

Toxic Ex 461

Chapter 461: Give me a reason not to kill you

The man took advantage of Lin Yixun's distraction, unexpectedly grabbing her wrist. Lin Yixun only felt a sudden numbness in her wrist, and in the next moment, the hairpin in her hand had been knocked to the ground.

Having lost her only weapon and support, Lin Yixun was quickly subdued by the man's bodyguards, who pinned her firmly to the ground. Only then did Lin Yixun realize that the man had just been talking to her to stall for time and find an opportunity.

The opponent was clearly experienced in this regard. How could she, a novice, be his match?

In the end, everything she had done moments ago was just a futile struggle. Lin Yixun lowered her head powerlessly, not thinking about what fate awaited her, but couldn't help worrying about Song Yi and Chu Yan.

She had implicated them.

The bodyguards didn't care if Lin Yixun was injured, their grip on her was extremely strong. Just now, when she was dealing with the man, Lin Yixun didn't feel much pain from her wounds, but now it hurt like hell.

But she couldn't care about all that now.

She struggled to lift her head, looked to the mixed-race man in a black long coat not far away, and said in a low voice, "Let them go. You can take my life instead."

The man stepped forward, came in front of her, squatted down, and lifted her chin with his slender fingers, his thin lips curling in a mocking smile, "You can barely save yourself now, what do you have to negotiate with me?"

Hearing this, Lin Yixun felt her heart sink. The man was right; in her current situation, she was like fish on a chopping block, ready to be cut. What leverage did she have to ask this man to let Song Yi and Chu Yan go?

"Moreover..." The man paused, his gaze falling on the hairpin not far away, "I've lived for so many years and never suffered a loss from anyone. How do you think we should settle this score?"

"How do you want to settle it?"

"I'll have to think about that carefully."

The man withdrew his gaze, his sharp eyes falling on Lin Yixun's face. This was the first time he had carefully examined this woman. Her hair was disheveled, her face covered in blood and dirt. She looked so helpless yet possessed an extremely enchanting beauty.

There was no denying it; this woman had a face that could captivate any man in the world.

But for him, she was an exception. He had seen many beautiful women. To him, women were no different from men; if they had no skills, they were useless.

The man's gaze was sharp and dangerous, with a hint of amusement. Lin Yixun felt a chill running down her spine as he stared at her. She couldn't figure out what he was thinking.

Just when Lin Yixun thought she was doomed this time, the man's cold lips parted, and his deep voice sounded in her ear, "I'll give you one minute. Give me a reason not to kill you."

"Any reason will do?"

"It depends on whether your reason can convince me."

"If the reason is good enough, will you let Song Yi and Chu Yan go?"

"It depends on if your value is substantial enough."

With that, he glanced at his watch, his voice cold, "You have thirty seconds left to think."

Time ticked by, each second more nerve-racking than the last. Lin Yixun felt her mind go blank. She had nothing, not even her memory. How could she convince this man?

"Alright, time's up. So, what's your reason for me to spare your lives?"

At these words, the German Shepherd, lying not far away, seemed to understand and trotted over, staring at Lin Yixun on the ground, ready to strike.

Seeing Lin Yixun remain silent for a long time, the man squatted down and ran his hand through the German Shepherd's fur, his words chilling, "Do you want to taste her meat?"

Seeing the German Shepherd about to pounce on her and tear her apart, a sudden flash of inspiration came to Lin Yixun's mind. She quickly spoke, "I can... I can work with computers!"

The man chuckled lightly, "Computers? Everyone here can use a computer, what use are you to me?"

Lin Yixun quickly added, "I mean, not only can I use a computer, but I'm also proficient in it! If needed, I can be your hacker!"

"Why should I believe you?"

"If you don't believe me, you can ask Chu Yan and Song Yi. If you don't trust them, you can bring a computer over and see for yourself."

The man gave her a deep look, then said to a bodyguard beside him, "Go, bring the laptop from upstairs."

Lin Yixun turned on the computer, took a deep breath, and her fingers danced swiftly over the keyboard. Soon, she successfully controlled the power grid of the entire city.

She turned to look at the man beside her and said in a deep voice, "Is this satisfactory to you?"

"Child's play, hardly impressive." The man withdrew his gaze indifferently, seeming unimpressed, but his next move surprised everyone.

