

Chapter 201 - Was He A Masochist?

Madam Jiang cast a side glance at her own son like she found him annoying too. "Why do you like whining so much? Are you a two year old kid?"

Jiang Xingyu clutched at his chest in heartbreak. "Fine. I will leave. You two are bullies, humph."

Xia Luna chuckled. She enjoyed bullying him just as much as everyone else did. She hugged Madam Jiang. "Aunty, I'll go and cook for you now."

Madam Jiang didn't want her to tire herself out. But seeing how happy and eager she was, she couldn't bring herself to say no. Besides, she had never had a meal cooked by a daughter. Of course, she didn't have any daughter. Xia Luna was very much like one, so Madam Jiang was eager to have a taste.

As soon as Xia Luna entered the kitchen, she familiarized herself with it before taking out the ingredients she needed.

But just as she started preparing them, Jiang Xingyu walked in.

"What do you want?" She snapped at him.

"I'm only here to watch you cook. Is there anything wrong with that?" He leaned against the fridge with a smirk plastered across his face.

Xia Luna was infuriated. "I don't want you to watch." She hissed.

"Oh." He walked towards her, pretending not to see her darkening expression. "Then I'll help you."

"I don't need your help." She narrowed her gaze like she could beat him up.

"Honey, let me help you." He insisted and took the knife from her hand.

"Jiang Xingyu!" Xia Luna's lungs almost exploded from fury. Couldn't this guy just stop being irritating for once? Hmph, she knew who he was afraid of. She glared at him and left the kitchen.

"Aunty, Xingyu just won't stop bothering me." She told him off mercilessly.

"Really? You actually ran to tell mommy? What are you, a three year old girl?" Jiang Xingyu mocked as he followed her out to defend himself. "I'm only trying to help her out but she doesn't appreciate my help."

Madam Jiang looked at both of them and laughed heartily. They were just too cute. They would make the perfect couple. "Luna, let him help you. You might need help and you can make him do the boring tasks like chopping vegetables. Make sure you bully him while at it."

Xia Luna frowned quizzically. Her words made it sound like Jiang Xingyu would be on the losing side but whose side was she on exactly?

Madam Jiang looked innocent like she was actually siding with her.

Of course, Madam Jiang was on Xia Luna's side. It was just that if she let Jiang Xingyu bother her right now, they might get closer. What she wanted in the end was to make Xia Luna her daughter-in-law anyway.

Xia Luna huffed in defeat and returned to the kitchen. Behind her, Jiang Xingyu happily blew a thankful kiss at his mother, who wordlessly warned him not to go overboard. He raised a thumb in response and followed Luna back into the kitchen.

He grabbed an apron from the hook and draped it over himself then positioned himself next to her. "What should I do?"

Xia Luna cast him a glance and ignored him, continuing to do her work.

Seeing that she was ignoring him, he laughed. She was just too cute. "Do you realize that our aprons are similar? It's like wearing a couples outfit with you."

"That's because they are identical, you dummy." Xia Luna didn't know what to do with him.

He laughed after successfully making her talk. "So you really are ignoring me on purpose. Come on, give me some work to do."

"I'm warning you. If you bother me, I will stick this into your guts." She threatened, pointing the edge of the vegetable knife at his stomach.

"You don't play with such tools, honey." He grabbed her hand and pulled it further away from him.

"Hmph." She resumed chopping the radish.

"Give me a task, come on." Jiang Xingyu whined.

She took a deep breath then pointed at the jars on a shelf. "Bring out the second jar and open it for me. Quick."

"Okay." Jiang Xingyu happily grabbed the jar from the shelf and opened it at the same time that he placed it on the kitchen counter. Because he had been too careless, the content splashed in his face.

Xia Luna averted her gaze and giggled.

"You asked me to open a jar of floor and didn't mention what was inside? You pranked me." He complained with his whitened face, hair and chest.

"You should check the label first. Don't you know that?" She was laughing too hard to think of helping him dust it off. She even took out her phone from her pocket and took a photo of him, laughing at his silly look. "What? Your dye is awesome. Don't take it off yet."

Jiang Xingyu helplessly swatted the floor off him. Such a heartless woman. Was he a masochist for loving her?

When he was done, he went back to her side. She had had enough fun laughing at his expense and was now back to chopping vegetables. Only then was he able to see the speed at which she was chopping vegetables. "Are you even human? How can you do it so fast?"

He picked up a slice of onion. It was so thin too.

Thinking of something, he took another knife, grabbed an onion and started chopping it. "I can do it too. See?"

She didn't spare him a glance.

"Don't ignore me. Lo... ah!"

Xia Luna shot a look at his scrunched up face then followed his gaze down to his finger. Blood was seeping out of a small cut.

In shock, she rushed to him and grabbed his hand, putting his finger in her mouth. It was only a while later that she remembered to take an ice cube from the fridge. After taking it, she rushed back and grabbed his hand, pressing the ice cube on the cut. When he hissed, she glared at him. "Bear with it. How could you be so careless? Are you a little child? Look, now you've cut yourself. I really don't know what to do with you."

He smiled, earning another glare from her as she rubbed the ice cube against his finger. "What are you smiling for? Don't go playing with knives if you can't use them!"

Jiang Xingyu's smile widened even more, revealing his snow-white teeth.. Before this, he had never been so happy about being cut.

Chapter 202 - Restless

"Do you know how you look right now? Do you want to know?" He asked, unable to restrain his smile from deepening even further. She paused her actions and looked at him curiously. Her eyes were still filled with anxiousness and worry.

"You look like a wife scolding her husband because he has hurt himself and she is worried." Jiang Xingyu felt proud saying such words to her.

She froze, all the worry vanishing from her eyes. She wanted to retaliate but she couldn't. He was right. A wife would definitely worriedly grab ice cubes or a band aid if her husband got hurt. She annoyedly let go of his hand and threw the ice cubes into the trash bin. "Stop sounding like I'm worried about you. Why would I be worried over you? It was just out of instinct that I..."

She stopped, realizing that her words were not making anything better. Saying that she did it out of instinct was just the same as admitting that she cared about him deep down. Throwing him a "I would do it for anyone", she began cooking.

Jiang Xingyu looked at her back then back at his finger. Happiness filled his heart even though he had been ignored.

