rolled her eyes. What was the difference?

Ji Xiehan had had enough fun teasing her; he knew that she would not accept his request, so he carefully said, "I can't think about anything for now. How about you owe me this time?"

"Okay." Li Lanni replied casually.

Wait! Why did it suddenly feel as if she has fallen into the trap he had woven for her? Li Lanni blinked her eyes in a daze.

Happy that he had had his way, Ji Xiehan opened the driver's car door. "I'll send you home first."

Li Lanni quickly got in too. It was embarrassing to be out here. Luckily no one was looking at them.

But unknown to her, at the entrance of the hall, Madam Ji was standing at the corner, where they couldn't see her. She had come to have a word with Ji Xiehan but was greeted with her son openly flirting with a girl in the parking lot.

...

In the car, much to his dismay, Li Lanni asked Ji Xiehan to drive faster. So his little plot to spend more time with her didn't work.

But he didn't mind it. She still owed him cupcakes and a favor.

And who said he couldn't make her owe him more?

As soon as they arrived, Li Lanni got off the car and smiled at him, "Thank you for the ride."

He smiled back charmingly, his blue eyes gazing at her gently before he dropped the bomb. "How are you going to thank me?"

"What?"

Chapter 104 - You Have Brains. Use Them Well

Ji Xiehan looked at her meaningfully.

"More cookies for you." She said as she went on her way, not willing to breathe the same air as this brazen man. She had had enough of his shamelessness.

Ji Xiehan grinned in satisfaction and quickly followed behind her, before making another demand. "Make them on different days, so it actually feels different." As soon as he said this, he felt like he was a three-year-old kid asking for several one-dollar coins because he thought they were more valuable than a ten-dollar bill. So he quickly coughed up an excuse, "Well, I'm only looking out for you. I don't want you getting tired."

Li Lanni rolled her eyes at his theatrics. Baking cookies twice was less tiresome than doing it once? She turned to continue walking to the house.

Ji Xiehan quickly ran after her. "That was just to thank me for driving you to the banquet. You haven't thanked me for driving you back."

"Excuse me?" Li Lanni tilted her head to ask the man behind her. He was not just a business-minded profiteer; he was a cold-blooded vampire too.

He was seriously using every single opportunity he had to take advantage of her. What audacity.

Ji Xiehan waved his hands innocently. "I do not like owing people. And similarly, I do not like it when people owe me. Why don't we just get this over with?"

Li Lanni really had to give it to him. Every time she met this man, her respect for him seemed to drop to the level below. And the more he spoke, the more he lived up to the nickname she had christened him, 'the pervert'.

And it didn't help that he had recently changed his tactics. In the past, he would keep his distance when she wanted him to and stay out of her way.

But it wasn't sure what had hit him. He had suddenly turned into a flirtatious man, sticking onto her when he was least needed and finding every excuse he could to spend time with her.

She was only twenty, but that was old enough to understand what exactly this man wanted from her.

And it was something she was not ready to give yet. She looked him up and down then just sighed. Opening her purse, she took something out and shoved it into his hands. "We owe each other nothing after this. Please stay far away from me."

Ji Xiehan grinned and watched her back view as she walked into the villa. What a gorgeous waist... and backside.

Once she disappeared into the house, he opened his hand to reveal what she had shoved into his palm.

It turned out to be candy. He lifted his lips in amusement. Did women always carry candy in their purses?

And out of all things, she gave him candy? But somehow, this candy held more significance than all the gifts he had ever received.

He eyed the colorful little thing in his hand and was about to unwrap it and eat it when he thought of a better destination than his mouth. Taking out his own wallet, he opened it and kept the candy next to a

picture of her. As for how he got her photo, there was no need to ask. He had secretly taken it on the first day they ate lunch together and then printed it in a small size to fit in his wallet.

Satisfied with the new 'souvenir,' he got into his car and drove off.

...

Li Lanni was tired by the time she got into the house. She hadn't had the appetite to eat at the banquet, so she was famished too.

She placed her purse on the nearest sofa as she made her way to the kitchen to find something to munch on.

"You're back." Li Yuming joined her in the kitchen after a short while. "How was the banquet?"

Li Lanni paused in her tracks, awkwardly gripping a bottle of water that she had taken from the fridge. She couldn't help but remember how someone had insulted her mother.

But she flashed a smile while unscrewing the cap and replied to her mother. "It was alright."

From her tone, Li Yuming could more or less guess that something might have gone wrong. But she must be tired, so Li Yuming didn't bother her about it.

In fact, what she wanted to know right now was her relationship with Ji Xiehan, having seen what happened earlier from her window.

She could have sworn that they looked like a boyfriend coaxing his little girlfriend because she was upset and throwing a tantrum.

In the end, she didn't ask. Li Lanni was still paranoid. It might take some time for her to actually start liking a man -- though her maternal instincts told her that she has already started developing interest in him.

Oh, how nice it was to be young. One could fall in love so cutely. These two were an ideal match. Their babies would definitely be the most adorable.

Unaware of her mother's terrifying train of thought, Li Lanni warmed up some dumplings she found in the fridge, ate them before going to her room.

Once in her room, Li Lanni laid on her bed and finally remembered what had happened earlier, how she had stuffed the pervert with a candy. She couldn't help but giggle.

Seriously, she had just used a candy to thank a grown man. Pfft. But it did suit him. He was acting like a baby anyway.

At the same time, in the Ji family mansion.

Ji Xiehan had been driving back to his villa, still basking in a good mood when his mother called him back home urgently.

He had to go home even though he didn't want to.

Madam Ji was seething in anger.

Putting the scandal Ji Feifei had created aside; nothing could change the fact that Ji Xiehan had attended a banquet with Li Lanni!

"Explain." As soon as he entered the house, Madam Ji spat out a word impatiently.

Ji Xiehan didn't understand why his mother sounded so angry. "What do I need to explain?"

"That girl you came with at the banquet." Madam Ji angrily said.

He was thrown into confusion for a moment. Shouldn't his mother be happy?

Of course, she should, unless that damned nutcase of a younger sister had said something she shouldn't. Since they were at it, he could only explain. "Her name is Li Lanni. She is Li Yuming's daughter and the girl I'm chasing, but she doesn't know it yet, so I will pretty much appreciate it if you do not interfere."

