

Hidden 261

Chapter 261: Countdown To The Big Demon King's Outburst

In the evening at Platinum Palace No.8.

Lu Tingxiao and Lu Jingli were the only two people at the large table.

"Ai, Little Treasure is not around, neither is sister-in-law, which leaves just you on your own. See how considerate I am, specially coming over to eat with you!" Lu Jingli sighed, hating that the house was too cold, so he ran to turn on the TV.

Of course, what he tuned into would be the entertainment gossip channel.

It was currently airing news of the conference for Su Yimo's latest movie, <The Sea of Stars>. It was a grand occasion, with many stars present.

Su Yimo was dressed in an ice blue, high-quality, custom-made evening dress by WECOUTURE. She gave off a magical air, like a goddess. She was worthy of the title of "National Goddess".

But Lu Jingli, as the boss of Glory World, looked at her with knitted brows. "She has so many resources at her disposal, and so many scripts to choose from, in the end why does she always choose this kind of thing? It's always a goddess, she's going to become a professional goddess soon. Can't she break out of her stereotype... ah, by the way, there's quite a number of people in the company who think that you and Su Yimo are involved that way. Sister-in-law probably would have heard it too. Have you explained it to her yet? Don't create any dramatic misunderstandings!"

Lu Tingxiao looked calm. "Yes."

"What, so efficient?" Lu Jingli was trying to guess if it had been during that conversation which they had on the phone yesterday, when the image on the TV screen suddenly changed, and Ning Xi's face appeared...

"Wow! It's sister-in-law! Look, look!" Lu Jingli immediately focused his attention on the TV.

Lu Tingxiao put down his chopsticks and turned towards the TV screen, his expression attentive and serious.

"This morning, our front-line entertainment reporters visited the production set of <The World>, which everyone has been talking about recently, and were able to catch a wonderful extra..."

After the host finished her introduction, the image switched to the large screen behind her.

Ning Xi was dressed in bloody armor, and held a long spear in one hand. She stared angrily at Jiang Muye, who was dressed in blue. "Don't expect me to protect you!"

Jiang Muye smiled softly, and reached out to wipe the blood from Ning Xi's face. His eyes were full of deep emotion and love: "Changge, I am your man, I should be the one protecting you."

"Pu, cough cough cough cough..." Who would've thought that they would show such an explosive scene at the start? Lu Jingli hurriedly comforted his brother. "Brother, it's just acting, it isn't real, it isn't real!"

But it wasn't over.

The scene quickly switched to another one where Ning Xi held Jiang Muye's body, pierced by arrows. The despair in her eyes at losing her beloved made people feel as if they were experiencing it themselves...

Lu Jingli glanced covertly at his brother's dark, restrained face, and emphasized with a hollow smile, "Uh, sister-in-law's acting is amazing! Her acting is amazing!"

But in the end, this TV seemed to hate him. As soon as he said that, it began to play a clip of the reporters interviewing Ning Xi.

"Then Ning Xi, what kind of man do you like in reality? Or, what is your criteria for choosing a spouse? Mind telling us a little bit?"

"My criteria for a spouse are that he should be the same age as me, and share common interests and views!"

...

Lu Jingli began to count on his fingers silently.

Similar age: his brother was eight years older than Ning Xi, and it was nearly a three-generation gap. No matter how he looked at it, their ages couldn't be considered similar.

Common interests: there was an even bigger gap there...

Common values: before, the main reason Ning Xi had refused his brother was that "People with different values cannot be together"...

On the other hand, Jiang Muye fulfilled all three criteria which Ning Xi had for a spouse...

Chapter 262: Do I Harvest This Carrot Or Not?

At this very moment, what was running through Lu Tingxiao's mind was... radish.

He recalled Ning Xi's reminder to him the other day, "Carrots and greens are preferred; those who like carrots, as perfect as greens may be, they would still not take a fancy to greens."

At that point in time, he was confident that Ning Xi reciprocated his feelings. She was most likely just making up excuses, which was why he didn't pay much thought to her words, but now... he had no choice but to acknowledge this problem.

Maybe, he really was just considered to be greens, and was not her carrot...

Lu Jingli observed his brother's cold stare at the plate of carrots in front of him and a shiver went down his spine, "Bro, are you okay?"

