

Ice Age 161

Chapter 161: Go, Before I Change My Mind

After resting for a while, Zhang Yi took out some stimulants from his spatial space and administered them to Xu Hao. To wake him up faster, he also splashed some ice water on his face. After a bit of this, Xu Hao finally opened his eyes, exhausted.

"Ugh, so cold!"

Seeing Zhang Yi in front of him, Xu Hao was momentarily stunned, then filled with joy.

"Brother Zhang, did you... did you succeed?"

He looked around for Wang Siming but saw nothing. Zhang Yi didn't speak; he just untied the ropes around Xu Hao. Xu Hao never expected that this time he would wake up to find they had taken over Wang Siming's luxurious shelter without any effort on his part. This made him incredibly happy.

He was curious, though. Both of them had been hit by the sleeping gas in the trap, so how had Zhang Yi woken up so quickly and taken control of the shelter?

"Brother Zhang, where is Wang Siming? How did you deal with him?" Xu Hao asked curiously.

Zhang Yi replied calmly, "Did you forget? I'm a city soldier king, an expert from the mountains, a mercenary returned from the battlefield. Taking down someone like Wang Siming is nothing."

Xu Hao burst out laughing.

"Hahaha! Brother, you're amazing. I knew I was right to trust you."

"From now on, I'll follow you without any reservations! With you protecting me, I'll never have to worry about survival again."

Zhang Yi picked up a heavy backpack from the sofa and placed it in front of Xu Hao.

"These are your rewards. Take a look."

Xu Hao's eyes lit up, and he rubbed his hands together, "This... how can I accept this?"

"No need to be polite; it's what you deserve," Zhang Yi said flatly.

Xu Hao, no longer holding back, opened the backpack in front of Zhang Yi.

"Wow—"

Inside was a pile of food: biscuits, bread, chocolate bars, chicken legs, cream cakes, rice cakes... The entire backpack was packed full, easily weighing twenty or thirty kilograms! Xu Hao's smile stretched from ear to ear.

"Brother Zhang, you're truly like a brother to me! Just say the word if you need anything, and I won't hesitate!"

As Xu Hao tore open a bag of chicken legs and expressed his loyalty to Zhang Yi, Zhang Yi finally smiled slightly.

"Oh? You said it yourself! I didn't force you."

He pointed outside with his chin. "Take these things and leave."

Zhang Yi couldn't let Xu Hao stay, but his conscience wouldn't let him be ungrateful either. Xu Hao, though troublesome, had indeed helped him a lot in this matter. So, Zhang Yi decided to give him enough food to survive on his own.

Xu Hao, halfway through tearing the packaging, froze upon hearing this. Time seemed to stand still as he stared at Zhang Yi, his body stiffening.

Zhang Yi looked down at him calmly, his gaze containing an unyielding will.

After a long pause, Xu Hao came to his senses, his heartbeat accelerating wildly, causing a ringing in his ears as if electricity was coursing through them. He couldn't accept this reality. He had thought he had successfully joined Zhang Yi's team and helped him secure this luxurious and safe shelter. Why wouldn't Zhang Yi let him stay?

Xu Hao's eyes reddened as he looked at Zhang Yi with pleading eyes. "Brother Zhang, what did you just say? I didn't hear clearly."

He hoped he had misheard.

But Zhang Yi, word by word, said clearly, "You can't stay here. Take your reward and leave."

Tears instantly streamed down Xu Hao's face. Clutching the backpack, he retreated a few steps, curling into a corner for security.

"You promised to keep me! You said so yourself!"

Zhang Yi shook his head with a bit of helplessness.

"I did promise you. But I can always go back on my word. We're adults; we should know that verbal agreements are the easiest to break. It's always been this way, especially now."

Zhang Yi's bluntness was shocking. To ensure his own safety, he was willing to discard any moral principles. This behavior made Xu Hao cry even harder. He curled up like a helpless child, shouting angrily at Zhang Yi, "You can't do this to me! You can't go back on your word!"

"I helped you so much, and I don't want anything else from you, just your protection so I can survive. Can't you even accept that?"

"If you keep acting like this, you'll die alone, with no one to trust or stand by you!"

Zhang Yi just smiled indifferently, his expression showing disdain.

"Oh, so what? At least I'll still be alive."

"But if I let my soft heart get me killed, I'll have nothing!"

He didn't bother arguing with Xu Hao because it was pointless. They weren't on the same level of strength. Whatever Zhang Yi wanted Xu Hao to do, Xu Hao had to comply.

Zhang Yi waved outside. "Go! These foods will last you a month if you ration them. In that month, find a way to survive. I've already been as kind as I can to you."

Xu Hao shook his head desperately. "No, I won't go!"

It was too cold outside. From Yue Lu Community to here, it was a world of snow and ice. Leaving here meant certain death sooner or later. After experiencing the warmth and comfort of the shelter, how could he leave?

Zhang Yi smiled.

Then he raised his gun.

"Do you really want to force me to do this? I hoped we could part peacefully without me having to point a gun at your head."

Seeing Zhang Yi raise the gun, Xu Hao's face showed even more fear.

"I can't leave! I still have your poison in me!"

Zhang Yi's tone grew colder. "There's no poison. It was just a colored common drug; you won't die."

Xu Hao's face turned pale. He realized he had been tricked by Zhang Yi.

"Even so, you can't kick me out! How can you be so ungrateful?"

He raised the backpack. "I helped you take over a shelter, and this is all I get? It's far from enough!"

Zhang Yi took a deep breath. His patience was wearing thin. He stared at Xu Hao, his tone becoming emotionless.

"Don't forget, you owe me your life too!"

"What? When?"

"Of course. Back in the community, I should have killed you! But I didn't. So, you owe me your life."

Zhang Yi continued, "Now, I use your life and this bag of food as payment. You've made a huge profit!"

He pointed the gun at the door and used a remote to open it.

"Go quickly! If you delay, I might change my mind."

Chapter 162: I Gave You a Chance

Zhang Yi's gaze had already turned icy as he pointed the gun at Xu Hao's forehead. The dark gun barrel brought back memories of Zhang Yi's cold and ruthless killings, making Xu Hao realize Zhang Yi wasn't joking.

Xu Hao felt extremely aggrieved, his heart filled with hatred for Zhang Yi. The hatred in his eyes was evident, with bloodshot veins covering his pupils.

"Fine, I'll go!" Xu Hao gritted his teeth, walking towards the passage with a face full of reluctance.

