

Mr Han 1621

Chapter 1621: Support

When Han Zhuofeng read this part, he became really curious. Everyone's posting it tonight?

Right after that, one of the comments caught his eye.

"Hahaha, to those who said that Shi Xiaoya was making things up, I feel like First Young Master Han seems more like the one making things up now?"

So, it was because Han Zhuoling had previously followed Shi Xiaoya.

Hence, quite a lot of Shi Xiaoya's fans also went to follow Han Zhuoling.

They secretly ate this couple candy[1].

Hence, when they saw that Han Zhuoling also posted such a Weibo post, Shi Xiaoya's fans gave a rallying call under the comments section of her post, so the rest of her fans who had never followed him before swarmed over as well.

"What the f*ck, it's too sweet."

"The person above, be careful. Don't let Han Zhuoling's solo stans see that and come over to bash Xiaoya and say she's making things up."

"It's still unclear who's the one making things up now. Xiaoya first posted this, then Han Zhuoling followed suit. I'm gonna eat this couple candy."

Indeed, there were some fans of Han Zhuoling who were unhappy.

"Shi Xiaoya's fans, can you guys hold up for a bit. Don't grab at every chance to cling on, please?"

"Exactly. She's the one who posted it first, alright, but so many other people posted before Young Master Ling did. Why do you guys have to cling on to Young Master Ling? Can't you invest your affections on someone else?"

"Haha, didn't Young Master Ling simply follow her? You all started dreaming already and kept shipping Young Master Ling as your OTP. We are not shipping them, no thanks bye."

"Shi Xiaoya and those fans, stop thinking too much. If you really want to think too much, do it in your own territories, thanks. At least what we don't see can't hurt us."

He finally found the origin at last. Han Zhuofeng went to Shi Xiaoya's Weibo homepage straight away.

After he saw it, he understood. No wonder Han Zhuoling would suddenly upload such a Weibo post.

He probably wanted to support Shi Xiaoya.

Han Zhuoling had just finished eating and had not had time to see these comments.

Han Zhuofeng could not stand it any longer and asked him, "Big Brother, you uploaded this Weibo post to support Shi Xiaoya, right?"

Han Zhuoling threw a glance at him but did not reply.

What was there to not understand for Han Zhuofeng?

If it was not true, Han Zhuoling would have denied it upfront.

But since he was not saying anything now, it meant he was admitting it.

Lin Liye's pitch went up as she went "ehhh." She immediately turned to look at Han Zhuoling and said, "You even feel bad for her now?"

Lin Liye wiggled her fingers, wanting to send the latest news to Old Mrs. Han.

"Big Brother, not only did you not manage to help Shi Xiaoya, you actually got her into trouble. She got scolded a great deal by your fans," Han Zhuofeng said.

Han Zhuoling frowned. He quickly picked up his phone to look.

Han Zhuofeng laughed. He was still pretending to be cool about it before. If you're that capable, continue pretending!

Han Zhuoling understood with one glance.

He happened to see one of Shi Xiaoya's fans say, "Everyone, go home. Some people just can't take a joke. You really know how to stir controversy for your idol. Let's go back and play among ourselves, lest we attract more controversy for Xiaoya."

"Let's go. If you're Xiaoya's true fan, you should all go back. Don't let those people with untoward intentions disguise themselves among us."

"Right. Xiaoya has quite a few competitors, and some of them are quite despicable. I won't name who, lest it stirs controversy for Xiaoya again. But it won't be the first time the other party has hired paid posters to disguise as fans to stir controversy for Xiaoya. I don't believe true fans would be so enthusiastic to go to other people's comments to start shipping OTP. Most of us just close our doors and play among ourselves."

"I agree with the person above. We've already said this much. If there are still people who continue dragging Xiaoya into this, we have to think carefully about who hired these paid posters to come and be fake fans."

Chapter 1622: Slap in the Face

Han Zhuoling frowned as he browsed through the comments and even scrolled up to see earlier comments.

Paid posters might indeed be a possibility.

Especially Shi Xiaoya's corporate rivals.

In every industry and line of work nowadays, there would always be people who could not sit quietly.

Han Zhuoling thought even further than these netizens.

If there were really paid posters among these people, they would not just be among Shi Xiaoya's fans. There would surely be some of them among his own fans.

They pretended to be his fans and vilified Shi Xiaoya thereafter.

But it would really not be easy to find them if he wanted to.

