

Chapter 111: Matchmaking

He touched his face. Was that what he looked like to everyone else? He couldn't deny it. None of his past girlfriends had lasted more than a few days; they had all asked to break up with him within a week.

And they had all said the exact same thing about him: "You're not a boyfriend. You're a mindless, insensitive brick. You don't know how to make a woman happy."

He didn't understand it: he had memorized all their needs and preferences and provided them in silence, without making a big show of it. Were they not happy? Were his silent contributions worthless when compared to the hypocritical, insincere sweet-nothings and empty promises of other men?

He had had a string of girlfriends, but he was not a playboy by any stretch of the word. All his so-called "girlfriends" had been arranged for him by his mother, Ye Shuyun. He did not want to let his mother down, and so he had treated every one of these "girlfriends" with the utmost sincerity and respect—in fact, he treated them the way he treated his job, which was the highest honor he could give. He had been meticulous. He had made doubly sure everything was perfect. And yet not one of the women had liked him.

Ye Shuyun had stopped introducing women to her son in the last two years. Lu Yi suspected it was because she had realized all her efforts were completely meaningless, and also because she was afraid that she was inadvertently making her son out to be a flaky playboy. Her son had never really been in love, but he already had a substantial list of past girlfriends because of her meddling; what if women began to avoid him because his relationship history made him look like a player? Then her hopes of getting a daughter-in-law would be dashed forever.

Lu Yi had not been in a relationship since breaking up with his last girlfriend two years ago. Unlike his job, he did not particularly miss having a girlfriend.

Now, for the first time in his life, he was interested in a woman and wanted to know more about her past.

He did not know what drove him to do it. He did not want to think about the reasons— all he knew was that he wanted to know, and so he acted upon it.

An hour later, the phone on his desk rang.

"Mr. Lu, I've completed the background check you asked for. I've sent the report to your computer, let me know if you don't see it."

"Okay, thanks."

Lu Yi put down the phone and set the file he had been going through aside. He wouldn't be able to focus on it, not now. He opened his computer, sure enough, Xiao Chen had sent him a full report.

He crossed his legs and leaned backwards into his chair. He was already feeling a little sore around his shoulders from all the desk work; he knew he would probably suffer from occupational disease in the future if he didn't watch out.

He was accustomed to reading background reports as it was sometimes part of his job. But this was the first time he had abused his authority to look up information on a woman who was completely unrelated to his work.

He was just curious. He knew curiosity killed the cat, but he couldn't help it. He had to investigate and satisfy his curiosity.

He clicked on the confidential file, and a split-second later the full report appeared before his eyes. It documented every known detail of Yan Huan's life, including her family relations and other specifics that Yan Huan herself was probably unaware of.

Yan Huan. Age: 20. Birthday: 28th of September. Mother: Yan Jing. Father: [blank].

He scrolled down. Raised by a single mother, father unknown.

He moved his mouse and scrolled further downwards. His expression darkened as he read the rest of the report.

Her mother Yan Jing had died only two years ago. Yan Huan had been enrolled in an art school then, she had been a star in the making because of her pretty looks and talent in dancing. But she had started taking stunt double and background extra jobs because of her mother's illness, and within a few years she had given up entirely on her education. She had gotten a small role in *The Story of a Supernatural Chivalrous World*, and then secured a major role in *Love and Tribulations* through an open audition. The rest of her resume was empty; the future was still unknown, after all.

He saw her current address. It was an apartment given to her by Yuelun Entertainment.

Lu Yi turned off his computer. He stood up, walked over to the floor-to-ceiling window in his office, and opened the curtains. He could not explain the ripples that had begun to disturb the placid lake in his heart.

Were the ripples from the wake of a silent boat that was only passing through? Or had something fallen into his inner waters, something that would be a part of him forever?

He spent a long moment in contemplation by the window. Finally, he turned around and started up his computer again. He pulled up Yan Huan's photo and the details from her ID. As a general rule, ID photos were never flattering, but Yan Huan's was an exception: her photo captured all of her radiant youth and innocence. She was absolutely gorgeous. A cynical thought suddenly crossed Lu Yi's mind: he wondered how long her innocence would last in the face of reality.

He moved his gaze upwards, to a specific line on her ID.

Blood type: Rh negative, type AB.

It was the same as his.

He put his hand on the mouse, closed the report, and then deleted it. He pretended not to have read it, but in fact he had read everything and committed it to memory.

Men and women sometimes tried to deceive themselves, for one reason or another. But the human memory was absolute.

Memories stayed for as long as you remembered them. Once forgotten, they were gone forever.

He went home. He fished a key out of his briefcase, opened the door to his house, and then changed into his indoor shoes. As soon as he stepped inside, he immediately sensed that there was someone unfamiliar to him in the living room.

“Back already, Lu Yi?”

Ye Shuyun had heard the door open and knew that her son had returned. Her husband, Lu Yi’s father, was still living in the military zone and could only come home a few times each year. Thus, the only one who went in and out of the house regularly was that inconsiderate son of hers.

The fact that Lu Yi was a son and not a daughter grated on her nerves. Her husband was not dependable, and her son was completely insensitive to her needs. How she wished she had a thoughtful, considerate daughter who would comfort her like a warm cotton jacket!

Even Lu Yi’s father had teased her about her inability to have a daughter. Now she was old and didn’t have anyone to talk to because her husband spent all his time working. What’s the point of working when you have to retire in the end and spend the rest of your old age in loneliness? she thought bitterly to herself.

But she knew it was pointless to cry over her hypothetical “cotton jackets” — all those lovely daughters belonged to some other families. She didn’t even have a slipper, let alone a cotton jacket!

She had resigned herself to her fate. She only had one child, and he was a son named Lu Yi.

Lu Yi walked over to his mother and seated himself. Sitting next to Ye Shuyun was a young woman around his age, about 24 or 25 years old. Her hairstyle was old-fashioned, and the way she sat made him think of a business meeting. This woman was, as Lei Qingyi would have put it, the no-nonsense intellectual type. It was obvious that she came from a highly-educated family and probably had her nose in a book all day to the point of being slightly out of touch with reality. She was easy to spot in a crowd of women: among all the makeup and colorful dresses, her plain, drab looks made her stick out like a sore thumb. One could— if they were being kind— describe her as a breath of fresh air, a refreshing pool of clear spring water.

For Lu Yi, she reminded him not of clear spring water, but of the murky water dry noodles had been boiled in.

Ye Shuyun always introduced him to such women because they were more likely to be compatible with Lu Yi’s punctilious, uptight personality.

Chapter 112: He Was Introverted

“Xiao Zhu, this is my son, Lu Yi. He is a prosecutor, twenty-five years old. He looks fierce in his appearance, but he is very kind and talkative, he’s just a bit introverted.”

Lu yi sat still and did not refute Ye Shuyun.

Oh, so I have a fierce look, I am nice, talkative, and also an introvert.

Really?

He declined to comment, whatever she said, just let it be, even if she said he was a smiling tiger, he would just smile foolishly without refute.

“Oh, yes, Lu Yi, this is Fang Zhu. You can call her Xiao Zhu. She is a university teacher who is also twenty-five years old.

“Hi,” Fang Zhu pushed her black-framed glasses up higher on her nose. She was wearing a black suit without any creases on it and no jewelry. She was old-fashioned, inflexible, and she looked like...

A nun.

But apparently Lu Yi wasn't a monk.

“Hi. Nice to meet you.” Lu Yi said something more for his mother's sake, in case she lost face.

