

Superstar 961

Chapter 961: Zhang Ye vs. Rao Aimin!

Zhang Ye versus Yang Shu.

In just a few quick moves, the outcome was decided.

Next, Rao Aimin suggested sparring with Zhang Ye!

Honestly, Zhang Ye was really quite afraid of her. He had witnessed just how strong Rao Aimin was and knew that he was not a match for her. Even if Rao Aimin had not recovered the injuries she'd sustained at the Conference, Zhang Ye still knew his place in front of her. But since Rao Aimin was the one who'd suggested it, he could not refuse. Thinking back about all that had happened, neither Rao Aimin nor he had not talked about it much after that. It was as though they had a common understanding, or perhaps neither of them liked bothering the other. Who did you learn Taiji Fist from? What happened to Chenchen's parents all those years ago? Neither asked, and they definitely didn't exchange physical blows with each other!

But now, it seemed that Rao Aimin wanted to test Zhang Ye's skill?

Even Zhang Ye was quietly curious of Rao Aimin's martial arts.

Spar?

Then let's go!

In the blink of an eye, their chopsticks touched!

Pah!

A clear, crisp sound rang out!

Zhang Ye pulled back his chopsticks at the moment of contact and dampened the force he put in them before explosively releasing the force again, but by the time he went in for an attack, Rao Aimin's chopsticks were no longer there!

She had shifted to the kun position!

Her chopsticks reappeared in a different place!

Zhang Ye immediately twisted his wrist in that direction!

Rao Aimin flicked her chopsticks up!

The chopsticks Zhang Ye was using to grip that piece of pork belly were met with such a huge force that even his "listening power" did not help him anticipate the move. As it was too fast, he could only instinctively meet it with a dose of his "neutralizing power"!

Taiji Fist's Neutralizing Power: an advanced skill that only existed in Taiji Fist. Using the traditional martial arts terms to describe it, there were four types of "power" in Taiji Fist. They were "sticking

power," "yielding power," "drawing-in power," and "seizing power." Among them, "drawing-in power" and "seizing power" fell under the releasing of power, while "sticking power" and "yielding power" were forms of neutralizing power. During the spar with Yang Shu, Zhang Ye had used neutralizing power which encompassed mainly sticking power. In the current spar with Rao Aimin, Zhang Ye used more yielding power against her while attaching some form of sticking power in the chopsticks!

They came into contact!

The force of it pushed both of their chopsticks back toward themselves!

Clearly, Zhang Ye's chopsticks were pushed further back, but the pork was still in his possession. It was as though the pork belly were stuck to his chopsticks as he tightly gripped it. Even this exchange did not make it drop!

Rao Aimin grinned. "Interesting."

Chenchen shouted, "Aunt, that pork is mine!"

"Alright, let your aunt get it back for you!" Rao Aimin made another move.

Zhang Ye took it on with a smile. "Chenchen, will you die if you eat a little less?"

"I will!" Chenchen said matter-of-factly.

Zhang Ye said in amusement, "If you keep eating, you'll turn into a little butterball!"

Chenchen cheered her aunt on. "Hur hur, you're the little butterball. Go Aunt, you can do it!"

Rao Aimin's chopsticks came attacking again!

Zhang Ye was about to take her on, but noticed a flash of movement. The opposing chopsticks changed to a different position!

The Eight Trigrams footwork!

It was the Eight Trigrams circular footwork!

Zhang Ye immediately predicted where she would move to and determined her next position. Those 1,000 Fruits of Agility were not eaten for nothing!

It was the qian 1 position.

But Rao Aimin flipped her wrist over and her chopsticks around in the next instant. Then she came attacking in from yet another direction and stuck fast to him—this was the Swimming Body Eight Trigrams Palm. Every move hugged the body. It was impossible to defend against!

Zhang Ye could only meet her with force!

Twirling the chopsticks between his fingers, he swung them at Rao Aimin!

Rao Aimin changed her center of gravity and held him off!

Zhang Ye instantly pressed down!

Rao Aimin used her Swimming Body Palms!

While Zhang Ye used his sticking body techniques!

The two similar yet utterly different styles of martial arts clashed with each other!

Pah!

Both pairs of chopsticks bounced off each other again on contact!

"That should be enough." Zhang Ye rotated his aching wrist a few times and said, "We're just trying this out. Also, you're still injured. In fact, I haven't fully recovered yet either."

Rao Aimin said, "What are you talking about? We haven't even gotten serious yet."

Zhang Ye said, "If we get serious, I'm afraid that we might tear your place down."

Rao Aimin said, "You're talking rather big, eh?"

They crossed swords again with their chopsticks!

Pah!

Dah!

The force got greater!

The speed got faster!

The fighting at the dining table was simply dazzling!

The chopsticks' afterimages were darting all around! The clinking and clunking of the chopsticks resounded through the apartment!

Once!

Five times!

Ten times!

Zhang Ye suddenly felt rather drained and had no choice but to place his left hand on the tabletop to support himself. Otherwise, he might not even be able to stabilize himself. Old Rao had immense skill!

Rao Aimin was still sitting there ramrod straight without needing to grab onto anything for support!

"Go Aunt, you can do it!" Chenchen cheered!

Beside them, Yang Shu had been watching the two of them the entire time with an astounded look on her face!

One minute passed!

Two minutes passed!

All of a sudden, Zhang Ye felt he couldn't go any further. He added a gentle stream of concealed power into his moves out of nowhere and squeezed the table harder with his left hand that was supporting him!

Whoosh!

The chopsticks moved with a gust of wind!

"Then let's get serious!" Zhang Ye said.

Rao Aimin said, "Alright!"

Her eyes narrowed. Still seriously injured, she did not overextend herself and placed the elbow of her hand that was holding the chopsticks onto the table as a fulcrum. She also channeled a stream of concealed power into her attack!

Bang!

Both pairs of chopsticks collided!

The next second, under the startled gazes of Yang Shu and Chenchen, Zhang Ye's and Rao Aimin's chopsticks that had clashed started splitting in half as though they were flimsy pieces of paper being torn! It also felt like two long, thin strips of tofu had crashed in midair and smashed into pieces!

The chopsticks broke in half!

Rao Aimin's chopsticks flew behind her!

Zhang Ye's chopsticks flew to the ceiling!

Alongside that, the dining table cracked with a loud report!

The legs of the table could no longer support the pressure of both their forces. The table legs made of solid wood splintered apart as the tabletop came crashing to the floor!

It was at this juncture that Rao Aimin's left hand pulled back and caught two plates of unfinished vegetables, with one plate held between her index and middle fingers, while the other one was caught between her pinky and ring finger. Her right hand also moved as she nudged the broken chopsticks over to catch Chenchen's unfinished bowl of rice. All of these movements were executed in one perfectly smooth, flowing motion!

At the same time, Zhang Ye's wrist lowered as he acted similar to Rao Aimin. He caught his own bowl of rice, then shifted his center of gravity slightly behind and shot out his foot to catch an unfinished plate of vegetables. He caught it with the tip of his toes before steadying it to rest on his foot!

The tabletop finally hit the ground!

Thud!

The pork belly that the two of them were tussling over also fell!

The bowl of rice Rao Aimin held between her broken chopsticks was waiting below the falling pork belly right at this moment. Splat! The already cold piece of pork belly landed without any fuss into Chenchen's bowl of rice.

The sparring was over!

Rao Aimin handed the bowl of rice into Chenchen's lap. "Eat up."

The meat still made it into Chenchen's bowl in the end!

Zhang Ye found a spot to set his bowl down, then helplessly shrugged. "Let's make this clear. I'm not gonna pay for the table and chopsticks. I'm poor."

This action had sent Chenchen's pulse racing!

Next to them, Yang Shu wore an expression of shock. Suddenly she exclaimed, "Just who the hell are you two?!"

Chapter 962: Gaining a junior martial sister out of nowhere!

Old Rao's house.

The floor was a complete mess.

The watching Chenchen and Yang Shu were shocked from the start until the end by this battle of Rao Aimin versus Zhang Ye on the tabletop!

Chenchen immediately asked, "Aunt, did you win?"

Rao Aimin said, "What do you think?"

Zhang Ye said, "Your aunt didn't even give it her all."

"The two of you..." Yang Shu found it simply unbelievable.

Suddenly, Yang Shu thought of something before she finally managed to react. She stood up from her chair in an instant. "You are Grandmaster Rao Aimin!"

She finally recognized her!

Or more precisely, she had figured it out!

She had never seen Rao Aimin before, but had heard very many rumors regarding her. Moreover, she knew very well just how strong a Taiji Fist expert who had achieved concealed power was. But even so, he still could not beat her? Other than the opponent being a martial arts grandmaster, there was no explanation for this. Besides, everyone knew that there was only one female grandmaster in the entire Chinese martial arts world. According to the rumors, this female grandmaster had a rather close relationship with Zhang Ye!

As such, who else could she be other than Rao Aimin from the Eight Trigrams School?

Yang Shu felt extremely shocked as she never expected that she would encounter an expert who practiced Taiji Fist, nor unwittingly witness a spar between a Taiji Fist master and a Chinese martial arts grandmaster!

Zhang Ye looked at Yang Shu curiously and answered her question from earlier. "I should be asking you instead. Who are you really? And why do you know Taiji Fist?"

Rao Aimin looked at him. "Does she?"

"There's no mistaking it!" Zhang Ye affirmed.

Rao Aimin did not quite understand Taiji Fist, so she asked, "But why does her form look quite different from yours?"

"There are some differences in the moves, but it's really Taiji." Zhang Ye said earnestly, "That, I'm sure of."

Rao Aimin nodded. Since Zhang Ye was the expert in Taiji, if he said it was, then it definitely was!

Yang Shu's kung fu had indeed startled Zhang Ye!

She really did know Taiji Fist!

On top of that, her martial arts were very good and she was probably not too far off from achieving the use of concealed power!

Zhang Ye had not expected that a Taiji expert would suddenly pop out of nowhere like this!

In his previous world, there were many martial sects and styles of Taiji Fist. The most well-known ones were the Chen-style Taiji Fist and the Yang-style Taiji Fist. They specialized in different areas and had slightly different combat methods from each other. In fact, the Taiji Fist Skill Experience Books from the game ring that Zhang Ye had "eaten" were not considered Chen style nor Yang style. It did not specifically belong to any of the Taiji Fist styles. His Taiji forms were seemingly a combination of the different styles of Taiji Fist and drew upon the strengths of each to make up for the weaknesses of each. In other words, Zhang Ye's Taiji Fist covered a huge area and encompassed nearly every style. The other styles of Taiji Fist could be observed in his Taiji Fist as he knew a bit of every one of them. But as Zhang Ye was not a martial arts enthusiast in his previous world, nor learned Taiji, he did not quite understand the differences. As such, he could not tell exactly which style of Taiji Fist Yang Shu's style belonged to in his previous world. However, upon further consideration, it was not actually practical to compare the Taiji Fist styles of both worlds. After all, they were unique in their own ways and should be looked at as they were.

Zhang Ye could see this.

Yang Shu naturally understood as well!

After the two Taiji Fist experts had sparred and saw each other's moves, they knew very clearly that they both belonged to the same branch!

"Who taught you Taiji Fist?" Yang Shu did not care that Rao Aimin was here anymore and fired off, "Why is your Taiji Fist so much better than mine? Who are you really?"

Zhang Ye threw up his hands. "I am Zhang Ye, and that is who I shall always be known as."

But Chenchen exposed him. "Didn't you say that your name was Chen Zhen during the Martial Arts Conference?"

Zhang Ye's face turned red. "...Can you not bring that up?"

Chenchen laughed, "Hur hur."

Yang Shu immediately asked, "Who is your master?"

"I don't have a master," Zhang Ye answered.

Yang Shu said, "That's impossible!"

Zhang Ye returned, "And who did you learn Taiji Fist from?"

Yang Shu clenched her teeth and said, "It was handed down through my family!"

Handed down through her family?

