



Still Not Wanting to Forget

Written by Mo Bao Fei Mao (墨宝非宝)

Translated by ['the c novel project'](#)

Synopsis:

Still Not Wanting to Forget (念念不忘) is a novella by Mo Bao Fei Mao (墨宝非宝) depicting the reunion of two former lovers who have never once met. Si Nian and Cheng Chen met in an online game and became each other's first loves. Years later, they meet again as a famous director and a scriptwriter. A short and sweet story, also features equally adorable pair of pets.

Author's summary:

Remember that line from Gossip Girl? If two people are meant to be together, eventually they'll find their way back.

Prologue

“What was the biggest challenge in your life?”

“Level 4 English. I took the test four times before passing.”

“Your ambition can be a little higher... Be more rational. The readers of my magazine are all students. Be mindful of your influence on them.”

“Level 6 English. I don't even dare to enter the examination hall.”

Listening to the Si Nian's regretful rant about her university's Level 6 English, the person before her ran out of the patience and snapped, “Si Nian, are you trying to pick a fight with me? Be careful or I'll isolate you from the industry.”

“... what I want to express is that even if your English is not good, it doesn't really matter. Every path leads to success.”

Si Nian squatted in front of the TV cabinet, looking at the Blu-Ray discs inside.

Shen Wei Jue that girl recently became Blu-Ray-obsessed but had no one to share her obsession with. Thus she purposely mailed her Blu-Ray discs every week in an effort to convert her into an addict as well.

It is true that image looks better than in DVDs but unfortunately for her, that is all the advantage there is to it...

Liu Xia finally gave up and changed her question. “Why did you use the nickname Qing Yi Fang Huo (lit. Easily Angered/Fired Up)?”

Si Nan glanced at her. “You're not allowed to tease me for being sentimental [2]... I once wrote this in my diary, ‘it's only a passerby in life, there's no need to be easily angered’. I thought it had a lot of feeling, I thought of it when I was coming up with a nickname so I used it.”

“Why did you suddenly decided to write a novel?”

The reason was actually very simple in the beginning.

“I originally wanted to write about a person. He and I did not have a good ending. I wanted for us to have sweet moments for once in the novel.”

Liu Xia laughed. “It’s probably your first love?”

Si Nian did not dared to offend her so she explained, “Yes, it’s first love, it’s also online dating. Back then I was only in third year of high school, it’s definitely the so-called puppy love. In the first place I have almost forgotten about it but in the past two years I would sometimes see him on the news. That is where I got my inspiration from.”

Feeling unease, she added, “Don’t ask who.”

“Online dating? Have you two met?”

“We never met even until we broke up. That is not right, I have seen him but he had not seen me,” Si Nian said grinning. “Back then I wore braces. I was so ugly, how could I meet the person I like. We only did things like video-messaging or writing letters.”

In her teenage-girl mood, she often signed off with two names: Si Nian, Cheng Chen.

Si Nian, Cheng Chen. A deep and sorrowful longing.

“How did the break-up happened?”

“How else did it happened? My mother found out, she cut off the Internet and phone was off-limits. So I was made to disappear.” The hidden risk of a puppy love... Of course it is because of parents’ disapproval. She sighed and concluded, “After the one-year ban, I can no longer find him anywhere.”

“I understand,” Liu Xia said and nodded. “Basically he thought that he was cruelly and mercilessly dumped. Not only did you break up, you also had to be the scapegoat. What a poor child.” Liu Xia thought for a moment; she suddenly thought that she deviated from

the actual question. “Then what did that had to do with your novel <Set Fire>?”

Si Nian drained the tea, not saying anything.

“It couldn’t really be that melodramatic, could it?” Liu Xia quickly connected the dots between the setting of the novel and understood. “Many years later you found out that the guy who was your first love, your online boyfriend and your puppy love joined the entertainment industry? An artist?”

Si Nian vaguely answered, “He was first an actor, then a director.”

Things are not set in stone. Even someone like her who was a law graduate ended up being a screenwriter.

Liu Xia immediately grabbed Si Nian's arm and said, “Tell who he is. If you won’t say, I will jump from your balcony. I’m too nosy, I want to change my occupation to become an entertainment reporter!”

“... then jump.”

“Did you two meet yet? You’re a screenwriter, you occasionally do commercials. Writers and directors have a lot of opportunities to meet.”

“Not yet,” she said, sighing, “the world is not as small as you imagine.”

In the end a proper interview was completely destroyed by gossip.

After finally sending away Liu Xia, only then did she remembered that she needed to go to the office for a meeting this afternoon. The production company she was working for was going to recommend directors.

But she didn't expect to see a bunch of young girls standing outside the meeting room, secretly whispering to each other.

She walked over and patted the front desk. “What are they looking at? So uncalm. Don't our company have a lot of celebrities coming over everyday?”

“Miss *jié*, it’s a director who is better-looking than celebrities. It’s the director that shot <Intimate>. That drama made me sobbed uncontrollably, even my mom cried. I thought the director must definitely be a woman to be able to film such an emotional drama. I didn’t think it was a man, furthermore such a well-mannered and attractive man...”

Cheng Chen?!

She was just about to brave through the crowd but now she was completely stupefied.

How popular was <Intimate>, that was how popular Cheng Chen was. That was the reason why Si Nian dared not tell Liu Xia. In the past two years Si Nian had ample opportunities to work with him but refused each time with a variety of reasons. She didn’t expect to stumble across him working on this small commercial.

Honestly, the past was not a big deal at all right now.

But to suddenly meet him and say, “Hi I’m Si Nian, I was that first love of yours who you not only have not met but also dumped you...” No thanks.

She took out her phone, walked to the hallway and dialed Shen Wei Jue's number.

“Oh why are you suddenly looking for me?” Shen Wei Jue chuckled. “I’m filming, hurry up and say what you want to say.”

Si Nian cleared her throat. “Did you think, after all these years, my voice has changed?”

“... probably not.”

“My voice on the phone and in real life, is there a difference?”

“Of course there is some difference.” Shen Wei Jue groaned. “But it isn't such a big difference. Did you do something wrong, asking such a pointless question? I have to hang up now, my boss is here.”

The call was immediately cut off. She struggled for a full ten-minute before resolving to pretend until the bitter end.

Anyway, the lower-level staff only knew she was called *Miss*, with the closer ones calling her Xiao M. No one would pay attention to her Chinese name. She repeatedly prepped herself mentally, took a deep breath and went into the meeting room.

Due to the traffic and the crowd outside, she was delayed. By the time she went in, they were already discussing the script. There was a pile of scripts in front of everyone and the producers were using laser pointers to explain.

Si Nian quietly pulled out a chair and sat down.

Cheng Chen was just sitting diagonally opposite her.

The curtains prevented sunlight from coming in and because the lights were turned off, the light from the screen illuminated his face, flashing occasionally. He didn't change, except for the pair of glasses. There was no change at all. Si Nian stared at his side profile, for a moment she couldn't look away. As if he could feel the staring, Cheng Chen turned around and looked at her.

Their eyes briefly met. It was fortunate that the room was dark, concealing her embarrassment.

The summer of her third high school year, when she stared at him through the lens of her camera, she had the similar feelings of embarrassment and nervousness.

The image wasn't quite clear yet the heartbeat was rapid and furious. In that glance there was surprise, and then he looked as if he didn't know where to laugh or cry. After a long while, he finally rested his chin on his palm, seriously observing the actions of the people in the monitor.

The script explanation was quickly over and someone opened the curtains again.

In the sunlit meeting room, the producer smilingly introduced the person beside him. "This is our director this time, Cheng Chen. He's the one who directed the hit TV series <Intimate>. I put in a lot of effort in order to get a spot in his schedule."

Cheng Chen reclined his back, nodding at her.

Fortunately she found a good excuse.

She cleared her throat and deliberately coughed a few times. She lowered her voice and said to the person next to her, "My throat is in terrible condition these couple of days, please speak on my behalf."

Thus in the entire meeting, she did only two things: smiling and coughing.

She didn't know why, but he kept glancing at her now and then.

There shouldn't be any problem.

It must be her guilty conscience acting up.

Si Nian thoughtlessly skimmed through the script, trying to keep herself out of trouble.

She didn't expect that, in the middle of a heated discussion, Cheng Chen who had not said anything all this while, suddenly spoke. "I have throat lozenges. You will feel better after eating some." His voice is slightly low, cool and very mild.

Everyone stopped to look at him, then at Si Nian.

His voice did not change after so many years.

A little dizzy, Si Nian thanked him. Her voice actually became hoarse from trying to act convincingly earlier.

Cheng Chen placed a small metal tin on the glass table, pushing it towards her.

She extended her hand to grab it and then saw it was by the brand Nin Jiom. Back then when he had a cough, she bought three boxes of Nin Jiom herbal essence (x) for him. It couldn't be that coincidental... in a flash she had an idea, her hand missed and knocked the tin onto the floor.

Once again everyone stopped because of the sudden noise.

The corners of Cheng Chen's lips twitched. Maintaining his posture of reading through the script, he silently watched her.

Chapter 01

Late, she was still late in the end.

Even though she estimated the right time before leaving, she never made it on time. When Si Nian entered the studio, everything was ready. Cheng Chen was talking to the spokesperson.

The product of their commercial was crisps; he even purposely tasted a few slices to demonstrate the expression he wanted while eating.

The two of them seemed to have known each other. After a few sentences, they began to flirtatiously eat each other's crisps, chatting while eating.

Ah Wen's net worth rose insanely these past few years; filming just one commercial can rake in ten million. Naturally her temper and attitude also rose. Previously a director she worked with wanted her to make a jumping movement, her face immediately darkened, saying that doing such things didn't suit her professional image.

Look at her today? She appeared to be just a friendly girl-next-door.

She predicted that if Ah Wen was asked to climb a bamboo tree, she would just nod happily.

"Truly a famed reputation is good," an assistant lamented beside her. "Chen Wen is notoriously difficult. Look at her today, she is so cooperative."

Si Nian kept quiet, so the assistant curiously asked, "Miss *jie*, they look like they are very close, do you think they are involved a scandal?"

She merely smiled widely, pointing at her throat.

The assistant suddenly said, "It's still not cured? Didn't you eat the lozenges?"

... throat lozenges are not medicine.

The assistant had the eating-Chengdao-brand-lozenges-is-the-definite-cure look, so she decided to remain silent.

Therefore, since 7 am on this Saturday, she stood around the studio pretending to be sick while watching Cheng Chen do his work.

She must admit that his fame is not undeserved.

For a director like him, it was likely he was helping a friend to take over a commercial. In the meantime, he could also earn some side income. He was obviously very patient from the way he explained to Chen Wen over and over again, even to the point of taking notice of the extras. He was also very detailed, paying attention to every scene.

Currently he was sitting in his chair, with one hand holding the script, his eyes focused on the scene in the monitor.

His eyebrows were lightly creased. It was a scene that Si Nian was so familiar with.

When Chen Wen was about to eat her 107th crisp, the crisp fell. But Cheng Chen's eyes were still glued on the monitor. He said, "Your expression is getting more and more rigid. You must imagine the feeling of first love." He paused for a moment before continuing, "You don't have any experience, therefore you are nervous. You are careful and nervous but you are also hopeful, no matter if it's bitter or sweet."

He said this in all seriousness. On the side, the producer raised an eyebrow.

Si Nian guiltily glanced at Cheng Chen.

Whose bullshit creativity is this, why must it be themed first love?

In the past few days, she really felt wronged. Was it not just her ignorant and frivolous feelings when she was young?

In her heart, two voices appeared, each occupying high ground and desperately arguing. The first voice asked her to just accept it, they

were both adults, no one will care about what happened in teenagehood. The second voice incessantly resisted, insisting that it cannot be accepted, it was way too awkward, people who don't understand will think that she was clinging onto a first love that ended up being rich.

If he was just an average white-collar worker, working hard to pay off mortgage, she would be very calm and reveal her identity. She would invite him to a somewhat atmospheric cafe and explain to him what happened in the past.

Both of them would probably chuckle over the past, laughing it off.

But why was it that they met each other when he was rich and successful? He was in the same field of work as hers, with such remarkable performance.

Didn't people say that first loves will definitely be disillusioned?

Why did such law did not apply to her, and instead was reversed?

The more she thought about this, the more she felt distressed. She didn't think she did anything, she was merely complaining in her heart. But for apparently no reason, Cheng Chen turned around to look at her. She was stunned. She quickly adjusted her gaze, pretending to be looking at the monitor.

Cheng Chen simply picked up a bottle and took a mouthful of water, asking, "What do you think?"

He was asking her.

Coincidentally the scene had just finished. The lighting team immediately rushed to start prepping for the next scene.

The producer who was standing in between them thought that Cheng Chen was asking him and kept on praising that it was perfect. Only after he said 'perfect' for the third time, did he knew he was the one who jumped the gun.

Si Nian originally wondered why the producer was suddenly interrupting their conversation, she wanted to take advantage of the

situation to keep on pretending. She didn't think his eyes would be so focused on her, as if he really cared about her opinion.

Without a way out, she only made an OK gesture.

She immediately pulled out the little metal tin and ate a lozenge.

The studio was like a time blackhole, sunrise and sunset cannot be seen here. Naturally no one paid attention to the time.

It was only when the assistants brought in lunch, did everyone in the studio noticed it was already afternoon. The production company specifically prepared a resting room for Chen Wen because she was such a huge star, but she was exceptionally friendly and ate with everyone in the common room. She was even generous enough to allow her assistant to distribute the nourishment supplement to the staff.

Some people idly chatted. Suddenly remembering something, the producer pointed at Si Nian and said, "Miss, you have several positions, you're also a screenwriter. Perhaps in the future we might have the chance to co-operate in a drama or film."

She was done...

Si Nian's heart was dripping blood, but she raised her head and smiled.

The days of pretending to be a mute were seriously difficult. Thankfully commercials were short-term projects, only one day was needed for the filming.

After today, she would be liberated.

She used her chopsticks to carefully peel away the skin of the chicken, then the fish. This was a craft that she had practiced for twenty-some years, she was very familiar with. In others' eye, she looked like a picky eater but to her, it was a good method of calming herself. She really wanted the hour to pass, for everyone to continue their work, so she didn't have to be on pins and needles.

Cheng Wen, who started out as a singer, could never resist

mentioning music.

Even though Cheng Chen only occasionally talked, he unexpectedly had some deep understanding.

“When I was younger and in a band, I liked Nirvana the most. Too bad they were disbanded,” Chen Wen lamented. She then asked Cheng Chen, “Cheng, whose songs do you like?”

“Faye Wong,” he thoughtfully answered. “The song ‘I’m willing’.”

“‘I’m willing’?”

The familiar melody played out in Si Nian’s mind. *Longing [Si Nian] is a very obscure thing, like shadow, taking shape of whatever.*

She was sipping soup when she heard that, successfully scalding her tongue.

Since she was young, her name was always ridiculed by others.

She would be very angered whenever anyone tried to make a pun of her name, except for when she was together with him. Whenever she was sulking alone, he would always send her all sorts of lyrics with the word ‘longing’ in it without exception on QQ. Seeing those butchered lyrics never failed to cool her anger.

She was being narcissistic.

Could it be that the rainy season sparked her to be literary and sentimental?

She finished the ribs in the soup, eating so cleanly that there was no meat left on the bones. She spat it onto the table, before continuing eating...

The south barely entered the rainy season, rain was still sparse. When someone mentioned that it was raining around four pm, she was still not too concerned. She didn’t expect that after filming wrapped up, the rain was flowing like a river. Even if she used an umbrella, she would definitely not be able to hail a taxi.

People in the studio were cleaning up. Most that owned cars have

already left.

She usually travelled by taxi and it was quite convenient, but if she encountered rain or snow she could only look onto the sky helplessly.

“Did you drive here?” someone behind her asked. “Where did you parked it?”

She solemnly said, “I took a taxi here. But looking at the situation, I think I can only hail a taxi after the rain calms down a little.”

After she finished talking, she turned around.

The world went completely quiet.

The loudness of rain falling, people undressing their shirts to cover their heads and rushing to the parking lot, people continually bidding farewell, people discussing tomorrow’s schedule. Yet Cheng Chen was standing behind her, only a few steps away, as if he was also waiting for the rain to stop.

When he saw that Si Nian was also looking at him, he smiled. “I also didn’t drive.”

From their eyes to their expression, there was nothing similar.

Si Nian made an “oh” sound, turned around to continue staring at the rain. It turned out that he no longer remembered her. There was relief but also disappointment. Perhaps everyone had a similar fantasy, that after meeting a former lover many years later, they would find out that in their former lover’s heart, their presence was irreplaceable, that they were the one the former lover loved the most and perhaps still love.

People gradually became lesser until only an empty studio remained. There were only the two of them, standing at the door.

The producer saw them while leaving and immediately understood. “In such heavy rain, it is not that convenient to take a taxi? You guys wait for a moment, I will call someone to fetch you.” He took out his phone and dialled a number.

Cheng Chen removed his glasses, drying the water dripped onto the

lens. "After so many years, you are still so picky with your food."

Si Nian subconsciously made a sound of agreement. After digesting his words, she became shocked.

Despite the situation he was still calm. Putting on his glasses, he asked, "Have you been well?"

Chapter 02

The noise of the unrelenting rain and the sound of the person behind them talking on the phone, were completely suppressed by that one simple question.

“Have you been well?”

To be honest she *had* been well. No one would be in despair because their love first failed.

In the past years, she ate and slept well, went to university, started working...

In her mind there were a lot of vague answers, that she was banned from the Internet for a year, that after the ban, she found that the game account was deleted, that he was never online on QQ again. She didn't know which university he went, not even which city he was at... There were a thousand words she had wanted to say, but in the end she only answered in the most common way possible.

“I'm quite OK,” she vaguely answered, before throwing the question back at him, “What about you?”

Look, the years not only robbed her off her appearance but also her ability to be honest.

He glanced at her.

