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*Chapter 172: Sudden Danger*

A notification from her phone snapped Samantha back to her senses.

She looked at the screen and saw a WeTalk message from Harmony.

[Ignore whatever those netizens say on Waybo. Your strength is obvious for all to see. I did make a mistake, so I fully accept the results of this round. I'll just continue to do my best in future rounds. The competition may be important, but I think it's equally as important to maintain such a good friendship. I hope the comments on the internet won't affect our relationship.]

After reading that, Samantha had to admit that—if nothing else—Harmony had a very high emotional quotient.

It was difficult to get a bad impression of her when she spoke on Samantha's behalf on Waybo and even expressed her goodwill privately through WeTalk.

In that case, Samantha would appear petty if she felt any further dissatisfaction.

Samantha thought for a moment and replied: [Yeah, let's do our best in the competition.]

Harmony returned a smiling emoji in seconds.

Samantha did not reply and considered the matter settled.

...

The second round started five days later.

At nine o'clock in the morning, the seven contestants who made it through gathered in the studio. After Walter did a headcount, the three judges assumed their places.

The rules were announced on the spot, just like the previous round. One of the judges stood up to face the crowd, but as soon as he cleared his voice and prepared to speak, he heard a commotion outside the door.

Everyone exchanged glances and was taken aback. Everyone wanted to know what happened.

The judges' stopped and looked at Walter, "Did something happen, Walter? Would you like to go out and have a look?"

Such noises were not permitted during any broadcasts and recordings done within a TV station!

Walter nodded. "I'll head out and have a look."

A staff member barged in all of a sudden as soon as Walter finished his sentence. There was a look of anxiety and panic on the man's face. "Things aren't looking good, Mr. Schuck. A madman forced his way into the station and he's at studio one right now. Some people have been held hostage and the situation is extremely dire. He asked for a reporter or an anchor, but there's a convention today and all our reporting staff is now out on duty. I can't contact anyone now. Do you have anyone here?"

"What..." Walter was shocked to hear a madman coming in.

Similar incidents had recently been reported but Walter never expected it to happen before his eyes.

As someone who had gone through enough stormy situations, Walter forced himself to calm down and replied, "I don't have anyone on my end. I'll make a call to see if I can get someone."

The staff member said anxiously, "There's not enough time. The madman is taking a child hostage. If the child gets too scared and the madman is pissed off, there might not be hope for the child's life to be saved."

He then glanced across the contestants. "Aren't they anchors? Can't they go?"

"NO!" Walter retorted without thinking. "They're anchors with no actual experience in the field, plus they're women! If something happens..."

The staff member did not seem to hear what Walter was saying and looked directly to the contestants while asking, "Would anyone like to go over to interview that madman and listen to his demands?"

The contestants practically took a step back in unison. There was fear and unhappiness on everyone's faces.

Criminals were inhumane. Who would not feel scared if they went crazy?

'A child is in the madman's hands.' When those words appeared in Samantha's mind, she clenched her fists as her arms hung on either side of her body. A resoluteness appeared in her eyes and she took a step forward. "I'll go."

Everyone could not help but look at Samantha and there was a myriad of emotions in each of their faces.

Walter, as the person responsible for the competition, was obligated to protect the lives of the contestants. He advised, "Please think long and hard about your decision, Samantha. This isn't a joke. There's a possibility you'll get injured...or worse...die."

"That doesn't mean we can just leave the child alone!" Samantha looked at the staff member, "Let's go. We don't have much time."

The staff looked touched and merely said, "Okay, come with me!"

After a pause, he said to Walter, "Mr. Schuck, you're in charge of evacuating everyone. Leave the TV station as fast as you can and keep yourself safe!"

Samantha did not hesitate and followed the staff.

Walter shouted at her from behind, "Be careful, Samantha."

He then turned around and looked at everyone. "Everyone, follow me."

Harmony spoke suddenly, "Mr. Schuck, I'm worried about Samantha and I want to help too. I'm going to studio one."

She dashed off as soon as she spoke and without waiting for Walter to reply.

Walter was unable to stop her and immediately felt a headache coming on. There was nothing else he could do except to take care of the group of people in front of him. "As for the others, please come with me."

...

Samantha followed the staff to the door of studio number one. The employees had been evacuated inside, leaving only the madman and the child he held hostage.

The staff and the security guards in the station were all surrounding the door, but no one dared to act recklessly. Security had attempted to enter earlier, but the madman immediately pressed a knife on the child's neck and drew blood, startling all the guards into retreating.

The staff held Samantha and explained in detail, "We already have him surrounded. The police and the special police unit are about to arrive soon. Remember to calm the madman's emotions after you enter, stall him as much as possible, protect the child, and make sure to cooperate with us. Don't provoke him or else you and the child will be in danger!"

Samantha nodded, "Okay, I understand."

On a final note, the staff added, "If things go south, then you should...prioritize your own life."

"Yes."

The staff handed over her anchor card, a microphone, and a Bluetooth earpiece to her. "Be careful!"

Samantha put the Bluetooth earpiece on and let her hair down to cover it. After making sure it was nowhere in sight, she put on her anchor credentials and grasped the microphone. "I'm going in!"

Everyone reminded her, "Be careful."

Samantha knocked gently on the door before opening it slowly and taking slow steps in.

As she walked in, she saw the madman holding an eight-year-old boy and sitting on the newsroom table. He was pressing a small knife on the child's neck and it was quite clear that there were already several red marks on the child's neck. The child had a tear-stained face but was too scared to cry.

The madman had a fierce gaze, and as soon as Samantha walked in, he stared at her like a predator looking right at its prey. She could not help but feel a chill down her spine.

When Samantha was three steps into the room, the madman ordered sullenly, "Close the door and lock it!"

Samantha pursed her lips slightly. Before she could even reach for the door, the madman immediately yelled, "Lock the door! Or I'll cut the boy again!"

*Chapter 173: I'll Kill You Right Now*

The madman pressed the knife against the child's neck once more.

"I'll lock the door! Please don't get upset. I'll listen to you. Just don't hurt the child!" Samantha said while retreating slowly to the door. She closed it gently and locked it with a click.

She then looked at the madman again and said in a very soft voice, "Sir, I've locked the door."

The madman stared at the door lock for a while before finally looking toward Samantha. He spoke viciously and said, "Walk over here!"

Samantha walked toward him without saying another word.

When she was within a few steps from the madman, he stopped her and said, "Stop! You can just stand there!"

Samantha obediently followed his orders and stood motionlessly there.

Her obedience seemed to have satisfied the madman as his hostility dissipated a little. The hand that was holding a knife against the child's neck was slowly relaxed too.

Samantha gently breathed a sigh of relief. She did her best to ensure that she spoke in the most natural and relaxed tone when she said, "Sir, I'm standing right in front of you now. You can tell me if you have any demands."

The madman pressed his lips tightly and said nothing.

Samantha did not rush him but softened her tone instead. Instead of asking questions, she chatted casually, "Sir, have you seen the sky outside today? The air today is really fresh and the sky is so blue. It's beautiful, not like the cloudy weather we had a few days ago."

The madman unconsciously looked out the window, as if being swayed by her words.

However, he sneered not too long after that. "No matter how beautiful the scenery is, it's all useless. This is a dog-eat-dog world. Everyone's the same!"

Samantha maintained the momentum and asked, "Have you encountered something unpleasant, Sir? I'll listen to you if you don't mind telling me."