Once they had set off a trend, even real fans would go along with them.

Han Zhuoling stood up and went to the balcony. He called Tong Chunian and said, "Go and check who among Shi Xiaoya's rivals have the strongest competition with her. Find out who hired paid posters to deal with her before and if that person had contacted paid posters recently."

"Understood." Tong Chunian immediately went to check.

Han Zhuoling stared at Weibo moodily.

He originally could not stand that other people were supporting Shi Xiaoya so fervently, so he also posted a similar post.

Yet he did not expect that it would bring Shi Xiaoya trouble instead, bringing on a more negative impact on her.

Han Zhuoling minced his lips tightly. He picked out a few netizens from the comments section who were the most active and who scolded her most ardently.

He noted them down. These people might not definitely be paid posters, but there was a very high possibility that they were.

Especially the one that had the strongest influence in swaying the overall sentiment.

Afterward, Han Zhuoling deleted that Weibo post.

Instantly, many fans went over to Shi Xiaoya's comments to mock her. "Hahaha, how is it? You got slapped in the face, right? Seeing that you're trying to make things up, Han Zhuoling just deleted his Weibo post as he simply does not want to be an OTP with you."

"How embarrassing. Quickly manage your fans, stop letting them embarrass themselves."

"The faces of those who cling on to others are really so ugly."

"Are you guys done? We were just kidding and making a joke out of it. You guys even came over to scold people here. What kind of manners is that!"

"Haha, those who came to mock Xiaoya, quick, go back to your hubby's Weibo and take a good look. Come back and continue mocking after you're done looking."

Han Zhuoling's fans went back to take a look in confusion.

Once they saw it, great. Han Zhuoling had indeed deleted the previous post.

But he reposted the same post once again.

No, it's not exactly the same post. This time, Han Zhuoling had changed the caption.

“Thanks, @Shi Xiaoya, for teaching me the new eating trend online.”

Below it was still the same photo he had posted earlier on.

Han Zhuoling’s intentions were as clear as day now.

Previously, he’d only posted this photo, so a huge bunch of people said that it was Shi Xiaoya’s fans who were thinking too much and even said that Shi Xiaoya was shamelessly trying to make things up.

He then deleted the photo, and those people became even more arrogant and said that Shi Xiaoya got a slap in the face.

Looking at it now, who exactly was the one being slapped?

The first time he posted the photo, it was arguably because of Shi Xiaoya.

Afterward, when he saw that Shi Xiaoya had been misunderstood and vilified, he then deleted the photo, but not because he wanted to draw a clear line between him and Shi Xiaoya.

Han Zhuoling reposted the post immediately when those people went over to Shi Xiaoya’s account to mock Shi Xiaoya again.

To avoid any misunderstanding this time, he even directly tagged Shi Xiaoya to shut those naysayers who were scolding Shi Xiaoya up.

“Oh my goodness. What’s going on?”

“Han Zhuoling is obviously helping Shi Xiaoya here.”

“Shi Xiaoya is the only female he follows, and now he even especially uploaded a post that he had never posted before on Weibo because Shi Xiaoya had been misunderstood. Could it be that Han Zhuoling really likes Shi Xiaoya?”

“I don’t care about those haters. Anyway, I am shipping this couple.”

“I don’t understand how some people think. Even if Han Zhuoling doesn’t like Shi Xiaoya and doesn’t want to get together with her, it’s none of your business. Look how anxious those people are and how they keep on bashing her like there’s no tomorrow. They’re such a joke.”

Chapter 1623: Sweet Secret Joy

When he saw that the discussion in the comments finally took a turn in another direction, Han Zhuoling finally became a little more pleased.

Han Zhuoling had made such a post, and seeing that everyone was already guessing that they were a couple, Han Zhuoling still refused to come out and clarify things.

The netizens would not believe that he did not see these comments. He had clearly deleted the previous post because he saw the netizens’ comments.

He must be quietly staring at his phone screen now.

When they saw that he still did not express anything, they wondered, what exactly was his relationship to Shi Xiaoya, then?

And all these, Shi Xiaoya did not know about. She had long fallen asleep.

On the other hand, Shi Nancang saw it. He thought to himself, “What is going on with Han Zhuoling?”

He had no way of asking Han Zhuoling. One reason was that he did not have Han Zhuoling’s contact, and another reason was that he was really not well-acquainted with Han Zhuoling. They just exchanged small talk outside the lift today—aside from that, they had no other connections with each other.

