

I Want a Lifetime with You

Chapter 388

As Shi Nuan stepped out from Wutong Residence, she was greeted by a fresh whiff of the spring air. It felt warmer today, but Fu Chengyan still intentionally reminded her to bring a jacket along. He wouldn't risk letting her catch a cold.

Shi Nuan couldn't defy his persistent nagging. She hurriedly grabbed a coat and left to the meeting point.

Su Yian had long waited at the usual place all by herself, while Song Rongrong was nowhere to be seen. As soon as she saw Shi Nuan coming closer from a distance, she waved her hand in the air as she called out to her friend, "Here, Nuan!"

Shi Nuan had actually noticed the familiar face and silhouette of Su Yian at the mall's entrance even from afar. Her friend stood there alone quietly with both hands tucked in her coat's pockets. When she saw Su Yian waving, she picked up her speed and made a light dash towards her. "Sorry, have you been waiting for a long time?"

"Nah, I'm good!" Su Yian greeted back with a smile. Her eyes briefly assessed Shi Nuan from head to toe while she added, "We haven't met up in a while. You seem to have plumped up quite a bit from the last time we saw each other. "

Plumped up?

Shi Nuan immediately felt self-conscious at Su Yian's comments. She glanced down at herself. Oh dear, I think I've really gained weight like what Yian said... She pressed both hands on her own cheeks and then pinched her own waist.

“You’re right... I’ve probably fluffed up over the winter!” She added with a sigh, “I’ve been well fed!”

Su Yian’s narrowed her eyes and grinned teasingly. “Nuan, are you trying to show off how well you’ve been cared for? Are you trying to make us singles jealous of your love life?”

“What is it about?”

Song Rongrong’s voice rose suddenly from behind Shi Nuan, startling her. Shi Nuan shot an angry glare at Song Rongrong. She jokingly slapped Rongrong’s arm and said, “You’re late again! Didn’t we already fix a time to meet up?”

Song Rongrong let out a sigh. “Well, it’s our chief editor’s fault...” she started explaining, but paused for a millisecond and shrugged. “Never mind, enough about my work. Topics like these only kill the mood. Say, is brother-in-law really fine with us inviting you out like this?”

Before Shi Nuan could respond, Song Rongrong suddenly grabbed onto her arm and pulled her aside. “Hey, Nuan... Haven’t you gotten a little fatter recently!”

“...” Shi Nuan was speechless for a moment. She exchanged a glance with Su Yian and the two let out a chuckle.

“Yian’s more thoughtful with her words after all. She said I plumped up slightly, whereas you called me ‘fat’ so directly. That’s not very kind of you!” she scolded jokingly.

Song Rongrong inched closer to her ear and replied with a mischievous grin, “Have you been that much kinder to us on the other hand? You kept bringing up about your husband here and there in our group chat. Who are I and Yian to you?” She wrapped her fingers around Shi Nuan’s neck as she pretended to strangle her.

Shi Nuan couldn't argue anymore. "Alright, alright... I surrender. It's my fault, okay? Let's go do our shopping and then have some tea, shall we?"

"Okay! Let's go!" Song Rongrong raised her brows in delight. She playfully grabbed onto Shi Nuan with one arm and held onto Su Yian with the other. The trio laughed and giggled as they began their shopping journey.

Shi Nuan and her friends were exhausted after a whole morning of strolling around the mall. They began to look around for somewhere to take a break from their shopping spree. It's a huge area to explore on foot, although she had frequented this place since it's a project that belonged under Shengyuan's franchise.

Holding on to a few bags of her shopping haul, A familiar male voice suddenly caught Shi Nuan's attention when they walked past one of the shops. "Yes, I'm in Jiang City now!" That voice was deep, yet clear and gentle.

She paused in her tracks and listened. Song Rongrong and Su Yian didn't notice anything unusual and kept walking on, unaware that their friend was left behind.

With hesitating steps, Shi Nuan followed after the man who seemed to be the source of the voice.

That man sounded so deliberately tender as he spoke. Shi Nuan was convinced that the person he was speaking to must have been a woman. A very important woman, in fact.

She treaded behind the man for a short while until he eventually stopped. Still holding onto his cellphone, he turned around. His eyes fell on the person who had followed him.

Surprised to see Shi Nuan, Shen Shixiu gawked for a moment. He frowned slightly as he tried to finish the conversation with the other person on the other end of the phone. "I might only return after a month or so... Okay, I'll leave the matters in Sheen City in your hands meanwhile!"