"What nonsense!" Madam Ji fumed. "I will not let you marry a girl like her."

"And what's 'a girl like her' supposed to mean?" Ji Xiehan refuted .

Madam Ji used all her self control to hold herself back from giving her son a slap across his face. "Didn't you hear it? People were talking about it at the banquet. She is the daughter of a divorcee, and heaven knows where her father is. Her mother has a bad reputation too. It's only a matter of time until people dig that up."

"And that's supposed to be my business?" He couldn't understand how his mother could be so narrow-minded. How could she label a person just based on the rumors outside? Had Ji Feifei infected her with some of her stupidity?

"Every part of it is your business." Madam Ji shrieked. "Li Yuming is a jinx, has a bad reputation, and God knows what else... and that reflects on her daughter too. There are better women to choose from."

Ji Xiehan's eyes turned cold and he stood up to leave. He hated it when people said terrible things about Li Lanni. But what he hated more was when people insulted Li Yuming. He had spent enough time with her to know that she was not the type of person every other woman made her out to be. She was not the kind of woman his mother was talking about.

And the last thing he wanted to deal with right now was a feud between his mother and his future mother-in-law.

He tilted his head and looked at his shocked mother. "Instead of listening to rumors outside and badmouthing people for no apparent reason, you should be spending that time with your 'dear' daughter and teaching her how to behave herself.

Just look at what scandal she created at the banquet today. Hasn't she brought enough shame to the Ji family? She probably said she was only teaching Lanni a lesson for framing her, but you have brains. Use them well." He turned on his heel and left. He had so much to say that he could spend hours saying it but it didn't matter. His mother seemed to have been blinded by that brat.

Madam Ji slumped back onto her sofa in anger and shock. How could her son talk to her that way? And for a dirty little s!t?!

Chapter 105 - Cliché

Ji Xiehan didn't wait to hear what his mother has to say.

He was right. Ji Feifei had cried and begged for their forgiveness, saying that she only wanted to teach Li Lanni a lesson for framing her weeks ago. And as the fools Ji Feifei had made them, they actually believed her.

To be exact, Old Master Ji did have his suspicions, but Madam Ji had been taken for a fool.

It was tiresome just thinking about it.

The following day.

After their art class, Li Lanni and Cheng Yu happily decided to go to the employees' cafeteria for lunch.

They had heard Ruby say the food there was delicious. And for a girl like Ruby to compliment it, it had to be tasty.

They were just about to reach the entrance of the employees' cafeteria when Li Lanni saw someone from the corner of her eye.

She wasn't very familiar with this woman, but she could vaguely remember her to be Madam Ji. They had met at the banquet.

Li Lanni could guess that she came here to meet her, but she had a feeling that she didn't come here just to have a casual conversation with her.

"Lanni?" Cheng Yu probed when she realized that Li Lanni had stopped. "What's wrong?"

Madam Ji had a solemn expression as she scrutinized Li Lanni then turned to Cheng Yu. "I want to have a word with your friend. If you'll excuse us." After leaving her with these words, she just dragged Li Lanni away.

"Sheesh." Cheng Yu was unhappy when the woman simply dragged her friend away, but what could she do about it?

Wait. Wasn't that Madam Ji? What did she want from Lanni?

...

Li Lanni wasn't happy either. How could she just drag away like that without her consent? there was such a thing as a courtesy!

Of course, Madam Ji's visit was expected after the discussion that didn't end well with her son last night.

"To what do I owe the honor of having Madam Ji look for me?" She asked with a frown on her face when the woman stopped dragging her.

Madam Ji wasn't in the mood to mince her words, or she found it below herself to do so. "You do know why I am here."

"I don't." Li Lanni said with a straight face. If this was about Ji Feifei...

"My Xiehan is a handsome and capable man, with an impressive educational background and a good head on his shoulders. He is not even the CEO yet but look at all the achievements he has made in the company over the years. The woman he will marry has to be intelligent and from an impressive background. A woman who can carry on the name of our Ji family."

When she was done speaking, Li Lanni looked at her, confused. "And which part of all this is my business?" Was this an advertisement of sorts?

"I know what you want." The woman was displeased by Li Lanni's tone. "Every woman wants to marry my Xiehan. But you do not qualify."

Li Lanni finally understood what was going on. This was one of those rich mother-in-law vs. poor daughter-in-law scenes.

Only in this case, neither was she poor, nor was she interested in her rich son. So she laughed it off. "Madam Ji, I don't have anything to do with your oh-so-precious son." This woman wasn't polite, so Li Lanni didn't bother being polite either. Not to mention, she was Ji Feifei's mother.

"Huh." Madam Ji scoffed. "Years ago, I would have mistaken you for a good girl. But not only did you turn into an immoral woman, but you are also a gold digger."

A woman like you, who doesn't even come from a complete family, do you think you deserve my son? Was it your mother who taught you to seduce men from wealthy families?

Don't even bother putting on an act. In the end, don't women like you only want money? Tell me how much do you want from my son? I will give it to you if you stay away from him."

Li Lanni almost picked her ears. Cliché through and through. Didn't these mothers-in-law ever have new lines?

She smiled at the woman before her, almost in pity at her nonsensical thoughts. But when she heard her talk that way about her mother, the pity in her disappeared and she retorted, " You are so delusional. Now I know where your daughter's wishful thinking came from. Do I need money from your son? Oh please, don't be ridiculous. I'm not interested in your son." She sneered. "You think too highly of yourself. Think about who you're speaking to. I am Li Yuming's daughter.

I don't blame you for not knowing it, but my mother is among the world's most famous artists. A single painting from her can as well buy your entire house.

She can earn millions of dollars just by closing her eyes and doodling some circles on paper. What more money do I need?

You are telling me that I need to marry into your family for money? Ridiculous!

You should be asking yourself which part of me your family deserves."

She had never liked throwing her mother's name around, but she couldn't help herself. How could she stand someone using their so-called power to look down on her?

"You must be offering me money as an indirect way of making me accept your son, but sorry! I will not stoop below my standards no matter how much you offer."

Madam Ji was fuming with rage. How dare this girl look down on her son?!