He coldly turned around and walked towards the small villa opposite. Before leaving, he made a gesture to the bodyguards, who then released Song Yi and Chu Yan. The ferocious German Shepherd also obediently retracted its claws, dejectedly following behind the man, disappearing into the villa.

The sudden turn of events left Lin Yixun momentarily unable to react. So what now? Was their crisis over?

This realization made Lin Yixun let out a long breath of relief. The complete relaxation caused a wave of dizziness. After all that turmoil, her body had already reached its limit. With the crisis over, her injuries and exhaustion overwhelmingly engulfed her.

Lin Yixun fell unconscious for an entire day and night. When she woke up, she found herself back in the basement of the villa. Chu Yan, seeing her awake, wept with joy.

"Shi Yi, you're finally awake. You had a high fever all night, talking nonsense. Even Song Yi almost couldn't hold on. I thought... I thought... It's good, it's good that you're awake!"

"Why am I here?"

"Where else would you be?"

"Your boss..."

"Don't worry, this time I didn't hide you here secretly. The boss allowed it. You don't know how scared I was yesterday. I thought for sure that Song Yi and I wouldn't make it, but who knew the boss would make an exception and not punish us."

"How are your injuries? And what about Song Yi..."

"We just had some minor injuries, it's nothing. But you, that damn dog was too ruthless, biting you until the flesh showed! Hmph, let's see how long it can stay arrogant. If it ever makes a mistake, I'll make sure to cook it in a stew!"

Chapter 462: I kept her because I found her somewhat interesting

Lin Yixun watched Chu Yan's expressive face, and couldn't help but let out a chuckle. This was Chu Yan, carefree and without worries, even after experiencing life and death, still living so unburdened.

This, truly is a good thing.

From Chu Yan's mouth, Lin Yixun learned that the man was called Feng Chengyu. As for what he does, Chu Yan was very secretive about it, and Lin Yixun did not press further, but she could guess a little. Anyway, he wasn't a normal kind-hearted person.

Lin Yixun also learned that there was an unwritten rule here: other than the owner of this villa estate, no one else was allowed to take outsiders in and out freely. This was the biggest taboo here, and if anyone violated it, the consequences... Lin Yixun had already experienced it, and there was no need for Chu Yan to elaborate further.

"Why would there be such a requirement? Is there some unknown secret here?"

"It's not really about a secret, but...the boss's identity is special, and also the old lady was once injured by an outsider entering, almost losing her life, so this rule was established."

"Is that so?" Lin Yixun became even more curious about Feng Chengyu's identity.

Curious as she was, Lin Yixun did not ask detailed questions. Curiosity kills the cat, and she didn't want to stir up unnecessary trouble. Moreover, even if she asked Chu Yan, Chu Yan might not explain clearly.

"Oh right, there's something I almost forgot to tell you." Saying that, Chu Yan took a package from her bag and handed it to Lin Yixun.

"What's inside here?"

"Passport and your new identity, plus a flight ticket and a letter of introduction."

Lin Yixun looked at her suspiciously, not understanding something.

"The boss said you owe him three lives, and there are already enough people working for him, he doesn't need one more, he just wants you to complete three tasks for him."

She owed him three lives?

Lin Yixun thought it was extremely ridiculous, this man was indeed overbearing, but she didn't refute, and asked with a faint smile, "What tasks?"

"The boss said he'll tell you when the time is ripe."

Lin Yixun was speechless, it was like having three swords hanging over her neck and not knowing when they would fall, the feeling was truly uncomfortable.

However, under the eaves, she had no choice but to lower her head. She couldn't fight this man and could only submit to his tyranny.

Lin Yixun's gaze fell on the package in front of her, and she asked, "Even if I owe him three tasks, what does that have to do with these things inside?"

Chu Yan gave Lin Yixun a deep look, hesitated, but finally spoke with difficulty, "The boss said your computer skills are just child's play, not good enough to work for him, so..."

"So he's sending me abroad?" Lin Yixun looked at the destination on the ticket and spoke softly.

"Not sending, it's learning. Carnegie Mellon, as Song Yi said, their computer science school is incredibly strong."

"Carnegie Mellon?" Lin Yixun frowned, she seemed to have some impression of this place, but couldn't quite remember where she'd heard of it.