She still dared not look at his eyes, though she could feel his gaze on her. She suddenly felt chilled, grumbling in her heart that he couldn't possibly be holding a grudge against her, could he? Then she heard him saying, “Barely passable.”

Barely passable... barely passable...

In lovers' reunions, shouldn't it be “How are you?” “I'm fine” “I'm also quite fine”? Yet he chose to say something like that.

She didn't know how to follow up that answer. With a hollow laugh,

she replied, "You're too humble. Didn't you achieve a lot of success in the past few years?"

Later, when they all stepped into the car, she deliberately chose the window seat to allow a distance of two seats with him. Cheng Chen and the producer were idly chatting. He spoke very little but she found out that he was also a resident of Shanghai. Not only that, he was already one since five or six years ago. Both their residences were in the same area, only ten minutes apart by car.

The series of revelations made her slightly flabbergasted.

The world is indeed large. Back then she was in Beijing, now Shanghai. But no matter what, she simply couldn't find him. Yet how small is the world that now she came across him in such a way?

But how did he recognise her?

She shot Cheng Chen a quick glance. He was indicating to the driver that he had already reached.

To avoid the embarrassment of meeting again, she declined all the necessary procedures of the commercial including colour grading and editing.

In a conclusion, she would put an end to any way or opportunity to meet Cheng Chen.

How exactly did he recognise her?

Si Nian lifted her cup, no matter how she racked her brain thinking about it, she couldn't find the answer. She drank a mouthful of water, before continuing to the next question.

Was he disappointed after finally seeing her face? Or was he glad?

TV was broadcasting the variety show *If You are The One*. The host was cackling with delight but she didn't understand what he was laughing about. Even though she knew most of the show was orchestrated, she still enjoyed the liveliness of it. Once the spotlight flashed, all the men and women on stage would say things they normally wouldn't dare to say.

In just tens of minutes, how could there be so many incidents of love-at-first-sight...

Immersed in her thoughts about Cheng Chen, while furiously drinking hot water, she heard the doorbell. She didn't even manage to get up before hearing people impatiently knocking on her door.

Si Nian opened the door. Outside an old couple told her with a grim expression, "Little lady, water is leaking in your house."

"I don't think so?" She barely finished her sentence when she glimpsed at her kitchen. Turning on the lights to see better, she saw her bowl of fruits floating on the water from the water dispenser. She must have forgotten to turn it off.

After cleaning up in a manic rush, the menacing couple grabbed Si Nian, who was still in her pajamas, to their house downstairs.

The ceiling of their kitchen was indeed beginning to leak water. Thankfully they detected it early.

For making such a mistake, she took the initiative to offer compensation. She didn't expect the old couple to not appreciate the offer and instead said that because of the leak, the entire kitchen was waterlogged, all their furniture in their three rooms and one living room were damp and needed replacement, that the room needed to be cleaned completely, naturally the wallpaper needed to be changed as well...

Such demand is too much of a scam, isn't it?

But the people she was dealing with were a pair of old couple in their seventies, not to mention the neighbours outside watching, she didn't even have the place to voice out. Unexpectedly, in her current bruised and battered situation, her phone rang.

"What's wrong?" she asked in a low voice, clutching her phone.

"The footage is done, come over to confirm it."

"Can it be tomorrow?" She wasn't too confident in escaping the siege.

“Hurry over, you already asked for leave during the filming process, you don’t even want to see the final version?” the producer said decisively. He added, “The director is leaving early tomorrow. Even if your house is on fire or flooded, you must come. Please, Xiao M. Oh right, bring us dinner, there’s thirteen of us here.”

Wasn’t she now stuck between a rock and a hard place?

In the end, she made up a mysterious excuse saying she had an emergency, forced to hand over her house keys, and ran out of the crowd.

Right now it was the restaurant’s peak hour. She pondered for a while outside before deciding to wait in line to order. When she reached the counter, the staff broken into a smile hearing that she was ordering for thirteen people and started listing what was on their menu.

She saw Shancheng duck-blood spicy soup on the menu and remembered that it was Cheng Chen’s favourite.

Since she already picked the restaurant’s most well-known dishes, adding another dish wasn’t such a big deal.

Thirteen people’s worth of food, four takeout boxes. When she got into a taxi, the driver happily asked, “Is the restaurant moving? Little lady, I’m starving, after sending you to your destination I’ll be in a really bad state.”

When everyone saw the food, they were astonished.

One after another, they called out, “I love you Si Nian!” She unintentionally glanced at the editing room. The door is half-open, from where she was standing, she could see their back of the two persons inside. They are watching the advertisement on the monitor. There was a stark difference between the situation inside and outside. It was noisy here, but it was unbearably quiet inside.

“Director Cheng,” the producer called as he poured out the soup inside the container. “Look at how efficient our Xiao M is, she even dared to take-out such a large bowl of duck-blood spicy soup! I think the taxi driver would be spending the entire night getting rid of the

smell.”

Cheng Chen quietly said a few words to the editor before walking out. “I like this the most.”

“So coincidental?” the producer asked smiling. “This is called fate.”

Everyone else didn’t understand the meaning behind those words. They turned around and only saw the producer smirking.

Cheng Chen swiftly capped his pen and slid it inside his jeans pocket, and said to Si Nian, “It’s almost done. You can go take a look first.”

She was speechless, and then in an all-seriousness said, “Director Cheng, you’ve worked hard.”

After her work, she finally remembered that she left a terrible mess behind at home. Her house keys were still at the hands of the old couple. Even though she had installed two doors at home for security reasons, but the keys for the outer door were with someone else’s. She didn’t know how much more ridiculous conditions that she had to agree with before she was able to go home...

The real problem was Cola was still trapped in the bedroom. She didn’t manage to feed her, would she be crazily hungry now?

She was never good at dealing with such disputes; she usually tried to be peaceful.

This time the old couple appeared to be demanding too much, she was going to lose three or four months’ worth of salary. But if she did not agree, the couple was definitely going to be making a lot of fuss in the committee every day. She would no longer have peaceful days. But if she agreed with such an obvious scam of a compensation, she would be ridiculed by all her university classmates, she would have studied law in vain.

The more she thought about it, the more troublesome it was. She leaned against the terrace rail, racking her brain for ideas.

Most importantly, if Cola was too hungry, she would definitely

mercilessly scratch and tear the bedsheets and blanket.

The terrace overlooked Taikang street, through the spaces between the Paulownia trees, it was a charming and impressive sight. She stared at the crowded bar opposite of the road and sighed. Thinking about the problems she would face when she returned made her even more depressed.

A few people had come out to the terrace. Seeing Si Nian sprawled on the rail watching the bar, they laughed. "It seems that Miss's nightlife is pretty happening?"

She dejectedly raised her head, seeing that all of them had a look of content after being stuffed, her sorrow dimmed a little. She saw Cheng Chen walked in with another man and she immediately pretended to be invisible.

Cheng Chen didn't quite like conversing. He listened more than he talked.

It wasn't clear who first talked about pets when the producer suddenly mentioned that Cheng Chen had a Shepherd dog. Cheng Chen smilingly said, "I'm going away for a few days, I'm still not sure who to entrust it with. It doesn't like being kept in a pet store."

"Of course you should entrust it to Miss," the producer quickly said, "Aren't you two living quite near to each other? It's also convenient to send it over."

He seriously said it easily.

Si Nian's eyes met Cheng Chen for a moment, before smiling graciously. "That's impossible. I have a cat at home." She tried her best to sound sincere, saying, "She's also the kind of cat that gets frightened easily... don't you have other friends?"

He was holding a beer to his mouth but stopped. His lips showed a hint of a smile. "They're all men, they're not careful enough."

All men? Ah, all... men.

Si Nian looked up, glancing at the moon.

Fine, she was the one who owed him. “Then, fine. I’ll see if I can send my cat to my friend’s place for a few days.”

Chapter 03

After the both of them exchanged a series of precautions, she found out that his flight was actually tonight, which meant the dog must definitely come over tonight.

But the problem was, she didn't even have her own house keys.

When Cheng Chen fished out his car keys from his pocket, she vaguely said, "It's fine if you want to bring your dog over today but please give me two hours to settle some private matters."

She didn't understand why but she didn't want him to know about her predicament.

The car unlocking made a light noise.

Cheng Chen opened the passenger door. "What's wrong? Is it inconvenient?"

"Not really," she answered. "It's just that there's some people in my house that I need to settle before letting you come over."

She also needed to appease Cola.

Cheng Chen motioned for her to get on. "Then I'll send you home first, it's on my way."

It was indeed conveniently on his way. She still had to hurry home to settle the problem so the dog can come over sooner.

With such reasoning, Si Nian also didn't refuse his offer.

Cheng Chen helped her close the door before getting into the driver seat. The music drifted as they started their journey home. The rhythm was very quiet. There were only the sound of a guitar strumming monotonously and the voice of a young girl's singing in a language she didn't recognise.

She couldn't tell what song it was, only that it was a very gentle one.

Neon lights flashed in the window as they drove past.

In the end Cheng Chen still didn't speak much. She was pretty bored, so she took the script that was in the driver's seat earlier and read it very carefully and seriously from cover to cover.

When she closed the script, she saw a contact form attached.

It was a very simple form. It was commonly used during filming to avoid the staff from losing contact from each other.

Usually she wouldn't pay attention to such a form and even now she was just lazily looking at it, but she saw a name that surprised her.

In the third row, it wrote: Si Nian.

Next to it was a string of numbers.

He knew, he knew all along.

Si Nian stared at her own name and felt her entire body getting hot. On the day of the meeting, he was browsing through this script, looking as if he knew nothing. But after reviewing things that happened afterwards, she was certain that he knew from the beginning.

She put the script behind her and quietly glanced at him.

Cheng Chen was looking at the review mirror, as the car drove through the elevated bridge. He asked, "Do I turn left at the intersection?"

She subconsciously made an "en" sound. When the car turned into a junction, she saw the newly-built convenience store and said, "I remembered that I had something to buy, you can just drop me off here."

The convenience store was just in front, walking home from there took only five minutes.

She could also buy something for the old couple to show her sincerity.

Cheng Chen braked and said, "Is it really inconvenient for you? If it

would inconvenience you, then let's call the thing off.”

The car was parked safely in front of the convenience store.

She was stunned.

First she said that she was going home to settle private matters, now she deliberately didn't allow him to drop her off in front of her house... he must be misunderstanding that she had someone at home.

“It's not inconvenient,” she said, pretending to look out the window. She was actually looking at his reflection in the window. “I have some misunderstanding with my neighbours, I need to settle it.”

He tilted his head, staring at her.

She could not guess his expression or gaze, her heart fluttered a little. “Wait for my call. When I'm done, I'll call you.”

After she finished her sentence, she immediately exited the car. She didn't even dare to look back and with big steps, she entered the convenience store.

Matters were far from simple as she had imagined.

The elderly couple called in three pairs of their daughter and son-in-law. The eight of them were standing outside her door, all of them discussing passionately. The scene made her felt like she was seeing the illusion of <Boxer Revolution> reproduced in real life... Even if she was good at arguing, she was no match for eight people's series of attack. Her heart was full of lamentations. If she had the foresight, she would have called in her girlfriends as well. At least then her presence would not be so weak.

Two hours quickly passed but the eight people were still relentlessly arguing. She looked at the time, getting more and more impatient.

She thought since it was her neighbours, leaving her keys behind would show sincerity, but she didn't expect that she had unwittingly trapped herself.

She was afraid that Cheng Chen would be waiting too long and

caused him to miss his flight, so she discreetly sent him a text: “I think you’ll have to wait a while more. I’m still not done here.”

The reply was immediate: “I’m already downstairs. Which floor do you live on?”

She hesitated, but still replied, “I live on the 13th floor. I’m currently on the 12th floor. Why don’t you bring in your dog first.”

She originally thought he was just dropping off his dog but when an intrepid Shepherd popped out of the elevator, the situation truly became out of her control. Cheng Chen followed out of the elevator and because of the dim yellow light of the corridor, his tall stature made him very striking.

When Si Nian, who has been bullied for the past two hours, saw him smiling at her, she immediately hid behind him.

The Shepherd sniffed her a little, his tail wagging furiously...

She also smiled, petting the dog.

This dog was pretty smart, it can detect good and evil.

Cheng Chen did not say much, he only asked to go inside the house to inspect the damage.

They have already made preparations in advance so they allowed him in. The ceiling and wall stopped dripping water a long time ago but on the floor there was a plastic basin. The basin was half-full, to prove the devastation of the situation earlier.

Si Nian frowned. This family could truly be part of the prop team, they made it look so real.

Cheng Chen simply raised his head to look around. “I will send someone over tomorrow to inspect the damage. After the report is out, then we will meet to discuss the compensation. What we owe you, you won’t receive one cent less.”

After this sentence, he took off his glasses and placed it inside the pocket of his shirt.

His one movement efficiently killed all the conversation in the room.

Taking the dog with him, he walked out. Before Si Nian could react, she had already followed him.

The eight were stunned speechless for three minutes, before understanding one fact: as long as that man existed, there was no way they could take advantage of the situation. In fact it was possible that in the end they would even lose any form of compensation. Their fire immediately dwindled, watching the two stepping into the elevator.

The old woman quickly rushed over to stop the elevator. Smilingly she reminded that they were neighbours after all, everything could be discussed.

Therefore, the situation that Si Nian was stuck in for two hours, Cheng Chen used only two minutes to completely reverse the situation.

Even until she reached home, she could not stop lamenting.

“They think that because you’re just a little lady, they can try and take advantage of you,” he said. He took off his necklace. “Sometimes, a man’s presence is necessary to settle such problems.”

Such logic, of course she understood.

But she can’t exactly keep asking her parents to help out solve problems, can she?

The Shepherd had finally regained freedom, he quickly toured the house. Sniffing here and there, he didn’t seem to be shy around strangers.

She walked into the kitchen to pour him a glass of water, before seeing that her water dispenser had long dripped all the water in it. With no choice, she looked into her refrigerator. “I only have coke here. Why don’t you wait here for a moment, I’ll go down to buy water for you.”

She heard no immediate answer, so she closed the refrigerator and walked out.

“It’s okay, I’ll have coke. Now I will drink some occasionally.”

He was sitting on the corner of the sofa, leaning near the light, making his shadow long and lean. The dog apparently got bored of running around and had settled down next to his leg. One man, one dog, both of them treated this place like it was their home...

Si Nian made an “oh” sound. She took out the coke and two glasses.

There were even traces of ice on the lid of the coke, causing her fingers to feel numb from the cold.

She was afraid that her bedsheets were completely destroyed by her cat, so she put down the coke on top of a magazine and ran inside her room. She carried her cat into the kitchen, made sure it finished eating and drinking before carrying it to the living room.

“My cat’s temper is pretty bad, be careful of getting scratched,” she explained, feeling a little embarrassed.

Look at his dog, how gentle and well-mannered he is...

While she was lamenting about not training her cat well, Cola’s eyes narrowed and shrieked loudly, with all its hair standing. She was so shocked that she accidentally released her hold and a white shadow pounced forwards.

Oh shit.

Subconsciously Si Nian chased after the cat. When she was about to catch it, Cheng Chen’s hand firmly grasped the cat by the scruff of her neck, separating her from the dog. His other hand firmly supported Si Nian who was about to fall over.

One woman, one cat, both was successfully supported by him.

The ball of white in his hand was indignantly brandishing her paws at him.

Si Nian could feel the heat from his palm, there was a sense of

anxiety in her heart. She thought he would release his hold on her, she didn't expect him to look at the cat with one eyebrow raised.

Two second later, the universe's unrivaled cat Cola completely surrendered, even letting its tail drop in a loving manner.

"Just a paper tiger," he said, ending the dispute with a smile. He glanced at Si Nian.

In his clear eyes that showed that he knew how to differentiate between white and black, there were traces of laughter.

Si Nian stared at him blankly. In her mind, she repeatedly thought that this man truly looked different when he was smiling. If those people downstairs saw him when he was smiling like this, they would definitely not be afraid of him.

He released his grip on her. She immediately stood up to pour him a glass of coke.

The foam quickly bubbled up and the hissing sound seemed almost celebratory.

In that moment earlier, it was her truly seeing him for the first time, the real him. Other than the familiar facial features, everything else was strange and new to her.

The feeling was a little odd. This was a person whom she had once liked, it still felt like she would never like anyone else but him in her life. Even now she still remembered every word she had ever said to him.

But from the way he spoke, the way he sat, even to the way he held her earlier, everything felt strange and unfamiliar.

Both of them chatted idly.

The past never came up, the conversation was stubbornly focused around work.

Cola the coward had fallen asleep on his lap, as if she had forgotten who was the owner who fed it.

The Shepherd occasionally raised its head to look around, sniffing the cat and looking at Si Nian, before falling asleep again.

Only after she saw Cheng Chen off, while lying sprawled on her bed, she remembered that she had forgotten to ask something important. She immediately texted him: "I've forgotten to ask, what is your dog's name?"

She waited for some time in a daze before her phone buzzed.

It was a one-word reply: "Sprite."

She stared at her phone, and immediately had a mental breakdown.

Back then, she enjoyed lying on the balcony drinking an endless stream of coke, whether it was in the height of summer or the middle of winter. On the phone he would keep on nagging that coke was unhealthy, so on and so forth. He was seriously strict. In the end she got fed up and said that she would keep a cat and call it Cola. Who asked him to dislike cats?

She wanted to annoy him but he actually laughed and said, "Okay, then I'll keep a dog and call it Sprite. They would be a pair then."

...

TL Note: I decided to use he/she for the adorable pets because using "it" is getting repetitive.

Chapter 04

She hugged her blanket and struggled with memories and nostalgia for a few hours, before falling asleep at the brink of dawn.

When she barely fell asleep, she felt warmth on her hand. With much effort she opened her eyes and saw Sprite munching her finger, tail wagging and eyes bright.

She was stunned and stared at the dog for about ten seconds, before finally grasping the situation.

She poked Cola but the cat was in deep sleep, she didn't even open an eye.

