

### **Chapter 71 With Money or with Your Body?**

Yan Huan pinched Yi Ling's cheek. "Food is food, don't be so picky. Little Bean has to eat the exact same food every day, do you hear her complaining?"

Little Bean seemed to know that her owners were talking about her; she meowed once and lifted her tiny head from her bowl of cat food to look at them.

Yi Ling pouted. Oh well, noodles were still better than nothing.

One bowl of noodles later and Yi Ling was full. She walked off to look for Little Bean as she had nothing else to do. Yan Huan, seeing that Yi Ling was now out of sight, surreptitiously pulled up her sleeve to check the large bruise on her arm. She was thankful for the recent spate of gloomy weather; it gave her an excuse to cover the bruise with long-sleeved clothing. She just hoped the bruise would disappear soon, otherwise she would have to try to hide it with makeup when it was time to shoot her remaining scenes.

She climbed onto her bed and was soon fast asleep. She had not slept this soundly in ages, not since waking up in her younger body in this new life. When she opened her eyes, it was already the next day.

The purple bruise on her arm was less obvious now. She hugged a pillow and went back to sleep. She did not have to look into a mirror to know that her face was still deathly pale.

Several hours later, she heard Yi Ling knock on the door. "Huanhuan, are you still asleep? You've been sleeping for almost the entire day. Are you really that tired?"

"Yeah..." said Yan Huan as she snuggled deeper into her pillow.

"I was so hungry I ate a few bowls of cat food. It tastes pretty good, actually."

Yan Huan was speechless and made no reply.

She had slept for an entire day and night and was now feeling a little better. But she kept mum about her blood donation— she knew Yi Ling would throttle her to death if she so much as hinted at it.

It took three whole days of rest for Yan Huan to feel normal again. In this time, Yi Ling did not suspect anything. Yan Huan wanted to believe it was because of her acting skills, but she could not help wondering if Yi Ling was simply too dense to notice.

Around the same time, Lu Yi woke up in the hospital. Although his injury was serious, he had been spared from any permanent damage to his organs. He had received a blood transfusion in the nick of time, and thanks to that, he was now back to his normal self after only a few days.

"I heard that a gorgeous chick gave you her blood. Is that true?" Lei Qingyi selected an apple from the fruit basket, casually wiping it on his clothes before taking a bite out of it. He was a boorish, unsophisticated man with a loud voice; he lifted a leg and rested it on the hospital bed, revealing the hairy calf under his pants. The hair on his calves was as thick as a monkey's.

Lu Yi was flipping through a book, his expression inscrutable.

Crunch! Lei Qingyi took another bite out of his apple. “I heard that it was all thanks to that pretty lady that you recovered so quickly. If it wasn’t for her, you’d be laid up in the hospital for the next several months. Heck, you might even be dead now. I know you’re not the type to owe a debt, so how are you going to repay her for saving your life? With money? Or with your body?”

After a short pause with no reply from Lu Yi, Lei Qingyi continued his monologue. “Oh, and by the way... Lu Yi, from now on, I forbid you from telling anyone that you and I are from the same team. And you’re not allowed to tell anyone that you were previously trained in my family’s ancient martial arts- not when any Tom, Dick, or Harry can walk up and stab you in the stomach just like that. Disgraceful! I’m ashamed of you! And that stony, deadpan face of yours—you look like a dead fish! Would it kill you to smile every once in a while, bro?” Lei Qingyi tossed the apple core into the trash can beside him. It was a clean throw; his aim was perfect.

Lu Yi tossed the book in his hand aside.

“Are you thirsty?”

Lei Qingyi licked his chapped lips. “I wasn’t, but now that you mention it... Yeah, I could use a drink.”

## **Chapter 72 She Doesn’t Want You to Find Her**

A moment later, Lei Qingyi returned to the room with a pitcher of water and a glass. He did a double-take when he saw that Lu Yi had moved from the bed to stand by the window: it was incredible how quickly the man had recovered from his life-threatening injuries. Was he some kind of superman? And that rare, precious blood of his— what a waste to have lost so much of it! All that blood would have fetched a pretty penny.

“Qingyi, can you help me look up the identity of my blood donor?”

Lu Yi assumed Lei Qingyi would be able to track down his mystery blood donor easily, as the latter worked with the National Security Department branch in Sea City.

Lei Qingyi sat down heavily in the visitor’s chair. He carelessly poured out a glass of water for himself, spilling some of it, and downed the entire thing in one go.

