

Chapter 221 - Just A Little More.

The first day of November had been set as the day of the first hearing in court. Everyone was looking forward to it.

By the 29th of October, Lanni and Xiehan had managed to find the 'perfume bottle' USB drive and got someone to verify that its content was original and had not undergone any changes. They showed it to everyone at the dining table that night.

The content was several videos, including confessions from servants in Xia Hanchen's home. Some of them revealed that they had witnessed Li Xiyan's violent behavior and that it was she who had started the fight between her and Xia Luna. There was also video evidence to prove this. One of the maids was on her way to the kitchen when she heard a vicious argument and had recorded it for the sake of gossip.

However, she had not expected it to escalate to the point of near-murder. She had fled soon after it happened to avoid being caught in the middle of such a scuffle. After Paul investigated everyone that was in that scene at the time and found out that some servants had left, he looked for them and spoke to them. That was how he found out that the maid had the video. He got it from her as well as her verbal statement. That was some of the content of the USB drive and he was going to help Luna present it to the court.

"Just in time. We should make a copy of it and send it to the lawyer too." Li Yuming suggested when she saw it. These kinds of meetings had been common lately; Madam Jiang would come over with her son and so would Xiehan. They would have things to discuss and even if it was not related to Luna's case, they would still have meals and drinks together.

"Yuming is right. He is a reputable lawyer, but there is no such thing as too much caution. We should still give him a copy and keep the original, in case it gets lost." Madam Jiang seconded. She and Li Yuming had grown quite close lately.

"I will also save another copy on cloud," Lanni suggested, and they all burst into laughter at how cautious they were being.

"Enough about that. Now that we are able to prove that Li Xiyan is the one who attacked Luna first, how about the current case?" Lanni asked.

"Mrs. Paul refused to confess that she had lied to the police. She still insists that her late husband told Luna that he had found her guilty."

Everyone huffed. How can one tell such a lie and insist on it?

"There is already so much evidence to prove that her statement was a lie. There is no way that Detective Paul would have told Luna that he had found her guilty when he had found all this evidence, right? It wouldn't make any sense." Xiehan shrugged.

"Yuming doesn't have to try anymore. We already have enough evidence in our hands." Madam Jiang announced.

"Did you find the real murderer?" Lanni asked.

"Is it Li Xiyan?" Luna speculated.

"Not exactly Li Xiyan..." Madam Jiang explained. "It is a young man. There is evidence of him entering the house and leaving sneakily at around the time that Detective Paul is said to have died. However, there is nothing to prove that he is in contact with Li Xiyan or may have worked for her."

"And he is still lurking out there?" Li Yuming sounded worried. "What if he and the mastermind find out that we have evidence against him? Wouldn't he try to go after Luna?"

"We came here as soon as we found the evidence. We will hand it over to the police. However, we cannot be sure that his mastermind will not hire someone else. We have to keep our guard up."

Luna looked solemn. "As long as he is caught. He can reveal the mastermind if he gets interrogated."

"Though I'm curious. Why would the police previously suspect Paul's wife for murdering her husband?" Lanni asked.

"Are you seriously going to look into that? Some people's lives are complicated. You would rather not find out." Xiehan held her waist as he stated.

It was not important. As long as Luna was freed of the charges, whatever lie everyone told would be invalid. It was no longer their business.

Now that everything was only one step away from being settled, everyone was happy.

Jiang Xingyu raised a glass in the air, grinning widely as his eyes filled with joy. "Just a little more and I will be able to make Luna my woman."

"Uh..." Luna was speechless.

"That's your main point in all of this?" Madam Jiang looked at her son like he was an idiot.

"How is it not the main point? Luna has been throwing me off with this matter as an excuse. Now she will no longer have any excuse. She will have to be with me."

Luna shook her head at his logic. "Who gives you excuses? Are you insane?"

"Then you agree to be with me?" Jiang Xingyu looked excited as he asked.

"You're impossible." Luna stood up from beside him and went to sit next to Madam Jiang instead. She no longer wanted to be close to this unreasonable man.

"Mother, look at her bullying your son." Jiang Xingyu complained, earning a glare from his mother. "Shush! My Luna is such an angel. How can she even bully anyone? It's you who is bothering my little angel."

"Just who is your real child? Did you perhaps switch me and Luna and carry the wrong child home?" Jiang Xingyu whined.

"How I wish I carried the wrong child home." Madam Jiang looked serious as she lamented. "It would be much better to have such a darling like Luna as my child than a punk like you."

Li Yuming watched the mother-son banter and laughed so hard her stomach hurt. This family was too funny.

And the best part of it was that Luna would be in safe hands if she married Jiang Xingyu.. She wouldn't have to worry about her daughter being mistreated by her in-laws.

Chapter 222 - What Really Happened.

After the meal, the Jiangs went back to their home. After spending a little more time with Lanni, Xiehan had to go back and complete his work so he left too. Now it was just Li Yuming and her daughters again.

Lanni went to her room and tried to call Cheng Yu again. Although the latter had given a false statement and fled, Lanni still felt there was more to it. That didn't look like something Cheng Yu could do. She wanted to get to the bottom of it.

Who knew, perhaps Cheng Yu had been forced to give that statement by someone. If there was anyone who could force people into giving false statements against Xia Luna, there was no one aside from Li Xiyuan who could be responsible for that. Just what lengths could that woman go just to frame Luna?

Lanni clenched her fists. If Li Xiyuan could go to impossible lengths just to get rid of Luna, then she was no different. It didn't matter what she would have to do. She would do what it took to get the truth out of Cheng Yu's mouth.

Thinking about this, something surfaced in Lanni's mind. She seemed to have made a similar declaration before. She sat on the bed and calmed down, making the memory more clear.

She was facing a white-haired elderly man as she boldly inquired, "What's the meaning of this? Why did you instruct us to lie about completing the investigation for this case when it is still unsolved? Are we just going to go with the flow and accuse the innocent like other people are? The purpose of this agency is to reveal the truth to the public and to the police. We help people get justice and expose evil. Why would you ask us to lie to the police then? If we lie, then what's the purpose of this agency's existence to begin with?"

"Little girl, stop asking questions and do as you have been told." He scoffed in annoyance at her irritating questions.

"No." Lanni firmly refused. "I will not be part of this. I stand for the truth no matter what. Even if it means defying you, big boss, I'm not going to lie to the police or anyone. I am going to continue investigating this matter."

The memory fragment came to a stop, and Lanni was just as puzzled as she was proud.

She knew that sometimes, being so bold was just the recipe for trouble. But recalling how decisive the past her was in standing for the truth, she felt like it was a good thing. She still couldn't recall what case they were investigating or which innocent person was being accused. But it eased her mind a little. She

had always feared that she might turn out to be a spy of sorts. But now that she had remembered this, she knew that she had been a good person.

Now that she remembered this, she wondered why Xia Luna didn't want her to recover her memory. Wasn't she a good person?

"Why ask myself questions when Luna is just a wall away?" Lanni thought out aloud. She stood up and went to Luna's room.

"Come in," Luna said when she heard the soft knock on her door. When she saw Lanni, she looked at her curiously. "Why are you here? It's already so late."

"I just wanted to have a small chat." Lanni walked in and sat on Luna's bed.

"What is it, should I be anxious?" Luna half-joked.

"You don't need to be anxious, silly. Can't I just chat casually with my sister?" Lanni laughed although it was not just a casual chat. Luna sat next to her on the bed. As soon as Luna was more relaxed, Lanni asked, "Why didn't you want me to recover my memory?"

Luna remained silent for a while. They had been sweeping this under the mat for too long and it looked like it was time to pull it right out and address it. "Well..."

"Well?" Lanni looked at her. Was it a long story?

Luna smiled. "It's kind of... a complicated story."

When Xia Luna went into hiding, one of the things she did was thoroughly investigate Lanni. It took a long while and she was about to give up when she met someone. She had been sneaking to Lanni's ward to visit her and one day while she was at it, she bumped into a man. She interrogated him and found out that his name was Flynn.

"So you met Flynn. Who is he anyway?" Lanni was even more curious when she heard this piece.

"Just listen, okay?" Luna said and continued narrating. After meeting Flynn and finding out that Lanni was his trainee, she wanted to know what Lanni had been doing in secret. Flynn told her the truth but that was only because if he didn't, Luna would use him as a clue and go seek the truth anyway. And the truth was that Lanni was an undercover journalist.

The agency they were working for was a newsgroup on the surface but secretly, they did investigations. They had managed to uncover the truth in many instances that people had played tricks. They would report the truth on the news and let it gain the attention of the police or the government.