"Classmate Sprite, what is it that you want?" she asked.

Sprite kept on wagging its tail, wagging its tail...

She picked up her phone and saw that it was only seven. The dog couldn't be hungry, could he? She had prepared the dog food and drinking water in advance yesterday. Could it be he needs to pee? Or poop? Cheng Chen told her that the dog could do his business independently, not even a sitting toilet would be a problem for him...

In the end, in a state of fatigue, she gave up and dialled Cheng Chen's number.

A gentle, relaxing song kept on playing as he didn't pick up. Si Nian placed her phone on the side of her face and started dozing off in a few seconds, until a voice answered.

With her eyes closed, she asked in a sleepy voice, "Your dog is munching my finger and refuses to let me sleep. Can I know what exactly is it that he wants?"

Cheng Chen's voice was clear and bright, as if he had already began work. Someone kept on pestering him for answers, he first answered the person before explaining to Si Nian, "I think he wants to go out and play around. I would bring him out every morning."

Si Nian resisted the urge to yawn. "If I don't bring him out, what will happen?"

Back then when she decided to keep a cat instead of a dog, it was because she thought walking a dog every day would be too troublesome...

He was quiet for a moment before calmly saying, "I don't know. It never happened before."

She wishfully thought that it would be alright and climbed back underneath her blanket to continue her slumber. It went without saying that Sprite ended up biting her from head to toe. Therefore she had no choice but to carry a cat that was still asleep and pulling Sprite along down the building...

When they reached home, it was already ten. She was just about to go back to sleep when Shen Wei Jue called, "Have you woke up?"

She was so tired she wanted to cry. "No. Just now I took my first love's dog out for a walk, I'm about to sleep again."

The person on the other end was silent for a moment before getting really enthusiastic. "No way, I just finished filming a programme about marriage law, focusing on the pitfalls of love. But something actually happened on your side? Si Nian, are you dating?"

"... listen well, it's my first love, but we have already broken up nth years ago."

Even though they had not actually said the words "break up".

"Oh..." Shen Wei Jue's tone immediately changed, her attitude was even a dramatic one-eighty shift. "If that's so, then don't think about it further. Today my colleague did an investigative piece, it's the same background as yours. The man liked to fantasize about his first love. Even after he got married, he still fooled around. He kept telling his first love that he was still single but in reality, his wife was in overseas..."

Shen Wei Jue explained the case with enthusiasm, Si Nian only listened without replying but there was something that she said that

enlightened her.

So many years had passed.

Back then, he was in his sixth year, she was in her third. They were both still children who knew nothing about feelings and emotions. How long have they walked since they broke up, how many people have they met, what kind of lives were they living. It was not something she could understand by reading those entertainment news about him.

Sunlight was filtered through the glass, landing on the bed.

Cola turned on her back and continued to sleep.

She could no longer understand what Shen Wei Jue was talking about. After the phone call ended, she mimicked Cola and pulled the blanket over her head and fell asleep.

She slept badly because Sprite kept on moving and changing position.

One week later, she and Cola felt completely and utterly battered.

On Friday there was nothing much to do at the company. Therefore, equipped with severe dark circles, she went to Liu Xia's company. Her novel had already been printed and earlier she promised to sign a thousand books. Thinking about her "beautiful" handwriting, she felt ashamed and kept delaying the signing. That made Liu Xia felt impatient enough to kidnap her from her house.

"Your dog," Liu Xia said with obvious lingering fear, "is too scary. I say, could it be you bought it to prevent fire, prevent thief and prevent Liu Xia?"

Holding her pen, Si Nian kept on practicing her handwriting. "How could that be, don't my cat Cola like you very much? That Shepherd belongs to someone else, he'll be returned this weekend."

She looked around the meeting room that was brimming with books, estimating in her mind Cola and Sprite's dinner time. While listening to Liu Xia complaining about how ferocious Sprite was, how she

would never approach another dog again, she finally completed the signing around ten minutes before midnight.

“I did this to myself...” she sighed as she signed the last book. “To be honest, scriptwriting is still the best. I don’t have to bother what happens after I wrote it. Whatever decisions the production company make has nothing to do with me.”

Li Xia who was helping her pack up, grinned and said, “The interview is out, the question that got asked the most...”

Si Nian bit her lip. “The person behind the inspiration, right? My dream is already achieved, if you want to isolate me from the industry, you can no longer threaten me using that excuse.”

“Is that all to your ambition? You don’t want the book to be a best-seller?”

“That would have to depend on luck.” Si Nian capped her pen and continued, “When I’m writing this book, a good friend said writing ‘sweet’ literature would make life ‘sweeter’ for the writer. Now that the book is written and printed, that’s enough for me. Did you know that the power of suggestion? If people kept on doing things that are ‘sweet’, their mind set would be more positive. A positive mind means a positive life.”

She glanced at Liu Xia, grinning. “Just look at me. I have always told my subconscious that I need to be thin. For all my life, I have never been fat.”

In the beginning, Liu Xia was still contemplating her words seriously but she quickly fired up after hearing the last sentence. “Don’t discriminate against fat people!”

“I’m not lying. There’s a fitness celebrity who said the same thing. He kept on telling himself that he wanted to be thin every day, and he really got thin... the most important factor is the mentality. You must tell yourself that you *can* be thin.”

She immediately got a book thrown in her face, followed by Liu Xia snapping, “Tomorrow, sign another 500 copies!”

It was almost twelve so she dared not provoke Liu Xia further. She grabbed her bag and left.

When she reached home, Sprite already looked weak from hunger, sprawled across the floor. Cola was laying on top of his body, in a deep sleep. She quietly sneaked into the kitchen to prepare the powdered milk but both of them were already following behind her.

Ever since the water dispenser incident, she dared not use the machine again. Every day she would use the electric heater if she wanted hot water.

There were two advantages: she could make coffee for herself and milk for Cola and Sprite.

The size of Sprite was too large for her bathroom, so a few days ago, she sent him to the pet store to get washed. She didn't expect him to return with a cold. She watched him finish the milk, and then tried to feed him a mixture of fruits and Isatis root. But he refused to eat no matter how she tried to coax him.

Such a large dog sprawled on the floor dejectedly, he looked like pitiful.

She tried all sorts of encouragement but he refused to even look at her, only lightly coughing...

Cheng Chen is returning tomorrow. She had been taking care of Sprite for an entire week without problem, how was it that on the final day, she actually allowed him to catch a cold. She didn't know how to explain to his owner.

Thinking for a long while, she finally decided to call Cheng Chen.

"So late?" Cheng Chen answered quickly, his voice betraying his exhaustion. "Did something happen?"

"Your dog..." Taking a deep breath, she continued, "has a cold. I think I needed to inform you beforehand. Had he ever caught a cold before? I'm trying to feed him medicine but he completely ignored me."

He was quiet for a moment. "What are his symptoms?"

"His nose is dry, the vet said it's a cold," she said, reviewing what the vet told her this afternoon, "he said it's not very serious and that I only need to feed him some Isatis root, if possible I should mix it with fruits. When I came back at night, he was still coughing." She hesitated a little before deciding to tell him honestly, "Furthermore his coughing is very serious."

He laughed once. "Do you have Nin Jiom at home?"

Nin Jiom... did it have to be this coincidental?

"I have."

"Wait," he said. She heard the sound of someone bumping the car door shut. "One to three ratio, use warm water."

Si Nian made an "oh" sound.

"I'm driving. I'll call you back later."

He quickly hung up the phone. She glanced at the clock, it was already one in the morning... she really did called him quite late. Following Cheng Chen's instructions, she prepared the concoction and fed it to Sprite. Indeed, after sniffing it, he started licking the concoction.

She was just about to clean the Sprite's bowl when her phone rang.

He really called back?

She pressed answer, and sandwiching the phone between her face and shoulder, she said, "You don't have to call back, it's settled."

His tone was indifferent when he asked, "Has he finished it?"

"He finished."

Rinsing the bowl, she began wiping it with a clean white towel and left it to dry.

"Once you finished tidying up, please open the door. I'm here."

“Ah?”

She had to digest his words several times. No way, he was outside her door?

By the time she finally comprehended, he already hung up. She tossed the towel on the table and speedily ran to the hallway. Yet, standing in front of the door, she hesitated.

She was still wearing sportswear, should she change?

But it was already midnight, if she was dressed properly, wouldn't it be too fake?

Keep calm.

Si Nian, keep calm.

It was just a friend visiting, even if visiting at this hour... was a little strange.

Taking a deep breath, she opened the door. Underneath, a white shadow pounced at the door.

The person at the door was tall enough to block half the light from the corridor. He gently patted Sprite's head, and then tilted his head down to look at her. “I just reached. I didn't have time to change.” Even though he obviously sounded tired, his voice was low but clear.

She simply stared at him without a word.

Wearing forest-green trekking pants, with matching shoes, he was even carrying a large luggage. He truly looked as if he was worn from the travel.

Chapter 05

“You just reached?”

Because it was too sudden, she didn't seem to have the intention to invite him in.

He stood there a little awkwardly. With a small but clear voice, he said, “When you called, I just reached my own apartment. So I decided to come over.” After finishing his sentence, he noticed Si Nian was still just staring at him. He gently lifted his chin, hinting for her to invite him in first...

It was only then that Si Nian realized, she quickly jumped aside to let him in.

“I took Sprite to the pet store to wash up a few days ago, I think they didn't blow dry him,” she said. Since the owner was already here, she might as well honestly admit all her wrongdoings. “Coincidentally I'm quite busy these few days, I didn't expect there to be a problem today.”

Sprite was very cooperative. He even coughed a few times to illustrate the point, causing her embarrassment to deepen.

Cheng Chen sat down on the sofa. “It's fine. Once autumn comes, he would always get sick. I'm already used to it.”

“It's a recurring illness?” Si Nian thought of her cat Cola. “My cat is also the same, she would also get sick quite often. But it's because when I first brought her home, she was heavily injured. It's leftovers from that time.”

While sipping water, Cheng Chen repeated her words, “Heavily injured?”

Si Nian made an “en” sound and carried Cola that was purring and rubbing her face against her leg. “One of my friends is a reporter. Last year she did a report on animal abuse, I accompanied her to

her interview. In the pet store, someone showed us a cat that had most of her bones fractured. They said she was incurable.”

Cola’s eyes fluttered, contently lying in her arms, looking satisfied and adorable.

She was completely different from the first time Si Nian saw her.

“My friend was taking photos of her, her eyes were watery as if she was crying. I pitied her so I brought her home. I ended up spending around seven to eight thousand, took care of her for a few months before she can be considered alive and well.”

Cheng Chen quietly watched the cat that was quite obviously spoiled rotten by her owner, before looking at her.

Si Nian was going to complain about the animal shelter that allowed such abuse to happen, but upon seeing the way he gazed at her, she immediately gave in and concluded the story. “So please forgive her if she gets frightened. I suspect that she was treated badly to the point that she had no sense of security. She is much better now. In the beginning she would freak out if anyone but I came near, it was really scary.”

Back then, she didn’t know how many bedsheets were sacrificed...

He put down his cup on the coffee table. Looking away, he said this as if he was talking to himself. “There are some parts of you that didn’t seem to have changed.”

She laughed without amusement. She didn’t dare to continue that conversation.

One single man and one single woman, at one in the morning, how could it be that when they were merely discussing about their pets, it felt so ambiguous.

Si Nian didn’t know when he was leaving but was too embarrassed to ask outright. There was a part of her that wanted to ask if he wanted to watch a DVD with her but asking that at such a late hour seemed unreasonable...

After much contemplation, she tried to probe him. “You just got off the plane, do you want to eat something?”

Cheng Chen knitted his eyebrows out of habit. “I think I’m a little hungry.”

Si Nian quickly found her excuse and rushed into the kitchen after telling him she would cook him a bowl of instant noodles.

Surely, he would leave after eating?

Unexpectedly, by the time she came out carrying a steaming bowl of noodles, Cheng Chen was already asleep on the sofa. His outer coat was placed on the armrest of the sofa. He was lying there with only a short-sleeved shirt on. His hair fell lightly, slightly covering his eyes.

Xue Bi quietly lied down in front, sleeping harmoniously with his owner.

Si Nian didn’t know whether to laugh or cry at such a sight. Only when her fingers was hurting from the heat of the noodles, only then did she turned off the lights in the living room. She carried the bowl back into the kitchen.

What should she do?

What *can* she do? No matter what, they were old acquaintances. Allowing him to sleep in the living room was very normal. Didn’t the guys from her class who came over for a gathering also slept in the living room?

Mouthful after mouthful, she ate the noodles meant for Cheng Chen , feeling utterly stuffed.

She then went into her room to bring out a blanket.

The coffee table was placed very close to the sofa. She noticed that Cheng Chen’s stature was too tall for the sofa, she was afraid once he turned around, he would bump into the table. She carefully pushed the table aside, leaving more distance between them.

Turning around, she spread out the blanket and quietly covered him

with it. Sprite lightly shivered. When he opened his eyes, he saw that it was Si Nian and obediently went back to sleep again.

When she woke up the next day, her living room was already empty.

On the table, there was a neatly folded note. His clear handwriting in blue ink said only this: "Today's schedule is very hectic, I'm leaving first. I'll keep in contact." She folded it and placed it inside one of the TV cabinet's drawers.

For the entire day, Cola was completely restless.

Cola never left home, neither did she had any friends. Sprite's sudden appearance made her appreciate companionship. Now that she was left alone again, she felt lonely and a little depressed.

Si Nian had no idea how to cheer her up. She picked her up and took her along to freeload dinner at Shen Wei Jue's place.

From inside the kitchen, she heard the hissing of the deep dryer and the humming of the exhaust hood. Shen Wei Jue stuck out her head to ask, "Hey, continue your story. You were filming a commercial with your first love, then? What happened next?"

Si Nian was sitting on the sofa cross-legged, supporting a laptop on her lap. "Then his dog stayed in my place for a week."

"Oh my, how unabashed." Shen Wei Jue shook her head. "Then?"

"Then... he slept at my place yesterday." Si Nian noticed Shen Wei Jue's face turned white and quickly added, "He slept on the sofa. He was too tired after getting off a long flight so he fell asleep. I think your dish is almost burnt..."

Shen Wei Jue brandished her wooden ladle at her. "I'll educate you properly in a moment."

Having said that, she went back inside the kitchen and noisily continue cooking.

Si Nian started staring blankly at her laptop. Feeling that something was not right, she immediately opened her web browser.

She remembered that today was the Shanghai Film Festival. She had a ticket since a long time ago but she stayed away because only two kinds of people went to such festivals: either they were celebrities that walked the red carpet for media exposure, or they were adoring fans who went to see their favourite celebrities.

As a scriptwriter that was neither doted on by her grandmother nor loved by her uncle, it was better for her to just stay at home to browse through the photos instead.

Shen Wei Jue filled the entire table with food and then went over to pat her shoulder. "I dare to bet, you definitely have no idea what day is today." Si Nian stared at her blankly for a few seconds, then said, "Perhaps, your birthday?"

Shen Wei Jue gritted her teeth. "We've known each other for so long, you never remembered my birthday."

She immediately shut down her laptop and carried Cola. "Cola, tell *ah yi* happy birthday."

"Get lost."

"... you know my math is bad, I can never remember everyone's birthday. It's not like this is the first or second time."

Cola looked confused and her eyes were bright when she looked at Shen Wei Jue. Shen Wei Jue didn't have the heart to take her temper out on the poor cat so she relented. "It's a problem with your mental capacity. I don't believe you really don't remember anyone's birthday. Your first love's birthday, do you remember?"

November 11th...

It was simply because it was too easy to remember.

But Si Nian refused to admit it. "I have already forgotten. Didn't I say it was ancient history? It's already reduced to dust."

The both of them had a candlelit dinner with Chinese cuisine. Shen Wei Jue suddenly remembered that it was Shanghai Film Festival today and turned on the TV, changing the channel to Phoenix TV.

“Come on, continue your story. Women are all sentimental beings, they like to reminisce, they also like to fantasize. Even though a person’s glance is just a glance, they will still imagine that there is hidden meaning. You must be level-headed and remind yourself at all times that you’re not a celebrity.”

Si Nian wasn’t sure to laugh or cry. “I’m very clear that I’m not some celebrity. Why do I feel like you’re filming a documentary on marriage, instead of a law programme...”

“Does he have a girlfriend now? You don’t know that, right? He might even be married.”

Si Nian drank a mouthful of water. “How would I know?”

Shen Wei Jue sighed. “Perhaps you’re even the third wheel. Thankfully it’s still early, you can still stop before it’s too late.”

Si Nian was dumbstruck into speechlessness.

Shen Wei Jue was a rational person. It was also why she remained single after her ex-boyfriend was stolen by her close friend.

Si Nian made a face of concentration and attentiveness, while pulling the spicy lobster prawn dish close. She began peeling the shells patiently.

“It’s Cheng Chen,” Shen Wei Jue suddenly said, pointing at the TV. “<Intimate> is really not bad, how rare is it that the director is more popular than the male lead. You have no idea, do you, that after a little lady from our broadcast company interviewed him, her entire wall was plastered with his photos. Every day she would praise him to high heavens...”

Her heartbeat suddenly quickened. Tilting her head, she looked at the screen.

It was really Cheng Chen and the female lead of his film <Intimate>, Wang Yi Ran. Both of them walked on the red carpet before inevitably pulled aside by the host for an interview. Wang Yi Ran’s hand was on Cheng Chen’s arm, both of them looked at ease. In the interview podium, he released her hold and gently guided her to

stand next to him. He looked nothing like the person she met yesterday, there were no traces of a worn-out traveller. There was only a magnificent and dignified Cheng Chen.

The host began the usual routine: exchanging pleasantries, bantering, asking about his next film...

As she was watching the screen until the broadcast featured another celebrity, Si Nian took exactly two minutes to peel a single lobster prawn. Shen Wei Jue continued her criticism, "That Wang Yi Ran, why did she wear such a high heels? She kept on leaning on him."

