

I Want a Lifetime with You

Chapter 26

In that instant, Shi Nuan's heart beat wildly. She really didn't like that inexplicable feeling. Suppressing those foreign emotions, she took a deep breath and tried her best to change the topic.

"Did you enjoy eating at the small stalls outside campus back when you used to study there? I used to go to those places for supper with my friends."

Fu Chengyan smiled slightly as his gaze fell on Shi Nuan. "You played hooky?"

Shi Nuan instantly turned red, as though she had been seen through. But there was no way she'd admit to it, so she could only refute with a scarlet face, "Of course not! We only went outside when we were allowed to!"

Seeing how panicky she was, she looked more like trying to cover her tracks. But Fu Chengyan merely smiled and said nothing. Shi Nuan also quieted down. She felt the man next to her right now was rather different from her original impression of Fu Chengyan.

The store Shi Nuan referred to was nearby Jing University, just across the road and through an alleyway. Back then, Shi Nuan would often play hooky with Yun Xiao and eat here, or sneak out together for supper after everyone had fallen asleep. Those were Shi Nuan's happiest moments.

But she hadn't been back to visit ever since she left for her year-long business trip.

Fu Chengyan stopped by the roadside and said to Shi Nuan, "You can head over first. I'll drive over to Jing University!" There was no parking here.

“That’s OK, just go ahead and drive in now. I’m worried you wouldn’t be able to find the store on your own.” Shi Nuan figured that someone like Fu Chengyan probably never walked through the alleys there. Fu Chengyan wanted to say something, but paused for a moment and eventually nodded. “Alright!”

Fu Chengyan drove to Jing University’s parking lot. When he got out of the car, he saw Shi Nuan standing under a ginkgo tree with a purse hanging on her shoulder, leisurely kicking some small rocks around. Light seeped through the trees and shone on her body. As Fu Chengyan narrowed his eyes slightly, time seemed to slow down.

Seeing Fu Chengyan holding his car keys, Shi Nuan waved at him and said, “Over here!”

Fu Chengyan then strode over and asked, “Wanna take a stroll?”

Shi Nuan raised a brow. Jiang City was now in its full autumn glory and students were everywhere. She thought for a moment before shaking her head. “Maybe next time.

Let’s go grab a bite. It’s just past an alley outside Jing University. If we head over before the students finish class, we shouldn’t have to wait long for our food!”

“Sure!”

Shi Nuan was more familiar with the area than Fu Chengyan was. With a few twists and turns, they arrived at the store Shi Nuan was talking about. But the situation wasn’t as ideal as Shi Nuan had described. Although classes were still ongoing, the place was still packed as it was rather small.

Shi Nuan stood outside in hesitation, wondering if she should really bring Fu Chengyan in. Unexpectedly, the latter simply walked right in. Shi Nuan quickly followed him in. She scanned the place and saw that someone had just gotten up, so she rushed over.

Shi Nuan was a bit anxious at the time, so she grabbed Fu Chengyan by the hand and said, "Hurry, there's a table there."

Fu Chengyan raised a brow when he felt his Shi Nuan clutching his large hand. His gaze deepened as he looked at where Shi Nuan was holding.

But the woman didn't seem to notice. She happily dragged him over and sat down. It was only when she noticed Fu Chengyan standing next to her that she returned to her senses. "What's wrong?"

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Fu Chengyan collected himself, shaking his head as he said, “Nothing.” Yet, he remained standing there.

Shi Nuan gazed at Fu Chengyan for a moment, then turned to look at the chair. She quickly gave the chair a wipe then said, “It’s clean now, Mr. Fu!”

Fu Chengyan cast Shi Nuan a meaningful glance. Did she think he found the place too dirty?

Shi Nuan began to feel unsettled under Fu Chengyan’s gaze. “What’s wrong? Maybe we shouldn’t eat here? I know another decent place nearby. How about we go there instead?” Shi Nuan was starting to regret bringing Fu Chengyan here.

Hearing that, Fu Chengyan immediately sat down and smiled. “There’s no need. This place isn’t bad!”

Shi Nuan breathed a sigh of relief. Just then, the lady boss walked over and was stunned to see Shi Nuan. “Haven’t seen you for quite a while, young lady! What will it be today... Huh? Is this your boyfriend?”

“No...”

“What shall we have?” Fu Chengyan quickly interrupted and placed the menu in front of Shi Nuan. Shi Nuan froze for a moment, smiled awkwardly and stopped explaining herself. “Yeah, I’m here with a friend. What do you feel like having, Mr. Fu?”

