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Ning Siqi had become smarter.

No, she had matured—significantly.

With no parents to rely on and estranged siblings, she was no longer the second young lady of the Ning family. Even if she still had a trace of immaturity, life would eventually force her to grow up.

The others quickly composed themselves and followed Ning Siqi into the bar.

Meanwhile, at Dongguan Airport—

Zhan Yuan was pulling a large suitcase in each hand, while Ouyang Ya walked empty-handed. He wanted to free up one hand to hold hers, but she didn't need him to.

She said, "It's already tough enough for you to drag two big suitcases. Don't hold me—I'm not a child who needs hand-holding to walk."

Zhan Yuan gave a faint smile. "There are a lot of people here."

In the past, she was always followed by bodyguards when going out. In crowded places, they would form a protective barrier and clear a path for her.

But now, there was no one behind her—no protection, no path-clearing presence.

Ouyang Ya replied, "So what if there are a lot of people? I won't bump into anyone, and they won't bump into me."

"To be honest, I haven't walked in a crowd like this in a long time."

Looking around at the sea of people, she added as she walked, "Now it actually feels like I'm part of the real world."

Normally, no one could approach her without permission—her bodyguards would stop anyone who tried.

She had always felt like she lived in a completely different world from everyone else.

Zhan Yuan smiled. "Sometimes, living low-key and simply is a kind of happiness."

"As long as we have loved ones beside us and everyone is healthy, that's enough to be happy."

Ouyang Ya smiled but didn't reply.

She knew they couldn't truly live like ordinary people.

The burdens they carried were far too heavy.
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"Sixth Young Master."

Just as they exited, someone called out to Zhan Yuan.

He turned toward the voice and saw Uncle Yang and a bodyguard. He said to Ouyang Ya, "That's the butler from our old house. He's here to pick us up."

He walked over with Ouyang Ya.

Uncle Yang and the bodyguard stepped forward with a smile and greeted them, "Sixth Young Master, we've been waiting here for a while."

He glanced at Ouyang Ya, and Zhan Yuan introduced her at the right moment, "Uncle Yang, this is Miss Ouyang—my girlfriend."

In the future, she would be the Sixth Young Madam of the Zhan family.

Uncle Yang already knew Ouyang Ya's identity and immediately greeted her respectfully.

"It's getting dark. Sixth Young Master, Miss Ouyang, let's head home. The Old Madam and the others are waiting for you to join them for dinner."

Uncle Yang and the bodyguard each took one of Zhan Yuan's suitcases.

As soon as Uncle Yang grabbed his, he felt its weight and guessed it was filled with gifts Miss Ouyang had prepared for the family.

The future Sixth Young Madam appeared as composed as the Third Young Madam, yet she was very polite. When the staff greeted her, she responded with a nod and a smile, never looking down on them just because they were servants.

After getting into the car, Zhan Yuan asked, "Has my brother returned yet?"

Uncle Yang replied, "The Eldest Young Master hasn't come back yet, but he called home twice. He's also very concerned about your and Miss Ouyang's return."

"The Eldest Young Madam will be discharged from the hospital tomorrow. She said she wants to go back to the villa to recover after giving birth."

When Haitong had just given birth, Uncle Yang had delivered some supplies and taken a peek at the little one.

The arrival of a new baby in the household was a joyous occasion. Everyone working at Youyou Villa was genuinely happy.

The Eldest Young Master and his wife had been married a year before they conceived. Everyone had been looking forward to this child. Although the Old Madam had hoped for a little girl, she was still overjoyed—after all, this was her first great-grandchild.

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With the birth of the baby, the old lady officially became a great-grandmother.

Zhan Yuan said with some surprise, “Sister-in-law is going back to the old house to recuperate after giving birth? That’s great—the old house is quiet and the air is fresh. It’s a good place to rest.”

When he wasn’t working, he always found it peaceful and relaxing to stay at the old house.

Normally, they were all so busy with work that the old house felt too far away. Every time they went back, they had to leave in a hurry, unable to fully enjoy the calm, serene comfort of the place.

Once the elders in the family retired, they preferred to move back to the villa to live. Even if they didn’t leave the house for a month, they wouldn’t feel bored. The villa was spacious, the scenery was beautiful, and many of their workers lived at the foot of the mountain.

Like his grandmother, who loved to chat with the other elders every day and talk about family matters. Life there was leisurely and comfortable.

Uncle Yang smiled and nodded in agreement.

The ladies were overjoyed when the eldest young lady said she would return to the villa to recover after childbirth.