She was stuffing herself with prawn meat when she heard her phone rang. She shot Cola a look and Cola immediately carried the phone over in her mouth.

Shen Wei Jue clicked her tongue. She lamented, "It's true that the pet mimics the owner, truly only a lazy person like you would be able to train a cat to act like a dog."

She was wiping her hands clean, about to answer the call, when she saw the caller's name.

Cheng Chen?

Wasn't he just walking on the red carpet?

She shot Shen Wei Jue a look full of guilt before answering the call with a casual "hello".

From the other end, it sounded a little noisy. She heard voices of people exchanging pleasantries, people quietly greeting each other. It sounded like he was already inside the venue. Cheng Chen cleared his throat, and quietly excused himself from god-knows-who before telling her, "Sprite has not eaten the whole day."

A person who happens to be a famed director, in the venue of the film festival, sitting close to so many good-looking celebrities, actually called to say his dog had not eaten the entire day... Si Nian once thought she was already carefree enough, she didn't think there was actually someone who was more casual than she was.

She didn't know what to say, so she made a random guess. "Is it because his cold is not cured? He has no appetite?"

He leisurely answered, "It couldn't be. In his entire life, his appetite is the best when he's sick. Is it because you fed him anything that he became accustomed to?"

Following that train of thought, Si Nian racked her brain.

Cats and dogs can easily be spoiled into being picky eaters, but whatever she fed him was whatever he provided her with.

Ah, right. Milk.

"It's milk. I would feed Cola milk every morning and night, he would also drink along." In a flash, she felt guilty but after some thought, she felt that she shouldn't be. She had already dedicated a lot of effort into taking care of Sprite, there was nothing to be guilty about...

Silence on the other end. It sounded like Wang Yi Ran was whispering something to him. Cheng Chen covered the phone and said a few words before continuing the phone call. "I don't think so, I also feed him milk every day."

Right... that was the problem.

Taking in a deep breath, Si Nian explained, "It's like this. In these past few years, the quality of dairy products in the country is pretty bad. Cola has been drinking baby milk..."

Cheng Chen was quiet. In one breath, Si Nian finished, "It's a German-made product, the brand is HiPP. It's the combiotic one, it won't cause allergy reaction or excessive heat, it's not fattening either... I always asked for my friends who were parents to buy it for me. If you need some, I can give you two boxes."

She admitted she was spoiling Cola too much... but cats only have fifteen years of life, drinking baby milk was not considered excessive.

After a long period of silence, Cheng Chen finally laughed quietly,

“Let’s talk when I get home.”

Chapter 06

Regarding the baby milk incident, Si Nian knew she was in the wrong so she took the initiative to deliver four boxes of milk and even gave him the Taobao purchasing address.

Cheng Chen only sent her a two-word reply: "Okay, thanks."

Hugging her phone, she stood inside the train in a daze. She thought that Shen Wei Jue was correct. Perhaps he really did have a girlfriend, perhaps it was even one of the female artists he had worked with. That was why he used her to diffuse suspicion.

Another text popped up. "Scriptwriter, where are you now?"

It was Assistant Liu.

Si Nian opened her umbrella and swiftly replied, "It's raining too hard, I wasn't able to catch a taxi. I just left the train." The rain outside was relentless and unforgiving. Her legs were completely wet from the splashes.

Assistant Liu's reply was quick. "The boss and the director are already here, Hong Kong Plaza, the café on the first floor."

In the end, she spent almost ten minutes searching inside Hong Kong Plaza but where was that café... when she was beginning to get anxious, she saw a familiar figure standing in front of the Apple store.

In the rush of the crowd, he was still silently watching the road, as if he was waiting for someone.

Wasn't this too coincidental?

He suddenly moved, turning around to glance in her direction. Si Nian instinctively lowered her umbrella to cover her face to look inconspicuous.

The moment she turned away, her phone began to ring. She cleared

her throat and then answered the phone. Before she could speak, she heard Cheng Chen asking, "Where are you?"

I'm close to you...

But if she said that, won't they be forced to meet?

She rushed over to hide at a corner where Cheng Chen could not see, ducking near the glass door. "Me? I just woke up." The pitter-patter sound of noise was too obvious, she had no choice but to come up with a suitable story. "I'm at the balcony hanging the laundry."

There were a lot of people who also chose to take shelter from the rain in the spot she was hiding in. Because she was answering her phone, she didn't manage to close her umbrella in time. The person next to her huffed and glared at her.

"Hang on," she said. Embarrassed, she closed her umbrella before continuing, "Did you call me for something?"

From this spot, she could see his back.

The person on the other end was quiet for a moment, before saying in an indifferent manner, "I heard that you were supposed to meet me to discuss about the script. Just now Li Xiao Qing's assistant said you were on your way."

With him? Discussing the script?

Si Nian gaped. This time, she really embarrassed the hell out of herself.

Cheng Chen seemingly didn't care for her little lie earlier. He simply asked straightforwardly, "Where are you now?"

"... I'm almost here."

"Hong Kong Plaza has two blocks, one north, one south. Are you on the north or south road?"

Outside the glass door, the crowd kept on growing. She was inside, how would she know if she was facing the north or south road?

Si Nian desperately tried to determine her location, but before she could decide, Cheng Chen immediately asked another question, "Never mind. Are you next to Apple or Tiffany shopfront?" His voice had traces of laughter, as if he realized that she had no conception of direction.

"Apple." She gave up the useless struggle and honestly revealed her location.

In the end, she indeed couldn't differentiate between north and south. When she sat down with Cheng Chen, Li Xiao Qing smiled when she told her, "Director Cheng said he was going out for a smoke, didn't expect he would run into you."

Si Nian smiled a little but focused on the menu and the list of coffees available.

Li Xiao Qing's company preferred modern city dramas but she specialized in period dramas. Even though they both knew each other since a while back, but they never had the chance to collaborate. This time Li Xiao Qing mentioned that she was going to produce a historical film and found a famed director for the name value. She accepted without much thought. She didn't expect the director to be Cheng Chen...

She lifted her head from the menu and saw Cheng Chen drying himself with the paper napkins.

Her umbrella was too small, when they were sharing earlier, he nearly got wet from head to toe. He used one napkin after another but he didn't seem to worry about looking pitiful.

"But Director Cheng," Li Xiao Qing turned and said to Cheng Chen, "You were smoking in front of the entrance, how did you ended up getting wet?"

Cheng Chen smiled and said, "Just now I saw Si Nian in the opposite entrance and predicted that she went the wrong direction, so I went and picked her up."

Seeing the water that dripped along his jawline, Li Xiao Qing picked up some napkin and helped Cheng Chen wipe his face.

What a shocking move. Si Nian discreetly looked away.

Li Xiao Qing seemed to be recently divorced? Perhaps...

Cheng Chen cleared his throat, then said, "How's Little Aunt's post-operation recovery?"

Little Aunt?

Si Nian contemplated this sudden news. Li Xiao Qing laughed and said, "My mom kept on talking about you. If you really have her interest at heart, you should visit her at the hospital. Let's start our discussion."

Si Nian turned around and saw Cheng Chen still drying himself. He appeared to have glanced at her, as if he saw through her bold imagination earlier.

She lowered her head out of guilt. He can't exactly blame her, who asked them to be act so flirtatiously earlier?

Who would have expected that Li Xiao Qing is his cousin...

In the past two years she rejected the opportunities to work with Cheng Chen again and again, though she had heard that he was a very dedicated director. In other words, he was a person who would torment others. In the previous commercial project, she also experienced it first-hand. Now that she was discussing the script with him, she realized he truly was difficult to deal with.

The necessary information had already been prepared. Even though she did flipped through the information, it was just a cursory glance.

By comparison, Cheng Chen had read through the information again and again. He would talk her into speechlessness. In the end, even Li Xiao Qing also couldn't bear to go on with the discussion. She smiled and clapped her hands. "There, there. We have not signed our contract, don't scare away my scriptwriter."

"She's always like this," he said, glancing at Si Nian. He concluded, "I won't force her but even if she's given three years to finish reading all the information, she won't be able to do it."

This time, even Li Xiao Qing's assistant had a difficult expression.

In the end, when they were about to leave, Li Xiao Qing and Cheng Chen made plans to go to the production company. The location was nearby Si Nian's place. Acting as if Cheng Chen would definitely agree to be the driver, Li Xiao Qing dragged Si Nian to carpool with him. When they reached the parking lot, they followed Cheng Chen as he walked to his car. Li Xiao Qing immediately laughed, "Director Cheng, you finally changed your mind to change your car?"

Si Nian observed the car in front seriously, it was indeed quite shocking.

The last time she saw him, he was still driving an ordinary car. He really changed it fast. A director was indeed a director. She felt a deep sense of regret, why was the difference between a director and a scriptwriter so drastic?

The drive home was not too smooth because not only was it raining, it was also peak hour.

Li Xiao Qing took out two tins of coke from inside the mini-refrigerator and passed one to Si Nian. "I still remember that when I was in my twenties, my husband and I were broke to the point we almost couldn't afford our rent. Yet he was still obsessed with cars, always saying what kind of car he would buy in the future. Whenever he took me around the bicycle, he would always pretend he was riding some luxurious car and asked me, "What do you think about your husband's BMW?" I could only play along, telling him to step on the pedal, overtake other cars. Truly we were foolish back then." After she finished, she glanced at Cheng Chen. "There's no man who doesn't like cars."

Cheng Chen lightly smiled, steering the car up to viaduct.

Li Xiao Qing appeared to have thought of something. She turned around to look at Si Nian who was in the backseat. "I remembered, Chen Qing once told me his first love really liked cars."

... did I?

Keeping a poker face, she glanced at Cheng Chen. She pretended

whatever Li Xiao Qing said had nothing to do with her.

“Is it?” she replied with a hollow laugh, giving a noncommittal response.

“Back then he just started university, he made me accompany him to look at cars.” With a laugh, she continued, “I asked him why was he wasting money when he wasn’t even working but he said something that I still remember vividly.”

Cheng Chen turned on the music and continued driving.

Si Nian became very curious what was it that he said. But she felt a kind of complicated feeling stirring in her and became afraid of listening further.

Li Xiao Qing evidently didn’t notice the other two’s complicated expressions because she continued, “He said he made a promise with her girlfriend, that he must buy a decent car and act out the scene of using the car to chase down the bus. Cute, isn’t it? When he was young, he was really cute.” Li Xiao Qing was beaming with obvious affection but on the other end, Si Nian was completely bewildered.

Back then he would often stand in the telephone booth outside his school and called her to have idle conversation. One time he heard her saying she recently became addicted to idol dramas, those pointless but enthusiastic conversations.

She remembered, she was pointing at the TV screen excitedly telling him, “The female lead ran away, the male lead jumped into his car prepared to chase down the bus... ah, that’s so romantic.”

She ended up talking a lot but he was still quietly listening. His silence annoyed her.

She was so angry that she snapped, “Cheng Chen, are you listening?”

She heard the noise of cars zooming past in the background before his voice came up. He calmly said, “I heard you. In the future, after I bought a car, you must take the bus once and let me chase it down

with the car. Remember, you must wear like a Cinderella, better yet, wear a school uniform. I will desperately chase after you and in the end, I will stop my car in front of the bus. Who cares about rules or courtesy of the road...”

He said so earnestly, yet she actually burst a gut laughing, accidentally spitting the yogurt she was drinking. “Alright, alright, you must not forget.”

Such silly conversation, he still remembered.

“But that’s already water under the bridge,” Li Xiao Qing lamented, not sure if she was talking about herself or Cheng Chen. “Look at me. Back then I was sitting in the passenger seat of my husband’s bicycle, I was still so happy. Now he had plenty of cars but the one sitting in the passenger seat is not me. Look at Cheng Chen? His first love is probably in god-knows-who’s embrace by now.”

Si Nian was both embarrassed and stunned. She merely kept quiet.

“Si Nian?” Cheng Chen called.

“Ah?” She could feel her entire body stiffen from the nerves.

He parked the car on the side of the road. “The traffic is terrible now, I’ll let you off here. You only need to walk for about five minutes to reach home.”

“Okay.” She let out a sigh of relief. “Thank you.”

When she reached home, Cola was so hungry that her eyes were flashing. She fed her the creampuff that she bought on her way home but unexpectedly Cola was so picky with her food, refusing to even eat the outer crust. She kept on scratching to get to the ice-cream inside.

Si Nian didn’t know where to laugh or cry. She simply tore away the crust and scooped out the ice-cream to feed Cola. Cola was a Persian pure breed, she had a lazy disposition, when she was not being frightened, she was actually very gentle.

She couldn’t comprehend what Cola’s previous owner was thinking,

how could he be so cruel as to break a cat's hipbone... When Si Nian was still lamenting about it, Cheng Chen suddenly sent her a text. She stared at the name flashed on the screen, dreading the content of the message. She wasn't sure what she felt.

Cola was particularly sensitive to phone noises, she kept on pawing the phone. Helplessly Si Nian finally reached for her phone and glimpsed at the text.

A series of words: "Read the information carefully. I'll contact you in a few days."

Chapter 07

Thanks to the text, Si Nian ended up not leaving home for three consecutive days.

She would be sprawled on the sofa every day, going through the information while eating melon seeds. There would be a huge pile of melon seed shells in front of her, the smaller pile belonged to Cola.

They went through the same pattern for an entire three-day, both the woman and the cat were already sick and tired of melon seeds.

Thankfully, in the end what Cheng Chen meant was that he was going to contact her to arrange for a meeting, not that he was going to contact her privately.

Li Xiao Qing was an engineering graduate, she had the habit of using numbers to analyse the script... for a humanities graduate like her, she felt tortured seeing all the numbers.

The subject of the meeting: how many female leads does this film need?

The whiteboard listed a series of women with different personalities who will have complicated and tangled relationships with the male lead. There was one who was naïve and forced the male lead to take responsibility, one who was so passionate and obsessed that she threatened to kill herself if he wouldn't marry her, also one who had a tragic past waiting for the male lead to rescue her...

They even went as far as calculating the percentage of how all the women would be received...

She saw that the males inside the room sharing the same look of deep satisfaction.

Did they all thought of themselves as the male lead?

Sigh, people these days.

They should be more clear-headed.

She looked at Cheng Chen who was sitting across her. He seemed to be carefully considering what the analyser said. She sighed inwardly, continuing to bite her apple to replenish vitamin in her body.

She had been working hard, worried that this famous, slave-driver director would be unsatisfied.

“How is it?” Li Xiao Qing asked, her head popping at the door. “How did the discussion go?”

Everyone quieted down. Their company had four branches, every day there would at least be ten films or dramas to be discussed about. As they were working with Cheng Chen this time, whom was heavily endorsed by their boss Li Xiao Qing herself, they had put in extra effort.

Cheng Chen kept on tapping the table with his pen. “Si Nian, what do you think?”

Si Nian, who was still biting her apple, absentmindedly said, “How many do you think is necessary?”

Why did it feel like they were buying groceries at the market, as if the women were from the Dreams of the Red Chamber, as if they were choosing a beauty out of a harem.

Cheng Chen simply lifted his cup. Even though it was just an ordinary action, it silenced everyone.

Li Xiao Qing, who had been standing at the door, finally found it unbearable and said, “Isn’t it just choosing a female lead? Quickly make up your mind and wrap up, it’s dinner time.” Having spoken her mind, she remained leaning on the door, waiting.

He started drinking from the cup. “I got a cold recently, allow me to drink some hot water.” After finished, he continued, “That childhood-friend female lead is not bad, I like that sort of feeling. Just use one female lead. What do you think, scriptwriter?”

Si Nian kept on eating her apple and pretended to consider it

seriously. Then she casually answered, “I also like that sort of feeling.”

Everyone had discussed for almost an entire day, including every kind of feeling they got from the proposed female leads, yet they didn’t expect the director to like the childhood-friend trope. There were also people who were not satisfied with that decision, they argued that such trope was often acted out badly and was the most difficult to film with passion. But Cheng Chen seemed to be indifferent. While sipping hot water, he said, “That would have to depend on the scriptwriter.”

Si Nian were uselessly concentrated on her apple but tasted bitterness. She didn’t realize that she had been biting into the core.

Thanks to the director’s one sentence, it had been decided that the main couple would be childhood friends, innocent and sweet.

“Ha, didn’t I say so,” Li Xiao Qing said, putting a dumpling into her daughter’s bowl, “Director Cheng likes this kind of trope.”

Si Nian merely stuffed herself with the steaming hot dumpling, accompanied with ginger slices.

“Nian Nian,” Li Xiao Qing’s daughter called with familiarity. She obviously only looked like she was in her teens, the little girl actually carried herself with the air of an older sister. “Be careful you’ll burn your tongue.”

Si Nian bared her teeth at her, gently stressing, “I’m six years older than you, call me *jie jie*.”

Even though Li Xiao Qing heard it clearly but she was still curious. “The both of you, since when you have become so close to each other? But that’s good too. Lou Lou, after you became friends with Si Nian, your results rose sharply.”

Si Nian smiled sheepishly. It was a long story, better to keep it a secret.

“It was Si Nian *jie* who motivated me,” Lou Lou said, “she made me understood the phrase ‘under every person, there is another

person’.”

Si Nian shot Lou Lou a resentful glare. *Girl, please stop talking.*

Everyone at the table had already witnessed how difficult the boss’s daughter can be. Skipping school to throw a house party, not paying attention in class, but now she actually turned over a new leaf and placed academics as her first priority.

After hearing what Lou Lou said, everyone became curious, especially Cheng Chen. He glanced at Si Nian, appearing to look very serious.

“Hurry and tell us your experience,” a middle-aged man sitting across said, his curiosity apparent. “Every now and then I would have to meet my son’s teacher, hurry and share with me your parental experience.”

Li Xiao Qing also laughed. “Si Nian, you don’t have a boyfriend right? How would you have parental experience?”

Si Nian made an noncommittal noise. Her guilt made her unable to look at Cheng Chen.

Under such pressure, she had nervously finished all her ginger slices. She turned around to order for another plate. When she looked back, she met Cheng Chen’s eyes.