"Also, I can't believe that people from the so-called top families act like shrews. Are you so proud of yourself to prove that other people are not worthy?" She recalled something and asked in a half-

whisper. "Your daughter was in a scandal with a married man not too long ago. Are you the one who taught her to seduce married men?"

With that, she walked off.

"Little sl*t!" Madam Ji cursed behind her. She was just pretending to act all high and mighty! And how dare she talk that way about Feifei?! She even dared to use that statement to insult her!

That girl better not set foot near the Ji family.

Of course, Li Lanni was not planning to set foot in her family. Madam Ji was just delusional!

...

After meeting Madam Ji, she was no longer in the mood to have lunch, so she went home.

She couldn't help thinking about it. This wasn't the first person talking that way about her mother.

Technically, only people from the Ji family were trying to make her mother pass off as some immoral woman. Was this another of Ji Feifei's antics?

This wouldn't do.

She thought for a while then made a phone call.

"Luna, I want to eliminate someone."

"What?"

Xia Luna was just about to go to sleep when she received Li Lanni's phone call. That statement made her blood run cold.

She peeked to make sure the light in Cheng Yu's room was off before she lowered her voice to ask. "Who?"

"Ji Feifei." Came the emotionless reply.

Xia Luna wasn't shocked. Of course it would be her. It was in fact surprising that she wasn't dead yet.

No, wait. The focus here was that Li Lanni wasn't even close to her. Why would she tell her such a thing?

It was as though Li Lanni was reading her mind--if that could possibly be done through phone -- because her next statement answered it all. "Luna, you're my sister. You are the only person I can tell this."

Xia Luna felt her heart swell with warmth. Her sister finally realized this.

"Actually, I knew you wanted to get rid of her yourself. That's why I didn't make any major moves on her." Xia Luna explained. "I have a way to get close to her. Do you want me to shove a knife into her heart?"

"What? Hell no!" Li Lanni literally shouted. Was her sister crazy? How could she say such things so casually?

"This phone call isn't being recorded by some hacker, right?" Li Lanni remembered to take precaution. "Perhaps we should meet up."

"That's a bad idea. Your man is looking me up. He might tail you."

"Eer..." Why was it that when Xia Luna said 'your man', her brain automatically filled Ji Xiehan into that slot?

It might be because he was the one Xia Luna was talking about but oh well.

"First off, he's not my man. Secondly, we can discuss on phone as long as it's not being spied."

"It wouldn't be. I'm good in this field."

"Okay." Li Lanni proceeded to tell her what she wanted to do. She could have done it herself, but she knew that Ji Feifei might be expecting her to do something after what happened at the banquet.. She trusted that Xia Luna knew what to do.

Chapter 106 - Messed Up Life

Once the call ended, Xia Luna sat on her bed and placed the phone back on the bedside table.

From the phone call they had just had, she knew that Li Lanni was starting to trust her. Or maybe she almost fully trusted her.

But instead of happiness, her face was filled with sadness... a lonely kind of sadness.

Actually, she hadn't known Li Lanni for very long. She had grown up only knowing that she had a father and a stepmother. No one ever mentioned her mother, and like the good girl she was, she never asked.

It only happened about two years ago. Her father, Xia Hanchen, had suddenly been screened with a heart tumor. His health had deteriorated so rapidly that in a few months, he was almost just a walking

shell. The doctors didn't think he would make it past a year. He would talk to no one and just keep staring into space in a daze.

But every time he looked at Xia Luna, she would feel like he wasn't truly looking at her. It was as though he was trying to see someone else through her.

She had always wondered who that person might be. Could it be that she resembled her biological mother and he was missing her?

One day, her questions were answered. He suddenly called her and told her about her biological mother and her twin sister.

She was shocked to find out that her mother was still alive, having assumed that she was dead all along. She was even more shocked that she had a twin. And she could tell from the look in her father's eyes that he missed them too much.

As his dying wish, he pleaded her to let him meet with his ex-wife and his other daughter.

That was the first time she saw her father so desperate. She couldn't bring herself to say no to him, especially when she was so desperate to make him happy. If there was anything she could do to make him live a day longer, she would do it even if she had to tread through fire.

Thus the next day, she packed her bags and made her way to B City to look for them. Somehow she knew it would be easier to talk to her sister than to her mother. So she found a way to get close to Li Lanni. As expected, Li Lanni didn't refuse to meet their father. She was happy to go.

Both father and daughter were happy after their reunion, and miraculously after meeting Li Lanni, his condition started improving. He was elated that Li Lanni didn't hate him or ask where he had been all those years or why he had divorced Li Yuming.

Following their rendezvous, the tumor in his heart had shrunk significantly, and he had managed to get out of hospital - even though they had to take strict care of him.

Xia Luna had always suspected that her father still had feelings for her biological mother, but after he met Li Lanni, it became even more apparent.

So when she told this to Li Lanni, she was excited and proposed a plan to make their parents meet and talk things through. At that time, Li Lanni was more excited than her, even hoping that they would reunite in future and be a complete family once again.

With Xia Hanchen's health getting better and better and surpassing expectations, that dream did seem possible.

But unfortunately, Li Lanni met with an accident before that plan could come into action.

And now, as expected, Xia Hanchen's health had become worse than it was a year ago.

Xia Luna knew what he wanted. But could she really make Li Lanni meet him again? Many things had happened after Li Lanni's accident, and her mother would never trust her, much less agree to let her bring Li Lanni to their father. Going to see him herself was even more off the charts, and Xia Luna knew that it was what he wanted more than anything.

Would her father's life really have to end so miserably? Surely the heavens should be merciful to grant him this one last wish, right?

While these thoughts ran through her mind, Xia Luna fell into a restless sleep full of nightmares.

...

The next morning, Cheng Yu was surprised to find her in the kitchen, absentmindedly making breakfast.

"What are you thinking about, and so early in the morning?" She asked.

When Cheng Yu asked her, she had actually not really expected an answer, and as expected, she didn't get any because Xia Luna simply shoved whatever she was thinking about at the back of her head before flashing a smile. "Morning. I made breakfast."

Cheng Yu pursed her lips. "It's okay if you don't want to talk about it. But you should know that letting it out is always the best solution. Keeping it all pent up in you will only make you sadder."

Xia Luna smirked, didn't she know this already? It just didn't feel right to bother people about her hectic life.

