

Priceless Baby 571

Chapter 571: Sexy

During Ying Bao's stay in the hospital, the winds of change began to blow through the entertainment industry.

The previous gossip about Ying Bao's father had been bumped off the radar by news about Xu Xinrou's miscarriage.

News of her miscarriage triggered a chain reaction: it was soon followed by news of Huo Jingtang breaking up with her, rumors that Chu Yuhe was the real father of the child she had lost, and other such scandalous gossip. There seemed to be no end to it.

In the fallout, Xu Xinrou was kicked off the production for "Red Sleeved Beauty."

For the first time in her career, she had been written out of a show.

In the show, her character, Meng Zhaoyi, was given a tragic ending. She was banished to the Cold Palace where she lived out the rest of her miserable existence in isolation, as punishment for her evil deeds.

Some speculated that Xu Xinrou had been "iced." Others were of the opinion that Xu Xinrou's career would never recover from this blow.

Xu Xinrou lay on her hospital bed, convinced that there was no one more miserable than she was right now. She had lost her child, lost the man backing her, and had even missed out on the audition for ROSUE.

Little did she know that a good friend of hers would soon be accompanying her in her fall from grace.

On the second day of Yang Qiong's audition, news of her inappropriate relationship with her uncle began to circulate on the internet.

All the media outlets were sharing the scandalous, revolting news of Yang Qiong and Yang Bin's illicit sexual relations in a private hotel room.

Yang Qiong, who had a reputation for being an list Kung Fu Actress, was mercilessly roasted in the online forums.

[Ugh, she turned out to be another casting couch whore. I was naïve enough to think she earned her status and reputation with her acting skills!]

[WTF, she did it with her own uncle? That's incest! Has she no shame?!]

[The entertainment industry should blacklist Yang Qiong. She doesn't deserve any acting roles.]

[Gross! Gross! Gross!]

[Her uncle is just as bad. What a disgusting pair!]

After that, Yang Qiong's dirty laundry was exposed in quick succession: her casting couch roles, her divlike behavior on set, the way she bullied newcomers, and so on and so forth.

Her scandals were enough to kill her career for good.

As a result of all the negative press surrounding her, the companies she had celebrity endorsement deals with asked to break off their contracts with her. They also demanded compensation for the damage done to their brand images.

Yang Qiong's talent agency could do nothing for her. Instead of helping her put out the fire with a PR team, the agency announced that Yang Qiong was responsible for her own actions: she would have to deal with the consequences herself because the company had nothing to do with it.

That meant that Yang Qiong had been “iced.”

If she wanted to make a comeback in the future, she would have to undergo plastic surgery so no one would recognize her.

When Xu Xiyan saw the news, she let out a whoop of satisfaction.

Serves her right!

Yang Qiong had gone to extreme lengths for her revenge, but had ended up destroying her own future.

Xu Xiyan learned from this incident that Huo Yunshen was no ordinary “overprotective hubby.” Her enemies would have to think twice before attempting to cross her now!

Xu Xiyan walked into the kitchen, dressed only in Huo Yunshen's shirt. Huo Yunshen's back was turned towards her; he was busy preparing breakfast. She walked over to him and hugged him from behind.

“Thank you, hubby. I'm grateful for everything you do for me.”

Her gratitude was heartfelt and sincere. He had quietly assisted her whenever she needed help, without telling her about it, and she owed her peaceful, carefree life to him.

Huo Yunshen put down the kitchen utensil in his hand and turned around. He held her shoulders and kept her at arm's length as he looked her over.

She was dressed only in a man's shirt that hung loose upon her like a nightgown, leaving her curvy figure underneath to the imagination. It was extremely sexy and suggestive.

“Dressed so sexy so early in the morning? Are you trying to hint at something?”

“Hint at something? This is an open invitation!”

“Good, you catch on quick.”

Huo Yunshen gave her a quick peck on the lips before scooping her up in his arms and carrying her bridal-style to the bedroom.

Chapter 572: Artificial

Now that their ship appeared to be sailing smoothly towards a dazzling future, Xu Xiyan and Huo Yunshen finally had the time to enjoy each other's company without worrying what was going on in the outside world.

As for the rest of the people in showbiz, there was now some good news to balance out the previous torrent of scandals.

For example, the first half of “Red Sleeved Beauty” had shattered the previous record for highest viewer ratings.

As the story unfolded, viewers became increasingly invested in Xu Xiyan's character, the palace maiden, Yao Yue.

“Majestic Land,” the theme song for “Red Sleeved Beauty,” quickly spread throughout the internet. Soon, almost everyone had listened to it.