“It won’t be easy. All we know is that it was a young, petite lady, only 20 years old but tough as nails. She has to be, because she donated 1100cc of her blood. Keep in mind that once you lose 1500cc of blood, you’ll pass out and possibly go into a coma. But the lady actually got up after all that and left the hospital on her own two feet. She didn’t leave a name.”

Lei Qingyi rubbed his chin. “My gut feeling tells me that this lady isn’t interested in having you repay your debt to her with your body, so you may as well forget it.”

Lu Yi’s dark eyes flashed, but he did not say anything.

“By the way...” A thought seemed to occur to Lei Qingyi. He leaned back into his chair and made himself comfortable. He was a large man, and the tiny chair beneath him creaked helplessly under his weight. “I heard that troublemaker in your family wants to go into show business?”

“Yeah,” said Lu Yi flatly. “He can do whatever he likes, it’s none of my concern.”

Tsk-tsk...

Lei Qingyi clucked his tongue as he shook his head disapprovingly: some people seemed set on digging their own graves. “Eh, he still hasn’t learned his lesson? Is he trying to stir up trouble again?”

Lu Yi seated himself. “Like I said, it’s none of my business. I don’t care what goes on in his head, so long as he doesn’t cause trouble for my parents.” He picked up a book, placed it on his lap, and began leafing through it.

Lei Qingyi rolled his eyes. “Son of a bitch, would it kill you to chat with me?”

“If you want a conversation partner, you better look for someone else,” said Lu Yi in a disinterested monotone. His expression was entirely deadpan; the muscles on his face seemed frozen in place.

That was a pity, as he was actually a very handsome man. He did not have the high, pronounced cheekbones of a Caucasian, instead he had the elegant, mysterious aura of people from the East. His thin lips were always in a prim, straight line, and the corners of his eyes and mouth were free of wrinkles. He was evidently a man who did not smile much.

He was young, tall, and well-built, his lean frame rippling with raw power from his sturdy muscles. He had beautiful hands; the joints of his fingers were like bamboo, strong and ruthless. He had claimed many lives with these hands, but every single one of them had deserved it.

That was just the way it was.

Criminals never went unpunished; the legal system worked tirelessly to ensure that.

He was a prosecutor, which meant that he had to be stoic and serious at all times. He could not afford to be emotional; it would be a huge mistake for him to inject his personal feelings into his work.

He had to be sensible and rational.

He was fair and impartial. But that was not the same as being heartless.

There were many ways to get through life. Some people were natural fakers and pretenders, while others tried to remain true to themselves. And then there were those who had to put on a mask out of necessity.

Lu Yi belonged in that last category. He had to disengage himself from his true feelings and pretend to be someone he was not.

Over in Yan Huan’s apartment, Yan Huan was sitting on the old, threadbare sofa with Little Bean in her arms. She was still feeling a little under the weather; she was often groggy and tired. She had asked Director Jin about her next scenes, and he had told her that the production was currently a little behind schedule. The scenes between the female and male leads were taking longer than usual to shoot, which meant that Yan Huan’s scenes would have to be delayed for several days.

Yan Huan was glad to hear that, she needed the extra time to rest.

## **Chapter 73 An Offer**

Yan Huan wished she knew exactly how long it would take for her body to replace the blood she had donated.

“Huanhuan, Huanhuan...”

Yi Ling’s shouts preceded her arrival. The door opened with a bang and Yi Ling ran in, grabbed Yan Huan by the wrist, and dragged her out the door. “Quick, we have to get going, there’s no time to waste...”

Yan Huan could not shake Yi Ling off; she was still carrying Little Bean with her other hand.

They had just stepped out of the apartment when Yi Ling finally turned to take a good look at Yan Huan. Her jaw dropped.

Cotton pajamas, a face that was as pale as a zombie’s, a cat in one hand, and slippers on her feet—Yan Huan was so beautiful she could wear a burlap sack and make it look like a fashion statement, but they were going to meet someone important and her current look was completely unacceptable.

“What on earth are you wearing?!” Yi Ling was close to tears. Yan Huan’s attire would have been perfectly okay for the market, or for walking the cat around the neighborhood, but this was serious business!

“Hey, you’re the one who dragged me out, remember?” Yan Huan rubbed her sore wrist. She was already used to Yi Ling’s impatient, highly excitable personality; it was just like her to do a grab-and-run without offering any kind of explanation.