Fang Zhu lifted her neck and focused on him, he had no idea about what she was looking at, but in her eyes, she seemed to be calculating something about their family background, appearance, future planning, and so on.

The Lu family was well known in Sea City. His family was involved in both politics and business, and no matter which industry, they had succeeded where others couldn't. It was the biggest wish among many women to marry into the Lu family, a wish that they couldn't reach.

The Lu men were constant in love and serious-minded. Though they didn't speak honeyed words, they were loyal to their companion. Both men and women had been spoiled in this materialistic society.

Mistresses, other women, extramarital affairs, and so on. But no one had heard about any of the Lu members doing such a thing. They were haughty and aloof to the point of being unapproachable; ordinary women were unable to handle it.

But Lu Yi was a good marriage partner for Fang Zhu. They had well matched occupations, they shouldn't have too many problems, and they wouldn't be too dependant on the other since they both had their own careers. Moreover, they were about the same age and experience, which was most satisfactory.

Lastly, Lu Yi was handsome, and for the quality of the next generation, it was better to find a good-looking woman.

She pushed her black-framed glasses up and looked at Lu Yi like he was an item to be valued. She was indeed satisfied, and Lu Yi felt uncomfortable under her gaze.

He wasn't a good for sale, he was a man. He wasn't so unmarketable that others could evaluate him so blatantly.

He wasn't expensive but he definitely wasn't cheap.

“Mom, I have something to do, I'll leave first,” he said as he rose to his feet with his hand in his pocket.

He looked like noble British gentleman with the lofty sentiment of ancient chivalry, he wasn't a wimp but masculine in every way.

“Sit down.” Ye Shuyun gave him a sharp look. “Xiao Zhu just arrived, shouldn't you entertain her as the host?”

Lu Yi took a deep breath and sat down again, and Ye Shuyun soon found an excuse to leave them alone.

“Hello, Mr. Lu?” She called her husband when she got outside. “I’m telling you, I found you a daughter-in-law. She’s a university teacher, they’re the same age, she has a good temper and is well-educated. She’ll be a good match for our son. If they get married this year, we may get a grandson next year...”

She showed off to her husband from time to time but she didn’t know her son and “future daughter-in-law” had not said a word to each other inside.

Fang Zhu pushed the black-framed glasses up on her face again. It was evidence that she was knowledgeable with her nearsighted vision that was nearly at a -7.0 prescription, and it was also evidence of her years of reading.

“What is Mister Lu’s job?”

“A prosecutor,” Lu Yi answered drily.

“What hobbies does Mister Lu have?” Fang Zhu tried again.

“Work.” Like he was an robot. Yes, he just loved to work, what he loved most was work. He didn’t have any hobbies besides that.

“What a coincidence. That’s my hobby as well.”

Fang Zhu put her hand on her leg, her face calm. It didn’t look like a blind date, more like a tutoring session.

“Mister Lu, what do you think about the future?” She asked again.

“Future...” Lu Yi narrowed his eyes slightly. He only lived in the present. As for the future, who knew? He did not know how to answer the question. It happened that Fang Zhu raised her chin again, and she did not need him to answer as she had said it herself.

“I’m busy at the present, and I think you are, too. Right now is the best time to advance in our careers, so I don’t plan to have a child until after the age of 30. As for the child, he will join the army or be a teacher. Mr. Lu, what do you think?”

She was asking, but it seemed clear that she had arranged everything already, and if they got married, their relationship, their children, and even their children’s careers had already been predetermined.

Of course, she was satisfied with Lu Yi. His job, looks, and height were all right. Besides, he was also born into a wealthy family.

“Even if we get married, I will continue my work. As you know, work is not only a source of income for a woman, but also a woman’s ambition and a place to realize her value,” Fang Zhu continued. Her words were clear and carefully chosen. She smoothed her hair even though it wasn’t messy.

Lu Yi was speechless. It was none of his business to know her thoughts on those topics, they were strangers who had only met once, why were they talking about the future?

But anyhow, he was sure he had no interest in this woman who looked like a nun.

Obviously, his mother didn't think so.

Ye Shuyun grabbed her son after Fang Zhu left. "Lu Yi, how do you feel about Xiao Zhu?"

"M-hm." Lu Yi answered drily and pinched his eyebrows, he had a headache and just wanted to rest, he was tired as he didn't get a wink of sleep for two nights.

Chapter 113: What Was She Crying Over?

What was that supposed to mean?

Ye Shuyun immediately assumed he meant, "She's okay."

"If you like her, then you should spend more time with her and try your best to get married this year."

"I..." Lu Yi was about to say something, but decided against it at the last second. Instead, he asked, "You like Fang Zhu?"

"I do," Ye Shuyun nodded. "Xiao Zhu is a good woman. She has a competitive streak, but I'll take that over all the sly, opportunistic women out there any day. She'll make an excellent wife." Ye Shuyun paused. She narrowed her eyes as she added, "I'm warning you, don't you dare bring home one of those loose, immoral women. Look at Lu Qin— he's been dating models and celebrities, one after another. Those women will never make good wives. If you date one," Ye Shuyun's expression darkened, "I'll disown you. Understand?"

Lu Yi did not reply. He turned around to open the door to his room. Suddenly, he heard his mother give a loud shriek.

"Oh, how could I have forgotten to check?! I have to see whether my darling Yan Huan uploaded new photos today!"

Lu Yi's fingers stilled on the doorknob. A moment later, he nonchalantly opened the door and walked into his room. He began to go about his usual routine, showering and getting ready for bed.

Just as he was about to lie down and turn off the lights, he got out his phone, feeling like a guilty schoolboy, and checked the site he had been frequenting lately.

There was a new batch of photos.

In the photos, a slender, beautiful lady was bathing a cat in a small basin. The photos captured her pretty looks from different angles, but it was obvious that the cat was not enjoying the experience. There was water all over the place from the cat's frantic scrabbling, and the young lady was soaked.

I'm_Really_A_Cabbage: "FIRST!!!! Holy moly, my goddess is TOTES ADORBS. You're such the caring, motherly type. I'm under your spell, I can't break free! I'm going to be your loyal fan for the rest of my life. When's your show airing on TV, my lovely goddess?"

CallMeXiaoMing: "^^^ Hey, that's what I was going to say! I'll support my goddess for as long as I live, come hell or high water. I love how my goddess doesn't wear makeup, she's so much more real than all the other superficial online celebrities. My lovely goddess won't have any problems showing up on live broadcasts without any makeup— try beating that!"

XiaoHuahua: "I'm a new fan and follower. She's soooo pretty. I'm obsessed with her. I want to lick my screen and eat my computer."

The number of comments at the bottom of the page had been steadily increasing with each passing day. As soon as a new photo was uploaded, Yan Huan's oldest, most loyal fans would immediately show up in the comments section to gush over their "goddess." Each new day saw a significant increase in her follower count.

Innocent_Auntie: "She's so beautiful! I want her as my daughter!"

CallMeXiaoMing: "Are you talking about the cat, Auntie?"

I'm_Really_A_Cabbage: "I want her too, haha..."

Lu Yi pressed the red heart symbol.

That was his way of leaving his mark on the page.

He set his phone down and pulled the blanket over him. In a few moments he was already soundly asleep; not even a thunderstorm would be able to wake him.

The next day, Fang Zhu paid him another visit. This was an unmistakable sign of interest from her: he met all her expectations, and she wished to take their relationship to the next level.

Lu Yi made no comment; he neither agreed nor disagreed. Ye Shuyun immediately assumed that he agreed.