"I have nothing!" the madman said. He then repeated in an even louder tone. "NOTHING! I lost my job, my money, and my wife brought my son away. I lost everything!"

"I just... All I wanted...was to give my wife and son a better life. I received insider news that the stocks I invested in would go up. It went up very well at the beginning, so well that I was thinking about buying a big villa for my wife and son once I just invest a little more money. I decided to borrow some money online and invest all of it in."

"But I was damned. After I put the money in, the stocks started crashing and crashing, and I lost it all. My wife even blamed me! Can you imagine her blaming me? Didn't I buy those stocks for her sake too? She's just the kind of woman who deserts their husbands after seeing them penniless!"

“Then there are those debt collectors chasing me every day. They spouted all sorts of sweet words when I borrowed money from them. I only owe them money for a few days. I told them I’ll pay them back when my stock rises, but they kept pushing me and pushing me!

“My company’s even more laughable! They said my actions were misconduct and that they’d fire me. Do I deserve to be treated as less than a person just because I owe some money!

“There are also those stocks I bought. They’re all leeches who suck the blood of us investors. They make money like it’s nothing and couldn’t even care less about whether ordinary people like us live or die. Society is unfair! Don’t people at the bottom deserve to live? Fine by me, then! I’ll bring everyone down with me! We’ll die together!”

The madman became increasingly crazier and more animated as he spoke.

Samantha clenched her hand tightly and took a deep breath to suppress her anger.

The entire situation boiled down to the madman’s insatiable greed for money. He did not know when to quit after making a bit of money and suffered huge losses after borrowing more money to invest.

Instead of blaming himself for his own actions, he faulted his wife and son, thinking that he did all that for them. He blamed the world, society, and everyone else, and he still could not come to terms with his own actions. Even worse, other innocent people had to suffer for his sake, and the people he held hostage were children and women!

A person like him should really be punished, not once, but a thousand times over!

After Samantha calmed her emotions, she forced a smile and said, “Doesn’t this all come down to money? Money problems aren’t entirely unsolvable. It really isn’t worth going through all this trouble.”

“Easy for you to say! Do you know how much money is involved!” The madman was very angry and his entire face became even more savage, “Those rich guys are the ones that take it all away from us. They can never get enough of the money they make. It’s the rot in our society! Society is disgusting!”

As he said that, he had a spine-chilling smile on his face. “I’ll die here today and show everyone just how vicious this dog-eat-dog world is. I’d be happy enough if this is the last contribution I make to society.”

He hugged the child in front of him tightly, “Hey kid. You and I will die here together. It’ll be worth it!”

The child had been keeping quiet and holding back his fear, but the madman's words frightened him so much that his emotions crumbled completely. He burst out in tears and cried, "I don't want to die..."

Samantha's expression sank.

The child would have been better off silent because the madman might go crazy if the child started making a fuss.

Sure enough, the child's cries and struggles made the madman even more ruthless. "You little b\*stard. Shut up or I'll stab you to death if you cry again!"

The police officer outside heard the situation and spoke calmly to Samantha through the Bluetooth earpiece, "Hello, Samantha. I'm a policeman. I want you to listen carefully to me. Our sniper is already in place on the roof of the opposite building and is now aiming at the madman. However, the window is in the way and I need you to do two things!"

Samantha could not give a response so she pretended to touch the hair near her ears with her fingers, and tapped the earphone twice with her finger to indicate that she had heard it.

The voice sounded again over there. "First, you must walk to the window and open it.

"Second, you have to find a way to distract the madman's attention. His attention must remain on you for at least thirty seconds."

Both things were extremely difficult, because for one, the madman would not allow her to walk around for no reason or even open the window. Distracting the madman for thirty seconds was even trickier.

As difficult as it was, she had no choice but to do it because the child would die otherwise!

'Calm down, Samantha. Calm down! You can do it. Believe in yourself!'

Samantha cheered herself on and looked right at the madman, saying, "Sir, do you know who I am?"

The madman did not even look at her and merely yelled at the child in his arms. "Cry again and I'll kill you right now!"

He held the knife against the child's neck.

Samantha's hand clenched tighter and she continued speaking clearly, "Do you know who Timothy Barker is then? The CEO of the Barker Group?"

Timothy Barker, Barker Group.

Those words prompted the madman to look suddenly at Samantha.

*Chapter 174: Kill the Both of You!*

The madman's eyes turned red as he said. "I know him. He's very rich."

"Indeed, he is." Samantha took a step forward. "I'm Timothy's wife. I'm the wife of the Barker Group's CEO. His money is my money, which means I'm just as rich too."

"You?" The madman could not help but look at her from head to toe.

He rarely paid attention to the entertainment news and did not surf the internet very often, so he could not be sure whether she was telling the truth.

Samantha looked at his expression and could already guess what he was thinking. She took out her cell phone from her pocket and quickly found the news about Timothy publicly disclosing their marriage. She showed him her screen and said, "So you see, I really am Timothy's wife."

The madman looked at the news and could confirm that the woman standing next to Timothy in the photo was the same woman in front of him.

He did not expect that a small-time anchor in Lychee TV would actually be the wife of the Barker Group's CEO.

"All you need is money, don't you? I have a lot of money. Just tell me your bank account number and I'll transfer it to you right now. Just don't hurt the child, okay?"

The madman still had his guard up and kept his hand around the child's neck. He asked in a hoarse voice, "Are you willing to give me the money?"

Samantha smiled. "My husband is very rich and there's no way he can spend all that money. Helping you through your current difficulties can be considered an act of kindness."

The madman frowned and said nothing, as if he was contemplating the authenticity of her words.

Seeing his hesitation, Samantha persisted with her efforts and took out her purse. She pulled out a card from within and held it in front of the madman.



“Look. This black card is the highest there is for a bank’s VIP customers. A phone call is all I need to get you any amount of money you want.”

The madman might not be sure about everything else, but he knew about the black card after his frequent dealings with stock markets and banks.

Transactions from customers of that level could be approved with just a phone call.

The madman’s eyes suddenly brightened and his expression had a look of greed.

Samantha continued to speak calmly. “You’re only in your forties and you’ve only lived half your life. You still have many days ahead of you. The money can help you pay off your debts, and your wife and children might even come back to you too. You have a chance at starting a new life. Are you willing to just die like that?”

Money could bring back everything he lost and those who looked down on him before would not dare to do so anymore. The man no longer wanted to throw his life away!

However, nothing was certain until the money arrived.

The madman stared at Samantha solemnly and demanded, “Then make the call right now and transfer the money to my account. I want... I want ten million!”

Samantha answered without thinking. “Okay. Ten million. I’ll make the call now.”

She took her cell phone and dialed the exclusive number provided on the black card. The other side answered within seconds and the sweet voice of a customer service representative was heard. “Mr. Barker, how can I help you?”

Samantha frowned, as if she could not hear the person clearly. “Hello? What was that? Hello?”

The other side continued to greet her.

Samantha tapped the phone twice and said, “Hello? Can you hear me? I can’t hear you clearly...”

The madman immediately became anxious when he heard that and stared closely at Samantha. “What’s the matter?”

“Must be the bad reception,” Samantha replied embarrassedly and bit her lower lip slightly. She then said, “Sir, can I walk to the window? The reception is probably better over there.”

“Fine.?Go!” the madman responded, but his expression was still very gloomy. “No tricks. Or I’ll kill you and the child!”

“No tricks, of course.”

Samantha walked slowly to the window and turned her back to it before continuing to speak, “I can hear you clearly now. I’d like to transfer ten million to an account. Yes, right now.”