"Can I not go?" Lin Yixun didn't like adapting to a new environment again.

"Well... the boss said you can choose not to go, but our little lives..." Chu Yan made a throat-slitting gesture as she spoke.

What else could Lin Yixun say, she could only agree. Borrowing Chu Yan's phone, she looked up some information about Carnegie Mellon online. It was indeed as Song Yi said, their computer science program was renowned worldwide.

Lin Yixun put down the mouse, resting her chin on her hand, wondering what the identity of the villa's owner was, to get her, an unknown person, there in just one day? And what was his purpose, wanting to train her as a professional hacker?

Though there were swirling doubts in her mind, Lin Yixun still had to accept the man's demand. With her wounds barely scabbed over, she embarked on the journey abroad.

Dragging her suitcase, Lin Yixun couldn't help but look back at the small villa. She had spent a confusing eight months here, and had narrowly escaped death. Now, as she was about to leave, she felt a mix of emotions that she couldn't quite describe.

"Let's go, I'll take you to the airport." Song Yi took her luggage gentlemanly from her hands and loaded it into the trunk.

Lin Yixun gave him a heartfelt smile, "Thanks!"

"No, no, please don't smile at me like that!" Song Yi couldn't handle Lin Yixun's smile. This woman was already mesmerizing enough, but when she smiled, she was like a seductress, making one's mind wander.

Song Yi couldn't help but think, maybe the boss's unusual decision to spare them wasn't because of this woman's hacker skills, but because he was captivated by her beauty.

It wasn't just Song Yi who was curious about why Feng Chengyu changed his mind suddenly, even his close friend Chu Feng was curious.

At this moment, the two of them were leisurely lying on the rooftop patio of the villa, with a minimalist-style coffee table beside the sofa, with two glasses of fine red wine on it.

Chu Feng withdrew his gaze from the black car driving away, turned to the man on the opposite sofa, and said with a smile, "I'm curious, why did you let her go? This doesn't seem like your usual style."

"Usual style? What is my usual style in your eyes?" the man leisurely replied.

"Do I really need to say it?" Chu Feng gave a devilish smile.

In Chu Feng's impression, Feng Chengyu's style was rather kill a thousand wrongly than let one go. But this time, not only did he let this unexpected guest go, he also sent her to the United States. On the surface, it looked like an exile, but in reality she was given a great boon. After all, getting into Carnegie Mellon wasn't easy.

"I say, are you interested in her?" Chu Feng suddenly leaned closer and gossiped.

In response, the man only gave him a cold glare. Feng Chengyu took a glass of red wine from the coffee table, the blood-red liquid swirling in the clear glass, glowing with a bewitching light.

After a long time, the man's rich voice slowly came, "I kept her because I found her somewhat interesting. She was the first woman to openly challenge me and the first one to make me stumble."

It was about a two-hour drive from the villa to the airport. Lin Yixun opened the car door, got out, and took her suitcase from Song Yi, ready to say goodbye to Song Yi and Chu Yan. However, considering her amnesia, Chu Yan insisted on walking her to the gate.

Chu Yan's attentiveness touched Lin Yixun. When she finally waved goodbye to the two of them, she felt a bit reluctant deep inside.

However, no matter how reluctant, the road ahead had to be walked alone. Eventually, she boarded the plane to the United States.

Due to her amnesia, Lin Yixun wasn't very comfortable being in a confined space with so many people. She leaned back, closed her eyes, hoping to feel better.

She wanted to take a break and think about her future, when she heard an excited voice from a girl in the front row.

"Oh my god, I can't believe I'm seeing Ouyang Hao in first class! Ouyang Hao is here! Oh my god! Am I dreaming?"

Chapter 463: Missed

Ouyang Hao?

Lin Yixun furrowed her brow slightly, inexplicably finding the name somewhat familiar. Was this someone she knew before?

She slowly opened her eyes, her gaze falling on the girl in the front row. The girl was practically beside herself with excitement, her eyes not far from sparkling with starry glints.

"Should I go to first class to get his autograph?" the girl asked the boy sitting next to her.

"Why get an autograph? Is he more handsome than your husband?" the boy said disdainfully.

"To be honest, he is really much more handsome than you."

The boy felt deeply hurt and angrily said, "It's just that he dresses more stylishly. If I were a celebrity, and had a professional team package me, I might be even more handsome than him."