Yan Huan held Little Bean in her arms as she walked into her gated community. The cat was extremely lethargic, Yan Huan wondered if she had been overfeeding her. The little cat had been listless lately, too uncomfortable to even meow.

She petted Little Bean on her tiny head. She had taken the cat to the vet just now, but the vet had said there was nothing wrong with her. Little Bean had seemed a little better after the vet fed her some medication, but she still did not move much or meow.

Yan Huan had adopted Little Bean from the streets. Back then, Little Bean had been a tiny, scrawny kitten with sparse, unkempt fur. She had blossomed into a full grown, gorgeous cat, and was now part of the loving little family that was Yi Ling, Yan Huan, and Little Bean.

Yan Huan walked to the elevator and pressed the up button. She was not surprised to see that the elevator was empty when it came as there was barely anyone living in the building. The elevators lay idle most of the time.

She removed her black-rimmed glasses and hung them on her collar. She petted Little Bean on the head as she cooed reassuringly: it's all right, we'll be home soon.

The elevator doors were closing when suddenly, they stopped and slid open again. A man and a woman entered the elevator. Yan Huan took a step backwards to make room for them.

A heavy, oppressive feeling suddenly weighed upon her heart. She turned her head away quickly, but it was too late, she had seen from the corner of her eye the faces of the man and the woman who had just walked in.

She had not seen him in a long while.

The last time they had met was when he had saved her, but she had slipped away and run home at the first opportunity. In retrospect, it seemed silly for her to have been so afraid of him, but she had been absolutely certain that she did not want to have anything to do with him. She knew it had been wrong of her to run off without thanking him or paying her hospital bill, but there had been no other way.

As for the woman with him, she knew who she was: Fang Zhu, the woman who had been set to marry Lu Yi in Yan Huan's previous life.

There were two people in the Lu family that Yan Huan had absolutely loathed in her previous life. The first was Lu Yi: his emotionless, robotic personality had annoyed and scared Yan Huan at the same time. The second was Fang Zhu: back then, the woman had treated Yan Huan like dirt because of the difference in their status.

Yan Huan was the first to admit that she came from an unremarkable family. She had lost both her parents by the time she entered the Lu family, and what was worse, she didn't even know who her father was. She had never discovered his identity. Fang Zhu, on the other hand, was from a highly-educated and distinguished family. Both her parents were professors, and Fang Zhu herself was an A+ student who excelled in everything, including her career. She had become a lecturer at a university at the age of 25, which was truly an exceptional feat. Most of her students were older than her.

Yan Huan knew it was impossible for her to ever be Fang Zhu's equal in terms of family background and IQ. In her previous life, Fang Zhu had known it as well, and rubbed it in her face by mocking Yan Huan for being a lowly actress. Fang Zhu had zero respect for those in showbiz.

Naturally, Yan Huan had not liked Fang Zhu either. In her view, Fang Zhu seemed like a haughty, old-fashioned nun. She wondered what Lu Yi saw in her: was it her eternally frozen-in-place nun hairstyle, or that arrogant, holier-than-thou look in her eyes?

Yan Huan gently caressed Little Bean's tiny head. She felt her throat close up, she was feeling unhappy and nauseated. Her nose began to sting. She felt like crying.

She was surprised at herself. What was she crying over? What did any of this have to do with her, anyway?

Chapter 114: Hello, Old Hag

Though she always told herself that, she still felt bad.

Finally, the elevator opened. She was still standing in the back corner, just as pitiful as Little Bean when she had been abandoned.

"Come on, let's go."

Fang Zhu lifted her chin up, she was still dressed in an old-fashioned black suit with a silk kerchief around her neck. She put her hand on Lu Yi's arm and walked out, her heels clicking on the ground.

Lu Yi paused for a moment and glanced at the thin woman who was holding a cat in the elevator, he couldn't see what she was doing clearly in the poor light, but he saw her hair was dishevelled and both she and the cat in her arms looked weary.

"Shall we go now?" Fang Zhu asked again, looking displeased. She was tired as she had had classes all day- was he going to stand inside the elevator and make her wait for him?

Finally Lu Yi moved his legs and walked out of the elevator. Fang Zhu gripped his arm tightly.

But even so, she didn't have much expression on her face, and Lu Yi was the same.

It could be said that they were a perfect match.

Both of them were as cold as ice and reticent.

"Sexless, ascetic man, old nun, old hag," Yan Huan muttered angrily. Then she patted Little Bean's fluffy head. "What do you think, Little Bean? She's just like a dead fish and Lu Yi can't like being with her, I'm sure he has erectile problems."

Yan Huan thought about it ruthlessly and felt better. The elevator was now going down, so she pressed the button for the fifteenth floor and it had to go up again. Then she went home.

She opened the door and put Little Bean down.

"Meow..."

Little Bean finally moewed, rubbed against her master's leg, then ran to her little bed, curled up and fell asleep.

At the moment, Yi Ling was still working in front of the computer, helping Yan Huan update her Weibo.

Yan Huan felt that she owed her company too much as she hadn't made any contributions yet, and she still lived in her house for free, but that would end soon.

She counted on her fingers.

The day of Journey to Fairyland's casting was at the end of the month, so she just had to wait as time would pass. She wouldn't have free time when she was busy later on.

She would be fully occupied when the drama started shooting. They would need to travel around to location to shoot, as the Director didn't like to use green screen settings, he preferred natural scenery.

Her phone rang suddenly, and her heart jumped at that moment because she had a sense of crisis deep in her heart.

In short, she didn't feel good.

She took her mobile phone out from her pocket, it showed a series of numbers. Although there was no name, Yan Huan knew who was calling her.

Yan Lixiong, the big porker.

Why don't you give up, quit thinking about me. She might have given him a pass at first, but she had rejected him many times afterwards. Yan Lixiong was not a fool, he should have known that she wasn't willing to have a sexual relationship with him.

But he was still thinking about getting her.

She clasped her phone in her hand and didn't answer the call in the end.

Touching her arm, she felt sick at the thought of Yan Lixiong's face, even the hairs stood up on end with disgust.

She put the phone on her desk and grabbed a script. She put it on her thigh and skimmed through it, but she couldn't help but think of the intimate couple and feel uncomfortable.

She threw it down.

"Adulterous couple."

"What's the matter? What did you say?" Yi Ling popped her head in.

"Nothing, I'm memorizing lines," Yan Huan hurriedly picked up the script and sat down properly.

"Oh, alright." Yi Ling retracted her head again, counting happily the number of followers Yan Huan's page had gained today. Yan Huan received compliments in the comments. She worked hard for so long and was finally getting some results.

At the same time, Yan Huan turned the pages of the script. She felt uncomfortable in her heart when she thought of the serious man cohabited with that woman.

The man hadn't gotten married before thirty in the previous life, and he had only had a textbook marital relationship with Fang Zhu. She once thought the man had erectile problems, but now he was already in a romantic relationship.

Men were all bad, she snorted. Then she threw her script down and went to bed. She had been trying to get more rest recently as she would be busy later on.

In the living room of a different house, Lu Yi put a glass of water on the desk.

"Thank you." Fang Zhu straightened her back into an upright sitting posture. She took the glass and swept her eyes over Lu Yi's room. His home only had wooden furniture and decorations without obvious luxury. He was a sporty type, thus there was a treadmill and a spinning bike in the room. He had some plants but all of them were cacti. Perhaps he was too busy and didn't have much time to take care of the flowers, therefore, he only wanted cacti.

Fang Zhu was quite satisfied with the place, mainly because there were few people in the area. Nothing was going to change, he would just set up a study room for her. She could also use it as an office at night.