“Oh, right, sorry about that.” Yi Ling realized she had been too hasty. She quickly pushed Yan Huan back into their apartment. “Go get changed, Yuelun wants to sign you. Oh my god, someone wants to sign us! Finally! We’ll be part of an agency, we’ll get a new place to stay in.”

“Yuelun?” Yan Huan was momentarily stunned. She lowered her head and gently stroked the tiny ears of the kitten in her arms as she considered the news.

Was Yuelun interested in signing her? This wasn’t some kind of joke, was it?

She could not understand why Yuelun wanted her. She was just a nobody; she didn’t have any breakout roles yet. She had a number of shows under her belt, but she had worked as a stunt double or a background extra in all of them.

It did not make sense for a large entertainment agency like Yuelun to consider signing her. Even the smaller agencies would turn her away at once if she showed up at their door.

She was a nobody with zero connections. Signing with them would be a massive boost to her career.

Was the universe sending her help right when she needed it?

The timing was uncanny. She felt as though someone had slipped a nice, fresh pillow under her head just as she was about to lie down to sleep.

Yan Huan went back to her room and changed into something much more decent. She did not have a lot of clothes, and most of them were unbranded. This was a complete 180 from her past life: back then,

her massive walk-in closet had been full of the latest, trendiest clothes from her various sponsors. She had hired a clothing assistant just to manage her wardrobe. Her clothes, shoes, bags, and even her various hairstyles had been specially designed by professionals. She had enjoyed all those luxuries in her past life; this time around, however, she preferred to live her life in a modest and laid-back manner.

She chose a white blouse and a pair of jeans from her wardrobe and put them on. She tied one end of her blouse into a knot around her waist. She put on a pair of white canvas shoes and tied her hair into a simple bun. She looked young and pretty, a little like a fresh-faced, wide-eyed child. Mentally, however, she was a mature adult: she had lived for almost 28 years in her past life, and had seen more or less everything life had to offer. She knew how the world worked; she had tasted the sweet wine of life as well as its bitter poison.

She felt old and cynical inside, but she wanted to be young again.

There was nothing wrong with wanting to be young again, was there? Her current body was only 20 years old, after all. She was back at the starting line of adulthood, young enough to waste her youth without a second thought. She was a flower that had just begun to bloom.

All right, she said to herself as she patted her cheeks in the mirror, I hope I get the contract with Yuelun. Yi Ling, Little Bean, and I will finally be able to move out of here, and we won't have to listen to the couple next door go about their, er, "nightly activities" any more.

#### **Chapter 74 A Request**

When they arrived at the office building for Yuelun Entertainment, there was already someone waiting at the entrance to receive them. The man took a moment to look Yan Huan over, but unlike most other actors her age, she did not feel uncomfortable or nervous as he silently assessed her. Instead, she greeted him with a pleasant, easygoing smile; she was already a battle-hardened veteran, after all.

The man appeared to be impressed with her. He led the two women to a tastefully decorated office. Yuelun was not yet the world class entertainment agency Yan Huan remembered from her previous life, but it was on its way there. The company did not have a lot of artists, but all of the young performers under its label showed great potential. Some of them were already moderately famous, and these artistes were the prized jewels of the company.

Someone was waiting for them in the office: Li Changqing, one of the business managers in Yuelun. Both his name and face were easy to remember. His eyes lit up at once when he saw Yan Huan.

"Director Jin has a good eye. You have an extremely photogenic face, Ms. Yan. You were born to be on camera."

"Thank you." Yan Huan lowered her eyelashes modestly over her clear, placid eyes. She was pleasantly surprised; she had not expected Director Jin to actually keep his word.

"Haha..." Li Changqing chuckled amiably. He looked like a kind, easy-going person, but Yan Huan knew better than to be fooled: the man had to be a shrewd businessman to be a manager at Yuelun. All businessmen were sly foxes by default, and the businessmen in showbiz were practically demons.

The entertainment industry was not a place for the naive. Yan Huan knew she had to be extra careful when navigating the deep, treacherous waters of showbiz; one mistake, and she would sink like a rock before she knew it.

“This is the contract, have a look. If you don’t agree with some of the terms, let me know and I’ll see what I can do.”

Yan Huan took the contract and began to read it. It was similar to the last contract she had signed with Chengcheng in her previous life. A lot of the terms were generous; she could tell that Yuelun was not trying to exploit her just because she was new to showbiz. Instead, it gave her plenty of freedom to decide the direction of her career for herself. It was in fact a lot more generous and flexible than her first contract with Chengcheng in her past life.