And it was damned hectic. A father who was on the brink of death, a mother who hated them for heaven knows what reason, a sister she felt indebted to. And a boyfriend, no, an ex-boyfriend she had to answer to, who was close to finding her again. And some mistakes she had to own up to, including the murder she had committed not too long ago. She had always tried to push that scene out of her mind, but sometimes she couldn't help but think about it. And she would feel so guilty that she would almost want to turn herself in. But once she remembered why she did it in the first place, that guilt would be replaced with indifference. But that didn't mean it didn't bother her.

Oh, and top on her list of problems was a scheming stepmother, whom she had to thank for 97% of her predicaments. Honestly, even she didn't know how she came up with that figure, but it did feel right.

She was the rebellious iron girl she had made herself, but she could also crumble at times. In fact, at times, she felt more vulnerable than she had ever imagined possible. Or maybe, she had always been this vulnerable. Just like a paper tiger that looked fierce on the surface but could easily be torn into pieces. Perhaps she was not as strong as she had always thought she was.

"Luna?" Cheng Yu was getting worried. It would be alright if Xia Luna spoke or cursed or cried like other girls did when they felt sad. But this girl would always stare into space, lock herself into her own world, and be lost in it for so long that it would get creepy.

Not again...

But she was in luck this time. Xia Luna brushed away her lousy mood and gulped down her breakfast before getting changed.

"Where are you going?" Cheng Yu asked worriedly.

"To stroll around."

"Oh." Cheng Yu knew she was lying. Xia Luna might be good in hiding her feelings and lying, but she could lie to anyone else. Cheng Yu knew her deepest wounds and understood her the most. It would be strange if she could be deceived by her.

But Cheng Yu didn't call her out for it. She must need to be on her own for a while. She would calm down after letting it out.

Which made Cheng Yu wonder, where did she always go when she was not at her apartment? And that seemed to be on a regular pattern too...

But to avoid having a fallout with her, Cheng Yu didn't ask too many questions. Perhaps it was better if she didn't know. She finished her own breakfast, washed the dishes, and left for Star Art International.

...

Li Lanni was early today. Cheng Yu sat next to her with a smile on her lips. "We didn't have lunch together yesterday. How about we do so today?"

Li Lanni had one of those expressions that Cheng Yu couldn't understand. "I really want to. But I owe the white-haired pervert cookies and have to bake some today."

Cheng Yu was startled. What pervert?

Was it Ji Xiehan? That was the only man that had white hair and was close to Li Lanni lately.

Speaking of which, "Why was Ji Xiehan's mother looking for you yesterday? She simply dragged you away!"

Li Lanni didn't have anything to hide. "She came to give me a lecture about how great her dearest son is and how I don't deserve to marry into their family. Are you kidding me? Urgh... like my taste is that bad."

Cheng Yu looked at her defeated expression and cocked her head curiously. Although Li Lanni clearly said her taste wasn't that bad, why did it feel like she looked heartbroken?

She couldn't have started falling in love with Ji Xiehan, could she?

No.. That wasn't possible.

Chapter 107 - The So Called Huge Favor

Cheng Yu was the only one who knew about Li Lanni's encounter with Madam Ji. Actually, Li Lanni didn't want to reminisce and gossip about her confrontation with Madam Ji to anyone because she felt it below herself to dwell on it.

But Cheng Yu wouldn't let her off. She had clung to her and annoyed her into recounting all the details about her conversation with Madam Ji word-to-word. Li Lanni knew that Cheng Yu was worried about her, so she patiently told her everything and asked her not to say these things to anyone.

While Madam Ji was about to burst with anger, how could she face people when a little girl had shamed her?

Her hatred for Li Lanni deepened even more. She was initially thinking about giving that girl a chance if she was outstanding, but now she had made up her mind. Li Lanni would never set foot into their family.

In anger, she called Mrs. Feng, who was her close friend and ranted to her over a cup of tea. "Can you imagine it?! A little b*tch dared to be so rude to me, yet she expects to get her hands on my son?! Not as long as I live!"

Mrs. Feng had heard about Ji Xiehan bringing a girl to the banquet. While she was displeased, she had kept her calm. And look, it paid off! She knew Madam Ji too well.

How could the Ji family accept some random girl into their family? Only a capable girl like her Feng Ci could make a good wife for Ji Xiehan.

Now that they were at it, she brought it up in passing. "The kids have grown up very fast. We are now even talking about their marriage. I still remember seeing them play together and pull pranks on each other."

Madam Ji somehow knew where this kind of conversation was heading to and went with the flow. "Feng Ci was so pretty as a little girl. And now she has grown into an exceptional beauty with brains. If only Xiehan could open his eyes..."

The women chatted on, each knowing what they wanted but passing it off as a casual chat.

In the end, Mrs. Feng just came out with it. "We cannot force the kids to fall in love, but we can initiate it. How about we let them meet? They might just ignite a spark!"

Madam Ji couldn't hide her happiness. While she liked Gu Tianxi more, Feng Ci was good too.

As kids, they would always play as a group with Lin Jian, Jiang Xingyu, and a few other kids, but the boys were fond of bullying the girls. The girls always found Ji Xiehan more friendly to speak to, as he wouldn't bully them like other boys did.

So they would always stick to him. Feng Ci was no different. She particularly adored Ji Xiehan and would find all sorts of excuses to go to the Ji mansion to play with him. When Ji Xiehan left the country with his aunt, she had bawled her eyes out for days.

Although it was just an innocent friendship back then, and they were only playing together like siblings would, it was this kind of naive and pure friendship that was most likely to blossom into love.

Meanwhile, in Jiang Xingyu's mansion,

"I have a bad feeling." Ji Xiehan suddenly said, shifting his gaze from the laptop to his friend.

"About what?" Jiang Xingyu nonchalantly asked, still immersed in his iPad.

"My mother." He hesitated, "I know her too well, and she didn't seem to like Lanni."

"How can anyone not like Lanni? She's an angel. Practically." Ji Xiehan languidly replied but felt something was wrong and finally looked away from iPad. He was met with his friend's deadly glare.

Jiang Xingyu gulped and replied meekly, "What?... oh, fine. I shouldn't compliment your little beauty. "

'This inhumane world. My Xia should come to me soon. I want to spend my days with my own little beauty!' He gritted his teeth and muttered under his breath.