"Che, give it up. Even the best team in the world couldn't give you Ouyang Hao's charisma," the girl rolled her eyes, pulling out a white T-shirt from somewhere, and said excitedly, "Forget you. This is a rare opportunity, and I must get his autograph today."

But as the girl walked into the aisle with the T-shirt, a passing flight attendant stopped her, "Sorry, Miss, the plane is about to take off. Please return to your seat and fasten your seatbelt."

The boy, seeing this, pulled the girl back to her seat, muttering, "The plane is about to take off, don't cause trouble. Besides, even if you take the T-shirt over, he may not sign it for you. Didn't you always get airsick? When the plane takes off, if you get airsick, I won't take care of you."

The girl thought about it and realized she did indeed get airsick, and very badly. So she had to temporarily give up, but was planning in her heart to wait until the plane landed or stabilized at cruising altitude to get Ouyang Hao's autograph. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity she couldn't miss.

Watching the scene, Lin Yixun in the back row withdrew her gaze calmly and smiled knowingly. So the "Ouyang Hao" the girl mentioned was a star, no wonder the name seemed so familiar. She must have heard it before losing her memory. Perhaps she was also a fan like the girl in the front row.

She adjusted her sunglasses, prepared especially for her by Song Yi. The frames were large, meant to help hide her face, supposedly so she wouldn't trouble others when she went out. At the time, Lin Yixun just smiled silently, thinking that Song Yi was probably worried that others would trouble her instead.

Lin Yixun closed her eyes and leaned back in the seat to rest. The journey from T City to the United States was long; she needed to rest well to face the unfamiliar environment ahead with composure.

Unconsciously, she fell asleep against the seat. In her hazy state, the surroundings changed, and she found herself on a beach. Under the nightshade, she couldn't see the color of the sea, but she could hear the waves and smell the salty sea breeze. Suddenly, countless firelights leaped from the opposite side of the bay, exploding into colorful lights in the night sky.

In the shimmering waves, Lin Yixun seemed to hear a man's voice from behind, "Lin Yixun, Happy New Year!"

Who was it? Whose voice was that?

She turned around to see the person's face, but it seemed as if a thin veil separated them. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't make out the person's appearance.

As she tried to get closer, the seat underneath her suddenly jolted. She woke up abruptly from her dream, looking around bewilderedly, and realized she was still on the plane.

So, it was all just a fleeting dream.

Soon, the plane stopped bumping and smoothly moved through the stratosphere. Although the ten-plus-hour journey wasn't very long, Lin Yixun's legs were slightly swollen when she got off the plane.

After passing through customs, Lin Yixun pulled her suitcase and walked alone down the wide corridor. She felt a bit lost, wondering how she would face this unfamiliar environment in the future.

At that moment, someone suddenly bumped into her shoulder. Her shoulder, which hadn't fully healed, must have reopened the scab from the impact. She winced in pain, while the culprit continued pushing his suitcase forward arrogantly, unaware.

Heh, bumping into her, at least he should apologize, right?

"Hey, stop right there!" Lin Yixun quickly caught up with the man.

The sudden voice behind made Ouyang Hao stop abruptly. This voice... how long had it been since he heard it?

His spine stiffened, every cell in his body trembled, yet he sadly realized he didn't dare to turn around. He feared it was just his imagination. He was afraid that if he turned around, there would still be nothing behind him.

But in Lin Yixun's eyes, this conveyed a different meaning. Was there something wrong with this person? She called out to him to stop but he didn't turn around. What, was he planning to argue?

She frowned, stepped around the man, and lifted her chin slightly, "Sir, you bumped into me. Shouldn't you apologize?"

But the man's response was even stranger to Lin Yixun. He kept staring at her face, as if trying to see through her, with an indescribable look.

Just as Lin Yixun was puzzled, the man suddenly stepped forward, wrapped an arm around her waist, and to Lin Yixun's shock, he took off her oversized sunglasses.

In that instant, the light in the man's eyes extinguished, replaced by endless pain and despair. He slowly released her, stepped back a few steps, and gave a bitter smile.

"It's not her, you're not her."

The timid girl wasn't like this. Her meek personality was nothing like this woman. This woman wasn't her. She wasn't her.