“What are you having?” Fu Chengyan glanced at Shi Nuan.

“Beef noodles. And you?” Shi Nuan originally wanted some hot and sour noodles, but her throat wasn’t feeling too well, so she changed her mind. Fu Chengyan nodded. “Then we’ll have two bowls of beef noodles! Is there anything you can’t eat?”

Shi Nuan shook her head. Fu Chengyan then closed the menu and returned it to the owner. “Two bowls of beef noodles, less chili, please.”

“Aye!” The lady boss nodded and couldn’t help but sneak a few more glances at Fu Chengyan. Deep down, she thought, What a gorgeous-looking man! And he’s super considerate too. He’s obviously much better compared to the previous guy.

The two became silent once the lady boss walked away. But the tables around were extremely lively. It wasn’t lunch or dinner time, but the store was still bustling with customers. Customers from the tables surrounding them were looking their way and began to discuss among themselves.

Shi Nuan tried to pretend to not hear them, but they were just too loud. The main theme of their conversations was similar. “I didn’t think there’d be such a handsome guy nearby our school!”

“My god! This is a rare sight. The hunks from our school are nothing compared to this man.”

Shi Nuan groaned internally for a moment then carefully observed Fu Chengyan’s appearance. She truly felt those young girls weren’t exaggerating – Fu Chengyan really was exceptional.

Fu Chengyan squinted, noticing Shi Nuan’s gaze on him. “What’s wrong? You suddenly think I look good? Have you fallen for me?” he smiled.

Shi Nuan calmed herself. “You’re too full of yourself, Mr. Fu!”

“It’s called self-confidence!” Fu Chengyan replied. “Did you not hear what they said?”

Shi Nuan refused to admit it. “They’re just young girls who are easily tricked by one’s outer appearance!” Shi Nuan argued, not knowing what else he would say.

As they spoke, the beef noodles arrived. The lady boss happily glanced at Fu Chengyan several more times. “Your boyfriend sure is handsome, young lady!”

“Thank you!”

Fu Chengyan clear voice sounded particularly melodious, making the lady boss even happier. “Enjoy your meal! I’ll even add on some noodles if it’s not enough, just give me a holler!”

“...” Shi Nuan had never seen so much beef in her noodles before. “Looks like a nice face really makes a world of difference!”

Fu Chengyan raised his brow. “So, are you admitting that I look good, Ms. Shi?”

“...” Shi Nuan really had never met someone so brazen. “Just act like I never said anything!”

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Truthfully, the noodles didn't taste particularly great; they certainly weren't up to the standards of a young master like Fu Chengyan, who would always dine at luxurious hotels.

But Shi Nuan was never picky with food, so she was fine as long as it could fill her tummy. Besides, she frequented this place mainly because of nostalgia.

It was almost time for classes to end, so Shi Nuan was worried that the area would get crowded. She quickly finished her bowl of noodles and suggested to leave. "It's getting late!"

Just as Fu Chengyan nodded, he received a phone call from Zhou Zheng. "Ms. Shi's gift is ready, sir!"

"OK. We're at Jing University," Fu Chengyan said while glancing at Shi Nuan. "Where are you headed after this, Ms. Shi?"

"I'll be going home!" she replied. "It's fine – I can wait for your assistant to come over. If you're busy, you can go on ahead first, Mr. Fu!"

"No worries!" Fu Chengyan said as he got up to pay for the meal. Shi Nuan hurriedly followed behind, saying, "I told you it's my treat, Mr. Fu. It's not expensive or anything, but you should let me pay!"

"There's no need. Chivalry would never allow women to pay for the meal." Fu Chengyan stopped Shi Nuan and took out a red note from his wallet. He then walked outside after settling the bill.

Shi Nuan had no choice but to follow him. She couldn't help but feel that she always lacked confidence whenever she was around Fu Chengyan. No matter what she said, he would never listen to her. But his actions did not offend her nor make her uneasy.

Since they had to wait for Zhou Zheng to come over, Fu Chengyan suggested they take a stroll around campus. It has been a long while since she last visited Jing University. Shi Nuan felt that the place had undergone quite some changes. She couldn't help but wonder which batch of her grandfather's students Fu Chengyan had been in.

"You don't seem old, but I'm pretty much familiar with all of my grandfather's students, and I've never met you. Which batch were you from?"

Shi Nuan walked behind Fu Chengyan in the sunset, stepping on his shadow.

