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A few minutes later, Nan Xing and Ning Ran accompanied Zheng Lunlun who was now wearing a mask to the parking lot and was about to get in the car.

Feng Minsheng who had been lurking in the parking lot immediately took out his phone and made a call, reporting what he saw to the person on the other line as soon as he saw Ning Ran come out.

There were too many cars in the parking lot, so Ning Ran and Nan Xing didn't notice that someone was watching them.

As soon as the car drove out of the parking lot, Zheng Lunlun cried out in joy. He was too excited as he hadn't come out for a long time.

Seeing Zheng Lunlun so happy also made Ning Ran and Nan Xing happy.

"I've made a reservation at the hotpot restaurant. We'll have a seafood hotpot! However, because of our late notice, the boss had already accepted too many reservations so he couldn't clear the place for us. But, he promised to give us the best private room. That's fine with you two, right?"

"Only rich people like you would book the entire restaurant for a meal. I'm fine with it since no one there would recognize me anyway." Ning Ran said.

"My main concern is Lunlun. He's a huge star and if he gets discovered, things could go very badly, so we must protect him well. If anything happens to him while we take him out for a meal, we would have a hard time explaining it to my brother." Nan Xing was still somewhat worried.

"It is fine." Zheng Lunlun on the other hand, seemed rather calm.

When they arrived at the restaurant, they found it to be very crowded.

After parking the car, the manager guided them into the restaurant through the back door towards their private room that was prepared for them beforehand.

After entering the private room, Zheng Lunlun took off his mask and let out a deep breath.

Ning Ran too, let out a sigh of relief as they were finally safe.

Zheng Lunlun grabbed the tablet and ordered a lot of dishes which soon filled the table.

The environment was still alright. Each person had a pot and the candles used were specially made. They exuded a fragrance and there was almost no smoke.

Zheng Lunlun wolfed down his food as he had been having bland food in the hospital for too long.

Ning Ran kept looking at her watch from time to time as she had to go pick up the kids so she couldn't stay for too long.

They heard knocking on the door and thought it was the waiter so they told them to come in.

But when the door opened, a few young girls came rushing in and started taking pictures of them with Zheng Lunlun.

"What are you doing?! Stop taking pictures!" Nan Xing quickly stood up and tried to stop them.

"It really is you, Lunlun! Where did you go when you disappeared again recently? Are you leaving the entertainment industry?" Someone started to ask.

Another girl started live streaming, "Dear friends, I was having hotpot with my sisters today, and came across a treasure! Look who it is next to me! It's the Beauty Zheng!"

Ning Ran was confused. Encountering an entertainment news reporter and a live streamer here? Why are we so unlucky today?

How did these people know that Zheng Lunlun is here?

Realizing that they were now appearing live on the internet, Ning Ran motioned at Nan Xing to calm down.

"Now that you're here, how about we eat together?" Ning Ran invited them with a smile.

"You're Ms. Ding, right? I remember you had some gossip with Lunlun and even ended up on the hot topic searches. What is your relationship with him?" The entertainment news reporter suddenly asked.

"Friends, we've always been good friends." Ning Ran said calmly.

"Lunlun, she says you are friends. Is that true? Are you two boyfriend and girlfriend? Or some other type of friend?" She pressed on.

Zheng Lunlun dared not speak, and Ning Ran gave him a look of encouragement.

Zheng Lunlun took a deep breath and said, "We are friends."

His limit was three words, any more and he would start stuttering.

"You mean boyfriend and girlfriend?"

"The normal kind."

Ning Ran let out a sigh of relief. Luckily Zheng Lunlun was not stupid and knew to use three word answers to handle the situation.

"Then how is Sir Chen related to you?"

These people probably mistook Nan Xing as Nan Chen. Not everyone was familiar with their iconic black suit and white suit preferences, after all.

"We are friends." Ning Ran responded calmly.

"Ms. Ding, rumors on the internet say you cheated on Sir Chen, stole Luo Fei's boyfriend and got rid of her. Is that true?"

"That's nonsense. We are all friends. I didn't get rid of anyone nor did I cheat."

Ning Ran wasn't sure if this person was a journalist, an internet celebrity or just a keyboard warrior.

So, she forced herself to keep calm in order to not make the situation worse.

"Sir Chen, did you get rid of Luo Fei and make her disappear from the entertainment industry for good because you took a liking to Ms. Ding?

"Don't believe that nonsense! There is no such thing!" Nan Xing was starting to get impatient as well.

An otherwise nice hotpot dinner had been ruined by these people rushing in and bombarding them with questions rudely. Nan Xing was already losing his temper at that point.

"Then what is going on? Please explain, Sir Chen. Why has Luo Fei suddenly disappeared? Where has she gone?"

"Miss, we're having a meal here, and this is our private room and space. Isn't it too much of you to just barge in and question us like that?" Ning Ran asked.

She realized a problem. These people had come prepared and wouldn't give up easily.

She was going to be polite to them but they only seemed to become more aggressive, like a typical shameless person.

"Ms. Ding, please answer my question." That person wasn't backing off in the slightest.

"We're eating right now. We'll talk about your questions during work. I have no obligations to answer your questions right now! Please leave." Ning Ran was losing her temper.

There are always nasty people causing trouble. You give them an inch and they'll take a mile.

"Look, everyone! Someone's mad and trying to kick us out! Isn't she polite? She became a third wheel and yet she's acting so self-righteous......" The streamer started her act.

The effects of the livestream was clearly great, as a barrage of likes and comments appeared on the screen.

It was already considered amazing if someone like Zheng Lunlun or Nan Xing were to appear in a livestream. Now the both of them were appearing live on the same stream with a beautiful woman, which made the livestream even better than ever.

Netizens had started to criticize Ning Ran.

There were simply too many brainless young people on the internet these days. They didn't care about the truth and would start cursing as soon as someone starts a scene like this.

"Look, everyone! This woman is the third wheel who got between Luo Fei and Sir Chen! Now she's even shamelessly gotten together with Lunlun! I wonder if they're here today to discuss their relationship......" The streamer had started to attack them personally!

Lunlun could not stand it anymore. He stood up, grabbed the streamer's phone and threw it into the boiling hotpot.

Everyone was stunned and there was a brief moment of silence.

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"Zheng Lunlun is attacking people!" The girl who had been questioning them was the first to react and started screaming. Ning Ran quickly grabbed the girl's phone and threw it into the hotpot as well.

Now that it has already come to this, I might as well do so! Nan Xing saw that and felt it was a smart move, and was about to reach for the phone of the girl next to him as well.

But that girl was prepared for it as she dodged and ran off. Nan Xing wouldn't chase after her, as it would be too disgraceful for a young master of the Nan family to chase after a girl for her phone. Nan Xing couldn't bring himself to do such a thing.

"How dare you snatch our phones?! I'm calling the police!" The girl who looked like an entertainment news reporter shouted.

"Go on, call the police then! Who are you, and where are you from? How dare you behave so rudely towards us! Do you wish to continue living in Jiangcheng? I don't care who you are, a word from me and I can make you disappear from Jiangcheng forever!" Nan Xing shouted coldly.

The girl went quiet, and just stared at her phone in the hotpot.

Anyone with some common sense in Jiangcheng knew the influence that the Nan family has.

This girl too, knew that Nan Xing was not bluffing when he said that.

Although he was just trying to intimidate her, the Nan family was indeed capable of such a feat.

Ning Ran took out her phone and snapped pictures of the two girls.

"What are you doing? Why are you taking our pictures?" The girl said anxiously.

"Oh, now this is new. So you can take pictures of me, but I can't do that to you?" Ning Ran smiled coldly.

"Why are you taking our pictures? We're not stars, what do you want with us?"

Ning Ran sneered, "Revenge, of course! I'm taking your pictures for revenge! You barged into our private gathering rudely and took our pictures, and now you're threatening us? Of course I'd have to capture your faces on camera. How else would I get my revenge on you otherwise?"

The two girls looked at each other with fear in their eyes.

Obviously, they weren't afraid of Ning Ran, but they were afraid of Nan Xing and the Nan family.

"Our phones are already in the hotpot now, so there are no pictures taken anymore. Let's just treat this as a misunderstanding." her tone softened.

"No, this is not misunderstanding. I'm asking you, who are you and how did you know that we're here? Who gave you that information?" Ning Ran asked.

The girl went quiet.

She stopped talking as soon as the most important question was asked.

"You won't tell me? That's fine, we'll find out anyway." Ning Ran said.

She then grabbed her coat and motioned for Zheng Lunlun and Nan Xing to leave.

Now that things have become like this, they couldn't stay there any longer.

