

《情人节恶作剧：上海单身人士买光单号电影票》

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Bless them. Bless their cold, dark hearts.

In what might be the greatest-ever Valentine's Day prank, a group of Shanghai singles purchased every odd-numbered seat for a Feb. 14 showing of Beijing Love Story. Their sole purpose: disrupting lovey-dovey dates. "Want to see a movie on Valentine's Day?" asks a message posted by an organizer. "Sorry, you'll have to sit separately. Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

Tell that to the millions of Chinese who will be spending the day in the absence of a date. With a population of 1.3 billion, China naturally has hefty share of the world's singletons. This is compounded by a dramatic gender imbalance. Thanks to the one-child policy and preference for sons, there are an estimated 34 million 'surplus men' in China — a whole lot of lonely hearts.

Luckily, the country's unattached have a history of being awesome; they've even got their own day. Since the 1990s, Nov. 11 have been celebrated as Singles Day. It was picked because the numerals — 11/11 — are said to look like 'bare branches,' a Chinese term for bachelors. It started as an occasion to get together for a meal, but has since morphed into a multi-billion dollar orgy of online shopping.

Valentine's day is also celebrated (if you're into that type of thing). As I left my apartment block this morning, an older gentleman entered through the lantern-draped gate, a bouquet of pink and white flowers tucked under his arm. All of Beijing's best restaurants have been booked up table-for-two by table-for-two.

The self-described "computer nerd" that spearheaded the Shanghai theater stunt said he was just trying to do something nice for fellow singles. He initially tried to buy all the the tickets in the theater, he told the Shanghai Morning Post, but was turned down. Things came together when he started a campaign on a crowd-funding site and, working with fellow singles, snapped up the requisite seats.

The best part may be the comments it generated online. For every "No wonder you're single," there were witty rejoinders and high-fives to spare. "No choice but to go on a blind date now," joked one commenter, according to a translation by ChinaSmack. "Now most lovers will go to the hotel directly," quipped another.

Gazing at the checkerboard seats, one netizen had this to offer: "If he bought the white seats, he could've saved nine tickets." Unromantic and cheap? You have won my heart.

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