

Priceless Baby 501

Chapter 501: The End Of The World

Without waiting for Xu Xiyang's reaction, he added, "Hey, Jing Xi, you two are close. Can you help ask her whether she's found someone else?"

Ma Haodong suspected there was another man because he had overheard Xiao Yuqian talking on the phone with someone, and whoever it was on the other end had called her "dear."

Ma Haodong was proud of his manly instincts; they were, in his opinion, as keen as a dog's sense of smell. His instincts were now urging him to get to the bottom of the matter, ASAP, or risk getting cuckolded.

"Sure. I'll help you ask her when I see her next," Xu Xiyang promised.

"Don't wait. I'm pretty sure you don't have any scenes to shoot this afternoon. Go ask her once you're done here."

In his current state of insecurity, every passing second felt like an eternity to Ma Haodong. He wished he could whisk Xu Xiyang over to Xiao Yuqian that very minute and get the whole thing sorted out.

"I can't. I have to go to the hospital, Ms. Qi's surgery is this afternoon."

"Do you want me to drive you there?"

"No, I'm good, thanks."

After wrapping up all her scenes for the day, Xu Xiyang hurried over to the hospital.

The surgery to remove the tumor in Qi Liya's uterus was scheduled to take place at two o'clock in the afternoon. Xu Xiyang and Xiao Ke, Qi Liya's assistant, accompanied Qi Liya to the door of the operating room.

Dr. Xia, Qi Liya's doctor, was already waiting inside the operating room with his surgical team.

Qi Liya was nervous. She grabbed hold of Xu Xiyang's hand in her panic. Xu Xiyang said soothingly. "Ms. Qi, don't be afraid. I have it all worked out, everything will be fine."

Qi Liya had already entered the operating room when Huang Guoqiang finally appeared, drenched in sweat and clutching a bouquet of bright red roses.

He spotted Xu Xiyang and said hastily, "Sorry I'm late, I got caught in traffic. Where's Little Qi?"

"Ms. Qi is already inside the operating room. Now we'll just have to wait patiently for her to come out."

Xu Xiyang looked at the flowers in his hand. She smiled as she said teasingly, "I didn't expect you to be a romantic, Director Huang. I'm sure this will be a pleasant surprise for Ms. Qi!"

Huang Guoqiang was going to propose to Qi Liya that very day. At that moment, he was as excited as a 20-year-old boy. "I'll need your help, you cheeky little devil. Help me get her to say yes."

"I can't make any guarantees. It all depends on how sincere you are about this, Director Huang."

"Of course. I'm entirely devoted to her, 200%."

The two of them exchanged a knowing smile.

Xu Xiyan was rooting for Huang Guoqiang; she wanted to see him win Qi Liya's heart. If Qi Liya accepted his proposal, Xu Xiyan would be the first to give them her blessings.

They waited for almost three hours before the light above the operating room finally dimmed. The door swung open, and a nurse wheeled Qi Liya out.

Xu Xiyan, Huang Guoqiang, and Xiao Ke immediately clustered around Qi Liya. They asked her how she was doing.

Qi Liya was feeling depressed. After entering the operating room, the nurse had given her some kind of pill that had quickly knocked her out. When she woke up, she was told that the tumor had been removed—along with her uterus.

It was the end of the world for Qi Liya.

She was no longer a complete woman. She was no longer qualified to be a woman.

The look of concern on Xu Xiyan's face, coupled with Huang Guoqiang's steady, earnest gaze, proved to be too much for her to take. She broke down and wept tears of sorrow.

The nurse wheeled Qi Liya into her private hospital room, and left her so she could be alone with her friends.

Xu Xiyan helped her dry her tears. She said comfortingly, "Don't be sad, Ms. Qi. This may turn out to be a blessing in disguise. And besides, you still have us."

"Thank you."

Qi Liya was sad and touched at the same time. Her tears streamed endlessly down her cheeks.

Just then, Xu Xiyan gave Huang Guoqiang a pointed look. Huang Guoqiang walked over to the hospital bed, and revealed the flowers he had been hiding behind his back.

Qi Liya's eyes widened in surprise at the large bouquet of red roses that were being held out to her. Tears clung to her eyelashes as she stared at the man standing before her. "Director Huang, you..."

Chapter 502: Marry Me

Huang Guoqiang had already planned out a speech in advance and memorized it, but now he found himself unable to recall a single word. His mind had blanked out. His forehead was drenched in nervous sweat, and his hands trembled.

"Director Huang, what do you want to say to Ms. Qi? Say it, quick!" whispered Xu Xiyan from beside him.

"I... Q-Qi... Liya... I... I..."

Huang Guoqiang was going nowhere with his seemingly endless stammering. Beside him, Xu Xiyan and Xiao Ke felt like they were about to die of suspense.

Xu Xiyan watched with increasing amusement as Huang Guoqiang stuttered and blushed. Who could have guessed that the famous director, so awe-inspiring with his confident, no-nonsense attitude on the set, would be gaping like a goldfish now?

"What are you trying to say, Director Huang?"