As he walked, he looked around the luxurious decorations of the shelter. Such an opulent survival environment, even better than anything he had experienced before, filled him with a strong sense of resentment.

When Xu Hao reached the passage, he suddenly turned around, glaring at Zhang Yi with malice. "Zhang Yi, you're untrustworthy! You'll get your comeuppance one day!"

Zhang Yi merely glanced at him calmly. Xu Hao sneered, turned around, and walked into the passage.

Zhang Yi stared at his back for several seconds, hesitating. Then he raised his gun, aiming at the back of Xu Hao's head.

"Bang!"

A hole appeared in Xu Hao's head, clean through from the back to the front. He died instantly and painlessly, collapsing limply in the passage.

Zhang Yi sighed, looking at Xu Hao's body. "Anger won't make you stronger; you need strength."

He walked over to Xu Hao, picking up the backpack he had left behind. "I intended to let you live, but why did you seek death yourself?"

Zhang Yi had been hesitant about killing or not killing Xu Hao. Out of his principles, he had decided to let Xu Hao leave. But Xu Hao's last words changed his mind.

"I already let you go, so I'm not ungrateful. We were square at that point. But then you threatened me. Killing you is reasonable!"

Satisfied with his logic, Zhang Yi nodded to himself. In Cloud Manor, Xu Hao was the only one who knew his identity and had knowledge of the shelter's layout. He could bring trouble to Zhang Yi someday.

Zhang Yi felt somewhat grateful to Xu Hao for giving him a valid reason to kill him. After killing Xu Hao, he stored the body in his spatial space.

Then he turned on the multi-million dollar sound system in the room, playing a cheerful song:

"Mama, just killed a man. Put a gun against his head, pulled my trigger, now he's dead. Mama, life had just begun. But now I've gone and thrown it all away..."

Zhang Yi fetched a mop and bucket from the bathroom, whistling cheerfully as he cleaned up the bloodstains on the floor.

"I hope this is the last time I have to kill someone. No one here knows my past, and no one will come to disturb me. If I could live here until the end of the apocalypse, or until I die of old age, that would be wonderful!"

"But it's probably very unlikely," Zhang Yi smiled to himself.

He soon cleaned up the bloodstains. The entire room was now quiet, with only him alive, making it unusually silent. The house was so big, it felt a bit lonely.

"I should go get Ke'er. A mature man always needs a beautiful woman by his side to make life interesting."

"As for Uncle You..." Zhang Yi had other thoughts. The shelter was large with many rooms, but Zhang Yi didn't really want Uncle You to move in. Since he and Zhou Ke'er were still in their honeymoon phase, they wanted their space.

Ke'er always managed to come up with something new, and having others in the house hindered her creativity. For example, she would wear only a white shirt or an apron. With another man in the house, they wouldn't be able to enjoy themselves freely.

"I already have a better shelter. I might as well let Uncle You stay in the safe house. He once took a bullet for me; I owe him. Providing him a good living environment is fair repayment."

"Also, I can't move the safe house into my spatial space right now. It's better to leave it in Yue Lu community as a backup base. If needed, I can return and live there, with someone to look after it."

Zhang Yi's plan was clear, solving the problem perfectly. Uncle You would likely be very grateful.

However, Zhang Yi still needed to solve one issue for Uncle You—the problem every man understands.

Both Zhang Yi and Uncle You were physically healthy men, one in his twenties, the other in his sixties. Naturally, they had physical and psychological needs.

After killing Xie Limei, Zhang Yi felt he owed Uncle You a woman.

"I promised Uncle You I'd find him a better one. But there aren't many women left alive in the community, and even fewer who meet the criteria."

"Hmm, it's a bit difficult. I'll leave this problem for later. If worse comes to worst, he can find a few women in the community to get by."

Given the limited conditions, one couldn't be too picky.

Zhang Yi sat on the sofa, in front of a 100-inch TV. Curious about what Wang Siming usually watched, he found the remote and turned on the TV. The black screen slowly lit up.

Zhang Yi walked to the bar, filled with various branded drinks, many of which he had never heard of, supplied by foreign vineyards.

Pouring himself a glass of fresh beer, he watched the TV. He expected to see the few remaining official channels but was surprised to see a white female host speaking in English.

"#\$%&^(&*)&..."

Zhang Yi admitted his English was only CET-6 level, and his spoken English was terrible. He couldn't understand a word.

"Strange, how can it receive foreign channels? The blizzard should have affected signal transmission. Even phones have limited signal range. How did he do it?"

Zhang Yi, surprised, switched channels. Each channel was still a foreign one. As he flipped through dozens of foreign channels, he realized something.

"This shelter must have a super-strong network system!"

Excited, Zhang Yi checked the control room. Following the lines, he found a hidden door revealing a closet-sized independent server!

"He actually set up a server in his own home. Impressive!" Zhang Yi laughed, eyes brightening.

Though he didn't fully understand how it worked, the signal reception indicated the network system in this shelter was incredibly powerful, capable of global signal transmission. This meant Zhang Yi could access global information through the network.

Chapter 163: Sweet as Honey

The ten-billion-dollar shelter was undoubtedly top-tier, even by the standards of a decade later. With such an advanced network setup, Zhang Yi could now access information from the outside world more accurately. Domestic news channels often focused on entertainment, presenting them as serious news.

Sitting down, Zhang Yi began browsing international networks, eager to learn about the current global situation beyond Tianhai City. The information he found aligned with his expectations. The extreme cold had killed most living creatures, and due to poor communication, the exact global death toll was unknown. However, according to a mathematical model from Hopkins University's underground lab, the global population had plummeted from 8.5 billion to about 2 billion.

"In just one month, nearly three-sevenths of the population wiped out. If 5% survive, it will be a miracle," Zhang Yi sighed.

Despite the harsh environment, humans continued to fight and kill each other, with extremely low temperatures halting production activities. No crops could be grown, and resources couldn't be extracted, leading to a severe shortage of food and energy. Wars broke out everywhere, from personal conflicts to international disputes, all over these precious resources.

"Fortunately, I'm well-prepared," Zhang Yi took a deep breath, feeling grateful for his foresight.

As he continued browsing, he stumbled upon information about "mutants." A mysterious American website used this term for those who had mutated, inspired by their once-popular comics. Zhang Yi straightened up; he was eager to learn more about this, given his own spatial abilities resulting from mutation.