Why is he staring at a plate of carrots with such a murderous vibe?

With a poker face, Lu Tingxiao pressed the bell to call for the butler, telling him to get rid of the carrots and to never serve such a vegetable on the dining table ever again.

Lu Jingli, "..."

Lu Jingli was baffled. Even if he was a genius beyond comparison, he would still never be able to understand the thoughts of a man in love...

In the meantime, the man from Video City came to the hotel.

Ning Xi had put on a face mask and was ready to hit the sack when her doorbell rang.

Taking a peek at who was outside, Ning Xi exclaimed in shock, "Jiang Muye? Why are you here?"

"I'm following a team too. I will be living on the floor above yours!"

Ning Xi was speechless, "I'm only following a team because I have too many scenes. What are you joining in the fun for?"

"I'm trying to save time so I can play more video games, can't I not?" said Jiang Muye quite matter-of-factly.

"Fine! You win!" Ning Xi showed a big thumbs up, then asked, "So, why are you here and not playing your video games?"

Upon hearing this, Jiang Muye was unhappy. "Play, my ass! The internet speed is so freaking slow that I lost five games in a row, I even lost levels! Quick, accompany me to the cyber cafe to play! Quick!"

Ning Xi said exasperatedly, "I'm not going to play with you. I was about to sleep!"

"It's only slightly after 9 p.m., why are you sleeping?! Are you coming with me or not? Remember when you'd call me at 3 a.m. for someone to faithfully accompany you? Do you remember who that someone was? It's only 9 p.m. now and I can't make you come with me anymore? Hehehe..." Jiang Muye smirked, judging his friend.

Alas, the days of messing around had to be returned in favour someday!

Ning Xi had no choice but to give in, "Okay fine, I'll go, okay? Let me change my clothes first!"

Ten minutes later, both of them were changed into nondescript clothes, before entering a cyber cafe with masks on.

Because this was Movie City, cyber cafes often had celebrities visiting, so the owner didn't find it weird to see two people with masks on at night. They were even let in without having their identification cards checked in detail.

There were no more private rooms, so they had to find separate rooms to make do.

It had been so long since she logged in to play video games that Ning Xi had forgotten her password. "Uhh, blondie, what's my password again?"

Jiang Muye rolled his eyes at her and started typing away a series of possible passwords.

"Thanks!" Ning Xi said as she clicked the 'Enter' button to login.

Once logged in, a bunch of system messages popped up non stop. Ning Xi lighted up at the sight of all the pop up windows, "Woah! RKO! Why did you send me so much skin? It's even limited edition!"

Jiang Muye was shocked when he heard this, "Dude, I can't believe you haven't seen the birthday present I got for you. How many days has it been! Haven't you been logging in before this? No wonder you could forget your own password!"

"Uhh..." Ning Xi knew it was her fault. She guiltily scratched her head and said, "I'm pretty busy okay!"

Jiang Muye poked his face and replied, "That's just an excuse, you just don't care!"

Chapter 263: There Are People Who Ship Us Together?

"Sorry, okay, it's not like you don't know how forgetful a person I am! Thanks for your present, I love it so much! I'll accompany you all of tonight, okay?"

"Accompany me all night, aye? You're the one that said so!"

"Yes, I'm the one that said so! I'll help you regain all your levels and powers! Let's go!"

...

Ning Xi kept her promise as a faithful friend and played games all night with Jiang Muye.

Jiang Muye finally got to play to his heart's content since returning to the country, even winning 10 games in a row! Finally, he could enjoy his long awaited win!

It had been awhile since Ning Xi relaxed, and she too enjoyed herself playing the games. She yawned and said, "It's a good thing the both of us don't have many scenes in the morning, so we can catch up on some sleep!"

Little did they know that as they were snoring away in their rooms, it was chaos outside...

At last, both were woken up by their managers before they were called to Lei Ming's house.

"Isn't there still an hour before work? Why did you disrupt my sleep so early in the morning?!" Jiang Muye grumbled sleepily with a visible bed head.

Ning Xi wasn't doing all that great herself either, almost falling asleep as soon as she sat down on a chair.

Ling Zhizhi walked around the house several times in a circle with her arms crossed before she turned to the both of them and asked with a stern tone, "What did the both of you do last night?"