"So that is what I was. An undercover journalist." Lanni didn't know how to react to this news. "Why did you not want me to recall my past then? Isn't it a good thing?"

Luna facepalmed. "It was dangerous. Can't you tell? You were just a rookie in that agency and were exposed to so much potential danger. Besides, you were asked to investigate Li Xiyan. That is how you got into so much trouble and guess who was responsible for your accident?" Luna took her hand. "Lanni, I knew you would want to go back to that place once you woke up. So in collaboration with Flynn, we found syrup that would make you forget everything.

That was how you lost your memory. Once you woke up, we knew that we couldn't expel the possibility of you recovering your memory so I gave you those pills."

Lanni massaged her temples. She had not expected the truth to be like this. On several occasions, she had even assumed that she was a bad person and that was why Luna didn't want her to remember it, fearing that she would feel guilty.

"I'm sorry Lanni. I shouldn't have made this decision for you." Luna apologized.

"You finally realize this." Lanni pouted, surprised that she wasn't as angry as she had expected to be upon finding out the truth. Perhaps it was because she had learnt from the time that they had spent together that Luna might have had reasons for doing what she did.

"Now I know the truth. I don't know how to react." Lanni smiled, mocking herself for not knowing what to do.

"It's understandable that you don't." Luna breathed out a sigh. She felt much better now that the truth was already out of her mouth. It was no longer pent up inside her heart. "Don't blame Xiao Yu. She remained silent about it because of the same reason as mine. That, and the fact that I asked her to shut her mouth."

"Of course I don't blame Xiao Yu." Lanni smiled. She had already guessed that her reason would be the same as Luna's. "How is she anyway? I'm worried about her. I think Li Xiyan might have hidden her somewhere."

"That's what happened." Luna was disgusted just thinking about it. "Li Xiyan kept her captive."

Lanni stood up in shock. "What?! Why didn't you tell anyone about it? Xiao Yu must be in danger!"

"Calm down, okay?" Luna pulled her back down. "I didn't have a choice. Besides, this is just my speculation. Come, I'll show you something."

Luna showed Lanni something on her laptop. She had found that Cheng Yu had been in the same location and had not moved ever since the day she reportedly left B City. Li Xiyan had been to that place twice.

"That's the only proof I have that Li Xiyan has something to do with her disappearance. I cannot report this to the police because it is at most coincidental. Do you get it now?"

Lanni sighed helplessly. "But your hearing is tomorrow. Who knows what Li Xiyan is planning? We should try to save her before then."

"I cannot leave the city, remember?" Luna was just as helpless.

"Luna, why didn't you tell us? We could have thought of something." Lanni wanted nothing more than to strangle her sister. How could she keep such an important thing from them?

"I only found out a while ago," Luna explained. "All these days, I have been mad at Xiao Yu. I didn't think of the possibility that she could have been forced. It only occurred to me a while ago so I tried to look for her."

"Great.. Just when I thought everything was going well."

Chapter 223 - We Have To

Lanni let out sigh after sigh as her thoughts ran wild. "Tomorrow is an important day and we definitely cannot afford to have any weakness. And Cheng Yu being held hostage by Li Xiyan is the greatest weakness we could ever have."

"What can we do?" Luna asked, and Lanni gave her a meaningful look. Luna felt chills down her spine. "No, no you do not mean that."

"We have to save her, Luna. Or who knows what Li Xiyan might do to her to get to us?"

"But we cannot even notify the police. We have no evidence that Li Xiyan kidnapped her." This time, it was Luna who was hesitant.

"Have you been possessed by me? Since when were you such a lawful citizen?" Lanni mocked with a scoff. "We are going to save her ourselves."

"That's dangerous. If we get discovered, we will all be in danger." Luna warned. She was one who would take most risks without any hesitation so if she felt that something was dangerous, then it really was dangerous.

"But if we don't try, the only one in danger would be Xiao Yu." Lanni urged.

Luna didn't want to leave her friend in trouble either but... "But I really can't leave the city. I would be in more trouble if I did."

Lanni sank into contemplation. They couldn't just leave their friend, could they? There had to be a way. She could go to whichever city she had to because she was not under any restriction, but she needed Luna's help. If only Cheng Yu was being held within the city... Lanni's eyebrows knitted as she thought of something. That was right.

"We are not leaving the city." Luna looked at her quizzically, and she explained her hypothesis. "Li Xiyan knows that you would try to find Cheng Yu's location by hacking. She might have dropped Xiao Yu's phone in a fake location to mislead you."

"Now that you mention it, we did find that Xiao Yu booked a train ticket to leave the city but we don't know if she actually boarded the train." Luna realized that they might have been fooled too. "Wait. But why did she appear in that location that Xiao Yu's phone is?"

"Who knows? Perhaps she has other business there." Lanni dismissed. No matter why Li Xiyan went to that place, there was no way Cheng Yu was there. She wouldn't be so stupid as to let Cheng Yu have her phone with her.

Luna grabbed her laptop. "Let me try to find where they actually went."

"But how would you do that? Xiao Yu doesn't have her phone with her. "

"Road surveillance from the day she disappeared." Luna had already started typing a series of codes.

Lanni waited under bated breath then after a while, she had a thought. "Should we tell mom about this?"

Luna didn't look up from her laptop as she answered, "I don't know, but she wouldn't let us go on our own and the fewer we are, the less the danger."

Lanni couldn't agree more so she said nothing more of it. "I'll make preparations for our departure then."

She hurried back to her room and made a phone call, then went to the closet and dragged out a full body mannequin.

"Are you done?" Luna joined her and asked. She already had her bag that had everything they needed. When she saw Lanni drag the mannequin, she frowned in curiosity. "What's that for?"

"In case mom looks for us." Lanni dressed up the mannequin in her nightgown then laid it on her bed. When she was done, she dragged another mannequin.

"And what is that for?" Luna raised an eyebrow as Lanni seriously did the same thing with the second mannequin.

"This is you." Lanni put 'Luna' in bed then covered the two of them, deliberately letting out some fabric of their nightgowns. "We had a sleepover in my room, and now we fell asleep."

"This is crazy." Luna giggled.

Lanni opened the window and urged, "Hurry! We should get going."

Luna glanced at the rope she had tied onto the window and was speechless. This old trick still existed?

"The curtain will cover it up." Lanni smiled, patting herself on the shoulder for covering all bases.

They got down through the window and looked around.

"Did I hear something?" A guard on patrol stopped in his tracks. The girls managed to hide behind the wall just as he turned. They trembled as he walked towards their hiding spot. He was definitely going to catch them. Lanni turned to ask Luna if they should explain it to him. Just before she did, the guard arrived and Luna stepped out before she could stop her.

"Young Miss?" He was clearly surprised.

"I'm just out on a stroll. Did I scare you?"

"No, no, it's nothing young miss. Then you..." the rest of his words were swallowed as he fell into a deep sleep.

"What did you do?" Lanni was puzzled when she saw the man on the floor.

"I knocked him out. Don't worry; he will only be asleep for a few minutes."

Lanni dragged Luna away. They left the compound without notice and there was a low-profile black car waiting outside. Lanni led Luna in.

"Miss Li, I thought you had forgotten all about me." An Zichen greeted them when they entered the car.

"I'm sorry to trouble you so late at night." Lanni apologized sincerely. It was just that anyone else would have notified Li Yuming. She couldn't get a stranger in their business either so a cab was out of the question. Besides, she couldn't possibly take any car without attracting attention so she had decided to call An Zichen.

"You don't have to be too modest, Miss Li. I was scared you would never need me." An Zichen looked like he was doing well since leaving the Feng family. "Where are you going so late at night?"

Luna took out her laptop and confirmed before telling him the location. An Zichen guessed that it must be urgent so he sped into the night. They arrived within just twenty minutes.

Luna opened her bag and took out a mask then threw it at Lanni. Before she could ask, Luna took a spray bottle and shoved it into Lanni's hands. "If anyone notices you, this will make them sleep."

Lanni understood and grabbed another mask. "We don't want Xiao Yu to sleep or we will not be able to get out."

"Great." Luna took out a pair of wireless earphones and dialed Lanni's number then connected the call. "We will have to make do with this."

"Is this really necessary?" It was Lanni's turn to laugh, but Luna took her laptop and checked one of the several windows on the screen. "I'll tell you when to enter."

Lanni took in a deep breath and went straight for the house where she didn't know what to expect. It felt strange to willingly go to the tiger's den, especially when she knew that Luna could only tell her when to enter. There were no cameras inside the house so once she was in, she would have to face whatever or whoever she would meet. She went in at Luna's signal.