Shen Shixiu kept his cellphone away and turned his attention to Shi Nuan. His lips curved into a polite smile as he walked towards her in tall, steady strides. He noticed the shopping bags in her hands. With the composure of a gentleman, he greeted respectfully, "Hello, Ms. Shi!"

"Hello, Mr. Shen!" Shi Nuan returned the smile. "What a coincidence!"

Shen Shixiu nodded. "Indeed. Did you come shopping here alone?" he replied as he took another glance at the bags of clothes in her hands. Shi Nuan widened her eyes slightly in a sudden realization. She shook her head as she answered, "No, I came with my friends... I wonder where'd they gone to?"

Embarrassed at herself, she briefly scratched the side of her head. How did she end up separated away from her friends and not even realizing it after so long? "Perhaps they went browsing in the other shop," she glanced around and turned back to Shen Shixiu as she continued, "I assume you're shopping here on your own as well, Mr. Shen?"

He shook his head. "No, I was just paying a random visit since I rarely have the opportunity to come to Jiang City. I've heard that this mall belongs to Shengyuan?"

Still somewhat perplexed at his presence, Shi Nuan promptly answered, "Yes, that's right."

Shen Shixiu nodded understandingly. "Ms. Shi, are you not going to look for your friends then?"

"Ah, yes I should... But it's fine, I'll search for them later!" Shi Nuan forced an embarrassed smile. Shen Shixiu looked straight at her and replied, "Ms. Shi, would you like to have some coffee?"

"Sure!" Shi Nuan agreed immediately. "I know a café around here that's pretty good."

“In that case, I shall let Ms. Shi lead the way.”

Shen Shixiu kept up a graceful and collected composure at all times, constantly emitting a gentlemanly aura. Noticing multiple shopping bags hanging on both Shi Nuan’s arms, he reached out a hand and offered, “Let me carry them.”

“Oh no, you don’t have to!” Shi Nuan tried to decline, but he acted swiftly and had already taken the bags from her as she spoke. “It’s not a problem,” he replied calmly.

Shi Nuan could only smile at the polite gesture. “We’re almost there. It’s just downstairs.” She pointed as she walked ahead of him.

Just then, Shi Nuan’s phone rang. She looked at Song Rongrong’s name flashing on the screen, unsurprised that her friends would eventually call. She shot Shen Shixiu an apologetic look. “Excuse me for a moment, Mr. Shen.”

Shen Shixiu said nothing but smiled reassuringly. He gestured with a hand for her to proceed with the phone call, then stood aside to wait.

“Nuan, who’s that handsome guy you’re with? How dare you left us so quietly all of a sudden! Also, are you sure brother-in-law would be okay with you meeting up that good-looking dude behind his back?”

Song Rongrong’s nosy tone echoed brightly through the speaker. Shi Nuan shook her head helplessly. “It’s not like that. It’s someone I know. We bumped into each other coincidentally, so we just had a small talk!” She quickly glanced at Shen Shixiu who stood waiting at a distance and felt somewhat guilty.

She didn’t want to come off rude in front of such a seemingly courteous person. “Well, I have something to handle right now. You and Yian go back ahead of me, alright? Sorry I can’t be with you girls any longer for today!”

“What’s the meaning of this, Nuan? Dates before mates, huh? Hmph, you better be careful if I report this to brother-in-law!” Song Rongrong responded with a

slightly annoyed tone. She still cared for her friend nonetheless. “Seriously, be careful while you’re on your own, okay?”

You’ve been walking on eggshells with how the Fu clan views you at this moment. Brother-in-law may trust you, but it doesn’t guarantee that his family won’t have any misunderstandings if you’re meeting with another man like this. Not mentioning that recent drama with your husband’s ex-fiancée... “

“Calm down, Rongrong. This person is Shen Shixiu; he’s Shen Qianan’s older brother! Nothing bad will come out of this meeting. Don’t worry, alright? I’ll explain more later. I really have to go now!” Shi Nuan quickly assured her friend and hung up.

She walked back towards Shen Shixiu with a slightly remorseful smile. “Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Shen.”

He gave a slight nod. “Was it your friends?”

“Yes. They said they’ll go back first,” Shi Nuan answered, “Today’s coffee shall be my treat!”

“Alright!”