Qi Liya's grief faded into the background as she turned her attention towards the man before her. She was puzzled: what was Huang Guoqiang trying to do? Why had he suddenly brought her roses?

Huang Guoqiang felt that the love confession he had asked his screenwriter to write for him was too artificial and insincere. He could not bring himself to recite it.

He struggled for a long time before finally blurting out, "Little Qi, I'm an unsophisticated man, I don't know how to express myself with fancy, pretty words. This bouquet is for you, I want to tell you I... I-I... I love you. I want you to marry me!"

Qi Liya: "..."

She was caught entirely off guard. She had not expected Huang Guoqiang to suddenly confess his love for her.

Why was he proposing to her now, right after her surgery? She had just had her womb removed. Had he been kicked in the head by a donkey?

A wave of bitterness passed through Qi Liya's heart. She shook her head and said with a pained expression, "I'm sorry, Director Huang. You know of my... condition... I... I can no longer.... Doesn't it bother you?"

Huang Guoqiang understood her concern: she could not accept his feelings for her because she felt that she was no longer a complete woman. She no longer had a womb, and would never be able to have children of her own.

He was determined to set her mind at ease. "I know. I know what you lost, but it doesn't matter. Your health is the only thing that matters. It doesn't bother me at all, Little Qi. In fact, I feel like you should be the one turning your nose up at me. I had a failed marriage, a long time ago. I'm divorced, I have a 17-year-old son. I've been in love with you for a very long time, but I was too afraid to confess my feelings for you. I knew you would never be attracted to a middle-aged divorcee like me."

He strongly felt that he wasn't worthy of her, that he would be the one weighing her down in their relationship.

If it hadn't been for Jing Xi, who had seized the opportunity to try to bring them together, he would have kept his feelings to himself for the rest of his life.

Qi Liya listened to him confess his love for her. She was so touched by his sincere explanation she felt like crying tears of joy.

She had been aware of Huang Guoqiang's concern and love for her for some time now, but had pretended to be too dense to notice

Her previous romance with Peng Sicheng had wounded her terribly, and she had shied away from love ever since. Her heart had been closed off to everyone.

But the operation had opened her eyes.

She had lost the ability to be a mother, but instead of abandoning her, Huang Guoqiang was now asking her to marry him.

How could she not be touched by his love and devotion?

Her heart wasn't made out of stone. On lonely nights, she longed for a man she could depend on to love her and keep her company.

That man had finally appeared, but Qi Liya no longer had the confidence to take his hand. "No. You're a good man, but I'm no longer a complete woman. I'm no longer qualified to be a wife or mother. This is my problem, I don't want to drag you into this."

Huang Guoqiang knew she was a kind soul who wanted to spare him from the burden of her misery.

Chapter 503: A Blessing In Disguise

But Huang Guoqiang did not consider Qi Liya's condition to be a burden.

He took a step forward and knelt on one knee before the bed. He took her hand and said affectionately, "Do you really think I care about that? If I did, I wouldn't be standing here now."

Qi Liya: "..."

"So you won't be able to have children of your own. There's nothing wrong with that. If you marry me, you'll be the mother to my son. If you don't like him, well, we can adopt a child of our own. It's all up to you."

Huang Guoqiang was no longer as nervous as he had been in the beginning. He grew increasingly confident as he poured his heart out to her, hoping that it would be enough to make her understand how much he loved her.

He was in love with who she was, not one of her organs.

So what if she was missing one of her organs? He would never stop loving her.

Huang Guoqiang had said everything he had to say. He reached into his pocket and fished out a round box.

He opened the box, revealing the shiny diamond ring lying inside.

"Little Qi, will you marry me? I swear to love you with all my heart, now and forever."

"..." Qi Liya looked at the diamond ring as tears sparkled in her eyes. She was deeply touched.

The gods had taken her health away. In return, they had given her a man who sincerely loved her. It had been a blessing in disguise.

Beside them, Xu Xiyan and Xiao Ke had also been moved to tears.

But Qi Liya remained silent. Xu Xiyan and Xiao Ke wrung their hands nervously as they tried to persuade Qi Liya:

"Say yes, Ms. Qi! Director Huang loves you so, so much!"

"Marry him, Ms. Qi. Just say yes..."

Qi Liya finally nodded. There were tears in her eyes as she accepted Huang Guoqiang's marriage proposal.

Huang Guoqiang could hardly contain his joy and excitement. He immediately plucked the ring out of the box and put it on Qi Liya's ring finger. Then he lowered his head, kissed the back of her hand, and said, "Thank you, Mrs. Huang. Thank you for marrying me."

To celebrate the successful marriage proposal, Xu Xiyan and Xiao Ke popped party poppers, showering Qi Liya with pretty rainbow confetti as they gave their blessings.

"Director Huang, Ms. Qi, I wish the both of you happiness."

Qi Liya's tears gave way to laughter. She chided her friends gently, saying, "This is a hospital room. Isn't this going a little too far?"

"Nope, not at all. Congratulations, Ms. Qi! You've been discharged. You can go home today!" Xu Xiyan announced cheerfully.

"Discharged?" Qi Liya was confused. Why had she been discharged? She had just been in the operating room.