Shi Nancang was panicking right now. He wanted to give Shi Xiaoya a call, but it was so late now, he was afraid that she would be asleep.

But without an answer, Shi Nancang kept tossing and turning and could not sleep.

In the end, he still decided to give Shi Xiaoya a call.

The phone rang for a long time before Shi Xiaoya drowsily woke up. In the darkness, the light from her phone screen was extra bright and piercing.

Shi Xiaoya squinted and took a while before she adjusted her eyes to see that the call was from Shi Nancang.

She answered it. “Big Brother, what’s the matter?”

Hearing her voice, Shi Nancang asked, “You were sleeping already?”

“Yeah, I fell asleep not too long ago.” Shi Xiaoya turned on the table lamp by the bedside and sat up. “What is it?”

Shi Nancang thought to himself that since he had already woken Shi Xiaoya up, he would just cut straight to the point, so he directly asked her, “Are you very close to Han Zhuoling?”

Shi Xiaoya instantly became wide awake. “Why do you suddenly ask about this? That’s so weird.”

Shi Nancang said, “Aren’t there a lot of netizens that are shipping you and Han Zhuoling together on your latest Weibo post? There are even people who said you did it on purpose. I couldn’t stand it, so I asked a few friends to post along with you.”

Shi Xiaoya did not expect there to be such a thing.

Shi Nancang continued, “I didn’t expect that not long after, Han Zhuoling would also make a similar Weibo post. On the first post he uploaded, his fans and yours got into an argument. One camp supports you and Han Zhuoling as a couple.”

Shi Nancang paused for a moment. Why did it feel awkward to say that his own younger sister and another man were being shipped as a couple?

“Another bunch of people are saying you deliberately did it to make things up. Yet not long after, Han Zhuoling deleted that Weibo post. The people who said you were making things up became even more

aggressive about it and even went over to your post to comment nasty things.” Shi Nancang frowned. “Even I thought that Han Zhuoling deleted the Weibo post to avoid controversy.”

When Shi Xiaoya heard that, she had a strange intuition that Han Zhuoling probably had not done it because of that.

Indeed, she heard Shi Nancang say, “Yet not long after those people jeered under your post, Han Zhuoling reposted the post he’d deleted, but he especially tagged you that time around. It’s evident that he saw that you got misunderstood earlier on so he decided to just delete and repost so that he could shut those people up.”

Shi Xiaoya did not expect that there would be so many developments after she went to sleep.

She as the person directly involved had already fallen asleep, yet those people could still make such a big fuss.

However, even though she did not see it with her own eyes, just from hearing Shi Nancang say it, Shi Xiaoya’s heart still could not help but feel a sweet secret joy deep down.

She did not know what Han Zhuoling was really thinking, but he probably did this to protect her, right?

Shi Xiaoya could not help but picture Han Zhuoling’s face in her mind, and in it, he was smiling.

Chapter 1624: Things Are Not So Simple

Suddenly, even the faint smile that flashed across his face became unusually clear at this moment, making his expression seem exceptionally gentle.

Shi Xiaoya’s face heated up. “Then... I really have to thank Young Master Ling this time.”

“Are you very close to him?” Shi Nancang asked astutely.

“Nope,” Shi Xiaoya quickly added. She was really afraid that if she said the word “close,” Shi Nancang would just bulldoze his way to the Han Corporation.

“I don’t know why Young Master Ling would post this either, but I’m still really grateful to him.” Shi Xiaoya laughed awkwardly.

“You guys are not close but he’s so actively helping you? Then I’m very curious now.” Shi Nancang was confused. “He doesn’t seem like such a helpful and kind person. At most, he would just publicize new productions by the Han Corporation or things like that. I’ve never seen him tagging anyone individually before.”

“Could it be... could it be because I’m part of the Han Corporation?” Shi Xiaoya braced herself and made some random guesses. “If netizens say that I’m trying to make things up with him, it won’t be anything good for me or him, and it might sound bad if word were to spread, that’s why he came out to post. Also...”

Shi Xiaoya thought of Survivor and that Han Zhuoling was participating in it. Shi Nancang would know about it sooner or later.

So she said, “Didn’t I go on Survivor to follow the production team as a makeup artist? I heard that Young Master Ling is one of the guests, just that he won’t be going every episode. But no matter what, both of us will still be in the same show. If there were to be something negative, it would affect the show too. The Han Corporation invested a huge sum in Survivor this time.”