Through his research, Zhang Yi discovered widespread mutations across the globe. Hundreds of countries reported the appearance of mutants, including humans, animals, insects, and plants. The mutations varied, some positive, granting extraordinary abilities, while others negative, distorting bodies horribly.

For instance, he saw a video of a girl in Russia's icy wilderness who could conjure fire from her hand. Unfortunately, the flame lasted only two seconds before extinguishing, leaving the girl unconscious. "In this cold, awakening to fire abilities is rather tragic," Zhang Yi mused.

He also saw other mutants, such as a person whose body had turned a ghastly green, resembling a grotesque version of the Hulk. Another had a body capable of detaching parts while keeping them functional. Though details were scarce, these mutants represented a biological evolution, albeit sometimes for the worse, with some suffering severe radiation damage without gaining any powers.

Zhang Yi meticulously noted all available information. Although the number of known mutants was low, he suspected many were hiding their abilities, making the world outside still very dangerous.

Resolving to stay hidden in the shelter, Zhang Yi decided to bring Zhou Ke'er over. Used to her company, he found life more interesting with a beautiful, understanding woman by his side. As for Uncle You, Zhang Yi had other plans. He didn't want Uncle You living in the shelter since he and Zhou Ke'er were still in their honeymoon phase, enjoying intimate moments that would be hindered by another man's presence.

Zhang Yi equipped himself and opened the shelter's heavy metal door, admiring its futuristic design. Outside, he saw footprints, likely from the three women he had released earlier. Dressed inadequately for the cold, they probably wouldn't survive long.

"Am I wasting resources?" Zhang Yi wondered, noting the high quality of Tianhai City's "socialites." They rivaled some celebrities in looks. He had considered giving them to Uncle You but decided against it, fearing their manipulative nature might cause trouble.

"Never mind, there will always be better women," Zhang Yi muttered as he walked out.

He decided not to use the snowmobile to avoid drawing attention. As he neared Villa 204, he suddenly heard a woman's voice.

"Please wait!"

"Hmm?" Zhang Yi paused, finding the voice very familiar, as if he had heard it often.

"Wait?" he thought. "Wait for what?"

Recalling a classic movie line that had once gone viral, Zhang Yi turned towards the voice, his finger on the trigger.

At the door of Villa 204 stood a figure wrapped in a black down jacket. Seeing Zhang Yi turn, she moved towards him excitedly.

"Please wait, I... I have something to tell you."

Hearing the childlike, high-pitched voice, Zhang Yi confirmed the person's identity. His eyes lit up with surprise and delight. "Are you Da Mi Mi?".

Chapter 164: Under the Same Roof

The woman in the long black down jacket panted as she walked up to Zhang Yi. She pulled down her scarf, revealing a delicate, fair face. Zhang Yi recognized her immediately. Few netizens in China wouldn't know her: she was Yang Siya, one of the hottest stars of recent years, the woman countless men dreamt of.

According to Xu Hao, Cloud Manor was home to many wealthy and influential people, including top celebrities. Yang Siya, with her wealth, naturally had the means to buy property here. Seeing her, Zhang Yi felt a ripple of excitement. Though he wasn't one to chase after stars, as a normal man, he naturally admired beautiful actresses, especially those with perfect figures. Zhang Yi had been a fan of Yang Siya for a long time. Many lonely nights had been spent with her photos and videos.

Although she was a few years older than Zhang Yi and had been married before, these weren't disadvantages to him; in fact, they made her even more appealing.

Yang Siya looked at Zhang Yi with large, pitiful eyes and said timidly, "I haven't eaten in three days. Can you take me with you? I don't want to die here."

Her eyes seemed to have hooks that could snatch a man's soul. As an actress, her acting skills might have been criticized, but seducing men came naturally to her. This time, she decided to gamble with her beauty to secure a chance to survive.

Zhang Yi looked at her, silent. To be honest, he was quite tempted. After all, here was his favorite actress, practically throwing herself at him. Who wouldn't want to live under the same roof as a star and experience the joy of having her serve him as a maid?

But he had to consider safety. He frowned, "In these times, everyone's life is tough. If you want me to take you with me, you need to give me a good reason."

Yang Siya bit her lip lightly—a gesture both pure and seductive. Her lips were pink and shiny, like cherries, making one wonder how troublesome eating would be with such lips. This woman was inherently alluring.

Some said that Yang Siya might not be the most beautiful of the popular actresses, but she was certainly the most capable of stirring male fantasies. The celebrity halo made Zhang Yi feel even more desirable in her current helpless state.

Looking at Zhang Yi with her rabbit-like eyes, she took a step forward and said softly, "I just want something to eat. If you give me that, I'll agree to any condition you have."

Her words were suggestive, making it hard for Zhang Yi to refuse.

Looking at her cherry lips, Zhang Yi sighed internally. She appeared so helpless, like a fragile little white rabbit—or rather, a big white rabbit. However, she didn't hesitate when it came to subtly agreeing to Zhang Yi's suggestive request.

Yang Siya's thoughts were more mature than those of someone like Zhou Ke'er, which explained how she could run her own film company and be both an artist and a boss. Zhang Yi knew she wasn't as easy to bully as she looked, which made her even more attractive to him.

"Follow me!" Zhang Yi finally said.

He turned back, abandoning his plan to return to Yue Lu community to fetch Zhou Ke'er. They still had plenty of supplies, and there was no immediate rush.

Seeing this, Yang Siya breathed a sigh of relief. Her charm still worked, and luckily, Zhang Yi was a young man.

Yang Siya followed Zhang Yi to Cloud Manor 101, her eyes widening in surprise at the villa before them. "Isn't this Wang Siming's house?"

Zhang Yi smiled slightly. "It's mine now."

He took out the magnetic card key and opened the door. Yang Siya, full of curiosity, followed him inside. The room was warm, with a temperature of 27°C, making it cozy and comfortable. Soon, Yang Siya felt hot and hurriedly took off her thick clothes, revealing her figure wrapped in a black sweater. Despite the modest clothing, her impressive figure was still evident, making Zhang Yi's jaw clench.

Sensing Zhang Yi's unabashed gaze, Yang Siya bit her lip lightly. She knew what he was thinking, but having chosen to use her beauty to seek protection, she couldn't afford to act reserved. Calmly, she sat down opposite Zhang Yi. Even in her modest clothing, her figure left much to the imagination.

"Thank you for letting me in," she said in her soft, cute voice.

"What's your relationship with the previous owner?" Zhang Yi asked cautiously.