At that moment, Ouyang Ya’s phone rang.

It was a call from her mother.

She answered, “Mom—”

Unexpectedly, it was her younger brother, Ouyang Jun, on the other end.

“Jun just got out of school.”

Ouyang Ya asked gently, “Did you finish your homework?”

“I got out a while ago and already finished. Sis, why didn’t you take me with you when you went to play at Brother Zhan Yuan’s house? I didn’t even realize you two left me behind until I got home. So mean!”

“I didn’t get to go either,” Ouyang Jian chimed in from the background.

Ouyang Ya chuckled softly. “You two have school, so I couldn’t take you this time. But next time, when you’re on a break, I’ll bring you along to visit.”

Ouyang Jun pouted and said, “But big sis, you have to go to work too. You can ask for leave from work, so why can’t I ask for leave from school? You didn’t even ask for leave for me!”

Ouyang Jun pouted and said, “Doesn’t big sister have to go to work too? She can ask for leave when she’s working, and I can ask for leave when I’m at school—but she never asks for leave for me.”

“Ajun!”

Ouyang Ya’s smile faded, replaced by a serious expression.

“As long as you’re not sick, you must attend school as usual. Don’t think about taking leave just to play. Once you start getting used to it, it’ll become a habit.”

She wouldn’t allow her younger brother to skip school for fun.

It wasn’t a holiday.

Ouyang Jun went quiet for a moment before saying, “Okay, big sister, I understand. I won’t ask for leave just to play. But during the summer vacation, you have to take me to Brother Zhan Yuan’s house, alright?”

“Didn’t you say his house is big, beautiful, and fun?”

Ouyang Ya replied, “I just left the airport and got in the car. I’m still on the way to your Brother Zhan Yuan’s house. I haven’t seen his family yet, so I can’t promise anything.”

“Big sister will be back in a few days. While I’m gone, you and Ajian must study hard and not slack off. Do your homework properly and don’t fall behind.”

“When I come back, I’ll check your homework.”

“Okay, big sister. Second brother and I will be good. Will Brother Zhan Yuan come back with you?”

The two little ones were most afraid that Zhan Yuan would stay behind and not return with their eldest sister.

They liked Brother Zhan Yuan a lot.

They had overheard the adults say that their big sister and Brother Zhan Yuan were dating, which meant there was a 99% chance he’d become their brother-in-law.

That was amazing. Once he officially became their brother-in-law, they wouldn’t have to worry about their big sister firing him.

They could eat the delicious food he cooked anytime.

They could also ask him to play with them and take them out.

The two kids had already noticed that their big sister gave Zhan Yuan special treatment. As long as he was around, they could do whatever they wanted—and their big sister wouldn’t scold them.

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Ouyang Ya smiled and said, “What’s wrong? Are you worried that Brother Zhan Yuan won’t come back and you won’t get to eat delicious food?”

“There are several chefs at home. Can’t you just eat the food they make?”

Ouyang Jun replied, “We’re not just eating for the food. We can eat what the other chefs make, but Brother Zhan Yuan’s cooking is tastier—and he plays with us, too.”

“Brother Zhan Yuan takes us out, and no matter what we do, Big Sister never says anything when he’s around. That’s why we love playing with him.”

Ouyang Ya: “.....”

She had to admit, she gave Zhan Yuan a lot of leeway—and now these two little guys had clung to him like he was their secret weapon. In their eyes, as long as Zhan Yuan was around, even the sky falling wouldn’t be a problem.

“Don’t worry. Your Brother Zhan Yuan is going home with your big sister. He didn’t quit—he just took a leave of absence.”

Ouyang Jun sighed in relief and asked with concern, “Big sister, why did Brother Zhan Yuan take leave? Are you going back with him because you’re going to marry him?”

“Big sister, we’ll miss you so much. Please don’t move into Brother Zhan Yuan’s house, okay?”

He’d heard that once a woman gets married, she’s supposed to live with her husband.

Even though they liked Zhan Yuan, that was only because their big sister still lived with them. If she moved in with Zhan Yuan, everything would change—and he didn’t like that.

Once she was gone, it wouldn’t matter how much they liked Brother Zhan Yuan.

Because then, he would’ve taken their big sister away.

“Don’t you like Brother Zhan Yuan a lot?”

Ouyang Ya teased him on purpose. “So why don’t you want your big sister to live at his house?”

Ouyang Jun said seriously, “We do like Brother Zhan Yuan, but we like Big Sister even more. As long as Brother Zhan Yuan doesn’t steal Big Sister from us, we’ll always like him.”