“Is that it?” Shi Nancang was managing the big family enterprise of the Shi family himself, after all. It would not be that easy to lie to him. He just felt that there was something off about what Shi Xiaoya said.

But he did not have anything to rebut her with at the moment. After all, he was not close to Han Zhuoling.

It was already so late, so he did not continue pestering Shi Xiaoya to ask about other things.

Anyway, judging from her disposition, he probably would not be able to get anything out of Shi Xiaoya.

Shi Nancang was still pent up with suspicion, but he ended the call.

He felt even more strongly that things were not so simple!

Shi Nancang stroked his chin and thought about it.

Meanwhile, Shi Xiaoya could no longer sleep because of Shi Nancang’s call.

She opened Weibo and went to Han Zhuoling’s homepage.

She could not see the post that Han Zhuoling uploaded previously. She could only see Han Zhuoling’s latest post.

The last post before this which Han Zhuoling had made was actually a reshare of the first round of publicity for the show, Survivor. It had been a while since then.

When she scrolled further to see earlier posts, she saw he had also reshared different kinds of publicity posts. He had not written anything himself previously, let alone made any posts about his daily life.

Looking at Han Zhuoling’s Weibo, she saw there were no selfies, and nothing about his daily life, so there was nothing to gossip about.

Yet he still had so many fans, who waited through days and nights just to see him reshare an official post.

Looking down this row of posts, she saw that the post that had just been posted tonight instantly appeared unusually prominently, just like how prominent she was, being the only person of the opposite sex among a string of males in Han Zhuoling’s low, double-digit “following” count.

No wonder the fans’ reactions were so huge.

Seeing how he’d specially tagged her gave her a strange feeling of intimacy, even though he clearly did not say anything ambiguous or vaguely romantic.

Shi Xiaoya’s cheeks flushed red and were even redder than any blusher that was out there.

When she opened up the comments, she found that there were still a small handful of people who were saying that it was Shi Xiaoya who was latching on to Han Zhuoling to increase her popularity.

However, such comments no longer won the support of most people and were very quickly attacked and brought down by others.

The rest were all fans who had decided to ship them as their OTP.

Shi Xiaoya's fans were the happiest here. Han Zhuoling's fans were basically split into two camps.

Chapter 1625: Han Zhuoling Called Early in the Morning

One camp was the bystander type who just wanted to watch the drama unfold and join in the fun.

Meanwhile, the other camp was pretty interesting. They did not say that Shi Xiaoya was trying hard to form an OTP with Han Zhuoling but just kept crying that they were about to lose another husband.

They made comments such as:

“Originally, when Han Zhuoli said he had a fiancée, I still did not believe it and told myself that there's a chance they might break up. In the end, Han Zhuoli got married. I could only become an ex-wife in silence and come into Han Zhuoling's arms. Yet now, you're telling me Han Zhuoling is going to leave singlehood? Return my husband to me!”

Shi Xiaoya pinched her cheeks, which were burning ridiculously hot.

These people really... really liked to crack jokes hahaha.

Yet, Shi Xiaoya still could not help but stare at Han Zhuoling's Weibo post and could not take her eyes off of it.

Those words were clearly so ordinary, yet her heart just kept beating faster and faster when she looked at it.

Seeing her name being mentioned specifically by him just gave a very different feeling.

After scrolling through the sparse few Weibo posts that he had posted before, she saw she had never individually tagged anyone.

Previously, she did not care about anything after she'd gone to sleep. Usually for this kind of thing, she could not be bothered to care about it. What you don't see won't hurt you.

But now, when she saw Han Zhuoling post that, she went to see other things and noticed that Shi Nancang's good friends had already posted similar posts before Han Zhuoling did.

Originally because of their involvement, her and Han Zhuoling's issue had already been weakened.

It was because Han Zhuoling suddenly made that post that the popularity of those comments got bumped up again.

What Shi Xiaoya did not really understand was, if Han Zhuoling wanted to help her, there was clearly nothing going on already before that. Nothing would have happened even if he did not post anything.

Shi Xiaoya could finally bear to exit Weibo. Yet she opened WeChat and found her chat with Han Zhuoling. She had already opened it, but she did not type anything for a long while.

She wondered if Han Zhuoling went to sleep already at this time.

Even if he was not asleep, what could she say to him?

Ask him why he would make such a Weibo post?

How would she ask that?