Xu Xiyan told her the truth. "Ms. Qi, you don't actually have a tumor in your uterus. You were given sleeping pills in the operating room, but that was it. Nobody actually operated on you, nobody removed your womb."

Qi Liya's confusion deepened. "What do you mean? Are you saying that the two of you lied to me because you wanted me to accept the marriage proposal?"

Huang Guoqiang hastily explained: "Liya, you misunderstand. You have to thank Jing Xi, because..."

Huang Guoqiang and Xu Xiyan finally told Qi Liya the whole truth.

Qi Liya shuddered. "Who's trying to sabotage me?"

Who had been so cruel as to try to rob her of her uterus with a fake cancer surgery?

"Don't worry, Liya. I'll find out who's been trying to harm you, and make sure they regret it," Huang Guoqiang solemnly vowed.

"The doctor and nurse behind this are under our control now. All we have to do is interrogate them, and we'll know who's been pulling the strings behind the scenes," Xu Xiyan explained.

Qi Liya was sincerely grateful to Xu Xiyan for once again saving her. They had not known each other for long, but Xu Xiyan had proven herself to be a true friend. "Thank you, Jing Xi."

"Okay, that's enough 'thank you's' for today. C'mon, it's time to pack up and go home."

Chapter 504: A Huge Sacrifice

Xu Xiyan and Xiao Ke leapt into action: they helped Qi Liya change into a beautiful dress, and then put some light makeup on her face.

With their help, Qi Liya was restored to her former beauty: she was once again a resplendent goddess.

Qi Liya held the flower bouquet in her hand as she walked out of the hospital with Huang Guoqiang beside her. Xu Xiyan and Xiao Ke followed behind them.

The four of them had just exited the hospital when suddenly, they found themselves surrounded by reporters. The reporters pointed their cameras at Qi Liya and Huang Guoqiang and snapped away.

Qi Liya had not expected to see so many reporters waiting outside the hospital. She suddenly panicked; she did not know what to do.

She automatically tried to move away from Huang Guoqiang to avoid spreading unnecessary gossip, but the director put his arm firmly around her shoulders and nonchalantly faced the reporter's cameras.

He gave her a reassuring look and whispered into her ear: "I asked them to come. I want them to be witness to our happiness."

Qi Liya was so touched by his gesture she found herself unable to speak.

Back when she had been dating Peng Sicheng, Peng Sicheng had concealed their relationship in order to pursue his dream of being a director.

She would never forget how that had felt. She had become Peng Sicheng's clandestine lover, his dirty little secret. That was when their romance began its downward spiral into disappointment and heartbreak.

Her love for him had eventually turned into overwhelming pain. She had been suffocated by the pressure.

Back then, she had not been able to figure out why Peng Sicheng was reluctant to make their relationship public.

Now she understood: Peng Sicheng had never loved her. He had loved only himself.

The reporters who had heard from Director Huang about the marriage proposal began to ask questions. "Director Huang, is it true that you proposed to Ms. Qi Liya? Did she say yes?"

Huang Guoqiang smiled as he raised Qi Liya's hand to show the reporters their interlaced fingers—and the large diamond sparkling on Qi Liya's ring finger.

The reporters were almost blinded by the shiny diamond.

Qi Liya's fears were unfounded; the reporters did not start asking nasty questions. As soon as they saw that the marriage proposal had been a success, they showered the couple with their sincere blessings.

“Director Huang, congratulations on your successful marriage proposal!”

“When's the wedding?”

“Will the wedding be held inside the country, or abroad?”

“Qi Liya, will you remain in showbiz now that you're married?”

Most of the reporters' questions revolved around their marriage, and Huang Guoqiang took it upon himself to provide simple, concise answers.

Qi Liya stepped forward to answer the question about her career plans post-marriage. “Thank you for your blessings. I may take a break from acting once I'm done shooting ‘Red Sleeved Beauty.’”

Huang Guoqiang was shocked to hear that Qi Liya was actually considering putting her career on hold. He had not expected her to announce to the reporters that she would be taking a break from acting during such a successful point in her career.

He could not help but wonder if she was only taking a break from showbiz because she was marrying him. It was a huge sacrifice.

It was almost unheard of for a successful star to willingly give up their career in order to concentrate on their marriage.

Huang Guoqiang was deeply touched. He pulled Qi Liya closer to him as he said to the reporters, “Whatever she decides, Liya has my full support. Even if she retires from acting, I'll make enough money for the two of us.”

With that, news of Huang Guoqiang and Qi Liya's romance and the director's successful marriage proposal spread like wildfire. It made the headlines of every entertainment news site.

That night, Xu Xiyan hurried back to the set for “Root of Evil.” Just as she walked onto the set, she bumped into the director, Peng Sicheng.

“Hey, Jing Xi, come here. I want to ask you something.”

Peng Sicheng had seen the news, and had spotted Jing Xi standing beside the happy couple in the news footage. He wanted to ask her what she knew about the whirlwind romance.

Xu Xiyan followed the director to the production meeting room. She asked curiously, “What is it, Director Peng?”