Their eyes met but he didn’t look surprised at all and even kept on staring.

In contrast, it was Si Nian who felt like she was caught doing adultery and quickly looked away.

She turned away and when she was about to continue eating her dumplings, Lou Lou had already began telling her story. “Actually, each person has their own pride and dignity. When I was in primary school, my results were very good. But when I entered middle school I could not catch up, I was always scolded by my teachers. So I rebelled. Thankfully it was Si Nian who taught me a lesson by telling me her sob story.”

That was it, she was done.

Lou Lou purposely delayed the story and paused for dramatic effect.

“What did she say?” Cheng Chen suddenly asked.

Lou Lou immediately smiled. “She told me, ‘Results don’t mean anything. Back then in my 150-marks math paper, I only got 38. For my physics paper, I once got number two counting from the back. I have lived through all kinds of hurdle.’”

After she finished her sentence, everyone was quiet for a beat. They didn’t expect their respected scriptwriter would have such bitter school days.

Si Nian was close to tears. After her past was revealed, how could she be able to show off anymore...

After an “en” sound, Cheng Chen asked, “What happened next?”

Lou Lou beamed at Si Nian and continued, “Afterwards I thought that if she managed to get into a famed university with such terrible results, it simply is too unreasonable. I mustn’t be worse than her, at worst I still need to enter Tsing Hua, isn’t it?”

Li Xiao Qing almost laughed herself to death. Coughing, she said, “Why don’t you emulate your little uncle, he entered based on recommendation, he never took any entrance exams.”

Lou Lou helplessly said, “That’s mental capability problem. Little uncle’s extraordinary feats since young has dealt me endless blows. Only Nian Nian *jie*’s story can be considered the proper encouragement material.”

After the young girl’s entertaining scoop, everyone at the table started gossiping about some person’s wife, successfully forgetting the topic of how Si Nian managed to get into a good university after such lacklustre result in school.

On their way back to the company after dinner, she glanced at Cheng Chen.

Because he had good results back then, she didn’t want to him to

lose face.

Therefore puppy love can be considered a good thing if utilized properly. It can even be used to motivate people to establish the country and the people.

Especially when it was the person you like had good looks, good character, good results...

In the end their meeting went on till late night. Only when Cheng Chen's voice progressively became worse until he could barely speak, did he allowed everyone to go home.

Si Nian noticed that he didn't seem to have any plans to leave. After some hesitation, she asked him, "I asked for some ginger slices from the restaurant earlier. Originally I wanted to boil it with coke, but if you want, I will boil it for you here? It will keep you warm."

She was completely mad for coke to the point that coke with ginger was her favourite winter drink. Others drink it to keep themselves warm but she liked it because the drink was slightly spicy and had the fragrance of ginger.

It took her a lot of courage to ask but Cheng Chen did not immediately answer.

The meeting room was completely empty except for them.

"I remember, you said you started drinking coke?" She remembered Cheng Chen said so at her home. If not she would definitely not ask because back then he said he hated coke.

"I will occasionally drink some," he finally said.

She was actually quite curious, was he like her? When she was young, she hated long beans. When she became older, she actually became obsessed with stir-fried long beans. Was it inexplicable like that too?

In the end they went to the pantry, she turned on the water heater. When the heater was releasing slight vapour, she asked, "Why did you ended up drinking coke? Didn't you used to say you hate it more

than anything?”

Silence. The silence stretched for miles.

He wasn't talking again?

In the first place it was already rather awkward. She kept on looking for conversation topics to fill the silence yet he was so unreceptive.

Since she was already in the thick of things, she might as well go on with thickened skin. She watched Cheng Chen drink the remainder of the coke. He looked indifferent as he gulped it down.

The problem was, he already finished half the tin.

“You already drank the cold one, can you still finish the hot ginger coke?” She turned around and saw that the water was almost ready.

She harboured some dissatisfaction but she swallowed it down. She was afraid she would end up sounding too nosy.

“I couldn't find you then,” he suddenly said, crumpling the coke tin before tossing it into the waste bin. “I thought that you were sulking. The things that you like, I didn't quite like. Later I tried to drink the coke that you like, play with the cat you like. Eventually it doesn't feel like I can't accept anymore.”

Si Nian was holding up the heater, her fingers felt weak and nearly dropped the thing.

He spoke it so calmly, but her heart felt like it was bursting from the pain listening.

When she was pondering about what to say, Cheng Chen's phone suddenly rang.

He looked at the screen before cancelling the call. When he noticed that she was staring at him intently, he smiled and said, “What's wrong? Is it because you feel extremely regretful that you gave up on such a fine young man?”

Chapter 08

His tone was casual and indifferent but when each word travelled into her ears, it made her silent for a long time. She lowered her head, pouring a cup of steaming hot ginger coke for him. “Yes, extremely regretful.”

She could not decipher what was real and what was fake in his words, yet she used a joking manner to admit the honest truth.

After admitting as such, she immediately turned around to pour herself a cup.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Cheng Chen staring at her intently. The courage and calmness from a moment ago all but disappeared. Even though the warmth from the cup was hurting her fingers, yet she actually didn't move. She was afraid he was going to bring up more things from their past, she could only stare blankly at the slices of ginger floating in the cup.

The wall lights in the pantry were turned on year round, but under such circumstances, it actually highlighted how ambiguously romantic the atmosphere was...

Before her heartbeat could race uncontrollably, she heard the voice of the cleaner *ah yi*. She seemed to be asking if there was anyone left in the company. Having found her saviour, she quickly called out, “Here, there's still someone in the pantry.”

In a moment, the old *ah yi*'s head popped in to look. Laughing, she said, “It's Director Cheng and scriptwriter?” Having said that, she turned on the main lights. “Why are you still here? Luckily I came in to look around, if not you two will end up getting locked in.”

Cheng Chen smiled lightly. “We're discussing the script.”

That night when they left, Si Nian said she was taking the taxi. Seeing her insistence, Cheng Chen also didn't say anything.

Only when the script was almost finished, did Li Xiao Qing brought up the issue of actors.

Honestly, most of the roles were already pre-determined. It was only the second male lead that was not nailed down. The character had paranoia, someone who carried the burden of the world upon his shoulders, yet had endless love for the female lead, a very standard character. Yet it was this never-changing character trope that would make its actor famous.

Li Xiao Qing wanted to use her company's new actor but the company that invested wanted the rising star Shen Zhe. Cheng Chen didn't comment.

That night, when they were having dinner at Namnan Pavillion, while eating the fragrant foie gras, she made clear her opinion after much thought: "I want to use Shen Zhe, he's very suitable for period dramas. Just look at how he acted in Lan Rong Ruo..."

A childlike staff immediately agreed, "That's right, that's right, it's a total classic." The other women who was holding bamboo skewers, about to barbeque the meat, also nodded their agreement.

Shen Zhe rose to fame thanks to period dramas, his model-like looks paired with his feathered fan and silk threads had long won over the hearts of young girls everywhere. If not because of their big boss insisted on supporting their company's own actors, the ladies would have already demanded for him ages ago.

Cheng Chen smiled a little but said nothing.

He merely played with his lighter, listening to the others' passionate discussion.

The director's assistant pushed over a plate of green pepper. With a knowing glance, she pressured Si Nian to do her duty as a fellow woman.

That look made Si Nian guilty. When she advocated for Shen Zhe, she really did it because she thought he was suitable for the role, completely unlike these biased women...

She picked up one of the peppers and took a small bite. "I tried to use him in my last project, but he insisted on not shaving his head..." Before she could finish her sentence, a wave of nauseating heat rose to her nostrils. Her eyes immediately teared, but she stubbornly continued her words, "This time I still feel that the role of the second male lead must be him."

Having said her piece, she glanced at the person sitting across her.

Cheng Chen was about to light up the cigarette between his teeth, when he saw her looking at him, he lightly fingered his lighter. He hinted for her to wait until he finished lighting the cigarette. After a light flickering noise, he only opened his mouth. "You seriously want to use him?"

Without fearing her own death, she nodded. She completely discarded Li Xiao Qing's wish.

Cheng Chen pondered for a moment, and then quietly took out his phone to text someone.

Very quickly, they heard a light noise indicating there was a reply.

Everyone's eyes were focused on him, waiting for his response.

"He seems to be interested but there's also another movie that wants him, the schedule clashes with ours. If you want to try, then prepare a summarized script by tomorrow," he said, putting down his phone. "After he read the script, we can meet to discuss."

Everyone started cheering excitedly, only Si Nian's mouth seemed to be twitching.

Summarized script? She hadn't written anything yet...

Thankfully Cheng Chen didn't try to kick her while she was down. Since it was everyone's request, he even picked a few suitable staff members and brought them home to finish the work overnight. Therefore this group of people who barely finished their overtime at the company had to begin working overnight to secure their second male lead. They immediately went and bought various snacks and beer to tide off the night at Director Cheng's house.

Upon opening the door, Sprite could already sniffed out Si Nian's presence. He immediately stopped from pouncing on his owner, instead he jumped into Si Nian's embrace. She was excited and was about to baby him but then noticed five, six pairs of eyes staring at her. It was quite shocking... animals like dogs would only be so friendly with their family...

Si Nian smiled mockingly. "My house is nearby, I once ran into Director Cheng walking his dog."

Everyone tactfully made an "oh" sound.

Cheng Chen looked at Si Nian with slight glee, and then called for his dog, "Sprite."

Sprite didn't quite bother with him, he kept on licking Si Nian's palm. He appeared to be very close with her, didn't seem like he just 'ran into' her once or twice that simple...

Si Nian smiled ambiguously and explained further, "Last time I fed him spam, I think he likes it very much, that's why he remembered me."

Everyone seemed to have understood, only made another "oh" sound.

No one spoke until one of the assistants who lagged behind, assistant scriptwriter Dong Xiao came out the elevator. The young man was especially excited when he saw the dog, he immediately stooped down to play with him. "What is he called? How adorable."

"Sprite," someone answered.

"Ah?" Dong Xiao was surprised. "How coincidental. Scriptwriter, isn't your cat called Cola?"

That sentence was so powerful that everyone present understood something.

Whether their pets were having an affair, that was unknown. What was known was that rumours of the owners having a love affair were definitely forming.

Si Nian found no argument to retort while Cheng Chen seemed indifferent and in no hurry to explain anything. She could only try to pretend that she was also indifferent, wasn't it simply just rumours of an ambiguous relationship? Which production team did not have such rumours, what did she have to be afraid of?

Even Sprite was supportive of everyone's wild imagination. That entire night he ran around her, even when Si Nian was in the washroom, he would also guard the door. When they were finally finished around four, Sprite was still lying next to her legs, tiredly waiting for her to go to bed. Si Nian felt helpless; she could only go along with Sprite and went into one of the guestrooms under everyone's watchful eye.

For the sake of the ladies, this guestroom even had its own washroom.

Even though it seemed to be unhabituated, the room had all the necessities. Si Nian saw that the producer was still on the phone, so she went and took a satisfyingly hot water bath. When she was just about to towel dry her hair, she heard her phone ring. She immediately left the washroom and told the woman standing outside, "I'm done, you can go in now."

Having said that, when she took a look at her phone, she was stunned at the name displayed.

It was Cheng Chen.

Wasn't he just next door, what was he calling for?

She answered the call and, afraid that the producer would hear her, she walked to the bedside to ask, "What's wrong? Is it that you left something in the guestroom, you want me to bring it over for you?"

Other than this reason, she cannot guess what other urgent reason he would need her at this hour.

Furthermore, he had to do it so sneakily.

The person on the other end were suddenly quiet for a moment. He then said, "Tonight you should sleep in my room. Pack your

belongings and come over now.”

“Ah?” Si Nian was flabbergasted. She thought she misheard him so she said, “The line is not good, can you say that again?”

In the first place Cheng Chen’s voice was already a little awkward, after she asked him to repeat himself, he found it even more difficult to say so. He lightly sighed and explained, “The person in your room is a little special... it’s not that convenient for you to sleep with her.”

This time she heard it clearly, but sleeping with another woman, how inconvenient could it be?

She tried to reason, “Going to your room this late at night, that’s even more inconvenient...”

The line was quiet again. He finally sighed. “Get dressed and come over. Just say I want to discuss the script with you overnight.”

Wasn’t this just trying to deceive oneself?

They had already wrapped up everything just now, who was going to fall for that lie?

But Cheng Chen didn’t give her the chance to consider at all, he immediately hung up.

Si Nian could only get dressed neatly and tell her roommate through the door that the director wanted to meet her, that she needed to go and change the script. She asked her not to wait up for her. The person inside the washroom was a little surprised, laughingly said that the director was indeed a workaholic. Si Nian also laughingly complained a while before taking leave.

The distance from the guestroom to the master bedroom was only a few metres, yet she hesitated for three minutes, not daring to knock the door.

This late at night, having bathed and dressed, standing outside a director’s room...

Why did she felt like she was trying to sleep her way into getting a role?

The more she thought about it, the more wrong it felt. She turned around to walk away.

But after giving it another thought, it was better not to provoke Cheng Chen. She walked another few steps in his direction, but remained hesitating in front of his room.

Sigh, whatever. Didn't he say they were going to discuss the script? Then let's discuss the script.

Then, gritting her teeth, she knocked on the door.

The moment the door opened, there was a subtle mint fragrance. Both of them stood in front of each other, and it was more awkward than ever.

After a long stretch of awkward silence, Cheng Chen helplessly raised his chin and pointed at the other guestroom. "You keep on standing in front of my door, you're not worried that they will see you?" The moment he said that, the people in the guestroom cooperatively laughed, carrying the sound over.

Si Nian no longer dared to hesitate and hurriedly entered his room.

There was little furniture in the bedroom, with a very large bed sitting in the middle. There were some clothes scattered on the carpet. There was no place for her sit.

Cheng Chen sat down on the side of the bed, drying his hair with a towel. He motioned for her to sit anywhere she liked. "When I was washing up, I suddenly remembered that she likes women. For you, sleeping with her is like sleeping with other men, there's no difference." He paused for a moment. "Therefore it's better for you to sleep here tonight, I'll sleep on the floor."

She pondered over his words thrice. She understood but was also confused.

Even if the producer was manly inside, she was still biologically a woman, wasn't she?

Yet the Great Director Cheng was an actual man, no matter how she

looked at it, wasn't sleeping with him even more dangerous? Furthermore, she didn't even mind if the producer liked women...

Si Nian watched him take out fresh pillows and blanket from the cabinet and remained feeling that the situation was not right. "Why don't I sleep in the living room?"

"If you sleep in the living room, what would she think?" Cheng Chen naturally turned down her suggestion.

Right... she might not think much of it, but the other party might overthink it.

Fine. She would just insist to death that they were only discussing the script.

Resigned to her fate, she sat on the bed.

Her hair was still dripping water, she didn't even have time to dry it properly earlier. Thoughtlessly she reached for the towel on the bed and dried the water sitting at the tips of her hair. When she was just worrying if anyone saw her coming into his room, Cheng Chen turned around to look at her. He suddenly completely stopped moving.

She looked at him curiously. Sensing that the towel she was using was slightly damp, she immediately understood the situation.

The towel she was using was actually the one he was using earlier.

"Sorry," she said, hurriedly putting the towel back in its original place. "I only picked it carelessly, I didn't notice."

He didn't utter a single word. He took out a new towel from the cabinet and walked over to give it to her. "It's okay, I only used it to dry my hair, nowhere else."

Nowhere else, nowhere else... she also wasn't thinking he used it on anywhere else...

Lowering her head, she extended her hand to grab the towel. She dried her hair hurriedly, her entire body was flushed, even her neck was red from embarrassment.

Chapter 09

Throughout their conversation, Sprite sat on the floor, occasionally looking at Si Nian, occasionally looking at Cheng Chen.

Si Nian repeatedly dried her hair with the towel while watching Cheng Chen out of her eye. He started changing the bedsheets with quick and expert hands. The moment he finished, the dog immediately jumped on the bed. Turning around, he quickly added a few creases in the bedsheet.

He was an enemy's dog, indeed.

Si Nian wanted to laugh but dared not to. She kept on using the towel to wipe her hair.

Seeing no reaction from her, Sprite bit down on one of her slippers and immediately wriggled underneath Cheng Chen's quilt...

Left shoeless on one foot, she looked at the bulging quilt with a look of bewilderment.

"Sprite," Cheng Chen called, flipping the quilt. He gently patted the dog.

Sprite's whiskers lightly twitched.

Si Nian subconsciously placed her shoeless foot behind her, feeling an inexplicable sorrow.

She hadn't even been in his room for more than five minutes, she had already used his towel to dry her hair, had her slippers underneath his quilt. Luckily it's not her own dog's doing, if not it would look like she was plotting to get in his bed...

Because of her own status, she didn't dare to flip the quilt herself, she simply waited for him to act.

Thankfully Cheng Chen didn't seem to find it awkward, very quickly he chased away Sprite from the bed and got her slipper. He placed

it next to her feet. "He didn't used to have such a habit. I think he just got overexcited over your presence."

She made an "oh" sound, she didn't know what else to say. In the end she just kept quiet.

Cheng Chen was just in front of her, she didn't dare to put down her leg to wear the slipper. Without any other options, she leaned down to grab the slipper. To her surprise, he also extended his hand at the same time and slipped the slipper on for her.

He did it so casually, as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

In the dead of the night, he was even sitting in front of her. She felt her feelings stir.

For a long moment, she was quiet before finally asking, "Then I'll go to sleep?"

Cheng Chen nodded and turned off the lights for her.

She climbed onto the bed, wrapping herself tightly with the quilt, yet she was unable to sleep.

The pin-drop silence in the room was unbearable. Other than the meager light from the window, the entire room was submerged in darkness.

What kind of ridiculous reunion was this, without preparation of any kind she was forced step by step to re-familiarise herself with a person she once liked so many years ago... the most ridiculous part was, at this moment the both of them were actually sleeping in the same room.