"We didn't do anything!" The both of them picked up on the tone and knew that something was amiss, which was why they shook their heads and defended themselves in unison.

Lei Ming seemed to have expected their response and sighed helplessly before showing them the screen of her phone, "Then tell me what this is. Explain yourselves."

Ning Xi rubbed her eyes and, "Aah...isn't this from last night...?"

Wasn't this a picture from last night of her and Jiang Muye playing games together?

Jiang Muye immediately came to his senses, "Please! This is only a silhouette of our backs right? How did they even recognize me under all that disguise?"

Then, Lei Ming flipped to the next picture - this time, it was not just their backs but a clear picture that was taken from the front. Even though Ning Xi still had her mask on, Jiang Muye did not, clearly exposing his entire face.

Jiang Muye scratched his head a little and said, "Uhh...I was just a little too excited in the moment so I took my mask off, but it wasn't even ten seconds! How did they get this photo taken?"

Ning Xi blinked at the picture and said, "Well at least I didn't reveal any flaws, right?"

Ling Zhizhi pointed at her earlobe, "Your mole. The person in the picture already looks like you, plus this mole was so recognizable, it's not hard for people to connect it to you."

"Who's this? Such an eagle eye..." Without Lu Tingxiao's reminder, Ning Xi had really forgotten this little detail...

Jiang Muye's face darkened, "But when we went we specifically used the identification of crew members, not our own. Who's the one that so pathetic as to take these pictures and post it online? They could even notice Ning Xi's small mole?"

Lei Ming casually speculated, "Probably one of your fans, in fact, it's a fan who ships the both of you."

Ning Xi widened her eyes at hearing that, "A fan who ships us? We still have such fans?"

At this point, Ling Zhizhi's expression was unusually serious. "Ning Xi, I think you should remember that since your first day of work with us, we have discussed that you are not allowed to be in a relationship at all in your current circumstance."

She was too careless this time, she really should have noticed earlier. The way Ning Xi and Jiang Muye interact with one another, including the chemistry between them when they are acting and facing reporters, as well playing video games together all night. It was obvious that they had known each other from long before.

Especially the way Jiang Muye looks at Ning Xi, it was quite unusual...

Ship - A slang that means to endorse a romantic relationship.

Chapter 264: An Ominous Premonition

"No, no! Definitely not! Zhizhi, you've misunderstood us! We're not dating!" Ning Xi furiously denied and turned to Jiang Muye for support. That bastard, couldn't he explain our relationship to Ling Zhizhi?

Jiang Muye did not say anything, and just shot her a nonchalant look.

Ling Zhizhi was Ning Xi's manager. The decision to tell her or not to tell her would lie in Ning Xi's hands.

Ning Xi deliberated for a while, then decided that there was no other choice but to tell the truth, "Zhizhi, it's like this. Senior Jiang and I have known each other since we went to school abroad, and at that point in time...we did date for a while. But it was only for a few days before we broke up, and now we're purely best friends! I know I should have told you such an important thing much earlier but I thought

that you were Jiang Muye's ex-girlfriend, and so I didn't want to say anything to make things any more awkward..."

Ling Zhizhi was exclaimed in shock, "Who told you I was his ex-girlfriend?!"

As soon as she finished her sentence, she glared at Jiang Muye.

He defensively said, "Why are you looking at me? I said no such thing - she made those assumptions herself."

Ning Xi rolled her eyes at him, "Only because you were behaving so oddly! Can you blame me for overthinking?"

It looked like the two of them were about to launch into an argument, when Ling Zhizhi massaged her temples and sighed, "Ning Xi, Jiang Muye and I are purely just former manager and artiste, you need not worry."

Immediately, a cold expression flashed across Jiang Muye's features.

"Mmm, I know that now!" Since Ling Zhizhi said it herself, Ning Xi naturally believed her.

"Well then, let's discuss a solution to this issue now." Having cleared up the misunderstanding, Ling Zhizhi began to address the serious problem at hand, "Previously, Jiang Muye's fans didn't quite like you, and that was due to some malicious intentions. Now, that their attitudes have changed 180 degrees, there are now a lot of fans that ship the both of you.

Therefore, Ming and I have discussed that when the both of you respond to the reporters and the public about this, you can be ambiguous with your responses without denying completely. Just explain that the both of you work in the same company, have complementing personalities, admire one another, and are currently very good friends. Leave them some ambiguity for their imaginations to run wild."