So long as Yan Huan complied with the company’s regulations, Yuelun would do their best to assist her in developing her career. At the same time, they would respect her choices in her roles.

She handed the contract to Yi Ling, and then placed her hands neatly on the table as she waited patiently for Yi Ling to read through it.

“Ms. Yan, do you want to make any adjustments to the contract?” Li Changqing felt that Yan Huan was a worthy investment. Director Jin had praised her acting, and Li Changqing trusted the director’s judgment. More importantly, she was only 20 years old, she was brimming with untold potential.

Li Changqing knew that signing Yan Huan would be a win-win situation for them. The investment would pay off for the company, even though some of the terms in the contract were actually highly favorable to Yan Huan. For example, the company would only take a cut from the acting roles she secured through the company’s connections. She would be able to keep all of her earnings from the jobs she landed on her own, such as ads and product endorsement deals.

“I have a request,” Yan Huan looked directly into Li Changqing’s eyes. It was clear that this was actually a condition, and not simply a request: if he refused her, she would walk away from the contract and wait patiently for another agency to express an interest in her.

“Go on.” Li Changqing nodded slightly. He was able to accommodate most requests, so long as they were reasonable.

“I want...” Yan Huan paused briefly. “I want Yi Ling to stay on as my manager.”

## **Chapter 75 Moving Out**

Yi Ling teared up when she heard Yan Huan’s request. She wanted badly to continue being Yan Huan’s manager, but it did not seem likely. An entertainment agency of Yuelun’s caliber would most likely assign a manager who was much more experienced and competent to take over her job. But that was okay. No matter what happened, Yi Ling swore she would never leave Yan Huan. She had promised Mrs. Yan that she would take good care of her little sister; she would protect Yan Huan, come hell or high water.

Li Changqing had not expected such a simple request. "Sure, why not? Honestly, that was our plan all along, we had no intention whatsoever of getting another manager for you. Ms. Yi has a good head for business. We plan to mold her into one of the best celebrity managers around."

"Oh, stop flattering me." Yi Ling was thoroughly embarrassed by the praise. Her face had turned a bright red, which did not happen often for the tomboy.

Li Changqing smiled but did not retract his words. He had been telling the truth: Yi Ling was a good manager. The odds had been stacked against her, but she had managed to cut out a path for Yan Huan in the vicious, man-eat-man jungle known as showbiz. Although most of Yan Huan's roles so far were insignificant supporting roles, it was clear that Yi Ling was highly competent and knew what she was doing.

Yan Huan picked up the pen and signed her name on the contract.

She was now officially an actress signed with Yuelun Entertainment. The agency had arranged a small apartment for her, located just outside the city. She would have to undergo a training program, and then start working on the jobs assigned to her by the agency.

Signing with an agency meant that she no longer had full control over her time and what she was allowed to do in public, but the trade-off was worth it as she would now have access to many more roles and resources. But she was still a nobody and new to the agency, which meant that she did not qualify for a personal assistant or her own makeup artist yet. Her contract did not include a private limo either, but she did not mind. She would earn all of that with her own two hands.

It would happen soon. Very soon.

She was definitely staging a comeback.

She had signed the contract and joined Yuelun. She was now in uncharted territory; in her previous life, she had signed with Chengcheng, Yuelun's main rival. The rivalry between the two companies had been intense in her past life. They had yet to get to that point this time around, but Yan Huan knew it was going to happen soon.

She did not want to sign with Chengcheng again because A) Yuelun was clearly the superior company when it came to looking out for their artistes, and B) she knew Su Muran would eventually be Chengcheng's top celebrity once she returned from abroad.

In her previous life, Su Muran had robbed Yan Huan of the accolades, reputation, and fame that should have belonged to her. She had ruthlessly kicked Yan Huan to the ground and then kept her firmly underfoot. She had robbed Yan Huan of her blood, and then killed her child.

Yan Huan swore she would not rest until she avenged the death of her child.

"What's wrong, Huanhuan? Aren't you happy about this?" Yi Ling asked tentatively. She was surprised by the dark, brooding look on Yan Huan's face: was she regretting signing with Yuelun already?

"I'm fine." The look of hatred in Yan Huan's eyes faded away. She smiled, but the curve of her lips wavered.

Just you wait and see, Su Muran. We'll see which one of us gets the last laugh this time around.

Yi Ling was sure Yan Huan was lying, but she could not figure out why. What was Yan Huan upset about? Everything seemed perfect.