Yang Siya admitted she knew Wang Siming, but when she saw Zhang Yi acting as the owner, she was curious. Zhang Yi, however, didn't answer her question and instead asked, "How well do you know Wang Siming?"

She nodded slightly. "In our circle, who doesn't know him? But it's not like we're close. He's rich and famous, so we'd occasionally meet at events."

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow and poured her a glass of water. "Then don't worry about him. Just remember, I'm the owner here now."

"Thank you." She took a sip, feeling itchy all over as her body warmed up, not having bathed for a while. She looked at Zhang Yi pleadingly. "Can I use the bathroom here?"

"Go ahead," Zhang Yi said generously, pointing her to the bathroom .

Chapter 165: A Clever Woman

Whose bathroom is bigger than their bedroom and equipped with all sorts of recreational amenities? If the person is poor, we call it frivolousness. If the person is rich, we call it the playful taste of a playboy or the refined interest of the wealthy. Wang Siming, known for his lecherousness, excelled in this area, making his bathroom uniquely extravagant.

Zhang Yi, ever polite, didn't demand to check Yang Siya upon entry. However, for safety reasons, he felt he had no choice but to thoroughly inspect her once she was clean, ensuring she had no hidden weapons or poison. This was a matter of principle, and no one was exempt.

Inside the spacious bathroom, over 80 square meters with a massive gold-plated massage bathtub resembling a fish pond, Yang Siya turned on the water, letting it flow over her body. She sighed with relief, savoring the long-missed comfort of a hot bath. Such luxuries seemed mundane until they were lost. For someone who valued beauty and cleanliness, being unable to bathe was akin to torture.

As the hot water soaked her hair and washed over her delicate face, she felt warm and relaxed. Yet her mind remained active. From the moment she entered this villa, she had been contemplating her next move. Encountering Zhang Yi in this desperate situation, she decided to gamble with the only asset she had left—her body, which many men dreamed of.

In the face of life and death, many things can be set aside. Yang Siya found herself somewhat relieved upon meeting Zhang Yi. Despite his dangerous aura, he was handsome and tall, far from the ugly old men she had feared.

"If it's with this man, staying with him for a while might not be such a loss," she thought, a resigned smile on her lips.

Given the choice, she wouldn't be doing this. Unlike many in the entertainment industry who climbed up using the casting couch, Yang Siya relied on her abilities and her family's prominent background in Beijing. Even though she had been married, her body and spirit remained clean.

"I've decided. I'll talk to him and ask him to stay here for a while. I'm prepared to offer something in return," she murmured, embracing herself under the hot water.

"I just need someone to protect me, provide food and shelter. Once the snow disaster ends, I'll leave, and no one will know. I'll still be the dazzling star," she said with newfound determination.

After a while, Yang Siya emerged from the bathroom, her wet hair draped over her shoulders like a lotus flower blooming from the water.

"Zhang Yi, can you let me stay here?" she asked, looking pitiful. "I'm weak, and in this harsh environment, it's hard to survive alone. I need a man to protect me. Don't worry, I won't trouble you for long. Once the snow disaster ends, I'll leave, and this memory will remain just between us."

Her sincerity was a strategic move, hoping to secure Zhang Yi's protection.

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow, impressed by her approach. "She's a clever woman. This makes things easier," he thought. He disliked foolish women who often acted like saints and caused trouble. Yang Siya, understanding the transactional nature of using her body for survival, made things straightforward. This way, Zhang Yi didn't have to waste time on false emotional exchanges.

He needed companionship to fulfill his fantasies as a fan and to bring life to the empty house. With Yang Siya and Zhou Ke'er, two intelligent beauties, his life wouldn't be dull. Even playing cards would be more fun.

"This is a fair deal," Zhang Yi thought, enjoying the simplicity of it. He appreciated Yang Siya's pragmatic approach.

Yang Siya, hoping the world would return to normal so her efforts wouldn't be wasted, bit her lip. "The world will return to normal," she insisted, gazing at the snow outside.

Zhang Yi shrugged. "It's unlikely. Even if the ice age ends, the world won't be the same."

Yang Siya remained hopeful. "If it doesn't, all my efforts would be in vain."

Zhang Yi didn't mind her hope. If she chose to leave one day, he'd remember the good times they shared. There were many obedient and understanding girls outside; he wouldn't dwell on her departure. In the apocalypse, he lived for the present.

Seeing her intentions clearly, Zhang Yi decided not to waste time on emotional pretense. "Alright, you can stay, but in my house, you must follow my rules. That's a basic principle," he said firmly, his seriousness unchanged regardless of who she was.

Chapter 166: The Three Rules

Yang Siya, being a savvy businesswoman, understood the importance of clear transactions. Zhang Yi appreciated this straightforward approach, as he disliked unnecessary complications.

Zhang Yi glanced outside. It was getting dark, being wintertime, and it seemed they wouldn't be able to leave tonight. "It's getting late. Let's rest," he suggested.

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As the wind and snow calmed outside, Zhang Yi retrieved some clothes from his spatial space and placed them by the bed. "Here are some new clothes. You can change into them."

Seeing Zhang Yi's ability to retrieve items seemingly out of thin air, Yang Siya's eyes widened in astonishment. "What kind of ability is this?"

"A little trick," Zhang Yi smiled.

As he turned to leave, her soft, pleading voice stopped him. "Don't go."

Zhang Yi raised an eyebrow, smiling. "What's the matter?"

"There are some things we need to discuss," Yang Siya said, her face slightly reddening. Despite preparing herself mentally, she still felt confused and hesitant about her relationship with Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi stretched and said, "I'm a bit hungry. Let's go to the living room. We can talk while we eat."

Yang Siya nodded, her eyes lighting up at the mention of food. Shortly after, they sat on the living room sofa. Freshly washed, Yang Siya had regained her elegant appearance, her hair styled in a bun, exuding the aura of a refined housewife. She wore a black off-shoulder dress, highlighting her smooth shoulders and deep cleavage.

Elegance never goes out of style. Even in the apocalypse, her presence was pleasing. Just having her around, even as a beautiful decoration, was worthwhile. Zhang Yi reclined on the sofa, placing hot food on the table, which amazed Yang Siya, thinking it was some kind of magic trick.

"Eat up! We'll talk as we eat. Let's clarify some things to avoid future troubles," Zhang Yi said, biting into a hot cheeseburger and laying down the rules.