They soon arrived at the café which Shi Nuan recommended. A pleasant ambiance welcomed them as they entered. It was out of peak hours, hence there wasn’t too big of a crowd.

Shen Shixiu carefully laid down the shopping bags beside the table, and gracefully pulled out a chair for Shi Nuan. The waiter came up promptly just as Shi Nuan settled into her seat. “May I take your order?”

“An iced cappuccino for me, please. Mr. Shen, what would like to have?” Shi Nuan looked at Shen Shixiu as the waiter penned down her order.

“I’ll have a Jamaican Blue Mountain,” he was quick to decide his order and looked at Shi Nuan. “Are you sure about having an iced coffee in this weather? It’s probably not a good idea for your health. What about a regular cappuccino?”

Shen Shixiu was careful and considerate as he spoke. His deep, gentle voice was like a breath of fresh air. “I hope you don’t mind my suggestion, Ms. Shi.” His gaze remained on her as he waited for her response.

“Of course not.” Shi Nuan smiled as she agreed, and turned to the waiter. “I’ll change to a regular cappuccino then!”

The waiter nodded and proceeded away. Shi Nuan turned her gaze back onto the man sitting opposite her. She couldn’t help but continuously observed Shen Shixiu intently. She had so many questions in her head about him.

Shen Shixiu was equally silent for a brief moment. He then met Shi Nuan’s eyes with a smile and asked, “Is there something you want to talk about, Ms. Shi?”

Shi Nuan hesitantly bit her lip. She pondered for a second before replying softly, “Nothing much, actually. I just thought you seemed very familiar. Mr. Shen, do you really not know Shi Yu?”

Shen Shixiu narrowed his eyes at that name. His brows twitched slightly and a dark expression flashed across his eyes. He shifted his gaze sideways, not returning the keen stare from Shi Nuan.

He rested a hand on the table while the other arm remained on his lap. His lean finger tapped lightly against the tabletop in a slow but consistent rhythm. It was almost as rhythmic as the ticking of a clock. A few silent seconds passed when he finally spoke again, “Ms. Shi, what is it that you’re trying to find out from me?”

Shi Nuan bit her lip again. “You seem so different from Shen Qianan, Mr. Shen.”

These two people are way too different in personality and appearance, Shi Nuan thought to herself.

For some time, she had been troubled by the fact that Shen Shixiu and Shen Qianan barely shared any similarities with each other. On top of that, Shen Qianan looked almost like a doppelganger of herself. She was quite convinced that she wasn't merely overthinking.

Shen Shixiu gave a shallow smile. "Did that come from concerns about your own identity, Ms. Shi?"

Shi Nuan felt a slight shiver at his response, while he continued, "Ms. Shi, it seems like you're interested in knowing if both you and Qianan are related in any way."

Her eyes remained fixed on Shen Shixiu without showing any emotion. She managed to portray a calm stance outwardly, but deep down she could feel a storm gradually stirring up within herself. This man never failed to surprise her with his sharpness.

Shen Shixiu's gaze was so sharp and clear as if his eyes could peer into a person's mind. He met Shi Nuan's eyes directly as he added with a somewhat sober tone, "If you have any doubts about your heritage, why don't you clarify with somebody from the Shi family or your grandfather, Old Master Jiang?"

"You know my grandpa, Mr. Shen?" Shi Nuan asked, once again slightly taken aback by his words.

"No. I don't know him," Shen Shixiu replied in a matter-of-fact manner. "I've only heard a little about him before I came here. If Ms. Shi has any questions about your own background, I suggest you ask those from the Shi family instead. I'm afraid I can't provide the answers you're looking for."

Just as he spoke, the waiter returned to the table with their drinks. Shen Shixiu gracefully held up his cup as he looked straight at Shi Nuan. "Qianan is my half-sister through a different mother. I suppose it's normal that half-siblings share fewer things in common."

Shi Nuan froze a little and felt her chest tighten. Her face paled slightly. She looked down on her freshly brewed drink. As invigorating as the coffee aroma was, it didn't help disperse the faint gloom that had clouded her expression.

She forced the corners of her lips upwards into a weak smile. "I apologize for asking such a difficult question, Mr. Shen." She didn't know what else to say upon hearing his last few sentences. Perhaps he really isn't Shi Yu after all... And maybe... it could be that I'm never truly related to the Shen family at all, including Shen Shixiu and Shen Qianan!