Zheng Lunlun put his mask back on and they walked out of the private room.

But they were shocked as soon as they came downstairs.

The entire place was crowded. Many of them tried to rush up the stairs but were blocked off by the restaurant staff.

The moment Zheng Lunlun appeared, everyone raised their phones and started taking pictures.

"Lunlun....." A girl's voice was particularly shrill.

They could recognize Zheng Lunlun even with his mask on.

"Beauty Zheng, we love you!"

No one knew if these fans were real or fake, but they all rushed over at once.

There was no stopping them, and the trio soon found themselves surrounded with no way out.

Zheng Lunlun's mask was pulled off him in the chaos and that caused the fans to scream once again.

Ning Ran thought to herself, *This is bad, how would we get out now?*

We can only call the police now, otherwise there's no way we're getting out of here tonight.

We shouldn't have gotten rid of the bodyguards earlier. If we brought them with us, we could at least force our way out of here.

"Hey, everyone, please calm down and we can talk about this!" Ning Ran said loudly.

But everybody ignored her. She was beautiful, but the other two guys were far more attractive to the women at the scene, especially Zheng Lunlun.

These women were probably dying to get a bite of him or even take him home with them.

The circle was getting smaller as they were getting closer to Zheng Lunlun.

Some of them were even sexually harassing him, and it was impossible to tell if the person was a male or female in the chaos.

But the police have not yet arrived.

Right as they were out of options, a person came running through the crowd with an iron rod in his hand, "Get out of the way!"

Everyone stepped aside upon seeing the metal rod.

He successfully came to Ning Ran's side, grabbed Ning Ran's hand and ran away with her.

But Ning Ran didn't want to go with this person, because he was Feng Minsheng.

Ning Ran didn't even know where he came from and why he was here.

She didn't want to go with him but was dragged out by him anyway. The fans who were here for Zheng Lunlun got bolder as they saw that the man had only come for Ning Ran. They started squeezing towards Zheng Lunlun once again as they pushed Ning Ran out of there.

Ning Ran tried to struggle free from Feng Minsheng's grasp, but he had a very tight grip on her. She had thought that they were safe once they got out of the door, but the crowd had gotten bigger. They probably all came after word got out that Zheng Lunlun was here.

Ning Ran was disoriented from the chaos and was shoved by Feng Minsheng into a car that had been waiting outside.

Ning Ran wanted to get off the car but Feng Minsheng stopped her, "Ran, get out of here. It's useless for you to stay here as you will only hinder them. They will definitely be able to get out of there. If you stayed behind, wouldn't you just be giving the media more excuses to write about you? I'm sure the Nan family will have a way to settle this, right?"

Ning Ran looked at the fans who were still gathered there, and felt that Feng Minsheng's words made sense. The longer she stayed there, the more difficult it would be for her to explain her relationship with Zheng Lunlun.

Ning Ran didn't want to be in his car but she had no other choice at the moment.

Feng Minsheng closed the car door as soon as he saw that Ning Ran had stopped trying to get off the car. He then got in the driver seat and sped off.

As they got further away from the restaurant, Ning Ran started asking him coldly, "Why are you here?"

"It's fortunate that I'm here. How else would you have gotten out of that situation?" Feng Minsheng said smugly.

"Did you follow me here? Have you been following me the entire time?"

"I didn't. I was just passing by." Feng Minsheng denied her accusation.

"Passing by? That's too much of a coincidence! So you just happened to be passing by when all that happened?" Ning Ran didn't believe him.

"Maybe we're connected spiritually. I sensed that you were in trouble so I rushed over." Feng Minsheng said.

"You must be following me! Why are you following me? What is your motive?"

"What motive could I possibly have? I just like you and want to protect you. I know you like me too, and I believe we will be together in the end. I have faith in us." Feng Minsheng had a confident look on his face.

"I told you I don't like you, and it's impossible for us to be together. Why won't you stop already? I'm warning you, Feng Minsheng. You'd better give up on whatever motives you may have right now! Otherwise, you'll face the consequences yourself!" Ning Ran was not holding back one bit.

"Ran, how could you say that to me? You didn't even thank me for saving you today, and now you're accusing me of following you? That hurts me so much." Feng Minsheng said.

"Don't give me that nonsense! I've always felt something was off about you, but I just don't have any proof right now. If I find out that you do have an ulterior motive, I'll make you pay for it!"

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Nan Mansion, Commoner Residence. Zheng Lunlun's pretty face had been scratched in the chaos, and was being treated by the family doctor. Although it was not a serious injury, the family doctor was still very cautious when treating it to minimize the risk of leaving a scar.

"Is Third Uncle..... coming over.....?"

Nan Xing couldn't stand the stuttering and motioned for Zheng Lunlun to stop talking, "I know what you mean. I'm thinking about how I will deal with him too, so stop talking for now. It feels exhausting listening to you."

"I can't help..... help it either." Zheng Lunlun's face went red again. "I know you can't help it. Don't worry, you'll get better." "Is uncle coming?" Zheng Lunlun went back to using three word sentences again.

"After such a huge incident, of course he would come. Don't worry, I'll take the blame for this." Nan Xing said. Nan Xing was in a bad mood himself, mainly because Ning Ran was taken away by that man again. And it happened in public too!

The images of Ning Ran being dragged away were captured on camera and were being spread all over the internet. With that, all kinds of rumors started spreading. One of the most eye-catching and widely spread versions was that Ning Ran had an affair with multiple men at the same time, and got into a polygamous relationship.

The netizens loved juicy gossip like these the most. The juicier the content, the faster it would spread. Soon after, some negative news about Ning Ran had also been brought up, and she became a target for waves of condemnation from all the netizens.

However, negative news was also a form of popularity and Ning Ran found herself on the hot topic searches once again.

The mobile internet era was truly a terrifying one. It had only been a short time since the incident took place, and it had already been bumped onto the hot topic searches.

Nan Chen saw it too. He had an ice-cold expression on his face when he entered the room. Even before he spoke, his cold aura had put Nan Xing and Zheng Lunlun under tremendous pressure. "Brother."

"Third Uncle." Nan Chen ignored them and asked the doctor, "Is it serious?"

"No, it's just a scratch so there won't be a scar. However, it's best not to consume soy sauce and spicy food during this period of time." the doctor said.

Nan Chen waved at the doctor, motioning for him to leave. Zheng Lunlun and Nan Xing got even more nervous. "Whose idea was it?" Nan Chen asked coldly.

"Me." Both Nan Xing and Zheng Lunlun answered at the same time. At such a critical moment, the two men were quite responsible and both wanted to bear the responsibility.

But Nan Chen didn't believe them. He knew these two guys very well. Neither of them would dare disobey his orders so brazenly unless someone had instigated them somehow. Nan Chen deduced that it was undoubtedly Ning Ran who did it.

He had originally thought that Nan Xing and Zheng Lunlun would put all the blame on Ning Ran as she was not present, but he didn't expect the result to be quite the opposite. Both of them were trying to defend her.

This made Nan Chen even angrier.

That woman was able to have his own people listen to her.

If she were to marry into the Nan family, wouldn't she have the entire Nan Mansion in chaos then?

"Whose idea is it, really?" Nan Chen asked coldly again.

"Me." Zheng Lunlun and Nan Xing both answered at the same time again.

Nan Chen frowned even deeper as he thought to himself, Are these two so determined to defend that woman?

"Very well."

Nan Chen took two steps forward and pointed at Nan Xing, "So you're going to cover for her till the end, right? I'll have someone book you a flight to Africa right now. You aren't allowed to return for another three years!"

That left Nan Xing terrified.

Three years? He was going crazy with just one year, and now he had to spend three years there?

"Brother, please don't be angry. It's my fault, I shouldn't have brought Lunlun out. I was the one craving for hotpot and couldn't resist the temptation....."

"Shut up! You grew up eating all sorts of luxurious food. You wouldn't crave hotpot like that! Do you think I'm stupid?" Nan Chen was furious.

"It's me, it's..... me that craved..... I was in..... the hospital for..... way too long...... The food was..... too bland, so..... I wanted to..... go out and..... have something different..... but now I..... I've caused them....."

He got stuck and couldn't continue his sentence.

The nervousness worsened his stuttering so much that he couldn't continue speaking.

Nan Chen felt both anger and heartache seeing Zheng Lunlun in pain as he struggled to talk.

Zheng Lunlun became like this because he went to rescue him in the forest.

So Nan Chen had always felt guilty towards Zheng Lunlun.

"Alright, you don't have to say it if you can't."

"Third Uncle, I....." Zheng Lunlun's face was red as he looked at Nan Chen with a pitiful expression.

Nan Chen softened up a little.