Rao Aimin narrowed her eyes. "What is the relationship between you and the Taiji grandmaster from over a hundred years ago?"

Zhang Ye stared at Yang Shu as he had wanted to ask this question for a while now.

Yang Shu proudly proclaimed, "My ancestor!"

Zhang Ye exclaimed, "Are you serious?"

Yang Shu said, "Of course I'm serious."

Holy shit!

So this woman was the true successor of Taiji in this world!

Zhang Ye wondered, "Then why didn't you show up in our martial arts world all this time? Why didn't you open a training hall? Why did you make everyone think that Taiji Fist was lost for good?"

"I..." Yang Shu looked rather embarrassed. "I have no money to open a training hall."

No money?

Oh, alright.

That was a fair enough reason!

Curious, Rao Aimin asked, "Other than you, is there anyone else who can be a successor of Taiji?"

Yang Shu pondered for a moment and shook her head before saying a little sadly, "My parents have already passed away. I'm the only Taiji Fist successor left now." Then she looked at Zhang Ye. "He's the second person I've seen who knows Taiji Fist. And the forms, skills, and moves of Taiji that he used earlier, I, I haven't ever learned of most of them! My family never taught me them."

Zhang Ye asked, "Why not?"

Yang Shu explained, "My family lived in seclusion and had never been involved with the martial arts community. My parents' generation were not talented at martial arts and only practiced it for the sake of strengthening their bodies. Much of the knowledge that was passed down from my ancestors has been lost. There's probably only about 30 to 40% left of it."

Rao Aimin made a noise in acknowledgment. "Why does he seem more authentic than a true successor of Taiji Fist like you?"

Yang Shu pulled a sullen face, saying nothing.

Zhang Ye started to feel a little uncomfortable. If he did not make something up, there was no way he would be able to trick his out of this. He couldn't possibly claim that he had learned Taiji Fist all by himself from nothing, could he? And so, this fellow said, "By chance, I received a Taiji Fist manual and learned the fist and qi flow techniques in it by myself."

Yang Shu said excitedly, "Where's the manual now?"

"Uh, I lost it," Zhang Ye said nervously.

Yang Shu was instantly disappointed. "That manual was probably handed down by my ancestors!"

Rao Aimin said, "If that is true, then could it mean that the two of you might really be from the same martial arts branch?"

"I guess you can put it that way." Zhang Ye smiled and said, "Those of Taiji are one big family. Other than the two of us, no one else in this world knows Taiji Fist." When he thought of this, Zhang Ye looked at Yang Shu in a much more affectionate way. Such an affection was really difficult to describe using words alone.

Yang Shu hesitated for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Rao Aimin taunted, "Then why don't you two battle it out? Whoever wins can proclaim themselves as the true successor of Taiji, and I can help you promote your martial arts when that time comes!"

Zhang Ye had no reply.

However, Yang Shu said, "I'm no match for him."

Rao Aimin said in all sincerity, "Young people should be more confident. This rascal has not recovered from his injuries yet, so it's a great opportunity for you to wrestle back the right of being the true successor of the Taiji Fist. I believe in you!"

"Big Sis Rao." Zhang Ye said in a speechless manner, "Can you say things that will gain you some karma instead?"

Meanwhile, Chenchen had had her fill and was getting sleepy. "Aunt, I want to take a nap."

Rao Aimin voiced her understanding. "Alright, I'm not going to deal with your Taiji affairs anymore, so settle this between yourselves." Then she led Chenchen upstairs to rest.

Seeing that, Zhang Ye said to Yang Shu, "Let's go to my place."

"OK," Yang Shu said.

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Next door.

At Zhang Ye's rental apartment.

"It's been a long time since I've come back here, so it's a bit messy. Feel free to take a seat." Zhang Ye quickly tidied the place up a little and picked up the things that were scattered around on the small sofa and his bed.

Yang Shu did not sit.

Zhang Ye asked, "What would you like to drink?"

Yang Shu suddenly looked at him and gave him a fist and palm salute. She shouted a salutation that made Zhang Ye feel awkward. "Senior Bro!"

Senior Bro?

What Senior Bro!

Zhang Ye hurriedly said, "Please don't call me that."

Yang Shu insisted, "It doesn't matter where you learned your Taiji Fist. The two of us are still practitioners of Taiji. You said so earlier yourself that those of Taiji are one big family. And now we're the only two left in this world who know Taiji Fist. Since you're slightly older than me and your martial arts are also slightly...much better than mine, you are naturally my senior bro!"

"Just call me Zhang Ye."

"Yes, Senior Bro."

"You can also call me Old Zhang."

"OK, Senior Bro."

Zhang Ye smacked his lips. "Forget it, just call me whatever you like."

Yang Shu replied in a serious tone, "Senior Bro, now that we are the only two left of Taiji, we have a very heavy burden to bear. We are tasked with glorifying the martial art of Taiji Fist again. In the past, I always thought that I was the only person left to shoulder this heavy burden. But now that I've met you, I know that this is something that concerns both of us. My only dream in this lifetime is to make Taiji Fist become famous everywhere. I've decided that I won't be leaving anymore now that I'm here in Beijing! I know that you must have the same thoughts as me, so let's work hard, hand in hand, toward that goal!"

Ah?

Bear a heavy burden?

Tasked?

I've never had such a fucking thought!

Zhang Ye coughed and said, "I think it's better to take it slow."

"Senior Bro, can you teach me Taiji Fist?"

"Don't you already know how?"

"What I know is not complete."

"Oh, sure then."

"Senior Bro, please lend me some money."

"What for?"

"I don't have any food money."

"Uh, is 2,000 yuan enough?"

"Yes."

"Alright, here you go."

"Senior Bro, I don't have a place to stay."

"Ah? Then what're you gonna do?"

"Can I stay here at your place?"

"Stay here?"

"Yeah. Isn't your house empty?"

"...Fine."

"Senior Bro."

"Big Sis, what else?"

"Oh, nothing. I just wanted to call you that."

"..."

He had gained a junior martial sister out of nowhere, but lost his wallet and apartment in the process. Zhang Ye was still reeling from the turn of events. Without knowing how, things had somehow fucking become like this!

When he first saw Yang Shu, Zhang Ye felt that she was a rash person. But it was only now that he realized his instinct was right. This woman truly considered him family!

Chapter 963: A subordinate in trouble!

At night.

Zhang Ye only got home after 8 PM.

His mother asked, "Why'd you just get back?"

"I've took a friend out to sightsee." Zhang Ye felt exhausted. "We visited the Forbidden City 1 , Qianmen Street 2 , and the Summer Palace 3 . Quickly get me something to drink."

His mother handed him a drink. "Who's your friend?"

"A friend from out of town." Zhang Ye did not elaborate.

He essentially did nothing the entire day except accompany his newly gained junior martial sister on a sightseeing tour of the capital. Besides, he could not really turn her down. Her parents were no longer around and she had traveled very far to look for him, even acknowledging him as "family" after that and addressing him as "Senior Bro." No matter how thick-skinned Zhang Ye was, he couldn't just leave her alone. After all, it was true that there were only the two of them left in their generation of the Taiji branch of martial arts.

His father lowered the television volume and looked at him, saying, "You ran around the country for a while a month ago, so why are you still not acting proper now that you're back?"

Zhang Ye acknowledged, "Alright, I'll work properly tomorrow."

His mother badgered, "Your popularity isn't moving much."

"Is that so?" Zhang Ye had not been paying attention to it recently.

His mother said, "You're still at the bottom of the A-list celebrity rankings. That's what you get for not having any new works for the past month. If not for that car crash between you and Jiang Hanwei creating some buzz, that previous A-list celebrity, who is now first place in the B-list rankings, would have overtaken you. Aren't you worried?"

Zhang Ye grunted. "OK, I know what to do."

Back in his room, he gave the Celebrity Rankings Index a quick browse.

Sure enough, his popularity score was almost falling off the A-list rankings again. This was mainly because Zhang Ye had not released any new works nor had any exposure for the past month when he went to attend the National Martial Arts Conference. Actually, it was only Zhang Ye who would dare to do something like this. If it were any other A-list celebrities who did not appear on the news for a month? Nor take part in any events, shows, or interviews that would give them onscreen exposure? That would be as good as digging their own grave! For a celebrity, having constant exposure to the public was something that was even more important than their lives!

Moreover, the competition at this tier was very fierce. If your popularity did not keep growing, it would just drop lower. Would any celebrities at this tier be easy to deal with? All of them had fairly large fan bases, so it wouldn't be surprising if any one of them became famous overnight and jumped onto the A-list. That was why Zhang Ye's position was still quite precarious and why he would definitely like to get out of this unstable position as soon as possible and keep increasing his popularity score. It wasn't easy for him to get onto the A-list rankings, so he couldn't just give it back so easily. As there were numerous B-list celebrities behind him eyeing him, he knew that he could not remain stagnant.

He decided to go to bed first.

When he rose in the morning, he would carefully plan and look for something to do next.

He fell asleep immediately when he laid down.

One hour.

Three hours.

Some time in the night, his cell phone suddenly rang!

Zhang Ye subconsciously rejected the first call and went back to sleep. However, it rang again and Zhang Ye wondered to himself who could be calling in the middle of the night!

He looked at his watch and saw that it was 3 AM!

Then he looked at the caller ID and saw who was calling. Ha Qiqi?

Zhang Ye became slightly more awake. If it were reporters or nuisances calling at this time, he would not bother with them at all. But as Ha Qiqi was his deputy who had always been a composed person, and now that Zhang Zuo and she were directing a new documentary on air pollution, Zhang Ye knew that Old Ha would definitely not call him at 3 AM if it weren't something serious. And she'd even called twice?

He immediately answered: "Sister Ha, what's the matter?"

Ha Qiqi said in a slightly listless voice: "Director Zhang, sorry for disturbing your sleep."

"It's fine. Please speak." Zhang Ye sat up in bed.

"I..."

"Just what is it?"

Ha Qiqi said: "They didn't want to tell you this, but I feel that I have to tell you about it no matter what." She paused and fell silent for a few seconds. "Can you make a trip to the hospital? Something has happened to Huang Dandan!"

Huang Dandan?

Tong Fu's girlfriend?

Zhang Ye hastily asked: "What happened to Little Huang?"

"She was just diagnosed with lung cancer."

Zhang Ye's mind reeled as he sat on his bed in shock. "Impossible!" He threw aside his blanket and got out of bed before asking in a raised voice: "Which hospital? Which ward? I'll be right there!"

He put on his clothes!

He went downstairs and drove off!

On his way there, Huang Dandan's face kept appearing in his mind. He had a very deep impression of this subordinate of his. Little Huang didn't start on The Voice's program team, but rather was an employee of the documentary channel. When Zhang Ye went over, he chose her and her boyfriend,

Tong Fu, along with some other employees of Department 14 and established the program team for A Bite of China. When they were filming A Bite of China, as female member of the team, Little Huang had followed their group of men and overcome the treacherous mountain hikes without a single complaint. She was even tougher than most of her male colleagues, and from time to time, she could even liven up the atmosphere as the happiest person on the team. Everyone liked her presence very much!

Lung cancer?

Zhang Ye could not accept it!

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3:30 AM.

At the Department of Thoracic Surgery, Beijing Cancer Hospital.

When Zhang Ye finally arrived at the hospital, Yan Tianfei's secretary had just arrived as well. The two of them went upstairs together and saw quite a few people around the ward. All of them were Department 14 staff!

Ha Qiqi was talking to a doctor.

Zhang Zuo and Wu Yi were clenching their fists in anxiety.

Tong Fu was squatting by himself in a corner, in a daze and not speaking. The moment Tong Fu saw Zhang Ye, his nose wrinkled and his eyes suddenly welled with tears. "Director Zhang!"

Everyone looked over!

"Director Zhang!"

"Teacher Zhang!"

"Little Huang is...she's..."

Little Wang teared up as she had always the closest to Huang Dandan.

Zhang Ye said loudly, "What the hell is going on?"