At the door, Madam Jiang smiled in satisfaction and slipped away. Hearing Jiang Xingyu's yelp, she had worriedly rushed over. But when she reached the door of the kitchen, she was met with such an affectionate scene instead. Luna was actually worried about her son!

She held a hand over her chest in bliss. Never had she thought that she would one day be so happy about her own son getting hurt. Even when Jiang Xingyu got ignored, she still smiled through it. It must be because Luna was going through a hard time that she wasn't willing to open her heart up to anyone. She only needed time. Once she realized that she actually cared about Xingyu, she would give him a chance.

Realizing that she had been watching their cute cold war for quite some time, she went back to the living room.

By the time Xia Luna realized it, she had prepared a table full of dishes. They all started eating it in delight.

"Luna, you're a better cook than me." Madam Jiang exclaimed after just a taste. Jiang Xingyu would be lucky to eat food prepared by her often.

Xia Luna smiled modestly. "Aunty, you are too kind. You're the best cook ever."

Although her culinary skills were above passable, this was the most delicious food she had ever cooked. Perhaps it was because she was cooking for Madam Jiang that she had put all her heart in it.

Jiang Xingyu did not utter a word—he was too busy enjoying the food. He even chocked once and Xia Luna worriedly gave him a glass of water.

Halfway through the meal, a blabbermouth joined them.

"Why are you not at work, punk?" Lin Jian glared at Jiang Xingyu. He had looked for him at Jiang Corporation and he was not there. The idiot didn't even answer his calls. In the end, he had to go to his villa. Lin Jian was about to scold him when he saw the dishes all over the table and stopped. He scanned

the different types of meat braised, roast and sautéed, rice, several vegetable dishes and salads and his mouth watered. "What's with the feast? Is there some sort of celebration?"

"Ah, Lin Jian is here. Why don't you join us?" Madam Jiang waved him over.

Lin Jian didn't even need to be told. There were lots of delicious-looking dishes on the table. How could he not have a taste?

"What's the occasion?" He asked curiously as he sat.

"Luna cooked for us today. Does that qualify?"

Lin Jian finally realized Xia Luna's presence, having been too focused on the food to realize. "She can cook?" He glared at Jiang Xingyu. "How can he be so lucky? A super beauty and she can even cook? None of my girlfriends can even boil water."

Madam Jiang scoffed at him.

Xia Luna minded her business.

Jiang Xingyu was too busy munching his way through a fried chicken thigh to pay attention to him.

In the end, not a single grain of rice was left on the dining table. Xia Luna was initially worried that she had cooked too much. However, the two friends scarfed it down like gluttons and asked her to cook for them some other day.

"Those two won't wake up soon." Madam Jiang laughed at her son and his friend who were sprawled on couches in the living room, fast asleep.

Xia Luna laughed at them too. "They look kinda cute."

"Both of them?" Madam Jiang teasingly asked, and Xia Luna realized that she had been staring at Jiang Xingyu the whole time. This was a streak of insanity. Why was she paying so much attention to that idiot?

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That afternoon, Madam Jiang dragged Xia Luna to watch a movie together. Later, she even taught the latter how to knit. Before they realized it, the sun had set and they were on the topic of babies.

"Luna, do you prefer girls or boys?" She excitedly asked.

"Erm..." what?

"Actually, I used to prefer girls in the past but since I already have you now, it doesn't matter anymore. She excitedly continued. "But I'm pretty sure it would be nice to have another lovely girl filling the house with happiness."

"Well..."

"Luna, are you okay?" Madam Jiang realized that she suddenly looked sad.

"Yes. I just... can we not talk about children? I'm not even married yet. I don't even have a boyfriend yet."

"I see. Don't worry, I won't bring it up again." Madam Jiang smiled lovingly.

It made Luna's heart fill with guilt. She rested her head on Madam Jiang's lap. "Aunty, I'm sorry if I sounded rude. It's just..."

"Luna, I understand." The woman tousled her hair. "I know what you're going through. It's hard for you to think of the future now."

Xia Luna couldn't help feeling a bit emotional. How could Madam Jiang understand her so much? This felt so much like how people said that mothers understood their children.

Every time she was with Madam Jiang, she would find her heart growing closer to her. Perhaps, with Madam Jiang around, she would no longer miss her own mother in future.

"It's late already. Let's go back in." Madam Jiang's voice brought her out of her thoughts.

At the same time.

Li Yuming's villa.

Li Yuming held her phone against her chest as she paced the living room. "I have already spoken to Xiehan and he assured me that Lanni is alright. Why am I still so restless?"

Not only that, the restlessness had also multiplied after that phone call. Was that normal?

Chapter 203 - You Cannot Escape

"You cannot escape this time."

Lanni looked up at the scary-looking man towering above her. His eyes were bloodshot with anger while his nose kept twitching as he closed in on her. She stumbled and fell to the ground on her backside. The man pointed a gun at her forehead.

"But why?" Lanni asked. "Why do you want to kill me?"

"Because you should be dead!" He spat through huge gritted teeth, then he pulled the trigger.

Lanni started awake. Her chest heaved up and down as her heart raced. She raised her hand and touched her forehead. She was sweaty but there was no blood, no bullet and when she pinched herself, she felt pain. So she was alive. It was just a nightmare.

What scared her the most was not the man's face and eyes. Neither was it the fact that there were dead bodies not too far away. It was that in her dream, that girl who was supposed to be her was not in the slightest bit scared. How creepy...

She swung her legs to the side of the bed and stood up, looking around in a daze.

Thin rays of sunlight seeped in through the white curtains. So it was already morning. She had unknowingly slept through the whole evening and night.

This was neither her room nor Xiehan's bedroom. Where was she?

"Xiehan?" She croaked and coughed to clear her parched throat.

"Honey, you're awake." Ji Xiehan walked into the room as soon as he heard her call his name.

Lanni hugged him, finally feeling safe. "Where is this place?"

"We're in my office." He rubbed her back. Only then did he feel that she was trembling slightly. He looked at her worriedly. "Are you alright?"

"I'm okay now." She snuggled into his arms comfortably, to Xiehan's relief.

"I ordered breakfast for you. You must be hungry." Xiehan said and went to bring the food he had bought, after which he also brought her clothes which he had asked his butler to bring to his office.