He didn't mean to blame Zheng Lunlun. He was angry that Nan Xing and Zheng Lunlun were still trying to defend that woman even after what had happened.

"If you want to have hotpot, I can arrange for it. Why did you have to get rid of the bodyguards and escape by yourselves?" Nan Chen's tone eased a little.

He was afraid that he might pressure Zheng Lunlun too much if he were harsher on him, and cause Zheng Lunlun to stop speaking completely, which would be troublesome.

"I didn't dare." Zheng Lunlun lowered his head.

"Am I such an unreasonable person?" Nan Chen asked.

They both kept quiet. It was obvious that they were both thinking, *You are quite unreasonable sometimes!*

"Now there are a lot of rumors on the internet, all of which are detrimental to the Nan family. The only one who stands to profit from it is that woman. She's on the hot topic now, and you fools have been used!"

"No, she isn't that kind of person." Nan Xing immediately argued.

"Then what kind of person is she?" Nan Chen got angrier.

"She meant well. She didn't expect for things to be like this either."

Nan Chen's burning anger that had died down was reignited again.

"Have you gone crazy as well, defending her like that? She was rescued by that same man! Why would he show up there if they weren't in on it? She was the one who asked you two to go out, right? Then she got the journalists to follow her and used you to boost her popularity! She and that man are on the same side, and she's used you two like fools!"

Nan Chen was so angry that he had been yelling for quite a while despite being a man of few words.

Nan Xing and Zheng Lunlun didn't dare say a word.

"Isn't that the case? Think about it, isn't that the case?"

"No, it isn't." Zheng Lunlun mumbled.

He didn't believe that it was Ning Ran's plan as he was the one who suggested the whole thing.

He was the one who forced Ning Ran to pay up, so she had no other choice but to agree to take him out for hotpot.

Zheng Lunlun believes that this was definitely not Ning Ran's doing for sure.

Nan Chen felt like he was going to explode with anger.

Suddenly, he went quiet and stared at Zheng Lunlun and Nan Xing.

How would he save his closest relatives from being bewitched by that woman?

"You go to Africa tomorrow." Nan Chen pointed at Nan Xing.

Then he pointed at Zheng Lunlun, "As for you, I'll have someone arrange a press conference for you tomorrow. You will explain everything to the journalists yourself."

Zheng Lunlun panicked even more. Wouldn't that be his doom?

Wouldn't his stuttering problem be exposed if he were to speak to the journalists?

He might not even be able to say a single word from the nervousness by then!

"Please don't!" Both Nan Xing and Zheng Lunlun begged for mercy at the same time, and it looked very dramatic.

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"You don't want to go to Africa?"

Nan Xing shook his head immediately and said, "Nope, not even a little." Nan Chen turned to Zheng Lunlun next and asked, "Don't want to face the paparazzi?"

"No way!" replied Zheng Lunlun immediately. "Fine, then I'll give you both one last chance," said Nan Chen coldly, "Regardless of what happens next, the two of you are not allowed to be in contact with that woman!"

Nan Xing and Zheng Lunlun turned to one another. They were confused about what Nan Chen was trying to say. "In other words, the two of you are not allowed to help her, no matter what happens," explained Nan Chen.

The two men looked at each other again. "You don't agree with my terms? Okay, I'll have someone buy the plane tickets for you." "No, wait," said Nan Xing quickly to admit defeat, "I agree, I agree!"

"I will have someone bring you to the hospital right now. The specialist known for treating stutters is there and your treatment will begin tomorrow. While being treated, you are not to leave the hospital!"

"Okay uncle, but..." Zheng Lunlun wanted to say more on Ning Ran's behalf, but his stuttering was acting up again. Nan Chen's deadly glare made it even more impossible for Zheng Lunlun to talk.

Zheng Lunlun knew that Nan Chen could be stubborn. He also knew that the more they tried to help Ning Ran, the worse off she would be, so they had to listen to Nan Chen for the moment. They had to let Nan Chen cool off before they spoke again, so Zheng Lunlun kept his mouth shut.

Nan Chen didn't speak after he saw that Zheng Lunlun had decided to keep quiet. Nan Chen was relieved then because he had finally dealt with his family.

That woman was too scheming, and if those two weren't under constant supervision, they would be tricked.

There was no other way. He had to start dealing with his family first.

At that moment, Nan Xing's phone rang. It was Ning Ran.

Nan Xing checked his phone then turned to Nan Chen.

"She called?"

"Yes."

"Tell her that the kids are asleep and would be sent to school tomorrow so she didn't need to worry."

"Okay."

Nan Xing picked up the phone and repeated what Nan Chen had told him to say.

Still, Nan Xing didn't want Ning Ran to be overly worried so he added, "Don't worry, the kids are sleeping really well. You should rest up too."

Nan Chen's eyes were angry and were warning Nan Xing so Nan Xing quickly hung up.

.

On the other side, Ning Ran couldn't sleep well at all.

Although she knew that the kids were safe with the Nan family, she was still worried because the kids had mostly been with her.

When dawn came, Ning Ran got sleepy and went to sleep, but she was soon woken up by Cheng Xiangyun's screams.

Cheng Xiangyun's scream came from the living room, but it managed to wake Ning Ran up even though the bedroom door was closed. That was just how loud Cheng Xiangyun had been.

It was a voice that was louder than a lion's roar and could alert both Heaven and Hell.

Ning Ran was scared out of her bed and rushed to the living room without putting her slippers on first. In the living room, Ning Ran saw Cheng Xiangyun holding her own mobile phone and was jumping around like a terrifying and crazy person.

What could have happened to get her into a state like this? Did she get dumped? Wait, that didn't seem possible because Cheng Xiangyun hadn't been in contact with any men and didn't even have a crush. How could she have been dumped?

Ning Ran rushed over anyway to hug Cheng Xiangyun tightly. "What is it? What's wrong?" asked Ning Ran, "Don't worry. There's nothing scary about being dumped. We'll just replace him with an uglier... ah no, I mean, a more handsome boyfriend."

"That is amazing," Cheng Xiangyun's crazy dance kept going as she said, "That is amazing!"

"Don't think about how amazing he is. If he doesn't love you, he doesn't love you," said Ning Ran who was trying to calm Cheng Xiangyun down, "Don't think about him anymore. It's okay. You still have me."

"What do you mean by 'love'? Are you nuts?" said Cheng Xiangyun, "Since when has he ever loved me?"

"Huh? He never loved you? Oh, so it's a one-sided love?" said Ning Ran before she sighed and continued, "My gosh, woman. Aren't you a little old to have crushes and be a secret admirer? You should've just gone and flirted with the guy. Gosh, no wonder you're in such a bad shape."

"What the hell are you talking about?" asked Cheng Xiangyun, "Let me go. I never said I was in love with another person."

Ning Ran wanted to give Cheng Xiangyun a big hug to comfort Cheng Xiangyun's wounded soul, but Ning Ran's kind gesture was repaid with annoyance.

"If you didn't have your heart broken, why are you acting like you're suicidal?"

"I'm not suicidal. I'm happy!"

"You're happy after being dumped? Your crazy dance didn't look happy at all! Your reaction to happiness is a little too weird woman. You're scaring everybody."

"Look, look, isn't this just so freaking amazing?" said Cheng Xiangyun as she pointed at the screen on her phone, "Your Weibo account gained more than 500 thousand followers in one night! Moreover, those aren't robot accounts! Those are real accounts used by real people. Isn't that amazing?"

Ning Ran finally understood what was happening with Cheng Xiangyun. It's just a Weibo account. Do you really need to act so crazy?

It's getting more and more difficult to understand what that spinster was thinking about.

"Let me see," said Ning Ran as she reached for the phone.

"No, it's best you don't," said Cheng Xiangyun who dodged to keep Ning Ran away from the phone.

"Why not?"

"I think it's best to wait a couple of days before you take a look at it."

Ning Ran understood what was happening then. Most of the new followers must be haters who were only there to mock and tease her, and that was why Cheng Xiangyun didn't want to let Ning Ran see it yet.

"It's mostly haters, isn't it? Did they spew insults? Don't worry. I can take it."

"There are a couple of rather uncouth comments and messages, but don't take it personally. You know how those youngsters are," said Cheng Xiangyun.

"I'm fine. Let me see."

"Nope, you're fuming. I'll let you take a look if you promise you won't go crazy."

"I won't go crazy. What's there to be crazy about? Haters are still people, and regardless of the situation, being able to gain 500 thousand followers within a single night is a pretty big deal for a nameless actress like me."

"Alright then, take a look."

Ning Ran took a look at the phone and was immediately taken aback. There really were 500 thousand more followers.