As for other things, they would discuss them later on.

She took the glass on the table and took a sip. It was just plain water without anything added.

Of course, this was what she liked. Other people gave into desires to have sweetened, flavored drinks, but plain water was the best, and she found herself respecting Lu Yi for his tastes.

The man's private life was indeed as rigorous as he himself was.

Fang Zhu narrowed her eyes when Lu Yi put another cup in front of her.

"What are you drinking?" Fang Zhu pushed her black-framed glasses up higher onto her nose, her eyebrows furrowed tightly.

"Milk tea."

Chapter 115: Orphan Girl

Lu Yi lifted the cup and took a sip as he leisurely crossed his legs. "What, do you want to try it?"

Fang Zhu always asked for a glass of water whenever she visited the Lu residence. Lu Yi had naturally assumed that was her favorite drink.

"How can you drink that?" There was a hint of stern disapproval in Fang Zhu's voice. "Only little girls who don't know better would choose to drink something like that. It's full of all kinds of additives, you know."

Lu Yi had lifted the cup to his lips again, but he could not bring himself to take another sip, not with Fang Zhu lecturing and glaring at him like that.

He set the cup down. The unhappy scowl on Fang Zhu's face finally went away.

"Lu Yi, you should stop drinking that. No more unhealthy drinks in the future."

Lu Yi gently caressed the cup with his fingers. He suddenly felt as though he had gotten himself a nutritionist.

The two of them lapsed into silence again. It did not feel awkward, however, as Fang Zhu had actually brought her textbooks with her and was now busy drafting her lesson plans. Lu Yi, on the other hand, pretended Fang Zhu was not there and went about his business as usual.

Not long after, Lu Yi stood up.

"I'll take you home now."

Fang Zhu was caught off-guard. She stood up and smoothed the wrinkles in her clothes, one by one. She knew it was going to have to happen sooner or later: they were both adults, and now that they were officially seeing each other...

She was already mentally prepared for it. Personally, she felt it was better to wait until their wedding night, but if Lu Yi wanted to do it, well, she would not refuse him. It was supposed to be enjoyable for both men and women, after all.

They exited Lu Yi's apartment and entered the elevator. Yan Huan was already inside; she was, once again, carrying a listless cat in her arms. She was taking Little Bean to the vet for the second time because the cat had become sick again.

Yan Huan gave an inward snort.

She thought cynically to herself: done so soon? She wondered whether Lu Yi had erectile dysfunction. Perhaps he was one of those early finishers?

She gently stroked Little Bean on the head as she kept her gaze on the floor before her. Her eyelashes were so long that they inspired envy in every woman who saw her.

Fang Zhu did not know who Yan Huan was, but she was a woman, and women were naturally equipped with supernaturally accurate instincts when it came to other women— even those they weren't actually acquainted with. She had to admit to herself that this unfamiliar woman in the elevator was making her a little uncomfortable.

Fang Zhu studied the woman before her: she was younger and taller than Fang Zhu. She had a face so exquisite she looked like she had just walked out of a painting. She was the kind of woman that men drooled over. She had large, doe-like eyes, a small, pixie-like face, and snow white skin. Fang Zhu would not be at all surprised if men worshiped her at the altar and called her things like “my lovely goddess.”

Fang Zhu had been convinced that these so-called “goddesses” had to stay within photoshopped photos on tiny phone screens to be able to cast their spell on their adoring fans. They were always shockingly plain and ordinary-looking in real life.

But this woman with the cat was evidently an exception. She was incredibly beautiful, so beautiful she made all the women around her feel hopelessly insecure.

Fang Zhu could not help stealing a glance at Lu Yi to see if he had noticed. She let out a sigh of relief when she saw that his eyes appeared to be glued on the elevator doors.

She suddenly realized that she had been acting silly and paranoid. Lu Yi's ideal partner was a sophisticated intellectual like her, not pretty, shallow celebrities. How could she have forgotten that?

Ding! The elevator doors opened, but neither Lu Yi nor Fang Zhu moved.

Yan Huan was annoyed. She wanted to exit and decided she would just have to shove her way through. She took a step forward, but Fang Zhu was standing in her way.

“Auntie, can you please move aside?”

Fang Zhu was stunned. A few strands of hair broke free from her shiny, meticulously combed hair. Auntie? Auntie?! Who was this woman referring to? She was only 25!

Yan Huan walked past her, and then turned to give Fang Zhu a dazzling smile, one that showed off her radiant youth and perfect features. She was wearing a milky white dress, her silky hair tumbling down her back and shoulders in natural waves. Her canvas shoes and the cat in her arms made her look even younger, in fact, she looked like she could be in high school. Fang Zhu, on the other hand, looked closer to 35 than 25 because of her “old prudish nun” outfit and hairstyle.

Fang Zhu had always looked older than her peers. The gods were fair: they had given Fang Zhu an exceptionally high IQ and a top-class education, but had neglected to make her pretty. Fang Zhu didn't mind, however; she had always told herself that it was what was inside that counted.

Now, however, Yan Huan's smile stabbed Fang Zhu like a spear to the heart.

Lu Yi did not say or do anything. He merely stood beside Fang Zhu with one hand in his pocket. His phone was in his other hand, and he appeared to be looking at it. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

Fang Zhu had committed Yan Huan's face to memory. She could not help feeling there was something more to that smile. Little did she know that she had actually had a history with Yan Huan in her past life.

In Yan Huan's previous life, Fang Zhu had mercilessly roasted Yan Huan with snarky remarks about her shameful family background and lack of education. This time around, she had not formally met Yan Huan, but Yan Huan was not the type to let go of past grievances.

Yan Huan scowled inwardly as she thought to herself, You looked down on me in my previous life, didn't you? Well, I'll be taking a different path this time around. I'll climb to even greater heights, just you wait and see. And I'll rub it in your face, you pretentious, self-proclaimed high-class intellectual!

Yan Huan turned and made her way to the vet with Little Bean. She did not see the strange look on Lu Yi's face as he watched her retreating back...

"Lu Yi, did you see that? That woman was so rude. I'd like to give her parents a good talking to!" Fang Zhu complained as she smoothed her hair and carefully tucked every wayward strand back in place. She was still seething over Yan Huan's "Auntie."

Lu Yi did not answer. He exited the elevator and kept on walking. It was none of his business, and he wasn't the type to spend his time speculating about other people's parents.

Besides, he knew that he was in no position to criticize Yan Huan's parents, not when his were still alive. Yan Huan no longer had either of her parents with her; he couldn't even begin to imagine what that must be like for her.

Yan Huan was an orphan. She had nothing. All she had now was Yi Ling— and a sick cat.

"What is it?" Yan Huan asked the vet. Little Bean had seemed fine after her first visit to the vet, but soon after the cat had refused to move, eat, or drink.

She gently stroked Little Bean's soft fur. The cat was extremely lethargic, her eyes, usually so lovely and bright, were now shut tight. Sometimes, she lay stiff as a board, as though dead. Not even her favorite canned fish could entice her to get up and eat.

"She'll be okay." The vet gave Little Bean an injection, and then dissolved a pill in some water for Yan Huan to feed Little Bean later. "It's just indigestion. You've been overfeeding her. Cats are hardy creatures, she won't die so easily. Cut back on her food portions over the next few days and she'll be right as rain before you know it."

Yan Huan picked Little Bean up and held her in her arms. The cat seemed to be in better spirits now, and proved it by rubbing her nose against Yan Huan's fingers.