Chapter 505: His Private Property

Peng Sicheng paced back and forth, visibly struggling with himself. Finally, he asked, “Were you there when Director Huang proposed?”

“Yeah.”

Xu Xiyan did not know that Peng Sicheng had once been in a romantic relationship with Qi Liya.

“He proposed for real? And Qi Liya agreed? It isn't some kind of publicity stunt for her new show?” Peng Sicheng asked all three questions in one breath.

Xu Xiyan laughed. “Oh, you're so funny, Director Peng. Of course it was a real proposal, and yes, she agreed. It isn't a publicity stunt.”

Peng Sicheng was now visibly upset. He mumbled to himself, “How did she end up with him? What's so great about Huang Guoqiang, the old fart? She's a...”

He wanted to say “she's a flower stuck onto a pile of cow dung, what a waste,” but managed to stop himself just in time.

All this while, Peng Sicheng had subconsciously considered Qi Liya to be his private property.

He had assumed that there had been zero gossip about Qi Liya's love life since their breakup because she was still pining over him.

He had assumed that all he had to do was beckon to her, and Qi Liya would happily get back together with him.

But he was sure now that Qi Liya had lost her marbles.

Or perhaps she had agreed to Huang Guoqiang's proposal simply because she wanted to spite Peng Sicheng.

That had to be the reason. Why would she agree to marry an old fart who was divorced and had a son who was already 17 years old, if she wasn't trying to spite him?

Xu Xiyan felt that she had to speak up on behalf of Huang Guoqiang. “Director Peng, I think Director Huang is a good man. Do you remember when Huang Yanran, the leading lady in our production, had to take time off? It was a huge problem for you. You asked Director Huang if you could borrow me as a stand-in, remember? And Director Huang agreed to it, just like that. He's a man you can count on when you have a problem that needs fixing.”

Peng Sicheng: “...”

He felt like he had just been slapped in the face.

He could not come up with a rebuttal because Xu Xiyan was absolutely right.

He had asked to borrow an actor from Huang Guoqiang, and the director had readily agreed. Peng Sicheng was grateful to Huang Guoqiang for that.

But he hadn't foreseen then that Huang Guoqiang and Qi Liya would eventually end up together.

If he had known that Huang Guoqiang was interested in Qi Liya, he would have chosen to suffer the consequences than ask him for a favor.

Xu Xiyan was completely oblivious to the thoughts racing through Peng Sicheng's mind. She added, “You should have seen Director Huang. It was a truly touching proposal. If you ask me, I think Qi Liya agreed

to marry him because of his incredible, one-of-kind charisma. They belong together, he absolutely adores Qi—”

Peng Sicheng did not wait for Xu Xiyan to finish. He waved her away and said irritably, “That's enough. Go get ready, we'll be shooting the night scenes in a minute.”

“Okay.”

Before Xu Xiyan stepped out of the meeting room, she turned to look at Peng Sicheng and was surprised by his strange behavior. The director was obviously restless: he kept picking up his phone and then putting it down again. Once, he threw the script in his hand against the wall.

Xu Xiyan was confused. What was up with Peng Sicheng?

Why was he in such a bad mood? What, did men suffer from PMS too?

It was already close to 10 o'clock when Xu Xiyan was finally done shooting her night scenes.

As Xu Xiyan was packing up and getting ready to leave, Ma Haodong walked over to her. “Let's go, Jing Xi. I'll drive you.”

Xu Xiyan politely declined his offer. “That's okay. I drove here today.”

“Can't you let me do you a favor?” Ma Haodong whined. He wanted to do something nice for her so she would feel obliged to meet with Xiao Yuqian as soon as possible.

Xu Xiyan knew what he was trying to do. She smiled and said, “I want to, but I don't want my man to get jealous.”

“You mean Ni Yun?” Ma Haodong asked.

Ma Haodong guessed that she was referring to Ni Yun because she had previously told him that the person she loved most was Ni Yun.

Xu Xiyan laughed, but said nothing. She slung her backpack over her shoulder and walked off the set. Ma Haodong chased after her, feeling a little left out. “Hey, when are you going to introduce me to Ni Yun?”

Chapter 506: A Major Mistake

“Seriously, when can you introduce me to Ni Yun? I love his songs, I'm a huge fan. I know the lyrics to all his songs.”

“Maybe next time!”

Xu Xiyan hurried away. It wasn't yet time to let anyone else know about her relationship with Huo Yunshen.

Outside the set, Ma Haodong caught up with her and pointed towards his flashy sports car. “My car's parked just over there. You sure you don't want me to give you a lift?”

“Yes, I'm sure. I have my own car.”

Just then, she received a call from Huo Yunshen: he was waiting for her at the entrance of the studio lot. Xu Xiyan bade goodbye to Ma Haodong. "My man came to pick me up. I have to go now."

She had actually driven to the set in her Porsche, but she wasn't about to pass on an opportunity to spend more time with her prince charming. She left her Porsche in the studio lot and walked towards the studio gates.

From afar, she saw Huo Yunshen's RV parked by the side of the road. Xu Xiyan jogged towards it, her heart bursting with excitement.

She had just opened the door to the front cab and was about to get in when she felt a tap on her shoulder. She turned around: it was Ma Haodong.