Ning Xi nodded obediently, saying, "Oh, okay, I'll do whatever you say!"

Jiang Muye, with a hand supporting his chin, lazily replied, "No comments! Now can I go back to sleep?"

Ning Xi immediately slapped him and said, "Sleep, your head! Quickly wake up! We're starting work soon!"

Jiang Muye frustratedly scratched his head and asked, "Which scene are we filming this afternoon?"

Ning Xi stared at him unhappily and replied, "The kissing scene! Don't you dare tell me that you haven't even looked at the script once since it was changed! If I was Ming, I would have punched you 800 times a day!"

Since Ling Zhizhi now knew about their relationship anyway, Ning Xi could finally stop pretending to be polite to Jiang Muye.

Jiang Muye heard this and scoffed, "Pft, the higher ups are planning to make it a summer release, there will be many underaged audiences so the scriptwriter has already removed all the kissing and erotic scenes, what kiss scenes are you talking about?"

“Most of it has been removed, but wasn’t there still a little left? One scene of our first kiss, one sex scene within the military camp. The kiss scene is the one we did right before the hailstorm started and we had to stop. The director said that shots from the front could be used, we just need to supplement it with one more shot of a quick kiss!”

“Oh, okay...” Jiang Muye muttered.

For some reason, the tip of his eyebrows started pulsating, in a way that signified an ominous premonition.

Chapter 265: The Devil’s Arrival!

The Lu group, CEO’s office.

Lu Tingxiao made a quick call for Lu Jingli to come over.

Lu Jingli immediately made his way to his desk, “Brother, you called for me?”

“Have you prepared the materials for the meeting?”

“It’s done, here you go.”

“Mmm, inform every department that we’ll have a meeting in half an hour.”

“Oh, okay...” Lu Jingli did not immediately leave, but seemed worried and absent-minded.

Lu Tingxiao lifted his head up and gave him a questioning look, “What is it?”

Lu Jingli was frightened and replied, “Nothing, really! It’s nothing!”

Lu Tingxiao put down his pen and stared at him with eyes that seemed like he could see through people.

As if he was being examined on the military field, Lu Jingli stood rigidly straight and tried hard to remain calm, when his guilt was terribly obvious.

Five seconds later, Lu Tingxiao finally looked away.

As Lu Jingli was about to release a sigh of relief, he saw his brother quickly type something on the keyboard and then clicked enter.

He saw clearly what Lu Tingxiao had typed, “NINGXI.”

Oh no!

His brother was searching it by himself!

My dear brother! Why do you have to be so smart?

After Lu Tingxiao searched through the results, the latest and hottest news about Ning Xi immediately popped up—

[Jiang Muye and Ning Xi Played Video Games All Night, Interacted Intimately. Suspicions of Feelings Blooming]

[Similar in Age, Interests and Are Like-Minded, Jiang Ning Are A Great Match!]

[Both Parties Claim That They Are Just Good Friends, Fans Excited For Them To Get Together!]

[Jiang Ning Are Said To Be 'Couple of The Year']

...

Obviously by now, Lu Tingxiao had seen too much of everything, even more than he should have. Lu Jingli shut his eyes tightly, afraid to see his brother's expression.

Lu Tingxiao shut down his laptop, pulled his chair out, and put on his coat as he instructed, "Jingli, get the car ready."

"Ah? What about the meeting?"

"Postpone it to tomorrow."

"Where are you going now then?" Lu Jingli swallowed nervously, following closely behind.

"I'm going to inspect."

"Inspect? Can it be...?"

At this very moment, at Movie City in Beijing suburbs

Due to the fact that shooting the first kiss scene at the lantern festival required a huge amount of money and manpower, they strived for perfection. Ning Xi and Jiang Muye put on such a stellar performance that the director only needed to shoot some supplementary outtakes for the second half of the scene, saving time and money.

To ensure that the actors performed better, he even asked for all crew members who were not required to leave the set.

When everything was finally ready, just as Guo Qisheng was about to shout "Action!", the producer Wang Taihe suddenly stormed in. He pulled Guo and the assistant director aside and told him some urgent news.

