

SCRIPT TITLE

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INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

A group of middle school STUDENTS gather in front of the school's poster board. A big red list on it: Midterm Exam Ranking List. First place: Guantong Liu, 682. Second place: Qingzhi Li, 680.

On a hot summer day, a short-haired girl in a long-sleeved school uniform, GUANTONG LIU (15), is surrounded by a group of students.

STUDENT A

Guantong! How brilliant you are!

STUDENT B

Yeah, you're not the only one with a guaranteed spot this year!

STUDENT C

But Qingzhi's great, too.

STUDENT A

Not first place by one point. Right Guantong.

Guantong smiles sheepishly. Next to the crowd, stands another girl in a short-sleeved school uniform with a ponytail, this is QINGZHI. She has a forlorn expression. She looks enviously at Guantong. Guantong sees her and walks towards her.

GUANTONG LIU

Congratulations. No.2 is great.

Qingzhi, though despondent, shakes her hand.

QINGZHI LI

Second place is second place. But thank you and congratulations.

Qingzhi leaves after that.

INT. QINGZHI'S HOME - NIGHT

A dilapidated one-bedroom apartment is piled high with rags. There is only a table and a bed, and QINGZHI'S MOTHER (40), leaning weakly on the bed, comes in with a bowl of noodles, sits on the edge of the bed, and feeds her mother, who weeps silently.

QINGZHI LI

It's all because I didn't try hard enough. I'm the one who didn't fight. Two points, just two points. If I don't get this guaranteed spot, I won't have a high school to go to.

Mom looks at her daughter heartily.

MOM

It's all my fault. I'm sorry.

QINGZHI LI

It's ok, mom, If I can't go to high school, I'll go to work and make lots of money, and I'll support you!

The mother and daughter look at each other in tears.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

In the classroom, a few big words are posted above the blackboard: AWAY FROM EARLY LOVE, CHERISH YOUR LIFE. There are 108 days to go before the midterm exam.

Qingzhi distributes distributing the math midterm exam papers to everyone. When she reaches Guantong, she pauses for a moment, looking enviously at the two marks higher than her own. Suddenly, her eyes dilates. She pulls out her own paper.

Compare and contrast, sure enough, Guantong's paper on a wrongly done question is graded wrongly by the teacher. Qingzhi's eyes light up.

QINGZHI LI

(mutter to herself)

I'm the first!

Qingzhi walks quickly towards Guantong.

QINGZHI LI (CONT'D)

Your paper...

Guantong takes it and smiles at Qingzhi.

GUANTONG LIU

Thanks!

Qingzhi is about to say when the bell rings and the MATH TEACHER (male, 40) walks into the classroom.

TEACHER

Hurry back to your position.

QINGZHI LI

Well, I need to talk to you after class!

After that, she returns to her seat. But still full of excitement.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

Qingzhi pulls Guantong to the stairwell, who looks puzzled.

QINGZHI LI

I saw that on your math paper, the third question of the fifth question was D. You chose B, but the teacher gave you the right answer. Can you get the test back? I'm number one.

Guantong frowns and gulps.

GUANTONG LIU

Impossible! You must be wrong!

QINGZHI LI

I'm really not wrong! Really gave you the wrong grade for the paper!

Guantong takes her hand.

GUANTONG LIU

Come on, the results are in. And you came second, which is pretty impressive, so don't waste your energy. Next time, next time I'll remind the teacher to grade papers carefully.

QINGZHI LI

You go to your teacher and change it back. This grade is really important to me.

GUANTONG LIU

But this grade is important to me too! And it's not my fault. If you can, go to the teacher.

Guantong turns around and walks away after saying that, leaving Qingzhi alone and stomps her feet sharply.

INT. TEACHER'S OFFICE - DAY

When Qingzhi arrives at the teacher's office, the math teacher is on the phone, giving her a hand signal to wait.

TEACHER

(keenly)

You're too kind. I haven't finished the last one. Thank you. That's all for now. Don't worry, I'll take care of it.

Hanging up the phone, the teacher immediately puts away his smile and looks coldly at Qingzhi.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

QINGZHI LI

Teacher, on that midterm exam, I noticed that Guantong made a mistake on one of the questions but you got it right, could you please correct it?

The teacher frowns impatiently.

TEACHER

Impossible! You must be crazy.

QINGZHI LI

No, really, you're wrong. You know how important it is for me to get a guaranteed place. Please, I'll have her show you.

INT. TEACHERS' OFFICE - DAY LATER

Guantong hands the test paper to the teacher. The teacher looks at it and frowns deeper.

TEACHER

Isn't that a B? I told you, how could I have misjudged it? It's ridiculous!

Qingzhi snatches the paper and looks at Guantong incredulously.

QINGZHI LI
How can you do that!

GUANTONG LIU
(innocently)
I was right in the first place.

Qingzhi is anxious and angry, but powerlessness surrounds her. The math teacher slaps the paper heavily on the table.

TEACHER

Come on, you don't look at yourself for the reason why you didn't come first in the exams, you just think about the evil ways. Hey, you're a little girl. You've fallen for money? Who are you pretending to be poor for? Are you trying to sell yourself short? Get out of here!

Qingzhi runs out with red eyes, and Guantong watches vainly, and worriedly, as Qingzhi leaves.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - NIGHT

After school, in the empty playground, Qingzhi sits forlornly on the steps. She stares straight up at the sky with her eyes lifeless. She doesn't know why God is so cruel to her alone.

At that moment, the sound of boys and girls laughing and joking comes from the distance. She looks over and it is Guantong and her male classmates!