Shi Xiaoya struggled for a long time. When she stared at the time, she saw that it was actually past 12 am, so she decided not to ask anymore.

After coming back from filming the show and the matter had died down, she probably would not feel as conflicted anymore.

Shi Xiaoya then put down her phone once again. Alas, she could not sleep for a long time afterward.

When she really fell asleep, who could say how late the time already was.

It was to the extent that the next morning when she had been awoken by the alarm set on her phone just a few minutes before 6 am, she instantly felt a deep sense of not having had enough sleep.

After washing her face and looking in the mirror, she got a shock as well.

The heavy dark eye circles and eye bags under her eyes made her look especially tired.

As she had to rush to catch her flight, Shi Xiaoya planned to find a random cafeteria to settle her breakfast after passing the security check at the airport.

She did not put on any makeup in the morning and just used a concealer to lightly conceal her dark eye circles.

When she was done packing, it was already 6:20 am.

Shi Xiaoya was about to call for a cab. She had just picked up her phone when a call came right at that moment.

When she looked at the screen, Han Zhuoling's name appeared.

In that instant, she recalled the matter she'd felt conflicted about last night.

Who knew Han Zhuoling would call early in the morning?

Shi Xiaoya's hands trembled slightly. She was already at the door. She steadied herself before picking up the phone.

"Young Master Ling?" Shi Xiaoya said.

Han Zhuoling was used to waking up early and did not have a morning temper. However, hearing Shi Xiaoya's voice early in the morning still lifted his spirits hugely nonetheless.

"It's me." Han Zhuoling's voice sounded just like it usually did, but for some reason, Shi Xiaoya seemed to sense some warmth from his tone, as if she could see Han Zhuoling calling her with a smile on his face.

Chapter 1626: I'm Downstairs

Shi Xiaoya hurriedly shook her head. How could that be?

"What's the matter, Young Master Ling?" Shi Xiaoya asked.

She held her phone in one hand and so couldn't carry the two suitcases at the door at the same time, so she could only finish the conversation first.

"Are you ready? Are you out of your house yet?" Han Zhuoling asked knowingly.

He was downstairs currently, arriving half an hour earlier specifically to wait for her.

He remembered her saying she was departing at 6:30, and seeing that she hadn't appeared within the 30 minutes he'd waited, he knew that she hadn't left yet and called.

"I'm about to leave," Shi Xiaoya said, "and was booking a cab when you called."

Han Zhuoling chuckled. "No need to book a taxi anymore. Come on down, I'm downstairs."

Shi Xiaoya nearly dropped her phone in surprise, scrambling to hold it once more. "W-What?"

"I said, I'm waiting for you downstairs," Han Zhuoling patiently repeated.

If others behaved in a dazed and foolish manner like she did, Han Zhuoling would think that there's something wrong with their IQ for failing to comprehend a simple sentence.

But because the other party was Shi Xiaoya, Han Zhuoling actually felt that she was cute.

Her slow and dazed reaction became adorable.

He knew from her reaction that his arrival was completely unexpected.

Han Zhuoling said with warmth, "I'm here now, you can come down anytime. No hurry if you're not ready yet. Think on whether you've missed anything before you go."

"I'm going down now," Shi Xiaoya replied immediately, "I've brought everything, shouldn't have left out anything else."

"Phone, wallet, ID. The most important things of all," Han Zhuoling said.

Shi Xiaoya quickly searched her bag and confirmed, "Yep."

"Umbrella and raincoat?" Han Zhuoling reminded her further. "You're following them around, and if it rains or snows, it'd be inconvenient holding an umbrella. A raincoat is better."

"Brought those too." Shi Xiaoya nodded.

"Alright, then, come on down." Han Zhuoling gave a soft laugh, and it was so quick Shi Xiaoya almost suspected she had imagined it.

She then heard Han Zhuoling continue, "It's fine even if you really forgot anything. Just get someone to send it to you."

Hanging up, Shi Xiaoya put her phone away and dragged her suitcases out.

She exited the lift and spotted Han Zhuoling's Phantom parked outside the door through the glass.

Nearing the door, she saw Han Zhuoling getting out of the car.

Because she was always nervous facing Han Zhuoling, she'd never observed him carefully before.

Now looking at him through the glass door, Shi Xiaoya noted how his tall and lean body was attractive no matter how she looked at it.