Many people were surprised to find that Ni Yun had composed the melody for “Majestic Land.” This was his first time composing a classical-style melody.

It was a masterpiece!

They were also surprised to learn that the lyrics were by Jing Xi. The universally praised classical-style theme song for the show was a duet sung by Jing Xi and Ni Yun.

Thanks to the song, the show's audience and Ni Yun's fans now knew that Jing Xi had a lovely singing voice. In fact, her voice and Ni Yun's complemented each other perfectly.

She had previously acted in Ni Yun's MV, and now she had contributed her singing voice to his song. Her talent won over the hearts of many on the internet.

Ni Yun's fans were amazed and curious at the same time: what was Jing Xi's relationship with their idol Ni Yun?

In a previous interview, Jing Xi had admitted that her prince charming was Ni Yun. Were the rumors true?

A good theme song was always a boost to the popularity of a show; the ratings for “Red Sleeved Beauty” continued to climb as the list of glowing reviews grew ever longer.

After Xu Xinrou had been dropped from the production, Director Huang Guoqiang invited the famous list actress Ning Xin to join the show for the next arc of palace politics.

On the day it was announced that Ning Xin would be joining the production, she accepted an interview request from a reporter.

The reporter asked in the interview: “Ning Xin, I heard that you and Yang Qiong are close. Are you aware of her recent scandals?”

Ning Xin smiled pleasantly. “I think there's been a misunderstanding. Yang Qiong isn't a friend of mine, just an acquaintance. I met her during an audition once, but that was it. I don't really know her. As for her recent news, I think it's such a pity. That's all I have to say. Thank you.”

Yang Qiong was her friend, but Ning Xin had chosen to distance herself from her as soon as she was in trouble. It was human nature.

Show business was chaotic, shady, and nebulous. Most people in showbiz chose to protect themselves at all costs—no one was dumb enough to willingly step into a puddle of filthy water.

Even so, everyone now knew that Ning Xin was a fair-weather friend. Her “friendship” with Yang Qiong had been entirely artificial.

But all the news paled in comparison to the best news of all: the darling angel Ying Bao was finally going to be discharged from the hospital!

It was now time for Ying Bao to leave the hospital and go home.

Ying Bao's great-grandfather, Jing Huaduo, Ye Xun, Huo Sanyan, Fang Xiaocheng, Wang Dazhi, Lu Qiancheng, and Tang Feimo had all come to the hospital to celebrate her recovery.

The gauze on the little girl's head had already been removed. The doctor had given her one final checkup and confirmed that she was now healthy enough to go home.

Xu Xiyan had dressed her daughter in a cheery little red dress and arranged her hair into tiny space buns atop her head, tied with cherry ornament hair elastics. The little girl was in good spirits, and looked it.

The adorable little girl looked at the adults in the room, who were all smiling and clapping happily. She said joyfully, “Wow, I must be the happiest, luckiest little girl in the whole wide world!”

Xu Xiyan had to suppress a laugh: her daughter was too easily satisfied.

She had evidently forgotten how much she had suffered. She had almost died!

Xu Xiyan kissed her daughter's tiny face, her heart filled with tender happiness.

She was glad Ying Bao was still with her; her daughter was her beacon of hope.

Chapter 573: Piggyback Ride

“Come, darling, put on your shoes. Let's go home.”

Ying Bao was sitting on the edge of the bed. Xu Xiyan helped her daughter put on her tiny leather shoes.

Jing Huaduo had been feeling guilty all this time for losing sight of Ying Bao on the day of her kidnapping. He said kindly, “Ying Bao, how about I carry you?”

Ying Bao pursed her tiny lips together. She looked him over and shook her head. “I don't want Great-grandpa to carry me. You're an old man, your bones break easily. They may break if you carry me.”

“Haha... oh, you...”

Jing Huaduo did not know whether to laugh or be offended. He hadn't expected the little girl to remember the things he had told her!

Ye Xun opened his arms and asked, “My sweet little daughter, how about a hug?”

Again, the little girl shook her head. She said seriously, "Uncle Tree-Leaf, you should go hug Auntie Sanyan instead. Don't keep her waiting!"

What was she talking about?

The little kid was already trying to match-make the adults around her. Surely it wasn't a good idea to encourage something like that?

Ye Xun blushed a bright red as the other adults in the room burst into laughter.

Huo Sanyan's heart overflowed with love for her little niece. What a thoughtful, considerate child! How wonderful of the little girl to try to get certain "benefits" for her aunt!

Tang Feimo squeezed past the adults and volunteered himself. "Little Cherry, let me give you a piggyback ride!"

He smiled, revealing his small perfect teeth. His handsome little face glowed with excitement.