She then said to the madman, “Sir, what’s your account number?”

The madman recalled his account number and said it out loud.

Samantha used her free hand to reach behind her back and push the window open when the madman’s attention was elsewhere.

After the madman said the account number, Samantha immediately repeated it to the bank’s customer service representative. After receiving a confirmation, the customer service representative said, “Alright. I’m arranging the transfer now. Please wait a moment.”

After about three minutes, the customer service representative spoke again, “Hello again, I’ve already transferred ten million to that account, but there may be a slight delay. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“That’s all, thanks.”

After Samantha hung up, her dark pupils looked at the madman as she said, “The ten million has been transferred. You might receive a notification soon.”

As soon as she said that, she heard a sound from the madman’s cell phone.

Samantha smiled and said, “That’s probably the message, Sir. Do you want to confirm it?”

‘Did I get ten million just like that..’

The madman was a little excited and could not control himself. He freed up a hand, touched his trouser pocket, and took out his cell phone.

Sure enough, it was a message from the bank.

He clicked on the unread message and looked at the bank balance being displayed on his phone screen.

Two words suddenly appeared in Samantha’s earpiece. “Get down!”

She held her head and squatted down immediately.

A bullet shot in through the open window with a bang, striking the madman's arm and drawing a violent scream from him.

The phone in his hand fell to the ground, and the pain was so great that he lost his strength and could not hold the child firmly any more.

Samantha had been closely watching the madman's every move. When she saw the situation, she rushed up quickly, carried the child, and ran out before the madman could react.

To her surprise, the madman stood up strenuously as he chased after her. After taking a few steps forward, he grabbed with his uninjured hand and firmly pulled on the child's hair.

The child cried in pain and struggled uncontrollably before falling to the ground. Samantha was unable to hold him firmly.

Samantha wanted to pick the boy up again, but the madman kicked her viciously on her waist. She failed to notice a kick coming at her and flew a few steps away.

The madman was in a deranged state at that time and exerted a tremendous amount of strength. Samantha's vision had turned black, and once she regained her senses after a few seconds, she finally saw the child being hugged in front of the man.

With the child in one hand and a knife in the other, he hacked right at the child's neck without any further consideration.

"NO!"

Samantha's strength appeared out of nowhere and she rushed straight up to hug the child and protect her in his arms.

The knife was coming at her.

However, a bang was heard and the madman's body fell to the ground with a thud.

*Chapter 175: One-Hit Kill*

Samantha hugged the child tightly in her arms and was stunned for a few seconds before raising her head to look at the madman who had collapsed in front of her.

The bullet struck accurately in the center of the forehead. A bloody hole had appeared and he died in one shot.

The demented and hideous look was still present in his eyes. He seemed to be staring at her defiantly and his entire face looked dreadfully shocking.

That was the first time Samantha saw a living person die before her very eyes and her heart began thumping wildly against her chest. She closed her eyes immediately and instinctively covered the child's eyes to prevent him from looking at the body.

At the same time however, she was also fortunate to have cheated death. Had it not been for the sniper's decisive and accurate second shot, she and the child would be the ones lying dead on the ground at that moment...

Samantha felt a stickiness on her fingers and looked down to see the wound on the child's neck had deepened. Bright red blood was flowing continuously from the wound and she did not know whether the child stopped crying because of fear or pain.

Samantha quickly took off her coat and wrapped it around the child's neck. She then tied a knot using the sleeves and comforted him softly, "Don't be afraid. You're fine now."

The locked door was finally kicked open by the police and they all swarmed in.

One of the police officers stepped forward to confirm the madman's death while another walked up to Samantha and asked, "Are you alright?"

Samantha replied, "I'm fine, but the child is injured. He needs to go to a hospital as soon as possible."

As soon as she said that, a couple rushed out and hugged the child tearfully. "Are you okay, Billy? Mommy and Daddy were so scared! Ah! You're bleeding? Come on, let's go to the hospital!"

The child's father picked up the child and sprinted out.

The mother was too focused on her child's injury and hurriedly thanked Samantha without looking at her. She then rushed out behind her husband.

After the police ascertained that they were fine, they went to deal with other things on the scene. Even though Samantha had experienced a surge of strength during the moment of crisis, that energy seemed to have disappeared as soon as the crisis was averted and her body collapsed softly.

Just as she was about to fall to the ground, an arm stretched over and supported her in the nick of time.

"Are you alright, Sammy?" came a gentle voice.

Samantha looked up and saw Harmony's worried expression. She answered weakly, "Thank you, I'm just feeling...a little weak right now."

"It's too chaotic here. I'll help you out and find you a place to rest."

As Harmony said that, she supported Samantha with all her strength as they walked out of the studio and toward an empty lounge.

Harmony helped Samantha in and set her down on the sofa but noticed that her face was still pale. "Just lean back and rest for a moment, alright. I'll get you a cup of hot water."

"Thanks."

Harmony turned and left the lounge.

Samantha leaned on the sofa to relax and felt her strength recovering slowly, but the pain on her waist was starting to become even more noticeable.

The madman had exerted so much force with the kick that she did know if it had struck the bone. It was so painful that there was cold sweat on her forehead.

It seemed that she had overestimated herself and ought to visit a doctor.

Samantha touched her pocket in search of her cell phone, but soon remembered that she had dropped it somewhere in the studio when she was fighting the madman.

She tried to stand up on her own, but the slight movement was enough to make her feel as though her waist was being pierced by needles. She decided to drop the idea of getting up so the pain would stop.

When Harmony came back, Samantha would just borrow her cell phone to make the call.

Footsteps were heard outside the door about five minutes later and the door was then pushed open. Samantha thought that Harmony had returned, but she looked up to see Timothy walking right in.

Her pupils widened slightly and she wondered if the pain was making her hallucinate.

The man walked up to her in a couple of steps and squatted down on one knee while stroking her face with his big palm. His voice was trembling slightly as he asked, "Are you alright?"

Timothy was the only one with such a delightful voice.

Samantha snapped back to her senses and looked at the man in front of her. He probably rushed all the way to her because he was still panting. The panic and anxiety in his eyes were just completely undisguised.

He probably came over as soon as he knew that she was in danger.

Samantha tried her best to put on a smile because she did not want him to be worried. "I am."

Unfortunately, her answer was less than convincing due to the frown that was caused by the pain. Timothy's voice became a little more solemn, "Where are you hurt? Tell me or I'll check you myself."

Samantha knew she could not hide it from him and therefore told him the truth. "My waist. I was kicked just now."

"You..." Timothy closed his eyes and suppressed the anger that erupted from his concern. He took a deep breath, opened his eyes again, then said, "Let's go to the hospital."

"Okay."

He carefully helped Samantha to sit up before turning his back to her and putting her arms over his shoulder. Then, he lifted her up gently and walked out.

...

Harmony walked back with a cup of warm water and saw that the door of the lounge was opened. She stopped for a moment when she looked up and saw Timothy coming out while carrying Samantha on his back.

He came over so quickly...

Based on the distance between the Barker Group and Lychee TV's company building, he must have rushed over as soon as news broke out.

The incident happened so suddenly that it was impossible for any news report to have named the reporter or anchor who was dealing with the madman. In that case, he would have rushed over at first instance—despite having no idea who was involved—just because Samantha was at Lychee TV and might be in danger.

There was a flash of emotion in Harmony's eyes as she continued walking straight toward Timothy and Samantha.

