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charlie Wade was at a loss for words.

He rarely finds himself unsure of what to do, but this was exactly one of those rare moments.

If Tawanna insists on kissing him through the mask, then as a grown man, he has no choice but to let her.

The real problem is, this woman just won't stop kissing—who could possibly endure that?

More importantly, they were on stage right now!

This wasn't just some ordinary public place. A hundred people could qualify as a public setting.

But here, there were tens of thousands of people!

And after tonight, who knows how many tens of millions will watch the videos online? Even with charlie Wade's strong mental fortitude, this was too much.

But Tawanna didn't care.

She truly didn't care at all.

So what if tens of thousands were watching?

When she's dating someone, aren't millions of people paying attention anyway? The moment she falls in love, she's all over global entertainment headlines. She's used to it.

Besides, how often does a chance to hug and kiss charlie Wade come around? Of course she had to take it.

So he gently reminded her, "The song's over."

Tawanna knew the song was over, but she still held charlie Wade tightly, unwilling to let go—as if she were afraid he'd vanish into thin air.

Left with no choice, charlie Wade threatened her in a low voice, "If you keep this up, I won't perform in the next three shows!"

When Tawanna heard this, she looked surprised and said, "Then you're not allowed to cheat in the next three shows!"

With that, she quickly released charlie Wade, quietly wiped away her tears, and turned to find Stefanie sun, bowing in her direction.

The audience had just been stunned by what happened, and now, seeing Tawanna suddenly turn and take Stefanie sun's hand to bow together toward the crowd, they were momentarily confused.

Tawanna, aware that her earlier actions had been a bit abrupt, had no choice but to cover it up. She smiled and said, "I'm sorry—just now, that song really pulled me in emotionally. I'm also truly honored to have had the chance to perform it with Stefanie. Thank you, everyone. Thank you, Stefanie! Thank you, Eastcliff!"

Hearing this, the dazed audience began to understand—Tawanna had simply been too immersed in the performance. For a moment, they couldn't help but admire her. A queen is indeed a queen—her emotions in song are deeper than most.

Thunderous applause broke out, and the concert reached its climax in that instant.

charlie Wade finally let out a sigh of relief. Although he had ascended the stage with Stefanie sun via the elevator as part of the performance, now that the show was over, his role as a dancer didn't require him to exit the same way as the star. So, he turned and strode off the stage.

At this point, Stefanie sun, as a guest performer for the concert, had completed all her appearances.

She picked up the microphone and said with a warm smile, "Thank you to Tawanna for the invitation. It's been a great honor to share the stage with her. On behalf of Eastcliff, I'd also like to extend a heartfelt welcome to her. I hope she'll return to China and Eastcliff more often in the future. I also hope everyone enjoyed tonight. Thank you—I'm Stefanie sun. Goodbye!"

Once again, the venue erupted in deafening applause and cheers.

For the audience who paid to see Tawanna, the evening was undoubtedly a rare visual and musical feast. Fans of Stefanie sun were thrilled, and those who hadn't known her well before now had a newfound admiration for her after tonight's performance.

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Afterward, Stefanie sun and Tawanna embraced once more.

Tawanna held her tightly and whispered in her ear, ashamed, "I'm sorry, Stefanie... I really couldn't help myself."

Stefanie sun smiled and replied, “Why are you apologizing to me? I’m not Brother charlie Wade’s wife.”

She gently patted Tawanna’s back and said, “Do your best out there. I’m heading down now!”

Tawanna was deeply moved and nodded reluctantly.

Stefanie sun walked to the top of the elevator, gave the audience another bow, and waved with a bright smile. “Thank you again for your support. Goodbye!”

The elevator then began to descend, and Stefanie sun disappeared from the stage.

By now, Tawanna had collected herself. As the prelude to the next song began, she shifted smoothly back into performance mode.

Meanwhile, charlie Wade had already stepped off the stage and headed straight for the dressing room.

He removed his makeup, then glanced at his reflection while holding his outfit. Looking at himself in the mirror, he couldn’t help but feel a bit helpless.

If he’d known things would turn out this way after agreeing to perform, he never would’ve done it. He cared about his reputation. If his identity were ever revealed, what would happen to that reputation?

Just as he was lost in thought, there was a knock at the door.

charlie Wade called out, “Come in,” and in walked Stefanie sun, smiling brightly.

“Brother charlie Wade!”

She approached and teased playfully, “You sure had some serious romantic luck tonight!”

charlie Wade winced. “What romantic luck? That was just plain embarrassing.”

Stefanie sun walked up to charlie Wade, looked him over with a playful smile, and said, “A gorgeous top star throws herself into your arms on stage and kisses you—how is that not considered luck in love?”

charlie Wade shook his head seriously. “No, absolutely not! I don’t have those kinds of feelings for her. At most, she’s half a partner and half a friend. After what she did, I just wanted to vanish from the stage. How is that even remotely romantic luck?”

Stefanie sun deliberately let out a teasing “oh,” and said with mock shyness, “So that doesn’t count? Brother charlie Wade, your standards for love luck are really high.”