He could hardly wait to carry his little bride on his back, the way grooms traditionally carried their brides on their wedding day.

"Why do you want to give me a piggyback ride?"

"Because you're my little bride!" Tang Feimo answered matter-of-factly.

Cherry cocked her head as she considered Tang Feimo's small back. She suddenly asked, "Feimo, when did you become the piggy, Zhu Bajie? I know Zhu Bajie gave his bride a piggyback ride!"

Tang Feimo: "..."

Oh well. For his adorable little bride, he was willing to become the pig, Zhu Bajie.

"I don't mind being Zhu Bajie this time. So do you want me to give you a piggyback ride?" Tang Feimo turned his head to ask.

"I don't want that. I want Feimo to stay handsome forever." Ying Bao extended her tiny hand towards Huo Yunshen. "I want Daddy to carry me!"

Huo Yunshen stepped forward with open arms and hugged his daughter. "All right, you're coming home with Daddy."

"Okay. Let's go home."

Back in Shengshi Yujing, in Xu Xiyan's apartment...

Ying Bao followed Xu Xiyan into the living room. She stood in the middle of the room, cocked her head to the side, and asked her mother: "Xi baby, can I live here now? Is this a dream?"

As a result of her kidnapping, Ying Bao had found her real father, and could now live with both her mommy and daddy. For a small child like her, it was as though Christmas had come early.

But she had to confirm it with her mother because she knew firsthand that happiness wasn't easy to come by.

Xu Xiyan pinched her daughter's tiny cheeks. "Of course this isn't a dream, darling. You can live here now. And you can use both apartments!"

"That's great! Now I can be with Mommy forever!"

The cute little girl skipped happily to the crystal door. She opened the door and said excitedly, "Xi baby, I'm going to find Daddy."

She waited for Xu Xiyan to give her permission before running through the doorway to Huo Yunshen's apartment, shouting "Daddy!" as she went.

Huo Yunshen heard his daughter's voice. He emerged from one of the bedrooms and waved to her. "Daddy's here. Come here, Cherry."

Ying Bao ran happily towards Huo Yunshen, who pointed to the bedroom he had just come out of and said, "Look at the room Daddy prepared for you. Do you like it?"

Chapter 574: No Longer An Illegitimate Child

Huo Yunshen had prepared a princess-themed room for Ying Bao. The room had been decorated entirely in warm pastel colors, and was equipped with a full set of matching furniture.

The ceiling had been specially decorated with star-shaped nightlights of different sizes. At night, with the nightlights on, the ceiling would be transformed into a starry sky.

Huo Yunshen had carefully picked out everything in the room for Ying Bao, from the Minnie bed sheets and the decorative lamps to the toys and the storybooks on the colorful bookshelves.

Ying Bao's jaw dropped when she entered the room.

Wow, what a beautiful room!

It was covered in her favorite colors, and she absolutely adored the Minnie patterns.

It was the prettiest room she had ever seen. Surely only a beautiful princess was worthy of living in it?

"Wow~ It's just as pretty as a princess's room in a fairy tale. I love it."

Ying Bao skipped around the room, unable to contain her excitement. "Daddy, are you sure I'm allowed to stay in such a pretty room?"

Huo Yunshen nodded, smiling. "Yup." He tapped her on her little nose as he said indulgently, "I prepared this just for my beautiful little princess."

"Yay! Long live Daddy!"

Ying Bao planted a kiss on Huo Yunshen's cheek, and then ran joyfully to the child-sized bed. She took off her shoes, climbed onto the bed, and began playing with a teddy bear.

Huo Yunshen's heart almost melted into a puddle of warm goo when he saw how happy his daughter was.

Whenever he thought of how she had missed out on a father's love for the last 4 years, Huo Yunshen was seized with the urge to give her the best of everything in the entire world.

That evening, Xu Xiyan made dinner, and the family of three sat at the dining table together to eat.

Ying Bao was elated; her father and mother were taking turns adding food to her plate. She picked up her tiny spoon and began wolfing down her food; everything seemed extra delicious.

She said in between mouthfuls of food, "I want to sleep with Daddy and Mommy tonight. I want Daddy to tell me a bedtime story."

Huo Yunshen nodded. "Okay, sure. It's a promise."

It was such a simple request. His daughter was so easily satisfied!

The three of them finished their dinner, showered, and climbed into bed.

Huo Yunshen lay on Ying Bao's left, while Xu Xiyan lay on her right. Ying Bao lay between them, enveloped in happiness. She couldn't stop smiling.

She wanted to tell all the other children in the world that she was no longer an illegitimate child. She had a Daddy and a Mommy. She had a family.