Chapter 116: Do You Think We are Right for Each Other?

“She seems to be a Garfield cat, she has good genes,” the vet said to Yan Huan after looking at Little Bean for a while.

“She’s just a stray cat, I found her.” Yan Huan rubbed Little Bean’s ear. Truthfully, Little Bean’s lineage didn’t matter to Yan Huang. She’s already a part of my family, yes, she’s my family member.

She used to be alone, but now she had Yi Ling and Little Bean.

Yan Huan took the medicine and was about to go when the veterinarian suddenly spoke again. “Excuse me, are you Yan Huan? The actress who played the Little Golden Silkworm?”

For the first time, Yan Huan could tell that she was famous. There were many people who remembered the Little Golden Silkworm character. That had been the first part she played in a drama that aired, although it was only a few seconds and she just appeared twice, she had performed successfully, and there were many people who remembered it.

She turned and smiled.

“No, maybe we just look alike.”

“You’re right,” the veterinarian nodded. “The actress was fully made-up on TV, you’re so beautiful that if you had played the role, you may have been more beautiful than the leading actress.”

Yan Huan simply smiled.

She lowered her head and held Little Bean tighter in her arms. A warm smile hung on her lips.

She didn’t see the couple when she came back. She didn’t know that Lu Yi was drinking a cup of milk tea in Le Qingyi’s house.

“What? You don’t have milk tea powder at home?”

Lei Qingyi walked over in bare feet, and stretched his legs on the sofa. The furniture in his house was all made to order, otherwise they wouldn’t fit such a big, tall man like him.

Lu Yi drank a sip of milk tea, he liked was its sweetness and rich taste.

“Fang Zhu threw it away.”

“She tossed it?” Lei Qingyi widened his eyes and pounded the desk. “Lu Yi, you’re not even married yet and this is what she’s doing already? You have no any other hobby but to drink milk tea, is she going to deprive you of your only joy?”

Though he was confused by Lu Yi’s “hobby,” he respected him, at least he had one. Lu Yi was still a normal person, how was he supposed to live when his life was all about work?

“I don’t really think she’s right for you. Why does everyone think both of you are perfect for each other?” Lei Qingyi grabbed his hair, confused. Was it because Lu Yi didn’t love to talk, and Fang Zhu didn’t pay much attention to people?

“Did you really decide to marry her?” Lei Qingyi leaned his head on Lu Yi. “She isn’t fun at all. If both of you really are going to get married, I’m afraid that she’ll even make a schedule for sex.”

“How many times in a week, how long does it take, Lu Yi? I really worry about you. The woman who has obsessive-compulsive disorder is quite formidable.”

Lei Qingyi touched his arms. A life lived by someone else’s schedule is no life at all. If I had to follow someone else’s schedule for everything, what to do when, what time to sleep and eat, what I can or can’t eat and drink, I’d feel like my life is meaningless and had already ended.

“Lu Yi, do you really want to live such a life, where you can’t even drink the milk tea that you love the most?”

“My mother likes her,” Lu Yi said drily. The milk tea in the cup had a rich, creamy flavour. It tasted like usual, but was a bit more bitter, flavored not by chocolate but with cassia seed.

“What about you, though?” Lei Qingyi moved his head. “You can’t marry her because of your mother.”

“I have to marry someone.” Lu Yi put his cup down. “Do you think we’re right for each other?”

Lei Qingyi shook his head. “No, not at all.”

“So what kind of woman do you think would suit me?” Lu Yi asked.

Lei Qingyi could only smile at him.

There were only a few women who could get along with Lu Yi in the world. He didn’t stay home all night but instead buried himself in his work, and he always had a murderous look on his face. There was no woman that would like him...

The women around them preferred the handsome young boys, not the unromantic middle-aged men like Lu Yi. Though he was just 25, he already lived the life of a middle-aged man.

Lu Yi took the cup and took a deep drink. He looked perplexed and suddenly remembered something. Not far away, there were some young people who were in their prime.

Yan Huan opened her wardrobe, took out a light-coloured coat, and put on it. She was going to the audition of Journey to Fairyland. She wanted to get the second female lead instead of first, but Yi Ling was still daydreaming about if she got the leading role. The appearance and temperament of the first female were similar to Yan Huan: a lovable girl next door.

However, Yan Huan didn’t feel good about it. The two TV shows she had already appeared in were very different roles, and she didn’t want to position herself as just one character. She lived by her acting, not by her face.

And she remembered that in her previous life, the first female lead didn’t make as strong an impression as the second character. The first female lead was flat and dull without any dramatic plotlines, but the second female lead was totally different: she was first an angel but then a devil, and a challenge in both the clothing and make-up as well as the acting of her personality.

Yan Huan wanted to play a role like second female lead, it was played by Wen Dongni in previous life. Wen Dongni had joined the cast of Journey to Fairyland after she played in Love and Tribulations. She was famous in her past life, but it was different this time around as Director Jin had blacklisted her.

So, the role of the second female lead was vacant.

Of course, there was another reason she didn't want to audition for the role of the lead. Generally, the lead role was very popular, with everyone wanting such a big part in a hit drama. Yan Huan thought it was better to audition for the less popular second female lead role rather than compete with others for the leading part.

Chapter 117: Rival Was Here

A lovable first female lead, and an annoying second female lead.

It showcased the skill of the actress if she could play the second female lead which the audience bitterly hated.

An actress had attained the acme of acting if she could move the audience and they didn't hate her anymore.

"Let's go," Yi Ling urged Yan Huan outside. "If we don't go now, it will be too late."

"Yes, I'm coming." Yan Huan said gently as she crouched down and patted Little Bean's head. Then she gave her a handful of cat food and water, it was enough for her all day.

"Meow..." Little Bean clawed at Yan Huan's clothes, as if she would not have her master leave her. Indeed, she was hard to leave, she was chubby and cute.

Yan Huan stroked her back once more and then followed Yi Ling out.

Yi Ling was nervous.

"Huanhuan, are- are you afraid?" Yi Ling spoke with a stammer as if she had a thick tongue.

"Afraid of what?" Yan Huan smoothed her hair, standing outside and waiting for the taxi with Yi Ling.

"Afraid of failing." Yi Ling pinched Yan Huan's hand. "What should I do, I'm so scared!" She really was scared, as Journey to Fairyland was a big play with a huge investment. It had been selected to be made into a production two years ago and it was going to be made by Director Jin. His productions were a work of conscience, and in terms of ratings, they won several championships. There were a lot of actresses who owed their popularity to him, including the current hottest movie star, Liang Chen.

Yan Huan was only 20 years old and she didn't have any outstanding performances as she had mostly played walk-on roles since she started her acting career. Though she had nearly four years of acting experience, but she was still new to being a main actor on the stage. If she could play a role in Journey to Fairyland- let alone the first or second female lead- it would be great for her career. She would be famous even she played the third or fourth female lead. Since Yan Huan was young, it was enough for her to achieve personal advancement for a few years.

Therefore, how could she not be nervous?

This role was like a juicy steak in front of them- they could eat meat everyday if they got it. If they failed to, however, they might still get accepted for a second or third class role due to the arrangement of their company. An actress sometimes only needed one role to become popular.

Journey to Fairyland was a golden opportunity in Yi Ling's eyes, but she had no idea whether Yan Huan would be able to succeed in the audition or not.

Director Jin had strongly recommended Yan Huan to play in the drama, and the company didn't even arrange other work for them as they were afraid to miss the slot.

But no one could know whether it was Director Jin who would help Yan Huan get the part or if he was just being nice.