Zhang Zuo said, "After you left yesterday afternoon, Little Huang started coughing violently when we were eating out for lunch. At first, we didn't think much of it because Little Huang hadn't been feeling well due to her month-long cold. But later on, she suddenly choking and her face turned blue. We then realized it was serious and rapidly sent her to a small hospital nearby. After they examined her, the doctor advised us to transfer her to a different hospital. Only then did we learn that something was wrong! In the end, they had her sent here to the Beijing Cancer Hospital. She did her checkups and lab tests during the day. A portion of the test results just came out!"

Zhang Ye said angrily, "Why didn't anyone tell me sooner?"

Ha Qiqi said, "Tong Fu and Little Huang said that you were busy and didn't want us to tell you!"

"Something this big has happened and you guys still want to keep it from me? You guys are something!" Zhang Ye was angered for real. He said to the physician, "Doctor, you're positive that it's...lung cancer?"

The physician recognized Zhang Ye, but did not act surprised at seeing him at a time like this. He said, "We've diagnosed her on the whole. It'll take until tomorrow morning for the rest of the test results to come out."

Zhang Ye took a deep breath and asked, "What stage is it at?"

The physician said, "The preliminary diagnosis shows that it's at the early stage."

Zhang Ye quickly asked, "Early stage? Then she can get completely cured?"

The physician hesitated for a second. "She first has to get surgery. After that, it'll depend on the patient's will to live. Just because the cancer is at an early stage doesn't mean she be cured. It's just that the five-year survival rate for early stage lung cancer is higher than at the later stages."

Survival rate!

These words were heart-wrenching to those present!

Zhang Ye clenched his teeth. "She's only in her twenties!"

The physician sighed. "I know."

"Little Huang doesn't even smoke!" Zhang Ye said in a questioning tone.

The physician nodded. "She doesn't."

Zhang Ye asked, "Does her family have any history of such a disease?"

The physician said, "No."

Agitated, Zhang Ye said, "Then how could she have lung cancer? That doesn't make any sense at all!"

That's right!

Why?

No one in Department 14 could understand!

The physician looked around at them. "According to the clinical and pathological diagnoses, it is lung cancer. We can at most inform her family members that this is lung cancer with no known cause. We won't tell them anything more than that. However, based on my clinical knowledge and some of the pulmonary tests, I can tell all of you this with certainty." He suddenly took out a few of the x-ray films and laboratory reports and said, "I'm 90% certain that the cause of Ms. Huang Dandan's lung cancer is due to the air pollution around us, or what we colloquially refer to as...smog! She doesn't smoke nor have any family history of lung cancer, and is also very young. But she still has to breathe every day, every moment, and the pollutants in the air will follow her respiratory tract into her body and damage and infect her—this is the cause of the so-called lung cancer with no known cause!"

Zhang Ye asked, "Can you confirm that?"

The physician nodded. "The number of similar cases have been multiplying in recent years." He pointed to a nearby ward. "Over there are two cancer patients who got admitted here today before your case. They had the same circumstances—they did not smoke, had no family history of cancer, and did not

work in hazardous environments, but they still got diagnosed with cancer all the same. Tell me, why do you think that is? Besides, I checked and know that Little Huang's hometown is in Shanxi. That province is known to be heavily polluted."

The physician changed the topic. "It's quite late. The other patients still have to rest, so don't have too many people stay behind. Go home for now." He then walked away.

He left behind a group of Department 14 staff who felt very angry!

Air pollution?

It was actually caused by the air pollution that they had been investigating for the past month!?

The ward's door opened.

A female employee of Department 14 came out and wiped away some tears from the corners of her eyes. "Little Huang wants everyone to go inside."

Zhang Ye immediately stepped into the ward. "Little Huang!"

The lights were on inside the room. Huang Dandan was lying on the bed, her face haggard and pallid. She had an oxygen mask on to help her breathe. "Director Zhang, why are you here too? I've told them not to tell you about this."

Zhang Ye said, "How can I not be here! Rest assured, Little Huang. Don't worry too much. The doctor said that you're at the early stage of the cancer, so you'll definitely recover! We'll always be by your side!"

Little Wang said, "Right!"

Ha Qiqi said, "We're all here for you!"

Wu Yi said, "Everyone will always be by your side!"

Zhang Zuo said, "Just rest up and don't think about anything else. We will come and visit you every day!"

Looking at Huang Dandan's condition, everyone's heart ached.

However, Huang Dandan shook her head. "I can bear this. You don't need to be by my side or come here."

"Dandan!" Tong Fu was nearly in tears.

Huang Dandan looked at everyone and suddenly said, "Can you guys promise me one thing?"

Zhang Ye said, "Whatever you say!"

Ha Qiqi quickly said, "However many requests you have, we'll definitely give you our word!"

Huang Dandan's tone became very determined all of a sudden. "I overheard what the doctor said just now. Don't worry about me. You guys must take my place and produce the air pollution documentary. We can't let the citizens stay in the dark. Don't let the same thing happen to other people, alright?"

"Dandan!" Little Wang teared up again.

Zhang Ye straightened his face as he said through set teeth, "Alright, I promise! I will make sure that everyone gets to see this documentary!"

"Thank you, Director Zhang." Huang Dandan fell asleep content.

After the group left the ward, they went downstairs.

Zhang Ye stood in the lobby and suddenly announced loudly to everyone of Department 14, "From today onward, from now onward, our Department 14 will fight to the bitter end against...air pollution!"

"Fight it!"

"Motherfucker!"

"To the bitter end!"

"To the bitter end!"

The people of Department 14 were furious!

Chapter 964: Barred from broadcast!

7 o'clock in the morning.

At Central TV.

The other channels and departments were not at work yet. Many of their offices were still empty, but Department 14's office was already working at full capacity!

Every staff member was present!

"Where's the script?"

"We're making copies of it now! It'll be ready immediately!"

"Get the Ministry of Environmental Protection's number!"

"I have it here!"

"Who's going to interview Chief Xu?"

"Me! I'll go!"

"Director Zhang? You're going to handle it yourself?"

"Yes!"

"Then I'll get it arranged for you immediately!"

"Director Ha, the animated short is ready. Can you take a look to see if it's OK?"

An hour later.

The Central TV employees gradually arrived for work. When those who passed by Department 14's office saw what was going on inside, all of them, without an exception, froze in their tracks. They discovered that the people of the Documentary Channel were all seemingly different today. They were all busy working. No one was playing games or idly chitchatting. Each person seemed like a sharp sword, looking very persistent, tough, and angry!

What was going on?

Just what was going on?

A curious person from Department 13 went over and asked, "Old Wu, what are you guys..."

Someone who knew what had happened quickly pulled that person back. "Don't bother asking. Something happened to their department's Huang Dandan!"

"What happened to her?"

"Lung cancer."

"What did you just say? How could that happen?"

"Yeah, she's still so young!"

"How'd you know?"

"I heard it from someone this morning. Apparently, it was caused by the smog!"

"This..."

"No wonder! No wonder the people of Department 14 are working so hard!"

"Smog? Is the smog really that harmful?"

"It can even cause lung cancer?"

"Why didn't I know about this? They didn't report it on the news either?"

"I know that the smog is pretty bad, but no one has ever told me that it could cause lung cancer? And how could the chances of it developing be so high? I saw Huang Dandan just yesterday!"

"I don't know."

"Is the smog really that harmful?"

In just one afternoon, the news had spread all around Central TV!

Several heads of other departments came looking for Yan Tianfei to show their support.

Some of the channels even suggested to hold a fundraiser for Huang Dandan out of goodwill, but were rejected by Yan Tianfei and Tong Fu. Huang Dandan traveling around the country to the regions most affected by the smog was an aggravating factor in the lung cancer developing. As a result, Huang Dandan's case was considered a workplace injury. Yan Tianfei had already gone to the relevant departments to check out the procedures to take. The medical expenses were all submitted so that

Huang Dandan and her family wouldn't need to have any additional burdens. Yan Tianfei had taken care of all this already.

...

One day.

Two days.

Three days.

The staff of Department 14 were all working harder than the other. Under this high intensity work pace, in only three days, they had finished the latter half of the documentary that spanned four episodes. Together with the work done in the previous month, the entire documentary was completed!

In the end, it was Zhang Ye who took on the responsibility of editing the show. He had edited out the parts which were most controversial and did not follow his previous world's version of Chai Jing's Documentary on Air Pollution in China. He also chose a different way of presentation for the broadcast and added in some of his own content. The overall edit made it quite different from the original as he was afraid that it would not pass for broadcast, which was why he had taken out the most controversial parts of it in the first place, although not all of it could be edited out and had to remain in the final cut.

On this day, the documentary was completed!

Ha Qiqi heaved a sigh of relief. "It's finally done!"

"I'm gonna pass out from exhaustion!" Zhang Zuo had nearly collapsed.

Little Wang said excitedly, "This is great. I'll call Dandan and tell her!"

Tong Fu asked anxiously, "Director Zhang, when can it get broadcast?"

Zhang Ye asked, "What's the matter?"

Tong Fu said, "Dandan's surgery is scheduled for next week, so I hope that she can get to watch it before then!"

Zhang Ye immediately said, "Alright, let me speak to Director Yan about this."

Zhang Ye went to Yan Tianfei's office and discussed the documentary with him. After Yan Tianfei finished watching the final cut of the documentary, he was extremely satisfied with it. He immediately submitted for approval in the hopes that they would be able get it out for broadcast by next week while they concentrated on the promotions this week!

However, what no one expected was that the next day, the decision of Central TV was announced abruptly: Department 14's The Pollution Problem does not pass muster and has been barred from broadcast. All related work and promotions of the documentary would be stopped with immediate effect as well!

Department 14 reacted explosively!

Ha Qiqi slammed her hands on the table. "How could they make a decision like that!"

Zhang Zuo glared into the distance and said, "Why are they barring it from broadcast? Why?"

Little Wang said, "What on earth happened?"

Everyone was in disbelief. The many days of their efforts to rush out the documentary before Huang Dandan's surgery was now met with Central TV's decision to bar it from broadcast? There wasn't even an option to make changes to it and was instead shut down upon submission?

A decision like this was an extremely rare occurrence!

It had occurred just a handful of times at Central TV!

Yan Tianfei was furious and went to find the station head. When the people of Department 14 learned about this, they all followed Yan Tianfei!

The Station Head's office was packed with a lot of people!

"Why?"

"What regulations did we violate?"

"This is a public service documentary!"

"Station Head, why aren't we allowed to broadcast the documentary?"

Nobody could accept this!

The station head who oversaw the approval board looked at them, frowned, and said, "I watched the documentary. If you people only mentioned that the smog was harmful, no one would have batted an eyelid. But why must the source of the smog be brought into it as well? Pollution caused by the burning of coal? Pollution caused by steel making? That isn't going to be acceptable!"

Yan Tianfei said in annoyance, "Why not?"

The station head said, "You're asking me why not? Can the country not burn coal? Can the country not produce steel? What's the point of bringing up those things? It will just create a very negative impact all around! If this actually triggers a societal upheaval or conflict, who will be responsible for it? You? Can you bear that responsibility? Even Central TV couldn't bear this responsibility, much less you!"

Zhang Ye came into the office from outside. "If we don't mention the source of the air pollution, what is the point of making the documentary? What should we tell the audience? Tell them that the smog is harmful! That it is very harmful! That it is extremely harmful! But we have to keep the source of the pollution a secret, we can't tell you about it. So don't bother with taking measures against this. Even if the smog is heavy, you still have to breathe it in. Even if the smog is heavy, there's nothing you can do about it! Is that how it goes?"

The station head said in displeasure, "In your documentary, you claimed that the smog was the cause of lung cancer. But do you have any scientific grounds for saying that? Do you? If you do, show it to me!"

Zhang Ye looked at him. "A lot of the organizations that investigated this found that there is a correlation between the degree of air pollution and the number of lung cancer cases!"