Huo Yunshen finished his bedtime story, only to discover that Ying Bao was already asleep. He could see the dimples on her cheeks—she had gone to sleep with a smile on her face.

She wasn't the only one asleep; her mother, too, had dozed off.

Huo Yunshen's cheeks dimpled as he watched the two of them sleep peacefully. His heart was now whole and complete.

He felt like the king of the world now that Xu Xiyan and his daughter were in his life. They meant everything to him.

One was his queen, while the other was his little princess. They were his greatest treasures.

He leaned over and kissed his little princess on the forehead. After that, he kissed his queen on the lips. He turned off the lights and settled back into bed with them.

He closed his eyes and followed his queen and princess into dreamland.

It was a new day.

Ying Bao opened her eyes and saw that she was still snuggled between her father and mother. This made her very happy.

She turned her head to the left and right to plant a kiss on her parents' cheeks. It was so much fun for her to do this in secret!

Soon enough, the two adults in bed woke up. They kissed Ying Bao on her cheeks as they greeted her: "Good morning, darling."

Chapter 575: Passionate Morning Make-out Session

“Good morning, Mommy. Good morning, Daddy. Good morning, sun. Good morning, little flower. Good morning, little bear. Good morning...”

The little girl was so excited she rattled off a long string of Good Mornings.

“Okay, time to get up. I'll get your clothes for you.”

Xu Xiyan got out of bed to get the clothes for her husband and daughter.

Huo Yunshen pulled his daughter into his arms. He tousled her hair and said, “Cherry, let's have a teeth-brushing contest. We'll see who finishes brushing their teeth first, okay?”

“Okay. But I already know I'll win!”

Ying Bao slipped out of bed, put on her tiny slippers, and ran happily to the bathroom.

When he saw that their daughter had left the room, Huo Yunshen's deep, dark eyes immediately turned into sultry bedroom eyes. He called for Xu Xiyan in a seductive voice: “Wifey~ Come here!”

His voice was just too sexy to resist.

Xu Xiyan's body trembled all over. She turned to look at him: he was lying on his side, his head propped up on a hand. He was staring at her hungrily.

What was he thinking, striking such a sexy pose so early in the morning? Was he getting out of bed or what?

“What is it? Aren't you getting up? We'll be late.”

Xu Xiyan laid his clothes on the bed. She had to hurry over to the set, and she knew he had a company meeting at his office that morning.

“I don't have the energy to get up.”

Huo Yunshen's cheeks dimpled as he suppressed a smile.

He sat up—and then collapsed onto the bed. He was showing her that he truly didn't have the energy to get up.

Xu Xiyan felt like laughing. She hadn't expected Huo Yunshen to be so childish. Was he trying to find an excuse to sleep in?

She knew exactly how to deal with someone who didn't want to get out of bed. She immediately pulled the blanket off of him, thinking: Hah, let's see if you can sleep in now!

As soon as the blanket was gone, she was greeted with the sight of his long legs and sexy black briefs. She almost forgot to breathe.

The sight was too much for her. Xu Xiyan's cheeks grew warm as she quickly looked away.

Huo Yunshen saw that she was momentarily stunned. He seized the opportunity to grab hold of her and pull her into his arms.

Xu Xiyan was caught off-guard; she gave a surprised shout as she fell on top of him. In the next second he had flipped their positions and was now kissing her ruthlessly.

After their passionate morning make-out session, Xu Xiyan had to catch her breath and wait for the room to stop spinning. "This means we're living together even though we aren't married, right? It'll be a huge scandal if this gets out."

"Why? We already have a daughter. It's only natural for a man to sleep with his wife," said Huo Yunshen matter-of-factly.

Xu Xiyan's cherry red lips pouted as she said coyly, "Who's your wife?"

Deep down, she was feeling all warm and fuzzy because he had called her his wife.

"You are. You already accepted my ring, you can't back out now."

As soon as he finished saying that, Huo Yunshen captured her lips once again.

He knew what she was worried about, and had made the necessary arrangements.

He wanted to make her his lawfully wedded wife. He wanted her to use his surname.

He wanted her name to appear on his marriage certificate. She would be his Mrs. Huo, for the rest of their lives.

Right when the two of them were making out once again, their daughter ran into the room to tell her father that she had finished brushing her teeth.

She cocked her head curiously at the sight of her father on top of her mother. "Huh? Daddy, Xi baby, what are you two doing?"

As soon as they heard Ying Bao's voice, Xu Xiyan and Huo Yunshen immediately flew apart, as though electrified. They adjusted their clothes and hair, flustered.

Xu Xiyan quickly calmed her ragged breathing and racing heart. She explained awkwardly, "Darling, we weren't doing anything."