Because Ji Xiehan had work to do and meetings to attend, Lanni made her presence scarce and obediently watched a movie in his chamber. She only later decided to go to Star Art International to pick her things.

"I'll take you there." Ji Xiehan closed the file he was working on and suggested when she told him where she was going.

She went beside him and kissed his cheek. "Love, you have work to do. I'll contact my chauffeur."

"I promised Aunty Li." He insisted, and Lanni was helpless. She couldn't retaliate whenever he threw her mother in as backup. Knowing that trying to convince him would only waste their time, she took her bag and phone from the chamber. Having someone else handle his work, Xiehan grabbed his car keys and drove her to Star Art International.

As expected, Cheng Yu was worried when Lanni missed a class and upset when she learnt that Lanni was in fact giving up altogether.

"Lanni, why would you give up now? You've come a long way." She lamented.

"Xiao Yu, some things are just not meant to be. Perhaps I'm no talented painter or comic artist as I thought." Lanni kept her things into the car as she spoke.

"What does Aunty Li have to say about it?"

Lanni stopped in her tracks. "I haven't told her about it yet."

"Don't you think you should tell her when you make such an important decision?" Cheng Yu asked. Li Yuming would surely be disappointed. She secretly hoped that Li Yuming would convince Lanni to change her mind.

"I should." It was just that the previous day, the first place she went to after leaving Star Art International was Ji Xiehan's office. She hadn't gone home yet so she hadn't had the time to talk about it. "I'll tell her about it when I go home right now."

Cheng Yu looked like she still wanted to nag but Lanni hugged her. "Xiao Yu, let's talk all about it after your class tomorrow. Xiehan still needs to get back to work."

Only then did Cheng Yu notice that Ji Xiehan was in the car. She waved at him awkwardly and bid Lanni sadly. "Fine. I'll meet you at 2pm. You better not be one second late."

Lanni giggled, opened her purse and took out a candy which she stuffed into Cheng Yu's palm. "There there. I won't be late."

Cheng Yu regarded the candy and glared at Lanni who had already escaped into the car. "What do you think I am, a baby?"

She harrumphed and unwrapped the candy then shoved it into her mouth as she watched Ji Xiehan drive off.

"You like sweet things too?" A familiar male voice pulled her out of her thoughts.

She turned and when she saw that it was indeed Cedric, words tumbled out of her mouth before she could stop them. "What's wrong with you? You are everywhere! Why do you keep butting your nose where it doesn't belong?"

"I do not want you near me, can't you understand? I don't want you near me, get it? There's such a thing as minding one's own business, sheesh!" She walked off when she was done.

"Damn." Cedric let out a low laugh. "Someone's got their claws out." Why was it so cute though?

When Lanni arrived home, Li Yuming was in the living room.

"What's with the box?" She asked, referring to the box that the butler had helped bring in from Xiehan's car.

"Those are my things from Star Art International." Lanni chose to bring up the subject immediately. "I just quit my art lessons."

Li Yuming was silent.

She only spoke up one word a while later. "Okay."

Lanni frowned in confusion. Okay? That was all? She had expected to be interrogated at the very least and in the worst case, to be dragged right back into Star Art International. This silent, unquestioning reaction was in every way out of her expectations.

After throwing that one word at her daughter, Li Yuming went to the kitchen and made tea for Xiehan. After that, they chatted about random things.

Not only did Li Yuming not ask a thing about Lanni's decision, she also asked what Lanni wanted to do now that she no longer wanted to be in Star Art International. When Lanni said that she didn't know yet, Li Yuming didn't react negatively to that either.. She only urged her to give it time.

"Don't you think my mom is being strange?" Lanni asked as she walked Xiehan out later.

"If she nagged you, you might have felt sad about it." Xiehan responded.

Lanni nodded. He was right. It was much better that Li Yuming was not nagging her.

She walked Xiehan to the parking lot.

"Xiehan, you..." she turned to speak and just when she did, his lips met hers.

She was surprised but soon responded to the kiss by hugging his neck and letting him deepen the kiss.

He pushed her back against his car but stopped before his hand could reach under her dress. "Does it still hurt?"

Lanni understood instantly what he was asking about and felt slightly embarrassed. "It's bearable."

She felt something pressing against her crotch thanks to their closeness and looked at him in surprise. "You have a boner that fast?"

Ji Xiehan took her hand and brought to his crotch. "This is all thanks to you."

Lanni withdrew her hand quickly. "Xiehan, not here." And certainly not now.

"Of course not." He laughed. After kissing her a last time, he entered his car.

The next day—Star Art International.

As usual, Cheng Yu was earlier than the other students to arrive in Star Art International. This time, however, she was not the first. Someone else had already arrived.

She cast a glance at Cedric and wanted to mind her own business but then she remembered how rude she had been the day before. Cedric had done nothing but speak to her. Even though she was usually irritated by him, she couldn't deny that she had been unreasonable and taken her bad mood out on him.

Decisively, she went and sat next to him.

Cedric snuck a glance at the girl who had just sat beside him and picked up his brush to continue painting.

"Cedric." She called out softly.

Cedric turned and his gaze lingered on her for longer this time. "I thought I was hallucinating."

Cheng Yu frowned slightly. Why did those words sound so wrong?

"This is the first time ever that you have sought me on your own." He stroked his brush against the canvas. He was painting something that she couldn't make out because she wasn't even looking, and it seemed to be upside down.

She pushed his weird words at the back of her mind. "I came to apologize."

"You—what?" Cedric lost hold of his brush and it smudged the painting.

"Yesterday, I was mad. I didn't mean to take it out on you like that."

Cedric scrutinized her for a longer time than she was comfortable with and when he sensed her unease, he grinned. "Sure you didn't."

"What?" What did he even mean?

"Don't you always take it out on me? When have you not shouted at me for merely existing?"

Cheng Yu looked down, feeling guilty. Indeed, she had always been annoyed whenever he appeared and she would always sneer or shout at him then ignore him. "But that's your fault. It's all because you are so annoying."

Cedric smiled, not able to retaliate against that. He tried to correct the smudge on his painting, his gaze averted from her. "Why were you so mad anyway?"

Cheng Yu breathed out a long sigh. Although she was close to Luna, she couldn't bring herself to bother her so she had not told her about Lanni quitting. She had it all bottled up and now that Cedric asked, she couldn't stop herself from talking about it.