Yi Ling couldn't bear to imagine Yan Huan failing the audition, how long she would need to climb the social ladder. In the entertainment circle, you're famous once you become popular among the public, otherwise you could stay at the bottom until you were old and nobody cared.

Yi Ling's legs began to tremble when the taxi arrived.

Yan Huan got into the taxi. She looked at her fingers which were clean, white, and slender. Undoubtedly, she had good-looking hands. In this life, no matter how, she would hold onto those she had lost in her previous life in those delicate hands.

She could get back what others once owed her only when she stood on the top.

Her eyes suddenly darkened and she startled Yi Ling with the sudden change in demeanor. Yi Ling quickly moved closer to her, Why do I feel so cold suddenly? Is that... that thing around?

It took half an hour to reach the audition. It was an open audition, so there were a lot of people around. Though Director Jin had recommended Yan Huan to join his cast, they didn't know how many people he had recommended besides her. She lined up in the queue, which had more than a hundred people, seeing some faces that were already quite well-known.

Yi Ling registered a number for Yan Huan, then they sat down on the bench.

Yan Huan glanced around secretly, there were a lot of people here, as expected. Director Jin's dramas had always been a success. As long as it was an open audition, of course there would be many people coming over, including some already famous actresses. There were still a lot of late arrivals, too, and those who had already been decided behind closed doors.

Yan Huan put her hand on her knee, some of them were talking, and some of them were playing on their phone, but she was different, she hid herself like a hollow man with her eyes lowered.

"Why is she here?" Yi Ling shouted suddenly, both surprised and amazed.

Yan Huan lifted her face and looked at the direction Yi Ling pointed. When she saw who was there, she frowned, "Ugh, why is she here?"

It was none other than Wen Dongni.

Last time, Director Jin mentioned that he wouldn't need an actress like Wen Dongni in his cast, so why was she here? Yan Huan reached out and gently scraped the wall with her fingers. After a bit of thinking it was clear...

Director Jin had a huge influence and Journey to Fairyland was a big drama, Wen Dongni was not a fool. As long as she got a part she would have the chance to become famous, nobody would scold her for having the audacity to show up in the first place.

Yan Huan never thought Wen Dongni would come for the audition, but here she was now. She had probably come for the second female lead, too. Yan Huan smiled with closed lips, It doesn't matter, no matter what, I will get the role of second female lead.

Wen Dongni's agent said something to her, she seemed unwilling at first and pulled a long face, but in the end she entered the room with her agent.

Yan Huan did not know what they were going to do, they were probably going to apologize.

Soon after, they came out looking relaxed and comfortable, perhaps Wen Dongni was able to audition after all.

Yan Huan lowered her eyelashes and gently clasped her hands together, she wasn't afraid Wen Dongni. In fact, she wasn't afraid of anyone except those who were dedicated, well-known, and had a strong backing as she knew that with a big drama, some of the actors would join the cast through relations, and sometimes the first leading role of male and female would be decided by the sponsors. Whatever, please just leave me the second female lead.

Chapter 118: Underdog

She opened her slip of paper to check her number. She was 57— it was going to be a long wait.

Yi Ling kept her eyes on the number counter. She had been a bundle of nerves from the very beginning; by the time they were finally in the 50s, she felt ready to have a nervous breakdown.

55... 56...

"Huanhuan, it's your turn." Yi Ling could barely squeeze out the words. "Oh my god, it's our turn! What do we do?!"

Yan Huan stood up. She opened her arms, gave Yi Ling a hug, and then patted her on the shoulder. "Don't worry. It'll be fine."

Yan Huan walked into the audition room. Director Jin smiled when he saw her and gave her an encouraging nod. Yan Huan was reassured by the confident look on his face; she was afraid that the role she was after had already been given to Wen Dongni, but that did not seem to be the case.

Yan Huan stepped onto the stage. She opened her mouth to speak, but was interrupted by the sound of the door opening. Wen Dongni swaggered in.

Yan Huan's hands balled into fists. Why was Wen Dongni here?

It had been some time since Yan Huan last saw her, but Wen Dongni seemed to have learned her lesson. She had gotten rid of her haughty, holier-than-thou attitude, and now seemed much more humble and modest. In other words, she had gotten smarter.

“Sorry, but can I go first?” Wen Dongni asked Yan Huan. But it wasn’t actually a question; Wen Dongni had already stepped in front of Yan Huan before she could reply.

Yan Huan was forced to take a step backwards. Director Jin’s expression darkened when he saw what happened, but he did not lose his temper as he wouldn’t do something that unprofessional. Instead, he looked at the man sitting next to him, as though considering something.

So that was it. Yan Huan knew what was going on now.

Wen Dongni had someone backing her.

Wen Dongni lifted her head confidently and looked straight at the man sitting beside Director Jin. She smiled sweetly at him, and the man smiled back. It was clear from the way they looked at each other that they were “involved.”

Wen Dongni looked away. She bowed politely to the judges, and said, “Good day, Mr. Director, ladies, gentlemen. I’m number 56. My name is Wen Dongni, and I would like to audition for the second female lead: Qing Yao.”

Yan Huan was not at all surprised to hear that Wen Dongni was auditioning for the second female lead. In Yan Huan’s previous life, the role had indeed gone to her. History was evidently repeating itself: Wen Dongni was, once again, trying for the second female lead. But her number...

Number 56...

Yan Huan marveled at the strange coincidence. Was it truly a coincidence, or was fate deliberately throwing the two of them together because they hated each other’s guts?

Wen Dongni had jumped the queue and gone before Yan Huan in their previous audition. Oddly enough, she was once again just one number before her in this audition.

Yan Huan wondered what the outcome would be this time. Would the role go to Yan Huan instead of Wen Dongni for the second time?

Yan Huan moved out of the way, but did not exit the room. This was a good opportunity to watch Wen Dongni’s performance.

Qing Yao was the villainous secondary female lead in Journey to Fairyland. Her screen time was second only to the female lead’s, and many of her scenes involved the male lead as well. She was a complex character who inspired both hatred and sympathy: she was the haughty, spoiled daughter of the head of Qingshan Sect, but she was also supremely talented, hauntingly beautiful, and hopelessly in love with Yan Boxuan, the male lead. Unfortunately, Yan Boxuan was in love with Guan Yuexin, the female lead. Unable to win his heart, Qing Yao’s love transformed into an all-consuming hatred, leading her to the dark side. She waged war against the mortals, and ultimately died in the hands of the man she loved most.

Yan Huan was reminded of a saying: “A person who inspires pity will also inspire hatred.” Someone had mentioned the saying to her once, and she thought it described Qing Yao’s character perfectly.

Wen Dongni had chosen to perform one of Qing Yao’s many scenes with Yan Boxuan for her audition.

Cherry blossoms and falling leaves mingled in the air, it was always beautiful in Qingshan Sect, a famous cultivation spot. The head of the sect was a famous cultivator whose name was renowned throughout the mortal lands.

Qingshan Sect had therefore earned a reputation as a powerful holy spot for cultivators. Everyone said that the mountains were filled with immortal fairies, but they did not realize that those “fairies” were, at the most basic level, just humans who wanted to break free from the laws of nature.

Wen Dongni’s eyes suddenly lit up, as though she had just seen something of great interest to her. Her expression turned into one of deep, affectionate love as she gazed adoringly at the man before her.

“Junior Brother, you’re back.” Wen Dongni smiled pleasantly as she sauntered over to the man. She did not have any props, nor was she in costume, but everyone could tell that she was acting the part of an immortal fairy who had just descended from the mountains. She was beautiful, ethereal, and aloof.