The station head shook his head. "I'm asking you now, do you have any scientific grounds for saying that? What grounds do you have? A national report? Where is the report then? You said that the smog was the cause of lung cancer and a variety of other respiratory diseases, and could even cause pathological changes? You're fearmongering! Everything these days has to be based on science!"

Yan Tianfei shouted, "So many people died in the past in other countries due to smog. Tell me then, how did those people die?"

The station head said, "I don't know how they died, and neither do I care. All I know is that you people are fearmongering. There are some topics that people like you should never touch, even if it's for a documentary that you're doing! If it isn't handled well, things will boil over!"

Zhang Ye could not take this anymore. "Due to the smog, a lot of people have already died. Everyone can see this, yet you're asking me to fucking provide you with evidence? Asking if we have any scientific grounds for our claims? Have you gone blind? Do I look like a scientist to you? Then let me ask you! Does traditional Chinese medicine have any scientific basis to it? Explain to me the scientific principles behind it! Explain to me the scientific purpose of taking someone's pulse! Explain all of that to me!"

The station head clearly had no answers to his questions, but he did not approve the broadcast of the documentary either!

Further, the station issued direct punishment an hour later!

The leaders of Department 14 have led others to cause trouble!

Zhang Ye is suspended for a month!

Yan Tianfei is suspended for a month!

The entire Department 14 staff shall have their monthly bonuses deducted!

A large-scale punishment like this almost never happened at Central TV, but it seemed like the station was very determined in their way of handling things this time!

Yan Tianfei slammed his hands on the table and cursed!

The entire Department 14 also cursed!

"Fuck!"

"How could they bar the documentary from broadcast just like that?"

"The statistics that we collected were all from professional institutes!"

"Right, how did it become fearmongering?"

Zhang Ye was exasperated!

He had already taken great care dealing with this problem!

Others might not know it, but he did. In his previous world, Chai Jing's Documentary on Air Pollution in China had stirred up a lot of trouble, causing turmoil at almost every level of the country's hierarchy. A lot of people had been shocked by the documentary and become afraid of the smog for the first time in

their lives. But there were also a lot of people who had questioned it and relentlessly found ways to raise doubts against Chai Jing and her documentary!

That was why Zhang Ye had been treading so carefully!

Calling for capital reform? He did not include that!

Calling for reduced coal usage? He did not include that!

Statistics from foreign institutes? He did not include that!

Above all, he did not call for any urgent economic restructuring of the nation!

He had removed all of the controversial points of Chai Jing's documentary so that he could make a purely public service documentary that would inform the citizens of the harmfulness of the smog and where the smog originated! Zhang Ye was careful, cautious, and on guard at every turn, but he never thought that the documentary would still get barred from broadcast!

Little Wang said anxiously, "I told Dandan over the phone that the documentary has been completed. But now, what are we going to tell her? We won't be allowed to broadcast it? We can't get it out for broadcast?"

Tong Fu said angrily, "During the past few days that Dandan's been hospitalized, she's kept asking about the progress of the documentary. She...She..."

Everyone fell silent. With Central TV issuing the ban, Department 14 had no way to broadcast it. This was the ironclad truth!

What should they do?

There was no way out!

Director Yan was suspended!

"Director Zhang!"

"Director Zhang, what should we do?"

Ha Qiqi looked at him.

Zhang Zuo looked at him.

Everyone from Department 14 looked at him.

Zhang Ye did not say anything. He walked back into his own office and called Wu Zeqing. After explaining everything to her, he wanted to listen to her opinion.

"You want my opinion?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll tell you that it's best not to broach this subject. It's very sensitive so it'd be best to stay as far away from it as possible."

"Alright, I understand."

"But if you insist on it, you have my support."

"Thank you."

Old Wu's words revealed a lot to him. At her level of work, she definitely came into contact with many people and knew many things!

This was a minefield!

Whoever touched it would be done for!

Whoever touched it would die!

The strong reaction from Central TV said it all!

But!

Zhang Ye had always believed that in the long passage of history, such matters could not stay hidden for long. No one might talk about it this year or next year, but what about a hundred years later? Two hundred years?

Someone would definitely have to be the first to do it!

Someone would definitely have to make the sacrifice!

Zhang Ye poured some tea he'd brewed for himself and took a sip of it before closing his eyes to think. He thought about it for a long time.

He...was willing to be that someone!

Chapter 965: Let me bear the burden of these criticisms!

On the same day.

The news was already reporting on this matter.

"Zhang Ye's new documentary has been banned!"

"Nothing to follow up with after A Bite of China!"

"A documentary on air pollution? Barred before broadcast!"

"The decline of Zhang Ye?"

"Central TV Documentary Channel no longer able to replicate the miracle of A Bite of China!"

"Why did a public service documentary get barred from broadcast?"

On Weibo, many netizens were not having any of it!

"What is this?"

"Barred from broadcast? Fuck! I didn't even get to watch it!"

"What is this about it getting barred before its broadcast?"

"I've been looking forward to Zhang Ye's new documentary all this while. Although this documentary was not directed by Teacher Zhang, it was still made by him. Why is it gone?"

"Give me back my documentary!"

"Central TV is so awful!"

"I think there's some news that you guys might be still be unaware of?"

"What news?"

One of the program team members of A Bite of China was diagnosed with lung cancer several days ago!"

"Ah?"

"What?"

"Hai, she's just twenty-something. Teacher Zhang did not plan to be involved with this documentary initially as he was already about to leave Central TV. But he came back to take charge of it because that team member's lung cancer was seemingly caused by the smog."

"Surely that can't be true?"

"Can smog really cause lung cancer?"

"Are you serious? Don't scare me like that, alright?"

"An employee of Department 14 has been diagnosed with cancer. Why is Central TV still barring them from broadcasting the documentary? They really aren't sympathetic, are they? Would Teacher Zhang agree to that?"

"This makes me want to watch the documentary even more now! The news has often talked about being more aware of the smog and saying that the air pollution is harmful. But why do they not explain to us why it is harmful? Or tell us how they're going to govern and manage it? What's the meaning of that! Everyone's in a fog! They know that there is the smog, but no one knows what the hell it is! Was Teacher Zhang trying to tell us? And then got barred from broadcasting it?"

This topic was heatedly discussed on the Internet!

A lot of people were cursing at Central TV, but there were also a lot who did not know what had happened!

In this world, the study of PM2.5 was still in its infancy. There were a lot of things regarding it that most citizens did not understand, with about 95% of them not even knowing that they should have the habit of wearing a face mask outside on a smoggy day. Nobody thought much of this issue and were not nervous about it. This was also the reason for Zhang Ye and Department 14's urgency in making this documentary. But now it was all in vain!

...

At Central TV.

In the Documentary Channel's office.

It was almost time to knock off, but no one was preparing to leave yet. Everyone stayed behind and kept cursing and scolding. There were even some people who talked about wanting to quit their jobs!

"This is too much!"

"Dandan is gonna get surgery soon!"

"How are we going to explain it to Dandan? How do we break this to her?"

"We can't just leave it as that!"

"Right! We must think of a solution!"

Ha Qiqi dropped something heavily onto the table and said, "I'll go see the station head again!"

"Let's go together!" Zhang Zuo couldn't stand it anymore either!

"Let's go together!"

"Yeah, together!"

Everyone responded angrily!

They asked themselves if they had done anything wrong to deserve this!

They asked themselves if any of their statistics were not obtained from a professional institute!

But why did it end up with the station head accusing them in this way? And punishing them too? Why could they not inform the citizens of where the smog originated and how harmful it could get? Why couldn't they let the citizens know the truth?

They did not understand!

So they were very angry!

Across the room, Zhang Ye had just come out from his office.

"Director Zhang!"

"Come with us!"

"Let's go and see the head!"

"I don't believe that we can't justify our position!"

The people of Department 14 were in a state of frenzy.

But then, Zhang Ye looked at everyone and said, "Don't bother looking for him. There's no point in doing so either. Without approval from the station, we'll never get the go-ahead to broadcast our documentary."

Ha Qiqi said, "But!"

"No buts." Zhang Ye waved his hand. "It's time to leave and go on home, everyone. There's no need to contemplate the documentary issue any further."

Zhang Zuo stared at him wide-eyed. "Are you saying we should just let it be?"

Zhang Ye said, "What else can be done? The footage has already been taken away by the station's people."

Little Wang could not believe that Zhang Ye was saying something like this. "Director Zhang, what's with you? This, this isn't your style. If this were the past, you'd definitely..."

Zhang Ye said, "I'd definitely what? The station has already indicated to us that our documentary would cause more harm than good. I have nothing I can do, so we can only leave it as is for now. Everyone, let's stop kicking up a fuss already and head on back home."

Ha Qiqi was angered by this. She shouted, "Director Zhang! Then who's gonna be responsible for Dandan's cancer? Dandan's been laying in her sickbed without airing a single grievance. All she wants is to prevent what happened to her from happening to anyone else! She just wanted our documentary to inform the citizens so that they'd know about the harmfulness of the smog! Yes, I accept that the station head's words were right. Even if some of the statistics we obtained were genuine and from official institutes, but there are no scientific grounds to them! Statistics are just statistics and can only be used for scientific interpretation. They can't be considered scientific fact! But even if it really turns out to be wrong, even if the smog is actually not harmful at all, we still want to make this matter public! We still want to scare the people into thinking! To make them learn about the smog and let them be afraid of it. Even if we have to face a lifetime of criticism, we're willing to accept it!"

"Right!"

"All of us are willing to accept it!"

"We're not afraid of getting scolded! In the past year, haven't we already been scolded a lot?"

"Director Zhang, we cannot just let this be!"

"This documentary is the fruit of everyone's labor!"

Zhang Zuo stared straight into Zhang Ye's eyes. "You promised Dandan personally! You said that you'd make sure everyone gets to see this documentary!"

Tong Fu clenched his fists. "Director Zhang!"

Zhang Ye looked at all of them. "Are you guys finished?"

No one spoke.

Zhang Ye nodded. "OK, if you are, then head on home. Let's not bring this up again. Go back home and pack up your feelings. We still have to prepare for the next documentary, maybe something about gourmet or animals. Any subject is fine."

Ha Qiqi suddenly asked, "Is this coming from the bottom of your heart?"

Zhang Ye threw up his hands. "Then what do you want me to do?"

"Director Zhang, I was wrong about you!" Ha Qiqi turned around and left!

Zhang Zuo hesitated for a bit before giving a long sigh. He walked off as well!

Zhang Ye abruptly said, "There's something else. Right now, there's a lot of attention on our documentary from the media and the people. There's huge ruckus online, so we can't just stay quiet and offer no explanation about it. We'll apply to the management for a venue to hold a press conference regarding this issue. It'd be best if the venue is a large one so that we can fit in all the media outlets and reporters for the press conference. At that time, I will personally go onstage and give an excuse for the barring of our documentary from broadcast."

Ha Qiqi did not even turn her head. "Got it!"

Zhang Ye felt reluctant. "This will be very important."

Zhang Zuo turned around and said, "I'll write a report for it tonight."

"OK." Zhang Ye nodded.

Little Wang said angrily, "You still intend to clear it up? Give an excuse? What's there to excuse! What's there for us to explain! We did not do anything wrong in the first place! Director Zhang, why, why are doing this!"

Tong Fu looked at Zhang Ye. "Are you still the Director Zhang I know?"

Little Wang pulled at Tong Fu. "Let's go!"

Gradually, everyone left the office!

Everyone wore the same expression of disappointment!

Soon, Zhang Ye was left in the office by himself.

Outside, it had turned dark. Smog blotted out the moonlight. When he looked out through the window, the night looked gloomy in a rather depressed and somewhat lonesome manner.

Zhang Ye quietly walked over to the office's main door and closed it. Creak. The sound of the door closing was particularly loud in the silence of the office. He walked back in, and suddenly bent over and turned on a computer, then another, and a third one. These computers had previously been used to store the data for the air pollution documentary, but were wiped clean after the people from Central TV's management came over in the afternoon.