However, Timothy did not look at her and walked straight ahead even though they had brushed shoulders. She was unsure if it was because Timothy did not notice her, or because his thoughts were entirely on Samantha.

Harmony froze on the spot for a few seconds before turning around. She watched as Timothy carried Samantha on his back and walked away. Once they disappeared from sight, her grip on the cup tightened slowly.

Not long later, her lips curled up again as if nothing had happened.

...

At the hospital, Timothy insisted that the doctor perform a full-body examination on Samantha even though she said that only her waist was hurting.

After the examination, the doctor confirmed that she had only injured her waist, but it was a bone injury instead of a minor one.

When the doctor told his findings to Timothy, Samantha watched as the expression on the man's handsome face sank rapidly.

#### *Chapter 176: Coaxing the Husband*

Samantha's heart skipped a beat.

She had gotten used to getting injured and felt saving a child was worth the injury. Timothy, however, did not like to see her injured.

The doctor applied medicine on Samantha, put on a brace, wrapped her with some gauze, then said, "Don't let the wound come into contact with water. Try to stay in bed and don't move around. Come next week to remove the brace and we'll do another x-ray then."

"Okay, understood."

After the doctors and nurses went out, the consultation room became quiet and there was pin-drop silence.

Samantha raised her eyelids slowly and glanced at the sullen-faced man who had been standing silently at one corner. She thought to herself for a moment and her entire face scrunched up to reveal a pained expression.

Timothy looked askance at her and remained unmoved.

Samantha looked at him eagerly and said in a trembling voice, "It hurts, Timothy."

The man looked askance at her again. He finally reacted and started walking, but he headed for the door instead of her.

Samantha was about to ask him what he was doing when she saw him open the door and leave.

She was speechless to see his response because it really came as a surprise to her.

What was going on with Timothy? Did he plan to leave her alone because he was angry that she got injured due to a reckless disregard of her own life?

Just as she was wondering what was going on with him, the door opened again and Timothy pushed in a wheelchair.

He walked straight to Samantha and did not say a word. All he did was bend down, pick her up, and put her on the chair before pushing her and walking out.

His movements were gentle, but the coldness exuding from his entire body was a clear indication that he was still angry and dissatisfied.

The car was already waiting at the entrance of the hospital. Timothy carried Samantha up again and placed her into the car before getting in himself. The car then started driving and soon merged into traffic.

Samantha looked at Timothy's frosty side profile and knew that it would not be that easy to coax him.

She thought for a moment and frowned before opening her mouth to speak, but her voice was exceptionally low because of her discomfort. "I have something to tell you, Timothy, but can you come closer."

Timothy merely glanced coldly at her and did not move.

"It's very important," Samantha emphasized. "I can't move now, or else I might strain the wound again."

Timothy moved over and leaned his handsome face toward her.

"A little more. It hurts if I speak too loud."

Timothy leaned so close that she was practically exhaling over his face. He then uttered coldly, "Tell me."



To his marked surprise, Samantha hooked both arms around his neck and planted her red lips down on his for a kiss.

Timothy was speechless.

He was about to push her away when Samantha quickly reminded, “Don’t move, Timothy. You’ll strain my injury if you move.”

Timothy chuckled in annoyance. “Is this intentional?”

“Mmhhh.” Samantha nodded unabashedly. “Don’t be angry, Timothy. I’m fine now, aren’t I? This little injury will recover soon, but isn’t it good that I saved a child at least?”

Timothy did not know what happened at the scene but he could imagine how dangerous it must have been. Under such circumstances, few—if any—senior reporters or anchors would brave themselves and take risks. While everyone was finding ways on how to retreat, she willingly decided to enter the fray.

His heart was nearly about to jump up to his throat on the way to Lychee TV. He knew that Samantha had to have been involved when he received the transfer notification message from the bank, and it was there that his heart sank to the bottom.

What if something happened to her?

No one would dare to take risks on the off chance that something might happen to her.

Timothy pursed his thin lips tightly and said stiffly, “Let go.”

Samantha gave him another firm kiss. “Don’t be angry.”

After a pause, she lowered her voice and called out softly, “Hubby...”

Ronald shuddered involuntarily in the driver’s seat. He felt that he ought to be anywhere else other than in the car!

Timothy had an indifferent and frosty expression. He ordered coldly, “Let go!”

Samantha continued giving it her all and cajoled him again, “Hubby, darling, honey... Pretty please don’t get angry at me anymore...”

Ronald glanced at his boss through the rearview mirror and silently lamented for Samantha. Having worked for Timothy for so many years, he understood Timothy to be a man of steel who despised coquettishness and would never be swooned by such acts. Ronald remembered a female secretary who was fired after she made a work mistake and tried to act kittenish around Timothy. It was likely that Samantha’s efforts would be in vain.

He was just thinking about that when he spotted a tiny and almost imperceptible smirk at the corners of Timothy's lips.

He blinked and wondered if he had seen it wrongly.

He then heard Timothy's voice soften. "Give me another kiss and I'll forgive you."

Ronald was absolutely speechless.

Samantha readily accepted it and planted another kiss on Timothy's lips. "You're the best, honey..."

Timothy pinched the tip of Samantha's nose and said sternly, "This is the first and last time."

He knew that it was her dream and therefore would not stop her from pursuing it. His only condition was for her to always put her life first.

Samantha nodded. "Understood."

After a pause, she thought of the ten million and frowned again, "Timothy, about that ordeal I went through with the madman, I negotiated with him and gave him your ten million. I don't know if I can get it back. If I can't, I'll—"

"The ten million belongs to you," he interrupted before she could finish speaking.

"What?" Samantha was puzzled for a moment.

"I gave the card to you and the money in it is yours. You don't need to explain to me how you decide to spend it," the man said in a very natural manner.

Samantha's inner anxiety disappeared suddenly because Timothy genuinely did not mind how she spent his money. However, she frowned again the next second.

Timothy looked at her worriedly. "What's wrong? Are you feeling uncomfortable?"

"I can't help but feel a bit heartbroken if I can't get back my ten million," Samantha said pitifully. "If I knew that, I would've tried bargaining with the madman when I was negotiating with him."

Timothy was speechless.

Seeing her heartlessness, he felt that he had been worried about her for nothing.

...

After Samantha returned to the villa, she took her medicine and drifted to sleep once the effects kicked in.

The sky outside was already dark by the time she woke up and Timothy was no longer beside her.

She glanced at the wall clock and saw that it was already eight o'clock at night.

When she spotted her cell phone on the bedside table that Timothy had retrieved, she reached out and picked it up. As soon as she pressed the button to light the screen up, she saw a bunch of unread message notifications from WeTalk.

Samantha tapped on WeTalk and was about to read the messages, but her phone suddenly began ringing.

### *Chapter 177: Final Round*

Samantha glanced at the caller ID and saw that it was Walter.

She swiped her finger on the screen and answered the call. "Hello, Mr. Schuck."

Walter's voice came from the other end. "How are you, Sammy?"

"I hurt my waist and would have to stay in bed for a week, but other than that, there's nothing to worry about. I'm fine," Samantha replied.

Walter sighed in relief when he heard that and expressed his heartfelt admiration. "You did a very good job today, Sammy."

After a pause, he added, "There's one more thing. The date of the second round has been changed to tomorrow, but because of your outstanding performance in today's incident, you have already demonstrated your dedication as an anchor and will therefore advance directly to the final round. In the meantime, take care of yourself and continue recovering at home."

That news was far beyond what Samantha expected.

