



Ice in the Fire

Tess SUN

My name is Bill for the moment. I am super clever. I know everything and I can control everything. Don't laugh! A+ is the only grade I had ever got. And I had been enjoying my new life as Bill for one year until a girl who has a silly name---Lily--- burst into my life.



Photograph from Ziyu Ke, Xiamen, Mar., 2019

1

Her chest was weaving, and she said, “I am so sorry for late, sir. I guess you must be Mr. Smith.”

Oh, my! Silly girl dates with silly Smith. I looked at her out of the corner of my eyes, “Apologies, I am not Mr. Smith. My name is Bill. B-I-L-L, Bill, the smart one.”

She said, “Sorry, Bill. Oh, excuse me. Can I call you Bill? Uh, is this seat taken? Or can I sit here for a while? I am exhausted. Since there are no more seats in the café, as I notice.”

Normally, I would refuse such a request from a stranger, but this time I agreed for no reason. Maybe it was because she had a nice voice.

The moment she sat on the sofa next to me, she started to talk to me nonstop.

“Why do you have a long hair?”

“How old are you?”

“What are your hobbies?”

“Are you an artist?”

I was submerged in her voice and start-

ed to stare at her face. She was kind of just a little bit pretty. Good features but short. Beautiful eyes but fat face. Juicy mouth but yellow teeth. But, well, overall, she was uniquely pretty.

“I am 20 years old. I am jobless recently...” I replied.

“Oh, really? Actually, I am waiting for my customer named Smith. I am working a part time job.”

...

In her babbling 20 minutes’ talk, I had already known everything about her. 20 years old, single, not a lesbian. She majored in English education in an unknown university. And she loved reading detective novels.

Even I could deduce that this Mr. Smith would not come. Still remember that? I can know and control everything.

“Bill, you are so funny. We are friends now, right?” She seemed very happy.

Before she left, we exchanged our num-

bers, she said: "Got your number. I'll text you later."

Yes, I am humorous, which is technically right. But wait, no girls had ever said they are going to text me. How dare you, silly girl!

In fact, this is my first time to talk with such a cute girl. In the past, just some stupid girls asked me some stupid math questions.

When I wanted to say goodbye to her, the door had closed, she left.

2

For the whole week, I have used ALL my psychology knowledge to analyse why she didn't text me from Project Effect to Murphy's Law. I figure out there were 7,485 reasons why she didn't text me. But I deny all of them. I just can't get rid of her from my head. Also, this is the first time that I can't control things.

Suddenly, bunch of "zeec" sounds come from my phone. It is LILY's message!

"Hi Bill, I am Lily. Do u still remember me?"

Sorry to text you late. I became awfully busy these days

"R u free this Saturday? I want to invite you to

a chill out dinner with my friends."

"Wanna come?"

My heart beats so fast like the volcano which is about to burst out. But why am I so happy for these little messages? Hold on, now I have to figure out the most appropriate way to reply to the messages.

After one hour, I text a "Sure" to her.

3

Saturday comes finally. For this dinner, I prepared a bunch of interesting topics.

But when I get there, there are not even friends. There is just ONE friend, Penny.

The chat goes really well.

"A foreigner came to America. He found a rat in his room, but he doesn't know how to express it in English. Then, he called the worker in the reception, 'Hi, do you know Tom and Jerry?' Then, the worker replied, 'Yes.' 'Jerry is here!' " They are laughing out loud because of my joke.

Just google "the weirdest things" online, then you can make these girls laugh. Suddenly, Penny gets an emer-

gent message and then leaves.

Lily says, "Have you ever heard about that Berkeley student named Jacky who killed his mother last year?"

I freeze for a second, "Nope."

"I know it is not good and moral to kill his mom. But if we see him from another side, his modus operandi is PERFECT!" She looks excited, nobody but a lover can tell she is talking about a killer.

"Oh? What happened?"

"He is intelligent and won countless prizes. Also, all his families, friends, and teachers can't believe he killed his mom because he looked good to his mother. Last May, he secretly prepared a lot of tools like operation scissors, cotton cloth, and tapes. He looked like a doctor, but his major is math. He is extremely professional."

I take up my coffee.

"After his mother was killed, she was wrapped in the bed with more than one hundred layers' cotton cloth, and every layer has activated carbon in order to prevent the rotten scent from spreading. It is careful and precise, isn't it?"

I nod because it is truth.

"Then, he told his family he and his mother were

going to Cambridge University for exchange for four years. He borrowed 200,000 dollars from relatives.”

She takes up a cup of black tea. “Interesting.” I say.

She continues, “Also, he pretended his mother to send a letter of resignation to her company in June. No one found any loopholes. Can you believe that he still went to school after he committed the crime? Haha, you must be curious why I know so many details.”

I nod again.