“But if he takes her away, then we won’t like him anymore.”

Zhan Yuan, who had been quietly listening to the siblings’ conversation, felt the need to step in and defend himself.

He said, “Ajun, I won’t compete with you for your big sister. She’ll always be yours.”

“Even if she marries me, she’ll still live with you—nothing will change. I’ll still be your cook and make you three meals a day.”

“Even if your big sister marries me, she’ll still live with you, and everything will stay the same. I’ll still be your cook and make you three meals a day.”

“The only difference will be how you address me. Once I marry your sister, you’ll have to call me ‘brother-in-law.’ You can still call me ‘brother,’ just don’t use my full name anymore.”

After hearing that, Ouyang Jun was relieved. Knowing that Zhan Yuan wouldn’t take their eldest sister away, he grinned and said, “Brother Zhan Yuan, as long as you don’t take our sister away, we’ll keep liking you.”

“Brother Zhan Yuan, you have to come back with Big Sister next time. Second Brother and I will miss you.”

“We have to go to school now, so we can’t go with Big Sister to your place. But when summer vacation comes, you must take us there to play. I want to go to your amusement park!”

Brother Zhan Yuan had told them he had an amusement park at his house—one much bigger than the one at the Ouyang family estate, with way more fun attractions.

The Zhan family was wealthy and thriving.

There were nine grandchildren in Zhan Yin’s generation. When the old lady saw them being born one after another, she generously had a massive amusement park built right on the villa grounds.

Yangyang especially loved visiting the Zhan family’s old house just for the amusement park.

But if Uncle Jiu wasn’t home, it just wasn’t as fun—there was no one to really play with.

Kids from the village at the base of the mountain sometimes came to play with Yangyang, but their parents always reminded them that Yangyang was the Zhan family’s precious little one, so they had to be extra polite.

When Yangyang played with them, it never felt as carefree as it did when he played with Uncle Jiu.

Zhan Yuan smiled and said, “Alright, when summer vacation comes, if your sister’s free, she’ll bring you to visit and stay for a bit.”

“It’s a promise! You can’t go back on your word, Brother Zhan Yuan!”

“It’s a promise.”

Ouyang Jun turned to his brother excitedly. “Brother Zhan Yuan promised to take us there during summer vacation!”

Ouyang Jian was just as happy.

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Of course, Zhan Yuan had more than just a few teachers. The chefs at the hotels under the Zhan Group each had their own specialties, and Zhan Yuan would often seek their advice. His impressive cooking skills today are the result of combining the best techniques from each of them.

After dinner, the old lady invited Ouyang Ya to sit on the sofa and chat.

In fact, Ouyang Ya was almost completely monopolized by the old lady that entire night.

Seeing that he had no chance to sit next to Ouyang Ya, Zhan Yuan decided to go upstairs to tidy up the guest room for her.

Though his mother had already prepared the room, Zhan Yuan was still concerned. He carefully checked everything and tidied up once more, ensuring his fiancée would feel comfortable and at ease, like she was at home.

It wasn't until 10 p.m. that Zhan Yuan finally had a chance to sit beside his fiancée.

Perhaps his grandmother had gotten sleepy and wanted to rest, as the older family members and those of his generation gradually left.

Zhan Yuan sat next to Ouyang Ya, took one of her hands, and held it tightly, saying with a hint of jealousy, "Miss, I knew that once you came, I'd be pushed to the side."

"From the moment you walked in, I couldn't get close to you. You became Grandma's granddaughter, and she monopolized you the entire night."

Ouyang Ya smiled and replied, "Your grandma is a lot like mine. I'm very close with my grandparents, and I couldn't help but chat with them. I didn't mean to forget about you."

"Just call me by my name. You're still calling me Miss, but I'm your girlfriend now, not just your chef."

Zhan Yuan leaned over and kissed her cheek gently. Seeing no objection from her, he boldly pressed his lips to hers.

After the kiss, Zhan Yuan pulled her into a tight embrace, his heart racing.

Ouyang Ya stayed in his arms for a moment before gently pushing him away and sitting up straight.

"Aya, I love you," Zhan Yuan whispered softly, his voice full of affection. After asking what he wanted, Ouyang Jun said goodbye to his older sister and hung up the phone.

Ouyang Ya smiled and said, "I thought you missed me a lot, but it turns out you were just thinking about going to your house to play."

"My two brothers like you very much."