"Lanni left the class."

"She did? I figured she would. Sadly, her performance has been dropping every new day."

Cheng Yu was almost mad at him for being so direct about it but it was true and there was nothing she could do about it. "You pay so much attention to her?"

Cedric turned to look at her. "Of course. She is my idol's daughter. Of course I would pay attention to her. And you must be best friends, right? You are always sticking together like you have been glued onto each other."

Cheng Yu found it easier to speak to someone who knew so much already. She grabbed a spare painting brush and started playing with it as she spoke. "Lanni is more than a friend to me." She started. "Most of my life is bland without her. Lanni means a lot to me." Luna did too, but that was different. Luna wasn't

one to share any emotional support, being cold herself. But for Lanni,... "Lanni makes me feel strong even at my weakest point. A person like her, it's not like her to give up on anything she decided to do. Even I am shocked by her decision. And the worst part of it is that I know why exactly she has decided to quit and there is nothing I can do about it."

By the time she was done, her whole face was a mask of sadness and despair.

Cedric continued scanning Cheng Yu for a while and when he finally spoke, what came out of his mouth was something irritating. "You made it sound like the two of you are romantic lovers. Say, you wouldn't be interested in girls, right? I would understand, she is so beautiful anyway."

Cheng Yu's eyes narrowed then she glared at him. "Can't anything better come out of your trap? You're insane."

She stood up and left his side, going to settle down on her seat with a huff. That idiot. She must have been stupid to talk to him.

Cedric laughed. He had just wanted to laugh. He wasn't good with jokes, it seemed. He held his almost complete painting and turned it back right-side-up.

In her seat, Cheng Yu sulked for a while before realizing that she was still holding his brush. She stood up and was going to return it to him.

But when her gaze landed on his painting, the brush in her hand dropped to the floor as she stared wide-eyed at the painting.

What was a painting of her doing on Cedric's canvas?

Chapter 205 - Scared

Cedric turned when he heard the sound of the brush connecting with the floor. When he saw Cheng Yu staring wide-eyed at his painting that was basically her painting, he froze. It was much like being caught making a mistake as a kid.

He had painted it upside-down and because it was a back view of her, she couldn't really recognize herself. But when he was done, he had forgotten that she was still in the studio and excitedly turned it.

"Why would you paint me?" She expectedly asked. No matter how she thought about it, she couldn't find a reasonable excuse for him painting her.

"Because I like you." He answered like it meant nothing. As though afraid she didn't hear, he looked up at her, his eyes meeting hers. "Cheng Yu, I'm in love with you."

Cheng Yu stared in shock. What did she just hear? There was something wrong with her ears. There must be. Maybe it was the way she had turned that was wrong. "What... you..." she couldn't even construct a complete statement and kept stammering.

It was only later that she found her voice. "You're kidding, right?"

"Yes."

"What?" Cheng Yu glared at him. She had just freaked the hell out her by suddenly declaring that he liked her and before she could process it, he was saying that it was a joke?

"That's what you expected me to say-that I like you, right?" Cedric grinned at her, making her unable to say a word for a while.

"You're crazy." Cheng Yu harrumphed and picked his paintbrush, threw it at him and went about her own business. What kind of sick joke was that?

Cedric looked on as she angrily started to do her own work and ignored him. A sly smile escaped his lips. "Actually, there might be some truth in some jokes."

"What are you saying?" Cheng Yu didn't want to but before she could stop herself, she turned to ask.

"I'm reading a quote from a book." He stuck out a novel to show her. It wasn't sure whether he was actually reading it but that was none of her business so she shrugged and continued doing her own work.

Actually Cedric was not lying. Neither was he joking. He actually liked Cheng Yu. The first time he saw her was a few months ago. Her brother had almost been run over by a car and he saved him. Cheng Yu had frantically thanked him before going away with her brother. She had dropped her purse and before he could give it to her, she had already hurried away.

He knew that it was wrong to check people's purses but he was smitten by her beauty and he was curious about who she was. Who could blame him for checking out of curiosity? Her purse had what Cedric assumed would usually be in girls' purses—a lip gloss, a few bills and what looked like a small, pink packet which Cedric looked at curiously but didn't understand at the time. There were also her national ID and her school ID. That was how Cedric knew what university she was in.

He didn't even think of using that information to return her purse until much later. When he did, he changed his mind about it. She had probably forgotten all about their meeting and replaced her IDs. Besides, he might be unable to control his feelings once he met her; and he didn't want her to think that he was taking advantage of the fact that he saved her brother. He thought of sending them to her school or address but at last, he kept them safely with him.

He hadn't even thought that they would meet again until he heard that Star Art International was sponsoring an art contest and Hun He Art School would participate, as well as B City University. Not only that, the venue would be B City University. He had excitedly joined the contest in the hope of meeting her again.

When he reached B City University, he was in for an even better surprise. She had joined the contest too! He couldn't describe his joy. How could he be so lucky? Unfortunately, he wasn't good with girls and offended her from the start. He could only ask about her but he couldn't possibly get close to her.

When the contest started, an idea crossed his mind. The winner would go to Star Art International for comic arts training. She was such a good painter and it was possible for her to win. So he deliberately restrained his skill so he wouldn't win. If all went well, she would win and go to Star Art International. Then he would find other means to go to Star Art International and they would be in the same school, and he would have a chance to pursue her.

Of course, fate was not going to play things according to his wishful imagination. The winner was actually not Cheng Yu but his idol's daughter instead! His disappointment was immeasurable.

As though that was not taunting enough, the people from Star Art International had personally invited him to the institution. What was the use? Cheng Yu wasn't going.

Yet just at the last moment, he learnt from someone that Cheng Yu was going to Star Art International too! Hence he had hurried into the institution and accepted the invitation that he had almost rejected.

When he arrived, it was such a coincidence that Ruby Chan was there too. He knew Ruby because their parents were a little close and he knew that she was in B City University too. He had learnt from her that Lanni and Cheng Yu were very close, so he dragged her everywhere with him so she would distract Lanni while he got close to Cheng Yu.

However, that had failed miserably. Lanni didn't seem to trust Ruby. Besides, Cheng Yu would ignore him every time they met or scold him for merely breathing the same air as her.