"My house is quite big, and having one more woman won't be a problem. My only requirement is that you obey me."

"You're smart; you should understand what I mean, right?"

Yang Siya, still embarrassed by recent events, bit her lip. "I understand. In our industry, such things aren't unusual."

Zhang Yi nodded in satisfaction. Smart people were easier to deal with. He didn't have many demands from Yang Siya. Keeping her was like having a beautiful ornament at home. With Zhou Ke'er joining soon, the two women could share household chores and alternate duties without much pressure.

Zhang Yi's sudden thought made him frown. "I remember buying some medicines from Zhou Hairun. Let me check later."

Yang Siya, suppressing her shyness, boldly addressed Zhang Yi. "I can agree to your demands, but I have some conditions I hope you'll respect."

Zhang Yi spread his hands, indifferent. "Let's hear them."

Yang Siya, in her soft voice, said, "First, our relationship is limited to the duration of the snow disaster. If we ever part ways, I hope you won't reveal anything that happened here. As a public figure, if people find out what we did, my career would be over."

Zhang Yi slightly pursed his lips. Like Zhang Yuan Zheng and Cai Mingyu, she hoped society would return to normal after the disaster. Those who enjoyed societal benefits most were least willing to see it collapse.

"Alright, I promise not to reveal anything we did," Zhang Yi replied, easing her concerns. As a popular national idol, any relationship with her would excite men, making them eager to boast.

"Second, I'll follow your requirements, but you can't force me to do things I don't want to do."

Her voice grew softer. She needed the courage to set such terms. She felt shame over using herself as a bargaining chip. Despite acting tough, she had lost her autonomy and was now at Zhang Yi's mercy. She hoped he would respect her in some way.

Zhang Yi found joy in her mix of humiliation and shyness.

"I've learned my lesson. I used to value young girls, but now I see the appeal of mature women," Zhang Yi thought.

Moving closer, Zhang Yi's approach frightened her. Her instinctive attempt to keep distance failed as he pulled her into his arms. Her face flushed, she looked away, unable to meet his gaze. Zhang Yi grinned, holding her chin to make her face him.

"You came to me willingly. Don't act so pitiful. Even if it's a temporary arrangement, as a top actress, I expect your best performance. It'll make me happier, and it's better for you too, right?"

His domineering gaze made her heart tremble. Despite her hopes, she realized she had little choice.

"Fine, but you must agree to my conditions first," she insisted.

Zhang Yi laughed lightly. "Don't worry. I'm not a demon. As long as you behave, I won't make things too difficult for you."

"Not too difficult," he thought, "but I didn't say not at all."

Yang Siya glared at him but could only pout in silent frustration.

Chapter 167: Zhou Haimei

Zhang Yi made a three-point agreement with Yang Siya, allowing her to move in as she wished.

However, Zhang Yi could sense that she still felt some shame and anger inside. After all, being a top-tier popular actress, she was tightly controlled by a man, which naturally made her somewhat unwilling. But instead of feeling unhappy, Zhang Yi found it even more enjoyable!

Men inherently enjoy conquest; the more untamable the wild horse, the more he wants to tame it. This woman was damned sweet!

Because of Yang Siya, Zhang Yi didn't return to Yue Lu District. On the one hand, he inquired about the situation at Cloud Manor to facilitate moving in later. On the other hand, he subtly probed Yang Siya to prevent her from becoming a threat to him.

Thus, a full day passed. Zhang Yi left a room for Yang Siya, but like he did with Zhou Ke'er before, he didn't give her a key.

"I need to go out for a while. You stay in the room and behave," Zhang Yi said, leaving some food for Yang Siya. As for the bathroom, it was not an issue since all the rooms here had private bathrooms. When the shelter was built, everything was well thought out.

Hearing that Zhang Yi was going out, Yang Siya showed a nervous expression. "When will you be back?"

After the apocalypse hit, she had spent a considerable time in loneliness and fear. Now, even though she had been taken advantage of by this bad man, as a woman, she felt a certain sense of security. Honestly, if Zhang Yi had been courteous and didn't take advantage of her at all, she would be more afraid that he had other schemes. Now that Zhang Yi was leaving, she was once again scared. She didn't want to be alone anymore.

"Don't worry, I'm just going out to pick someone up. I'll be back soon!" Seeing Yang Siya's timid demeanor, Zhang Yi couldn't help but smile. The hard shell on the surface was slowly crumbling. What an interesting woman!

Yang Siya pursed her lips, her face showing a cold expression again as she sat primly on the sofa. "Alright, come back soon."

Just as Zhang Yi was about to leave, a thought struck him. He turned back to Yang Siya and asked, "A lot of rich people and celebrities live here, right?"

Yang Siya blinked, "Yes, this is the largest wealthy district in Tianhai City. Even the poorest here are billionaires!"

Zhang Yi nodded. A mischievous smile appeared on his lips. "So, are there any big-breasted, simple-minded rich women around?"

Yang Siya's eyes widened, and she stood up excitedly. "Are you serious? Are you serious? If you keep joking like this, I'll... I'll get mad!"

She glared at Zhang Yi, clenching her little fists. Zhang Yi blinked, realizing she was projecting herself. Hmm, she indeed fit the big-breasted criterion but wasn't brainless. Zhang Yi explained with a smile, "You misunderstood! I wasn't talking about you but other people."

Yang Siya was stunned, covering her mouth in surprise and stepping back a couple of paces. "You... you scoundrel! That's too much!"

How long had it been, and he was already planning to find another woman? Did she have no charm at all? Ah, what am I thinking? He's just a bad guy, a pervert! Yang Siya felt a mix of shame and anger. Zhang Yi, however, was speechless. He admitted he was a bit lustful, but not to the extent of looking for women everywhere. The reason he asked was purely out of consideration for Uncle You, hoping to find

a suitable companion for him. After all, he was quite lonely. As for women, Zhang Yi wasn't that desperate. If it weren't for his youthful crush on Yang Siya, he wouldn't have let her into the shelter so easily. Honestly, even the three women he drove away had looks not much worse than hers. Moreover, their skills in that regard were undoubtedly better than hers.

"It's like this. I have a friend back home who has been very kind to me. But he was hurt by a bad woman and now needs some comfort from the opposite sex." "I wanted to find him a companion, that's why I asked. After all, your connections among wealthy women are quite extensive."