Guo Qisheng expressed his shock about the news, "Glory Word corporation's boss is coming to personally inspect? Why all of a sudden? But no worries, Muye and Ning Xi's acting skills are flawless, let him come if he wants to!"

Wang Taihe exclaimed in response, "Ah, my dear director, if it's only the Senior Vice President, why would I be so nervous? It's the big boss himself! The CEO of the Lu group!"

Guo Qisheng was stunned. "Who? You can't mean...Lu...Lu Tingxiao, right?"

"That's exactly who's coming! Guo, hurry and come along with me to welcome him! Zhang Rui, you go quickly and tell the crew members and both the actors about this!"

"Right away!"

...

They were already ready to shoot and yet there seemed to be a delay, and even Guo Qisheng and Wang Taihe were suddenly nowhere in sight. Seeing Zhang Rui run towards them, Ning Xi immediately asked, "What's wrong?"

Chapter 266: What? It's A Kissing Scene?!

"Who's here?" Jiang Muye couldn't help but ask, his brows furrowing intensely.

Zhang Rui rushed to explain to them, "Later, Lu group's CEO Lu Tingxiao is coming over to observe the shoot. The director has gone to meet him. I don't think I need to further explain how important this shoot is, do I? Make sure that the both of you put on your best performance, okay?"

Ning Xi gasped, stunned, "Lu Tingxiao? Assistant director, are you sure you're not mistaken? You mean Lu Jingli right?"

"No, I'm not mistaken! Lu Jingli is here too! Quickly go get ready!" Zhang Rui hurriedly rushed off to alert the other crew members.

Ning Xi turned to Jiang Muye and said, "Blondie, did I just hear him wrongly? Did assistant director just say that Lu Tingxiao is coming over?"

"No, you heard him perfectly. Just as I did!" Jiang Muye said, as he started to look uneasy. Damn it! No wonder he kept having ominous premonitions, this was what was waiting for him!

Zhang Rui swiftly cleared the set and dismissed all the crew members, before preparing chairs, drinks and an umbrella.

They soon arrived. Leading the entourage was the charismatic Lu Tingxiao in a suit, followed closely by Lu Jingli, who was looking around. They were surrounded by the core members of the directing team, with Wang Taihe explaining profusely about the production team's progress.

Guo Qisheng enthusiastically led them to the best viewing spot, "Mr. Lu, Senior Vice President, please have a seat! You've come on the right day. Today's shoot is an exciting one!"

"Really? What is today's shoot all about?" Lu Jingli popped a grape into his mouth, asking interestedly.

Guo Qisheng started explaining what had gone on, and then, "...after the script was changed, now we are only left with this kissing scene that we are striving to achieve the best effect..."

"Uhh..." Lu Jingli started wiping the sweat of his face. What? A kissing scene?! We made it in time for the kissing scene. In fact, it's probably the scene with the man-made rain! What luck is this?

Lu Tingxiao seemed expressionless throughout it all, yet as he sat there, he had an air of arrogance, heeding no attention to anyone else.

Guo Qisheng felt a little awkward. Thankfully, he had already heard about this CEO's temperament previously and was not moved by his apprehension. He continued, "Ning Xi and Muye's acting skills are excellent, with such great chemistry. Their scenes are almost always a one take wonder!"

Guo Qisheng thought to himself, there's no harm in complimenting their own company's artistes, is there?

Lu Tingxiao casually took the cup of tea that Lu Jingli was serving him, and said with a cold, distant tone, "Is that so?"

"Indeed! I'm not sure if you saw the behind-the-scenes footage online, but even the two difficult scenes we shot yesterday were a one take..." Guo Qisheng continued as he felt a shiver run down his spine.

Lu Jingli cleared his throat at this moment, in an attempt to interrupt, "That's enough, let's start."

"Okay, let's start now!" said Guo Qisheng, relieved. "Lights, props, cameras...everyone, please get ready! Actors, please be in position!"

The crew nervously prepared themselves, worried that anything might go wrong. After all, the big boss was here to inspect! Lu Tingxiao was a busy man. He did not have time to bother about the trivial matters of his smaller companies, much less personally observe what they were up to. This visit was something that he had never done before, and it was definitely an occasion to brag about!

Chapter 267: A Tensed Atmosphere

When the set was ready, the two lead actors made their way out from the resting area.

