蝉鸣肆意
没盖住我的心跳
致青春的你
导演
猫的树
周翊然
饰 张陆让
张淼怡
饰 苏在在

SLC Ch 1 – 10

Aug 16, 2024

Chapter 1

“Hey, do you feel honored, beauty?

Even if you didn’t have cat ears, I’d still fancy you.”

— “Su Zai Zai’s Little Fairy Diary”

Two days after the National Day holiday, it rained continuously in Z City. The rain was light but steady, yet it brought little coolness; the air still carried a touch of sultry heat.

The campus was always lively during breaks between classes.

The corridor was filled with the sounds of students laughing and playing around, accompanied by the faint patter of rain.

Amid the noise, Su Zai Zai walked out of the office, holding a large stack of English practice books.

After entering the classroom, she gritted her teeth as she placed the practice books on the desk near the door. She wiped the sweat from her forehead and picked up the topmost book.

Footsteps sounded behind her, and Jiang Jia suddenly pounced on her, laughing, “Zai Zai! Let’s go! To the convenience store!”

Su Zai Zai blew her bangs out of her eyes and waved the practice

book in her hand, “Wait a moment, I need to go to the advanced class. The English teacher asked me to find a boy in their class for her.”

“Who are you looking for?”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai opened the cover of the practice book.

— “Zhang Lu Rang, Class 1, Grade 10.”

The handwriting was neat and powerful, appearing both orderly and bold.

Jiang Jia leaned over to take a look, and her eyes immediately widened, “Oh my God, Zhang Lu Rang! I want to go too!”

Her strong reaction made Su Zai Zai pause for a moment, but she quickly understood, “Is Zhang Lu Rang really that handsome?”

“Yeah! Although I haven’t seen him yet, haha, I’m more interested in another guy. They say he’s incredibly handsome, with that bad-boy charm!”

“Heh.” Su Zai Zai chuckled.

“What are you laughing at?”

“Is my laugh charming enough?”

“Get lost, you jerk.”

Before long, they reached the door of the advanced class.

Su Zai Zai called out to someone inside from the back door and handed him the practice book. “Classmate, could you please give this to Zhang Lu Rang in your class and let him know the English teacher is looking for him?”

She turned her head and saw Jiang Jia still peeking inside, so she couldn’t help but glance in the direction of her gaze.

“Which one is he?”

“Looks like he’s not here…”

“Let’s go then.”

On the way back.

Jiang Jia was a bit disappointed and rolled her eyes at Su Zai Zai, “You really have no enthusiasm for handsome guys! I haven’t seen even one of the two handsome guys in the advanced class yet! You should have handed the practice book to Zhang Lu Rang yourself! Why did you ask someone else to do it? You irresponsible woman!”

“How am I irresponsible?”

“Hmph.”

“I didn’t even hit on him.”

“…”

“And weren’t you interested in the other guy?”

“If I can’t see him, I’d settle for seeing Zhang Lu Rang! After all,

he's also a handsome guy."

Su Zai Zai sneered, "I'm not interested in handsome guys."

Jiang Jia pouted, looking disdainful, "Stop bluffing."

Su Zai Zai looked serious, "Really, I'm only interested in someone like Tomoe, with cute cat ears that twitch when he talks. I want to pinch them."

"You're dreaming! Tomoe has fox ears, okay? And besides, isn't Tomoe handsome?! Go away!"

Su Zai Zai yawned lazily, "Being handsome isn't the point; the point is having a pair of cute ears."

"...No matter how I think about it, being handsome seems to be the main point."

During the long break, the two went back to the classroom, grabbed an umbrella, and headed downstairs to the convenience store. Most students took this time to buy snacks, so the convenience store was quite crowded.

After wandering around inside, they didn't find anything they wanted to buy. The space was small, the line was intimidatingly long, and the air was stuffy and uncomfortable. Su Zai Zai pursed her lips, lost her desire to buy anything, and slowly squeezed her way out.

There were also many people standing under the awning outside the convenience store. After a moment of hesitation, she opened

her umbrella and walked a little further outside.

From this spot, she could just see the school gate.

A student was walking over from that direction, without an umbrella, taking long, quick strides.

Luckily, the rain wasn't too heavy, so he didn't look too disheveled.

Late?

It's way too late. It's already the end of the second period.

Su Zai Zai lowered her head and rubbed her sleepy eyes.

Bored, she tapped a puddle on the ground with the tip of her shoe, muttering under her breath, "Idiot, if it were me, I'd just come back in the afternoon."

After all, being late for two classes and being late for an entire morning is still just being late.

If you don't know how to seize this golden opportunity, give it to her, okay?

After saying this, Su Zai Zai lifted her head, only to find that the student had already walked to a spot two meters in front of her.

Their eyes met, his gaze was hard to decipher, his pupils a deep black, carrying a hint of intimidation, cold and clear, shining like stars.

Su Zai Zai: "..."

...Did he fly over here?

Even though she knew he couldn't possibly have heard her, and even if he had, he wouldn't know she was talking about him, Su Zai Zai still felt guilty and quickly averted her gaze.

The boy walked past her swiftly, turning onto the small path ahead.

Su Zai Zai turned around, watching his back, lost in thought.

A delayed reaction hit her suddenly.

She quickly retracted her gaze, her cheeks gradually heating up.

The image from just now replayed in her mind.

The boy's eyes were like they had been washed by rain, moist and clear, as if electrified, piercing her heart. A tingling sensation surged from her chest, spreading to her fingertips, making the hand holding the umbrella tremble.

His hair was wet, as black as ink, his nose straight, his lips glossy and slightly red.

Fair skin, long legs, slim waist, narrow hips.

Such a beauty...

Su Zai Zai licked her lips.

Jiang Jia, who had just come out of the convenience store, interrupted her thoughts, pulling her out of this inexplicable daydream.

“Su Zai Zai! Get over here! I didn’t bring an umbrella!”

Su Zai Zai paused her lip-licking action, came back to her senses, and walked over.

On the way back to the classroom, Jiang Jia was chattering beside her about the class gossip. Su Zai Zai responded a few times absentmindedly, but her mind wasn’t really in it.

Her head felt like it was filled with mush, hazy and muddled.

Jiang Jia quickly noticed something was off with her and couldn’t help but pat her on the arm, teasing, “What’s up with you? Still thinking about your ideal type? A boyfriend with cat ears?”

Su Zai Zai shook her head, her expression slightly dazed, without saying a word.

She recalled what she had just said.

— “Being handsome isn’t the point; the point is having a pair of cute ears.”

She felt like she had slapped her own face…

Su Zai Zai really hadn’t expected that such a person could exist in this world.

No cat ears, yet somehow even more tempting.

******

The geography teacher was tapping the blackboard, lecturing.

Su Zai Zai seemed to be listening intently, scribbling down the content from the blackboard into her notebook, but her mind was buzzing with thoughts of what had just happened.

This was the first time she had spaced out in geography class.

Since he walked along that path, he was probably a freshman or sophomore...

The third-year classrooms were in the opposite direction.

But with so many classes in the first and second years, there was no way to guess which one.

So annoying.

If she had known, she wouldn't have gone to the convenience store.

No, it wasn't her fault...

It was all that beautiful guy's fault! Why did he have to look at her? Didn't he know that good-looking people shouldn't just stare at others like that?

So unreserved!

When Su Zai Zai was in a bad mood, it was obvious, and Jiang Jia could sense her low spirits right away: "Hey, what's wrong? Didn't eat enough?"

Su Zai Zai ignored her, feeling increasingly irritated.

The fog outside turned the scenery into blurry patches of color.

Her eyelids drooped, her long, curled eyelashes trembled lightly, and her upturned peach blossom eyes reflected a glassy light.

The scenery instantly became the background, dimming in comparison.

Jiang Jia admired her for a moment and then exclaimed, “Sigh, Zai Zai, if you didn’t talk, I’d think you were a fairy who had fallen from the heavens.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai paused, and her irritation dissipated.

Her eyes immediately filled with a smile, curving into a beautiful crescent moon shape.

She felt a bit smug.

If she could be a fairy, she’d be fine being mute for life.

“But the moment you talk,” Jiang Jia sighed, “it’s like that fairy suddenly shoved a mouthful of poop into my mouth.”

She patted her chest in distress, “It’s not just anything, it’s poop! A full mouthful of poop!”

Su Zai Zai turned to look at her, her gaze subtle, “And that poop wasn’t enough to shut your mouth?”

“…”

Su Zai Zai picked up her textbook and read aloud the first

paragraph: “All physical processes in the atmosphere involve energy conversion. Solar radiation is the Earth’s atmosphere’s…”

Jiang Jia was confused, “What are you doing?”

“The most important energy source.” She insisted on finishing the paragraph before answering Jiang Jia, “I don’t mind giving you more to eat.”

Jiang Jia: “…”

******

Zhang Lu Rang walked upstairs.

The rain wasn’t heavy, but he was still half-soaked.

“Hey, Zhang Lu Rang,” a boy behind him patted his shoulder, loudly saying, “Where did you go? The homeroom teacher is looking for you!”

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at him, tugged the corner of his mouth in a sort of response.

He walked to his seat, took a pack of tissues from the drawer, pulled out two pieces, and slowly rubbed his hair, his lips pressed tight.

The girl at the desk in front of him, Ye Zhenxin, turned around, curiously asking, “Hey, why are you all wet? Got caught in the rain?”

Zhang Lu Rang looked down, pulled out a few more tissues to wipe the water off his body, his expression indifferent.

“Yeah.”

Then he walked over to the trash can in the corner of the classroom and threw the tissues away.

The boys nearby were huddled together, laughing and cursing as they watched something on one of their phones: “Idiot! I cleared that level ages ago, and you’re still playing it!”

Zhang Lu Rang paused for a moment.

A soft, girlish mumble echoed in his ears like a replay, each word lingering.

— “Idiot, if it were me, I’d just come back in the afternoon.”

His eyes were dark and deep, inscrutable.

When he looked over, her gaze was unsteady, guiltily averting her eyes.

So, she had indeed been cursing at him.

Chapter 2

Seeing him so calm even though he was late, he must be a repeat offender.

I can wait for him a few more days. I’m sure I’ll catch him.

— “Su Zai Zai’s Little Fairy Diary”

The bell signaling the end of class rang.

The teacher at the podium tossed the chalk into the chalk tray and scanned the classroom with a glance, “Anyone who hasn’t turned in their homework, come to my office after class.”

The students immediately stood up, lazily bowing, “Thank you, teacher. Goodbye, teacher.”

Knowing that Zhang Lu Rang didn’t like being disturbed during class, Ye Zhenxin waited until the bell rang to turn around and ask him, “Zhang Lu Rang, where did your deskmate go?”

He leaned back, still holding his pen. His knuckles were prominent, and the curve of his hand was elegant.

“He took a leave of absence.”

His voice was clear and deep, devoid of emotion, like rain falling silently in the night.

Ye Zhenxin’s eyes widened, and she mumbled enviously, “Huh? Why did he take leave…? The National Day holiday just ended two days ago, and he’s already taking time off. That’s so nice.”

She waited for a while but got no response.

Zhang Lu Rang slightly lifted his eyes and picked up the English workbook on his desk, flipping to the page with the last assigned exercise. It was a cloze test, and out of fifteen questions, thirteen

were wrong.

His gaze finally showed a flicker of emotion.

The girl in front continued to talk, “Why did he suddenly take leave? He seemed fine during the Chinese class.”

Absentmindedly, he tapped the edge of the desk with his pen, his straight lips curving downward, and a hidden irritation smoldered in his eyes.

It was faint, almost imperceptible.

Realizing he was still being asked, he looked at Ye Zhenxin and softly said, “I don’t know.”

She was still talking, but the topic had already shifted to something else.

Zhang Lu Rang stood up.

Ye Zhenxin was startled, “Where are you going?”

His expression was calm, and he didn’t answer. He just took the English workbook and walked out the door.

******

Meanwhile, Su Zai Zai was being dragged toward the restroom by Jiang Jia.

On the way, Jiang Jia suddenly remembered something.

“Oh, right, Zai Zai.”

Su Zai Zai took out a packet of tissues from her pocket, pulled out the last piece, and then tossed the empty tissue pack into the trash can beside the sink.

As she wiped her hands, she responded, “Hmm?”

“The school sports day is coming up. Do you want to participate in any events?”

“What events are there?”

“A lot! High jump, long jump, one-minute jump rope, ten-person eleven-legged race.”

Su Zai Zai was about to answer when she noticed a boy walking up the stairs beside the office. He turned and walked toward the office.

He was tall and slim, with water dripping from the tips of his hair.

Her pupils contracted, a mix of uncertainty and excitement rising in her heart. Before she could move toward him, she saw the boy’s workbook fall to the ground.

He bent down, revealing the side of his face.

...It wasn’t him.

Su Zai Zai felt disappointed and silently cursed in her heart.

To think that a stunning beauty like herself would be so distracted

by just a handsome guy.

What a disgrace.

Seeing that Su Zai Zai hadn't reacted, Jiang Jia thought she hadn't heard any events she was interested in and continued, "There's also the 100-meter, 200-meter, 800-meter races, and shot put."

Su Zai Zai looked a bit disinterested, lazily asking, "The longest race is only 800 meters?"

Jiang Jia was a bit confused and asked, "Huh? You want a longer one? I think 800 meters would already kill me."

Just before they entered the classroom, Su Zai Zai couldn't help but glance back again.

The office door was wide open, and by the desk nearby, two girls were chatting happily, one standing and the other sitting. Rain was tapping against the bright blue railing, and a few boys were horsing around.

She withdrew her gaze.

At the same time, a boy walked out of the stairwell and turned right into the office.

Su Zai Zai sat at her desk, buried half her face in her arms, leaving only her bright, clear eyes exposed, "I think 800 meters would be too much of a waste for my athletic talents."

Jiang Jia twitched the corner of her mouth, "But you clearly..."

“Don’t ask me to participate unless it’s a 10,000-meter race.”

“That’s bullshit!” Jiang Jia shouted.

Her voice was so loud that the noisy classroom instantly fell silent.

Then, a boy came over, teasing, “Who farted?”

Jiang Jia put on a serious expression, “Definitely not Su Zai Zai.”

Guan Han raised his eyebrows, a teasing light in his eyes, “Then it was you?”

“It was you,” Jiang Jia retorted.

Su Zai Zai spread her hands, “It was definitely you.”

Guan Han: “...Ha.”

That wasn’t the reason he came over!

Jiang Jia covered her nose with one hand and half of Su Zai Zai’s face with the other, saying in disgust, “Guan Han, can’t you not fart in public?”

Guan Han patted her on the head, glaring, “Are you looking for trouble?”

Jiang Jia didn’t loosen her grip at all, “I won’t smell it, even if it kills me!”

“...”

Soon, the bell rang, and the group of students who had gathered quickly dispersed and returned to their seats.

After a moment of silence, Jiang Jia brought up the earlier topic again, “I remember you panting like a dog after running just 50 meters in gym class last time, and now you’re talking about running 10,000 meters?”

Su Zai Zai blinked innocently, “Panting like a dog?”

“Don’t act like you don’t understand! Want me to show you how? Dream on!”

But Su Zai Zai never played by the rules…

She stuck out her tongue and panted quickly a few times, then asked proudly, “Like this?”

Jiang Jia: “…Enough, stop acting crazy.”

Before long, the Chinese teacher walked in.

Su Zai Zai stopped messing around and opened her textbook to listen to the teacher.

She turned her head to look out the window.

The tree branches were still being battered by the heavy rain, bending slightly. Tiny droplets of water slid down the veins of the leaves, falling to the ground.

It was still raining.

He didn’t have an umbrella. Is he going to get soaked again?

******

Class hadn’t even ended yet, but Jiang Jia had already packed her bag, exchanged glances with the other two girls from the dorm, Xiao Xiao and Xiao Yu, looking ready to go.

But that wasn’t enough. Seeing that Su Zai Zai was still sitting there without any intention of moving, Jiang Jia impatiently grabbed her bag hanging by the desk and stuffed two random books into it.

As soon as the bell rang, the four of them rushed to the cafeteria like a pack of hungry wolves.

They quickly got their food and found a spot to sit down, chatting idly.

Xiao Yu suddenly remembered something and asked, “By the way, are you guys interested in participating in the Campus Night program? Our class hasn’t prepared anything yet, and there are only two weeks left.”

She was the class’s cultural committee member, so organizing these things was her responsibility.

The school sports day lasted for two days and one night. During the day, there were sports events, and at night, there was Campus Night, a party where each class performed a program.

Xiao Xiao picked up on the conversation, “Oh, do you have any

ideas?"

"None, that's why I'm asking you guys."

Suddenly, Su Zai Zai had an idea.

Maybe she could perform, and at the end, make a missing person announcement...

But how should she phrase it?

Should she say that he was very handsome, and today during the break, he was late and passed by the convenience store?

Or maybe say that he looked particularly aloof and seductive while getting soaked in the rain...

Damn it, she even felt like something was wrong with her.

After finishing their meal, Xiao Xiao and Xiao Yu returned to the dormitory first, while Su Zai Zai accompanied Jiang Jia to the convenience store.

When they reached the outside of the convenience store, Su Zai Zai didn't want to buy anything, so she waited outside for Jiang Jia.

There were a lot of people around. The three tables outside the convenience store were fully occupied, with people chatting, holding hands, and eating instant noodles.

People were coming and going, and it was inevitable that shoulders would brush against each other.

Su Zai Zai moved closer to the corner.

From a distance, she overheard a conversation between two people.

The boy's voice was rough and loud, attracting attention: "Zhang Lu Rang, did you get caught in the rain? Let's head back together."

Zhang Lu Rang...

Isn't that the handsome guy from the advanced class?

Su Zai Zai looked in the direction of the voice, but her view was blocked by the bustling crowd.

"—Yeah."

His voice was exceptionally clear, fresher than the air after the rain.

Her heart fluttered as she remembered the boy she saw this morning.

He had quietly passed by her, with water still dripping from the

tips of his hair, and the strands at his temples clung to his cheeks.

Drops of water fell one by one from his jet-black hair, dyeing it darker. Su Zai Zai suddenly felt that the water dripping off his hair must have been black as well.

His eyes were pitch black, set against his fair face, making them particularly striking.

Su Zai Zai looked down at the umbrella in her hand, her eyes a bit dazed.

A wave of annoyance surged within her, accompanied by an absurd thought.

He must be doing it on purpose; he must know how attractive he is.

That's why he deliberately got caught in the rain, deliberately walked past her.

Deliberately... seduced her.

Chapter 3

Ha, caught him.

— "Su Zai Zai's Little Fairy Diary"

The next day during the long break, Su Zai Zai, holding her umbrella, went to the same spot as yesterday, determined to wait for him.

This time, she didn't lower her head to play with the puddles on the ground. Instead, she looked intently toward the school gate, her expression serious. She even wore her glasses, which she usually took off whenever she wasn't in class.

In the distance, a lush grove of trees was blurred by the light rain and mist, forming large, soft patches of color. The scenery was picturesque, as if painted.

To her surprise, the beautiful boy wasn't someone who often arrived late.

Then why was he so calm that day?

It seemed that this beautiful boy was someone who remained unflustered in any situation, which she really admired.

On the third day of her stakeout, the weather cleared up.

The morning exercises over the loudspeakers resumed...

She decided to change her strategy.

Since the beautiful boy had walked in from the school gate that day, he was probably a day student. So, if she got up earlier to wait, she would definitely catch him eventually.

After finishing the last exercise, the head of discipline took the microphone and began organizing the students to return to their classrooms. But as usual, the students didn't listen. The moment they heard the words "return in an orderly manner," they dispersed, chatting and putting their arms around each other's shoulders.

Jiang Jia was dragged to the convenience store by Xiao Yu.

The scorching sun hung high, the cement ground was hot, and the air was thick and sticky, as if it had solidified. There was no shade around the playground, and Su Zai Zai, feeling dizzy from the heat, just wanted to get back to the classroom as soon as possible.

She squeezed through the crowd, her head lowered, eyes focused

on the ground in front of her, taking careful, slow steps to avoid stepping on someone's foot.

Then...

Her head bumped into someone's chin.

At that moment, she heard the person's jaw make a "crack" sound, as if a bone had shifted out of place, separating from the upper jaw.

Su Zai Zai: "..."

She quickly looked up, her face full of apology, and the words of apology came out instinctively, "I'm so sorry! It's too crowded... Are you... okay...?"

The further she spoke, the softer her voice became.

Because she saw his face.

That face... the one she had been thinking about for seventy-two hours.

The boy frowned, rubbing his chin with his right hand. Beads of sweat had formed on his forehead, his cheeks were flushed from the sun, and his eyes were slightly downcast as he looked at her coolly, "It's fine."

After saying that, he walked past her, heading toward the convenience store.

Su Zai Zai, still in shock from the unexpected encounter, snapped

out of it when she saw him about to leave. Her heat-addled brain suddenly cleared.

She hurried after him and grabbed his wrist.

The boy stopped and turned to look at her. His eyebrows were furrowed, his side profile tense, clearly showing his displeasure.

Su Zai Zai immediately let go of his hand as if she had been shocked. She swallowed nervously, her palms damp with sweat, and the surrounding noise seemed to fade away, leaving only silence in her ears.

His presence felt magnified, sharp and clear, enveloping her.

Su Zai Zai wiped her hand on her school uniform pants, trying to get rid of the sweat.

The boy suddenly seemed to notice something, and the coldness in his expression slightly softened, his face taking on a thoughtful look.

Encouraged by this, Su Zai Zai mustered up the courage to ask, "... What's your name?"

******

Su Zai Zai felt utterly despairing.

Extremely despairing, to the point of losing all hope.

Jiang Jia straddled a chair, placed a can of Coke on Su Zai Zai's

desk, and asked with a playful grin, “Hey, what’s up with you? I was only gone for a little while, and you’re looking like this.”

Su Zai Zai glanced at her, her eyes unfocused, and didn’t reply.

Jiang Jia thought for a moment, “Is it your period?”

Since it was Jiang Jia, Su Zai Zai didn’t bother hiding anything. With a sorrowful expression, she confessed, “I’ve fallen for a boy.”

“…” Jiang Jia almost spat out her Sprite.

“Sigh.” Su Zai Zai traced the droplets on the Coke can with her finger, her voice filled with melancholy, “These droplets are like the endless tears in my heart.”

Jiang Jia coughed a few times, then reached out to ruffle Su Zai Zai’s hair, “…What happened? Who’s the boy? Do I know him? What’s he like? Is he someone you knew before?”

Su Zai Zai was honest, “I don’t know if you’ve seen him, but I met him for the first time. I saw him a few days ago when I was waiting for you outside the convenience store.”

“Huh? Love at first sight?”

Su Zai Zai nodded, thought for a moment, then added with a sigh, “I ran into him again just now when I was coming back to the classroom, and I asked for his name.”

Hearing this, Jiang Jia’s eyes lit up, “Wow, that’s fate! You ran into him again? What’s his name? Maybe I know him!”

“Idiot.”

“Can you speak properly? Why are you randomly calling me names?”

Su Zai Zai lowered her eyes, “That’s what he said.”

She had been completely stunned when she heard that. Why would someone start off by calling her an idiot…

It felt a bit disillusioning.

But she quickly realized the implication, and the realization… was even worse than the disillusionment.

Idiot…

He probably meant: “I’m called ‘Idiot,’ isn’t that what you called me before?”

Could she really keep pressing him for more after that…

Su Zai Zai never expected that he would have heard her say that, let alone correctly identified that she had been talking about him!

Jiang Jia was furious, slamming the table with a heavy hand, “Damn it, what’s his problem, calling you an idiot! Is there any need for that just because you asked for his name? What a jerk!”

Her reaction made Su Zai Zai pause. She looked up at her, hesitating.

“What is it? Did I say something wrong? Are you actually defending

him? What kind of taste do you have! You're definitely someone who only cares about looks and not personality. Didn't you say you weren't interested in handsome guys? What a load of crap!"

Seeing Jiang Jia so worked up, Su Zai Zai cleared her throat, her tone cautious, "Well, I... it's possible that... he heard me call him an idiot before..."

There was a moment of silence.

Jiang Jia: "...Forget everything I just said."

Another moment of silence.

Jiang Jia couldn't help but ask, "Why did you call him that?"

Su Zai Zai couldn't quite remember what she had been thinking at the time...

"I feel like, if all he said was 'idiot' and nothing else, he probably doesn't have a good impression of you..." Jiang Jia's tone was cautious, "He didn't leave you any clues to find him again."

That seemed to be the case...

Su Zai Zai groaned, "I regret it. Should I have just directly asked for his contact info... Ugh, I was so nervous that I didn't even think of that."

She should have gotten his contact info first and explained everything later!

“You’d regret that even more.”

“…Why?”

“Because he wouldn’t have given it to you.”

“…”

“And he might have even insulted you again.”

Jiang Jia ruffled her hair again, half-jokingly.

Su Zai Zai smiled, then firmly twisted her fingers off her head, “Get lost.”

Jiang Jia was about to retaliate when the bell rang.

Seeing Su Zai Zai still looking so downcast, Jiang Jia lost interest and tried to comfort her, “Don’t worry, you’ll definitely run into him again. This school isn’t that big.”

Su Zai Zai felt like crying, “Yeah, there are only sixty classes between the first and second years.”

Jiang Jia was at a loss for words, “…Drink your Coke.”

The English teacher walked in, and the classroom instantly fell silent.

Su Zai Zai took a moment to collect herself, slapped her cheeks with both hands, and prepared to channel her frustration into studying.

After starting the class, the English teacher began talking while flipping through some papers on the podium.

A moment later, she looked up at Su Zai Zai, “Class rep, I left my lesson plan in Class 1. It’s in a blue folder on the podium. Could you go get it for me?”

Su Zai Zai nodded, stood up, and walked out of the classroom, heading quickly toward the advanced class.

Afraid of making the teacher and her classmates wait too long, she eventually started jogging.

She ran all the way to the door of the advanced class, her footsteps making a “da-da-da” sound, accompanied by the breeze.

She was slightly out of breath, her hair a bit disheveled, as she called out, “Excuse me.”

Seeing the teacher wave her over, she walked to the podium and quietly

said, “Teacher, I’m here to get Ms. Chen’s lesson plan. She said it’s on the podium.”

The teacher rummaged through some papers and handed her a blue folder, “Is this it?”

“Yes, thank you, teacher.” With that, she turned to leave.

As Su Zai Zai turned around, her gaze unintentionally swept across most of the classroom.

Suddenly, she noticed a boy sitting on the outside of the third row in the first group.

His head was lowered, intently writing something on paper, completely undistracted by her presence. From this angle, she could see most of his face—his nose was fair and high, his lips slightly curved.

His back was straight, his demeanor strong.

The light cast a shadow from his eyelashes onto the area under his eyes, fanning out.

Su Zai Zai calmly looked away and walked out of the classroom.

On the way back to her classroom, she was so excited that she almost wanted to roll back.

Su Zai Zai couldn't help but hop up and down a couple of times, thinking to herself that if it weren't for the fact that class was already in session, she could probably scream for a solid hour without stopping.

What kind of insane luck was this!

She was so thankful to her English teacher!

******

Back at her seat, Su Zai Zai passed a note to Jiang Jia.

— You mentioned before that the advanced class has two

handsome guys. One is called Zhang Lu Rang. What's the other one's name?

Jiang Jia gave her a puzzled look, wondering why she was suddenly asking about this, but she obediently wrote the name on the note.

— Zhou Xu Yin.

Su Zai Zai licked her lips, crumpled up the note, and whispered, "Which one is more handsome?"

The man she fancied had to be extraordinarily good-looking! No one could compare to him!

Jiang Jia grabbed Su Zai Zai's hand. Since the English teacher was present, she didn't dare to speak too loudly, but her tone was full of excitement, "I haven't seen them, but from what I've heard, it's definitely Zhou Xu Yin!"

"Zhou Xu Yin...?"

"Yeah! I swear, they say he's stunningly handsome!"

Stunningly handsome.

His casual glance was indeed... stunning.

Chapter 4

Today...

I'm so overwhelmed I don't even want to talk. Haha.

— From Su Zai Zai's Little Fairy Diary

After the first class in the afternoon, Su Zai Zai immediately stood up.

Just as she was about to walk out of the classroom, the prelude to the eye exercises began playing over the intercom.

Su Zai Zai instantly sat back down, letting out a wail.

Jiang Jia was a bit speechless: "What are you doing?"

She lied without changing her expression: "My bladder is about to burst."

As soon as the eye exercises ended, Su Zai Zai rushed to the third floor where the key classes of the first year were, pretending to go there to use the restroom, but unfortunately, she didn't run into her crush.

She didn't hurry back and lingered in the hallway for a while.

However, even after the bell rang for the next class, she still didn't see him.

Even though she didn't see him, Su Zai Zai was still incredibly nervous...

She felt like her heart was about to leap out of her body, her breathing was short and rapid, like she couldn't get enough oxygen, and her cheeks were flushed red.

During the break after the second class, she shamelessly dragged Jiang Jia along with her.

Su Zai Zai couldn't stop talking about her crush: "I'm telling you, Zhou Xu Yin is just too good-looking! He's incredibly captivating! How can a guy be this handsome? I can't take it, ahhhhh Zhou Xu Yin..."

His eyes, his nose, his mouth, blah blah blah...

Jiang Jia: "..."

As expected, love-struck fools are truly terrifying.

The two of them walked down the stairs, turned left after reaching the third floor.

And there he was, Zhou Xu Yin, walking towards them from the end of the corridor.

He walked right past them, glancing briefly at the two before quickly looking away.

Su Zai Zai's breath caught, and she tightened her grip on Jiang Jia's hand, turning to her in a panic, suddenly changing the subject: "What should we eat tonight?"

Jiang Jia was a bit slow to react, her mind still filled with the name Zhou Xu Yin, and she subconsciously blurted out: "Zhou Xu Yin?"

Zhang Lu Rang glanced over.

Su Zai Zai's face turned bright red, and she hurriedly pulled Jiang Jia along at a faster pace.

Once they reached the girls' restroom, Su Zai Zai was distraught: "What do I do? Do you think he heard us saying we wanted to eat him...? I want to cry, ahhh!"

Jiang Jia was incredulous: "He just passed by? How did I not notice?"

Su Zai Zai dragged Jiang Jia back out.

At that moment, Zhang Lu Rang was just walking around the corner, revealing half of his profile.

Jiang Jia squinted her eyes, then quickly shook her head: "Too far, I couldn't see clearly... I was too focused on listening to you talk, didn't notice anything else."

The two of them walked back into the restroom.

Su Zai Zai turned on the faucet and splashed her face with water, looking frustrated: "Oh my god, I feel like whenever he's within my sight, I get so nervous..."

"You've got a crush," Jiang Jia said, staring at her face like she'd discovered a new world, "This is the first time I've seen you blush, it's kind of scary."

Su Zai Zai took a deep breath, looked up at herself in the mirror, touched her face, and said seriously: "I think I look quite charming."

Jiang Jia: "..."

******

Two days after returning from the weekend, Su Zai Zai was very dissatisfied with her reaction of getting nervous every time she saw "Zhou Xu Yin." After some thought, she finally came up with a plan to attract his attention.

After the third class in the morning, she grabbed her water bottle and said to Jiang Jia: "Let's go, let's get some water."

Jiang Jia rolled her eyes: "Can we just go three times a day from now on?"

"Just come with me two more times, and then I'll manage on my own."

Jiang Jia reluctantly followed her.

On the way, Su Zai Zai reflected seriously: "I think what I did before was wrong. I can't just look away as soon as I see him. That won't get his attention at all."

Jiang Jia rolled her eyes: "So, what are you going to do?"

"When we see Zhou Xu Yin later, you should call me loudly by my full name, okay?"

"...Alright."

To get to the water dispenser on the third floor, they had to pass by

the key class's classroom. As they approached, Zhang Lu Rang was just coming out of the room with his water bottle.

The two of them immediately quickened their pace and followed behind him.

Jiang Jia cooperated by loudly calling out: "Su Zai Zai!"

Su Zai Zai immediately responded loudly: "I don't think that problem is solved that way. You see, the braking process of a car is a uniform deceleration linear motion. Using reverse thinking, it can be considered as a reverse uniform acceleration linear motion starting from rest..."

She rattled off a bunch of technical terms, leaving Jiang Jia dumbfounded.

Su Zai Zai proudly declared: "So, the answer should be twelve meters per second."

Heh heh heh, surely a top student would have a good impression of a girl who's good at academics!

After filling his water bottle, Zhang Lu Rang left, but Su Zai Zai didn't hurry to follow him. Instead, she turned her shining eyes to Jiang Jia and asked: "How did I do just now?"

Jiang Jia looked a bit pained: "...How long did you spend memorizing that problem?"

Busted, Su Zai Zai didn't mind and confessed honestly: "I was up all night memorizing it."

“When you substituted the numbers just now, you got the unit for acceleration wrong… You’ve been saying meters per second…”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai was stunned: “What’s the correct unit then?”

“Meters per second squared…”

She was silent.

After a long pause, she said: “Jia Jia, let’s take a different route back.”

Su Zai Zai really didn’t have the courage to pass by the key class again.

She had just tried to impress and ended up revealing herself as a fraud.

******

“Jia Jia, I think I need to redeem myself.” Su Zai Zai sat on a chair, analyzing calmly, “I was too impulsive just now. I should have shown off my English or comprehensive arts skills instead.”

Jiang Jia was exasperated: “…So why did you bring up a physics problem? Didn’t you get forty points in the last physics test?”

“I thought he looked like a science guy…”

“Dude, we haven’t even split into arts and science streams yet!”

Su Zai Zai bent over and banged her head on the desk a few times

in frustration: “So, do you think I should memorize an English essay to redeem my image?”

Jiang Jia rubbed her chin thoughtfully: “I think you should forget it. You’d be better off just apologizing to him and explaining that you weren’t cursing at him last time…”

Su Zai Zai’s eyes lit up: “You’re right! You’re absolutely right! I’ll go right after this!”

Seeing her like this, Jiang Jia couldn’t help but smile.

Su Zai Zai took out a mirror, combed her hair, muttering to herself: “Hmm, first I need to make myself look as beautiful as a fairy, so I can dazzle him.”

Soon after, she sighed.

Jiang Jia, confused by her mood swings, asked: “What’s wrong now?”

“I feel a sense of crisis,” Su Zai Zai said, staring at her reflection in the mirror, biting her lip, “Do you think he’ll fall in love with himself just by looking in the mirror?”

Jiang Jia: “…”

Su Zai Zai became increasingly self-conscious: “I feel like in his world, everyone else looks ugly.”

“…You’re exaggerating.”

“Do you think Zhou Xu Yin will fall for his own looks, turn gay, and settle for that other handsome guy in the key class…” Her imagination ran wild.

“…”

“No! That Zhang Lu Rang! He has to stay away from my Zhou Xu Yin!”

“Shut up.” Jiang Jia knocked on her head, “But, you know, everyone says Zhou Xu Yin has that roguish charm, but I only sense the coldness…”

“What’s so great about being roguish?” Su Zai Zai said indifferently, “I just love his aloof and cold demeanor, it’s too handsome! It’s so intense.”

“Stop fantasizing, okay? Let him rest in your mind for a bit, will you?”

“Okay, I’ll give him a ten-second break.”

“…”

“I’ll start counting now, ten, nine, eight…”

“…Crazy.”

******

After class, Su Zai Zai decided to be self-reliant and didn’t ask Jiang Jia to accompany her.

She walked towards the key class, psyching herself up.

She kept rehearsing what she would say: Hello, I'm Su Zai Zai from Class 9, the one who asked your name on the sports field last time...

What else should she say...

Before she could finish thinking, she arrived at the key class's door.

She took a deep breath. From the front door, she could see him

sitting in his chair, leaning back, holding a notebook in one hand, with no expression on his face.

A girl in front of him was talking to him.

Su Zai Zai quickly averted her gaze and called out to a boy walking towards the front door: "Excuse me, could you help me call Zhou Xu Yin from your class?"

Upon hearing the name, the boy immediately glanced over at Zhang Lu Rang, then quickly corrected himself: "Ah, he's on leave."

On leave?!

Su Zai Zai was dumbfounded...

Wha-what?!

Isn't he sitting right there?! Can't they see him?!

Su Zai Zai raised her hand, pointing frantically at Zhang Lu Rang:

“He, he…”

A boy sitting in the first row of the second group suddenly burst out laughing and turned to Zhang Lu Rang: “Hey, Zhang Lu Rang, you’re losing it, man. This week three girls have come looking for Zhou Xu Yin, and you’ve only got two!”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang looked up and glanced at the front door.

He just so happened to see Su Zai Zai pointing at him, his eyebrows furrowed slightly before he quickly looked back down, giving a soft “oh.”

Zhang Lu Rang…

So, for the past four days, she had been fantasizing about the wrong person.

And she had even started seeing her real crush as a rival.

…She was going to kill Jiang Jia when she got back.

Chapter 5

A Beautiful Face is More Important than Pride.

— From Su Zai Zai’s Little Fairy Diary

“Jiang Jia, I think our friendship has come to an end.” Su Zai Zai pulled out a one-cent coin from her backpack and slapped it on the desk, “This is our breakup fee.”

Jiang Jia folded the money and put it in her pocket, casually asking, “Oh? Why do you say that?”

“My crush’s name isn’t Zhou Xu Yin at all! He’s Zhang Lu Rang!” Su Zai Zai became more desperate the more she thought about it. “He must think I’m a fickle woman, one who lights up at the sight of a handsome guy, such a vulgar woman, waaaah…”

That was unexpected. Jiang Jia blinked: “It really is Zhang Lu Rang?”

“Why don’t you seem surprised at all?”

“Because I thought he was Zhang Lu Rang from the beginning. He has that high-and-mighty flower vibe.”

“…Then why didn’t you tell me?”

“You dragged me over that day, calling him Zhou Xu Yin with such certainty. What was I supposed to say? Point at him and tell you he’s Zhang Lu Rang? I’ve never met him before!”

Su Zai Zai deflated instantly: “But… but weren’t you the one who said Zhou Xu Yin was more handsome?”

“Based on the description, I’d definitely prefer Zhou Xu Yin!” Jiang Jia replied confidently, “I have no interest in cold and aloof types. I like the playful and nonchalant ones.”

“No way!” Su Zai Zai pinched her cheeks, angry. “Even if you like Zhou Xu Yin’s type, you must think Zhang Lu Rang is the most handsome!”

“What the heck! Why?”

“Because it’s the truth, and you can’t deny it,” Su Zai Zai declared with even more confidence.

“Get lost, stop trying to change my taste.” Jiang Jia slapped her hand away. “I’m telling you, you might meet Zhou Xu Yin and change your mind, you shallow face-obsessed girl.”

“Impossible.”

“Why not?”

Su Zai Zai replied seriously: “It’s just impossible.”

Jiang Jia stopped teasing her and smiled: “I didn’t expect you to be so adorably loyal.”

The room suddenly fell silent.

Su Zai Zai rested her head on her arms on the desk, sighing: “You’re right. I’m just an irresponsible person. I need to work on this flaw.”

“Huh? When did I say you were irresponsible?”

“You said it last time when I had to give the English practice book to Zhang Lu Rang. You said I wasn’t responsible because I didn’t hand it to him directly and let someone else do it.”

Jiang Jia immediately remembered and teased her: “Hahaha, I remember now! Didn’t you tell me you didn’t want to go to him?”

“I’ve changed my mind now.”

“…”

“Suddenly, I remember that you even said Zhang Lu Rang was ‘just okay!’”

“…My dear sister, I was wrong.”

Thinking about the English practice book, Su Zai Zai was filled with regret: “Oh my god, if I had known he was Zhang Lu Rang, I should have memorized an English essay instead of a physics problem!”

Jiang Jia was curious: “Why?”

Su Zai Zai was full of regret: “When the English teacher asked me to give the practice book to Zhang Lu Rang, she mentioned that his English is really bad. The teacher suspects he might get kicked out of the key class because of it, so she’s been pushing him to improve.”

“Hahahaha, I didn’t know that!” Jiang Jia laughed so hard she was clutching her stomach. “But I heard he’s really good in other subjects, so it’s surprising his English is that bad.”

“That’s why I should’ve shown off my English skills in front of him.”

Jiang Jia shook her head: “If you do that, you’ll only make him jealous.”

Her words were like a revelation, and Su Zai Zai gratefully grabbed her hand: “You’re right, thanks for the advice, master.”

“But how bad is his English, to make the teacher so concerned…”

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment: “Taking out the listening and speaking parts, out of a full score of 135, he probably only gets around 30 points…”

“…You could get 30 points just by guessing on the multiple choice.”

“Come to think of it, it’s kind of impressive! He actually managed to score 30 points in English!”

“….”

“Oh my god, he’s so adorably pathetic! The top student in the key class scores 100 points lower than me in English, hahaha. He really is a beauty, so cute.”

“…You’re hopeless.”

******

Even though Su Zai Zai had adjusted her mindset, she still didn’t have the courage to approach Zhang Lu Rang in the next two days, afraid of making an even worse impression.

She was still trying to figure out a strategy.

As she was thinking, a torrential downpour suddenly began, with heavy raindrops crashing to the ground with deafening noise.

Rainy days always bring a strange sense of melancholy.

Su Zai Zai looked out at the large raindrops falling rapidly outside,

then turned to Jiang Jia and sighed before saying seriously, “Jia Jia, I think I’m being too reserved.”

She’s reserved?!

Jiang Jia was shocked by her level of shamelessness and couldn’t help but tease: “You’re overthinking this…”

“I really think I’m being too reserved.”

“I really think you’re overthinking it…”

For once, Su Zai Zai didn’t argue back. She thought for a moment and then said, “Don’t you think? Although I’ve been going to the third floor every day, deliberately passing by him so he could see me, and speaking louder around him so he could hear me, I haven’t really done anything substantial.”

That doesn’t count as action?

Jiang Jia suddenly couldn’t understand her thought process.

“When we make eye contact, I never dare to hold his gaze for more than three seconds. And when I see him, I get so nervous I can’t speak, I just blush and pretend I didn’t see him, pretending to be deeply engaged in conversation with you.”

“That’s normal, because you like him.”

“But what good does shyness do?” Su Zai Zai licked her lips, her eyes serious. “I like him, but I don’t do anything about it. How can he possibly notice me?”

Jiang Jia was at a loss for words.

“Let me give you an example.”

“Go ahead.”

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment: “For instance, when you were in first year, two boys liked you. One would blush and run away whenever he saw you, and the other would bully you and call you ugly. Ten years later, which one would you remember more vividly?”

Jiang Jia didn’t even need to think: “The cute one who blushed.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai stared at her for a while, then chose to ignore her: “I think it’s the guy who bullied you. This proves that actions speak louder than looks.”

“I’m not joking; I’d really remember the cute one.”

“Of course, just because I say this doesn’t mean I think I’m not good-looking.”

“…”

“Alright.” Su Zai Zai compromised. “Then let’s say the bully is also a cute guy. Which one would you remember more?”

Jiang Jia didn’t want to choose either: “So why does he have to bully me? Can’t he be nice?”

“Don’t be so greedy.” Su Zai Zai frowned. “You want him to be good-looking *and* nice to you? Keep dreaming.”

“…”

After the playful banter, Su Zai Zai felt her anxiety creeping back in.

She thought to herself, even if Zhang Lu Rang doesn’t like her, she didn’t want him to forget her name in the future.

That would be too unsatisfactory. She couldn’t accept it.

“Jia Jia, do you believe in those TV dramas where the female lead does nothing, yet still wins the male lead’s affection?” Su Zai Zai muttered, “I don’t believe it.”

She turned to look out the window.

“If I only know how to be reserved and shy, he’ll only be stolen away by someone who isn’t.”

******

“I found out for you. The key class has their third period computer class this afternoon.”

Su Zai Zai smiled and kissed Jiang Jia on the cheek: “Mwah! You really are my little fairy! Beautiful, kind, and sweet.”

Jiang Jia wiped her face in disgust: “Since you said this morning that you wanted to do it, why don’t you just give it to him in person? It would leave a deeper impression.”

“That won’t work.” Su Zai Zai analyzed seriously. “It’s fine if I go to his class to look for him, but handing him an umbrella would be too obvious. His classmates would definitely tease him, and I’m afraid he’d be put off.”

“...That makes some sense.”

“Mainly, I’m worried he didn’t bring an umbrella. I don’t want him to get wet,” Su Zai Zai said, frustrated.

Being half-dry, half-wet is so damn seductive, like a little temptress.

After speaking, she grabbed an umbrella and stood up, walking to the window beside the front door. She placed the umbrella on the window sill.

The bell for class rang just then.

Twenty minutes later, Su Zai Zai raised her hand: “Teacher, may I go to the restroom?”

She

left the classroom, grabbed the umbrella from the window sill, and went downstairs.

Sure enough, both the front and back doors of the key class were locked. Su Zai Zai recalled where Zhang Lu Rang’s desk was and tried the window nearest to it. To her surprise, it opened.

A smile tugged at her lips as she leaned in, placing the umbrella

right in the center of his desk. The note on the handle was facing down, so it wouldn't be noticed unless someone picked it up.

She suddenly remembered what that boy had said the other day.

— "Hey, Zhang Lu Rang, you're slipping! This week, three girls came looking for Zhou Xu Yin, and only two for you!"

Only two.

The competition wasn't as fierce as she'd thought.

Su Zai Zai chuckled, brushed off her hands, closed the window, and walked back to class.

The rain gradually lessened, the clouds slowly dispersed, and the sun, previously hidden, began to peek out, casting a faint light over the wet earth.

Su Zai Zai returned to her seat.

Jiang Jia turned to her: "All set?"

"Yep." Su Zai Zai rested her chin in her hand, smiling. "Jia Jia, I won't be going home to shower this afternoon."

"Huh? What are you planning?"

Nothing much.

It's just that, if he comes to return the umbrella...

Then she'd get to see him again.

Chapter 6

Unrequited love is too lonely.

I am not someone who can endure loneliness.

— From the Diary of Su Zaizai, the Little Fairy

In late October, the weather changed rapidly, with rain arriving and departing quickly.

During the period between the end of school and the evening study session, although there were few people in the classroom, it was quite noisy. From a distance, he could hear the clamor in the classroom and the crisp, gentle female voice from the loudspeaker.

Zhang Lurang walked into the classroom.

Before he reached his seat, he noticed a dark red folding umbrella lying conspicuously in the center of the desk, seemingly meant to attract his attention.

Upon picking it up, he found a piece of paper stuck on the umbrella handle, with several layers of transparent tape added for waterproofing.

A sentence was written on it, though somewhat blurred from being rubbed.

But he could still clearly read the words.

— Su Zaizai from Class 9, Grade 10, lent to Zhang Lurang from

Class 1, Grade 10.

The word “lend” was printed in a font twice as large as the others.

He lowered his gaze with a neutral expression and placed the umbrella back on the desk. He packed a few books into his bag, slung it over his shoulder, and left the classroom, making sure to take the umbrella with him.

He went up two flights of stairs, turned right, and walked around to the classroom nearest to the Grade 10 office.

Perhaps because it was so close to the office or maybe because there were few people, the classroom was very quiet.

Particularly quiet.

Zhang Lurang saw only one girl inside, sitting near the window on the inside of the row, with large-frame glasses perched on her nose and headphones on, flipping through a book.

Outside the window, the setting sun cast its infinite beauty, filtering through the dense leaves. The fragmented light illuminated the book with a few halos and reflected a pearly glow on the girl’s hand.

It was somewhat glaring.

Zhang Lurang’s eyes narrowed slightly as he spoke, “Su Zaizai.”

She didn’t hear him and continued turning the pages without pausing.

Zhang Lurang didn't call her again and simply walked in.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw someone standing beside the desk, and Su Zaizai paused in her reading, instinctively pulling one of her headphones off.

The voice from the loudspeaker came through, the girl's voice melodious and charming.

"In Han Han's *A City* there is a line that goes..."

"Nothing in this world is more than this: to like something in an instant and then spend years questioning why you like it."

.....

.....

Su Zaizai looked up at him.

The boy's lips were pressed straight, his eyes clear and bright without any emotion. His black hair was half wet, making him appear lazy yet pure.

He raised his hand and handed the umbrella to her without saying a word.

Su Zaizai didn't take it and merely stared at him.

Seeing this, Zhang Lurang leaned over and placed the umbrella on her desk before turning to leave.

Su Zaizai hurriedly called out to him, "Zhang Lurang."

The boy paused, turning to look at her.

“Do you recognize me?” Su Zaizai put down her book and picked up the umbrella, shaking it slightly.

Zhang Lurang nodded but did not speak.

It seemed as if something inside Su Zaizai had swelled, making her feel both joyful and uncontrollable. She restrained her anxiety, stood up, and shamelessly asked, “Are you secretly paying attention to me?”

Caught off guard by the question, Zhang Lurang frowned slightly and showed no interest in continuing the conversation, turning his foot toward the door.

She followed him, talking to herself, “I shouldn’t have called you out. Don’t be mad. Pretend I didn’t say that.”

Zhang Lurang’s lips twitched as he couldn’t help but sneer, “Acceleration of two meters per second squared.”

“……”

It seemed the previous incident had been too extravagant, with loud calls and recitations.

Suddenly, she felt very embarrassed.

But she could handle it.

Moreover, it seemed that what she had done before wasn’t in vain;

he did remember her a bit.

Su Zaizai blinked and quickly changed the subject, “By the way, that day, I was actually looking for you, not Zhou Xuyin… I was looking for you.”

She was not a fickle person! She was very devoted!

“Mm.”

So cold, sob sob.

Su Zaizai pressed on, “Aren’t you going to ask why I was looking for you?”

“Not interested.”

Not interested…

Fine, if he wasn’t interested, she wouldn’t say anything. Su Zaizai decided to give in.

Let’s change the topic.

“Oh, and about the acceleration thing, I didn’t not know the unit of acceleration! I just had a brain lapse and thought of the wrong unit,” Su Zaizai shamelessly explained.

“Oh.”

“Do you know saying ‘oh’ is a form of cold violence?”

“……”

“You used violence against me.”

“……”

“Domestic violence.”

Zhang Lurang’s footsteps paused as he turned to look at her with a subtle expression.

Su Zaizai calmly corrected herself, “Campus violence, a slip of the tongue.”

Zhang Lurang: “……”

After that, one person kept talking while the other remained firmly silent.

But after descending two flights of stairs, Zhang Lurang could not help but speak, his tone slightly heavy: “Why are you following me?”

Just reaching the key class floor, a few more steps and they would be at the back door of the classroom, where the noise from the classroom could be heard. He was carrying the umbrella to return it…

It seemed like guessing wouldn’t be too bad.

Su Zaizai innocently blinked, “I’m not following you. I’m going to the reading room.”

He didn’t say anything more or enter the classroom, turning and

continuing downstairs.

Looks like she guessed right!

Su Zaizai cheerfully followed.

Although she didn't get a response, Su Zaizai, naturally talkative and thick-skinned, kept talking, making the situation less awkward.

Just as they were about to enter the reading room, Su Zaizai suddenly tugged at his sleeve before quickly letting go.

Zhang Lurang turned his head.

She licked her lips and cautiously explained, "What I said about cold violence was a joke... You should have been able to tell, right?"

He glanced at her and then looked away, saying, "Mm."

Still so cold.

The single word, though brief and seemingly filled with ice, quickly melted the ice in Su Zaizai's heart.

Gentle warmth spread in the air.

******

The two of them entered the reading room.

Zhang Lurang leisurely walked past a few bookshelves to a desk in the corner.

Su Zaizai followed behind him.

There were four empty chairs by that desk.

Zhang Lurang quietly pulled out a chair and sat down. He took out his textbooks and exercise books from his bag and began to work.

Su Zaizai stood in place for a moment before turning and walking toward the door.

Noticing her leaving figure from the corner of his eye, Zhang Lurang paused in his writing, briefly looked up, and soon returned his gaze to his textbook.

He sighed in relief.

...Finally left.

Her lively nature made him unsure how to handle her.

But Su Zaizai wasn't leaving. She had nothing with her, so she couldn't sit next to him and keep staring at him...

Though she really wanted to.

But she still didn't dare to try.

Su Zaizai turned a corner and wandered through the foreign literature section.

Her fingers brushed over the spines of the books, her mind wandering. Unable to find anything she wanted to read, she finally picked out the book *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, which was

recommended by the Chinese teacher.

She carried the book back to the corner.

Two seats across from Zhang Lurang were already occupied, making Su Zaizai a bit disappointed. She had wanted to sit opposite him so she could see his face as soon as she looked up.

Well, she would sit next to him instead.

Closer distance.

Su Zaizai gently pulled out a chair and sat down.

Zhang Lurang, sitting next to her, seemed oblivious, not even moving his eyelids.

Su Zaizai glanced at him before quickly shifting her attention to the book, immersing herself in the story.

The sky outside was a dark red, tinting the clouds a faint pink while faintly revealing the blue backdrop, looking both beautiful and somber.

Zhang Lurang glanced at his watch; it was almost time for the evening study session.

Most people around had already left.

He closed his exercise books and textbooks, stacked them, and put them into his bag before standing up.

Su Zaizai remained motionless, continuing to read quietly.

Her profile was fair and delicate, her features small, her head slightly bowed. The chestnut-colored hair covered part of her face, her rosy lips curved into a small smile.

Her slender, fair fingers turned the pages of the book.

Her usually vibrant and cheerful demeanor had become quite serene.

Zhang Lurang stood in place for a moment, then slightly bent his back and lightly tapped his finger on the desk, quietly reminding, “Study session.”

When Su Zaizai looked at him, her eyes were still a bit dazed but soon cleared up as she nodded in acknowledgment.

After speaking, he turned and walked out.

Su Zaizai didn’t expect him to wait

Chapter 7

No matter when or where, or how she feels.

She always thinks he’s just too good-looking.

— From Su Zai Zai’s Diary

The next day was Friday.

After school, Su Zai Zai slowly packed her things and walked out of the school gates with Jiang Jia.

Although Z High School is the best in Z City, its location is rather remote. It's nestled within a green area, with fresh air, pleasant scenery, and a peaceful and comfortable atmosphere.

The only downside is that it takes half an hour to walk from the school gate to the bus stop.

So, on Friday afternoons, many parents come to pick up their children.

As Su Zai Zai walked down the steps in front of the school gate, she looked up just in time to see Zhang Lu Rang getting into a black private car, accompanied by the sound of the car door closing.

The car didn't start immediately.

From this angle, she could see him toss his backpack aside and sink into the seat, closing his eyes.

Su Zai Zai stood there for a while.

Jiang Jia, who had taken a few steps ahead, suddenly sensed something was off. She looked back and saw Su Zai Zai standing still in the crowd, staring fixedly in one direction.

She called out, puzzled, "Zai Zai!"

At the same time, the car started to move forward.

As it moved, light and shadow flickered across his face, alternately bright and dark.

Finally, he disappeared from view.

Su Zai Zai snapped out of her daze and quickly ran to catch up with Jiang Jia, giving her a big hug, grinning like a fool.

Jiang Jia was speechless. “What are you doing?”

Su Zai Zai smiled freely, her joy evident, but she just shook her head without saying anything.

Her expression made Jiang Jia even more curious. “What exactly are you up to? You’re smiling like that for no reason; it’s creeping me out, girl!”

“Let Rang.”

“...The road is only so wide. Where do you want me to go?”

“Let Rang.”

“Go away.”

The sun was scorching, and even through the black coating of the parasol, you could still feel its heat. People bustled around them, and light and shadow danced on the ground.

At that moment.

Su Zai Zai saw it—his eyelashes fluttered, and then he opened his eyes.

Just as the car started moving.

Just as Jiang Jia called out “Zai Zai.”

When you have a crush, even a coincidence can bring immense joy, a kind of satisfaction that fills your heart instantly.

Sweet as honey, seeping into your heart.

******

Saturday afternoon.

Su Zai Zai was home alone, sipping milk from a bag, idly flipping through channels with the remote control.

Her phone buzzed on the sofa.

Su Zai Zai glanced at it and picked it up.

Jiang Jia had sent two messages.

—*I asked my classmate for Zhang Lu Rang’s WeChat.*

—*134****4329*

The milk bag slipped from Su Zai Zai’s mouth, spilling all over her. She yelped, quickly grabbed some tissues to clean up, and changed her clothes.

A few minutes later, she returned to the living room, picked up her phone, and sat cross-legged on the sofa.

After hesitating for a while, she started typing rapidly on her phone.

Su Zai Zai: *Do you think I should add him?*

Jiang Jia: *Add him, why not?*

Su Zai Zai: *I feel like he won't accept...*

Su Zai Zai: *Besides, I kind of want to ask him for it myself.*

Jiang Jia: *Just try it! What if he agrees? Then you'll have a chance to chat and build your relationship! Otherwise, at this rate, who knows how long it'll take for you to catch his attention.*

That sounded right...

Su Zai Zai hesitated a bit longer, biting her finger in anxiety.

Finally, she made up her mind, copied the number, clicked "Add Friend," pasted it, and his detailed information popped up on the screen.

His profile picture was a Samoyed dog, sticking its tongue out happily at the camera.

The style didn't quite match...

Her nervousness faded by more than half as she clicked on the enlarged picture. She suddenly noticed that in the bottom right corner of the picture, around the dog's neck, two fingers had sneaked into the frame.

To be precise, it was part of an index finger and middle finger.

Su Zai Zai blinked, immediately dismissing her doubts.

Even two fingers looked so good, exuding a seductive charm, tempting her to lick the screen. Who else could it be but Zhang Lu Rang!

She glanced at the nickname: *zlr*.

Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes, gritted her teeth, and tapped “Add to Contacts.” She didn’t bother with a verification message and just hit “Send.”

Afterward, she tossed her phone aside as if she had touched boiling water, grabbed a cushion, and covered her face, letting out a few muffled screams.

A long time later, Su Zai Zai finally lowered the cushion from her face.

Her eyes were shimmering with excitement, her face flushed, and a few beads of sweat had formed on her forehead.

She looked both anxious and thrilled, eyeing her phone in the corner of the sofa, wanting to pick it up but too scared to.

Finally, she gave up, went back to her room to do some homework.

But she couldn’t focus, so she stood up in frustration, returned to the living room, and recklessly grabbed her phone to check—

As expected.

No messages.

Even though she had expected it, she still felt a little disappointed.

But she quickly recovered.

If such a handsome guy accepted friend requests so easily, he would've been snatched away long ago.

Su Zai Zai made a face at his profile picture, muttering, "One day, you'll be begging to add me."

******

Sunday afternoon.

Su Zai Zai packed her things and looked out at the blazing sun, feeling like she was going to break out in sweat. She grabbed a plain black hair tie and casually tied up her hair.

Then she picked up her backpack and headed out.

Su's mother was watching TV in the living room. Seeing Su Zai Zai come out, she lazily glanced up and asked, "Have you packed everything? Did you get your allowance from your dad?"

Having just taken two hundred yuan from her father, Su Zai Zai lied without hesitation, "I packed, didn't get the allowance."

"I know you took it," her mother sipped some water.

"..."

"If you convince your dad to agree to get a dog, I'll give you two hundred more."

Thinking about dogs suddenly reminded Su Zai Zai of Zhang Lu Rang's profile picture. She quickly came back to her senses and refused, "Forget it, it's just two hundred yuan."

"Wow, you have principles."

Su Zai Zai walked to the entryway to put on her shoes. "This is a battle between you two, don't drag me into it."

"What do you mean 'battle'? Your dad said we'll decide by vote, and there are only three people in this house!" Her mother glared at her. "Do you want me to drive you?"

"Drive me where?" Su Zai Zai tidied her hair in the mirror by the entryway, smiling, "I only get one day off a week, you should rest."

Her mother didn't insist. "Okay then, be careful on the road. Call me when you get to school."

"I know."

In late October, the sun was still as fierce as in early summer. The asphalt on the road seemed about to catch fire, and the grass by the roadside emitted a strong scent.

Su Zai Zai hated the heat, so she quickly bought an ice-cold bottle of mineral water from a nearby convenience store and pressed it against her face to cool down.

She walked to the bus stop, put away her umbrella, folded it, and tucked it into her backpack. Then she sat down on a bench, took out her phone, and checked the real-time location of the 71 bus on

a public account.

It was still ten stops away...

Su Zai Zai immediately regretted it. She was so stupid!

She should have waited until it was only five stops away before coming out. She was dying of regret!

After sitting for a while, Su Zai Zai suddenly stood up and walked over to the bus stop sign.

No way, she couldn't wait any longer. Maybe she could find another bus and transfer halfway...

After taking a few steps, she stopped in her tracks, her expression slightly dazed.

A young man was standing next to the bus stop sign.

He stood in the shade, wearing plain black headphones, properly carrying his backpack. His expression was calm as he stared at the passing buses.

A few seconds later, perhaps feeling a bit hot, he took a sip from the bottle of water in his hand, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down twice.

Then he wiped his lips with the back of his hand, the one holding the bottle cap.

Su Zai Zai's gaze followed his movements, finally resting on his lips.

She couldn’t help but swallow. The gulp was particularly loud.

Chapter 8

In front of him, I feel like myself, yet not quite like myself.

— From Su Zai Zai’s Diary

Su Zai Zai quickly took a few steps back, twisted open the bottle of mineral water, and took a few sips.

To quench her thirst first.

If she couldn’t control herself later and ended up swallowing in front of that beautiful person…

That would be too embarrassing.

Su Zai Zai tightly screwed the cap back on and looked at her reflection in the black screen of her phone. Then she pulled out a tissue from her bag and wiped the sweat from her forehead, curving her lips into a smile.

Hmm, good.

Her smile was very natural and beautiful.

Su Zai Zai put her phone in her pocket, took a deep breath, and suppressed all her nervousness.

She walked over, tilted her head, and greeted him, “Hey, Zhang Lu Rang.”

Hearing the voice, Zhang Lu Rang looked over, his eyes showing no surprise, as calm as a lake at night, with not even the slightest ripple.

He nodded slightly, as a response to her.

Su Zai Zai instinctively tightened her grip on the mineral water bottle in her hand, blinked, and asked curiously, “Do you live around here? I’ve never seen you at this bus stop before.”

“Yeah.”

“Which neighborhood do you live in?”

This was a residential area with many neighborhoods around, so Su Zai Zai really couldn’t guess which one he lived in.

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her and vaguely replied, “Just nearby.”

That look…

It was as if he was on guard against some dangerous animal.

She must have seen it wrong.

Su Zai Zai didn’t dwell on it any longer. She suddenly remembered what happened on WeChat yesterday and carefully chose her words, coming up with a more subtle way to ask, “Do you have WeChat?”

“…” She saw Zhang Lu Rang hesitate for a moment, touching the

back of his neck, and then he replied, “No.”

He must have thought lying was bad, but compared to adding her on WeChat, Zhang Lu Rang preferred to lie.

Heh.

She should have just asked him why he didn’t accept her friend request. What should she do now? If she exposed his lie, she’d be afraid he’d feel embarrassed.

She never knew she was such a self-sacrificing person.

Su Zai Zai forced a smile. “Not planning to get one?”

“No.”

“Oh.”

Awkward silence.

Su Zai Zai thought randomly that Zhang Lu Rang must be the slow-to-warm-up type. If she took a step forward, he would probably take two steps back, so… for the sake of her future, she’d take a step back first.

She cleared her throat and casually made something up, “You could get one. There’s a public account on WeChat that lets you check the real-time location of every bus route. That way, you can time your departure from home and won’t have to wait outside for so long.”

Zhang Lu Rang's eyes flashed with a bit of embarrassment, seemingly not having considered this reason. He averted his gaze and said softly, "Okay, thanks."

"No problem." Su Zai Zai waved her hand.

Both of them fell silent.

Su Zai Zai slung her backpack in front of her and took out her phone to check the real-time location of Bus 71 again—about ten stops away.

She secretly hoped the bus would be delayed, or better yet, stuck in traffic, feeling a bit pleased with herself.

The atmosphere was a bit awkward. After some thought, she brought up another topic, "By the way, isn't the school sports day next Thursday? Are you participating in any events?"

"Yeah."

"What about the School Sports Night? Are you performing?"

"...Yeah."

This surprised Su Zai Zai. She was stunned for a moment and asked in disbelief, "Huh? You're performing? What are you performing?"

This time, Zhang Lu Rang didn't answer.

Su Zai Zai looked up at him, instantly amused, "What's with that

look? Like I'm trying to steal your class's idea."

Zhang Lu Rang neither looked at her nor explained.

"Hmph, and don't think I'm going to tell you either. Our class's program is amazing—the performers are both beautiful and classy. I'm almost falling for her myself."

Seeing no reaction from him, Su Zai Zai continued, "I've heard she's beautiful, academically excellent, comes from a good family, and has a cheerful personality. She's known as the number one goddess of Z High School."

Zhang Lu Rang was at a loss for words, finally saying after a long pause, "...You're not talking about yourself, are you?"

If she really was, then he truly had never seen anyone so shameless.

Su Zai Zai feigned surprise, her eyes widening slightly, "You guessed right, it's me."

"..."

"Didn't expect I had so many good qualities in your eyes."

"..."

Zhang Lu Rang's brow twitched, and unable to bear it, he put the other earphone in as well.

Seeing him put on the earphones, Su Zai Zai cautiously checked his

expression. He didn't seem angry...

Seeing this, she let out a sigh of relief, lowered her eyelids, and hid her emotions behind them.

They didn't talk anymore.

When Bus 71 arrived, they both walked over at the same time. Su Zai Zai stood behind Zhang Lu Rang, holding her student bus card.

When she swiped her card, she suddenly noticed that he wasn't using a student bus card but was paying with cash.

Zhang Lu Rang removed one of his earphones and stood near the rear door of the bus, holding onto the overhead strap with one hand. Su Zai Zai walked over to stand beside him and also grabbed the strap overhead.

After some thought, Su Zai Zai asked him, "Have you eaten dinner?"

"No."

"Then let's go eat at Maoye Plaza!"

Maoye Plaza was the stop they would be getting off at soon. After getting off, it would take another half hour to reach the school.

"No, I'll eat at the school cafeteria."

"How did you know I actually wanted to eat at the school cafeteria more?" She raised her eyebrows, half-joking.

Zhang Lu Rang fell silent again, not responding.

Su Zai Zai's heart skipped a beat, and just as she was about to say something to break the awkwardness, the bus suddenly braked sharply. She lost her balance and instinctively grabbed onto something nearby.

And beside her, the only thing was Zhang Lu Rang...d him.

Su Zai Zai's face instantly turned bright red. She quickly let go of his arm, and before the bus had even come to a complete stop, she was already wobbling, nearly tripping. She didn't have the time to worry about that, anxiously apologizing, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to... I just couldn't keep my balance."

Zhang Lu Rang opened his mouth to speak, but before he could say anything, she hurriedly added, "And I was just joking earlier. I didn't really plan on eating at the cafeteria."

The bus came to a stop, and a few people got off. Su Zai Zai lowered her head and walked to the back, finding a seat in the rear.

Zhang Lu Rang glanced in her direction.

Today, she had tied up all her usual loose hair, looking much fresher than usual. Her small, palm-sized face was made even smaller by her bangs. Her eyes were dull, and the corners of her mouth drooped down.

The bus started moving again.

At the same time, Zhang Lu Rang withdrew his gaze.

In the back, Su Zai Zai felt increasingly anxious. She rubbed her fingers together and turned to look out the window, suddenly feeling an urge to cry.

She held back but still couldn't bring herself to cry.

She didn't dare to look at Zhang Lu Rang again, so she gloomily took out her phone to play a game.

When the game screen loaded, her phone briefly went black. In that moment, she saw her own reflection on the screen, particularly her lips.

Her mood worsened.

She really wanted to give herself a good slap.

******

After getting off the bus, Su Zai Zai immediately headed to the snack street next to Maoye Plaza, randomly picking a place to have dinner, then got up and returned to school.

Actually, she didn't want to eat out, but if she and Zhang Lu Rang walked together and someone saw them, he probably wouldn't be happy about it.

On the way, Su Zai Zai kept thinking about one thing.

What kind of girl does Zhang Lu Rang actually like?

He's so quiet, shouldn't he find someone talkative to balance

things out?

But it seems like he prefers peace and quiet, so he might find her pretty annoying.

Ahhh, this is so strange. Why can't she stop talking when she's around him? She isn't usually so forward with people, but she just can't control herself!

It feels like everything she does in front of him is wrong.

Unable to come to any conclusion, Su Zai Zai began to think back: What expression did Zhang Lu Rang have on his face when she accidentally touched him on the bus today?

It wasn't until she reached the school gate that she remembered.

She was too nervous at the time, she didn't even dare to look at him.

But Su Zai Zai recalled that moment on the sports field when she grabbed Zhang Lu Rang's wrist—his expression had shown impatience and... annoyance.

He's too difficult to approach.

In Zhang Lu Rang's eyes, her looks probably don't even register.

So, she'll have to rely on her personality to win him over.

...If she even has one.

******

When Su Zai Zai arrived at the classroom, it wasn't even 5 o'clock yet, but there were already over ten students inside. Some were chatting in groups, while the rest were studying.

She rested for a moment before quickly picking up her physics workbook, painfully starting to do her homework.

Halfway through, Jiang Jia walked in through the front door, sat down at her seat, and excitedly leaned over to Su Zai Zai, asking, "Hey, Zai Zai, did you add him?"

Su Zai Zai stared at her physics problem, her head about to explode. Hearing this question made it even worse. Her pen paused, her expression unreadable.

She sighed and casually replied, "Let me finish this first."

Seeing that she was working on physics, Jiang Jia sympathetically patted her on the shoulder and didn't bother her any further, quietly taking out her phone to play.

Suddenly, Jiang Jia noticed Su Zai Zai's WeChat nickname. "Huh? Why did you change your WeChat name?"

Jiang Jia hadn't set a remark for Su Zai Zai, so she noticed the nickname change right away.

Su Zai Zai let out an "Ah," without explaining.

"What's gotten into you? The old 'Little Fairy' name was so good, why change it to 'Su Dumbass'?"

“...I just changed it to ‘SZZ’.”

“Which is basically ‘Su Dumbass’, right?”

“Shut up.”

After this interruption, Su Zai Zai lost all motivation to do her homework.

She thought for a moment, then mentioned what had happened today to Jiang Jia and asked, “Do you think he doesn’t dislike me? After all, he does respond when I talk to him...”

“I don’t really know.” Jiang Jia thought for a moment. “But I heard from a classmate that Zhang Lu Rang is just like that. Even though he seems cold and distant, he usually responds when someone talks to him. He won’t make anyone feel awkward.”

“Oh.” Su Zai Zai felt a bit disappointed.

“Zhou Xu Yin is so lively, but he’s the type who absolutely won’t talk to you if he doesn’t want to. So, by comparison, the girls in their class actually prefer Zhang Lu Rang.”

Thinking about it that way, Zhang Lu Rang is indeed pretty charming, Su Zai Zai thought, feeling a bit tired.

If she were to win him over, she’d have to constantly be on guard.

The more she thought about it, the more Su Zai Zai’s mood sank. “I’m really afraid he doesn’t like me.”

Jiang Jia hesitated, then comforted her, “He probably doesn’t.”