Hearing Zhang Yi's explanation, Yang Siya realized her misunderstanding. Yet, with her current view of Zhang Yi, she still thought of him as a lustful wolf. However, since she was under his roof, she couldn't refuse his request. Moreover, since Zhang Yi had the ability to survive in the apocalypse, his friend was likely not much worse. Introducing her friend to him could also mean saving a life.

Yang Siya said, "There are still some rich women around, but finding one who is simple-minded is tough." She frowned slightly, then cautiously asked, "Would it be okay if she's a bit older?"

Hmm? Older? That's great! Zhang Yi hoped to find a mature, sensible woman for Uncle You, unlike Xie Limei, who was always reckless.

"My friend is in his fifties. He prefers mature women." Sorry, Uncle You. Even if you liked eighteen-year-old girls, I couldn't help. Young women are too much trouble.

Yang Siya sighed in relief, "If that's the case, it's easier!" She looked at Zhang Yi and asked with a smile, "You know Zhou Haimei, right?"

Zhang Yi's pupils shrank slightly at the mention of the name. Zhou Haimei was his childhood goddess! Not only Zhang Yi, but even his father liked her a lot when he was alive. Back then, Zhou Haimei was known as the nation's sweetheart and had won many film and TV awards. Now in her fifties, she was transitioning to motherly roles but often outshined the lead actress due to her stunning looks. Even at her age, Zhou Haimei remained beautiful and voluptuous. Even Zhang Yi had to praise her mature charm.

"Uncle You, I've found the best for you this time!" Zhang Yi quickly had Yang Siya contact Zhou Haimei.

Soon, Zhou Haimei arrived at Zhang Yi's home. The once exquisite beauty looked a bit thinner and more exhausted due to the snowstorm, but deep in her eyes, there was undeniable excitement at the chance to survive.

Yang Siya said to Zhang Yi, "I've explained everything to her. She has no objections."

Of course, in the face of life and death, most people cannot maintain their pride and arrogance.

Chapter 168: The Fishermen

Zhang Yi brought some food to Zhou Haimei. Seeing the food, her eyes lit up. She thanked Zhang Yi with the last bit of her dignity before sitting on the sofa and devouring the food ravenously.

After she finished eating, Zhang Yi asked, "You understand everything, right?"

Zhou Haimei nodded, "Yes, you've found me a home, right?"

A woman in her fifties could see things more fairly. Perhaps at their age, they didn't place as much importance on so-called love. Marriage and living together were more about matching each other's status. As long as the conditions were met, they could be together. So when Yang Siya told her that she could find her a long-term meal ticket, she agreed without hesitation. The only regret was that she initially thought the man would be Zhang Yi.

With Yang Siya paving the way, Zhang Yi saved a lot of trouble. Before setting off, he sternly reminded the two women that the safety house and the shelter must be kept secret! They must not reveal it to anyone outside under any circumstances. Otherwise, it could attract greedy people to seize it.

"If I find out that anyone leaks information about this place, there will be no need for them to live anymore," Zhang Yi said calmly but coldly, his eyes filled with pure killing intent. Both women were terrified and quickly assured him they wouldn't do anything stupid.

Zhang Yi nodded and didn't say more. These two women were not young, and having fought in the entertainment industry, they were not naive. His warning was just a precaution. After giving instructions, he sent Yang Siya back to her room and prepared to take Zhou Haimei to Yue Lu District.

...

The cold wind howled, the icy northern wind carrying snow as it blew across the Lu River. Compared to when the snow disaster first hit, the snowfall had decreased significantly. After all, in the extreme cold, there weren't many water molecules in the air to condense into ice. The low temperature continued, and the wind remained as biting as ever.

Across the river from Cloud Manor was a small town called Xu Family Town. On one side of the river was the villa district where the richest people in Tianhai City lived, and on the other side was a suburban rural area. In the past, people in Xu Family Town lived by growing grains and vegetables. Every household built greenhouses, growing grains and vegetables to sell in Tianhai City. Over the years, although they weren't as wealthy as city dwellers, their lives were decent.

After the extreme cold storm hit, their lives were better than those in the city. Although they faced the same freezing temperatures, they didn't lack food. Moreover, their physical strength was better than city folks. Despite the ice and snow, they lived relatively comfortably, which was somewhat ironic.

At noon, the warmest time of the day, the outside temperature rose to minus sixty degrees, and the snow slightly decreased. On the Lu River, a group of Xu Dong Village villagers appeared, wrapped tightly in their clothes. They brought five or six dogs, all sled dogs like Alaskan Malamutes and Huskies, all wrapped in cotton coats due to the low temperature. The villagers cherished these dogs, treating them better than themselves because, in the south, they were the only animals still useful for labor.

However, these sled dogs were different from the goofy ones seen in normal times. Their eyes were filled with fierce hostility, their mouths revealing sharp teeth, and their fur stained with blood.

Led by a fifty-something dark-faced man, the group reached the ice. The dark-faced man walked back and forth on the ice, sometimes lying down to look into its depths. After a while, he tapped a spot with the stick in his hand.

"Here, start digging!"

As soon as he spoke, a dozen people behind him moved forward. They unloaded large ice-breaking tools from the sled and placed them at the designated spot, tying them to the dogs with ropes.

“Run, run!”

The dog handlers firmly held the ropes and shouted, and the dogs began to run, pulling the ice-breakers to crack the ice. With the dogs' strength, the ice-breaking was efficient, and soon a huge round hole was opened on the ice.

“Alright, we’ve got fish!”

The dark-faced man waved, and the handlers quickly stopped the dogs and lifted the icebreakers out. Under the broken ice were a dozen or so frozen fish.

After the river froze, the oxygen levels in the water decreased, causing the fish to rise for air. Though they didn’t find a breathing hole, they died near the ice surface, providing the fishermen of Xu Family Town with a good food source. By breaking the ice, they could dig out the frozen fish, their main protein source.

Led by Xu Dahai from Xu Dong Village, the group was busy as usual. Xu Dahai, once just a fisherman with average status in the village, became an important figure after the apocalypse due to his fishing skills. For instance, he only needed to designate spots for fishing while others did the physical labor.

A villager, Xu Manjin, approached Xu Dahai, chatting idly. “Uncle, do you think the city folks are all frozen by now?”

Xu Dahai snorted disdainfully, hands in his pockets. “Those city folks, they don’t even know how to farm, relying on us to feed them. Now they probably can’t even eat a full meal, likely frozen to death already.”

Xu Manjin nodded, grateful. “Good thing we’re from the countryside. No matter how bad the weather, we have food and strength, so we’re not afraid of surviving!”