She tried hard to fall asleep for almost half an hour, she didn't even dare to turn around, but her eyes refused to shut and her mind was still awake.

"Can I ask you a question?"

His voice answered, "Just ask."

"When you first saw me," she said, eyes focused on his reflection on

the window, “you saw me in real life, did you feel disappointed? I don’t mean anything, I’m just curious.”

The reflection in the mirror suddenly moved a little but he was actually reaching for the bottle of water next to him. He drank a mouthful of it.

“There’s no difference from what I imagined,” he said.

... he might have had said nothing at all.

Only after a long time, did she begun to dream. In her dream, everyone was eating together, the dishes had just arrived. But before she could eat any, Cheng Chen told her in a voice full of seriousness, “You should wake up now.”

Ah? She still wanted to eat, what did that had to do with waking up...

She felt someone patting her face, it felt cool against her skin. Only then did she wake up.

In her daze, she saw Cheng Chen half-squatting near the bed, saying, “It’s already morning. If you don’t want them to see you, then follow me out to walk the dog and have breakfast.” Beside him, there was also a pair of twinkling eyes staring at Si Nian. It was Sprite with his tail wagging excitedly...

Si Nian was so tired she wanted to cry. Truly they were a pair that brought her bad luck, the both of them never allowed her to sleep in.

But what he said was logical.

Walking behind them in that early morning, with some grievance, she realized that whatever he said always made sense...

They circled the streets nearby for a moment, had some breakfast. They also ordered some take-away for the people at his home, none of them were awake. On one hand, Si Nian was afraid that the food would go cold, on the other, she was actually annoyed that they got to sleep in while she couldn’t. She woke them all up with a smirk. “Breakfast is almost cold.”

She thought it was a flawless plan but then during breakfast, the producer came out from her room and absentmindedly asked her, “Why didn’t you come back to sleep the entire night?”

Silence, everyone was immediately silent.

There was only the sound of people sipping milk and soymilk.

Assistant scriptwriter Dong Xiao dryly interrupted, “Director Cheng, this soymilk is pretty good...”

The conversation-starter was too silly, no one replied.

Si Nian felt her heart bleed, she can’t believe he was actually a scriptwriter. He completely didn’t have any sense of appropriateness; he actually said such low-quality stuff.

Thankfully the producer seemed to have thought of something, she immediately lowered her head to eat her share. The rest of them also continued their tasty breakfast. Other than the sound of people eating and drinking, there was no other sound.

To ease the script discussion, Cheng Chen took Si Nian along to Shen Zhe’s house.

Shen Zhe was talking to his manager on the phone when they reached. He opened the door to let them in and only briefly said hello to Si Nian before disappearing into the kitchen. He left Si Nian staring after him blankly, without any other words.

She followed Cheng Chen in and glancing inside the kitchen, she found that... Shen Zhe was cooking. All by himself, on his own.

Since his debut, 80% of Shen Zhe’s works had been set in ancient times.

Even though they never worked together, he had a very persistent image in her mind, he was a pretty boy with long hair floating gently in the background. Right now, the ancient pretty boy was actually wearing sportswear from head to toe, standing in front of stove, stir-frying vegetables. He didn’t even turn around when he said, “Make yourselves at home. I know Si Nian is coming, so I purposely

cooked.”

Si Nian was stunned for a moment, then turning around to look at Cheng Chen.

He seemed as if he hadn't heard that. He motioned for Si Nian to join him at the sofa.

She could tell Shen Zhe was an expert at cooking. After just half an hour, he had already prepared seven small dishes. Putting down the last dish – spicy diced chicken meat – the ancient pretty boy sat down.

“Si Nian, I wanted to meet you since a long time ago. I apologise if my hospitality is unsatisfactory, please don't mind. It's not too convenient for me to go out and buy groceries, I'm not too used to the ingredients my assistant bought...” he continued on, but because his first sentence was too shocking, she couldn't comprehend the rest.

Subconsciously, she glanced at Cheng Chen.

Cheng Chen was pouring himself a drink. “His cooking is not bad. When we used to room together, he would always be the one cooking.”

“I want beer,” Shen Zhe interrupted. “And, what's with ‘not bad’? Every time you get drunk, am I not the one who cook porridge for you? Each time you refuse to eat unless it's a different flavour.”

Si Nian wanted to laugh hearing that. If she didn't know what Cheng Chen was straight, she would definitely think that these people were a long-time couple.

Cheng Chen opened two cans of beer, passing on to Shen Zhe.

Si Nian observed that they were very close to each other, and decided that there was no need for unnecessary words. “I always write for period dramas but what a pity that I've never had the opportunity to work with you.”

Shen Zhe drank a mouthful of beer, motioning her to start eating.

“Let’s not discuss work while eating.” He started smiling gleefully at Si Nian, then asked, “Back then, why did you dump Director Cheng? I could never understand, such a perfectly good man, why would there be anyone with the heart to abandon him?”

Si Nian felt as if she wanted to cry. She turned and looked at the one who was abandoned. She finally understood completely why Cheng Chen hesitated that long when they mentioned Shen Zhe.

Cheng Chen coughed. “That’s enough.”

Shen Zhe laughed out loud and easily changed the conversation topic. With a smile he brought up the time he first met Cheng Chen. Back then he and Cheng Chen were still students, they met in a pub. They immediately disliked each other. “Back then we didn’t speak to each other. If he drank one tin, I would also drink one. In the end I drank until I was almost unconscious, I felt very liberated. The moment before I got knocked out, I snatched his phone and called my own number.”

In his life, the period after he graduated high school was completely blank.

Si Nian was listening attentively. When she heard that part, she inwardly sighed, such bad boys... “Afterwards I got sober, I forgot to contact him. Then my roommate was going to graduate, and I remembered that such a person existed and thought that he was quite suitable to be a friend.” Shen Zhe passed Si Nian a bowl full of rice. “He asked me why should he room with me. I told him I know how to cook. Then the both of us clicked, ended up rooming for three years.”

Si Nian nodded and ate a mouthful of rice.

She then heard Shen Zhe’s voice asking, “Since when did you two got back together?”

That mouthful of rice felt stuck in her throat. She started coughing, even her eyes were wet.

Thankfully Cheng Chen suppressed Shen Zhe with just a look. Having finished eating, Shen Zhe the idol actually got up to clear the table

himself. Only after everything was completely clean, did he started reading the script seriously. Just now when he was joking around, Si Nian thought he was quite a cheerful person, but looking at his expression now, she finally found the image of Shen Zhe in her mind.

After a while, Shen Zhe finally glanced at Cheng Chen. “The character is probably decided by you? Why is it that you’re obsessed with the childhood-friend trope?”

Si Nian was speechless. She lowered her head to stare at her cup of tea.

“Someone who overthrows the world, as affluent as a country, tragically evil, handsome to the point of incurring others’ jealousy, in the end dies in a foreign land as a way of giving his blessing to his childhood friend?”

Shen Zhe was absolutely gleeful. “Cheng Chen, my dear brother. Such a character would definitely make the actor popular, you finally thought of me?”

Cheng Chen glanced at Si Nian. “It’s the scriptwriter who wants you.”

Chapter 10

Once *A Beauty's Makeup* confirmed its entire cast, Li Xiao Qing immediately prepared to hold the press conference in frenzy.

This time Li Xiao Qing had thrown in a lot of money to produce the drama. Just by looking at the list of media invited, it was already shocking enough.

The most important thing was Shen Zhe's casting.

Si Nian wasn't very interested in celebrities' scandals or rumours but because her friend Liu Xia was the editor of a youth magazine, she kept on forcing her to dig out some gossip. Si Nian had no choice but to hurriedly ask the people around her for news, passed on and be done with it.

Thus when Liu Xia told her that Shen Zhe was now plagued by rumours and was the prime press material, Si Nian was quiet for quite some time. Oh fine, she admit, she had already tacitly agreed that Shen Zhe was secretly in love with Cheng Chen.

The press conference was held at the Four Seasons Hotel. Thanks to Shen Zhe's magnanimous invitation, she made the sudden decision to go.

Even though he was an assistant scriptwriter, it was Dong Xiao's first time attending a press conference. The moment he reached, both of his eyes flashed with excitement, he kept on looking for his idols. According to him, all the female actresses in the drama were his idols... therefore Si Nian stood at her corner on her own, watching the press conference. She was a bit lonely so she was about to take the opportunity to sneak away.

Lately Cola had been sulking.

Because Cheng Chen was a workaholic, she was not able to feed her at regular intervals. She can only ask the help of ah yi who cleans her house to feed Cola thrice a day. Once Cheng Chen found

out, he very naturally sent Sprite over for her to look after.

Therefore, Cola was sulking.

Based on her logic, it could be because she was favouring Sprite too much that Cola was jealous. The other reason was that ah yi didn't know how to prepare the milk, making it taste awful...

She passed by a buffet restaurant and was about to brave through the crowd of unknown faces when a hand suddenly pulled her back.

When she turned around, she saw Shen Wei Jue smirking at her. "Classmate Si Nian."

Si Nian was stunned. She said, "Aren't you with the general desk? Since when you became an entertainment reporter?"

Shen Wei Jue took one step back. "It's your 'past reincarnation', I came here with him."

That vibrant face, that bright smile, that pair of shining black eyes, and that head of soft black hair. Si Nian stared with her eyes wide and was rendered speechless for a long time. Finally she said, "Oh my God."

Having said that, she grabbed onto Lin Xin's hand. She kept on smiling at him but couldn't find anything to say further.

"Why are you still the same?" Lin Xin became the one to break the silence. His voice was still in that familiar gentle and soft tone.

"You also didn't change," she said, smiling at him. "You're completely the same as before. Oh God, why are you still the same, you don't grow old even though so many years have passed. You still look like when you're in your youth. Are you with the entertainment desk now?"

Shen Wei Jue rolled her eyes.

Did this seem like a woman who was almost twenty five? Why did she seem to have returned to the time when she was fifteen...

On the other hand, Lin Xin was still very calm. "I'm here to replace a

colleague who had an emergency. Besides this is the biggest drama of the year, collaboration between Cheng Chen and Shen Zhe. I definitely must come over to take a look and do an interview.”

Si Nian made an “ah” sound. “Who do you want to interview?”

Lin Xia lifted his chin, smiling. “Director Cheng.”

It was at this moment, when she was still holding Lin Xin’s hand, that she turned around and saw Cheng Chen and Shen Zhe standing together. Both were smiling at her, but one smile looked like it was positively gleeful because of someone’s misfortune, the other was a lot more complicated...

Si Nian originally wanted to evade the interview, she wanted to wait for them to finish the interview before catching up with Lin Xin but she didn’t expect Cheng Chen and Lin Xin to click and started talking happily. They even decided to have supper together.

Si Nian, Shen Zhe and Shen Wei Jue very naturally also accompanied them.

The moment they sat down, Shen Wei Jue’s first sentence was actually this, “Xiao Zhe, do you still remember me?”

Shen Zhe smiled. “Of course, a few years ago you came to the backstage of Oriental Storm to say hello to me.”

Shen Wei Jue immediately gripped Si Nian’s hand. “Didn’t I once tell you, I chased after a small-time celebrity? That’s Xiao Zhe. Back then I went to Oriental Storm to do an interview, it’s that time. I told you before.”

Shen Zhe laughed a little and drank a mouthful of beer. He glanced at Cheng Chen.

His meaning was very obvious.

Look, my fanbase is blossoming, age doesn’t even matter.

Si Nian felt her entire life principles stir a little.

She suddenly remembered that Shen Wei Jue once liked a small-

time celebrity, she said he debuted in some singing competition. She also remembered that Shen Zhe also debuted in some competition. In these few years Shen Zhe was also in Shanghai, Shen Wei Jue also went to some Oriental Storm or something, saying she was going to say hello to some celebrity...

Ah, fine...

She looked at Shen Zhe. "I remember now, when she came back that time, she did tell me. She was drinking water backstage when a man stood beside her, it was the idol from Baidu competition... Shen Zhe, that's you right?"

Si Nian fished out a camera from her bag and said, "Then I'll make the decision." With a serious face, she told Shen Wei Jue in no uncertain terms, "Tonight I'll help take photos of you and your idol until you're satisfied."

Shen Zhe's mouth lightly twitched, shooting Cheng Chen another glance.

"Your first love sure is unabashed."

"First love?!" Shen Wei Jue, who was basking in the happiness of meeting her idol, was as shocked hearing that as if she met a ghost.

Even the one who had been smiling without saying anything, Lin Xin was also stunned.

Cheng Chen merely took off his glasses to wipe it clean. With a beat off from the actual conversation, he said, "She's always like this."

Then he put on the glasses again.

"So..." Shen Wei Jue's entire core felt terribly shaken. "You guys broke up a long time ago, right."

Si Nian glared at her. You don't say.

Cheng Chen didn't say anything. He lifted his glass to toast the other two men, drinking the beer.

Shen Wei Jue looked at Lin Xin. "Then that's good, if not I'm afraid

your ‘past reincarnation’ would be targeted to death.”

Si Nian’s mind seemed to hum; her instinct told her that there was something bad impending.

Before she could say anything, Shen Wei Jue had already begun to introduce Lin Xin. “Lin Xin and I were university classmates, we took journalism. But he was a little strange. Of all people, he clicked with Si Nian who was studying law. Both of them thought each other was very good. I was thinking, if they all thought each other was good, they should just be together. But this two were seriously awkward, in the end they didn’t end up together...”

Si Nian’s hands were already weak from anxiety, this girl was seriously distorting the truth...

The problem was Shen Wei Jue’s voice was always soft and somewhat coy, plus her tone was very sentimental. Even though she was embellishing a distorted rumour, she would make it sound very realistic, making others ponder over it seriously.

“That’s why they referred to each other as ‘past reincarnation’. What do they mean by that? Well, it means that in their past life, they have met and had feelings for each other. But in this life, they met but do not have the fate.”

Having finished her story, Shen Wei Jue took a sip of her fruit juice.

The entire room was quiet.

Never mind Si Nian, even Lin Xin was stiff.

Wasn’t this called piling one lie after another?

This was the real-life example of it.

Si Nian laughed hollowly. Clearing her throat, she said, “She’s just joking. To be honest, it’s only because I think Lin Xin is good-looking, I’m merely admiring his looks...” Why did it felt like it still sounded ambiguously romantic... “It’s just that I merely thought that this guy is seriously decent, has good character too. We’re just joking when we came up with the nickname.”

Everyone was still silent...

Lin Xin also cleared his throat. "Please don't misunderstand. Si Nian and I don't have any sort of relationship."

Shen Wei Jue felt like she had said something wrong so she didn't dare to say another word. She sneakily sent a text to Si Nian: "Didn't you already break up with your first love?"

Si Nian glanced at her phone. Closing her eyes for a moment, she finally decided not to argue with this woman any further.

When they finally finished, Si Nian wanted to take the taxi home but Cheng Chen patted her shoulder. "Wait for me at the entrance, I'll bring you home and go visit Sprite since it's on the way."

On the way, as if Sprite was not his dog...

Si Nian wanted to find an excuse to flee but felt an inexplicable sense of guilt.

No matter what, he was still her first love and only boyfriend. Those words earlier... she couldn't bear for him to misunderstand and feel hurt.

Unexpectedly when they reached home, Cheng Chen didn't mention the topic at all. He actually asked her an unrelated, leisurely question, "I heard from Li Xiao Qing that you wrote a book? Do you want me to look at it, maybe make a film adaptation or something."

Guiltily she looked at him. "No need, my target audience are very pure women."

"What's the story?"

"It's the very sweet kind of story, there's no misunderstanding or obstacle at all. From the time they met to the time they have children, they never even fought once," Si Nian said. Sighing, she continued, "In the months that I was writing the book, everything I look seem to be tinted pink. It was such a blissful feeling."

Cheng Chen glanced at her. "Adaptations lately seem to prefer 'oppressive' romance stories. They're more dramatic so they get

popular more easily.”

Si Nian stared at him with bewilderment. “How did you learn about ‘oppressive’ romance stories?”

“Lou Lou told me.”

Si Nian made an “oh” sound. Laughingly she said, “I think mine is quite dramatic too. If I change my perspective, even the way I perceive happiness changes. For example, a pair of couple may be very poor and run into all sorts of trouble, they just graduated from university and barely getting into the workforce. Both of them can only afford a small room, they even have to support their siblings’ school fees, this can be considered dramatic right? It sounds realistic and depressing, doesn’t it?”

Cheng Chen laughed. “How realistic.”

Si Nian made an “en” sound and tilted her head to look at him. With a laugh she continued, “If I’m the writer, I would write about a pair of very poor couple. Even though they earn very little but they are still very sweet. They can go to a park and have picnic there. Every week they can go the outskirts to fish. When they return home, they can cook the fish in many flavours. When they’re eating, the guy would even peel the fish skin for the girl, attentive and gentle... it’s actually that same pair. You noticed the miserable part of their life, so their misery will be enlarged in your mind. If you notice only their happiness, you will think they are very lucky.”

Both Cola and Sprite were meekly sitting near her feet.

“Si Nian,” Cheng Chen called, motioning her, “come over.”

Si Nian thought the movement was a little odd but she still went over. Cheng Chen patted on the sofa, indicating for her to sit. So she sat down next to him.

Cola and Sprite mimicked their owners and went and sat near them.

After she sat down, it was Cheng Chen who didn’t speak. He only leaned on the sofa, making himself comfortable. But it was the actual owner of the house who was sitting upright. Her hands were

folded in front of her in a courteous manner. The more she sat, the more she felt nervous.

It's already almost twelve, Director Cheng you can't really be thinking of sleeping over again...?

Chapter 11

Cheng Chen suddenly said, "Let me read the script that you've altered." Si Nian immediately let out a sigh of relief and ran into her bedroom. She handed to him a stack of binded A4 papers. "Do you need me to turn on the lights?"

"No need."

She made an "oh" sound. She gently nudged Sprite's belly with her foot, playing with him. Sprite smartly understood that it was playtime and obediently rolled over on his back. Cola meowed and then jumped on Sprite's belly... Si Nian's eyes were wide open at the harmony of the two pets.