"Speaking of which, do you think my mother will like Xia? She seemed to really like Lanni. Since they are twins, she should like Xia, right?" As soon as he was done, he realized he had said something wrong. Crap.

"Let's talk about that when you have found your Xia." Ji Xiehan mocked.

Jiang Xingyu hugged his iPad and sulked. Right. It would be a different case if she lost her memory or something of the sort. But the girl was deliberately avoiding him. How could he take this lying down?

Once he got that girl back, she wouldn't hear the end of it from him.

Ji Xiehan felt it was a waste of breath to share his worries with Jiang Xingyu and wondered what would happen if his mother confronted Li Lanni or did anything similar to that.

They were not even on friendly terms. If that happened, even their current delicate relationship would be ruined.

He was oblivious to the fact that the trouble was already rearing its head.

"I remember you still owe me a favor." Jiang Xingyu suddenly interrupted his friend.

"What favor?" Ji Xiehan stared annoyingly at his friend; he knew him too well. The idiot was about to find excuses to extort him.

"The one from many years ago. When you had just come to visit your parents in Summer and got into a fight with the older boys, I helped you cover up, remember?"

"What drugs are you on?" Ji Xiehan cringed. Who in their right mind would dig up something from over a decade ago?

"I'm not on drugs. But that day, you shakily said you would do anything if I kept my mouth shut. Then you owed me a favor. It's been many years, but you won't go back on your word, will you? Don't give me 'I don't remember' as an excuse. It will not change a thing."

"What do you want?" Ji Xiehan asked disgruntledly. He knew it had to be something he wouldn't agree to do, or else his friend wouldn't have gone all the way to dig up something that happened when they were teenagers.

And he had an inkling of what it was related to.

"A lot has been happening in Star Art International lately. There seems to be a mole, and it's not the suspicious waitress from the banquet. She had a different agenda and we have already taken care of her.

Although Si Yulin is already investigating the matter, it's going to take a while, and the incident at the banquet has already caused me a lot of troubles. I cannot let my subordinates do all the work when I can help them, right?" Jiang Xingyu looked at his friend with a crafty smile.

"Where's this discussion heading?" Ji Xiehan demanded. He had a feeling this was where the so-called huge favor came in.

"I have my suspicions over a girl in the Comic Arts trainee department."

Ji Xiehan would be a fool if he didn't understand what he wanted by now. "You want me to ask Lanni to spy on her?"

Jiang Xingyu saw the stern look on his friend's face and knew that what was awaiting him was a resounding "no." "Surely, you can do this for a friend, right?"

"This is madness. Can't Si Yulin do it? She is in Star Art International too."

Jiang Xingyu knew this too. But it was just more practical. "The girl I'm suspecting is somewhat close to Li Lanni."

"Cheng Yu?" Ji Xiehan cocked an eyebrow. She did need money, but it didn't seem possible.

"No. It's a red-haired girl. The name is Ruby Chan. She is in the same class as Li Lanni, but she doesn't even love art. Heaven knows why she's there. By the way, she is close to your sister too."

Ji Xiehan let the words sink in. Why was Ji Feifei involved in everything unpleasant? Was she addicted to causing trouble everywhere she went?

He was yet to get all the details about Li Lanni's accident months ago, but he had a gut feeling that was Ji Feifei not only involved, but she also played a significant role in that accident. Then there were those little ploys she played previously, and now she was involved in Star Art International too? This was no joking matter.

But still, he didn't want to involve Li Lanni.

Jiang Xingyu knew this, so he pulled out the trump card. "Heaven knows what would happen if Li Lanni got too close to that Ruby girl unaware of her malicious intentions towards her. It would be best if Li Lanni could keep her guard up and find her intentions first, right!"

Ji Xiehan clenched his fists. He knew that Jiang Xingyu was saying this to persuade him, but it was true.

Li Lanni wouldn't be safe if she was close to Ji Feifei's friends.

Chapter 108 - Why Would Ruby Be A Mole?

Ji Xiehan sunk into thought. No matter how much he wanted to deny it, what Jiang Xingyu was saying was right.

But could he really ask Li Lanni to spy on someone? Wouldn't that be too overboard?

Even if he asked her, would she comply with his request? She did owe him a favor, but there was no way he was going to use it for Jiang Xingyu! Thinking till here, Ji Xiehan shot a glare at his friend.

If he couldn't bring himself to ask, he could just warn her about Ruby Chan. That would ensure her safety without having to do such tasks.

"Hey! Don't you even think about backing out! I know you too well." How could Jiang Xingyu not know what his friend was thinking even after receiving a glare from him!

Ji Xiehan sighed. Well, that didn't work.

That night, Li Lanni busied herself around in the kitchen.

She had initially thought of procrastinating for ages and making Ji Xiehan give up on the cookies, but after meeting his mother, she didn't want to owe him anything. She would rather be done with it as soon as possible.

Baking even with the help of a recipe book wasn't very easy for her. The last time she baked hadn't been easy either. She had wanted to ask her mother for help but thought against it in the end, not wanting to bother her.

By the time she was done with mixing the batter, there was a thin layer of sweat on her forehead.

Her clothes and hair were covered with flour even though she had worn an apron and a hat. She quickly portioned the batter onto the baking pan and put them in the oven then set the timer.

She sighed while wiping the sweat and sat on the chair to take rest. She drank a mouthful of water and thought in frustration that she was never going to make cookies again! Luckily she made many of them this time. She would just tell the pervert that she had baked two portions. If he insisted on having her bake again, she would just order some from a pastry shop.

It would still take a while for the cookies to be ready, so she started playing with her phone to pass the time.

Within half-an-hour, the timer went off. Li Lanni quickly switched off the oven and wore a pair of thick mittens before taking out the cookies from the oven.

They looked pretty with the strawberry pieces sticking out a little. At least they looked edible and were pleasing to the eyes.

She waited for them to cool down and took one to taste it.

"Well, at least my hard work paid off." She praised herself as she tasted the sweet crunchiness. "I deserve a pat on my back!"

"Who are those for?" Li Yuming asked as she sniffed the sweet aroma in the kitchen.

Li Lanni was startled and turned to look at her mother. "Mom, when did you get here?"