He turned them on.

Typed on the keyboard.

Zhang Ye performed a series of complicated operations on them. If there were any technicians present, they would know that Zhang Ye was recovering the files and data that were still retained on the hard drives!

Five...

Ten...

Twenty...

Little by little, the data were restored!

One by one, the sections of video and interview material reappeared on the screens!

All of a sudden, Zhang Ye thought of those words Ha Qiqi uttered to him before she left. He couldn't refrain from chuckling, and felt quite proud of her at heart. Make the people learn know about the smog? Let them know so that they would be afraid? Even if they had to face a lifetime of criticism, they would accept it?

Well said!

That's my team!

You're all good people!

However, this is no trifling matter. This is a major issue that will tear a hole in the sky! How could I let you guys face these criticisms? How could I let you sacrifice yourselves? All of you are still powerless right now. If you guys offend someone, or if someone tries to find trouble with you guys, how could you handle it? You have wives and kids, husbands and parents. When it comes to handling the pressure from such criticisms, can any of you truly bear it?

Forget it.

It's no coincidence that I'm not afraid of trouble, have never been afraid of offending others, and am always very controversial. So I don't care if I'm charged with another count. I'm your boss. If anything happened, could I let you guys take the blame? All of you have really underestimated me, Zhang Ye!

So let me bear the burden of these criticisms instead.

Chapter 966: The press conference begins!

A few days later.

Saturday.

On the day of the press conference.

Morning, at the Department of Thoracic Surgery, Beijing Cancer Hospital.

"Dandan," Tong Fu said.

Huang Dandan shook her head. "That's impossible!"

Beside her, Little Wang said with a sunken expression, "Director Zhang really said that."

Huang Dandan said in disbelief, "Don't you guys know what kind of person Director Zhang is?"

"I know." Tong Fu grit his teeth and said, "But he's really going to stop caring about this. He instructed us to not get involved nor bring it up again. Even when we wanted to go and protest against the heads a second time, he stopped us from going!"

Little Wang said in resentment, "Our documentary definitely can't make it to broadcast anymore as the footage has been deleted. The press conference will be held today, and we'll be explaining to the reporters and public the reason why the documentary was taken down. It's 7 AM now. In two more hours, the press conference will begin!"

Huang Dandan kept shaking her head.

Tong Fu said, "I can actually understand Director Zhang's decision. He will be leaving Central TV soon, so if he gets into trouble at this stage, it'll greatly affect him. Since we already know that our documentary will likely offend a lot of people, nobody would want to get themselves involved in such a mess. Director Zhang also—"

"Don't speak any further!" Huang Dandan interrupted him angrily. "All of you, please leave!"

Little Wang said, "Dandan, why are you—"

Huang Dandan ignored her. "Please go back!"

"Th-Then we'll head on to work. Rest up and listen to the doctor." Tong Fu had no choice but to leave with Little Wang and another colleague who was also visiting.

"What should we do?"

"Just give Dandan some time alone."

"Hai, she definitely can't accept that either."

"This time, Director Zhang is really—"

"Don't. Director Zhang has done a lot for everyone."

"Let's go back then. There's still a lot of things to handle at the press conference venue."

...

Meanwhile.

At SARFT HQ.

Wu Zeqing walked into the office building.

"Eh."

"Chief Wu!"

"Chief Wu, good morning."

"Ah, Chief Wu!"

Many people were momentarily stunned. Today was Saturday, as well as public holiday. Besides, didn't Chief Wu attend a meeting in Shanghai yesterday? Didn't she originally plan to return on Sunday? Then why did Chief Wu come back to work today? Uh, did something happen at the office? Why wasn't there any news of that then?

The employees started gossiping.

Soon, Wu Zeqing's secretary, Bai Li rushed back in a hurry.

In the office.

Bai Li was quite surprised. "Chief Wu, what made you come back today? Wasn't the meeting in Shanghai slated to end on Sunday?"

Wu Zeqing said nonchalantly, "There might be something happening today, so I came back in advance."

Bai Li exclaimed, "What's going to happen?"

Wu Zeqing did not answer her. She just said, "If something happens today, tell me immediately. I will be in my office the entire day."

Terrified, Bai Li said, "Uh, OK."

Just what was going on?

Even Chief Wu had to come back in anticipation of something?

Was a disaster going to occur?!

...

At Central TV.

At the press conference venue.

"I'm from the Beijing Times."

"Oh, please enter."

"I'm from the News Channel and this is my reporter pass."

"Alright, please enter."

"I'm with Tianjin TV."

"Welcome. Please enter."

The reporters and camera operators were gradually admitted into the venue. Some of them were setting up their equipment and testing their video cameras, while others were exchanging words in twos and threes.

"Why is it being held at such a big venue?"

"I heard that there will be over a hundred reporters attending."

"That many?"

"Yeah. Department 14's new documentary was rejected, so a lot of people are focusing their attention on them."

"That's true. We still don't know the reason behind it."

"We'll probably find out in a while."

"I heard that the entire Department 14 was punished and even warned!"

"Due to what reason?"

"Who knows! Isn't it just a documentary about air pollution? How big of an affair could it be?"

"It seems that the smog can cause diseases."

"Come on, that's all nonsense, no? It is the same as pesticides on vegetables. No matter how much you try to wash them away, the veggies won't be 100% clean. There will still be some residue left in the vegetables. Even though the residue is poisonous, a small intake of it won't affect the body, so nothing will happen. The issue of the smog is likely the same, and it doesn't happen every day anyway. Today's weather looks just fine to me."

"Yeah, if the smog really is hazardous, the station would already have gotten us to investigate and do a report on it, but have any of you received instructions to do so in the past two years?"

"Nope."

"We didn't get such instructions from our station either."

"I did receive one, but our investigations showed nothing. The officials did not even give us a proper definition of what smog is. There were some similar cases overseas as well, but their circumstances should be different from our country's. This PM2.5 issue was only brought up recently, in the past two years."

Even a lot of the reporters working on the front lines had only a passing knowledge of it.

This was the current state of this world's knowledge and understanding of smog. It was a very different from Zhang Ye's previous world. The people of this world were still at the preliminary stage of discovery regarding smog. Ignoring the fact of how hazardous it was, nobody even seemed like they knew if the smog was harmful to their bodies.

Not far away.

Ha Qiqi, Zhang Zuo, and the others were busy working.

But from the looks of it, everyone from Department 14 seemed to be going about their work very listlessly. There was no hint of the fire or anger from before. They all appeared to have become rather apathetic to everything.

Zhang Zuo asked, "How many people have not arrived yet?"

Wu Yi said, "Almost everyone is here. There's just one or two who aren't."

"Then let's get ready to start," Ha Qiqi said, expressionless.

Beside them, several heads of Central TV walked by for an inspection. They looked at the staff of Department 14. "So how's the preparation going?"

Zhang Zuo looked upset. "It's all done."

Deputy Station Head Zhou said, "When it's time for the Q&A session, don't mention anything about getting barred or the like, as it doesn't sound nice. Today's press conference is mainly to give a proper explanation to the people concerned about this issue. Don't bring up any unrelated things, understand?"

A different supervisor criticized, "In the future, don't commit such a big mistake! Even Zhang Ye knows how severe this is, yet you people are still not over it?"

The station heads then made their rounds once more, albeit not seriously, before leaving. With the footage deleted, there was no way they could broadcast it even if they wanted to. They did not believe this group of people could give them any more trouble.

Once the station heads left, the look on the faces of the Department 14 people turned even more unsightly!

A big mistake?

What big mistake did we commit?

Someone spoke up, "I think Director Zhang is still backstage. Can someone go and get him?"

No one answered.

Ha Qiqi just said, "Whoever wants to go, go."

Zhang Zuo sighed, "Old Ha."

Wu Yi gazed at Ha Qiqi. "It's actually hard for Director Zhang too. Director Zhang is tired of it this time and does not want to fight them anymore. We have to try to understand."

Ha Qiqi turned around and walked away to oversee the work elsewhere.

Tong Fu walked up. "But he personally promised Dandan!"

Zhang Zuo patted Tong Fu on the shoulder. "Little Tong, I know that you aren't in a good mood, but the implications of this business are too great and aren't things we can change. Director Zhang has difficulties as well."

Tong Fu said angrily, "He can ignore it, but why must he stop us from taking this into our own hands?"

Zhang Zuo sighed, "Hai."

Suddenly, a silhouette appeared at the entrance!

The people of Department 14 cried out in shock!

"Dandan!"

"Aiyo!"

"What are you doing here?"

"Why'd you come here instead of staying at the hospital?"

"Your surgery's soon!"

Tong Fu was stunned!

Ha Qiqi hurriedly ran over.

Huang Dandan said calmly, "I just came to take a look."

Ha Qiqi reprimanded, "The documentary has been axed, and Director Zhang's not going to do anything about it. What's there to look at? Go back quickly and get some rest!"

Tong Fu was also very anxious about her. "Huang Dandan!"

But Huang Dandan turned a deaf ear to them and stubbornly stood there without moving!

It was time!

The press conference was about to start!

Backstage.

There was only one solitary person here at this moment.

For the past few days, not a single person of Department 14 knew what Zhang Ye was doing. After he got suspended, he just stayed at home and did not show his face at the office. No one called Zhang Ye either. It seemed like the entire team had become strangers with him overnight. A lot of them were still angry at him.

Zhang Ye looked at his watch and lightly exhaled. He looked in the mirror and adjusted his shirt collar before he smiled and walked out satisfied and resolute!

I'm not a stern person, nor am I a likeable character. I'm not one to have an exhaustive plan, as I'm not a deep schemer. I don't know how to behave in a way that everyone will agree and be satisfied with. My EQ is not high and my IQ is just the same. I often make mistakes and am sometimes impulsive. I have many shortcomings, though I know them all!

You can doubt me!

You can scold me!

You can insult me!

You can bite me!

None of that matters to me!

But if you don't allow me to speak?

Then that is unacceptable!

That is...truly unacceptable!

Do you people think that by deleting the footage, you can seal my lips?

Do you people think that a documentary can only be shown on televised media?

Hur hur, then I guess you people have never before witnessed a documentary being broadcast live at the venue, right?

Chapter 967: Zhang Ye's Documentary on Air Pollution in China!

Thud.

The venue's door was closed by the staff.

This announced the start of the press conference!

The reporters roused themselves and looked at the stage. They looked around for the host of the press conference or Central TV Documentary Channel's supervisor.

"It's beginning!"

"Where's Zhang Ye?"

"Where is he?"

"Eh, why isn't anyone coming out?"

"Who's hosting the press conference?"

All of a sudden, the venue's lights went out!

Click!

Click!

Most of the lights turned off!

Only a few of the dim stage lights remained lit!

The venue instantly darkened!

"Huh?"

"What's going on?"

"Why did they turn off the lights?"

"What's the meaning of this?"

"Hey, what are you guys trying to do?"

The reporters were startled. Everyone started questioning Department 14's staff about this. This setup bewildered them as they had never attended a press conference that was held in this way. Why did they turn off the lights?

However, the employees of Department 14 were also startled by this. They did know understand what they were seeing. They hadn't received any prior notice and wondered how the press conference could be held with the lights off.

Wu Yi quickly said, "It's probably a fault with the lighting system!"

"Quick, go and take a look!" Yan Tianfei's secretary was here as well.

Little Wang said, "B-But I don't think anyone's backstage?"

Someone else wondered, "The lighting was preprogrammed. I don't think there's a lighting technician around today?"

"What's going on then?"

Ha Qiqi sensed that something was wrong!

Zhang Zuo and the others also felt it!

The next moment, however, a vertical beam of light abruptly shot down from above and illuminated the rostrum on the stage. In the dusk of the venue, this light was quite conspicuous!

In an instant, the venue fell silent!

Everyone looked up at the stage in surprise!

From backstage, a silhouette slowly walked out.

One step.

Two steps.

Three steps.