“Hello, Senior Sister,” said the man acting opposite Wen Dongni. He dodged Wen Dongni’s hand, exactly as written in the script.

Wen Dongni’s fingers froze in place, arrested in midair. She smiled stiffly.

“Have you recovered, Junior Brother?”

“Thank you for your concern, Senior Sister. I am feeling well. If there is nothing else to discuss, I shall take my leave. Please excuse me.” With that, the man turned and left.

This was where the camera would zoom in on Qing Yao. Wen Dongni narrowed her eyes, her red lips pressed into a cold, hard line as she tugged at her clothes in frustration. It was an extremely realistic portrayal of a bratty, spoiled girl. Her expression, actions, and the way she carried herself were all on point.

Most of the judges sitting at the table seemed impressed with Wen Dongni’s performance. Director Jin, however, did not say anything.

“What do you think, Director Jin? She’s very good, isn’t she?” The man next to Director Jin sat up straight. “See, I told you I have a good eye. You can’t go wrong with my recommendations.”

Director Jin smiled, but did not reply. He had to admit that Wen Dongni’s performance was good, but it fell short of what he had in mind.

He looked towards Yan Huan. He had been betting on her from the very beginning, she was an actress with incredible range, and she was much better looking than Wen Dongni. He couldn’t give her the role of the female lead— that was beyond his control— but he could cast her as the secondary female lead, as long as she could prove that she deserved it.

Would she trip and fall, or would she pull off a spectacular upset as the underdog? He could hardly wait to see the outcome.

Wen Dongni let out a sigh of relief. She was pleased with her performance, and was confident that she had the role in the bag this time. She shot Yan Huan a cool, sidelong look. Up until recently, Yan Huan had been nothing more than a lowly background actor and stunt double, so Wen Dongni refused to believe that Yan Huan was capable of acting. She was sure that Yan Huan had only gotten the role of

Hong Yao because she was, like Hong Yao, also a slut. Qing Yao, on the other hand, was a pure, otherworldly fairy. There was a huge difference between an immortal fairy and a prostitute.

Wen Dongni snickered inwardly at the thought of Yan Huan playing a fairy with her overrated, one-dimensional acting skills. She smiled at the man below the stage. An enigmatic look flashed across the man's face and Wen Dongni's smile grew wider when she saw it. She knew exactly what he was hinting at.

Wen Dongni walked off. It was now Yan Huan's turn.

Yan Huan stepped forward. She was neither upset nor perturbed by the way Wen Dongni had essentially squeezed in and shooed her off the stage at the last possible second. In fact, she was glad for the free front row seat to Wen Dongni's audition performance...

"Good day to you, Mr. Director," she said politely. "I'm Yan Huan, number 57. I would like to audition for the role of Qing Yao."

Chapter 119: She Was the Chosen One

"Director," she said politely, "I am number 57, Yan Huan. I would like to audition for the role of Qing Yao."

The faces around her showed no change in expression, Qing Yao was a popular character, the role second only to the female lead, and she had many scenes and a strong character. There were several people who wanted to audition for the role.

Those present, besides Director Jin himself, were satisfied with the performance of Wen, after all her audition had been quite good.

Yan Huan was good-looking, but nobody knew whether or not she had good acting skills, just like she wasn't considered as favorite in the audition of Love and Tribulations, the main thing was that she was an unfamiliar face, and the risk of hiring unfamiliar faces was larger than those actors that were already known.

Yan Huan moved a chair and sat on it. She leaned on it and closed her eyes, and it was silent all around. She rested her face in her hand, the fluorescent light fell on her bright, pale skin, the young lady had good skin which most people envied.

"Do you have something to say?" she asked drily with her eyes closed. No one was acting opposite her; she had to do it herself.

"Oh..." She smiled suddenly, her red lips arched charmingly beautiful. The moment she opened her black crystal eyes, they were filled with iciness as if a blast of cold wind was blowing. The people watching couldn't help but shudder.

"If they want to die, let them die. There are too many people in the world, so be it." She was smiling, but a single tear emerged at the corner of her eye, and it slowly rolled down to her chin.

Then she closed her eyes again, her slightly curved lips had never fallen.

“Aren’t you going to leave?” she asked again. Though she was not impatient and was not rushing the person she spoke to, she made the room fall indescribably silent and distant.

“Should I?” It was as if someone was actually standing opposite her, talking to her, arguing with her, pleading with her, and if that was the case, what would she do with such a subordinate? You should keep a dog that was obedient, but if it began to bite its master, why would you keep it? Now she wanted nothing but people’s deaths.

“If you will die for him, then do it.” Her voice was cold and ruthless, and so was she. You could see and feel her unutterably pretty and flirtatious presence in her every move, every word, every blink, and even every small expression.

She was immersed in her performance, and she brought the people into her play.

Yan Huan rose to her feet, but they still couldn’t help falling in the strange scene.

“Ahem...” Director Jin coughed a little and the others came to their senses. “I choose Yan Huan,” he expressed his decision immediately. Yan Huan had amazed him. Yes, amazed. Wen Dongni did play well but everyone was stunned by Yan Huan’s acting, she was extremely attractive. He believed that anyone who had eyes would know who they were going to choose.

“I choose Yan Huan too,” one of them nodded and agreed with Director Jin. “Wen Dongni has good acting skills, but she lacked the feeling of Yan Huan’s performance.”

The rest of them discussed and they all decided Yan Huan would play the role, she was the perfect Qing Yao. This was Qing Yao, a devil but with a good side, too, a good side but she would never admit.

Qing Yao was not bad, she was pitiful, whose fault was it that Qing Yao had become this way?

The man beside Director Jin looked sullen, “I think Wen Dongni is better.” His face felt hot when he spat out the words.

The others looked at him strangely. He was embarrassed and coughed a little bit.

“I’m sorry, Planner Chen, we all agreed.” Director Jin looked at him helplessly, “The minority is subordinate to the majority, you won’t go your own way, will you?”

Fuck you! Planner Chen nearly jumped up and touched Director Jin’s nose when he pointed at him to scold him.

Even though he insisted on having his own way, it was not going to work.

Yes, they had all agreed, he couldn’t win the argument with them in any way. In the entertainment circle, people lived by their appearance. But if their beauty was similar they had to live by their acting.

You couldn’t brag about having a connection, as many people also have them due to the large nature of the drama. All the investors wanted to earn money, if you asked a third-class actor to play in it you couldn’t get the support needed from everyone else. In the end, Planner Chen could only clench his teeth in hatred and look on helplessly as everyone agreed on Yan Huan.

When Yan Huan came out, Yi Ling rose to her feet and ran to her. She stood in front of her before she could even speak, just like a mother hen protecting her chick, carefully keeping Yan Huan behind her.

Wen Dongni walked over and smiled with confidence.

“Little walk-on actor, I look forward to seeing you again, there is no chance really, but it could be possible,” she said as she blew on her perfectly manicured fingernails. “Perhaps you could be my double in Journey to Fairyland, I do remember you being good in hanging wire.”

Yan Huan didn’t get angry but she instead smiled, “If I get the chance, I will.”

Wen Dongni held her hand tightly, and her face took on a ghastly expression. She snorted and turned around, walking away in her high heels swinging her hips.

Yi Ling could relax after Wen Dongni left.

“Are you alright? Huanhuan, why does she bully you?” She was nearly ready to scream in fear when she saw Wen Dongni enter the room, as she was afraid Wen Dongni might bully Yan Huan again.