There was no one inside; Luna must have done something to distract them so Lanni hurriedly started looking for Cheng Yu. Since she had to be sneaky, she could not call out Cheng Yu's name in fear of alerting them. She could only patiently check every room.

"Xiao Yu!" she finally couldn't hold in her excitement when she saw Cheng Yu in one of the rooms, a yelp of excitement escaping her lips. She covered her mouth quickly and went forward. The girl had been bound with duct tape and was sweating profusely. From her quick breathing and the wounds and cuts on her skin, she must have suffered a lot.

"Li Xiyan, how dare she? I will make her pay." Lanni declared as she swiftly freed Cheng Yu.

"Lanni." Cheng Yu cried when the tape was pulled off her mouth.

"It's okay. You're alright now." Lanni hugged her, feeling moisture gather at the rims of her eyes. They had all misunderstood Cheng Yu and called her a traitor... when she was actually a victim too... "I'm sorry Xiao Yu. If we believed you sooner, we would have found you sooner."

"Don't blame yourselves. It was all so confusing." Cheng Yu understood them. If she were in their shoes, she would have misunderstood too.

"Let's go quickly. Luna must have distracted those idiots. We should hurry before they realize something is amiss." Lanni recalled someone and asked, "Where is Xiao Ying?"

"He should be home." Cheng Yu couldn't be too sure. However, Li Xiyuan only needed her if she wanted to get to Lanni and Luna so logically, she shouldn't have kidnapped her brother.

"Okay, let's leave." Lanni helped Cheng Yu up.

"Going so fast?" A mocking voice emanated from the entrance.

Chapter 224 - Rats Entering Their Own Trap

Lanni froze in her tracks. She turned to look at the door and swallowed when she saw Li Xiyuan standing there, giving her a look of triumph.

She sauntered in, her voluptuous hips swaying as she moved. She stopped in front of Lanni and Cheng Yu and looked down at them like she was staring at ants. "Look who we have here. Rats walking head-first into their trap."

Lanni's eyes widened. Trap? This was a trap? Li Xiyang had tricked them into coming here? But how was that even possible?

"Li Lanni." Li Xiyang's lips twitched then she burst into an evil laugh. "I didn't think we would ever see each other on earth. You're quite the phoenix, eh?"

Lanni wasn't in the mood to argue with this psychopath. "Li Xiyang, what do you want?"

"To settle scores with you. Can't you tell?" She guffawed. "Now that you willingly came here, do you think I would let you leave just like that?"

Lanni took a deep breath. This was trickier than she thought.

"Listen. I hate your dumb sister more than I hate you. Why don't you call her here? As long as I have her, I will let you and your friend live for now."

"You're insane. I will never let you hurt my sister." Lanni spat through gritted teeth. Who did this woman think she was?

"Oh, what an amazing display of sibling affection. In this case, I guess I should no longer the two of you any mercy."

Lanni bit her lip as she thought of what to do. If only there was a weapon she could use to kill this woman.

Uh... weapon. Of course she had one.

She took out the little bottle and sprayed its contents into Li Xiyang's face.

"I can't believe I wasted so much time before thinking of this." She scolded herself before swiftly leaving the room with Cheng Yu.

Outside the door, several henchmen lay unconscious. She looked around and was shocked for a while before dragging Cheng Yu away.

"You're out safely. That was close." Luna was outside the house. They hurried to the car.

"Li Xiyan suddenly appeared and caught us. I wonder how she knew that we were going to break Xiao Yu out." Lanni gasped to catch her breath after running so fast.

"Isn't that obvious? The hearing is tomorrow. She knew we would try to save Xiao Yu if we found out that she is here." Luna analyzed. That was obviously the case.

"Let's leave first."

They got into the car and An Zichen drove off speedily.

"Luna..." Cheng Yu started.

"I know. you don't have to mention it. I'm sorry I doubted you at first." Luna hugged Cheng Yu before the latter could explain anything. She knew Cheng Yu was going to explain why she lied about Luna before.

"Luna is right. We doubted you before but now that we know the truth, we are not going to bring it up anymore."

Lanni turned to her sister and gushed. "If you didn't fight those guards, we wouldn't have been able to get out. What are you, a superhero?"

"What guards?" Luna was confused.

"Uh... the ones that accompanied Li Xiyan."

Luna frowned. "No way. Everything was going well until Li Xiyan appeared. I tried to warn you but you didn't hear me so I came to help you fight in case you had to. I didn't even get in before I saw you coming out."

"Huh? How could that be?" Lanni wondered. "It's weird to insinuate that they fought among themselves."

"Maybe someone helped us out but we just did not see them." Cheng Yu chimed in.

"You're right. Who was it, was it you, An Zichen?" Lanni turned to ask him.

"No, I was waiting for you the whole time." An Zichen responded.

Luna thought of a possibility and had a shocked expression on her face. "Flynn."

"What did you say? Who?"

"Flynn. He has been following Li Xiyan, at least from the last exchange we had."

"No way. If it is him, he would probably help Li Xiyan to capture me." Lanni laughed mockingly. From her memory, he must hate her.

"No way. Why would he help the enemy?"

"What's the matter with Li Xiyan anyway? Why did I investigate her?" Lanni changed the topic, not wanting to talk about that man anymore.

"Who am I to ask?" Luna dismissed, and Lanni raised an eyebrow accusingly. "Fine, fine. I know why you did, but can I answer it later? It's already so late and I'm sleepy."

"Fine." Lanni let her off. They had a lot of time to talk about it anyway. Besides, what was more important now was to know how to sneak back into the house. They needed to take care of Cheng Yu's wounds and call a doctor if necessary.

"But can we really sneak in? It will not be safe with Xiao Yu's wounds." Lanni thought aloud.

"Of course not. We can just make a triumphant entry. We did something good anyway so mother will not be mad at us."

"What triumphant entry?" Lanni glared at her sister.

But Luna was right. Even if Li Yuming was going to be mad at them for sneaking out of the house late at night and endangering their lives, she would be proud of them once she saw them bring back Cheng Yu.

As a precaution, she called Cheng Yu's brother and ensured that he was alright. Just for the sake of more security, she would send over a bodyguard or two to protect him. For the same reason, Jiang Xingyu and his mother had sent over a team of bodyguards to guard the hospital where Xia Hanchen was. Nothing could go wrong before or after the hearing.

Cheng Yu was asleep, and Lanni reclined in the backrest to sleep a little too. She was now truly calm.

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The following day.

Everyone arrived in court in time for the first trial.

There was no trace of worry or despair on anyone's face. After all, they had all the evidence and Luna being brought to court was just a formality for her to prove her innocence.

Li Yuming sat next to Lanni with a happy smile plastered across her face. After today, her daughter would no longer have to be under restriction in the name of being a suspect.

Li Yuming's phone rang at that moment and she excused herself to go out and receive it. When she came back, her face was ashen with shock.

"What happened?" Lanni asked worriedly.

"The lawyer." Li Yuming merely said two words.

Without a doubt, Lanni understood what had happened. The man must have withdrawn. Now, it was doubtless that Li Xiyan was behind this. She must have made the first lawyer drop the case and now she had done the same for the lawyer that Li Yuming hired.

"But how can he withdraw on the last day, and in the last minute too? Where is his professionalism?"

"What happened?" Madam Jiang felt something was wrong when she saw Li Yuming and Lanni's worried looks so she went over to ask with a whisper.

Once Li Yuming explained the situation, she frowned. "Of course, there have to be one or two irresponsible scoundrels out there. I will teach him a lesson once the trial is over."

"What do we do now?" Lanni was more worried about this. The trial was about to start.

"Who needs a lawyer when we have all the truth with us?" Madam Jiang said meaningfully.

"Right! I saved all the evidence." Lanni breathed a sigh of relief. Gladly, they had decided to be overly cautious.

Everyone went to sit in their places as the trial began. After the opening statements and introducing the case, the prosecutor finally asked Luna the question everyone had been waiting for. "Guilty or not guilty?"

Luna scanned the courtroom and bit her lips.

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?" The prosecutor asked once again.

Luna looked at him and enunciated the syllables. "Guilty."

Silence washed over the courtroom. Everyone stared at Luna in disbelief.

"Huh?" Lanni was the first to react.

"She pleaded guilty." Li Yuming's jaw dropped.

"Why would she say that she is guilty?" Madam Jiang's voice rang through the courtroom. "Luna, you must know that this is a courtroom and not a place for you to play around. Why are you making such a horrible joke?"

"I'm not making a joke. I really am guilty." Luna sighed. "I killed Detective Paul."

A crash resounded as Jiang Xingyu's phone dropped to the floor. He stood up furiously and glared at her. "Drop this nonsense! What are you even saying? Are you muddled?"