“This weather is too chilling. When will it pass?” Xu Manjin glanced at the luxurious villas across the river, his eyes a mix of disdain and uncertainty about the future. Surviving was true, but this wasn’t the life they wanted.

Xu Dahai frowned slightly, squinting against the snow. “Hard to say! But in this weather, we’ll survive. As long as we work hard, we won’t starve!”

“I remember when I was in Mohe, it was just as cold. We even swam shirtless!”

The men chatted idly. They used to gather and discuss international affairs, always mentioning Europe and the US, belittling other countries. But now, without news sources and no mood for foreign affairs, they only talked about the city's suffering.

Suddenly, a distant engine sound reached them from across the river. Though faint, it was distinct in the silent, snowy world.

Xu Manjin paused, “I think I hear an engine?”

Xu Dahai listened carefully, then looked astonished. No mistake! The sound was just like the motor on his fishing boat.

“At this time, how can there be a vehicle? Aren’t the city folks all frozen?”

Everyone stopped their work, looking toward the direction of the engine sound.

Chapter 169: You Dare to Rob Me?

Zhang Yi rode the snowmobile with Zhou Haimei towards Yue Lu District. Driving along the riverbank, the snow-covered Lu River looked majestic. However, there was noticeably less snow on the ice surface compared to the ground. The Lu River, connecting to the East China Sea, had a large specific heat capacity, causing its temperature to change more slowly. They even saw people fishing on the ice.

As Zhang Yi observed the scenery, he felt a rare sense of human presence. However, a sudden realization struck him.

"Fishermen? Have they adapted to this extreme cold?" Zhang Yi was astonished. During his month in Yue Lu District, he witnessed the misery people endured. Yet, across the river in Xu Family Town, the villagers had adapted to the cold. It wasn't surprising, though. Farmers work year-round, getting up early to labor in the fields regardless of the weather. Their ability to adapt far surpassed that of city dwellers spoiled by air conditioning and heating.

"Human adaptability is truly frightening! If it were me, I wouldn't know how to survive a winter without heating or air conditioning," Zhang Yi mused.

But his thoughts were cut short by terrifying barking from the ice ahead. Zhou Haimei screamed, pointing at the river, "Dogs!"

Zhang Yi saw them too. Eight ferocious dogs were charging towards them, dragging two makeshift sleds with four men on them. Zhang Yi's eyes narrowed, realizing trouble was ahead—not just now, but future trouble. Originally, he planned for the city's inhabitants to perish quickly in the snow disaster, leaving him and a few others in shelters to survive. But he hadn't accounted for the countryside adapting to the severe cold, posing a potential threat.

For now, his snowmobile was a target. "Hold on tight!" Zhang Yi revved the engine, speeding up to avoid a confrontation. Fighting one person could lead to dealing with an entire village. He sped ahead, the dogs frantically chasing, their eyes wild with savagery. These dogs had survived many battles, even eating human flesh during desperate times, making them extremely dangerous.

The snowmobile was fast, but so were the sleds. The fishermen had anticipated his path, blocking his way. One fisherman hurled a fish spear at Zhang Yi. "D*mn it!" Zhang Yi cursed. The spear would have taken a chunk of his arm if it hit. He swerved the snowmobile sharply, braking suddenly, causing Zhou Haimei to be thrown off into the snow. The once-famous actress cried in fear, unable to get up.

Two sleds blocked Zhang Yi's path, the eight sled dogs barking ferociously, baring bloody teeth. Zhang Yi's scalp tingled. He feared the dogs more than the men; humans could be reasoned with, but dogs were relentless.

The fishermen approached, armed and holding the dogs' leashes. "Leave the vehicle and the woman, then get lost!" one man with a machete shouted.

Zhang Yi coldly assessed them, memorizing the position of each man and dog. Then he drew his pistol, aiming at them. “Fellas, let us pass. I don’t want trouble, and you don’t want to die.”

The sight of the gun made them step back. Zhang Yi gestured with the gun. “How about you move aside?”

The four men exchanged glances, their hostility undiminished. They were survivors, not easily scared. A young man with a rogue look asked, “Buddy, where’d you get the snowmobile and the gun?”

Zhang Yi sneered, “Inherited.”

They eyed each other, seemingly debating whether to retreat. But the lure of the snowmobile and Zhou Haimei’s presence reignited their greed. The snowmobile was a top-tier vehicle, far superior to dogs. And a woman, especially a well-maintained celebrity, was a rare commodity in the apocalypse.

The rogue, Xu Xingwang, said, “Buddy, this is Xu Dong Village’s territory. If you want to pass, pay a toll.” He pointed at the snowmobile and Zhou Haimei. “Leave either the vehicle or the woman!”

Zhang Yi couldn’t believe their audacity, treating his gun as a bluff. He frowned and sneered, “You see this gun in my hand, right?”

The four men hesitated but didn’t back down. Survivors in the apocalypse were tough and bold. Another skinny man with a felt hat taunted, “Who are you scaring? There are four of us and eight dogs. How many bullets do you have?”

“Leave the woman and the vehicle, or else try your luck!”

Zhang Yi’s gaze turned icy. He saw more people coming from the river. The river was less than a hundred meters wide, with Xu Family Town on the other side. If more villagers arrived, they’d surround him. Zhang Yi could protect himself, but Zhou Haimei might be torn apart by the dogs. He took a deep breath. They were forcing his hand.

With no more room for negotiation, Zhang Yi swiftly drew a second gun, shooting each of the four men in the head. They fell instantly, blood splattering.

With the men dead, the eight dogs charged at Zhang Yi and Zhou Haimei, barking ferociously.

Chapter 170: Enmity with Xu Family Town

The gunshots did not scare off the rabid dogs. Instead, they became even more frenzied, baring their teeth and lunging at Zhang Yi and Zhou Haimei. Zhou Haimei screamed, paralyzed with fear as the dogs closed in.

Gritting his teeth, Zhang Yi quickly shot and killed the two dogs near Zhou Haimei. But the remaining six dogs were already upon him, making it too late to use the gun.

"Dimensional Gate!" Zhang Yi shouted, opening a portal to a different dimension in front of him.

The barking of the dogs abruptly vanished as they were swallowed by the portal. Zhang Yi took a deep breath. If he had been bitten on an unprotected part of his arm, he might have lost a chunk of flesh, and there was a high risk of infection. This was his first time using his dimensional ability in combat, and it proved incredibly effective—almost invincible in terms of defense. The dogs would suffocate and die in his alternate space due to lack of oxygen.