"Huh? Why are you here?"

"My car broke down. It won't start. Can I hitch a ride?"

It was a bluff: there was nothing wrong with his sports car. Ma Haodong was shamelessly asking Xu Xiyan for a free ride because he wanted to see what Ni Yun looked like.

"..."

Xu Xiyan was now caught between a rock and a hard place.

If she agreed, Ma Haodong would discover Huo Yunshen's identity and her relationship with him.

"If your man can afford such a luxurious RV, I'm sure he must be a really generous, easy going person. I don't think he'd mind."

As Xu Xiyan wondered what to do, Ma Haodong boldly slipped past her and stepped into the front cab.

Ma Haodong was fearless and determined: he was going to get into the RV and see who Ni Yun was with his own eyes, come hell or high water.

"Wait, Brother Dong..."

It was too late now to stop him. Xu Xiyan was left with no choice but to enter the car after him and see the whole thing through.

As soon as Ma Haodong got into the front cab, he made his way to the RV section and opened the partition door.

He walked through the doorway. The luxurious furnishings inside the RV amazed him. Then his eyes fell upon the man in the wheelchair, sitting in the middle of the room, and Ma Haodong immediately froze in place.

This wasn't possible...

Huo Yunshen?

A.K.A. Elvis, the former international film star?

Former CEO of Yunhai Entertainment, and the new Huo Group CEO?

Were Huo Yunshen and Jing Xi in a romantic relationship? For real?

Was Ni Yun, the musical genius he practically worshipped, actually Huo Yunshen? Seriously?

Ma Haodong could only gape openly at the man before him. He could not move; he felt like a character in a kung fu movie who had just been immobilized by a jab to a pressure point.

Huo Yunshen had been reading a book while waiting for Xu Xiyan. When he heard the partition door open, he had assumed that it was Xu Xiyan.

He put down his book and looked up. Ma Haodong was also looking in his direction; their eyes met, sending a mild jolt of surprise through Huo Yunshen.

His superb memory told him that the man in front of him was an actor working with Huayin Entertainment.

He was Ma Haodong, the secondary male lead who shared many scenes with Xu Xiyan in “Root of Evil.”

Huo Yunshen recognized who the man was, but he did not say anything. He merely regarded Ma Haodong silently.

The awkward tension in the air was now thick enough to slice. Ma Haodong began to squirm under Huo Yunshen's dark, razor-sharp gaze.

Ma Haodong suddenly felt as though he were standing on a bed of nails. He was thoroughly uncomfortable; he could not help feeling like an interloper who had barged into a sacred, forbidden place. This had been a major mistake.

He had never had any dealings with the legendary showbiz king sitting before him, but he knew Huo Yunshen's character and the way he did things.

Everyone who crossed him always ended up regretting it.

Ma Haodong was overcome with the urge to ask in a meek voice: “Have I offended you in some way, sir?”

Was it too late now to get out of the car?

Chapter 507: A Real Doozy

Just as Ma Haodong was thinking of backing out of the vehicle, Xu Xiyan squeezed in after him and said apologetically, “Sorry, Uncle, my friend's car broke down. Can he hitch a ride with us?”

Ma Haodong: “...”

He was now seriously contemplating biting off his tongue and offing himself. He deeply regretted lying about his car.

Ma Haodong was in fact overthinking it. Huo Yunshen was nowhere near as terrifying as he imagined him to be.

The real Huo Yunshen was easy to get along with. He was friendly to everyone, so long as they didn't try to provoke him or test his patience.

He considered a friend of Xu Xiyan's to be a friend of his.

The forbidding look in Huo Yunshen's eyes disappeared. He smiled pleasantly as he nonchalantly welcomed Ma Haodong into the RV: "Please, have a seat."

"..."

Ma Haodong was stunned and flattered at the same time. He remained standing with a star-struck expression on his face; Xu Xiyan had to tap him on the shoulder and lead him over to the sofa to sit down.

The RV was now cruising down the road, but Ma Haodong was still nervous and uneasy. He could not relax. He did not know how to chat with the formidable man before him.

He exchanged a few words with Jing Xi, but spent most of the time listening to Jing Xi chat with Huo Yunshen.

He had seen the way Jing Xi and Huo Yunshen looked at each other, and was now 100% certain that they were in love.

Xu Xiyan and Huo Yunshen talked about the scenes she had shot for "Root of Evil" earlier that day. She'd had to fight against Ma Haodong—for real—in all of them.

Huo Yunshen was worried that Xu Xiyan would be injured during a fight scene. He looked at Ma Haodong and said, "Mr. Ma, please try to go easy on Jing Xi in the remaining fight scenes. I would be grateful if you would do your best to make sure she's all right."

Xu Xiyan's heart warmed all over when she heard Huo Yunshen try to look out for her.

Ma Haodong nodded. "Yes, of course. You can count on me!"

Jing Xi's kicks and punches had been on point in every scene so far. Most of the time, Ma Haodong had been the one getting pummeled.

Ma Haodong gave an embarrassed smile. He mustered the courage to ask, "By the way, President Huo—are you really Ni Yun? Did you compose all those pop songs that are all the rage these days?"

