

Trapped In Paradise

Volume 3 Chapter 12 / Chapter 517: Dormitory

"Yeah, yeah, I got it! You're annoying as hell!"

"Bye!"

After ending the call impatiently, Zhang Shaoqing kicked open the balcony door and walked back into the room, grumbling under his breath.

He glanced at Wang Jie, who was sitting at his desk playing games, then pulled out a chair and sat down, restlessly shaking his leg.

The only sound left in the dormitory was Wang Jie's gaming—rapid keyboard and mouse clicks mixed with noisy background music.

"Turn that crap down. It's irritating."

"..."

When the chaotic noise finally disappeared, the dorm suddenly became so quiet that only the footsteps of students passing through the hallway outside could be heard. Strangely enough, Zhang Shaoqing suddenly felt that maybe having a little noise in the room wasn't so bad after all.

He let out an irritated sigh and looked at the game icons on his desktop, but couldn't bring himself to launch any of them.

The pressure from his mother demanding that he break up with Qian Qian, the anxiety of soon graduating and entering society, and the gloomy atmosphere Wang Jie constantly radiated after his own breakup...

Even someone usually as carefree as Zhang Shaoqing felt as though it was hard to breathe.

Especially when it came to his overly controlling mother.

"Damn it... it'd be nice if Ning Chu were here..."

Zhang Shaoqing muttered as he slumped onto the desk.

Even though that girl was always meddling in other people's business and was unbelievably clumsy when trying to comfort someone, at least she was someone you could talk to. Unlike Wang Jie, who was basically a silent gourd.

Unfortunately, Ning Chu was now a succubus with a boyfriend, no longer the cute little boy who used to live in the dormitory.

Just as he was thinking that, there came a light knock at the door.

"I mean, why bother knocking? Couldn't you just kick the door open?"

"What if they're inside without any clothes on?"

"It's not like we haven't seen them before~"

Zhang Shaoqing raised his head and glanced toward the door. Hearing the conversation outside, he then looked down at himself—wearing nothing but a pair of underwear.

"Hold on! Holy crap! Why is a woman coming into the men's dorm?!"

"I'll come if I want to! Coming in now!"

"Give us two minutes!"

The previously dead and oppressive atmosphere in the dormitory instantly became lively.

Zhang Shaoqing hurriedly opened his wardrobe and threw on a random shirt. Wang Jie also scrambled to put on some pants and quickly closed the erotic game he had been playing.

Not even a minute later, the door cracked open.

Ning Chu's little head poked inside, suspicion written all over his face.

"Dormitory weekly inspection!"

"Inspection my ass!"

Fortunately, it was summer. Shirts and pants were easy to throw on, taking only a few seconds.

Both Wang Jie and Zhang Shaoqing were now fully dressed, though their clothes were somewhat disheveled.

The door swung open.

Wen Yang entered carrying a large case of beer, while Ning Chu followed behind, curiously looking around the dorm room she hadn't visited in quite some time.

"It's so cold~ Turn the air conditioner up."

Back in the dorm, Ning Chu seemed completely at home. She skillfully found the air-conditioner remote and, after a few beeps, raised the temperature from sixteen degrees to twenty-six.

"Holy crap! Why are you so picky? It's hot as hell! Don't touch the AC!"

"My stomach hurts. You're lucky I didn't turn it off completely."

Zhang Shaoqing's mouth was as foul as ever, but his gaze drifted toward the beer Wen Yang had brought.

"Come to mooch off me again, huh? Barbecue or something?"

"Grilled fish!"

"The hell's that got to do with you? Wang Jie, what do you want to eat?"

"I'm not eating," Wang Jie answered gloomily, only for Wen Yang to hook an arm around his neck and drag him away from his chair.

Meanwhile, Ning Chu had already set up a folding table and a few small stools in the middle of the dorm room.

"Hurry up, hurry up! We bought some marinated snacks. Eat a little and fill your stomach first."

"No, I've already eaten."

"Then at least have a few drinks with us."