"Just now. I went to your room and didn't find you."

"Oh..." Li Lanni was too embarrassed to say that the cookies were for Ji Xiehan. Her mother would certainly overthink things, so she changed the topic. "Is something the matter?"

"I will go somewhere early tomorrow morning." Li Yuming smiled when she saw her daughter avoiding the topic. "I might be back quite late or the day after."

"Where are you going?" Li Lanni couldn't help asking.

"Nowhere important. Take care of yourself, okay?"

"Okay." Li Lanni didn't probe further. But she couldn't help but wonder where her mother was going. Was it out of B City? Whatever, she was tired and had no energy to think about it now. She went to her room and freshened up.

Before sleeping, she sent a text message to Ji Xiehan.

...

The next day after class, Li Lanni went back home to get changed before going to meet Ji Xiehan. This was also because she had not carried the cookies with her to class or they would get eaten by her or Cheng Yu.

She had not had lunch yet, so she suggested meeting at a restaurant not far from Feng Ji International. This was only logical since he had to go back to work after lunch.

Because the restaurant was farther from her home, Ji Xiehan arrived before her.

Once she walked into the private booth he had booked and saw how dashing he looked in his black suit and blue shirt; she looked at her Jeans and simple top self-consciously. She should have worn a dress.

She bit her lips and proceeded like she didn't care. "Hey."

Ji Xiehan let out a smile, looking even more attractive with those slight curves at the corners of his mouth. "You look lovely." He complemented honestly.

Although what she was wearing was meant for her comfort and she didn't pay much attention to it, she still looked beautiful.

Obviously, this was because she looked beautiful in anything.

"I do?" Li Lanni's heart raced, and she sounded silly. "You don't look too bad yourself."

It was Ji Xiehan's turn to bask in happiness. This was the first time she had complimented him. He was happy even if it was most likely out of courtesy.

"How are your classes going?" He asked after placing their orders.

"It's all good. We are going to have a test soon. I guess they are planning to discontinue students who will not pass the test."

Ji Xiehan thought it made sense too. For the test to be prepared this early, this was the only logical reason. So they did care for quality after all. He recalled his conversation with Jiang Xingyu from the previous day and decided this was the best time to bring that up. "There are students who don't do well?"

Li Lanni was at ease, so she talked about it. "There are such students in every class, right? It makes one wonder why they are wasting so much time."

"Maybe they have different agendas?" Ji Xiehan said. "Actually, there's a mole in Star Art International."

Li Lanni raised an eyebrow in question.

Ji Xiehan continued. "Two weeks ago, Star Art International was planning to purchase the copyright of a comic. The comic wasn't doing well in the market, and it was going to be redrawn by Star Art International into a better version. There was no way another comics company would have thought of buying the same unpopular comic. Still, on the day before the contract was signed, the author suddenly backed out on Star Art International and collaborated with another company instead."

"Huh?" Li Lanni was surprised.

"This is just one of the many things happening recently. Star Art International has been losing too many deals, including some of the already signed ones. It's obvious that someone is playing tricks."

"There seems to be a mole, and the mole might be your classmate." Ji Xiehan continued.

"That's terrible." Li Lanni frowned, seeming to think of something.

"Yeah. It could slow down a company's progress and cause huge losses. Jiang Xingyu has been sitting on pins and needles. He thinks Ruby Chan is the mole."

Li Lanni's frown deepened. "That's absurd. Why would Ruby be a mole?"

To get her help, he couldn't hide anything, so he expressed his hypothesis. "While Ruby Chan is from a rich family and doesn't need money, she could still be a mole. She could do it for her father."

"She could... but it would not make sense. Her father's company has nothing to do with art."

"Of course. That would have been too obvious. But think about it. Chan Enterprise has been trying to compete with Jiang Corporation for ages now. If a subsidiary of Jiang Corporation was attacked to bankruptcy, wouldn't Chan Enterprise beat Jiang Corporation?"

Li Lanni was in deep thought again. "It would..."

Indeed, Chen Enterprise would be the biggest benefactor if something went wrong in Jiang Corporation.

"But Ruby isn't the mole." She still refuted his suspicions after thinking about it clearly.

"How can you be so sure?"

"Let's be logical. She doesn't like art, doesn't do well either, attends classes every day when she didn't even go to class in B City University. Wouldn't that be too obvious? I don't think anyone would plant such an obvious person.

If I wanted to plant a mole in a comic art class, I would plant someone talented. Someone like Cedric because no one would suspect him.

Of course, Cedric isn't the mole either."

Ji Xiehan found her train of thought compelling and more logical than Jiang Xingyu's. But, "How would you know that Cedric isn't the mole either?"

"Because I know who the real mole is." Li Lanni shrugged. "To be exact, there are two of them. The other one is in a different department, but I know about both of them."

"What?!" Ji Xiehan widened his eyes in shock.

Chapter 109 - How Did You Know All This?

Ji Xiehan was mortified. "You knew about it all along? How did you even know?"

"That was easy to find out. The one from my class is a good artist, but she has always looked like she is in a hurry to go somewhere.

Then when no one is looking, she discreetly meets up with a particular guy. Three days ago, she had a bud in her ear. It was of the same color as her skin and was covered by her hair, but I saw it briefly and cannot mistake it. The other mole is quite obvious, right?" Li Lanni casually rattled on, as though what was saying was something that happened every other day.

Ji Xiehan stared at her in disbelief. "You're kidding, right?"

"Nope. Believe it if you want to. But I don't think it would be funny to joke around with such a matter. "

Ji Xiehan didn't know whether to ask how on earth she knew all this or how she could be so calm saying it. "And you didn't tell anyone?"

"Nobody asked me. It was none of my business." She shrugged.

Ji Xiehan was rendered speechless.

Dwelling on it would only exhaust his brain, so instead, he asked, "So who are the two moles?"

"I cannot tell you." Li Lanni shook her head in denial.

"Why not?"

"I only stumbled upon these facts without intending to. It's none of my business." She said expressionlessly.

"..." Ji Xiehan was left speechless.

He did not know what to say. Jiang Xingyu had exhausted his brain cells, and so had Si Yulin, and they had only come up with a wrong guess. Yet Li Lanni knew the truth without intending to? What kind of weird situation was this?