Lately, she had not been avoiding him so much and now that Lanni had left the class, he could now slot himself next to Cheng Yu and she wouldn't mind so much. Just a moment ago, he had uncontrollably blurted out his pent-up feelings.

He was ready to face her reaction, but when he saw how scared he looked, he changed his mind and made a joke out of it. A bad joke that earned scolding from her.

Why was she so scared anyway? Did she have a bad history with love?

Chapter 206 - You Look In Love

Later that day.

Luna was in her room, busy typing codes on her laptop when the doorbell rang. Cheng Yu was already home so she was hesitant. Who could it be? Thinking that it might be that annoying fellow, Jiang Xingyu, she went to open the door.

She was surprised, however, when she was who it was. "Lanni? Come on in."

Lanni walked in and sat on the sofa, curiously looking at her sister.

Luna brought her a drink and sat next to her. "Why are you scanning me like that? It's getting a little creepy."

Lanni let out a small smile. "You look different. Are you in love?"

Luna chocked on her saliva and coughed in a fit. What nonsense was her sister spewing? "You're the one who looks in love. You look so bright and cheerful."

She ran her eyes all over Lanni's body and asked teasingly, "I know about how you confessed to Xiehan and how you went to Europe together for a vacation. Although you had to come back prematurely, you don't look disappointed at all. Tell me, did something happen between you too?"

Her eyes squinted slightly as she half-whispered. "You know, something that should give me the hope of becoming an aunty soon? What happened next? Did your relationship get even better after that?"

"Are you reading my mind?" Lanni interrupted her jabbering. How did she even know any of those things? She hadn't even told Cheng Yu about them.

"Is it hard to guess? You're my sister after all. Come on, tell me."

"Luna..." Lanni sighed.

Luna looked worried as a glint flashed in her eyes. "What happened?" If Ji Xiehan bullied her sister, he was not going to hear the end of it from her.

"What about you? How are you fairing on?"

Luna smiled in relief. So her sister was not being bullied. "I'm alright. I'm making progress in my case and..." a smile involuntarily formed on her face. "Aunty is so friendly to me."

"Aunty? What aunty?" Lanni inquired.

"Jiang Xingyu's mother." Xia Luna felt happy just talking about the loving middle-aged woman. "She's so kind and treats me like her own daughter even though I don't love her son. That must be the only good thing about Jiang Xingyu—his mother."

Lanni tittered at her sister's words. "If there was nothing good about him in the past, why did you date him?" She hadn't met Madam Jiang in the past, right?

"I was young and stupid and anyway, he hasn't always been a fool. He was quite sensible in the past."

"You sound like you're in love with him, just teasing." Lanni quickly corrected her words before Luna had her head.

"But Luna..." Lanni started worriedly.

"What is it?"

"I think..." she hesitated, knowing that Luna would surely scold her. But thinking about it, she said it in the end. "I think our mother misses you."

Xia Luna frowned for almost half a minute then a slight laugh escaped her mouth. "Oh? Okay."

Lanni knew that her sister took it as a joke. "I'm serious, Luna."

Xia Luna raised an eyebrow and scrutinized Lanni. After a while, her mood dropped. "If this is a joke, it's not funny."

Lanni felt uneasy too. She knew that the topic of their mother was a thorn to her sister, especially after their last meeting. "I'm not kidding Luna."

"Why would you think so?"

Lanni remembered how Li Yuming would suddenly blank out while looking at her and how she would seem restless.

When she told Luna this, the latter thought she was thinking too much. "How did you come to the conclusion that she is restless because of me? It could be anything. She could be staring at you because she is recalling something about you or just because looking at you calms her down. Who knows?"

Lanni took her sister's hand. "I know what I'm saying, Luna. I'm not thinking too much about anything."

"If anything, I don't think she would want to be associated with me."

"But..."

"But you saw how she treated me Lanni. You heard what she called me and what she told you about me. Why would you still think she would want anything to do with me? You are the only daughter she recognizes and it doesn't matter to me anymore." Luna suddenly blurted out.

She then glanced at the shocked Lanni. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude."

Lanni smiled. "You weren't. I'm just... it's just so hard to bear."

Unwilling to continue talking about this difficult topic, Lanni casually asked, "I will be free for the coming few days as I figure out what I want to do. Do you want to catch a movie together tomorrow?"

"I would love to, but I'll go to Lakeside City tomorrow."

"Why would you go to Lakeside City?" Lanni was confused. Hadn't Luna been going there too frequently lately?

"I'm going to visit our dad." The smile slowly returned to Luna's face at the mention of the person who cared about her the most. "The doctors said he would wake up soon."

"That's great news." Lanni said with a hint of longing in her voice.

Luna grabbed her hand in slight excitement. "Do you want to come with me?"

Lanni was excited at the idea then the excitement suddenly died down. "Tomorrow? I can't. I have an appointment with the hypnotist."

"Hypnotist? Why would you want to see a hypnotist?" Luna sounded a bit off as she frantically asked.

"Because he can help me recover my memory. He is Xiehan's friend."

"Yeah, of course." Luna shook her head to clear the confusion. "But why did you change your mind? You said you didn't want your memory back."

To that, Lanni explained what had happened three nights before, how she had recovered a section of her memory that was confusing.

"I see. Then you should... yeah you should go to a hypnotist then."

"Luna, are you alright?" Lanni asked worriedly. Her sister suddenly looked pale and a bit sweaty.

"Yeah, I'm okay. It must be the heat."

Lanni thought something was strange but laughed it off. "Okay. Luna, I'll go home now."

"Okay." Luna did not even hesitate, and when Lanni left, she rushed to her room.

She took an old phone and turned it on then frantically sent a text to a contact named Flynn.. [The meds aren't working anymore. What should I do?]

Chapter 207 - Why Not?

Luna anxiously waited for a reply but instead, the phone vibrated with an incoming call. She answered it right away.

"What are you saying? What do you mean the meds aren't working anymore?" A deep male voice asked in a perfect German accent.

"Lanni stopped taking those tablets long ago. Their effect must have worn out already. Lanni has started to regain her memory. She might even have remembered things she shouldn't." Luna couldn't hide the worry in her voice. "How are things on your side?"