The moment Ning Xi appeared in a red and black outfit...Guo Qisheng was not sure if he imagined it, but it seemed as if Luo Tingxiao's arrogant and distant demeanor warmed up a little...

Ning Xi looked towards Lu Jingli and Lu Tingxiao from afar. Lu Jingli immediately gave her a sneaky wink and pointed at his camera, indicating that his brother had found out about everything.

Ning Xi slowly shifted her sight to look at Lu Tingxiao, who was looking at her in an aggressive, possessive manner, like a predator that was hungry for its prey.

The clapperboard sounded and Ning Xi gathered her senses again, immediately sinking into her role for the scene —

Meng Changge furiously ran away after fighting with Sun Huanqing. As the night fell and the sky darkened, Sun Huanqing who started to worry about her whereabouts.

Actually, Meng Changge had already found Sun Huanqing much earlier. She just did not want to appear, instead mischievously following closely behind him. Observing his grave concern for her, her usually tough demeanour softened.

Ning Xi accurately portrayed the feelings of a girl who was in love yet abashed to admit so.

Finally, Meng Changge couldn't resist letting her husband Sun worry any longer. Just as Sun Huanqing was about to break down, she tapped his shoulder from behind, wearing a mask that she had bought from the market. With a delighted tone, she said—

"My dear husband, were you looking for me?"

Jiang Muze was first stunned, then revealed a face shining with joy, before pulling her into his arms, "Changge..."

Lu Jingli's first reaction was to stop watching the scene, but to look at his brother's reaction. He was shocked and quickly nudged his brother's fingers, saying, "Bro, bro, bro, not so hard. This cup is made of glass and not of steel. Remember, this is only acting..."

Before he could finish his sentence, there was a loud crack...the tea cup was broken...

Lu Jingli looked up and only saw Ning Xi slowly removing the mask from her face, revealing eyes that were filled with love, looking at Jiang Muye. Then, she leaned forward, slowly approaching his lips...

"Oh no...this time there was no preparation at all!" Lu Jingli did not dare look and had to cover his eyes, yet he could not help but peek through the slits between his fingers.

One second passed...

Two seconds...

Three seconds...

Four seconds...

Wait, what's happening?!

Five seconds later, Ning Xi who had yet to plant the kiss suddenly buried her face in her hands and apologized, "Sorry, I wasn't ready, let's do it again!"

Ning Xi actually had a bad take!

All the crew members, including both directors and producers were shocked! However, they could understand the reason for the mistake - having the CEO there was a huge distraction!

They were only on the sidelines but already felt the tremendous pressure, what more Ning Xi.

"No worries, let's get ready and do it again," consoled Guo Qisheng.

Xiao Tao quickly passed a bottle of mineral water to Ning Xi, "Sister Xi, you can do it!". Ning Xi finished the entire bottle at one go.

Jiang Muye who was on the side shot her a look, "Who knew you'd have stage fright too!"

With a pale face, Ning Xi replied, "You better make less sarcastic remarks! You know how scary your uncle is. Imagine if you were the one being stared at - we'll see if you can still perform normally."

Chapter 268: So, Are You Kissing Me Or Not?

Without any further delay, the second take began.

Meng Changge tapped his shoulder from the back, saying, "My dear husband, were you looking for me?"

Sun Huanqing turned around to hug her, "Changge..."

Guo Qisheng, "Cut! Ning Xi, watch your expression, why are you suddenly losing focus?"

Ning Xi bowed her head in shame and said, "Sorry!"

The third take began.

Meng Changge, "My dear husband, were you looking for me?"

Sun Huanqing, "Changge..."

Guo Qisheng blurted out, "Cut! Ning Xi, you took too long staring at him. The most you should take is three seconds before you plant the kiss, okay?"

Ning Xi mumbled, "Okay."

The fourth take...

Guo Qisheng exclaimed, "Ning Xi, you are being too stiff and inexpressive! What are you looking at?"

And then there was a fifth time...

And a sixth...

...

In the end, Ning Xi had six bad takes in a row!

Even Jiang Muye was about to break down and he started exclaiming in the restroom, "Dude! I'm about to get a heart attack! Are you going to kiss me or not? Can't you hurry up?"