“I’m fine,” Yan Huan shook her head, “Don’t worry. I didn’t get hurt.”

“Then,” Yi Ling asked carefully, “Did... you get it?”

Yan Huan smiled, then she reached out and made an “okay” gesture with her hand

Chapter 120: The Taste Of Victory

Yi Ling did not understand at first. She had to think for a long moment. Suddenly, her eyes widened, and she threw her arms around Yan Huan.

“Huanhuan, you did it! You did it, didn’t you? We’ve finally landed our first big break! Right? Right?”

“Yes, we finally did it.” Yan Huan lifted her face, blinking back the tears that were threatening to gather in her eyes. It was their first big break, and she was confident that the name “Yan Huan” would be a mainstay on TV, in the magazines, and on the internet in the very near future. Her name would be part of the “trending” list on all the major search engines. She would be a star, just as she had been in her previous life—no, she would climb to even greater heights, and cover even greater distances this time around.

The open audition lasted two days. A few other actresses had tried for the role of Qing Yao after Yan Huan, but none of them had been able to bring Qing Yao to life the way Yan Huan had done. Unsurprisingly, the role of Qing Yao went to Yan Huan. As for Wen Dongni, she had failed to get the role of the secondary female lead, but her “connection” with Associate Producer Chen was strong enough to snag her a minor supporting role. It was an insignificant character, but one that many actresses had coveted because the character would be getting plenty of screentime: she would be introduced early on, and then make frequent appearances throughout the show without getting killed off half-way. Wen Dongni was lucky to get the role.

But Wen Dongni had had her heart set on the secondary female lead. She had to admit that she was not a versatile actress; she did not have the acting chops to tackle some of the other roles, but twisted characters like Qing Yao were supposed to be her specialty. She was by no means a bad actress—she

would have dropped out of showbiz long ago if she was actually terrible at acting. She was not a famous star, but most in the industry recognized her name; that was an honor that most other newbie actors did not have.

But the role she was after had been snatched out of her hands by Yan Huan—for the second time.

She demanded an explanation from her manager, and also from Associate Producer Chen, but it was no use.

“It’s out of my hands.” Associate Producer Chen liked Wen Dongni and tried his best to make her happy, but that did not mean he was a pushover. Some things he knew he could help her with, but the rest were completely beyond his control. He was not the type to make promises he already knew he would not be able to fulfill.

“Are you saying that that stunt double is a better actress than I am?”

Wen Dongni’s features were distorted from her uncontrollable anger.

“Do you want to hear the truth?” Associate Producer Chen regretted his decision to help the woman standing before him. She had seemed pretty enough at first—she was his type, in fact—but her unbecoming jealousy now made her seem impossibly ugly. He shuddered at the thought of going to bed with an ugly hag like her.

Wen Dongni was dumbfounded. What did Associate Producer Chen mean by that?

The truth? What truth?

“I think I should be honest with you.” Associate Producer Chen lifted Wen Dongni’s face. “You’re not as pretty or as young as Yan Huan. And—this is the deal breaker—you’re just not as good at acting as she is. Far from it. I know that’s hard to believe, but you’ll see what I mean once filming begins. She’s leagues above you.”

As the saying went: “Ignorance is bliss.” Sometimes, it was better not to know how you compared with others.

Wen Dongni’s face turned an ashen gray as she listened to Associate Producer Chen. Her cheeks were warm with acute embarrassment.

At that very moment, Yan Huan and Yi Ling were celebrating. The company had heard that Yan Huan had gotten the role of the secondary female lead, and had rewarded both women with a significant increase in their monthly stipend. The money came at just the right time to ease Yan Huan and Yi Ling’s financial woes. The agency’s gesture of goodwill at this moment was actually standard industry practice, as Yan Huan would be splitting her earnings 50/50 with the agency in the future.

“Let’s go eat hot pot today.” Yi Ling had, in her excitement, come up with a long list of food to celebrate with: Yangzhou boat dishes, Cantonese cuisine, barbecue... the list went on. She had ultimately decided on hot pot because A) the cold weather was perfect for it, and B) hot pot was cheap, despite the large portions.

“Okay,” said Yan Huan, her eyes disappearing into happy crescents. She lowered her head and gently rubbed Little Bean’s tiny pink nose.

She lifted Little Bean to eye-level and said apologetically, "Sorry, but we can't take you with us."

Little Bean stuck out her tiny tongue and licked Yan Huan's fingers. Yan Huan was worried: what was she going to do with Little Bean if she had to film outside the city for days at a time? Yi Ling would have to come with her because she was her manager, which meant that Little Bean would be all alone at home. How was her little darling going to feed and take care of itself?

Neither Yan Huan nor Yi Ling had close friends they could rely on. Leaving Little Bean in a stranger's home was completely out of the question; she did not trust amateurs to know how to look after her cat while she was away. Her only option, then, was to board Little Bean at a pet shop with professional expertise.

"Hey, why haven't you changed?" Yi Ling emerged from her room to see Yan Huan still sitting on the sofa. "We're going out to eat hot pot, right? Did you change your mind?"

"I'll go like this." Yan Huan looked down at herself. Her clothes seemed decent enough; the cotton dress she had on was a simple design that could be worn outdoors and also as pajamas. It was too much effort to change into something else just for a trip to the hot pot restaurant. Who was going to recognize her, anyway? She was still a relatively unknown actress.

She set Little Bean down. She mentally reminded herself to look for a pet shop that would be able to take care of Little Bean for a few days.

Yi Ling brought Yan Huan to a famous hot pot restaurant in their neighborhood. Unlike some of the other bigger stars, Yan Huan did not disguise herself with oversized sunglasses and a face mask. She was not delusional enough to think she needed them at this stage.

"Let's sit over there." Yi Ling quickly pulled Yan Huan into the restaurant and found a table. She was glad they had come early; there were only a few other diners about, but she knew the restaurant would be bursting at the seams with diners soon. It would be a nightmare to find a table then.

They sat down and placed their order. Yan Huan did not take spicy food, so they ordered a hot pot with Jiangnan-style seafood broth. As they waited to be served, Yi Ling got out her phone and opened Yan Huan's Weibo to see if the follower count had increased. Her heart soared as soon as she opened the page: the follower count was steadily increasing, which meant that her efforts had not been in vain. Yi Ling was confident that Yan Huan's popularity would be launched to even greater heights once *Love and Tribulations* went on air.

A moment later, a waiter brought them their hot pot. Yi Ling picked up her chopsticks and dug in. Yan Huan, on the other hand, was not as greedy: she had always been a small eater, and was not as picky as Yi Ling when it came to food.

She ate her food slowly, relishing the rich, complex taste of victory as she mulled over her journey so far.

The hot pot restaurant was becoming increasingly crowded. It was a casual neighborhood joint, which meant that most of the diners were the easygoing type who did not care about anything other than the food. Everyone was busy eating; no one ogled Yan Huan, and the owner did not give her a discount just because she had a pretty face.

“Let’s take this spot.” Lei Qingyi lifted a long leg over a stool and sat down without waiting to see if his companions agreed. The stool was uncomfortable; it was not quite big enough for him. To put it another way, Lei Qingyi’s hips were too wide for the stool. He was a massive giant of a man, after all.

One of his companions was a woman in a black suit; she looked like a widow who had just left a funeral. She carefully picked her way to the table where Lei Qingyi sat, as though navigating a minefield. It was obvious that the restaurant disgusted her; she could not understand how anyone could stand to eat in such a messy, overcrowded place.