She then heard Cheng Chen called for her, "Si Nian."

She turned around and saw that he was pointing at a line in the script. "Tell me, what does 'pupils suddenly contracted' mean? How do you want the actor to act that out?"

"Ah?" She looked at him strangely. "It's when someone sees something frightening, his 'pupils suddenly contracted'."

Cheng Chen made an "en" sound. Removing his glasses, he lightly massaged the bridge of his nose. "I understand, tell me how to act that out."

Si Nian went blank.

This was indeed a legitimate question. Shen Zhe's acting, it shouldn't have reached the levels of being able to act 'pupils suddenly contract'...

"Last time my friend did a film," Cheng Chen said, putting the script aside, "One of his assistants saw the words 'movement as if running away from a rabbit' in the script and really went out and caught a rabbit."

Si Nian laughed dryly. "... how amusing."

“Therefore sometimes, just write something others will understand, it’ll save time and effort. It will also not be the cause of ridicule.”

Si Nian made an “oh” sound. “I wrote that to sound more poetic, to indicate he’s really frightened.”

“But when actors receive the script, they will usually ask me, ‘Director, how to act?’,” Cheng Chen said. Leaning close to her, he asked, “How do you think they should act?”

That was the problem.

Si Nian stared into his eyes, trying desperately to pretend he was a character out of a horror movie. Just look at that pair of eyes, dark as sin, he was also blocking the light. She stared at his nose bridge, his lips... ah, lips didn’t seem to have anything to do with horror.

The room was very quiet, only the soft pendulum sound could be heard. The light beating sound traveled to her ears to her heart.

A long, long time ago.

The both of them once discussed about a topic.

Back then she was a young girl with barely discovered romantic feelings, she actually unashamedly asked him if they should kiss the first time they meet. The both of them started discussing very seriously over the phone. Since they were already husband and wife, such necessary procedures should be done and over with... then?

She suppressed her fluttering heart, she could taste his breath.

“I think... I better adjust the script,” she said, desperately trying to find a conversation topic.

His lips seemed to curve slightly. “Okay.”

“Change it to ‘turn pale with fright’, let Shen Zhe interpret himself...”

“Okay.”

The sound of pendulum grew increasingly loud.

Usually it was never that loud...

Cheng Chen leaned forward, his hand grasping for hers, holding it gently.

His palm also felt incredibly hot, so hot that she lost all other senses. She was in a daze...

She pursed her lips looking at him, no longer evading.

Think properly, if you kiss me, I'll consider that we're back together...

A very, very small distance.

She saw that he seemed to be hiding a smile, a very charming smile.

In the moment she closed her eyes, a piercing sound of cat meowing rang through the night. She was so shocked that she opened her eyes. A flash of white shadow sprang at Cheng Chen.

Ah, shit.

Si Nian reached to catch her cat but could only brush across the tail.

Cola meowed loudly, her eyes flashing green. She turned around to glare at Si Nian.

“Cola... gets jealous easily.”

Si Nian laughed dryly. She hugged and coddled Cola in her arms, not daring to look at him.

Truly it was Sprite that was calm at such times, he didn't even open one eye to look at the uproar... When Cola was finally soothed to calmly sit in her embrace, only then did she lift her head to look at the clock. “It's already twelve thirty...”

Cheng Chen patted Sprite's back lightly, the dog obediently ran to the kitchen to drink water. With quick steps Sprite ran back to the door, sleeping there.

“I'll continue reading the script, you go to sleep first.”

He picked up the stack of papers again, serious to the point of looking slightly muddled.

Considering the situation, Si Nian could only surrender. "I'll go bring your pillows and quilt."

He made a noncommittal sound without even lifting his head.

If Cola didn't interfere...

Si Nian leaned her head on her hands, sitting at the table on the balcony. Even though she obviously had a lot of work emails to reply to, she had absolutely no heart to work. Thankfully, *A Beauty's Makeup* had started filming. Cheng Chen had already flown to Xin Jiang, far away in Gobi desert.

Therefore, as a young person who wanted to continue pave her way to success, she started discussing new scripts with other companies.

Basking in the sun of the late autumn, when she was about feel drowsy, Shen Wei Jue's photo suddenly popped up in her QQ.

Shen Wei Jue: Sigh, I'm about to be jealous to death thanks to your 'past incarnation'.

Si Nian: ??

Shen Wei Jue: Go and look at the Weibo that you have abandoned for a thousand years.

Si Nian: ?!

She didn't use her real name on Weibo, all her followers were readers of her novel. Other than Shen Wei Jue and her editor, there were almost no other followers who knew in real life. So for a long time, she didn't use it. After a while, she also got used to not using it.

Unexpectedly she received a blood-stimulating notification, someone mentioned (@) her.

"Ge's blood-pumping university days, who did he spent it with? @NianNian, it was this girl that guided ge read that book, whatitscalled Dreams of Red Chamber something, that was how she opened the curtains to a passionate young man's heart, even called

each other 'past reincarnation' love, this buried love *ge* had already buried until there was no longer shape. But such reunion, how many more reincarnations this buried love would have go through?"

Si Nian's happiness immediately dissolved all her sleepiness.

It was actually Lin Xin.

She didn't even give it much thought before writing a reply with a smile. Whatever she was planning for the script had already been pushed aside.

"Our first meeting in this life, you came over to the dorm to give some people snacks in the middle of the night, I thought of you as deity. Through various entanglements afterwards, our fate kept on piling. Now after n years of not meeting, we still ended up reuniting. Can this be considered as an endless loop of fate?"

In her arms, she was hugging her cat, on her feet, she was nudging the dog. The more she looked at it, the more she felt content.

Soon enough, someone also replied a short sentence.

Cheng Chen: "The script has problems, come over to Xin Jiang to discuss."

Not only did he mentioned (@) at her, he even posted it on her Weibo page.

Therefore within three minutes, she was mentioned more than three thousand times, all of them were Cheng Chen's fans. Only three person sent her private messages.

Shen Wei Jue: Oh my, your first love got jealous.

Shen Zhe: Xin Jiang welcomes you, remember to buy me *xiao long bao*, ha.

Lin Xin: Haha haha haha...

Si Nian nearly grasped at her cat's fur. She first replied Lin Xin: "How did he know of my Weibo?"

Lin Xin: Didn't you realize that your first love and I are mutual friends?

The air conditioner was blowing warm air, yet she actually felt chilled to the bone.

This time she was really done for... After thinking for a long time, she took out her phone to call Cheng Chen. She was going to ask if he really wanted her to go to Xin Jiang. It was already almost winter, all the actors were paid in millions of RMB, even if it was cold they could just bear it. But she was just being useless there, what for she had to go?

The phone was left ringing for a long time, yet he did not answer. She was about to hang up when she heard Cheng Chen's voice. "What's up?"

"... about that, what problems did the script have? I want to first hear your opinion," Si Nian said, trying to sound reasonable and polite.

"The problem isn't really big."

Si Nian quietly let out a breath of relief.

"It's best if we discuss face-to-face."

For anyone who was arguing about conditions, they would be most afraid of the word "best". The meaning of the word was very clear, it meant no further discussion necessary, that was the best solution. Therefore as a scriptwriter who seriously lacked human rights, she had no choice but to wait for Cheng Chen to hang up and book plane tickets online.

She was supposed to take the plane at four pm but upon reaching the airport, she found out that the flight was cancelled. She was arranged for a plane at an even later time.

When she reached Urumqi airport, it was 23:40. It took another three hours for her to reach Jimsar.

Tonight they were filming a night scene. When she got off the car,

they were wrapping up. Everyone was having supper together.

The weather was so cold that everyone was huddled together, surrounding a pit of fire. When Si Nian was walking over to join them, one of the assistants was already setting down a huge bowl of spicy duck-blood soup from Urumqi with a happy smile. “Si Nian *jie* bought this for us after she got off the plane.”

At three am in the morning in the biting cold, there was actually a bowl of steaming hot, fragrant duck-blood soup, who cared if it wasn't authentic? Especially when everyone was already so exhausted and cold.

Si Nian glanced at Cheng Chen who was sitting near the fire pit. Having stayed in the desert for so many days, it was inevitable that he would get somewhat tanned.

But, a slight tan also seemed to look good...

“Eh?” Shen Zhe seemed to have thought of something. “Our Director Cheng likes this the most, this is seriously coincidental.”

Si Nian fumingly glared at him.

“Look at how fragrant it is,” one of the female actors Tong Jia said. “I like spicy stuff the most. But the weather here is too dry, I'm scared of getting pimples. You guys eat, I'll go to sleep first.”

She stood up and started hugging everyone one by one, thanking them for the hard work.

When she reached Shen Zhe, he immediately buried himself in the food, ignoring her.

When she reached Cheng Chen, he was about to put down his chopsticks. He was going to tell Si Nian something but Tong Jia had already walked over to him, telling him softly, “Director, you've worked hard.” She extended her hand, about to hug him...

Dong Xiao looked so bewildered seeing the scene. Si Nian merely glanced at Cheng Chen, then immediately looked away. With a low voice, she told Dong Xiao, “You must get used to this. The cast and

crew are a family, don't you know. It's very normal, very normal."

"You've also worked hard today," Cheng Chen said indifferently. He glanced at Si Nian. "That day, didn't you say you don't quite understand the script, coincidentally the scriptwriter is here. You can discuss it with her tomorrow during lunch."

"Okay, thank you Director Cheng." With a smile, Tong Jia retrieved her hand and left.

The rest of them continued to discuss the latest rumours.

"Si Nian," Shen Zhe said, pulling a chair between him and Cheng Chen, "Come, let's discuss the script."

In the middle of the night, what was there to discuss about.

Si Nian suddenly felt depressed, her mood became very bad. She sat down and stared at the spicy duck-blood soup, it was beginning to irritate her. Just look at the colour of the pepper, just how dark it was, it definitely couldn't be fresh, there was so little blood, they even put in so much vegetables, how dark was their hearts... in conclusion, the bowl of soup irritated her.

Even Shen Zhe could tell something was amiss, he only quietly finished his food.

Cheng Chen's voice was very quiet. "Tong Jia is like that, everyone's already used to it."

Everyone else was sitting close to the fire pit, only the three of them sat further away. Even if someone was watching them talk, most of them would have thought they were discussing the script.

Si Nian made an "oh" sound but didn't say anything.

He continued, "I never hugged her, you don't misunderstand."

"I'm not misunderstanding anything." Si Nian kept on looking everywhere but him.

"I've also never hugged her," Shen Zhe interrupted, wanting to adjust the mood.

Si Nian and Cheng Chen simultaneously looked at him.

“Just pretend I never said anything,” Shen Zhe immediately shut up.

Cheng Chen cleared his throat. “Since you’re already here, tomorrow morning I’ll take you around. There’s some rather nice scenery around here.”

“Didn’t you say that tomorrow I have to discuss the script with Tong Jia?” Si Nian thoughtlessly picked up a pair of chopsticks to stir the contents of the bowl. She ate a slice of spam, it was so spicy that she immediately started coughing.

He immediately handed her a bottle of water, it was his personal thermos.

“Drink some water, eat slowly.” His voice sounded tired yet there was undeniable gentleness.

Chapter 12

Si Nian reached for the thermos, but she wasn't sure whether she should drink, so she just stared at the bottle.

"Drink, drink," Shen Zhe quietly said. "Cheng Chen is a germaphobe, it's only you that he doesn't mind. Back then I had an agitating cough, I looked all over the studio for a bottle of water but there was none. Meanwhile he was drinking water, gulp after gulp, watching as if I cough to death in front of him."

The water barely reached Si Nian's throat before she almost choked.

Because of Shen Zhe's words, her attention finally was diverted. With a low voice, she asked, "I'm curious, do you actually like men?" Shen Zhe was stunned before laughing loudly. "I really like women, 101% like women."

Si Nian pursed her lips. She stared at him, weighing his words. "Which type do you like?"

"She must be the same age as I am and able to understand what am I saying. Independent, best if she has her own career," Shen Zhe answered after careful thought, "Someone who understands me, she must be someone who can embrace me when I'm being attacked by malicious rumours."

"You're almost 30 right? You like someone your age? Shouldn't you like those tender young models or something?" Si Nian immediately felt a deep sense of respect for Shen Zhe.

But after she digested what the later half of his words, she thought that it didn't sound right. "As long as you want to, when malicious rumours come up, those people who want to hug you would probably need to line up and take a number..."

"It's not the same," Shen Zhe said smiling. Slightly bashful, he continued, "Many of my fans are still students. For their sake, I

would always try to set myself as an example. But my girlfriend will need to see my moody and imperfect side, such as when I'm shouting at someone, throwing things around, things like that."

She quietly contemplated this, and then drank another gulp of water.

This wind here was inhuman. Even though they were close to the fire pit, she was still cold. There was a sudden weight on her shoulders, Cheng Chen actually placed his overcoat on her.

Si Nian turned around to look at him, suddenly overwhelmed with nostalgia. That first love of hers brought her many sweet moments but each one of them came from his voice and his strings of words on the Internet. Her biggest regret was that they never truly got to know each other. She stared Cheng Chen, Cheng Chen too stared at her.

His overcoat was too large, she was almost buried in it. The hem was touching the ground.

Before she was about to be embarrassingly touched over the coat, Cheng Chen looked away and said with a low voice, "If you know you're coming to Xin Jiang, why didn't you wear a thicker coat?"

The feelings that was getting too close to the surface was quickly suppressed.

Si Nian twitched her nose, continuing to drink her water until none was left. "If I'm not like this, how would director have the chance to show off his attentiveness to the scriptwriter?"

Cheng Chen looked at her again. "How much longer are you going to stay mad?"

"I'm not mad?" Si Nian laughed dryly.

"I say," Shen Zhe interrupted helplessly, fishing a blood cube from the soup while sighing, "if you both dare to argue, then be daring enough to do it loudly..."

Both Cheng Chen and Si Nian stared at him.

Shen Zhe immediately put down his chopsticks. "I'm done eating."

They were filming night scenes the next day, so Cheng Chen took Si Nian out to look around.

To avoid rumours, Si Nian brought along a few staff members who she was close to, on purpose. They waited for Cheng Chen in the hotel's lobby but it was actually Tong Jia who showed up first. "I saw Director Cheng just now, he said he was going to look around. Since the scriptwriter is also going, I also decided to come along. We can discuss about the script while walking around."

Si Nian didn't say anything.

After a while, Cheng Chen showed up, walking leisurely with Shen Zhe.

When the group got onto the car, assistant scriptwriter Dong Xiao got overexcited and showered Cheng Chen with questions, asking if he knew how to go to places like the ancient city Beiting or the thousand-year Buddhist temple.

Shen Zhe immediately laughed. "Don't believe what they say online. Those historical and scenic sites sound good but when you see them, they are only ruined stones and walls. Our plan today is to walk around. Director Cheng is also taking the opportunity to go to a hot spring resort to discuss some matters."

"Is it Director Cheng's next film?" Tong Jia saw her opportunity and immediately interrupted. She looked at Cheng Chen who was in the driver seat.

Cheng Chen made an "en" sound, he didn't elaborate.

"Speaking about new films," Cheng Chen quickly said, "I suddenly remembered that one of my friends submitted his film for approval a few days ago, the title's *33mm's Romance*. It was rejected on the spot."

"Why?" Dong Xiao asked.

Si Nian found it ridiculous. Even though she thought the title sounded laden with grief, but it shouldn't be to the point that it couldn't even get pass the inspection?

A male staff laughed loudly. “The inspectors are getting more and more powerful these days, they definitely are educated.”

“Quickly, tell us,” Tong Jia urged, also curious. She tugged the male staff’s arm. “Why?”

The staff was shocked at the movement but then explained, “It’s referring to *thatmm*. You know, the *mm* that was used to prevent AIDs. I remember it’s medium size...”

Such an ambiguous explanation, everyone was quiet for a few minutes.

They laughed loudly once they realized. Even Cheng Chen was also smiling.

Si Nian stared at Cheng Chen. A thought suddenly formed in her mind. How many girlfriends did he have after her? No, that wasn’t it. She didn’t even know if he had one now...

Thanks to that lively conversation-starter, they discussed about various gossip throughout the journey. Mature topics were inevitably ambiguously flirtatious. Cheng Chen would also respond every now and then, only Si Nian played dead.

Shen Zhe repeatedly generated new conversation topics, until he brought up first love.

Wasn’t this topic too innocent?

After assistant scriptwriter Dong Xiao shared how he had an affair with his teacher, assistant director Liu Qing Qing narrated how exactly he managed to date a university junior. After everyone finished reminiscing their first loves, Shen Zhe gleefully glanced at Cheng Chen. “I met Director Cheng when I was in university, I only knew his first love was in high school. But the relevant love story, I didn’t even know any of it.”

Everyone else sported twinkling bright eyes, waiting for juicy gossip.

The car stopped at red light.

Cheng Chen braked, he was still quiet.

Ten seconds, twenty seconds, thirty seconds... only after the light turned green and everyone had gave up their hope for gossip, did he suddenly opened his mouth to speak. "It's online dating."

"Go on, go on," Shen Zhe encouraged, overjoyed. He was the only one who knew the other party in that relationship was the one sitting in the back. The feeling as if he was the only sober one among a party of drunkards, it was absolutely the best.

"Back then I was upping my in-game level, suddenly a figure wearing mini-skirt ran to me and said 'Too awesome, your name is too awesome'. Then in her second sentence she said, 'Let's get married, it'd be so flashy having a husband with your name'. I remembered that the character she was using was seldom used by people in that server. The character wore a blue mini-skirt, her hair was made up like a servant's, and she had two cloisonné bowls on her head."

Si Nian wanted to run her head into the glass window and die.

Shen Zhe coughed. "Just exactly what name did you use?"

"Jesus."

Dong Xiao made a long stretch of "oh" sound. "So your wife's name would be Jesus's Wife... the best combination of Chinese and Western elements."