He gazed at the girl before him, wondering what he could say to make her tell him. Otherwise, Jiang Xingyu would not get off his back.

He was a negotiation expert, alright, and he could get anything he wanted with the help of his glib tongue. But unexpectedly, he couldn't bring himself to use some of those tricks on Li Lanni. Nevertheless, he had to thank her. If he didn't tell him that, he would have wasted a lot of his time and resources investigating the wrong target!

He could only look as troubled as he was. "Thank you."

"What are you thanking me for?"

"Even though you didn't tell me everything, you did give me a major pointer. I appreciate it." Ji Xiehan replied with a gentle smile.

Li Lanni remained silent, not understanding how this matter would affect him. This was not related to Feng Ji International in any way, right?

"This means a lot to Jiang Xingyu." Also, his crazy sister might be involved in this too. He felt obliged to help Jiang Xingyu. But thinking of how it was going to take time to investigate the two moles, paired with the other two things he was investigating -- Li Lanni's accident and Jiang Xingyu's Xia -- he did have a lot on his plate. His smile gradually disappeared, paving way for a distressed frown.

When Li Lanni saw that the smile on his face had disappeared, unconsciously, she furrowed her eyebrows too. For some reason, she didn't like it when he was anything but happy. She wanted to see him smile forever, even though she didn't know why she cared. All she knew was that it was such a pity for such a handsome face to frown.

For a moment, she almost blurted out everything she knew. But thinking about it, what if she got into trouble for it? The walls had ears. It was not worth it.

Looking at her blank facial expression, Ji Xiehan could tell that she was having trouble deciding what to do. He didn't want to force her into anything, so he let her be. If she wanted to tell him about it, he would gladly accept the information, but if she didn't, he was not about to force it out of her mouth. So he quickly tried to change the conversation.

Fortunately, at the same time, the waiter came in after knocking the door with their lunch.

Soon, Li Lanni pushed everything at the back of her mind to satiate her hunger.

Ji Xiehan didn't eat much; he was secretly sneaking glances at her and took a photo or two.

Where had the frown flown away to! At this moment, he was no different from a teenager passionately in love!

His admiration was apparent in his eyes. How could a girl look so beautiful, even when just doing something as simple as eating?

He could tell how much she was enjoying the food from how she savored it, and a smile escaped his lips.

If they had a daughter in the future, he would be happy if she resembled her. She would be the loveliest little girl on earth.

She would even be lovelier if she had her grey eyes and his silvery hair.

No. Such a combination would be dull.

Maybe she should have his hair and his blue eyes.... it would also be pretty if she inherited everything from her mother... or his blue eyes and her black hair.

After debating in his brain for a while, he decided that they could have three kids: two girls and one boy or two boys and one girl.

One could have black hair and blue eyes; another could have black hair and grey eyes and other silver hair and blue eyes.

Then they could play together every day. He would teach the boys to protect their sisters and their mother; and the girls' role would be to receive his hugs and kisses and candy.

He was just about to name them when he snapped back. Calm down, Ji Xiehan! She is not even your girlfriend yet.

He had gotten far ahead of himself.

If Li Lanni had known what he was thinking, she would have gone crazy by this guy's nonsensical imagination.

Once they were done eating, he offered to drop her off before going back to work.

But she had been driven there by her chauffeur, so she rejected his offer politely.

Before they parted, she held out the small bag she had carried with her. "Your cookies."

Ji Xiehan grinned happily as he reached for them. He felt like a little kid finally receiving his hard earned candy. "Thank you."

Li Lanni's face suddenly burned scarlet as she hesitated, he would like them, right?

"Eer... I'll be on my way then." Li Lanni quickly brushed away her silly thoughts.

"Mmh." Ji Xiehan wanted to ask her out again but remained silent. She might just reject him. He should find a good reason first.

"Ling Shan." Li Lanni suddenly said.

"What?" Ji Xiehan was unable to understand what she meant.

"The girl from my class, the one we talked about earlier. Her name is Ling Shan. And the other one is the CEO's assistant."

Ji Xiehan soon realized that She was talking about the moles. "Thank you."

"I figured you would find out anyway. I already gave you too many spoilers. Might as well just tell you." She shrugged.

It took a moment for the information to sink in. The CEO's assistant actually betrayed Star Art International? How tragic.

"Lanni, I will protect you." He suddenly promised.

"Huh?"

"I will not let anyone know that you are the one who found them out. But if anyone does find out, I will be sure to protect you."

Li Lanni felt touched by his promise. At least she didn't feed the information to the dogs. "If..." she tried to stop her mouth but it spoke on its own. "If I see anything else that is strange, I will let you know."

Ji Xiehan nodded his thanks as he walked her to her car. He would seriously squeeze out every single second he could to spend more time with her. Even if it was just one more second, it was worth it.

—

That evening, Ji Xiehan finished up all his work before taking a shower and sitting on the sofa in his room comfortably. Then he fished out the cookies to enjoy them.

He couldn't remember eating anything so sweet in his adulthood.

It was somewhat foreign but not appalling; he liked the taste of it.

When he was done, he sent a message to her happily. [The cookies were sweet.]

..

Li Lanni was sitting on her bed and reading a novel when her phone chimed. She took a glance; then, her face went red when she saw the content. [Pervert: The cookies were sweet.]

She didn't know how to reply.

She was still racking her brains when another text came in. [Pervert: Thank you.]

She let out a silly giggle before replying. [You already thanked me.]

Soon came another.

[Pervert: I was just finding an excuse to text you. Can't you tell?]

Li Lanni grabbed a pillow and buried her face in it.

Chapter 110 - He Kissed Her!

After blushing like a naive little girl for a while, Li Lanni finally pushed the pillow away and thought of what to say to him.

Then she remembered Madam Ji's confrontation. The joyful spark in her eyes immediately turned serene.

She couldn't get close to Ji Xiehan. If his mother didn't confront her, she might have let whatever was happening spiral into friendship at the very most.

But now, after all the things his Madam Ji said t about her and her mother, she didn't even want to be his friend. She had better things to do than bicker with people from the Ji family.

She turned her screen off and closed her eyes, deciding not to reply.