“I’m afraid I’m doing things wrong, afraid I’m too enthusiastic, or that he’ll think I’m too cold.” Su Zai Zai rubbed her eyes, unable to hear anything, just muttering to herself, “But what can I do? I’ve never chased anyone before.”

Su Zai Zai had no experience. So she couldn’t find the right balance.

All she had for Zhang Lu Rang was overwhelming enthusiasm.

When she saw him, all her enthusiasm found an outlet.

Su Zai Zai couldn’t control it.

She showed her enthusiasm for him, unintentionally revealing her feelings.

Su Zai Zai couldn’t control it at all.

Chapter 9

I’ll sell you my English grades.

And as a bonus, you get me too. Want it?

— “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

After just one night, Su Zai Zai had regained her spirits.

After all, she wasn’t the type to worry too much about things.

No matter what, she thought, just go for it first.

With this mindset, Su Zai Zai began to frequently try to make her presence known around Zhang Lu Rang.

In the afternoon, after finishing lunch, she said goodbye to Jiang Jia and returned to the classroom.

After timing it well, Su Zai Zai did her homework for fifteen minutes, then grabbed the remaining assignments for the day and headed straight to the reading room.

She found the same spot as last time and immediately spotted Zhang Lu Rang, who was sitting with his head down, doing homework.

Someone was still sitting across from him, so Su Zai Zai decisively sat down next to him.

Zhang Lu Rang didn't even lift an eyelid.

It seemed like he didn't care at all who sat next to him; his attention remained completely undisturbed.

Su Zai Zai glanced at his workbook.

It was an English cloze test.

She blinked and decided not to focus on him, turning back to look at the chemical formulas in her own workbook, nearly breaking down from frustration.

Her English was so good, so why did these letters stop making sense when they were combined?

Question three: Particles with equal numbers of electrons are called isoelectronic species. Which of the following particles is not an isoelectronic species...

Su Zai Zai decided to stop complaining and quickly started scribbling away on her scratch paper for a good ten minutes.

Meanwhile, Zhang Lu Rang, who was struggling with English, found himself inexplicably distracted, listening to the person beside him muttering under her breath, "Hydrogen, helium, lithium, beryllium, boron, carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, fluorine, neon, sodium... sodium... no, no, that's not right... magnesium, aluminum, sodium, silicon, phosphorus... sodium, thirteen."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

When she finally figured out the answer, her spirit seemed to relax as if a huge weight had been lifted.

Solving a difficult problem was incredibly satisfying.

As soon as her mind relaxed, Su Zai Zai immediately noticed Zhang Lu Rang's gaze.

His expression was odd, with a hint of confusion that she couldn't quite understand.

Su Zai Zai felt a bit embarrassed being stared at like that and quickly lowered her eyes.

It wasn't until he looked away that she let out a breath of relief.

Then, she cautiously glanced at his workbook.

...He was still stuck on that cloze test.

And she had actually done that one before. Out of curiosity, Su Zai Zai leaned closer to look at it for a moment, thought about the answer, and then hesitated to say something.

She quickly looked away and wrote for another ten minutes. When she turned back and saw him still working on that same cloze test, she was so anxious she almost wanted to grab it and do it for him.

Ten minutes later, when she noticed Zhang Lu Rang had moved on to the grammar section, Su Zai Zai inexplicably felt much more relieved.

At 6:20 p.m., when Zhang Lu Rang wrote down the last answer to the first reading comprehension passage, he began to pack up his things and leave.

Su Zai Zai hurriedly stuffed her things into her backpack and quickly followed him out.

As they left the reading room, she stood next to him and couldn't help but quietly remind him, "You took way too long on that cloze test. You spent nearly half an hour on it—it's such a waste of time."

Talking about English made Zhang Lu Rang feel frustrated too. He was silent for a moment before finally speaking in a low, sullen voice, "If I don't understand it, I don't feel like continuing."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai was a bit shocked, “You understood it?”

“…” Well, not really.

“You only got three questions right! Did you really understand it?”

“…” Did she really have to embarrass him like that?

Su Zai Zai continued her barrage of complaints, and Zhang Lu Rang, surprisingly, began to feel a little annoyed. He said in a deep voice, “You only got three chemistry multiple-choice questions right, and you spent fifteen minutes on a problem and still got the answer wrong.”

Hearing him speak so much for the first time, Su Zai Zai was a little stunned. Then, she stubbornly defended herself, “That’s because I didn’t attend the class.”

Zhang Lu Rang, who had diligently attended every English class but still only scored thirty points, fell silent.

Su Zai Zai quickly realized her mistake and hurriedly corrected herself, “Ahem, what I meant was, I haven’t done this type of problem before. Now that I’ve done it once, I’ll get it right next time.”

Zhang Lu Rang remained silent.

Su Zai Zai scratched her head and continued trying to salvage the situation, emphasizing, “I pay super close attention in every class, but I just don’t get it. Sigh, it’s really frustrating.”

She definitely wasn't one of those students who didn't pay attention in class. She was very diligent!

Seeing that Zhang Lu Rang had no desire to continue the conversation, Su Zai Zai also stopped talking.

The hallway was very quiet, with only the sound of the wind whistling, the tapping of shoes on the floor, the soft breathing of the two people, and... Su Zai Zai's accelerating heartbeat.

The two quickly reached the third floor.

Zhang Lu Rang silently headed toward the classroom.

"Zhang Lu Rang," Su Zai Zai called out, standing at the landing of the stairs. The dim light from the energy-saving lamp cast a soft glow on her, making her fair face appear even more radiant.

He turned around, his expression indifferent, quietly waiting for her to speak.

The sky was pitch black, and the night had descended like a mist.

Su Zai Zai, no longer in a joking mood, softly reminded him, "Don't just keep doing exercises non-stop. It's more effective to memorize the vocabulary properly."

******

"Huh? So you're actually teaching the top student how to study now?!"

Su Zai Zai was momentarily at a loss for words, then stammered, "But his English isn't top-notch at all, okay?"

"But he still ranked in the top fifty for the whole grade in the last monthly exam, including English."

"..." Su Zai Zai couldn't argue with that. After a moment of thought, she replied earnestly, "Well, I'm pretty sure he didn't memorize the vocabulary. That cloze test had only a few new words, all from the first unit, and he couldn't understand them."

"Even top students have their struggles," Jiang Jia sighed.

"I know it was kind of ridiculous to remind him like that," Su Zai Zai admitted as she flipped open her chemistry workbook, looking at one of the multiple-choice questions. "But it really seems like he's troubled by English."

"Well, all his friends are in that class, and now that he's been put into the honors class, he has to make new friends all over again."

Oh, is that so?

Su Zai Zai didn't dwell on it further and instead pointed at the question. "Can you help me figure out where I went wrong with this one?"

Jiang Jia grabbed a pencil and some scratch paper and started explaining the problem to her. After she finished, she suddenly found it a bit amusing. "Hey, you're actually asking a chemistry question? Didn't you say you were going to break up with

chemistry?"

"We made up," Su Zai Zai said, resting her chin on her hand, a bit frustrated. "Ah, sodium, magnesium, aluminum... Why do I always get them mixed up?"

He didn't hear that, did he...

How embarrassing.

******

After the last evening class ended, Zhang Lu Rang checked the answers for his English cloze test. As expected, he only got three right. For the grammar section, he only got two correct, but surprisingly, he got all the reading comprehension questions right.

This immediately improved his mood quite a bit.

But he still didn't want to look at the explanations, so he glanced at them briefly before tossing the answer sheet back into his drawer.

Ye Zhenxin stood up, slung her backpack over her shoulder, and noticed the sea of red marks on his workbook. She couldn't help but ask, "Why did you get so many wrong again?"

Zhang Lu Rang didn't reply.

After a moment of thought, she sat back down and turned her head to look at him. "Do you want me to help you?"

"No need."

His blunt response made Ye Zhenxin a bit awkward, but she didn't say anything else. She just added, "Well, don't be discouraged. Keep working hard, and your grades will improve."

"Mm."

Zhang Lu Rang closed the workbook and put it back in his drawer.

Seeing him like this, Ye Zhenxin felt a bit bored and said goodbye before walking out.

Zhang Lu Rang pulled out his math book and began reviewing. It wasn't until it was almost time for the dormitory curfew that he started packing up to head back to the dorm.

He pulled out the books he needed from his desk or drawer.

Finally, his gaze fell on the first volume of his English textbook. He picked it up.

In his mind, Su Zai Zai's words from earlier echoed.

"Don't just keep doing exercises non-stop. It's more effective to memorize the vocabulary properly."

He didn't pay much attention to it and carelessly tossed the book on top of the stack of books on his desk.

Then he walked over to the door and turned off the lights.

As he stepped out the front door, he hesitated at the back door, suddenly recalling the way Su Zai Zai looked when she was reciting

the periodic table earlier today.

...Could it be that when he was doing English exercises, he looked just as ridiculous to others?

No way. Zhang Lu Rang scratched his head and stood there for a moment.

In the end, he returned to his desk, and in the dim light from the hallway shining into the classroom, he picked up the book on top of the stack.

...Might as well start memorizing.

Chapter 10

He's not cold at all,

He just doesn't talk much.

— "Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy's Diary"

On Tuesday afternoon, Su Zai Zai went to the reading room as usual.

To her surprise, Zhang Lu Rang wasn't there.

Su Zai Zai panicked.

Could he be angry?

But she hadn't said anything harsh—she just mentioned in front of him that he only got three answers right on the cloze test...

Maybe top students have a stronger sense of pride...

But then she remembered how he called her a “fool” after she had called him the same. That showed he could be a bit petty.

Still, she couldn’t just ask him why he wasn’t going to the reading room anymore! That would make her intentions too obvious!

She wanted to please him but couldn’t think of an excuse to do so.

No matter what...

...She decided to test the waters a little.

After the break between classes on Wednesday, she quickly ran back to the classroom, grabbed her water bottle, and headed up to the third floor.

After spending enough time observing, she had figured out Zhang Lu Rang’s daily routine.

It was as regular as it could be.

After the first and third periods in the morning, he’d go to the restroom. After the second period, he’d go to refill his water bottle. In the afternoon, after the first period, he’d refill his water bottle, and after the second, he’d go to the restroom. After school, he’d first go to the cafeteria for dinner, then return to the dormitory to take a shower. After that, he’d come back to the classroom to get his books before heading to the reading room to study. During the evening self-study session, after the first period, he’d refill his water bottle, and after the second, he’d go to the restroom.

Sure enough, as soon as she reached the third floor, she saw Zhang Lu Rang coming out of the classroom with his water bottle.

Su Zai Zai quickly followed him, lining up behind him.

After some inner turmoil, she finally bit the bullet and called out, “Zhang Lu Rang.”

He didn’t respond or turn around.

Su Zai Zai grew anxious, scratching her head, unsure of what to say.

In her panic, she blurted out, “By the way, have you been studying your English vocabulary?”

The person in front of her remained silent.

Su Zai Zai immediately realized her mistake.

No! That’s not what she meant to say!

She definitely didn’t intend to humiliate him again…

No, she never meant to humiliate him at all!

Just as she was trying to figure out how to salvage the situation, the person in front of her finished filling his water bottle.

Zhang Lu Rang turned his head slightly, glanced at her, and muttered, “…Yeah.”

At that moment, the tightly wound string in her mind suddenly

snapped, and fireworks exploded in her brain, making her feel dizzy.

Su Zai Zai stood frozen in place for a while.

It wasn't until someone behind her impatiently urged her to move that she snapped out of it.

Mumbling an apology, she walked back in a daze without even filling her water bottle.

Did the handsome guy just admit he's been studying his vocabulary?

Did he really start studying vocabulary because of what she said...

She wasn't imagining it, was she...

Oh my god.

Su Zai Zai stopped, leaning against the wall to steady her breathing.

She was so excited she felt like she might burst.

******

After school in the afternoon, Su Zai Zai eagerly rushed to the reading room.

But Zhang Lu Rang wasn't there again.

She was baffled and couldn't figure out what the handsome guy

was thinking.

...So why hasn't he come!

Didn't his behavior earlier today count as him being nice to her?

She had to find out, or she wouldn't be able to sleep tonight.

Su Zai Zai forced herself to come up with a reason to see him.

After the last evening self-study session, Su Zai Zai headed straight to the honors class.

At that time, there were still about a dozen students studying in the honors class. Su Zai Zai waited outside for a while.

About ten minutes later, only Zhang Lu Rang was left in the classroom.

Su Zai Zai took a deep breath and walked in.

She hesitated for a moment, then sat in the seat in front of Zhang Lu Rang and turned to look at him.

Hearing the noise, Zhang Lu Rang instinctively looked up.

He seemed surprised to see her and stared blankly for a moment, looking somewhat cute.

But he quickly reverted to his usual indifferent and aloof expression.

"Uh, it's so hot, I just came in to cool off with the air conditioning,"

Su Zai Zai blurted out, clearly making up an excuse.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

The classroom quickly fell silent again.

After a while, Su Zai Zai, trying to sound casual, asked, "By the way, why didn't you come to the reading room today?"

"Rehearsing for a performance," he replied flatly, not even looking up.

Oh.

Su Zai Zai breathed a sigh of relief.

Glancing at the workbook on his desk, she blinked and said, "You're working on English? Let me teach you."

"No need." He closed the workbook and tossed it aside.

As if expecting this response, Su Zai Zai quickly pulled out her physics workbook from her bag, flipped to a page, and pointed to a problem. "Then explain this one to me."

Zhang Lu Rang looked up, instinctively touched his neck, and softly said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? If you don't know, you should ask! How can you learn if you don't ask?" Su Zai Zai scolded him, then quickly changed her tone. "Let me explain it to you."

"..."

He had never met anyone with thicker skin than hers.

Su Zai Zai pulled out a pen and a notebook, stumbling through her explanation: “Um, this problem says it’s uniform motion, so, um, the average speed…”

Zhang Lu Rang couldn’t listen any longer.

Her explanation was full of holes and nonsense—she clearly didn’t understand physics.

He pressed his lips together, picked up a pen, and quickly wrote out the correct solution on her notebook.

Su Zai Zai looked at what he had written. Even though it was brief, it was clear and concise. After thinking it over, she understood.

With a grateful expression, Su Zai Zai said, “I get it! Thank you!”

Zhang Lu Rang nodded, saying nothing.

“I’ll teach you English to repay you.”

“…No need.”

“Then can I repay you in some other way?”

“…” Zhang Lu Rang hesitated, then relented, “Fine, go ahead.”

Su Zai Zai beamed with joy, her eyes curving into crescents. She flipped to the page he had just been working on. “This one?”

“Yeah,” he responded half-heartedly.

After getting his confirmation, Su Zai Zai looked at the problem and smoothly explained, “For this question, because ‘not only’ is at the beginning of the sentence, it requires partial inversion in the sentence structure. So, we can eliminate options A and B…”

After finishing her explanation, seeing no reaction from him, Su Zai Zai asked curiously, “Hey, did you understand this question?”

“Yeah,” he responded, still half-heartedly.

“Then explain it back to me.”

“…”

“Didn’t get it? Should I explain it again?”

“…”

“Because ‘not only’ is at the beginning, the sentence requires partial inversion. Inversion, you know what that is, right? Blah blah blah… Did you get it this time?”

“…Yeah.”

“Then explain it back to me.”

“…”

“Still don’t get it? I’ll explain it again.”

Finally unable to take it anymore, Zhang Lu Rang gave in, “Because ‘not only’ is at the beginning, the sentence requires partial inversion. And based on ‘went’ being in the past tense, the correct

answer is D."

Su Zai Zai clapped her hands in excitement and grinned. "Didn't I explain it well? Simple, clear, and easy to understand."

"..." He really didn't want to talk to her anymore.

"Don't think I'm bad at school," Su Zai Zai persisted, shamelessly defending herself when she saw his reaction. "I'm only bad at physics, chemistry, and math. My combined scores for politics, history, and geography are over 250!"

For once, Zhang Lu Rang retorted, "I'm only bad at English."

"...Oh." Su Zai Zai wasn't ready to give up, so she asked, "How many points did you get in politics, history, and geography on the last monthly exam?"

When he didn't answer, Su Zai Zai glanced at the bulletin board, walked over, and looked at the scores posted there.

Her eyes widened, shining like stars. "Wow, you're amazing! Aside from English, you have no weak subjects!"

Zhang Lu Rang paused, then asked, "What did you just call me?"

Su Zai Zai: "...Oh, Zhang Lu Rang."

Zhang Lu Rang stared at her for a moment before quietly starting to pack his things.

Su Zai Zai also put her physics workbook back into her bag and

casually asked, “So, are you planning to choose humanities or sciences?”

Zhang Lu Rang’s goal was clear: “Sciences.”

Su Zai Zai: “…”

Sciences, huh.

She didn’t dwell on it long and asked, “By the way, what event are you participating in tomorrow?”

“The 100 meters.”

“I’ll bring you water, okay?”

This made Zhang Lu Rang raise his eyebrows slightly, as if he found it a bit amusing. “I might be competing against someone from your class.”

Su Zai Zai thought about it and realized that might not be appropriate. “Yeah, maybe not then.”

“Mm.” He lazily stuffed his books into his bag and responded casually.

“How about I secretly bring it to you?”

“No need.”

“Then I’ll do it openly.” Su Zai Zai grinned mischievously.

“…”

Zhang Lu Rang stood up and began closing the windows that hadn't been shut.

"Leaving? Let's go together."

"..."

On the way, Zhang Lu Rang remained silent.

Su Zai Zai chatted away next to him.

Zhang Lu Rang's pace gradually quickened.

Soon, they reached the area near the girls' dormitory.

Zhang Lu Rang sighed in relief and continued walking, noticeably slowing down.

Su Zai Zai stood still and called out to him, "Zhang Lu Rang."

He stopped and turned to look at her.

The silver light of the moon spilled down, the shadows of the trees dancing in the breeze.

Behind Su Zai Zai was the bright light from a lamp. She stood with the light behind her, her face half-covered in shadow.

But her eyes shone all the more brightly.

She smiled, her eyes curving like the crescent moon in the sky, clear and radiant.

“Good luck in the race tomorrow,” she said.

Zhang Lu Rang’s eyelids lowered as if he were pondering something.

After a moment, he looked up.

His gaze was clear as he calmly and steadily asked a question.

“Do you like me?”

SLC Ch 11 – 20

Aug 16, 2024

Chapter 11

He runs so fast, no wonder he's so hard to catch.

— "Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy's Diary"

Su Zai Zai's smile froze on her lips.

Her fingers unconsciously twisted together, tangling into a knot.

Zhang Lu Rang stood there quietly.

The night breeze blew, bringing with it the atmosphere of the evening.

Su Zai Zai opened her mouth.

She wanted to say, "Yes."

Yes, I like you—a lot.

Because of you, rainy days are no longer just rainy days.

They've become a day to remember, the day I first met you.

And because of you, my otherwise mundane youth has suddenly become vibrant and alive.

—Silence.

The dormitory supervisor walked out of the dormitory entrance and shouted, “Students! Hurry back! We’re about to close the doors!”

Zhang Lu Rang’s brows furrowed, and he spoke with a hint of impatience, “Su Zai Zai.”

The sound of his voice startled her, making her shiver.

All those sweet words she had rehearsed in her mind, all those confessions that were on the tip of her tongue…

They were immediately replaced by something else, scared off by his impatient tone: “I—I never thought about it, really, never… I swear…”

“I swear…” Even her voice wavered uncertainly.

Su Zai Zai’s face flushed bright red as she awkwardly defended herself, “I’m only fifteen this year…”

Her voice was soft and sweet, but now, due to her nervousness, it was a bit unclear.

Yet the words “fifteen years old” were particularly distinct.

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

Seeing the cracks that had finally appeared on Zhang Lu Rang’s frozen face, Su Zai Zai felt embarrassed, but she couldn’t find any more words.

She chickened out.

She was really afraid that if she spoke, his response would be a serious and cruel rejection.

Next time, she thought. The next time he asks, she'll definitely admit it.

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her.

For some reason, his own cheeks also turned slightly red, a faint blush appearing.

Then he turned around and walked away, his steps a bit hurried.

It was as if he was fleeing.

******

Su Zai Zai practically sprinted back to the dormitory.

Jiang Jia was already in bed, and when she saw Su Zai Zai's flustered state, she asked curiously, "What happened to you?"

It was almost lights-out time, so Su Zai Zai didn't have time to explain. She quickly grabbed her clothes and rushed to the shower, shouting as she ran, "I'll tell you when I come out!"

She took a quick, five-minute shower.

By the time she came out, the dormitory lights were already off.

Su Zai Zai hurriedly went to the balcony to wash her clothes, then returned to her bed with wet hair.

She pulled out her phone and sent a WeChat message to Jiang Jia.

Su Zai Zai: I just tried to casually get closer to the handsome guy.

Jiang Jia: Hahaha, so what did you do?

Su Zai Zai: I called him “Rang Rang,” using the “Rang” from his name, and he noticed right away…

Su Zai Zai: I suddenly realized he’s really sharp.

Jiang Jia: …

Jiang Jia: Did you think he was dumb? How could he not notice that?!

Jiang Jia: You call that “casual”?!

Su Zai Zai stared at the screen for a moment.

Then she honestly replied: Okay, that’s not what I wanted to talk about.

Su Zai Zai: He just asked me if I liked him…

Jiang Jia replied instantly: OMG! What did you say?!

Su Zai Zai: I think I’m really weird. I don’t even know why I said what I did.

Jiang Jia: Huh?

Su Zai Zai: …I told him I’m only fifteen, and I haven’t thought about

things like that.

This time, there was no immediate reply.

Su Zai Zai then heard a burst of laughter from the bed above.

Jiang Jia: …You're fifteen.

Jiang Jia: So does that make your handsome guy fifty?

Su Zai Zai: [Crying and biting a handkerchief.jpg]

Jiang Jia: Hahaha, but actually, that's not so bad! Top students definitely don't date early! I think if you had admitted it, he might have rejected you on the spot, and then he'd probably avoid you from now on.

Looking at that message, Su Zai Zai fell into thought.

Su Zai Zai: But if I don't admit it, how can I pursue him? qaq

Jiang Jia: …That's up to you. I've never chased anyone before, orz.

Su Zai Zai: But if I don't admit I like him and still try to chase him…

Jiang Jia: ?

Su Zai Zai: It feels like I'm hogging the toilet without actually using it.

Jiang Jia: What kind of metaphor is that…

Jiang Jia: I'm curious about what you really want. Do you want to

catch him and be with him?

Reading that message, Su Zai Zai put down her phone, her eyes vacant.

She seemed lost in thought.

After a while, she replied: I want to wait until after we graduate from high school. I don't want to affect his studies.

Then, feeling guilty, she added: ...But I just can't help it.

I want to see him, be near him, talk to him.

I think about him all day long. If I don't see him for a day, I get restless.

I know it's not right, but I just can't help it.

******

After the opening ceremony of the school sports meet, Su Zai Zai was lounging in Class 9's tent, idly playing on her phone.

She was still debating whether or not to bring water to the handsome guy.

It felt like their interaction yesterday had ended on a sour note...

If she went to bring him water now, what would that look like? It would be like offering her face up to be slapped.

Just as Su Zai Zai was still wrestling with this decision, the long-

awaited announcement came over the loudspeaker.

“All participants in the boys’ 100-meter preliminary race for Grade 10, please report to the check-in area immediately.”

Su Zai Zai immediately stood up, pulled out her camera bag from her backpack, grabbed her DSLR, hung it around her neck, and ran to the check-in area under the blazing sun.

She completely forgot about her earlier hesitation.

When Su Zai Zai arrived at the check-in area, Zhang Lu Rang had just finished checking in.

The official led him and a few others toward the starting point on the track.

Su Zai Zai sneakily snapped a few photos of Zhang Lu Rang.

But to her surprise, he noticed her right away.

Once she was caught, Su Zai Zai actually felt relieved.

She lowered the camera, revealing her whole face, and called out, “Give me a smile!”

Zhang Lu Rang indifferently looked away.

Su Zai Zai didn’t mind, lowering her head to check the photos she had just taken, satisfied with the results.

Soon they reached the starting point of the track, and Zhang Lu Rang was assigned to lane one.

He was wearing Class 1's white uniform, with black knee-length athletic shorts instead of the usual pants. He looked much more energetic than usual, though his eyes were still cold as frost.

There were thirty classes in the first year, and the track had eight lanes. The students were divided into four groups, with the top eight fastest times advancing to the finals, which would be held in the afternoon.

Class 9 was in the second group, meaning they wouldn't compete against Class 1 this time.

Before long, the race was about to start.

The runners took their positions.

Zhang Lu Rang bent down, placed his hands on the ground, knelt on his back knee, relaxed his neck, and let his head hang naturally —a classic starting stance.

As the referee called "Ready," Zhang Lu Rang's focus sharpened, ready to burst forth.

At the sound of the starting gun, all the runners charged forward with all their might.

Su Zai Zai had positioned herself at the finish line, holding up her camera to record the race.

The crowd was bustling around her, with cheers and shouts echoing in her ears.

Zhang Lu Rang wasn't much faster than the others, but he was still in the lead, breaking through the finish line first.

The cheers erupted like a bomb going off.

She saw him run a short distance beyond the finish line due to inertia, then slowly walk around the track, his breathing a bit heavy, and his cheeks flushed.

Without hesitation, Su Zai Zai hurried over, shoved the bottle of mineral water in her hand into his, and turned to walk away.

After taking a few steps, she looked back and saw him staring at the bottle for a moment.

Before long, he unscrewed the cap, tilted his head back, and drank, his Adam's apple bobbing as the sweat dripped down his face.

Nearby, the girls from his class looked at him with admiration, chattering excitedly.

Zhang Lu Rang quickly drank more than half the bottle, then screwed the cap back on and wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. He squinted slightly and looked in her direction.

Su Zai Zai cheerfully snapped a photo of his expression.

His face froze, and he immediately looked away.

Having completed her task of delivering the water, Su Zai Zai was about to turn back to her class's tent when Zhang Lu Rang

suddenly called out to her.

“Su Zai Zai.”

Not expecting him to call her, Su Zai Zai was caught off guard and turned around, staring blankly at him.

Zhang Lu Rang took a bottle of unopened water from one of the girls and walked toward her.

He stopped about a meter in front of her, stretched out his hand, and offered her the bottle, saying softly, “Here’s your water.”

Looking at the bottle, Su Zai Zai’s mood immediately soured.

She didn’t move, and Zhang Lu Rang didn’t lower his hand either.

The two of them stood there in a standoff for a moment.

Not wanting to make things difficult for him, Su Zai Zai wrinkled her nose and decided to compromise: “If you want to return my water, I don’t want this bottle. Give me back the one I just gave you.”

“…”

“The one you drank from.”

Zhang Lu Rang lowered his hand, his expression becoming somewhat indescribable: “What are you planning to do?”

Su Zai Zai hadn’t thought much about it—she just didn’t want water from another girl.

But his reaction…

Su Zai Zai blinked, suddenly intrigued: “I don’t know what I’ll do either.”

“Maybe I’ll lick—”

He stiffened.

“Ah, no, I mean add—add some water back in.”

“…”

“I’m not very good at Chinese,” Su Zai Zai shamelessly said.

Zhang Lu Rang’s cheeks were tinged with red, whether from the recent exercise or something else.

His jaw tightened, and his lips moved slightly, but he didn’t know what to say.

After a long pause, Zhang Lu Rang finally forced out three words, his tone rigid.

“You’re crazy.”

Su Zai Zai was stunned.

Her reaction inexplicably improved Zhang Lu Rang’s mood.

Three seconds later.

Su Zai Zai snapped out of it, her eyes sparkling with excitement,

“Say it again.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

“Please, say it again.”

At that moment, all of Zhang Lu Rang’s principles evaporated.

It was just a bottle of water…

No need to return it.

He stiffened his face and turned to leave.

Chapter 12

Big Beauty, Zhang Lu Rang, Rang Rang, Male God.

— “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

In the afternoon, it was time for the Grade 10 boys’ 100-meter final.

Both Zhang Lu Rang and a boy from Class 9, Wang Nan, made it to the final.

As soon as the announcement for check-in came over the loudspeaker, Su Zai Zai immediately dashed toward the track.

A large crowd had already gathered around the track.

When Su Zai Zai arrived, she saw many familiar faces, and she was suddenly overwhelmed.

They were all from her class.

...She wanted to cheer for the handsome guy, but what should she do now?

Xiao Xiao saw her and smiled, calling out, “Zai Zai! Come over here!”

Su Zai Zai forced a smile. “Coming.”

“Where’s Jiang Jia?”

“She went to watch Guan Han’s high jump,” Su Zai Zai replied.

Xiao Yu noticed the DSLR in her hand and grinned, “Hey, Zai Zai, make sure to take a few extra photos of Nan Shen later. He said he wants to show them to his parents.”

Wang Nan was the class’s math representative and always scored full marks on math exams, so the class had given him the nickname “Nan Shen” (God of the South).

Su Zai Zai pondered this.

She nodded. “Sure.”

After all, she had already taken plenty of photos in the morning.

“It’s about to start!” someone in the crowd shouted.

As the runners got into their starting positions, Su Zai Zai held up her camera and snapped a photo, capturing both Zhang Lu Rang and Wang Nan in the frame.

When the gun fired, Su Zai Zai was enveloped in a wave of cheers and screams. She instinctively lowered her camera and focused on Zhang Lu Rang.

Xiao Xiao, Xiao Yu, and the other classmates were all excitedly shouting, “Nan Shen! Go for it!”

In the distance, she could also hear people cheering for Zhang Lu Rang.

Taking a deep breath, Su Zai Zai started shouting as well, “Male god! Go!”

Big beauty, you have to understand me! I’m cheering for you!

Su Zai Zai’s face turned red as she shouted.

Then, she saw Wang Nan break through the finish line just ahead of Zhang Lu Rang.

Su Zai Zai: “…”

The cheers from her classmates exploded around her.

Xiao Xiao happily grabbed her arm and jumped up and down a few times.

Su Zai Zai forced another smile and joined in with a few symbolic cheers.

Xiao Yu laughed for a long time, “Hahaha, Zai Zai, you were really into it! If someone didn’t know better, they’d think you were Nan

Shen's girlfriend."

"..."

She thought she had shouted quietly.

The group walked over to give Wang Nan some water.

Wang Nan downed an entire bottle in one go and laughed heartily, "Su Zai Zai, you've got quite a voice! Even in that huge crowd, I could pick out your shout."

Su Zai Zai: "..."

"Come on, admit it, you've got a crush on me?" Wang Nan teased, laughing.

Su Zai Zai instinctively glanced over at Zhang Lu Rang and just happened to meet his gaze.

She froze.

The next second, Zhang Lu Rang looked away.

He wouldn't really think she was calling Wang Nan "male god," would he...

No, no, don't misunderstand! Big beauty!

******

When it was time to award the medals.

Su Zai Zai hesitated for a long time, but in the end, she still brought her camera over to take pictures of them.

As soon as Wang Nan saw her, he immediately said, “Su Zai Zai, come on, take a few more pictures of me.”

Su Zai Zai: “...Okay.”

Wang Nan: “I’m going to change my pose.”

Su Zai Zai: “Mm.”

Wang Nan: “How’s this? Do I look handsome?”

Su Zai Zai: “...”

After taking several shots, Su Zai Zai completely ignored Wang Nan’s comments and turned the camera lens toward Zhang Lu Rang.

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t even look at her. After stepping down from the award podium, he headed straight toward Class 1’s tent.

The girls who had been taking pictures of him quickly followed, surrounding him.

Su Zai Zai anxiously scratched her head.

Teasing him this morning was one thing.

But just last night, she had told him she was too young to think about dating, and now she had made him think she was interested in another guy.

This kind of misunderstanding would tank her reputation with him!

No, she needed to explain.

Being sentenced to “death” so quickly—she wasn’t going to accept that.

But going straight up to him like this might be…

No, wait!

He had just come over in front of her whole class to return her water, damaging her reputation…

So now, she should be able to go over and talk to him too, right?

Su Zai Zai shamelessly thought to herself.

With this in mind, her confidence grew a bit.

But when she spoke, her tone was still a bit hesitant: “Zhang Lu Rang.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s steps paused, and he slowly turned around.

Having just finished the race, his temples were covered in sweat, with droplets steadily falling.

His white shirt was half-soaked, revealing a faint outline of his abs, and his chest, solid and firm, rose and fell with his breathing.

Su Zai Zai’s face immediately flushed bright red as her blood rushed to her head.

…He’s so tempting.

She was about to have a nosebleed.

Su Zai Zai took a deep breath, repeatedly telling herself to calm down.

“Can you come over here for a moment?”

Zhang Lu Rang’s lips curled slightly in a mocking smile. “No.”

Su Zai Zai, used to being rejected, shamelessly continued, “You don’t have to answer so quickly. I have plenty of time to wait.”

He turned away and kept walking.

Su Zai Zai hurried after him.

With several girls by his side, Su Zai Zai felt too embarrassed to explain herself directly.

She jogged ahead of him and walked backward to face him.

Behind them, the crowd was bustling, with students running and playing around.

Zhang Lu Rang immediately stopped.

Seeing him stop, Su Zai Zai instinctively did the same.

After a moment of hesitation, she offered a very delicate explanation: “You know, the guy who came in first, his name is Wang Nan.”

So even if she had called out “nan shen” (God of the South), the “nan” she meant was Wang Nan’s “Nan”!

Big beauty, you have to understand!

Besides, the one she had been cheering for was always him!

Zhang Lu Rang looked down at her and gave a low “Oh.”

It seemed he didn’t understand…

She really wanted to just come clean.

Su Zai Zai felt incredibly frustrated.

With his response, she didn’t know what else to say.

She just wanted to drag out the time a bit longer, hoping the girls next to him would leave on their own.

She glanced at the silver medal around his neck and, on a whim, blurted out, “Hey, with that silver medal around your neck, you kind of look like you’re wearing a red scarf.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

“But it looks pretty good on you,” Su Zai Zai continued with her nonsense.

However, the girls beside him didn’t react at all and continued to wait patiently.

…Well, maybe next time.

Su Zai Zai lowered her eyes, feeling a bit down.

Just as she was about to walk away, Zhang Lu Rang suddenly lifted his hand.

He was silent, as if considering something.

Then he took the silver medal from around his neck and casually slipped it over Su Zai Zai's head.

Seeing her stunned expression, he pressed his lips together and said, "If you want it, it's yours."

After a moment, he added with emphasis, "Don't follow me anymore."

Chapter 13

I discovered a secret.

It seems like he touches his neck whenever he lies.

— "Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy's Diary"

Su Zai Zai was stunned.

So, did he think that all the water she brought him, and the photos and videos she took, were just because she coveted that silver medal?

The handsome guy's way of thinking is truly different...

Su Zai Zai licked her lips.

She watched his back as he walked away and obediently didn't follow him.

She stood there for a while before turning and slowly heading back to her class's tent.

As she walked, she replayed the scene in her mind.

He had taken a step forward, his face devoid of any emotion.

There was the scent of sunlight on him, mixed with a bit of sweat.

It smelled really nice.

When he placed the medal over her head, his fingertips had unintentionally brushed against her hair.

As he spoke, his faint breath had brushed her face.

Su Zai Zai grasped the silver medal, and suddenly her face felt like it was on fire.

It made her heart start beating faster.

Meanwhile, on the other side.

Ye Zhenxin's expression wasn't looking good. She asked jokingly, "Zhang Lu Rang, is she your friend?"

Zhang Lu Rang didn't answer.

Another girl quickly chimed in, "Why did you give her the silver medal?"

Zhang Lu Rang paused and then replied indifferently, “She wanted it.”

If he didn’t give it to her, she would never stop bothering him.

...Consider it repayment for that bottle of water.

But the girls clearly misunderstood his meaning.

Ye Zhenxin’s face turned extremely sour, and she immediately turned and walked off in a different direction.

One of the girls followed her.

The remaining two girls awkwardly laughed and shifted the conversation to tonight’s school event.

******

After the afternoon competition, Su Zai Zai went to the cafeteria with Jiang Jia for dinner.

Since there was another event in the evening and she was worried she might sweat, she didn’t go back to shower, but instead returned directly to the classroom.

Su Zai Zai wasn’t participating in the class’s performance for the evening event but in the Eco-Fashion Show for the Science Festival.

Each class had to make two outfits and send a male and female model to walk the runway, which was the first event of the evening.

Su Zai Zai went to the restroom to change into her dress.

The dress was just above mid-thigh, overall beige, with paper-folded flowers adorning it, forming a floral pattern. A translucent white ribbon cinched the waist, and layers of mosquito netting were sewn onto the skirt, giving it a puffy and playful look.

She wanted to check herself in the mirror, but the class's arts committee member, Huang Yuanjuan, dragged her back to the classroom to do her makeup and hair.

While Huang Yuanjuan was doing Su Zai Zai's makeup, Jiang Jia was behind her, gathering all of Su Zai Zai's hair and braiding it into a fishtail braid that hung from behind her ear to her chest.

Then she clipped several small floral clips into the braid.

Jiang Jia worked quickly and was done in no time. She then sat to the side, watching Huang Yuanjuan apply Su Zai Zai's makeup. "By the way, Zai Zai, did you bring high heels?"

Su Zai Zai nodded and, taking advantage of the moment when Huang Yuanjuan's hands left her face, said, "I brought a pair of black ones. My mom bought them for me. I feel like I'll be almost 1.8 meters tall when I wear them."

Jiang Jia sighed, "Being tall isn't all good. It's hard to find a boyfriend."

Su Zai Zai felt insulted.

She scoffed and retorted, "As if being short guarantees you'll find

one."

"..."

Besides, how tall is the handsome guy anyway? It's not like she wouldn't be able to find a boyfriend.

******

Since it was the first event, Su Zai Zai went directly to the backstage area after arriving.

Her partner for the runway was Guan Han, whose outfit was far less elaborate than hers. As she had expected, it was a set of clothes hastily made out of black plastic bags.

When Guan Han saw her, he nearly exploded with frustration, "What the hell? This is so unfair!"

Su Zai Zai, suppressing her conscience, praised him, "It's okay, you still look handsome in it."

"Heh."

"Suddenly, I feel like we're in a stage play."

"...What?"

"A little fairy saving a beggar."

"Get lost!"

With ten minutes left before the runway show began, Su Zai Zai,

feeling bored, wandered over to the backstage staff and stared at the program schedule in his hands.

1. “Eco-Fashion Show”

2. Grade 11 (Class 13) Solo: “Ambiguity”

3. Grade 10 (Class 1) Stage Play: “What to Do When You’re Robbed”

Su Zai Zai: “…”

So, what role is Zhang Lu Rang playing…?

Is he supposed to be someone getting assaulted?

Su Zai Zai briefly imagined Zhang Lu Rang being mistreated and immediately covered her nose.

She took a deep breath to clear her mind of the unsettling thoughts.

After what felt like a long speech, lively music began to play in her ears.

The fashion show went in order by grade, starting with the lowest and going from Class 1 to the last class.

So, the first up was Grade 10, Class 1.

A boy and a girl entered the stage from opposite sides, walking straight ahead. When they were about a meter apart, they turned and faced the audience, then walked to either side of the stage and

took their positions.

Each pair didn't take long, and soon it was Su Zai Zai's turn.

Aside from her shoes, her entire outfit was in light colors. Despite the subdued tones of her dress, it didn't diminish her vibrant personality; in fact, it made her stand out even more.

The two had rehearsed beforehand.

When they reached the front, Su Zai Zai was supposed to turn slightly, so her entire face was toward the audience.

Guan Han would then kneel on one knee, take Su Zai Zai's hand, and pretend to kiss it.

They quickly separated and found their places to strike a pose.

Finally, when it was time to exit the stage, Su Zai Zai breathed a sigh of relief and began to walk back along the original route.

As soon as she reached backstage, she immediately spotted Zhang Lu Rang standing off to the side, preparing to go on stage.

Su Zai Zai's eyes lit up, and she called out to him, "Zhang Lu Rang."

He didn't respond. He was leaning against the wall, his expression a bit lazy, lost in thought.

Su Zai Zai walked over and took the opportunity to explain, "The guy who competed with you today, our class calls him 'Nan Shen'—'Nan' as in 'Pumpkin' (Nan Gua)."

Zhang Lu Rang lifted his gaze slightly.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and added, “But I’ve never called him that.”

He didn’t seem to care much, asking nonchalantly, “So who did you call that?”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai’s heart started pounding.

Did he hear her calling “male god” earlier?

Did he really hear that?

Su Zai Zai swallowed nervously and instinctively looked away.

At the crucial moment, she chickened out.

She wanted to say it, but she didn’t dare.

...No, she couldn’t back down now.

You can’t be timid when chasing a guy!

Su Zai Zai gritted her teeth and forced herself to say it, “You.”

Zhang Lu Rang stayed silent.

After she said it, the nervous tension immediately faded.

Su Zai Zai’s courage surged, and she lifted her head, earnestly repeating, “I was calling you.”

The atmosphere fell silent.

At that moment, it felt like Su Zai Zai couldn't hear anything else; she was entirely focused on waiting for his reaction.

But the waiting was agonizing.

Her courage felt like air being pumped into a balloon.

The plastic balloon was fragile and easily burst with just one look from him.

"Pop!"—and it was gone.

Zhang Lu Rang's lips parted slightly, just as he was about to say something, but Su Zai Zai interrupted him.

She anxiously pinched her fingertips, and the words slipped out without thinking.

"But maybe you didn't hear it clearly when you were running—I was actually saying 'male neurotic.'"

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

She chickened out again...

And made it worse.

Su Zai Zai lowered her head in frustration, feeling speechless toward herself.

She pretended nothing had happened, pointed at herself, and

changed the subject: “How do I look?”

“…” Zhang Lu Rang completely ignored her.

“Don’t I look amazing? The crowd was cheering so loudly when I came out!”

Su Zai Zai just wanted him to forget what she had said earlier; her mind was a jumbled mess, and she was babbling nonsense.

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

She cautiously looked up, checking his expression.

He didn’t seem to be angry…

Su Zai Zai let out a sigh of relief.

But she also noticed that he still wasn’t looking directly at her, which made Su Zai Zai a bit annoyed.

She muttered under her breath, “Just one look won’t cost you anything.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang suddenly found it a little amusing.

He finally lowered his gaze and looked at her seriously.

His eyes moved from her rosy lips to her delicate nose, finally resting on her bright, clear eyes.

They were vivid and bold, like they were inlaid with glass.

Moist and smiling, they seemed to be drawing him in.

His heart gave a sudden jolt.

Caught off guard, he quickly looked away.

Seeing that he didn't respond, Su Zai Zai rephrased her question: "Do I not look good?"

A few seconds passed.

"Mm," Zhang Lu Rang responded with a low grunt.

Su Zai Zai didn't mind and lifted her head, smiling, "You have terrible taste."

Zhang Lu Rang didn't respond.

He lowered his gaze, his thick eyelashes hiding his emotions.

In the dim light, his expression was hard to discern.

Shadowy and vague.

But his actions were clear and undeniable.

Su Zai Zai saw him lift his hand.

His movement was slow, trying to appear nonchalant as he touched the back of his neck.

Just a brief touch, and then he let go.

Chapter 14

I wish he would come and rob me of my virtue.

Take it all.*

— “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

Two images suddenly flooded into her mind.

…

In the Grade 10 Class 1 classroom.

Zhang Lu Rang was hunched over, working on a problem, while Su Zai Zai sat in front of him, turned slightly to watch him.

Then she took out a workbook, smiled, and said, “Can you explain this problem to me?”

He hesitated, touched his neck, and softly replied, “I don’t know.”

…

At the bus stop near her home, while waiting for the bus.

Su Zai Zai’s expression was a bit conflicted: “Do you have WeChat?”

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment, raised his hand to touch the back of his neck, and said, “No.”

…

And now, at this very moment, he did the same thing.

So, what he meant to say was...

—Do I not look good?

—Mm.

Su Zai Zai's face instantly burned as if it were on fire, turning completely red.

There was a moment of silence.

The two of them stood facing each other, but neither looked at the other.

Yet, there was an atmosphere between them that no one else could disrupt.

The surroundings were not quiet.

Besides the murmured conversations of the backstage crew, the stage was filled with the soulful singing of a girl.

One note after another.

It felt like the atmosphere was thick with unspoken tension.

Lingering, refusing to fade away.

Su Zai Zai gathered her courage and looked up.

Just as she was about to speak, she suddenly noticed a few of their

classmates standing beside Zhang Lu Rang, watching them with interest.

The heat on Su Zai Zai's face intensified.

She couldn't take it anymore, and without saying anything, she walked straight toward the audience seats.

Behind her, she immediately heard the boys' gossiping and excited voices: "Hey, Zhang Lu Rang, is she your girlfriend?"

Zhang Lu Rang remained silent.

On stage, the girl happened to be singing the chorus.

The lights suddenly brightened, shining through the curtains.

He kept his eyes down.

The light cast one side of his face in shadow, making the other side appear obscure.

When he didn't answer, the boys didn't press him further.

They just laughed and said, "She's a real beauty!"

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang finally looked up.

He breathed a quiet sigh of relief.

It seemed he wasn't the only one acting strange.

In that instant.

He… actually thought Su Zai Zai looked really pretty.

******

Su Zai Zai sat down in her seat.

Jiang Jia was talking beside her.

Su Zai Zai took out her water bottle and drank several gulps in a row.

Jiang Jia noticed something was off and looked at her, puzzled.

“What’s wrong with you? It’s like you’ve never had water before.”

Su Zai Zai lowered her head and covered her face, speaking in a muffled voice: “Let me calm down for a bit.”

“…Oh.”

Jiang Jia waited for a moment.

A minute later, she heard Su Zai Zai quietly mutter, “The handsome guy wants to kill me.”

Jiang Jia: “…Don’t be ridiculous.”

“I’m serious.” Su Zai Zai’s breathing had steadied, but her cheeks were still flushed. “He just said I was pretty, and I felt like I was about to suffocate.”

Jiang Jia nearly choked on her water, “Oh my god! Hahaha! I can’t even imagine Zhang Lu Rang calling you pretty.”

Su Zai Zai recounted what had happened.

Jiang Jia: "...Are you sure he was saying you were pretty?"

Even though the handsome guy's response seemed to deny it, his actions...

Su Zai Zai wanted to tell her, but she also wanted to keep this secret to herself.

There were many things about Zhang Lu Rang that she only wanted to know herself.

However, the fact that he touched his neck when lying was still just a guess on her part.

...Maybe she would test it tomorrow.

Jiang Jia looked at her sympathetically, "You're probably just in shock because your handsome guy got beaten by Wang Nan and you can't accept it..."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai immediately turned to her.

"You're probably crazy," Jiang Jia concluded.

Su Zai Zai: "...Eat dirt or die, pick one."

"I don't want to eat what you eat, so I'll just die."

"Get lost."

While they were talking, they finally heard the host's voice.

“Next up, please enjoy the stage play brought to us by Grade 10 Class 1, *‘What to Do When You’re Robbed.’*”

Su Zai Zai immediately clammed up and quickly took out her glasses from her bag and put them on.

The auditorium lights dimmed.

The red curtains gradually opened.

A boy stood in the center of the stage.

He was holding up a large white poster board with four big characters written on it: “I’m very rich.”

Jiang Jia, sitting beside her, whispered, “‘I’m very rich’... Why didn’t he just write ‘Please rob me’?”

Su Zai Zai blinked.

Was the play going to be about robbery and assault?

The handsome guy should be coming out soon.

Sure enough.

Not long after, Zhang Lu Rang appeared on stage.

He was followed by five or six boys, all with menacing looks.

The exposed skin on their bodies was covered with fake tattoos.

Su Zai Zai: “...”

It seemed that the boys standing next to Zhang Lu Rang earlier were now the ones on stage.

How had she not noticed they were wearing those fake tattoos before?

Su Zai Zai shifted her gaze to Zhang Lu Rang.

He was wearing a black, camo-patterned jacket loosely over his white class uniform. His black hair fell messily over his forehead, his eyes were dark and bright, and a lazy smirk played on his lips.

Somehow, this gave him a roguish charm.

He scratched his head and glanced back at the boys behind him, but he didn't say anything, his lips pressed together.

Su Zai Zai imagined: There's probably supposed to be a line here, but Zhang Lu Rang couldn't bring himself to say it.

Meanwhile, the boys simultaneously pulled paper knives out of their pockets and shouted in unison, "This is a robbery!"

Su Zai Zai: "..."

She had fantasized about so many scenarios, imagining Zhang Lu Rang being the victim of a robbery for so long.

She never thought he would be... the one doing the robbing.

And not just that—he was the leader, the big boss.

At that moment, a female narrator's voice suddenly rang out, sweet

and clear.

“When you’re being robbed, you shouldn’t blindly try to escape.”

Everyone on stage froze, as if time had stopped.

“If you do, you might end up like this.”

The boy holding the large sign started moving, lifting the sign as he ran.

The group of boys chased after him, dragging him back in front of Zhang Lu Rang.

Zhang Lu Rang looked at him expressionlessly and lifted his long leg to give a mock kick.

The boy immediately fell to the ground, wailing.

The action on stage froze again.

“You should try to outwit the robber while ensuring your safety, and definitely don’t anger him.”

The boy lying on the ground pretending to be dead immediately sat up, took the microphone, and said, “I’ll give you whatever you want, just don’t hurt me.”

Zhang Lu Rang chuckled softly, “What do you think?”

The boy obediently handed the large sign over to Zhang Lu Rang.

Zhang Lu Rang took it and carelessly tossed it behind him.

The boy started taking off his jacket and handed it to Zhang Lu Rang.

Zhang Lu Rang repeated the same action as before.

Seeing that none of this was getting a reaction from him, the boy then cupped his face in his hands and fluttered his eyelashes at Zhang Lu Rang.

Su Zai Zai: "..."

This guy is crazy! He's being robbed and still flirts!

Jiang Jia, sitting beside her, whispered, "I heard that originally, Zhang Lu Rang was supposed to be the one getting robbed. Oh my god, I would love to see him flirt back, hahaha."

Flirt back...

Su Zai Zai wanted to see that too.

Zhang Lu Rang paused in place, then picked up the microphone and softly said, "Can't you tell?"

His voice was rich and resonant, amplified by the speakers, making it deeper and more magnetic than usual.

Su Zai Zai felt a shiver run through her, a tingling sensation in her heart, as if thousands of ants were gnawing at it.

Zhang Lu Rang crouched down to be at eye level with the boy.

A slight smile curved his lips as he said, "I'm here to rob you of your

virtue."

Immediately, suppressed screams erupted around them.

In the distance, a girl could be heard shouting, "Rob me instead!"

Then the crowd burst into laughter.

Jiang Jia was laughing hysterically beside her, "Oh my gosh! Hahaha, what kind of plot twist is this? It's killing me!"

Su Zai Zai felt like something had exploded in her mind, making her want to scream.

But it was as if her throat was caught, leaving her excitement without an outlet.

So, so hot, she thought, almost in tears.

Unable to hold back, Su Zai Zai took advantage of the crowd.

She shouted at the top of her lungs, "Big beauty, I want to ravage you!"

Then, immediately feeling embarrassed, she ducked behind the back of the front-row seats.

The classmates around her bent over laughing, and even Jiang Jia couldn't help but give her a thumbs up.

Su Zai Zai covered her face and thought.

When I shouted just now, my voice cracked. Hopefully, the

handsome guy didn't recognize it was me...

Su Zai Zai was lost in her own world.

She didn't notice the slight pause in Zhang Lu Rang's delivery of his lines.

******

After the "Campus Night" event ended.

Students poured out of the auditorium through every exit.

A sea of black heads crowded together, making the place feel stuffy.

Zhang Lu Rang sat in his seat for a while, waiting until the crowd thinned out before getting up to leave.

He returned to the classroom.

The chair next to his, empty for two weeks, finally had someone sitting in it.

Zhang Lu Rang walked over, picked up his water bottle, and took a few sips.

Zhou Xuyin was organizing the papers in his drawer.

After a few minutes, he turned to Zhang Lu Rang and quietly asked, "Do you know why I took time off?"

That day, it was Zhang Lu Rang who had walked Zhou Xuyin to the

school gate.

On his way back, he ran into Su Zai Zai.

And that was when the days of being pestered began, with no understanding of why.

“I don’t know,” Zhang Lu Rang replied.

He noticed that the furrow between Zhou Xuyin’s brows finally relaxed.

Based on his reaction that day, it seemed he might have been sick.

But as to what kind of illness, Zhang Lu Rang wasn’t interested in knowing.

Because he understood that everyone has things they don’t want others to know.

******

Back at the dormitory.

Zhang Lu Rang first went to the balcony to wash up, then walked to his cabinet and opened it.

He checked his phone.

Seeing a missed call, Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment before dialing back.

After a few rings, the call was answered.

“Ah Rang.”

“Mm.”

“I heard from your uncle that you have midterms next week?”

Zhang Lu Rang walked to the balcony, closed the sliding door, and quietly responded.

“Why don’t you ever call your mom?”

“…”

“What rank did you get in the last monthly exam?”

Zhang Lu Rang was silent for a moment, then softly replied, “Thirty-second.”

The person on the other end sighed.

That sigh squeezed his heart, making it hard to breathe.

After a while.

The woman’s gentle voice came through again.

“Is it still because of English? You’re just like A Li… I’ll call your uncle later and ask him to find a tutor for you, okay?”

“No need,” Zhang Lu Rang immediately refused.

There was silence on the other end.

Zhang Lu Rang looked up at the distant sky.

As if resigned, he said, “I’m not good at it.”

“You…”

Zhang Lu Rang interrupted her, repeating, “I’m not good at it, don’t waste money on me.”

He hung up the phone, pressing his lips together as he ran his hand through his hair.

Zhou Xuyin had things he didn’t want others to know because he was too proud.

But Zhang Lu Rang was different. His insecurity ran deep, right to his core. He had struggled.

But in the end, he simply accepted his fate.

Chapter 15

I hope he can be a little happier.

— “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

The day after the school sports meet.

Su Zai Zai sat under her class’s tent, sneakily staring at Zhang Lu Rang, who was about thirty meters away.

The tents were set up around the track in the order of the classes, so Class 1’s tent was positioned at about ten o’clock from where

Class 9's tent was.

From a distance, Zhang Lu Rang was sitting among a group of boys. While the others were chatting and laughing, he had his head down, holding a book in his hands.

From this angle, all she could see was his black, tousled hair and his slightly pursed lips.

He had already changed back into his blue and white striped school uniform, looking fresh and bright.

An hour later, Zhang Lu Rang finally moved.

He stood up, put his book into his backpack, and started walking toward the restrooms.

Su Zai Zai quickly got up, smoothing her hair as she ran.

She soon caught up to him and jumped in front of him with a playful grin. "Hey!"

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her but didn't respond.

She walked beside him for a while.

As soon as she was next to him, Su Zai Zai's mind went blank.

All the things she had prepared to say suddenly vanished.

This silence...

She decided to start some small talk.

“I think it’s great how you are.”

“What?”

“I mean, it’s a good habit that you don’t need someone to accompany you to the restroom.”

“…”

This just made things more awkward.

So, Su Zai Zai decided to take a wild shot: “Zhang Lu Rang, have you ever lied?”

“Mm.” Zhang Lu Rang casually responded.

Su Zai Zai pressed on: “Have you ever scored over thirty in English?”

“…Mm.”

Hearing the hesitation in his answer, Su Zai Zai’s heart skipped a beat.

It seemed she had touched on a sore spot for the handsome guy…

She licked her lips, a bit flustered, and added, “Actually, scoring low isn’t a big deal. Let me tell you, I’ve never scored over a hundred in physics and chemistry combined.”

“…”

“I’ve been trying to memorize the periodic table since middle

school and still can’t get it right.”

“…”

“I really don’t know what the unit for acceleration is.”

Zhang Lu Rang raised an eyebrow, puzzled, “What are you trying to say?”

“Can’t you tell?” Su Zai Zai felt a bit frustrated.

“Mm.”

Su Zai Zai scratched her head, feeling so anxious she almost jumped.

“To praise you and make you look good, I’ve basically called myself an idiot, and you still don’t get it.”

“…”

“Do you really believe I don’t understand such simple things? That’s just ridiculous!”

Zhang Lu Rang couldn’t hold back anymore and said in a low voice, “But you really are like that.”

If it wasn’t just flattery.

The truth is, she really is like that.

Su Zai Zai: “…”

They fell into silence again.

Even after being called out, Su Zai Zai didn't feel embarrassed.

She hadn't forgotten her original purpose, so she continued her questioning.

"Have you ever lied to me?"

"Mm."

Su Zai Zai: "..."

Does he have to be so honest?

How on earth can I get him to lie?

And...

Su Zai Zai put on a disapproving look: "Zhang Lu Rang, you can't keep doing this."

"..."

"You always just respond with 'Mm.' It's too dismissive."

"..."

"Be a little more enthusiastic. If you don't want to say much, you can at least add one more syllable."

"..."

“For example, ‘Mm-hm.’”

“…”

After saying this, Su Zai Zai suddenly felt something was off.

She quickly covered her cheeks, mumbling, “…Suddenly, this feels so embarrassing.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s expression darkened, and he said coldly, “What are you thinking about all day long?”

He’s quick to get flustered when teased, hiding behind his cold exterior.

Su Zai Zai pretended not to hear him.

After a moment’s thought, she decided to be direct.

Taking a deep breath, she repeated the question from yesterday: “Do you think I’m pretty?”

Zhang Lu Rang was still a bit annoyed by what she had just said.

Hearing her question, he responded without hesitation, “No.”

Hearing this answer, Su Zai Zai couldn’t help but laugh.

She then looked at him expectantly.

Thirty seconds passed.

…No reaction.

Su Zai Zai thought, maybe he's just a bit slow.

I'll give him another minute.

A minute later.

Realizing the truth, Su Zai Zai became a bit flustered and angry: "Zhang Lu Rang! I can't believe you!"

This is too much! He doesn't even recognize me without makeup!

And I've been thinking about it all night!

Her sudden outburst made Zhang Lu Rang turn his head to look at her.

His gaze was calm, without any clear emotion.

Yet, there was a subtle, almost teasing undertone.

Su Zai Zai immediately felt weak, quickly plastering a smile on her face.

"I can't believe... you're so good-looking. It's only natural that you don't think I'm pretty in comparison..."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

But Su Zai Zai still wasn't satisfied. Shamelessly, she asked, "But don't you find it pleasing to look at me when you're not looking in a mirror?"

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang stopped walking.

He recalled the voice he had heard from the stage yesterday.

—"Big beauty, I want to ravage you!"

His brow furrowed slightly.

"Su Zai Zai," he called.

Caught off guard by the handsome guy calling her name, Su Zai Zai felt a bit overwhelmed.

She quickly leaned closer, happily responding, "Yes, yes, yes!"

He ignored her enthusiastic reply and, with a blank expression, asked, "What's 'big beauty'?"

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai froze.

Her mind raced, and she began to sweat.

Then she started babbling nonsense: "A 'big beauty,' as the name suggests, refers to someone who is very beautiful. Of course, it can also describe someone who is very handsome, or even someone with a noble character."

Silence.

A few seconds later, Su Zai Zai, disheartened, gave up and confessed, "Okay, fine, I was calling you that."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

"Are you unhappy? I was complimenting you, not insulting you," Su

Zai Zai said, a bit aggrieved.

"..." He genuinely didn't see any reason to be happy about it.

"Besides, there was even a girl shouting for you to 'rob her of her virtue,' and I wasn't nearly as extreme!" Su Zai Zai felt more justified the more she spoke, her voice rising in pitch. "All I said was, 'Big beauty, I want to...'"

At this point, she abruptly stopped.

The previously aggrieved expression quickly vanished, replaced by a hint of awkwardness.

She swiftly put on a serious expression.

Then she pointed to the restroom not far away and said, "You should go now, don't hold it in. I have something to do, so I'll be leaving first. We can talk another time."

Without waiting for Zhang Lu Rang's response, she turned and dashed away.

Zhang Lu Rang stood there for a moment, watching her retreating figure.

Then he turned and headed toward the men's restroom.

After taking a few steps.

He suddenly found himself smiling, the corners of his mouth lifting slightly.

With her antics, the oppressive mood that had been weighing on him quickly dissipated.

Normally, it would have taken him a long time to adjust.

But that heavy feeling was effortlessly swept away by her in such a short time.

The burden became lighter than a feather.

A gust of wind blew, and it was carried away.

Far, far away.

Thinking of Su Zai Zai.

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly felt a twinge of envy.

Being a little foolish has its perks.

No worries.

******

After the sports meet ended, each class began cleaning up the area.

Su Zai Zai was carrying her chair back toward the school building.

From behind, Wang Nan called out, “Hey! Su Zai Zai! Let me help you carry that!”

She pretended not to hear and kept walking.

As she left the stadium, Su Zai Zai suddenly noticed Zhang Lu Rang ahead of her.

He was carrying a chair with one hand, looking effortlessly at ease.

She quickened her pace, caught up to him, and eagerly offered, "Let me help you with that, Rang Rang?"

Zhang Lu Rang turned to look at her, frowning, "What did you call me?"

This time, Su Zai Zai didn't back down. She calmly replied, "Rang Rang. If you think it's unfair, you can call me Zai Zai!"

After all, he'd already heard her call him "big beauty," so she might as well go all out.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

"Rang Rang, let me help you carry the chair."

"..."

"Rang Rang, why aren't you responding?"

"..."

"Zhang Lu Rang, let me help you with the chair."

"No need."

As expected.

Su Zai Zai blinked, suddenly finding the situation quite amusing.

...Let's try something different.

"Big beauty, let me help you carry the chair!"

"..."

"Big beauty..."

Zhang Lu Rang couldn't take it anymore. He grabbed the chair from her hands and strode forward.

Su Zai Zai was stunned, then hurried to catch up with him, "Why did you snatch my chair?"

"Su Zai Zai."

"It's Zai Zai," Su Zai Zai corrected him.

"..." He was silent for a moment, then sighed in frustration, "Go back to the classroom, I'll carry it for you."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai glanced at him and muttered, "I really did want to help you carry it."

"Mm."

Su Zai Zai walked beside him, lightly kicking a small pebble on the ground with her shoe, and asked in a low voice, "Zhang Lu Rang, are you unhappy?"

"..."

She pointed to her brow, “You’ve been frowning here the whole time.”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t reply.

After a while.

Su Zai Zai smiled and said, “But now you look just like you usually do.”

They entered the school building and started up the stairs.

Zhang Lu Rang remained silent, but when she was jostled closer by the crowd, he instinctively shifted the chair to the side.

Then he heard her say, “See? Being around me makes you happy.”

“…”

When he still didn’t respond, Su Zai Zai scratched her head in frustration.

After a moment’s thought, she said, “Rang Rang, let me treat you to some jelly. Don’t be upset.”

Her tone was as if she were comforting a child, her words laced with sweetness.

But he remained quiet.

Su Zai Zai also fell silent.

She slowed her pace and walked behind Zhang Lu Rang.

Like a shadow.

They reached the third floor.

Su Zai Zai saw him place her chair outside the door, then carry another one into the classroom.

Without saying a word, as if she didn't exist.

Su Zai Zai stood there.

Suddenly, she felt a bit sad.

Just as she was about to walk over and take the chair back, he returned.

Zhang Lu Rang lifted her chair with one hand and looked at her.

Su Zai Zai opened her mouth to say something.

But Zhang Lu Rang simply turned and started up the stairs.

Su Zai Zai quickly followed, a smile spreading across her face.

"Rang Rang," she called out cheerfully.

"..."

"Big beauty."

"..."

"Zhang Lu Rang."

“Mm.”

I really like you, she thought to herself.

They reached the door to Class 9.

Just as Su Zai Zai was about to take the chair from him, she heard him ask, “Where’s your seat?”

Instinctively, Su Zai Zai pointed to the second-to-last row in the first group, “I moved over there.”

Zhang Lu Rang walked over.

Su Zai Zai immediately followed.

Jiang Jia, who was sitting at her desk chatting with the person in front of her, fell silent and stared at them with gossip-filled eyes.

Zhang Lu Rang placed Su Zai Zai’s chair in its spot.

Su Zai Zai thought he would leave immediately after putting it down.

But he stood there quietly, as if waiting for something.

She clenched her hands, suddenly feeling a bit nervous, “What’s wrong?”

Zhang Lu Rang turned to look at her.

Then, in a soft voice, he said, “Nothing.”

After saying that, he turned and left the classroom.

After he left, Jiang Jia excitedly rushed over, “Oh my gosh! What’s going on?! Did you win him over?!”

Su Zai Zai shook her head and explained, “He thinks I’m annoying, so he helped me carry the chair.”

“No way! If he found you annoying, would he really carry the chair all the way into the classroom for you?”

“Really.”

Jiang Jia continued analyzing the situation beside her, but Su Zai Zai couldn’t focus on anything she was saying.

Her expression was a bit blank, with a hint of confusion.

She was quietly pondering.

What was the handsome guy waiting for just now?

Chapter 16

I hope I’m different.

— “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

Su Zai Zai thought about it for a long time but couldn’t figure it out, so she decided not to dwell on it.

She began packing her things to go home.

Jiang Jia, who had been analyzing the situation, grew more and more excited, shaking Su Zai Zai's hand in excitement.

"Zai Zai, I'm so happy for you."

"Huh?"

"You were right; actions speak louder than looks."

"...You can stop talking now."

"In my lifetime, I never thought I'd see a toad eat swan meat."

"Get lost."

After a while, Su Zai Zai thought about it and then quietly explained, "It's really not like that."

Even though she really wanted everyone to think Zhang Lu Rang was hers, she didn't want to unjustly give him the label of an early romance.

Jiang Jia dropped the subject.

As she packed her things, she mentioned, "I heard that yesterday a girl in Class 1 cried in the classroom all afternoon because of Zhang Lu Rang. It was so exaggerated."

"Huh?" Su Zai Zai was confused.

"Apparently, it's because of the silver medal he gave you."

"...What's the big deal? He was just trying to get rid of me."

“I’m not sure.” Jiang Jia thought for a moment. “That girl sits right in front of him, and then the girls in their class all went to comfort her. A few of them even asked Zhang Lu Rang to say something to her, but he didn’t respond at all.”

Su Zai Zai was completely baffled: “So why did she cry?”

“You can’t guess? That girl likes Zhang Lu Rang!”

Su Zai Zai thoughtfully touched her chin.

“I think it’s a good thing. After crying, she can be reborn.”

“…”

“And besides, it’s normal that the handsome guy didn’t respond to her. He’s always been cold like that.”

Jiang Jia: “…”

The two of them slung their backpacks over their shoulders and headed out the door.

Jiang Jia, looking down at her phone, suddenly said, “Don’t you think Zhang Lu Rang treats you differently? Like when he gave you the silver medal or just now when he helped you carry the chair.”

Su Zai Zai stopped in her tracks and answered honestly, “I don’t think so.”

“Think about it, his desk mate was in tears, and he didn’t react at all. My friend told me he was completely unaffected…”

“Yeah, he has this ability to automatically block out the world around him.”

Jiang Jia exploded, “Can you let me finish talking!”

“...Oh.”

“Anyway, I really think Zhang Lu Rang wouldn’t do the things he does for you for any other girl.”

This time, Su Zai Zai remained silent for a long time.

A very long time passed before she spoke.

“If that’s true, that would be great.”

But she didn’t dare take it any further.

Su Zai Zai thought things were just fine the way they were.

She lived in a world of her own.

In that world, Zhang Lu Rang also liked Su Zai Zai very much.

As long as she didn’t deny it, no one could deny it.

******

On Sunday, Su Zai Zai left home an hour earlier than usual.

She was determined to catch Zhang Lu Rang at the bus stop.

She waited from the time the sun was high in the sky until it began

to set.

Su Zai Zai lit up her phone and checked the time.

If she waited any longer, she'd be late.

She put the vocabulary book she had been holding into her backpack.

After taking one last look at the direction of the bus stop, she finally boarded the bus.

When Su Zai Zai walked into the classroom, the bell for evening self-study had just rung.

Seeing her come in, Jiang Jia looked up and whispered, "Zai Zai, why are you so late today?"

Su Zai Zai pulled out the books from her backpack and placed them on her desk.

She sighed in despair, "Waiting for a rabbit at a tree stump, it never works."

"Huh?"

"Mm."

"..."

"But that guy said he has your WeChat." Su Zai Zai persisted.

Zhang Lu Rang, without changing his expression, said, "He lied to

you."

Then, he calmly touched his neck.

Su Zai Zai: "..."

He always lies when it comes to WeChat—just how much does he not want me to add him?

After a moment.

Su Zai Zai said softly, "I know you have it."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

Su Zai Zai started to rant, "We've known each other for so long, what's wrong with giving me your contact info? I'm not going to do anything to you, what are you so afraid of?"

Zhang Lu Rang pressed his lips together, his fingers lightly tapping on the blue-painted railing.

The metallic sound echoed softly.

It was as if he was thinking about how to respond.

Half a minute later.

"Why do you keep coming to the third floor?"

He shifted the conversation to another topic.

"You." Su Zai Zai replied.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

Noticing his expression, Su Zai Zai quickly corrected herself.

"Ah, no—I meant to see you. I just missed a word..."

"..."

"After all, you're my only male friend, so I just want to keep in touch."

Zhang Lu Rang lowered his head.

His dark hair, handsome brows, black eyes, and slightly pursed red lips.

His entire being exuded an air of restraint and temptation.

Su Zai Zai suddenly looked away, stammering, "D-don't look at me like that."

Zhang Lu Rang frowned, "How am I looking at you?"

"You... you just gave me a flirtatious look," Su Zai Zai blushed.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

He really couldn't imagine what he would look like giving a flirtatious look.

But somehow, he instinctively looked away.

Zhang Lu Rang rubbed his cheek and, with a serious expression,

said, “I’m not that close to you.”

Su Zai Zai blinked, “Nobody starts out being close.”

Hearing this.

Zhang Lu Rang wanted to say, *I don’t want to get close to you.*

But when he saw Su Zai Zai’s expression, the words got stuck in his throat and wouldn’t come out.

The bell for evening self-study rang through the quietness.

Around them, only a few students were slowly making their way back to the classroom from the restroom.

The light bulb above them flickered, causing their faces to alternately brighten and darken.

The night breeze gently swayed the branches.

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly felt a bit powerless.

He sighed and said, “Go back and study.”

“...Okay.”

Su Zai Zai turned around and started walking back.

After a few steps.

She turned back and looked at him, unwilling to give up.

“Do you really not want to add me on WeChat?”

Chapter 17

Having a crush can make your emotions swing wildly.

One moment you can’t sleep, the next you can’t eat.

Sometimes you laugh like a lunatic, and sometimes you just… want to cry.

— “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

Zhang Lu Rang also turned to head back. Hearing her words, he raised an eyebrow and asked, “Why should I add you?”

Su Zai Zai didn’t know how to respond for a moment. After thinking it over, she shamelessly replied, “Because I want you to.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai was genuinely frustrated. “What are you afraid of?”

Just adding a WeChat contact, and yet he was acting as if it was the end of the world.

“Look, so many people want to add me on WeChat, but I don’t give it to them. You get to add me—aren’t you happy, excited, thrilled? Don’t you feel honored? Like you’ve won the lottery?”