Not her? What's not her? Lin Yixun felt confused. Not her? What's the matter with this guy? Did something happen to his brain?

"You bumped into me earlier, and you haven't apologized yet," Lin Yixun persisted.

"Sorry, I mistook you for someone else."

"....." Lin Yixun wanted an apology, not for this reason.

Forget it, she had to report to Carnegie and had no time to fuss with this man. Since he had apologized, she decided to let it go.

However, what Lin Yixun didn't know was that the stylish, somewhat melancholic man before her was the one she had always dreamed of marrying. Nor did she know that sometimes, a random brush with a stranger might change a lifetime.

Chapter 464: He Thinks, Perhaps He Can Meet Her

Four years later...

In the conference room of the Leng Group Company's headquarters, the executives hung their heads low, like elementary school students who had made a mistake, silently listening to the reprimand from the big boss, Leng Yixiu.

"Can someone tell me what the hell is going on here?" Leng Yixiu threw the financial report onto the conference table, the coldness on his face even more chilling than the air conditioning in the room.

"What, no one is going to speak up? Do you think by staying silent, everything will be okay?" The man coldly swept his gaze over everyone present, finally landing on the third seat in the right row, "Manager Qi, you're in charge of software development, shouldn't you have an explanation for this?"

Being singled out by Leng Yixiu, Manager Qi instantly broke out in a cold sweat. Oh dear, why was he so unlucky? He slowly stood up from his seat, anxiously thinking of how he could explain himself to get through this hurdle and avoid being fired.

"What, cat got your tongue?" The man asked impatiently.

"President Leng... in my opinion, the reason our market share has declined this time is because of the rise of a new company."

"Are you talking about 'Lei Man'?"

"Yes, President Leng. As you know, although Lei Man has been around for less than three years and its scale cannot be compared to Leng's, before entering the Chinese market, Lei Man already had a good reputation in the United States. Several of their games achieved great success in the U.S." Manager Qi cautiously glanced at Leng Yixiu's expression, nervously swallowed, and continued, "Therefore, it is somewhat expected that Lei Man's entry into the Chinese market would impact our company's sales share. After all, as an industry insider, Lei Man's products do have considerable appeal."

The man narrowed his eyes dangerously and said coldly, "Manager Qi, are you saying that compared to Lei Man's products, our products are inferior and at a disadvantage?"

"This..."

Manager Qi was momentarily speechless. He couldn't openly admit that the company's products were inferior, especially since he was responsible for product development. Denying the company's products was equivalent to denying himself. If he dared to say yes, he would probably be kicked out of the company by the big boss immediately.

However, his silence seemed like an admission to Leng Yixiu. The man stared at him intensely, his gaze sharp and cold, making Manager Qi shiver. Just when he thought he was doomed, he heard the man speak in a deep voice.

"Manager Li, do you think collaborating with Lei Man would turn our company's current situation around?"

Manager Li froze, carefully choosing his words, "President Leng, I'm afraid Lei Man would not be willing to cooperate with us."

"Why?"

"Actually, I considered this plan a few days ago. After all, we are the leading company domestically and have more experience than Lei Man in many aspects. Collaborating with us would be more beneficial than detrimental to Lei Man. However, my investigation revealed that Lei Man had refused numerous cooperation requests from other companies back in the United States. The current CEO of Lei Man is quite a peculiar person who dislikes interacting with others and prefers working independently. Ordinarily, this kind of management style wouldn't last in the business world, but somehow, Lei Man has not only survived but also thrived over the past three years."

"Lei Man's current CEO?" The man frowned.

"Yes, her name is Shi Yi. She's reportedly a Chinese woman who graduated from Carnegie Mellon. Most of the core members of Lei Man's software development team are her friends from college, and their capabilities are not to be underestimated."

"Shi Yi? Carnegie Mellon?" The man tapped the table carelessly with his fingers, seemingly lost in thought. After a few seconds, he turned to Assistant Chen behind him, "I want all the information on her."

"Yes, boss."

The next morning, Assistant Chen sent all relevant information about Shi Yi to Leng Yixiu's email.

The man opened the email and quickly skimmed through the content, then coldly looked at Assistant Chen, "You've been investigating all day, and this is all you've found? Manager Li already mentioned this in the conference room. What use is this information to me?"