Ji Xiehan waited for her reply for hours. He glanced at his phone for the umpteenth time with a frown. Was she ignoring him? He sulked. 'Why hadn't she texted him back yet?

She probably had not read his text yet and had gone for bed. That must be the reason! She would reply him the next morning after checking the message.

"There's no reason for her to ignore me, after all."

Ji Xiehan comforted himself when he saw that she stiil hadn't replied back, and went for the bed after checking his mails.

Little did he know, she was going to ignore him for days.

Indeed for the next few days, Li Lanni neither answered his calls nor replied to his texts. She would also slip away from Star Art International so fast that he wouldn't be able to see her if he went over after her class.

Had he done something wrong? He couldn't help but wonder.

Many days passed, and the one-month deadline his father had given him was almost over.

He knew that his father meant it when he said that he would have to marry either of those two women if he didn't get Li Lanni engaged to him within one month.

He also had a feeling that his mother was eagerly waiting for the month to end before starting to introduce women to him.

He only had one week left.

This wouldn't do.

He thought about it then dialed a certain idiot's number.

"Eh? Eh? Ji Xiehan finally actively called me? Is the sun going to rise from the west tomorrow?"

Ji Xiehan put up with Lin Jian's chatter. He needed his help anyway. "Help me do something."

"Of course you would only call me because you need help. You heartless profiteer!" Lin Jian ranted for a while.

Ji Xiehan was about to hang up when the motor-mouthed idiot said something more reasonable. "What do you need?"

...

When he was done with Lin Jian, he felt his brain cells must have been depleted. He massaged his temples and sighed. So much for having friends. He grabbed his car keys and headed out of his office.

Because he had rushed over, he had to wait for almost an hour before he finally saw Li Lianni exiting the building. This time, Cheng Yu was not with her. It was even more convenient.

As soon as he saw her, he hurried over to her.

This time, he saw it clearly. Li Lanni saw him and tried to slip away.

He just had an inkling about it, but now that he saw her sneaking away, he knew that something was wrong. Thus he quickly grabbed her elbow just as she tried to rush away.

"Ji... Ji Xiehan?" She gasped.

"Don't try to evade it. You clearly saw me. Lanni, why are you avoiding me? Did I do something wrong?" He knew that he didn't have time and that she might just shrug him off and walk away, so he went straight to the point and asked the most important question when he had the chance.

As expected, she shrugged his hand away and said coldly. "Mr. Ji, please behave yourself."

Ji Xiehan's mood dropped by a hundred degrees. "Why are you suddenly being so formal?"

"Since when have I been casual with you?" She muttered, rendering him speechless. She was right; indeed, Li Lanni had always been distant towards him.

Perhaps because she had been a little less distant lately, he must have read too much into it and assumed she was beginning to warm up to him. How naive of him. Of course she couldn't have started liking him so soon. He had gotten ahead of himself yet again.

But still, there had to be a reason for her to become more distant suddenly. Why would she?...He thought of a possibility and felt his heart sink. "Did someone say something to you?"

Li Lanni looked up at him blankly.

"Was it my mother?" He knew that his mother didn't like Li Lanni. If there was anyone who would say something mean to Li Lanni to make her cold towards him, it had to be his mother.

Li Lanni was awed by how fast he had managed to make a correct guess. But what was the use? The last thing she wanted right now was to be entangled in some melodrama with families she didn't even want to be affiliated with.

"It's none of your business Mr. Ji. Please get out of my way." She said blankly.

"How is it not my business Lanni? You are ignoring me. As the person being ignored, that's my business in every way. Not to mention that I..." He grabbed a fistful of air and cursed inwardly. He had almost blurted out that he loved her. This wasn't the right time to confess his feelings for the first time.

"Excuse me." Li Lanni tried not to lose her temper as she pushed him aside. But there was nothing the strength of her little hands could do against a strong man like him.

"Sorry, Lanni. I didn't want to have to do this either." He whispered, gazing deeply into her eyes.

"W-w-what..?" Li Lanni suddenly trembled. Something was wrong. His expression...

Before she knew it, she felt her world spin then she was against the wall in half a second. Before she could protest, a sturdy body was pressed against her; then, she felt a cold and wet sensation on her lips.

Her eyes shot open, her breath stopping for a second or two as her heart raced.

Then the man pulled away from her and looked at her apologetically. "Lanni..."

She snapped from her daze, suddenly realizing what had just happened. He... he kissed her?

She raised her hand, and her palm landed on his cheek with a crisp resounding slap!

Ji Xiehan was shocked out of his wits. He had more or less expected it but still shocked him.

"How dare you?! Ji Xiehan, you disgusting man! You... you!" She didn't know what to say, so she pushed him away and ran all the way to the parking lot where the chauffeur was waiting for her.

Damn it.

Ji Xiehan couldn't run after her. He knew that would only make her more upset.

He already knew she wasn't ready for that, but he still went ahead and kissed her. Ji Xiehan, are you such a fool? He must have left his brain in the office while coming. He grabbed at his hair and watched as her car drove off past him.

He had messed up this time.

...

Once Li Lanni reached home, she threw her bag onto her bed and dashed into the bathroom. She was determined to wash that pervert's scent off her even if she had to take thirty showers and splash a litre of perfume on her body.

That annoying bastard, how dare he do that to her?

She wasn't going overboard. He should consider himself lucky that she was not suing him for sexual harassment. She had all the grounds to do so, didn't she? He had pressed her against the wall and kissed her! All against her will!

She stood under the shower as the warm water cascaded over her bare skin.

By instinct, she reached to touch her lips. It was the first time she did so since he kissed her.

She closed her eyes and hugged her shoulders in disappointment. Just when she was starting to think that he was a respectable man. How could he take advantage of her?

She brought her fingers to her lips once again, caressing them gently as she tried to forget that scene. But no matter what she did, that kiss had already happened. It couldn't be undone.

She stayed in the water for forty minutes before she decided that she was clean enough. She clumsily got out of the shower and dried herself before wrapping her body in a bathrobe.

She picked up the clothes from where she had dumped them earlier and took a sniff.

She didn't know what she was doing either. Unsurprisingly, his scent was still lingering on her clothes.

It was surprising, however, that their scents had combined into an even sweeter scent. It was neither too strong nor as repulsive as she had thought it would be.. It almost made her imagination go wild.