“…”

Seeing his reaction, Su Zai Zai decided to apply some pressure.

“I’ll give you three seconds. If you don’t refuse, you have to accept my friend request tonight.”

“Su Zai Zai.” He looked at her without any emotion.

“Three.”

“…”

“Two.”

“…”

“One.”

Her overbearing attitude left Zhang Lu Rang somewhat helpless.

After thinking it over for a moment, he finally uttered a word:
“Fine.”

Fireworks went off in her mind, crackling and popping.

Before Su Zai Zai could even start celebrating, she heard him speak again.

“If you pass both physics and chemistry in the midterms.”

In an instant, Su Zai Zai felt like she’d gone from heaven to hell.

“Rang Rang, isn’t that a bit too much?”

“…”

“Zhang Lu Rang!”

“Then forget it.”

Su Zai Zai instantly backed down. “That’s not what I meant…”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang lowered his head, a small smile flickering in his eyes.

Su Zai Zai licked her lips and pitifully asked, “Can the two scores add up to 100?”

This time, he was surprisingly agreeable.

Without hesitation, he replied, “Okay.”

A patrolling teacher walked by from the other direction.

Even though she had gotten his agreement, Su Zai Zai didn’t feel particularly happy.

After a few steps, she suddenly turned back and, with a heavy heart, said to him, “I’m going back now.”

With that, she continued walking upstairs, her mood heavy.

Zhang Lu Rang stood there for a moment longer.

It wasn’t until the teacher reminded him that he finally snapped out of it.

As he walked into the classroom, he thought about Su Zai Zai’s expression just now.

He lost his focus.

Suddenly, he felt a pang of regret.

It seemed like he'd made things too difficult for her.

...Maybe the score he set was too high.

******

Even though the exams were only two days away, Su Zai Zai decided to give it her best shot. Because of that, she didn't spend much time trying to get Zhang Lu Rang's attention that week.

During breaks, she buried herself in her physics or chemistry books.

In class, she uncharacteristically paid full attention to the lessons.

Jiang Jia, lying on her desk, watched her work on problems.

After a few minutes.

Seeing how badly Su Zai Zai was struggling, Jiang Jia couldn't bear it anymore. "Stop it. Even if you don't score 100, he'll still add you on WeChat. Want to bet?"

Su Zai Zai put down her pen.

Her eyes were still fixed on the problem in front of her, her delicate eyelashes trembling slightly.

"He won't." She said quietly.

Zhang Lu Rang knew she couldn't score that high.

That's why he set that condition.

He always found her annoying, so he wouldn't give her any more chances to bother him.

Su Zai Zai understood this very well.

But even if she couldn't reach the goal, she still wanted to try.

She could only hold on to the tiny hope that he would keep his promise, just to get a little closer to him.

"Jia Jia, why am I so stubborn?" Su Zai Zai propped her chin up, feeling down. "Even if he adds me, he probably won't respond when I message him."

He'd just be like a decoration.

But the thought of even a small chance.

Somehow became an irresistible temptation.

******

The Saturday after the midterm exams.

Su Zai Zai was sleeping soundly in bed when she was suddenly yanked awake by her mother.

She let out a groan, resisting with all her might, struggling to bury herself back into the blanket.

The room quieted down.

But Su Zai Zai could still clearly sense her mother's presence.

She held back for a moment.

Then she pulled the blanket off her face.

With a look of grievance, she said, "I get up at six every day at school, can't you let me sleep a bit longer!"

Her mother sat by her bed, righteously replying, "I did let you sleep longer, it's already seven now."

Su Zai Zai: "..."

"Get up, I want to eat Xu Ji's Tingzai Congee today, go buy it for me."

Su Zai Zai was full of morning grumpiness but didn't want to lose her temper with her mother.

Still groggy from just waking up, it took her a while to react, and she mumbled, "Why don't you go buy it yourself, or let Dad go, I'm too lazy to move."

"Your dad is too lazy to move, and so am I."

"... She just admitted she's too lazy to move..."

"Two bowls of Tingzai Congee, make sure to come back quickly, your dad and I have to work at nine."

… Her dear parents.

But Su Zai Zai did kind of want to eat Xu Ji's fresh shrimp rice rolls too.

She hesitated for a while in bed, but in the end, she got up and obediently went to wash up.

After changing her clothes, she walked out of her room.

Her father was sitting on the living room sofa reading a newspaper.

Su Zai Zai walked over.

She picked up a cup from the coffee table, filled it with some water, and took a sip.

Then, she grumbled, pretending to be casual, "I don't know how other dads do it, sending their precious daughters out to buy breakfast early in the morning."

"…"

"Other people's treasures are cherished and pampered."

"Our family is a bit special." Her father turned a page in the newspaper and finally spoke.

"Huh?"

"Our family treasures are stepped on underfoot."

Su Zai Zai: "…"

Angrily, she grabbed the bike keys and walked out the door.

******

The morning air was especially fresh.

A moist breeze brushed against her face, carrying the scent of grass.

Golden sunlight poured down but wasn't blinding.

Su Zai Zai pushed her bike out of the shed.

Once on it, she headed towards the entrance of the community.

Probably because it wasn't work time yet, there were very few pedestrians along the way.

When she reached an intersection within the community.

Su Zai Zai suddenly noticed a young man standing on the lawn on one side.

He was wearing a black T-shirt and dark knee-length denim shorts.

His black hair was fluffy and a bit messy.

He was holding a black leash in his hand.

Su Zai Zai was so absorbed in watching him that she didn't notice a white shadow flashing by her side.

When she snapped out of it, she realized a large white dog was

running towards her.

It nearly ran into her.

Su Zai Zai quickly turned her bike.

Unable to control it properly, she fell over with the bike, hitting the ground hard.

Bang—

A loud noise.

Hearing the commotion, the young man looked over.

His eyes tightened, as if he couldn’t believe what was happening.

He quickly reacted and ran over.

Su Zai Zai’s tears instantly flooded out.

Wearing short sleeves and shorts in the summer, her exposed skin was scraped by the cement, leaving streaks of blood.

Su Zai Zai regretted only wearing slippers to go buy breakfast.

She now regretted it because she saw that her big toe nail on her right foot was slightly lifted.

And blood was slowly oozing out.

The sight of it made Su Zai Zai cry even louder.

Although Su Zai Zai was afraid of many things, the thing she feared most was pain.

As Jiang Jia once said:

If you pull out one of her hairs, she could cry for an hour.

Zhang Lu Rang quickly reached her side.

Seeing her like this, he seemed a bit at a loss.

He reached out, trying to help her up.

Su Zai Zai, in pain and already in a bad mood, choked out, “Don’t touch me! Boohoo, it’s bad enough that you hate me, but even your dog hates me… We just met and it’s already trying to harm me.”

The Samoyed dog wagged its tail beside them, tilted its head, and stuck out its tongue.

Zhang Lu Rang squatted down, his expression not looking too good: “Let’s go to the hospital.”

Su Zai Zai suddenly remembered something Jiang Jia had said.

That girl had cried all afternoon in the classroom, and Zhang Lu Rang hadn’t reacted at all.

Su Zai Zai could almost imagine what was going to happen next.

Zhang Lu Rang would throw a large sum of money at her and tell her to limp off.

The pain made it impossible for her to think clearly about what to do. Like a clingy child.

She grabbed the hem of Zhang Lu Rang's shirt and made a fierce threat.

But her voice was soft and sweet, completely lacking any intimidation. Between sobs, she said:

"Zhang Lu Rang, if you dare to leave me, I'll kill you."

Chapter 18

An unforgettable day.

I don't know if he'll ever forget it.

Anyway, I won't.

— "Diary of Su Zai Zai, the Little Fairy"

Zhang Lu Rang's mouth was tightly pressed, like a straight line.

His gaze swept over her wounds, carefully.

But he quickly looked away, not daring to glance again.

His eyes flickered, as some emotions seemed to surge within.

Listening to Su Zai Zai's sobs, Zhang Lu Rang felt a bit restless.

It was as if something was lodged in his chest.

Heavy and uncomfortable.

Zhang Lu Rang gently touched her arm, his eyes showing a hint of caution.

“Can you stand up?”

Su Zai Zai immediately shook her head, like a rattle drum.

She babbled incoherently, “If I stand up, won’t the nail just snap off, like that?”

Imagining that scene, Su Zai Zai cried even harder.

As if she was trying to draw the attention of the entire neighborhood.

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang’s expression grew more serious.

But he didn’t know what to do either.

A few seconds later.

“Are your parents at home?” he asked.

Su Zai Zai was about to nod.

But suddenly, some force made her shake her head instead.

After hesitating for a moment, she followed that force and lied with red-rimmed eyes, “No, they’re not.”

Zhang Lu Rang thought about calling his uncle, but then he

instantly remembered that his uncle was out of town.

“I’ll park your bike and then take you to the hospital,” Zhang Lu Rang decided.

Su Zai Zai’s hand clutching his shirt didn’t loosen a bit, her eyes red and filled with wariness.

“You’re going to steal my bike.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…Stop talking nonsense.”

Su Zai Zai pointed at the Samoyed beside them and sniffled, “Your dog is in my hands.”

In other words,

If you dare to steal my bike, I’ll take your dog.

He ignored her words, his voice carrying a soothing tone, “I’ll be back quickly.”

“No way!” Su Zai Zai shouted stubbornly.

He lowered his gaze, staring at her: “So, you don’t want your bike anymore?”

Tears streamed down Su Zai Zai’s face as she said, “You really want to steal my bike.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

Half a minute later.

“Let go,” Zhang Lu Rang ordered coldly.

Lacking any sense of security, Su Zai Zai tightened her grip even more.

Zhang Lu Rang’s cool demeanor started to crumble.

He sighed, pulled out his phone from his pocket, and placed it in her hand.

“Hold onto this as collateral,” he said, with a slightly coaxing tone.

Su Zai Zai hesitated but finally let go.

Zhang Lu Rang breathed a sigh of relief, parked the bike in a nearby bike shed, and jogged back.

He bent down, asking quietly, “You really can’t stand up?”

Su Zai Zai didn’t dare to move and quickly nodded.

Hearing this, he turned his back to her and squatted down, his deep voice coming from the front.

“I’ll carry you.”

Su Zai Zai’s crying suddenly stopped, and she sniffed.

She changed her mind, “Never mind, I think I can stand up.”

Zhang Lu Rang turned his head, frowning at her, “Hurry up.”

She hesitated, “I might be a bit heavy.”

“Mm.” He responded nonchalantly.

Su Zai Zai didn’t hesitate for long and carefully moved closer.

She slowly stood up and wrapped her arms around his neck.

Zhang Lu Rang held onto her thighs and stood up with a slight effort.

This was the closest they had ever been.

Su Zai Zai recalled seeing him on the playground.

Back then, he didn’t like her touch at all.

But now, he was actually willing to carry her.

Su Zai Zai suddenly felt a sense of accomplishment.

He walked steadily forward.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and then explained softly.

“I’m heavy not because I’m fat, but because I’m tall. My body proportions are really good.”

“Mm.”

Hearing his acknowledgment, Su Zai Zai wasn’t too happy.

“Where am I heavy? I’m just a smidge under 100 pounds.”

“Mm.”

“Mm what?”

A minute later.

“Not heavy,” he said softly.

Su Zai Zai didn’t catch it and curiously asked, “What did you just say?”

Zhang Lu Rang fell silent.

Su Zai Zai didn’t dwell on it either.

She stared at the phone in her hand and suddenly asked, “Rang Rang, can I play with your phone?”

“…” His lips moved slightly, but he didn’t answer.

The hand holding onto his neck lifted, and she waved the phone in front of him.

Su Zai Zai changed her approach, “Zhang Lu Rang, can I play with your phone?”

This time, he responded quickly.

“Mm.”

His response caught Su Zai Zai off guard.

She licked her lips and said quietly, “I was just kidding…”

Zhang Lu Rang was silent for a moment, then said, “Go ahead.”

But Su Zai Zai didn't touch his phone, just held it tightly.

Her palm felt hot, sweating a bit.

She lowered her head and suddenly noticed the obedient dog following beside them.

She became interested.

Su Zai Zai asked, "What's your dog's name?"

He instinctively replied, "Susu."

Susu barked.

Su Zai Zai suddenly laughed and shamelessly replied, "I'm here."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

She shamelessly added, "My nickname is Susu too."

With a playful smile, she looked carefree, as if all her troubles and pain had vanished.

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her and asked quietly, "Does it not hurt anymore?"

"It hurts," she replied honestly.

But with you here, the pain seems insignificant.

Utterly mesmerized by his charm.

After walking a short distance.

Su Zai Zai looked at the large white figure beside them.

Her voice carried a bit of a nasal tone, “What about Susu? The hospital doesn’t allow dogs.”

“We’ll leave it at the security booth,” Zhang Lu Rang thought for a moment and added, “They know him.”

Su Zai Zai chuckled, “Your dog is so impressive, even the security guards know him.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

Su Zai Zai remembered calling him “Rang Rang” earlier and not getting a response.

But today, this beautiful boy seemed to be treating her especially well.

Su Zai Zai’s playful side emerged, and she called out, “Rang Rang.”

“…”

She smiled, her eyes curving like crescent moons, “Rang Rang, why aren’t you answering me?”

“…”

“Rang Rang.”

Zhang Lu Rang finally relented, “…Mm.”

Su Zai Zai couldn’t describe how she felt at that moment.

It was like finally seeing the moon after waiting through clouds.

But actually, it wasn’t.

If only every day could be like today, she thought.

Even though she got hurt today.

It felt like the whole world was setting off fireworks.

Even if it was just celebrating her injury.

...She would accept it.

******

They soon reached the entrance of the community.

Zhang Lu Rang set Su Zai Zai down on a chair at the security booth, then crouched to tie Susu’s leash.

He then turned to the security guard and said a few words.

After finishing, Zhang Lu Rang was about to carry Su Zai Zai again, but she spoke up.

“No need, it doesn’t hurt much anymore. It’s not far, I can walk.”

He paused but still bent down, saying, “Get on.”

Su Zai Zai obediently replied, “Okay.”

The security guard behind them couldn't help but remark, "Ah, youth is wonderful."

Su Zai Zai's face inexplicably felt a bit warm.

There was a community hospital about 50 meters away from the neighborhood.

When they arrived, Zhang Lu Rang went to register Su Zai Zai.

This time, no matter what he said, Su Zai Zai refused to let him carry her.

She held onto his elbow with one hand, slowly making her way to the surgery department.

They entered a small room labeled "Surgery."

Su Zai Zai walked over and sat on the chair in front of the doctor.

Since they had come in a hurry, Su Zai Zai hadn't brought her medical record book.

Zhang Lu Rang went out to buy one.

When he returned, he found Su Zai Zai, who had just stopped crying, wailing again.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

He walked over, placed the medical record book in front of the doctor, and then bent down to look Su Zai Zai in the eye.

His deep, dark eyes met hers as he asked in a low, soothing voice, “What’s wrong?”

Su Zai Zai immediately grabbed his wrist, like she had found a lifeline, “Zhang Lu Rang, the doctor said the toenail has to be pulled off, they have to pull off my toenail…”

Imagining that scene, she immediately put on a look of defiance.

“I’d rather die than have it pulled, I’d rather die.”

Her eyes met Zhang Lu Rang’s.

They were filled with the question, “Do you really want me to die?”

Zhang Lu Rang was at a loss.

After thinking for a moment

, he turned to the doctor and asked softly, “Is it absolutely necessary to pull it off?”

The doctor glanced at Su Zai Zai’s toenail again and considered for a moment.

“Not necessarily, the part of the nail that’s lifted is less than half, but if you don’t remove it, there’s a risk of infection.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang still wanted Su Zai Zai to have it pulled off.

But when he turned his head.

Seeing her tearful eyes, his heart inexplicably tightened.

He looked away and instantly changed his mind, “Then we won’t pull it off.”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai’s crying gradually stopped.

She let go of Zhang Lu Rang’s wrist and lowered her head, embarrassed, to wipe her tears.

“Then let’s treat the wound,” the doctor said as he began writing in the medical record book, “Make sure to disinfect it with iodine every day.”

As soon as Su Zai Zai heard that the nail wouldn’t be pulled off, her spirits immediately lifted.

Listening to the doctor’s instructions, she obediently responded several times.

But she suddenly became distracted.

Su Zai Zai glanced at Zhang Lu Rang.

Seeing him with his head down, looking a bit troubled.

******

After treating the wound.

Su Zai Zai limped out.

Zhang Lu Rang followed behind, watching the scrapes on her arms

and legs.

He was just about to say something when Su Zai Zai's phone rang.

Su Zai Zai answered it.

Hearing the voice on the other end, she guiltily glanced at Zhang Lu Rang.

She lowered her voice.

"Mom."

"I...I ran into a friend, so I didn't go to buy breakfast."

"I'll buy it for you tomorrow."

"I brought the keys, you and Dad go to work, be careful on the way."

"Okay."

She hung up the phone.

Seeing that Zhang Lu Rang didn't seem to notice, Su Zai Zai breathed a sigh of relief.

She walked a few more steps, then turned to urge him, "Rang Rang, hurry up."

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her, took a few long strides, and quickly caught up to her.

They walked side by side in silence.

After a while, Su Zai Zai spoke up.

“How much did it cost just now? I’ll pay you back when I get back to school.”

He didn’t answer.

Su Zai Zai patiently asked again, “How much?”

Zhang Lu Rang pressed his lips together and suddenly asked, “Why did you go out this morning?”

“To buy breakfast, I wanted Xu Ji’s fresh shrimp rice rolls,” Su Zai Zai replied instinctively.

At the mention of food, she suddenly felt hungry.

“So hungry,” Su Zai Zai rubbed her stomach.

“…”

“So hungry, so hungry.”

“…”

“I really want to eat fresh shrimp rolls.”

“…”

“I really want to eat it.”

Zhang Lu Rang sighed, “Where’s that shop?”

“It’s over by the Cultural Square. There’s no direct bus, so I have to ride a bike.”

He made a sound of acknowledgment.

Su Zai Zai didn’t know why he was asking, but she decided to shamelessly push it further.

“Are you going to buy it for me?” she asked with a playful smile.

Unexpectedly, he directly admitted it.

“Yes.”

A bike was coming toward them from the front.

Zhang Lu Rang instinctively pulled her closer, warning, “Move over a bit.”

Su Zai Zai was still lost in his earlier response, her thoughts unable to break free.

After she snapped back to reality, she said, “There’s no need, I was just joking. Your dog, Susu, is still waiting for you to pick it up. If you don’t go back soon, it’ll think you don’t want it anymore.”

When she mentioned “your Susu,” Su Zai Zai suddenly curved her lips into a smile.

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t say anything more.

After a moment, Su Zai Zai added, “Actually, it’s not Susu’s fault. It’s because I’m not good at riding a bike.”

Zhang Lu Rang turned his head to look at her.

Su Zai Zai didn’t feel guilty at all, “Really.”

So, don’t feel guilty.

“Su Zai Zai,” he suddenly called out.

“Huh?”

“If you can’t ride a bike, then don’t,” his tone was somewhat stern.

Su Zai Zai: “…”

How did he come to that conclusion?

Shouldn’t he have said she was kind-hearted, always considering others’ feelings?

Su Zai Zai felt a bit depressed.

Every time she said something for the sake of this handsome guy, he couldn’t understand her at all.

Last time, he concluded she was dumb; this time, he said she couldn’t ride a bike.

… What could she even say?

They reached the security booth and retrieved Susu.

Suddenly, Su Zai Zai remembered she still had Zhang Lu Rang's phone in her pocket. She fumbled around, took it out, and handed it to him.

Zhang Lu Rang took it slowly.

After walking for a while.

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly asked, "Where do you live?"

Su Zai Zai honestly pointed to one of the buildings, "Building 13, 9th floor, Unit B."

He softly replied with an "Mm."

A moment later.

Zhang Lu Rang pushed his tongue against his cheek, asking out of nowhere, "Still hungry?"

Su Zai Zai felt drained, "...Yes."

The handsome guy had definitely already had breakfast.

She was the only one enduring the pain of hunger alone.

Su Zai Zai felt a bit unfair and was just about to ask if he was trying to tease her.

Then she saw Zhang Lu Rang scratch his head and quietly say, "Give me your WeChat."

Su Zai Zai: "..."

Her startled expression made Zhang Lu Rang's ears turn slightly red, but he didn't show it on his face.

It was as if he was just asking something perfectly natural.

Soon, Su Zai Zai snapped out of it.

She lowered her head, feeling down.

"This time, I probably won't even score 100 points in two subjects combined."

Zhang Lu Rang opened his mouth.

Before he could say anything, Su Zai Zai continued, "Give me another chance, okay? This time caught me off guard. For the final exam, I'll definitely score over 100, alright?"

"..." What could he say?

"Is that okay?" Su Zai Zai looked at him with hopeful eyes.

Zhang Lu Rang averted his gaze and repeated, "Give me your WeChat."

This time, Su Zai Zai truly reacted.

She was so excited she wanted to jump up and kiss him.

But for some reason, she remembered what Zhang Lu Rang had said before.

— "If you pass both Physics and Chemistry in the midterms."

She also remembered her previously unanswered friend request.

And how Zhang Lu Rang always lied when it came to WeChat.

She smiled mischievously and said, “Beg me.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “...”

“Beg me.”

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her.

He didn’t seem to care and casually said, “Never mind then.”

Su Zai Zai immediately backed down, trying to please him, “...I was just kidding.”

She quickly recited her phone number, deliberately trying to make it difficult for him.

But he still typed it in correctly and quickly.

Su Zai Zai tapped “Accept” on the screen.

Then she quietly complained, “Every time I joke with you, you don’t play along. You know, it’s easy for our friendship to fall apart if you keep this up.”

A few steps later.

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly smirked and said, “Okay.”

Su Zai Zai hadn’t realized what he meant when she heard him

continue:

“Beg you.”

******

Zhang Lu Rang walked Su Zai Zai to her building.

She didn’t have her key, so she pressed a few numbers on the keypad to unlock the door.

Noticing Zhang Lu Rang’s puzzled expression, Su Zai Zai quickly explained.

“It’s a code. First, press the ‘#’ sign, then 1245, and it’ll open.”

Zhang Lu Rang nodded and reminded her, “Remember to apply the medicine.”

Su Zai Zai smiled cheerfully at him, “You’re so considerate, handsome.”

Zhang Lu Rang gave her a look before turning to leave.

Su Zai Zai watched his and Susu’s backs and smiled.

She hobbled inside to wait for the elevator.

Once inside, she opened the door with her key.

Looking at her wounds, she worried about how to explain them to her parents.

As she thought about it, her mind wandered.

Suddenly, Su Zai Zai remembered what Zhang Lu Rang had said earlier.

— “Beg you.”

She excitedly rolled around on the couch.

Forgetting that she was still injured.

Su Zai Zai winced in pain and tears welled up in her eyes.

She bit her lip.

Then she stood up and walked over to the TV cabinet.

She opened the cabinet door and took out a row of unopened jelly cups.

Feeling bad from both pain and hunger, she decided to eat some to cheer up.

She sniffed, hopped back to the couch on one foot, and opened one.

Strawberry flavor.

It was full of fruit, deliciously chewy.

After finishing one, Su Zai Zai idly turned on the TV and watched for half an hour.

Just as she was about to go back to her room to take a nap, her phone chimed.

She glanced at it.

The handsome guy had sent a message.

— *Open the door.*

At the same time, the doorbell rang.

Su Zai Zai couldn’t believe it.

She slowly walked over and looked through the peephole.

… It was really him.

After confirming it, Su Zai Zai quickly opened the door.

He was still wearing the same clothes from the morning.

But now the sun was high, and it was hot and stuffy outside.

Zhang Lu Rang had a few drops of sweat on his forehead, and his hair was slightly damp.

He looked down at her.

His eyes were dark and bright, hard to look away from.

This sudden situation left Su Zai Zai unsure of how to react.

After thinking for a moment, she guessed his reason for coming.

“Did you come to ask me for money…?”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

His temple twitched as he handed her the bag in his hand, “Take it.”

Su Zai Zai took it and looked inside.

It was Xu Ji’s fresh shrimp rice rolls.

Su Zai Zai was stunned, “…Why did you go and buy it?”

Zhang Lu Rang took out her bike key from his pocket and handed it to her.

Then he said, “I’m leaving.”

Su Zai Zai looked at the key in her hand and suddenly felt happy.

“Did you ride my bike?”

Zhang Lu Rang paused and looked back at her.

“No.”

“Then how did you go? It takes me 20 minutes to bike there and back.”

Zhang Lu Rang scratched his head and said, “Taxi.”

Su Zai Zai’s eyes widened, “These rice rolls cost only eight yuan, and the fare was twenty!”

"..."

She felt a bit upset and asked, "Why didn't you ride my bike? I don't let others touch it, but you avoided it."

"...I can't." To stop her from talking, he told the truth.

Su Zai Zai thought she had heard wrong and asked in confusion, "What?"

Zhang Lu Rang looked at her and calmly repeated, "I can't."

"You can't ride a bike?" Su Zai Zai asked.

"Mm."

His expression was indifferent.

But Su Zai Zai's heart felt inexplicably heavy.

It hurt a little.

She didn't know why.

Not knowing how to ride a bike was no big deal; it was normal.

But seeing Zhang Lu Rang's expression now, Su Zai Zai suddenly felt sad.

She stood there in silence.

Zhang Lu Rang was about to say that he was leaving when the person in front of him spoke.

Su Zai Zai murmured, “Cute little Rang Rang.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

She blinked at him and softly said, “Wait a moment.”

Su Zai Zai walked over to the couch and picked up the row of jelly cups.

She walked back to the door and handed them to him.

She rambled, “I’m telling you, normally, if I fell this badly, I

’d need to eat a whole row of jelly cups to feel better… But today, you bought me breakfast, so I only need to eat one…”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t say anything, nor did he move.

Su Zai Zai pretended to be generous, “Eating jelly makes you feel better. I’m giving you the remaining five, consider it as me passing on my good mood to you.”

Zhang Lu Rang finally moved a bit.

He raised his hand, just about to take them, when Su Zai Zai spoke again.

She smiled mischievously, her eyes bright and curved.

Her voice was clear and pleasant.

“In return, you’ll let me teach you how to ride a bike.”

******

That evening.

Su's mother returned home before Su's father.

Hearing movement from her room, Su Zai Zai immediately threw herself on the bed and wrapped herself in the blanket.

How should she explain this...

Just say she accidentally fell while riding her bike.

That's the only thing she could say.

Su's mother came over and knocked on her door, "Zai Zai, have you had dinner?"

Well, she would find out sooner or later...

Su Zai Zai got up, walked over, and opened the door.

Seeing all her wounds, Su's mother's voice suddenly rose.

She grabbed Su Zai Zai's arm and looked at her injuries, her voice anxious and frantic.

"What happened? How did you get hurt? Huh? Why didn't you tell me?"

Su Zai Zai's voice was soft, "I-I fell off my bike."

She felt a bit uneasy.

Afraid her mother would scold her for not paying attention while riding, afraid of being reprimanded.

All she wanted was to hide and pretend she hadn't been injured.

Unexpectedly, she wasn't scolded.

"Did you go to the hospital?"

"I did."

"Did they treat your wounds? Did you bring back medicine?"

"Yes, and yes." Su Zai Zai obediently answered everything.

After a moment of silence.

Su's mother patted her head and said, "Be careful when riding your bike from now on. And if you get hurt, remember to tell us. You're going to give me a heart attack if you don't."

"I didn't mean to." Su Zai Zai mumbled, "It's not that serious..."

Su's mother muttered to herself, "Should I let you take a few days off? Wait until your wounds heal before going back to school."

Su Zai Zai was stunned. Isn't that a bit too much...

As they were talking, Su's father came home.

He walked from the entrance to the sofa and noticed Su's mother and Su Zai Zai standing by the door.

He looked over and immediately noticed Su Zai Zai's injuries.

His face darkened as he walked over, "What happened?"

Su's mother replied, "She fell."

For a moment, Su Zai Zai felt like her savior had arrived.

How could she take a break! How would she see the handsome guy if she took time off!

Dad would definitely say Mom was overreacting!

Su's father frowned as he stared at Su Zai Zai's wounds, "Did you go to the hospital?"

Su Zai Zai meekly replied, "I did."

But unexpectedly, Su's father was even more dramatic.

He turned to Su's mother, "And you didn't keep her in the hospital? You just brought her home?"

Su's mother looked a bit troubled, "I was thinking... about asking for a few days off."

Hearing this, Su's father disagreed, "A few days isn't enough. Ask for a week."

Su Zai Zai: "..."

Seeing Su's mother pick up her phone, ready to make the call, Su Zai Zai panicked, "There's no need to ask for time off..."

Her parents looked over at her.

Su Zai Zai nervously said, “It looks like there are a lot of wounds, but it’s not that serious.”

After some pleading, she finally got their agreement.

But Su’s father insisted on driving her to school on Sunday.

Su Zai Zai had to plead again, finally convincing him to drop the idea.

After dinner, she returned to her room.

She picked up her phone and opened the chat with the handsome guy.

There was only one message from him.

— *Open the door.*

Su Zai Zai smiled, quickly typing: *Rang Rang.*

No response.

She thought for a moment, then typed again, pouting: *Zhang Lu Rang.*

Zhang Lu Rang: *?*

Su Zai Zai: *How will I get to school tomorrow?*

Zhang Lu Rang: *...*

Su Zai Zai: *How will I get there?*

Zhang Lu Rang: *What time are you leaving?*

Su Zai Zai grinned to herself.

But she pretended not to understand: *Do you want to go with me?*

Zhang Lu Rang: *Mm.*

Su Zai Zai resisted the urge to roll around in excitement: *Then meet me at the station at three.*

Zhang Lu Rang: *Okay.*

After a while.

Su Zai Zai asked again: *Rang Rang, was the jelly good?*

She didn't expect a reply since "Rang Rang" was in the message.

He was probably scared by her crying earlier.

Otherwise, with his usual stubbornness, he wouldn't have responded.

Now... he would probably just ignore it.

After sending the message, she tossed her phone aside and went to take a shower.

While searching for clothes in the wardrobe, Su Zai Zai heard her

phone chime.

She glanced back.

... Could it be him?

Although it wasn't very likely, Su Zai Zai still walked over with some hope.

She lit up the screen.

It was the person she was hoping for.

"Mm." he replied.

Su Zai Zai felt a tingling sensation in her chest.

Like he had just zapped her from afar.

******

On Sunday.

Su Zai Zai stood at the entrance, looking at her sneakers.

She didn't dare wear socks, so she went out in slippers.

She stepped out the front door.

Immediately, she spotted Zhang Lu Rang standing nearby.

Su Zai Zai walked over, "Rang Rang."

Hearing her voice, Zhang Lu Rang turned his head.

Instinctively, he reached out to take what she was holding.

Su Zai Zai pushed the bag into his arms, curiously asking, “How did you know it was for you?”

“...He didn’t know.”

“Take a look,” Su Zai Zai urged him.

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated, looking at her.

The bag was a bit heavy.

He opened it.

... Six packs of jelly.

“You said it was good, so I’m giving you all my stock.”

“...”

“Don’t you feel like I treat you with supreme love?”

“...”

Su Zai Zai was walking slowly, so Zhang Lu Rang slowed his pace to match hers.

She was especially talkative, as if she had a lifetime’s worth of words to say.

“Isn’t it great being friends with me? I can pamper you until you lose the ability to take care of yourself!”

Zhang Lu Rang: “...Just walk properly.”

“Rang Rang, where do you live?”

“...”

“Zhang Lu Rang.”

“Just in this neighborhood,” Zhang Lu Rang answered casually.

Su Zai Zai: “I meant, which building and unit.”

They walked out of the neighborhood.

Zhang Lu Rang tried to avoid answering, but he couldn’t, so he finally replied, “Building 25.”

Su Zai Zai felt a bit upset.

She answered all his questions without hesitation.

But whenever she asked him, she had to pry each answer out of him.

“Which...” Unit.

Su Zai Zai suddenly realized, “Building 25? Isn’t that a single building?”

“Mm.”

Zhang Lu Rang hailed a cab and said to her, “Let’s go.”

Su Zai Zai was a bit dazed, but she obediently got in the car.

Aside from Zhang Lu Rang telling the driver their destination, they didn't speak again.

Su Zai Zai was so quiet that Zhang Lu Rang thought she had fallen asleep.

He turned his head, only to find her staring at him.

Su Zai Zai licked her lips and finally spoke.

"You're a rich Rang Rang," she said.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

Chapter 19

Step by step.

Suddenly, a big leap forward.

So satisfying.

— From "Su Zai Zai's Little Fairy Diary"

Zhang Lurang turned his head away, ignoring her.

Su Zai Zai shamelessly scooted closer to chat with him.

"Lurang, how much is your weekly allowance?"

Zhang Lurang was about to answer.

Su Zai Zai, with a curious expression, continued, “I want to know what life is like for rich people.”

“…” He suddenly didn’t feel like talking.

Then she started counting on her fingers.

“If we don’t count New Year’s money, I currently have two hundred and forty-seven yuan and fifty cents.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

“I usually spend only a hundred on food, and the rest…”

Before she could finish, she noticed Zhang Lurang’s expression.

Su Zai Zai frowned and changed her tone, “Lurang, you can’t be like this.”

Zhang Lurang, suddenly being scolded, was a bit confused, “What?”

“It’s the 21st century now; you can’t still have class consciousness.”

“…”

“If you dare to look down on me now…”

Zhang Lurang quietly looked at her, waiting for what she would say next.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and decided to threaten him.

“When I become a big boss in the future, we will cut ties.”

Zhang Lurang looked away and said in a deep voice, “Let’s cut ties now.”

Su Zai Zai: “...I was just joking.”

After a while.

Su Zai Zai changed her approach, “I will earn lots and lots of money in the future.”

“...”

She grinned mischievously and said, “And then I’ll use it all to buy you jelly.”

All of it.

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang turned to look out the window.

The scorching sun was shining, and the streets were crowded with people.

The scenery was rapidly moving backward.

Zhang Lurang didn’t know what to say.

His heart skipped a beat, and he couldn’t snap out of it.

He didn’t answer.

Without receiving his response, Su Zai Zai simply changed the

subject.

“Have you always lived in Qinghua? I’ve lived here since middle school, but I’ve never seen you.”

Qinghua is the neighborhood where they both lived.

“No.” He snapped out of it and said calmly.

Su Zai Zai made an “oh” sound and shamelessly continued speaking.

“Did you move here because I live here?”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

“Let me tell you, I usually don’t go out on weekends.”

“…”

“If you want to have a chance encounter with me, you can let me know in advance.”

“…”

Zhang Lurang didn’t want to engage with her.

He took out his phone from his bag, plugged in the earphones, and put them on.

Then he leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes to rest.

Taking this opportunity, Su Zai Zai stared at him without hiding it

for ten minutes.

Noticing his eyelids twitch, she quickly averted her gaze.

Su Zai Zai leaned forward slightly and asked the driver, “Uncle, how much will it cost to get to Z Middle School?”

The driver thought for a moment and said, “About fifty yuan.”

She suddenly felt a bit of heartache.

Taking the bus only costs three yuan, and it would only be six yuan for both of them.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and said, “Uncle, when we get there…”

“Su Zai Zai.”

Hearing the shout, Su Zai Zai instinctively turned her head.

The earphones in Zhang Lurang’s ears had somehow been taken off.

He frowned and reprimanded, “Don’t distract the driver.”

“Oh.” Su Zai Zai retracted herself and sat properly.

The car returned to silence.

Su Zai Zai, bored, took out her phone and started playing with it.

Zhang Lurang, sitting next to her, didn’t put his earphones back on

and felt somewhat irritated.

...Was my tone too harsh just now?

He hesitated, thinking about how to start speaking.

Before he could say anything.

Su Zai Zai suddenly became curious and turned to ask Zhang Lurang.

“Lurang, what do you have me saved as in your WeChat contacts?”

Zhang Lurang felt relieved.

He clutched his phone, raised his eyes slightly, and answered seriously, “Su Zai Zai.”

Su Zai Zai was silent for a moment, then said, “How about you change it to ‘Fairy Zai’?”

Zhang Lurang: “...”

“I saved you as ‘Great Beauty.’”

“...”

Su Zai Zai said righteously, “Good friends should have affectionate nicknames for each other...”

Zhang Lurang, unable to bear it anymore, said, “Su Zai Zai.”

Su Zai Zai quickly leaned over and responded, “Fairy Zai!”

“…” Whatever, let her be.

Zhang Lurang fell silent, and Su Zai Zai also stopped talking.

He turned his head and saw her looking down, fiddling with her phone.

The returning silence made Zhang Lurang feel a bit stifled.

He sighed.

Then handed her his phone, saying in a low voice, “Change it yourself if you want.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t take it, smiling instead, “No need to change it.”

Then, she raised her phone and showed it to him.

It was his contact information card.

The nickname displayed clearly was—

Zhang Rang Rang.

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Zhang Rang Rang.

Su Zai Zai.

Her little thoughts.

Even if he doesn’t understand, she still wants him to see them.

******

The car arrived at the school gate.

After Zhang Lurang paid, they got out of the car, one after the other.

Su Zai Zai stood next to him and suddenly said, “Rang Rang, can I borrow your phone?”

They walked side by side.

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang glanced at her.

He took his phone out of his pocket and handed it to her.

Su Zai Zai took out her own phone and transferred 500 yuan to his WeChat.

Then she unlocked his phone.

No password.

Su Zai Zai directly opened WeChat.

There were only a few people in his chat history.

Su Zai Zai, Uncle, Dad, A Li...

Su Zai Zai didn’t look any further.

She went into their chat, clicked “Confirm Receipt.”

After finishing, she breathed a sigh of relief and handed the phone back to him.

Zhang Lurang took the phone and instinctively glanced at it.

Noticing the amount transferred, he frowned.

He turned to look at her.

Su Zai Zai smiled cheekily, not feeling guilty at all: “How about it? Did you feel my love?”

Zhang Lurang pressed his lips together, not saying a word.

“I’m giving you a preview of the treatment you’ll get when I become a big boss.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

After saying that, Su Zai Zai reminded him again.

“So don’t ever break off our friendship; you’d be missing out.”

He stood beside her, suddenly feeling a bit tired.

“Su Zai Zai.”

“Huh?”

“Act normal.”

“…Oh.”

Zhang Lurang looked down and fiddled with his phone.

He opened Alipay, clicked on “Transfer.”

Recalling her phone number, he typed it in.

Noticing the real name was “Zai Zai,” he directly transferred the money back.

The phone pinged, and Su Zai Zai looked down at it.

Then she turned her head and stared at him, confused.

Zhang Lurang looked back at her.

Suddenly, he was afraid she might be upset.

Zhang Lurang spoke up.

“Su Zai Zai.”

“Huh?”

Zhang Lurang’s lips curled slightly, half-jokingly.

“Your friend is very rich.”

Su Zai Zai was even more confused.

Her reaction made Zhang Lurang’s expression a bit unnatural.

Half a minute later, Su Zai Zai softly replied, “Oh.”

...He joked with her.

And for the first time, he acknowledged that he was her friend.

Even if it was one word short of the answer she wanted...

Su Zai Zai suddenly lowered her head, her heart pounding.

******

They walked into the school building.

Zhang Lurang half-supported Su Zai Zai up to the fifth floor.

After dropping her off at the door, he turned and started to walk back.

The person behind him suddenly called out to him: “Rang Rang.”

He paused, hesitated for a moment, but still turned back.

Then, he heard her say, “My foot isn’t doing well, so I can’t go down to the third floor to see you.”

Zhang Lurang nodded lightly.

Just as he was about to turn and leave again.

Su Zai Zai shamelessly added, “So you come up to the fifth floor to see me.”

Chapter 20

Daily Pampering of the Beauty

—From “Su Zai Zai’s Fairy Diary”

Su Zai Zai was rejected.

She was actually rejected.

By someone who had just said, “Your friend is very rich,” and now refused her.

Someone who admitted to being her friend wouldn’t even agree to this small request of hers.

Su Zai Zai found it hard to accept.

She watched Zhang Lurang’s retreating figure and stood still for a moment.

Then, she walked back to the classroom, feeling sad.

There weren’t many people in the classroom, and it was very quiet.

Some were bowing their heads doing homework, while others were engrossed in their phones.

Su Zai Zai slowly walked to her seat, her steps somewhat unsteady.

But no one noticed her discomfort.

After reaching her seat, she finally sighed in relief.

She took out her phone from her pocket and opened her chat with Zhang Lurang.

The last message shown was from him: a simple “Mm.”

Su Zai Zai felt an inexplicable surge of anger.

He always responds with just “Mm,” never willing to say more.

But when it comes to crucial moments, he immediately says:

—”Not coming.”

Su Zai Zai couldn’t suppress the impulse inside her.

Her fingers flew over the keyboard, typing three heavy words.

—Zhang Lurang.

There was no immediate reply from the other side.

Su Zai Zai thought it was time to explode a little.

Otherwise, even if she ended up with this handsome guy, she’d be completely under his thumb.

After thinking for a bit, she continued typing.

—I swear, if I ever ask you for anything again, I must have been raised on dog poop.

After the message was successfully sent.

The other side replied immediately with: “...”

His reply made Su Zai Zai feel as if she could sense his presence

from afar.

...And she instantly regretted it.

On the other end, Zhang Lurang was also hesitating on how to reply.

She seemed really angry...

Before he could think of something, another message came through.

Su Zai Zai: I'm hungry.

Zhang Lurang paused, unable to understand how her mood could change so quickly.

But he still pressed his lips together and typed into the chat box: What do you want to eat?

Before he could send it, his phone vibrated again.

Su Zai Zai: Do you have dog poop?

Zhang Lurang: "..."

He really didn't understand what went on in Su Zai Zai's mind every day.

Zhang Lurang deleted the message he had just typed.

Then he carefully typed six words.

—No, eat properly.

Su Zai Zai: "..."

******

The handsome guy wasn't coming.

So Su Zai Zai had to drag her wounded self out of the classroom.

She had no choice.

If the mountain doesn't come to me, I'll go to the mountain.

When chasing a guy, one must have this kind of perseverance.

Jiang Jia, who was sitting behind her, glanced at her and sighed, "Such determination despite the injuries."

Su Zai Zai walked slowly forward and passed by the office.

She was just about to turn and go down the stairs.

She immediately noticed Zhang Lurang coming up from downstairs.

Zhang Lurang saw her too.

He hesitated for a moment before continuing up the stairs.

Su Zai Zai stopped and flashed a big smile.

"Rang Rang, what are you doing on the fifth floor?" she asked,

pretending to be clueless.

Zhang Lurang looked at her and answered, “Looking for the headteacher.”

Su Zai Zai shamelessly responded, “When did I change my name to Headteacher?”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

“Besides, Mr. Chen isn’t here; she doesn’t work on weekends.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang immediately stopped.

“Mm.” Then he turned around and walked away.

Su Zai Zai quickly hopped a few steps to catch up with him.

Hearing the commotion behind him, Zhang Lurang couldn’t help but turn around.

“Su Zai Zai.”

Su Zai Zai instinctively stopped: “Huh?”

He was silent for a moment, then said, “I’ll be there.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t quite understand and then heard him continue, “At this time.”

Then he sighed and added, “Don’t wander around.”

Su Zai Zai obediently replied with an “Oh.”

She wanted to ask.

Did you only say this after eating my jelly?

But no, that doesn't make sense.

The effect wouldn't be that strong.

She wanted to know.

Why is it that you only say three sentences, but it's more effective than me eating a hundred jellies?

******

On Monday afternoon, the midterm exam results came out.

When Su Zai Zai returned to the classroom from the dormitory, she took a quick glance.

She was ranked 825th in her grade, out of about 1,500 first-year students.

But excluding her science scores, her overall results were still decent.

Su Zai Zai was quite satisfied.

During the first evening self-study session, Su Zai Zai immediately ran outside.

She stood at the stairwell, waiting for Zhang Lurang.

Soon, his figure appeared in her sight.

Su Zai Zai called out crisply, “Rang Rang.”

Zhang Lurang looked up at her and responded with a low “Mm.”

The two walked to the side.

He seemed to be in a bad mood.

Su Zai Zai blinked and asked directly, “Are you in a bad mood?”

“No,” he answered.

“Then did you eat the jelly?”

“…”

“Did you eat?”

“…Mm.”

“Even eating jelly doesn’t help?”

Zhang Lurang was silent for a moment but eventually nodded.

“You’re really hard to please,” Su Zai Zai accused him.

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Su Zai Zai hesitated for a moment and said, “Then let me tell you a joke.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai cleared her throat and began.

“Liu Bei’s horse, Dilu, broke free and ran towards a cliff, so Zhang Fei urgently shouted, ‘Big Brother, rein in your horse!’”

As she mentioned this, Su Zai Zai suddenly paused and gestured with her fingers.

“‘Rein in’ is like the ‘勒’ in ‘勒索’ (extortion).”

Zhang Lurang remained silent, quietly watching her.

Su Zai Zai continued, laughing as she spoke: “Then Liu Bei got angry and scolded, ‘I’m happily reining in your damn horse!’”

Zhang Lurang remained expressionless.

“Hahaha, this kills me every time I think about it, it’s so funny.”

Not getting a response from him, Su Zai Zai stopped laughing and innocently asked, “Isn’t it funny?”

He still didn’t say anything.

After a while.

Zhang Lurang, with a cold expression, reprimanded her: “Su Zai Zai, don’t use foul language.”

Su Zai Zai, who thought she had managed to lift his mood, immediately exploded.

“I didn’t say anything! That was Liu Bei speaking! What does it

have to do with me!”

Suddenly being labeled as someone who curses made her feel wronged. That would lower her likeability! She was indignant!

She looked like she was ready to jump up and hit him.

A few seconds later.

Her reaction seemed to amuse Zhang Lurang.

The gloom that had been lingering over him instantly vanished.

He chuckled softly.

The bell rang.

At the same time, he let out a single word from his lips.

“Fool.”

His voice was full of laughter.

******

During the first break of the Tuesday evening study session.

Su Zai Zai had been thinking for a long time.

Just ten minutes a day, it was too little for her.

Before, between the breaks and the afternoon reading room time, she could see him for an hour and a half each day.

Now it’s just ten minutes!

Su Zai Zai decided to have a talk with him.

She thought it over and then asked, “Can I go to the reading room with you in the afternoon to study?”

“No.” He rejected her immediately.

“But if I don’t go to the reading room in the afternoon, I won’t be able to resist going back to the dorm.”

Zhang Lurang casually replied, “Then go back.”

“Look, the dorm is so far away, and going back and forth takes me a whole week…”

He looked over at her.

Su Zai Zai, with a serious expression, said, “Okay, but remember to come and collect my body.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

There was a moment of silence.

Zhang Lurang couldn’t help but say, “You’re exaggerating too much.”

Su Zai Zai widened her eyes, accusing him: “You think walking a bit is no big deal, so why did you tell me not to wander around?”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Su Zai Zai suddenly realized something.

She lowered her head, her expression seemingly regretful.

“I get it, you’ve already gotten what you wanted from me.”

“…”

“You used me and now you’re running away, burning the bridge after crossing the river.”

“…What?”

Su Zai Zai came to a conclusion.

“I gave you all my jelly, so now you don’t need me anymore.”

Zhang Lurang: “…Stop being ridiculous.”

Seeing her fall silent.

Zhang Lurang lowered his eyes to look at her and immediately compromised: “Five-thirty.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai spoke up.

“Rang Rang.”

“Mm.”

“You really care about me.”

“…”

“I’ve decided to buy you six more packs of jelly.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

******

In early November.

Overnight, a cold wind swept through.

Zhang Lurang felt a scratchy throat as soon as he woke up.

By the afternoon, he had already started coughing.

He hesitated for a moment but decided to go back to the dorm to sleep for a while in the afternoon.

During the break, he went to Class Nine to find Su Zai Zai.

Su Zai Zai came out of the classroom.

Seeing that he didn’t look well, she softly asked, “Are you sick?”

Zhang Lurang didn’t answer and simply said, “I won’t be going to the reading room this afternoon.”

“Oh.” Su Zai Zai didn’t ask further.

Having delivered his message, Zhang Lurang turned to leave.

Behind him, Su Zai Zai called out again: “Sick beauty.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

He really didn’t want to turn back.

But Su Zai Zai didn’t seem to need him to.

Soon, she continued, “Remember to check your phone when you’re back at the dorm.”

******

Zhang Lurang was woken up by his roommate.

His head was still a bit groggy.

He got up, went to the bathroom to wash his face, and was about to head back to class.

His mind was blank, yet he inexplicably remembered Su Zai Zai’s words.

—”Remember to check your phone when you’re back at the dorm.”

Zhang Lurang turned back to his locker, picked up his phone, and took a look.

—Those are all from me.

A message with no context.

He replied, somewhat confused: What?

There was no response from the other side.

Zhang Lurang didn’t think much of it, put his phone back, and

picked up his backpack to leave the dorm.

After a while, he returned.

He took the phone out of the locker and put it in his pocket.

He returned to the classroom.

On Zhang Lurang's chair was a small brown blanket.

On the desk was a thermos and a bag of medicine.

Opening the bag, one of the medicine boxes had a sticky note attached to it.

It read:

—With Su's love and care.

SLC Ch 21 – 30

Aug 16, 2024

Chapter 21

Something feels Different.

But this feeling is just too good.

—From “Su Zai Zai’s Fairy Diary”

Su Zai Zai sat in her seat, looking full of melancholy.

“When a beauty gets sick, they look so delicate and frail, it really stirs up feelings of pity.”

Jiang Jia: “...Are you done?”

Su Zai Zai nodded, a bit worried: “Isn’t that blanket too thin...”

“Huh? It should be fine. It’s not that cold right now, it should be enough.”

“I wonder if the water is too hot for him. I tested it on my hand, and it seemed okay.”

Jiang Jia continued to answer seriously: “If it felt okay on your hand, it shouldn’t be too hot.”

“Did I buy enough medicine? But the pharmacy near the school only had those options.”

"..."

"Maybe I should bring my dorm blanket for him."

Jiang Jia couldn't help but facepalm: "Su Zai Zai, is Zhang Lurang your son or something..."

Su Zai Zai widened her eyes: "Of course not."

Then she added, "But I could help him have a son."

Jiang Jia: "..."

On the other side.

Zhang Lurang reached out and pinched the note, pulling it off with a slight tug, letting it fall into his fingertips.

He looked at the contents of the note, momentarily speechless.

Then, he lowered his head, staring at the small blanket on the chair.

After hesitating for a moment, he picked it up.

Glancing at the clock on the wall, it was already close to 6:30.

Zhang Lurang had no choice but to fold the blanket neatly, place it on his lap, and sit down.

He took his phone out of his pocket.

Upon checking, he had already received a reply.

Su Zai Zai: Did you see it? Did you see it?

Zhang Lurang coughed lightly before replying: Mm.

He was just about to ask how much the medicine cost when Su Zai Zai sent another message: Don't talk about money with President Su, President Su has plenty of money.

Su Zai Zai: President Su's money is all yours, don't be so calculating with President Su.

Zhang Lurang: "..."

He really didn't know how to respond.

After thinking for a long time, Zhang Lurang decided not to reply.

The bell for the evening study session rang just then.

Zhang Lurang put his phone into the drawer.

A little while later.

He scratched his head and took the phone out of the drawer again.

He saw that she had sent two more messages.

—Rang Rang.

—Don't get sick.

Zhang Lurang stared at those two messages.

Until Zhou Xuyin patted him on the shoulder, indicating that the teacher had arrived.

Only then did he snap back to reality.

He stuffed his phone into the drawer.

Zhang Lurang picked up his pen and started on his homework.

But the pen tip remained motionless.

A few minutes later.

He reopened the bag, took out a box of cold medicine.

Using the warm water from the thermos, he swallowed two pills.

After taking the medicine, he lit up his phone.

Replied: Mm.

******

Thursday.

Su Zai Zai suddenly realized that walking normally didn't seem to hurt anymore.

As long as her wound didn't bump into anything, she basically felt no pain.

In the afternoon, when the two of them were returning from the reading room.

Su Zai Zai directly told him: “My foot doesn’t hurt anymore.”

Zhang Lurang glanced down at her foot and responded: “Mm.”

“So from now on, I can just go find you.”

Zhang Lurang paused for a moment, not replying.

Not getting a response from him, Su Zai Zai leaned in closer and shamelessly asked.

“Then can I come to your class to find you?”

Zhang Lurang didn’t hesitate much and nodded directly.

Su Zai Zai was so happy she almost jumped up.

“Anytime?”

Zhang Lurang thought for a moment: “Except during class.”

“Since you’re okay with it.”

“Mm?”

Su Zai Zai shamelessly added: “Then I also agree that you can come and find me.”

But Zhang Lurang didn’t seem to find anything wrong with that.

He seriously replied with a “Mm.”

His reaction made Su Zai Zai feel a little embarrassed.

Su Zai Zai changed the subject.

“Jiang Jia told me before that there are two really good-looking guys in your class.”

“Mm.” He responded absentmindedly.

“One is you, and the other is Zhou Xuyin, your deskmate.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang turned to look at her.

Su Zai Zai didn’t notice his gaze and continued: “When I went to give you something yesterday, I saw him…”

How could he possibly compare to you!

He’s not even as good-looking as a single strand of your hair!

Before she could say these words out loud, Zhang Lurang interrupted, “Su Zai Zai.”

Suddenly being cut off, Su Zai Zai was confused and responded, “Huh?”

His expression became unreadable as he said, “Don’t run around if your foot isn’t healed yet.”

Receiving this unexpected reprimand, Su Zai Zai innocently replied, “It’s almost better.”

Zhang Lurang scratched his head and looked down, seemingly lost in thought.

Su Zai Zai, with a playful grin, tried to change the subject.

“If you don’t want me to run around, then you come and find me?”

“Okay,” he answered immediately.

Su Zai Zai was caught off guard.

Zhang Lurang’s gaze seemed a bit unnatural as he looked away and asked, “How are you getting home tomorrow?”

Su Zai Zai’s thoughts were quickly redirected to this new topic. After thinking for a moment, she replied, “I’ll probably go with Jiang Jia to catch a bus at Maoye Plaza.”

Zhang Lurang turned to look at her and softly suggested, “Take a taxi home instead.”

“...Why?”

A taxi costs fifty yuan! Is he crazy?

“There will be too many people; you might get stepped on.”

Su Zai Zai looked down and obediently murmured, “Oh.”

Seeing her response, Zhang Lurang lowered his eyes to look at her and asked, “Didn’t you say you were going to teach me how to ride a bike?”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai got excited, “Oh yeah! When?”

“Then get better soon,” he said.

******

Friday night.

After finishing her English homework, Su Zai Zai sent a WeChat message to Zhang Lurang.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang.

Su Zai Zai: Are you walking Susu tomorrow?

It took a few minutes for Zhang Lurang to reply.

Zhang Lurang: Mm.

Su Zai Zai: What time?

Zhang Lurang: ...

She waited a few minutes, but he didn't say anything more.

Su Zai Zai couldn't believe it.

They had been through so much together already, how could the handsome guy's first instinct still be to reject her?

Su Zai Zai was angry and sent a threatening message: If you don't tell me, I'll head out now and wait outside your house.

Su Zai Zai: I'll leave at seven tomorrow morning to give you a chance to "accidentally" meet me.

Zhang Lurang: ...

Seeing his response, Su Zai Zai tossed her phone aside and buried herself in her blanket.

She felt like she wasn't acting well at all—worse than before, even more annoying.

The moment she got rejected, she felt like getting angry.

But she knew she had no right to be angry with him.

After a while, her phone buzzed again.

Su Zai Zai slowly dragged herself over to it and picked it up.

The lock screen displayed a message.

—Finish your breakfast before coming out.

Su Zai Zai rubbed her eyes and slowly typed a reply: There's nothing to eat at home.

She then stared at the words "The other person is typing..." on the screen.

Counting in her head.

One, two, three...

Five seconds later.

Her phone chimed.

—I'll buy it for you.

Su Zai Zai's bad mood disappeared instantly.

Her fingers danced across the screen.

Su Zai Zai: I want a red bean bun from that bakery next to Jinghua.

Zhang Lurang: Okay.

She couldn't help but roll around on her bed in excitement.

Then she pushed her luck: I want to eat it with you.

Zhang Lurang replied quickly.

—Okay.

******

The next morning, Su Zai Zai left her house right at seven o'clock.

She entered the elevator and sent a message to Zhang Lurang.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang, where are you?

Zhang Lurang: Outside your building.

Su Zai Zai smiled foolishly to herself.

It took her a few minutes to realize she hadn't pressed the floor button.

She blinked and quickly pressed the "1" button.

Stepping out of the building, she saw Zhang Lurang standing under

a tree not far away.

He was holding a bag in one hand and a black dog leash in the other.

Seeing her come down, he called out to the distance, “Susu, come back.”

At the same time, a person and a dog came bounding towards him.

Su Zai Zai shamelessly announced, “I’m here!”

The dog, Susu, barked as if in response.

Zhang Lurang: “…”

He bent down to attach the leash to Susu, a fluffy Samoyed dog.

Looking at the adorable dog, Su Zai Zai asked, “Can I walk her?”

Zhang Lurang didn’t hesitate: “No.”

Su Zai Zai was stunned, thinking she had misheard.

But she lowered her request and asked, “Then can I at least pet her?”

“No.”

This time, she was sure she hadn’t misheard.

After being rejected twice in a row, Su Zai Zai exploded.

“Is your dog a national treasure or something? I can’t even touch her!”

Her sudden raise in tone startled Zhang Lurang for a moment.

Soon he explained, “She’s aggressive towards strangers.”

Su Zai Zai huffed, “Do you think I’d be scared?”

After a moment of silence, Zhang Lurang finally spoke, “Yes.”

Su Zai Zai: “…”

“She might bite you.”

“Fine then, keep her away from me.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai still felt a bit scared.

After thinking about it, she nervously threatened.

“If she bites me, I’ll bite you.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t mean anything more by this.

Mainly because she hadn’t thought of anything else.

But for some reason, Zhang Lurang’s ears started to burn.

Like a small flame had been lit.

Chapter 22

“Hahaha, so cute.”

— From “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

After Su Zai Zai said that, she felt it might not have been appropriate.

Right now, teasing a great beauty can only stay on a mental level; if it rashly moves to the physical level, it might be too hasty.

She thought about it for a moment and added, “...your dog.”

Upon hearing this, the heat in Zhang Lu Rang’s ears began to subside. He turned his head to look at her, his eyes devoid of emotion.

Su Zai Zai, worried that he didn’t understand, repeated, “If your dog bites me, I’ll bite back, and I’ll bite your dog.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “...”

There was a moment of silence.

Zhang Lu Rang shoved the bag in his hand into hers and said in a deep voice, “Finish eating and then go back.”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai was a bit unhappy and muttered under her breath, “I didn’t wake up so early just to eat breakfast.”

“What?” He didn’t catch what she said.

She didn’t respond, quietly opening the bag.

Looking inside.

Three red bean buns, two pieces of toasted bread, and two bottles of pure milk.

As they talked, the two of them walked to a lawn in the community.

Zhang Lu Rang crouched down and untied the dog's leash.

Su Zai Zai's gaze followed the dog as it quickly ran far away.

Then, the two of them walked to a stone bench under the shade of a tree and sat down.

Su Zai Zai picked up a bottle of milk, inserted a straw into the aluminum foil at the bottle's mouth, and offered it to him like she was presenting a treasure.

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her and took it.

Looking at the bread inside, Su Zai Zai scratched her head, her face full of indecision.

"Lu Rang, will you be full with two red bean buns and a piece of toasted bread?" she asked.

Zhang Lu Rang nodded.

"How about with one red bean bun and a piece of toasted bread?"

"Mm."

Su Zai Zai persistently continued asking, "What if there's only one

piece of toasted bread?"

"...Mm."

Hearing his affirmative answers, Su Zai Zai happily made a decision.

"Then you'll just eat one piece of toasted bread."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

Su Zai Zai didn't notice his reaction, silently thinking: with this amount, if I eat slowly, I can probably stretch it out until noon.

And I can't just focus on eating; I have to talk, so I can slow down as much as possible.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and said, "Let me tell you a joke."

"..." He wasn't interested.

But Su Zai Zai didn't care whether he wanted to hear it or not and started anyway.

"Many people did poorly on the midterm exam. The teacher was furious, saying, 'The fill-in-the-blank questions were practically giving away 40 points, yet some people scored only 10 or 20 points? Everyone who scored between 10 and 20, stand up and copy the test paper ten times!'"

Zhang Lu Rang, as usual, showed no expression, keeping his head down as he bit into the toast.

“One classmate then said in relief, ‘Phew, I scored 21.’ Then another classmate spoke up and said, ‘I’m also lucky, I got 9.’”

After Su Zai Zai finished, she immediately burst out laughing.

Zhang Lu Rang had no reaction.

Now Su Zai Zai was at a loss: “Wasn’t that funny?”

Zhang Lu Rang paused before responding, “Mm.”

Su Zai Zai, who has a very low threshold for humor, began to feel a bit embarrassed and accused him, “Are you just focusing on eating?”

“…”

“Do you think that after you finish eating, I’ll give you some of mine?”

Zhang Lu Rang was about to deny it when he heard her continue, “Don’t even think about it.”

“…”

After her outburst, Su Zai Zai quickly softened, hurriedly handing over a red bean bun.

“Of course, I wouldn’t just give you a little. I spoil you so much; how could I do that to you?”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

Seeing that he seemed unwilling to take it, Su Zai Zai directly stuffed it into his hand.

She suddenly remembered something and asked, “Lu Rang, are you still planning to choose science for your major?”

Zhang Lu Rang held the red bean bun but didn’t move.

He replied nonchalantly, “Mm.”

Su Zai Zai responded with a slightly disappointed “Oh.”

Zhang Lu Rang turned his head to glance at her: “Study hard.”

She didn’t know why he suddenly said that, but Su Zai Zai still felt it was necessary to defend herself.

“I’ve always been studying hard.”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t say anything.

Su Zai Zai couldn’t help but continue speaking up for herself, “This time, including the science comprehensive exam, I ranked 825th in the grade!”

If she chose liberal arts, she would definitely get into the advanced class.

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang frowned, “I ranked 25th.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai was stunned for a moment before she spoke in disbelief.

“Then why were you unhappy that day? I thought you did badly, so I didn’t even dare to bring up grades and just kept trying to cheer you up.”

“…” He did feel like he hadn’t done well.

But Zhang Lu Rang didn’t dare say that now.

“I can’t believe it, you actually ranked 25th.”

“…”

“You’ve been toying with me in different ways.”

“…”

“You let someone who ranked 825th try to cheer up someone who ranked 25th.”

“…I didn’t.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t care what he said, continuing to ramble on.

“Zhang Lu Rang, if you don’t cheer me up, I might completely lose my spirit, fall into despair, and never be able to return to being the confident and domineering Su Zai, or the beautiful and lovely little fairy.”

Zhang Lu Rang had no idea what to say.

After holding back for a while, he finally squeezed out, “Be normal.”

“Choose: cheer me up or lose me, which one?”

"..."

"Hurry up and choose."

Zhang Lu Rang scratched his head, compromising, "...How do I cheer you up?"

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment, then grinned cheekily, "Ask me, who am I."

Looking at her, Zhang Lu Rang hesitated but still asked, "Who are you?"

"I'm Zai Zai!" She smiled with her eyes curved, dragging out the last syllable on purpose.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

After a while, Su Zai Zai asked, "Who are you?"

"..." Zhang Lu Rang felt like he was on the verge of breaking down.

Seeing the expectant look in Su Zai Zai's eyes, he lowered his gaze.

His eyes were full of defeat.

Soon, he slightly opened his lips and, in a serious tone, uttered four words.

"I'm Rang Rang."

******

These four words would probably keep Su Zai Zai in a good mood for a whole month.

She decided not to waste too much of his time.

Su Zai Zai sped up her breakfast.

Noticing out of the corner of his eye that she was almost done, Zhang Lu Rang called Su Su back and fastened the leash.

Su Zai Zai smiled widely, watching him without saying a word.

Zhang Lu Rang looked away and said coldly, “Go home.”

“Are you mad?” Su Zai Zai moved closer to him.

He didn’t respond.

“Don’t you think that kind of conversation is cute?” Su Zai Zai asked.

Zhang Lu Rang’s jaw tightened, and his mouth was set in a straight line, “No.”

“Then why did you say it?”

“…”

“You said it and now you’re upset.”

“…”

“And now I have to cheer you up.”

"..."

Su Zai Zai sighed and said, "You cheer me up with one sentence, and I have to cheer you up with ten."

Finally, unable to bear it any longer, he spoke, "I'm not mad."

Having had her fun, Su Zai Zai switched to another topic.

"When you're not at home, is it your parents who take care of Su Su?"

Zhang Lu Rang paused for a moment before slowly replying, "No."

Su Zai Zai, who had expected a definite "yes," was taken aback.

"Huh?"

"..."

"Then, who takes care of it?"

Zhang Lu Rang answered softly, "My uncle."

"Oh." Su Zai Zai didn't ask any more questions.

After a while. Su Zai Zai changed the subject again, "Lu Rang, I want to get a dog."

He frowned and said in a serious tone, "Don't get one."

Su Zai Zai was puzzled, "Why not?"

He looked at her and replied seriously:

“I’m afraid you’ll bite it.”

Chapter 23

A little note to commemorate today, Singles’ Day.

He just blocked me.

Haha.

— From “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

After getting home. Su Zai Zai returned to her room and looked at her phone.

7:40 AM.

Not long after, Su Zai Zai heard the sounds of her parents getting up.

She rolled over in bed.

Thinking about what Zhang Lu Rang had said earlier, Su Zai Zai couldn’t help but laugh in exasperation.

But when she recalled those four words, she decided to forgive him.

She wrapped herself up in the blanket.

After thinking for a bit, she sent a WeChat message to Zhang Lu

Rang.

Su Zai Zai: Lu Rang, how are you getting to school tomorrow?

It took quite a while before Zhang Lu Rang replied.

—My uncle will drive me.

Su Zai Zai: Does your uncle usually drive you?

Zhang Lu Rang: Mm.

Su Zai Zai: Then why did you take the bus last time?

Zhang Lu Rang: He was on a business trip.

Su Zai Zai stared at the content on the screen, a bit lost in thought.

She wondered why he didn't live with his parents.

He didn't seem to want to talk about it.

So she didn't ask.

******

Su Zai Zai didn't reply anymore and left her room.

She walked to the living room, sat down next to her father, and said, "Dad, I want to get a dog."

Her father paused and poured her a glass of water, "Have a glass of water to calm down."

“I’m serious about getting one.” Su Zai Zai refused the water directly, “I don’t need to calm down.”

A moment later, her mother came out of the bathroom.

She glanced at the two of them out of the corner of her eye, “What are you two talking about?”

“Daughter, you need to calm down.” Her father was so anxious he was scratching his head.

But such words couldn’t stop her at all, and Su Zai Zai immediately spoke up.

“Mom, I want to get a dog.”

Her mother was stunned for a moment, then her face lit up with a smile, “My good daughter, what a coincidence, I want one too.”

Her father: “…”

Su Zai Zai got excited right away and continued, “I want to get a Samoyed!”

“No Samoyed.” Her mother replied.

Su Zai Zai was a bit disappointed, “Then what kind of dog?”

“A Corgi.”

Su Zai Zai immediately protested, “No way! How can we get a Corgi? If I take it out for a walk in the morning, we might not make it back downstairs until evening!”

Her mother ignored her and turned to her father, “Old Su, stop watching, it’s time to go to work.”

Su Zai Zai leaned closer and tried to sweet-talk her mother, “Mom, wouldn’t a Samoyed be nice? It’s a smiling angel!”

Her mother gave her a glance and said slowly, “Either a Corgi or no dog.”

“…” Su Zai Zai quickly gave in, “Fine, Corgi it is.”

At least its short legs would highlight her long legs.

After her parents left, Su Zai Zai returned to her room.

She picked up her phone, just about to tell Zhang Lu Rang that she was getting a dog, when she saw a message from him.

It was sent five minutes after his last one.

— I can go by myself.

Su Zai Zai felt a bit puzzled.

What was the handsome guy trying to say?

Was he bragging about how capable he was, being able to get to school on his own?

Su Zai Zai didn’t know what to make of it, but she decided to play along.

She proudly replied: I can go to school by myself too. I haven’t

needed my parents to take me since third grade. Am I just as brave as you?

After successfully sending it.

Su Zai Zai stared at her phone, waiting for Zhang Lu Rang's reply.

After a long time.

Su Zai Zai waited until she was about to fall asleep, her eyelids growing heavy.

In a drowsy state, she heard her phone ding twice.

But she couldn't shake off the pull of sleep and fell into a deep darkness.

******

When she woke up again, Su Zai Zai instinctively lit up her phone.

After unlocking it, she saw that she was still in the chat with Zhang Lu Rang.

"zlr" retracted a message

"zlr" retracted a message

—Mm.

Su Zai Zai was completely confused.

She quickly asked him: What did you retract? And two messages?

Zhang Lu Rang: Nothing important.

Su Zai Zai got up in frustration, sitting cross-legged on the bed.

She propped her chin on her phone, thinking for a long time but couldn’t figure out how to get him to reveal those two messages.

She was getting anxious and accused him: How dare you do something and not own up to it!

Zhang Lu Rang: …

Su Zai Zai: If you don’t tell me, I’ll…

Su Zai Zai scratched her head, almost ready to kneel: Please, I’m begging you.

On the other end.

Zhang Lu Rang saw her messages and felt a bit helpless.

He put down his pen and seriously replied.

—It really wasn’t anything important.

Her curiosity was left hanging, unresolved.

Su Zai Zai pursed her lips, feeling inexplicably annoyed.

Su Zai Zai: Haha.

Su Zai Zai: I never thought you were this kind of person.

Su Zai Zai: Let me tell you, if you don't tell me, I won't be able to get through the day.

Su Zai Zai: I won't be able to eat, sleep, or study well. I might as well be a wreck.

Zhang Lu Rang: ...

Seeing him send another ellipsis, Su Zai Zai got even angrier.

Didn't he see that she was upset? Didn't he know that this would only add fuel to the fire?

Just as she was about to continue scolding him, she suddenly noticed what she had just sent.

The two words at the top.

"Brother."

Su Zai Zai: "..."

...Oh no!

This damn autocorrect, this damn nine-key pinyin keyboard.

Su Zai Zai immediately tried to fix it.

But the more anxious she got, the more mistakes she made.

— No, what I meant to say was "hehe"!

— No, no! I meant "hehe"!

He sent another ellipsis in response.

Su Zai Zai took a deep breath and decided to calm down.

She then slowed down and carefully typed out “hehe” using the 4-3-4-3 keys.

Seeing the options “哥哥” (brother), “呵呵” (hehe), and “喝喝” (drink drink) on the screen, she meticulously selected “呵呵” (hehe).

After confirming it was correct, she sighed in relief and happily pressed the green “Send” button.

To her surprise, the screen displayed a very long message.