When they returned home, Yi Ling happily packed their things in preparation to move out.

The two women did not have a lot; they were only renting their current apartment, and all of the furniture in it belonged to the landlord. After packing their clothes, all they had to do was collect their kitchen utensils, roll up their mattresses, and grab their cat.

## **Chapter 76 We'll Be Happy**

"We're moving," said Yan Huan to Little Bean as she scooped the kitten into her arms. It had been a little over a month since she had first adopted Little Bean, and the tiny, sad-looking kitten back then was now a plump, beautiful cat with pretty blue eyes. She was also extremely obedient: she kept her tiny claws sheathed and hidden at all times and never clawed at the furniture.

Yi Ling was covered from head to toe with bags of all sizes. She was carrying everything she could possibly carry; Yan Huan, on the other hand, could only carry the bare minimum of luggage because she had to carry the cat, too.

"I forgot something." They had already walked some distance when Yi Ling suddenly stopped and placed her bags on the ground.

"What is it?" Yan Huan could not figure out what they could have possibly forgotten: she was sure they had taken everything with them. They had spent the entire night carefully packing, and had gone through their checklist again in the morning to make sure they had not missed anything. What else was there?

Yi Ling placed her hands on her hips. "I forgot to tell our neighbors they're now free to be as loud as they want at night."

Yan Huan's silence was her only reply.

In the end, Yi Ling did not actually turn back to tell their neighbors that they were moving out. She had too many things with her; it seemed such a silly, unnecessary waste of her time and energy to go back and forth with all their luggage just for that.

Their new apartment was in a nice, quiet neighborhood. The best thing about it was its top-notch privacy and security measures: the building had three doors that could only be opened with access cards. Yan Huan and Yi Ling's apartment unit was on the 15th floor, and, since most of the building was unoccupied, the elevators and hallways were usually quiet and empty.

"I want this room." Yi Ling chose the room with a large window as her bedroom. It was her dream to have a room with large french windows; she liked the idea of waking up in the morning to sunlight streaming through the window. When the curtains were open, the whole room would be bathed in golden light. When the curtains were drawn, she would snuggle into her blankets and have a nice, cozy sleep. It was a dream come true for her.

Yan Huan was not as particular about where she slept. She could sleep anywhere— even on a thin sleeping bag in the living room if necessary.

The company had given her a small apartment with two bedrooms, fully furnished. They had everything they needed.

"I'm so in love with this place." Yi Ling threw herself onto the large bed in her room. She rolled around on top of it, from one end to the other and then back again.

Yan Huan set Little Bean down, and then prepared a small nest for the kitten in one corner of the living room. Little Bean ran over to the nest, made herself comfortable, and was soon asleep.

Yan Huan pulled up her sleeves and began to unpack their belongings. Yi Ling had already fallen asleep on her bed, and was even snoring slightly. Yan Huan stood quietly in the bedroom doorway as she watched Yi Ling sleep.

"Yiyi, you'll be happy this time, right?"

"Yiyi, I'll be happy this time, right?"

"We've stayed away from those vile, despicable men so far. We don't need them."

She gently shut the door behind her, and then got a mop. She kept herself occupied for a long while after that, buzzing around the house like a busy bee as she cleaned it inside and out. When she was done, she got her purse and went out to shop for groceries. She would cook a nice dinner later to celebrate moving into their new home.

On the way to the market, she stopped in front of the hospital Lu Yi had been admitted to. She could not help it; her feet seemed to have a mind of their own.

She wondered whether he had recovered.

She fully intended to continue on her way, but the next thing she knew she was already inside the hospital.

### **Chapter 77 Want Me To Stab You?**

She took another step forward, but turned suddenly to hide behind a corner when she spotted two men walking towards her. One of them was a loud, roguish-looking man with spiky, porcupine hair; the other was stoic and taciturn. The quiet man had a frigid, no-nonsense demeanor, his attitude was so frosty he seemed to carry a personal snow storm with him.

Suddenly, the quiet, icy man stopped in his tracks.

"What's up, Prosecutor Lu? Miss your hospital room already? I can always stab you with a knife and have you admitted again, you know." Lei Qingyi crossed his arms, his face split into a wide grin as he ruthlessly made fun of Lu Yi. He had been teasing Lu Yi ever since the day he had been admitted into the hospital, the day he had almost died in the operating room. He could not resist cracking jokes at Lu Yi's expense. He had seen Lu Yi's skills firsthand during their time in the army together, and he knew it was completely absurd for Lu Yi to almost die from a knife stabbing of all things. He was never going to let Lu Yi live it down.