"Sometimes, in the middle of the night, I turn on the light. I see the light shining and motes of dust, and sometimes even some irritating bugs flying toward the light."

The man's voice rang out before his face could be clearly seen.

Zhang Ye walked up to the rostrum. He did not gaze at the stunned faces of the hundred-odd media reporters in the audience. He just stared straight up at the beam of light as he walked toward it until he came to a stop in the center of it. "But there's something that I cannot see, the fine particulate matter floating in the air. It's smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter. It has a high refractive index which allows them to absorb a large amount of visible light, leaving us with a very low visibility of the places surrounding us. In time, people began giving this phenomenon a name, which I think is called 'smog.'" He smiled and reached out to grab something, but grabbed only air. "I've always been very curious about smog and wanted to know what it really was. It's right in front of me, yet I can't see it."

The venue was dead quiet!

No one could react to what was happening before their eyes!

This opening, this speech stunned everyone!

Ha Qiqi stared, eyes wide!

Zhang Zuo could feel goosebumps cover his body!

Huang Dandan excitedly balled her fists!

Little Wang's eyes reddened, tears threatening to spill out!

Director Zhang!

You...

Zhang Ye took two steps to reach an onstage master console that was set up beforehand and tapped on it. "There's only one way that I can drag it into my sight."

The big screen behind him lit up.

A picture of an apparatus appeared.

Zhang Ye smiled as he pointed at it. "This is a PM2.5 sampling apparatus that I borrowed from the Environmental Sciences Department at Peking University. Professor Wang from their department told me that this instrument is extremely precious and that there are only ten of them in Peking University, so they couldn't loan it out. So I handed him a 68-yuan 1 bottle of wine and he immediately said that I could have the apparatus as a gift."

A female reporter in the audience burst into laughter!

A few other reporters couldn't hold in their laughter either.

Zhang Ye spread his hands and smiled as he said, "I've always thought that the smog was very mysterious and wouldn't show itself to just anyone. But later, I found that with an apparatus like this, which I exchanged for a bottle of wine, by placing a pristine sample of film in it, the smog would automatically show itself to me."

The screen flashed.

One by one, photos featuring scenes of Zhang Ye's daily life appeared.

There was a timestamp.

There was a location.

There was a figure of the PM2.5 values at that second.

Zhang Ye said, "This is from two days ago when I carried this apparatus around for 24 hours."

Two days ago?

So you did not come to work for the past few days because you were doing this?

At this moment, without exception, everyone from Department 14 looked deeply touched!

Ha Qiqi almost sobbed! Director Zhang!

Then, a shocking picture popped up!

The reporters gasped in shock!

"Ah?"

"This!"

"This is?"

Zhang Ye smiled. He pointed at the screen and said, "This was the sample of film that was taken out at the end of the day."

The film sample in the picture had turned completely black!

It was the same color as coal!

"Why is it like that?" a female reporter asked in disbelief!

"This...this is what the smog is?" A male reporter was also shocked!

One of the reporters nearly jumped up. "Impossible!"

Zhang Ye looked at him and said with a smile, "Yeah, I didn't believe it at the beginning either. However, I went to look for my Peking University colleague, who is still that Professor Wang from the Environmental Sciences Department, and gifted him yet another bottle of wine, and had him help me analyze the sample that I'd collected. I wanted to know what was really in it."

The picture changed.

A densely packed group of chemical names appeared!

Zhang Ye raised his hand and pointed at the screen. "These are the results of his analysis of the film sample. There are a total of 15 types of carcinogens, including the strongest carcinogen in the world, benzo[a]pyrene. Do you know how many times above the national standards it was measured at? It exceeded it by 14 times!"

It caused an uproar!

Carcinogens?

Exceeded the standards by 14 times?

Zhang Ye said, "I didn't believe it, so I carried the apparatus around and went out again yesterday to do another test. Then I hurried back to Peking University to look for Professor Wang and had him help me analyze the film sample again. This time, the result was...the benzo[a]pyrene levels exceeded the standards by 17 times! I was astounded. I thought my initial test was wrong, but how could the results of the second test exceed the standards by an even higher figure? Professor Wang said to me, 'Professor Zhang, did you go shopping this time?' I told him I did. Professor Wang replied, 'If you'd walked around a little longer, the result would have exceeded the standards by much more!'"

Everyone looked up at the stage in horror.

Zhang Ye shrugged. "I knew that Peking University had recently built a laboratory. As all of you know, since I'm part of Peking University, I'm in a relatively favorable position for some things. So I spoke to Professor Wang and asked if I could volunteer myself for the Key Laboratory of High Concentration Particulate Matter, and if they could measure my body for data so that I could better understand and inform the people of this. But Professor Wang shook his head and said that there was no way. So I asked why. I told them that I wasn't afraid of this. Signing a liability waiver was fine too. If anything happened to me afterwards, I would not hold them responsible for it, so just let me do it."

Everyone was rendered speechless. They didn't think that Zhang Ye would actually risk his life like this!

Continuing, Zhang Ye said helplessly, "Professor Wang hesitated for a long time before telling me, 'There's no need for you to go inside the Key Laboratory of High Concentration Particulate Matter. In fact, the outside air you breathe every day is much more polluted than the air inside the lab!'" Looking at everyone, Zhang Ye said, "It was at that moment that I realized all of us are actually living inside a lab that is constantly exposed. This is what the smog is, and that is who our enemy is. We can't see it, but it's all around us!"

Many of the reporters were aghast!

Many of them were also stunned by today's presentation!

Wasn't this a press conference? Weren't they going to explain why the documentary was taken down? Why did it become something like this? What was going on?

Documentary?

You're actually showing a goddamn live broadcast of the documentary?!

No one had seen anything like this before! These reporters had never even heard of something like this!

On the other side of the venue.

The emotions of the staff of Department 14 got a bit out of control!

Tong Fu wished he could slap his own face. "Director Zhang!"

Wu Yi said, "This..."

Little Wang wiped her tears away. "So it turns out that Director Zhang did this much in the past few days! And we didn't even know about it! We didn't know anything at all! I, I even spoke harshly to Director Zhang! I had thought, had thought that Director Zhang did not care about us anymore!" As Little Wang talked, her tears fell faster!

A staff member said, "Goddamn me!"

"I should have known!"

"Yeah! When has Director Zhang ever been afraid of trouble!"

"Why did he choose to do this by himself? Why didn't he tell us about it? He even told us to stop kicking up a fuss over it? And told us not to be involved anymore?"

Ha Qiqi's lips were trembling. "He was afraid that he would get us into trouble! He intended to bear all of the criticism by himself! All of us...we have wronged Director Zhang!"

"Director Zhang!"

"I, I..."

Chapter 968: A never-before-seen documentary!

This was an unprecedented press conference!

This was history's first live premiere of a documentary!

Zhang Ye calmly stood onstage and faced all the reporters who wore different expressions, his expression unchanging. "So how does the PM2.5 enter our bodies? How does it destroy our bodies from within? With the assistance from the experts at the Environmental Sciences Department of Peking University, we created a short video to explain."

The big screen lit up.

One after another, cartoon characters appeared onscreen.

"Hello, I am a PM2.5. I have many siblings, such as the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and various heavy metals, all of which carry a sharp weapon. In the game of attacking humanity, we very rarely lose. At the first stage, the nostrils, nasal hair, and nasal discharge stop foreign objects from entering. 90% of the particles that are larger than 10 microns in diameter will get stopped here, but that won't stop me. At the second stage, the throat in the upper respiratory tract has tiny hairs called cilia which beat in coordinated waves 20 times per second. But because of my lightness, the trachealis muscle—which contracts when irritated—will try to stop me, although that is not enough to defeat me. At the third stage, the lower respiratory tract has passages called bronchi, which branch out like a big tree and conduct air into the lungs. This is our favorite ski slope of all, as we fight our way in against the cells, lymphocytes, and others. As a side effect, humans suffer from various inflammations caused by us."

This was an animation that they had prepared earlier to be used in the documentary.

Ha Qiqi, Zhang Zuo, and the others were once again shocked!

The Central TV News Channel's reporter was also rather startled!

Weren't all these resources already deleted?

Didn't Central TV send a team of people to take them away?

Why do you still have it? H-How did you get them back?

Only then did the staff of Department 14 realize just how much Director Zhang had done behind their backs! Director Zhang had begun planning for this press conference since the day the documentary was barred!

"Our large force finally reaches the end of the branches of the bronchi, which is where the alveoli are. Humans have over 300 million alveoli in each lung. Once we block off these alveoli, they cannot breathe. But in here exists our most fearsome enemy—the macrophages. They are specialized to engulf and digest foreign substances, and are also known as internal scavengers. This is going to be a tough battle. But we outnumber them, and our core is difficult to break down as well. Together with the heavy metal toxins, the macrophages find us hard to digest, so easily die. This is how the human immune system breaks down. We also have a group of warriors, the ultrafine particles measuring no more than 0.5 microns in diameter. They are able to penetrate right through the membrane of the alveoli into the bloodstream, damaging and constricting the blood vessels, which in turn causes increased blood pressure and leads to internal clotting. We can even make use of the pulmonary circulation to enter the core of the human body and carry out attacks against your heart, causing myocardial ischemic damage, arrhythmia, and heart attacks."

"Shiver in fear, human!"

"We're in every breath you take!"

The animation ended with the ringing of wild and savage laughter!

A lot of the reporters were holding their breath, too afraid to even breathe!

How could it be like this?

How can this be possible!

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "While we were drawing up this animated short, a colleague of mine was present. She was extremely scared. She told me that she has a two-year-old at home, and asked how this would affect her child in the future. I wondered the same, so I went to ask Peking University's Professor Wang about it. I said, 'Old Wang, shouldn't we expose our children to the smog so that they start adapting to it? Isn't there a saying going around these days? Don't make your kids lose at the starting line.'"

This made many of them want to laugh out loud.

But a lot of the people in the audience could not bring themselves to laugh.

Zhang Ye spread his hands. "Professor Wang told me that there was simply no basis for a statement like this. For every day that you're exposed to smog, it will be a day of damage done to your body. There's no such thing as adapting to it! So I asked him, 'What should we do, what can we do? And what about children?' Professor Wang hesitated for a while before giving me a suggestion. He said that we could only reduce the number of times that we went out on smoggy days." Looking at the reporters in the audience, Zhang Ye laughed and said, "I thought about that and felt that it wasn't such a bad idea after all. At worst, we could just stay home during smoggy days. That would surely do, right?"

That's right.

Just reduce the number of times you go out.

The reporters listened carefully and thought about it as well.

However, Zhang Ye spoke again. "Later, I realized that I had overthought things. I contacted our country's Ministry of Environmental Protection and obtained some internal statistics."

What statistics?

The reporters were taken aback.

Without warning, another short video started playing on the big screen!

The music played. It was a background track that sounded very heavy as a time lapse of images flashed on screen. It was the PM2.5 readings of various medium to large cities!

Shijiazhuang:

Days with air pollution in the past year: 267 days

Tianjin:

Days with air pollution in the past year: 189 days

Shenyang:

Days with air pollution in the past year: 192 days

Taiyuan:

Days with air pollution in the past year: 184 days

Chengdu:

Days with air pollution in the past year: 107 days

One by one, astonishing numbers appeared before the crowd's eyes!

The reporters were all stunned. How was this possible? Had the smog already reached such a state? But why didn't they know about it? Why couldn't they feel it in their daily life?

In this world, the people had a very limited understanding of what smog was. They really did not know what it was!

Zhang Ye pointed at the screen and gave a wry smile, saying, "In many of the cities, the number of days per year that the air was polluted on a large scale was close to 50%, and in some places, more than 50%. Don't go outside? Unless we don't work, don't go to school, don't go to the market, and don't go shopping, how else can we avoid going outside? When I got ahold of this data, I found it quite perplexing and was also extremely surprised by it. Why? Because I did not understand why it was like this. Wasn't smog only a thing that came up in the past two years? So why did it seem like the entire country was suddenly shrouded in it overnight? Why didn't we have it in the past? Why didn't I know about it in the past?"