Then, suddenly stepping closer to him, she asked, “Brother charlie Wade, then tell me... would this count as luck in love?”

charlie Wade blinked in confusion. “What do you mean, this?”

Stefanie sun only smiled mysteriously and whispered, “This!”

Before charlie Wade could react, she rose on her tiptoes and pressed her soft, cherry-colored lips against his.

charlie Wade was completely caught off guard, stunned into stillness.

As their lips met, he felt the warmth and tenderness of her kiss, along with a faint sweetness. His mind went blank, and a strange, unfamiliar flutter rose in his chest.

His heartbeat sped up instantly, but Stefanie sun showed no sign of pulling away. Eyes closed, she kissed him with a gentle, greedy affection.

charlie Wade couldn’t help but scold himself in his mind: “charlie Wade, you’re supposed to be a master! Even the Earl of Poqinghui couldn’t take you down, and now you’re getting ambushed by two women in a row? You... you’re seriously slipping!”

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At that moment, charlie Wade couldn’t tell whether he was simply frozen in place or deliberately refusing to react.

Stefanie sun’s soft, sweet lips pressed against his like a spell had been cast, leaving him completely immobilized.

After a long while, he began to notice her breathing grow heavier, and he felt his own desire become increasingly difficult to restrain.

Though he didn’t want to admit it, the unspoken passion between a man and a woman was steadily building in their hearts, filling the room with a charged, ambiguous atmosphere.

A sudden storm of conflict stirred in charlie Wade’s chest.

He had always seen Stefanie sun as a younger sister and never entertained inappropriate thoughts about her. But over the years, that little girl had grown into an elegant woman—and her affection for him had never wavered.

And now, she had kissed him—deeply and with unmistakable passion.

Emotionally, he resisted the feeling. But physically, it was as though he had stepped into a snare from which he couldn't escape.

Torn, he also felt a tinge of disappointment in himself. In this moment, he realized his heart was not as resolute as he had believed.

It felt like discovering a vulnerability he had always thought he didn't possess.

As the confusion and desire between them intensified, he gently turned away from her kiss and whispered, "Stefanie, if someone sees us, your reputation will be ruined."

Stefanie sun looked at him stubbornly and asked, "Do you think I care?"

charlie Wade responded helplessly, "You should care. You have to care."

"No—I don't care at all!" Stefanie sun replied firmly. Then, rising onto her toes, she leaned in again. Afraid he might retreat, she wrapped her arms around his waist and kissed him once more.

As she kissed charlie Wade, she murmured softly, "Brother charlie Wade, I can accept Tawana kissing you because I know you're in her heart. But don't forget—you've been in my heart too, for over twenty years..."

Then, summoning her courage, her eyes red and voice tender, she said, "Brother charlie Wade, I know that the so-called three-year promise you made to my parents was just a way to buy time. I understand your circumstances and the pressure you're under. I won't ask you to marry me. Even if we never get married, I can accept that. But I truly want to give birth to your child. You'll be staying in Eastcliff for several days this time. Please... just promise me, okay?"

charlie Wade quickly shook his head. "Stefanie, this isn't something to take lightly. You said before you'd give me time—why bring this up so suddenly now?"

Stefanie sun replied, aggrieved, "Didn't I just see Tawana kiss you? If she has the courage to do that, then I should have even more courage. How long has she liked you? And how long have I loved you? If she dares to kiss you, then I dare to give myself to you!"

She wiped her tears carefully, then added seriously, "As long as you nod, I'll go with you tonight. Or you can come home with me."

charlie Wade could only comfort her gently. "Stefanie, now really isn't the time to talk about this. Don't forget—I'm already married. If I sleep with you and you end up pregnant, what does that make me? An adulterer? And your child... an illegitimate one? Forget about your reputation—how could I even face myself?"

Stefanie sun's tears fell again as she choked out, "I just want to give myself to you. I've saved myself for you all these years. Do you know how chaotic things are in the entertainment industry? Most people don't care about this stuff. Look at Tawana—her love history is longer than an encyclopedia, but she enjoys every relationship. Every woman wants to be cherished and to experience everything love brings. I want that too..."

Seeing her cry, charlie Wade quickly wiped her tears and said with concern, "Why are you crying? A lot of things take time to sort out. I have things I need to resolve too. Don't let Tawana influence your emotions. You and she live in completely different worlds."

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Though her mood calmed a little, Stefanie sun still said bitterly, "She's loved so many people—and she's been with every one of them. I've only ever loved you... but I've never had you."

charlie Wade was at a loss for words. Talking about this topic made him feel awkward and uncomfortable.

He had a wife, and so many women who cared deeply for him—yet he hadn't truly been with any of them.

There was always a strange barrier between him and Claire, and over time, he had gradually lost the drive to move their relationship forward.

Yet, he considered himself a traditional man, guided by the example of his father—a true gentleman. He couldn't bring himself to cross the line into an affair or extramarital entanglement.

When he thought about it carefully, he realized that he and Stefanie sun were in similar situations. Both had held firm to their boundaries out of love, but both had also become trapped in an impossible love they couldn't fully express.

Stefanie sun had started out with a playful tone, half-complaining, half-seeking affection. But when she saw charlie Wade's face slowly grow solemn and wistful, a serious thought struck her.