Lu Yi was now looking in Yan Huan's direction, but she had plastered herself against the wall, out of sight. The palms of her hands were slick with nervous sweat.

“C’mon, let’s go.” Lei Qingyi touched his spiky hair. He was proud of his hair; it was, in his opinion, extremely stylish. He did not have to apply any hair products; each individual strand of hair stood upright on its own.

“Yeah.” Lu Yi finally looked away and followed Lei Qingyi out of the hospital with long, confident strides. He was neither frail nor ghastly pale; in fact, he seemed perfectly healthy. He did not look at all like someone who had just recovered from a serious injury.

The speed of his recovery was almost as scary as his frosty, no-nonsense personality.

It was hard to believe he was human like everyone else. Lei Qingyi would have believed it if someone came up to him now and told him Lu Yi was actually a mutant.

Yan Huan waited until they had gone a safe distance before emerging from her hiding place behind the corner. She touched the bruise on her arm; it seemed to throb faintly.

She walked out of the hospital with a relieved smile on her lips.

Yup, she thought to herself, a celebration is definitely in order. We’ll celebrate moving to a new apartment, a new home.

She went to the market and bought fish and vegetables. When she returned to her new apartment, she saw that Yi Ling had woken up and was now playing with Little Bean, idly squeezing the kitten’s fleshy paws. Woman and cat seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Yi Ling’s eyes lit up when she saw Yan Huan. Food!

Little Bean’s eyes lit up when she saw her owner. Food!.

Yan Huan lifted the fish in her hand, her eyes twinkling merrily. Yes, food!

That evening, the two women and their cat gorged themselves on a hearty dinner. Afterwards, Yi Ling held Little Bean in her lap as she watched TV. Yan Huan went into her room to study her script. That was the good thing about their new place: she could now study her scripts in peace because the walls were soundproof, and they had very few neighbors. In fact, the entire building was largely unoccupied. It was perhaps a little too quiet for most people, but this was exactly what Yan Huan wanted.

She knew from experience that once she became famous, her life would never be peaceful or quiet again.

The company had not yet assigned new jobs to her because she was still in the middle of shooting Love and Tribulations.

“Are you ready?” Yi Ling poked her head through the doorway.

“Yup.” Yan Huan rubbed her arm; she had covered the bruise with makeup. Just to be safe, she put on a long-sleeved blouse. She would have to change out of it at the set, but there was no point worrying about that now. She was confident she would find a way to keep her bruise hidden.

She made sure to arrive at the set early, as one of the scenes they would be shooting that day was hers. Her role, Hong Yao, did not have many lines; instead, she would have to express herself through her

expression and body language. Hong Yao was the hardest character to pull off in the entire show, which was why Jin Hailiang, the director, had insisted on personally choosing the actress for the role. So far, Yan Huan had nailed it: her take on Hong Yao was extremely realistic and fascinating. Perhaps a different actress would be able to top her interpretation of the character in the future, but then again, maybe not. Yan Huan hadn't heard of any plans to remake Love and Tribulations in her previous life.

## **Chapter 78 You've Lost Weight**

"What happened? You've lost weight," said the makeup artist as she helped Yan Huan adjust her clothes. The makeup artist liked Yan Huan and had a lot of respect for her; Yan Huan was the youngest among all the actors, but she was just as skilled at acting as the older, much more experienced actors. "Are you trying to lose more weight? That isn't necessary, you know." The makeup artist was genuinely worried for Yan Huan; the actress was only 20 years old, after all. Most people her age were still in college, but she had given that up to be an actress because she needed money immediately to support herself and her family.

"Look, there's so much more space now," the makeup artist lamented as she tugged at the loose fabric around Yan Huan's waist. She couldn't understand it: it had been less than a week since Yan Huan had last gotten into costume, but she was already so much thinner.

Yan Huan smiled wryly as she touched her arm. She had donated 1000cc of blood, it was only natural for her to be thinner now.

But this actually worked out in Yan Huan's favor. Hong Yao was supposed to be sick in her next scene, which meant that Yan Huan was being 100% true to character. Her complexion was the right shade of ghostly white; the makeup artist did not have to put any white powder on her face. And after the sudden weight loss, her eyes looked bigger in her small, gaunt face.

It was the perfect look for Hong Yao's next scene.