That's right!

There was no such thing as smog in the past!

Zhang Ye's words hit the bullseye. Everyone was thinking the same thing and could not understand it either. This smog seemed like it had suddenly dawned on them in the winter of two years past. There was no forewarning at all!

But Zhang Ye's next reveal made all the reporters at the venue gasp!

Zhang Ye said, "Professor Wang told me that the smog had always been around. But I said that was impossible. Was I blind or something? Why didn't I know about it before? Then, Professor Wang had me to go through some news articles from some years back."

On the big screen, an image from a newspaper was shown.

It was the front page news from ten years ago that appeared on the Beijing Times.

There was an airplane.

And heavy fog.

Zhang Ye said, "Professor Wang asked me, 'What do you see?' I said, 'Fog, right?' Professor Wang said, 'Have a look at the headlines of that day's news.'"

The image changed.

Some more words appeared over the top of that image. The news headlines was revealed!

"Massive delays at capital's airport due to fog!"

Fog?

It was fog?

The reporters were stunned. A chill originating from the bottom of their hearts spontaneously arose!

Zhang Ye smiled and said, "In fact, since ten years ago, or even earlier, smog had already existed. But it was not referred to as smog at that time, but called...fog!"

The reporters were horrified!

Even the staff of Department 14 could feel a chill in their hearts after hearing this. Actually, they were involved in the production of this documentary from the beginning and had conducted interviews at many places. They had created a lot of clips for the documentary and knew about all the things Zhang Ye was talking about. They already knew and understood the subject as they were the ones who'd handled it in the first place. But for some reason, when they saw Director Zhang standing onstage and relating the story, they still felt the same shock as the reporters. It was in truth even more shocking than when they first learned of all this knowledge!

This was Zhang Ye!

One of the top hosts in the domestic industry!

Organized, logical, controlled, appealing—he was just so good at all of it!

The Department 14 staff had full reason to believe that even if their original documentary were to be broadcast, the effects after the broadcast would definitely not be as good how Zhang Ye was currently giving his speech! This was on a completely different plane! This was an oration expected of one of the top hosts in the country!

It was extraordinarily charismatic!

"Lung cancer," Zhang Ye suddenly said. "These words can terrify anyone. I never expected something like this to happen to someone close to me." He smiled and said, "I've always thought that only us smokers got lung cancer. But one day, I realized that I had it all wrong. I have a female colleague who's a year younger than me. She's the joy of our office and treats everyone very well. She's also very motivated, and does not smoke, drink, or have any family history of the disease. However, she was recently diagnosed with lung cancer. I got very angry at that time and questioned the doctor, 'Why! What'd she do to deserve that! Do you know how old she is?' The doctor said to me, 'I can only tell you that the lung cancer was the result of an unknown cause. But I formed an opinion that it was due to the air pollution!'"

Huang Dandan's tears fell.

Ha Qiqi held one of Huang Dandan's hand in hers.

Little Wang held Huang Dandan's other hand and cried together with her.

Air pollution?

Lung cancer?

The reporters were once again shocked!

This information that Zhang Ye had thrown out wrecked their perception of smog knowledge!

Zhang Ye looked at them. "Therefore, I wanted to investigate this. I needed to understand where the smog came from! I wanted to find out who the responsible parties were!"

Coal!

Steel!

Pollution!

For the entire afternoon, without a script nor any assistance, Zhang Ye kept on talking about the subject.

...

Outside.

At a meeting room in Central TV.

The regular meeting had just ended and the heads gradually vacated the premises.

Oh right, is Department 14's press conference over yet?"

"Uh, I don't think so."

"It's still not over?"

"Uh-huh."

"It's already been over an hour!"

"I don't know."

"Why is it taking so long?"

...

At the venue.

A spinning Earth appeared on the screen.

Zhang Ye looked into the audience. "Thousands and thousands of babies are currently in their mothers' wombs or being birthed. These rivers, skies, and lands should belong to them. We have no right to consume without restraint. We have no right to grumble without restructuring. We have the responsibility to prove to them that a world illuminated by energy can be both clean and beautiful."

He faced the big screen.

Focused on that rotating Earth.

A smile hung on Zhang Ye's face. "Every time I see this planet spinning in the dark of space, I feel a nameless attachment and warmth. Someday in the future, I'll leave this world, but my family and children will still be living on it, so I'll still be involved. That's why I watch over it, just like I watch over you. That's why I protect it, just like I protect you."

The music faded out slowly.

Further and further out.

The press conference was over.

Everyone sat in their seats, unable to move!

Suddenly, Ha Qiqi started to clap with all her might!

Little Wang clapped!

Zhang Zuo clapped!

Tong Fu clapped as hard as he could!

In an instant, a round of applause broke out!

Every one of the reporters present at the venue stood up, feeling a sense of shock, confusion, and fear...and gave their most respectful applause to this never-before-seen press conference!

This was Zhang Ye!

This was Department 14's new documentary!

Chapter 969: Stay true to yourself!

The lights came back on.

The doors opened.

The press conference ended and Zhang Ye walked off the stage.

But none of the reporters left!

"Teacher Zhang!"

"Teacher Zhang, please stay!"

"Please accept an interview!"

"Teacher Zhang!"

"Please wait a moment! Wait a moment!"

Numerous reporters piled forward in excitement. Several of the male reporters seated in the back rows even stepped over the chairs ahead of them to get to the front as everyone rushed forward in a frenzy!

However, Zhang Ye did not answer any questions or accept any interviews. He just turned around and left through the backstage.

Noticing this, the Department 14 staff in the back quickly went forward to hold off the reporters. They shouted, "Please go back. Everyone, please head back."

When a few of the reporters saw this jostling, they knew they would not get to interview Zhang Ye today. They were highly aware that something big was about to happen, so they immediately turned around to find their colleagues who were filming the press conference and ran outside with all their might, carrying their video cameras and cameras with them!

When some of the other reporters saw this, they came to their senses!

"Let's go!"

"Hurry, hurry, hurry!"

"Let's return to the station!"

"Quick, contact the editor-in-chief!"

"Drive the car over here first!"

This press conference, no, to be precise, this documentary was very astonishing, so they had to return to their office immediately to seek the opinions of their bosses. For breaking news of such scale, it was impossible that it would remain a scoop. It all depended on their speed now as they competed to see who would get it published first and gain the advantage!

But even though they were fast, they would definitely not be faster than those from the Central TV News Channel. This was because they did not need to drive back to their office at all. It was just right upstairs!

As this documentary was ordered barred from broadcast by the Central TV heads a few days ago, the people of the Central TV News Channel clearly would not dare to act on their own. They quickly reported this matter to their superiors.

With that, the whole of Central TV was stunned!

Deputy Station Head Zhou pounded the table and jumped to his feet. "What? What did you say?"

Deputy Station Head Li stared and said, "C-Can you repeat that?"

The female reporter from the news channel said bitterly, "Zhang Ye has publicly released the documentary by presenting it in a live conference format! Th-This is the recording from the press conference."

They watched it as quickly as they could.

It was fast-forwarded.

And fast-forwarded again.

They took just five minutes to finish watching it!

The station heads immediately paled!

"What has gotten into Zhang Ye this time?"

"He's about to leave. Why is he still meddling?"

"This is pissing me off!"

"This is outrageous!"

"He actually had the courage to say all that with all those reporters around?"

"The documentary's footage was deleted. But he, he turned it into a live conference?"

"We cannot allow this to get broadcast!"

"This was a press conference held by Central TV! We'll be doomed if it gets broadcast!"

"Go and tell the Station Head!"

"Hurry!"

"Let the Station Head know! Tell him that something terrible has happened!"

...

Backstage.

The employees of Department 14 stood in front of Zhang Ye.

Huang Dandan looked at him. "Thank you, Director Zhang."

Zhang Ye smiled. "Since I promised you, I would've gotten it done even if the sky collapsed. There's no need to thank me for it. You must now recuperate and get ready for your surgery. I'll be waiting for you to get back and help me in the future."

"Director Zhang! I..." Tong Fu flushed.

Ha Qiqi said, "We thought that you were..."

Zhang Zuo said angrily, "Why didn't you let us know about something so important!"

Zhang Ye laughed and said, "It's just as you said. It's precisely because this is such an important matter that I knew I had to bear the responsibility on my own."

"We could have all borne it together!"

"That's right!"

"We could have all borne it together!"

"Why are you bearing this responsibility by yourself!"

"You're looking down on us, Director Zhang!"

Everyone had something to say, but they were in fact all very touched. Before the press conference, everyone had given up all hope and even entertained the thought of quitting. But when they saw Zhang Ye appear onstage and give his opening speech in such a composed manner, it set their pulses racing!

Director Zhang was still the same old Director Zhang!

He had never let them down before!

Zhang Ye looked at everyone around him. He spoke, "It's not that I'm looking down on you guys, it's just that it's not necessary to drag all of you down together with me. I've always been unpopular and have offended so many people, so I'm not really bothered by it. But all of you are different. Every one of you still has a future in the industry, so why would I let you become notorious like me and get hated on? There's no need since we're a team. Haven't our roles always been clearly defined? You guys are responsible for producing the documentary while I handle the offending!"

Ha Qiqi said, "Director Zhang, I'm sorry. Back then, I even—"

"It's me who should be sorry," interrupted Zhang Ye, "as I didn't let you guys know about my plan. Actually, when I heard everyone saying that you wanted to make this documentary public even if you had to face the music, I felt rather touched and proud, knowing that you guys didn't disgrace me."

...

At a newspaper firm.

Everyone was up to their ears in work!

A lot of them were on the phone, while many of executives and employees of the newspaper firm had surrounded a monitor, which was replaying the footage from Central TV Department 14's press conference!

They finished watching it.

A reporter who was present at the press conference said, "Chief Editor, c-c-can this be published?"

Another reporter said, "Zhang Ye has revealed the source of our air pollution to be caused by the steel mills, gas stations, vehicle exhaust emissions, corporations polluting, and even coal-fired heating. I-if this gets published, wouldn't it cause chaos?"

Everyone was very uncertain about this and waited for the chief editor to speak.

A deputy editor said, "This can't be published, right?"

A different editor said, "So what if we know the source of the air pollution? Can we stop people from using heating? Can we ban all the steel mill production? Stop industrialization?"

An executive of the newspaper firm had a different view. "When did Zhang Ye say that he wanted to stop industrialization?" When did he say that he wanted to stop people from using heating? If coal-fired heating causes pollution, we can just aim to reduce the burning of coal and increase the proportion of gas heating instead! For pollution caused by steel mills, we can order the standardization of environmental protection facilities, increase crackdown efforts on offending corporations, and encourage citizens to report lawbreaking corporations! For pollution caused by vehicle exhaust emissions, we can increase the penalties. We can issue fines to all those heavy vehicles that exceed the limits! How is that called being unable to do anything about it?"

That deputy editor said, "But the citizens won't think of it that way! They will surely call for the complete eradication of steel mills! And refuse large and heavy vehicles from entering into cities! The citizen are always ignorant. If they see this documentary, then—"

"Alright, everyone, stop arguing." The chief editor finally spoke up.

Everyone looked at him.

The chief editor laughed in extreme helplessness. "Honestly, I have gained a sudden sense of admiration for Zhang Ye. At least he dares to speak up and tell the truth. The whole truth and nothing but the truth!" After a short silence, the chief editor gave his orders. "Just report it. We'll publish it as is! Hand the recording over to Old Hu. I will personally write the rough draft for this afternoon's edition of the paper!"

"Chief Editor!"

"Why?"

"Are we really going to publish it?"

"Ah?"

The chief editor suddenly looked at them. "Why not? Why can't we publish it? Zhang Ye, as a host and documentary director, has done for us what we media personnel could not do. These kinds of reports should have been written by us in the first place; it should've been us who exposed such news to the public. But look now, a documentary filmmaker has beaten us to it instead. Don't you guys think it disgraceful? Well, I find it disgraceful! I find it extremely disgraceful! I know the higher-ups probably won't approve of such reporting. But as journalists, we must sometimes have a backbone!"