"Order!" The judge warned.

"The defendant has pleaded guilty..."

"Wait. Please wait. I want to have a word with my sister in private." Lanni pleaded.

"I'm afraid that's not possible." The prosecutor stopped her.

Lanni rushed forward. "But what she is saying is a lie! She is telling lies.. We have evidence to prove that she lying."

Chapter 225 - Verdict

The prosecutor frowned, and Lanni insisted. "I will show you the evidence now."

"Go ahead." He said, and Lanni quickly unlocked her phone.

She checked her storage for the videos she had saved. "I know that this is a different case, but it will prove that Luna did not have any motive to murder Detective Paul. He helped her."

"Where is the evidence then?" The prosecutor asked.

"It's right..." Lanni frowned as she checked several folders. It was in her phone. Why wasn't it there anymore? "In my cloud storage." Her smile seemed forced as she checked and found it missing in her cloud storage too. What in the world?

Li Yuming wondered why she was hesitating. Perhaps she had forgotten her password? She checked for her own copy as did everyone else.

"It's gone!" Lanni exclaimed and turned to look at Li Yuming, Madam Jiang, Jiang Xingyu and Ji Xiehan.

Madam Jiang frowned too. "My copy is gone too."

Li Yuming, Ji Xiehan and Jiang Xingyu exchanged looks and understood each other. They had lost their copies too.

Lanni frowned in realization and glared at Luna accusingly. "It was you. You deleted all the evidence, right? Why are you doing this?"

Luna looked back at Lanni with a snicker. "What are you talking about? What evidence, are you muddled?" She harrumphed and continued to make weird statements. "I deliberately tried to kill Li Xiyun because I hate her. And I killed that man because he found evidence to prove me guilty. What else are you talking about?"

Her mouth made an 'O' as though she had come to an understanding. "I see. You must be in denial. That is why you constantly believe that I am innocent even when the facts are right before your eyes."

"Who is this girl?" Lanni pointed at Luna in shock and glanced at the prosecutor. "Are you sure this is my sister? Maybe someone is impersonating her! My sister wouldn't be speaking so much nonsense."

"The facts are before your eyes." The prosecutor stated, and Lanni interrupted. "These are lies! Can't you see for yourself?"

"Order!" The judge stopped their banter. "The suspect has pleaded guilty."

Lanni felt all the strength leave her body. If a suspect pleaded guilty, the judge could simply pass the verdict on the same day. She placed her hands together in front of her face. "Your honor, please do not pass the verdict yet. Please give us time to prove her innocent. She really is—perhaps someone is blackmailing her to speak all this nonsense."

"This is a court." He reminded sternly. Even so, he added, "she will be asked a few questions to prove that she is the real murderer."

Lanni heaved a sigh of relief and went back to her seat.

The interrogation started immediately.

"At what time was Mr. Paul murdered?"

Luna thought about it and accurately answered, "at 4.10 am."

"According to the autopsy, her answer is correct." The prosecutor said.

"Everyone knows that. It was posted on gossip forums." Lanni interrupted, and he shrugged before the interrogation went on.

"Where was he stabbed, how many times and what was the impact?"

"He was stabbed twice in the left side of his chest. The first stab only grazed the skin a little but the second one went right through his heart." Luna answered like it was nothing, shocking everyone present.

"What was the position of his body and the weapon when he was found?"

"He was lying on his stomach, on the floor; and the knife had been pulled out and placed beside his head."

Lanni's eyes went wide when the prosecutor said that she had got it right again.

"What type of knife was used?"

"A chef's knife with a marroon handle." She answered effortlessly.

"She's guilty." Even the prosecutor was shocked. Aside from the police, the only person who knew this much information was the detective's widow. She had been a suspect at first, but her innocence was proved when they found out that she had sneaked out of the house late at night and only returned at 5am. The fact that Luna knew so much could only mean that she had been there when the man was murdered, which meant she was the murderer.

Lanni watched in disbelief as two policemen cuffed Luna and led her away. There was probably nothing that could be done anymore. The verdict would be read in a few days. After that, it would be too late.

Lanni's eyes watered.

Ji Xiehan pulled her into his embrace to comfort her as Madam Jiang and Jiang Xingyu comforted Li Yuming.

—

"How could she do this?" Lanni cried against Xiehan's shoulder. "Why? Why would she plead guilty and even say things that prove her guilty when she is innocent?"

Ji Xiehan didn't know what to think either. They had all seen the evidence of Luna's innocence. What in the world was the meaning of this? He could only pat Lanni's back to soothe her.

—

Li Yuming wasn't feeling any better off. She stared into space like a lifeless doll and did not let out a peep. Just when she had reunited with her daughter, just when she had finally heard Luna call her 'mother'...

Just when they thought everything was going on well, it all shattered like it had been a dream. How could fate be so cruel?

She knew that no matter what Luna said, she was innocent. She just couldn't understand why Luna would take the guilt upon herself and lie in front of the court with a straight expression. She even went hacking and deleted all the evidence. Did she hit her head against the door this morning and go crazy?

Madam Jiang was in disbelief too. Just when she was thinking that it was finally time for Luna to stop being in hiding and live freely, the girl did this. Like Lanni, she also believed that Luna must be under a threat. But what threat?

Ji Xiehan drove Lanni to her home and stayed with her a little more to make her feel better. Lanni realized this and felt guilty about it. "Xiehan, you don't have to put your job aside for me. You should go back to work."

"It's nothing. Work is boring anyway." Xiehan sat on the bed and brought her into his embrace and ran his fingers through her hair.

Lanni let her thoughts ran wild and hugged his waist. "Xiehan."

"Mmh?" He looked down at her.

"Let's attempt a jailbreak." She said seriously.

"Attempt a what?" Xiehan was so startled that he sat up straight.

"Let's break Luna out of jail. Once the court gives her a sentence, it will be too late."

"Are you crazy?" Xiehan stared at her in disbelief. Was she seriously saying this?

"It's not dangerous. If Luna can break Ji Fiefei out of jail, then we can help her break out too..." her voice trailed as she thought of something.

"Wait. If Luna goes to prison, she might meet with Ji Fiefei because she will go to the same prison as her. Do you think this could be the reason why she pleaded guilty? Could it be that she wants to meet Ji Fiefei and maybe seek revenge?"

Ji Xiehan frowned at her analysis. "That would be too far-fetched and not worth it in the slightest. Don't forget, she might be in isolation due to the nature of her case. Besides, who can guess the sentence? She could be hanged instead."

"Hanged..." the word hit Lanni like a bolt of lightning. Forget her analysis. Luna could be hanged...

"Just why? Why did she choose to do this to herself?" Lanni pulled at her hair.

—

Everyone was saddened by what Luna had done, but the most saddened was probably Jiang Xingyu.

The man locked himself in his room for three days straight and neither ate a grain of rice nor drank a drop of water. Madam Jiang was worried almost to death. But no matter how she coaxed her son, he wouldn't let anyone into his room, much less leave the room.

If this continued, he might starve himself to death.

Decisively, Madam Jiang had someone knock the door down and was immediately greeted with the stench of alcohol. The man lay lifelessly on the floor with a bottle of alcohol in his hand—although most of its contents had been spilled on his clothes.

She paused for a while, taking in her son's pitiful state. Walking over the broken door, she knelt beside her son and knelt beside him, using a finger to push the hair off his face. "Xingyu you... how could you do this to yourself?"

"She has always been like this. She doesn't care about what everyone else feels." The drunk gritted his teeth and brought the bottle of alcohol to his mouth. The remaining drink poured onto his clothes and whatever made it to his mouth choked him.

Madam Jiang sat on her legs and pulled his head to his lap. "But you are harming yourself too. Don't you care how your dad and I feel?"

Chapter 226 - You Only Care About Your Wife

"What's wrong with him? Why is he acting like a little child throwing a tantrum when he is a fully grown man? Is he asking for a beating?" A harrumph resounded from the door. What was he doing, getting his mother all worried? It was already enough that his mother was worried about Xia Luna. Why did he want her to be worried about him as well?

Jiang Xingren glared at his son fiercely. "You punk! Get off the floor now!" He pinched his nose tightly between his thumb and forefinger. "Go and take a shower, gah! You stink like a sewer, you will suffocate my wife!"

"You only care about your wife." Jiang Xingyu grumbled, and Jiang Xingren scoffed at him. Left with no choice, Jiang Xingyu could only drag his weak body to the bathroom.

After taking a bath and changing into clean clothes, he looked more decent. Lunch was ready, so Madam Jiang called him down to eat.