Chapter 576: Simple Things

Instead of trying to cover it up like Xu Xiyan, Huo Yunshen pulled his daughter over and said seriously, "Daddy and Mommy were kissing. You'll have a little brother soon."

"Really? Mommy will have a little brother if Daddy kisses her?"

As soon as she heard she was going to get a little brother, Ying Bao's eyes lit up with excitement. She could hardly wait for her mother to give her a little brother so they would be able to play together.

Huo Yunshen nodded. "Yup, that's right."

Ying Bao was overjoyed. She urged him, "Then you have to keep kissing Mommy! I want to see my little brother soon. I want to play games with him. I want to teach him to sing!"

“...”

Xu Xiyan facepalmed. She wished Huo Yunshen would stop putting ideas into their daughter's head—she wasn't ready for a second child, not yet!

After breakfast, Huo Yunshen and Ying Bao walked Xu Xiyan to the door.

“Don't worry, I'll keep an eye on our daughter.”

“Okay.” Xu Xiyan bade goodbye to her husband and daughter.

Huo Yunshen was actively taking on the responsibility of looking after his daughter because he wanted to make up for lost time.

When he showed up at the Huo Group office building with Ying Bao in tow, the entire company exploded into gossipy chatter.

The rumors of Cherry Baby being his daughter had been the talk of town for some time, but no one had been able to prove it.

But today, they all saw with their own eyes that their president had brought his little darling princess with him to work, and the adorable little girl was none other than Cherry Baby, the net celebrity!

The dimples on the little girl's cheeks were an exact copy of Huo Yunshen's. She was really Huo Yunshen's daughter!

Now that the gossip had turned out to be true, the second question on everyone's mind was: Who was the child's mother?

Was it Rabbit Mommy, the woman wearing the pink rabbit mascot costume in their live streams?

This was Ying Bao's first visit to her father's company. She took in the tall building, the beautiful interior, and exclaimed, “Wow...My daddy is really rich!”

“Yeah. You and your mommy won't have to work hard to make money any more. Daddy will give you the best of everything.”

Huo Yunshen tousled the little girl's hair as he asked, “So what do you want? Tell Daddy.”

Ying Bao cocked her head to the side and thought about it. Suddenly, her eyes lit up. “Oh, I want a big kite! The kind with a long tail.”

Children were always wishing for such simple things!

Huo Yunshen suddenly remembered that he had promised his daughter he would fly a kite with her when he was able to walk again.

He said to her now, “All right. Daddy will give you a big kite with a long tail. We'll go fly it this afternoon. Is that okay?”

“Yes! I'm so happy!”

Huo Yunshen took his daughter to the president's floor. There was a small playground on that floor, built in accordance to his orders.

The playground was equipped with everything a child could ask for. Ying Bao would be able to spend her time happily playing inside.

Not wanting Ying Bao to feel lonely, he selected several of his employee's children, all around Ying Bao's age, to play with her inside.

This way, his daughter wouldn't feel bored when he was working.

Ying Bao loved her father's company. Not only was it big and beautiful, there was also an indoor playground, and plenty of other children playing with her. It was so much fun.

While they were playing together, a child named Niu Niu asked Ying Bao, "Cherry, which kindergarten do you go to?"

Ying Bao shook her head. "I'm not in kindergarten."

Niu Niu asked, "Why not? We're all in kindergarten, so why aren't you?"

Chapter 577: Filled With Envy

"Kindergarten is bad."

Ying Bao had given it some thought, but she could not overcome her fear.

Just the thought of her horrific experience at the E country kindergarten was enough to make her recoil in horror.

"No, our kindergarten is really fun! We play a lot of fun games every day, and they give us snacks to eat," Niu Niu said proudly.

Another little girl added, "Yeah, they even taught us how to paint and make things. Niu Niu, let's play the Woodman game!"

And with that, Niu Niu ran off to play with the other children who were also in kindergarten.

Ying Bao sat on the slide and watched them play together, her heart filled with envy.

It was clear now that not being in kindergarten made her different from everyone else. Niu Niu and the other children were able to sing the same nursery songs they had learned in kindergarten, and they knew the same dances and games. When they began talking about their kindergartens, Ying Bao couldn't get a word in because she didn't know what they were talking about.

When his meeting was over, Huo Yunshen walked out of his office to look for his daughter. He saw her sitting alone on a swing; she wasn't playing with the other children.

"Cherry, come here."

Ying Bao heard her father call for her. She immediately jumped off the swing and ran to her father, flinging herself into his arms and hugging him tight.

“Daddy~”

She sounded upset.