When they were filming at the island next to Nanhai City, he'd worn a simple short-sleeved T-shirt. She couldn't see what the shirt covered, but his exposed arms were firm with muscles, which were aesthetically pleasing and not scary and intimidating.

The lines on his arms were well-defined, like those on actors who especially worked out to look good on camera.

Shi Xiaoya even wondered then if the abs under the shirt were also that well sculpted.

If it was, what did they look like?

But he was donning a suit now, and he looked lean—broad-shouldered, slim-waisted, and long-legged, he looked as if he'd walked out of a picture, attracting all eyes to his perfect form.

Shi Xiaoya had seen her fair share of models, but none of them compared to Han Zhuoling.

Chapter 1627: On the Way

She actually lost sense of her surroundings with her intense gaze on Han Zhuoling.

She failed to notice even when Han Zhuoling was just outside the glass door.

Han Zhuoling looked amusedly at her in a trance-like state.

Who knew what she was actually thinking to just suddenly go out of focus like this?

How did this silly girl manage to avoid all the traps laid by her competitors?

Seeing that Shi Xiaoya still hadn't moved, Han Zhuoling rapped on the glass door.

Shi Xiaoya finally jerked out of her trance.

Han Zhuoling looked resignedly at her, saying, "Open the door, or I can't get in."

Shi Xiaoya quickly opened the door, embarrassment rolling off her in waves.

Han Zhuoling took the two suitcases.

Shi Xiaoya hurriedly helped him open the door and followed him out. "Let me hold one."

"No need," Han Zhuoling said plainly as he reached his car.

Opening up the trunk, he placed Shi Xiaoya's luggage inside. "Get in."

Shi Xiaoya replied "Kay" and went dutifully to the shotgun seat.

Not long after, Han Zhuoling came back.

He drove off after putting on his seat belt.

In her nervousness, Shi Xiaoya clenched tightly at her seatbelt. "Young Master Ling, why are you here?"

"I'm going to the company, and you have to set off at 6:30, so I'm sending you. It's on the way," Han Zhuoling explained.

He had to pass by her house on the way to the Han Corporation.

She chose this place not only because of safety but also because it was near the Han Corporation and her studio.

"Thanks for sending me." Shi Xiaoya did not forget that though her house was near the Han Corporation, it was far from the airport.

It was a long way for Han Zhuoling to give her a lift to the airport before going to the company.

Han Zhuoling typically woke at 5 am and arrived at the company by 6 to start his day, far earlier than the other employees.

That was because it wasn't peak hour and he could finish more work in the time saved from a jam.

And now, Han Zhuoling was actually willing to sacrifice his precious work time by going a long way, all for Shi Xiaoya.

Since Han Zhuoling had already explained, Shi Xiaoya let it go and didn't persist in her questioning.

Both of them were clear as to whether it was near or not.

"Sorry, I posted a Weibo and caused trouble for you," Han Zhuoling suddenly said, breaking the silence.

Shi Xiaoya looked questioningly at him and Han Zhuoling said, "You were asleep by then?"

"Mm." Shi Xiaoya nodded guiltily, embarrassed to say that she woke up after that and looked at the post for a long time.

But she did miss it when Han Zhuoling first posted.

"I saw your latest post," Shi Xiaoya said frankly, "not the one you deleted before."

Han Zhuoling explained, "Because of me, the netizens were rude to you and said nasty things. I was sorry for that and wanted to post one as well, but who knew there were still others who could stir things up."

Han Zhuoling tightened his lips. "So I deleted and reposted. But ultimately, I brought some negative impact on you."

Shi Xiaoya smiled kindly. "It's nothing. I discovered some malicious comments after posting and I didn't care about them. It doesn't matter what they say, it has nothing to do with me and doesn't affect me. I only learned after that my brother had asked his friends to support me, and then noticed your post. Thanks a lot."

"It didn't help you much," Han Zhuoling said. "But I've asked them to check, and the ones who were making trouble in our comment sections were paid commenters."

Chapter 1628: You're Still Young

Shi Xiaoya's eyes widened momentarily.

"You don't seem surprised." Han Zhuoling glanced at her while driving.

He smirked slightly at Shi Xiaoya's indifference.

"It's not like I haven't experienced this before. Competition's rife ever since I started in the industry. Clients used to be the ones doing the picking, not me. Even doing makeup for a C-list celebrity was a rare opportunity for me, what more an award-winning actress." Shi Xiaoya was rather cool when speaking of the past.