"Could it be that my beloved Brother charlie Wade and his wife, Claire, have never actually shared true physical intimacy?"

"It must be!" she concluded silently.

"Otherwise, why have they been married for so long and still have no children?"

Seeing charlie Wade's conflicted expression only deepened her belief in that assumption.

In that moment, all the complaints in her heart faded, replaced by a deep sympathy for him.

She wanted nothing more than to embrace him and say sincerely: That woman may not be willing to give herself to you, but I am. That woman may not want to have your child—but I do.

Yet, the more she thought about it, the more she realized now wasn't the right time to say such things. Not only would it reopen Charlie Wade's emotional wounds, but it would also make her seem like the other woman.

Still, the more she held it in, the more suffocated she felt—unable to express the grievances buried in her heart.

"In the end, I'm the one who's been intruded upon."

"I've been set on becoming Brother Charlie Wade's wife since I was a child, and both our parents agreed to it."

"If it hadn't been for what happened back then, I would've married him long ago—and we might already have several children."

"So what does Claire have to do with any of this?"

"Claire..."

"If you treated Brother Charlie Wade with true devotion, I could accept it. But you don't know how to cherish your blessing. You've been married to him for years, yet you still refuse to give yourself to him. Why? Do you think he's not good enough for you? If that's how you really feel, then why not just divorce him and end this marriage that exists in name only?"

Stefanie Sun felt a deep wave of grievance swell inside her.

What she never expected was that Lydia (Ava) (Charlie Wade's mom) had already begun taking action to support the daughter-in-law she truly acknowledged.

Tang Sihai was already aboard the returning freighter, drawing ever closer to China across the sea.

Lydia (Ava) (Charlie Wade's mom), always decisive, had instructed Tang Sihai to meet Claire in secret upon arrival. The time had finally come to resolve, once and for all, the twisted marriage between Charlie Wade and Claire.

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While Stefanie sun was still basking in the joy of kissing charlie Wade, the news that Tawana had passionately kissed her dancers had already topped entertainment trending lists around the world.

For a time, the entire world was in an uproar.

Everyone knew Tawana's stage presence was fiery, but no one had ever seen her this uninhibited.

Moreover, she still has a boyfriend.

After watching the live performance, many fans were left with one burning question: Was Tawana simply too immersed in her role?

If she was, then her initiating the kiss might be understandable—after all, the song portrays lovers reuniting after being separated by death.

But if she wasn't deeply absorbed in the role, then the performance might have gone a bit too far—even Western audiences found it hard to accept.

Tawana's agent didn't wait to speak with her after the show. Instead, she immediately sprang into action, contacting all partnering media outlets and issuing a press release that attributed Tawana's behavior to the song's narrative, claiming she was genuinely lost in the emotional depth of the Chinese track.

To help foreign audiences better understand the song, the agent enlisted a writer fluent in Chinese to craft a soft article explaining its context.

This article translated and analyzed the story behind the song "Assassin" line by line, even introducing the historical tale of "Jing Ke's assassination attempt on the King of Qin" to international readers.

The song "Assassin" was inspired by the tale of Jing Ke's attempt on the prince's life. Since the original story had no romantic elements, the lyricist reimagined it by adding a love plot and a more uplifting ending.

The article also emphasized that Jing Ke's story has been passed down in China for over 2,000 years and embodies the chivalrous spirit long celebrated in Chinese culture—its depth and significance far surpassing that of an ordinary historical tale.

When foreign fans learned the specific background and original intention behind the song, they finally accepted the explanation that Tawana was simply "too immersed in the performance." Sensing the shift in public sentiment, her agent seized the opportunity and publicly announced that Tawana's favorite Chinese song was Assassin. She explained that the reason Tawana wanted to perform the song with Stefanie sun was because she genuinely loved it.

Thanks to this timely spin and some fast research, much of the public's initial shock was significantly eased.

Moreover, the situation began to evolve in a direction that greatly benefited both Tawana and Stefanie sun. Foreign fans also began to enjoy the Chinese song. The number of overseas streams of Assassin skyrocketed, even climbing to the top of global music popularity charts. As overseas fans grew fond of the song, they also developed a favorable impression of Stefanie sun.

As for Tawana—being the global star she is—fans admired her even more for being so emotionally invested in her stage performance. She became a shining example of artistic dedication, further endearing herself to her supporters.

But at that very moment, Trevor—who was far away in the United States—had just woken up and was getting ready to attend team training. Suddenly, he saw a news notification about Tawana's concert. Upon clicking it, he immediately recognized the masked man wielding a sword on stage—it had to be charlie Wade.

Tawana's passionate kiss wasn't merely the result of being absorbed in the performance—it was, in Trevor's eyes, a reflection of her admiration for charlie Wade.

This realization made Trevor deeply uneasy. From the beginning of his relationship with Tawana, he had already felt immense pressure.

For one, Tawana's romantic past was notoriously complicated. Anyone dating her would inevitably be subjected to scrutiny from both the media and the public.

Secondly, he couldn't compete with Tawana financially. Compared to her success, he often found himself mocked as a "kept man" or gigolo.