Fu Chengyan paused for a moment. "You were probably still a child when I was studying here!"

"How can that be!?" Shi Nuan refused to believe him. "I'm 25 this year and you don't look that much older than me. How could I have been a child?"

Fu Chengyan smiled. Turning to see a childish-looking Shi Nuan, he felt rather amused. "You can ask your grandfather if you don't believe me. I studied two years of college when I was... Hmm... 15. You were only 7 or 8 at the time, so were you not still a kid?"

"H-how can that be!?" Shi Nuan gasped. "Then you must be a genius!"

"Genius?" Fu Chengyan's eyes narrowed and darkened slightly. He now looked very different from his previous appearance. Shi Nuan really couldn't tell just what kind of person Fu Chengyan was.

But as she gave it more thought, she remembered how her maternal grandfather and his colleagues used to talk about a genius who was supposed to be Jing

University's glory, but eventually left the country. I remember grandpa being upset about it for a long time – could it actually have been Fu Chengyan?

Seeing Fu Chengyan become less expressive, Shi Nuan could tell that this wasn't a very good topic to talk about. Luckily, Zhou Zheng called right at this moment. Fu Chengyan put his phone away and said to Shi Nuan, "Let's go. Zhou Zheng is waiting for us at the parking lot."

The two walked, one behind the other. They weren't too far apart, but not too close either. Zhou Zheng was already waiting outside when the pair arrived. Seeing them walk over, he handed the wrapped gift to Shi Nuan. "Here you go, Ms. Shi."

"Thank you!" Shi Nuan nodded. "How much is it?"

She was flabbergasted when Zhou Zheng passed her the bill. "It's this cheap!?" she asked, glancing at Zhou Zheng several times. "Was there some kind of mistake?"

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Zhou Zheng gave Fu Chengyan a meaningful glance, but the latter merely looked absent-minded and didn't seem like he wanted to say anything. Zhou Zheng felt his head hurt, but decided to bite the bullet and responded, "How could there be a mistake? It really costs this much!"

"No way!" Shi Nuan didn't understand the market prices, but she wasn't a fool either. How could she ever get something from an antique shop at such a low price? Besides, anything that Fu Chengyan recommended surely wouldn't be this cheap either. Shi Nuan clearly wasn't buying it.

Zhou Zheng's forehead began to perspire. Deep down, he kept thinking, Of course it's not cheap; in fact, it's very expensive! But he certainly dared not say this out loud.

He could only let out a silly chuckle. "Perhaps you don't know this, Ms. Shi, but my boss here always drops by the antique store and every purchase is worth a lot. Heheh.

The shopkeeper is also a smart man who certainly knows how to do business. This brush isn't considered a valuable treasure. He initially didn't even want to take the money, but since you intend to give it to your grandfather, I figured you couldn't take it for free."

After speaking, Zhou Zheng glanced over at Fu Chengyan and sighed in relief when his boss said nothing. "So there's no need for you to worry, Ms. Shi."

Shi Nuan roughly understood what Zhou Zheng meant. To ensure a customer like Fu Chengyan would continue patronizing the store, the shopkeeper would

occasionally put in some good deals. Today just happened to be Shi Nuan's lucky day.

Shi Nuan turned to see Fu Chengyan leaning against the car door, looking rather relaxed. Biting her lip, Shi Nuan said, "Alright then, but how should I pay you? What's your account number, Mr. Fu?"

"There's no hurry. Get in the car first! I'll send you back," Fu Chengyan said as he gave Zhou Zheng a glance. Zhou Zheng immediately understood what his boss meant and chuckled, "Sir, I just remembered that I still have something to do at the office, so I'll be heading back first!"

Shi Nuan was dumbfounded by how quickly Zhou Zheng scurried off. She wanted to say something, but now it looked like she could only get into the car. "Then sorry for the trouble, Mr. Fu!"

"Not at all!"

Hanlin District, Western suburbs, Shi family villa

Today, Old Man Shi was officially 79 years old, but it was a custom to celebrate one's 80th birthday in advance, so the party was especially lively. The Shi family wasn't among the top families in Jiang City, but they were still pretty well-known, especially in these past few years under Shi Yu's leadership.

The Shi family had prepared for the old man's birthday party half a year in advance. Of course, there was another important reason behind all this ruckus. Shi Jingzheng and Jiang Yu had planned to make sure the old man would approve of Shi Wei's and Fu Xicheng's marriage on this day.