Huo Yunshen did not answer. His shimmering eyes looked towards Xu Xiyan, as though asking her: How'd he find out?

Xu Xiyan's lips tightened apologetically as a helpless look crept over her face. She was saying: I didn't mean to expose you, I'm so sorry.

Huo Yunshen did not blame her. If Ma Haodong already knew he was Ni Yun, he might as well come clean. "Yes, I'm Ni Yun. But I composed those songs for fun, really."

He was Ni Yun!

Ma Haodong was now beyond excited. At the same time, he was amazed at the way Huo Yunshen had downplayed his accomplishments.

He was evidently a humble man, despite being the untouchable king of the business world.

Not everyone could achieve that level of humility and generosity.

As the RV continued to cruise along, Ma Haodong could not help marveling at Jing Xi and Huo Yunshen: they were truly an extraordinary couple.

Jing Xi had Huo Yunshen backing her—so why was she painstakingly eking a name out for herself by taking on stunt double roles and small supporting roles?

He could not understand why Xu Xiyan had not made full use of Yunhai Entertainment's resources. After all, her boyfriend was the legendary Huo Yunshen!

Huo Yunshen was the former head of Yunhai Entertainment and the current CEO of the Huo Group. He was a busy, successful businessman, and now he was even making his own music!

Acting was the only thing Ma Haodong was any good at. He felt himself dwindle into insignificance in front of the supernaturally talented man before him. Life wasn't fair!

The RV continued to speed along. Xu Xiyan asked, "Brother Dong, where do you want to get off?"

Ma Haodong looked out the window, and was surprised to see that they were actually passing through Xiao Yuqian's neighborhood. He immediately asked for the car to pull over so he could get off and look for his darling Qianqian.

Unfortunately for him, Xiao Yuqian was working overtime at her company. Just then, the phone she had left on her desk began to ring.

She picked up her phone, saw that it was from Wan Dou, and took the call. "Hello?"

Wan Dou's slightly anxious voice sounded over the phone. "President Xiao, have you checked the news online? There's new gossip about our boss. What should we do? It's a real doozy this time, I'm afraid Ms. Jing Xi might take it badly!"

Chapter 508: Shocking News

"What gossip? Let me see."

Xiao Yuqian ended the call and immediately turned on her computer to check the news sites.

There was a gossip piece about Huo Yunshen, headlined: [Shocking News! Award-winning Actor Huo Yunshen Has A Daughter! (Photos Inside)]

The "shocking news" lived up to its name. The article was forwarded and shared all over the internet in record time. The internet forums were flooded with discussions about it.

[Huo Yunshen already has a daughter? So I guess the earlier gossip about him having a gorgeous wife has to be true, right?]

[This proves that our prince charming can still do it, if you know what I mean. He has a child! All those trolls who kept saying he's impotent can get lost now.]

[OMG, that little girl in the photos, isn't that Cherry Baby, the internet child celebrity? I love her!]

[Is that little girl really Huo Yunshen's daughter?]

[She has to be! Look at her dimples, they're just like Huo Yunshen's. Man, those are some crazy powerful genes!]

[The little cutie pie is so pretty! I wonder who the mother is...?]

[OMG, I know our prince charming keeps a low profile, but a daughter, really?! Where'd she come from? This is crazy, I can't believe it!]

Xiao Yuqian's face darkened after reading the gossip piece and the internet comments. She was pretty sure the news was fake.

Huo Yunshen had just taken over the reins for the Huo Group and had attracted a lot of public attention because of that. He was the talk of the town.

Xiao Yuqian guessed that someone had noticed the dimples on Cherry Baby and decided to cash in on the current public interest surrounding Huo Yunshen by spinning a sensational clickbait story alleging that the little girl was Huo Yunshen's daughter.

She understood why Wan Dao was so nervous: Jing Xi might see the news and be upset with their boss.

It did not matter whether the news was true or false; the sudden existence of a child always spelled bad news for romantic relationships.

Previously, back when their boss was still part of Yunhai Entertainment, he'd had a professional PR team to help him deal with pesky gossip and rumors.

But their boss had resigned and taken over the Huo Group instead. That meant he would have to assemble a new PR team to help him deal with this new scandal.

Xiao Yuqian immediately forwarded the news to Huo Yunshen and left a voice message: "Boss, what do you think? Do you want me to get a PR team to help you deal with this?"

The RV had just entered Shengshi Yujing when Huo Yunshen received a link to a website from Xiao Yuqian.

He opened the link, and immediately frowned at what he saw.

He could not believe it: had the media exposed his relationship with Cherry?

How had they discovered Ying Bao's identity?

Xu Xiyan wheeled Huo Yunshen out of the RV and into his apartment.

Once they were inside, she noticed the worried look on Huo Yunshen's face and asked curiously, "What's wrong, Yunshen? Is everything all right?"

"It's nothing. Don't stay up too late, Jing Xi," Huo Yunshen replied simply.

"Okay. Good night."

Xu Xiyan guessed that he had a private matter to deal with. She returned to her own apartment through the crystal door.