"That's more like it." Jiang Xingren nodded when he saw his son looking better than the lifeless log of wood he had become in just three days. "Men should be strong. Otherwise, how sad will your woman be when she comes back and finds you in such an unbearable state?"

"That's enough. Don't berate him too much." Madam Jiang stood up for him.

"For the first time, you are not scolding him together with him." Jiang Xingyu made a joke out of it, earning a glare from both of them. He had made them so worried that they were on the verge of pulling their hair off their scalps and he had the guts to make a joke?

"Fine. Let's think of a way to get the evidence to prove her innocence. You said she deliberately deleted it?" Jiang Xingren asked.

"Yes. And that's the strange part in all of this. Why would she do such a thing? It's as though she wanted to go to prison no matter what." Madam Jiang still couldn't understand.

"Do you think the evidence you had found to prove her innocence had all been fabricated? Perhaps she deleted it earlier because she knew that the court would prove it fake anyway?" He speculated.

"No way." Madam Jiang shook her head confidently. "Xingyu and I worked hard to retrieve it. We couldn't have got anything fake and besides, we checked the authenticity."

"Then she must be under a threat." He concluded.

"Actually we thought so too. But who could have threatened her? And what would be the leverage? Xia Hanchen was transferred to Hillside hospital and we have people monitoring the whole hospital.

"Wait. What about Cheng Yu?" Jiang Xingyu suddenly recalled. Xia Luna cared about Cheng Yu like her own sister. If anyone used Cheng Yu to threaten her, she would do what they wanted right away.

"Right... Cheng Yu! Why didn't she attend the hearing when she and Luna are best friends? Shouldn't her best friend's hearing be of utmost importance?"

—

Cheng Yu had not attended Luna's hearing. Besides Lanni and Luna, no one else knew why she had not attended.

The sisters knew that on the night they rescued Cheng Yu, they had brought her to their room and tried to treat her wounds. However, they couldn't be sure that there were no other complications so they sent Cheng Yu to hospital in the wee hours of the morning.

Aside from being dehydrated and a few of the wounds being infected, there were no major complications.

Cheng Yu was currently at her home. Goldenwing Apartments was no longer safe enough since Li Xiyan could infiltrate it like she did the last time. She did not want to depend on Lanni and Luna and let them get her a place to stay, so she had swallowed the pill and gone back home.

It wasn't too bad. She could keep an eye on her brother while at it.

Sitting on her bed, Cheng Yu checked her new phone impatiently. There was no call from Lanni or Luna. Not even a text message. Lanni's phone wouldn't go through either.

"Are they alright? Why aren't they saying anything?" Cheng Yu wondered aloud.

It was still not safe for her to walk around at such a time, but she was worried that something could have happened to her friends.

'Maybe I should go to Lanni's home and check on them?' She wondered.

—

Li Yuming's home.

"Miss, Miss Cheng is here to see you." The housekeeper announced to Lanni, who was sitting on her legs on the white sofa, blankly staring at a book.

"Let her in." Lanni looked up, suddenly remembering that she had almost forgotten all about Cheng Yu. She put the book beside her on the sofa and stood up, stretching as she felt around for her slippers using her feet. When she found them and wore them, she gathered the long waves of her hair and tied it up into a messy ponytail then went out to meet Cheng Yu.

"Lanni!" Cheng Yu rushed over and hugged Lanni as soon as she saw her. "You and Luna are so mean! You didn't tell me anything about the hearing. Do you know how worried I've been? At last I couldn't handle it anymore so I rushed here to check the situation myself."

Cheng Yu finally realized something was wrong. Lanni didn't look alright. "What's wrong? What happened?" When Lanni didn't answer her, she contemplated then remembered that the last time they talked, they had said that Luna was currently living together with them. "Where is Luna?"

Lanni didn't know where to start. She pulled Cheng Yu to the sofa she was sitting on earlier and took a deep breath. "Xia Luna is the craziest person on earth. She pleaded guilty."

"She did what?" Cheng Yu would have fallen onto the floor in shock if she wasn't sitting.

"She pleaded guilty." Lanni enunciated the syllables. "Not only that, but she also deleted all the evidence that we had spent so much time gathering to prove her innocence. I don't know her anymore."

"That's strange." Cheng Yu frowned, then suddenly thought of someone. "Where is your dad?"

Lanni bit the inside of her lip. "You know what? I thought she was being threatened too. However, our dad is safe and we rescued you too. The two of you are the only people my sister cares about. Oh, and me too, but I'm right here and so is mother. Basically everyone she would worry about is safe. What would anyone use as leverage to blackmail her?"

Cheng Yu couldn't think of any possibility no matter how hard she thought. This was a case of murder, so she couldn't possibly be doing this because she had a mission to complete in prison. Luna wouldn't be that unreasonable.

"Perhaps..." Lanni didn't want to think that way of her sister but, "perhaps she really did it."

"What nonsense are you saying? We both know Luna would never do such a thing." Cheng Yu berated.

"Then tell me another possibility." Lanni shrugged, and Cheng Yu was speechless. She didn't know what to think either.

"What about the young man you guys said had been caught as the true murderer?"

Lanni sat down in despair. "Since the evidence has been deleted, of course there was nothing to prove him guilty."

Cheng Yu sighed. Why would Luna do that?

They were still racking their brains when Li Yuming passed by. She only spared them one glance before heading into the kitchen.

"Uh..." Lanni peeked at Cheng Yu then looked at Li Yuming's retreating back and frowned in confusion. She had already explained to Li Yuming that Cheng Yu did what she did because she had been forced. Why was Li Yuming still ignoring Cheng Yu?

"I guess she is mad at me." Cheng Yu bit her lip.

Li Yuming came back a few minutes later, bringing a tray of fruits with her. She sat on the sofa next to the one the girls were sitting on as she placed the tray onto the emerald coffee table.

She looked surprised to see Lanni and Cheng Yu. "Ah... you girls are here. When did you get here?"

Lanni and Cheng Yu exchanged looks.

"Uh... what do you mean 'when did we get here', mom? We have been here for a long time." Lanni expressed her confusion.

"You even looked in our direction and ignored us, and I thought you were mad at me." Cheng Yu seconded.

Li Yuming glanced at the two of them and laughed. "I know you girls are trying to make me laugh. How lovely."

Lanni and Cheng Yu exchanged looks again. She was serious...

Li Yuming looked at Cheng Yu and asked, "Why would I be mad at you? You are my excellent disciple. Did you do something wrong that I don't know about?"

"Uh... because of what I said about Luna." Cheng Yu stuttered, as though scared that she would remind Li Yuming to be mad at her.

"What are you saying? What did you say about Luna?" Li Yuming asked, baffling them both.

Chapter 227 - Muddled

"Mom, are you alright?" How could she forget something that happened not too long ago? She wasn't muddled out of shock, right? Lanni was worried, especially knowing that some people reacted that way to trauma or shock. Could it be...

Li Yuming let out a long sigh. "Let's forget about it. Anyway, what are you girls up to? We should be thinking of a way to get Luna out of there."

In the past month that Xia Luna had stayed in Li Yuming's villa, the two had grown quite close. It was no wonder Li Yuming couldn't bear to let her go to prison.

Lanni was happy that finally someone had the same thought as her. She shifted her position so she was looking at Li Yuming and quickly said, "I have a foolproof idea."

"What?" Li Yuming and Cheng Yu both looked at her and asked.

"To replace Luna. I will find a way to knock her out and drag her out of there. Then I will replace her."
She explained her plan in all seriousness.

"And then what? Go to prison on her behalf? I understand that you love your sister but I am not going to let that happen." Li Yuming glared at her.

"Who said anything about going to prison on her behalf? Of course not. I will let them know that they have the wrong person. I can say I got knocked out and when I woke up, I was in jail. Then they will have to free me and we will hide Luna."

"Then Luna will be what she has been for the past year—a wanted criminal." Li Yuming sighed, and Lanni bit her lip. Indeed, it was a stupid idea. It wouldn't even work.

"But what are we going to do?"

"We are going to do what we did before. We will find the evidence to prove her innocence." Li Yuming declared determinedly.

However, that was easier said than done. Five days passed, and they had not even found a single lead.

The Jiangs had also been working their butts off but they had not found a single clue either. Not even Ji Xiehan, who had tried to retrieve the evidence by hacking had achieved any progress. Hence, they couldn't stop the court from giving a verdict.

Luna was pronounced guilty and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment.

Lanni was in disbelief. How could one girl outwit everyone? She had deleted those videos and files and no one had managed to retrieve them no matter how hard they tried. That wasn't what bugged Lanni the most. It was the fact that her sister was now in prison. It was hard to bear but there was nothing more she could do about it.

No matter what it was, she hoped Luna had done what she did for a good reason.