Since these things were over and done with.

"There was this time when we were competing to be part of a movie production crew a couple of years back. It was 'Son of Heaven' directed by Li Mingguan, and his movies were hard to come by. Moreover, Gao Zishan, Dong Qinrong, and two other award-winning actors were in the cast too. Another makeup artist and I were fighting for the chance, and we were both recommended by two different senior celebrities. But the most the veteran actors did was put in a couple of good words for me, and I worked hard for the rest of it."

Shi Xiaoya smiled wryly. "So I was dragged through the mud plenty back then. That was the first time I knew that one could employ paid commenters to fight your opponents and increase your chances of winning."

"I remember you entered the team eventually?" Han Zhuoling asked.

He didn't know who her opponent then was, but if he recalled correctly, Shi Xiaoya had made a name for herself because of that movie.

She got nominated for the Best Makeup Award in the Huayi Awards, but because she was new, she lost to another veteran in the industry.

Many awards within the country were like this. They focused on your status, connections, power, and experience. Capability was ranked last.

He didn't pay much attention then, only knowing that Shi Xiaoya got nominated but never won.

"Yep." Shi Xiaoya nodded. "People were criticizing me every day, and I didn't have a good mentality like I do now. Plus, I didn't know that they were paid commenters, so I was pretty miserable. Especially stressed too, and I'd hide at home when I'm not working and cut contact with the outside world. Rather than unwilling, I'd say that I was afraid."

At that time, the paid commenters were saying the worst things one could think of.

That she sold her body for the position, that she was having an ambiguous relationship with her mentor Liu Jingping, or that she had a messy private life, making use of male stars to get makeup opportunities, or that she was mediocre at doing makeup but excellent in bed, etc., etc.

And many believed these slanders back then.

“Qin Zigou pressured Weibo and got these topics deleted. My brother went to investigate who the culprit was, and my mentor personally went to talk to the production crew before I finally succeeded in getting in,” Shi Xiaoya said sadly. “But I never felt like I won.

“I was rather depressed back then, thinking that I was useless. I didn’t have the ability and ended up depending on my friend, my brother, and my mentor for me to succeed. If I’d depended on my own abilities, I would’ve failed miserably.”

“You wouldn’t have.” Han Zhuoling tapped lightly on the steering wheel. “If you didn’t have the skill, you wouldn’t have made a name for yourself even if you were forced onto the production team. You’re still young back then.”

Han Zhuoling paused and realized that that was so.

Chapter 1629: Waiting for You Here

Shi Xiaoya wasn’t that old now, and she certainly had been even younger before she made her name.

Shi Xiaoya was only 24 now, and 22 two years back, fresh out of graduation.

Han Zhuoling suddenly felt gloomy. Shi Xiaoya was actually this young.

A young lass just out of school wasn’t experienced with the ways of the world, unprepared for the malicious attacks.

It was natural for her to be helpless for her first of such an experience.

“You were young and inexperienced before, and it’s normal for you to be clueless in dealing with such ploys. If the other party had the same opportunities as you did, she wouldn’t be feeling disappointed or think she won using underhanded means,” Han Zhuoling said. “No matter which industry you’re in, having connections is a form of ability.

“What’s more, you had the chance and you didn’t waste it, nor did you ruin your mentor’s reputation.” Han Zhuoling continued, “You seized the chance and proved your worth. You proved that your mentor’s right in his recommendation and you lived up to his teachings.”

Shi Xiaoya never expected Han Zhuoling to be so adept at consoling people.

Although she understood the reasoning after her career started taking off, she was glad to hear Han Zhuoling say this.

It was as if she got recognition and affirmation.

Different from others’ affirmation, it seemed especially convincing coming from Han Zhuoling’s mouth.

Han Zhuoling's words were as powerful as internationally recognized certifications for other things.

"Yep, I understand it now," Shi Xiaoya replied. "No matter how I joined the production team back then, why couldn't I use my connections to defeat her when she dared to use underhanded means to slander my name? We're just doing what we do best. Fighting dirty was her expertise, and using connections is mine.

"Moreover, I used my abilities to prove that I lived up to my name and my teacher's recommendation. I didn't embarrass him. If it were someone else, he or she might not even have been better than me," Shi Xiaoya said confidently.

When they encountered a red light, Han Zhuoling couldn't help turn to stare at Shi Xiaoya's serious and confident look.

And couldn't bear to turn his gaze away.