Huo Yunshen wondered what was wrong. He asked patiently, “What happened? Cherry? Why weren't you playing with the other girls?”

Ying Bao shook her head, her eyes filled with indignant tears. Before she could say anything, the tears rolled down her cheeks.

Huo Yunshen scooped his daughter up and carried her into his office. He shut the door and asked, “What happened? You can tell Daddy. Did someone bully you?”

“No...” Ying Bao shook her head and rubbed her eyes with the back of her tiny, pudgy hands. She pouted as she said, “They're all in kindergarten, so they play together. They don't want me to join them.”

Oh, was Ying Bao having trouble fitting in with the other kids because she wasn't attending kindergarten?

Huo Yunshen looked at his daughter's tiny, innocent face, his heart filled with tender sympathy. He didn't want his daughter to turn into a lonely outcast.

He hoped she would have a happy, carefree childhood, like the other kids her age.

He didn't know how much schooling Ying Bao had received overseas, but he knew that in this country, every little boy and little girl her age would be starting their second year of kindergarten in September.

Perhaps it was time to send Ying Bao to school and let her receive a normal education, like all the other children. This would make it easier for her to fit in with the rest of society and make more friends.

Huo Yunshen discussed this with his daughter. “Cherry, what do you think about going to kindergarten? This way you'll get to be good friends with the other girls and play with them. How about it?”

“No, I don't want to go to kindergarten.”

Ying Bao kept shaking her head. She looked deeply unhappy.

She didn't want to go to kindergarten. Not in the slightest.

“Why? Isn't it nice to go to school?”

Huo Yunshen wondered why his daughter was reacting so badly to the idea of going to kindergarten.

“No it isn't, there are bad aunties in kindergarten who will bully me. I don't want to go to kindergarten.”

Ying Bao had become anxious and sullen.

She snuggled against her father's chest and put her arms around him, hugging him tight.

Huo Yunshen was deeply shocked by what his daughter had said. Had Ying Bao been hurt in kindergarten before this?

“Okay, don't be scared, Daddy's here. I'll catch all the bad aunties so they won't be able to bully you ever again.”

Huo Yunshen comforted his daughter as he moved over to the office pantry and brought out an assortment of delicious snacks and drinks for her.

Chapter 578: His Heart Ached Terribly

The delicious food helped to calm Ying Bao's nerves. She ate the food happily.

Huo Yunshen wanted to find out what had happened to Ying Bao in E country. He called Xu Xiyan, but she didn't answer—she was probably in the middle of a shoot.

He called Ye Xun next, and learned from him that Ying Bao had previously been abused by her kindergarten teachers when she was living in E country.

The experience had been traumatizing for Ying Bao, and caused her to be extremely hostile towards the idea of going to school.

Once Huo Yunshen understood what had happened, his heart ached terribly for his daughter. He couldn't imagine what it must have felt like for the little girl to suffer such cruel abuse.

Poking children with needles, stuffing their mouths with wasabi, spanking them, yelling at them... how was it possible for teachers to be so evil?

How could they not know that even the slightest wound to a child's psyche was enough to leave an indelible mark for the rest of their lives?

Huo Yunshen's heart bled for his daughter. But his sorrow soon gave way to anger. “A place with teachers like that doesn't deserve to be a kindergarten. It should be razed to the ground!”

Ye Xun replied, “Us JS mercenaries have already done that. The teachers who were abusing the kids have gotten the punishment they deserve.”

After ending the call, Huo Yunshen decided upon his next step: he would give his daughter psychological counseling whenever possible to reduce her fear of kindergartens, ASAP. He had to make sure Ying Bao would be okay with a new environment.

He instructed Yi Xiao to contact the best psychologist available, and also to look up all the kindergartens in Peijing with excellent reputations and track records. He would handpick a suitable kindergarten for his daughter.

Over at the studio lot in the eastern suburbs...

They were now shooting a tense scene for “Root of Evil.”

The policewoman in the story was in hot pursuit of W, a serial killer. W had suffered a serious injury and fled into a welfare home.

The policewoman stealthily followed after him. His trail led her to a door, where she stopped.

The sight of the dilapidated door triggered something within her. She was reminded of her childhood memories.

After her parents had died, her brother, too, had died to save her. She had been sent to a welfare home after that.

The policewoman entered the room where W lived, which happened to be the same room she had lived in when she was a young girl. Inside, she was shocked to find a photo of her and her brother.

This was the turning point in the movie: what would the policewoman do now, once she realized that the brother she missed was actually the serial killer she was trying to catch?

What would her reaction be, once she discovered the truth behind her brother's serial killings?