—

11th November.

Life had to go on. On one hand, there was no use dwelling on the past. On the other hand, Lanni had a feeling she might be able to help Luna if she recovered her memory. Staying in prison for twenty years when one didn't commit a crime was hectic.

Hence Lanni wanted to recover her memory—her identity, and do what she could.

That afternoon, she had an appointment with Han Xichen. Ji Xiehan was busy in Feng Ji International, so this time she went on her own. Unlike the last time, she was no longer scared this time.

...

A scene appeared in Lanni's mind.

She was standing in front of a middle-aged woman as she patted her head.

"Don't worry. The first mission is usually the hardest. You may have failed, but you became stronger." The woman coaxed.

"Thanks Miss Nila. But I still feel bad about it. I got discovered and Flynn had to save me. If they were not drunk, I would be dead." Lanni was disappointed in herself.

"Phoenix, there is no such thing as 'if'. Once something happens, it has happened. It's gone and will not rewind." The woman said to Lanni.

The present Lanni was shocked. Phoenix?

So that was where the alias came from. It was from that organization... no wonder Li Yuming lied to her when she asked about it.

"Come. I will teach you how to write an article

"Alright." Lanni followed her into her office, wondering what made Miss Nila think that she didn't know how to write an article.

However, it was not any normal article. On the surface, it was indeed a normal story or piece of news. However, there were hidden pieces of information in it and only the writer would be able to tell.

"What a brilliant way of storing information." Lanni exclaimed.

"Of course. You see, keys can be copied, passcodes can be cracked and people can even temper with biometric sensors. That's why we use all those other forms of security but still keep our documents this way."

Lanni nodded in understanding.

The scene shifted, and Lanni was with that woman again.

"Your new mission is to investigate two families. The first one is the Li family." The woman declared.

Lanni's eyes went wide as her jaw dropped. "My own family?!"

"Of course not." The woman seemed to have had fun messing with her. "The person you will be investigating is Li Xiyan."

"I see." Lanni was relieved.

"The other family you will investigate is the Xia family."

"What? Why would I..."

The woman didn't seem to know why Lanni was protesting, so she cut her off. "Xia Hanchen is her husband, so he might be involved too—though I hope he isn't. You have to investigate them both."

"What am I investigating?" Lanni questioned.

"Li Xiyan comes from a family of renown doctors and they major in the field of manufacturing medicine. However, they have been making medicines that are banned because they are harmful to human health. You have to investigate Li Xiyan in two months."

"This..." Lanni was hesitant.

"You chose to be here, Phoenix. So you must complete your mission as assigned." Miss Nila interrupted. "Besides, you are Li Xiyan's stepdaughter, aren't you? That makes it easier for you to investigate her."

Lanni nodded and left her office after taking up the mission.

—

The present Lanni was surprised. So that was why she was investigating Li Xiyan. It turned out that woman was dangerous in every way, even in her profession.

She figured Li Xiyan usually did all of this in private because it was illegal. But what did she do during the day anyway? Saunter around and curse at Li Yuming for remaining deeply rooted in Xia Hanchen's mind?

Lanni didn't remember anything else before she fell asleep. When she woke up, her head didn't hurt as much as it did the last time.

"I guess you are recovering more and more of your memory." Han Xichen said when Lanni woke up. "You only need one or two more sessions to figure out all of your past. On a side note, if I may be audacious to ask..."

Lanni raised an eyebrow, silently giving him permission to ask whatever he wanted to ask.

"Did you really lose your memory in a car accident? From my experience, it seems to be different. I've had a patient before, and they were forced to forget their past for their parents' selfish reasons and ended up living a lie. No matter how many times they were hypnotized, she would remember nothing..."

Lanni smiled. If he said this the last time, she might have been shocked or even offended. But since she already knew the truth, she was unaffected. "Trust me, it's alright."

Han Xichen did not dwell on it anymore. "When will you come for the next session?"

"I don't know." Lanni thought about it. "In two weeks to one month. I will notify you beforehand."

The man nodded and watched her as she left. How beautiful... Ji Xiehan must have saved the world in his previous life to date such a beauty in this life.

—

When she left Han Xichen's office, Lanni had a better understanding of herself. The organisation she was working for—or at least training at—was an undercover agency. She was an undercover journalist in training, and one of her training missions was to investigate Li Xiyan.

Now she knew why Li Xiyan hated her so much. It must be because she found out that Lanni was investigating her. That, and the fact that Lanni was Li Yuming's and Xia Hanchen's daughter.

Lanni was just leaving the hospital when she bumped into something firm, a man's sturdy chest.

She looked up with a frown and was surprised when she saw the handsome man looking back at her. He had his brown hair in a ponytail, his thin lips curled into a smirk and his gaze on her was as mocking as always. He looked unpredictable even with a slight smirk pasted on his face. It was the same face she had seen in dreams and when hypnotized.

"Flynn?"

Chapter 228 - That Sick Bastard!

"Flynn?" Lanni was clearly not expecting to see him any time soon or ever. "What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be in Germany?"

The man grinned devilishly and looked down at her. "It turns out, your memory is quite better than expected."

Lanni pursed her lips and glared at him. "Is that meant to be some kind of joke? It's not funny."

"Ah... you can lose your memory but old habits die hard, don't they? You still have your golden birdie claws out—as defensive as ever." His lips twitched into a smirk.

Lanni really wanted to strangle him. She would beat him up if he wasn't a hundred times more skilled in fighting than she was. Why was this guy always mocking her whenever he had the chance? "What are you doing here?"

"To check up on you." He said matter-of-factly, earning an eye roll from Lanni but he continued anyway, "I heard you regained your memory."

"Most of it." Lanni answered because with his abilities, he would still find out even if she hid it from him.

As expected, the man snickered. "What a waste of time, effort and brains."

Lanni's brows knitted into a frown. "What the hell do you mean?"

"Don't you know?" The man languidly leaned against the wall and took out a cigarette and a lighter. Lanni grabbed them and walked to a trash bin at the side, then shoved the cigarette and lighter into the bin, shooting him a glare. "This is a hospital. Couldn't you restrain your annoying smoking habits a bit?"

"So what if it's a hospital?" He laughed tauntingly.

She turned and looked him up and down. "Right. I should have let you smoke. That way, the doctors would see you and give your lungs a thorough check. They must be damaged already thanks to all the smoke you have been taking in."

"Are you worried about me, princess?" He slammed a hand against the wall and suddenly had her trapped between the wall and himself.

Lanni scrunched her eyebrows and pushed his chest off her. "Less nonsense. I asked you why you are here."

"To mock you." He was finally being serious and she didn't like it either.

She huffed and walked past him, but his voice stopped her just after a few steps, "your sister spent so much time and effort just to make sure you wouldn't return to the place that could cost your life. But what about you? Would you let her rot in prison and do nothing about it?"

Lanni stopped in her tracks and turned to face him. "How do you know? Wait, how much do you know?"

"Oh... my silly princess, I know everything about you. I even know who your current boyfriend is and how many times you have met him."

Lanni glared at him but deep down, she was slightly scared. Was this man a stalker?

He saw her accusing gaze and laughed. "Listen, I don't care about your man, but you should do something about your sister."

Lanni looked at him curiously. "Do you have a way out?"

"Of course. Let's have a meal together and I will tell you all about it." He started walking off. She thought about it for a second and followed him.

...

Flynn walked into a restaurant with Lanni behind him. He sat and ordered a meal.

"Place an order too, I'm treating." He offered, but Lanni shook her head. It was already bad enough that she was sitting opposite this unpredictable man.

"You will not even save face for your trainer?" He grinned, and Lanni ignored him.

Faced with her attitude, he could only make his suggestion. "You should get Luna out of prison."

"Prison break? Yeah, right." Lanni sighed. She had thought about it, but Xiehan had chewed her out just for merely considering it.

"Who said anything about a prison break?" Flynn crossed his arms, his eyes accusing her of being slow-witted.

"Then what else are you talking about?"

"Find Li Xiyan."

"Find who?" Lanni was taken aback. Why would he mention Li Xiyan out of nowhere?

"We both know that you believe she is the one who forced your sister to plead guilty—and I'm a hundred percent sure that she did. You have to find her and prove that she is the one who forced your sister to lie in court. It's already bad enough that she has been wrongfully convicted. If you prove to the court that she had been forced to wrongfully admit to the crime, something good might come out of it.

I've told you what to do. It's up to you to accomplish it."

Lanni raised an eyebrow. "You sound so serious... like you are giving me a mission." She placed her elbows on the table and looked at him. "Besides, why do you care so much about my sister?"