“[zlr has enabled friend verification. You are not yet friends with him (or her). Please send a friend request, and once the other party has accepted, you can continue chatting.]”

Su Zai Zai: “…”

******

Saturday afternoon.

Zhang Lu Rang returned to the classroom.

He was just about to get up to refill his water bottle.

When he touched it, he realized it was already filled.

And it was warm.

He didn’t know who had refilled it for him.

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment but decided to go to the water dispenser to refill it anyway.

He stood up and was just about to leave when Su Zai Zai’s head popped in through the window.

Seeing that he was back in the classroom, she smiled brightly and called out, “Lu Rang.”

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her but didn’t say anything.

Noticing the water bottle in his hand, Su Zai Zai tried to please him.

“Is the temperature not right? I tested it on my hand before.”

Zhang Lu Rang put his foot back and sat down in his seat.

Su Zai Zai also walked in from outside and sat in the seat in front of him.

Zhang Lu Rang picked up the water bottle and took a sip.

Su Zai Zai watched him and softly asked, “Are you feeling better from your cold?”

He responded with a low “mm.”

After a while.

Su Zai Zai, after much internal debate, decided to use an angry tone.

She patted his desk and said angrily, “I can’t believe you blocked me.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

Su Zai Zai shamelessly continued, “You’re too much. Our friendship is so fragile. What’s wrong with me calling you ‘brother’? I’m definitely younger than you anyway.”

“…”

“Even if you’re younger than me, I still look younger than you. No matter how you look at it, I’m the younger one, so what’s wrong with calling you ‘brother’?”

Zhang Lu Rang couldn’t hold back anymore and said in a deep voice, “Then I’ll block you again.”

Su Zai Zai: “… I was just messing with you.”

Zhang Lu Rang lowered his head and picked up his pen to start working on his homework.

Su Zai Zai’s mood instantly dropped, but she stubbornly continued, “That was the autocorrect’s fault, you can’t blame me for it.”

“…”

“I didn’t do it on purpose, why are you so mad…”

“I’m not mad,” he replied.

Su Zai Zai propped her chin up with one hand, mumbling,

“President Su came all the way here just to refill your water, and now you’re giving President Su an attitude. President Su feels very hurt.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…I’m not.”

Su Zai Zai was about to say more.

A girl suddenly walked in from outside.

Seeing Su Zai Zai sitting in her seat, the girl’s expression immediately darkened.

Ye Zhenxin quickly walked over and rudely shouted, “Who are you? Can you stop sitting in other people’s seats? So annoying!”

Su Zai Zai was completely stunned by the sudden outburst.

She immediately stood up and instinctively apologized.

Ye Zhenxin completely ignored her attempt to de-escalate, her face full of anger, pointing at the chair, “Wipe it clean. I hate it when others sit in my seat. It’s disgusting.”

People around them started to look over.

Su Zai Zai, overwhelmed by her intense emotions, felt a bit at a loss.

But thinking about it, she realized that she hadn’t asked for permission before sitting in her seat.

So she might as well wipe it clean…

After thinking it through, she softly replied, “Oh.”

Then she turned to Zhang Lu Rang, “Can you lend me some tissues?”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t move, tilting his head slightly so his gaze met hers.

After a brief silence, Zhang Lu Rang finally spoke.

“Su Zai Zai, go back.”

Su Zai Zai blinked, “Don’t send me away, I’ll wipe it clean and then leave.”

“I’ll clean it for you,” he said softly.

Su Zai Zai opened her mouth, intending to refuse.

There’s no way she would let the handsome guy clean another girl’s chair!

She would rather die!

After a while.

Zhang Lu Rang glanced at her, his eyes carrying a hint of reassurance.

Then he added, “I’ll come find you later.”

Su Zai Zai, dazed by the look in his eyes, forgot to refuse and obediently nodded before leaving the classroom.

Only after Su Zai Zai had left did Zhang Lu Rang stand up.

He took a cloth from the podium, went outside, and washed it in the bathroom.

Ye Zhenxin called out to him from behind.

But he acted as if he hadn't heard her.

When he returned to the classroom and saw Ye Zhenxin already sitting in her seat.

Zhang Lu Rang's gaze turned completely cold.

He didn't say a word.

After putting the cloth back, he walked back to his seat.

After a while.

Ye Zhenxin turned around and softly said, "I got a little too worked up earlier, I didn't mean to. I hope I didn't scare that girl."

Thinking about Su Zai Zai's stunned expression when she was scolded.

His anger inexplicably flared up.

Zhang Lu Rang tugged at the corner of his mouth and let out a mocking laugh.

"Get lost."

Chapter 24

“I’m also very pretty. My grades are good, I’m not poor, and I have a great personality. I deserve to be with Lu Rang.”

— From “Su Zai Zai the Little Fairy’s Diary”

Ye Zhenxin was stunned. It was as if she hadn’t heard him clearly, or she just couldn’t believe it.

She looked at him and stammered, “What did you say?”

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly stood up, and the chair made a loud screeching sound.

It bumped into the desk behind it, making a clattering noise.

He didn’t respond to her and walked out with a cold expression.

The noise was so loud that people around them turned to look again.

Ye Zhenxin immediately felt so embarrassed that she wished she could disappear.

She turned back and lay down on her desk.

Thinking about the scene just now.

The girl was speaking with her head down.

Zhang Lu Rang held a pen in his hand, but his gaze was fixed on her the whole time.

He kept looking at her.

Only at her.

Ye Zhenxin's tears suddenly began to fall.

******

Su Zai Zai returned to her class.

About ten minutes later, Zhang Lu Rang appeared at the door of Class Nine.

Su Zai Zai cheerfully ran over to him.

But as she got closer, she noticed that he didn't look very happy.

The smile on Su Zai Zai's lips faded as she became puzzled.

"Lu Rang, what's wrong?"

Zhang Lu Rang looked down at her but didn't say anything.

His eyes had a delicate, moist shine, deep and captivating.

It was as if he could steal someone's soul.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and immediately reacted.

She almost jumped in anger and said, "Did that girl scold you?"

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

"How did she scold you?"

Not understanding why she was reacting this way, Zhang Lu Rang was suddenly at a loss.

His bad mood vanished instantly.

“No,” he said.

“But that girl was indeed a bit fierce,” Su Zai Zai muttered to herself.

“…” She wasn’t even listening to herself.

“Actually, to be honest, I’d be a bit scared to confront her too.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai patted his shoulder, comforting him, “You wait here, I’ll go get justice for you.”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t know what to say. After thinking for a moment, he asked, “…What are you going to do?”

She rambled on, trying to psych herself up.

“Let me tell you, I’m really good at scolding people.”

Noticing the doubt in his eyes, Su Zai Zai continued, “I just didn’t want to bother with her earlier, but if someone bullies me or my friends, I have a hundred ways to make them pay.”

Zhang Lu Rang was stunned, “Your friends?”

“…”

Su Zai Zai stared at him, also a bit confused.

She quickly realized her mistake and softly explained, “Not my friends, I mean, my people.”

After saying it, she felt it didn’t sound right, so she quickly corrected herself, “My friends.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

After a while, he sighed, “Su Zai Zai.”

“Yeah?”

“Don’t come here anymore.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai’s once enthusiastic mood deflated like a balloon.

Her head drooped down.

The tip of her shoe unconsciously scraped the ground, making a soft “swoosh” sound.

She replied with a faint “oh,” her voice so low it seemed to sink into the ground.

She couldn’t understand why her mood had suddenly dropped.

Zhang Lu Rang opened his mouth, intending to add something.

But before he could speak, Su Zai Zai asked, “Do you think I’m annoying?”

It was the first time she had asked.

The first time she couldn’t hold back.

Even though she knew asking this question made her seem even more annoying.

She still desperately wanted to know the answer.

Su Zai Zai didn’t know.

She didn’t know what Zhang Lu Rang thought of her.

Was she just a clingy, bothersome person who tested his patience to the limit?

She didn’t dare think about it.

How terrifying that would be.

What if all her flaws were magnified in his eyes?

If that’s how Zhang Lu Rang saw her.

What would she do?

Su Zai Zai suddenly regretted asking the question.

She immediately began thinking about how to naturally change the subject.

But before she could speak again.

Zhang Lu Rang frowned and immediately denied it.

“No.”

Su Zai Zai lifted her head and murmured, “Really?”

“No,” he repeated.

Hearing this answer, Su Zai Zai’s spirits instantly lifted.

She smiled and pushed further, “Not even for a second?”

“Not at all.”

He didn’t touch his neck, so he was telling the truth.

Su Zai Zai almost wanted to jump up and give him a kiss.

Seeing that her mood was no longer down, Zhang Lu Rang sighed in relief.

But he still emphasized, “Not even for a second.”

******

Feeling more confident, Su Zai Zai immediately started rattling off a series of complaints.

“Why did you block me? I was too scared to add you back because I didn’t want to upset you.”

“And when I went to see you, you didn’t talk to me, just kept trying to send me away.”

“And now you’re not even letting me visit anymore.”

After thinking for a moment, she counted on her fingers and said, “Do you think you’re so amazing just because you’re tall and handsome, come from a wealthy family, and have good grades?”

Zhang Lu Rang really couldn’t understand her thought process.

“...I don’t.”

“Let me tell you, that’s really...” Not that impressive.

She couldn’t bring herself to say the rest.

After holding it in for a while, she finally said, “I’m not bad either, okay! I’m also very pretty!”

Zhang Lu Rang twitched at the temple, “...Be normal.”

Su Zai Zai widened her eyes in protest, “Are you saying I’m not normal just because I said I’m pretty?”

“...”

“You always say I’m not normal, and I put up with it, but when I compliment myself on being pretty and you tell me to be normal, that’s something I absolutely cannot tolerate!”

“...”

“Why don’t you say I’m not normal when I compliment you?”

Zhang Lu Rang gave in, “Fine, you’re normal.”

“…” Su Zai Zai didn’t feel like she had won at all.

After a moment of silence.

Su Zai Zai brought up the question that had been bothering her.

“Why did you block me?”

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment.

Then he quickly said, “I didn’t block you, I just deleted you.”

Su Zai Zai was shocked by this answer.

“Isn’t that the same thing?!”

Zhang Lu Rang wanted to explain.

But when he opened his mouth, it came out as, “I was just joking with you.”

A few seconds later, Su Zai Zai finally reacted.

“You’re saying that deleting me was a joke?”

Her reaction left Zhang Lu Rang unsure whether to nod or shake his head.

“Who taught you that?” Su Zai Zai was completely confused, “Let me tell you, joking means that after deleting me, you immediately add me back, that’s what a joke is!”

“…”

“Now it’s been a whole day and night since you deleted me, and you still haven’t added me back.”

“I’ll add you back when I get home…”

Su Zai Zai interrupted him, “Zhang Lu Rang, you’ve hurt my feelings.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

“You have to make it up to me,” Su Zai Zai said.

“…”

“This time it’s easier than last time, don’t worry.”

“…”

******

After telling him how to make it up to her, Su Zai Zai suddenly remembered the original issue.

“After all this, I almost forgot to go get revenge for you.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s brows furrowed with worry, and he didn’t want to talk.

“I can’t hit anyone,” Su Zai Zai mumbled to herself, “So I’ll just resort to verbal attacks.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…Go back and study.”

“No way, you got scolded, how can I not stand up for you!” Su Zai Zai said angrily.

He was at his wit’s end, “You’re the one who got scolded.”

He couldn’t understand why she kept thinking she was the one being scolded.

Su Zai Zai’s anger immediately dissipated, and she asked in confusion, “She scolded me?”

“…”

“That doesn’t really count…” Su Zai Zai blinked, thought for a moment, and then said, “Maybe she just has some cleanliness issues, it’s understandable.”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t say anything more and softly said, “Go back.”

Su Zai Zai nodded and walked a few steps before turning back to look at him.

She asked hopefully, “Can I still come see you?”

Zhang Lu Rang stood still.

His back was straight, his figure tall and lean.

The blue-striped school uniform made him look even brighter.

“Su Zai Zai, study hard.”

He repeated this phrase.

Su Zai Zai felt incredibly frustrated, “I’ve always been studying hard.”

Zhang Lu Rang averted his gaze.

Then, in a soft voice, he said, “The science class and the liberal arts class are in neighboring classrooms.”

******

Back in class.

It wasn’t long before Zhang Lu Rang added her back.

Su Zai Zai happily sent him three words.

— Hehe.

He didn’t reply.

After evening study session and returning to the dormitory.

Su Zai Zai took a shower and saw that it was almost eleven o’clock.

She couldn’t help but ask: You didn’t forget, did you?

Su Zai Zai: Let me remind you.

Soon, he sent a voice message.

Su Zai Zai looked around, then smiled and put on her headphones.

His speech was fast and urgent, as if he was extremely unwilling.

But his words were clear and easy to understand.

— President Su is as beautiful as a fairy, while Lu Rang feels ashamed in comparison.

Chapter 25

Sometimes, I feel like I'm unlucky.

But in reality, I've actually been more blessed with luck.

—From "Su Zai Zai's Little Fairy Diary"

Su Zai Zai couldn't help but let out a laugh.

The dormitory had already quieted down.

The other three were studying under small lamps, but they weren't disturbed by her.

Feeling a bit embarrassed, Su Zai Zai quickly stifled her laughter. She bit her lip, trying to hold it in. She poked at the voice message again and, after listening to it several times, held it down to save it.

She tossed her phone aside and buried her head under the covers.

Silently giggling.

After a while.

Su Zai Zai reached for her phone again and started typing on the screen.

Su Zai Zai: Hey.

Su Zai Zai: Are you mad?

Su Zai Zai: If you're mad, just say so. Otherwise, with the screen between us...

Su Zai Zai: The incredibly beautiful President Su won't notice.

On the other end, after seeing her message.

Zhang Lu Rang opened the floor-to-ceiling window and walked back into his dormitory.

He sat cross-legged on the bed, thinking for a while.

Then, hesitating, he typed "Hmm."

But before sending it, he quickly deleted it.

He typed again: No, just studying.

******

The next day, after school in the afternoon.

Ye Zhen Xin turned down her roommate's invitation to eat together.

Seeing that most of the students had already left the classroom for dinner, she stood up.

She walked towards the fifth floor.

Turned right and entered the office.

The homeroom teacher, who was just getting ready to go out for dinner, raised an eyebrow when he saw her and smiled, “What’s up?”

Ye Zhen Xin stood in place and glanced around.

After confirming that there were no familiar students nearby, she spoke up.

“Teacher, Zhang Lu Rang and Su Zai Zai from Class Nine are dating.”

******

After the evening study bell rang.

The homeroom teacher of Class Nine walked into the classroom and brought up a few matters.

“I mentioned this last week, the education bureau will come for an inspection tomorrow. Boys… well, most of you have already gotten your haircuts. Girls, remember to tie your hair up tomorrow.”

Su Zai Zai twirled the ends of her hair around her finger, spinning it in circles.

She kept her head down, writing with a pen in her other hand.

It wasn’t clear if she was even listening to the teacher.

“The students on duty today, make sure to mop the floor.” The

homeroom teacher thought for a moment and continued, "Tomorrow, wear your school uniforms properly. Don't mix them with your formal clothes. If you get caught, you're done for."

Finally, he added a pointed remark.

"And remember, you're still so young. Focus on your studies and don't think about other things. There will be plenty of time for that later. There's no need to rush now."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai finally looked up.

Her gaze met the homeroom teacher's directly.

She was momentarily stunned, staring into his eyes without looking away.

It was the teacher who eventually averted his gaze.

Jiang Jia, sitting next to her, suddenly leaned over.

In a low voice, she asked, "Hey, do you think the homeroom teacher was talking about you?"

Su Zai Zai hesitated for a moment, "No way..."

"You and Zhang Lu Rang are that obvious?"

"Why are you saying it like we're actually together?" Su Zai Zai was baffled.

"...I think it's pretty close."

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai's eyes widened, looking as if she'd been wronged.

"There's no way! When I talk to him, we're at least a meter apart. If that counts as being together, I... I might as well die."

Jiang Jia: "..."

"You don't know how uptight the great beauty is. If I even say something remotely flirty, he gets mad immediately."

Jiang Jia didn't believe her at all: "It can't be that bad..."

"Of course it is! Like the day before yesterday, I accidentally called him 'big brother,' and he got so mad he blocked me."

"..."

Su Zai Zai was totally scared: "So, physical contact? Honestly, I don't have the guts."

"..."

Su Zai Zai came to a conclusion: "He's like a chaste and virtuous lady."

"..."

After saying that, she realized something wasn't quite right and immediately corrected herself.

"No, a chaste and virtuous Rang."

Jiang Jia twitched at the corner of her mouth: "...Let's just get back to our homework."

******

The next morning.

Su Zai Zai, still drowsy, slipped on her slippers and walked out to the balcony to freshen up.

The sky outside was just beginning to lighten.

The air was damp and cold, with the wind howling.

Su Zai Zai woke up immediately, shivering as she brushed her teeth.

After washing up, she casually ran her fingers through her hair.

With a quick twist, she tied it up.

Su Zai Zai walked back into the dormitory and closed the floor-to-ceiling window.

Seeing Xiao Yu about to go out to the balcony to wash up, she reminded her.

"Put on a jacket before you go out, it's cold."

Jiang Jia had just come out of the bathroom and glanced at her.

Then she pointed at Su Zai Zai's hair and said, "You should redo your hair, it's a mess."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai picked up a mirror from the cabinet and took a look.

“Not at all, it’s got volume. Perfect.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai, feeling playful, started talking nonsense: “Don’t be fooled by how I look. Every strand of my hair has been carefully adjusted and styled. You can’t just change their position casually.”

“…Haha.” So much chatter so early in the morning.

“Messing with it will bring a curse.”

Jiang Jia ignored her and went to the balcony to wash up.

Afterward, Su Zai Zai also turned around and went into the bathroom to change into her school uniform.

When she came out, Jiang Jia was almost done getting ready.

The two of them left the dorm together.

At 6:30 AM, there were still very few people in the cafeteria.

Most had already gotten their breakfast and found a seat, with hardly anyone queuing at the windows.

Su Zai Zai walked up to one of the windows and ordered two pieces of bread.

She found a seat and sat down.

Before long, Jiang Jia also came over.

Su Zai Zai looked at the noodles in Jiang Jia's bowl and sighed, "I suddenly feel like having noodles too."

Jiang Jia glanced at her, "Do you want to switch with me?"

"No need." She took a bite of her bread, "Bread is fine too."

Jiang Jia didn't say anything more, bowing her head to eat her breakfast.

A minute later.

"This bread is so dry..."

"It's really hard to swallow."

"How does the cafeteria even manage to make bread like this? It's unbelievable."

"I feel like I'm going to die of thirst."

Jiang Jia couldn't hold back anymore: "If you talked less, you might last a little longer."

Su Zai Zai immediately went quiet.

Jiang Jia thought for a moment and then said, "Should I go get you a bottle of milk?"

Su Zai Zai shook her head, still chewing on her bread.

Half a minute later.

She glanced at the window where drinks were sold and finally spoke up.

“There are too many people. By the time you get back, I’ll have finished eating. Alright, don’t talk to me. Don’t tempt me to talk; I want to live a bit longer.”

Just as Jiang Jia was about to say something, she suddenly noticed that the person sitting behind Su Zai Zai had stood up.

Carrying a shoulder bag and holding a tray in one hand, he walked out of the cafeteria.

Jiang Jia tilted her head slightly and said, “Isn’t that your handsome guy?”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai turned around and took a quick glance.

Then she quickly turned her head back.

“He was sitting right behind me?”

“Yeah.”

“Hmph.”

“...What are you doing?”

Su Zai Zai analyzed sadly, “If he had sat down before me, I would have noticed him. But I didn’t, which means he arrived after me.

From that angle, he definitely saw me, but he didn't say hello."

"...Maybe he didn't recognize you from behind."

"Impossible!" Su Zai Zai refused to admit it, "So, I'm saying he's a very cold person."

Jiang Jia was a bit speechless: "Does your handsome guy know that you keep badmouthing him like this?"

"When did I?" Su Zai Zai said innocently.

"..."

"This doesn't count; lots of people know about this."

Jiang Jia continued eating her noodles, mumbling indistinctly, "Really?"

"Of course, why wouldn't I talk about something everyone knows!"

"..."

"Zhang Lu Rang really is cold. Sometimes I just want to go up and hit him. If it weren't for him..."

Before Su Zai Zai could finish her sentence, a well-defined hand suddenly appeared in front of her.

Fair, slender, and strong.

He casually placed a bottle of milk in front of Su Zai Zai.

Then he turned and left.

Without even looking up, Su Zai Zai could recognize the owner of that hand.

Moreover... she didn't dare to look up.

Jiang Jia finished her noodles and then looked up.

Noticing Su Zai Zai's stunned expression and the extra bottle of milk on the table, she asked in confusion, "What happened?"

"Have you ever experienced despair?" she whispered.

"Huh?"

Su Zai Zai didn't say anything more.

She really hadn't expected Zhang Lu Rang to come back, let alone bring her a bottle of milk.

Looking at the milk on the table, Su Zai Zai reached out and touched it.

It was warm.

This brand seemed to be only available at the small shop.

Come to think of it, he really did leave quickly...

Su Zai Zai, as if trying to avoid facing reality, kept thinking about other things.

She sighed.

Inserting a straw into the bottle, she took a sip.

She felt like her luck wasn't good at all.

Every time she badmouthed him, she always got caught.

******

The School-Wide Exercise Break

The students from each class lined up outside their classrooms and made their way to the sports field.

A few girls hurriedly borrowed rubber bands from others, quickly tying up their hair in a rush.

The sun was already out.

The temperature wasn't scorching, just pleasantly warm.

It cast a golden glow on Su Zai Zai as she stood, making her shine.

Because of her height, Su Zai Zai stood at the end of the girls' line.

Her hair was naturally chestnut brown.

In the sunlight, the color became even more pronounced.

The music for the exercise routine began.

Su Zai Zai had just made her first move when someone pulled her

out of the line.

Before she could react, a loud voice accused her.

“Who told you to dye your hair?”

Su Zai Zai was stunned and turned to see who it was.

It was the head of the first-year students.

She pointed at her own hair and softly explained, “I didn’t dye it. It’s naturally like this.”

He frowned, not listening to her explanation at all.

“Go back this week and dye it back to black.”

“I really didn’t dye it,” Su Zai Zai explained again.

The head’s temper flared, and his voice grew louder and sharper, “Every student I catch says it’s natural. Do you think I’m that easy to fool? You can’t even come up with a different excuse?”

Su Zai Zai stopped talking.

The teacher had already made up his mind.

No matter what she said, he wouldn’t believe her.

Seeing that she was no longer arguing, the head’s expression softened a bit.

He pointed towards the teaching building and said, “Go back to the

classroom. The education bureau's inspectors are coming today. Don't come out here and embarrass yourself. Make sure to dye your hair by the weekend."

Su Zai Zai looked at him and, with a cold expression, said, "I'll go back to the classroom, but I won't dye my hair black."

"You..."

"Why should I suffer the consequences because you don't believe me?" Her temper flared as well, and she spoke firmly, "I've told you I didn't dye it, so I didn't dye it."

He wasn't reasonable at all, quickly shifting the topic to something else.

"Who allowed you to speak to a teacher like that?"

Su Zai Zai didn't want to engage with him any further: "If you don't respect me, why should I respect you?"

With that, she turned and walked towards the teaching building.

Before long, the head saw someone else walking by.

He quickly called out, "Hey! Where are you going?!"

Zhang Lu Rang turned and replied coldly, "To dye my hair."

******

Su Zai Zai hadn't made it to the teaching building when someone grabbed her by the elbow.

Instinctively, she turned to look.

Seeing it was Zhang Lu Rang, her first reaction was.

“Rang Rang, I didn’t curse you this morning.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

Her second reaction.

“Aren’t you doing the exercise routine? Where are you going?”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t respond, just looked into her eyes.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and asked, “Did you hear what the head said?”

He nodded.

The voice had been too loud, so he had looked over.

That’s when he saw her.

He was too far away to hear what she was saying.

He only caught the words “dyed hair” from the teacher.

Su Zai Zai didn’t care about others’ opinions, but she did care about his.

She anxiously explained, “Don’t listen to him. I didn’t dye my hair.”

Zhang Lu Rang nodded again.

Su Zai Zai sighed in relief and started lecturing him.

“Rang Rang, let me tell you, in situations like this, you mustn’t be afraid. Usually, if you act tougher than them, they won’t dare say much. They’re just typical bullies who pick on the weak.”

“…” He thought…

“He wouldn’t listen to reason and acted like shouting made him right. It’s so frustrating.”

“…” She might cry.

“I’m not afraid of him. He wouldn’t dare hit me. If he did, my dad would be the first to take him down.”

“…”

“At most, he’ll call my parents. My mom could easily tear him apart.”

“…”

“Either way, he’ll lose.”

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly found it amusing.

He wanted to pat her head; it looked so fluffy, soft, and cute.

After venting, Su Zai Zai’s anger subsided.

She remembered the milk from this morning and smiled, her eyes curving.

“Rang Rang, you bought me milk this morning.”

“Mm,” he responded softly.

“How should I repay you?” Su Zai Zai pondered.

“...No need.”

“I’ll give you all my assets.”

“...”

“I get it, you probably think it’s too little.”

As they walked into the teaching building, Su Zai Zai suddenly realized.

“So why did you come back?”

“...” He thought she understood.

“Did they also accuse you of dyeing your hair? Even though your hair is so black?”

Zhang Lu Rang was about to deny it.

Su Zai Zai continued, full of sympathy, “You’re worse off than me.”

“...” Forget it.

They reached the third floor.

Zhang Lu Rang was about to enter the classroom when Su Zai Zai

suddenly tugged on his shirt.

With a serious yet shameless expression, she said, “I really didn’t curse you this morning.”

Zhang Lu Rang wanted to tell her he had heard everything.

Before he could speak, Su Zai Zai defended herself confidently, “I hadn’t finished what I was saying. The next part was, ‘if it weren’t for your good looks.’ The first part was just to set up for that.”

“…”

“So my main purpose was to compliment you.” Her eyes were full of sincerity.

Zhang Lu Rang really wondered just how thick her skin could be.

After a moment of silence, he said, “…Go back.”

******

Su Zai Zai returned to class and did her homework for a while before Jiang Jia came back.

She quickly moved closer and asked, “You didn’t cry, did you?”

Su Zai Zai was speechless: “Why would I cry over something like this…”

Jiang Jia breathed a sigh of relief, “That’s good.”

After a while.

She asked, “Did Zhang Lu Rang come to find you just now?”

Thinking about it, Su Zai Zai became unhappy again, “Yeah, the head even accused him of dyeing his hair? Ugh, ridiculous.”

“No,” Jiang Jia lowered her voice, “I heard the boys in the back row say that he was the one who claimed he dyed his hair.”

Su Zai Zai: “…How is that possible.”

“Maybe they heard wrong.” Jiang Jia didn’t insist.

Su Zai Zai was stunned.

She thought, if it was true.

Then she was, after all, quite lucky.

******

Not long after the evening study bell rang.

Su Zai Zai was called to the office by the homeroom teacher.

She thought it was about the hair incident and didn’t think much of it.

Su Zai Zai pushed open the office door and walked in.

Immediately, she saw Zhang Lu Rang standing in front of the English teacher and the homeroom teacher.

Their eyes met.

Su Zai Zai felt a tightness in her chest.

She could guess that the teachers were suspecting the two of them of being in an early relationship.

Even though they really weren't, Su Zai Zai still panicked.

Because no matter what happened.

She didn't want Zhang Lu Rang to be dragged into it.

Chapter 26

He doesn't like to talk.

I can speak enough for both of us.

—From "Su Zai Zai's Little Fairy Diary"

Su Zai Zai instinctively clenched her fist, then released it.

She slowly walked over to stand beside Zhang Lu Rang.

Just as she got into position.

Mr. Wang, the homeroom teacher of Class Nine, got straight to the point.

"You two seem to have been getting pretty close lately."

Su Zai Zai was still thinking about how to respond.

But Zhang Lu Rang spoke up directly: "Yes."

“...What a lousy teammate,” Su Zai Zai thought.

Upon hearing this, Mr. Chen, the homeroom teacher of Class One, frowned: “You’re both so young. In two months, you’ll have the class placement exams. Every second in high school is crucial. Don’t waste your time on this.”

Su Zai Zai licked her lips and explained, “Teacher, it’s not what you think.”

Zhang Lu Rang seemed a bit dazed.

After a moment, as if he had come to some realization, his expression became slightly awkward, and his ears turned red.

Mr. Wang wasn’t convinced at all: “Whether it is or isn’t, you two should interact less. It doesn’t look good at school.”

Su Zai Zai blinked and earnestly repeated, “But it really isn’t.”

Mr. Chen sighed and softened his tone: “Zai Zai, you’ve got an English recitation competition coming up, and Zhang Lu Rang has a physics knowledge competition. You’re not kids anymore; you should know what’s more important.”

Suddenly, Zhang Lu Rang spoke up: “I can still get first place without preparing.”

Su Zai Zai suddenly found this amusing.

She smiled and said, “I can get first place too.”

Mr. Wang: “You two…”

“And we really aren’t…whatever you think we are.” Su Zai Zai decided to explain one more time, “If we’re not allowed to have friends of the opposite gender, why doesn’t Z Middle School just become an all-girls or all-boys school?”

“……”

Su Zai Zai sincerely added, “Teacher, if you think my suggestion is feasible, you can report it to the school. Otherwise, stop bothering us about it.”

“Su Zai Zai!” Mr. Wang got angry, pointing at her, “You can go home tomorrow! Come back when you’ve thought things through!”

Seeing this, Zhang Lu Rang took a step forward, positioning himself in front of Su Zai Zai.

His eyes seemed to emit a cold, sharp chill.

In a steady voice, he said, word by word, “She said there’s nothing between us.”

Su Zai Zai popped her head out from behind him.

“Teacher, I’m fine with going home, but you’ll have to ask my parents. If they agree, I’ll go.”

The two of them were tough and unyielding, leaving the teachers with no choice.

They could only send them back to class for now.

After exiting the office, Su Zai Zai lowered her voice and cheerfully praised him: “Rang Rang, you were so cool just now!”

Zhang Lu Rang: “……”

“Not at all like your usual delicate self.”

“……”

“Let’s head back. I’ll message you on WeChat tonight, don’t worry.”

“……Mm.”

******

After the evening study session ended, the bell rang.

Su Zai Zai packed up her bag, ready to head back to the dorm with Jiang Jia.

A classmate called out to her, “Su Zai Zai! Someone’s looking for you!”

Su Zai Zai instinctively looked towards the front door.

It was that fierce-looking girl…

Zhang Lu Rang’s former deskmate.

Su Zai Zai told Jiang Jia to head back first.

Then she walked up to the girl, puzzled, “You’re looking for me?”

Because of what happened last time, Ye Zhen Xin thought Su Zai Zai was an easy target.

She approached with a domineering attitude, angrily saying, “The teachers already found out about you two. Stop bothering him, okay? How can you even have the nerve with such bad grades?”

Su Zai Zai: “……”

She thought for a moment and softly asked, “You told the teachers?”

Ye Zhen Xin’s expression froze for a second, but she continued stubbornly, “So what if I did? I’m telling the truth, not making things up.”

Su Zai Zai chuckled, “You’re really stupid.”

Ye Zhen Xin: “……”

“What good does it do to tell me? It’s so dumb that even I can’t stand it.” Su Zai Zai was utterly baffled, “Do you like Zhang Lu Rang?”

“……”

“If you like him, why are you coming to your rival in love for attention?”

Ye Zhen Xin’s face flushed red instantly: “What are you talking

about?!”

“Forget it, go home, take a bath, and sleep. You’re not as pretty as I am, your figure isn’t as good as mine, your personality isn’t as nice as mine, you’re not as proactive as I am, and maybe your grades are better, but you’re still stupid. Just give up.”

“You…”

“Just a heads up, I’m definitely going to tell Zhang Lu Rang that it was you who told the teachers.”

“……”

“But still, thanks! Because of you, the guy you secretly like ended up protecting me.”

Su Zai Zai saw the tears well up in Ye Zhen Xin’s eyes.

She softened her voice and said gently, “Go ahead and cry. After this, take a fresh start and be a better person.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t bother with her any further.

She walked forward, turned a corner, and went downstairs.

So much time wasted.

She still needed to go back to the dorm to tease the handsome guy.

******

After Su Zai Zai finished her shower, she stood by the bed, drying

her hair while looking at her phone.

From the top bunk, Jiang Jia poked her head out and asked in a low voice, “Did you crush the flower with your ruthless hands?”

“Wrong choice of words,” Su Zai Zai retorted, “It should be the flower crushing the hands.”

“……”

She lifted her chin proudly and said, “I’m the flower.”

After a moment.

Su Zai Zai sighed and muttered, “I hate making things difficult for other girls, but she was really annoying.”

“What did she do?” Jiang Jia asked, curious.

Su Zai Zai huffed, “She tattled on me.”

“Was that why the teacher called you today?”

“Yeah.”

“Damn, what’s wrong with that girl?”

Xiao Xiao, from the neighboring bed, turned her head and curiously asked, “What are you guys talking about?”

The two of them went quiet and said, “Nothing.”

The dormitory fell silent.

Su Zai Zai opened her chat window with Zhang Lu Rang.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang.

Probably because she had warned him beforehand, his reply came quickly.

Zhang Lu Rang: Mm.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment: The teacher might call our parents. 😢😢

Zhang Lu Rang: ...

Su Zai Zai was about to type “Don’t be afraid.”

But before she could, another message came from him: Why are you crying?

Su Zai Zai: “.....”

She stared at the crying emojis she had just sent, silent for a long time.

After some hesitation, Su Zai Zai slowly typed: That was just an emoji...

But in the end, she deleted the message.

Su Zai Zai sighed, steeled herself, and replied: Nothing.

If she clarified, it would make the handsome guy look foolish.

It would make him seem stupid.

Su Zai Zai: Are you afraid of having your parents called to school?

Su Zai Zai: Actually, there's no need to be afraid. We're both totally innocent!

Zhang Lu Rang: Mm.

Su Zai Zai couldn't tell what he was feeling from that single word.

She thought for a moment and cautiously suggested: How about we keep a little distance at school?

Su Zai Zai: Just avoid getting caught by the teachers.

Su Zai Zai: Like we're having a secret affair.

Zhang Lu Rang: "....."

His fingers hovered over the screen, unsure of how to respond.

A few seconds later.

Su Zai Zai: Secretly nurturing our feelings...

Su Zai Zai: Friendship...

Zhang Lu Rang: ...

Su Zai Zai shamelessly added: I'm too lazy to type everything out; you should understand me.

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t want to deal with her anymore: Studying.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang, let me tell you.

Zhang Lu Rang: Mm.

Su Zai Zai: Your front desk girl came to find me today and told me she was the one who tattled to the teachers.

Su Zai Zai: So I’m telling you.

Su Zai Zai started to ramble: You can’t always be so nice.

Su Zai Zai: Sometimes, you need to be a little colder to people like that.

Su Zai Zai: Of course, I’m different.

Su Zai Zai: I’m the one who spoils you, President Zai. You have to be nice to me.

Su Zai Zai: A person should have a conscience.

Zhang Lu Rang: ...Got it.

******

The next day, after morning reading class.

Ye Zhen Xin hesitated for a long time before turning around to ask, “Yesterday...”

Zhang Lu Rang kept his head down, showing no reaction.

She steeled herself and asked in one breath, “Did Su Zai Zai say anything to you?”

Seeing that he didn’t respond, Ye Zhen Xin grew anxious.

“I’m doing this for your own good. How good can someone from a regular class be? Su Zai Zai couldn’t even make it into the top hundred in the midterm exams. I don’t want her to drag you down.”

Upon hearing this, he finally looked up, and, with a mix of irritation and seriousness, he retorted.

“Even without her science scores, she’s in the top twenty of our grade.”

Ye Zhen Xin was left speechless by his words.

After saying that, he lowered his head and continued writing.

“But I can also be in the top twenty,” she said, a bit resentfully.

Ye Zhen Xin had thought about it a lot the night before.

Judging by Su Zai Zai’s behavior, she guessed that Zhang Lu Rang liked girls who were more forward.

So even though she wasn’t getting a response, she kept trying to make conversation.

A minute later.

With a cold expression, Zhang Lu Rang nudged Zhou Xu Yin, who was sitting beside him.

“Switch seats with me.”

******

Su Zai Zai was sitting at her desk.

Huang Yuan Juan suddenly walked over and curiously asked, “Zai Zai, are you and Zhang Lu Rang from the honors class together?”

Su Zai Zai was taken aback for a moment: “No, we’re not.”

“Yesterday, when the homeroom teacher called you to the office, the people sitting by the window saw you and Zhang Lu Rang coming out together…”

Hearing this, a girl sitting in front of Su Zai Zai also turned around.

“I heard Zhang Lu Rang is very aloof. Don’t you find it boring to be with him?”

Su Zai Zai suddenly didn’t want to talk anymore.

After a while.

She couldn’t help but speak up: “Not boring at all.”

He’s so wonderful.

She knows it all.

Chapter 27

She touched his hand.

It was somewhat cold, but also felt warm.

In short... it was great.

—From *Su Zai Zai, the Little Fairy's Diary*

Friday night.

After taking a bath, Su Zai Zai lay on her bed.

She held her phone in her hand, her legs swinging back and forth.

Looking at the name "Zhang Rang Rang" on the screen, she couldn't help but roll over, hugging her phone and giggling.

After a while, she happily typed: Rang Rang.

Su Zai Zai: My foot is better now~

Zhang Lu Rang: Hmm.

Su Zai Zai: So, let's go cycling!

He didn't reply immediately.

Su Zai Zai kept staring at the "The other party is typing" indicator.

After half a minute, she couldn't hold back anymore.

She bit her lip and asked unhappily: You're not backing out, are you?

Su Zai Zai: Then give me back the number of jellybeans from six

rows plus one row minus one.

Su Zai Zai: No, with inflation, you should compensate me a hundred times.

Su Zai Zai: You broke our agreement, causing me great emotional trauma.

Su Zai Zai: Adding it all up, you probably owe me around a billion.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

He slowly deleted what he had just typed and replied: What time?

******

The next afternoon.

Su Zai Zai walked out the door holding a bag, with a cycling helmet in her hands.

Zhang Lu Rang, standing downstairs, saw what she was holding: "..."

Su Zai Zai ran over cheerfully and showed it to him.

"I bought it last week!" She said proudly.

"..."

Su Zai Zai handed him the bag and instructed, "Put these on first, knee and elbow pads, you mustn't get hurt."

Zhang Lu Rang pressed his lips together and took them.

“We can put the helmet on over there,” she murmured.

Zhang Lu Rang said nothing, but it was clear he resisted the helmet.

Noticing his expression, Su Zai Zai caught on.

“Do you think the helmet is ugly?”

“...Yes.”

Su Zai Zai felt a bit down: “Really? I even chose a plain black one because I thought you might find it too flashy.”

Seeing no reaction from him, Su Zai Zai didn’t insist.

“But I guess it isn’t very good-looking... Then let’s not wear it, just the knee and elbow pads.”

Zhang Lu Rang nodded.

Su Zai Zai went to the bike shed and wheeled out her bicycle.

The two of them walked side by side to an open space in the neighborhood.

Su Zai Zai suddenly spoke up: “Rang Rang.”

“Hmm.”

“Did the teacher call your parents?”

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment and said, “I don’t know.”

Su Zai Zai responded with an “oh” and switched to another topic.

“Do you know how long it usually takes for a normal person to learn how to ride a bike?”

Zhang Lu Rang thought seriously for a moment, just about to answer.

Su Zai Zai shamelessly lied: “For someone with talent, it takes at least six months. For someone as average as you, it would probably take at least a year.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

Noticing Zhang Lu Rang’s gaze, Su Zai Zai innocently asked: “You don’t believe me?”

“…”

“Why would I lie to you?”

He turned his eyes away and said in a deep voice, “I don’t know.”

“How can you not believe me?”

“…”

“Rang Rang, you can’t always be on guard against me.”

“…”

“I’m so good to you, why would I lie to you?”

“…” How could he believe it would take a year to learn how to ride a bike?

They reached the open space.

Just as Zhang Lu Rang was about to grab the bike’s handlebars, Su Zai Zai stopped him.

“No way! You can’t start practicing so soon!”

“…”

“We still have to go through the theory first!”

“…”

“I’m going to explain it to you.” Su Zai Zai pointed to the bike, “This is called a bicycle, you can also call it a pedal bike or a bike…”

Zhang Lu Rang really didn’t want to engage with her anymore.

“Its English name is ‘bicycle.’”

“…Hmm.”

Noticing his indifferent expression, Su Zai Zai frowned and started to make trouble.

“You tell me, how do you spell ‘bicycle’?”

“…”

“You don’t know? Let me teach you.”

“...Learn to ride the bike.”

“We are learning to ride the bike.”

“...”

After explaining the word to him, Su Zai Zai continued seriously, “Now we’ll learn about the bike’s structure.”

“Su Zai Zai,” Zhang Lu Rang couldn’t take it anymore.

“Yes?”

“Are you deliberately trying to stop me from learning?”

“Why would I?” She looked completely innocent.

Zhang Lu Rang lowered his head and stared at her expressionlessly.

Su Zai Zai couldn’t stand being stared at like that by him.

She immediately looked away and adjusted the height of the saddle.

Then she looked at him and relented, “Try it out and see if the height works for you.”

Zhang Lu Rang placed one foot on the ground, swung his long leg over, and stepped onto the pedal.

Su Zai Zai hesitated for a moment and still asked, “Rang Rang, are you sure you don’t want to wear the helmet?”

“Hmm.”

“Then I’ll hold on to you, I won’t let you fall, don’t worry.”

“Okay.” A hint of a smile flashed in his eyes.

Since Su Zai Zai’s bike didn’t have a back seat, she could only hold onto the rod under the saddle.

Zhang Lu Rang pushed down with his right foot, stepping onto the pedal.

Then he placed his left foot on it too.

Su Zai Zai held onto the back, gently reminding him, “I’m holding on, try to find your balance.”

Zhang Lu Rang responded with a low “Hmm.”

“Go ahead and pedal, I won’t let you fall,” she said seriously.

Considering that Su Zai Zai was holding on behind him, Zhang Lu Rang rode very slowly.

Seeing that he was pedaling well, Su Zai Zai cautiously let go.

But she kept her hands close to the rod, not daring to move too far away.

She suddenly got distracted.

Today, Zhang Lu Rang was wearing a black and white striped pullover, which was fitted and casual.

It was hard to see his muscle lines.

But because the saddle was almost at the same height as the handlebars, when Zhang Lu Rang rode, his body leaned forward slightly.

One careless move, and a bit of skin would show...

Su Zai Zai swallowed nervously.

She couldn't help but reach out and touch him.

Zhang Lu Rang's body stiffened instantly, his balance suddenly lost.

He quickly put one foot down to steady himself.

Quick reflexes—he didn't fall.

Su Zai Zai was startled.

Seeing that he didn't fall, she breathed a sigh of relief.

But then she quickly reacted and hurriedly said, "I didn't touch you."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

"I absolutely didn't! I absolutely did not touch you!"

“…”

Su Zai Zai immediately tried to shirk responsibility: “You were the one who twisted your waist toward me, I swear.”

“…”

“My hands were just resting there…”

Zhang Lu Rang remained silent, turning his head to look at her.

Su Zai Zai instantly shut her mouth.

After a moment, she weakly admitted, “Alright, it was me.”

Then she lied with a straight face: “There was a bug on you just now, I helped you get it off.”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t say anything more.

But Su Zai Zai felt inexplicably wronged: “So what if I touched you?”

“…”

“It’s not like I have any improper thoughts.”

“Hmm.” He responded quickly.

“Then why do you always act like you’re resisting to the death?”

“…I’m not.”

“Don’t lie to me.” Su Zai Zai lowered her head, frustrated. “It’s not like I don’t bathe, what are you rejecting? I—I took a bath for nothing.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s cheeks burned, feeling a bit embarrassed: “What nonsense are you talking about?”

“So you’re not rejecting me?”

“Hmm.”

Su Zai Zai pushed her luck: “Then you have to prove it to me.”

“...How?”

She held out her hand, grinning mischievously.

“Touch my hand, to prove you’re not rejecting me.”

He immediately turned his face away, awkwardly saying, “Don’t be ridiculous.”

Su Zai Zai widened her eyes: “What’s wrong with just touching hands?”

“...”

She thought for a moment, deciding to ease his psychological burden.

“Haven’t you ever high-fived a girl before?”

Zhang Lu Rang nodded.

Su Zai Zai laughed cheekily, hinting, “Then your first time is mine.”

“…”

“First time high-fiving a girl,” she explained.

Su Zai Zai held up her hand, “Come on.”

Zhang Lu Rang kept one foot on the ground, the other on the pedal.

His hands rested on the handlebars, eyes downcast.

After a moment, he lifted his left hand.

His cheeks were a bit warm as he quickly tapped her palm.

Then he immediately pulled away.

Su Zai Zai was so excited she wanted to jump up and lick her palm.

She forcibly suppressed the impulse, pretending not to care.

“Let’s continue learning to ride,” she said.

Zhang Lu Rang kept his head down, not responding.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and said, “Rang Rang, you should put on the helmet. You almost fell just now.”

“Not wearing it.” He refused directly.

She felt a bit annoyed: “But I might not be able to hold you up.”

“…”

“Wear it, it’s safer.” Su Zai Zai continued to persuade.

“…”

Su Zai Zai leaned closer to him: “Will you wear it?”

Her eyes seemed to be shining, clear and bright.

When she smiled, her almond-shaped eyes curved like crescent moons, with a small dimple appearing at the corner of her lips.

She looked both cute and lively.

Zhang Lu Rang turned his eyes away: “…Okay.”

Su Zai Zai quickly picked up the cycling helmet she had placed aside and handed it to him.

He took it and put it on.

Su Zai Zai stood by, watching him adjust the straps.

Half a minute later, she suddenly called out, “Rang Rang.”

Zhang Lu Rang responded absentmindedly.

Su Zai Zai praised, “You made the helmet look better.”

“…”

“Rang Rang, you’re really amazing.”

Although Zhang Lu Rang could guess that whatever she said next

would probably be something ridiculous, he hesitated and still couldn't resist asking, "What?"

"I was originally going to say that this helmet was ugly, but after you put it on—"

"..."

"I just want to say, it's a beautiful helmet now."

"...Act normal."

After getting ready, Zhang Lu Rang started riding again.

Su Zai Zai held on from behind; this time she didn't dare let go.

Ten minutes later.

Having already found his balance, Zhang Lu Rang couldn't help but say, "Su Zai Zai, you can let go now."

"No way." Su Zai Zai immediately objected, "What if you fall?"

"..."

Fifteen minutes later.

"Su Zai Zai, let go."

"I'm scared... I'm scared to let go," she said, looking distressed.

"..."

Twenty minutes later.

Zhang Lu Rang squeezed the brakes and said softly, “It’s getting late. Let’s continue another day.”

“Is it really difficult?” Su Zai Zai let go, acting like someone who had been through it all.

He stayed silent for a moment: “...Yes.”

******

The week before the final exams.

The homeroom teacher handed out the subject selection forms for choosing between humanities and sciences.

As soon as Su Zai Zai received it, she immediately filled in “Humanities.”

Next to her, Jiang Jia was curious: “Hey, didn’t you say Zhang Lu Rang is choosing sciences? You’re not following him?”

“Jia Jia,” Su Zai Zai said seriously, “You have to be rational when chasing a guy.”

“...”

“If I choose humanities, I can become a top student.”

“...”

“Now I’m flawless, perfect in every way.”

“...Just shut up.”

******

After the end-of-term ceremony.

Su Zai Zai sent a WeChat message to Zhang Lu Rang.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang, let’s go cycling tomorrow.

This time, his reply was slower than usual.

Su Zai Zai waited for a while, and just as she was about to go take a bath, her phone chimed twice.

She lit up the screen and checked.

—I’ll be going back to City B tomorrow.

—My home is there; I’ll be back when the new term starts.

Chapter 28

Haven’t seen him for a long time, I really miss him.

But of course, he must miss me too.

Because he likes me.

—From *Su Zai Zai, the Little Fairy’s Diary*

Su Zai Zai stared at those two sentences for a long time, not fully comprehending them.

She threw her phone back onto the bed.

Then, she grabbed her pajamas and headed towards the bathroom.

But soon, Su Zai Zai came back.

She picked up her phone and stared at those two sentences again.

Unable to accept this sudden parting, she felt a bit angry, but didn't have the courage to express it.

Su Zai Zai sniffled and slowly typed: Be careful on your way.

Before she could send it, another message came through.

It seemed like he had thought long and hard, yet still only knew how to say these few words.

—Don't be mad...

Su Zai Zai's fingers paused.

She immediately deleted her previous message and changed it to: I *am* mad!

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

Su Zai Zai: Whenever I go to get a drink, it only takes a minute, and I always tell you.

After sending that message, she didn't say anything else.

She just stared at the screen, waiting for his reply.

At times like this, she knew she needed to say less, otherwise, he wouldn't understand just how angry she was.

But when he didn't reply for a long time, Su Zai Zai couldn't help herself.

—You're going back to City B tomorrow, for a whole month! And you're only telling me now! And only because I asked you to go cycling tomorrow! What if I hadn't asked you...

Before she could finish venting, her phone chimed.

Su Zai Zai glanced at it.

Zhang Lu Rang: ...I'll buy you jelly.

Her anger dissipated in an instant.

Su Zai Zai bit her lip and, going back on her previous stance, quickly deleted what she was about to send.

Then she lightly tapped on the screen, pushing her luck: I want it now.

He replied quickly.

—Okay.

—Come down and get it in five minutes.

Su Zai Zai was a bit stunned, and immediately walked over to the full-length mirror to check herself.

She was still wearing her blue and white striped school uniform, which looked wrinkled.

Her hair was a bit messy from where she had run her fingers through it, and overall, she looked a bit disheveled.

Su Zai Zai smoothed her hair with her hands, washed her face in the bathroom, and then ran out.

Her mother was watching TV in the living room.

Seeing her at the entrance changing into outdoor slippers, her mother frowned and asked, "Where are you going this late?"

"I'm just going to the convenience store to buy something," she replied casually.

Her mother didn't ask further, just reminded her, "Come back quickly after you're done."

"I know."

"It's cold outside, wear something warmer."

"Okay."

Su Zai Zai pushed open the door, got into the elevator, and went downstairs.

She walked out of the building's entrance and saw Zhang Lu Rang standing under a tree not far away, waiting for her.

It seemed like every time, he would wait for her there.

Su Zai Zai walked over.

One step, two steps.

Something felt different.

This time, the feeling was very real.

She heard Jiang Jia's voice echoing in her ears.

—"Don't you think Zhang Lu Rang treats you differently? Like giving you his silver medal, or helping you move your chair earlier."

—"Think about it, even though that guy in front of Zhang Lu Rang was behaving like that, he didn't react at all. My friend told me he wasn't affected at all..."

—"Anyway, I think the things Zhang Lu Rang does for you, he wouldn't do for any other girl."

Su Zai Zai reached him, looked at the kraft paper bag in his hand, and said nothing.

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated, not knowing what to say.

After a while.

Su Zai Zai softly said, "Where did you get so much jelly?"

"I bought a lot before," he replied.

Su Zai Zai looked up at him.

Her eyes seemed to be filled with stars, bright and twinkling with anticipation.

“Zhang Lu Rang, do you like eating jelly?”

He paused, and lightly murmured, “Mm.”

Then he turned away, pretending to be calm as he touched his neck.

Su Zai Zai’s heart skipped a beat.

“Did you think the jelly I bought for you last time was tasty?” she asked.

Zhang Lu Rang kept touching his neck and nodded.

“Did you finish it?”

He finally put down his hand and obediently answered, “Mm.”

He didn’t like it, but he finished it.

He didn’t like it, yet he bought a lot of jelly to keep at home.

Su Zai Zai lowered her head.

She didn’t know how to describe how she felt at that moment.

Ecstatic, to the point of wanting to cry.

Seeing her fall silent, Zhang Lu Rang bent down slightly, making eye contact with her.

He forced a smile and said, “If it’s not enough, I’ll buy you more.”

His tone was a bit pleading.

Why is he being so nice to you?

What reason does he have to be so nice to you?

For the first time, Su Zai Zai allowed herself to entertain that thought.

Boldly, without hesitation, she thought of that reason.

Su Zai Zai looked at him and said, “It’s not enough.”

Seeing Zhang Lu Rang nod, Su Zai Zai quickly grabbed his sleeve.

“Buy me more when you come back.”

******

Su Zai Zai carried the bag of jelly back home.

She placed the bag on her desk and sat down on the carpet by her bed.

Su Zai Zai lit up her phone and opened the chat with Jiang Jia.

Her fingertips trembled slightly as she slowly typed.

—Jia Jia.

—I think Zhang Lu Rang might like me a little.

******

The next afternoon, after waking up from a nap.

Su Zai Zai grabbed her phone from beside her pillow and rubbed her sleepy eyes.

There was only one message from Zhang Rang Rang in WeChat.

—Arrived.

Su Zai Zai blinked a few times, then immediately sat up.

She thought for a moment, and shamelessly typed a message.

—It’s the first day without Rang Rang, and I miss him.

Zhang Lu Rang: ...

Su Zai Zai: Sigh, don’t you miss me?

Su Zai Zai stared at the “The other party is typing” indicator.

After a while, no reply came.

Su Zai Zai: You know what?

Su Zai Zai: When you’re typing, it shows on my end that “The other party is typing.”

Zhang Lu Rang: ...

Zhang Lu Rang: I’m going to sleep.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang.

Su Zai Zai: I want to travel.

Zhang Lu Rang: By yourself?

Su Zai Zai: Yep.

Zhang Lu Rang: Don’t wander around.

Su Zai Zai: I want to go to City B.

Zhang Lu Rang: …

He stopped replying again.

But the chat box clearly showed that he was typing.

Su Zai Zai smiled and waited patiently.

After a while, she finally received his reply.

—Stop messing around.

—It’s not safe to travel alone.

Su Zai Zai tossed her phone aside and sighed.

Let’s see how long she could hold out.

If she couldn’t take it anymore, she would definitely go to City B.

Su Zai Zai didn’t believe that if she just went ahead without asking, he wouldn’t come out to see her.

As she was thinking, she heard her parents coming home.

Su Zai Zai got up, opened the door, and walked out.

She still had to talk to the two elders about this first...

As soon as Su Zai Zai entered the living room, she saw a small cage placed beside the coffee table.

Inside was a tiny, two-colored corgi, lying down and looking around.

Su Zai Zai's eyes widened as she knelt beside the cage, curiously observing it.

Her mother came over and smiled, "Isn't it cute?"

Su Zai Zai nodded, looking at the little thing, her heart melting.

She couldn't resist opening the cage and reaching in to pet it.

She completely forgot about talking to her parents about traveling to City B.

"Your dad and I both have to work, so you'll have to take good care of it," her mother said.

Su Zai Zai nodded immediately, almost getting goosebumps from how adorable the little corgi was.

"What are you going to name it?"

Su Zai Zai stared at the corgi for a while before saying, "Short

Legs."

Her mother: "..."

******

With the sudden addition of a little life in the house, Su Zai Zai's plans to visit Zhang Lu Rang in City B were dashed.

Su Zai Zai poured some milk-flavored puppy food and goat milk powder into the dog bowl, then added warm water to soften it.

She placed it in front of Short Legs and said softly, "Go ahead, eat."

The puppy sniffed it and then slowly began to lick.

Su Zai Zai sat in front of it, talking to it: "From now on, your name is Short Legs, okay?"

"That's your nickname."

"Your real name is Zhang Xiao Rang, but only we know that."

"You're still young, so I won't teach you yet."

"But in the future, when I call you Zhang Xiao Rang, you have to respond to me."

"Just give me a 'woof.'"

"Got it? 'Woof.'"

Short Legs: "..."

After eating, the puppy slowly crawled onto the cushion and went to sleep.

Su Zai Zai watched it for a while.

She wanted to wake it up and make it play with her, but she couldn't bear to.

She lay back on her bed and started chatting with Zhang Lu Rang.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang.

Su Zai Zai: Let's play a game of idioms.

Zhang Lu Rang replied quickly: Sure.

Su Zai Zai: I'll start: *Hunqianmengying* (Haunted by dreams).

Zhang Lu Rang: *Yingchangreduc* (Lingering thoughts and feelings).

Su Zai Zai: I knew you were thinking of me too.

Zhang Lu Rang: ...

Su Zai Zai: If you miss me, you should say so. Otherwise, I won't know just by looking at the screen.

Zhang Lu Rang: Your turn.

Su Zai Zai pouted and continued: *Duriruyan* (Days pass like years).

Zhang Lu Rang: *Nianshaowuzhi* (Young and ignorant).

Su Zai Zai: Are you calling me stupid?

Zhang Lu Rang: … Are we still playing?

Su Zai Zai: Yes.

Su Zai Zai: But how can you insult me with such underhanded tricks?

Su Zai Zai: I'll forgive you this time, but you have to pick a new word.

Su Zai Zai: *Shunengshaoqiao* (Practice makes perfect).

Zhang Lu Rang was silent for a moment before replying: *Qiaoduotianong* (Ingenious craftsmanship).

Su Zai Zai: *Kung Fu Panda.*

Zhang Lu Rang: "…"

He pursed his lips and decided to be nonsensical too: *Tom and Jerry.*

Su Zai Zai: That's not an idiom, stop making stuff up!

Zhang Lu Rang: …

Zhang Lu Rang: I'm done playing.

Su Zai Zai: Sigh, Rang Rang, your temper is really bad.

Zhang Lu Rang: …

Su Zai Zai: Only I would put up with you like this.

Zhang Lu Rang really didn’t want to deal with her anymore.

He turned off his phone and worked on his homework for a while.

But eventually, feeling restless, he turned his phone back on and typed: I’m going to do my homework.

******

On New Year’s Eve.

Su Zai Zai went with her parents to her grandparents’ house for the New Year’s Eve dinner.

After the meal, the elders sat on the sofa chatting.

Her younger cousins went straight to the room to play on the computer.

The older ones found a quiet spot to play on their phones.

Su Zai Zai wandered around the courtyard.

The cold wind made her shrink her neck.

She sat down on the swing chair, curled up her legs, and swung gently.

She took out her phone from her coat pocket, her hands a bit stiff

from the cold.

Her typing was slower than usual.

She breathed warm air onto her hands.

Slowly, she typed: Rang Rang.

Su Zai Zai: Today is New Year's Eve, aren't you going to send me a red envelope?

She thought he was having dinner and wouldn't reply for a long time. Su Zai Zai exited the chat window and was about to chat with Jiang Jia. Her phone buzzed twice.

Su Zai Zai saw a small red circle with a "1" appear next to Zhang Lu Rang's profile picture.

—[WeChat Red Packet] Go buy some jelly.

Su Zai Zai blinked and clicked it open.

A big "200.00" appeared on the screen.

Her fingers paused, and she stammered: I was just joking.

Su Zai Zai decided to send a voice message: "Rang Rang, let's just say I borrowed this two hundred yuan from you."

"School starts on February 18th. If you come back a day early, I'll give you an extra ten yuan. If you come back two days early, I'll add twenty yuan, and so on."

After a while, he sent a voice message back.

His voice carried a hint of laughter as he said, “No need, keep it for yourself.”

“Do you think it’s not enough?” she asked, sounding frustrated.

Before he could reply, Su Zai Zai continued, “Then I’ll change it to one hundred.”

Su Zai Zai kept talking, and on the other end, he kept listening.

He didn’t have time to reply to her.

“I’m telling you, one of Short Legs’ ears finally stood up. One’s up and one’s down—it looks so silly.”

“He keeps pooping everywhere, sigh, I’m so exhausted.”

“There are so many physics worksheets, I don’t want to do them.”

“Have you finished your English homework? Do you need me to teach you?”

The voice messages kept coming.

Zhang Lu Rang, with his earphones in, listened carefully, wondering how she could have so much to say.

Finally, the last message played.

“Rang Rang, if you keep going back to City B, how about I apply to B University?”

Just as he was about to reply.

There were three knocks on his door.

A boy about his age opened the door and poked his head in.

He looked at Zhang Lu Rang and softly said, “Brother, Dad wants you to come out.”

Zhang Lu Rang lowered his head and pressed the power button.

That string of voice messages immediately disappeared from view. He was plunged into darkness.

Soon, he looked up and said to the boy, “Okay, I’ll be out in a minute.”

The boy nodded, then stepped back and closed the door.

Zhang Lu Rang turned the screen back on and quickly typed a message.

—Don’t apply to B University, apply to Z University.

Su Zai Zai sent another voice message.

It was very short, just one second. Zhang Lu Rang didn’t listen to it.

He pressed his tongue against the inside of his cheek.

Carefully, yet full of anticipation, he sent a voice message back.

“Let’s apply to Z University together.”

Chapter 29

When he's not in front of me, I get scared.

I'm afraid there might be another girl around him right now.

Maybe someone else is clinging to him shamelessly, just like I do.

What if he ends up getting attached to her?

This kind of fear and insecurity leaves me anxious and restless.

—From *Su Zai Zai, the Little Fairy's Diary*

Looking at the message on the screen, Su Zai Zai said without hesitation, "Okay."

The air outside was damp and cold, with a chill that seemed to pierce through to the bone.

The swing swayed as if it had invited the wind.

Her breath turned into white mist, spreading in front of her eyes.

Almost simultaneously, Zhang Lu Rang sent a voice message.

Shivering, Su Zai Zai tapped on the voice message.

She felt so cold that all she wanted was to listen quickly and then head back inside.

She held her phone close to her ear.

His voice was warm and smooth, like a gentle stream.

Each word was clear and distinct as it reached her ears.

—"Let's apply to Z University together."

But Su Zai Zai didn't react immediately.

She sniffed, her expression a bit dazed, and played it again.

This time she understood.

Zhang Lu Rang said, "Together."

Suddenly, she felt that this year was going to be a great one.

There probably wouldn't be a more joyful moment than this.

So, she decided not to make any wishes this year.

Because she had already received everything she wanted.

No need to be greedy anymore.

******

Zhang Lu Rang returned to his room.

He walked over to his desk, picked up his phone, and unplugged his earphones.

Su Zai Zai had sent a few more voice messages.

Zhang Lu Rang played the one he hadn't listened to yet.

—"Okay."

Before he could react, the next voice message automatically played.

On the other end, there was the sound of wind, and the girl's soft voice still carried a hint of a nasal tone.

—"It's settled then, we'll apply together, don't back out."

—"I think this year is going to be great, so I'm not making any wishes."

—"Is there anything you want? You can tell Zai Zai the little fairy, and she'll make your wish come true."

Zhang Lu Rang lay down on his bed, holding his phone in his right hand, his arm covering his eyes, blocking out the light.

He suddenly chuckled softly.

Then he moved his hand away and sent two messages.

—No need.

—Don't stay outside too long, go home.

******

Su Zai Zai didn't reply immediately, leaving Zhang Lu Rang unsure of what she was doing.

He stood up, walked over to his desk, and sat down.

He placed his phone in the most visible spot and, after confirming that she hadn't sent any more messages, he shifted his gaze away and reached for his pen.

Before he could start writing, the door opened again.

Zhang Lu Li walked in and sat down on his bed.

The room remained as quiet as it always was when Zhang Lu Rang was alone.

After a while, Zhang Lu Li, seeming to have hesitated for a long time, finally made up his mind and spoke.

"Brother, don't pay attention to what Uncle and the others said."

"Mm," Zhang Lu Rang responded.

"I think they're really annoying too, they're just sick."

"..."

There was a brief silence.

Zhang Lu Li licked his lips and changed the subject. "Brother, is Z City fun?"

Zhang Lu Rang didn't answer.

"Just now, Dad said that starting next semester, you'll be going back to study at home. The high school exams in Z City and B City are different, the question types are different too..."

Zhang Lu Rang's pen paused, and he replied softly, "Got it."

"And for local students, the admission score for B University is a bit lower. I feel like this way, you'll have it a bit easier."

"..."

"Brother, let me tell you, B University..."

Zhang Lu Rang interrupted him, "Let's not talk about this."

"Oh... okay."

Seeing that he wasn't going to say anything more, Zhang Lu Rang sighed and spoke up.

"Z City is great."

Zhang Lu Rang's initiative to talk made Zhang Lu Li's interest perk up again.

"I have a classmate whose family is from there, every time I hear him describe it, I want to go see it."

"Mm."

"Brother, can I visit you in Z City after the semester starts?"

"..."

"Are you staying in a dorm? I could come over on the weekend, and you could show me around."

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang was momentarily distracted.

In his mind, he pictured Su Zai Zai's smiling face, carefree and silly.

She was always laughing, like a fool.

He pressed his lips together and softly refused, "No."

Zhang Lu Li groaned in disappointment and asked, "Why not?"

"I won't have time."

******

Zhang Lu Rang knocked on the study door.

After hearing a response, he pushed the door open and walked in.

His father was sitting at the large desk, looking over some documents.

He didn't lift his head, nor did he speak.

Zhang Lu Rang didn't say anything either, standing quietly where he was, waiting.

After a while, his father looked up at him, his voice low and stern, tinged with frustration.

"Have you been studying properly over there?"

Zhang Lu Rang stood straight and didn't say anything.

“You’re not just playing around, are you?”

“…”

“Don’t go back next semester. Your uncle is busy, he doesn’t have time to look after you.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang finally spoke, “I live in a dorm, I don’t need Uncle to watch over me.”

“And do you think you can keep up with the progress when you return for the second year?”

“…”

His father pulled out his report card from the drawer and sighed.

“22nd in your grade. I don’t even know what to say.”

Zhang Lu Rang wanted to say:

His first monthly exam, he ranked 32nd.

For the midterms, he was 25th.

This time, he ranked 22nd.

He was improving every time.

But what good was that if no one noticed?

“Don’t go back to Z City. If no one is watching over you, I can’t feel at ease.” His father tossed the report card into the trash can next to

him. “Get up early tomorrow. Your mom has found an English tutor for you.”

“Can’t I take the college entrance exam in Z City?” he asked softly.

His father ignored him, simply saying, “Go read a book and get some sleep.”

******

Zhang Lu Rang returned to his room.

He didn’t even bother turning on the lights, heading straight to his bed and lying down.

He lit up his phone and opened the chat with Su Zai Zai.

She had just replied: I’m home.

Su Zai Zai: Today we had dinner at my grandparents’ house. Sigh, the elders keep bringing up grades…

Su Zai Zai: But luckily, I’m the top student among them, hehe.

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly really wanted to hear her voice.

He lowered his gaze and slowly typed: **Su Zai Zai.**

Zhang Lu Rang: Weren’t you going to help me make a wish come true?

Su Zai Zai: What do you want?

Su Zai Zai: If I have it, it's yours.

Zhang Lu Rang felt a tightness in his chest, his eyes stinging slightly.

He swallowed hard and said hoarsely, "Tell me a joke."

Seeing that he sent a voice message, Su Zai Zai immediately initiated a voice call.

Zhang Lu Rang was startled for a moment, but instinctively accepted.

When the call connected, Su Zai Zai's voice came through the line.

Her tone sounded a bit different from usual, but her words were exactly the same.

"Rang Rang, can you hear me?"

Zhang Lu Rang pulled over his earphones and put them on: "Mm."

Su Zai Zai seemed a bit troubled and hesitated before speaking.

"You want to hear a joke, huh? But I haven't come across anything funny lately."

"Then never mind." He really just wanted to hear her voice.

There was a brief silence.

Su Zai Zai cautiously asked, "Are you feeling down?"

"..."

"Why? It's New Year's Eve; you should be happily receiving red envelopes."

Zhang Lu Rang didn't respond.

Her tone turned gloomy, sounding a bit discouraged: "You never say anything."

Zhang Lu Rang's fingers tapped lightly on the blanket, as if he was contemplating how to respond.

Before he could say anything, Su Zai Zai continued, "Sigh, now I'm feeling sad too."

"..."

"Your mood is contagious, even over the phone."

"I..."

"Why are you unhappy?"

Zhang Lu Rang thought for a moment and decided to share one of the lesser reasons for his bad mood.

"I ranked 22nd in my grade for the final exams."

Upon hearing that, Su Zai Zai immediately shared her own results.

"I ranked 823rd."

"..."

"We both improved! Isn't that great?"

Hearing that, Zhang Lu Rang chuckled.

His mood lifted a little.

Hearing him laugh, Su Zai Zai continued, showering him with praise.

"But you're more impressive than me. You moved up three spots! A whole three spots! I only moved up two!"

"Alright." There was a smile in his voice now, sounding much less downcast than before.

But Su Zai Zai still felt that wasn't the real reason for his sadness.

After some internal debate, she decided to ask again, "So why are you unhappy?"

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment, then decided to be honest.

"My dad wants me to go back to B City for school."

The other end of the line went silent.

Zhang Lu Rang didn't even hear her breathing.

He took off one of his earphones and lit up the screen to check.

The call hadn't been disconnected.

Zhang Lu Rang hesitantly said, “Hello?”

The call immediately ended.

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

******

Su Zai Zai’s mood right now felt like…

A perfectly sunny day, suddenly struck by lightning, and she was the one struck, even though she’d been safely at home.

Her phone buzzed a few times as Zhang Lu Rang sent messages.

Su Zai Zai sat cross-legged on her bed and set his messages to “Do Not Disturb.”

She didn’t have the courage to block him.

She didn’t even check what Zhang Lu Rang had sent.

Instead, she opened the chat window with Jiang Jia.

Su Zai Zai: My mood right now… is indescribable.

Jiang Jia replied instantly: Together at last?

Su Zai Zai: Haha.

Su Zai Zai: Dumped.

Jiang Jia:…You weren’t even together, so how could you be

dumped?

Su Zai Zai: He just told me we'd apply to Z University together, and now he says he's going back to B City for high school. Do you think he's messing with me?

Jiang Jia: Those two things aren't contradictory...

Jiang Jia: He can still apply to Z University with you even if he's in B City.

Su Zai Zai: No.

Su Zai Zai: If I'm not around to remind him of my existence, he'll definitely forget about me soon.

Su Zai Zai suddenly felt like crying.

He's in another province, another city, and she felt helpless.

That sense of attachment could be so easily defeated by distance.

Su Zai Zai buried her face in her blanket, her tears soaking into it, leaving dark spots.

Soon, she lifted her head.

She went online and checked flight tickets from Z City to B City.

But it was pointless.

A few days ago, it might have worked, but now, with the New Year approaching, her parents definitely wouldn't let her go.

Feeling frustrated, Su Zai Zai opened the chat window with Zhang Lu Rang.

—What's wrong?

—Say something.

—Su Zai Zai.

—I'll come back to Z City.

Su Zai Zai licked her lips and slowly typed: **Really?**

Zhang Lu Rang: Mm.

Su Zai Zai: You scared me by not saying the whole thing.

Zhang Lu Rang: ...

Su Zai Zai: You should have said, "My dad wants me to go back to B City for school, but I don't agree." That's how you should've said it. You definitely did it on purpose to scare me.