Once their scenes for the day were done, Xu Xiyan and Ma Haodong walked off the sound stage together.

Ma Haodong was now back to his normal self. He patted Xu Xiyan on the shoulder and said, "You were amazing back there. I was so close to tears, I couldn't help thinking how wonderful it would be if you were my little sister."

Xu Xiyan had poured her heart and soul into her acting just now. She had been in complete emotional sync with her character. The tears in her eyes were real; she hadn't been faking them.

It had taken a while for her to get herself out of character and back into reality. "Oh, really? Thanks. Keep flattering me, go on, I think I'm going to fall in love with myself any minute now."

"Hahaha..." Ma Haodong laughed, amused by her joke. They got their things and left the set together.

Along the way, the two of them talked about "Root of Evil." They both felt that the suspense and mystery aspects of the movie were especially gripping, complementing the character's emotional scenes. It was a good movie.

As they continued to chat, they suddenly heard someone call Ma Haodong's name. The two of them stopped and turned towards the direction of the voice.

It was Ning Xin. She was dressed in an expensive-looking floral dress; Xu Xiyan could tell that she was going for the "sweet, lovely girl-next-door" look.

Chapter 579: How Fake

"Ning Xin, why are you here? Aren't you supposed to be at Hengdian Studios?" asked Ma Haodong, a little surprised.

Both Ma Haodong and Ning Xin were part of Huayin Entertainment. He hadn't expected to bump into her here, because he had heard that Ning Xin was shooting an idol drama at Hengdian Studios.

"Brother Haodong, I see you haven't been keeping up with my news. My Hengdian show already wrapped up last week. Now I'm part of 'Red Sleeved Beauty'," explained Ning Xin with a smile.

Ma Haodong nodded in reply. "Oh, I see."

Xu Xiyan was still standing next to Ma Haodong. She hadn't said anything, but Ning Xin was keenly aware of her; she had seen her walking with Ma Haodong, laughing and joking with him. Ning Xin didn't like that. Not one bit.

But Ning Xin didn't let her resentment show on her face. She allowed her gaze to fall naturally upon Jing Xi before asking tentatively, "Oh, is this your girlfriend?"

"She's not my girlfriend. Don't misunderstand," explained Ma Haodong.

He introduced Jing Xi. "Let me introduce you to my friend: this is Jing Xi, we're currently in the same production."

Ning Xin suddenly realized who Jing Xi was. "Oh, so this is Jing Xi, the newcomer who was rumored to be in a relationship with you."

Ma Haodong nodded. He introduced Ning Xin. "Jing Xi, this is my junior sister apprentice, Ning Xin. She's also part of Huayin Entertainment, like me."

Ning Xin hated it when Ma Haodong introduced her as his "junior sister apprentice," but she let it go. There was nothing she could do about it.

Several years ago, Ma Haodong had had his heart broken when Xiao Yuqian disappeared. Ning Xin had seized the chance to try to get him on the rebound—to no avail. In the end, she had to settle for the role of his confidante in order to stay by his side and continue being friends with him.

She had to give up on any romantic possibilities with him because that was the only way she would be able to meet him without making him uncomfortable.

"Good day, Ms. Ning."

Xu Xiyan's greeting was perfectly civil. Deep down, however, she was filled with disgust. She couldn't stand how fake Ning Xin was being.

They had already met several days ago, during the audition for ROSUE. Ning Xin and Yang Qiong had even mocked her openly—and now she was pretending this was their first meeting? What a load of crock!

Now that they had gotten the introductions over with, Ning Xin said, "Brother Haodong, are you free tonight? We haven't seen each other in ages, we should have dinner together!"

Ma Haodong was, in fact, free that night. "Sure. I was just about to go for dinner. We'll have dinner together." He turned to Xu Xiyan. "Jing Xi, you should come with us too!"

Xu Xiyan was reluctant to have dinner with Ning Xin. Eating at the same table with someone she didn't get along with was bound to give her an upset stomach.

She was racking her brain for a suitable excuse when her phone began to ring. She got out her phone and saw that it was from Orange.

"Sorry, I have to take this call."

Fang Xiaocheng informed Xu Xiyao over the phone that it was Chinese Valentine's Day. She had set up a flower stall at the city's central square, but she needed help because there were just too many customers.

Xu Xiyao was elated; this was the excuse she was looking for. She would rather help her friend sell flowers than have dinner with Ning Xin.

After ending the call, Xu Xiyao smiled pleasantly as she said, "Sorry, I have to go meet a friend now, so if you'll excuse me... Have a nice dinner, bye!"

"All right. Do you want me to drive you?" Ma Haodong asked courteously.

"That's okay, I drove here."