"Boss, Lei Man's CEO is quite low-key and rarely appears in public. I put in considerable effort, but this is all I could find."

Actually, Assistant Chen felt quite aggrieved. He had indeed searched extensively online and even asked people in the police department to investigate, but found that Lei Man's CEO seemed to have appeared out of nowhere. Information from four years ago was practically non-existent, and over the past four years, she rarely appeared in public. Therefore, after a whole day's effort, all he discovered was that she

graduated from Carnegie Mellon and is a woman, with no other useful information. Even the photos found were blurry.

The man gave Assistant Chen a cold look, seeing that he didn't seem to be lying. He didn't pursue the matter further and waved him off, "Alright, I understand. You can go now."

Originally, the slight decline in the company's quarterly sales had happened before, and with some adjustments and strengthened management, it shouldn't have been a big issue. Therefore, Leng Yixiu hadn't taken Lei Man, a small company, seriously.

However, after this incident, he became quite curious about Lei Man's CEO. What had caused her past to be almost a blank slate, and what had allowed Lei Man to rise so rapidly in just three years, becoming a formidable software development company?

He thought he might want to meet Lei Man's CEO.

...

After a long day's journey, Shi Yi finally endured until the plane landed. Looking at the distant view of the city through the window, Shi Yi's lips curved slightly.

T City, an internationally renowned metropolitan city.

In her memory, she had only stayed here for eight months, but for some reason, gazing at the entire city from the plane, she felt a strange sense of familiarity.

This time, she returned to negotiate an important deal. If successful, the company would reach a new milestone, providing considerable support for its listing in the United States.

"Dear passengers, the plane has safely arrived in T City. The surface temperature is 29 degrees. The plane will taxi for a while. Please remain seated, and be careful when retrieving your luggage..."

The in-flight broadcast announced. Shi Yi removed her headphones, unfastened her seatbelt, took her luggage from the overhead bin, and followed the crowd out of the cabin.

The airport terminal was bustling with people, but even in the crowded terminal, she remained the most noticeable figure.

Chapter 465: Who's Child Is This?

Her outfit leaned toward a Bohemian style: casual yet somewhat flamboyant. With her tall stature and fair skin, even though her small face was mostly covered by sunglasses, she still attracted countless stares wherever she went.

As soon as Shi Yi reached the airport exit, she was recognized by Chu Yan and Song Yi. Chu Yan excitedly waved her hand, "Shi Yi, over here!"

Four years had passed, but Chu Yan's personality hadn't changed a bit. Her emotions were always written on her face. Seeing Shi Yi walking toward them, Chu Yan nudged Song Yi, "Why aren't you hurrying to help Shi Yi with her luggage? Where did your gentlemanly manners go?"

Seeing this, Shi Yi couldn't help but chuckle. Over the past four years, many things had changed, but these two were still the same bickering pair. Song Yi was still completely under Chu Yan's thumb.

"It's so nice to have you back." Chu Yan linked her arm with Shi Yi's, scrutinizing her up and down with envy and jealousy, "How did you get even fairer after just a few months?"

"Really?"

"Really!" Chu Yan nodded heavily, muttering discontentedly, "Why do you get fairer every day without doing anything, while I pay constant attention and still look like a piece of charcoal."

"Well... maybe it's genetic."

"Genetic? Both my parents are so dark. Does that mean I'm beyond saving? Oh my god, how frustrating!" Chu Yan pinched her own face, then suddenly leaned close to Song Yi, "How about you get me some cosmetic surgery?"

"Cosmetic surgery? You?" Song Yi snorted, "Someone like you can't even be saved by plastic surgery."

Song Yi's words completely enraged Chu Yan. She rolled up her sleeves and immediately grabbed Song Yi's ear, "Can't be saved, huh? Tell me, why can't I be saved? Do you see me as so hopelessly ugly?"

"Ouch, mercy, madam! I was wrong, okay?"

Shi Yi, seeing this, couldn't stand it anymore. She leaned close to Chu Yan and whispered, "Let him go. This is a public place. Bullying a boy in front of everyone isn't very nice."

Only then did Chu Yan realize they were still in the airport. She reluctantly let go and glared fiercely at Song Yi, "I'll deal with you later."

Song Yi rubbed his nearly-torn ear, muttering under his breath, "Like a female bandit, no wonder she can't find a husband."