Su Zai Zai: I'm so shaken, I feel weak...

Su Zai Zai: I'm going to sleep now.

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

******

Despite what his father said, Zhang Lu Rang secretly booked a flight ticket.

On the morning of the seventh day of the New Year, he returned to Z City.

Zhang Lu Rang entered the house, unlocking the door with the code.

Su Su, the dog, jumped up, placing its front paws on him, wagging its tail.

He smiled and rubbed its head.

His uncle, Lin Mao, walked out of the kitchen, sipping on a glass of milk.

Seeing that Zhang Lu Rang was back, he didn't seem surprised.

He lazily nodded toward him and said, "After you unpack, give Su Su a bath. It smells awful."

Su Su stuck out its tongue and barked once.

Zhang Lu Rang silently nodded.

"I'll take you to school tomorrow, remember to wake me up."

"...Mm."

"Don't listen to your dad; he's got issues."

"..."

"Your mom too."

“…”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t bring much back, just a backpack.

He placed it in his room.

Then he went downstairs to give Su Su a bath and blow-dry its fur.

After finishing everything.

Zhang Lu Rang returned to his room, and Su Su followed him, lying down next to his bed.

The room was quiet.

The person was quiet, and the dog was quiet too.

Zhang Lu Rang smiled again and sent a message to Su Zai Zai.

—I’m back in Z City.

Chapter 30

I used to hope that he would be good to me.

Now, I only hope that he will allow me to be good to him.

I just want to spoil him…

Am I going crazy? *TAT*

—From “Su Zai Zai’s Little Fairy Diary”

The curtains were tightly closed, and the room was dim.

Only the faint light from a phone was visible.

Zhang Lu let patiently wait.

The phone vibrated, and he glanced down at it.

He quickly stood up, walked over to Su Su, and squatted down beside it.

Zhang Lu gently patted its head and asked with a smile, “Do you want to go out for a walk?”

******

Before going out, Zhang Lu went into Lin Mao’s room.

Lin Mao was typing on his computer and didn’t look up when he noticed Zhang Lu entering.

Zhang Lu stood there for a moment before speaking softly.

“Uncle, I want to take the college entrance exam in Z City.”

Lin Mao’s hands paused as he turned to look at him.

After a brief silence, Lin Mao sighed and said, “The proof required for taking the exam in Z City is a lot, and your household registration is in B City. Besides, your parents aren’t here.”

“……”

“I’ll think of a way,” he said.

Zhang Lu was silent for a while and then nodded, “Okay.”

Just as he was about to turn around and leave, Lin Mao spoke again.

“A-Rang, don’t let it affect you too much.”

“……”

Lin Mao withdrew his gaze and said seriously, “You’ve already done very well.”

Zhang Lu forced a smile and responded in a low voice.

“Where are you going?” Lin Mao suddenly asked.

Zhang Lu paused and slowly said, “Taking Su Su out for a walk.”

He thought he had gotten away with it.

But in the next second, Lin Mao continued to ask.

“The little girl who taught you to ride a bike last time, who is she?”

“……”

“Ah, I saw her when I got off work.”

“……”

Lin Mao confidently came to a conclusion, “Looks like a girlfriend.”

Zhang Lu finally spoke, his expression a bit unnatural.

“She’s not.”

“Oh.”

Quickly, Zhang Lu added, “She’s only fifteen.”

A year had passed, so she was probably sixteen by now.

But she was still too young.

So young that he felt just touching her would feel like a crime.

******

Su Zai Zai was assigned to the intensive humanities class.

Her new deskmate was Wang Nan, who had been in the same class as her before.

Wang Nan walked in from outside and sat back down, speaking with a bit of frustration.

“Hey, Su Zai Zai, I heard we’re having military training next week…”

Su Zai Zai’s pen paused, and she turned her head in disbelief to look at him.

“Didn’t they say military training was canceled? Why this semester…”

“I don’t know, it seems that they’ve scheduled both military training and agricultural education, starting Monday morning.”

"....."

Su Zai Zai immediately got up and walked out of the room.

The intensive science class was right next to the humanities class.

Zhang Lu sat in the last row of the first group, near the back door.

Su Zai Zai called out to him, "Rang Rang."

Zhang Lu turned his head and looked over.

Leaning against the doorframe, Su Zai Zai spoke to him, "It seems like we have military training next week."

Zhang Lu didn't react much, just nodded.

"But it's better to have military training now than in September, when it would be scorching."

"Yeah."

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and continued, "I heard the research institute area is really sunny. I'll bring sunscreen for you over the weekend. Make sure to use it during the training."

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lu frowned, "I won't use it, don't bring it."

Su Zai Zai was silent for a while, then said, "Do you think using sunscreen makes you feel too feminine compared to the other boys?"

"....." He didn't answer, but it was clear she had hit the mark.

“Rang Rang, you just don’t understand.”

“What?”

“Other boys don’t use it because no one buys it for them,” Su Zai Zai said with a grin.

“……”

“So, do you want it or not?”

Su Zai Zai stared at him until he turned his head back.

Then, in a muffled voice, he said.

“……Okay.”

******

The first day at the agricultural research institute, military training began.

The instructor, after giving a long stern speech, started collecting phones.

He held a burlap sack, waiting in front.

Su Zai Zai obediently took out her phone from her bag.

She walked up to the instructor and placed her phone in the sack.

After changing into the military training uniform, the instructor led the intensive humanities class to one of the training grounds.

Once there, Su Zai Zai noticed that Zhang Lu was training on the ground right next to their class.

Because of this, she purposely stood in the second-to-last row.

Military training was the ugliest; she needed to find a way to communicate with her beautiful friend...

To not let him look over here.

******

Early the next morning.

In her sleep, Su Zai Zai felt uncomfortable. When she woke up, she felt a heavy sensation in her lower abdomen, and a bad feeling came over her.

It was still early, and her dormmates were still asleep.

Su Zai Zai quietly got out of bed and walked outside.

When she reached the bathroom, she saw that her period had indeed started.

Su Zai Zai usually didn't feel much during her period, except on the first day.

On the first day, the pain was enough to torment her.

She put on a sanitary pad, washed up, and returned to the dorm.

Her dormmates gradually woke up one by one.

Su Zai Zai lay back on her bed to rest for a while and unknowingly fell asleep.

Xiao Xiao, who had been assigned to the intensive humanities class with her, came back from the bathroom and immediately shook her awake, saying, “Zai Zai, get up quickly. It’s almost nine o’clock, and if we’re late, the instructor will remember us!”

Su Zai Zai was a bit dazed but quickly got up and put on her shoes.

The two of them rushed out the door.

As they were nearing the training ground, Xiao Xiao noticed something, “Zai Zai, where’s your hat?”

Su Zai Zai was startled and instinctively touched her head.

“I…” She was anxious, thinking as she walked, “I think I left it in the bathroom…”

“What should we do?”

Su Zai Zai hesitated for a moment and said, “I’ll go back and get it…”

“There’s no time.” Xiao Xiao pulled her into the lineup and whispered, “Let’s see what the instructor says. It’s the first day; maybe he’ll make an exception.”

Su Zai Zai nodded but didn’t say anything.

As the whistle blew, the instructor approached.

He bent down to place his water bottle on the ground and then scanned the group with a cold expression, “Stand straight.”

The whole class obediently stood still.

“Stand for fifteen minutes, no moving.”

“……”

“If you need to move, report first.”

The instructor spoke as he circled around them.

He quickly noticed Su Zai Zai, who wasn’t wearing a hat.

His expression darkened as he walked up to her.

“Where’s your hat?”

“……”

“I told you yesterday, not a single item—hat, shirt, pants, belt, shoes—should be missing.”

Su Zai Zai softly said, “You did.”

“Then why didn’t you wear it?”

Su Zai Zai, who was feeling increasingly uncomfortable due to her period, responded weakly, “……I forgot.”

His voice grew louder, “How come you didn’t forget yourself?”

Just as Su Zai Zai was about to explain that she wasn't feeling well, she saw someone running towards her.

Behind him, another instructor was shouting angrily, "Did I tell you to move?"

Zhang Lu ran up to Su Zai Zai.

Breathing slightly heavily, he placed his hat on her head.

The hat was warm from the sun and a bit damp with his sweat.

Su Zai Zai was completely stunned.

Zhang Lu said nothing and simply walked back.

The instructor didn't make things difficult for Su Zai Zai, but he looked at Zhang Lu with interest.

Zhang Lu's instructor, with a cold face, watched him return.

He didn't let him rejoin the group, instead repeating in a stern voice, "Did I tell you to move?"

Zhang Lu softly replied, "No, sir."

Then the instructor spoke again, ordering, "Get ready for push-ups."

Zhang Lu immediately dropped down and held the position without moving.

Su Zai Zai asked the instructor for permission to rest under the

shade of a tree.

She stared at Zhang Lu.

While she felt touched, she also felt sad.

Seeing Zhang Lu being punished made her feel really sad.

The instructor beside him sneered and said, “Do you think what you did was cool?”

Su Zai Zai lowered her eyes and murmured,

“It was definitely cool.”

SLC Ch 31 – 40

Aug 16, 2024

Chapter 31

So Beautiful That It Feels Unreal

—From “Su Zai Zai’s Fairy Diary”

The whistle blew, signaling the end of a short break.

Su Zai Zai saw Zhang Lu Rang stand up and head towards the restroom. She quickly jogged to follow him. Hearing footsteps behind him, Zhang Lu Rang stopped and looked back at her. Su Zai Zai stood in front of him, tiptoed, and placed the hat back on his head.

He didn’t resist, softly saying, “If you’re not feeling well, go sit down.”

Su Zai Zai took sunscreen out of her pocket and handed it to him.

“Rang Rang, remember to apply it, your face is already red.”

“……”

“The sun is strong; if you don’t apply it, you’ll get sunburned, and it’ll hurt.”

“Okay.”

“Make sure to put it on your ears too, and reapply every two or three hours, or it won’t be effective.”

He obediently replied, “Hmm.”

“Stop moving around so much; push-ups are really tiring,” Su Zai Zai reminded him.

“Got it, go back now.”

Su Zai Zai was silent for a moment, then said, “My psychological endurance isn’t that weak.”

“What?”

“No matter how harshly the instructor scolds, I won’t cry.” She said seriously.

Happy because of you, sad also only because of you.

******

Lunchtime.

After wiping her body with hot water in the restroom, Su Zai Zai returned to the dormitory.

She was about to climb into bed when Xiao Xiao from the lower bunk immediately grabbed her, gossiping, “Zai Zai, what’s the deal with that cute guy from Class 2?”

“Nothing.” She said listlessly.

“Still not feeling well?”

“Hmm.”

“Then you should sleep for a bit.”

Half-asleep, Su Zai Zai could vaguely hear the other five girls in the dorm talking excitedly about today’s events in low voices.

“He’s really handsome, why don’t I have a boyfriend like that!”

“But does he have to be so high-profile? It’s a bit annoying.”

“Kind of, yeah…”

She frowned and pulled the blanket over her head, shutting out the outside world.

On the other side,

Zhang Lu Rang was lying on his bed, studying his English vocabulary book.

His roommate Li Yu De came over, giving him a thumbs up, “Rang, you’re really cool.”

Another boy joked half-seriously, “Just getting punished with push-ups to win a beauty’s heart, Zhang Lu Rang, you’re quite the strategist.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang paused in flipping through his book.

Li Yu De added, “Yeah, girls really fall for that, sigh.”

“I can’t take it anymore, I need to put in the effort too. We’re already in the second semester of high school! If I don’t start dating now, I’ll never have the chance for a high school romance.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “……”

A thought stirred in his mind.

But a scene suddenly flashed in his head.

At night, under the starry sky.

The girl’s face was red, full of bewilderment.

—“I never thought about this, really, never. I swear…”

—“I’m only fifteen this year…”

Zhang Lu Rang’s temple twitched.

He pulled himself back to the present, focusing again on his vocabulary book.

…better forget it.

******

After a nap, Su Zai Zai felt much better.

She got up half an hour early, folded her blanket into a neat square.

After applying sunscreen, she started to change clothes.

This time, making sure she hadn't forgotten anything, she left the dorm.

She was quite early; more than half the class hadn't arrived yet.

Su Zai Zai found a shady spot to sit down, took off her hat, and hugged her knees in a daze.

Soon, a boy came over.

He squatted beside her with his legs wide apart, asking curiously, "Desk mate, are you not feeling well?"

Su Zai Zai glanced at him without answering.

"What's going on between you and that guy from the class next door?" Wang Nan asked casually.

"....."

"I'm asking you a question!"

"A lot of things." Su Zai Zai replied perfunctorily.

"....."

After a moment of silence,

Wang Nan suddenly reached out to tuck her hair behind her ear, teasing, "Isn't it hot with your hair down like this?"

Su Zai Zai frowned, slapping his hand away, "What are you doing?"

After saying this, she didn't want to stay there any longer and stood up.

Wang Nan instinctively stood up too, saying, "Hey, I was just joking with you."

Su Zai Zai turned, puzzled, "Then why did you touch me?"

"....."

Already in a bad mood, she didn't want to waste any more words on him.

Su Zai Zai was about to put her water bottle in place when she turned and saw Zhang Lu Rang looking her way.

She was startled, immediately running over to him.

She asked in a low voice, "Did you put on sunscreen?"

"Hmm."

"I forgot to tell you, remember to apply it half an hour early."

"Okay."

Su Zai Zai blinked, recalling the earlier incident.

To avoid any misunderstanding, regardless of whether he saw it or not, she had to explain.

"Did you see what happened just now?"

Zhang Lu Rang looked away, not speaking.

“Rang Rang, don’t be jealous.”

“I’m not.” He frowned, raising his hand to touch his neck.

“……”

Suddenly, Su Zai Zai found him very cute.

Her mood instantly lifted.

“It wasn’t my fault, he suddenly reached out, I didn’t have time to react.” Su Zai Zai explained seriously, thinking for a moment, then continued, “I feel you’re at a disadvantage too, how about you touch me once too?”

Zhang Lu Rang: “……”

Shamelessly, Su Zai Zai said, “Otherwise, I’ll wash my hair tonight and offer myself tomorrow.”

“……”

“Say something…”

Before she could finish, Zhang Lu Rang suddenly raised his hand.

He ruffled her hair like he was petting a soft kitten.

Su Zai Zai hadn’t even reacted.

Zhang Lu Rang quickly looked away, leaving a sentence behind as

he walked off.

“If you’re not feeling well, remember to ask the instructor for leave.”

Su Zai Zai stood there, nodding foolishly.

Before the training, they stood at attention for fifteen minutes.

The instructor talked as he walked around the class.

A few minutes later, he stopped in front of Su Zai Zai.

He tapped the brim of her hat with his finger, sternly saying, “Who allowed you to smile?”

For the first time, Su Zai Zai felt so wronged.

She couldn’t help it!

******

On the day the military training ended.

The school rented buses to take the students back to school, from where they would then go home on their own.

Su Zai Zai was standing in line with her class.

The class teacher suddenly walked over and said, “The bus assigned to our class is a bit small, it only has 40 seats, ten students will have to take the buses of other classes.”

Su Zai Zai was holding an umbrella, looking down at her phone.

"Three will go to the Science Intensive class bus, another three to the Fifth Humanities class bus, and the remaining four..."

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai raised her hand sharply, "Teacher! I volunteer to take the Science Intensive class bus back to school!"

The teacher was taken aback by her interruption, "...Okay."

Then, she sent two messages to Zhang Lurang.

—Lurang, I'll sit next to you in a bit.

—Save me a seat.

Zhang Lurang: "..."

******

After getting on the bus, Su Zai Zai immediately saw Zhang Lurang sitting in the second to last row.

She walked over and saw his bag placed on the seat next to him.

Zhang Lurang raised his eyes and casually moved his bag away.

Su Zai Zai sat down and turned to look at him.

His skin, under the sunlight, was dazzlingly white.

Zhang Lurang looked out the window, showing only half of his side profile.

His eyelashes drooped, long and curled, lightly trembling.

His lips were lightly pressed together, slightly curving upwards.

After admiring him for a while, Su Zai Zai said, “You must be very meticulous with your sunscreen application.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

“When we have military training in college, I’ll buy you sunscreen.” she said softly.

After a while, she didn’t get a response from him.

She didn’t mind, hugging her bag and curling up in her seat, closing her eyes.

Soon, Zhang Lurang pulled her bag over and stacked it on top of his own.

Then he said softly, “Sleep.”

Su Zai Zai looked at him and obediently said, “Oh.”

She was indeed tired and soon fell asleep.

Zhang Lurang stared out the window, dazing off for a while.

Then, he took out a vocabulary book from his bag to study.

After a while, the bus jolted.

Su Zai Zai’s head tilted, leaning on his arm.

Zhang Lurang's body stiffened momentarily but soon relaxed.

He licked his lower lip and turned to look at her.

Looking at her delicate face, he suddenly spoke very softly.

"I'll buy it for you."

"In the future, whatever you want, I'll buy it for you."

Zhang Lurang retracted his gaze.

In his mind, he thought, let her lean for ten minutes, then wake her up.

Ten minutes later, he thought, another ten minutes.

And so he thought all the way.

******

Su Zai Zai had arranged to meet Jiang Jia at the school gate, then they would go to the station together.

"I just came back with Zhang Lurang," Su Zai Zai said cheerfully.

Jiang Jia was looking down, sending a message to someone.

After a while, she responded, "Nice, the expert in chasing the heartthrob."

Thinking about this week, Su Zai Zai sighed, "Military training is so painful, and not being in the same class as you is the worst."

“Stop bragging, the whole grade knows about your big beauty putting a hat on you.”

“…”

“Good eye, found a wife-loving one.” Jiang Jia teased.

Su Zai Zai said nothing, curling her lips.

“Let me tell you something,” Jiang Jia scratched her head, a bit embarrassed, “I’m with Guan Han now.”

Su Zai Zai was stunned, stopping in her tracks, looking at her in shock.

Jiang Jia was a bit embarrassed, patting her arm, “What’s with you, too exaggerated…”

“You…” Su Zai Zai didn’t know what to say.

“Not long, just the week before military training.”

Su Zai Zai suddenly lowered her head, “I feel like such a failure.”

Jiang Jia: “…”

“I’ve been chasing the big beauty for…” Su Zai Zai started counting on her fingers, “one, two…six, almost half a year, my god…”

“…”

“This week, there must be substantial progress!” Su Zai Zai raised her hand in a vow.

“...Don’t be impulsive.”

******

On Saturday afternoon, Su Zai Zai asked Zhang Lurang to walk the dog together.

The little short legs were already four months old.

Su Zai Zai put the leash on it and took it out.

She met Zhang Lurang downstairs.

The two walked to the lawn, let the dog loose, and found a place to sit.

They were silent for a few minutes.

Su Zai Zai hesitated on how to start.

Soon, she said tactfully, “Does your Soso have a partner?”

Zhang Lurang: “...”

Thinking about it, the gender seemed undecided.

Su Zai Zai continued, “Is Soso male or female?”

“Female.”

Su Zai Zai immediately got excited, “My little short legs are male.”

“...”

“Do you think they are suitable?”

“...No.”

Su Zai Zai widened her eyes, asking, “Why! The genders match!”

Zhang Lurang was silent for a moment, a bit embarrassed, “Not reachable.”

“Wha...” Su Zai Zai immediately understood, her ears turning red, “Lurang, you’re slightly dirty.”

Zhang Lurang: “...”

“Impressed.”

“Su Zai Zai!” Zhang Lurang called her, frowning.

She immediately quieted down.

After an awkward pause.

Just as Zhang Lurang was about to speak.

Su Zai Zai suddenly spoke, saying something that caught him off guard.

“Zhang Lurang, you like me.”

Zhang Lurang instinctively turned to look at her.

At that moment, the surroundings fell silent.

She didn’t speak again, nervously clutching her sweaty hands.

Her eyes were firm, unwavering.

Zhang Lurang’s mind went blank.

He couldn’t remember anything, couldn’t hear any sound.

He could only see her.

Chapter 32

For the first time, I wanted to tell him to get lost.

But I didn’t have the guts. I held it in.

Held it in until I couldn’t anymore and burst into tears.

——From “Su Zai Zai’s Little Fairy Diary”

Zhang Lurang’s gaze fell, noticing her clenched fists.

Her grip was tight, nails digging in.

Zhang Lurang wondered, if he denied it.

Would she feel embarrassed or hurt?

Or just laugh it off?

He raised his eyes again, meeting her determined gaze.

Su Zai Zai pressed her lips together, stubbornly waiting for his answer.

Like a child who couldn’t get their candy.

Zhang Lurang didn’t understand why she asked this question.

Had he been too obvious, making her uneasy?

Zhang Lurang suddenly felt a bit distressed.

He was silent for a moment, then softly responded.

“Yes.”

Feelings like this shouldn’t be hidden.

If hidden, what if the other person believes it?

Explaining later would be troublesome.

Moreover, he couldn’t hide it.

Zhang Lurang looked away, his expression unreadable.

He didn’t know how Su Zai Zai would react next.

The scene froze for a moment.

The next second, Su Zai Zai grabbed his hand, stifling a scream.

“Lurang, do you really like me? You like me! You like me!”

Zhang Lurang: “...”

Her eyes shimmered with tears from excitement.

Even with his affirmative answer, there was still a hint of caution in her eyes.

Zhang Lurang sighed and said, “Yes, but I won’t let it affect you…”

Before he could finish, Su Zai Zai interrupted.

“How can it not affect! It must affect! If it doesn’t affect me, you’re not a man!”

“…”

Her excitement made her voice crack.

Su Zai Zai calmed down, pretending to be composed.

“Lurang, I’ve been chasing you for half a year! You should give me a title now, right!”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang turned sharply to look at her.

His face full of disbelief, he was stunned for a long time.

Su Zai Zai felt embarrassed under his gaze: “…Why are you looking at me like that.”

His face fell, and after a long pause, he said, “You told me no.”

Zhang Lurang’s words reminded Su Zai Zai of her previous reply.

——”Do you like me?”

——”I’ve never thought about it, really, never…”

Su Zai Zai sweated nervously, denying calmly, “I never said that.”

“You did.” Zhang Lurang insisted.

“I really didn’t.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai surrendered: “Alright, I did.”

Zhang Lurang’s face still looked bad, but a blush gradually appeared.

It felt different from what he expected.

Being deceived… wasn’t so bad.

“Well, I was embarrassed.” Su Zai Zai lowered her head, whispering.

“…Didn’t seem like it.”

Thinking back to that time, Su Zai Zai still felt her reaction was clever.

“I knew you’d reject me, so I didn’t give you the chance.”

“…”

“And if you had rejected me then, you’d probably end up lonely. So, in a way, I saved your life.”

Zhang Lurang’s temple twitched: “Stop talking nonsense.”

“It’s not nonsense. You obviously love me to death.”

Zhang Lurang’s face burned: “Su Zai Zai!”

“Sigh, so when should we start dating? Today or tomorrow.”

“…” He fell silent, not answering.

Su Zai Zai waited patiently.

He’s trapped now, no need to rush.

After a long time, Zhang Lurang hesitated: “You’re still in high school.”

Su Zai Zai blinked, feeling frustrated: “You’re in high school too. We’re the same age. Don’t talk to me like you’re a generation older.”

Ignoring her, he continued: “Do your parents have strict rules?”

To ease his burden, Su Zai Zai kept talking nonsense.

“Of course not! They encouraged me to date when I was in elementary school.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Su Zai Zai wanted to say more, but Zhang Lurang said: “It’s still too early.”

Alright, she didn’t want to affect his studies either.

They could date after the college entrance exam; she could wait.

They already understood each other's feelings; just a matter of time.

Though not official, she could probably get more affectionate with him now.

Su Zai Zai suddenly felt very happy.

But two years still felt long.

She persisted: "Then when?"

Zhang Lurang thought for a moment, slowly saying: "After you graduate from university."

Su Zai Zai: "..."

She turned to him, thinking she misheard: "What did you say?"

"..."

"Did you just say two extra words, 'university'?"

"...No."

Realizing, Su Zai Zai's eyes widened in disbelief: "Zhang Lurang! Are you crazy!"

Zhang Lurang was taken aback by her reaction: "What's wrong."

Su Zai Zai demanded an explanation: "Why wait until after

graduation?"

"You're still young." He said seriously.

"..." For the first time, she was at a loss for words.

Su Zai Zai's spirit started to crumble, analyzing angrily: "Lurang, are you reincarnated, with grandchildren already?"

"..."

"Or did you come from an old society."

Zhang Lurang frowned: "Stop talking nonsense."

Su Zai Zai exploded: "Zhang Lurang! You're too selfish!"

"..."

"You deprived me of early romance! Now you want me to start my first love at thirty! You're dreaming! You're too selfish!"

"I..."

"I don't want to talk to you anymore. Don't talk to me."

Su Zai Zai turned away, walking to her dog, tying the leash.

Zhang Lurang followed, at a loss.

He paused, softened his voice: "Su Zai Zai, early romance isn't good."

Su Zai Zai tied the leash but didn't get up.

Zhang Lurang hesitated, then squatted in front of her.

Up close, he saw her eyes red, tears falling.

Zhang Lurang was stunned, panicking: "Why are you crying?"

"It's too scary..." Su Zai Zai cried, "Being single for six years is terrifying. Don't talk to me..."

He couldn't help but laugh.

"How about after the college entrance exam." Zhang Lurang compromised, gently coaxing.

Su Zai Zai instantly stopped crying.

His words made her feel incredibly happy.

Two years was nothing...

They'd pass in a flash.

She sniffed, seriously saying: "Then June 8, 2015, at 5 PM."

Zhang Lurang nodded obediently, not daring to say more, only: "Don't cry."

******

Su Zai Zai went home.

Exhausted, she lay on the bed for a while, then picked up her phone to text Jiang Jia.

Su Zai Zai: I...

Su Zai Zai: Sigh.

Jiang Jia: What's up.

Su Zai Zai: Did you know? Zhang Lurang is more conservative than my dad.

Jiang Jia: ...

Su Zai Zai: People with his looks should date more while they're young.

Jiang Jia: What's going on?

Thinking of Zhang Lurang today, Su Zai Zai's eyes reddened again. She desperately typed a message —Hope you see me marry Zhang Lurang before we're forty.

Chapter 33

Want to run away? Dream on.

If you offer yourself, I might consider it.

—From "Su Zai Zai's Fairy Diary"

In June, the weather gradually shifted from cool to hot.

The sky was clear and blue, and the concrete ground was scorching under the sun.

The sound of cicadas chirping could be heard intermittently, quite loudly.

In the classroom, seven or eight students were gathered around the bulletin board at the back door, checking their midterm exam results.

Soon, cries of despair filled the room.

Xiaoxiao couldn't help but turn her head from the front to speak to her.

Lowering her voice a bit, she nodded towards someone in the class.

"That Lu Yu, came second in the grade this time, and she's still complaining about not doing well."

Su Zai Zai propped her chin with one hand, lazily doodling in her notebook with the other.

Hearing Xiaoxiao's words, Su Zai Zai lifted her head, looking a bit hesitant.

She soon responded, "But she ranked first last time."

Xiaoxiao swallowed her next words.

"...Alright, I just don't get the world of top students."

Sensing the conversation was dying, Su Zai Zai changed the topic.

“Who’s first this time?”

At the same time, the person sitting next to her returned.

Just in time to hear Su Zai Zai’s question, Wang Nan raised an eyebrow and said, “Me.”

“Oh.” Su Zai Zai didn’t say anything more.

Seeing him back, Xiaoxiao asked curiously, “Hey, Nan Shen, did you get full marks in math this time too?”

“No.” Wang Nan sighed, “I miscalculated the last problem, was careless.”

After speaking, he glanced at Su Zai Zai and added deliberately, “But I got the process right. It wasn’t hard, quite simple.”

But she had no reaction at all.

Just then, the class bell rang. Wang Nan, feeling defeated, lowered his head and opened his book.

After a while.

Su Zai Zai whispered, “Wang Nan, do you know who has the air conditioner remote?”

As soon as the weather turned hot, the air conditioners in the classroom were turned on.

The classroom space was quite large, so the school installed two air conditioners in each room.

Due to the outdoor unit, both air conditioners were installed on the side of the inner group.

Su Zai Zai happened to sit in that group.

"It seems the class monitor has it." Wang Nan turned his head to look at her, "But it won't help. They've set it to 28 degrees. They can't lower it further; otherwise, the group near the door will overheat."

Su Zai Zai sniffed and rubbed her arms, "Got it."

Noticing her lips turning purple from the cold.

Wang Nan scratched his head and couldn't help but say, "Didn't I remind you to bring a jacket yesterday..."

"Forgot."

He hesitated for a moment and said, "How about I lend you mine?"

Su Zai Zai glanced at him, looking a bit hesitant.

She quickly averted her gaze, curling up into a ball.

That made her feel much warmer.

Su Zai Zai rubbed her arms again to get rid of the goosebumps caused by the cold.

Then, she mumbled, “No need, I don’t like wearing other people’s clothes.”

Wang Nan didn’t say anything more.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and continued, “But thanks anyway.”

******

After class, Su Zai Zai picked up her water bottle, intending to get some hot water from the dispenser.

As soon as she stepped out of the classroom, a wave of heat hit her.

It instantly soothed her cold body.

After walking a few steps, she bumped into Zhang Lu Rang coming out of the science class.

Her nose hit his back, feeling numb and sore.

Su Zai Zai rubbed her nose with her hand, complaining, “Are you trying to murder your future wife?”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

He ignored Su Zai Zai’s words, turned around, and looked down at her face.

Seeing that she wasn’t hurt, he sighed in relief.

Then, frowning, he scolded her, “Don’t talk nonsense.”

“What nonsense did I say?” Su Zai Zai retorted.

“…”

“Wasn’t I right?”

He lowered his face, coldly said, “Su Zai Zai.”

Su Zai Zai immediately felt timid but still stubbornly criticized him.

“Why are you always harsh when you can’t win an argument?”

“…”

After thinking for a moment, Su Zai Zai continued confidently, “What did I say wrong? We’ve even set a date to be together. The next step after dating is marriage, isn’t it?”

Zhang Lu Rang turned his head, his ears burning, not wanting to respond to her.

“So what’s wrong with me calling myself your future wife?”

“…”

Getting no response from him, Su Zai Zai said frustratedly, “Do you just want to play with me?”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang turned to her and denied, “No.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t care what he said, “But you haven’t even thought

about marriage."

"..."

"I'm very disappointed in you. You're a scoundrel."

Zhang Lu Rang, unable to bear it any longer, blurted out, "I have thought about it."

Su Zai Zai was stunned, "What did you say?"

He looked extremely awkward, turning his gaze away.

The next second, Su Zai Zai's face turned completely red.

******

After they finished getting water, Zhang Lurang started walking back immediately. Su Zai Zai quickly grabbed him.

"Let's go back later. It's too cold in the classroom; I need to warm up outside for a bit."

Zhang Lurang paused but continued walking back. Su Zai Zai didn't insist any further.

Walking beside him, Su Zai Zai suddenly remembered something.

"Rang Rang, how many points did you score in math this time?"

He answered nonchalantly, "One hundred and fifty."

Su Zai Zai lowered her head, happy for him, and smiled.

Then, she spoke softly, feeling a bit down. “I only scored ninety, just barely passing.”

Zhang Lurang instinctively turned his head to look at her expression.

Soon, he spoke without thinking, “The math exam was pretty hard this time.”

Su Zai Zai turned her head.

Seeing his serious face, she raised her hand, which had been hanging by her side, and placed it on her neck.

She was a bit stunned but quickly reacted, giving an “Oh.”

Su Zai Zai leaned closer to him, grinning mischievously. “Rang Rang, you’re comforting me.”

As she said this, they reached the door of the advanced science class.

Zhang Lurang didn’t reply and walked straight into the class, leaving a sentence behind.

“Wait here for me.”

Although she didn’t know what he was going to do, Su Zai Zai obediently stood at the door.

Not long after, he came out with a jacket.

Su Zai Zai immediately put her hands behind her back, refusing to

take it.

“You wear it yourself; your seat is also under the air conditioner.”

“…”

“Rang Rang, you getting sick would trouble me the most. Stop causing me trouble.”

He sighed and said, “I brought two jackets.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai slowly relaxed her hands, confused. “Huh? Why did you bring two?”

Zhang Lurang didn’t answer her question. He grabbed her wrist and shoved the jacket into her hand.

“Don’t catch a cold,” he said softly.

******

Days passed one by one.

Zhang Lurang left the house and got into Lin Mao’s car.

He put his backpack aside and looked at the scenery outside.

The sunlight was dazzling, making him squint.

Zhang Lurang withdrew his gaze, adjusted his sitting position slightly, and closed his eyes.

Lin Mao didn’t start the car immediately. He drummed his fingers

on the steering wheel, seemingly lost in thought.

Then he sighed and said, “Ah Rang, you might have to go back to B City for high school next semester.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang immediately opened his eyes.

“There are too many documents required for taking the college entrance exam in Z City as an out-of-towner. I’m not confident I can secure it for you here…” Lin Mao paused and continued, “I spoke to your dad, and he said he wouldn’t let you go to B High.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t say anything.

Lin Mao, not knowing what else to say, started the car silently.

After a while, Zhang Lurang spoke softly, “Can I come back during the winter and summer holidays?”

Hearing him speak, Lin Mao finally breathed a sigh of relief.

“If you want to come back, just come back. If your parents won’t let you, I’ll come and get you.”

Zhang Lurang fell silent, his mind blank.

He suddenly thought of that day when Su Zai Zai looked at the bulletin board, wide-eyed and cheerfully praising him.

—“Rang Rang, you’re amazing!”

Even if others didn’t see his worth.

Su Zai Zai did.

Zhang Lurang suddenly smiled, as if he had an epiphany, and spoke.

“Uncle, let’s go to B High.”

******

Zhang Lurang had just walked into the classroom when Su Zai Zai came in through the back door, standing by his seat.

Zhang Lurang habitually stood up.

He sat in his deskmate’s seat, making room for her.

Su Zai Zai sat down and laughed for a long time.

Zhang Lurang sat beside her with an indifferent expression.

Su Zai Zai finally stopped laughing and spoke.

“Rang Rang, did you know the physics teacher shaved his head? Oh my god, it’s so shiny… This is hilarious.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Being stared at for no reason, Su Zai Zai blinked and asked, “What’s wrong?”

Zhang Lurang was silent for a moment, then said, “He shaved it last Monday.”

"..."

Su Zai Zai immediately lowered her head and admitted her mistake obediently.

"I-I didn't look up at him..."

Zhang Lurang frowned and said coldly, "Su Zai Zai, pay attention in class."

Su Zai Zai didn't argue, nodding obediently.

She felt a bit tired, thinking that she seemed to like a principal.

After scolding her, Zhang Lurang opened his mouth again.

But he still didn't say anything.

******

After the end-of-term ceremony in the second semester of high school.

Su Zai Zai lay on her bed in despair, not wanting to move at all.

She didn't want the holidays to come.

As soon as the holidays started, they would be in a long-distance relationship.

Long-distance relationships meant potential, unnoticed rivals.

Before she could think further, her phone vibrated.

It was a message from Zhang Lurang.

—Can you come out now?

******

Su Zai Zai ran out and hopped over to Zhang Lurang.

Seeing his unhappy expression, she immediately put on a serious face and asked, “What’s wrong…”

At night, the temperature was a bit cool.

There weren’t many people on the road, making the atmosphere feel heavy.

The wind blew, causing the trees beside them to sway.

Zhang Lurang licked his lips and cautiously said, “Su Zai Zai…”

“Huh?”

He lowered his head, staring into her eyes. “I’m going back to B City for school next semester.”

Zhang Lurang spoke slowly and clearly.

Su Zai Zai was stunned for a moment, then pretended not to understand.

After a moment of silence, she slowly spoke.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about… I’m going home.”

Zhang Lurang immediately grabbed her hand, saying, “I…”

Su Zai Zai shook off his hand, tears instantly streaming down her face.

She raised her hand to cover her eyes, holding back her sobs and throwing a tantrum.

“You always do this!”

Zhang Lurang stood in front of her, his Adam’s apple moving, unsure how to react.

Su Zai Zai wiped her tears, starting to speak sarcastically.

“Fine, do whatever you want, as long as you’re happy.”

Zhang Lurang opened his mouth but didn’t speak.

Suddenly, Su Zai Zai burst into tears, grabbing his hand and sobbing, “No, you can’t go back. How can you… I don’t care…”

“Su Zai Zai, stop crying,” he sighed. “I have to go back because I can’t take the college entrance exam here.”

“No!” She didn’t listen, only knowing to refuse.

“I’ll come back during the winter and summer holidays,” he said.

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai slowly stopped crying.

But she still couldn’t stand it.

School lasted five months, and winter break was only one month.

A fivefold difference...

“When are you going back?” she asked with red eyes.

He answered seriously, “A week before the start of the next semester.”

“You won’t like another girl there, will you?”

Zhang Lurang felt embarrassed. “...Don’t say that.”

Su Zai Zai’s thoughts were still a bit chaotic, speaking nonsense.

“You won’t even give me a title.” “...”

She thought for a moment and seriously said, “Then kiss me before you go.”

Her voice was nasal, sounding like she was acting spoiled.

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang took a step back, his face turning as red as blood.

He lowered his voice and gritted his teeth. “Su Zai Zai!”

Su Zai Zai’s eyes were still moist, glistening under the moonlight.

She immediately grabbed his collar, full of stubbornness. Not letting him escape, not wanting him to escape.

Chapter 34

Second base, hehe.

A little commemoration, July 12, 2013.

The beautiful girl kissed me, hahaha.

— From “Su Zai Zai’s Fairy Diary”

The scene seemed to freeze.

Zhang Lurang was completely stiff, not daring to move.

His Adam’s apple bobbed, and his eyes darkened.

Black as ink, obscure and unclear.

Su Zai Zai stared into his eyes, slowly letting go of his hand.

She lowered her eyes in frustration and said softly, “Why do you always act like I’m taking advantage of you?”

“…”

“I-I also had my first kiss…” Su Zai Zai’s voice grew quieter and quieter.

After a moment of silence, she admitted in defeat, “Alright, it does seem like I’m taking advantage of you.”

Seeing him still silent, Su Zai Zai became somewhat annoyed and embarrassed.

“If you don’t want to kiss, fine, I’ll go home.”

At the same time, Zhang Lurang grabbed her wrist with one hand and pulled her close.

His other hand instantly covered her eyes.

His long fingers were a bit cool.

Touching her skin made her face feel even hotter.

Su Zai Zai's breath caught, and her heart pounded loudly.

Her fist clenched nervously, lightly pressing against his chest.

"Don't always tease me." His tone was somewhat aggrieved.

She had no time to respond.

Then, warmth covered her lips.

Su Zai Zai's mind exploded like fireworks.

Zhang Lurang moved quickly, gently touching and then pulling away.

Yet Su Zai Zai felt as if her lips had been repeatedly pressed and ground by him.

Burning hot, hotter than any other part of her body.

His hand remained over her eyes, not letting go.

The next second, Su Zai Zai heard him speak.

His voice was low and hoarse, with a hint of emotion.

“I couldn’t help it either.”

******

When he let go of her eyes.

Su Zai Zai opened her eyes and saw him with his back to her, throwing out a muffled sentence.

“I’m going back.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t know how to react.

Her expression was blank as she softly said, “Oh.”

Hearing her response, Zhang Lurang finally lifted his foot to walk away.

Su Zai Zai stood still, not returning immediately.

She watched his back until he reached the corner.

Then he turned left.

Su Zai Zai suddenly realized what had just happened.

She raised her hand, trying to cool her face.

Silly and dazed, she headed home.

While waiting for the elevator, she suddenly remembered.

Zhang Lurang's home was... to the right, wasn't it?

******

Su Zai Zai walked into her room, sat on her bed, and hugged a pillow, lost in thought. Half an hour later, she hesitantly opened her phone.

She sent Zhang Lurang a WeChat message.

— July 12, 2013, we kissed~

Zhang Lurang: "..."

He immediately tossed his phone aside and buried his face in his pillow.

In the room, the air conditioner made a "clicking" sound as it operated.The cat Susu was sleeping under the bed, breathing evenly and lightly. The light was dim.

Only the moonlight outside the window and the faint light from the phone on the bed illuminated the room.

After a long time, feeling a bit stifled, Zhang Lurang turned over. The corners of his mouth, hidden in the pillow, had long since curled up silently.

As if guessing he wouldn't reply. Soon, Su Zai Zai sent two more messages.

— Lurang, I'm so bad at math.

— Can you help tutor me? I can't afford a tutoring class, poor me.

He pressed his hand against his lips and slowly typed a word. — Okay.

******

The next afternoon.

Su Zai Zai stuffed the books she needed into her backpack, slung it over her shoulder, and went downstairs.

She met Zhang Lu Rang downstairs.

The two of them walked to a dessert shop near Jinghua.

When he saw her, Zhang Lu Rang's expression was still a bit unnatural.

He tried to act as if nothing had happened and didn't say anything.

But Su Zai Zai shamelessly asked, "How did it taste?"

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

"To be honest, I think my lips are the most attractive part of my face."

"..."

"Do you like them? Do you want to kiss me again?"

Zhang Lu Rang stopped in his tracks and looked at her

expressionlessly.

Seeing this, Su Zai Zai immediately changed the subject, “Let’s go study.”

Even though she changed the topic in time, Zhang Lu Rang still frowned and scolded her.

“Stop thinking about these things.”

She couldn’t hold back and retorted, “Didn’t you kiss me yesterday?”

“…”

Su Zai Zai jumped in front of him, facing him while walking backward.

“Are you going to give me a clear answer?”

Zhang Lu Rang pulled her back and said, “Walk properly.”

“Ugh, why are you like this…” Su Zai Zai was frustrated, “What should I say about you…”

“…”

“Ugh, two years, you think about it yourself.” Su Zai Zai lowered her voice, threatening him, “I might like another guy.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang turned to look at her.

Although she didn’t know if it would work, Su Zai Zai continued

nervously, “I’m serious, you…”

Zhang Lu Rang interrupted her, “Alright.”

Hearing the expected answer, Su Zai Zai said, “Oh,” and didn’t say anything more.

She lowered her head, and a smile appeared at the corners of her mouth.

After walking a few more steps, Zhang Lu Rang spoke again.

“Don’t like other guys,” he said sullenly.

******

The two entered the dessert shop and found a corner by the window to sit.

The environment in the shop was very nice, with warm yellow lights creating a cozy atmosphere.

Soft music played in the background, making people feel comfortable.

Su Zai Zai sat down first, then patted the seat beside her, indicating for him to sit.

Zhang Lu Rang initially wanted to sit opposite her, but seeing her gesture, he obediently sat next to her.

They ordered two drinks and took out their workbooks.

Su Zai Zai pulled out her final exam paper from the workbook.

She flipped through it and said, “I feel like I didn’t make many mistakes on the front questions, but I barely knew how to do the last three big questions…”

Zhang Lu Rang took the paper and looked over her answers one by one.

The final exam paper hadn’t been reviewed yet, so Su Zai Zai didn’t know how many she got wrong.

Zhang Lu Rang, looking down, asked in a low voice, “How many points did you get?”

“This time I got 102!” she said proudly.

He picked up a pen and marked the wrong answers.

“You got four multiple-choice questions wrong and two fill-in-the-blank questions wrong, that’s 30 points.”

Su Zai Zai couldn’t believe it.

“No way, then how did I get 102?”

“…”

She didn’t want to face reality and started blaming him, saying, “Rang Rang, don’t think your answers are always right.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “… I got a perfect score.”

“Oh.” Su Zai Zai lowered her head, humbly asking for guidance, “Where did I go wrong?”

Before he could speak, Su Zai Zai continued, “So, if I got 40 points on multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank, that means I got 62 points on the big questions…”

“…”

“No way, I totally guessed the last three big questions!”

Zhang Lu Rang twitched at the corner of his forehead and started explaining the questions to her.

After explaining once, Su Zai Zai said gloomily, “Why add left and subtract right here?”

“…” He continued explaining.

“Ugh, I still don’t get it.”

Zhang Lu Rang decided to explain it again.

He had just opened his mouth when Su Zai Zai smiled cheekily and said, “Maybe I’ll understand if you kiss me.”

He turned to look at her and said coldly, “Do you want to go home?”

“… Next question, please.”

******

After he finished explaining the last big question, Su Zai Zai digested it and then said, “Rang Rang, let me teach you English. This English exam was really tough.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “…”

“How much did you score?”

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment and answered, “Over 80.”

Su Zai Zai blinked: “How did you improve so fast?”

He didn’t answer.

Su Zai Zai propped her chin on her hand, lost in thought.

After a while, she suddenly asked, “Rang Rang, what if I don’t get into Z University?”

Zhang Lu Rang opened the workbook in front of her and didn’t take her question to heart.

“Focus on your questions.”

******

The night before Zhang Lu Rang returned to B City.

He hesitated but still called Su Zai Zai out.

Su Zai Zai was in a low mood and didn’t speak first when she saw him.

Zhang Lu Rang grabbed her wrist and handed her a bag, “Take this.”

“Oh.” She obediently took it.

Su Zai Zai opened it and took a look.

Seven rows of jelly. Soon, she heard Zhang Lu Rang speak.

“Eat one a day, and I’ll be back when you finish.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai looked up at him.

Zhang Lu Rang smiled and patiently coaxed her.

“Then I’ll give you the next batch.”

Her mood inexplicably improved, and she said softly, “Got it.”

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated and then instructed her sternly:

“Don’t play with other boys.”

Chapter 35

Why can you only eat one jelly a day?

Why can you only see the great beauty during National Day?

Why, when you saw him during National Day,

At such a happy moment, he didn’t believe I only ate one jelly a day. 🙂

——From “Su Zai Zai’s Little Fairy Diary”

After school in the afternoon.

Su Zai Zai went back to the dormitory to take a shower.

After washing her clothes, she used the towel hanging around her neck to dry her hair.

She walked to the cabinet and took out her phone to take a look.

Before the lunch break, Su Zai Zai had sent a message to Zhang Lu Rang.

——How are your new classmates? Is the school environment good?

He had just replied: Everything’s fine.

Seeing this, Su Zai Zai felt relieved, but inexplicably, she also felt a bit heartbroken and displeased.

She pressed her lips together and directly asked: Is everything fine without me there?

She waited for a while but didn’t get a reply.

Su Zai Zai didn’t mind and put her phone back.

Then she picked up a hair dryer and went to the laundry room to dry her hair.

Ten minutes later, Su Zai Zai returned to the dormitory and put the

hair dryer back in the cabinet.

Just then, she saw the screen light up.

Zhang Lu Rang had sent a message.

——Yes.

Su Zai Zai: "..."

Before she had time to get angry, another message came.

——Not good.

******

Stepping out of the dormitory, she realized it was raining outside.

Su Zai Zai went back to the dormitory to get an umbrella.

After thinking for a moment, she walked to the cabinet and sent a few more messages to Zhang Lu Rang.

Su Zai Zai: It's raining here in Z City.

Su Zai Zai: If it's raining there too, remember to bring an umbrella.

Su Zai Zai: Don't get soaked.

She hesitated for a moment but eventually put the phone back.

Taking it to the classroom would definitely tempt her to chat with him.

It might even make him bring his phone to the classroom too.

Su Zai Zai didn't think too much and left the dormitory.

Summer rain came suddenly, pouring down in torrents.

The air was mixed with the scent of soil, stirring restlessness in people.

Su Zai Zai carefully avoided the puddles on the road and went to the convenience store to buy a few pen refills.

Walking out of the store, she instinctively turned her head and looked towards the school gate.

She thought of the first time she met Zhang Lu Rang.

Time seemed to pass so quickly.

The time spent with him seemed to fly by.

Suddenly, she found it hard to endure.

******

Su Zai Zai sat back at her desk.

She put down her backpack and reached into the bag hanging on the side of the desk to take out a jelly.

Wang Nan propped his head with one hand and looked at her sideways.

“You really do eat one a day.”

Su Zai Zai tore off the top layer of the packaging with a ripping sound.

The eleventh one, only one left in the second row.

A total of thirty-one left.

But it seemed only twenty-five days were left until National Day.

Did the great beauty give her an extra row…

Before she could figure it out, Wang Nan spoke again, “Hey, give me one.”

Su Zai Zai immediately refused, “No.”

“…Su Zai Zai, you’re getting more and more stingy.”

“……”

“Why haven’t you been talking much lately?”

Su Zai Zai replied perfunctorily, “I need to save my energy for studying.”

After a while.

Wang Nan couldn’t help but ask again, “Will you come to my birthday party? We’re singing karaoke at Haoting.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai hesitated, thinking of how to refuse.

The great beauty didn't want her to hang out with other boys.

"Come on, I'm only inviting our old classmates from Class Nine. And we're only in sophomore year, why so tense?"

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment and asked, "When is it?"

"October 3rd."

This made Su Zai Zai's wavering resolve firm, and she immediately said, "I can't go, I have plans."

Wang Nan was silent for a moment, then said, "What about the 4th?"

Su Zai Zai lowered her head, threw the plastic jelly wrapper into the nearby trash bag, and seriously said, "I'm busy all seven days of National Day."

Not sure if he got the hint, Su Zai Zai deliberately added, "I need to be with my boyfriend."

While Su Zai Zai was browsing Weibo, she suddenly came across a phrase.

— "The public funds for meals are 300 billion. Our country has only 1.3 billion people. If we divide it among everyone, each person would get 1 billion, and there would still be 2,987 billion left. Do we really need to spend this much?"

She suddenly thought it made a lot of sense.

She long-pressed to copy and pasted it to Zhang Lu Rang.

Su Zai Zai: These people are really too greedy.

Su Zai Zai: I feel like the country owes me 1 billion.

After sending it, Su Zai Zai continued browsing Weibo.

She happened to see Jiang Jia forward a Weibo post and tag her.

Jiang Jia Bu Chi Jiang: Look at the third picture, doesn't it look like your guy? [image] [image] [image] [image] [image] [image]

Su Zai Zai clicked on the third picture and took a look.

It did seem quite similar, the contours of the features were almost the same.

But Zhang Lu Rang was still better looking.

Su Zai Zai saved the picture and was about to send it to Zhang Lu Rang.

He replied just in time: ...

Zhang Lu Rang: 300 billion / 1.3 billion = 230.8

Su Zai Zai was momentarily confused and looked up at what she had just sent.

After understanding, she didn't feel embarrassed, and cheerfully replied: Then it's 230 yuan.

After waiting for a while without a reply from him, Su Zai Zai sent him the picture.

The small circle in front of the message bubble kept spinning and quickly turned into a red circle with a white exclamation mark inside.

She swiped down the notification bar to check.

The WiFi was disconnected.

Su Zai Zai reconnected.

As soon as it connected, she received his message.

— [WeChat Red Packet] Here's 30 yuan, I'll return the rest later.

Su Zai Zai didn't open it, finding it quite funny.

She smiled and typed on the screen.

Su Zai Zai: Are you the country?

A minute later, he replied: No.

Zhang Lu Rang: But I want to give it to you.

Su Zai Zai's breath hitched.

She could imagine, if he were standing in front of her now.

He would probably turn his head away, not daring to look her in the eyes.

But still, wanting to be good to her.

******

On the first day of the National Day holiday.

Although Zhang Lu Rang said he would arrive at noon, Su Zai Zai still woke up early.

Too excited to sleep.

She checked the time; Zhang Lu Rang was probably still on the plane.

But Su Zai Zai couldn't help but send him a WeChat message: Have you arrived?

After rolling around in bed for a bit, she got up to wash.

She found something to eat in the fridge, and then returned to her room to work on math problems.

After finishing the multiple-choice questions, she thought for a moment and sent him another message.

— Should I ride a bike to pick you up?

After sending the message successfully, she continued to dive into her studies.

Stuck on a problem, she doodled on her draft book.

Unknowingly, she fell asleep on the desk.

After a while, the vibration of her phone woke her up.

Su Zai Zai immediately looked up and picked up her phone.

Zhang Lu Rang had called her.

Su Zai Zai quickly answered, excitedly shouting: “Lu Rang.”

Zhang Lu Rang seemed to be in a good mood, his voice carrying a hint of a smile.

“I’m here.”

She jumped up from the chair: “Where are you?”

Hearing his reply, Su Zai Zai immediately ran out and downstairs.

Seeing Zhang Lu Rang’s figure, her eyes inexplicably felt sore.

Su Zai Zai no longer rushed, walking slowly up to him.

After a moment of silence.

She lowered her head and softly asked: “Do you want to hug me?”

Su Zai Zai thought if he refused, she would just pounce on him.

Before she could pounce, Zhang Lu Rang suddenly grabbed her wrist and pulled her close.

The cool, fresh scent enveloped her instantly.

He hugged her for just a moment and then let go.

Zhang Lu Rang raised his hand to rub her head, his voice softening: “Did you finish the jelly?”

Not expecting him to actually hug her, Su Zai Zai’s heart filled with pink bubbles, she obediently replied: “There’s still one row left.”

Thinking about it, she became curious.

“Why did you give me an extra row?”

Hearing this question, Zhang Lu Rang hesitated.

In the end, he chose to tell the truth.

“I didn’t believe you would really eat just one a day.” “…”

Chapter 36

Sigh, it’s my fault.

It’s my fault for not being attractive enough to make him fall in love at first sight.

But of course, success depends on hard work.

I’m a prime example of that.

— “Su Zai Zai’s Little Fairy Diary”

Noticing Su Zai Zai’s gaze, Zhang Lurang licked his lips, unusually wanting to change his words.

But he didn’t know what to say that wouldn’t seem deliberate.

Before he could speak, Su Zai Zai spoke slowly and heavily.

“Lurang, I have to tell you. Normally, in this situation, I should be mad at you.”

“…”

“But it’s only been seven days, I won’t waste time on this.”

Her voice lowered, almost like she was mumbling to herself, her head bowed as if inviting someone to comfort her.

Zhang Lurang’s heart instantly melted.

He opened his mouth and softly said, “I…”

Before he could finish, Su Zai Zai immediately looked up and hummed, “I’ll let it go for now.”

“…”

“When I have time in the future, I’ll teach you a lesson.”

“…”

She spoke earnestly, “Lurang, you shouldn’t be spoiled.”

“…”

“Sigh, I’ve really spoiled you,” she added, with a hint of pride.

Zhang Lurang looked away, not wanting to engage with her.

******

In the midst of summer, it was stifling and windless.

The asphalt road shimmered under the scorching sun.

Pedestrians hurried by with sun umbrellas.

In a rush to leave, Su Zai Zai didn't bring an umbrella.

She touched her forehead and suggested, "Lurang, let's go to that café nearby."

Zhang Lurang nodded, "Alright."

Then he took a pure black umbrella from his backpack and handed it to Su Zai Zai.

Instinctively, she took it but didn't move.

After half a minute, Zhang Lurang couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Su Zai Zai sighed, "I just feel that if we get married, I'll probably be the one changing light bulbs and fixing pipes."

Zhang Lurang: "..."

While speaking, Su Zai Zai opened the umbrella and raised it high.

"Come here, your delicate skin can't handle the sun."

"... You hold it."

“When I offered to pick you up by bike, you refused.”

“…”

“Now I want to hold the umbrella for you, and you refuse again.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai glanced at him and took the chance to touch his hand.

Then she casually remarked, “You’re just like a little princess.”

Zhang Lurang’s temple twitched as he took the umbrella from her.

He tilted it so that most of the shade covered her.

Su Zai Zai turned her head, staring at his hand holding the umbrella handle.

Fair and slender, smooth as jade.

She looked down at her own hand and asked seriously, “Lurang, do you think our first hand-holding was initiated by me or you?”

Is that a direct question…

Zhang Lurang was at a loss.

Before he could think of an answer, Su Zai Zai spoke in frustration.

“Sigh, I can’t count on you.”

Zhang Lurang felt inexplicably annoyed and lowered his voice, “Su

Zai Zai."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai pressed on.

"When will my status change from Su Zai Zai to just Zai Zai?"

"..."

"See, you're not talking again," Su Zai Zai scolded him, "Aside from our first kiss and hug, which I forced, I'll probably have to initiate everything."

He turned his face away, not speaking.

Su Zai Zai started counting on her fingers.

"We haven't even tried holding hands yet, what else... oh, taking off clothes... in bed..." She paused, mumbling, "That doesn't sound so bad."

Zhang Lurang couldn't hold back anymore.

"Stop talking nonsense."

"Alright, I'll initiate everything," Su Zai Zai was in a good mood, not wanting to argue, "You're good-looking enough."

"... Fine, I won't say anything."

A few minutes later, Su Zai Zai added, "But I'd still like to see your wild side."

Silence fell.

“Su Zai Zai,” he said calmly.

“Huh?”

For the first time, Zhang Lurang threatened her.

“If you don’t behave, I’ll go home.”

“…”

******

The two walked into a café.

A few people sat scattered inside, very quiet.

The lighting was dim, creating an intimate atmosphere.

They found a seat.

Zhang Lurang ordered a coffee.

After thinking for a moment, he ordered a yuanyang milk tea and a lava chocolate cake for Su Zai Zai.

Resting her chin in her hand, Su Zai Zai was still pondering.

“Lurang, the way you threaten people, I used that in elementary school.”

“…”

She mimicked, “Hmph! If you keep doing that, I’ll go home!”

Zhang Lurang stared at her expressionlessly.

After a while, he softly said, “Go ahead.”

“…”

Su Zai Zai quickly changed the topic.

“I have to tell you, Jiang Jia and Guan Han are together now.”

“Mm.”

“They’re both in Class 12.”

“…”

“I haven’t experienced being in the same class as you,” Su Zai Zai said sullenly.

He looked over.

Su Zai Zai smiled and began sharing the thoughts she’d been imagining.

“I want to be your deskmate, pretend to borrow a pen, and touch your hand.”

“…”

“Or drop my pen and pretend to accidentally touch your leg when I pick it up.”

The more Su Zai Zai thought about these teasing methods, the

more she liked them.

She cheerfully asked, “Wouldn’t that make it easier to win you over?”

Zhang Lurang paused and seriously said, “I might call the police.”

Su Zai Zai was speechless.

Seeing his serious expression, she was both angry and amused.

But thinking about the future.

The same university, the same direction.

Su Zai Zai was lost in thought and softly asked, “Lurang, will we always be together?”

She felt her love was so intense.

It seemed it would last a lifetime.

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang was stunned.

Their eyes met.

Su Zai Zai saw him smile and softly say, “Yes.”

Did you know?

It’s not just you who can’t live without him.

He can’t live without you either. ******

After finishing the cake, Su Zai Zai still didn't want to go home.

Resting her chin in her hand, she asked, "So the next time you come back will be during winter break?"

"Mm," he responded softly.

"But winter break includes New Year, so it's less than half a month," she said, her mood suddenly dampened at the thought.

Zhang Lurang didn't know what to say.

After a while, Su Zai Zai grumbled discontentedly, "We just started dating and now it's long distance. My luck is..."

"..."

"Are there any pretty girls at your school?" she asked.

Zhang Lurang thought seriously for a moment, "I don't know."

Su Zai Zai widened her eyes and scolded him, "How can you say you don't know? You should immediately say no! No matter how pretty someone is, you should always think I'm the prettiest."

Zhang Lurang looked at her with an indescribable emotion in his eyes, struggling with how to respond. After a while, he lowered his head, not daring to look at her.

"I like you."

Su Zai Zai's heart skipped a beat.

Before she could get excited, Zhang Lurang continued, “Not because of your face.”

“…”

Why did she feel that after visiting City B, he wasn’t as innocent and cute as before?

Su Zai Zai didn’t want to talk anymore.

Zhang Lurang sighed and took the initiative, “You need to study hard.”

“… Oh,” she responded, feeling like the headmaster was talking.

“Next semester is the academic proficiency test, don’t slack off in science.”

“Mm,” Su Zai Zai started to brush him off.

He fell silent.

After a few minutes, he mumbled, “I can’t stop worrying.”

******

After finishing the last sip of milk tea, they got up and headed home.

The weather outside suddenly turned gloomy.

Large clouds gathered densely, like a storm was imminent.

Seeing this, Su Zai Zai didn't bother with the umbrella.

Walking beside Zhang Lurang, she asked cheerfully, "Lurang, do you remember the first time we met?"

"... Mm."

"What did you think?"

... What was it like being scolded the first time they met?

It didn't seem to affect his attitude towards her.

Zhang Lurang didn't answer.

Su Zai Zai suddenly laughed and said, "I think you were probably thinking..."

He turned his head, patiently waiting for her to continue.

"How to seduce me."

Zhang Lurang seemed completely unable to understand why she would draw such a conclusion.

He frowned and said word by word, "Don't talk nonsense."

Su Zai Zai shamelessly replied, "I'm not talking nonsense."

"..."

"You were just a step away from holding up a sign telling me to quickly fall in love with you and chase after you," Su Zai Zai thought

the more she spoke, the more it made sense, “You’re so lucky, you don’t have to do anything to get a pretty wife.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t respond, letting her imagine whatever she wanted.

“Why can’t I be the type that makes you fall in love at first sight?” she suddenly felt a bit regretful.

He suddenly smiled.

Reaching out to rub her hair, he said:

“This is just perfect.”

******

They walked into the neighborhood.

Seeing a pair of twins passing by, Su Zai Zai remembered a photo she had seen on Weibo.

As she opened her phone, she asked, “Lurang, do you have an older brother?”

Zhang Lurang shook his head, “No.”

Su Zai Zai immediately lost the desire to show him the photo.

After a while, Zhang Lurang added, “I only have a younger brother, one year younger than me.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai became interested.

“You have a younger brother?”

“Mm.”

“Do you two look alike?”

Zhang Lurang thought for a moment, unsure.

“We should look quite similar.”

“Do you have similar personalities?” Su Zai Zai continued to ask, loving everything about him.

This time he answered quickly, “No.”

Su Zai Zai wanted to ask more.

Zhang Lurang voluntarily spoke, “He has a great personality.”

Cheerful and positive, like sunshine.

Unlike him, who was reclusive and quiet.

Su Zai Zai blinked and said seriously, “You’re great too.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t say anything, creating an instant chill in the atmosphere.

Half-joking, Su Zai Zai asked, “Which of you looks better?”

He answered quickly again.

“My brother.”

Su Zai Zai hummed and corrected him.

“My Lurang is the best looking.”

He suddenly lowered his head and smiled.

Seeing this, Su Zai Zai continued to praise him.

“Beautiful enough to make people lose their minds.”

Zhang Lurang laughed.

Then, he seriously acknowledged.

“Mm.”

Chapter 37

I like her.

I don’t know why she likes me.

But I’m glad she does.

I’ll always be good to her.

—Zhang Lurang

Zhang Lurang booked a flight back for Saturday morning.

Before leaving, he gave Su Zai Zai a set of questions.

—2014 Integrated Science Academic Level Test

Su Zai Zai was puzzled: “So, where’s the jelly?”

Seeing her about to explode, Zhang Lurang licked his lips and explained seriously, “Eating too much jelly isn’t good. Finish these questions, and I’ll be back.”

At the same time, Su Zai Zai saw the big “20” on the cover.

Twenty sets.

Each set includes physics, chemistry, and biology.

Each subject has sixty multiple-choice questions, totaling one hundred eighty.

She was silent for a moment, then casually said, “You don’t want to see me again, do you?”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

“And also…” Su Zai Zai counted on her fingers, “It’s eight months until the academic level test. Even if I write them now, I’d forget everything by then.”

He pressed his lips together and said coldly, “You need at least a C in all three subjects to get into a first-tier university.”

Su Zai Zai was indifferent, “I can’t possibly score below fifty, right? They’re all multiple-choice! I’ll do twenty questions, guess ten more, and that’s fifty. How hard can it be?”

“…The points aren’t the same.”

It wasn’t as simple as getting fifty points for thirty correct answers.

He didn’t say this out loud.

Su Zai Zai tore open the transparent packaging and pulled out the papers.

She glanced through them indifferently.

Still, she didn’t find them difficult.

Su Zai Zai was puzzled, “What are you worried about? They’re just multiple-choice questions.”

In the second year of high school, there was only one lesson each week for physics, chemistry, and biology.

Whenever she wanted to work on other subjects during these lessons, she’d think of his words, put down the other papers, and focus on the class.

So Su Zai Zai felt no pressure at all.

But Zhang Lurang’s thoughts were clearly different.

“Afraid you’ll guess all wrong.” He looked a bit worried, “If there were big questions, you could at least write formulas for points.”

When it came to her studies, he seemed particularly serious.

Though Su Zai Zai was happy he cared so much, she couldn’t help but ask, “Why are you so sure I’ll be guessing?”

He lowered his eyes, staring into hers.

Su Zai Zai felt a bit embarrassed under his gaze and turned her head slightly.

Golden light filtered through the gaps in the leaves.

One beam landed right in Su Zai Zai's eyes, making her squint.

Zhang Lurang instinctively raised his hand to block the light.

Then, Su Zai Zai heard him speak.

His voice was low and smooth, like a gentle breeze.

"Ah."

He seemed lost in thought, as if recalling something.

Quickly, he snapped out of it, his tone light and amused.

"—Magnesium, Aluminum, Sodium, Silicon, Phosphorus."

Su Zai Zai immediately remembered the periodic table she had memorized beside him before.

She didn't mind, shamelessly ignoring the last three words.

"You called me beautiful."

Zhang Lurang was taken aback and seriously asked, "Do you really confuse 'n' and 'l'?"

Su Zai Zai nodded without changing her expression.

He lowered his eyes, seemingly recalling things she had said before.

Quickly, he looked up, ready to refute her words.

Su Zai Zai spoke at the right moment, grinning, “For example, calling you ‘Lurang’.”

Hearing his name, Zhang Lurang instinctively looked into her eyes.

Her smiling eyes curved, sparkling with light.

Her red lips parted and closed.

“I’d say, ‘that Lurang’.”

Zhang Lurang’s temple twitched.

Just as he was about to say something, his phone rang.

He took it out and glanced at it, “I have to go.”

Su Zai Zai’s good mood instantly vanished.

She instinctively grabbed Zhang Lurang’s wrist and softly asked, “Can’t I see you off at the airport?”

“No.” He refused immediately.

“Oh.”

He sighed, explaining, “I don’t want you coming back alone.”

Su Zai Zai was silent for a moment.

Quickly, she spoke again, her voice soft, almost like she was pouting.

“I listen to everything you say.”

“You tell me to eat only one jelly a day, to pay attention in class, to avoid playing with other boys, and I’ve done all that.”

“I’ll definitely do these questions too.”

“I’m so obedient. Don’t you want to come back often to see me?”

Zhang Lurang patted her head.

His Adam’s apple bobbed twice before he couldn’t resist lowering his head.

He kissed her.

Tenderly.

******

Zhang Lurang pushed open the door and walked inside.

The house was very quiet, almost desolate.

He silently changed into indoor slippers and grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge.

Then he headed to his room.

After telling Su Zai Zai that he had arrived home, he immediately pulled out a set of test papers to work on.

Unknowingly, the entire afternoon passed.

Noticing that it was dark outside, he glanced at his phone.

It was seven o'clock.

Zhang Lurang stood up and walked downstairs.

His parents and Zhang Luli had returned, and they were now sitting at the dining table having dinner.

Seeing him, Zhang Luli was surprised: "Brother, why didn't you tell us you were coming back?"

Zhang Lurang replied nonchalantly, "I just got back."

With that, he walked into the kitchen and served himself a bowl of rice.

Just as he sat down, his mother frowned and asked, "Why do you keep going to your uncle's place? I had arranged a tutor for you this holiday..."

Zhang Luli couldn't help but interrupt, "Mom, can we not talk about this while eating?"

His mother paused and then repeated, "Lurang, why do you keep going to your uncle's place?"

Hearing this, his father also sternly said, “You used to go there for classes. What are you doing there now? Your uncle isn’t that old; don’t trouble him.”

Zhang Lurang paused from picking up food and finally spoke.

“I’ll be going there during winter break too.”

His mother immediately objected, “No! Why are you going there? Next term is the second half of your sophomore year. Can’t you give me some peace of mind?”

“I have to go.” He rarely insisted.

His father sighed and told Zhang Luli, “Luli, go get his ID card for me.”

Zhang Lurang suddenly looked up, incredulous.

Zhang Luli stopped eating, not moving.

His mother seemed extremely disappointed in Zhang Lurang, repeating something she often said.

“Why can’t you be more like Luli…”

Zhang Luli immediately turned his head, shouting in frustration.

“Mom! Can you please stop?”

******

Su Zai Zai sat at her desk, about to pull out a test paper to work on.

Her phone vibrated, and a message from Jiang Jia appeared.

Jiang Jia: OMG, let me tell you.

Jiang Jia: Remember that B University heartthrob I tagged you on Weibo?

Jiang Jia: Someone commented! The third one! Second year!

Jiang Jia: But! Only! Fifteen! Years! Old!

Jiang Jia: OMG!

Su Zai Zai was stunned for a moment.

The third one?

The one that looked like Zhang Lurang?

She blinked, pursed her lips, and replied: 6666

Out of nowhere, she recalled a conversation she had with Zhang Lurang a few days ago.

—"Lurang, do you have an older brother?"

—"No."

—"Only a younger brother, a year younger than me."

******

A scene suddenly surged into Zhang Luli's mind.

He knocked on Zhang Lurang's door but got no response.

Then he opened the door and saw Zhang Lurang lying on the bed, asleep.

The window was open, and the wind blew in.

It rustled the books on the desk, flipping page after page.

It finally stopped on one page.

He instinctively looked over.

—"If only they had just Luli, how nice that would be."

Zhang Lurang's handwriting.

His brother's handwriting.

******

His mother was stunned by his shout, muttering, "What did I say wrong?"

"Watch your tone with your mother," his father frowned.

Zhang Luli's eyes reddened, choking up, "Just stop."

In a family with two children, the parents gave all their love to one child.

The neglected child gradually became silent and withdrawn.

The favored child also started to live cautiously.

Such a family, how distorted.

Even the children felt something was wrong, but the parents saw no problem.

Zhang Lurang had always lived in such a place.

Because his younger brother was too outstanding, he grew up amidst everyone's disappointment.

No matter how hard he tried, it was useless.

—"Hey, Zhang Lurang, isn't your brother three grades ahead of you?"

—"You're Zhang Luli's brother? What was your rank last time?... Tsk."

—"How come the brother is so much worse than the younger brother?"

—"Lurang, what are you proud of? Your brother scores full marks every time."

—"Ugh, I don't want to say anything. If you don't know something, ask your brother."

That day, Zhang Lurang opened Zhang Luli's room door.

He told himself, if you don't understand, you should ask.

There’s no shame in that.

Zhang Lurang gathered his courage and placed his workbook in front of him.

“Luli, do you know how to do this problem?”

But Zhang Luli was still young then and didn’t understand the impact of his words on Zhang Lurang.

“Yes.”

Just as Zhang Lurang was about to ask him to explain, he heard him ask.

“Brother, why can’t you even solve something this simple?”

No matter how many years passed, Zhang Lurang never forgot those words.

They were like the last straw that broke the camel’s back.

Because of those words, he called Lin Mao.

For the first time, he cried like a child.

For the first time, he bowed to reality as if he couldn’t bear it anymore.