There was the sound of what must be the man pouring something into a glass, probably wine. He took his time and gulped a loud swig then brought his attention back to the almost impatient Luna. "My side isn't safe." He enunciated every syllable like he was declaring a verdict that would determine the life or death of someone—which he sure was. "Lanni cannot come back here. She will die. The old man hates her to the core and will want to kill her as soon as he sees her. And trust me, she will surely want to come if she recovered her memory."

"You're not helping." Luna hung up with an eyeroll. So what if Lanni couldn't go back? Now what? The man only knew to scare her and in the end, she would still be the one to come up with a strategy. There was no use talking to him.

She gripped the phone and sunk into thought. The last time she thought Lanni might recover her memory, she had prevented that from happening by swapping her medicine with almost identical drugs that she had used up all her connections to find. As for how she managed to swap it, she simply had to walk into Li Yuming's villa when she was not there.

She didn't have to say a word and everyone assumed that she was Lanni. That was also how she had dropped Lanni warning notes months ago, before she resorted to sending text messages.

As for the drugs, Lanni must have grown resistance to them. Of course she would have. At least five months had passed since she stopped taking them and according to the person who gave them to her, the effect could only last for six months at the very most. Of course, at the very most meant it could be much sooner than six months.

But that was not important. What was bugging her right now was that she couldn't possibly use the same method. If Lanni were to take more of those tablets, who knew how they would affect her. Besides, she had no prescription so there was nothing for her to swap to begin with.

She went to the living room and sat on the sofa, trying to think of what to do. She didn't know Flynn that closely. She couldn't possibly trust him to take care of Lanni. Besides, he was fast to state that Lanni wouldn't be safe in that place. Why was it so difficult?

An idea crossed her mind. Lanni mentioned that the hypnotist she was seeing was Ji Xiehan's friend.

Quickly, she grabbed her laptop and sat back on the living room couch. Then she searched on Ji Xiehan's social media accounts for friends who were medics or related to the field.

Because Ji Xiehan didn't have many friends on his personal social media accounts, it was easy to find and recognize the man.

"Han Xichen. Now I want to be hypnotized." She exaggeratively giggled when she saw the display photo. The man was quite handsome. Getting back to business, she searched for where he lived and where he worked.

Satisfied, she thought about how to plan a meeting with him. If all went well, she would negotiate with him so he would fail to hypnotize Lanni and in exchange, she would offer benefits. That way, Lanni would believe that she really couldn't be hypnotized. What a genius idea!

But thinking about it with a clearer mind, she slammed the laptop shut and stood up. What a dumb idea. What the heck was she even thinking? That was Ji Xiehan's friend. Which went to say that he might not agree to do anything against his friend's will. He might even rat her out.

"Why are you pacing? This is so unlike you." Cheng Yu's voice interrupted her thoughts.

"Oh, Xiao Yu. You were locked up in your room. Are you in a bad mood?"

She was, but "Uhm... I asked you a question first, Luna." She interrupted before Xia Luna could brush her off. "You have never looked this anxious. Something is definitely wrong."

"You're right. Something is horribly wrong Xiao Yu. Lanni is starting to remember things."

Cheng Yu looked like she had been struck by a bolt of lightning. "No wonder."

"No wonder what?" Luna raised an eyebrow inquisitively. "Come on, tell me."

"No wonder she quit the art class. I was wondering why she did." Cheng Yu bit her bottom lip in panic.

"Wait wait wait. She did what?" Luna was shocked witless.

"Quit the art class." Cheng Yu promptly repeated her words. "She didn't tell you?"

"You are telling me that Lanni left the art class?"

"Yes." Cheng Yu didn't even want to think about it. "If you say that she is starting to regain her memory then it could be that she knows who she really is. Maybe she knows what her true passion is and that's why she is no longer interested in Art. After all, Aunty Li must have only made her go to art class to make her forget all about her past."

Cheng Yu jabbered on for a while and Xia Luna was pacing, not even seeming to listen. But she suddenly stopped and glanced at Cheng Yu. "For the first time, I agree with Ms. Li. We have to stop it from happening. No matter what, Lanni cannot recover her memory."

"And why not?" An upset voice asked from the door.

Xia Luna and Cheng Yu were both startled.

Xia Luna turned robotically, her heart racing. "Lanni..."

Lanni shifted her gaze between the two of them then she laughed. She walked over to the table and grabbed a bunch of keys. "I forgot my keys so I had to turn back. The interesting conversation I just overheard wasn't part of my business so... don't mind my interruption, please continue with your conversation."

Cheng Yu had nothing to say as a retaliation against Lanni's mocking words.

When she saw Lanni leave, Xia Luna anxiously grabbed her arm and pleaded. "Listen to me."

"Let go of me." Lanni pulled her arm out of Xia Luna's with a fierce glare.

"Lanni, don't... I can explain."

"Explain?" Lanni scoffed. "What do you have to explain Xia Luna? I trusted you. I believed you even when the truth was right in front of me. How could I... I have been so stupid." The last part was meant to scold herself.

Shooting a glance of disbelief in Cheng Yu's direction, she walked out. She had instinctively stopped herself from saying hurtful words even though she thought of them and they were true. No wonder Li Yuming said that Xia Luna was too cunning. Indeed, only a mother knew her daughter best.

On one hand, she was acting like the loving sister who wanted nothing but to reunite their family while on the other hand, she was busy scheming against her—and Cheng Yu knew all about it and was even supporting her.

Lanni laughed in self-mockery. She should have learnt from her encounter with Ji Feifei. How could she still trust anyone after what happened with Ji Feifei?

...

Lanni stayed in her room and only came out when she really had to. She would even have her meals in her room.

She only left the house on Friday morning, when it was time to go to the hypnotist.

She dressed up quickly and sent Xiehan a text message. He was accompanying her, so he would pick her up on their way. Once she had sent the text, she went to wait for him in the living room.

Li Yuming was on her way out when she saw Lanni and went to her happily. "You finally left your room. I was worried something was wrong with you." She couldn't resist hugging her daughter warmly.

"You were worried about me?" Lanni wondered aloud. She just wanted to be on her own for a while to think everything through. But if Li Yuming was worried, why didn't she check on her? Isn't that what any mother would do, especially one that loved her daughter as much as Li Yuming did?

Li Yuming could pretty much guess what Lanni was thinking, and she smiled awkwardly. Only she knew how many times she had gone to Lanni's room and when she reached the door, she had to forcefully stop herself. The last time something similar happened, it spiralled out of control. Li Yuming was traumatized just thinking about it.