"Who's a female bandit, huh?" Chu Yan glared with wide eyes.

"Female bandit? Where's a female bandit?" Song Yi feigned ignorance, casually distanced himself from Chu Yan, and fled to the driver's seat.

The three hadn't seen each other in a long time. Naturally, Chu Yan had a lot to say to Shi Yi and chattered non-stop about the funny events that had happened recently around her.

After a long chat, Chu Yan finally got to the point and asked Shi Yi, "How long are you planning to stay in the country this time?"

"About a month. If everything goes smoothly, it should only be half a month."

"Are you still planning to stay at a hotel?"

"There's nothing wrong with staying at a hotel."

"I mean, you could actually stay with us at Yayuan. Besides, we've got a room especially reserved for you."

"Better not. The rent there is too expensive; I can't afford it."

The "rent" Shi Yi referred to wasn't literal rent, but the cost involved. Last time, she stayed in the basement of Feng Chengyu's villa for eight months and barely escaped with her life. If she were to stay in the guest room this time, she might not survive Feng Chengyu's German Shepherd.

"Actually, the boss isn't as bad as you think."

"I never said he was bad." Shi Yi shrugged innocently, "It's just that taking advantage of someone's hospitality comes with strings attached. I'm happier staying freely at a hotel."

"Alright then, I won't insist. We're treating you to dinner tonight. What do you want to eat? Song Yi's paying."

"Why me?" Song Yi protested, as Chu Yan always liked making grand gestures using others' money.

"You're the only man in the car. Who else should pay? Besides, you said I'm just a nanny. My monthly salary is less than your pocket change. Why shouldn't you pay? And Shi Yi is your friend too. Are you really okay with freeloading?"

"Fine, fine, I'll pay. No way I can argue with you." Song Yi was used to it and didn't mind much. He turned to Shi Yi with a smile, "What do you want to eat? Big brother is treating you to a feast tonight."

"How about Golden Leopard?" Chu Yan intended to take him for a ride.

"You've got some nerve." Song Yi gritted his teeth.

Shi Yi couldn't help smiling at their exchange. "Let's have hotpot. I've had enough Western food abroad. I just want something spicy."

Since Shi Yi had spoken, Chu Yan didn't argue. After all, she had just returned and they should cater to her wishes. She figured she could take advantage of Song Yi another time.

The car exited the overpass, entered the city, and finally pulled into a shopping center in the downtown area. There's a famous hotpot restaurant there, and even on weekdays, it was packed. Fortunately, they were lucky to find an empty table when they arrived.

"I tell you, the hotpot at this place is amazing. I guarantee that once you try it, you'll be hooked." Chu Yan said while grabbing the menu from the waiter.

Chu Yan wasn't exaggerating. By the end of the meal, Shi Yi was thoroughly satisfied. She had a heavy palate, and after four years abroad, she still couldn't get used to sandwiches and burgers. Now that she was back, she naturally took the opportunity to indulge.

Feeling full, Shi Yi decided to take a stroll around to digest. Her hotel was just a 20-minute walk from the shopping center.

"It's getting late. You guys should head back. No need to wait for me."

"Are you sure you're okay by yourself?"

"You think there's a problem? I've been abroad for so many years. If I was fine there, I'll certainly be fine here." The security in China is way better than in the United States.

In the United States, Shi Yi didn't dare walk the streets alone at night because you never knew what could happen next. One moment, a Black man might point a gun at your temple, demanding all your cash and valuables.

Chu Yan thought about the one-and-a-half-hour drive back to the villa from the shopping center and decided not to insist, "Just be careful. Call me if you need anything."

"Will do. Don't worry. See you!"

Shi Yi waved goodbye to them and soon disappeared into the crowd. She followed the directions on her phone's map, slowly making her way to the hotel.

On her way to the hotel, she passed through a plaza. The large plaza was surrounded by European-style buildings, and at its center was a massive fountain that erupted into various shapes to the music every hour.

As Shi Yi walked past the fountain, it happened to stop. The music ceased, and everything quieted down. But just then, a child's cry broke the silence.

Shi Yi looked toward the sound and saw a little girl, about three or four years old, standing by the fountain. The child looked around helplessly as she cried, seemingly lost.

Shi Yi frowned. Whose child is this?