Then she read the first comment and her heart skipped a beat.

The comment said, "Your mom is dead! Shameless old broad. How dare you go after a man so much younger than you?"

That comment received the most likes.

Scrolling down, she saw a comment that said, "I wish your whole family would die! You're not even worthy of carrying Zheng Lunlun's shoes, you clout-chasing b****!"

Ning Ran thought that her heart was strong enough to withstand the accusations, but her face darkened upon seeing the second comment.

Ning Ran was okay with being targeted, but she could not stand to have her family targeted.

"What the f*ck?" That was one of the rare moments when Ning Ran cussed aloud.

Cheng Xiangyun took back her phone and said, "I warned you, but you insisted on taking a look. Now you're all mad."

"Delete my account. I won't post anything anymore," said Ning Ran whose lips were quivering, "Let's see how those a**holes spew their insults when they have nowhere to post them!"

"Calm down. An actress needs her own social media account. Besides, cussing is just a fan's way of communicating..."

"Communicating? Does this look like they're trying to talk to me? They cursed my mother and my family!" shouted Ning Ran, "What is wrong with them? I didn't steal their food or their money. Did they have to curse to that extent?"

"See? I told you not to look. Now you can't calm down."

"Those are Zheng Lunlun's fans. You had dinner with Zheng Lunlun yesterday, and someone live-streamed the whole thing which turned you into a hot topic."

"Zheng Lunlun's fans didn't know what was going on and thought you were using him to accelerate your career so they came to your Weibo account to insult you. Why care about what a bunch of immature, underage girls thinks?"

"If they're underage, they should spend their time studying. Why the hell are they following a celebrity's news when they don't even have a brain?" said the furious Ning Ran, "And if they have to chase after a celebrity, why do they have to curse someone else? Also, why are they cursing my family when I am their target? What the hell is wrong with them?"

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Ning Ran calmed down after Cheng Xiangyun spent some time pacifying her. The truth was, being insulted was a normal phenomenon for an actress. Ning Ran was only that agitated because she was rarely insulted.

The reason why Ning Ran wasn't insulted before that incident was because she wasn't famous so little to no people paid attention to what she did.

Becoming famous meant that she would be able to enjoy the resources and attention of the public because she was a public figure. Unfortunately, those resources and attention weren't free. A person should be prepared to withstand the backlash that came with fame.

Your fans supported you. They went to see your concerts, bought the products you endorsed, and gave you unlimited wealth and admiration... But did they do it for free? Of course not.

Fans had certain expectations from celebrities and wanted the celebrities to act a certain way. It's similar to the way a parent puts his/her expectations on the kid or the way lovers expected things from one another.

The moment those expectations were not met, the fans would start abandoning the celebrities and started to insult them. Power and responsibility depended on one another. One must carry out their responsibilities to enjoy the power given to them.

A celebrity's job was to satisfy their fans mentally and on a spiritual level. If celebrities' did not meet their fan's expectations, their fans would not be satisfied, or may even get hurt. Under those circumstances, who else could the fans blame?

Ning Ran understood those fundamentals too, but she had never experienced it firsthand. The intense attacks from the internet hurt her pride and overwhelmed her.

After calming down, Ning Ran started to strategize an action plan to solve the problem. "Should I tell them the truth? If I don't, they will keep attacking me," said the frustrated Ning Ran.

"No, you can't do anything right now," refuted Cheng Xiangyun, "No matter what you say, they will put the blame on you, and as long as you make an appearance, they will insult you."

"So I just have to take it quietly? Let them attack me like I'm a punching bag?"

"Silence is the best course of action for now. Zheng Lunlun's fan ranges from twelveyear-old tweens to fifty-year-old elderlies..."

"Hang on," said Ning Ran with disbelief in her eyes, "Fifty-year-old seniors are paying attention to entertainment news?"

"Of course," said Cheng Xiangyun, "The elderlies nowadays, especially the women, are adopting a parental style and are almost as crazy as younger fans."

"Parental style?"

"That's right. They see Zheng Lunlun as their own kid because they watched him grow up and live the life they've always dreamed of."

"Oh my gosh," wailed Ning Ran, "So now they are coming after me because they see me as the old woman who is trying to steal their son away?"

"More or less," said Cheng Xiangyun who couldn't fully contain her laughter.

"Could you be a little more serious?" growled Ning Ran, "Why are you still laughing at a time like this?"

"Alright, I'll stop," said Cheng Xiangyun who turned serious immediately, "And yes, your description is a little weird, but that is the general idea."

"As for the younger fans," said Ning Ran as she sighed and continued, "It's easy to understand what is going on in their head. That blonde rascal is their knight in shining armor. They think that I am not worthy of having dinner with their lover so they want me gone."

"Yes, and that is why you should be kinder and try to understand how they're feeling," said Cheng Xiangyun.

"Okay, now you're just being mean to me. Did you see how they insulted me?" said Ning Ran whose anger was beginning to rise again, "They cursed my family!" "Yes, they are too much. The internet has always been full of haters, but keeping quiet is the only way to avoid more conflict."

"The best solution is to have Zheng Lunlun step up and personally explain what had happened last night to pacify his fans."

"And he must do so personally or his fans won't buy it. They would just assume that his personal account was used by his manager to send the message," said Cheng Xiangyun.

Ning Ran shook her head and said, "That won't be possible."

"Why not? Aren't you two close? Why can't he step up and help you explain the situation?"

Still, Ning Ran shook her head and said, "He can't right now, and I don't want him to do that for me. It'd destroy his reputation."

"Not likely. He is a super celebrity so everything will calm down quickly if he is willing to personally tell everyone the truth. It shouldn't have much of an impact on him," said Cheng Xiangyun.

Ning Ran continued to shake her head, but she didn't explain why.

She knew that Zheng Lunlun was suffering from serious stutters, but the paparazzi cannot know about it.

If anyone were to find out about it, the current commercial loss would be devastating, and its negative impact on Zheng Lunlun's future would be unpredictable as well.

Ning Ran was Zheng Lunlun's friend so she didn't want him to sacrifice his stardom for her, but she couldn't tell Cheng Xiangyun about Zheng Lunlun's stutter either. She didn't have the right to do so unless Zheng Lunlun gave her permission.

"Forget about it, let's leave it for now. We'll wait for it to die down. This is an era where new and exciting things are happening every day. My news will be replaced by other rumors soon enough. I won't think about it anymore. I'll just focus on shooting the show," said Ning Ran who was trying to make herself feel better.

"That's the spirit," said Cheng Xiangyun, "Who cares what others think? We must be optimistic and smile at the hurdles life throws at us."

"Pfft, don't act all Zen," said Ning Ran who rolled her eyes at Cheng Xiangyun, "You're just being mean to me."

After having their breakfast, the two friends drove to the set where the show was being shot.

Before they even reached the set, they saw that it was surrounded. When they got closer, they noticed that there were hundreds of people there. Most of them were angry teenagers, and they were chanting something aloud.

As they listened more carefully, they heard that the people were chanting, "Go to Hell, Ding Mi! Come out, b****!"

That was a bad sign. The haters weren't just yelling online, they were also taking actions offline.

"My gosh, they came all the way here? Just how much do they hate me? And how did they find out that I'm shooting a show here? Who let the news out?"

Cheng Xiangyun was grim too because it looked like things were getting out of control.

At first, they had thought that it was just an online rant, but the haters had set up a protest.

This is bad!

"You're right. It's so early in the morning, and everyone is here so someone must've coordinated it to get to you. Someone must be after you so they leaked the location of where you will be shooting a show and led the haters here," commented Cheng Xiangyun.

"But everyone signed an NDA. Who would risk being sued and leak that information out?"

"With the internet being the way it is, leaking information without being caught is too easy. It's likely that someone on the inside had done so intentionally to gather the haters and affect your work..."

Cheng Xiangyun hadn't even finished saying her bit when Ning Ran's phone rang.

It was the director, Wang Yan.

Wang Yan had just arrived as well and had just realized that the place had been surrounded.

Wang Yan went out with his friends and was drunk the night before so he had no idea what had happened on the internet.

He was also stunned when he saw the place surrounded by people who were cursing Ding Mi.

"Director, this is Ding Mi," said Ning Ran who had answered the phone.

"What is going on?" yelled the director, "Who did you piss off and why is everyone after you?"

"It's a long story, director," said the frustrated Ning Ran, "I don't know who I pissed off, but it's probably Zheng Lunlun's fans. Somebody's after me and had gathered everyone here to personally attack me."

"So what do we do now? With everyone surrounding the set, there is no way we can shoot the show! What do you plan to do about it?"

The director's words had Ning Ran stumped. How would she know what to do?