"Why are your eyebags so dark? Haven't you been having enough sleep?"

"Don't worry about me. I will be able to sleep better now." Li Yuming was happier, cheering up instantly. "Anyway, what happened to you?"

"Can we not talk about that? I really don't want to." Lanni shook her head, and Li Yuming understandably nodded. "As long as you're alright now."

When Ji Xiehan arrived, Lanni's mood lightened up even further.

Right. Why would she care so much about a friend she knew so little about and a sister who basically popped out of nowhere? She should be concentrating on herself and her loved ones. Those who genuinely loved her—Ji Xiehan and her mother.

The ride to the hospital was cheerful, punctuated with several happy laughs and lots of sweet words. Ji Xiehan even stole a few kisses at the red lights and when they turned green, Lanni would steal kisses too.

When they arrived at the hospital, neither wanted the ride to end.

"That's enough for now. We will continue on our way back." Ji Xiehan teasingly nibbled on her earlobe a little before letting go of her. When Lanni glared at him, he laughed and defended himself. "Your eyes are asking for more. But you know that this is a hospital, right?"

Lanni shook her head. "You are so shameless. But I'm not complaining... I love you that way." She said, earning a kiss on the forehead.

"I was wondering whether you guys would really come and just when I want to rush to grab a snack, you waltz in hand in hand, whispering sweet nothings and biting each other's ears." A man interrupted them.

Lanni was a bit embarrassed that someone had seen them, while Xiehan happily introduced them. He turned to Lanni and said, "This is Han Xichen."

Then he hugged her waist. "Han, you already know about my wife."

Lanni was startled. What did he just call her?"

"So this is Lanni." He extended a hand to greet her. "Nice to finally meet you." Then, he jabbed Ji Xiehan. "Congratulations man. When are you getting married?"

"When she says yes."

Han Xichen was taken aback. She hadn't yet? But then, it was not part of his business so he led them into his office, asking them to make themselves comfortable.

Because he had other matters to attend to, he didn't waste time and started interrogating Lanni.

"You want to be hypnotized to recover your memory. Do you know how you lost it?"

"A car accident." Lanni answered, fright starting to slowly creep in. Perhaps it was the man himself or the fact that she knew he was going to help her uncover what a part of her was still slightly afraid to face.

"Are you ready?" He asked directly, to which she thought for a second and nodded.

"Am I still needed here? If my presence will be a distraction then I should wait outside." Xiehan said, but before he moved, Lanni grabbed his hand instinctively.

"She will be scared if you are not here." Han Xichen was surprised that Ji Xiehan would like the type of girl who was basically a damsel in distress.. Even so, it was not his business so he took out a lighter from his pocket and flicked it on.

Chapter 209 - I Do Not Want You

The image before Lanni's eyes shifted into one she had not expected to see.

A little girl hid behind the wall as two adults argued on the other side, probably not aware of her presence.

"I already told you. I want nothing to do with you and your family." Li Yuming snarled at the man before her.

"Yes you did. You said that a minute ago too but Yuming, Lanni misses me. Luna needs you too. How can we let our children suffer just because we are divorced?" The man retorted. From Lanni's previous memory fragments and from what he was saying, he must be Xia Hanchen.

"My daughter doesn't need you. Quit it already, will you?" Li Yuming sounded bitter. "I know what you want and I am not going to let that happen as long as I am alive."

"You're not going to let me take care of our daughter?" Xia Hanchen frowned as though in disbelief.

Seeing that Li Yuming was silent, he resorted to coercion. "Lanni is my daughter and I have every right to be part of her life. I will sue for her custody if I have to."

"Are you even listening to yourself?" Li Yuming scoffed.

The argument continued for a while, but Lanni didn't hear more of it.

She was surprised that as a little girl, she had witnessed a fight between her parents. However, that was none of her business. At least not for now.

The scene changed and this time, she was no longer a little girl but a young woman in her late teens instead.

Li Yuming grabbed her hand and pulled her to her room, sat her on her bed and shook her shoulders, squeezing them furiously.

"You're hurting me." Lanni complained.

Li Yuming looked into her eyes angrily. "Hurt? You know how to feel pain? Then why do you insist on ruining your life, Lanni?" She let go of Lanni's shoulders with more force than necessary, making the latter feel pain.

Lanni rubbed her shoulders and looked right at her mother. "I am not ruining my life, mother. I am just doing my duty as a..."

"What kind of sick duty?" Li Yuming looked like she would pull her hair off. "What kind of duty involves you putting your own life at risk? Is it because of that woman?"

Lanni didn't ask who Li Yuming was referring to, she seemed to understand who "that woman" was. "I'm not doing this for anyone. This is what I want to do and it has nothing to do with anyone."

"Lying." Li Yuming retreated a short distance away. "You are lying. I know you better than anyone and I know that she's one of the main reasons. But let me remind you, Lanni. That woman hated you from the moment you opened your eyes. She has always wished you were not born into her family."

"Mother..."

"What makes you think she will like you now? You're just a teenager, I understand—but how can you be so naive?"

The scene faded off as well.

Lanni was perplexed. Why was every piece of memory that she was remembering a fight? Did she fight a lot before losing her memory? She seemed quite stubborn too.

The next piece proved that she was even more stubborn than she thought.

This time, she was with a man.

She remembered this man, it was the same man from the memory fragment she had remembered a few days ago when she was in her studio. This time, his face was clearer as he sat behind a desk.

Lanni angrily grabbed his pen, tossed it aside and grabbed his notebook too. When he took his laptop, Lanni slammed it closed too, then glared at him, huffing.

"What is it, princess? Was it too hard?" The man reclined in his chair and Lanni could swear that he was mocking her. "Then you better give up. I wouldn't want to be responsible for tiring out a fragile flower. How would I answer to your parents then?"

Lanni crossed her arms. "You're right. I failed."

"I told you..."

Before he could complete his statement, Lanni's hand swung and landed a slap across his face. "You know why I failed, Flynn. You know what you did."

Her eyes were brimming with anger and the man called Flynn was shocked too. She grabbed his collar, looking like she could beat him up. "You deliberately messed with my computer. Just like you have always messed everything up."

The man looked surprised and a little guilty.

"Why did you do it?" Lanni asked angrily. "Why do you mess everything up?"