“Uncle, I don’t want to stay here anymore.”

“...Can I come to your place to study?”

Zhang Lurang fled from City B to City Z.

Then, he met Su Zai Zai.

Someone who gradually removed the deep-seated inferiority within him.

Chapter 38

She asked me, when will I be able to call her Zai Zai.

I need to practice it.

—— Zhang Lurang

The scene instantly fell silent.

Zhang Lurang placed his bowl back on the table, making a crisp sound.

He stood up and said softly, "I'm full."

Zhang's mother glanced at his bowl and frowned, "You haven't eaten much."

The bowl was almost still full, with barely a few bites taken.

The food on the table was still steaming hot.

The warm yellow light shone down from above, but it didn't feel warm at all.

Zhang Lurang was about to head upstairs.

Beside him, Zhang Luli rubbed his eyes with his hand and said flatteringly, “Brother, eat your meal.”

He paused and eventually sat back down.

At the dining table, Zhang’s mother kept talking.

Her voice was very gentle.

But to Zhang Lurang, it sounded like it had thorns.

******

After dinner, Zhang Lurang returned to his room.

He turned on the bright white desk lamp with a “click.”

Zhang Lurang sat down and glanced at his phone.

The lamp’s light was too bright, making it hard for him to see the content on the phone.

Zhang Lurang increased the brightness.

Instantly, he could see what Su Zai Zai had sent him.

—— I thought about it, you can’t always be the one coming to see me.

—— How about I visit you during the winter break?

Zhang Lurang lowered his eyes, thinking about how to reply.

But his fingers moved uncontrollably and dialed her number.

After one ring, Su Zai Zai answered.

“Lurang.”

“Mm.”

“Why did you call me?”

“…”

“Are you in a bad mood?”

“No.”

She didn’t ask further and changed the topic.

“Today, Jiang Jia told me that people with repeated syllable names are usually good-looking.”

“Really.” Zhang Lurang chuckled.

Su Zai Zai said seriously, “No wonder your name is Zhang Lurang.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

“But I think,” Su Zai Zai continued to flatter, “a simple name can’t affect your appearance at all.”

There was a moment of silence.

Zhang Lurang suddenly asked, “How did you know I was in a bad

mood?"

"Because I'm not by your side." She shamelessly said.

She originally thought Zhang Lurang would deny it.

But unexpectedly.

In the next second, he murmured in confusion.

"How do you always guess right?"

Su Zai Zai fell silent on the other end.

Soon, Zhang Lurang heard a "beep beep" sound.

At the same time, there was a knock on the door, three times.

He instinctively looked up and said softly, "Come in."

Zhang Luli slowly turned the doorknob and walked in.

He habitually went to the bed behind Zhang Lurang and lay down in silence.

Zhang Luli turned his head, looking at Zhang Lurang's back.

The light cast a faint halo on his black hair.

From this angle, he could see Zhang Lurang holding his phone, typing seriously.

The room was very quiet.

There was no sound of typing on the phone.

No sound of flipping through a book, and the person on the bed was motionless, as if asleep.

Neither of them spoke.

After a while, Zhang Lurang flipped through the English vocabulary book in front of him.

A sticky note fell out from inside.

Light blue, with slightly wrinkled edges.

It was stuck on the medicine box by Su Zai Zai when he had a cold.

—— Always cherished by Zai.

Zhang Lurang mouthed silently.

One word at a time: “Zai Zai.”

He lost his focus.

Soon, hearing the sound of movement behind him, Zhang Lurang turned his head.

At the same time, Zhang Luli lowered the arm covering his eyes.

Only then did Zhang Lurang realize Zhang Luli was still in his room.

“Go back to your room.” He said lightly.

Zhang Luli sat up, head lowered, not speaking.

The temperature in city B had already started to drop.

Cold wind blew in through the small gap in the window.

Blowing so hard that Zhang Luli, wearing a short sleeve and shorts, shivered.

Noticing his movement, Zhang Lurang got up to close the window.

As he walked to the window, Zhang Luli suddenly spoke.

His tone was low and hoarse, as if he was about to cry.

“Brother, should I not have skipped grades?”

Zhang Lurang was stunned and turned back, “What?”

He didn’t repeat.

The next second, Zhang Lurang understood.

He reached out to close the window, sealing the last small gap completely.

The temperature in the room instantly stopped being cold enough to make one shiver.

Warmth gradually came.

“Luli, it’s not your fault.” He answered seriously.

Zhang Luli looked up, meeting his gaze.

There were specks of starlight in his eyes.

That was the light of relief.

******

In 2009, due to work reasons, Lin Mao moved to settle in Z City.

Before leaving, he said to Zhang Lurang, “Don’t compare yourself to anyone.”

Zhang Lurang lowered his head and said nothing.

In 2010, Lin Mao took leave and rushed from Z City to B City.

He walked into Zhang Lurang’s room.

Following the sound, Zhang Lurang turned to look at him.

There was still a trace of childishness on his face, with soft and gentle features.

He was still a child who had not yet grown up.

“It’s not that I want to compare with him… it’s that everyone else compares me to him.”

Lin Mao’s throat tightened, and he couldn’t say a word.

“Do you blame Alu?” he asked.

Zhang Lurang said nothing, silently shaking his head.

In fact, thinking about it carefully.

It seemed Zhang Lurang had never gotten angry at Zhang Luli.

Everyone praised Zhang Luli and belittled him.

Yet he never gave up on himself, nor did he let himself fall into despair.

Lin Mao didn't know when Zhang Lurang became so silent and withdrawn.

Gradually, he put on a cold mask, appearing indifferent to the world.

But in reality, he was extremely gentle.

The world treated him poorly, yet he still chose to be kind.

Such a good Zhang Lurang.

******

Before returning to school, Su Zai Zai took her short legs out for a walk.

When passing by Zhang Lurang's house, she happened to see a young man walking Su Su.

His posture was a bit relaxed and lazy, wearing short sleeves, shorts, and a pair of gray slippers.

Soon, he noticed Su Zai Zai nearby. Lin Mao tugged at the corner of his mouth, as if recognizing who she was.

His brows relaxed, and he smiled lightly.

Su Zai Zai inexplicably felt like she had been caught by an adult for having an early romance.

She hurriedly nodded to him and immediately walked back.

Lin Mao stood in place, lost in thought. He remembered passing by that vacant lot that day.

A young boy riding a bike, with a girl cautiously holding on behind him. He had a bright smile on his face.

That looked like the Zhang Lurang from a long time ago. The Zhang Lurang Lin Mao hadn't seen in many years.

Chapter 39

I want to apply to Z University because it's in the city where she lives.

— Zhang Luran

Back home.

Su Zai Zai was untying the leash from Short Legs.

Once freed, Short Legs ran and ran.

He quickly ran to the corner where the pet water dispenser was

and started drinking.

Su Zai Zai watched him for a while and mocked, “Zhang Xiao Rang, you should be grateful we have an elevator in our house.”

She said this while walking to the coffee table and pouring herself a glass of water.

Then, Su Zai Zai walked over to Short Legs and petted his head.

“Didn’t I say you should bark when I call you that?”

She squatted beside him and watched for a while.

Soon she stood up, went to the bathroom to wash her face, cooling her sunburned face.

The water was flowing, and Su Zai Zai suddenly started daydreaming.

She snapped out of it, turned off the tap.

She took two tissues and wiped her face.

Su Zai Zai returned to her room and took out her phone from her pocket again.

The screen still showed the message Zhang Luran sent last night at 8 o’clock.

—Why did you hang up?

Su Zai Zai hesitated for a while, not knowing how to reply.

Yesterday, hearing him say “How can you always guess right,” she thought he was answering her question, “Because I’m not by your side.”

Excited and shy, she hung up the phone.

But after thinking for a while, she felt Zhang Luran might have meant…

How do you always guess when I’m in a bad mood?

Su Zai Zai felt a bit embarrassed.

She thought for a long time and felt the latter guess was more likely.

Moreover, hearing he was in a bad mood and then hanging up the phone…

Su Zai Zai dared not reply at all.

But not replying wasn’t a solution either.

Determined, Su Zai Zai sent two messages.

Su Zai Zai: I accidentally hung up the phone after laughing yesterday.

Su Zai Zai: Then I fell asleep.

After sending the messages successfully, she felt relieved and started packing to go back to school.

She thought for a moment and suddenly felt something was wrong.

Su Zai Zai immediately picked up her phone and sent two more messages.

—Last night, I couldn't help but cry when I heard your words.

—Accidentally hung up the phone.

Zhang Luran: "..."

He was speechless.

Zhang Luran didn't mind much and sent a voice message.

—"Did you finish the exercises?"

Su Zai Zai felt a bit gloomy and started to reply with a voice message.

"No, you just left for a day, and I haven't adjusted my mood yet."

"Study hard," he said.

After graduating high school, he would be an adult.

Zhang Luran wanted to stay in Z city, where Su Zai Zai was.

He wanted to always have her around.

******

The gears of time kept turning, never stopping.

On June 8, 2014, high school graduates walked out of the exam halls.

They threw their books in excitement, screamed, and hugged each other with tears in their eyes.

This marked the end of Su Zai Zai's senior year.

Su Zai Zai sat in her seat and took out her grade report from one of her books.

Her eyes scanned from left to right.

They stopped at the second number.

Math: 98 points.

Su Zai Zai pursed her lips and stuffed a few math solution books into her backpack.

Then she left the classroom and headed toward the dormitory.

At night, the surrounding temperature was cool and comfortable.

The leaves swayed, making a "rustling" sound.

Yet, Su Zai Zai felt a bit restless inside.

She returned to the dormitory and quickly took a shower.

After washing her clothes, she was about to climb into bed and study with the small lamp.

She happened to see Jiang Jia on the lower bunk looking annoyed, throwing her phone heavily onto the bed.

Su Zai Zai blinked and asked, “What’s wrong with you?”

Everyone in the dorm knew about Jiang Jia and Guan Han’s relationship.

So Jiang Jia didn’t mind, sighed, and said directly.

“Guan Han is so annoying. We’re in our senior year, yet he always plays with his phone and doesn’t listen when I tell him not to.”

Because of her math score, Su Zai Zai felt a bit down and didn’t know how to comfort her.

She hesitated but still said, “You should talk to him seriously.”

Jiang Jia picked up her phone, sent a few messages, and her eyes turned red.

She wiped her eyes and said softly, “It’s useless. I’ve told him many times. If he keeps this up, we won’t be able to get into the same university.”

Xiao Yu looked over and comforted, “Don’t cry…”

“I’m really annoyed. He even makes me not want to study.”

Su Zai Zai dazed for a while and suddenly asked, “If you can’t get into the same university, will you break up with him?”

Jiang Jia nodded without hesitation, “Absolutely.”

Su Zai Zai's expression stiffened, and she said no more.

She looked down at the phone's breathing light blinking.

She lit up the screen.

Su Zai Zai: Luran.

Zhang Luran: Just finished evening study.

Zhang Luran: What's up?

She didn't reply and sent a WeChat message to Su's mother.

—Mom, please sign me up for a math tutoring class.

Su Zai Zai got into bed and opened the chat window with Zhang Luran again.

She thought for a long time, not knowing what to say.

Soon, another message came from him.

Zhang Luran: The other party is typing

Su Zai Zai laughed out loud.

All the heavy and restless feelings vanished with his one message.

She thought for a moment and still asked.

Su Zai Zai: Luran, what was your last English score?

Zhang Luran: 124

Su Zai Zai: !!!

Su Zai Zai: Wasn't it 110 last time? Great job!

Zhang Luran's pursed lips lifted a bit.

Then, he suddenly felt a bit uneasy and asked, "What about your math?"

There was no reply from the other side. ******

"I woke up in the middle of the night yesterday and saw that your light was still on..." Jiang Jia took a bite of bread and frowned, "What time did you go to bed?"

"Ah, I didn't notice."

"Your grades should definitely reach the threshold for a top university."

Su Zai Zai scooped her porridge with a spoon, the steam rising in front of her eyes.

Suddenly, her nose tingled.

Jiang Jia looked worried, "What's wrong with you?"

Su Zai Zai changed the subject.

"Jia Jia, how are things with Guan Han recently?"

Jiang Jia shrugged indifferently, "It's the same. If I don't look for him, he won't look for me. Since we're not in the same class

anymore, I don't even feel annoyed by not seeing him."

"Do you not like him anymore?" Su Zai Zai asked softly.

"So what if I do?" Jiang Jia smiled bitterly, "He never thought about our future, so why should I invest so much in him?"

"..."

"My relationship with him is not like yours with Zhang Lu Rang. Long-distance relationships don't end well."

Su Zai Zai tightened her grip on the spoon.

If she didn't get into Z University.

There would be four years of long-distance relationship ahead.

A relationship with more separation than togetherness.

She didn't know if Zhang Lu Rang would still want that.

******

Su Zai Zai hadn't replied to him again today.

Zhang Lu Rang irritably ran his fingers through his hair.

Suppressing the urge to call her, he opened a set of comprehensive science exam papers and began to work on them.

Because of his bad mood, he didn't notice how late it had gotten.

After finishing, Zhang Lu Rang picked up his phone again and glanced at it.

In the chat window with Su Zai Zai, it showed “The other party is typing…”

Zhang Lu Rang paused, glanced at the time in the top left corner of the screen.

2 AM.

His expression instantly turned cold, and he sent a message.

——Why aren’t you asleep yet?

The person on the other end seemed to be surprised that he was still awake.

This time, she replied immediately.

Su Zai Zai: …

Su Zai Zai: I woke up halfway.

Zhang Lu Rang turned off the desk lamp in front of him and leaned against the wall.

The light from the phone illuminated his face, making it glow.

His lips pressed tightly together, his profile tense.

Zhang Lu Rang couldn’t suppress the sour feeling rising in his heart.

Ignoring how childish his question sounded, he voiced his concern.

That unacceptable thought.

——Do you not like me anymore?

The reply was slow.

Su Zai Zai: No.

Su Zai Zai: I like you very much.

To avoid disturbing his roommates, Zhang Lu Rang had even turned off the phone's vibration.

He watched silently.

The other side was quiet, slowly sending these two sentences.

Zhang Lu Rang's initially tense mood did not relax.

He hesitated, then quickly sent another message.

——What's wrong?

Su Zai Zai: Ah, I'm confessing my feelings to you.

Su Zai Zai: Rang Rang, aren't you happy?

Something felt off, but he couldn't pinpoint it.

Zhang Lu Rang just wanted to finish the college entrance exams quickly.

Then, to be by her side soon.

He curved his lips and replied: Hmm.

Zhang Lu Rang: Go to sleep.

Zhang Lu Rang: Don’t play with your phone if you wake up.

Su Zai Zai: Got it, you sleep early too.

Su Zai Zai: Good night.

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t know that the person on the other end.

After putting down the phone, picked up the pen again and continued working on problems.

Crying, collapsing, and writing endlessly.

Long-distance relationship, who can be at ease?

No one can be at ease.

******

The first mock exam in Z City coincided with the end-of-term exam for the first semester of senior year.

When the closing ceremony ended, the results were out.

Su Zai Zai knew she hadn’t done well and had no desire to check the bulletin board for her scores.

Most of her grades remained consistent.

According to last year's admission scores for Z University, Su Zai Zai needed to score at least 110 in math.

But her performance was unstable, her scores fluctuating.

She got nervous during math exams, and her mindset collapsed when faced with difficult problems in multiple-choice.

Xiao Xiao went to check the scores on the bulletin board.

She quickly returned to her seat and turned to Su Zai Zai, saying, "Zai Zai, you ranked thirty-first in the class this time."

Su Zai Zai was silent for a moment, then asked softly, "What did I score in math?"

"Ah, I didn't notice," Xiao Xiao glanced back at the bulletin board and simply shouted to someone over there, "Hey, Nan Shen, what did Su Zai Zai score in math?"

Wang Nan walked over, hesitating, "I think it's 92."

Su Zai Zai's eyelids drooped, her voice barely audible, "Thank you."

She had no grand ambitions.

If Su Zai Zai wanted to go to Z University, she would give it her all.

If she still couldn't make it, she wouldn't be too upset.

What she couldn't get, she would just let go.

Su Zai Zai never believed in forcing things to be good.

But if Zhang Lu Rang wanted to go there.

Then she had to go too.

For the first time, Su Zai Zai felt that life was so, so difficult.

She stayed up late every night until two or three o'clock, working tirelessly on problems.

But her grades still didn't improve.

She suddenly felt like a burden.

Su Zai Zai didn't dare to tell him that her grades weren't improving.

She was afraid it would affect his mood.

She was also afraid he would choose to break up, like Jiang Jia did with Guan Han.

Even more afraid that Zhang Lu Rang would say, "If you don't get into Z University, I'll go to the university you can get into."

She liked him, never to burden him.

The pressure of studying, the unknown future, nearly crushed her.

Su Zai Zai's eyes gradually reddened, filling with tears.

She bit her lip and couldn't help but take out her phone.

With each word she typed, tears fell.

——Zhang Lu Rang, I think I can't get into Z University.

******

After sending the message, Su Zai Zai immediately regretted it.

She wiped her tears quickly and retracted the message.

She changed it to another: Rang Rang, we're on holiday today~

Su Zai Zai: I made a typo just now.

After sending it, she finally breathed a sigh of relief.

People around her started packing up to go home.

The winter break wasn't long, but Su Zai Zai still wanted to take more books home to read.

Because of this, she asked her father to pick her up.

Just as Su Zai Zai was about to start packing, her phone rang.

In the classroom, she tensed up but soon relaxed when she saw the caller ID.

——"My dear Rang Rang"

She hesitated, then walked out of the classroom to the end of the corridor.

Seeing no one around, she answered the call.

Clearing her throat, she called out, “Rang Rang.”

The other end was quiet.

After a few seconds, Zhang Lu Rang spoke, “Have you been crying?”

Su Zai Zai choked up, “What are you talking about?”

She squatted down, covering her eyes with her hand.

“Did you not do well on the exam?” he asked softly.

Su Zai Zai held back her sobs, “Did you see it?”

“——Hmm.”

“Jiang Jia said Guan Han didn’t do well. She said if they don’t get into the same university, she’ll break up with him.”

“I’m afraid you’ll do the same, so I didn’t dare to tell you.”

“...But my math scores just won’t improve.”

...

Su Zai Zai didn’t know what she was saying, only that she poured out everything weighing on her heart.

After listening to her, Zhang Lu Rang finally spoke.

“Then don’t take the exam.”

Su Zai Zai held her breath.

Zhang Lu Rang’s voice was hoarse and low, as if infected by her sadness.

“Take the exams you can pass, just be happy.”

“Would you…” break up with me?

Before she could finish, he interrupted her.

“Impossible.”

Tears welled up in Su Zai Zai’s eyes, looking pitiful.

“Then you wouldn’t give up Z University because of me, right?”

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly laughed, “No.”

After a brief silence, Su Zai Zai heard him say:

“I still need to take care of you.”

Chapter 40

I don’t want to have any shortcomings in front of her.

——Zhang Lurang

Zhang Lurang’s holiday coincided with Su Zai’s.

The next day at noon, Zhang Lurang returned to Z City.

As he entered the house, he put his backpack aside and sat directly on the steps of the hallway.

Hearing the noise, Susu ran downstairs and excitedly burrowed into his arms.

His gaze softened as he rubbed her head.

With his other hand, he took out his phone from his pocket.

After telling Su Zai that he had arrived in Z City, Zhang Lurang took out a set of test papers from his backpack.

He had just bought the 2015 I Province Mathematics Liberal Arts High School Simulation Exam papers from a bookstore near Jinghua.

Lowering his eyes, Zhang Lurang flipped through the first set of questions and glanced at them.

Su Zai quickly replied.

——I'm awake.

——Where are you? I'll come find you.

Zhang Lurang moved Susu, who was clinging to him, away, put the test papers back into his backpack, and left the house.

As he walked towards Su Zai's building, he typed a message.

——Downstairs at your building.

Before he reached the building, he saw Su Zai coming out of the door from a distance.

Seeing Su Zai, he squinted in disbelief, wanting to see clearly if he had made a mistake.

Su Zai was wearing a dark purple pullover hoodie that just covered her hips, seemingly wearing only leggings underneath, with bare legs. She didn't look like someone living in the winter.

Zhang Lurang stopped in his tracks and sent a voice message on his phone.

——"Go back and put on some pants before coming down."

Su Zai, not checking her phone, saw him and ran over, smiling and hugging his waist.

Zhang Lurang frowned, pulled her hands away, and said coldly, "It's thirteen degrees today."

"Really?" Su Zai blinked innocently. "The moment I saw you, my heart started boiling, so I don't feel cold at all."

He wasn't moved at all. "Go back and dress warmer before coming out."

"No way!" Su Zai immediately refused. "I'm wearing thermal underwear and a wool sweater underneath! I don't feel cold at all. I'm telling you, if the upper body is warm, the lower body doesn't feel cold."

Zhang Lurang stared at her for a few seconds. He quickly compromised and said, “Then let’s go home separately.”

“...I’ll go back and change now.”

******

It was ten minutes later when Su Zai came downstairs again.

Reluctantly, she had changed into a pair of black skinny jeans.

Walking to his side, she said nothing.

Zhang Lurang took the initiative to hold her hand and coaxed, “I’ll treat you to some cake.”

Su Zai squeezed his hand back and soon cheered up. “Lurang, you seem like a domineering CEO right now.”

“...”

She exaggeratedly imitated in a low voice, “Woman, you are not allowed to wear clothes I don’t like.”

Zhang Lurang stayed silent, holding her hand and walking towards the dessert shop.

When he didn’t respond, Su Zai became puzzled.

“Why don’t you tell me to act normally anymore?”

Zhang Lurang hesitated and didn’t answer.

“You’re acting very aloof now,” Su Zai began to accuse him.

“…”

“Do you think you’re so great just because you’re a CEO?”

Zhang Lurang couldn’t bear it anymore. “No, speak properly.”

Su Zai paused and said dumbfoundedly, “You really became a CEO behind my back.”

He suddenly felt speechless but inexplicably smiled.

“Fool.”

******

The two of them walked into their usual dessert shop.

Zhang Lurang sat across from her, took out the test papers from his backpack, and handed her one set.

“You do this set of questions. Two and a half hours.”

Su Zai was a bit confused.

…She thought they were out on a date.

She nodded, took the pen he handed over, and looked down at the questions.

A few seconds later, she asked, “What are you going to do?”

Zhang Lurang set a timer on his phone and said, “I’ll do questions too.”

Su Zai said no more and began to seriously work on the questions.

She didn’t notice Zhang Lurang glancing at her from time to time.

Two and a half hours later, Zhang Lurang’s phone buzzed on the table.

Su Zai obediently stopped writing and handed him her test paper.

Zhang Lurang took out the answers and started marking her paper, pointing out the questions she got wrong.

He mentally calculated the score and slowly said, “About 110 points.”

Su Zai blinked in surprise. “That high?”

Zhang Lurang sighed and said, “Come sit next to me.”

Su Zai got up and sat next to him.

Once she sat down, Zhang Lurang placed the test paper in front of her.

In a clear, deep voice, he said, “All multiple-choice questions are correct, one fill-in-the-blank wrong, the first three big questions are correct.”

“…”

“This question I’ve looked at before, it’s not easy.”

“Really…”

Zhang Lurang turned to her and asked, “Have you done this set of questions before?”

“No.”

After a brief silence, Su Zai stared at the questions and said softly, “The teacher said the first mock exam in Z City is very important. She said this score basically sets the final exam score.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t interrupt, quietly listening to her.

“I want to do well…”

“But when I get anxious, the answers I calculate are all wrong.”

“When I practice on my own, without pressure, my accuracy is a bit higher.”

“If I mess up like this during the final exam…”

“I’m afraid it will affect my English and comprehensive subjects.”

Seeing that he wasn’t speaking, Su Zai quickly changed her tone.

“But it’s much better now, just math. I’m not afraid.”

Zhang Lurang looked down at her hands twisted together on her lap.

He couldn’t help but hold her hand.

“Su Zai, I’m going back on the 15th,” Zhang Lurang said seriously. “Before that, you do a set of questions every day, and I’ll explain all the problem-solving methods to you.”

Su Zai stared at him in a daze.

“Everything you don’t understand, I understand. I’ll teach you everything.”

“So, don’t be afraid.”

Her eyes suddenly felt a little sore.

Zhang Lurang’s expression became unnatural, but he continued with determination.

“Didn’t you say you like me?”

Su Zai nodded like a pecking chick, eyes red.

“Then you have to listen to me,” he said.

——”Don’t be afraid.”

******

The Spring Festival of 2015 came exceptionally late.

When the second semester of senior year started, it was already close to March.

Only three months remained until the final exams.

One Saturday afternoon at the end of March.

The school organized a physical examination for the senior students at the city center hospital. After the exam, students could go home on their own.

Due to the large number of students at Z Middle School, the education bureau only scheduled two schools for the exam that day.

Su Zai specifically chose a line with fewer people and finished all the checks in about an hour and a half.

She had agreed to meet Jiang Jia at the hospital entrance to go home together.

The two got on bus 71 and sat in the back row.

The bus moved forward, and the scenery outside blurred by.

Su Zai placed her hand near the small gap in the window, feeling the cold air outside.

The bus announcement played in her ears.

“Dear passengers, City Square is next. Passengers getting off, please exit from the rear door. Passengers getting on, please move inside and do not stand by the door.”

Su Zai instinctively turned to remind Jiang Jia.

“Your stop is next.”

Jiang Jia looked a bit dazed and said softly, “Guan Han and I broke up.”

“...Huh?”

“Sigh, relationships are such a hassle.”

Su Zai looked worried. “Are you okay...”

“I’m fine, just suddenly realized.”

“The one who pursues you might not be better than the one you pursue.”

“Actually, I was quite against you pursuing Zhang Lurang before.”

“I was afraid that he would look down on you for it.”

Su Zai licked her lips and cautiously said, “You’ll find someone better.”

Jiang Jia laughed and raised her eyebrows. “Of course.”

The announcement played again.

Jiang Jia stood up and seriously said:

“Zai, you and Zhang Lurang should be good together.”

“If you two break up, then I’ll truly stop believing in love.”

******

After returning home.

Su Zai looked at the time, it was past six.

Zhang Lurang should be out of class.

Remembering Jiang Jia's words, she couldn't resist the urge to call him.

It rang once, and he picked up.

"Lurang, are you out of class?"

"Yeah."

"I finished my physical exam today, even had blood drawn. It hurt a bit."

Zhang Lurang chuckled and asked, "Did you cry?"

"No, what's the point of crying when you're not here." Su Zai said confidently.

He didn't reply. But Su Zai heard his breathless laugh. She suddenly felt infected and began to laugh too.

Then she started sharing.

SLC Ch 41 – 50

Aug 16, 2024

Chapter 41

She took the lead.

—Zhang Lurang

A week before the college entrance examination.

Seniors could choose to stay at school or go home to study, and the school no longer restricted them to staying on campus.

Since the exam rooms needed to be set up in a few days, Su Zai decided to take most of her books home.

Su Zai called her father to pick her up.

She piled up some unused test papers and workbooks nearby, planning to throw them away.

While organizing her notebooks, she suddenly came across a plain white sketchbook.

Su Zai paused, flipping it open.

On one page, she saw that familiar handwriting.

Neat and elegant, especially attractive.

She smiled and tore out that page, placing it among her recent

study materials.

…

“Can you explain this problem to me?”

“I don’t know how.”

…

“What you don’t know, I do. I’ll teach you.”

…

Su Zai laughed out loud.

She couldn’t help but send him a message.

—Lurang.

—What did you feel the first time I came to your class to explain a problem to you?

Su Zai glanced at the time, not expecting an immediate reply.

She put her phone in her bag and continued packing.

After throwing away the unwanted books, Su Zai called her father to help carry the books downstairs.

Half an hour later, Su Zai finally got into the car.

She rested her head against the car window, watching the scenery

flash by.

The car jolted, making her dizzy.

Suddenly, she remembered the message she had sent to Zhang Lurang.

Curious, she turned her head, took out her phone from her bag, and glanced at it.

Zhang Lurang had already replied.

The screen showed a rather perplexing message.

—The classroom's air conditioning wasn't on.

Huh?

Su Zai blinked, scratching her head as she recalled the scene.

Did she say something?

It seemed like...

—"Uh, it's so hot. Let me come in to cool off with the air conditioning."

Su Zai: "..."

******

After the Chinese exam.

Su Zai went to the location the class advisor had previously specified.

Afraid students would lose their exam admission tickets, Su Zai's class advisor required them to hand in their tickets after the exam and receive them one by one before the next test.

Su Zai handed over her admission ticket and then went to the cafeteria with a girl from her class.

After eating, they returned to the dormitory.

Su Zai took out her phone from the cabinet, leaning against the ladder, standing to digest her food.

The dormitory was not quiet; several girls were chatting about other things.

No one mentioned whether the exam questions were difficult or how well they had performed.

While listening to their conversation, Su Zai searched for Zhang Lurang on WeChat.

Su Zai: Hey, Lurang.

Zhang Lurang: What's up?

Su Zai: Before entering the exam room, we had to take off our shoes for scanning. I wore the wrong socks, so embarrassing.

Su Zai: Do you have to do that too?

Zhang Lurang: No.

Su Zai: Luckily, you don't.

Su Zai: I can't stand the thought of others seeing your feet.

Su Zai: Only I can look!

Zhang Lurang: "..."

After her playful comment, Su Zai intended to take a nap to recharge, but suddenly remembered something.

Su Zai: By the way, there was a guy in our exam room.

Su Zai: When he was drinking water, he placed the bottle on the table, but it wasn't closed properly.

Su Zai: Near the end of the exam, the water spilled, soaking his test paper.

Su Zai: Be careful, and remember to put your water bottle on the floor after drinking.

Zhang Lurang: Got it.

******

After the math exam, back in the dormitory.

Su Zai had just sat on the bed when she immediately stood up, walked to the cabinet, and took out her phone.

Her first message again was: Hey.

This time, Zhang Lurang was a bit nervous.

Did the math exam not go well...

Su Zai: Lurang, a guy in our class lost his ID card this afternoon.

Su Zai: Our class advisor was so anxious she cried.

Su Zai: But later, the proctor found it in the guy's exam room.

Zhang Lurang didn't know what to say.

Su Zai: Lurang, you need to be careful too.

Su Zai: Make sure to keep your ID and admission ticket safe.

Her rambling made Zhang Lurang a bit anxious.

He thought for a moment and decided to call her.

Su Zai answered with a cheerful voice: "Lurang."

Zhang Lurang scratched his head, puzzled: "What's wrong with you?"

"Huh?"

"..."

Su Zai walked outside the dormitory, found a spot to squat down, and chatted with him.

She looked around stealthily, then lowered her voice to speak to him.

“I think I did exceptionally well in the math exam.”

Zhang Lurang breathed a sigh of relief.

Su Zai didn’t know why he called.

She hesitated a moment, then comforted him.

“Don’t worry, if you don’t do well, I’ll take care of you.”

“...No need.”

“Then why did you call?”

“No reason.”

Just worried about her, hiding his own feelings.

He didn’t realize it at the time.

How much it would hurt when he finally did.

******

The day after the college entrance exam.

Zhang Lurang had booked a flight long ago, returning from City B to City Z.

It was only four in the afternoon, and Lin Mao wasn’t home yet.

Zhang Lurang glanced at Susu.

He frowned, half-carrying and half-dragging it to the bathroom, giving it a bath.

After blow-drying Susu's fur with a hairdryer.

Zhang Lurang returned to his room, changed clothes, and sat on the bed, picking up the phone from the bedside table.

He saw a WeChat message from his mother.

—Have you run off to your uncle's again?

Zhang Lurang paused, replying: I'll come back to fill out my college application.

Soon, his mother called.

The phone vibrated in his hand.

Zhang Lurang looked a bit resistant but answered.

"Did you check the exam answers?"

"..."

"Ah Rang, tell Mom."

"..."

"Why do you keep running to your uncle's? Are you in a relationship?"

Zhang Lurang didn't answer, just said: "I'm applying to Z University."

His mother was silent for a moment, then softened her tone.

"Why so far away? Isn't it good to go to B University with Ah Li?"

"..."

"Why aren't you talking?"

Zhang Lurang pulled at the corner of his mouth, softly saying: "It's not good."

Then he hung up.

The room returned to silence.

Feeling a bit irritated, Zhang Lurang scratched his head.

Sensing his mood, Susu came over, resting its head on his leg.

Zhang Lurang forced a smile, petting it.

******

A few minutes later, Zhang Lurang went downstairs.

He happened to see Lin Mao, who had just returned.

Seeing him, Lin Mao raised an eyebrow and smiled: "Think you can get the top score?"

“No.” Zhang Lurang was realistic.

Lin Mao walked to the sofa, sat down, and casually poured himself a glass of water.

Seeing Lin Mao didn’t say anything more, Zhang Lurang didn’t initiate a conversation.

He went to the fridge, took out an apple, and started eating.

Sitting beside Lin Mao, Zhang Lurang silently thought.

After eating, he would go find Su Zai.

Just as he threw the apple core into the trash can.

Lin Mao suddenly spoke.

“My nephew has a girlfriend, yet I’ve been single for thirty-three years.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Lin Mao downed the water in his glass, turning his head.

He didn’t take his previous words seriously, softly reminding: “Apply to whatever school you want, don’t listen to your parents.”

“Okay.”

After a while.

Lin Mao thought for a moment and continued: “Before finalizing

your application, remember to check with the school administration." "..." "My sister is very strict." "..."

Lin Mao patted his shoulder, solemnly saying:

"Be careful."

******

Lin Mao's words made Zhang Lurang more cautious, afraid of doing something to hurt his feelings.

Therefore, Zhang Lurang changed his original plan of finding Su Zai right after eating the apple.

After dinner, waiting for Lin Mao to return to his room, he quietly slipped out.

They arranged to meet at a pavilion in the neighborhood.

Su Zai sat next to him, cheerfully leaning closer.

"It's a dark and windy night, quiet and deserted. Do you want to do something to me?"

Zhang Lurang frowned, pushing her away: "No."

Su Zai lost interest instantly, frustrated: "I thought you'd be more wild after the exams, guess I was wrong."

Zhang Lurang said nothing, quietly watching her.

Seeing this, Su Zai persisted: "Lurang, want to try a French kiss?"

“Impossible.” Zhang Lurang refused immediately. Su Zai didn’t say anything more, letting out a long sigh. Silence fell.

Zhang Lurang spoke first, helplessly: “Talk about something else.”

Su Zai propped her chin, seriously saying: “Nothing much to say.”

The summer night was still hot and stifling. The sound of crickets made it seem less.

Chapter 42

Actually, it’s possible, isn’t it?

After all, we’ll always be together.

...I can’t think like that.

—Zhang Lurang

The night was illuminated by the moonlight pouring through the gaps in the clouds, casting a silver stream on the ground.

Ambiguity hung in the air, enveloping them like a soft web.

Inch by inch, it enveloped the two of them.

Zhang Lurang’s mood suddenly became restless, a sensation that arose from his heart.

Tingling and numb, it made his heart itch.

It almost devoured his rationality entirely.

Su Zai was still savoring the recent moment.

She quickly snapped back to reality and playfully patted his shoulder.

“Don’t be afraid, I’ll take responsibility for you.”

Zhang Lurang turned his head, quietly looking at her.

His profile was sharp and defined, rigid and stern.

His lips were pressed into a line, his expression somewhat cold.

His eyes were deep, darker than the night, mesmerizing.

His expression made Su Zai nervous.

The surrounding temperature seemed to drop several degrees, making her shiver.

Her palms grew slightly damp with sweat.

Her earlier confidence vanished without a trace.

Soon, Su Zai stood up, pretending to be calm.

“What are you doing… Anyway, it was bound to happen sooner or later.”

Seeing that he still didn’t speak, Su Zai gave up trying to coax him.

She decided to let Zhang Lurang cool down; he probably wouldn’t be angry by tomorrow.

After all, if he kept being so rigid, she'd feel quite suffocated too.

Su Zai took two steps back and suggested, "It's late, let's go home."

Zhang Lurang stood up silently.

Seeing this, Su Zai's heart finally settled.

She was about to reach out and hold his hand.

Suddenly, Zhang Lurang grabbed her wrist and pushed her back.

In an instant, Su Zai's back was against the pavilion's pillar.

She was confused, her mouth open in bewilderment.

"You..." What are you doing?

Before she could finish her sentence.

The warmth of Zhang Lurang's lips pressed against hers, urgent and forceful, swallowing all of Su Zai's words.

Su Zai even heard the sound of their teeth clashing.

His actions were filled with anger, rough and intense, biting her lips.

His tongue invaded her mouth, occupying every corner.

Su Zai hadn't had time to react, her eyes wide open, enduring his kiss.

After a while, Zhang Lurang licked her lower lip.

Their lips parted.

Su Zai's eyes were watery, misty, looking a bit dazed.

She came back to her senses, instinctively pushing him away slightly, lowering her head in embarrassment.

She had completely lost her previous arrogance.

Zhang Lurang suddenly chuckled, his deep eyes shining with a faint light.

He lowered his eyes to look at her, unable to resist touching her face.

The corners of his mouth curved into a shallow smile.

Soon, Zhang Lurang spoke.

His voice was low and hoarse, full of restraint.

"Didn't I tell you not to provoke me?"

Su Zai lowered her head guiltily, not daring to look into his eyes.

The next second, Zhang Lurang grabbed her chin and lifted it.

He lowered his head and gently kissed her forehead.

Su Zai heard him chuckle.

Before she could respond, Zhang Lurang continued:

“This time, close your eyes.”

******

On the way back, Su Zai remained silent.

Next to her, Zhang Lurang seemed to be in an exceptionally good mood.

Even without looking at him, Su Zai could feel the joy emanating from him.

When they reached the building, Su Zai quickly said goodbye and went upstairs.

Noticing her parents watching TV in the living room, she greeted them guiltily and then went to her room.

Su Zai sat on the carpet beside her bed, hugging a stuffed toy next to the bedside table.

After a moment of daydreaming, she touched her lips and giggled foolishly.

But Su Zai couldn’t understand why she had suddenly become—

So wild.

She hesitated for a moment and decided to talk to Jiang Jia.

Su Zai: Zhang Lurang kissed me today.

Su Zai: And he wasn't shy at all...

Su Zai: Do you think that's normal?

Jiang Jia: Ah, it's normal...

Su Zai: No, it's Zhang Lurang we're talking about!

Su Zai: I suspect he's been possessed by something...

Jiang Jia: ...

Jiang Jia: When did he kiss you?

Su Zai: Just now.

Jiang Jia: Then it's really normal.

Jiang Jia: The night is dark, emotions run high.

Jiang Jia: Zhang Lurang couldn't help but reveal his true nature.

Su Zai: ...And tomorrow he'll go back to normal. 🙂

Thinking about this, Su Zai suddenly panicked a little.

She immediately exited the chat with Jiang Jia and sent Zhang Lurang a message.

—Lurang, will you kiss me again tomorrow?

Zhang Lurang: "..."

******

While waiting for the college entrance exam results to come out.

Zhang Lurang enrolled in a driving school and also tutored a middle school student in math.

Su Zai originally wanted to learn to drive too but realized she wouldn't turn 18 until the end of the year.

So she gave up.

Through a recommendation from her tutoring class teacher, Su Zai tutored a freshman girl living nearby in geography.

During a break.

She propped her chin up, watching the girl chat shyly with someone on her phone.

Su Zai suddenly became interested and took out her phone from her pocket.

Taking a quick selfie when no one was looking.

In the photo, she had a deliberately shy expression.

Su Zai sent it to Zhang Lurang, along with a message.

—Lurang, I'm so shy chatting with you~

Zhang Lurang replied quickly.

—Be normal.

“...Okay then.”

******

The day after Zhang Lurang passed the first part of the driving test, his college entrance exam results came out.

Province B’s results came out faster than province I’s.

He wasn’t too nervous, but Su Zai kept urging him to check his scores.

Mother Zhang kept calling too.

Seeing that Zhang Lurang hadn’t moved, Su Zai left and went to his house.

Today was a weekday, Lin Mao wasn’t home.

Because of this, Su Zai rang Zhang Lurang’s doorbell without hesitation.

She hadn’t told Zhang Lurang in advance, so he didn’t know it was her.

Soon, his low voice came through the intercom: “Who is it?”

Su Zai didn’t respond and pressed the doorbell again.

This time, the person inside seemed to have guessed.

Zhang Lurang opened the door, only halfway, as if he didn’t intend to let her in.

Seeing this, Su Zai widened her eyes: “You’re not going to let me in?”

Zhang Lurang nodded and said, “I’ll take you home.”

Su Zai was bewildered.

But thinking about it, it made sense. In their two years together.

She had never stepped into Zhang Lurang’s house.

Likewise, he had never entered hers.

“Your uncle isn’t home, what’s the big deal if I go in…” Su Zai felt frustrated and puzzled. “Stop joking, I want to check your college entrance exam results with you.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t say anything, walked to the shoe cabinet at the entrance.

He took the keys, changed into outdoor slippers, and came out.

Waiting outside for half a minute, Su Zai was really getting angry.

She forced herself to stay calm, and when he came out, she said flatly, “You go in, I’ll go back myself.”

Noticing her mood, Zhang Lurang still didn’t relent.

He softened his voice, advising, “Su Zai, don’t go into a boy’s house alone.”

Su Zai didn’t understand his logic at all, angrily said, “Aren’t you

different?!"

"I'm the same." Zhang Lurang said seriously.

Seeing his expression, Su Zai's anger dissipated instantly.

When Zhang Lurang came over to hold her hand, she didn't pull away.

They stood at the door.

Su Zai compromised, saying, "Then you go in and check, I'll wait here."

Zhang Lurang smiled, tucking her hair behind her ear.

"I checked."

"...When?"

"Five minutes ago, sent it to you on WeChat."

Su Zai was stunned for a moment, quickly took out her phone from her pocket.

She found the message he just sent.

—694

She hesitated, uncertainly asked, "So is that good or not?"

Zhang Lurang comfortingly rubbed her head.

“It’s pretty good.”

Su Zai breathed a sigh of relief, suddenly laughed, and kissed his chin.

“See, who would believe it.”

“You used to only get 30 points in English.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t say anything, his eyes soft, looking at her.

“Sigh, I have such good taste.” She said proudly.

******

Two days later, Su Zai’s college entrance exam results also came out.

Su Zai didn’t dare to check, she sent her exam number and password to Zhang Lurang, asking him to check for her.

After a while. Su Zai started to regret it.

Because if she didn’t do well, Zhang Lurang probably wouldn’t know how to tell her.

Su Zai climbed out of bed, went to the study, and turned on the computer.

Better check it herself…

She hadn’t even entered the website. Her phone vibrated next to the computer.

Chapter 43

I know she did it on purpose.

But still, I want to indulge her.

– Zhang Lurang

Their scores and rankings made it likely they would both get into Z University, based on last year's cut-off scores.

Su Zai discussed it with her parents and eventually decided to choose Journalism and Communication at Z University.

Once the decision was made, her anxious feelings instantly dissipated.

She went to the study, turned on the computer, and while waiting for it to boot up, she called Zhang Lurang.

She held the phone to her ear with one hand and opened the college application website with the other, entering her exam registration number and password.

Zhang Lurang answered quickly.

Su Zai picked up the college application guidebook beside her and opened the page for Z University.

"Rang Rang, what major are you choosing?"

Zhang Lurang was silent for a moment before quickly answering, "Computer Science."

“Oh—” Su Zai’s attention was fully on the book, her voice a bit slow.

She ran her fingers over the book, searching for the code for Journalism and Communication.

After finding it, she muttered the numbers to herself.

Then she reacted and asked again.

“Ah, what major did you say?”

Zhang Lurang, patient, repeated, “Computer Science.”

“Computer Science, huh,” Su Zai thought for a moment, “That major has the third highest rate of baldness.”

“……”

“It’s not my opinion, I read it on Weibo.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t want to comment on that.

He walked to his desk, opened his computer, and asked, “What are you studying?”

Su Zai cheerfully answered, “Journalism and Communication.”

Zhang Lurang logged onto the website, entering his registration number and password.

When he typed in the password, his fingers paused. He suddenly thought he hadn’t changed the default password, which was the last six digits of his ID number.

Before he could think further, he heard Su Zai say:

“You won’t go bald, don’t worry.”

Zhang Lurang’s temple twitched, “...Mm.”

Su Zai continued flipping through the application guide, “Hmm, what should I choose for my second major? There are so many empty slots.”

Zhang Lurang absent-mindedly looked up, and after entering the system, he typed in the code for his first choice school.

“Fill in whatever you want.”

“What are you filling in?”

“Nothing.”

“You’re only filling in one? Even for the school?”

“Mm.”

Su Zai felt a bit off-balance, “Aren’t you afraid you won’t get in?”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang hesitated a bit, “Will I?”

“Of course! After filling in my majors, I even opted for subject adjustment!”

“.....”

Su Zai sighed deeply, her voice revealing some bitterness.

“I don’t feel like you really want to go to the same university as me.”

Then—

Even though Zhang Lurang could definitely get into a popular major at Z University, he silently took out the college application guide he brought from B City.

He meticulously filled in all the empty slots.

******

The next day, Zhang Lurang returned to B City.

After completing the college applications, he had to go back to school to confirm and sign them.

Zhang Lurang originally wanted a classmate to sign for him.

But Lin Mao insisted that he sign in person.

His exact words were, “You will never have another chance to return to high school as a high school student. Don’t miss this precious opportunity.”

…Actually, he wasn’t one anymore.

Lin Mao was very diligent, even proactively booking his flight and driving him to the airport.

Like being pushed onto a duckboard, Zhang Lurang was forced to return to B City.

Before entering the house, Zhang Lurang stood at the door for a while.

He suddenly stepped back, opened the outermost pocket of his bag, and took out his ID.

He hesitated a bit before putting it in his pocket.

On Sunday, Zhang's father and mother were both at home.

Zhang Luli was at school and hadn't returned.

Zhang Lurang went in and greeted them.

Then he quietly headed upstairs.

Before he could take a few steps, his father, sitting on the sofa, suddenly spoke.

"Arang."

His voice was steady and calm, full of authority.

It habitually carried a tone of command.

Zhang Lurang stopped and turned around, his face calm.

In the next second, his father's voice softened, "Rest well."

Zhang's mother came out of the kitchen, holding a fruit platter, and handed it to Zhang Lurang.

He didn't take it.

His mother seemed to be in a good mood, smiling gently, “This time your ranking in the province is even higher than Luli’s was. Your uncle and others are all praising you. You’ll definitely get into B University.”

Zhang Lurang frowned slightly, wanting to tell them he didn’t apply to B University, but in the end, he said nothing.

Zhang’s father leisurely picked up the teapot and poured a cup of tea, asking, “What major did you choose?”

Zhang Lurang suppressed his irritation and answered, “Computer Science.”

“B University’s Finance program is excellent. After graduation, you can help manage the company.”

“Mm.” Zhang Lurang nodded perfunctorily, “If there’s nothing else, I’ll go upstairs.”

His mother handed him the tray again, “Eat, mom cut it for a long time.”

Zhang Lurang suddenly smiled, saying only two words before heading upstairs.

“Not eating.”

******

Zhang Lurang took a shower and returned to his room.

Just as he was about to go to bed, he remembered what his father had said earlier.

Zhang Lurang turned around, walked to the desk, and turned on the computer.

But he couldn't connect to the home Wi-Fi.

He also couldn't access the college application website on his phone's browser.

Frustrated, he scratched his head.

He wanted Su Zai to check for him but was afraid she would misunderstand if it was really changed.

He thought for a moment and called Zhang Luli.

Zhang Luli answered quickly, sounding pleasantly surprised.

"Ah, bro? Why are you calling me?"

Zhang Lurang got straight to the point, "Check my college application for me. My registration number is..."

Though he didn't understand why his brother suddenly wanted this, Zhang Luli obediently complied.

Half a minute later, Zhang Luli's cheerful voice came from the other end.

"Bro, you're going to Z University? I heard there are a lot of beauties there. My school is full of guys."

Zhang Lurang's initial nervousness eased significantly at his words.

He suddenly found it amusing but didn't forget his question.

"...Did I only apply to Z University?"

After confirming that his application wasn't changed, Zhang Lurang finally relaxed.

He chatted a bit more with Zhang Luli before hanging up and putting his phone aside.

Before sleeping, he wondered if he was overthinking.

******

The next day.

When Zhang Lurang woke up, his parents had already left for work.

He packed his things, planning to go to school, sign the form, and head directly to the airport.

At B High.

Zhang Lurang went to the third floor and entered the homeroom teacher's office.

The teacher greeted him and pulled out his application form from a stack of A4 papers.

"Double-check it. If there's a mistake, you can still go to the administration office to fix it."

Zhang Lurang nodded and was about to look when his phone suddenly rang.

He glanced at it and walked out, holding the form, to take the call.

It was Su Zai.

Her voice was always full of life.

Every word brought a cheerful smile.

“Rang Rang, yesterday, I dreamed you were bald.”

Zhang Lurang’s good mood instantly vanished.

“—Oh.”

Noticing his mood, Su Zai immediately tried to appease him, “But you were still very handsome, hehe.”

Zhang Lurang completely ignored her.

Su Zai changed the subject, “Tomorrow I’m going to confirm my application. Will you come with me?”

Zhang Lurang glanced down at the paper in his hand, “No.”

Not getting the answer she wanted, Su Zai began lying to him.

“Ah, Wang Nan is also going. He doesn’t know I have a boyfriend.”

“……”

“Actually, I told you, I’m quite popular at Z High because I’m so pretty.”

“……”

“Don’t you want to claim me as yours?”

Just as Zhang Lurang was about to agree, he heard Su Zai pitifully say, “You don’t know, after you went to B City for high school, your former deskmate always came to find me, saying we would definitely break up.”

He was stunned for a moment and immediately said, “I’ll come back this afternoon.”

“Will you go with me?”

“Mm.”

After hanging up, Zhang Lurang pursed his lips, looking at the application form.

His jaw tightened, feeling extremely annoyed.

His eyes grew cold.

In the next second, his mouth curved into a smile devoid of warmth.

On the paper.

For the first choice, it clearly showed. —B University, Finance.

Chapter 44

Sometimes, I feel like I am in love with a man.

—Zhang Lurang

Zhang Lurang, with a cold expression, crumpled the paper in his hand and tossed it into the nearby trash can. He quickly went downstairs and walked towards the office on the second floor.

Inside, two students were queuing to modify their application preferences. Zhang Lurang stopped and waited beside them. He took out his phone and found a photo in his album. It was a picture he had taken for Su Zai Zai after applying online.

Soon, one of the students finished, took the newly printed paper, and left. Zhang Lurang walked over and watched the teacher open the website. He bent down and slowly entered his exam registration number and password. His palms were sweaty with nervousness, and he subconsciously gulped.

He successfully logged in and sighed in relief. He quickly modified his preferences according to the picture on his phone. After filling in the details, he carefully checked them two or three times before confirming. The teacher, holding the mouse, glanced at him and asked, “Are you sure this time?”

Zhang Lurang nodded and suddenly asked, “Teacher, can I still change my preferences after signing?”

The teacher, about to print out the application form, immediately

stopped and frowned, “Of course not. Haven’t you made up your mind yet?”

Hearing the definitive answer, Zhang Lurang finally relaxed and softly thanked the teacher, “I’ve made up my mind. Thank you, teacher.”

After signing, he handed the form to his homeroom teacher. Zhang Lurang left the office and stood outside for a while. After a moment, he snapped back to reality and walked out of the school. Since there was no set time for signing, students were arriving one after another.

At B Middle School by the sea, a few students occasionally walked by with joyful smiles on their faces. The sea water hit the stone bridge below, making a splashing sound. Zhang Lurang suddenly stopped, propping one hand on the railing. He took out his phone and called Zhang Luli.

Upon receiving Zhang Lurang’s call, Zhang Luli’s excitement was still high. “Hello? Brother! Do you need any more help?”

Zhang Lurang stared at the waves below and was silent for a moment. He thought for a while and softly asked, “Did mom and dad change your college preferences?”

Zhang Luli paused and obediently replied, “My preferences were filled out by them.”

“…”

“But I really wanted to choose clinical medicine at T University,” Zhang Luli said with a cheerful tone. “But they didn’t allow it, so I just let it go.”

After chatting for a while, Zhang Luli suddenly realized, “Brother, did they change your preferences?”

Zhang Lurang’s fingers unconsciously tapped the railing. Hearing this, he nonchalantly replied, “Yes, I changed it back.”

Zhang Luli’s voice turned anxious, “Did you change it back? Can the school still change it? Wasn’t the deadline yesterday…”

“Luli,” Zhang Lurang curved his lips and slowly said, “I won’t be returning to B City.”

There was silence on the other end, followed by a quick “Oh.”

Zhang Lurang hung up the phone. He stood there in a daze for a while and couldn’t resist calling his mother.

“Hello, Arang?”

Zhang Lurang calmly asked, “Did you change my preferences?”

His mother seemed taken aback but quickly explained, “Z University is too far from home. When you went to Z City for high school, I was worried every day…”

Zhang Lurang interrupted her, “I told you I wanted to go there.”

His mother’s voice gradually became stern with annoyance at his

defiance. “Think about it, graduating from B University and directly working at your father’s company is a great path. We arranged everything for your own good.”

Zhang Lurang seemed to ignore her words, his eyes dead and emotionless. “I changed it back.”

There was a sudden pause in his mother’s breathing. Her voice then became sharp, “How did you change it? Wasn’t the deadline yesterday?”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang understood something. He felt a mix of relief and self-mockery as he asked, “Do you know why I came home?”

His mother seemed puzzled by the sudden question, “Do you need a reason to come home?”

Zhang Lurang remained silent. Before hanging up, he remembered the plate of fruit from the previous day. Clenching the railing, he spoke in a tone that was both accusatory and childlike, yet not particularly concerned, “Luli is the one who likes oranges.”

He stood there for a while, took the house keys out of his pocket, and thought seriously. After a long time, he couldn’t think of any reason worth returning home. He lifted his hand, turned it over, and let the keys fall into the sea, silently sinking to the deepest part.

******

Zhang Lurang never thought his parents didn’t love him. It was just

that the love they gave him was less than what they gave to Zhang Luli. But he always believed there was love, just not as much as he wanted.

After getting off the plane, Zhang Lurang walked out of the arrival gate. He instinctively scanned the surroundings and immediately saw Su Zai Zai waiting with her phone in hand. He froze for a moment and then walked quickly towards her. Su Zai Zai also saw him and waved excitedly.

She ignored the fact that she had asked for his flight number earlier, pretending to give him a surprise. “Are you touched? I’ve been waiting for a long time!”

At that moment, seeing her, Zhang Lurang felt the hole in his heart suddenly filled. He couldn’t help but drop the bag in his hand, bend down, and embrace her, his cheek resting against her neck, his breath warm and irregular. Su Zai Zai felt ticklish and moved slightly, only to be pulled back by him. She panicked and pushed him away, “Let me see if I have the right person.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Feeling his chest’s sudden pause, Su Zai Zai immediately laughed and said, “How could I be wrong? You’re so easy to fool.”

The romantic atmosphere was instantly dispelled by her words. He let go, looked at her with slightly somber eyes, and seemed a bit aggrieved. Unable to resist, Su Zai Zai poked his face, looked at him for a while, and then seriously said, “What a stunning beauty.”

Silently, Zhang Lurang picked up his luggage and held her hand, leading her outside. Halfway, Su Zai Zai asked again, “You haven’t told me if you were touched.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang glanced at her, his lips curving into a serious and obedient smile, “Very touched.”

After walking a short distance, Zhang Lurang suddenly spoke, as if casually, “I’ll stay in Z City from now on and won’t go back.”

Before Su Zai Zai could respond, he continued, “My parents don’t like me.”

If the love they gave meant binding his freedom, Zhang Lurang would rather not have it. Su Zai Zai instinctively tightened her grip on his hand. She didn’t know what to say. For her, home was a beautiful word because her family was happy, her parents loved each other, and they adored her. She never had such worries.

Suddenly, Zhang Lurang spoke seriously, “After we graduate from university, I’ll propose to you. How about that?” Then they could create another home, one that belonged only to them, a home that could fill the love he lacked.

Su Zai Zai’s breath caught, overwhelmed by the sudden joy. But she instinctively refused, “No.”

Zhang Lurang was taken aback, recalling her previous words: “Are you trying to play with me?” His expression instantly turned grim. He bit his lip, remembering romantic lines he had seen on social media, ready to use them to appease her, only to hear her say:

“Such things, let me do it.”

“…”

Her words rendered him speechless, all the romantic lines stuck in his throat.

Chapter 45

“Afterwards”

It turned out she also had thoughts.

— Zhang Lurang

The night was thick like ink, dotted with stars.

In the room, the sound of the air conditioner running seemed particularly loud in the quiet.

The alarm clock by the bed ticked away, the second hand making a steady clicking sound.

Nightmares trapped him, and he couldn’t break free.

The words of the person in his dream were like needles laced with poison, stabbing into his heart one by one.

The poison seeped inch by inch, penetrating his bones, causing him such pain that he could barely breathe.

— “If I had known about Ali, I wouldn’t have given birth to you.”

At that moment, the pain reached an extreme.

Zhang Lurang woke up abruptly, feeling a cold sweat on his back.

He sat on the bed, calming himself and adjusting his erratic breathing.

Annoyed, Zhang Lurang ruffled his hair, got up, and prepared to go downstairs for a drink of water.

The noise woke up Soso beside the bed. She got up and followed him.

Passing by Lin Mao's room, he noticed the light was still on.

Zhang Lurang hesitated for a moment and knocked on his door.

Soon, Lin Mao's slightly hoarse voice came from inside.

"Come in."

Zhang Lurang opened the door and walked in.

He sat on the chair in front of Lin Mao, thinking about how to start.

The next second, Lin Mao closed the folder in front of him and said softly, "Your mother called me."

There was no emotion on Zhang Lurang's face, his eyebrows drooping.

His spine was straight and stiff, looking somewhat stubborn.

His lips were pressed into a thin line, pale and tight.

Lin Mao sighed and said, “It’s good that you’ve changed your mind.”

“Uncle,” Zhang Lurang said, feeling stifled, “I don’t want to go back to B City anymore, not even during holidays.”

Hearing this, Lin Mao paused in his action of picking up the water cup.

He turned his head and looked at Zhang Lurang quietly.

Noticing Zhang Lurang’s expression, Lin Mao finally softened.

“If you don’t want to go back, then don’t. I’ll help you get the documents you need for university.” Lin Mao took a sip of water, “Just like you went to high school here.”

Zhang Lurang was silent for a moment, then emphasized, “After graduation, I’ll earn money to pay you back.”

Lin Mao was about to refuse but changed his mind when he saw Zhang Lurang’s expression.

“Ah, I’m still waiting for that money for my retirement. Remember to pay me back.”

Zhang Lurang nodded and stood up, “I’m going back to sleep.”

As he opened the door and was about to leave, Lin Mao’s voice came from behind.

His tone was casual, warm, and calm.

“Not everyone knows how to be a parent from the start.”

Zhang Lurang paused, tightening his grip on the doorknob.

Lin Mao tapped his fingers on the cup, thinking for a moment, then said:

“When you and Ali were young, your parents weren’t like this.”

He sighed, his tone like that of someone who had been through it all.

“Vanity, what a terrible thing.”

******

Su Zai zai had to plead for a long time before Zhang Lurang agreed to let her accompany him to practice driving.

Before leaving, Su Zai zai rummaged through the table, stuffed sunscreen into her backpack, and hung a mini fan around her neck from the drawer.

She went to the mirror, tied up her hair, and put on long pants and a sun-protection jacket.

Then she put on the panda-striped baseball cap from the table and took another one in her hand.

On a weekday, the house was empty, and she was alone.

Su Zai zai went to the living room, took two bottles of mineral water from the fridge, and a few minutes later, put one back.

She grabbed the sunshade umbrella from the shoe cabinet and went out.

In the height of summer, the outside temperature was stiflingly hot.

Sunlight shone on the trees, casting dappled shadows on the ground.

The surrounding concrete seemed to be steaming, rising in waves.

Su Zai zai looked up and saw Zhang Lurang standing under a tree.

His cheeks were flushed with heat, and sweat dampened his hair tips.

He looked like he had been waiting for a while but showed no impatience.

She quickly ran over, placing the hat on his head.

Zhang Lurang instinctively took it off and frowned, “I won’t wear it.”

Su Zai zai turned on the fan and placed it in front of his face.

Seeing his unwilling expression, she coaxed softly, “Be good, wear it, or you’ll get sunburned.”

“…”

Zhang Lurang initially wanted to refuse but noticed she was

wearing the same hat.

He hesitated for a moment and silently put it back on.

Su Zai zai handed him the umbrella and complained, “It’s so hot, I think I should wait until winter to learn how to drive.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang’s expression turned sour, “I told you not to come.”

“But it’s different when you’re learning and when I’m learning,” Su Zai zai said innocently.

“What’s different?”

Su Zai zai didn’t answer his question.

She watched the fan blow air on his face and shamelessly said, “If I accompany you now, and you don’t accompany me when I learn, you’re heartless.”

“…”

“Heartless to the extreme.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t want to talk, silently walking beside her.

A few minutes later, Su Zai zai suddenly felt a bit gloomy.

“Why don’t you say that fairies don’t need to be heartless?”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

******

When they arrived, Zhang Lurang chose the usual car by the coach's number.

They walked over together.

Su Zai zai was about to sit in the front passenger seat but was sent to the back seat by Zhang Lurang.

"It's too sunny in the front, sit in the back."

She didn't resist much, hesitatingly asking, "Lurang, are you driving alone? Isn't the coach supposed to sit next to you? Won't it be dangerous..."

Zhang Lurang tapped his finger on the steering wheel and honestly said, "I drove alone on the first day."

Hearing this, Su Zai zai's eyes widened in disbelief, "This coach is too much!"

She looked like she was about to confront the coach immediately.

Zhang Lurang opened his mouth to stop her but heard her indignantly say, "No way! I definitely won't learn here!"

"..."

He silently closed his mouth, fastened his seatbelt, stepped on the clutch pedal, and shifted to first gear.

Zhang Lurang practiced seriously for a while.

Half an hour later, he stopped the car and glanced back.

Seeing Su Zai zai playing with her phone and occasionally looking at the scenery, she was unusually quiet.

Zhang Lurang turned his gaze back and restarted the car.

When he reached a turning point, he suddenly said, “Help me see if the right wheel is on the line.”

Hearing this, Su Zai zai’s eyes curved with a smile, and she immediately moved to the right window to look.

“It’s on the line.”

Zhang Lurang stopped the car and looked at her.

Seemingly dissatisfied with her answer, he said seriously, “Tell me the truth, don’t talk nonsense.”

Su Zai zai looked puzzled, “It is on the line…”

Zhang Lurang unbuckled his seatbelt, propped himself up on the front passenger seat, and leaned out to look.

Seeing the rear wheel indeed on the line, he stiffened and slowly sat back.

After a while, Zhang Lurang quietly continued practicing.

This time, Su Zai zai couldn’t hold back, “Lurang, is this the result of a week’s practice?”

He pretended not to hear.

“How about,” Su Zai zai suggested cautiously, “we hire a driver in the future?”

Zhang Lurang turned the steering wheel, pretending not to care.

“...Don’t talk.”

Su Zai zai ignored him, reminiscing, “It reminds me of when you were learning to ride a bike.”

“...”

“Didn’t I say I didn’t want to touch your waist back then?”

“...”

“How could I not want to? I could barely resist.” Su Zai zai mimicked her thoughts back then, “Wow! A slim waist exposed!”

Zhang Lurang really didn’t want to hear this anymore.

He thought of saying something to change the topic.

Su Zai zai leaned her head back, laughing, “I thought, if I didn’t touch it, I’d be wasting your good looks.”

“...”

“This opportunity is once in a lifetime.”

Zhang Lurang felt his face heat up and turned back, scolding, “Su

Zai zai!”

Su Zai zai grinned fearlessly.

“Your wife is in your car! Drive properly!”

Zhang Lurang’s temple twitched, and he stopped talking.

After a while, his phone on the passenger seat rang.

Su Zai zai reminded, “Lurang, your phone is ringing.”

Zhang Lurang stopped the car and glanced at it.

It was his mother.

He suddenly remembered what Lin Mao had said a few days ago.

Zhang Lurang pressed his lips together and, without hesitation, hung up the call.

Soon, he turned back to look at Su Zai zai.

The soft sunlight enveloped him, casting a gentle glow around him.

Chapter 46

Is someone always leading her astray?

—Zhang Lu Rang

The summer in City Z is exceptionally hot, with the heat rising from the concrete ground.

The plane trees in the distance seem to melt into green water, standing still in the windless scorching sun.

Occasionally, a few students pass by on the small path, holding umbrellas and whispering about something.

The university military training lasts for half a month and is much more intense than the high school training.

Su Zai Zai stands amidst a sea of green, finding time particularly hard to endure.

Sweat drips from her forehead like rain, trickling down her hair into her eyes.

The alkaline liquid stings her eyes, causing a sour pain.

Su Zai Zai resists the urge to wipe it off.

Soon, another drop falls.

Su Zai Zai can’t stand it anymore and is just about to report when she hears a whistle from afar.

She secretly breathes a sigh of relief.

Hearing the instructor announce a break, she immediately sits on the scorching ground and pulls out a tissue from her pocket to wipe her face.

Her classmates rush to the side to drink water.

Her dorm mate Cui Yu Xuan brings over a water bottle for Su Zai

Zai and sits in front of her to chat.

“Damn, I’m exhausted. It’s only been a week…”

Su Zai Zai tiredly raises her eyes and softly says, “Thank you.”

Another dorm mate, Zhang Ke, comes over and looks into the distance, saying, “But that deputy company commander is really handsome!”

“He is handsome! But he’s too strict…”

Su Zai Zai does not join in on this conversation.

After finishing her water, she stands up and puts the bottle back.

Su Zai Zai rubs the back of her neck and looks up, locking eyes with the deputy company commander.

His features are rugged, lips tightly pressed, looking very serious.

…He does look quite intimidating.

Su Zai Zai averts her gaze and slowly walks back.

Her three dorm mates are still discussing the deputy company commander.

“—He seems to be in our department too, a sophomore in journalism.”

Su Zai Zai, lost in her thoughts amidst their chatter, wonders if Lu Rang has applied sunscreen.

She bought him a more expensive one than she uses herself.

But there doesn't seem to be much left. She wonders if it's enough.

She decides to buy another bottle online tonight...

—

The afternoon training is somewhat lighter than the morning session.

Su Zai Zai's sweat glands seem to have been activated by the hot weather. Even a bit of heat makes her sweat profusely.

Taking advantage of the instructor not paying attention, Su Zai Zai quickly wipes her sweat with her sleeve.

Feeling elated that the instructor didn't catch her, her joy is short-lived as the deputy company commander walks over slowly.

His lips curve into a smile, looking somewhat malicious.

He stops in front of Su Zai Zai without speaking.

The silent pressure makes Su Zai Zai sweat even more.

Soon, the deputy company commander chuckles and says, "Who told you to move?"

His voice is loud enough for the class and the nearby instructor to hear.

Noticing the instructor approaching, Su Zai Zai bites her lip and

admits her mistake.

“Reporting, instructor. I moved just now to wipe my sweat.”

The instructor scolds her a bit but doesn’t punish her much.

Su Zai Zai breathes a sigh of relief and dares not act recklessly again.

—

After military training, Su Zai Zai joins the new media department of the student union, planning events for the welcome party.

The department head is her military training deputy company commander, Xie Lin Nan.

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t join any departments, spending his time between classes in the library or with Su Zai Zai.

One day, after finishing the final editing of an event video, it’s almost time for class.

Su Zai Zai leans back in her chair, glancing around.

Her three dorm mates are still napping in bed.

They stayed up late last night, and now Su Zai Zai can barely keep her eyes open.

Her class schedule is different from her dorm mates.

She has a moral cultivation class in the afternoon, while her dorm

mates have no classes.

Remembering she was marked absent last week, Su Zai Zai is torn about whether to attend.

If she skips, no one will cover for her.

If she skips too often, the teacher might call her every class...

After much hesitation.

Su Zai Zai decides to skip again.

Having made up her mind, she climbs into bed to sleep.

Before sleeping, she texts Zhang Lu Rang about dinner and complains about the roll call.

Su Zai Zai: Ugh, it's so frustrating.

Su Zai Zai: When I go, the teacher never calls me.

Su Zai Zai: But when I skip, she always calls me.

Zhang Lu Rang quickly understands and frowns.

—You're skipping class again.

Su Zai Zai, having decided, isn't afraid of his lecture.

Su Zai Zai: Lu Rang, think about it.

Su Zai Zai: Skipping three times leads to a direct fail.

Su Zai Zai: I've already been marked once.

Su Zai Zai: If I don't skip twice more, I'm doing myself a disservice.

Zhang Lu Rang seems stumped by her logic, taking a while to reply.

Su Zai Zai, finding her reasoning sound, reminds him of dinner and sets her phone aside.

She covers her head with the blanket and quickly falls asleep.

Meanwhile, Zhang Lu Rang sighs, pulling up Su Zai Zai's class schedule.

He has no classes in the first period of the afternoon.

Zhang Lu Rang packs his things, grabs a textbook, and puts it in his bag.

In the dorm, the curtains are drawn, and the rhythmic breathing of his roommates fills the air.

The air conditioner hums, the coolness a comfort in the summer heat.

Zhang Lu Rang opens the dorm door.

The old door creaks, followed by a thud, shutting him out of the cozy atmosphere.

In the scorching heat, he heads to a non-air-conditioned classroom...

To answer roll call for his girlfriend.

Zhang Lu Rang can't describe how he feels.

He used to dislike enabling such behavior.

Though Su Zai Zai says this now, if she gets marked absent again, she'll be upset.

...So, he'll help.

Upon arrival, Zhang Lu Rang finds a seat in the back corner.

He takes out his headphones, planning to put them on after roll call and study.

Two girls nearby whisper, their conversation clear in his ears.

"Look, Xie Lin Nan is here again..."

"Yeah, why does he keep coming? Retaking the class?"

"Impossible. He won a scholarship."

Soon, the class bell rings.

A slightly chubby female teacher stands at the podium and opens the roll call system.

Zhang Lu Rang stops writing, listening carefully.

Soon, Su Zai Zai's name is called.

Zhang Lu Rang touches his neck, lowers his head, and raises his right hand.

Feeling awkward.

At the same time, a boy two rows ahead also raises his hand.

The teacher, sensing something, looks up.

She glances around and spots the two boys with raised hands.

The teacher frowns, smiling slightly. “Do we have two students with the same name? I don’t think so.”

Zhang Lu Rang turns, expressionless, looking at the boy ahead.

“And Su Zai Zai, if I recall, is a girl?”

“Not here? Then I’ll mark her absent.”

“Two absences. One more and she’ll have to retake the class.”

Gender being undeniable, Zhang Lu Rang sighs in frustration and puts on his headphones.

The boy who also raised his hand turns around, smiling at Zhang Lu Rang.