Ning Xi pulled her hair in frustration, "Ahh! I'm the one who's about to get a heart attack okay! Can't you get your uncle to leave? His staring at me is like an X-ray screening! Who would be able to kiss like this?!"

Jiang Muye scoffed, "He came for you, what can I do to make him leave?"

Ning Xi pulled off her wig in exasperation, "Dang it! I really can't stand it!"

"Hey, please watch your reputation...", Jiang Muye cautioned. Ning Xi was about to lose her temper due to the intense pressure. He had never seen her been this irritated.

From a different perspective, it could also be said that...Lu Tingxiao's influence on her was pretty significant...

More significant than he had thought...

At least previously, no one else affected her acting performance.

A profusely sweating Guo Qisheng entered the restroom to give Ning Xi some advice, "Ning Xi, what's wrong with you today? Is Lu Tingxiao's presence making you nervous? Just take it easy! Now is not the time to panic!"

Ning Xi looked down apologetically and said, "I'm sorry for troubling you, director!"

"Sigh, it's fine. Which actors don't have bad takes? Who knew that the big boss would have come today? Everyone was taken unaware! It's not just you, everyone else on set is equally nervous! Do you want to call your manager over?" Guo Qisheng suggested.

Ning Xi shook her head, "No need for that, let's not trouble Zhizhi. I can do this, please get ready for the next take!"

"You sure?"

"I'm sure."

...

Three minutes later, the seventh take began.

Ning Xi walked to the camera with her teeth clenched and narrowed her stare at Lu Tingxiao. He was playing around with the tea leaves using the cover of the cup, with a smug expression on his face.

The bastard, he was definitely doing this on purpose! His negative presence was clearly trying to make her distracted and under perform!

"Changege...", Jiang Muye hugged Ning Xi. Actually, wasn't he just as pressured? Every time he hugged Ning Xi, he felt like he was being stabbed at with a million arrows from the back!

Ning Xi took down the mask off her face, and looked at him longingly for three seconds, before slowing leaning towards him...

Up to this point, everything was going smoothly. However, as she was about to touch his lips, the hostile stare of the person behind her forced her to lose focus, and she just couldn't plant that kiss, no matter what.

Dang it!

In a flash of an eye, Ning Xi unexpectedly put the mask back on.

In the next second, using the mask as a second identity, she planted a kiss on Jiang Muye's lips...

Chapter 269: The Ice Cold Devil Who Left Angrily

Under the bridge, with lanterns that lit up the surroundings, the wind blew steadily as a young girl kissed a stunned young boy, separated by a mask...

This scene was unexpectedly more beautiful and moving than a direct kiss...

"Cut! Good!" Guo Qisheng came to his senses and called the scene to a stop.

"Not bad, Ning Xi, the way you dealt with this by hiding half of your face actually resulted in a better effect!" Guo Qisheng complimented, while the other crew members also nodded their heads in agreement.

"Director, as long as you're satisfied, all's good," said Ning Xi, forcing herself to smile. Dang you! I was just acting out a romantic kiss scene, not a crime scene, yet I had to act till I was physically and mentally exhausted!

Her eyes then involuntarily shifted to a certain direction...

Opposite her, the producer was saying something to Lu Tingxiao while he sat there quietly, like a dull oil painting that had been sitting in a dark corner of an old castle for many years, cold and lonely. Somewhere within his eyes, there was a heart-wrenching sort of loneliness...

Ning Xi was taken aback by that sight, hurriedly turning around to leave.

"Sister Xi, where are you going?"

"The toilet!"

...

Ning Xi quickly sent a text message to Lu Jingli as she walked down the corridor —

[Senior Vice President, what is your brother trying to do???)

Lu Jingli replied her swiftly, "How would I know? He was already acting weird yesterday when he saw the TV play your interview and behind-the-scenes footages. Then, this morning he saw the tabloid news about the both of you playing video games all night, so he immediately postponed a meeting and came here to inspect!"

[Did he let you know what he's thinking about doing, or if he has any plans?] Ning Xi quickly asked, since she knew that the best strategy to win was to know her enemy!

[It's not like you don't know how my brother is like - he would never tell me this kinda things!]

[Then...then was there anything that was odd about him? Try to recall anything!]

[Odd...yes, I think there was one incident! Yesterday, after he finished watching TV, he suddenly glared at a plate of carrots coldly, and then told the butler to never serve this dish! Isn't that weird? As smart as I am, I can't seem to understand what this odd behaviour means!]