Everyone went silent.

The chief editor said, "We should let the people know about this issue as they have the right to know!"

A female editor smiled. "The chief editor is right. I've finally understood why there are so many people who like Zhang Ye. He reminds us of our past selves every so often. There is a popular phrase going around these days: 'Stay true to yourself.' I suppose that Zhang Ye will never understand this phrase because everything he's said and done these past few years has been true to himself. He has never forgotten, but most of us have probably forgotten ourselves."

"Then let's publish it!"

"Fuck yeah, let's do it!"

"Right, you're speaking as if we're afraid of trouble!"

"I will contact Old Hu immediately and get him to publish the video in full on the newspapers' website!"

"Chief Editor, let me help you with the first draft!"

"Let's do it! Let the sky fall! Zhang Ye's there to hold it up!"

The entire newspaper firm immediately got down to work!

At the same time, the other newspaper firms and television stations were getting ready to publish the news!

Chapter 970: Let's clear up this day a bit, just a little

A video appeared online without any warning.

The headline read: Zhang Ye's Documentary on Air Pollution in China.

Another headline read: "Department 14's latest documentary."

And another headline read: "What exactly is smog?"

It just started popping up this way.

A lot of people were caught completely off guard!

"What?"

"The documentary?"

"Didn't it get banned?"

"Yeah, didn't Central TV ban it from being broadcast?"

"What's going on then?"

"Didn't they hold a press conference this morning to make an explanation about the ban? Then where did the documentary come from? This must be fake news, right? Is it clickbait? They're just trying to lure us into reading the reports, right?"

A lot of people did not believe the headlines as there has been too much fake news recently.

But many of them still could not hold back from clicking. And when they did, they were stunned!

"Damn!"

"Look! Quickly, look!"

"Look at what?"

"It's really true! This...this is Zhang Ye's new documentary!"

"How is that possible? It wasn't even broadcast on TV!"

"Go and take a look for yourself! It's not a documentary that was meant for television broadcast at all! The documentary was released live at the press conference instead! Oh my god! Teacher Zhang is too amazing!"

"Ah!"

"What?"

"Let me see, let me see!"

The first batch of viewers just kept on howling excitedly like that!

But when they finished watching the entire documentary that was filmed live at the press conference, which lasted over an hour, all of them got mad without exception. They could not believe it, as shock was written all over their faces!

"How is this possible!"

"Th-This is what smog is? These are the enemies that we've been facing on a daily basis?"

"This is too shocking! Too shocking!"

"This...this..."

"Share it! Hurry!"

"Right, we have to let everyone know about this!"

"Old He, quickly come and see this!"

"Old Wang, stop playing your games already. Have a look at this!"

"Motherfucker! This is too much! These polluting enterprises have really gone too far!"

"So that was why they banned it from broadcasting? Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!"

"Start sharing it!"

"Right, share it for Teacher Zhang!"

In the blink of an eye, the Internet blew up!

This documentary struck like a thunderbolt and lit up the Internet with a bang!

On Weibo.

"What's the matter?"

"What's happening?"

"What's everyone watching?"

"Why is everyone so excited? What happened?"

"Let me have a look too."

On the discussion forums.

"What is this video about? Why is getting so many views?"

"A documentary? Why did it get posted here? This is a stock trading forum."

"Holy shit! This documentary..."

"Heavens! Is this for real?"

"Is this what smog is? Fuck their grandpas!"

"So they've been keeping that from us all this time?!"

"Fuck! I want to swear at someone! I really want to swear at someone!"

On Tieba.

"Why didn't they tell us?"

"Why didn't they tell us before?"

"If I had known, I would have worn a face mask!"

"My wife died from lung cancer last year! Fuck!"

At a filming location.

A call from Fang Weihong suddenly came in. "Sister Zhang."

Zhang Yuanqi said pleasantly: "What's the matter?"

Fang Weihong said solemnly: "There's a video online that I think you should watch."

Zhang Yuanqi: "Hmm?"

Old Chen's house.

Chen Guang's face was one of shock. "This..."

Fan Wenli also looked somewhat pale. "This is the smog?"

Chen Guang said, "It has...already advanced to such a stage?"

Songstress Zhang Xia was at home watching this documentary. She watched it twice and fell silent.

At Beijing Television.

Dong Shanshan was stunned.

Hu Fei wore a sunken expression.

Hou Ge, Xiao Lu, and the others were all enraged!

At Yao Jiancai's house.

Yao Jiancai's wife gasped. "Why didn't anyone ever tell us about something so terrible? Why?"

Yao Jiancai gave a wry smile. "Little Zhang has ripped a great big hole in the sky this time!"

Yao Mi said, "Why do you say that it's ripping a hole in the sky? Teacher Zhang just reported the truth!"

Yao Jiancai said, "It's not like no one has investigated this before. There are also some people who know about this as well, so why must he go and spill the beans? This kid is an imbecile!"

His wife disagreed with him. "Yes, he is stupid. No one is more stupid than him in the entire entertainment industry! That time when Lee Anson pushed a fan after the Spring Festival Gala, if it were anyone else, they would not have bothered stepping in. But Zhang Ye did! When Beijing Television's Wang Shuixin caused Father Wei's death, if it were anyone else, they would not have done anything. But Zhang Ye did! When the Japanese delegation visited Peking University and acted arrogantly, if it were anyone else, they would not have dared to say a word. But Zhang Ye did! He never had anything to gain out of any of that, and even caused many people to start scolding him! They've been scolding him from the year before last until last year, and then from last year again until this year. You said that he is an imbecile? I totally agree! He is the stupidest person I've ever seen in the entertainment industry. But, but deep down in my heart, I just can't help but admire and respect him! Do you know why I feel that way?"

Views of the online video were increasing rapidly!

Every refresh brought about an increase of a million views!

There were two video hosting sites that even crashed from the heavy load of traffic, leaving their entire site crippled!

This was an unprecedented kind of virality, as no other documentary had ever managed to create such a shocking and influential impact within an hour of its release! No, perhaps it wasn't just for documentaries. Even for movies, music, or videos, none of them had ever hit such a level of craze!

Central TV was angered!

The entertainment circle was stunned!

The entire country had been turned upside down due to this live documentary conference!

Confusion!

Panic!

Anger!

Madness!

All sorts of emotions were spreading rapidly among the people!

"@EnvironmentalProtectionMinistry Why didn't anyone take control of the pollution issues? Why?"

"Steel manufacturing corporations that have flouted the law, you all better own up!"

"Right, you all owe everyone an explanation today!"

"Who approved those heavy vehicles that failed the emissions tests and allowed them to be on the road?"

"Requesting that the relevant departments thoroughly investigate this! Why should we pay the price for your irresponsibilities? What makes all of you think that you can profit off of our health? Teacher Zhang is right! You motherfuckers! What is that I smell in the air? It's not the smell of smog, it's the smell of the goddamned money from pollution!"

The populace exploded in anger!

An emotion rooted from the thoughts of getting deceived and having the truth withheld erupted!

"Where can we buy face masks?"

"They're available online!"

"Remember to buy the protective face masks that Teacher Zhang emphasized in the documentary. If it's just a normal cloth-type face mask, it won't be effective no matter how many layers it has. It won't work at all!"

"There's a private steel factory near my place that has broken the law. How do I report them?"

"Didn't Teacher Zhang already mention that?! Just report it to the police, as well as call the Ministry of Environmental Protection!"

"Right, let's report them all!"

"If one person is not enough to make a difference? Then are ten enough? If ten are not enough? Are 10,000 enough? Fuck, I doubt nobody won't care if so many of us report the violations!"

"Let's all take action together!"

"Motherfucker, we can't let them go about flouting the law any longer!"

"Smog! You motherfucker!"

"Corporations contributing to smog! You motherfuckers too!"

But at this moment, something happened that no one expected!

"Ah, I can't play the video anymore?"

"What do you mean you can't play the video anymore?"

"I can no longer load the documentary on dot net's site!"

"Damn! The video that was posted by the official website of Tianjin TV can't be played either!"

"It's been deleted!"

"It's the same for me. It says that the video has been taken down!"

"What happened?"

"Fuck!"

"Someone has made a move!"

"Zhang Ye's Documentary on Air Pollution in China has been taken down!"

Two hours after the incident started, the video was gradually deleted off the servers on a wide-scale. The reports by several mainstream media outlets regarding the documentary also disappeared suddenly!

The citizens were enraged!

Central TV Department 14's people also exploded with anger!

Ha Qiqi slammed the table. "How'd they take it down so quickly!"

"It's only been out for two hours!" Zhang Zuo said in anger.

Little Wang said, "They're totally bullying us!"

But Zhang Ye was not surprised. He just laughed it off and said, "Didn't we already expect that? Then what's the fuss about?"

Tong Fu anxiously said, "But a lot of the people have yet to watch it!"

...

The SARFT.

Wu Zeqing's office.

Bai Li hurriedly ran in. "Chief Wu, something really has happened! At the press conference held at Central TV, Zhang Ye..."

"I already know about that," Wu Zeqing said calmly.

It was at this time that Bai Li finally knew why Wu Zeqing had rushed back a day earlier during an important meeting at Shanghai. She understood now what Chief Wu meant when she said that something might happen today! It was Zhang Ye again! So it was over Zhang Ye's troublemaking again!

Why?

What was the relationship between Chief Wu and Zhang Ye?

Bai Li did not ask, and neither did she have the courage to ask. "That documentary's been taken completely offline!

"On whose instructions?" Wu Zeqing looked at her.

Bai Li hesitated before saying, "It was the instructions of Deputy Chief Chen who is at the meeting in Shanghai. It seems like he received a call from the higher-ups and later gave the order directly to all the online video hosting sites and TV stations."

Wu Zeqing nodded. "I understand."

Bai Li said, "Chief Wu, ma'am..."

But Wu Zeqing did not say anything to her. Instead, she picked up the telephone on her desk.

...

10 minutes later.

The Internet was still in an uproar!

"How can they delete it?"

"I haven't even watched it yet!"

"Isn't this too much?!"

"Ah! It's back up!"

"What?"

"Yeah, the video is back online! We can watch it now!"

"Aiyo, it's been restored on dot net as well! The documentary is back online!"

"This is great!"

"Wh-What on earth is going on here?"

Everyone was confused!

The employees of Department 14 were overwhelmed by this surprise!

"It's been restored?"

"It really has been!"

"What happened?"

"Holy shit!"

"Who's helping us out?"

Ha Qiqi, Zhang Zuo, and the others could not understand. How could they have any supporters?

Zhang Ye was also taken aback, but soon realized who it was. A warmth overcame him, and he momentarily felt rather apologetic. He would not ever regret what he had done today as he did not implicate Yan Tianfei nor his subordinates from Department 14. But there was someone who had been supporting him from behind and fighting alongside him! Zhang Ye did not wish to drag her down, but he knew that this was not going to be possible, so he felt quite sorry for her.

After he went back into his own office, Zhang Ye made a call.

"Old Wu," Zhang Ye greeted.

Wu Zeqing replied: "Mhm."

Zhang Ye hesitated for a moment. "It'll be fine if you can't make it work. Just leave it."

But Wu Zeqing smiled. "You've said it, and it has also been published, so how can we just leave it?"

"But for you..." Zhang Ye was afraid that she would be held responsible.

Wu Zeqing gently said: "Haven't the responsibilities between us always been very clear? You're in charge of the talking, while I'm in charge of letting you talk. Now that you've done your part, leave the rest of the battle to me."

When Zhang Ye heard this, he laughed. "Alright!"

Wu Zeqing said: "But I can only help you fend them off for at most a day."

"A day? That's good enough." Zhang Ye looked outside. He looked at the downcast sky outside and said: "We can only do so much anyway. Let's clear up this day a bit, just a little."