Flynn scoffed and stood up. "I don't care about anyone, princess. And even if I cared about anyone, it wouldn't be your sister."

The food arrived just as he turned to leave, and he paid the bill, letting Lanni eat it instead.

Lanni shook her head helplessly. What a strange species. Because she did not want to waste food, she wanted to pack it up as take out. When she took a closer look, she was surprised. Why did that strange man order only her favorite dishes?

Although Flynn was strange, he was right. She needed to find Li Xiyan. She should find ways to get close to Li Xiyan. Only by getting close to that woman would she find her weakness.

It was impossible to know just what she had used to blackmail Xia Luna into pleading guilty. Therefore, if she found Li Xiyan's weakness, she could use it to force her to reveal what leverage she used, and also confess the truth.

—

Lanni left the restaurant a short while later, carrying the take out boxes in a plastic bag.

She had just reached outside when she saw someone she wasn't expecting. "Xiehan? Shouldn't you be in a meeting right now?"

Xiehan glanced at the plastic bag in her hand and let out a slight smile. "Aren't you happy to see me?"

Lanni hugged him slightly. "Of course I'm happy to see you. I was just worried about your work."

"I cancelled the meeting." He answered expressionlessly.

Lanni finally felt something was off. She reached to touch his forehead and neck. "Are you alright? You don't sound right."

He took her hand off his neck and smacked a kiss on her lips. "I'm just tired. Do you want to go home together?"

"Sure." Lanni quickly called the chauffeur to go home on his own before following Xiehan to his car.

She placed the plastic bag in the backseat and sat in the shotgun. Xiehan glanced in the backseat slightly and started the car.

When Lanni noticed his slight actions, she frowned and looked at him. Was this really about being tired? "Are you upset about something?"

Xiehan stopped at a red light and didn't turn to look at her before asking, "did you hug him back?"

"Huh? Who?" Lanni was confused.

Afraid that his eyes would scare her, Xiehan didn't look at her and only unlocked his phone before passing it to her just as the traffic light turned green.

Lanni looked at the content of his screen and was speechless for a while. There were two photos, one of her and Flynn when he trapped her between himself and the wall. From the angle the picture was taken, it looked like they were hugging intimately.

The second photo was taken when the two of them were together at the restaurant. Lanni knew that they were merely talking about Luna, but that was not what the photos said. She suddenly didn't know what to say.

"Xiehan, it's not how it seems." She said, even though she knew she sounded like a girlfriend caught in the act but still trying to worm her way out.

"I know." The man grunted, to her surprise.

"You... you believe me?"

"I shouldn't believe you?" He peered at her.

"Of course you should!" She quickly corrected herself before cautiously asking, "since you believe me, why are you still mad at me?"

"I'm not mad at you. I'm mad at that man for trying to take advantage of my woman while I was away."

Lanni didn't know what to say. She kept looking at the pictures. The more she looked, the more she found that something was off. "Where did you get this picture?"

Ji Xiehan's lips twitched as he replied, "Han Xichen sent them."

"Han Xichen?" Lanni was puzzled. She was still at the hospital when Flynn appeared. Did that mean Han Xichen followed them?

Xiehan knew what she was thinking and corrected her. "He said it was sent to him from a strange contact."

"Did you try to find out who the sender is?"

"I tried. However, I couldn't get anything out of it."

Lanni's suspicion solidified. "Flynn, that bastard!"

Chapter 229 - Dangerous Criminal Convicted

Xiehan's lips twitched when she cursed. She had just blurted out the name of the person he also thought must be behind this. Since they both thought of him, it must really be him. What did he want? Because if he was thinking of trying to drive a wedge between him and Lanni...

Xiehan suddenly wanted to grab someone by his ponytail and fling him across the street.

"What did you guys talk about?" He changed the topic before he could really look for him and break his hands or give him a black eye.

Lanni didn't want to talk about what happened either. "He urged me to investigate Li Xiyang. He thinks the same as us—that Li Xiyang blackmailed Luna. I don't know why he cares but..." Xiehan turned to raise an eyebrow as she continued, "I think he has a point. But how do I even go about doing such a suicidal task?"

Xiehan's chest vibrated from his slight silent laugh and Lanni realized what she had just said. "Fine. I agree, I was courting death in the past when I agreed to investigate her. But how should I go and court death for a second time?"

Xiehan pulled up into Li Yuming's compound. After stopping the car, he turned to face her and took her hand into his. "Honey, you will be courting trouble if you do it on your own. But if we do it together, we will bring her down."

"How can you be so confident when... ow!" She frowned and yelped when Xiehan suddenly flicked her forehead.

"Honey, are you doubting your man's abilities?"

"Of course not. I know what you can do better than anyone. However, Xiehan..." Lanni felt her head hurt just from thinking about it. "This woman managed to do everything sneakily. We were all working together—all five of us. But she still managed to do everything sneakily and have her way while we didn't even know what happened until it was too late."

Xiehan couldn't refute her point, but he couldn't agree either. "That's why we should work harder this time. I refuse to believe that one woman could beat all of our combined effort a second time."

Lanni said nothing, but she still thought they might not be able to beat Li Xiyan.

She sat still in the shotgun seat and started playing with her phone.

Xiehan didn't say anything to rush her out of the car and reclined the seat to relax next to her.

"Xiehan this..." Lanni suddenly held a hand over her mouth.

"What is it?" Xiehan sat straight and looked over. A piece of news had just popped up on Lanni's screen. Xiehan facepalmed. "I don't know how we didn't but we should have expected this."

"That's not the main point." Lanni pushed her phone aside in frustration. "This news should have broken out several days ago when the verdict was passed. Why only now?"

That was right.

Lanni had just seen news regarding her sister being convicted of murder. The whole world was now talking about Xia Luna.

However, it had been several days already. How come the news only got to the media now?

"It's as though... the media already knew. Even so, they only let the news out now. Moreover, this infuriating headline..." Lanni paused and wanted to kill someone. [DANGEROUS WANTED CRIMINAL FINALLY CONVICTED.]? Who the hell was a dangerous criminal?

"This is obviously meant to infuriate us. It's as if they were being instructed..."

In fact, this was a familiar situation.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" Lanni looked at Xiehan.

"That Li Xiyan is controlling the media? I'm thinking that way too."

"You were right!" Lanni suddenly exclaimed when realization dawned on her. "Not about Li Xiyan controlling the media. I mean, that too... but you were right when you said that one woman couldn't possibly be able to beat all five of us combined."

"What are you insinuating?" Xiehan asked, even though he could already tell what she was thinking.

"She must have someone behind her." Lanni hypothesized, shocked by her own conclusion. But the facts were right in front of her. "One woman cannot do everything that Li Xiyan does all on her own. Besides, everything just feels too meticulously planned."

Just what kind of influence does that woman have behind her? Just who is she?"

—

Meanwhile, Cheng Yu wasn't having it any better.

It was already bad enough that she had missed many of her classes with no explanation. It had taken Jiang Xingyu's word to stop her from being expelled from Star Art International altogether.

Now that she was back and all caught up with everything she had missed, something else came up. News about Xia Luna was suddenly everywhere.

The worst part was that not many people knew that Lanni had a twin.

When they saw the news about Xia Luna being convicted with murder, some of them thought that it was Lanni. Some even insinuated that Lanni had lied about her identity and that she was Xia Luna, only under an alias. It was hectic just hearing their chatter. She couldn't possibly explain to everyone who asked about Lanni that Lanni and Luna were two different people. On one hand, they wouldn't believe a word of it. On the other hand, that would be indirectly admitting that Luna was guilty.

She had let it be, but the headlines irked her. What the hell was [Dangerous wanted criminal finally convicted]?

Since when was Luna a dangerous wanted criminal? "Whoever wrote this headline should just die!" She cursed.

"Easy, tigress. You are too irritable these days. Girls shouldn't curse people to die." Someone plastered himself next to her.

Cheng Yu rolled her eyes and ignored him. She had thought this guy would mind his business and stop bugging her. However, it seemed like she had a permanent parasite by her side.

Cedric didn't mind being ignored and moved even closer to her with a smile, as though he didn't know just how much that was angering her. "Why are you so angry anyway?"

Cheng Yu pursed her lips and was prepared to tell him off as usual.

He sprung his shoulders into a shrug and continued rambling, "just take it as you're writing in a diary."

"And how do you compare to a diary?" Cheng Yu was annoyed. What kind of sick comparison was that?

"Just like a diary, I will not tell anyone whatever you tell me. I will take it to the grave with me."

Cheng Yu looked him up and down and realized that he looked serious. Even so, she huffed and took out her painting tools to ignore him and do her own work.