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One hour later, Ning Ran was at the headquarters of the Nanshi Corporation. Jiang Zhe had called her and told her that Nan Chen wanted to talk to her. She didn't want to see that Poker Face, but he was the biggest investor of the show.

The production had been halted once more because of her, and the negative impact was indescribable so she was responsible for explaining the situation.

However, the truth was that the Poker Face already knew what had happened so the only reason why he had called her over was to make things even more difficult for her.

She was, in fact, partly responsible for that nightmare so even if the Poker Face was mean to her, she had no choice but to take it because the Poker Face was the only one strong enough to handle a situation like this.

Lowering one's head was a routine activity when living under someone else's care. "Ms. Ning, this way please," said Jiang Zhe who had personally come to welcome her and was smiling as usual.

That was an intelligent man. When others were present, he would refer to her as 'Ms. Ding', but when no one else was around, he would use Ning Ran's birth name.

That made them seem closer and made Ning Ran feel like she was in the presence of a friend.

An old fox like Jiang Zhe knew that even though it would take a lot of twists and turns, there was a good chance that the ridiculously beautiful actress in front of him would be a bride of the Nan Family in the future.

Ning Ran was a 'hidden financial portfolio' and being nice to her may be a good investment for his future.

After Ning Ran entered the private elevator, she frowned and thought *What do I say* when I see that Poker Face later?

Jiang Zhe observed the future Young Mistress's troubled expression and said, "Ms. Ning, don't worry. Sir Chen had invited you over to talk about the disturbance on the production set, but someone malicious must've done something to make it happen so it's not your fault."

Something about Jiang Zhe's words felt off so Ning Ran thought about them and concluded that Nan Chen was still investigating the matter but had asked her over anyway to make things difficult for her.

"What does Sir Chen plan to do?"

The elevator was moving fast, and they would reach Nan Chen's office soon. Time was running out so Ning Ran decided to be direct instead of wasting time being polite.

I better find out everything I can before I deal with that Poker Face.

"I'm not sure," answered Jiang Zhe, "However, I do know that Sir Chen cares deeply about the kids and is worried that they might be hurt by the incident."

Ning Ran got the message immediately.

The Poker Face is taking advantage of the situation to take my children away! His excuse for doing so would be to question how I intend to keep the children safe when I can't even protect myself.

At that moment, Ning Ran's phone rang. Cheng Xiangyun had called.

"The security at our place called. People had gathered around my house to try to get to you. Ran, don't come home tonight. It's not safe anymore."

They went all the way to Cheng Xiangyun's house?

Who could've leaked that information? Who knew that Ning Ran was staying there?

Ning Ran had a better idea of who the main culprit behind these incidents might be.

"I got it," replied Ning Ran whose heart was getting heavier.

"Don't worry, it'll pass soon enough. You can stay in a hotel for the time being or go live in the Nan Family's place. Oh wait, didn't Nan Xing say he wanted to give you a villa? You could..."

"Shut up, woman," said the exasperated Ning Ran.

"You shut up. You must be the world's dumbest person to turn down a villa like that," replied Cheng Xiangyun, "Why am I a friend to an idiot like you?"

<u>"Yeah, yeah, yo</u>u're smart, but you can't even find a husband."

"Oh, and you can?"

Ning Ran wasn't in the mood to keep arguing with Cheng Xiangyun so she hung up.

Nan Chen was having a conference so he had Ning Ran wait for him in the office.

She waited for two long hours.

The anxious Ning Ran kept drinking the coffee that the secretary had prepared for her and ended up finishing 5 whole cups.

With so much liquid in her system, Ning Ran's visit to the toilet became more frequent.

Her breathtaking beauty caught all the employee's attention. They got their phone out to confirm that the woman in their office was the one who got on the front page with Zheng Lunlun and the fourth young master of the Nan Family.

One of the employees deliberated for a long while before she decided to approach Ning Ran and ask to take a photo together.

"You want to take a photo with me?" said Ning Ran who wasn't sure if she had heard right.

"Yes, we love you," said the female employee, "and we admire your bravery."

Bravery? What bravery? Was it because they thought it took guts to have dinner with Zheng Lunlun? Or did they think that it was brave to be one of the most hated people on the news?

"Am I brave?" murmured Ning Ran.

"Of course," said the employee with excitement in her eyes, "You were brave when dealing with the camera and are able to ignore the haters gracefully. You are our role model!"

Ning Ran was delighted to hear those words. She must take that photo together to thank the employee for her encouragement if nothing else.

Hence, the two of them took a couple of photos together while Ning Ran had her arm on the employee's shoulder.

"Can I also have an autograph?" asked the employee again.

Ning Ran was happy to hear that.

Only celebrities were asked to sign autographs so it was weird that a nameless actress like her was asked.

"There's no need for that," said Ning Ran who smiled wryly, "I'm not that famous."

"No, you have lots of fans now," refuted the employee, "My colleagues and I are your fans. You are beautiful and brave, and are our idol!"

Just for that, Ning Ran must sign an autograph for her.

"Okay then," agreed Ning Ran, "Where do I sign?"

The employee handed Ning Ran a notebook that was previously prepared.

Ning Ran hesitated but still signed 'Ding Mi' on the notebook.

That was the first time she signed an autograph so it was downright ugly.

It didn't feel right so Ning Ran tried to redo it, but the employee suddenly took her notebook back and fled in the opposite direction.

Ning Ran was stunned and wondered, what's going on?

Then, she noticed that the other employees were also running away like they had seen a ghost.

That was when Ning Ran realized what was going on. She turned around to see Nan Chen's angry face.

Oh, so they did see a ghost.

"I…" Ning Ran's lips moved, but she didn't actually know what to say.

"Did you really think you've become a celebrity?" asked Nan Chen whose tone was insulting and filled with disdain.

"I... No, I just..."

Nan Chen turned around and went back to his office.

Ning Ran sighed and followed Nan Chen into his office like she was a kid who had just been caught being naughty.

"She approached me and asked..."

Ning Ran was trying to explain the situation, but she was interrupted by Nan Chen's wave. He didn't want to dwell on that topic.

Nan Chen pressed a button on his desk, and his secretary brought two more cups of coffee into the office. One cup was for Nan Chen while the other one was for Ning Ran.

Ning Ran didn't dare to take another sip. She'll stay awake for the next two days if she keeps drinking.

"Wang Yan said that the production will be delayed by at least three days. We're losing 800 thousand a day because of it, and our total loss will be about 2.4 million," said Nan Chen in a terrifying tone.

Ning Ran felt a chill down her spine the moment she heard those numbers.

He's not asking me to pay for it, is he?

"Are you paying by cash or via a bank transfer?" asked Nan Chen whose sharp, merciless eyes were glaring at Ning Ran.

"I... I'm broke."

Nan Chen was stunned because he wasn't expecting an answer like that. However, it didn't seem to have any problems either because the lack of funds may just be the best excuse to survive through it.

She didn't have any money so what could he do?

"Playing dirty, huh?" said Nan Chen, "The legal team of the Nanshi Corporation is topnotch, and we can take legal actions anytime we want."

Ning Ran's lips curved into a beautiful smile because she wasn't buying any of that.

"There's no point in taking legal actions. I have no asset for the judge to take away so there is nothing to do. Having me thrown into the jail might be possible, but that would affect the kids' development in the long term, and you won't do that to them."

Nan Chen was furious to hear that.

That woman is so calm even when she's acting so shamelessly!

Yet, her words and analysis were on point!

Celebrity Girl Is My Wife Chapter 177

"I've owed Zheng Lunlun a couple hundred thousand for quite a while now, but I never had the financial capabilities to repay him. That was how he pressured me into taking him out for dinner that day, and how the rumors began. It is useless to try and pressure me into paying because I am too poor."

Nan Chen's lips were shaking with pure rage. She wasn't ashamed of her condition, but was proud of how terrible it was?!

How utterly shameless!

Ning Ran was so glad to be able to fight back that she had almost forgotten about the situation she was in.

Ning Ran realized her mistake soon and straightened herself before saying, "That is not something I wanted to happen. I hope that Sir Chen is understanding toward a struggling actress who has to take care of two kids."

Ning Ran regretted her words the moment she said them. Those last few words about the kids were her biggest mistakes.

She knew that Nan Chen was trying to use the money to take her kids away, yet she brought them up. How stupid was she?

As suspected, the bright Nan Chen caught the mistake and used it against her. "You don't need to worry about the kids anymore because we'll take care of them. You can focus on working and repaying your debt. We will draft a legal notice and give you one year to repay all 2.4 million."