Xu Xiyao waved goodbye to them.

Xu Xiyao had forgotten it was Chinese Valentine's Day; she would never have realized what day it was if it hadn't been for Fang Xiaocheng's phone call.

Fang Xiaocheng had repeatedly reminded her over the phone to put on her pink Rabbit Mommy mascot suit to hide her identity.

Before hurrying over to the city center, Xu Xiyao called Huo Yunshen to inform him of her plans. After that, she went home to get her bunny suit.

The city's central square was packed with people.

Xu Xiyao immediately spotted Fang Xiaocheng because she was wearing her Orange full-face mask. The massive Orange head bobbing up and down among the crowd was difficult to miss.

Chapter 580: Happiness

"I'm here, Orange."

The pink Rabbit Mommy stopped in front of the stall with the rose bouquets and greeted Fang Xiaocheng.

"Yanyan, you're finally here! I'm so busy, I can't keep up. Quick, help me—if there are customers who want to buy flowers, ask them to pay by scanning the QR code."

Fang Xiaocheng handed her a placard with a QR code printed on it. Xu Xiyao immediately went into hustling-for-business mode.

Xu Xiyao had a good head for business. She was good at attracting people to her stall, and she knew how to get them to buy her flowers.

Whenever she saw a couple walk by, she stepped in front of them and praised the girlfriend's pretty looks in front of the boyfriend. This was followed by a well-timed suggestion to the boyfriend: "Why not buy a rose to show your love for her?" Most men were happy to part with their money upon hearing that.

The two women went about hawking their flowers with great enthusiasm. It was as though they had returned to their college days.

Suddenly, all the lights in the central square went out. The street lights, the lights in the surrounding building, and the jumbotron that had been showing ads—all of them flickered and died.

The square was now in total darkness. It was too dark to see the faces of the people around them, let alone sell flowers.

“Orange, we have a blackout!”

Xu Xiyan got out her phone to shine some light on her surroundings.

“Yup, it's a blackout, all right.” Fang Xiaocheng knew exactly what was going on. She patted Xu Xiyan's rabbit head and said, “Ooh, Yanyan, look behind you, quick!”

Xu Xiyan turned her head to look behind her. In the dark night, tiny flickers of light began to appear. They began to grow in number, like fireflies on a summer night.

Soon, the darkness around them had transformed into a brilliant river of stars.

In the massive square, someone had lit candles placed in cups. The candles were arranged in the shape of a large heart, surrounding the spot where Xu Xiyan and Fang Xiaocheng had been selling flowers.

“Wow, who lit all these candles? Is someone trying to propose?”

Xu Xiyan had immediately guessed that someone was trying to propose as soon as she saw all the candles arranged in the shape of a heart.

“I guess so. It looks so romantic!”

Fang Xiaocheng waited patiently by Xu Xiyan's side. She would keep her company until the moment Xu Xiyan's happiness finally came for her.

The other people in the square didn't seem to mind the sudden blackout. Instead, they gathered outside the heart made with candles in a civilized manner and were now eagerly waiting to see what was really going on.

Everyone was now waiting for the couple behind the marriage proposal to show up. Just then, a beautiful melody began to play; it seemed to be coming from the night sky above them.

“What song is this? I've never heard this before, it's beautiful.”

Xu Xiyan cocked her ears to listen carefully to the song.

As the music continued to play, the jumbotron on the building facing the square suddenly lit up. Instead of its usual lineup of ads, however, it now showed a little girl's smiling face.

Huh?

Wasn't that Ying Bao?

Why was her daughter Ying Bao on the jumbotron?

The jumbotron appeared to be showing a pre-recorded video of Ying Bao. The little girl smiled adorably at the camera; beside her was Fang Xiaocheng, in her Orange full-face mask.

Xu Xiyan tugged at Fang Xiaocheng's sleeves. "Hey, when did the two of you shoot an ad?"

Fang Xiaocheng pretended to be clueless. "I don't know anything about this. Maybe an advertising company is playing one of our videos?"

Oh, that made sense.

Xu Xiyan accepted the answer and stopped thinking about it. Like everyone else around her, she began to watch the video playing on the jumbotron.

Aunt Orange: [Today is Chinese Valentine's Day, a truly special day. Cherry, did you know? If you make a wish today, it'll come true.]

Cherry Baby's eyes were sparkling. [Really? You're not pulling my leg, are you, Aunt Orange?]

Aunt Orange: [Of course not. You can make a wish now, if you don't believe me.]

Cherry Baby clasped her hands together. Her expression was one of complete sincerity as she made her wish.

[I hope that Mommy can get married soon. I want a super handsome uncle to marry Mommy.]