The marriage between the Shi and Fu families had been planned long ago. They weren't about to let everything go to waste because of Old Master Shi. They didn't believe the old man and Shi Nuan wouldn't yield in front of this many people!

They were well aware of Shi Nuan's personality; she looked extremely stubborn, but she was very kind to the old man. Since Shi Nuan had so much pride, her parents figured that as long as Shi Wei and Fu Xicheng were to appear together during the old man's birthday, Shi Nuan would surely ask for the old man to approve her sister's marriage with Fu Xicheng.

Shi Jingzheng and his wife had planned so well that they even decided to make use of Shi Nuan and the old man.

"That brat Shi Nuan isn't here yet?"

Jiang Yu pulled on Shi Jingzheng's arm and looked around them after greeting several women. "She wouldn't dare not come, would she!?"

"Watch your mouth!" Shi Jingzheng glared at Jiang Yu. "Are you not aware of today's occasion? With so many people around, you'd better watch what you say!" He then looked around and said, "Don't worry. Shi Nuan is a filial kid, so she'll surely turn up. Besides, the old man treats her so well!"

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“That’s what you say, but you know about the incident that day, don’t you? Wei had begged her so many times already, and when did Wei ever not come back in tears? How could that brat be so cruel?”

There’s nothing she can’t do!” Jiang Yu gritted her teeth, harboring a strong grievance against Shi Nuan. “In any case, we can’t mess up today. Go give Shi Nuan a call. Tell her that the old man misses her and that she must come back!”

Jiang Yu felt that no one should ever make Shi Wei, her precious little girl, suffer. But after the old man found out about what happened between Shi Nuan and Fu Xicheng, he became infuriated. As long as Shi Nuan didn’t approve of Shi Wei’s and Fu Xicheng’s marriage, the old man would be against it too.

Jiang Yu was so mad that she nearly quarreled with the old man. But, the woman knew what was on his mind and was aware of the fact that he was still in charge of the Shi family.

“OK, OK, I know what to do!” Shi Jingzheng was irritated as well. The marriage could have worked out, but Shi Nuan had chosen to come back now, of all times!

Shi Nuan naturally wouldn’t know that her parents already had everything planned out before she arrived.

She picked a decent-looking dress to wear. The last time she came back, she had left her luggage behind to run to the hotel and consequently lost most of her clothes.

Shi Nuan hadn't had the time to buy more outfits ever since her return. All the clothes she had right now were whatever she had already owned before going on her business trip.

She checked herself out in the mirror and put on some light makeup before driving off in her car.

Even though Shi Wei and Fu Xicheng had done such a horrendous deed, it had nothing to do with the old man. It was his birthday today, so Shi Nuan had to show up.

Arriving outside the villa in Hanlin District, Shi Nuan saw that many cars had been parked outside and she couldn't drive in at all. She laughed sarcastically at the sight before opening the door to exit the car.

Of course, Shi Nuan knew what Shi Jingzheng and the others were up to – they would organize a grand celebration for the old man, and once all the respectable figures were there, that was when they would bring her out along with Shi Wei and Fu Xicheng.

By that time, she wouldn't be able to run away and would be forced to accept their decision alongside her grandfather.

Shi Nuan clutched her purse and took a deep breath. Just then, she received a call from Shi Jingzheng. "Where are you now, Nuan? Grandpa has been waiting for you."

Shi Nuan narrowed her eyes. Not too far off, she could see Shi Wei and Fu Xicheng welcoming the guests. Her grip on her phone tightened. Shi Jingzheng thought Shi Nuan hadn't arrived yet since he didn't hear her reply, so he continued, "We're a family.

If there's any misunderstanding, we can meet and solve it together. You...can also let grandpa know if you have any problems, right? But if you don't come, grandpa's going to be really sad, Nuan..."

“I know,” Shi Nuan grew impatient and interrupted Shi Jingzheng. “Of course I’ll be attending grandpa’s birthday celebration. As for what I’m going through, don’t you know about it, father?”

Shi Jingzheng was dumbfounded. He wouldn’t have ever expected his obedient daughter to talk to him like that. Unable to get over his ego, he said, “Cut the nonsense. You’re my daughter; if someone ever mistreats you, I’ll make sure justice is served. Stop throwing a fuss and come back now!”

Shi Nuan hung up the phone and stared mockingly at the entrance. Seeing Shi Wei lean on Fu Xicheng was such an eyesore to her.

Are they THAT impatient? Do they really have to humiliate me during such an occasion?