

Trapped In Paradise

Volume 2 Chapter 217 / Chapter 497: Father and Daughter

Night gradually deepened. Ning Chu lay lazily sprawled across the sofa, her stocking-clad legs propped high on the armrest, her skirt in disarray, faintly revealing the edge of her underwear.

She lightly swung her legs while playing on her phone, occasionally using a toothpick to spear pieces of apple her mother had cut for her. She had no trace of ladylike manners, making Ning Juan shake her head.

Luckily, the house was full of women—no matter how unrestrained her daughter behaved, no one else would see.

“I really don’t know how Wen Yang ended up liking you. You don’t even sit or stand properly.”

Ning Chu replied confidently, “Because I’m pretty~ Didn’t I get that from your genes?”

“Besides, this is the only place where I can really relax~”

The flattery immediately softened Ning Juan’s expression, and the slightly coquettish tone made her lose any desire to lecture. Sitting on the single sofa, she fondly rubbed her daughter’s silky hair.

“Your hair’s grown quickly. Want me to take you to get it styled tomorrow?”

“No need, right? I think it looks pretty good like this.”

By now, Ning Chu's hair had reached her shoulders. Her black, glossy strands were smooth like silk, and her bangs naturally fell over her forehead, giving her a slightly messy look.

She brushed aside the strands poking her eyes and muttered, "Maybe just trim the bangs. They keep getting in my eyes."

"What kind of hairstyle do you want?"

At the question, the image of Lily's long, straight black hair immediately appeared in her mind.

"Just long, straight black hair!"

It wasn't that she was deliberately copying Lily—back when she was still a man, she had always had a special fondness for that style.

Now, she was getting closer and closer to her ideal type.

After lounging on the sofa for a while, Ning Chu got a bit restless and flipped herself upright. "I'm going downstairs to find Black Bean."

"Bring her back by nine. She has school tomorrow."

"Got it~"

"Don't take her out for late-night snacks. Look at how chubby she's getting, she's even got a little belly now."

"Alright, alright~ She's not that fat..."

Ning Chu brushed off her mother's reminders, casually tidied her clothes, and walked out in her slippers.

Her home was in an old residential complex. There were only a few buildings in total, and the property management had been gone for over a decade. Security relied entirely on retired elderly residents working part-time.

After going downstairs, Ning Chu looked around for Black Bean and Wen Yang, heading toward the small convenience shop.

That was the most likely place to find Black Bean.

However, when she spotted the shop, she saw someone unexpected.

The white-haired man was sitting at the entrance of the shop, his gaze fixed on the direction of Ning Chu's balcony. Perhaps sensing something, he suddenly turned his head—and their eyes met.

“Going out?” her father immediately stood up and approached her, his face full of ingratiating smiles. “Where do you want to go?”

His overly enthusiastic attitude made Ning Chu instinctively step back, her brows knitting slightly.

To be honest, before coming back, she had never expected her father to treat her like this.

After all, his son had become his daughter...

Perhaps he had never really felt much connection to that “son” in the first place? Maybe that's why he accepted it so quickly?

“I'm looking for Ning Xin.”

After that brief moment of unease and resistance, Ning Chu quickly composed herself, putting on a cold expression as she walked past her father and headed straight toward the entrance of the complex.

Wasn't he supposed to be out eating seafood at a restaurant? Had he already come back? Then why was he here?

Noticing the faint confusion in her eyes, her father, following behind, explained, "I rented a place in this complex."

"Oh."

"Ning Xin should be near the entrance. I saw her just now."

"..."

"She's your mom's and—"

Ning Chu cut him off concisely. "Picked up."

Whether he believed it or not, that was the truth—though when Ning Xin was first picked up, she had just been a little black kitten.

She tried to fend off his enthusiasm with cold indifference, but it clearly had little effect. Her father continued trailing behind her like a shadow, eager and attentive.

"It's still early. How about I take you to buy some clothes?"

"Hungry? Want to grab some late-night snacks?"

"Are you used to the phone? Oh right, I have the receipt. I bought it overseas—I'm not sure if it can be serviced here."

Where was all this concern before...

Ning Chu grumbled inwardly, quickening her pace in an attempt to shake him off.

When she reached the entrance of the complex, she didn't see Black Bean or Wen Yang anywhere. Meanwhile, her father still hovered behind her, trying to strike up a conversation.

"Ning Yuan can earn money to support the family now. I saw him a couple of days ago—he's even taller than me."

"When I left, he wasn't even as tall as my leg."

Something in her father's words suddenly struck a nerve in Ning Chu. A surge of irritation rose abruptly from deep inside her. She stopped in her tracks, took a deep breath, her chest rising and falling sharply.

Damn it! I can't hold it in anymore!

"Stop bothering me!"

She suddenly turned around, her voice sharp and loud, so out of control that it even made her throat ache.

Her father was clearly startled, freezing in place. Then he lowered his gaze, looking somewhat dejected.

Seeing that expression, Ning Chu instinctively felt a flicker of guilt. Her eyes darted away, her face flushing hot. After hesitating for a moment, she lowered her head and hurried off.

In her heart, she tried to calm herself, suppressing that trace of guilt.

What are you acting pitiful for?!

When my brother and I didn't have a father, when Mom had to work multiple jobs just to make ends meet—where were you?!

When Mom worked herself sick and passed away—where were you?!

Now that everything's finally getting better, *now* you decide to come back?

All the grievances from both her past and present life flooded her mind at once. Ning Chu's nose grew sour, her eyes reddening.

After only a few steps, Black Bean came running toward her.

"I heard Sis's voice!"

Spotting Ning Chu walking quickly, her eyes lit up as she rushed over and grabbed her arm. "Sis! I want barbecue! I haven't had any for a whole month!"

"You promised during New Year that for every page of my workbook I finish, you'd treat me to a late-night snack! You can't go back on your word! You still owe me... ten meals?"

Black Bean's lively cheerfulness helped steady Ning Chu's emotions. She took a breath and quickly put on a gentle big-sister smile. "Alright, but you can only order twenty yuan's worth. Mom says you're getting as fat as a pig."

"I'm not!"

Black Bean happily skipped toward the nearest barbecue stall, muttering excitedly, “Barbecue~ barbecue~”

Wen Yang walked up beside Ning Chu, immediately noticing something off about her. He glanced back and saw the man in the distance.

With a rough guess in mind, he asked, “What’s wrong? Did he make you angry?”

Ning Chu’s forced smile faded. Pressing her lips together, she leaned against Wen Yang’s shoulder. “He’s annoying.”

Her pretty face was filled with disappointment, tinged with grievance. The redness in her eyes made her look even more fragile, like something delicate that could break.

“Just ignore him.”

“Hug me...”

Wen Yang wrapped an arm around her waist, pulling her close affectionately. “Alright, alright. Your eyes are already red—wouldn’t it be embarrassing if you started crying in front of Black Bean?”

“Next time he bothers you, I’ll beat him up! No one gets to upset my Ning Chu!”

“Yeah, beat him up.”

“With his scrawny build, one punch and I’ll send him straight to the ICU!”

“Eh? That might be a bit much, don’t you think?”

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Link for character illustration:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IxOucqi87ss3bmqrO9zI2gYiM1Gy8Hz2>