She did not expect that her actions, which came from the heart, would earn her an advancement in the competition.

Although she was happy, she pursed her lips lightly and asked, "Won't this be unfair to the other contestants?"

After all, only three out of seven would progress; the competition was understandably fierce.

“Don’t worry. This proposal was put forward by the three judges and was seconded by a majority of the contestants as well, so it’s fair. Personality and charm are qualities that an anchor must possess too.”

Samantha smiled. “It would be impolite of me to refuse.”

After the call ended, Samantha looked up and saw Timothy. She did not know when or how long he had been standing at the door.

She could not help but raise her head slightly and said proudly to him, “I was given a pass to the next round, Timothy. I’m now just one step away from winning the competition.”

Timothy smiled slightly and walked in. He sat beside her on the bed and said, “I heard it.”

He gently propped her up with one hand and placed the water glass in his other hand to her mouth. “Have some water.”

Samantha drank half a glass of water and said, “Have you been staying at home after bringing me back? Didn’t you go to the company?”

She knew he had an important meeting that day but had dropped it and came to her as soon as he saw the news.

“Yes.”

“Timothy, didn’t I tell you that there’s no need for you to keep me company on purpose. Nothing will happen if I’m at home, not when Aunt Julia and grandma are here too.”

She said in a rather embarrassed manner, “I always end up keeping you from your work.”

“If you know that you will keep me from my work, you should take care of yourself and avoid getting hurt.” Timothy put her back on the bed and covered her with a blanket.

Samantha felt guilty. She knew it was time for her to shut her mouth and could only look at him pitifully.

There was no way Timothy could continue getting angry at her when he saw her like that. He put the glass on the bedside table and said, “Although... I won’t be able to keep you company in the next fortnight.”

“What?”

“I’m going to Axlelland on a business trip.”

Samantha had a sudden realization. She had more or less heard about the Barker Group’s cooperation with a company in Axlelland. It was their largest project that year. Timothy had been busy with that in recent days. His visit to Axlelland was basically to finalize the cooperation. The Barker Group would then be expanded yet again.

Samantha nodded. “Okay. You can rest assured when you work because I’ll take care of myself.”

After some thought, she smiled and said, “But when you come back, it will almost be time for my final round in the competition. When you close your business deal, I will celebrate with you by bringing home a trophy.”

Timothy was amused. “Are you that confident about winning the competition?”

“Yes, because...you’re my motivation,” Samantha spoke a little softly toward the end but those words really came from the heart.

As soon as she said that, her face was cupped in the man’s hands and he kissed her red lips. He replied in a hoarse but sweet voice, “Okay. I’ll wait for you to bring back the trophy.”

...

The following day, the other six contestants competed in round two. Harmony and Jade advanced, so the contestants who reached the final were Samantha, Harmony, and Jade.

Although Samantha was recovering from her injury, she did not slack off in the least. She studied and practiced every single day, and she was not about to underestimate any opponents until the final result of the competition came out.

A week later, Aunt Julia accompanied her to the hospital to remove the brace and take another x-ray. She was relieved when the doctor said that she was well on the road to recovery.

Walter called her again to seek confirmation on whether she would be able to compete. The final round was set to happen in another three days.

The final round, as mentioned at the beginning, would see three contestants simultaneously conducting an online simulated live broadcast. The final score would be determined by the three judges as well as votes from the audience, both of which account for 50 percent of the score.

Three days passed in the blink of an eye.

Aunt Julia woke Samantha up in the early morning and dragged her downstairs. Before her mind was completely awake, she saw a large group of young ladies rushing in her direction. She was then ushered onto a professional salon bed and the ladies soon started working their magic on her appearance.

After a while, she finally reacted and glanced to the side, only to see Old Madam Barker who was sitting leisurely on the sofa while drinking morning tea. She said to the old lady, "There's no need to go this far, right Grandma?"

"Why not!" Old Madam Barker retorted as-a-matter-of-factly. "You will have to face the entire country on your live broadcast today. You have to be the most beautiful, dazzling, and captivating contestant!"

"If Tim can't come back to see you live, you can at least let him look at your beauty on TV, can't you?"

Indeed, every woman wanted to be beautiful.

.

Moreover, it was natural for a woman to show their most beautiful side to the man they loved.

Samantha graciously accepted Old Madam Barker's kindness and lay on the bed as the ladies went to work.

At eight in the evening, Samantha, Harmony, and Jade sat in their respective studios and faced the camera as they began the live broadcast.

Lychee TV's official account posted three live broadcast URLs, allowing viewers to choose which live broadcast they wanted to watch before voting for their favorite anchor.

The live broadcast went on for half an hour.

In the beginning, the respective number of people watching the three broadcasts was basically the same, probably because everyone was curious and wanted to click in and take a look.

After five minutes, the number of people began to grow.

Samantha and Harmony's viewers continued to soar while Jade's stayed flat.

15 minutes later, Samantha's viewers rose even more, and although Harmony's was on the rise as well, her momentum was not as strong as Samantha's. Conversely, the number of Jade's viewers began to decrease.

At 20 minutes, the number of votes was shown on the page and Samantha's was very far ahead.

25 minutes later, Samantha was still at number one and had twice as many viewers and votes compared to Harmony.

Everyone thought that Samantha would be the champion, but in the last five minutes, the number of Harmony's viewers skyrocketed explosively.

The competition then ended at half-past eight.

Ten minutes later, Walter held the envelope containing the final result and stood before Samantha and Harmony.

*Chapter 178: How Does It Feel to Lose?*

Walter looked at the two people in front of him and sighed. "Samantha. Harmony. This is my first time being fully responsible for hosting a competition. Time flies and we're now at the very end of the competition. The most important moment is now here.

"It has been my absolute pleasure to see the both of you grow and progress with each step that you have taken during the past month. Whatever the final result is, you're both outstanding individuals. I'm sure that you will both be future rising stars in the anchor world!

"Now then, I shall announce the final results."

Walter opened the envelope slowly and pulled out the card. His expression fluctuated slightly when he glanced at the name on the card. He then raised his eyes and looked at Samantha while saying, "The winner of this competition is..."

After pausing for a second, he turned to Harmony and announced the winner out loud, "Harmony Johnson!"

A thunderous applause erupted from all directions.

Lychee TV was also broadcasting the announcement live, so netizens were all able to see the news right away.

Everyone thought that Samantha would be the champion because she had been gaining momentum. No one expected that Harmony, the dark horse, would eventually clinch victory.

Harmony smiled and covered her lips with her hands, as if she could not believe it.

Samantha's long eyelashes quivered lightly but she continued to smile and applaud.

If she were to be honest, she was confident that her ability was at least on par with Harmony. However, since the competition was fair, she wholeheartedly accepted the results even if it was not what she wanted.

Nevertheless, she would be lying if she said she had no regrets.

After all, she had promised Timothy that she would bring the trophy back and give it to him as a celebration gift.

The reporters from Lychee TV had already circled Harmony in a mad dash to interview her. It was only natural that Samantha was squeezed out from the crowd.

Only the winner would be remembered by the masses. No one cared if the person in second place left.

Samantha was turning to leave when someone patted her on the shoulder all of a sudden. She turned around unconsciously and was surprised to see Jade.

Jade has always been at odds with her, so it was likely that Jade came just to taunt her. Samantha did not want to entertain her at all, but Jade was not about to just let Samantha go. She stood right in front of Samantha and sneered, "Are you surprised that you lost, Samantha? Didn't I tell you that winning this competition would depend on your capability? Your status or your husband's status doesn't matter one bit!"