“In this year’s February, he texted and asked his uncle to pick them up at the airport. Obviously, his uncle didn’t find any of them. So, he went to the police station and after a couple of days, they finally found her body.” She says.

In order to engage in her brilliant “speech”, I ask, “So did he get caught?”

She shakes her head, “How can a perfect man be caught? I guess he just wanted to make fun of the police.”

Yes, absolutely. I just wanted to show off to the cops.

“Do you admire him?”

“In some ways, YES! I mean I like his intelligence. I can feel everything is under his control, isn’t it?”

I am very satisfied with her answer. Her speculation is completely on the right track. I guess this is the destiny.

“Sometimes I just think you are similar to him in some way. You two are both very smart and serious.”

I smile.

4

After that day, her cuteness, her passion, her braveness, her pretty baby face, emerge in my head over and over again. I guess this is what people would call a “crush” in a love story. Why would a scientific guy know the term in love story? One day I went to library to find a science book named Control, but I wrongly picked a love story book sharing the same name. Then I found love story was not that bad. Oh, what the hell am I doing here? This is not even important.

I start to google for some answers.

“How can a foolish girl crush on a smart guy?”

“Is it possible for a smart guy to be in love?”

The answers suck. I can’t find the perfect one until

I find a suggestion which is that you should take her to the theatre. I choose a horror movie, because Lily will be scared and hold my hands portraying me into a strong and handsome man in her mind. She will deeply fall in love with me, this is the theory in suspension bridge effect.

Then, I text her.

She replies, “Yes.”

5

Oh, my god! She is extra charming today. An elegant one-piece dress, cute high heels, long eye lashes.

“Hi, Bill. You look really nice today.” Don’t praise me, Lily. I can’t breathe now.

“Th...Thank you. You are pretty, too.” No, pretty is not enough. You are a goddess. Smelling the fragrance spreading from her hair, I walk with her into the cinema with my heart beating faster and faster.

In the movie, a ghost was going to scare the main character Jim, but he accidentally missed. Suddenly, she looks at me. I look back. Is she a delicate doll? Why does she look so unreal in the movie



Photograph from Jincheng Yan, Sri Lanka, Jan., 2019

light? She is smiling.

Oh, wait! According to what I've learned from the love story, smile means she wants to kiss me! Shit! I haven't practiced it with others yet. No, no, how can I practice with others? I can only kiss Lily. Oh calm down, calm down, Bill. You have watched Art of Kissing 20 times on YouTube. Just put your tongue inside, and stir expertly.

Her head is closer and closer. But I am still not ready. I am afraid I can't control it.

"Open your mouth!"

"That moment was super cool!"

Mixed with the sound of the dialogues from the movie, she and I speak at the same time.

"What? Open my mouth?" She laughs.

"Nothing. Just watch the movie." I try to act naturally.

I can feel my shameless from my head to my toe. I thought she would kiss me. The author of the love story is totally a liar!

6

After we finish the movie, we go to Koji Kitchen for our lunch.

Lily holds my hands walking towards the corner seats. She says, "Bill, today's sun is too bright. Can we sit here?"

"Sure. I love corners!" Why is she staring at me? Is there something wrong in my face?

"Can I talk with you for a while?" "Can I talk with



you for a while?" She and I speak at the same time, again.

"Lady first."

When I turn my head to her side, what I can see is her sparkling eyes and zoom in face. Just a second, I feel a soft and dewy unrecognized object on my lip. What, she kisses me?! My body is becoming stiff, but my heart beats so fast that I nearly faint. Damn it! I forgot to open my mouth and stir our tongues. I must be the worst kisser ever!

She smiles sweetly, "Bill, can I be your girlfriend?"

Why does she say my words first? This is what I supposed to say later. How should I reply according to the instructions in the love stories?

"Bill?"

I am shocked by her sudden voice, and respond unconsciously, "Yes, you can."

7

This is the best year in my life. We have been the happiest couple for a year, everything was PERFECT until one day she comes back home.

"Bill! It's enough, I am done with your control! I have told you many times about it. You never listen to me, and you don't even try to make it right! I am not your private stuff. I belong to myself. You can't govern what my goals are, what I like, and what I want!"

"Lily, listen to me." I hold her shoulder, trying to calm her down. I want to explain, but I can't even say a word.

"What? Are you mute?"

"No, babe. I ...I ..."

"Then tell me, say it."

I hold a deep breath. This is my first time to tell oth-

ers my inner voice. "Do you remember I haven't told you anything about my family? My mother was addicted to control me because she liked vanity. When I was young, I had to do calculation constantly and endlessly. Calculating math, physics, biology... Cold numbers and my mother was everything in my past life. Piece by piece, I unconsciously became crazy in controlling because of her. Now, I don't even realise I like to control."

"Your mother? Then take me to see your mother to see if you are right."