She can't hear what the two are saying, but the two are pulling and tugging and behaving intimately. Qingzhi suddenly makes up her mind, she takes out her cell phone and snaps a few pictures.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Qingzhi walks into a kiosk.

QINGZHI LI
A calling card, please.

INT. QINGZHI'S HOME - NIGHT

Qingzhi edits the photos and sends them in a group to all the parents classmates and homeroom teachers. She pulls out the phone card and throws it away. She sneers.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Qingzhi walks into the classroom and realizes that Cathy's seat is empty. The students are talking.

STUDENT A

Did you see the pictures? Guantong is so brave.

STUDENT B

It's not a big deal for her. She is still the best student.

STUDENT C

It shows, ah, that there is no direct correlation between early love and good or bad grades, and how the school requirements should be changed!

STUDENT D

Why isn't she here yet? She's not embarrassed to come to school, is she?

At that moment, the math teacher comes in, tapping on the desk and frowning.

TEACHER

Guess I didn't give you guys enough homework to have time to gossip day in and day out.

Qingzhi is distracted and she doesn't seem as happy as she thought she is.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL - NIGHT

Qingzhi is walking home when a familiar figure stops her at the corner. It's Guantong, who is still wearing long sleeves and pants in the thirty-something weather. This time, we can see the bruises on the corners of her eyes

QINGZHI LI

Did your mom hit you? Did she?

GUANTONG LIU

You did that.

QINGZHI LI

I don't know what you mean.

GUANTONG LIU

It's obvious that you're the one who took revenge on me! How can you start a rumor? I have nothing with him!

QINGZHI LI

What about you! Why did you lie! You know how important it is for me to get a guaranteed admission! You're in such a good position, you can get into the best school even if you take the exam yourself. But if I miss out on the guaranteed place, I won't have a school to go to! It's my future you're ruining!

GUANTONG LIU

What about my future then?!

Guantong cries out. Qingzhi is confused. Guantong drags off her long-sleeved jacket. Qingzhi is surprised to find that her body is covered with dense wounds, both scabbed and fresh and still bleeding..

QINGZHI LI

Wow, emm.....

GUANTONG LIU

(force a smile)

Whenever I wasn't number one, my mom would beat me. Beat me to death. That's why I never wear short sleeves. Last night, I once again felt like I almost died. At that moment, I really wished I would just die, never wake up again, so I wouldn't be in pain anymore.

QINGZHI LI

You should have called the police. It's domestic violence!

GUANTONG LIU

But she's my mom. How could I let the police arrest my mom? I just blame myself for being incapable.
(MORE)

GUANTONG LIU (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, it's my fault. It's all my karma.

Qingzhi freezes in place, she pulls Guantong down and drapes her uniform over him.

QINGZHI LI

It's not your fault. None of us are at fault! What's wrong is them, the world!

Guantong looks at Qingzhi incredulously.

GUANTONG LIU

What are you gonna do?

QINGZHI LI

You wanna have a try?

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is full of parents and the teacher is speaking from the stage. On the blackboard it says, Parent-Teacher Conferences.

TEACHER

This exam still reacts to a lot of questions. But first we commend Mr. Guantong Liu, the first place winner.

GUANTONG'S MOM(40), an exquisite woman sits down. Holding her head up proudly, she receives envious glances from other parents.

GUANTONG LIU (V.O.)

I'm not the first.

At that moment, the classroom door opens and Guantong and Qingzhi enter the classroom. The teacher frowns.

TEACHER

Why are you guys here? Get out.

Guantong and Qingzhi looks at each other. Guantong's mother frowns and glares at Qingzhi. They both continues to walk up to the podium. Qingzhi bows first.

QINGZHI LI

Hello teachers, parents. First of all, I am here to admit my mistake.
(MORE)

QINGZHI LI (CONT'D)

That text message about Cathy before was a rumor I made on impulse because I was in a bad mood. She didn't have an early love affair, she is a very good girl, I did a very wrong act and caused harm to her and everyone, I am here to apologize like Cathy and Cathy's parents, and all the parents. I'm sorry, It's all my fault.

Parents start mingling below. Guantong's mom rolls her eyes from the stage.

GUANTONG'S MOTHER

Just apologize and that's it? You're making false accusations, rumors, and it's having an extremely bad effect on my daughter, and I am able to hold you legally responsible. Where's your parent? I'm going to have a chat with her!

QINGZHI LI

Hold it.

Qingzhi smiles, and Guantong walks on.

GUANTONG LIU

Next, I want to admit my mistake. In the midterm exam, I made a mistake in one of the math problems but the teacher ruled it right, it was me who changed it in a moment of haunting without admitting it in time, and this first place should be hers! I would like to make a special note here to apologize to Qingzhi.

There is an explosion down there. The teacher stomps around.

TEACHER

Get out! Now!

GUANTONG'S MOTHER

(Madly)

Shut up! What are you fuckin talking about!

Guantong suddenly pulls back her long-sleeved school uniform and is shocked by the wounds all over her body. Everyone, including the teacher, is dumbfounded.

Everyone turns their attention to Guantong's mom, whose face goes red and white. Lifting her bag, she steps forward and squeezes Guantong's hand, who cringes in pain.

GUANTONG'S MOTHER (CONT'D)

How dare you!!! Don't embarrass
yourself here. Go home and see what
I'll do to you.

She pulls open the classroom door and there are two policemen standing in the doorway. She looks back at Guantong incredulously. Guantong doesn't look at her. Instead, he turns around and smiles at Qingzhi.