Cedric let out a smile and took her paint brush from her hand. "Your mood reflects your art. Don't you know? You're in a bad mood and we are drawing such a happy volume in the comics. You will not do it right with this kind of mood."

"Cedric Han, what do you want from me? Will you just disappear?!" She yelled at him.

"Unfortunately, I do not have magic." He said, earning a murderous glare from her. He ran a hand through his hair and continued nagging incessantly. "How about we take a short walk around? We still have thirty whole minutes before the class starts."

Cheng Yu harrumphed and tried to grab back her brush. However, he held it higher up and she couldn't reach it no matter how she tried to stretch. Seeing that he was taking advantage of their height difference to bully her, Cheng Yu was on the verge of exploding. "Give back my brush! I came here early today so I would be able to do something meaningful before the lesson."

"But I came early today to spend time with you, and I want to do so by taking a walk with you."

Cheng Yu sighed and sat back down, opened her bag and took out another brush. However, Cedric must have anticipated it, because as soon as she took it out, it was snatched away by him. When she looked up at him, he had a silly smirk plastered across his face.

"What will it take for you to stop bothering me?"

"One walk. Just one walk and I will get off your hair." He still maintained his hand high above her head lest she caught him offguard and grabbed the brush from him.

"Fine." Cheng Yu could only resign to her fate. Cedric gladly grabbed her hand and dragged her out of the studio and into the elevator.

To avoid disturbing the people from other departments, Cedric led her out of Star Art International so they would have the so-called walk along the street.

Since she was unwilling to talk about why she was angry—paired with the fact that he could guess anyway—he did not ask. They merely walked silently.

Even so, Cedric's heart was filled with joy.. Being able to walk with her like this was something he didn't imagine possible before.

Chapter 230 - Arch Enemies

The duo passed by a European-styled coffee shop and Cedric thought about it before stopping her. "Do you want coffee?"

Cheng Yu silently nodded, so they walked into the coffee shop one after another. Cheng Yu chose a seat by the window and sat down just as Cedric sat in the seat opposite hers.

Cedric glanced at the menu and back at her. "What would you like to drink?"

"Espresso." Cheng Yu said without thinking, and Cedric smiled, making the former wonder why he liked smiling so much. How silly.

They both ordered Espresso and it arrived fast.

"We have similar tastes, it seems." Cedric made a joke out of it and she scoffed at him. Why did he like to make a big deal out of little things?

Cedric coughed to mask his awkwardness as he lifted his cup to his lips.

Cheng Yu lifted her cup to her lips too, savoring the strong taste.

"Everyone thinks Luna did something wrong." She suddenly spoke, catching him off guard.

Cedric instantly paid more attention to listen.

"I know Luna isn't exactly a friendly person. I know she is selfish sometimes—most of the time. But I know her better than anyone. She would never deliberately hurt anyone."

Cedric listened to her and the more he heard, the more he thought something didn't make sense. "You make it sound like they are two different people."

"Because they are. Xia Luna... is Lanni's twin." Cheng Yu knew Cedric was shocked by the information. Even she couldn't believe she was saying this to Cedric of all people but she had been holding in for too long and now it just came bursting out like a flood.

"And I feel so useless. I know she has been wrongfully convicted but there is nothing I can do about it. And I have to hear people curse behind her back behind her back and I can't do anything about them either."

Cedric reached over the table to hold her hand but stopped when his hand was just a centimeter close to hers. He knew she would chew him out if he touched her.

It was already rare that she would actively talk to him about her feelings. If he messed it up, he might never get such a chance again. He could only keep his distance and comfort her. "She is lucky to have a friend like you—a friend who would still trust her even after hearing her plead guilty with her own mouth. And Lanni is lucky too.

Cheng Yu blinked as a slight smile formed at the corners of her lips. "You don't have to console me."

"I'm serious Xiao Yu." He coughed when he realized what he had just called her. But when she didn't show any sign of getting angry or minding the intimate address, he pretended he hadn't realized it either and continued, "you are the best friend anyone could ever ask for."

"But just being their friend doesn't help." She frowned helplessly. "I should do something that will actually get Luna out of there. Or else I will never be able to face them after everything they have done to help me before."

"Is there something I can do to help?" Cedric quickly offered his help.

Cheng Yu thought about it and was about to reject him. But thinking about how she couldn't do anything with her limited abilities, she took the last sip of her espresso and said, "Nothing yet. Can I call you if I ever need help?"

"Of course." Cedric was even happier. Now he had an excuse to ask for her contact number, which he did immediately. He took out his phone and gently slid it on the table towards her. "We should exchange contacts. In case you need help, you can just give me a call."

Cheng Yu took his phone and saved her contact number in it, then gave herself a call and saved his number.

When they left the coffee shop, Cedric was walking on clouds. He had just got Cheng Yu's contact number! He looked around and was just about to find another excuse to go somewhere together when she spoke first. "We should head back now."

"Okay." He remembered the time and headed back with her. She walked faster on their way back and he understood that it was because they just had a few minutes before their class started. Just as they arrived in the building, they saw Jiang Xingyu walking towards them.

"CEO Jiang, hello." Cheng Yu politely greeted him when he stopped in front of them.

"I want to have a word with her." Jiang Xingyu coldly shoed Cedric away.

The latter huffed and walked to the side as Cheng Yu wondered why Jiang Xingyu would look for her.

"What do you want?" With no one else around, Cheng Yu couldn't bother to be polite to him anymore. The fact that Jiang Xingyu spoke up for her a few days ago didn't mean she had forgiven him for kidnapping and using her brother. Even though it was not kidnapping per se, it didn't make it any better.

Jiang Xingyu understood this too, so he didn't say anything about her attitude. "I want to talk to you about Luna." He said the words that he knew she would never reject.

"What about her?" Cheng Yu questioned.

Jiang Xingyu started walking towards the elevator, and she could only silently follow him. The man led her to the employees cafeteria.

"I'll be late for my class." She complained as soon as she understood his intentions. "We should talk after my class instead."

"The class will not start before you arrive." He said as tyrannically as he could possibly sound, and Cheng Yu was irritated.

"Are you simply going to waste everyone's time just because you are the big boss? You must be sick in the head. I don't know what Luna even ever saw in you."

"Are you taking out your frustration on me?" Jiang Xingyu laughed. "Then you better hope that I do not return the favor. Because I am very frustrated."

Cheng Yu stood up with a huff. "If you have something to say, say it after my class." She left after saying these words, and Jiang Xingyu laughed. Was she aware that he could eliminate her from that class if he wanted to?

Of course, he wouldn't do that. Luna would kill him if he did. He could only wait.

—

"Are you that close to Xingyu?" Cedric, who was waiting for Cheng Yu outside the elevator, asked as soon as she got out.

Cheng Yu frowned but answered, "We are not close. He is Luna's boyfriend."

When she realized what he had just called Jiang Xingyu, she looked up at him curiously. "Are you close to him?"

"We are arch enemies. Does this count?" Cedric smirked.

Cheng Yu recalled how Jiang Xingyu had ignored Cedric earlier. They did seem like enemies. She couldn't help but chuckle. Wasn't this an odd combination of enemies? What did they even do to each other? "What happened between you two?"

Cedric laughed. "Things happened. At first, I didn't actually like him because he rejected my sister."

"You have a sister?" Cheng Yu didn't know about it.

"My elder sister. She is beautiful, kind, elegant, intelligent and basically everything a man would want from a woman. However, he rejected her in a banquet—with tens of people as audience to that. He even said such mean words. My sister was so ashamed that she could no longer show her face in public for a while."

"So you hated him because of this?" Cheng Yu still didn't think this reason made sense. The issue was between Jiang Xingyu and Cedric's sister, not Cedric himself, right?

"After that incident passed, everyone forgot it. Jiang Xingyu even treated me as fairly as he would treat anyone else." Cedric continued. "However, during Li Yuming's charity art gala, do you know what happened?"

Cheng Yu shook her head.

"I had my eyes on the last painting. Actually, my sister had her eyes on that painting. It was going to be her birthday soon and I wanted to buy it as a gift for her. However, Jiang Xingyu made sure he got it by all means. Wouldn't you hate him if you were in my shoes?"

"I... I would." Cheng Yu bit her lip and smiled slightly in embarrassment. So that painting had been for his sister all along.

And there she was thinking that it was for her. Even though Jiang Xingyu had got it for Luna in the end, she had still been happy that Cedric was willing to spend so much money to buy her a painting of her idol along with her best friends. After all, he had only given up when the bid prices became ridiculously high.

But now that she thought about it, just where exactly did she get such an assumption? Was she crazy? She and Cedric weren't even close! Forget being close. She even hated his guts!