She looked aside with ridicule written all over her face. "Every time I failed, it was always because you messed up with something to slow me down or make me fail altogether.

I'm your trainee Flynn. Why do you hate me so much?"

"Because you do not belong here." The man suddenly spoke up.

"What?" Lanni looked a little lost by his sudden declaration.

The man stood up, towering over her as he mocked her. "What, did you really think that this agency is for spoiled princesses like you?" He did not mind Lanni's expression that was a mixture of shock and hate, and continued. "What did you think this was, a banquet where you only need to dress up and smile at people? This is a cruel world, princess."

Lanni's eyebrows raised as she frowned. "Where's all this nonsense coming from? I have always worked hard but you..." she sighed helplessly. She seemed irritated that the man was attributing her failure to her background when he was the one who had deliberately made her fail. "You are unpredictable. Sometimes you're expressionless, then you suddenly turn cold and evil. It's as though you decided that you wanted me to fail my training from the first moment you saw me here."

"Right. You do have great observation skills. I don't want you here, just because you are you. What can you do about it?" The man mocked and ignored her.

Lanni pursed her lips. Of course, there would be a person everywhere one went.. So that man was called Flynn. What was he training her for anyway?

Chapter 210 - Hypnosis

The scene changed yet again.

This time, Lanni was slightly older and a lot bolder than she was before. This time, she was standing before someone she was quite familiar with—Ji Feifei. She crossed her arms against her chest as she interrogated Ji Feifei. "What's your relationship with Li Xiyan?"

Before Ji Fei Fei could answer, Lanni's head hurt like a fire was burning her brains out. She gripped her forehead, groaning from the pain. Seeing this, the hypnotist chanted something to wake her up.

Once she was awake, her head no longer hurt that badly. It felt as though she had been asleep for days and when she asked for the time, she was surprised that it had taken only thirty minutes.

"If you are hypnotized two or three more times, you might remember everything." Han Xichen said to her, happy that she seemed to remember many things.

"Thank you." She said gratefully, her hand still holding onto Ji Xie Han's tightly.

"You don't have to thank me. It's my duty." Han Xichen gazed at her for a little longer, trying to understand something.

When the girl explained her memory loss, she said that she had temporary amnesia after a car accident. Why then, did it seem like the cause didn't feel correct?

...

Meanwhile, Goldenwing Apartments.

Luna was beside herself with anxiety. Since Lanni overheard her conversation with Cheng Yu, she had been ignoring her calls.

"You know, I'm tempted to kidnap and lock her up then only let her go after she listens to my explanation." Luna said to Cheng Yu.

Cheng Yu shrugged like she didn't want to be part of it. She had been ignored by Lanni as well. "You cannot force her to understand you. Just give it time."

"Of course. Yes, J should give it time. That way, she will remember everything before she even knows why I didn't want her to."

"Don't you think it's her choice, though?" Cheng Yu asked, earning a stare of shock. She continued in a small voice, "I know you mean well, Luna. You don't want her mental health to be affected. But don't you think it should be her choice whether she wants to forget it or not?"

To that, Luna said nothing and left for her room.

Cheng Yu shrugged. If she didn't know what Xia Luna really wanted, she would have misunderstood her.

Xia Luna was so bad at expressing her intentions that one might easily dislike her.

—

Lanni and Xiehan left Han Xichen's office after a long while.

He was not busy today, so he used some time to catch up with Xiehan and get to know Lanni—as a patient and his friend's future wife, of course.

By the time they left his office, they were hungry.

Xiehan held her waist and suggested, "There's a really nice restaurant a few meters away. Do you want..." he suddenly stopped.

Lanni followed his gaze and found that he was looking at a tall girl with fiery red hair flowing all the way to her waist. She was holding a bag which Lanni assumed must contain medicine.

When she saw Lanni and Xiehan, she flashed a bright smile at them and rushed to Lanni's side.

"Lanni, it's been long since we last saw." She cheerfully hugged Lanni.

Lanni was still surprised to see her. "Ruby?"

"Are you surprised to see me?" She continued chatting on like she and Lanni were long-lost best friends.

However, Lanni wasn't in the slightest bit interested in catching up with so-called friends. She was already fed up after being betrayed by Cheng Yu and her own sister.

She brushed Ruby off with a lukewarm greeting, but was surprised to realize that Ji Xie Han was still staring at her. She was a little surprised then she smiled.

Ruby looked up at Xiehan for a while. As though thinking of something, she stuck a hand out for a handshake. "Mr. Ji."

It was just that. A brief handshake. She didn't act all cozy with Ji Xiehan like she had with Lanni. At least the girl had brains.

"Why are you at the hospital? Are you feeling unwell?" Ruby asked Lanni.

Seeing the genuine concern in the girl's eyes, Lanni didn't have the heart to ignore her question so she answered, "No. Just a check up."

"Oh."

"Are you unwell?" Ji Xiehan suddenly asked, startling both the girls.

Ruby stared at Lanni for a few seconds then shook her head. "No. These are for my dad." She turned back to Lanni and seemed to force a smile despite being uncomfortable. "Lanni, I'll see you later."

When Ruby left, Ji Xiehan still seemed distracted and Lanni snapped a finger in front of his face. "Are you close to her?"

Ji Xiehan snapped back to his senses. "No."

"But you looked entranced." Lanni pointed out.

"Did I?" Ji Xiehan teasingly grabbed her waist again. "I do know her. Ruby Chan, infamous thanks to her father. Anyway, I have never seen her so up close before. It was a little strange."

"So strange that you were worried about her?" Lanni asked seriously. She was not trying to sound like a jealous, possessive girlfriend but it was hard to trust anyone lately. If her own sister could... this had nothing to do with Luna, but what if Xiehan fell for Ruby's good looks?"

"Honey, I already told you. I would never like any other woman. I can only ever love you." Ji Xiehan said, understanding from her question just what she might be thinking.

Lanni smiled and decided to trust him.

Actually, Ji Xiehan was shocked too. Why would he suddenly be concerned about another woman, and that with his girlfriend right next to him?

Not only that, he could also have sworn that his heart skipped a beat as soon as he saw Ruby smiling at them. Whatever this was, he could only hope that it was not the onset of trouble.

"You mentioned a restaurant, let's go." Lanni pulled him away.. She was famished.