His rugged features soften, lips curving slightly in a challenge.

Sensing something, Zhang Lu Rang looks back.

Their eyes meet.

Next second, Zhang Lu Rang nonchalantly lowers his eyes, returning to his book.

Xie Lin Nan, finding his reaction dull, shrugs and turns back.

—

After her nap, it's almost dinnertime.

Su Zai Zai quickly grabs her phone, reading Zhang Lu Rang's latest reply.

—Not eating.

Su Zai Zai is confused, asking: Why not?

Su Zai Zai: Are you busy? I can bring food to you.

Su Zai Zai: Are you in class?

Thinking of this, Su Zai Zai checks Zhang Lu Rang's class schedule.

He has class in the second period, then nothing...

Su Zai Zai scratches her head, puzzled.

—What do you want to eat? How about pork ribs?

—Not hungry? How about porridge?

Waiting for his reply, she decides to head to the dining hall.

Before reaching it, Zhang Lu Rang calls.

His voice is low, devoid of emotion.

“Where are you?”

Su Zai Zai grins, “I’m heading to the dining hall. What do you want to eat?”

He pauses, then asks oddly, “What’s your department head’s name again?”

Unsure why he’s asking, Su Zai Zai answers honestly, “Xie Lin Nan.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s eyelids lower, feeling a mix of emotions. He grabs his phone and meal card, leaving the dorm. “I’ll come to you.”

—

Su Zai Zai arrives at the dining hall first, ordering two meals.

Unsure how long Zhang Lu Rang will take. She decides to queue at a bubble tea shop.

Thinking of Zhang Lu Rang’s refusal to eat, she feels troubled

Chapter 47

She said, “It’s only Zhang Lurang.”

— Zhang Lurang

Although he said so, he did not relax his grip on her hand.

Su Zai Zai didn't notice, as her mind had already been intimidated by his cold face.

She immediately cowered, and any shyness she felt was thrown out the window in an instant.

Zhang Lurang turned his gaze away, looking at the small lake not far away.

The silver stream flowed, casting a faint glow on the curves of his profile.

The prominent Adam's apple on his neck moved slowly, particularly noticeable under the streetlights.

Su Zai Zai didn't know what to say.

Impulsively, she had blurted out something lewd without considering the consequences.

Could this be considered verbal harassment...

How could she let herself be led astray by her inner desires and listen to her roommate's advice...

Zhang Lurang was different from other men! What kind of fun would this be for him?

Would he...

Remembering what Zhang Lurang had said before, Su Zai Zai suddenly felt a bit scared.

That fear was like threads forming a web, tightly gripping her heart.

“Isn’t my method more likely to win you over?”

“I might call the police.”

Call the police…

She instinctively let go of Zhang Lurang’s hand, lowering her head to explain, “I-I was just joking with you…”

Zhang Lurang turned his head back, looking down at her, waiting for her to continue.

His face was expressionless, making it hard to tell if he was angry.

In the next second, Su Zai Zai’s words cracked his frozen expression slightly.

“Please don’t call the police, sob sob…”

He was at a loss for words. “Who taught you these things?”

Su Zai Zai’s eyes were misty, her heart wavering for a moment before she resolutely chose not to betray her roommate.

Her mind was racing.

Su Zai Zai licked her lips, tugged at the string of Zhang Lurang’s hoodie, and directly leaned in for a kiss.

She really didn’t know how to respond!

It was best to shut him up with this simple, rough, and satisfying method.

Unexpectedly, Zhang Lurang didn't react in time.

He instinctively leaned back, causing Su Zai Zai's lips to just lightly brush his chin.

Su Zai Zai instantly felt as if she'd been slapped in the face.

She was silent for a moment, then agreed with what he had just said, "...I'll go back on my own."

Su Zai Zai was indeed a bit hurt, feeling stung by his avoidance.

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lurang lowered his head to look at her.

She had her head lowered, exposing a smooth, white neck that glowed faintly.

From this angle, he could see her small nose slightly wrinkled, and her eyelashes trembling.

Zhang Lurang's Adam's apple moved involuntarily again.

He clenched his hand into a fist, unable to resist pulling her back and lowering his head to kiss her.

After the kiss, he lowered his eyes, using his cool fingertips to touch the corner of Su Zai Zai's eye.

His expression seemed contemplative, then he spoke seriously:

“Don’t always listen to other people’s nonsense.”

—

The evening of December 11.

Su Zai Zai and Zhang Lurang were wandering around the snack street outside the school.

They walked to a stall selling Shandong pancakes.

Su Zai Zai tilted her head and asked, “Rang Rang, do you want some?”

Zhang Lurang ordered one for her, took out his phone to scan and pay, “You eat.”

The vendor spread the egg evenly, sprinkled pickles, scallions, and pork floss, folded the pancake a third, applied sweet sauce, added a crispy sheet and raw vegetables, rolled it up, and cut it.

It was divided into two pieces.

Just right for the two of them, one piece each.

Su Zai Zai stuffed one piece into Zhang Lurang’s hand, saying, “This is really good.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t refuse much, took it, and took a bite, chewing.

Su Zai Zai didn’t rush to eat, watching his expression.

Seeing his eyebrows furrow, it seemed he didn’t like the taste.

She quickly pulled the piece back, babbling, “Never mind, I don’t have enough, you don’t eat it.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Su Zai Zai suddenly remembered that tomorrow was her eighteenth birthday.

She turned her head, asking with some expectation, “Rang Rang, do you remember what day tomorrow is?”

Zhang Lurang took out a tissue from his backpack and wiped the sweet sauce off her fingers.

After cleaning, Zhang Lurang obediently answered, “Your birthday.”

Su Zai Zai shamelessly added, “And it’s the age where I can book a hotel room with my ID.”

“…”

Seeing his expression turn sour again, Su Zai Zai blinked, innocently saying, “I’ll just book a room purely, not for anything else, don’t get the wrong idea.”

Zhang Lurang turned away uncomfortably, ignoring her.

“But it would be nice to bring you along too,” she said with a cheeky smile.

“…Hurry up and eat, we need to go back.”

Su Zai Zai bit into her pancake, suddenly saying, “Tomorrow, my department is planning a birthday celebration for me.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang frowned, “Is your department head going too?”

“Why would I care if he goes or not.” Su Zai Zai said, her voice a bit muffled with food, “I’m not going, I told them not to bother.”

“…”

“I definitely need to be with you.” Su Zai Zai said righteously.

Zhang Lurang was silent for a moment, then spoke somewhat gloomily.

“Why do you always have so many guys around you named ‘nan’ (男)?”

Just hearing that sound made him physically repulsed.

Su Zai Zai thought seriously, “No, there aren’t.”

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lurang’s heart filled with jealousy, making it hard for him to maintain his calm demeanor.

Before he could say anything, Su Zai Zai spoke again:

“Only Rang.”

—

In previous years, for Su Zai Zai’s birthday, Zhang Lurang would

simply buy her what she needed.

Then, he'd get a cake and send a red envelope without much thought.

In fact, he couldn't think of anything more creative.

But for Su Zai Zai's eighteenth birthday, Zhang Lurang put a lot of thought into it.

He searched online, asked his roommates with embarrassment, and occasionally asked Su Zai Zai indirectly.

After much hesitation, he decided to try everything.

Flowers, necklaces, cosmetics, love songs...

They didn't have a place to go, and booking a room was out of the question, so Zhang Lurang booked a small private room in a nearby café in advance.

The next day, Su Zai Zai was led by Zhang Lurang into the private room.

She immediately saw the cake on the table, with over a dozen candles forming a heart shape.

Next to it was a bouquet of red roses with a delicate gift box hidden among them.

Several gift bags were also placed on the table.

Su Zai Zai's first reaction was, "Rang Rang, did you arrange that

heart?"

Zhang Lurang licked his lips, admitting a bit awkwardly, "Yeah."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai suddenly fell silent.

Zhang Lurang turned his head in confusion.

At that moment, Su Zai Zai suddenly grabbed his collar and gave him a heavy kiss on the lips.

Their noses bumped, and it was a bit forceful.

Zhang Lurang winced in pain but instinctively rubbed her nose, asking in a deep voice, "What are you doing?"

Receiving such treatment, Su Zai Zai felt elated.

She also felt like she had gained a higher status, saying domineeringly, "Today is my birthday, if you don't let me have my way with you, I'll get mad! I need to show you that I'm not the only one who gets angry!"

"..."

While speaking, Su Zai Zai dragged Zhang Lurang to sit beside the table.

She rummaged through the gift bags, suddenly feeling timid, "Isn't this too expensive..."

Zhang Lurang shook his head, "Not much."

“You didn’t have to buy me these…”

Zhang Lurang interrupted her, “I bought these with the money I earned from tutoring during the summer.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai stared at him in a daze.

“I’ll buy you more in the future.” He lowered his eyes, speaking softly.

After saying this, Zhang Lurang picked up the lighter on the table and slowly lit the candles on the cake.

In the quiet room, only the sound of the lighter flicking open could be heard.

Click—click—

After the birthday song, Zhang Lurang spoke again.

His deep, magnetic voice echoed in the room, with a slightly soft and tender tone.

It was the song Su Zai Zai had been listening to on repeat recently.

…

“My dear baby

I’ll give you a bit of sweetness

To ensure you sleep well tonight”

…

Su Zai Zai was Zhang Lurang's treasure.

The priceless jewel of his heart.

Chapter 48

She's not here, and no one amuses me.

—Zhang Lu Rang

The sky looked like it was smeared with thick ink, resembling an endless black sea.

Outside, the leaves rustled in the cold wind, and the dead leaves on the ground were swept up into piles.

Occasionally, a few fireworks exploded in the sky, celebrating the arrival of New Year's Eve tomorrow.

After finishing her washing up, Su Zai Zai returned to her room.

She quickly climbed into bed, buried herself under the covers, and called Zhang Lu Rang.

Zhang Lu Rang answered quickly.

Su Zai Zai's voice, muffled by the covers, sounded stifled: "Rang Rang."

His voice, hoarse from a cough and a bit nasal, was softer than usual.

“What is it?”

“How will you spend New Year’s Eve tomorrow?”

Zhang Lu Rang paused, seemingly thinking, and then quickly replied, “I’ll be spending it with my uncle. He’s not returning to City B this year.”

“Oh.” Su Zai Zai pulled the covers away, looking a bit hesitant, “I’m going to my grandparents’ house tomorrow, as I do every year…”

“Hmm.”

“But I’ll be back after the New Year’s Eve dinner, though it might be a bit late.”

Only then did Zhang Lu Rang catch the underlying message in her words. He lowered his eyes and smiled silently, “Zai Zai.”

His voice, carried through the electric current, inexplicably felt a bit affectionate.

It was rare for him to call her that, and Su Zai Zai felt flattered.

She couldn’t help but roll around in bed, wrapping herself in the blanket.

The noise was quite noticeable, and the person on the other end of the line could hear the rustling.

Zhang Lu Rang’s face couldn’t help but heat up. He licked his lips and said softly, “I’ll give you a New Year’s gift when you get back.”

“What gift?” Su Zai Zai asked excitedly.

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a moment and asked, “What do you want?”

Su Zai Zai answered without hesitation, “Your body.”

“…”

“To be honest, I’ve wanted it since freshman year.”

“…”

“You’ve made me wait for three years.”

Zhang Lu Rang remained silent.

The next second, Su Zai Zai suddenly changed her tune, “Actually, I should wait ten years.”

“…”

“Is ten years still an underestimation of you?” she said gloomily.

Zhang Lu Rang opened his mouth, wanting to refute something, but in the end, said nothing.

His fingertips tapped the soft quilt, seeming a bit restless.

After a while, Su Zai Zai suddenly asked boldly, “Have you ever dreamed about it?”

The question came so suddenly that Zhang Lu Rang didn’t react

immediately.

He quickly figured it out, and his breathing instantly halted.

His Adam's apple bobbed, and he spoke in a flustered tone, "I'm going to sleep."

Su Zai Zai took the phone from her ear and looked at the time.

It was ten thirty.

Zhang Lu Rang's routine was always punctual, so Su Zai Zai didn't bother him anymore.

She reached out to turn off the bedside lamp and said cheerfully, "Alright, you sleep. Good night."

Hearing her words, Zhang Lu Rang suppressed his fluttering heart and scolded, "You sleep early too, don't stay up too late scrolling through Weibo."

"Got it."

After hanging up the phone, Su Zai Zai decided against browsing Weibo and obediently put her phone on the bedside table, closed the curtains, and went to sleep.

On the other side.

Usually asleep by this time, Zhang Lu Rang uncharacteristically tossed and turned in bed.

Not sure what he was thinking, he seemed inexplicably anxious.

Ten minutes later, he sat up.

He wiped his sweaty forehead, got up, and walked to the bathroom.

Soon, the sound of running water echoed.

The sound was particularly clear in the quiet night.

******

New Year's Eve night.

At the table for two, it was quiet, with only the occasional sound of utensils clashing.

Lin Mao swallowed the food in his mouth and said, "Turn on the TV."

Zhang Lu Rang instinctively put down his chopsticks, intending to comply, but Lin Mao continued, "Doesn't it feel less miserable with some noise?"

"..."

"Sigh, young people these days, don't even talk much."

Zhang Lu Rang thought for a moment and said seriously, "I don't know what to say to you."

Lin Mao was taken aback, "Are you saying there's a generation gap?"

Zhang Lu Rang said nothing, lowered his head, and continued

eating, seeming to acknowledge it.

His cold face softened a bit, and the corners of his mouth subtly curved up.

Lin Mao raised his eyebrows but didn't mind.

After a while.

Lin Mao suddenly remembered something, "You haven't contacted your parents this semester?"

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang's good mood instantly vanished, "Hmm."

"You don't answer their calls?"

"..."

"You're not going home for the New Year, and your mom has called me several times to scold me."

Zhang Lu Rang couldn't help but ask, "Why scold you?"

"Ah, I didn't listen carefully."

"..."

"She probably said I spoil you too much, that I'm too lenient?"

After saying this, Lin Mao suddenly understood something, "No wonder you don't answer her calls."

Zhang Lu Rang silently ate his meal, not speaking.

Lin Mao sighed, not joking anymore.

“Give them a call later.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s chopsticks paused, showing some reluctance.

Seeing Lin Mao’s expression, he eventually conceded and nodded, “Got it.”

After dinner, Zhang Lu Rang returned to his room.

Just then, his phone rang—it was a call from A Li.

Zhang Lu Rang swiped the screen and answered, bringing the phone to his ear.

Zhang Lu Li’s cheerful voice came through, “Bro! Happy New Year!”

Infected by his tone, Zhang Lu Rang smiled, “Happy New Year.”

After that, both fell silent.

Soon, Zhang Lu Li spoke again, sounding timid, “You’re really not coming back for New Year’s?”

“Hmm.”

“Mom and Dad have been arguing a lot lately...”

“I think after New Year’s, Mom might come to City Z to find you.”

“Maybe you should call her. She didn’t eat much at the New Year’s Eve dinner…”

“Bro, you can’t just decide not to come back…” Zhang Lu Li seemed unable to continue, his voice turning dull, “You can’t just not come back…”

Zhang Lu Rang stared at the lines on his palm, lost in thought, “I understand.”

Before hanging up, he heard Zhang Lu Li’s cautious voice again.

“Bro, I want to apply for graduate school at Z University…”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t think much of it, responding indifferently, “You decide.”

******

Zhang Lu Rang hesitated for a while before finally dialing his mother’s number.

It rang only once before she answered, not speaking immediately.

Both sides seemed to be in a silent standoff.

Finally, his mother couldn’t hold back, her voice sharp with anger, “Zhang Lu Rang, do you still consider me your mother? You don’t answer calls, and now you’re not coming home for New Year’s?”

Zhang Lu Rang said nothing.

Soon, her tone softened, as if restraining her anger.

“Changing your major was wrong on our part. If you want to study computer science, go ahead. We won’t interfere as much during college.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s brows slightly relaxed, the relief in his heart short-lived.

The next moment, he heard his mother continue, “But you must come home for holidays! Have you been with your uncle too long? You don’t consider your father and me at all?”

Zhang Lu Rang pressed his lips together, speaking softly, “I…”

His mother’s anger grew, cutting him off, “I’m your mother. Do you think B University’s finance major isn’t good? Graduating and working at our family’s company isn’t good? You won’t have to endure others!”

“…”

“Why didn’t your brother cause so much trouble? Switching schools in junior high, insisting on studying in City Z for a year of high school, choosing his own major without consulting us—do you think you’re right?”

Zhang Lu Rang rarely saw his mother so angry.

Suddenly, his desire to argue dissipated, his eyes stinging with unshed tears.

A deep sense of helplessness overwhelmed him, pulling him under, unable to break free.

After a while, Zhang Lu Rang inexplicably mentioned Su Zai Zai.

“I have a girl I really like.”

Hearing this, his mother was stunned, her voice lowering, “You…”

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly grew stubborn, like a child, raising his voice to interrupt her.

“Whenever she talks about her parents, her eyes are full of pride. No matter what she does, she’s fearless because she has a pair of wonderful and loving parents.”

His voice dropped, speaking softly as if to himself.

His words seemed tinged with tears.

“…I’m very envious.”

******

On the other end, his mother seemed choked by his words, unable to respond.

Zhang Lu Rang spaced out for a moment, quickly snapped back to reality, and hung up the phone.

He lowered his eyes and checked his phone, seeing a WeChat message from Su Zai Zai sent a few minutes ago.

—Hahaha, I told my mom today!

—I mentioned you!!

—She said since I like you so much, she will definitely like you too, hehe

Zhang Lu Rang tugged at the corner of his mouth and slowly replied.

—That's good.

Chapter 49

Time, go faster.

Let her grow up.

—Zhang Lu Rang

Su Zai Zai got home around ten in the evening.

As soon as Su's mother entered the house, she went to her room to get a change of clothes and took a shower. Su's father sat on the sofa and turned on the TV to watch the Spring Festival Gala.

The living room was soon filled with laughter from the program.

Su Zai Zai sat directly on a small stool by the coffee table, sending messages to Zhang Lu Rang.

— I'm home

— Rang Rang

— Do you want to meet tonight, New Year's Eve?

— Are you asleep?

Occasionally, she would lift her eyes instinctively when the TV volume got louder. But her attention was clearly not on it.

Soon, Su's father noticed her expression and casually spoke up.

"Are you going out later?"

Su Zai Zai looked at her phone screen. There was no reply yet, so she wasn't sure.

Thinking for a moment, Su Zai Zai vaguely said, "Not sure yet."

"From today, we have a curfew. If you're not back by ten, you won't be allowed back."

Su Zai Zai's eyes widened, finally looking away from her phone. "Did mom agree?"

The TV volume was a bit loud, so Su's father turned it down with the remote.

"Here's the deal. Give me half of your New Year's money, and the curfew is canceled."

Su Zai Zai looked at him in disbelief.

Su's father seemed not to notice her stare and didn't look at her at all.

"Be nicer to your dad. He hasn't received New Year's money in over twenty years."

At that moment, Su's mother came out of the bathroom.

Su Zai Zai immediately wailed and shouted, "Mom! Dad wants to take my New Year's money."

Su's mother paused on her way to her room, changed direction, and walked toward the living room. She sat down next to Su's father, glanced at him, and then quickly looked at Su Zai Zai.

"So, how much New Year's money did you get today?" Su Zai Zai: "..."

Just as Su's father was about to get up and take a shower, Su Zai Zai finally received a reply from Zhang Lu Rang.

— Not yet

— Just finished showering.

Seeing this, Su Zai Zai stood up immediately, smiling as she spoke to her parents, "I'm going out!"

As if they had expected it, Su's father and mother didn't say anything.

"Dad, Mom, go to bed early." Su Zai Zai shamelessly added, "Your daughter is working hard to get you a perfect son-in-law without any effort from you." "..."

Su's father silently went to the bathroom to shower.

Su's mother, eating melon seeds, ignored her.

Feeling wronged by the lack of response, Su Zai Zai put on her coat and said, “Mom, why are you ignoring me? You just said you were very satisfied with him!”

After a moment of silence, Su’s mother calmly said, “I’m not satisfied with you right now.”

Su Zai Zai: “…”

******

Su Zai Zai started replying to Zhang Lu Rang only when she reached his doorstep. She sniffled, shivering from the cold. After typing a few words, she bounced in place to warm up.

Su Zai Zai: Where are you now?

Zhang Lu Rang: Home.

Su Zai Zai: Where at home?

Zhang Lu Rang: …

Zhang Lu Rang: Room.

Seeing these words, Su Zai Zai looked at the house in front of her. A duplex. Just as she was about to ask if his room was on the first or second floor, the door suddenly opened. With a “click,” accompanied by the tall figure of a man.

Zhang Lu Rang had just finished showering, his hair still damp. He was holding a phone with the screen on, and upon closer

inspection, it was their chat window. He was wearing a dark blue thin sweater and gray slim-fit trousers, an indoor outfit. Completely unsuitable for the seven or eight-degree weather outside.

Su Zai Zai frowned immediately, looking very unhappy.

“Dry your hair first and put on a coat before coming out.”

The motion-sensor light at the door turned on again with her voice. The warm yellow light softened his facial features. The gentle and cold temperament blended together instantly. Zhang Lu Rang stared at her shivering figure in silence for a moment. Soon, he walked towards her, took her hand, and rubbed it gently.

Then, for the first time, he suggested, “Do you want to come inside for a while?”

His tone was soft, as if he would send her back immediately if she showed any hesitation. Remembering how he used to refuse to let her in, Su Zai Zai felt a bit flattered… She wanted to agree immediately but suddenly remembered it was late, and Zhang Lu Rang’s uncle must be home. Thinking of this, she hesitated.

Su Zai Zai honestly said, “Your uncle is home, I’m scared to go in…”

“He’s not home,” Zhang Lu Rang said softly, “He just went out.”

This answer relieved Su Zai Zai. Her timid demeanor disappeared instantly.

“Then let’s go inside quickly, don’t waste time.” “…”

“Rang Rang, the night is short! Do you need me to remind you?”

Zhang Lu Rang, silent, took out a pair of new indoor slippers from the shoe cabinet and placed them in front of her. Su Su circled excitedly around them. Su Zai Zai bent down, smiling, and petted its head. Soon, Zhang Lu Rang led her to the living room. Noticing they were heading towards the bright and spacious living room, Su Zai Zai stopped him. He instinctively looked back.

“Are you letting me stay in the living room?”

“...Yes.”

“Aren’t you afraid your uncle might come back suddenly?”

Zhang Lu Rang looked puzzled. “What’s there to be afraid of?”

He had another sentence in his mouth, “And he won’t be back so soon.”

Before he could say it, Su Zai Zai cautiously said, “Just me alone in your house, alone with you...”

Hearing this, his expression turned a bit unnatural. Zhang Lu Rang instinctively clenched his other hand, opened his mouth.

“Then...” I’ll take you home.

The next second—

“What if your uncle misunderstands that I want to do something to you...”

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

He lowered his eyes to look at her, staring at her expression.

...She seemed very serious. It didn't look like she was joking at all. Zhang Lu Rang paused, then quietly, resignedly, led her upstairs. Su Zai Zai finally relaxed. She looked up at his back, feeling inexplicably sentimental. She suddenly felt that he was leading her to his room with a sense of resignation.

She licked her lips, unable to resist reassuring him, "You don't have to be so scared... I will restrain myself." "..."

Upstairs, Zhang Lu Rang led her to the second room on the right. The room was spacious, with a predominantly cool color scheme. On the desk, the computer and desk lamp were on, with a few open books beside them.

Su Zai Zai glanced at them and said, "Were you reading just now?"

Zhang Lu Rang responded softly, walked to the desk, picked up a bag, and handed it to her.

He looked down at her, his eyes bright and lively, "Happy New Year."

Su Zai Zai took it and opened it. It was a dress, her favorite style. Su Zai Zai was stunned and asked softly, "Did you buy it yourself?"

Zhang Lu Rang licked his lips, his expression like a child showing off his treasure.

“Do you like it?”

“Yes! It’s beautiful!”

Zhang Lu Rang couldn’t help but smile, his gloomy mood completely lifted by her. Soon, Su Zai Zai let go of the bag. Because she hadn’t showered yet, she sat directly on the carpet by the bed. Zhang Lu Rang instinctively sat beside her. The door was closed, and outside, Su Su was whining and scratching at the door. Su Zai Zai watched for a while. Seeing Zhang Lu Rang not moving, she said nothing.

After a while, Su Zai Zai whispered, “I didn’t get you a New Year gift.”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t mind and nodded, “Okay.”

The next second, Su Zai Zai took out the New Year’s money she received today from her small bag. A dozen bright red envelopes suddenly appeared before Zhang Lu Rang. Proudly, she said, “Before I left, my parents wanted me to share my New Year’s money with them, but I firmly refused.”

Zhang Lu Rang found her childish behavior amusing.

“I’ve been getting New Year’s money for eighteen years.” Su Zai Zai counted on her fingers, seriously saying, “Although it’s all in the bank.”

Zhang Lu Rang leaned against the bed, quietly listening to her.

Su Zai Zai couldn’t calculate how much money it was, hesitating, “I

think it's quite a lot..."

He thought she would say, "Why don't you help me count?"

After a while, he finally heard her speak.

"I've never used this money. When I graduate from college, I'll use it to buy a ring."

Surprised, Zhang Lu Rang turned to look at her.

"So, you could consider it as," Su Zai Zai suddenly felt shy and lowered her eyes, "My lifelong savings to marry you."

Outside the door, Su Su had given up scratching and occasionally made

Zhang Lu couldn't help but smile, his gloomy mood swept away by her.

Soon, Su Zai let go of his hand. Because she hadn't showered yet, Su Zai sat directly on the carpet beside the bed. Zhang Lu also subconsciously sat next to her.

"I've never spent this money. After I graduate from college, I'll use it to buy a ring."

Hearing this, Zhang Lu turned his head to look at her in shock.

"In that case, you can think of it as," Su Zai suddenly felt a bit shy and lowered her eyes, "the purpose of my saving money since I was little has been to marry you."

Outside the door, the little one had given up scratching and occasionally made pitiful sounds from its nose. The surroundings were quiet, as if you could hear the flow of air.

In the room, in the place where Zhang Lu had been fantasizing about her yesterday—

The man who once wouldn't let Su Zai into his home suddenly leaned forward.

Supporting himself with one hand on the floor, he tilted his head, looking up, and uncontrollably kissed her lips.

Su Zai instinctively leaned back but was held steady by his hand on her back. His broad palm slowly moved upward, cupping the back of her head. His lips and tongue delved deeper, claiming all of her.

For the first time, his kiss was filled with desire.

Full of possessiveness.

Chapter 50

"I am, too."

– Zhang Lurang

Su Zai's heart fluttered, and she obediently accepted his kiss.

In the end, she couldn't help but take the initiative, tugging on his tongue and sucking gently.

Their moist lips tangled, continually taking in each other's breath.

After a while, Zhang Lurang's grip gradually relaxed.

He licked her lower lip nostalgically, pressing his forehead against hers, and looked into her eyes.

The room filled with an expanding sense of intimacy.

Due to the prolonged kiss, Su Zai's lips turned bright red and glossy.

Instinctively, she licked her lips as if savoring the moment.

Soon, Su Zai fluttered her eyelashes, lifted the hand supporting her on the ground, and hooked it around his neck.

Zhang Lurang's dark eyes deepened, with a flickering light at their core.

He remained still, seemingly allowing her actions.

In the next second, Su Zai moved closer again, biting his lip.

A hint of struggle flashed in Zhang Lurang's eyes, but he quickly pulled her away.

Su Zai blinked innocently and asked, "What are you doing?"

He immediately turned his head away, looking like he was fleeing.

"It's late. I'll take you home."

Su Zai was confused, murmuring, "...I haven't even had a taste of meat yet?"

Zhang Lurang pretended not to hear, repeating, “Let’s go home.”

“This is so unfair!” Su Zai widened her eyes, instantly displeased. “I said I could control myself, but you can’t tease me like this and then…”

“…”

“I really don’t know how to describe how I feel right now.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t know what to say either, his voice carrying a hint of appeasement.

“…Let’s go home. It’s almost eleven.”

“If this keeps happening, I’m afraid I’ll become frigid.” Su Zai snorted and muttered, “In the end, you’ll be the one suffering, so think it over.”

“…”

After her threat, Su Zai looked at him seriously.

“So, do you want me to stay a little longer, or suffer?”

Zhang Lurang’s Adam’s apple bobbed, the pain between his legs growing stronger.

Quickly, he lowered his eyes and said through gritted teeth, “My uncle is coming back soon.”

Su Zai instantly deflated, “Then I’ll go.”

She stood up, thought for a moment, and said, “You shouldn’t go out; you just showered, don’t catch a chill.”

Zhang Lurang acted like he didn’t hear her, also standing up and walking towards the wardrobe.

He opened the wardrobe door but remained motionless, looking dazed and lost in thought.

Su Zai asked in confusion, “What’s wrong with you?”

Zhang Lurang snapped out of it, his heavy breathing gradually calming.

Then, he took out an army green coat from the wardrobe and put it on, followed by a plain black scarf from another drawer.

Zhang Lurang walked back to Su Zai, slowly wrapping the scarf around her neck.

Su Zai stood obediently, staring into his eyes as he leaned closer.

His eyes were moist, as if they had just been ravaged, sparkling with a radiant sheen.

Zhang Lurang silently adjusted the scarf, his movements gentle to avoid strangling her neck.

His focused, soft expression made the room instantly warm and quiet.

Soon, Zhang Lurang smoothed her hair and led her out.

As soon as the door opened, the puppy lying outside jumped up, wagging its tail and begging for attention.

Zhang Lurang glanced at it and whispered, “Go to sleep.”

After leaving the house, the cold wind blew, cooling the heat in Zhang Lurang’s body.

He suddenly recalled what had just happened and turned to look at Su Zai.

“In the future, let me know in advance when you’re coming to see me.”

Don’t stand outside in the wind.

“Then you should also dry your hair before coming out.”

Don’t get sick.

After escorting her to her building, Zhang Lurang was about to leave.

Su Zai immediately grabbed his wrist, her touch cool and soft.

“Rang Rang, I haven’t told you my New Year’s wish yet.”

Zhang Lurang pulled the corners of his mouth into a smile, looking at her with a waiting expression.

“Before we get our marriage certificate.”

“Every year, my New Year’s wish is.”

“Su Zai wants to marry Zhang Lurang.”

Day and night, I yearn for this.

I hope heaven and you will help me.

***

A few days later.

Just as Zhang Lurang was about to go out and watch a movie with Su Zai, he received a call from Zhang Luli.

He answered the phone while walking out.

Zhang Luli’s voice came through, tired, hoarse, and deep, “Brother.”

Hearing his tone, Zhang Lurang paused, softly asking, “What’s wrong?”

“I’m not taking the exam anymore.”

“Okay.”

“The department has a spot for overseas studies, and Mom and Dad want me to compete for it.”

Zhang Lurang was silent for a moment, then said faintly, “You shouldn’t always follow their opinions.”

“It’s not entirely that.” Zhang Luli said slowly, “I don’t have many ideas myself. They’ve always decided for me, and I’m too lazy to

think for myself."

"..."

"I know it's not good, but I'm used to it."

Zhang Lurang sighed, "Ali."

"Going abroad is good, at least," Zhang Luli paused, "I won't live like this anymore."

Both fell silent.

After a while, Zhang Luli spoke again, his voice trembling slightly, "Brother, I'm not very happy either..."

"..."

"They always control everything I do, brag about me to others. If I make one small mistake, it becomes a huge deal in their eyes."

Zhang Lurang's Adam's apple moved, suppressing the sourness in his heart.

The bond of blood can break down all defenses with just a few words, leaving one's heart defenseless and in ruins.

"I don't dare to make any mistakes, and I don't dare to complain to you."

"I'm afraid you'll think I'm bragging..."

"I argued with them. They said I couldn't be like you, always going

against their wishes."

Zhang Luli's voice was choked with sobs.

"But I also want to go far away."

Follow my own ideas, escape far away.

I've always wanted to.

***

Quickly, Zhang Luli regained his composure.

His voice brightened, cheerful and infectious.

"Haha, don't worry about Mom going to find you. She told me that if you don't come back, she won't go looking for you either."

Zhang Lurang, still reeling from his earlier words, responded softly.

"I don't know what they're thinking, but they probably don't mean any harm. They just use the wrong methods." Zhang Luli said vaguely, quickly changing the subject, "I'll probably go abroad as soon as I get the recommendation letter from my advisor."

"I understand."

Just one sentence, unclear which statement it was in response to.

After a moment of silence.

Zhang Luli suddenly said, "I didn't mean it back then, I'm sorry."

An apology years in the making.

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang lowered his eyes, the corners of his mouth curling up as he pretended not to understand.

“When was this?”

Zhang Luli laughed relievedly, “Never mind.”

Those years, none of them had a good time.

So, none of them had the right to blame anyone.

***

After hanging up, Zhang Lurang calmed himself and continued towards Su Zai’s building.

From a distance, he saw her running over, a bright smile on her face. Su Zai leaped into his arms, her smile reaching her eyes. She seemed in a great mood, even bringing back an old nickname for him.

“Beautiful lady, let’s hold hands in the dark cinema!”

Zhang Lurang smiled and agreed. The boy in his memory. The Zhang Lurang who used to feel inferior at the mention of Ali’s name when receiving a call from his parents seemed to have disappeared without a trace. Fate always has its decree. All the misfortunes in his life were just paving the way for the future. To meet someone. Because of this, Zhang Lurang began to believe.

Everyone’s life will have a beautiful existence.

His is simple, just three words. Three words he cherishes so much, he can’t bear to let go.

“Su Zai Zai.”

SLC Ch 51 – 60

Aug 16, 2024

Chapter 51

Actually, I'm unhappy even when she talks to other boys.

But since I said that, she shouldn't think I'm being petty, right?

—Zhang Lurang

At the end of February, Su Zai Zai began her second semester of freshman year.

The day before the semester started, Su Zai Zai took clothes out of her wardrobe to change into. She glanced down at her phone and saw that Zhang Lurang had sent a message on WeChat saying he was already downstairs.

She quickly put on the black scarf he had given her last time and dragged her heavy suitcase out the door.

Winter in the south is wet and cold; no matter how many layers you wear, the cold air seems to seep into your pores from every corner, leaving no escape.

As she stepped out, a cold wind blew. Su Zai Zai couldn't help but shrink her neck, half her face buried in the scarf.

Then, she walked over and held Zhang Lurang's hand.

Zhang Lurang was only carrying a backpack with a laptop inside, nothing else.

He gripped her hand in return, instinctively scanning her up and down.

Today, Su Zai Zai was wearing a beige sweater dress, a brown cashmere coat, a scarf, and black fleece-lined leggings.

Zhang Lurang's face darkened instantly.

Su Zai Zai, having been reprimanded by him many times, noticed his expression and immediately said, "You're not allowed to criticize me. I'm someone who can't take criticism."

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang quietly looked at her.

He had seen this phrase in one of the stickers she sent him.

—I'm someone who can't take criticism. If you criticize me, I'll yell at you.

He pressed his lips together, thinking that he would educate her on two things after she finished speaking.

Zhang Lurang lowered his eyes, silently choosing his words.

Don't wear so little in winter, you'll catch a cold. Besides, he didn't even intend to criticize her, it's just...

Before he finished choosing his words, Su Zai Zai suddenly stood on tiptoe, leaned close to his face, and with a playful smile said, "If

you criticize me—”

Zhang Lurang stopped his thoughts, lowered his head to look at her, waiting for her to finish.

“—I’ll kiss you.”

Surprised by her answer, Zhang Lurang froze for a moment.

His gaze slowly shifted downward, staring at Su Zai Zai’s lips.

She had a thin layer of lip balm on, making her lips look soft and shiny.

Zhang Lurang’s Adam’s apple moved as he fell silent, not knowing what he was thinking.

After a while, when he didn’t hear his typically stern voice, Su Zai Zai happily pulled him toward the bus station.

Halfway there, she suddenly heard Zhang Lurang speak from behind, his voice somewhat muffled.

It was as if, after an internal struggle, he couldn’t resist the temptation and blurted out, “Su Zai Zai, it’s wrong to wear so little in winter.”

Several minutes had passed, and Su Zai Zai had completely forgotten about teasing Zhang Lurang.

Hearing this, she didn’t think much and just obediently nodded, “Got it.”

Zhang Lurang: "..."

******

After arriving at school.

Zhang Lurang helped Su Zai Zai carry her suitcase back to the dormitory.

Two of her roommates were already back. Su Zai Zai greeted them and pushed her suitcase to her spot, planning to unpack later.

Before leaving the dorm, Su Zai Zai looked at Zhang Lurang's backpack and couldn't help but take it off his shoulders.

It was heavy with his laptop, and carrying it for too long wouldn't be comfortable.

"Leave it here for now, we'll come back for it after we eat."

Zhang Lurang glanced at the laptop she placed on the chair and didn't object.

The sky looked as if it had been painted with ink, dark and starless.

The wind rustled the leaves, and the stone pavement seemed to exude a chill, making people shiver.

Students were gradually returning from home, and the once empty and desolate snack street near the school during the winter break was now bustling with activity.

Because of the cold, Su Zai Zai pulled Zhang Lurang into a grilled

fish restaurant.

There was just one table left inside.

They sat across from each other.

Su Zai Zai took out her phone and quickly typed on the screen.

Across from her, Zhang Lurang tore open the plastic wrapping around the utensils and scalded them with hot water.

After preparing the utensils, he silently pushed them in front of Su Zai Zai.

Seeing his actions from the corner of her eye, Su Zai Zai couldn't help but look up and say with a smile, "So considerate."

Zhang Lurang said nothing, lowering his head to repeat the same action for his own utensils.

After the dishes were served.

Su Zai Zai put her phone back in her pocket and ate seriously.

Having been choked by fish bones before, she was very careful when eating fish.

Her focus was entirely on picking out the bones, with no desire to talk.

After a while, she suddenly asked, "Lurang, do you want me to pick out the fish bones for you?"

Zhang Lurang raised his eyes and shook his head, “No need.”

“But there are so many bones…”

After a moment of silence.

Zhang Lurang paused, a guess forming in his mind, “Do you want me to pick out the bones for you?”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai widened her eyes in indignation, “How can you think that of me?”

“…”

“Is it because I made you carry the suitcase today?”

“…No.”

Su Zai Zai stared at his face and said seriously, “You don’t have to force yourself to carry it next time. I could lift a barrel of water in elementary school, carrying a suitcase is a piece of cake.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t reply, continuing to eat expressionlessly.

Su Zai Zai felt a bit dejected, asking softly, “Why aren’t you talking?”

“Eat,” he said.

“Oh.” Su Zai Zai continued picking out the fish bones, speaking as she did, “I might need to go to Most Time later. It was the minister’s birthday yesterday, and they said they would throw him a belated birthday party today.”

Zhang Lurang's actions paused. He looked up quietly at her.

Su Zai Zai didn't notice and continued, "I'll go back to the dorm with you first and bring your laptop."

Because the grilled fish was a bit spicy, Zhang Lurang's voice was somewhat hoarse.

He licked his red lips, feeling a slight sting, "Is the minister Xie Lin Nan?"

Su Zai Zai nodded, placing the picked fish meat in front of him.

Zhang Lurang looked at the ceramic bowl, her pale hand still resting on the rim.

Her hand was smooth and fair, slender and straight, even the curve of her bent fingers was beautiful.

It made him want to reach out and hold it.

His eyes drooped, long eyelashes hiding his emotions.

Zhang Lurang didn't know what to say.

He pushed the bowl back, saying seriously, "Let's get the laptop tomorrow. I'll take you there later. Don't walk alone at night, I won't be at ease."

Su Zai Zai blinked, pointing to the bowl, "You're not eating?"

"You eat," Zhang Lurang said. After a pause, he added, "I'll pick out the bones for you."

******

After dropping Su Zai Zai off at the entrance of the Most Time karaoke bar.

Zhang Lurang gave her a few words of advice before turning back toward the school.

Su Zai Zai stood there for a while, watching his back.

She suddenly realized something and called out to him, running over to grab the hem of his hoodie.

Zhang Lurang turned around, his dark eyes deep and unreadable.

“If you don’t like it, I won’t go, okay?” she said.

Hearing her words, the indifference Zhang Lurang had been feigning instantly crumbled.

Su Zai Zai’s expression was uneasy, her grip tightening.

“Don’t be unhappy…”

Just as Zhang Lurang was about to say something, a girl’s voice suddenly called out from not far away, “Hey! Zai Zai! Why are you standing there and not coming in?”

Su Zai Zai instinctively looked toward the voice. It was the vice minister.

Seeing Zhang Lurang next to Su Zai Zai, the vice minister immediately understood, smiling, “Is that your boyfriend? How

about he joins us? The more, the merrier."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai hesitated.

Zhang Lurang wasn't fond of noisy environments...

She turned to him, asking softly, "Do you want to go? If you don't, we can go back."

Zhang Lurang tugged at the corner of his mouth, pulling her hand from his clothing and holding it.

Then, he stepped forward, heading toward Most Time, saying casually:

"I want to."

******

On the way back, the two of them remained silent.

Just as they were about to reach the girls' dormitory, Su Zai Zai suddenly spoke.

Her voice was soft, almost in disbelief: "Rang Rang, you just..."

After the initial burst of emotion, Zhang Lu Rang's expression turned a bit awkward.

But he didn't regret it at all.

Su Zai Zai suddenly hugged his neck and jumped up.

“Wow! Were you jealous? Were you just claiming your territory?”

Zhang Lu Rang let her hug him, holding her back with one hand, without denying it.

After her excitement subsided, Su Zai Zai calmed down and became serious.

“There’s no need to be unhappy. Everyone in my department knows I have a very handsome boyfriend!”

She thought this would comfort him.

But Zhang Lu Rang paused for a moment before quickly saying, “I’m just unhappy.”

Su Zai Zai was taken aback.

“I don’t like it when others like you too.”

“Su Zai Zai, I never chat with other girls.”

“I can bear it when you talk to other guys.”

He bent down slightly, his dark eyes meeting hers at eye level. The beast in his heart broke free from its chains.

“But you can’t play with them.”

Su Zai Zai was still in a daze. The Zhang Lu Rang in front of her seemed to overlap with the one from the second semester of their first year of high school. His once immature face had become much more mature and rugged, and his youthful voice had deepened.

—"You're not allowed to play with other boys."

Su Zai Zai obediently nodded; her heart instantly soaked in honey.

The sweet feeling left her dizzy, unable to think.

After getting her response, Zhang Lu Rang lowered his head and buried his face in her neck. He opened his mouth, bit the soft skin on her neck, and licked it.

Zhang Lu Rang's voice was deep and husky, accompanied by a ragged breath.

His grip on Su Zai Zai's back tightened.

Then, without hesitation or reservation, he revealed his entire heart to her.

"Otherwise, it hurts inside."

Chapter 52

She said I wasn't good to her before.

Then I'll be a little better in the future.

— Zhang Lurang

His face was still buried in Su Zai Zai's neck, his breath hot and irregular.

The cold wind attacked from all directions, contrasting sharply with the warmth on her neck.

This chill sobered Su Zai Zai a bit.

She suddenly felt a little puzzled and turned her head, her lips close to his ear: “Who are you talking about? I haven’t been close to anyone.”

Before Zhang Lurang could answer, Su Zai Zai immediately thought of the answer: “The minister?”

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lurang lifted his head and looked down at her.

His lips were pressed together, his brow furrowed, and his displeasure was evident.

“Are you jealous of him?” Su Zai Zai licked her lips and muttered softly, “Maybe it’s you who’s jealous.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t hear clearly, his voice still low: “What?”

Su Zai Zai didn’t continue on this topic and brought up another matter suddenly.

“My roommate told me she saw a girl asking for your contact information when she went to the library before.”

Zhang Lurang nodded, thought for a moment, and honestly said, “It happens every day.”

“……”

Su Zai Zai was silent for a moment, staring at him unblinkingly.

Soon, she spoke, her voice faint.

“Why do you have to emphasize ‘every day’?”

Zhang Lurang was taken aback and said seriously, “I didn’t give it.”

Feeling a sudden surge of jealousy, Su Zai Zai asked immediately as if possessed by a jealous woman.

“Then how did you reply?”

“I said ‘no’.”

“You only said ‘no’?”

“Yes.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t say anything more, lowering her head in thought.

After a while, she asked curiously, “Do you remember how you rejected me at first?”

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lurang’s expression stiffened, and he didn’t answer.

“You lied and said you didn’t have WeChat.”

“……”

Recalling this, Su Zai Zai completely forgot about other girls asking for his WeChat: “Back then, all you did was reject me, always thinking about how to reject me.”

Zhang Lurang's lips moved, but he still didn't say anything.

"Sigh, I secretly cried thousands of times because of you."

This time Zhang Lurang couldn't help but ask, "Was I really that bad to you before?"

Hearing this question, Su Zai Zai shamelessly admitted, "Yes."

Her expression suggested he had committed some great sin. After a pause, she added:

"Go back and reflect on it properly."

Zhang Lurang: "....."

******

Back at the dormitory, Su Zai Zai hung the scarf she had been holding on a hook in the wardrobe.

She couldn't help but touch her neck, which still felt warm, almost hot.

She could still clearly feel the touch he left just now.

Luckily, she hadn't put the scarf on after leaving the grilled fish restaurant, Su Zai Zai thought with a smile.

Su Zai Zai quickly took a shower, opened her suitcase, and started organizing her things.

Cui Yuxuan, sitting on a chair, watched Su Zai Zai pack.

After a while, she remembered something: “Oh right, Zai Zai, have you written your social practice report?”

“Ah, yes.”

Su Zai Zai placed her laptop on the desk and pressed the power button, only to find it had no power. Just as she was about to plug it in, the once brightly lit dormitory suddenly went pitch black.

The girls instinctively let out a cry.

Then, Su Zai Zai turned on her phone’s flashlight and asked, “Power outage?”

“Let me check.” Lin Ke opened the dormitory door and peeked into other rooms, “It seems it’s just our room……”

Cui Yuxuan exclaimed and recalled: “Did we forget to pay the electricity bill?”

Su Zai Zai looked dejectedly at her now dark laptop screen. As she turned on her phone’s light, she asked, “When’s the deadline for the social practice report?”

“Probably by midnight tonight.”

Su Zai Zai nodded and sent a WeChat message to Zhang Lurang.

— Lurang, can I use your computer? I’ll help submit your social practice report too.

Zhang Lurang quickly replied: Sure, it’s in the folder on the

desktop.

Su Zai Zai set her laptop aside and placed Zhang Lurang's laptop on the desk.

She connected the desk lamp's USB to a power bank and turned it on. The room brightened up instantly.

Su Zai Zai took her USB drive from her bag and inserted it into the laptop.

While waiting for it to read, she glanced at the desktop and opened the only folder there.

Inside were dozens of Word documents and Excel sheets. Glancing quickly, Su Zai Zai found Zhang Lurang's social practice report near the bottom.

Just as she was about to open it for confirmation, she noticed another document below.

The document's name was: UCL University Application Form

Su Zai Zai froze for a moment, licked her lips, and instinctively clicked on it.

Just as she thought it might be inappropriate and was about to close it and directly ask Zhang Lurang, she saw the applicant's name.

"Zhang Luli"

She stared at the name for two or three times, confirming it wasn't Zhang Lurang, and then she breathed a sigh of relief.

Su Zai Zai scanned it briefly, moved the mouse to the top right corner, and her eyes suddenly caught the application for a master's degree.

Her gaze slowly moved down.

Date of Birth: September 1997.

Her pupils shook.

Brother, 19 years old, graduate student.

— My parents don't like me.

Su Zai Zai lowered her eyes, lost in thought.

Soon, she looked up again, quietly closed the document.

After a few seconds, she hesitated and opened it again.

She clicked on the file, opened the recent documents, and deleted the history.

******

By the end of April, the temperature gradually rose.

The weather was gloomy, often bringing fine, slanting rain.

Withered branches and leaves were replaced by green leaves,

looking vibrant and full.

The semester was already halfway through, and every club began preparing for their transition meetings.

Xie Lin Nan had also brought up the topic of electing new ministers at the department meeting at the beginning of the semester.

Su Zai Zai had no interest in running for minister or continuing her position.

Her attention was completely on the department trip.

..... How to tell Zhang Lurang.

In fact, Su Zai Zai didn't want to skip group activities.

If everyone thought about skipping, the purpose of group activities would be lost.

Su Zai Zai stood on the path outside the library waiting for him, pondering how to bring it up.

She irritably kicked a small stone in front of her with her toe.

It rolled forward, just bumping into someone's shoe.

Instinctively, Su Zai Zai looked up to apologize, only to see Zhang Lurang's face.

The "sorry" she was about to say got swallowed back.

His steps didn't stop at all. He came over, took her hand, and

walked towards the dining hall.

After a few steps, Su Zai Zai suddenly called him: “Lurang.”

“Yes.”

“You look really good today!”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang turned his head to look at her, his expression puzzled.

“..... Fine, you look good every day.” She said weakly.

Noticing her conflicted expression, Zhang Lurang asked softly, “What do you want to say?”

Su Zai Zai scratched her head and, feeling she might as well break the jar, said directly: “Isn’t it almost May Day? The department said they’re going to W city for a two-day, one-night trip during the holiday.”

Silence followed.

The quiet made Su Zai Zai anxious.

Soon, Zhang Lurang nodded, his expression unchanged: “Then go.”

Without his strong opposition, Su Zai Zai felt a bit unbalanced.

“How come...” She hadn’t finished.

The next second, he said lightly, “I have something to do in W city

too."

After speaking, Zhang Lurang, with a straight face, casually touched his neck.

Now Su Zai Zai was silent.

Soon, she licked her lips and boldly said, "If you come with me, you have to stay in the same room as me."

Zhang Lurang's expression stiffened, looking at her in disbelief.

Su Zai Zai raised her head and threatened: "Otherwise, forget it."

Chapter 53

About Her Situation, Not Sure If It's Right.

"I simply won't do it."

– Zhang Lu Rang

As soon as these words left his mouth, the atmosphere immediately felt muted.

Zhang Lu Rang withdrew his gaze, his black eyes looking ahead, his profile as rigid as if carved by a knife.

The grip on Su Zai Zai's hand tightened a bit, but he made no comment on her words.

Su Zai Zai didn't rush to continue speaking either; she lowered her head and began counting silently in her mind.

One, two, three...

Before she reached ten seconds, Zhang Lu Rang spoke.

His voice was soft, as if asking casually.

“Has your department booked the hotel and train tickets?”

“Not yet.” Su Zai Zai took out her phone and checked. “They mentioned taking a bus instead. A few people haven’t confirmed yet, but the department head said it needs to be settled tonight.”

Zhang Lu Rang pressed his tongue against his cheek, lost in thought.

“If you’re going, book the ticket together. There’s a student discount,” Su Zai Zai considered and continued, “For the hotel, there are seven girls in our department. It was initially planned that three would share one room, but now you and I can share.”

He hesitated for a moment and said seriously, “Su Zai Zai, booking two rooms isn’t expensive.”

Su Zai Zai blinked, her eyelashes fluttering innocently. “I know it’s not expensive.”

Seeing her waver slightly, Zhang Lu Rang’s expression relaxed, as if relieved.

Soon, Su Zai Zai continued confidently, “But booking one room saves money and lets me sleep next to you. Why would I book two?”

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

Noticing his lack of opposition, Su Zai Zai tapped on her phone, saying, "I'll tell them then. I'll check which hotel they book and then book ours."

After a long silence, Zhang Lu Rang compromised, "I'll book the room."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai shifted her gaze from her phone to him, shamelessly saying, "You're not going to book two rooms, are you? I won't stay in one! I don't care! I'm afraid to sleep alone! You can't do this to me!"

"...I won't."

******

A few days before the May Day holiday, it rained several times, washing away some of the heat.

When Su Zai Zai left the house, the sky was still overcast, and the ground was wet.

The air was particularly fresh, and the trees along the road looked lush and green, occasionally hit by accumulated raindrops.

Since they had to catch a bus later, they left early and first went to the cafeteria for breakfast.

Along the way, raindrops intermittently hit them.

Su Zai Zai couldn't help but unzip her bag and fumble for an umbrella, pulling it out. Her bag was stuffed with various items, and inadvertently, she pulled out something else.

It hit the ground with a "pop."

Zhang Lu Rang, standing next to her, instinctively bent down to help pick it up.

A small box, a common item often found near the checkout counters in supermarkets.

Realizing what it was, his expression stiffened, and he suddenly didn't want to pick it up.

Su Zai Zai stuffed the umbrella into his hand and bent down to pick it up herself.

Her expression was somewhat sneaky, and she said conspicuously, "Just a pack of tissues."

Zhang Lu Rang stared at her for a moment, silent.

Soon, he extended his hand in front of her, coldly saying, "Hand it over."

Seeing she couldn't hide it, Su Zai Zai brazenly said, "Why are you asking for it when you don't buy it yourself."

Given that he'd probably throw it in the trash next second...

Zhang Lu Rang, taken aback by her, frowned. "Who told you to buy

it?"

Su Zai Zai lowered her eyes, pitifully saying, "It's good to have dreams, right? What if they come true?"

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang wanted to say something to completely erase such thoughts from her mind. Before he could speak, she spoke again.

Her voice was low, slightly disappointed.

"Rang Rang, I don't feel secure if you're not proactive."

His words were choked back by her statement.

Zhang Lu Rang turned his head to look at her.

Su Zai Zai's head was still lowered, looking pitiful.

From this angle, he could see her lips pursed downward. Her eyelashes trembled lightly, as if she would cry any second.

Zhang Lu Rang licked his lips and softened his voice. "Got it."

After receiving his response, Su Zai Zai's spirits lifted immediately.

"Wow! It's a deal! Let's go then!"

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

******

Several people in the department brought their significant others,

so Zhang Lu Rang's presence wasn't out of place.

The group first took a bus from outside the school gate to the passenger station, then took a bus to W City.

The journey took about an hour and a half, just enough for a nap.

With so many people, the air wasn't well-ventilated, mixed with various smells, making the bus ride unpleasant.

Su Zai Zai always prepared disposable masks before taking the bus. Although it couldn't completely block the smell, it helped a lot.

She rummaged through her bag, took out two masks, and handed one to Zhang Lu Rang.

After he put it on, Su Zai Zai took a few pictures of him with her phone, then took some selfies with him before falling asleep on his arm.

Her breathing became light and even, and she drifted into sleep.

Zhang Lu Rang turned his head to look at her sleeping face, lost in thought.

He recalled what Su Zai Zai had just said.

—"Rang Rang, I don't feel secure if you're not proactive."

******

The temperature in W City was more comfortable than in Z City, cool and pleasant.

Due to the holiday, the streets were crowded, with pedestrians brushing past each other.

Soon, the group decided to split up and meet again at mealtime.

Zhang Lu Rang held Su Zai Zai's hand as they walked along the cobblestone path.

In the distant lake, boatmen on black-awning boats gently rowed, creating ripples.

Street vendors were hawking their wares, their voices loud and clear.

Su Zai Zai stopped at one of the stalls.

A white cloth covered the stall, displaying various crystal bracelets.

Her gaze wandered over them before settling on two.

Handwoven cords with a dark red bead, each engraved with "Li" and "Rang."

Su Zai Zai picked up the one with "Rang," smiling. "Buy this for me."

Zhang Lu Rang asked the price and took out money from his pocket.

He initially wanted to buy both and give the other to Zhang Lu Li.

Noticing Su Zai Zai wearing the bracelet, Zhang Lu Rang paused, abandoning the idea of giving it away.

Su Zai Zai grinned, showing off her wrist to him.

A dark red bead stood out against her fair skin, the “Rang” character making his heart flutter.

On the bridge, people came and went.

Her smile outshone the picturesque scenery behind her.

“You spent money to give yourself to me.”

Zhang Lu Rang couldn’t help but smile, touching her eye corner.

“Yes, giving myself to you.”

******

At lunchtime, the group reconvened at a small restaurant.

Since it was a group activity, they stayed together after eating and went to the lake to rent two black-awning boats.

They spent an hour chatting and taking pictures.

Listening to their conversation, Su Zai Zai remained mostly silent.

She played with Zhang Lu Rang’s fingers, occasionally glancing at the lines on his palm, looking forward to the night.

Zhang Lu Rang, unaware of her thoughts, softened his gaze at her small actions.

After the boat ride, the group took a bus to the commercial street

to buy local specialties.

After a day of play and wandering, a few girls were tired and suggested returning to the hotel to rest.

After some discussion, half decided to return, while the rest split into groups.

Su Zai Zai was still full of energy. She wanted to see the night view of W City more than the daytime scenery.

Streetlights reflected on the water, merging with it. Waves rippled, light and shadow intertwining.

As the sky darkened, scattered lights gradually lit up, and the night market became lively.

Su Zai Zai's eyes sparkled, reflecting the light.

She was mesmerized by the scenery, ready to take pictures when she suddenly felt her hand empty. Instinctively, she looked to the side. Seeing Zhang Lu Rang release her hand, his palm open, sliding up to grasp her wrist. He pulled Su Zai Zai into his arms, bent down, and lightly pecked her lips.

His voice was low and mellow, lazy with a smile, "I'll be proactive."

Su Zai Zai was momentarily stunned but quickly recovered. She licked her lips, not tempted by the small benefit, with a serious expression and tone.

"I'm not talking about this, don't brush me off."

Reflecting all the way on the bus, Zhang Lu Rang was puzzled.

“...Then what?”

“You should understand. I can’t always spell it out, or what will I become...”

Seeing Zhang Lu Rang seemingly in deep thought again, Su Zai Zai couldn’t hold back and, forgetting her previous words, added shyly, “I’ll wait for you tonight.”

Zhang Lu Rang: “...”

Chapter 54

She doesn’t consider herself, so I’ll consider for her.

I’ve already decided. Sooner or later, she will be mine.

No matter what, she will be mine.

—Zhang Lurang

As night gradually descended, more and more people filled the streets.

The two walked along the cobblestone path by the lake.

Su Zai Zai glanced at Zhang Lurang, who had been silent for a while, and suggested, “Shall we go back?”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang looked around and asked, “Are you hungry?”

Su Zai Zai touched her stomach and shook her head, “Not hungry.”

“Then let’s go back.” After thinking for a moment, Zhang Lurang continued, “If you get hungry, I’ll come out to buy something for you.”

She nodded and smiled, “Okay.”

Zhang Lurang led her to the side of the road, hailed a taxi, and gave the name of the hotel.

After getting in the car, Zhang Lurang remained quiet, his eyes looking out the window with a calm expression.

Su Zai Zai leaned over and poked his face with her index finger. When he turned to look at her, she gave him a playful kiss on the spot she had just poked.

Zhang Lurang’s eyes shone brightly, with something seemingly stirring within, mixed with unknown emotions.

He gently squeezed her fingers and slowly began to speak.

In a low, husky voice, full of seriousness, he said, “Su Zai Zai.”

Su Zai Zai instinctively responded, looking at their intertwined hands.

After a moment, she raised her eyes to look at him.

“If there’s anything I’m not doing well, you must tell me,” Zhang Lurang said, his gaze unwavering as he stared into her eyes, “I will

change."

He would slowly become better, becoming the person most suited for her.

The car was filled with a tender love song in the night.

The driver up front was waiting at a red light, tapping his index finger on the steering wheel.

Soon, the light turned green, and the car started moving.

The scenery outside the window blurred past rapidly, almost dizzyingly.

Su Zai Zai's attention was entirely on his words and his large, warm hand.

After a long while, she held his hand back and smiled with twinkling eyes.

"I can't think of anything."

Zhang Lurang doesn't have any faults.

Su Zai Zai said she couldn't think of any.

******

Upon arriving at the hotel, the two walked to the front desk to check in.

Zhang Lurang gave his name to the staff and handed over both his

and Su Zai Zai's IDs.

After paying the deposit, Zhang Lurang took the room key and led Su Zai Zai to the elevator.

While waiting for the elevator, Su Zai Zai watched the numbers change on the display and suddenly asked, "Did you book a standard room?"

Just as Zhang Lurang was about to nod, he remembered the advice to be "proactive." He hesitated for a moment and then said, "Only standard rooms were left."

Su Zai Zai couldn't help but stare at him for a few seconds, not expecting him to lie.

She slowly withdrew her gaze, looking down and chuckling quietly.

They walked to their room.

Zhang Lurang swiped the key card with one hand, opened the door, and inserted the card into the power switch.

He placed their belongings on the table and went into the bathroom.

After adjusting the hot water to the right temperature, Zhang Lurang came out.

Su Zai Zai was sitting on one of the beds, taking out her clothes.

Zhang Lurang stood beside her for a moment before saying,

“Shower.”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai looked up at him and quickly looked away.

“You go first.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t argue, walked to his luggage, took out his clothes and toiletries, and went into the bathroom.

In the small room, only Su Zai Zai was left.

The bathroom door was frosted, revealing the outline of the person inside.

Su Zai Zai couldn’t resist taking a glance, then quickly sat back down.

Listening to the sound of the shower, she swallowed hard.

Su Zai Zai looked at the bed she was sitting on, with her backpack on it.

She thought seriously for a moment, confirmed her idea, took out a box she had brought, took one item from it, and slipped it under the pillow on the other bed.

Satisfied that it was both hidden and easy to reach, Su Zai Zai climbed back onto her original bed and played on her phone.

Ten minutes later, Zhang Lurang came out of the bathroom.

He was drying his hair with a towel, his eyelashes still wet, his skin

looking particularly fair under the light.

He wore shorts and a T-shirt, but the dampness of his body made the muscles underneath faintly visible.

Su Zai Zai's eyes were dazzled, and her ears burned instantly.

Her previous boldness vanished into thin air.

Feeling a bit awkward, she picked up her clothes and headed to the bathroom, "I'll go shower now."

Zhang Lurang didn't know what to say, so he continued drying his hair with his eyes lowered.

Half an hour later, Su Zai Zai finished her shower and dried her hair. She took a deep breath and turned the doorknob.

She walked slowly down the steps from the bathroom, turned her head, and saw Zhang Lurang's legs crossed on the bed, leaning against the headboard, playing on his phone.

...On the bed where she had put her backpack.

Su Zai Zai blinked and, after confirming she wasn't mistaken, walked over to turn off the lights.

Afraid that she might trip in the dark, Zhang Lurang leaned over and turned on the bedside lamp.

The lamp's light was dim after long use, casting shadows in the room.

Half of his face was in the dark, making him look enigmatic.

Su Zai Zai stood there barefoot, and her original determination began to waver.

As she hesitated about what to do next, Zhang Lurang spoke lazily, “Come here.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai licked her lips and climbed onto the bed.

She then threw her backpack from the head of the bed to the other bed.

Seeing her obediently lie down, Zhang Lurang turned off the bedside lamp and said softly, “Sleep.”

He refocused on his phone, the screen’s light casting a faint glow on his face, making his profile look even more defined.

Unwillingness surged within Su Zai Zai’s heart again.

She turned over and hugged his waist, biting the firm muscles of his abdomen through his clothes.

Zhang Lurang groaned, his body tensed, and his voice became hoarse, “Go to sleep.”

Su Zai Zai pretended not to hear, lifted his T-shirt, and bit him again, her tongue swirling over the spot.

After teasing him, Su Zai Zai yawned and responded to his earlier command, “I’ll sleep now.”

She was about to get up and pull the blanket over herself when he suddenly moved.

Zhang Lurang threw his phone onto the bedside table with a heavy thud.

Before Su Zai Zai could react, his whole body was over hers, his arms on either side of her head.

In the dark room, Su Zai Zai couldn't see his expression but could hear his increasingly rapid breathing.

Hot, full of restrained desire.

After a while, Zhang Lurang leaned down and asked hoarsely, "Are you scared?"

Su Zai Zai hooked her arms around his neck, licking his earlobe provocatively, "I'm afraid you won't come."

This sentence instantly shattered his reason. Zhang Lurang lowered his head, capturing her lips, sweeping over every corner of her mouth, entwining with her tongue, and sucking hard.

His hand slowly moved down, caressing every part of her body, igniting a fire inch by inch.

His lips trailed down, biting along Su Zai Zai's earlobe, over and over again.

Small kisses fell continuously, his actions both inexperienced and full of deep affection.

Zhang Lurang pushed her top up and pulled it off.

Su Zai Zai suddenly sat up, turned over, and pressed him down.

Her upper body was bare, the moonlight streaming through the thin curtains, casting a silvery light on her skin, as smooth as jade in Zhang Lurang's eyes.

His breath became rougher, his previously clear eyes now clouded with desire.

Su Zai Zai straddled him, feeling the heat from below. She pushed her hair behind her ear and kissed his Adam's apple.

All the way down...

Zhang Lurang clenched his fists, unable to bear it any longer, holding her waist and flipping her back under him.

He kissed her lips again, murmuring two words, "Stop playing."

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai opened her hazy eyes slightly and breathlessly said, "No, I saw... some materials... I can teach you..."

Zhang Lurang paused, kneeling on top of her, taking off all his clothes. Dazed by the atmosphere, Su Zai Zai tried to mimic his actions. Before she could start taking off her pants, Zhang Lurang grabbed her ankle, pulling her close, biting her calf, licking and leaving marks, inch by inch upward. He pulled her pants and underwear down, groaning, his voice husky and full of desire.

"Don't compete with me for everything."

Before she could respond, he silenced her with a passionate kiss. Zhang Lurang's fingers slowly explored, moving clumsily yet gently, feeling her softness and wetness. Su Zai Zai bit her lip, enduring his advances, her fingertips on his back pressing harder, conveying pleasure. His lips and tongue roamed every corner of her body. His burning fingertips felt like they were on fire, igniting her senses.

After a while, Zhang Lurang forcefully stopped his movements, remaining still for a long time.

Unable to bear it, Su Zai Zai hooked her legs around his waist, whining softly, "Lurang."

He still didn't move, his muscles tense and hard as stone.

Su Zai Zai, through her hazy thoughts, pointed to the bed beside them, "I put one under the pillow over there."

Zhang Lurang: "..."

He supported himself with one hand on the bedside table and leaned over to retrieve it from under the pillow. This little delay brought back a bit of Zhang Lurang's rationality. His fingers slowly explored, inexperienced yet gentle, feeling her softness and moisture. Su Zai Zai bit her lip, enduring his movements, her fingers digging into his back with pleasure.

His lips and tongue roamed over every inch of her body. His cheeks were flushed and sweat dripped continuously from the tips of his hair, the restlessness not diminishing at all.

Zhang Lurang tried to steady his breathing and asked seriously, “Have you made up your mind?”

His hesitation made Su Zai Zai so anxious that she wanted to burst into anger. “Hurry up!”

Zhang Lurang’s eyes were as dark as ink, filled with a tide of emotions, surging out.

He grabbed one of her legs and placed it on his shoulder, lowering his head to kiss her forehead reverently, saying hoarsely, “You’re mine.”

In the next second, Zhang Lurang’s hips sank down suddenly and thrust in heavily. Su Zai Zai cried out instinctively, tears welling up in her eyes.

Zhang Lurang gritted his teeth, kissing away her tears one by one, trying to comfort her. He panted heavily, moving slowly in and out, giving her time to adjust. Her suppressed whimpering sounded like an aphrodisiac, swallowing all his reason.

In the confined space, the man rode the woman, accompanied by the sound of rapid thrusts. The room was filled with an intimate and ambiguous atmosphere. After a long time, once they had returned to calm.

Su Zai Zai, looking satisfied, lay on Zhang Lurang’s chest, falling asleep. She felt his chest vibrate, accompanied by tender words. But Su Zai Zai had already lost consciousness, unable to understand what he was saying.

“Zai Zai, I’ll marry you after graduation… I only want to marry you.”

“So you should only want to marry me, alright?”

Chapter 55

I have to let her know.

How much I look forward to our future.

——Zhang Luran

The next morning.

Because of his biological clock, Zhang Luran woke up very early.

Su Zai Zai’s department had planned to go to a famous local teahouse for breakfast that morning. But because it wasn’t too early, Su Zai Zai didn’t set an alarm.

Zhang Luran lay in bed with Su Zai Zai for a while, but he couldn’t hold back. He got up, tucked Su Zai Zai in, and quietly went to the bathroom to take a shower.

When he came out, Su Zai Zai happened to wake up.

Wrapped in a pure white blanket, her brown hair spread out behind her, soft and fluffy.

She rubbed her sleepy eyes and drowsily asked, “Luran, what time is it now?”

Zhang Luran averted his gaze, drying his hair with a towel, and said

softly, “I didn’t check.”

Then, he walked over to the table, his back to her.

Su Zai Zai rolled over in bed, her voice soft and sweet.

“Did you see my phone? I need to check what the department said.”

Zhang Luran unzipped his backpack, pretending to search for something casually.

“Haven’t seen it.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai was a bit dazed and happened to see Zhang Luran’s phone on the bedside table.

She thought for a moment and said, “Then I’ll use your phone to call mine.”

Zhang Luran instinctively responded.

The next second, as if he remembered something, he suddenly turned around.

He saw Su Zai Zai leaning over to grab his phone, exposing a large area of white skin, which was particularly dazzling.

Zhang Luran’s Adam’s apple bobbed, and he took two steps back, his thigh hitting the table with a slight sound.

Su Zai Zai didn’t notice his movement, yawning as she picked up his phone.

She unlocked it with her fingerprint and was about to return to the home screen when she noticed the page in front of her.

——《xx Sexology Report》

Su Zai Zai was stunned for a moment, then looked up at Zhang Luran.

The tips of his ears were burning, and he didn't dare to meet her gaze.

After a long pause, Su Zai Zai reacted, excitedly saying, "Luran, you read this textbook for me? But why are you reading the text version? You could have asked me, I have many videos!"

Zhang Luran: "..."

"Why don't we skip the breakfast tea and try a few times more, you need to apply what you've learned."

The bit of shyness Zhang Luran felt instantly vanished due to her words.

He walked over, took out a new set of clothes from Su Zai Zai's backpack, placed them in front of her, and said coldly, "We have to check out by twelve, hurry and take a shower."

Su Zai Zai looked at the time, innocently saying, "It's only nine, we have time for several more rounds."

Hearing this, Zhang Luran paused, looking down at her with emotionless dark eyes.

Noticing his expression, Su Zai Zai quickly corrected herself.

“One, just once! I misspoke…”

Zhang Luran ignored her, lay down on the nearby bed, and pretended to nap.

After a while, not hearing any movement from her side, his brow twitched, and he was about to check on her.

Before he opened his eyes, he heard Su Zai Zai’s cautious and hopeful voice.

“How about half a time…”

Zhang Luran: “…”

******

During breakfast tea, Su Zai Zai went to the restroom with a female colleague from her department.

On the way, the colleague, curious and gossiping, couldn’t help but ask, “Zai Zai, did you get your period yesterday?”

Su Zai Zai was puzzled, “No.”

“Then why does your boyfriend look like that?”

Su Zai Zai instantly understood what she meant, and after a moment of silence, she thought of Zhang Luran’s poker face all morning, his aura still gloomy.

She thought for a moment but couldn't recall what she had said in the morning, although being rejected by him had been bothering her.

"Just think about it the other way around."