The lights, background, and props were now in place, and Yan Huan seated herself on a chair. As soon as the director yelled the cue, a faraway look began to creep into her eyes. She was in her royal blue cheongsam, and the striking shade of blue only served to emphasize the lack of color in her complexion and the tint of gray in her lips. She was wasting away, living aimlessly from day to day. One day, she would probably die in the brothel, and her entire life would then be reduced to a lonely grave and a mound of soil.

Qinjiang River, Rouge Pavilion: the place where men went to lose themselves in wine and pleasure.

Hong Yao extracted a cigarette from her case, lit it, and began to smoke. There was something alluring about the way she moved. She exhaled the smoke casually, as though she had done this a hundred, or perhaps a thousand, times before.

She puffed away at her cigarette, a wry smile on her slightly parted lips. This Hong Yao did not inspire hatred and resentment, only sympathy: everyone who saw her now pitied her for her beauty, and what she was forced to do with it.

Suddenly, the window clattered. Hong Yao heard something roll in from outside and turned to look. It was not, in fact, a something, but a certain someone she knew. She stared at the bloody, sorry-looking mess of a man who had trespassed into her boudoir.

There was a loud commotion outside. She could hear a man shouting angrily as a woman wept loudly in the background.

The man on the floor struggled to get up, but did not have the strength for it. He collapsed once more, hitting his head against the floor with a resounding thud.

Hong Yao leisurely set her cigarette in the ashtray upon the table before walking over to the man. She lifted her slender, perfect calves and gingerly stepped over him.

Bang! The door burst open, and a troop of military policemen filed in. Hong Yao was now seated at the table again, smoking languidly. The men froze in place when they saw her sultry expression; suddenly, they could not remember what they were there for.

Men were always irrationally weak against beauty. That was just the way the world worked.

Just then, Madam Huang wormed her way through the men and towards Hong Yao.

“Hong Yao, they’re accusing us of hiding a man inside Rouge Pavilion!”

“A man?” Hong Yao stood up and fluffed her hair. “Madam, is that a joke? Of course we have men here.”

The corner of Madam Huang’s mouth began to twitch.

“How are we supposed to earn a living otherwise?” Yan Huan blew smoke over her fingers. “Rouge Pavilion is full of men.”

“Search the place!”

### **Chapter 79: A New Show?**

The senior officer leading the raid did not care to waste any more time listening to Hong Yao’s sarcastic remarks. He signaled to his men to begin the search.

Hong Yao was unperturbed. She merely gave him a coy, seductive look, the smile on her lips irresistibly alluring to even the most stoic of men.

Every man in her presence was now fantasizing about having their way with her.

The senior officer looked like a serious, no-nonsense man, but Hong Yao knew exactly what he was thinking. She had been working in a brothel for long enough to be able to read men like a book.

He had not shown any outward interest in her during the search, but when he walked past her on his way out the building, his hand shot out and squeezed Hong Yao’s behind.

As soon as he touched her, Yan Huan inwardly launched into a litany of expletives.

But that was Yan Huan. Hong Yao, on the other hand, continued to smile pleasantly because she was already used to men fondling her without her consent. As soon as the men had gone, however, her smile dripped with contempt.

“Cut!” shouted the director.

The expression on Yan Huan’s face immediately changed into one of consternation. She touched her behind, where the actor had fondled her, and wondered whether it was safe to disinfect the area with bleach without damaging her skin.

She had sworn to protect herself in this new life. Physical contact with other actors was inevitable when shooting a scene, but outside of the set, she was determined to be the scandal-free “good girl” in showbiz. She had had too many scandals and negative press in her previous life.

No secret was 100% safe in this world. Even the best kept secrets would eventually be discovered; it was only a matter of time. Yan Huan now knew that the only way to maintain a squeaky-clean image was to not do anything that would compromise her reputation in the first place.

Her actions caused everyone on the set to burst into laughter.

Director Jin turned to the actor playing the senior officer and said with a laugh, “Now look what you’ve done. You frightened the young lady.”

The actor gave a helpless, awkward smile. He had not acted opposite such an innocent young lady for a very long time now. All the other actors in the production were slightly older than average; some of the background actors were young, but the lead actors were all pushing 30. The female lead was 28 years old, already toeing the acceptable upper age limit for “young lady” roles. The actresses in the secondary and tertiary female roles were also around 26 and 27. In comparison, Yan Huan was only a young girl, not yet a woman. She was the only actress in the production who had not yet celebrated her 20th birthday. But her acting skills were on par, or perhaps even better, than those of the veteran actors.