Ning Ran wanted to slap herself hard. Dumbass! You knew there was something up his sleeve, but you still step on that trap. Did you lose all your brain cells? Idiot! Why can't you talk without making any mistakes? Like that man does!

"I take back what I said!"

Nan Chen stared at Ning Ran with distance in his eyes, but he didn't speak.

You want to take back what you said? No way! Not even in your dreams!

"I'll take care of the kids myself. As for the 2.4 million loss, it's not entirely my fault."

"We kept moving and changing shooting sites, but those haters found our exact location."

"That proves that someone on the insides had leaked the information so this whole thing is a set-up."

"Sir Chen is so smart and powerful. I am sure your beautiful mind can see through all this and find the real culprits."

Ning Ran's sudden praise had Nan Chen frowning because he wasn't used to that kind of treatment.

In fact, he was uncomfortable with Ning Ran being so nice to him. He felt like a greasy piece of meat had been shoved down his throat, and was making him sick.

Ning Ran didn't care if Nan Chen was comfortable with her praises because she needed to make up for her mistake and prevent her kids from being taken away.

"I am nothing but a nameless actress and was blessed with meeting you, Sir Chen. You allowed me to take part in the show you invest in, and I am grateful for it." "I worked hard to repay your kindness but was disrupted by a perpetrator who caused the production to be delayed. It is out of my control."

"I am but a helpless woman. I don't have the intelligence to deal with difficult situations like these. Only a strong hero like Sir Chen can save me from this disaster."

"I know that peace will return to Flower City if you take charge and destroy all those mean monsters who are disrupting us."

Nan Chen felt a headache coming.

That woman was proud and arrogant like a peacock a minute ago but was humble the next. She had no boundaries, and Nan Chen didn't know how to deal with that.

He had planned a scheme to fight against Ning Ran and force her into obeying him, but she had messed everything up.

She was like a ball of cotton that wouldn't be hurt no matter how hard one punched it and was able to change the subject without anyone noticing.

They were supposed to be talking about who should take care of the kids, but the topic had been changed to her asking Nan Chen to help solve the issue with the show.

What a terrifying monster.

Nan Chen took a big gulp of his coffee to realign his thoughts.

He had been a business tycoon for years and had faced countless experts in negotiation. Some of his opponents had been a country's minister or a multinational corporations' board of directors.

Nan Chen had always been able to adapt and combat against their strategies and tricks while retaining his quiet style.

Yet, Nan Chen often felt helpless when dealing with that woman.

He would even be distracted by the sweet orange blossom scent that exuded from her body every now and then.

He was annoyed but he couldn't do anything about it.

To make matters worse, he would feel guilty after being attracted to that scent because the woman in front of him was Nan Xing's lover... or at least she used to be.

That guilt gnawed at him like a poisonous snake and tortured him.

He had thought about seeking help from his psychiatrist, Qin Lan, but he couldn't bring himself to talk about it.

He had also planned to leave Flower City to get away from the scent by studying abroad, but that wasn't possible either because the Nanshi Corporation needed him. He was responsible for the corporation and could not leave just because a woman made him uncomfortable.

No one but Nan Chen himself could understand how difficult it was to be the powerful Sir Chen.

That was why he hated Ning Ran. After all, she was the root of all his guilt.

That being said, the hatred he felt wasn't absolute. It was a strange, indescribable kind of hate.

Ning Ran was observant and caught Nan Chen being distracted for a moment.

Nan Chen's eyes weren't cold and distant then but were exuding a mysterious form of loss and disappointment.

Ning Ran was shocked to see that. Who would've thought that the heartless Poker Face's eyes could show emotions that strong?

What was he thinking about?

Ning Ran didn't disturb him. Nan Chen's distraction was a good opportunity for her to take a break and gather her thoughts.

Battling against an opponent like Nan Chen was exhausting, and Ning Ran needed the break.

When Nan Chen noticed that he was distracted, he adjusted his chair and straightened his back. The cruel glint returned to his eyes immediately.

"I will take care of the show's problem," replied Nan Chen.

"Thank you, Sir Chen," said Ning Ran who kept buttering him up, "I knew there's nothing you can't solve in Flower City."

"But your responsibilities are not to be excused either," said Nan Chen who had no intention of letting Ning Ran go.

Ning Ran was stunned to hear that. He's not backing down even though I'm being ridiculously nice?

Are my words and praises too tame, or is his immunity against beautiful words too strong?

"The kids will stay at the Nan Family's house for now," said Nan Chen whose intention had always been that.

All that discussion was done just for that one sentence and that request.

Ning Ran didn't answer right away because her current state made it impossible for her to deny that request.

As Cheng Xiangyun had mentioned, the haters had the house surrounded so even Ning Ran herself couldn't go home.

She couldn't be that selfish and let her children face hardship with her so them living with the Nan Family was the best arrangement at that moment.

The only thing that worried Ning Ran was that Nan Chen's version of 'staying over for now' would turn into a permanent arrangement because that was Poker Face's style of dealing with things.

How do I deal with it? Do I agree with it or not?

"You don't have a choice," Nan Chen pointed out.

"Sir Chen..."

"Don't need to act so humble," said Nan Chen sternly, "I never liked that title, but everyone kept calling me 'Sir Chen', and I got tired of correcting them. You don't need to address me that way."

Ning Ran sighed. Looks like praising him is not the way to go.

It can't ease things over, and might even cause new conflicts to arise.

It is so difficult to please this Poker Face. I have to come up with something else.

"I'll let the kids stay over on one condition."

"The kids are staying at the Nan residence. Do you agree?"

Nan Chen's words were truly infuriating.

Ning Ran kept her cool and took a deep breath before saying, "I want to move into the residence as well. I want to keep an eye on my kids."

Nan Chen's eyes narrowed dangerously.

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"Permission granted," said Nan Chen who agreed to the terms. Ning Ran was surprised. She didn't think that Nan Chen would agree to those terms.

Her intentions were obvious. She would move into the mansion with the kids, and she would be able to leave with the kids when she moved out. A man as intelligent as Nan Chen must've seen through it, but he still agreed to it.

That made Ning Ran uncomfortable because it made her wonder if Nan Chen had something up his sleeves. "Really?" asked Ning Ran who felt that it was necessary to confirm his reply.

"Yes," said Nan Chen coolly. "Okay," said Ning Ran who was calmer, "So the kids and I will stay in the same room?"

"That won't be possible. Kids of the Nan Family must learn to be independent, and they must have their own rooms. Parents need not accompany them." "You and Nan Xing aren't married yet so it'd be inappropriate for the two of you to share a room." "Grandma and Grandpa had been fighting and were at odds. You'll share a room with grandma for now. It'll give you two a chance to get to know one another," said Nan Chen.

"Huh?" Ning Ran knew that the Poker Face wasn't that nice! He was making her share a room with an old lady who was in the middle of an argument!

Everyone knew that most elderly ladies from rich families were difficult to deal with because they were stubborn, picky, and liked to discriminate against others.

Having a stranger share a room with an elderly woman who was in the middle of an argument was equivalent to sending the stranger in as a punching bag.

Moreover, even if the elderly woman didn't go out of her way to annoy Ning Ran, Ning Ran would still be uncomfortable.

Ning Ran had always been easy-going so she never paid attention to her bad habits. If she wasn't careful, she'd make a mistake and the elderly woman would eat her alive for it.

That Poker Face is truly devious! "I'm not going," refused Ning Ran immediately. "Then forget about it," said Nan Chen, who was waiting for Ning Ran to reject his offer. "You..."

"That's it then." Nan Chen got up and left the room without saying another word to Ning Ran. He had gotten what he wanted so there was no need to talk anymore.

Ning Ran was a little disappointed that she couldn't beat him. She had spent so much time and put so much effort into that argument but was defeated by the Poker Face's indifference.

After exiting Nanshi Corporation's headquarters, Ning Ran started to look for a hotel to stay in. She spent quite some time looking for a place online and picked a cheaper hotel to stay in.

Ning Ran put on a mask so that she won't be recognized and attacked by the haters. There was a time when Ning Ran was jealous of Zheng Lunlun because he was a celebrity who needed a mask whenever he left the house. She never thought that there'd be a day when she needed to wear a mask too.

Ning Ran finally got a taste of what it was like to be a public figure. The heartbreaking bit was that other celebrities were worried about their fans being too sweet whereas Ning Ran was afraid of being targeted.

At the hotel reception, Ning Ran handed her identity card over to register for a room. "Please take off your mask so that we may verify your identity," said the receptionist.

Ning Ran hesitated, but still took her mask off. The moment she took it off, a beautiful face was shown. The receptionist felt that she had seen Ning Ran before so she said, "Are you...?"