"Huh?"

As they returned to the table, Su Zai Zai stopped talking and sat back in her seat.

Noticing she was back, Zhang Luran glanced at her and handed her a shrimp dumpling.

Su Zai Zai lowered her eyes and slowly nibbled at it.

...Probably because she didn't get her period.

Then, the feeling Zhang Luran was experiencing now was likely the pain of lost virginity.

Thinking about this, Su Zai Zai turned and held Zhang Luran's hand.

With a solemn expression, she said, "I'll take responsibility for you."

Zhang Luran: "..."

******

On the way back.

Probably because they didn't get up too early today, Su Zai Zai

didn’t feel sleepy in the car.

She watched some videos out of boredom, but soon felt a bit car sick.

Su Zai Zai put down her phone and turned to stare at Zhang Luran.

He wore a light blue mask, half of his high nose bridge exposed.

A few strands of hair fell on his forehead, his curled eyelashes faintly glowing, his side profile’s lines clear and handsome.

Su Zai Zai leaned over to look at what was on his phone screen.

Zhang Luran didn’t dodge, his slender fingers continued tapping on the screen.

His expression was serious, as if he was dealing with something important.

On the screen, there were countless photos of Su Zai Zai.

Each photo had the time and place of shooting noted.

From her second year of high school to now, three years, he had always done this.

Su Zai Zai rested her cheek in her hand, curiously asking, “How many are there?”

“Three hundred and twelve,” he said flatly.

Seeing one of the photos, Su Zai Zai felt a bit frustrated.

“This one doesn’t look good, why did you take it like this?”

Hearing this, Zhang Luran paused, staring at that photo.

A few seconds later, his finger slid, flipping to another photo.

“This one looks good.”

Su Zai Zai glanced at it.

In the photo, she was looking down, biting the pen cap, her brow furrowed, thinking hard.

The warm yellow light made her skin appear even whiter and smoother, a few strands of hair falling beside her cheek, adding a touch of girlish charm.

Su Zai Zai’s eyes lit up, pleased with his compliment.

Then, she took out a selfie from her phone and showed it to him, “Although that one is also pretty, it doesn’t fully capture my beauty.”

“……”

“Look at this one, it probably captures a tenth of my beauty,” she shamelessly said.

This selfie was one Su Zai Zai was completely satisfied with.

Hearing her words, Zhang Luran turned to look at her phone screen.

Seeing the person in the photo, he paused, half-squinted, carefully observing.

He quickly concluded, “This isn’t you.”

Su Zai Zai: “…”

Seeing her reaction, Zhang Luran’s mouth curved slightly.

He lowered his eyes, gently rubbing her hair, seriously saying, “They’re all beautiful.”

******

After a while, Su Zai Zai leaned on Zhang Luran’s arm, closing her eyes to rest.

Beside her, Zhang Luran put down his phone and softly asked, “Where do you want to live in the future?”

“What?” Su Zai Zai didn’t hear clearly, her eyelids twitching.

Zhang Luran turned to look at her slightly trembling eyelashes, his voice full of appeasement, “If you don’t want to be too far from your parents, how about we live in Jinghua in the future?”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai slowly raised her head, looking at him.

She didn’t understand what he was suddenly talking about, dazedly saying, “What are you talking about?”

“Our future.”

He was talking about the future.

Through two layers of mask fabric, Zhang Luran nuzzled her cheek with his nose.

His eyes were soft, deep and clear like glass beads.

“I’ll listen to you.”

Chapter 56

I’m not sad at all.

It’s probably because she’s sad for me.

— Zhang Lurang

Spring Festival of the following year, during the winter break of sophomore year.

The night before New Year’s Eve. As usual, Su Zai Zai curled up in bed after her bath, calling Zhang Lurang. She lay on the bed, wearing headphones, took her diary from the nightstand, and used her teeth to pull off the pen cap, slowly writing in it.

Soon, Zhang Lurang’s voice flowed through the headphones, low and slightly hoarse, with occasional coughs: “What are you doing?”

Su Zai Zai smiled as she wrote, “Writing you a love letter.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang paused and asked, “What love letter?”

Su Zai Zai lowered her eyelids, her soft hair scattered messily, with

a few strands falling on the notebook, which she brushed away. She raised her eyebrows and said seriously, “I’ll show you when your name is on my household registry.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

After finishing the last word, Su Zai Zai closed the diary and put it back. She reached out to turn off the bedside lamp, and the sudden darkness made her feel a bit sleepy. Thinking of tomorrow, Su Zai Zai lazily asked, “Lurang, are you spending tomorrow with your uncle?”

Since starting college, Zhang Lurang rarely went back to B City. Su Zai Zai had only seen him go back once last summer, and he returned the same night. Itwas probably to see Zhang Luli before he went abroad. Upon hearing this, Zhang Lurang fell silent and didn’t answer. Su Zai Zai patiently repeated her question, her voice low and slow, as if she was about to fall asleep.

“Tomorrow is New Year’s Eve. Are you spending it with your uncle?”

Zhang Lurang, still focused on his computer, casually replied, “No, he’s going back to B City to spend it with my grandparents.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai’s eyes widened. She cautiously asked, “Then why aren’t you going with your uncle to your grandparents’?”

Talking to her, Zhang Lurang didn’t want to be distracted. He got up, walked to the bed, sat down, thought for a moment, and

seriously said, “I’m staying to take care of Susu.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t ask further and followed his lead, “You’re making me feel guilty about my little short-legged dog.”

Zhang Lurang chuckled.

Mentioning the dog, Su Zai Zai glanced at the dog bed by the bed. In the moonlight streaming through the window, she could vaguely see the little short-legged dog sleeping, occasionally opening its eyes slightly at her voice before quickly falling back asleep. Su Zai Zai withdrew her gaze and suddenly didn’t know what to say.

The sound of his shallow breathing echoed through the headphones, steady and slow. Su Zai Zai’s lips moved. She felt she should say something in this atmosphere. Anything would do.

But Zhang Lurang spoke first. His voice was clear and cool, with a touch of softness because it was her, “Go to sleep. Don’t you have to visit relatives early tomorrow?”

Su Zai Zai swallowed her words and asked one last question.

“Will you be home alone tomorrow?”

Zhang Lurang returned to his desk and sat down, replying softly, “Yes.”

—

The next night, after New Year’s Eve dinner, Su Zai Zai went out for a walk in the yard as usual. Asapling she and her father had planted

together had grown quite sturdy.

Su Zai Zai walked over and touched it, feeling the cold seeping into her fingertips. She looked back and then sat on the swing. Pushing with her feet, she made the swing move. The old swing creaked in the yard.

Su Zai Zai remembered three years ago, sending Zhang Lurang a WeChat message here.

At that time, she had just realized Zhang Lurang liked her.

She was struggling with her emotions. But what did he say...

Su Zai Zai sniffed, opened her WeChat favorites, and scrolled to a message dated 2013-02-09.

It was a voice message. Su Zai Zai silently played it.

—"Let's apply to Z University together."

At that time, Su Zai Zai was very upset about the brief separation. She was deeply in love and wanted to be in the city where he was. Unconditionally, she wanted to be where he was.

But Zhang Lurang said, together.

He said, together.

Laughter echoed from the house, warm and lively. In the winter, it felt especially warm. Su Zai Zai's eyes reddened slightly, the redness standing out on her pale face. She stood up, slowly

opened the yard's small iron gate, and walked out. Probably because everyone was celebrating at home, the street outside was deserted and very quiet.

Su Zai Zai walked down the road, eventually starting to run. Out of the neighborhood, she occasionally saw small groups of people. Most shops were closed, and the night became increasingly silent. At the bus stop, there were no direct buses to her home, and the distance wasn't short, about an hour's ride.

While waiting, Su Zai Zai sent a message to her mother. Half an hour later, she finally hailed a taxi and got in. The taxi was warm, and her hands, stiff from the cold wind, gradually warmed up. Su Zai Zai opened the chat window with Zhang Lurang and, after some thought, randomly brought up a topic.

Su Zai Zai: Lurang, when people asked for your WeChat before, did you always say you didn't have it?

Zhang Lurang: What do you mean by before?

Su Zai Zai: Before sophomore year.

This time Zhang Lurang replied slowly, seemingly thinking. After a while, he said: No one asked, they just added me directly.

Reading this, Su Zai Zai was stunned, remembering her failed friend request. She suddenly felt a bit unbalanced.

—Did you add them?

Zhang Lurang: No, I didn't look at it.

Su Zai Zai kept pushing the topic further: Why didn't you look at it?!

Zhang Lurang: ...

Su Zai Zai: I added you in freshman year.

Su Zai Zai: If you had seen it, would you have accepted?

Su Zai Zai knew she was setting herself up for disappointment... Zhang Lurang would definitely be honest and not lie to please her. Such an upright boyfriend.

This time, the reply was even slower. The screen showed he was typing, but Su Zai Zai didn't receive his message for a long time. She wasn't in a hurry, looking out the window at the passing streetlights. The next second, her phone vibrated. She looked down.

—I don't know.

Meeting Su Zai Zai, Zhang Lurang had many things he couldn't understand about himself. Like lying about not having WeChat instead of directly refusing, like how he couldn't be hard-hearted towards her, like... when she asked his name.

And he blurted out, "Dummy."

Su Zai Zai put her phone on her lap, looked out the window again, her expression a bit dazed. Soon, she smiled. Probably in everyone's eyes, Su Zai Zai was chasing after Zhang Lurang, moving towards him. But Su Zai Zai knew very well that Zhang Lurang was also moving towards her.

He accepted all her actions, indulging everything she did to him.

It started a long time ago.

—

After paying, Su Zai Zai got out of the car. The security guard recognized her and greeted her, then opened the gate. Su Zai Zai cheerfully wished him a “Happy New Year.”

The cold wind blew, cutting across her face like blades. Su Zai Zai shrank her neck, tightened her scarf, and walked forward. At the end, she turned left and walked to the first house. Looking at the window outside, it was dark inside, except for one room on the second floor. Su Zai Zai stomped her foot heavily, activating the voice-controlled lights. Then, holding her phone in one hand, she pressed the doorbell with the other.

Half a minute later, there was movement inside. Seeing her through the video doorbell, Zhang Lurang quickly opened the door.

He looked slightly stunned, as if he hadn’t fully processed it. Because of the underfloor heating, he was only wearing shorts and a t-shirt, with a half-wet white towel around his neck. The cold wind blew in through the open door, but he didn’t seem to feel it at all. Soon, Zhang Lurang stepped back to let Su Zai Zai in. She didn’t have much with her, just a few red envelopes and her phone.

The rest of her things were at her grandfather’s house.

She took off her scarf and softly asked, “What did you have for

dinner?"

Zhang Lurang took her scarf, put it on the sofa, and held her hands in his palms to warm them. His eyes lowered, staring at her cold-red hands. Zhang Lurang didn't answer her question but poured her a glass of warm water.

Watching her sip it, he softly asked, "Why so early today?"

"I came back first," Su Zai Zai answered honestly.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Zhang Lurang frowned. "I could've picked you up."

Chapter 57

I want to give her a good life.

—Zhang Lurang

On the evening of the third day of the Lunar New Year, Lin Mao returned from City B.

His entrance wasn't quiet, producing a series of loud noises that instantly woke up Susu from her sleep. She jumped up and ran to the door, whimpering and scratching at it.

Zhang Lurang, who was sitting at his desk working on his computer, quickly stood up and walked over to open the door.

As soon as the door opened, Susu kicked her hind legs back and dashed downstairs.

The floor was slippery, making it look like she was about to fall.

Zhang Lurang chuckled softly and leisurely followed her.

When he got downstairs, Zhang Lurang immediately saw two boxes of specialties from City B piled up at the entrance. Beside them lay a black 24-inch suitcase, as if it had been casually thrown there.

Lin Mao was lounging on the sofa, playing with his phone.

Susu, who had run ahead, placed her front paws on his legs, pawing at him affectionately.

Zhang Lurang's temple twitched, and he walked over to pick up the suitcase and carried it to Lin Mao's room.

Then he went back downstairs.

Lin Mao lifted his eyelids slightly and said softly, "Take out the things in the suitcase and put them in the fridge."

Zhang Lurang glanced at him and said, "..."

"I'm a bit tired." Lin Mao patted the sofa, signaling Susu to jump up, then closed his eyes to rest while holding her. "I took a three-hour flight, it's exhausting."

Zhang Lurang didn't say anything, just nodded.

He then went to the entrance, lifted both boxes in one go, and carried them to the kitchen.

When he came out after sorting everything, Lin Mao was already sitting up watching TV.

Zhang Lurang: "..."

Lin Mao grabbed some peanuts from the coffee table, peeled a few, and popped them into his mouth.

Zhang Lurang sat down next to him and poured two glasses of water, placing one in front of Lin Mao.

Lin Mao changed channels and suddenly remembered something, speaking softly, "I put the red envelopes from your grandparents and your parents in the suitcase."

Zhang Lurang didn't respond, slowly sipping from a transparent glass.

"Your brother didn't come home for the New Year either." Lin Mao yawned and turned off the TV. "I can't take it, I need to take a nap. I stayed up all night playing mahjong with friends..."

"..."

Soon, only Zhang Lurang was left in the living room.

He sat on the sofa in a daze for a while, then walked back to his room.

Looking at his phone, Zhang Lurang sighed and was about to call home when the phone rang.

He didn’t hesitate and answered the call directly.

There was no immediate response on the other end, and the voice wasn’t as commanding as usual: “A Rang.”

Zhang Lurang looked down at the book on his desk, smoothing out the wrinkled edges.

Without waiting for his response, his mother continued, “Your brother said he has courses over there and won’t be coming back due to the tight schedule.”

“Okay.”

There was a moment of silence on the phone.

Soon, his mother’s voice choked a bit.

“Why don’t you and Ali ever take the initiative to call mom? Your uncle has been here for three days, and mom has heard him receive several of your calls.”

Zhang Lurang paused in his writing, slowly retracting his fingertips.

He had long lost his temper and had forgotten what he should feel.

Moreover, he didn’t know what to say.

After thinking for a moment, Zhang Lurang spoke awkwardly, “Nothing bad happened here, you don’t need to worry. Happy New Year.”

He waited for a response but heard nothing from his mother.

Just as he was about to say goodbye and hang up, he heard his father's voice.

His father's voice was deep, sounding much like before: "I heard from your uncle that you won a scholarship in your freshman year?"

Instinctively, Zhang Lurang responded, "Yes."

There was silence again on the other end.

Zhang Lurang's attention gradually shifted to the string of codes displayed on his computer screen.

He put down his pen and put the call on speaker, his fingers tapping on the keyboard.

After a long time, a middle-aged man's voice broke the silence in the quiet room.

"That's great."

Zhang Lurang paused, showing no reaction on his face.

He frowned, seemingly contemplating how to respond, and finally just said, "Okay, you should rest early."

With that, he hung up the phone.

He then glanced at the time and habitually called Su Zai.

Su Zai answered quickly, her crisp voice ringing in his ears, "Rang Rang."

“You’re home?”

“Just got here. Tomorrow we don’t have to visit relatives, let’s go out.”

Zhang Lurang thought for a moment and asked, “Where do you want to go?”

Hearing this, Su Zai immediately said, “To the movies! And the stores on Commercial Street are open, we can go eat something good.”

“Okay.”

“I received nearly ten thousand yuan in red envelopes these past three days!” Su Zai excitedly rolled on the bed, “Can you believe it? At nineteen, I have a daily income of over three thousand.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

Su Zai giggled, “Rang Rang, you’re dating a rich person.”

Hearing her tone, Zhang Lurang’s mouth twitched, “How much more until you hit ten thousand?”

Su Zai rechecked her red envelopes, counting slowly, “It’s about nine thousand five hundred now.”

But after counting, she wasn’t sure, so she decided to count again.

Before she could start, her phone suddenly chimed.

She glanced at it, causing her earphone to fall off.

There was a muffled laugh on the other end, sounding cheerful.

“I’ll help you.”

Su Zai opened Alipay and saw he had transferred 520 yuan to her.

She was about to say something when Zhang Lurang seriously added, “With this, you still owe me 20 yuan.”

Su Zai widened her eyes in disbelief, “You’re really counting every penny.”

Seeing him so ruthless, Su Zai started bringing up old debts, “Do you remember when I gave you a tip because I was in a good mood?”

“...What tip?”

“That night when you served me well, I gave you a red envelope. Now give it back.”

Zhang Lurang recalled for a moment, then was speechless.

Su Zai’s words were too suggestive, making him hesitate before answering, “The time I accompanied you to the evening class?”

“Yes.”

Zhang Lurang pressed his lips together, fully recalling the event.

Then, he responded word by word, “Su Zai, that was one cent.”

“But that was all I had left in my WeChat wallet, I gave you

everything." Su Zai shamelessly retorted, "And now you, who just got a full scholarship, are arguing with me over twenty yuan."

"..." Her words made Zhang Lurang question whether he had just given her five hundred or borrowed twenty.

After a while, Su Zai concluded, "Rang Rang, you're probably the type of man who would abandon his wife and children once you succeed."

Though Zhang Lurang was used to her daily frivolous remarks, he still couldn't tolerate this one.

Before he could frown and retort, Su Zai cheerfully added, "But don't worry, I'll always strive to be a wealthy person."

The words he was about to say instantly disappeared, and the corners of his mouth lifted.

The next second, he leaned back in his chair, lazily calling her, "Zai Zai."

"Yeah?"

Zhang Lurang recalled and slightly modified her previous words.

"Leave at 1 PM tomorrow. If you leave a minute earlier, you won't have to repay the twenty yuan. If you leave two minutes earlier, I'll give you twenty yuan. And so on."

Su Zai was silent for a moment.

Soon, she lightly said over the phone, “Rang Rang, if I leave now, you might have to declare bankruptcy.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

******

After the second semester of sophomore year began, their lives became busier.

Besides attending classes, Zhang Lurang was preparing for a mobile internet innovation competition.

He had to design an app and develop it, with the theme related to medical communication.

He formed a team with his three roommates and had to prepare for the presentation.

Additionally, he participated in many workshops in cooperation with the department, even skipping a few classes because of it.

Every day was a blur of activity.

On the other hand, Su Zai had more specialized courses.

Due to her involvement in a department during her freshman year, she met many people and participated in a school-organized advertising competition with some senior students from her department.

Time flew by quickly.

Once the busy period was over, the second year ended as well.

Su Zai Zai's last exam was two days earlier than Zhang Lurang's.

After finishing her exams, she didn't rush home but stayed in the library to study with Zhang Lurang.

Su Zai Zai yawned, put on her headphones, and started watching an advertisement video.

Noticing her sleepy expression, Zhang Lurang thought for a moment, then picked up a notebook from the stack of books next to him and wrote a sentence on it.

——Our team in the Mobile Internet Innovation Competition won the grand prize.

Su Zai Zai glanced at it, her eyes pausing for a moment.

The next second, she hugged his arm tightly, shaking it excitedly with a silent laugh.

Zhang Lurang's mood was lifted by her excitement as well.

He let her shake his arm and used his free hand to write another sentence.

——But I skipped classes, so I won't be getting the scholarship.

Seeing this, Su Zai Zai felt a bit proud, her eyes curving into crescent moons.

She released his arm, took the pen from his hand, and carefully

wrote a sentence.

——I got it, I'll give it to you.

Chapter 58

...I have no experience either.

— Zhang Lurang

Summer vacation lasts for two months.

The two of them went online to check out internship recruitment information and sent out several resumes after finding suitable ones.

Then came the waiting time for replies.

Before the interview times were set.

Zhang Lurang asked Su Zai Zai on WeChat: "Do you want to go out and play?"

Seeing this, Su Zai Zai put her laptop aside and happily replied: "Sure!"

After replying, she thought for a moment and was about to suggest going to the arcade when Zhang Lurang sent another message.

— How about the amusement park?

Comparatively, Su Zai Zai preferred the arcade more.

But remembering certain scenes, she decisively took back her words.

— Okay.

The next day, they set off early and took a bus heading to the amusement park.

Since the amusement park was near the terminal station, Su Zai Zai chose to sit in the last row.

Zhang Lurang silently followed her and sat next to her.

Su Zai Zai took off her baseball cap and casually pulled off his as well.

Then she rummaged through her backpack, took out her sunscreen, and squeezed a large amount onto the back of her hand.

Su Zai Zai turned sideways, hooked her arm around his neck, and pulled him down a bit.

Zhang Lurang obediently cooperated.

Seeing him up close, his pupils enlarged, and their color was light, clear, and bright. When her gaze flickered, it seemed like stars were flowing within them.

Her fingertips carried a bit of coolness, and her gentle touch was especially comforting.

Su Zai Zai carefully applied the sunscreen on him, saying as she did, “It’s going to be very sunny over there in this hot weather. You need to apply sunscreen properly. I bought non-greasy ones for you; it shouldn’t feel too uncomfortable.”

Zhang Lurang responded with a low “Mm.”

After finishing his face, Su Zai Zai squeezed some more onto her palm and applied it to his neck.

Her touch was very light. When she was applying it to his face, Zhang Lurang didn’t feel much, but when she got to his neck, it tickled him slightly.

A faint itch started from the bottom, moved upwards, and grazed his Adam’s apple.

It seemed intentional, yet unintentional.

Zhang Lurang endured for a while but eventually couldn’t help tilting his neck back.

Su Zai Zai blinked innocently: “What’s wrong?”

Zhang Lurang turned his head away, calmed his breathing, and said slowly: “It’s done.”

Su Zai Zai glanced up and down, then continued calmly: “Your collarbone is exposed too; let me apply some there.”

The next second, Zhang Lurang pulled his collar up, held it for a moment, and finally said awkwardly: “Don’t do this outside.”

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai was momentarily stunned, then burst into laughter.

Zhang Lurang's face stiffened at her laughter and he gave her a cold look.

Soon, he put his hat back on, pulled it down, and covered half his face.

Su Zai Zai bent down to look at his expression through the gap.

Quickly, she reached in and touched his face.

Her voice carried a soothing tone, though she was trying not to laugh.

"Okay, I won't do this outside."

Zhang Lurang: "..."

******

The two entered the amusement park.

Zhang Lurang held one of Su Zai Zai's hands while she looked at the map with the other.

She scanned it carefully, ignoring his question about getting ice cream.

Half a minute later, Su Zai Zai finally found the word "Haunted House" on the map.

She quickly pulled him in another direction.

Zhang Lurang was puzzled: “What do you want to do?”

“Let’s go to the haunted house first?” she suggested, glancing back at him, “Then we’ll do other things.”

Zhang Lurang paused, then said seriously: “It’s more atmospheric to go to the haunted house at night.”

Su Zai Zai widened her eyes, looking perplexed.

“What are you saying? Going to a haunted house in broad daylight is the norm!”

Zhang Lurang’s temple twitched: “...Then let’s go.”

The haunted house was located in a corner of the amusement park, a large cement building with a dark gray color, moss on the walls, and some red paint, giving it a mottled look.

From inside, occasionally came repressed strange sounds and screams, adding to the eerie atmosphere.

There was a long queue at the entrance, with groups of people going in at intervals.

Su Zai Zai licked her lips and pulled him over.

While waiting, Su Zai Zai took a water bottle from her backpack, unscrewed it, and handed it to him.

Listening to the creepy sounds, she suddenly felt a bit nervous and

asked quietly: “Are you scared?”

Zhang Lurang held an umbrella with one hand and took the water to wet his lips with the other.

Hearing this, he shook his head casually.

Su Zai Zai murmured “Oh” softly, hanging her head, lost in thought.

Soon, it was their turn to enter.

Inside, it was very dim, with rustling sounds constantly in their ears.

Su Zai Zai grabbed his arm seriously: “Lurang, don’t be scared.”

Zhang Lurang was about to say “I’m not scared,” but before he could, she continued earnestly: “If you’re scared, just hold me tight.”

He paused, then pulled her hand and walked forward.

The ghosts inside were all played by people, fixed in certain positions, suddenly jumping out to scare you.

Several times, Su Zai Zai was almost startled into screaming, but when she turned to look at Zhang Lurang, he was always calm.

Remembering her purpose for coming to the haunted house, her fears disappeared without a trace.

Su Zai Zai thought for a moment, decided to change her strategy.

Having made up her mind, she suddenly threw herself into Zhang Lurang's arms, clinging to him and saying: "I'm so scared, Lurang..."

Zhang Lurang: "..."

He stopped, lifted her head, and in the dim light, examined her expression.

Her eyes sparkled with mischief, and the corners of her mouth curved upward.

Quickly, she pursed her lips, restraining her smile.

Zhang Lurang's mouth twitched slightly.

He didn't move, letting her hold him.

After a while, Su Zai Zai, satisfied, said: "Let's go."

Zhang Lurang took her hand again, but quickly let go, moving his hand to her shoulder.

After a few steps, Su Zai Zai heard him mutter something.

"Silly girl."

She looked over, just in time to see his indulgent eyes.

******

After leaving the haunted house, Zhang Lurang led Su Zai Zai to a side and bought her an ice cream.

Su Zai Zai, biting the ice cream, asked: “Shall we ride the carousel?”

He glanced at the map and nodded.

She blinked and pushed her luck: “Will you ride with me?”

“Mm.” He responded indifferently.

Finding the location, Zhang Lurang led her to line up.

Su Zai Zai licked the ice cream on her lips, thought for a moment, and said: “Last time I came to the amusement park with Jiajia, she refused to ride with me, saying it was too childish.”

“…”

“Let me tell you, she and her current boyfriend have already met each other’s parents.” Saying this, Su Zai Zai widened her eyes, “Why haven’t we met yet?”

Zhang Lurang silently took out a tissue from his backpack and handed it to her.

“Don’t always use actions to change the subject.” Su Zai Zai looked serious.

Seeing she didn’t take it, Zhang Lurang wiped the corner of her mouth for her and said softly: “I want to wait a bit before taking you to meet my parents. They know about you; I’ve mentioned you to them.”

After saying this, he thought for a moment and added: “Do you want to meet my uncle first?”

Hearing his earlier words, Su Zai Zai was stunned and curiously asked: “When did you tell them?”

Zhang Lurang thought for a while and said seriously.

“When I called them before, they asked about things here, and I mentioned you.”

It seemed that only Su Zai Zai was worth mentioning.

Su Zai Zai suddenly felt a bit nervous and asked softly: “What did they say?”

Zhang Lurang couldn’t quite remember and hesitated: “They asked me to bring you back for them to see.”

After a moment of silence.

Su Zai Zai said softly: “Lurang, you should meet my parents first.”

“…”

“Let me see how you do it.”

“…”

“Give me some experience.”

Zhang Lurang: “…”

******

After lunch, the two wandered around to digest.

An hour later, they found themselves at the roller coaster.

Su Zai Zai suggested: “Shall we ride the roller coaster?”

Zhang Lurang looked at it, roughly sixty meters high.

He scratched his head, hesitating this time: “Are you sure you’re not scared?”

“Do you not like it?” Su Zai Zai didn’t mind, “Then we won’t ride.”

“It’s not that. If you’re not scared, we can go.”

He didn’t say anything and held her hand.

Soon, the roller coaster began to move slowly.

The speed gradually increased, rising from a low point to the top. After reaching the peak, it suddenly plunged downward.

The sound of the wind in their ears was particularly loud, drowning out half of the screams.

Su Zai Zai calmly turned her head to look at Zhang Lurang’s still expressionless face. She suddenly found it a bit funny and raised her voice slightly, calling him: “Lurang.”

She didn’t know if he heard her.

Su Zai Zai didn't think much of it and was about to continue speaking.

The roller coaster's speed increased further, and their bodies began to rotate with the twists and turns.

Su Zai Zai's heart skipped a beat, and she obediently closed her mouth.

A minute later, the roller coaster reached the end, and its speed slowed down.

Su Zai Zai turned to look at him and continued to say what she hadn't finished earlier: "Lurang, now we've been through a life-and-death experience together."

Zhang Lurang looked at her silently.

"So, come to my house."

As soon as she finished speaking, the roller coaster came to a stop, and the passengers unbuckled their seat belts, letting out sighs of relief.

Zhang Lurang also unbuckled his seat belt, and seeing that she wasn't moving, he reached out to help her unbuckle hers.

Then, Su Zai Zai pulled him up and continued:

"I'll have my parents treat you to a meal to thank you."

Zhang Lurang also unbuckled his seat belt, and seeing that she

wasn't moving, he reached out to help her unbuckle hers.

Chapter 59

Her home was so warm.

No wonder she was so good herself.

—Zhang Lurang

Two days later, it happened to be Sunday.

Zhang Lurang had arranged the time with Su ZaiZai in advance and visited early in the morning.

He stood at the door for a while, with a trace of nervousness in his eyes.

The next second, Zhang Lurang smiled slightly and reached out to press the doorbell on the right side of the door.

Almost simultaneously, the door opened from the inside, and Su ZaiZai poked her head out.

She cheerfully grabbed his wrist and pulled him inside.

Standing at the entrance, Zhang Lurang glanced inside.

A middle-aged man sat on the sofa, looking in their direction with a gentle smile on his face.

A middle-aged woman walked out of the kitchen, carrying a plate of fruit. She happened to see Zhang Lurang and smiled, "Lurang is

here? Come in and sit."

Zhang Lurang had just finished taking off his shoes and changed into the indoor slippers handed to him by Su ZaiZai, then walked to the coffee table.

He handed over the gift he had brought, speaking respectfully, "Hello, Uncle and Auntie."

Su's father stood up, took the gift from him, and placed it on the coffee table, "Have a seat."

Zhang Lurang nodded and sat on the sofa next to them.

Su ZaiZai sat quietly beside him like a little tail.

There was a moment of silence.

Zhang Lurang was contemplating what to say when Su's mother suddenly whispered in Su's father's ear, "He looks better than the photos."

Su ZaiZai immediately spoke up, "Mom, you said that too loudly."

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang's expression froze, and his face felt a bit hot.

The previously somewhat awkward atmosphere instantly eased a lot.

Su's father, with a hint of a smile, poured a cup of water and placed it in front of him, "ZaiZai said your family is in B City?"

“Yes,” Zhang Lurang thought for a moment and added, “My parents are over there, and I live with my uncle in Z City.”

“Will you go back to B City to work in the future?” Su’s father asked casually.

Zhang Lurang had already considered these questions and answered directly, “No, I’ll work in Z City and settle down here after graduation.”

“Do your parents know about this?”

“They do, I’ve mentioned it to them, and they agreed.”

Su’s father seemed to have no more questions and just sighed, “Our little precious daughter found a boyfriend after all.”

Hearing this, Su ZaiZai couldn’t help but say, “Dad, don’t talk like that.”

Zhang Lurang focused on the phrase “little precious daughter,” and after a pause, said seriously, “I will treat her well.”

After that, Su’s parents talked about other topics, mostly about Su ZaiZai’s childhood.

Zhang Lurang listened carefully, smiling all the while.

After lunch, considering the two elders might want to take a nap, Zhang Lurang didn’t want to stay too long and took his leave.

Su ZaiZai changed her clothes and went out with him.

On the way, Zhang Lurang was somewhat silent.

Su ZaiZai blinked and said earnestly, “What’s wrong? My parents like you very much.”

He seemed to be thinking about something, staring into the distance with no expression on his face.

After a while, Zhang Lurang spoke, “Do you think I did well?”

Su ZaiZai didn’t know what he meant by that, only felt he was seeking praise and approval.

She enthusiastically praised him, “You were the perfect son-in-law, super awesome, anyone would think you’ve met hundreds of parents.”

Zhang Lurang’s lips twitched.

He turned his head, looked down at her, his eyes filled with a smile and expectation.

“So you have experience now?”

Not expecting him to say that, Su ZaiZai was stunned for a moment, then nodded blankly.

“Next week, meet my uncle?” Zhang Lurang licked his lips and continued, “You might have interviews soon, and we can’t make it to B City to meet my parents. How about during the winter break or next summer?”

His tone was somewhat urgent, making Su ZaiZai a bit slow to respond.

“How about the winter break? Once you’re free, we can go.”

Seeing his eagerness, Su ZaiZai suddenly smiled uncontrollably.

She looked at Zhang Lurang and said seriously, “Okay.”

Both were trying their best to integrate into each other’s lives.

And there’s nothing wrong with that.

******

During the next winter break, Su ZaiZai went to B City with Zhang Lurang before the New Year.

Zhang Luli had just returned from abroad a few days earlier.

The once empty house became lively with a few more people.

Because of this, Zhang’s parents seemed to be in a good mood.

After dinner, everyone sat on the sofa chatting.

Zhang’s mother smiled and held Su ZaiZai’s hand, asking, “You and Lurang are in your third year, right? He said he’s going to work directly. What about you? Will you go for graduate studies or work?”

Su ZaiZai thought for a moment and said, “I plan to work directly as well.”

Zhang Lurang picked up the teapot on the table and poured tea, reiterating, “Both of our jobs are in Z City, and we will settle down there.”

Zhang’s father didn’t have any objections, just said, “Remember to come home when you have time.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang paused, then softly replied, “Mm.”

Zhang Luli, sitting nearby, took a sip of tea, “I’ll be back in a couple of years. Brother, when are you having your wedding? Should I be the best man? I might steal the spotlight.”

Zhang Lurang seriously thought about it, “Then never mind.”

The living room erupted in laughter.

After a while, Zhang’s mother pulled Su ZaiZai towards the room, “ZaiZai, come, let me show you Lurang’s childhood photos.”

Zhang Lurang instinctively stood up, wanting to follow.

Zhang’s father suddenly called him back, “The tea is gone.”

“Brother, you’re sticking too close,” Zhang Luli said with a look of disdain.

Zhang Lurang furrowed his brows, said nothing, and sat back down.

He muttered, looking puzzled.

“Really?”

“In my experience, girls don’t like clingy guys.”

Zhang’s father also rarely spoke, “That’s true.”

Zhang Lurang licked his lips and whispered, “She seems to like it.”

******

In the room, Zhang’s mother sat Su ZaiZai by the bed and took two thick photo albums from the bookshelf.

She was very enthusiastic, pointing at one of the photos and laughing, “Lurang and Luli are only a year and a half apart, so many people used to ask if they were twins.”

Su ZaiZai looked.

In the photo, Zhang Lurang was about seven or eight years old, his mouth almost reaching his ears. Zhang Luli stood next to him, with the same expression. Looking at them, they did indeed look very much alike.

Su ZaiZai had never seen Zhang Lurang with such an exaggerated expression.

She seemed infected, smiling for no reason.

“Lurang used to dislike studying,” Zhang’s mother reminisced, “he would play outside with his classmates until seven or eight at night. His brother wanted to go with him, but he wouldn’t let him.”

“Later, when his brother started skipping grades in fourth grade,

my husband and I probably began to change too, and Lurang's character slowly changed as well."

"His brother got into B University at fifteen and was even featured in the news."

Su ZaiZai remained silent, listening attentively.

"Many relatives called to praise him. I didn't know what I was thinking at the time. His uncle told me many times, but I didn't think I was doing anything wrong."

"Lurang has never come home since he went to university," Zhang's mother's voice choked, her eyes fixed on the photos in the album, "Neither has Luli. I thought he was very close to me, but he never called."

Tears fell from her eyes, and she couldn't help but cover them with her hand.

"I've been doing it wrong all along."

Su ZaiZai placed her hand on hers, unsure of what to say, "Auntie..."

"My two children have never been happy because of me and their father."

"I thought I gave them a good life, but it wasn't..."

"It was only us who felt it was good..."

Su ZaiZai's nose tingled, and she gently patted her back.

"Auntie, Zhang Lurang has turned out very well."

"You don't have to be sad; everything will be fine."

Everything.

******

It was getting late, so Su Zai Zai said goodbye to Zhang's parents and prepared to go back to the hotel.

Zhang Lu Rang took his father's car keys and left with her.

After they got in the car, Zhang Lu Rang didn't start the engine immediately.

After a moment of silence, he couldn't help but ask, "What did my mom say to you?"

"Nothing much. She showed me your childhood photos." Su Zai Zai's eyes widened at the mention of this. "Rang Rang, your mouth was super big when you were a kid."

Zhang Lu Rang: "..."

He glanced at her and started the car.

Su Zai Zai leaned her elbow against the car window, watching the scenery pass by outside.

The sky had darkened, bringing a sense of oppression.

Amidst the silence, Su Zai Zai suddenly spoke, asking softly, “Do you still blame your parents?”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang was clearly taken aback but quickly responded, “Not really.”

He couldn’t say he blamed them, nor could he say he forgave them.

But perhaps, he could never get close to them again.

Su Zai Zai didn’t express any opinion and changed the topic.

“In the future, let’s not have children,” she half-joked.

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t respond, seemingly waiting for her to continue.

“Because I would definitely only favor you.”

Upon hearing this, Zhang Lu Rang’s lips curved into a smile as he replied, “Then they really wouldn’t have any parental love.”

Chapter 60

She was seriously crazy, but she liked me.

Then I’ll just assume she’s not crazy.

—Zhang Lurang

Hearing this, Su Zai Zai was stunned for a moment.

She turned her gaze back to the car window, curled her lips into a smile, and then said seriously, “Then let’s split it in half.”

Zhang Lurang didn’t object and replied with a hint of a smile in his voice, “Okay.”

The car fell silent again.

After a while, Su Zai Zai saw a school flash by outside.

In bold black regular script, the name was: B City Middle School.

Su Zai Zai was attracted by it and couldn’t help but turn her head, saying, “Shall we take a look at your high school? You’ve been to mine, but I’ve never been to yours.”

Zhang Lurang turned the steering wheel and said instinctively, “It’s too late; we won’t be able to get in.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t mind too much. After thinking for a moment, she said seriously, “My biggest regret in life was caused by you.”

“…”

“It’s all your fault for returning to B City to study, making us go long distance right during our honeymoon phase.”

Zhang Lurang opened his mouth, somewhat bewildered, “But…”

“But you’re good-looking,” Su Zai Zai licked her lips with some envy, “Being good-looking makes a difference; you won’t be neglected by your partner.”

Meanwhile, Zhang Lurang happened to park the car in a lot near the seaside.

Su Zai Zai looked around and asked, “Where are we going?”

“We can’t visit the school, so I’ll take you for a walk around the area,” he said.

After speaking, Zhang Lurang held Su Zai Zai’s hand and walked toward the sea.

The wind was strong and refreshing, with a faint smell of the sea.

Su Zai Zai glanced sideways and saw a few couples holding hands and walking along the beach below.

The distant sea shimmered under the moonlight, distinctly meeting the sky.

Zhang Lurang was still thinking about what Su Zai Zai had just said, remaining silent.

They walked until they found an entrance where they could go down to the beach via stairs.

Su Zai Zai became excited and couldn’t help but pull Zhang Lurang in a different direction.

Just then, Zhang Lurang spoke, seemingly puzzled, “Zai Zai.”

“Ah?” Su Zai Zai replied, looking down at the sand.

He looked away, his expression a bit unnatural, “Why do you like

me?"

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai raised her head to look at him and answered honestly without much thought.

"Because you're good-looking."

Zhang Lurang pursed his lips, seeming unsatisfied with this answer, "Is that all?"

She thought for a moment and added, "And because you're Lurang."

The stiffness in Zhang Lurang's face softened instantly, and he awkwardly asked, "Who else do you think is good-looking?"

"How could I think anyone else is good-looking when I look at your face all day?" Su Zai Zai thought it over and felt a bit wronged, "I don't even dare look in the mirror anymore."

The sea breeze blew her hair back.

Zhang Lurang reached out to smooth her hair, his mood seemingly improved.

He lowered his eyes, bent slightly, and stared at her face for a while.

Soon, Zhang Lurang concluded, "You're good-looking."

Hearing his compliment, Su Zai Zai laughed, hugging his arm, her face full of curiosity, "Did you think I was good-looking the first

time you saw me?"

Zhang Lurang recalled for a moment and fell silent.

Su Zai Zai immediately understood, her smile fading a bit.

She felt a bit aggrieved and asked sulkily, "What was your impression of me then?"

Zhang Lurang licked his lips, hesitated for a moment, and decided to be honest, "I thought you were a bit weird."

Su Zai Zai's eyes widened, feeling wronged, "In what way?"

This time, Zhang Lurang fell silent and said nothing more.

Su Zai Zai recalled her behavior in her first year of high school.

...It seemed indeed so.

She decided not to mention the past and asked instead, "What about now?"

The silent person remained silent.

Just as Su Zai Zai was getting anxious and about to throw a tantrum, she heard him speak.

"Not anymore."

******

After walking along the beach for a while, they soon returned to the

parking lot and drove back to the hotel.

Su Zai Zai went to the front desk to check in, gave her name, and handed over her ID card.

The staff looked at the two of them and reminded, “If two people are staying, both need to provide ID.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang took out his wallet and pulled out his ID.

Before he could hand it over, Su Zai Zai softly said, “No, it’s just me staying.”

Zhang Lurang was caught off guard, turning abruptly to look at her.

After getting the room card, Su Zai Zai pulled Zhang Lurang aside to talk.

“Lurang, think about it. You haven’t been home in a long time, and now you’re staying in a hotel with me. We’re not married yet; what would your parents think of me?”

Zhang Lurang looked at her and said in a deep voice, “Then I’ll go back.”

“Mm, don’t be stubborn this time.”

“…”

“I’ll sacrifice myself next time,” Su Zai Zai shamelessly added.

Zhang Lurang understood her concerns and said no more.

He escorted her to the room, giving her a few last-minute instructions.

As he was about to leave, Su Zai Zai suddenly said, “If you’re unhappy, just come over.”

Zhang Lurang responded with an “Mm” and only left the hotel after seeing her lock the door.

When he got home, Zhang’s parents and Zhang Luli were still in the living room, chatting.

Zhang Lurang, who hadn’t been home in a long time, felt a bit out of place.

He stood in the entrance for a while, intending to greet them and head to his room when Zhang Luli, sitting on the sofa, spotted him and called out, “Brother!”

Finally moving, Zhang Lurang walked over.

“Ah Lurang, will you stay here for the winter break?” Zhang’s mother suddenly asked.

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang looked over and honestly replied, “I’ll head back in a couple of days and return for New Year’s Eve with Uncle.”

Zhang’s mother seemed a bit displeased and wanted to say more but quickly backed down, thinking of the empty house from the past few years.

Zhang's father, reading a newspaper beside her, said nothing either.

Zhang Lurang greeted them and returned to his room.

Not long after, Zhang Luli entered his room without knocking.

Zhang Lurang, sitting on the bed, just glanced up and quickly looked away.

Zhang Luli climbed onto his bed and sat cross-legged, "Brother, I plan to work there for a few years after graduation and then come back."

"Mm."

"I told Mom and Dad, but they don't agree."

Hearing this, Zhang Lurang finally reacted, frowning, "You..."

Before he could finish, Zhang Luli continued, "I won't listen to them. I want to stay there. I've decided."

Zhang Lurang nodded, looking at his phone without speaking.

Zhang Luli didn't mind his coldness and continued, "Brother, have Mom and Dad's attitudes changed? Last year, I didn't come home because of this."

Zhang Lurang looked at him, puzzled.

"When I was around, they only thought you were the problem because they thought you were rebellious and disobedient." Zhang

Luli analyzed confidently, “But brother, you haven’t come home for three years, ruthless.”

Zhang Lurang ignored him.

“Are you really working in Z City after graduation?”

Zhang Lurang, annoyed, kicked him lightly, “Go to your room.”

“So, are you working in Z City?” Zhang Luli persisted.

“Mm.” He finally answered, adding, “I’m settled there.”

******

Two people lingered in the car for a while before entering the barbecue restaurant.

Zhang Lurang took the tongs, spread a few pieces of meat on the grill, and carefully turned them over.

Su Zai Zai was chewing on the meat he had grilled and suddenly remembered something.

“Lurang, we have less than a year until we graduate.”

Zhang Lurang freed his hand to adjust some sauce for her and placed it in front of her.

Hearing Su Zai Zai’s words, his eyebrows twitched, and he said in a deep voice, “Su Zai, don’t compete with me for everything.”

Su Zai Zai blinked innocently, “I haven’t competed for anything.”

Zhang Lurang glanced at her but said nothing.

Su Zai Zai stared at him for a while, a bit puzzled, “Why do I feel like you’re always angry?”

He sighed and seriously asked, “Don’t you want me to be nicer to you?”

“Huh?” Su Zai Zai thought carefully, “You… are very nice to me already…”

Before she could finish, Zhang Lurang continued, “You also need to give me a chance.”

His voice carried a hint of frustration.

Su Zai Zai dazedly responded with an “oh” and lowered her head to continue eating meat.

After a while, she finally reacted.

“I won’t propose to you, but I’ve thought of many ways to do it.” Mentioning this, Su Zai suddenly felt a bit unwilling, “No, I also want to propose. How about we each do it once?”

Zhang Lurang added a few more pieces of meat to her bowl and said flatly, “When can you be normal?”

Su Zai Zai giggled and shamelessly asked, “Don’t you like it?”

Zhang Lurang raised his eyebrows slightly and gave her a brief look.

His eyes didn’t show much emotion, his face expressionless.

His voice was warm and gentle, like raindrops falling outside the window.

“I do.”

SLC Ch 61 – 63 The End

Aug 16, 2024

Chapter 61

> All along, I haven't been doing well enough.
>
> She just didn't say it out loud.
>
> ——Zhang Lu Rang

The BBQ restaurant was bustling with noise.

The warm yellow light cast a cozy feeling as it blended with the surrounding sounds.

The world around them seemed far, far away.

In front of her, Zhang Lu Rang's facial features had grown colder with age.

His hair, once long enough to cover his eyebrows, was now cut short, looking neat and distinct.

Despite being amidst this clamor, he seemed untouched by the mundane world.

A clear and distinct sense of distance.

Yet, this same person had just confessed to her with a serious face a moment ago.

Su Zai Zai felt a warmth in her heart and suddenly called out to him, “Rang Rang.”

Hearing her voice, Zhang Lu Rang raised his eyebrows slightly, as if waiting for her to continue.

Seeing Su Zai Zai remain silent, he looked at the several empty plates on the table and asked, “Are you still hungry?”

With that one sentence, all the barriers between them dissolved.

“Give me your WeChat,” Su Zai Zai said out of the blue.

Zhang Lu Rang was taken aback, but without questioning it, he instinctively handed her his phone from the table.

Su Zai Zai smiled with her eyes curving and didn’t take the phone. Instead, she responded to his earlier question, “Yes, I’m hungry.”

Zhang Lu Rang gave her a puzzled look and quickly murmured an “okay.”

He placed his phone back and added a few more pieces of meat to the grill.

Su Zai Zai propped her chin and watched his movements.

His slender fingers held the metal brush, slowly cleaning the grill. Occasionally, he used tongs to flip the meat and brushed some oil on it.

Noticing that he hadn’t used his utensils much, Su Zai Zai lowered

her head, picked up a piece of meat with her chopsticks, and brought it to his mouth.

Zhang Lu Rang took a bite, chewing slowly.

Then, Su Zai Zai picked up another pair of tongs and placed the grilled meat into his bowl. She asked, “Rang Rang, have you decided on the time?”

Zhang Lu Rang paused, not understanding, “What time?”

She didn’t explain and continued, “Just let me know in advance so I can dress nicely.”

Her words, combined with their previous conversation, made Zhang Lu Rang instantly understand.

He hesitated and asked, “Do I need to tell you in advance?”

“You should tell me, and I can teach you,” she said with a teasing smile.

Zhang Lu Rang, who had been asking seriously, immediately pulled back his thoughts upon hearing her words.

He glanced at her and said in a deep voice, “I don’t need you to teach me.”

Su Zai Zai didn’t mind his response, still smiling brightly and seeming in a particularly good mood.

“I think we’re pretty good like this.”

“Find a time to propose, or I can do it if you prefer.”

“Then after graduation, we’ll get our marriage certificate, save money slowly for the wedding and to buy a house.”

She paused, looking hopeful.

“Our names will be tied together forever.”

“Just like that, for a lifetime.”

Zhang Lu Rang suddenly found himself at a loss for words.

He stared into Su Zai Zai’s eyes, his lips moving slightly.

“In that case, you’d have to live a life of renting with me.”

Su Zai Zai was momentarily stunned, not receiving the affirmative response she usually got from him.

She didn’t dwell on it, looking earnestly into his eyes, “That would still be wonderful.”

No matter what, she thought it would be wonderful.

Zhang Lu Rang fell silent, murmuring, “If only I were a few years older than you.”

Then he could wait for her graduation with confidence and give her a better future.

Make her feel no burden because she had such a solid support.

If only it were like that.

He wanted her to live happily all her life.

Not having her brightness and vitality worn away by stepping into a competitive and harsh world.

“Ah? But you are a year older than me.”

Zhang Lu Rang’s Adam’s apple bobbed, and he said seriously, “After graduation, give me two years.”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai’s expression froze, puzzled, “What do you want to do?”

“I want to give you everything others have,” his voice was hoarse, as if fearing she would be upset, with a hint of caution, “and everything others don’t have.”

After listening to his words, Su Zai Zai immediately understood his intention.

Her gaze slowly lowered, her thick eyelashes hiding her emotions.

For the first time, she couldn’t understand his thoughts.

Su Zai Zai poked at the meat in her bowl with her chopsticks, her voice somewhat cold, “I don’t see anything wrong with that. Why does it have to be you working hard alone for a good life…”

Zhang Lu Rang didn’t know how to convey his thoughts.

Silence fell over the table.

Su Zai Zai couldn't stand the oppressive atmosphere. She bit her lip and put her chopsticks down on the table.

When she looked up again, her eyes were tinged red, filled with tears.

Holding back a sob, she asked, "Is it just me who wants this?"

Every past moment flashed through her mind.

——"You won't even give me a status."

——"Kiss me and I'll let you go."

——"If you come with me, you have to stay in the same hotel room."

Zhang Lu Rang panicked, immediately grabbing a few tissues and walking over to her side.

Before he could speak, Su Zai Zai stood up, sobbing, "Everything is just what I want."

After saying that, she pushed him aside and walked toward the door.

Her tone, her reaction, her two sentences.

It felt like pent-up emotions, yet also a sudden outburst.

Zhang Lu Rang's breath hitched, his heart feeling like it was being gnawed by worms, or as if someone was gripping it tightly, causing unbearable pain, making it hard to breathe.

He picked up Su Zai Zai's bag from the chair and quickly followed her out.

Su Zai Zai, not having a good sense of direction, turned left directly after exiting the door, walking forward with her head down.

It happened to be a crowded street. She pushed through the crowd, heading straight ahead.

Zhang Lu Rang quickly caught up to her, grabbing her wrist and pulling her into his arms.

She didn't resist, nor did she speak.

Zhang Lu Rang placed his palm on the back of her head, coaxing softly, "Don't cry."

There were too many people, so Zhang Lu Rang hesitated, then led her back.

Su Zai Zai obediently followed him.

Once they reached a less crowded area, Su Zai Zai suddenly shook off his hand, heading to the roadside to hail a cab.

Zhang Lu Rang grabbed her again, his voice tinged with pleading, "Zai Zai..."

Su Zai Zai's tears continued to fall, but her actions slowly stopped.

She remained quiet, as if waiting for his explanation.

Zhang Lu Rang wiped her tears, helplessly saying, "Don't cry, how

about we do it after graduation? We won't wait two years... I..."

He just needed to try a bit harder.

It didn't matter if he wasn't doing well, but he had to make sure she was doing well.

But Zhang Lu Rang's words didn't make Su Zai Zai happy at all.

Su Zai Zai sniffled, pulling his hand away with her other hand.

Word by word, filled with deep emotion.

"Zhang Lu Rang."

"Everything I forced you to do."

Zhang Lu Rang's lips moved, but the words of explanation didn't come out.

Su Zai Zai covered her eyes with one hand, speaking again.

"You don't want to take the initiative, so I did. I don't mind."

"I know you can't do these things, so I did them all. I really don't mind."

"But after a while, I don't know if what I'm doing is right."

Tears streamed down her face through her fingers.

Her voice was calm, as if nothing had happened, yet it was humble to the core.

“I sometimes wonder…”

She choked, “Are you really unwilling?”

Chapter 62

It turns out that a person’s life can indeed be thrown into disarray just by the absence of one individual.

Only the absence of that one person,

Can make life so bewildering.

— Zhang Lurang

Hearing her words, Zhang Lurang’s pupils contracted, and his expression became bewildered.

It was the first time he had seen Su Zai so helpless.

He didn’t know what to do.

Zhang Lurang carefully held her wrist, pulling her hand away from her face.

Revealing her reddened eyes, filled with fear and collapse.

His heart ached.

“How could I be unwilling,” Zhang Lurang’s Adam’s apple moved up and down, his voice low and obscure, “It’s my fault, I’ll…”

Su Zai interrupted him, taking her bag from his hand.

She subconsciously lowered her head, wiping her eyes, cutting him off.

“Go back.”

Zhang Lurang still held her hand, stubbornly finishing his sentence: “I’ll change in the future.”

Suppressing her emotions, Su Zai’s voice was thick with nasal sound, “I didn’t want you to change, it’s my own mindset that’s off. Go back, you have work tomorrow.”

The next moment, she pried his hand away, softly saying, “I want to go back alone today.”

Zhang Lurang’s palm emptied, instinctively grasping at the air.

Su Zai glanced toward the road, reaching out to hail a taxi.

She took two steps toward it, quickly turning her head to look at him.

Su Zai’s expression had returned to calm, only her eyes still red.

She seemed a bit disappointed, her lips moved.

Her words were cold, making him stop in his tracks.

“Zhang Lurang, I don’t like things that are forced.”

******

After speaking, Su Zai got into the car.

Zhang Lurang silently noted the taxi's license plate number.

He watched the car start and move forward, the red glow of the taillights fading into the distance.

Zhang Lurang came to his senses and walked back to the parking lot to get his car.

He sat in the driver's seat, dazed, his fear growing more intense.

Then, Zhang Lurang started the car and drove toward Z University.

The car couldn't enter the campus, so Zhang Lurang found a place to park nearby.

He got out and ran toward the girls' dormitory, calling Su Zai as he ran.

Su Zai quickly answered, but didn't speak.

Zhang Lurang, panting, his eyes stinging from either the wind or something else.

His steps gradually slowed, softly asking, "Are you back at the dorm?"

Su Zai responded with a light "hmm," saying calmly, "Almost."

Then there was a brief silence.

Zhang Lurang heard the sounds of girls laughing and footsteps on stairs from her side.

The call was filled only with their shallow breathing.

Zhang Lurang suddenly spoke, “I’m at Z University.”

The other end remained quiet, unlike her usual lively and bright self.

The atmosphere grew heavy.

Zhang Lurang started walking again, his voice fragile, as if it would shatter any moment.

“Su Zai, anything but breaking up, you can think of anything.”

You can scold me, hit me, be bad to me.

Anything.

Su Zai’s dry eyes welled up with a thin mist.

She quietly walked into her dorm, turning on the light.

Her roommates were out for internships, leaving the small room empty.

Su Zai walked to the balcony, leaning on the railing and looking down.

She immediately saw Zhang Lurang standing below, who seemed to sense her, looking up.

Su Zai parted her lips, speaking.

Her gaze fixed on Zhang Lurang downstairs, too far to see his expression clearly.

“I didn’t think about breaking up.”

She reached out, pretending to touch his face.

Then she seriously said, “I can’t live without you, don’t you know that?”

Zhang Lurang’s heart relaxed, but before he could speak.

Su Zai suddenly gave a bitter smile, calmly asking, “But what about you?”

After speaking, she paused for a moment, then hurriedly said something before hanging up.

“Go back, you’ve been staying up late a lot lately, rest well.”

******

In the following days.

It happened to be the busiest time at the company, Zhang Lurang was forced to work overtime until ten or eleven at night.

It was too late, he was afraid of waking Su Zai, so he could only contact her via text.

Su Zai usually replied the next afternoon.

In his spare time, when he called, he could only hear her quiet

breathing.

It was like entering a frozen period.

The WeChat chat window once filled with Su Zai's words now had only a few lines from Zhang Lurang.

Her emotions seemed to have accumulated for a long time, unable to disperse.

Zhang Lurang walked into the office break room, making a call while pouring coffee powder.

He didn't know what had happened to Su Zai today, but she spoke more than usual.

"Many of my friends, after meeting you, think I'm very lucky."

"Actually, not just them, even I think so."

"You're so good, because I never talk to other girls, you've given me so much security."

She paused her breathing, quickly asking, "Am I asking for too much?"

She used to just hope he wouldn't dislike her.

And now?

It seemed nothing could satisfy her.

It felt like the more she got, the more fearful she became.

“Why wouldn’t you,” Zhang Lurang stopped his actions, his voice low and hoarse, “Who said you can’t ask for more?”

Su Zai sniffled, pondering, “It seems no one did.”

Zhang Lurang’s expression turned dazed, slowly pressing the water dispenser’s switch.

Watching the hot water fall into the cup, rising with a cloud of steam.

“You think you’re lucky, but why don’t you think.”

“After luck found you, the next second, it found me too.”

****

Silence fell on the other end.

Zhang Lurang pressed his lips together, his mouth gradually becoming stiff and straight as he brought up what he had been saying for the past few days.

“I’ll come to see you after work today.”

“Aren’t you working overtime?” she asked softly.

Zhang Lurang irritably ruffled his hair. “Not anymore.”

Su Zai thought for a moment and said seriously, “Let’s talk when you have time. I might have to work late tonight too.”

He tugged at the corner of his mouth and directly exposed her.

“You don’t want to see me.”

“…”

Zhang Lurang repeated, his tone somewhat aggrieved, “Do you not want to see me?”

“I recently…”

Before Su Zai could finish her sentence, a man’s voice came through the phone: “Hey! Su Zai, we’re going out for lunch, want me to bring you back something?”

The voice was exceptionally familiar.

Zhang Lurang listened to her talking to the person on the other side.

He matched the voice in his mind, finally identifying it.

Xie Linan.

Zhang Lurang’s grip on the cup handle tightened.

Soon, Su Zai’s somewhat distant voice returned to his ear.

“I’m going to have lunch now, I’ll call you later.”

Zhang Lurang’s face revealed no emotion, he merely responded with a light “Hmm.”

****

In the afternoon, Zhang Lurang directly declined his supervisor's request for overtime.

He left the office as soon as the workday ended and drove to Su Zai's company.

He took out his phone and checked the time.

It was already six-thirty; he didn't know if she had left yet.

Just as Zhang Lurang was about to call her, he looked up and saw her walking out of the main entrance.

He was about to get out and call her when he saw Xie Linan following behind her.

Zhang Lurang's gaze faltered, and he got out of the car immediately.

The two of them walked and chatted, not noticing Zhang Lurang's approach.

Zhang Lurang walked over and softly called out, "Zai Zai."

Su Zai instinctively looked towards the voice and showed little reaction upon seeing him.

She turned and said goodbye to Xie Linan, walking directly towards Zhang Lurang.

Before she could take a few steps, Zhang Lurang reached her and pulled her towards the car. His grip was particularly tight, as if

containing some emotion.

Su Zai licked her lips and softly asked, “Why are you here so early?”

Zhang Lurang opened the passenger door, not saying a word. Su Zai hesitated, glanced at him, and quickly got in. A loud “bang” echoed as the door closed beside her.

Su Zai lowered her eyes, fastening her seatbelt.

The door on the driver’s side opened, letting in a gust of wind.

Su Zai didn’t look at him, turning her head to look out the window. “I’ve already eaten at the office. If you’ve eaten, you can take me back to the dorm…”

Before she could finish, a loud door-closing sound interrupted her.

Her chin was suddenly grabbed and turned in a different direction.

A heavy kiss followed, accompanied by a bite.

Su Zai’s eyes widened, instinctively opening her mouth, making it easier for him to plunder.

She had never been treated so roughly by him and couldn’t help but push him away.

Zhang Lurang restrained her with one hand, deepening the kiss.

Soon, he stopped.

His dark eyes stared at her, his fingers, cool to the touch, brushing her eye corner.

“Zai Zai,” he murmured.

Su Zai looked a bit bewildered, unsure how to respond to him like this.

The next second, Zhang Lurang suddenly smiled and softly said, “Let’s get married after graduation.”

Su Zai turned her head, wanting to say something.

Zhang Lurang gripped her hand, his tone somewhat forceful.

“I’ll go talk to your parents tomorrow.”

Chapter 63 – Final Chapter

It’s an honor.

——Zhang Lu Let “Su Zai Zai’s Diary of a Little Fairy”

Upon hearing this, Su Zai Zai lifted her eyes and quietly looked at him.

Her eyes gradually became dim, losing their sparkle.

Quickly, she averted her gaze and softly said, “If you came just to tell me this…”

Zhang Lu Let abruptly interrupted her: “Zai Zai.”

Su Zai Zai paused, responding in a low voice.

Zhang Lu Let's Adam's apple bobbed, seemingly nervous: "In the past two years, I've taken several freelance jobs here and there. I should have enough money to hold our wedding after graduation."

"..."

"I promise you, within two years after graduation, I'll have enough for a down payment on a house."

Su Zai Zai looked at the passersby outside the window, her eyes suddenly reddening.

She turned her head to look at Zhang Lu Let.

Her expression overlapped with the her from five years ago.

Su Zai Zai suddenly started crying, clutching his hand, and sobbed: "How can you be like this..."

Back then, her face was without makeup, still youthful, and even speaking a little seemed like she was acting spoiled, stubbornly holding onto his hand, not letting him return to B City.

This time, she wore delicate makeup and work clothes, but still clung to his hand like a child, accusing him of his actions.

They had known each other for six years and had been together for five.

In each other's eyes, they still seemed like their original selves.

Zhang Lu Let raised his other hand, wiping her tears, his voice hoarse: “Don’t cry.”

Su Zai Zai looked at him through misty eyes, sniffling as she vented her emotions.

“I said I wanted to go back alone, and you really let me go back alone. Clearly, I had to walk another dozen steps to reach that taxi, and you didn’t stop me!”

“I said don’t come looking for me, and you really didn’t come.”

“I was only mad this one time, can’t you coax me a little more…”

Zhang Lu Let was rendered speechless by her words. After a long silence, he said, “I was afraid you’d be even more upset.”

Su Zai Zai slapped his hand away, raising her voice: “Then you’ve really pissed me off this time.”

Hearing this, Zhang Lu Let leaned in, staring into her eyes.

His gaze was focused, with a glimmer in it.

Su Zai Zai allowed him to stare, not taking the initiative to speak.

She sniffed, then rummaged through her bag, taking out a tissue.

Zhang Lu Let suddenly gave her a light peck on the lips, the corners of his mouth curling up.

Su Zai Zai, holding the unopened tissue package, was caught off guard and frowned: “What are you doing, I…” still mad.

He thought for a moment and seriously said: “Cute.”

Su Zai Zai was stunned.

Then, Zhang Lu Let continued, seemingly shamelessly.

“I want to kiss.”

Su Zai Zai glanced at him, pursing her lips without speaking.

The next second, she couldn’t hold back: “What are you doing.”

Zhang Lu Let rubbed his nose against hers, speaking softly: “Kissing you.”

The grievance and anger in Su Zai Zai’s heart slowly dissipated. She rubbed her eyes and softly said, “Oh.”

Seeing her remain silent, Zhang Lu Let didn’t mind and continued: “Shall I take you to buy jelly?”

“I haven’t finished the ones you bought last time.” Su Zai Zai answered honestly.

Zhang Lu Let nodded: “Alright, I’ll buy more.”

As he spoke, he started the car, driving towards a nearby import snack store.

Su Zai Zai watched his actions and suddenly spoke: “It’s okay if you want to wait two years, but I’ll only wait two years.”

After saying this, she felt it wasn’t threatening enough and added

gloomily, “If it takes more than two years, I’ll find someone else.”

Perhaps because he was driving, Zhang Lu Let didn’t respond to her words.

Soon, they arrived at the snack store. Zhang Lu Let parked, quickly got out to buy a bag of jelly, and placed it in the back seat.

Then, he continued driving.

Su Zai Zai, having no sense of direction, didn’t know where he was heading.

“Where are you driving to?”

As they stopped at a red light, Zhang Lu Let turned to look at her: “I rented an apartment near Z University.”

Su Zai Zai looked puzzled: “Why did you rent it?”

“I want to see you every day.” he said softly.

After speaking, Zhang Lu Let turned back and started the car again.

Su Zai Zai looked at his profile, feeling a bit dazed: “When did you rent it?”

“During my internship.” He replied calmly, no longer holding back like usual, “But I didn’t want us to live together before marriage, so it was left unused.”

“Then why now...”

“Su Zai Zai, I’ve been too rational with you.” Zhang Lu Let drove into a residential area, finding a parking space, “I always thought you were still young, not knowing how to consider things for yourself.”

But thinking too much had instead become the source of her insecurity.

“But maybe I was overthinking.” Zhang Lu Let unbuckled his seatbelt and turned to look at her.

Su Zai Zai opened her mouth, suddenly feeling a bit embarrassed: “It’s not that…”

Zhang Lu Let leaned in, bit her earlobe, and licked it.

His voice was a bit muffled: “Being rational with you is unnecessary.”

Su Zai Zai was confused by his words but couldn’t help smiling.

Then, they got out of the car.

Zhang Lu Let held her hand, leading her towards one of the buildings.

Su Zai Zai looked at the back of his head and suddenly called out: “Lu Let.”

Zhang Lu Let turned to look at her, smiling: “What’s wrong?”

She let him hold her hand, finally letting out the words she had

been holding back for days: “You were really too much. That day, I even deliberately turned my head, and you didn’t come running to hug me.”

Zhang Lu Let listened to her, seriously saying: “Okay, next time, I won’t let you go.”

“The driver even told me that breaking up was a small matter, not worth crying so much about.” Su Zai Zai said angrily.

Zhang Lu Let frowned, also displeased: “Don’t listen to him, this is a big deal.”

Su Zai Zai obediently nodded, her voice nasal: “I also think it’s very serious.”

They soon reached the apartment Zhang Lu Let had rented.

He stopped, handing the key to Su Zai Zai.

“You go in first.”

Su Zai Zai looked at him doubtfully but didn’t refuse. She took the key and unlocked the door.

Inside, the light was dim, making it hard to see the decor.

Su Zai Zai instinctively touched the nearby wall, searching for the light switch: “Lu Let, where’s the switch…”

At the same time, she found the switch, and the white light came on. Su Zai Zai’s voice suddenly stopped. Before her was a white

wall covered with hundreds of her photos.

Her throat choked up as she slowly walked forward, reading the words beneath each photo.

——October 1, 2013, Zai Zai said: "My Lu Let looks the best."

——August 13, 2015, Zai Zai said: "Your wife is in your car! Drive carefully!"

——January 27, 2017, Zai Zai came to my house. I kissed her.

The voice of Zhang Lu rang out from behind.

His voice was low, mellow, and filled with gentleness and anticipation.

"Su Zai Zai."

She turned her head. She watched as Zhang Lu slowly knelt on one knee, holding a ring box in his hand.

"Your parents say you're their precious daughter, and I know you've never really been wronged since you were a child and have always lived well." Zhang Lu looked at her solemnly, "I want to give you a good life, but you said you were willing to endure hardships with me..."

At this point, Zhang Lu paused, his tone becoming somewhat hoarse.

"The only thing I can give back to you is that I will never let you

suffer."

Su Zai Zai's gaze shifted from the ring to his face, her eyes welling up with tears again.

"I can wait, you don't have to..."

"Su Zai Zai, it's me who can't wait."

"I'm afraid you'll run away."

"So, will you marry me?"

His expression was tense yet full of hope, as if he couldn't rest easy without her affirmative answer.

Su Zai Zai's lips couldn't help but curl up. She extended her hand to him and nodded solemnly, "Yes."

She had always been carefree, with no big ambitions, but she kept striving upward because of him.

His character was reclusive and taciturn, not knowing how to express his emotions and love, but he kept trying to speak out because of her.

They were both becoming better people for each other.

******

A year later, Su Zai Zai and Zhang Lu completed their university studies and ended their six-year romance by registering their marriage at the civil affairs bureau.

That night, Su Zai Zai took out a notebook from the bedside table.

The cover had a few cracks from long use.

She flipped through it briefly and then tossed it to Zhang Lu, who was sitting at the desk.

“A wedding gift, the love letters I promised you.”

After quickly dropping this line, Su Zai Zai grabbed her change of clothes and ran into the bathroom.

Zhang Lu paused, then put his hands down from the keyboard and took the notebook.

The cover had a few words written on it.

“Su Zai Zai’s Fairy Diary.”

The handwriting was delicate, quite different from now.

He couldn’t help but smile as he carefully opened it and read seriously.

October 9, 2012.

I saw a boy outside the convenience store, so handsome.

He doesn’t have Tomoe’s ears, but still, my heart skipped a beat.

How could a great beauty like me be disturbed by just a handsome boy?

How can I find him...

Suddenly changed my ideal type 🙂

Hey, feel honored, big beauty.

Even though you don't have cat ears, I still fancy you.

.....

November 3, 2012.

I fell today, and the big beauty took me to the hospital.

On the way back, he asked me, "Are you still hungry?"

Then... he said, "Give me your WeChat."

AAAAAAA!

An unforgettable day.

I wonder if he remembers.

Anyway, I won't forget.

.....

June 17, 2019.

Today, I married him.

When Zhang Lu turned to the last page, Su Zai Zai happened to come out of the bathroom.

He reached out his hand to her, speaking softly, “Come here.”

Su Zai Zai obediently walked over and nestled into his arms.

She watched as Zhang Lu picked up a pen and seriously added a line after her words.

—Today, she married me.

Then, Zhang Lu turned to the first page.

Filled with joy, he couldn’t help but laugh.

His chest vibrated, making her look back at him.

When she turned her gaze back.

She saw his powerful handwriting.

Stroke by stroke, he seriously wrote three words.

—Feel honored.

******

Two years later.

Su Zai Zai was in her office, about to pack up and go home, when she received a call from Zhang Lu.

She smiled and immediately picked up the call, “Lu Lu!”

Zhang Lu’s voice also carried a smile, “Are you off work?”

"Yes, I'm about to leave."

"Wait ten more minutes before you come down, I'm driving over to pick you up now."

Su Zai Zai responded, "Oh," and suddenly remembered, "Are we going to see the house today?"

"Yes, it's raining outside, remember to bring an umbrella."

Su Zai Zai looked around and frowned, "I didn't bring an umbrella."

Zhang Lu didn't mind, saying softly, "I'll come over to get you."

He was driving, so Su Zai Zai didn't want to distract him and quickly ended the call.

She looked out the window, lost in thought for a moment, then began to pack her things and head downstairs.

Su Zai Zai walked out of the company's door and waited at the entrance.

After a while, she saw Zhang Lu's car park nearby. He got out with a black umbrella.

Su Zai Zai watched him walk towards her through the rain, feeling like she was back at Z High School nine years ago.

Zhang Lu's features were sharp, his posture upright, exuding a mature aura.

He looked like the Zhang Lu from back then, yet different.

He walked slowly but with large strides to her, his eyes full of warmth.

Su Zai Zai stood on the steps, looking at him below.

Their eyes met, as if returning to that moment outside the convenience store.

That fleeting glance.

Just that one look seemed to set their lives in stone.

So certain.

The End