Wen Yang pressed a hand onto Wang Jie's shoulder and forced him into a seat at the small table.

Zhang Shaoqing had already seated himself without the slightest hesitation. Grinning mischievously, he opened one of the food containers and started eating.

"Not bad. At least you remembered to bring some tribute for your elders."

"Well, when you're coming to see your sons, you've gotta bring something good to eat, right?"

Ning Chu stood off to the side, leaning against the ladder of the bunk bed with her arms crossed, watching them.

"You're not eating?"

"Nope. I told you, my stomach hurts."

She helplessly rubbed her aching lower abdomen. Ever since her period started, she hadn't had much of an appetite, and there was no way she was going to drink beer or soda.

As Wen Yang opened bottles of beer for his roommates, he explained, "She's not feeling well today. I actually told her not to come, but she insisted on joining the fun."

"Exactly. What's a woman doing in a men's dorm anyway?"

"I'm afraid you'll all get drunk and nobody will be around to collect your corpses."

"Heh~ If you're feeling bad, go back and sleep. Why are you hanging around here?"

"What's it to you?!"

Seeing Ning Chu and Zhang Shaoqing start bickering again, Wen Yang helplessly shook his head and turned to the quiet guy who hadn't said a word.

He picked up a beer bottle and lightly clinked it against Wang Jie's.

"Here. Have a drink."

Wang Jie looked exhausted and dispirited. He took a sip of beer without much enthusiasm.

His alcohol tolerance wasn't great. After just one bottle, a faint flush had appeared on his face, and his eyes had become slightly unfocused.

Only then did Wen Yang slowly ask,

"So what happened? Why'd you two end up fighting?"

Having reached a pleasant buzz, the normally reserved Wang Jie finally opened up.

"It wasn't a fight. It's just... her family insists on a bride price. They won't budge unless it's enough..."

"A bride price? How much?" Zhang Shaoqing immediately leaned over.

"Whoa, are you guys already talking about marriage?"

"Not really. We've been together for so many years that this kind of topic was bound to come up eventually."

"So what does your girlfriend say?"

Wang Jie smiled bitterly.

"She's already done everything she can. It's her parents who won't back down..."

The shameless troublemaker turned toward Ning Chu with a mischievous grin, clearly trying to stir things up.

"Hey, what about your family's bride price? Can Wen Yang even afford it?"

Ning Chu had never really thought about the issue before. After a moment's consideration, she nodded.

"I think over where I'm from, it's usually several hundred thousand yuan too..."

Wen Yang had originally wanted to comfort Wang Jie, but somehow the conversation had trapped him instead.

The moment he heard that figure, his expression visibly stiffened.

A house, a car, and then hundreds of thousands in bride price...

Just thinking about it was enough to give him a headache.

Ironically, Wang Jie—who had been miserable moments ago—now patted Wen Yang on the shoulder.

"It's fine. Just earn money slowly."

No matter how you listened to it, there was a hint of schadenfreude in his voice.

Even though he was suffering himself, seeing someone in an even worse situation naturally made him feel a little better.

"You've at least got your parents backing you up. Wen Yang's the one who's really screwed~"

Zhang Shaoqing paused, then asked curiously,

"Ning Chu, you're from the provincial capital, right? If I remember correctly, doesn't that area have a tradition where whatever amount is given as a bride price gets matched and returned as dowry?"

Ning Chu smiled and nodded.

"Yep. But my family's pretty poor too—we couldn't afford to match it. Just give a token amount and call it good."

"Auntie wouldn't have any objections?"

"What objections would my mom have? When she got married back then, she probably had to bring money with her instead."

Remembering his future mother-in-law's past marriage, Wen Yang finally let out a sigh of relief.

Now it was Wang Jie's turn to wear the miserable expression again.

He gloomily took another drink, all traces of his earlier schadenfreude gone.

Why couldn't something like that happen to him...?

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Link for character illustration:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1IxOucqi87ss3bmqfO9zl2gYiM1Gy8Hz2>