[...] Ning Xi's head immediately flashed across the words "harvest the carrot". It looks like Lu Tingxiao had entirely misunderstood her and Jiang Muye!

Ning Xi thought for a while, and typed again, [How's your brother now? He should be okay, right?]

She had already used up all her brain juices to come with the idea of kissing through a mask...

[No way. The moment you kissed him, the air turned so chilly that I felt like I was ten million meters underground in some thousand year old ice cave.]

[Uhh...]

[Oh, right, little Xi Xi, where are you? Be careful! My brother's currently not in sight, and I don't know where he went. My guess is that he's probably gone to look for you, be careful okay!]

As soon as Ning Xi finished reading that last sentence from Lu Jingli, a silhouette fell from behind her, and someone was forcefully pulling her away.

She felt a hand grabbing her waist and when the world seemed to be spinning around her, she was pushed into the toilet, and she heard the sound of a door closing. Then, she felt her back pressed up roughly against the door and before she could call out in pain, her voice was muffled by a hot, crazy, and hungry mouth...

At that moment, because Ning Xi could barely breathe, the only thought that crossed her mind was —

"Dang you, Lu Jingli! You did this on purpose, didn't you!"

She refused to say out loud, "You could have warned me earlier!"

Chapter 270: An Irrational Kiss

All along, she had always thought of Lu Tingxiao as a serious and restrained gentleman, yet this kiss was urgent, almost savage and primitive.

The grip on her waist was like iron, and her mouth was filled with the metallic taste of her own blood as her lips were being bitten. Her tongue was also getting pulled to the point of numbness, and she felt as if she was getting devoured...

"Mmm...Lu..." Whenever she attempted to fight back, he held her down even tighter and was more ruthless.

She winced at the shooting pain in her neck and looked at the man in front of her who had lost his control. He was such a stranger to her that she was worried...

Ning Xi discreetly took off the wooden hairpin from her head and quickly pointed the sharp end at his neck when he had his guard down, warning him, "Lu Tingxiao, you'd better calm down or else...!"

Lu Tingxiao's kisses stopped at her collarbone, but only for a moment. He seemed as if he was deciding where to continue, before he found his way to her lips again, with no sign of stopping...

"You...", Ning Xi felt helpless.

This guy, can he read minds?

He knew that she would not hurt a single hair on him, he knew that...she would not be able to bring herself to do it.

Her mind flashed across to a story she once read, about a girl's beloved who was cursed to become a monster, yet the girl could not bear to leave him. She even let him have her flesh and blood so that he would not hurt the local villagers and get killed in the process...

When she had finished reading the story, she thought the girl was a total idiot. But now, she had become that idiot.

Lu Tingxiao's kisses lingered repeatedly at her sensitive earlobe, when Ning Xi finally had the chance to quickly say, "Lu Tingxiao, did you forget what you promised me? Or are you breaking your promise?"

When he heard her voice, some rationality passed through his eyes and he paused before replying mellowly, "Inspection."

Ning Xi almost laughed at this. "Inspection? Who inspects like you? With you sitting there, who wouldn't be distracted from their acting?"

"Professionalism," he replied monotonously.

"Are you trying to say that I'm not professional? You...Fine! I really haven't been very professional today, but there will be no next time! Also, if you're just here to inspect, then what are you doing right now?" Ning Xi questioned.

Lu Tingxiao wrapped her tightly in his arms, as if hugging his favorite toy that he had just snatched back from other kids, and did not say a word more.

At this point, Ning Xi was a mess. All the negative thoughts she had tried so hard to suppress surfaced, forcing her to face the music and make a decision...

Moments passed, and as Ning Xi was about to go limp in his warm, intoxicating embrace, she came back to her senses. She took a deep sigh before saying, "Lu Tingxiao, you gave me seven days. Well, you don't have to wait for seven days, I can just answer you now."

"I don't want to hear it," said Lu Tingxiao, whose expression tightened and he immediately went in for a kiss again, in an attempt to stop her from saying more.

Ning Xi had a look of despair as she dodged him, "Lu Tingxiao, listen to me."

As if afraid she would hesitate, Ning Xi squeezed her eyes tightly before looking at him and said —