With her looks, youth, and acting skills, she was a guaranteed star. If she failed to become a hit with the audience it would prove that the world was horribly unfair and illogical.

The rest of the crew chuckled as Yan Huan blushed a bright red. They then dispersed to take a short break before shooting the next episode.

During the break, Yan Huan went to Director Jin to personally thank him for recommending her to Yuelun Entertainment. She knew that it was largely thanks to him that Yuelun had offered her a contract that was incredibly generous for a newcomer like herself. Without Director Jin’s help, she would probably have had to work for the company for free for a few years under an unfair contract.

“You don’t have to thank me,” said Director Jin. He went on to praise her by saying, “You’re a rare piece of unpolished jade, a wonderful actor who will go far. Yuelun should count their lucky stars for signing you. Once you’re a superstar they’ll owe me one.”

“Oh, by the way,” Director Jin suddenly remembered something, “I recently came across a good Xianxia novel, and I want to adapt the story into a TV series once we’re done with Love and Tribulations. I’d like to ask you to join that project as well. Right now we’re looking at having that show go on air in April of

next year, which means we don't have a lot of time. I don't have a character in mind for you yet, so you'll have to audition and see which character fits you best."

A Xianxia TV series? Yan Huan searched her past memories but could not recall which show he was referring to. It didn't really matter, though; she knew that Director Jin's projects were always of high quality. He was the type to prioritize quality over quantity, and she had heard that he sometimes spent several years on pre-production alone to make sure everything was perfect before shooting.

There were not many Xianxia shows airing on TV right now; the show she had acted in previously had been the first in a long while. That show had not exactly been a massive hit, but it had been popular enough to prove that there was a market for Xianxia shows.

### **Chapter 80: Can't Stand It**

The drama she could remember most was Journey to Fairyland, which was filmed by Director Jin. It was a hit drama that year, both the leading and supporting actors in the drama had become famous due to the show. Undoubtedly, Journey to Fairyland was the most famous movie those years. The drama had made the actors and actresses popular, especially those of them that achieved various awards.

Is it possible that the film mentioned by Director Jin was Journey to Fairyland? If this was the case, Yan Huan knew she must partake in Journey to Fairyland. It was a pity she couldn't join the drama in her previous life, and that she had such a difficult career path as an actress later on.

She wanted to ask more about it, but Director Jin wouldn't say anything else, therefore she did not insist on getting to the bottom of it. However, since he had mentioned it to her, she should wait patiently and grab the opportunity when it arose. A good opportunity couldn't be missed; she had missed it a lifetime ago, but she wouldn't miss it in this life.

The first thing to be noted about playing Hong Yao was that actions speak louder than words.

Hong Yao sat down after everyone left, she took out a cigarette and lit it. She looked tired with her eyes squinted, she was pale, and there wasn't much depth in her face.

When it was very quiet outside, when the sounds of cars had disappeared, and when you could faintly hear happy laughter outside, Rouge Pavilion was itself again.

All of them were striving to survive difficulties.

It was hard to live but it was even harder to live well.

She smiled ironically.

Director Jin couldn't help but clench his hand. Her acting was very expressive and fit the character. Her performance was too contrary to his expectations.

The camera lingered on her as Hong Yao raised her eyes and rose to her feet, walked to her bed, and kicked the frame with her foot.

"Sir Jiang, you may come out now. Do you enjoy being a man who hides under the bed to protect his reputation rather than one who honestly comes here? In this world, there's no man who doesn't like

beauty and cheating, they assume a mock-serious manner but deep down they are men.” Yan Huan spoke without missing a beat, she gave a vivid portrayal of the prostitute.

The bedboard moved and finally, Jiang Chao got out from under the bed. He was badly wounded but he wasn't in critical condition.

“Thank you,” he said, clutching his chest.

“Ha...” Hong Yao smiled ironically. “Don't mention it, anyways I didn't see Sir Jiang, however, please be gentle when you come to investigate Rouge Pavilion in the future, all of us are women and it's hard for us.”

Then she moved closer and stood behind Jiang Chao, reaching out to hold his waist. Jiang Chao was stunned and stood still.

Hong Yao buried her face in his back. The camera shot the scene close up, so the audience could see as the corner of her lips slightly arched and a tear dropped from her eye.

“Cut,” Director Jin shouted. Indeed, it was a pleasure to shoot a scene with Yan Huan. She could inhabit her role quickly with high skills. She could break into tears at a moment's notice and she seldom needed to reshoot scenes. She was a natural.