"You relied on your identity as Mrs. Barker to come out tops in the first round, and you secured advancement in the second round without competing. And what happened in the end? A large-scale competition like this depends heavily on your ability. You can't just do whatever you want. How does it feel now that you've lost the competition and your dignity in front of everyone? Who knows, Mr. Barker might just abandon you if he's unhappy that you embarrassed him!"

Jade smiled proudly and arrogantly as she spoke.

Samantha smirked and opened her mouth to speak. "Did you win the competition?"

The sudden questioning stunned Jade for a moment. She narrowed her eyes in disgust at Samantha and scoffed, "Are you blind? Or are unable to face the fact that Harmony is the winner?"



Samantha nodded. "Harmony is the winner, not you. I'm in second place and you're in third, yet here you're mocking me. Let me ask you then. How do you feel after losing three times in a row to a greenhorn like me when you've previously won the rookie anchor award? Eat. My. Dust."

"...You!" Jade was angry that her face immediately turned ashen.

Samantha lifted her feet and walked away without looking at her again.

As someone who also made a living with words and language, Samantha was well-versed in sarcasm too. She simply could not be bothered to hold it against someone like Jade, but that in no way meant that she did not have a temper.

Samantha was not to blame if Jade insisted on looking for trouble.

She had taken a few steps forward when Jade finally reacted. In a couple of steps, Jade rushed forth and stretched out her hand to push Samantha, but Samantha reacted quickly and turned her body to dodge the attack.

Jade did not manage to push her, but instead staggered a few steps forward and nearly fell due to the force she exerted. She gritted her teeth in anger and sneered at Samantha. "Do you know why you lost, Samantha? You lost because of your bad character! I just had a peek at the transcript. You and Harmony were given the same scores by the judges, but when it came to the audience's vote, only one vote separated you from Harmony! Only one vote! Does that make you upset? Does that piss you off? Well, you can keep wallowing in your unhappiness. You failed to get the audience's approval because your attitude stinks!

"Harmony kept her word, unlike you. You said you wanted to help when the madman came in the other day. Your words were nice to hear, but what happened in the end? Wasn't it Harmony who went to deal with the madman and rescued the child? Where were you during the entire incident? And you have the nerve to stand in front of us and act all high and mighty? Disgusting!

"I'm glad the truth came out in the last five minutes, otherwise it would have been such an injustice if someone like you won the competition!

"As they say, Samantha, man proposes and God disposes. Do you think you can exert your influence just because you have the backing of the Barker Group? This is a big fat slap in your face! Bwahahahaha!"

Samantha did not take Jade's words seriously at first, since Jade was not the kind who would say anything nice. Jade would only be satisfied if Samantha got angry.

However, the latter part of Jade's rant stunned her.

What did Jade mean when saying that Harmony was the one who dealt with the madman that day? What was all that about Samantha's disappearance from the scene?

Samantha was the one who dealt with the madman and got injured in the process of saving the child. She had been bedridden for more than a week and there were still occasional bouts of pain on her waist. Why did the savior suddenly become Harmony?

She keenly picked up the key phrase about the truth coming out in the last five minutes.

Since she had been in the midst of a live broadcast and was subsequently waiting for the results to be released soon after, the situation surrounding the votes was unknown to her. She only realized that something was not right after Jade mentioned that.

Of course, Samantha was not that mindless to ask Jade directly. After all, it was impossible to glean any useful information due to their hostility toward each other. It was best for Samantha to find out for herself.

With that thought, Samantha left without looking at Jade again.

After getting into the taxi, Samantha took out her cell phone and clicked on Waybo.

The top three trending searches on Waybo were all about the final round. The entry [Harmony won the competition] had already reached third place in a short period of time.

On the other hand, the first entry—which was also about Harmony—read: [Harmony is the most beautiful anchor]

Samantha clicked on it.

The designation as the most beautiful anchor was not a compliment about her appearance, but about her character and bravery.

The reason was due to a video uploaded by an anonymous netizen. It was very blurry, but one could see Harmony—who had her back against the camera—dealing with the madman.. When the madman went berserk, she bravely rushed up and brought the child away.

*Chapter 179: Friend or Foe?*

Samantha was no stranger to that scene because the woman in the video was her rather than Harmony.

From that back figure alone, no one would doubt it was Harmony if they were told that it was her.

Samantha had once thought that her back figure was very similar to Harmony. The blurry video only served to enhance their similarities and practically made them indistinguishable from each other.

Samantha continued to read the other comments. As it turned out, her viewers and votes surpassed Harmony during the first 25 minutes of the live broadcast. The number of Jade's votes was not worth a mention, but Samantha led Harmony by nearly twice the number of votes.

Based on that trend, Samantha should have been the one to get first place. The tsunami of votes for Harmony—the brave anchor who saved the child and fought against the hostage-taking madman that barged into Lychee TV—only came in during those last five minutes, when the anonymous netizen uploaded the video.

Everyone admired such a heartening individual and enjoyed seeing such a heroic incident. Netizens from all walks of life subsequently poured into her live broadcast and voted for her.

The viewers came in such numbers that it turned the tables in her favor with only five minutes to spare. In the end, she narrowly defeated Samantha by one vote and won the competition.

Samantha's hand clenched slowly after reading everything.

She had earlier accepted the results of her loss because she thought it was a fair fight and believed that Harmony's performance was much better than hers.

However, she was the one who dealt with the madman and saved the child. She did not mind if the entire world was oblivious to her good deeds, but that did not mean she would let others take the credit, especially not when it cost her the competition.

That was, without a doubt, extremely unfair to her!

When the taxi reached the villa, Samantha paid the fare and got out of the car. Her heart warmed up uncontrollably when she was welcomed by Old Madam Barker and Aunt Julia.

Old Madam Barker stepped forward, held Samantha's hand, and said bluntly, "Sammy, I watched your live broadcast from the beginning until the end! You performed spectacularly and will always be the champion in my heart!"

Aunt Julia nodded repeatedly. "Yes, Mrs. Barker. I feel the same way."

Samantha hugged them back. "Thank you, Grandma. Thank you, Aunt Julia. But..."

'...I haven't lost yet.'

She did not say the last few words out loud because she did not want them to fret over it until it was settled.

Old Madam Barker could not help but ask, "But what?"

Samantha smiled and acted coy. "Oh, it's nothing. I'm just a little hungry. I'd like to have some of the refreshing pudding Aunt Julia made!"

"Alright, Mrs. Barker! I've prepared it already," Aunt Julia replied immediately.

"Okay! Let's go in and eat it together, Grandma."

Old Madam Barker responded naturally. "Sure, sure."

After having supper, Samantha went back to her room upstairs. She sat on the sofa, took out her cell phone to check the time, and realized it was almost 11.

Harmony had probably already returned home by then after finishing the interview. She would have also been able to read the news on the internet.

She would have seen the video and realized that she was not the heroine that the video said she was. Therefore, her votes and her victory—which only came about because of the video—did not belong to her.

Judging from Harmony's magnanimity, civility, and high emotional quotient which she had shown in front of Samantha before, it was conceivable that Harmony would take steps to remedy the situation, unless...

Samantha stopped herself from thinking ill of Harmony.

Despite her unwillingness to denounce a person and assume that they had malicious intent, she was not a fool either. Whether Harmony was friend or foe would soon become known.

Samantha's cell phone rang about five minutes later. She glanced at the caller ID and saw Harmony's name.