Huo Yunshen waited until she had left before entering his study. He immediately called Xiao Yuqian and instructed her not to help him deal with the gossip through Jingyue Entertainment's connections. He would deal with it himself.

After that, he called Yi Xiao. "These are my orders, pass them on: I want a complete clampdown on the gossip. Find out the source of the news, and make sure to blacklist all the media outlets involved."

He was doing this mainly to ensure Ying Bao's personal safety.

He did not want Ying Bao to be exposed to the pressures of public opinion or dangers from the outside world. More importantly, he did not want her to be pulled into the shady world of showbiz. She was too young for that.

Meanwhile, in Xu Xiyan's apartment...

Xu Xiyan walked out of the shower and flopped onto her bed, feeling refreshed. She was about to call Ying Bao on her phone when her phone suddenly rang.

She looked at the number: it was Qi Liya. Xu Xiyan sat up and took the call. "Hi, Ms. Qi."

"Jing Xi, I have bad news. It's Director Huang. He's in trouble."

Chapter 509: Harassment

Qi Liya briefly explained to Xi Xiyan what had happened: Dr. Xia and the nurse who was his accomplice had been murdered.

Previously, when Xu Xiyan first overheard Dr. Xia and the nurse plotting to sabotage Qi Liya, she had deliberately allowed them to carry on with their plan because she wanted to uncover the actual mastermind hiding behind the scenes.

On the day of Qi Liya's surgery, Dr. Xia had been ready to operate on Qi Liya, confident that no one had caught on to his deceit.

Unfortunately for him, Xu Xiyan had secretly arranged for a few men to hide in the operating room and seize both Dr. Xia and the nurse before they could do anything to Qi Liya.

Qi Liya had not undergone surgery of any kind that day. She had fallen asleep after taking a sleeping pill, and was later told that she had been operated on.

The sham surgery had helped bring Huang Guoqiang and Qi Liya together. Huang Guoqiang had plucked up the courage to propose to Qi Liya, and Qi Liya had seen with her own eyes that the director's love for her was entirely sincere.

After the proposal, Xu Xiyan had informed the two of them of the truth. She had handed the scheming doctor and the nurse over to Huang Guoqiang, along with the recording of the conversation she had overheard.

But just as Huang Guoqiang was getting ready to personally interrogate the doctor and the nurse, they both had been murdered.

Huang Guoqiang became the primary suspect, and was now in police custody.

“Ms. Qi, don't worry. I'll come over to your place now. We'll discuss this in person.”

This was an unexpected turn of events for Xu Xiyan. She quickly dressed herself and left her apartment.

She was the one person who knew everything that had happened. She hoped she would be able to help prove Huang Guoqiang's innocence.

Xu Xiyan hurried over to Qi Liya's apartment. To her surprise, she saw that the man who had just entered the apartment building before her looked very much like Peng Sicheng, the director for “Root of Evil.”

She stealthily followed him, and saw him knocking on the door of Qi Liya's apartment.

Inside, Qi Liya ran to open the door. She froze when she saw who was on the other side.

She had been expecting Jing Xi, not Peng Sicheng.

She asked warily, “I wasn't expecting you...why are you here?”

Peng Sicheng frowned slightly. He said testily, “What, am I not welcome here?”

The Qi Liya he knew was a docile and obedient woman who always stayed up to welcome him home no matter how late he returned after drinking with his clients. She lit the night lamps and kept the dinner warm on the table for him.

Back when they had been dating, she had been extremely obliging and eager to please. She had been a faithful puppy at his beck and call.

But that was the old Qi Liya. They had long since broken up, and Qi Liya no longer wanted to have anything to do with him. She said frostily, “Sorry, but it's too late in the day for a visit. Please leave, Director Peng!”

She moved to close the door, but Peng Sicheng's hand shot out and grabbed hold of the door, preventing her from shutting it.

“Hey! What do you want? Please leave!”

Peng Sicheng did not want to believe that she was mercilessly turning him away. “Are you sure you'll be able to survive without me? Well, I don't think so! Don't you think it's incredibly stupid of you to give up on me?”

"I don't know where you're getting all these ideas from, Director Peng. All I know is that even after we broke up, the sun has continued to rise for me every morning. The earth is still spinning. I've never heard of anyone not being able to 'survive' just because they broke up with someone."

"But I heard that Huang Guoqiang was arrested for murder. Do you really want to throw your lot in with a murderer?"

This was the main reason Peng Sicheng had come to see Qi Liya. As her ex-boyfriend, he felt that it was his responsibility to remind her not to destroy her own future.

"He didn't kill anyone. I know he's not a murderer. They'll acquit him because he's innocent."

Peng Sicheng's hard, unwavering gaze was making Qi Liya feel uncomfortable. She said firmly, "It's late. Please leave, Director Peng. God knows what kind of gossip the paparazzi will cook up if they snap a photo of us together. I wouldn't want to ruin your career, Director Peng."

Previously, he had been terrified of the potential negative impact Qi Liya would have on his career. He had kept a careful distance from her and pretended she was a complete stranger to him whenever they were out in public.