When the traffic light turned green and Han Zhuoling refocused on driving, Shi Xiaoya then said, "It's because of this previous experience that I wasn't affected looking at those nasty comments and could spot who was stirring up trouble there. I won't be troubled if I ignored those comments, and life still goes on."

Han Zhuoling smiled, saying, "The competitor who employed paid commenters to slander you, was it Yuan Yina?"

Shi Xiaoya looked at him in surprise. "How'd you know that?"

"I suspected someone's using paid commenters to slander you, so I got people to investigate your competitors, see who used a similar method to attack you and who contacted those commenters," Han Zhuoling spilled. "And there was only one person, Yuan Yina. You don't have many competitors now, and there's only Yuan Yina who's set on you. Since she employed internet trolls before, it isn't impossible for her to repeat her antics.

"And so I checked if she has contacted any companies before. Lu Man's well established in this area," Han Zhuoling explained, "and it's revealed soon that Yuan Yina did contact a company recently, employing a huge number of internet trolls. She was probably waiting for you here."

Chapter 1630: We'll Settle It When You Come Back

Shi Xiaoya remained calm after hearing it.

She trusted the results of Han Zhuoling's investigation, but she didn't know what went on in Yuan Yina's mind.

"I don't know about us competing. We've had nothing to compete over recently. The only one related would be Survivor, but there's nothing to fight over there too. It's not like I replaced her."

"That's what you think, but not her." Han Zhuoling tapped lightly on the steering wheel. "You both joined Survivor's production team at the same time, yet she's ousted in that manner. She's embarrassed. There's actually a total of six makeup artists, and she's the only one made to leave. So even if she wanted to begrudge someone, she couldn't place the blame on you solely. But because you both were at loggerheads before, she's always treated you as the enemy. She's blinded to everyone else

and only knew that she lost to you, got hugely embarrassed in front of you, and felt she made a fool of herself in front of you. Perhaps she thinks you're mocking her behind her back, and she's nursing a grudge. Such scenarios are all plausible when it comes to such a narrow-minded person."

Han Zhuoling paused and sighed. "Now that I mentioned it, that's my fault again. I kicked her out of the production team and asked you to do my makeup back then. It might be this that caused her to hate on you even more."

"This isn't your fault," Shi Xiaoya muttered. "She's the one harboring those despicable thoughts, trying to..."

Shi Xiaoya couldn't bring herself to utter the word "seduce" and swallowed it back.

Han Zhuoling laughed, not asking what it was she meant to say. Shi Xiaoya did what she needed to do, and it didn't clash with what he did.

Lu Man was busy preparing for the competition, and he didn't wish to disturb her at this time.

Though she would definitely help him if he asked her to.

But Han Zhuoling felt it was better to let Lu Man concentrate on her preparations, considering instead to approach Wei Zilin back at the company after he'd sent Shi Xiaoya off.

As he was a "god-like" public relations handler on par with Lu Man, it'd be a waste to not employ Wei Zilin's help.

Han Zhuoling parked at the parking lot after arriving at the airport.

Just as he turned off the engine, Shi Xiaoya facepalmed. "Oof, I forgot to bring your ties when you called me just now!"

Shi Xiaoya was dismayed. It was fine if she was already outside before that.

But she picked up Han Zhuoling's call at home and could've brought the ties along after that.

Even if she met him after she left, she could've gone up again to retrieve them.

And she completely forgot about it.

Han Zhuoling's lips quirked at seeing her frustrated expression, feeling especially good. "It's alright, we'll settle it when you get back."

Shi Xiaoya could only agree.

She unbuckled her seat belt and smiled at Han Zhuoling. "Thanks for sending me!"

The airport was so faraway. He was wasting so much time travelling back and forth.

Han Zhuoling smiled without saying a thing, got out of his car, and retrieved Shi Xiaoya's luggage from the trunk. He then locked his car and walked towards the airport.

Shi Xiaoya chased after him in surprise. "Young Master Ling, I—"

She wanted to say that she could pull her own luggage.

Han Zhuoling gave her a glance. "I'll send you there."

Shi Xiaoya's cheeks flushed, trotting dutifully beside Han Zhuoling before suggesting that she pull her own luggage.

Even if just the small one.

But Han Zhuoling refused.

Because Man City was cold and Shi Xiaoya had not been there before, Shi Xiaoya had quite a number of bags, which was also to accommodate the extra items Shi Nancang had bought for her.