"No, I am not!" claimed Ning Ran who wanted to keep herself hidden. "Wow, so you really are..." "I said I'm not!" said Ning Ran before she put on her mask again.

The receptionist looked rather excited when she said, "Don't worry, I won't tell. I am Zheng Lunlun's fan too, but I won't be mean to you."

Am I supposed to thank you for that? thought Ning Ran.

Ning Ran didn't want to stay there anymore since she had been recognized.

"Sorry, but I changed my mind," said Ning Ran, "I won't be staying here anymore."

"Don't worry, I won't tell anyone," said the receptionist, "You're too popular now so you'd be recognized no matter which hotel you live in. You may as well just stay here."

Ning Ran deliberated about whether she should listen to the receptionist.

The receptionist seemed like a reasonable person, but there was no saying whether she would leak the information about where Ning Ran was staying to the public.

"No thanks, I don't want to stay here anymore. Please return my deposit. Thank you."

"Just stay. It's fine," said the young receptionist, "I could pay for your room if you want. Employees get discounts on all rooms."

"It's okay," said Ning Ran who was a little touched, "You don't need to do that."

"Come on, just stay. You have to rent a room somewhere. It's decided. I'll pay for your room and you don't need to spend a dime." "Besides, I work at the reception. If the paparazzi show up, I can phone ahead and let you know," said the receptionist, "Won't that be better for you?"

Ning Ran saw how sincere the receptionist was and decided to stay. There is a good chance that I'll be recognized even if I stay somewhere else so I may as well just stay here.

"Okay, I'll stay," replied Ning Ran with a smile, "And thank you for your kindness, but I prefer paying for my room."

"There's no need. I can pay for it. I get a huge discount anyway. If you really feel that bad, you can buy me dinner."

Ning Ran didn't want to keep talking in a crowded lobby so she agreed to it.

The receptionist personally brought Ning Ran to her room and requested a selfie before leaving the room.

Ning Ran wasn't happy about it, but the receptionist seemed like a nice person, and it didn't seem right to reject that request. Hence, Ning Ran took off her mask and took a selfie with the receptionist.

"My name is Zhang Ying," introduced the receptionist, "I am glad that you're staying at this hotel. I love Zheng Lunlun, and I hope that you two are happy together."

Ning Ran thought about explaining the fact that Zheng Lunlun was not her boyfriend, but later decided against it.

Some things were too complicated to explain so it was better to just keep quiet about it. In the end, Ning Ran smiled as a reply.

"Rest up, I'll take my leave now."

"Okay, thank you."

After Zhang Ying left, Ning Ran fell onto her bed and began browsing the internet on her phone.

That was when she realized that it was a bad move because the haters were being too mean on the internet.

They were no longer just going after her immediate family. They were after all of her ancestors too.

Ning Ran had seen other celebrities being hunted before, and she had always thought that it seemed exciting.

Being on the other end made her realize that things weren't as simple as it looked.

The harsh words and mean comments were downright scary.

Ning Ran couldn't understand why those fans were so mean that they were willing to go on their phone and other devices to attack her. She was a stranger who never really did anything to hurt them, yet they acted like she was their mortal enemy and were determined to destroy her and her family.

That was just too scary.

Ning Ran threw her phone aside and buried her face into her blanket. Tears slowly crept out of her eyes.

Ning Ran rarely cried. She had spent years wandering lost in a foreign country and had learned that tears could never solve anything. That was why Ning Ran didn't cry during some of the most difficult times of her life.

With two kids by her side, she had no choice but to be strong because she needed to support them while being both their mom and their dad.

However, she wanted to cry that day. Life was simply too harsh. She had done everything right but was still hurt by a bunch of strangers.

Ning Ran's phone rang just as she was crying.

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The call was from Feng Minsheng. "Ran, where are you? Be strong and ignore the rumors on the internet." "Stop bothering me, Feng Minsheng! If you keep this up, I will call the police!" threatened Ning Ran.

"I am not bothering you. I'm just caring for you," explained Feng Minsheng, "I just want to let you know that I am by your side and will always support you."

"No need. I can take care of myself." "Don't be mean, Ran," said Feng Minsheng, "I know you're in a bad place now, but I'm here for you. I will face this hardship with you, and my heart will always be yours..."

"Stop being cringy," interrupted Ning Ran, "Do you actually have something to say? If not, I'm hanging up." "Where are you? You haven't eaten, right? I'll take you out to lunch."

"I am working at the shooting site so I'll eat there." "You're lying. I am at the studio now, and I heard that the production team had halted production."

"What are you doing there?" demanded Ning Ran, "Don't you have a job? Why are you spying on me?"

"I saw what had happened on the internet and thought that you must be stressed so I wanted to come to give you my support," said Feng Minsheng who was still trying to find out where Ning Ran was, "I didn't know that you're not here. Where are you now? I'll go to you."

"No need and I'm not telling you where I am! Since there's nothing else, I'm hanging up now," said Ning Ran who then hung up.

Ning Ran was still upset after she had hung up the phone so she turned it off and went to sleep.

She had been so tired that she fell asleep despite being in a terrible mood.

Ning Ran was later woken up by the doorbell. She jumped on reflex.

She took a look through the peephole and realized that it was the receptionist – Zhang Ying.

After opening the door, Zhang Ying scanned the room while wearing a strange expression.

"Are you hungry?" asked Zhang Ying, "Would you like me to get you something to eat?"

"I'm not hungry," replied Ning Ran with a smile, "But thanks."

"Are celebrities like you picky when it comes to food?" asked Zhang Ying.

"I wouldn't know because I am not a celebrity. I am just a regular actress so I have no idea how celebrities' lives are."

"That's not true. You're a popular celebrity now. If you don't mind, I can get you something to eat from the hotel's restaurant. It's actually pretty good. What do you want to eat?"

Zhang Ying was very enthusiastic and kind so Ning Ran was a little touched.

The situation had demoted Ning Ran to the rank of a street rat so it was rare to see someone else being so nice to her.

"Really, it's okay. Thank you, but I can go buy something myself if I'm hungry."

"Don't be shy. A meal doesn't cost that much anyway." "Oh, celebrities like you can't eat whatever you want because you have to keep fit, right?" "What would you like to eat? I'll get it for you."

After that, Ning Ran kept rejecting Zhang Ying's offer, but Zhang Ying kept insisting.

It was clear that Zhang Ying was a persistent young woman.

Ning Ran had no choice but to agree to it and said, "Okay then, thank you. I'm actually not picky about food. Some rice and vegetables will do."

"Alright, hang on. I'll be right back."

Zhang Ying returned quickly with lunch. She was very sweet and smart. In order to keep the calories low, she had gotten stir-fried broccoli and boiled eggs.

"Thank you, you're very sweet," said Ning Ran, "Thank you."

"Then can I eat with you?" requested Zhang Ying, "I got two servings."

"Okay, let's eat together."

"Let's take another picture."

The duo held their boxed meal up and took another photo together.

"So how long have you and Lunlun been together?" asked Zhang Ying as she ate.

"There's nothing between us. We're just friends."

"No way!" said the surprised Zhang Ying, "You two look great together, and you're so beautiful that you are a great match to Lunlun."

"But there really is nothing between the two of us..."

"I have absolutely nothing against the two of you together. I like him, but I'm a rational fan."

Zhang Ying was rather insistent on her views, and Ning Ran realized that there was no changing those views so Ning Ran let Zhang Ying be.

After lunch, Zhang Ying packed up and went back to work.

Zhang Ying stopped by two more times to take a look around the room before leaving.

Ning Ran found that to be weird. Zhang Ying seemed nice but there was something off about it.

A day had passed in the hotel room.

At night, Ning Ran couldn't bear it anymore because she wanted to see her children. It had been two days since she had seen them.

Ning Ran called Nan Xing to tell him that she wanted to meet the kids.

Nan Xing agreed to it immediately and said that he would make the necessary arrangements so that Ning Ran and the kids can have dinner together in a secluded area.

Ning Ran's spirit started to lift up. Nothing else mattered as long as she could see her kids, but she felt conflicted because she was worried about being recognized and scaring the children.

Nan Xing called just as Ning Ran was feeling nervous. He stuttered and gave a bunch of excuses about how everybody was busy. His intention was clear – to tell Ning Ran that she couldn't see her kids that day.

Ning Ran understood that it must be the Poker Face's orders.

The Poker Face didn't agree to it, and Nan Xing didn't dare to disobey because they had just caused a huge problem.

"It's alright. I won't meet them tonight. I'm worried about scaring the kids anyway because I'm in trouble at the moment," said Ning Ran, "Maybe I'll see them tomorrow."