No, I cannot tell her the truth. She must be scared of me. I don't want my lover to think I am a cruel killer.

An invisible rock gets stuck in my throat, stopping me to tell her the truth. I lose my tongue, temporally.

"Or maybe it is just your lie. You, a liar! We are done!" She leaves.

My silly Lily, this is not my control. What I want is to help you to be a better woman. I admit maybe I was a paranoia in the past. But the moment I saw you, I had already known you are the only thing that I can't control in my life. After I met you, what I want to do is to create another utopia world for us and bury the past. But now you start to

ask me the past. What should I do?

8

Without her, I spent the darkest time in my life for two years. In the past, I thought I would have a lot of girlfriends, and it did not matter breaking up with Lily. But I just keep dreaming of her, which makes me miss her smiles, her hair, her silly cute things, her everything. But she is such a simple and beautiful girl. Dating with me must be the biggest spot in her life.

Today, when I am eating a bowl of tasteless noodles, a stranger recognizes me, and I get caught by cops. I barely feel anything, since Lily's left, I have become a zombie already.

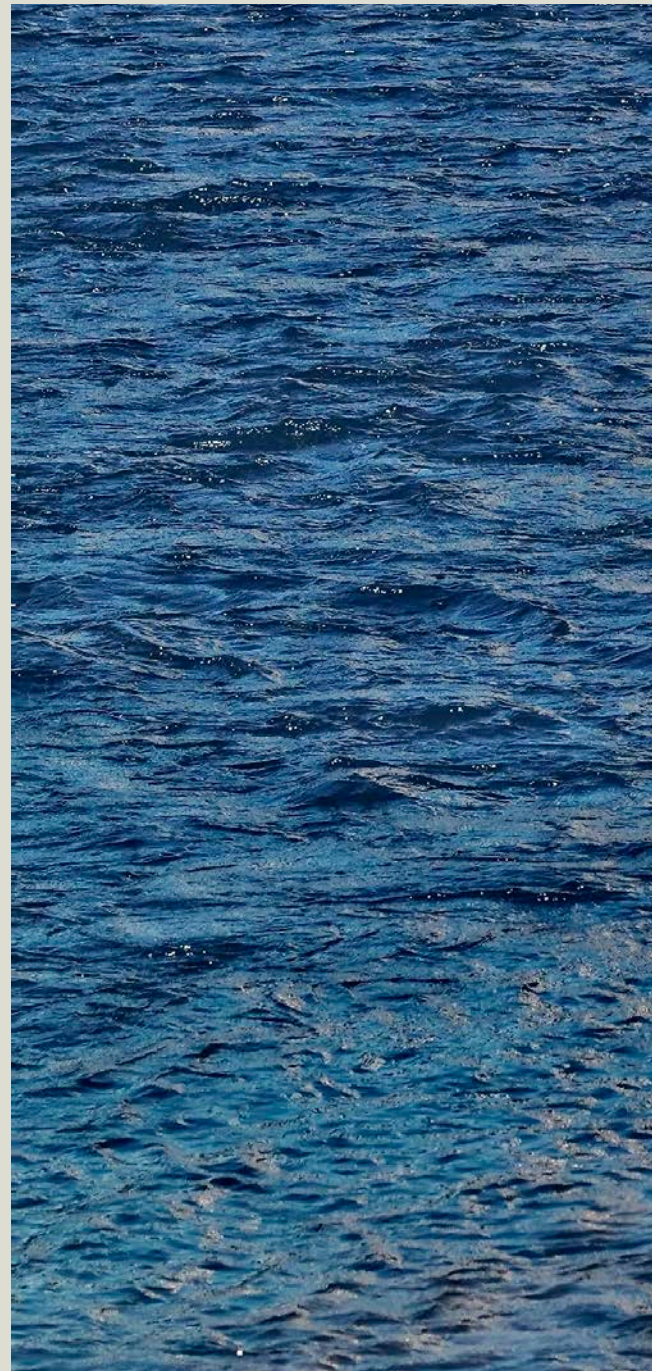
Lily, this must be the last time I appear in your life. I just hope it won't disturb your calm and happy life. I love you.

9

"Yesterday, the smartest killer Jacky has been caught. This time, he went to the police station voluntarily. Is it his trap...?" The woman's voice from TV starts to vanish from Lily's ears.

"No... No! This is not Bill. Bill has long hair and glasses. This must be Bill's twin brother. This must be his twin brother..."

"Why would you do that, Bill? I can keep it a secret for you..." Lily mumbles and



trembles in her room. Leaning on the wall corner, she sits down on the ground. With her head covered by her slender arms, tears run down her cheeks.

"He is ice, and I am fire. Ice will disappear eventually."



Photograph from Mingsong Yang, Eastern Europe, Jul., 2019

Disclaimer

This story's plot is purely fictional and in no way is it
a reflection of real-life events.