With his nerves steadying, Zhang Yi saw more people approaching from the distance on the ice. Knowing he couldn't stay, he quickly helped the terrified Zhou Haimei onto the snowmobile and sped away. He also collected the two dead dogs into his space.

Not long after Zhang Yi left, Xu Dahai arrived with his men. The villagers of Xu Dong Village saw the four bodies on the ice, their eyes filled with grief. They had sensed something was wrong when they heard the gunshots.

"I've always said not to act rashly when encountering strangers. Now look what happened—they've lost their lives!" Xu Dahai said with a pained voice. The four young men had been impulsive, ignoring Xu Dahai's caution and deciding to intercept the stranger with their sled dogs. Now, they lay dead.

Xu Manjin looked around and noticed something strange. “Where are the dogs? Where did they go?”

The village's dogs were well-trained and would not run away easily. The absence of the dogs was baffling. The villagers looked around but found no trace of them.

“Something’s not right. This guy isn’t ordinary. He had a snowmobile and a gun. He’s definitely someone special!” Xu Dahai said, his face darkening. This incident would be difficult to explain to the village.

“No matter what, he killed our people. This won’t end here!” Xu Dahai declared. “We should go back and inform the village chief. This guy might have extraordinary abilities, just like Chunlei.”

The others nodded in agreement, taking the bodies back to Xu Dong Village.

Xu Dong Village, located at the eastern edge of Xu Family Town, was a remarkable sight in the snowy landscape. Hundreds of igloos of varying sizes formed a cluster, with a white castle made of snow bricks at the center, resembling something out of a Japanese anime.

Inside the castle, the furnishings were also made of snow, including chairs, tables, and chandeliers. In the castle owner's room, strange sounds occasionally emerged.

“Eri, naughty children must be punished!” a voice said.

“Ah! Not there...” another voice responded.

A chubby young man was engrossed in his laptop, surrounded by tissues. Just as he was about to reach his peak, the door—a wooden board—was pushed open. Several burly men entered, led by a stern old man with a long beard.

“Chunlei, something has happened!” the old man announced.

The young man, Xu Chunlei, was startled, his moment ruined. He quickly closed his laptop, but the sounds continued from under the covers. The burly men, seeing the scene, were taken aback, realizing they had interrupted something private.

The old man, Xu Dongsheng, the village chief, scolded, "You're a grown man, yet you're still doing this!"

Xu Dongsheng tried to pull the blanket off Xu Chunlei, who resisted fiercely. "This is my hobby! So what if I'm a bit perverted?"

"You ungrateful brat! I've been trying to set you up with someone from the village, and you still act like this!" Xu Dongsheng shouted.

"Who cares about those old women? I don't want them!" Xu Chunlei retorted.

After a brief struggle, the blanket was yanked off, leaving the men in an awkward silence, trying to stifle their laughter. Xu Chunlei, now exposed, reluctantly asked, "What's the matter?"

Xu Dongsheng nodded to Xu Dahai, who explained, "Today, we went fishing, and Xu Kang, Xu Guangzhi, Xu Youbin, and Xu Xingwang were killed."

Xu Chunlei's face turned serious upon hearing about the deaths. "How did this happen? We had subdued the nearby villages, hadn't we?"

"This time, it wasn't anyone from Xu Family Town. It was someone from across the river," Xu Dahai explained, recounting the events.

Xu Chunlei listened intently, his expression growing grim. Village Chief Xu Dongsheng said, "This person is very strong. He killed four men and eight dogs with ease. I worry he might pose a future threat to our village."

"Chunlei, could this person have powers like yours?" Xu Dongsheng asked.

Xu Chunlei nodded. "It's possible. Though I am the chosen one, there could be others with powers destined to challenge me, to make me stronger!"

He propped his chin on his hands, deep in thought. “Perhaps this is my first trial outside the beginner village!”

The elders were used to Xu Chunlei’s dramatic expressions. Xu Dongsheng said, “The Xu family must avenge our kin. No one can kill our people without facing consequences!”

“Chunlei, this person is formidable. It’s up to you to handle this.”

The elders praised him, boosting his confidence. Xu Chunlei, feeling proud, covered his right eye and laughed deeply. “Leave it to me! I’ll see just how strong I can become!”

...

Meanwhile, Zhang Yi sped towards Yue Lu District with the shaken Zhou Haimei. He felt troubled. Xu Family Town was just across the river from Cloud Manor, less than a kilometer away. Killing the four villagers could provoke a retaliatory attack.

“I’m not afraid, but I left Yue Lu District to avoid trouble, and now I’ve stumbled into new trouble. I just want a peaceful life with some beauties. Why force me into conflicts?” Zhang Yi thought.

He realized his abilities were more defensive than offensive, but he was nearly invincible in defense. His dimensional skills and fortified shelter were impregnable against most threats.

“If they’re smart, they’ll leave me alone. But if they seek their own doom, I’ll wipe them out completely!” Zhang Yi resolved.

Soon, they reached Yue Lu District. Zhang Yi parked the snowmobile outside building 25. The area was quiet since he had cleared it of threats. Building 25 was now a strict no-go zone for others.

“We’re here. Get off,” Zhang Yi said to Zhou Haimei, who was still shaken. Her heart pounded as she followed him.

“The person I want you to meet is upstairs. Come with me,” Zhang Yi said.

Zhou Haimei sighed, feeling resigned. She knew she was no match for younger women but hoped to find a semblance of peace. She followed Zhang Yi up the 24 flights, pausing to rest twice along the way.

Before entering, Zhang Yi checked the surveillance feed on his phone. Everything was normal. Zhou Ke'er was reading in the living room, and Uncle You was resting. Satisfied, he opened the door and led Zhou Haimei inside.

Hearing the door, Zhou Ke'er looked up, her face lighting up with joy. She was about to run into Zhang Yi's arms but stopped when she saw the woman with him. Her expression turned wary.

“Zhang Yi, you're back! Congratulations on your success!” Zhou Ke'er said, helping Zhang Yi remove his heavy coat while eyeing Zhou Haimei. She recognized the former actress immediately, feeling a pang of insecurity. Would Zhang Yi prefer this older, still-beautiful woman? This new addition threatened her position in the household.

One woman could lie low, but with two, competition was inevitable. In these times, good positions and good men were always contested.