Zhan Yuan replied, “I like them both, too. Besides being my future brothers-in-law, they’re genuinely lovable kids—sensible, yet still delightfully innocent.”

He took Ouyang Ya’s hand again. “Let’s come back during the summer vacation.”

“When we return to Wancheng, don’t call me ‘Miss’ anymore. Call me by my name—or just Xiaoya, like my family does.”

Zhan Yuan smiled. “I’m used to it.”

“To me, you’ll always be my eldest lady.”

Ouyang Ya gently pinched his handsome face, then leaned on his shoulder and nestled close.

The drive from the airport to Youyou Villa took about two hours.

Zhan Yuan let his beloved rest for a while.

He would wake her when they arrived.

Ouyang Ya said, “I already slept for three hours on the plane. I can’t fall asleep now. If I do, I’ll end up with insomnia tonight.”

Ring, ring, ring...

The phone rang again, but this time it wasn’t Ouyang Ya’s—it was Zhan Yuan’s.

It was a call from Tang Junye.

Zhan Yuan let go of Ouyang Ya’s hand and answered his mother’s call.

“Zhan Yuan, have you landed?”

“Mom, we’re on our way back. Uncle Yang picked us up. We should be home around 7:30 p.m. If you’re hungry, please eat first. You don’t have to wait for us.”

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“Mom, we’re on our way back. Uncle Yang picked us up. We should be home around 7:30 p.m. If you’re hungry, go ahead and eat first—you don’t need to wait for us.”

“We had something to eat on the plane, so we’re not hungry.”

In our family, dinner usually starts at 6 p.m.

Our dining schedule rarely changes.

Zhan Yuan felt a little guilty for making the whole family wait.

Tang Junye replied, "It's okay. We're not hungry either. We had afternoon tea, so we're fine. We'll wait for you two to get back before eating."

"Make sure to take good care of Miss Ouyang."

Tang Junye was very pleased with Ouyang Ya. In the past, she might have even said this younger daughter-in-law was better than Haitong, her elder daughter-in-law.

But now, after spending years with Haitong, their bond had grown.

She hadn't yet formed the same emotional connection with Ouyang Ya. No matter how satisfied she was with her, she wouldn't speak poorly of Haitong. Deep down, her emotional balance still tilted in Haitong's favor.

"Mom, I will."

"Alright, call me when you're almost home," said Tang Junye.

Zhan Yuan gave a hum of acknowledgment.

He wanted to say more, but his mother had already hung up.

She only called to check if he had landed—nothing more? Not a single extra word?

Zhan Yuan could already picture what it would be like when they got home. Ouyang Ya would be the center of attention, warmly welcomed by everyone and doted on by the whole family. Meanwhile, he—the son who brought her back—would be quietly brushed aside by his own parents.

Around 7:30 in the evening, the car carrying Zhan Yuan and Ouyang Ya arrived at Youyou Villa.

It drove straight to the main house at the center of the estate and came to a stop.

Earlier, when they reached the foot of the mountain, Zhan Yuan had asked Uncle Yang to roll down the window so that Ouyang Ya could enjoy the view.

From the villa entrance to the main house, the night scenery along the way made Ouyang Ya—who had seen her fair share of the world—let out a sigh of admiration. "Ruotong said your Zhan family's estate is beautiful, like a painting in every season. It's true."

The night view was indeed stunning.

Zhan Yuan gave a faint smile. “After breakfast tomorrow, I’ll take you on a walk around the villa. I doubt I’ll be free tonight.”

Everyone was waiting for their return.

It was Ouyang Ya’s first visit, her first time meeting his parents. She would soon be surrounded by elders and likely wouldn’t have time for a stroll.

But they had a few days.

He could slowly show her around the entire villa.

“Alright.”

They got out of the car, and Zhan Yuan took her hand, leading her into the house.

At the door, Ouyang Ya noticed a middle-aged woman smiling warmly. When she saw them, she respectfully addressed Zhan Yuan as “Sixth Young Master” and then greeted Ouyang Ya politely.

Then, following Ouyang Ya’s glance, she turned around with a smile and trotted inside to announce that the Sixth Young Master had arrived with Miss Ouyang.

A wave of nervousness came over Ouyang Ya.

But only for a moment.

After all, she had been chosen by Grandma Zhan herself. It was the Zhan family elders who had first taken a liking to her. She hadn’t gone out of her way to pursue Zhan Yuan.

So what was there to be nervous about?

She believed the Zhan family would welcome her and wouldn’t try to find fault.

Ouyang Ya also felt she was good enough that there’d be nothing they could criticize.