Her lips twitched and she answered. "Hello."

Harmony's pleasant voice came from the other end. "Hey Sammy. I just got home and saw the video posted on Waybo. I don't know why that netizen said it was me. What a hilarious mix-up."

“Is it hilarious to you?” Samantha asked indifferently. “It was this mix-up that allowed you to secure a sudden surge of votes and win the competition.”

Harmony was silent at the other end. When she finally answered, there were hints of confusion and dejection, “Sammy, don’t you think you’re being biased against me when you say something like that? We promised each other to compete without letting our friendship be affected. I won the competition with my own strength. I know that not being able to win the competition will almost certainly make you unhappy, but you can’t deny my strength just because of that. I was selected by the judges and the audience. My victory is fair and square.”

“Of course, I have no problem acknowledging that you got first place,” Samantha said casually, “But please clarify that the woman in the video is not you, but me. If the audience still feels that you deserve first place, then I will continue to acknowledge that as well.”

“Definitely. I am more than willing to clarify!”

Harmony answered quickly and confidently. “My first reaction when I saw Waybo was to clarify, but...”

She took a breath and lowered her voice a little. “But...”

She paused mid-sentence as if there was something she could not say.

Samantha did not hear the continuation and so pressed further. “Are you going to do it or not?”

Harmony was silent.

Samantha felt disappointed but it was not entirely unexpected. “If you think that your ability will be acknowledged by everyone and cement your victory in everyone’s mind, then post the clarification. You won’t be affected by the clarification anyway. If you don’t post the clarification, then deep down, you know that you piggybacked on a video of me to get the votes and win the competition.

“But at this moment, you’re still trying to paint yourself as innocent and portray yourself as having nothing to do with the situation. You’re overestimating yourself, Harmony.”

Harmony’s voice did not seem panicked at all after being exposed. She continued to speak in a very innocent voice, “Sammy, I know that you’re in a bad mood right now and it’s normal to overthink. How about this, since we’re all tired today, you should have some rest. We can talk again once you calm down.”

Samantha ended the call right away.

There was nothing more she could say when it came to that.

The video did not appear too early nor too late; it happened to appear in the last five minutes of the competition with the sole purpose of preventing Samantha from making a comeback. By the time she was aware of it, the dust had long settled.

Harmony has not only cheated but even made it clear that she would step on Samantha to win the competition.

Simply stepping on Samantha to win the competition was not even the end of it. She even called to feign innocence and maintain her kind persona in front of Samantha.

If Samantha's fortitude had been weak and her brain was a little slower, she might end up being fooled by Harmony and continue being played into her hands.

Samantha said that she would be willing to accept her loss if it was a fair competition, but when it was clear that unfairness was at play, she was not about to just let it slide.

...

The next day.

Samantha woke up early because she wanted to go to Lychee TV. As soon as she came out from her shower and was about to change her clothes, there was an unexpected knock on her room door.

Aunt Julia's voice rang from the other side of the door, "Mrs.. Barker, you have a visitor."

*Chapter 180: Keeping Her Quiet*

A visitor?

No one had come to look for Samantha since she started living there, except for that one time she invited Alan over as a guest.

She had few friends to begin with and Rochelle was the one person she contacted on a regular basis. Did Rochelle come to the villa?

That was unlikely because Rochelle's dislike for Jonathan extended to Jonathan's best friends too. Rochelle also did not have a good impression of Timothy after all the hurt he caused Samantha, so any meeting Rochelle had with Samantha would always be outside rather than at the villa.

Who could it be?

Samantha thought for a while but could not figure out who it could be, so she just said, "Okay, Aunt Julia. Please entertain them on my behalf. I'll be right down after changing my clothes."

"Alright, Mrs. Barker."

Samantha hurriedly walked into the dressing room, changed into some decent house clothes, then sat in front of the dressing table. After tidying herself slightly, she walked out of the room and headed downstairs.

As soon as she set foot into the living room, she spotted Walter sitting on the sofa. He was drinking the tea that Aunt Julia had just brought to him.

Samantha was rather taken aback by it. Walter had always contacted her through WeTalk, so it came as a surprise that he would suddenly visit her.

She stepped forward, sat on the sofa opposite Walter, and greeted him with a smile. "Good morning, Mr. Schuck."

Walter put down his tea and answered with a smile as well. "Good morning, Sammy. I hope I didn't bother you by coming so early."

"Not at all," Samantha said. "What brings you here, Mr. Schuck?"

Walter did not answer immediately but asked softly, "Have you eaten breakfast yet, Sammy? I know a restaurant that serves good breakfast. May I treat you to some?"

When he mentioned that, Samantha immediately knew why Walter came to the home so early.

She decided to listen to what he had to say.

Samantha nodded. "Okay."

After letting Aunt Julia know, Samantha left the villa with Walter. He came over with his own car, so he drove her.

20 minutes later, the car stopped in front of a restaurant and the two of them walked in. One of the waiters then led them to a private room.

After Samantha sat down, Walter handed her the menu. "Please go ahead and order anything you feel like having."

"You can order whatever, Mr. Schuck. Our main purpose isn't to eat breakfast anyway," Samantha said bluntly. "I prefer being direct if you don't mind."

The expression on Walter's face turned stiff but it disappeared soon enough. He shook his head with a chuckle and said, "You really are a smart girl, Sammy."

He randomly ordered some food and the waiter excused himself while closing the door. Silence filled the entire room at once.

Walter picked up the teapot and poured a cup of tea for Samantha. He then looked at her and pondered for a moment before opening his lips, "I believe you already know what happened on Waybo yesterday, Sammy?"

That sounded more like a statement rather than a question.

Samantha answered, "Yes."

"What's your opinion?"

That question was asked in such a way that Samantha found it ridiculous. She did not beat around the bush and said with certainty, "I was the one who dealt with the madman and saved the child. Outsiders are not privy to this, but you, some staff members of Lychee TV, and other people present at the time would all know about it. The least they could do is clarify things on my behalf, right?"

Walter was not surprised by what Samantha said to him, but he had a frown on his face. He looked at her embarrassedly but finally decided to speak up after some hesitation. "This is the situation right now, Sammy. All of us knew and saw what you did. We are aware that you alone should be credited for those acts, but...that video yesterday boosted Harmony's numbers at the end and allowed her to win the competition. The entire competition went live, and everyone saw Harmony winning it during the live broadcast. If... If we came forth to make things clear and overturn our competition results, we cannot predict what will become of public opinion.

"You're probably aware that there was a video involving you that circulated during the first round, and netizens had a very bad impression of Lychee TV since then. It was difficult for us to stop the rumors. If we come forward and side with you again, netizens might not believe it, and they might even think that we're bullying a powerless Harmony just to please you. This will have an extremely serious impact on Lychee TV's reputation."

Samantha understood right away.

Walter had come to her early in the morning and seemed afraid to talk to her directly in the villa because Old Madam Barker was there. Based on that alone, she already had a hunch as to what Walter was going to talk to her about, but after hearing it in person, she inevitably felt speechless and angry.



She was so angry that she laughed. “What you mean by that is, you want me to shut up, to accept this loss just like that, to give my credit to Harmony, and to give Harmony the victory that belongs rightfully to me? All because I’m Mrs. Barker? Because in the eyes of the public, I’m rich and powerful, while Harmony is weak? Because it’s just for her to get what’s mine even if she got it by stealing it away from me? Because I’m the one using my influence to bully her if I don’t let her win?”