"Ran, where are you? You may not be able to see the kids today, but you can still see a hot guy. That'll cheer you up too."

"A hot guy?"

"Me," replied Nan Xing who was just shameless, "Obviously, I am a handsome and hot man."

"I'll pass, Mr. Hot Guy. I'm not in the mood. I'm hanging up now, 'kay?" said Ning Ran before she hung up.

Someone rang the doorbell once more. It was Zhang Ying.

Zhang Ying's shift had ended so she was out of her costume and was wearing a beautiful skirt. It looked like she had even put on some make-up.

"He's not here yet?" asked Zhang Ying directly.

"Who's not here yet?" asked the confused Ning Ran.

"Lunlun. When is he coming over?"

Ning Ran caught what was going on immediately. Zhang Ying had insisted that Ning Ran stayed in the hotel because Zhang Ying thought that Zheng Lunlun would make an appearance.

Zhang Ying had thought that Ning Ran and Zheng Lunlun had decided to meet in a hotel so Zhang Ying made Ning Ran stay so as to meet Zheng Lunlun.

That was a pretty good plan, but it was too naive.

Zheng Lunlun and Ning Ran were polar opposites when money was concerned. A celebrity like Zheng Lunlun would never stay in a two-star hotel.

"I'm sorry, but he's not coming," said Ning Ran, "As I said, we're just friends so he has no reason to stop by."

Zhang Ying looked disappointed but refused to back down. "You mean it's still too early so he won't be here until much later?"

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Chapter 180 Confused

Zhang Ying was enthusiastic, but Ning Ran didn't want to lie so Ning Ran told Zhang Ying the truth and said, "Zheng Lunlun's not coming." "Aren't you two a thing?" asked the confused Zhang Ying, "Why isn't he visiting?"

Ning Ran was a little tired as she said, "As I mentioned, we're not together. The rumors were just that – rumors."

Zhang Ying looked even more disappointed as her smile started to dissipate. Just then, her eyes sparkled again as she asked, "The two of you seem close so you must have his phone number or his WeChat number, right?"

Ning Ran stared without speaking. "You do, don't you?" asked Zhang Ying excitedly. Ning Ran wanted to lie, but that lie would be so stupid that even Ning Ran herself wouldn't have bought it. "I can't share it with you," confessed Ning Ran, "It's private."

"Don't worry about that. I'm not asking for his number. I just thought that you could tell him you're here and invite him over." Zhang Ying was proud of herself for coming up with such an amazing idea, and her face lit up with excitement and anticipation.

Ning Ran sensed the kind of insanity that only existed in fans. The well-mannered and sweet girl in front of Ning Ran was no different from the crazy fans online. Underneath that graceful exterior was the heart of a crazy fan.

I was too careless. Zhang Ying's kindness and enthusiasm had never been for me. They were all targeted at Zheng Lunlun! Zhang Ying's logic was simple. She thought that Ning Ran and Zheng Lunlun were together so she was trying to meet Zheng Lunlun through Ning Ran.

For that meeting, Zhang Ying had paid for the room to get Ning Ran to stay. Ning Ran was the bait, and Zheng Lunlun was the fish. Zhang Ying had visited the room a couple of times to see if Zheng Lunlun had arrived.

After learning that Zheng Lunlun won't be dropping by, Zhang Ying found another way. The logic behind Zhang Ying's idea was sound. Zheng Lunlun would definitely drop by if Ning Ran invited him.

However, Ning Ran couldn't do that because Zheng Lunlun was still being treated in the hospital. Besides, the mess Ning Ran was in was caused by her taking Zheng Lunlun out. Under those circumstances, no one sane would get him out of the hospital again.

"Come on, call him," urged Zhang Ying with great anticipation. Ning Ran sensed that insanity again, and it was more obvious and scarier. I have to be careful. Ning Ran wanted to reject that request, but she realized that Zhang Ying was too irrational and would react badly. "Alright, I'll try."

Ning Ran turned on her phone as she strategized an escape plan. If Ning Ran refused to make that call upfront, Zhang Ying would go crazy. Ning Ran couldn't afford to get Zhang Ying upset so she must find a way to go around it.

"Turn on the speaker. I want to listen to Lunlun's voice. I heard it from television before, but I want to listen to it in real life." Zhang Ying had gotten even more excited. She got her phone out and was ready to record everything. Does she plan to record Zheng Lunlun's voice?

My gosh! That's how a fan behaves? thought Ning Ran who was beyond shocked. If Zhang Ying were to find out that Ning Ran couldn't call Zheng Lunlun, Zhang Ying may be so disappointed that she would react violently. What do I do? Who should I call to help me get through this?

After carefully weighing all of her options, Ning Ran decided to call Cheng Xiangyun who knew Ning Ran well and was more in sync with Ning Ran. The phone went through, and Cheng Xiangyun's voice came from the speaker, "What?"

"Hi, I'm looking for Zheng Lunlun," said Ning Ran nervously. "Why are you calling me if...?"

"It's Ms. Cheng, right? Can Lunlun come to the phone? A fan of his wants to meet him," interrupted Ning Ran before Cheng Xiangyun could finish her sentence.

There were a few seconds of silence which suggested that Cheng Xiangyun may still be gathering her thoughts, but Ning Ran was confident with Cheng Xiangyun's quick thinking and thought that Cheng Xiangyun should be able to help her through that situation.

"Hello? Ms. Cheng? Are you still there?" said Ning Ran, "Can Lunlun come to the phone?"

"Oh, Lunlun has to work tonight and is busy at the make-up station so he can't come to the phone. Maybe try calling later? Anyway, I gotta go now. Bye."

Cheng Xiangyun hung up immediately after. It seemed that she needed time to figure out what was happening.

Ning Ran shrugged and raised her hands helplessly. "I guess he's so busy that he didn't have the time to pick up the call," said Ning Ran.

"Who did you call?" asked Zhang Ying. "His assistant." "But you called her 'Ms. Cheng'." "Yeah, because his assistant's surname is Cheng."

"That's not right. Lunlun's assistant is a mixed-blood named 'Zhang' and had an accent. The person you just called didn't have that accent." Ning Ran was stunned. Fans even paid attention to their celebrities' assistants? Just how crazy are they?

"Maybe he changed his assistant?" said Ning Ran who acted dumb, "Or he has multiple assistants?"

"But the assistant named 'Zhang' was just hired. Moreover, she just updated her Weibo account a couple of hours ago and was asking fans to stay calm. How could he have changed an assistant within that short period of time?"

Ning Ran was truly flabbergasted that time. That wasn't just a fan. That was a professional fan who didn't just pay attention to her idol, but also to her idol's team.

Ning Ran was asleep a few hours ago so she had no idea what Zheng Lunlun's assistant had posted on Weibo. Even if Ning Ran wasn't asleep, she didn't know the woman called 'Zhang' and wouldn't have paid attention to her Weibo account. Shoot! My lies are about to be uncovered! What do I do?

"Ms. Cheng is the assistant who took care of Lunlun's personal life whereas Ms. Zhang is the one who does PR. That is why as friends, we call Ms. Cheng to hang out with Lunlun."

Ning Ran wasn't dumb either and wouldn't be overwhelmed that easily. "Oh, so that's how it is." Zhang Ying seemed to have bought the lie. She was, after all, just a fan so her information couldn't always be accurate.

Ning Ran, on the other hand, was the woman who was rumored to be in a relationship with Zheng Lunlun so her words had more credibility.

The main point, however, was that Zhang Ying still wanted to meet Zheng Lunlun with Ning Ran's help so Zhang Ying could only choose to believe Ning Ran for now.

"Don't be hasty," said Ning Ran calmly, "You'll meet Lunlun when the time comes." "Then we'll wait until Lunlun is free before we head over to meet him." We? Ning Ran was surprised by that term. Who was she referring to when she said 'we'?

"We're a fan group. I told them that you are staying at this hotel, and a couple of Lunlun's most loyal fans are on their way here. Don't worry though. They are not haters," explained Zhang Ying, "They are happy for you and Lunlun, just like I am."

Upon hearing that, Ning Ran thought Shoot! More are coming? What do I do now?

Ning Ran forced a smile and said, "Lunlun is busy tonight. Why don't we schedule to meet him another day?"

"No, it must be tonight. We'll wait for however long we need to. It'd be best if Lunlun can come over, but if he can't, we'll go over there to meet him. Just one meeting, we promise we won't cause any problems for him."

Zhang Ying's persistent tone showed her determination to meet Zheng Lunlun.

If Zhang Ying couldn't meet Zheng Lunlun that night, Ning Ran believed that Zhang Ying would do something crazy.

Zhang Ying could barely contain her insanity as things were.