This time, she had turned the tables on him. She was sweeping him out the door and telling him she didn't want anything to do with him.

Peng Sicheng was suddenly overcome with fear.

He was afraid that Qi Liya had made up her mind. He was afraid that she was no longer waiting for him.

The thought spurred Peng Sicheng into action. He lunged forward and hugged Qi Liya. "Liya, please, stop this silly tantrum. I know you're just trying to spite me. I get it now. Let's start over! I promise I won't let you down this time!"

Xu Xiyan was still watching in the shadows. By this point, she had more or less figured out the relationship between Peng Sicheng, Qi Liya, and Huang Guoqiang. She clucked her tongue: who could have guessed that Director Peng was actually Qi Liya's ex-boyfriend?

But Qi Liya had already given her heart to Huang Guoqiang. Surely it counted as harassment for the ex-boyfriend to visit her at home and pester her like this...?

Chapter 510: Kiss Her Again

Peng Sicheng had swallowed his pride to beg Qi Liya to get back with him.

Unfortunately for him, he had forgotten that time and distance were sometimes enough to cool the flames of love.

Qi Liya did not want him to touch her. She struggled fiercely to push him away. "Let go of me, Peng Sicheng! It's over. I'm not foolish enough to give you another chance to hurt me. Let me go!"

"Liya, I'm sorry. I know I was wrong."

Right after his apology, Peng Sicheng lowered his face towards hers. He was trying to kiss her again.

“Peng Sicheng! You're out of your mind!”

The smell of alcohol enveloped her. Qi Liya whipped her head to the side to dodge Peng Sicheng's incoming face. She slapped and pummeled him with her hands, but Peng Sicheng pushed her up against the door. His behavior towards her was becoming increasingly inappropriate.

Peng Sicheng found Qi Liya's defiant struggling to be inexplicably thrilling. He felt the urge to dominate her. He had been drinking, and the alcohol inside him was like fuel to the fire. He began kissing her neck with feverish excitement.

“Let go of me! Help... someone help me...”

Qi Liya was now scared out of her mind. She shouted desperately for help.

Bam!

She heard a muffled thud, and the man on top of her suddenly froze. In the next second, Peng Sicheng had released her and collapsed to the floor.

Qi Liya was dumbfounded. She turned and saw Jing Xi, holding a fire extinguisher.

Jing Xi had arrived in the nick of time to save her!

“Ms. Qi, are you okay?”

Upon seeing Peng Sicheng sexually harassing Qi Liya, Xu Xiyuan had immediately picked up the fire extinguisher next to her and slammed it against the man's head.

“I'm okay, I'm fine...”

Qi Liya gasped for breath as she pulled the torn neckline of her dress together.

“I had no idea Director Peng was such a disgusting pig!” Xu Xiyuan said with heartfelt revulsion as she kicked the man lying on the floor. He did not move. “Uh-oh, crap, is he dead?”

Xu Xiyuan quickly knelt and put a finger under Peng Sicheng's nose. He was still breathing.

She patted her chest in relief: Thank the gods, he was only unconscious. She hadn't killed him, just knocked him out.

“What do we do now, Jing Xi?”

Qi Liya had been waiting for Jing Xi to come over so they would be able to go to the police station together.

But Peng Sicheng had suddenly showed up, out of the blue, and disrupted their plans. Qi Liya's thoughts were in a jumble; she did not know what to do.

Xu Xiyuan said to Qi Liya, “Ms. Qi, go get changed. I'll take care of Director Peng.”

“Okay, if you say so.”

Qi Liya had complete trust in Jing Xi. She hurried back into her apartment and changed her clothes.

Xu Xiyan placed her hands under Peng Sicheng's arms and dragged him outside, muttering apologies to him along the way: "So sorry, Director Peng. You'll just have to put up with this."

Xu Xiyan had just finished taking care of Peng Sicheng when Qi Liya walked out of her apartment in a new set of clothes. Xu Xiyan asked her to get in her car, and the two of them sped towards the police station.

Qi Liya was still feeling uneasy. "Jing Xi, where is he?"

Xu Xiyan kept a hand on the steering wheel as she pointed towards the trunk with her other hand. She quirked an eyebrow at Qi Liya. "In the back."

Qi Liya stared. Had Xu Xiyan stuffed Peng Sicheng into the trunk, all on her own?

What was she, the Incredible Hulk?

"What are we going to do with him?"

They couldn't keep him in the trunk forever.

Xu Xiyan had an idea. She asked, "Ms. Qi, do you know where Director Peng lives?"

"Yeah."

"Great, that makes this a lot easier."

Xu Xiyan's plan was to take Peng Sicheng back to his house. He was still the director of her current show, after all; she couldn't just dump him by the side of the road.

After sending Peng Sicheng back home, the two women hurried to the police station to give their witness testimony for Huang Guoqiang's case.

Before heading to the station, Xu Xiyan contacted Huo Yunshen and explained to him what was going on.

She ended her explanation with a request for a favor: would he be able to get someone in the police station to arrange a meeting with Huang Guoqiang?

Huo Yunshen was extremely efficient. He sent his instructions to Yi Xiao, and before long, everything had been sorted out.