“Hey, hey, calm down. Take a breather.” Walter calmed her at once. “Sammy, this issue was taken very seriously by the top management. After the competition ended yesterday, we had a meeting as soon as possible and discussed it until four this morning just to solve the problem.

“I can understand your feelings, and it’s not like I kept you in the dark over this. The top management discussed a solution that would solve this problem and give everyone the best of both worlds.”

Samantha’s lips twitched. “I’m all ears.”

Walter was a little nervous, so he took a big sip of tea before letting out a deep breath. He then said in a small voice, “Sammy, your participation in this competition is surely to join Lychee TV and be an anchor. The higher-ups have seen your abilities and you’re more than qualified to join us. So... As long as you don’t say anything about this, we will also bring you into Lychee TV as an anchor.”

Samantha laughed as soon as he finished speaking.

If she were to shut up and stop pursuing the matter, Harmony would continue taking the credit and using the victory that was rightfully Samantha’s. Harmony’s career in Lychee TV would be achieved by stepping on Samantha’s head.

Samantha could then be compensated by being allowed to join Lychee TV even if she did not win the competition.

Was she supposed to be grateful for that?

Her dream had always been to enter Lychee TV, but not by such means.

She looked up and stared firmly at Walter before opening her lips and saying clearly, “I refuse!”

A treatment like that was too unfair for her and was thoroughly humiliating.

Walter’s eyes flickered a few times and he persuaded, “You don’t have to answer so quickly, Sammy.. You should think about it carefully because it benefits everyone.”

*Chapter 181: Such Big Bullies*

Benefits everyone?

Samantha had a sarcastic look and remarked unceremoniously, "It'll only benefit you guys!"

Walter's smile disappeared bit by bit when he heard that and was gradually replaced by a cold and frosty expression.

He straightened his posture, poured a cup of tea for himself, then drank it slowly before speaking again, "If you're unwilling to accept our proposal, then you can follow your own heart and clarify it yourself."

'Clarify it yourself.'

Those three words clearly indicated Lychee TV's stance on the issue.

In other words, if she did not accept their proposal, Lychee TV would not come forward to make any clarifications for her and she would have to do so herself.

It seemed that Walter was finally resorting to force after failing in his attempt at amicability.

Samantha's expression remained unchanged and her tone remained faint. "You're telling me to clarify things myself, but no one will believe me, will they?"

Walter kept quiet, but his expression said it all.

Samantha continued, "Everything happened inside a closed studio that day. All the video equipment inside was turned off at the request of the madman. And the video that's now making its rounds was taken from outside the window, which explained why it's so blurry.

"The only people in the studio at that time were me, the madman, and the kid. The madman was killed on the spot, and as far as the kid is concerned, I heard that he's in such a bad condition that he still hasn't spoken up until now due to fright. Neither of them can testify for me.

"As for the people who saw me go in at the time, there were TV station employees and police officers. The TV station employees have been told not to say a word, while the police officers who were on duty at the time were facing a very chaotic situation before them. They didn't really see Harmony that well, but they also can't serve as a credible witness for me.

“Oh, there’s also the child’s parents. Although, they only cared about their kid when they came in and didn’t see who I was at all. Isn’t that right?”

Walter nodded in admiration when hearing Samantha’s analysis. “I said it before, Sammy. You’re a very smart girl. I’ve always thought highly about you, and so do the senior figures at the station. We can’t bear to let a talent like you stay buried.”

He took another sip of tea before continuing, “Of course, as Mrs. Barker, you’re able to whisper sweet nothings to your husband and have him come forward for you. I think even our general manager can’t afford to offend your husband. When it comes to that, the general manager will come forth to clarify everything and rightfully return the first place to you.

“But... we’ll also be truthful to the public and tell them that we did it because we didn’t have a choice. By then public opinion will train their guns at the Barker Group and Mr. Barker.”

Samantha could only sneer.

Lychee TV was brave enough to send Walter over because they had already calculated everything.

Walter immediately softened his voice again. He took out two contracts from his briefcase and placed them in front of Samantha. “Sammy, we’re really being sincere here. I even brought along the contract for your employment.

“Have a look. There are two contracts here. One is a non-disclosure agreement, and the other is for employment. As long as you’re willing to sign these two contracts, you can go through the entry procedures tomorrow and become one of us!”

Samantha looked down at the two contracts and wanted to speak, but in the end, she curled her lips in a rather indecipherable little smile.

Walter looked at her expression and felt that there was still a chance. He continued further and said, “How about this, Sammy... You’ve always looked up to Victoria Goldman as an idol, haven’t you? If you agree to these contracts, I’ll relay this to the station and let Ms. Goldman personally take you in. She isn’t the kind of person who accepts proteges on a whim.”

Being Victoria’s apprentice really was a huge temptation.

Samantha’s eyebrows twitched slightly.

Walter smiled slowly when he saw that. Victoria was his trump card. He had done his homework on Samantha before and figured out what she wanted most, giving him the confidence to win the negotiation.

It was his first time being solely responsible for hosting the competition, and it had already shone the spotlight on him. The path to further his future career was bright, and the general manager had already hinted he would be given more important projects to handle. He was adamant that nothing and no one would be allowed to hinder his path forward!

Samantha was silent for a while and her voice became gentler too. "But Ms. Goldman has her own principles in accepting a protege. Can you really persuade her to let her personally take me in?"

Walter's bet came through in the end...

He raised his head a little higher and gave a brief nod. "Don't worry. Ms. Goldman and I have been friends for many years. She won't object if I make a strong case to recommend you."

Walter's words are half-true and half-false.

He did know Victoria for a long time, but they were not on close terms with each other. Victoria was the kind of woman who did things her own way and had a weird temperament. Anyone who did not have the mental fortitude would not be able to work with her.

During the times he worked with Victoria, she lashed out at him countless times and it pissed him off greatly.

In any case, Samantha did not know about that and Walter had no qualms lying to her.

If she had signed the contract and Victoria was unwilling to take her in, there was nothing else Samantha could do either.

Samantha's eyes lit up after hearing his assurance. "It has always been my dream to study with Ms. Goldman. I would be willing to compromise if I have that opportunity. Okay then, I will go ahead and sign the two contracts."

"Wonderful!" Walter smiled all of a sudden, "I've always said that you're a smart woman, Sammy. Only the wise can make the most out of a situation. A little compromise makes everybody happy."

He took out his pen, unscrewed the lid, and handed it to her. "Alright, you can sign them now."

"Sure."

Samantha picked up the pen and signed her name on the non-disclosure agreement before doing the same on the employment contract.

She then put down the pen and smiled at Walter, "I will be in your capable hands now, Mr. Schuck."

"No problem, no problem."

Walter smiled and put away the two documents. "When do you plan on clocking in? I'll let the staff know."

Samantha thought for a while and said, "I'm a little tired after the competition just ended. Maybe in a few more days."

After a pause, she said again, "Won't there be an award ceremony for the competition in another two days? I can wait to clock in together with Harmony. We're on good terms, so it'd be good for us to be companions when we work together."

"You're very thoughtful." Walter expressed his admiration. "It's settled then."

He raised his hand and patted Samantha on the shoulder, "I need to go back to the station and explain it to the higher-ups. Enjoy your meal. It's on me."

Samantha had no objections. "Okay. Take care."

When she sent Walter out of the room, Samantha returned to her seat and picked up her cutlery, but when she looked at the table full of food, she did not have any appetite and even felt like throwing up.

They were all such big bullies....