Shen Zhe couldn't resist throwing Si Nian a bewildered look. "Scriptwriter, you didn't dream of it, did you. Our Director Cheng actually had such a silly first love."

Si Nian gritted her teeth, answering, "Yes."

Well, alright, she was the one who made the first love. She stared at the scenery zooming past outside, thinking about the beginning. Back then she was really in awe of his screen name, she didn't expect him to really agree. That was how they got married, and they would even talk everyday thanks to that...

"To be honest, in the beginning, she heard that I was from a school attached to Peking University, a sixth year at that," Cheng Chen continued his story in a leisurely pace, "Naturally she would make me

do all her second year questions. She didn't understand it when I explain her with in-game chat, so we added each other's QQ."

"Therefore, from talking about exams, you two start talking about your lives and dreams?" Tong Jia interrupted.

"She never spoke to me about life and dreams, she only complained how this teacher is too silly, how that teacher is biased, things like that."

The car was close to its destination.

"She was bad at studying, I once wondered if she would be able to graduate."

Si Nian watched in dismay as the scenery stopped in motion, as the car stopped.

So, that was how he perceived her.

"What happened next?" No one got down from the car. The conversation was going too great, it was too pure and too interesting.

"There was no 'next'." Cheng Chen pulled out the car keys, about to get down.

"There's no ending?" Dong Xiao was regretful hearing that.

"I heard that when Director Cheng got into the arts academy, you got first place for cultural studies." As a junior at the same academy, Tong Jia felt proud of such fact. "That little girl would definitely end up going to some vocational academy, she would not have any achievement. Perhaps when Director Cheng and her meet again, she would already be holding her child's hand, working at a little store, handing him his change..."

Si Nian rolled her eyes.

How ignorant. Running stores were actually profitable business. Just pick any bubble tea store in Nanking West Road, their clean profit every month would be more than hundred million yuan.

To be honest, once her script changed hands, it was already at the mercy of the director.

She totally couldn't see the point of her coming.

Most of them were too drowsy after lunch and went to sleep inside the resort rooms. Only then Cheng Chen called her into his room... to idly talk.

Si Nian could still hear how he described her earlier, she simply couldn't regather her spirit.

"What are you thinking about? You look so out of it." He sat down.

Both of her hands were gripping the mug. "Thinking about how you said I couldn't graduate."

"Didn't you graduate?"

"But you thought that I couldn't graduate."

"... okay, I admit I made the wrong assumption."

Si Nian looked at him smugly. "Tomorrow I'm booking a ticket to go back to Shanghai."

Cheng Chen lowered his head, looking at her. He was quiet for a moment before saying, "I remember back then, I would get you mad at least once a day and then spend half an hour to coax you. After so, so many years... you still like to sulk."

There were traces of laughter in his words, making her heart pound.

She was actually not sulking at all. She was just considering how she could save time and accept a few more script-writing proposals... but once Cheng Chen mentioned the past, she was tongue-tied, not knowing what to say.

Cheng Chen suddenly took the mug out of her hands, placing it on the bedside table.

Si Nian lifted her head, flabbergasted. She watched him as he stood up, staring at her.

Whenever they argued in the past, he would get so mad that he would say this to her: "If you're standing in front of me right now..." Afterwards he would swallow whatever he was going to say next and sulk on the phone.

Therefore, now she was truly in front of him.

Cheng Chen, what would you do?

He gently touched her face with the back of his hand, almost barely at all. "Still angry?"

Si Nian could feel all the blood rushing upwards, she don't feel quite... clear-headed.

A voice interrupted behind the door. "Director Cheng, the PR and investment companies..." Li Qing Qing suddenly stopped. With a slam, the door was closed again.

Si Nian jumped up from the bed, close to tears. "Why didn't you close the door..."

Chapter 13

“I forgot,” Cheng Chen helplessly replied. “Where did the conversation stopped at?”

“...at that part about me going back to Shanghai.”

Perhaps it wasn't where the conversation stopped, but where the action stopped?

He retreated, sitting on the sofa. “Why are you going back?”

Si Nian was still deep in thought about what happened earlier. She carelessly answered, “For the script, you're also one of the creators. If you have any problem, you can just tell me over the phone, it's not as if you need me to change the script completely.”

While she was still talking, Cheng Chen was already pulling onto her hand with a fair amount of strength, to pull her into him.

Si Nian shot him a flabbergasted look. *Cheng Chen, what are you trying to do?*

“I think, it's not good like this.”

If you want to kiss, just kiss. If you don't want to kiss, don't keep on groping around...

You can't be wanting to develop an ambiguous relationship with me?

Si Nian felt her temper rising and wanted to take back her hand. But Cheng Chen's grasp on her hand was firm. He told her, “Come here.”

“First tell me what you want to do.”

“Can't you tell what I want to do?”

Cheng Chen was also frustrated enough to be rubbing his temples.

The both of them remained in that hand-tugging motion, staring at

each other.

It was a sudden, mutually hostile situation...

When Si Nian was still contemplating whether to pull her hand away or continue arguing with him, he had already gave her hand a hard tug and pulled her into his arms. It was so sudden that there was no suspense at all.

Her body was forced into an awkward position, but in a moment it was enveloped in a hug...

She could feel him breathing, and as if sensing her awkward position, he quickly pulled her up to sit on his lap.

His stature was tall, her size was small. Naturally that position made it seemed like he was cradling her.

“Si Nian?”

She didn't reply. She didn't even dare to make a single movement.

All of her anger from earlier was gradually retreating, not even a hint of temper was left. His heartbeat also appeared to be erratic. Sensing that, Si Nian had to bite her lip lightly to prevent herself from smiling too much.

“Continue?” He lowered his head to look at her.

Si Nian pursed her lips and was silent for a long time. In the end, she stared at him and asked, “Does this mean you want us to get back together?”

With his eyebrows slightly knitted, he leaned down to whisper in her ears. “Did we... ever agreed to break up?”

With just one play of words, without even batting an eyelid, he managed to make so many years of separation between them fade into nothingness.

She stared into his eyes, mouth slightly opened as if she wanted to say something but she couldn't find the words. Her heartbeat was erratic and furious. She heard people walking outside the door,

discussing something illegible, and remembered that the door was still unlocked. She opened her mouth wanting to remind Cheng Chen but his lips had already met hers, pulling her into a deeper kiss.

His tongue slipped in. There was a dense smell of smoke.

Si Nian frowned, she didn't smoke. She was even somewhat allergic to smoke. When he was still in school, he never once smoked. How was it that since their reunion after so many years, his cigarette never once left his hand? How many more unfamiliar habits had he developed since those years?

"Is it that you don't like the smell?" he asked, stopping mid-kiss.

If it wasn't Cheng Chen.

If it wasn't Cheng Chen, she would reject a smoking man without thought.

But yet, who was it but not Cheng Chen.

For so many years, she never once thought of anyone else romantically.

By the time he ended up carrying her to bed, both their gazes were already scalding hot.

Si Nian found some scraps of rationality left and quietly said, "Cheng Chen, it's broad daylight..." He made an "oh" sound, letting her go. He left to pull the curtains shut and swiftly returned to bed. She desperately held onto the quilt, keeping herself bundled up and refusing to let him open up the quilt.

The room was dark, there was barely any light at all. But his eyes were bright as he quietly stared at Si Nian whose face was flushed red.

Si Nian could barely breathe under his intense gaze, hands tugging at the quilt. She desperately tried to reason with him, to not rush into things. "Isn't there a lot of people waiting for you..."

He looked at his watch. "Not urgent."

He took the watch off, and then reached to untie her.

“Back then when I couldn’t find you,” he said, staring at her, “I was very upset. You like to sulk so I thought you would just disappear for a few days to make me anxious. I didn’t expect that I wouldn’t be able to find you for an entire month.”

Si Nian pursed her lips, her heart heavy with regret.

“I wanted to get drunk to forget you but unluckily the beer that I bought was fake. Thankfully someone discovered me and sent me to the hospital. It was a very difficult time for me, I ended up repeating the school year.”

He lifted the quilt and reached for her, pulling her into his embrace. His lips curved into a smile, silently laughing for a moment. “Say, I’m already almost thirty, why is that every time I’m in front of you, I can still remember my teen years that vividly?”

“What happened next?” she asked. Even though it was obviously in the past, she still felt anxious for him.

For so many years since their separation, it was just an endless stretch of blankness. She knew about him when he finally gained some fame, she read those routine interviews about him. But he never once mentioned his school days, as if it was a great taboo.

“Next?” He sounded as if he was reminiscing.

Next, there was no next.

There was only a kiss that started everything.

She closed her eyes tightly, allowing him to do as he pleased, but in the end she could no longer bear it. Her eyes were wet from tears, she finally opened them to say, “I can’t, it hurts...”

“Try again?”

“No, no, I can’t, it hurts so bad...”

Si Nian’s tears began to overflow.

Cheng Chen no longer dared to give it another try and used his

fingers to wipe away her tears. The tears were too much that he ended up using a napkin. Si Nian bit on his arm with vengeance. Only after she was satisfied, she asked, “Do you even know how to do this?”

“Theoretically I’m very experienced,” Cheng Chen said, hands still busy with wiping away her tears, “I directed some bed scenes before...”

Her eyes opened wide, heart beating wildly. “For so many years, you never had a girlfriend?”

Cheng Chen let out a sigh. “If I really did have one, would you still be here?”

She suddenly became quiet. “Not even friends with benefits?”

Only after he wiped the remaining last tear, she wriggled under the quilt, hugging his waist tightly. His body was scalding hot to the touch. A sudden urge to tease him came up, so she said, “Director Cheng, how pitiful you are, being a virgin for so many years...”

Before she could finish her teasing, Cheng Chen had already pulled her under the quilt. “I take that you’re no longer in pain?”

“Pain...”

By the time they were having dinner, her eyes were still swollen. Now and then she would glare at Cheng Chen with resentment.

The seating arrangement was troublesome. She was sitting on Cheng Chen’s right, another producer was supposed to be sitting on his left. But Tong Jia managed to steal that spot. From the moment she sat down, she quickly found a serious topic to seek guidance from Cheng Chen. When she was laughing, she would even shoot Si Nian a meaningful glance.

When the ‘Big Plate’ Chicken dish was served, Cheng Chen first gave Si Nian some. Si Nian fiddled with the piece of chicken with her chopsticks. “There’s skin.”

Cheng Chen picked up that piece of chicken into his own bowl. After

skinning it, only did he returned the piece to her. She ate a bite of it then put it down. "Too much fat."

He quietly placed a slice of potato in her bowl.

"Too greasy."

Cheng Chen didn't say a single word. He placed some of the Xinjiang's popular spicy cabbage dish into her bowl.

Tong Jia was the kind of person who would put in the more effort when there were obstacles. She smiled at Si Nian and said, "Scriptwriter, is it that you're not used to Xinjiang's taste? The 'Big Plate' Chicken tastes exactly like that, once you get used to it, you'll find it very flavourful."

"It's so-so," Si Nian replied. She ate some of her rice, then looked at Cheng Chen. "Do you like Xinjiang's taste?"

"I don't like it," Cheng Chen said. Pausing for a moment, he added, "I really don't like it."

Shen Zhe, who was drinking beer, couldn't stop himself spitting from laughter.

Even when they left the restaurant and had gone inside the elevator, he was still laughing. He patted Cheng Chen's shoulder and said, "Director Cheng, I can't sleep. Why don't I go to your room tonight and we'll have a long talk?"

Cheng Chen pressed the button for third floor. "Tonight I'm having someone over."

The entire elevator was quiet. Tong Jia who had been noisily chattering the entire night finally closed her mouth. When the elevator stopped at the third floor, there was a *ding* sound. Everyone watched as Cheng Chen walked out.

He then turned around. "Si Nian?"

Chapter 14

Si Nian subconsciously took a step backwards.

Her self-preservation instinct kicked in. “Director Cheng... let’s discuss the script tomorrow?”

Burying one’s head in the sand, that idiom? This was it.

Cheng Chen frowned a little, saying nothing.

Under the watchful eyes of everyone, both of them were rooted in their spots. In the end she surrendered, forcing herself to walk out of the elevator.

After the elevator doors were closed tightly, she stared at him. She asked hesitatingly, “You can’t be expecting me to sleep in your room tonight?”

He was still silent, he merely fished out the hotel key and walked out of the elevator lobby.

The more he was quiet, the more anxious her heart became.

Could he really be angry? Just now she saw that Tong Jia was sticking so close to him, she might as well be climbing on him. She just wanted to sulk a little... the Great Director Cheng couldn’t be this petty, could he?

Only when Cheng Chen opened the door, only did she clear her throat, wanting to say something. Unexpectedly he turned around to embrace her, asking, “Continue?”

With his free hand, he closed the door and then carried her to the bed.

I knew it...

Hugging his neck, Si Nian kindly reminded him, “Director Cheng, you still have work tomorrow...”

“It doesn’t matter.”

Cheng Chen lightly planted a kiss on her, gently placing her on the bed.

Si Nian observed his expression and then sighed. Resigned, she said, “Let’s begin then, I know you definitely won’t give up until you succeed.”

Cheng Chen stared at her with mirth. “Just now, who was the one who said to try again?”

She was just saying that to make him retreat, but obviously that tactic didn’t work on him.

Remembering their afternoon, her entire face was crumpled in pain. Even Cheng Chen couldn’t refrain from smiling. “Si Nian?” “Hurry, hurry,” she had said, letting out a breath, “while I still have the courage.”

He sat down on the edge of the bed. “Were you jealous just now?”

“Just a little... did I overdo it?”

“It’s okay.” His voice was low. “When women occasionally express their jealousy, it’s pretty cute. If it’s a woman who I don’t like, I will be very disgusted.”

Si Nian stared at him, her heart felt as soft as marshmallows.

He had once said similar words to her many years ago.

She remembered back then, there were many little girls chasing after him in the game. She would often get so angry that she would throw away all his equipment, sell off their house, and then run off to an isolated corner of the game to sulk. There were a lot of people who ridiculed her for making such a big fuss but Cheng Chen always had an even temper. He would look for her in all corners of the game without a word of complain.

One time she was unable to hold it in and asked him over the phone, “Don’t you think that I’m overdoing it?”

Back then he was suffering from a cold. He was smiling when he said that sometimes when girls were jealous, it can be pretty adorable.

She was touched and she leaned closer to him. She hugged his waist, quietly contemplating her words. She finally said, "Say, do you think you owed me a debt in your last life? After so long, I still manage to meet you?"

Cheng Chen made an "en" sound, hugging her close. "I think so."

His laughter was gentler than usual. Si Nian peered at him, gently saying, "Did you know that your smiling face is very good-looking? But sadly when you're working, you seldom smile."

"Is it?"

He lowered his head, slowly closing into her.

So close that she can see herself reflected in his eyes.

"No, I can't, I can't..." Si Nian's tears began to overflow.

Cheng Chen was so frantic from her tears that he clumsily held onto her. Only after coaxing her gently for a long time, Si Nian quieted down. In a timid voice, she said, "Say, do you think I'm built differently? I never heard that it would hurt this much..."

Cheng Chen wiped away her tears with regained calmness. "Since it's your first time, it's very normal."

Si Nian guiltily looked at Cheng Chen. Contemplating for a long time, she finally said, "Why don't you... go to the bathroom?"

"... go to sleep."

Cheng Chen turned off all the lights and then hold her tightly in his embrace.

After a while, the sound of breathing beside her ears began to calm. He must be asleep.

Si Nian hesitated for a moment before grabbing her phone to send Shen Wei Jue a text. The reply was almost immediate: "Aren't you in

your marital bed?”

Si Nian almost bit her tongue. “How did you know?”

Shen Wei Jue: “My idol told me. Just now he called me to gossip.”

She didn’t know whether to cry or laugh. When she was still thinking how to respond, Shen Wei Jue had already sent her another text. “Did you succeed?”

Si Nian: “Not yet...”

Shen Wei Jue: “It couldn’t be, could it? Did you simply had a talk under the quilt? You’re both at marriage age, what innocence are you guys trying to fake?”

Si Nian: “What marriage age...”

Shen Wei Jue: “It’s true that your chest is a little small, perhaps he lost interest after seeing you. Didn’t I say, you should be eating more...”

Si Nian: “What... it’s he who doesn’t know how to do it!”

Shen Wei Jue: “... do you think this is doing a maths question? All men know how to do this!”

Si Nian quietly thought about this for a moment, then slipped the phone under the pillow. She turned over and shook Cheng Chen awake.

“What’s wrong?” His voice was thick of sleep, he was still half awake.

“Continue?”

Cheng Chen was quiet, neither did he move.

He went back to sleep...

Si Nian lightly turned under the quilt. When she was about to give up completely, an arm firmly embraced her waist. He was no longer as accommodating as he was in their previous tries.

In the dark, her entire body was flushed with heat. She hugged him nervously. “Were you pretending... weren’t you not able to do it earlier?” Cheng Chen laughed. “I’m afraid that you’ll be hurt. The moment you said it hurts, I stopped immediately.”

Now, he was no longer afraid?

He helplessly tried to distract her, saying in a quiet voice, “I think if I don’t finish this thoroughly, you won’t let me sleep in these few days...”

His tongue gently probed hers, whatever words were left unsaid. His hand propped her neck, adjusting the angle of their kiss, not giving her a chance to respond.

“Si Nian?”

She was left completely deprived of energy, her heart still furiously beating to the point she was beginning to feel numb. After Cheng Chen called her name again, she gritted her teeth and made a sound of acknowledgment. She then kicked him softly in the leg.

How sly, he actually pretended he didn’t know how to do it...

“Do you want to take a bath?” He gently stroked her hair. “I’ll carry you there?”

“... Don’t want to.” She just wanted to go to bed and sleep to death.

“Then I’ll go?” Cheng Chen still humoured her good-naturedly. “It’s almost five. I’m starting work at six. If you want to go back to Shanghai, I’ll have my assistant book you a ticket for tomorrow.”

Si Nian made an “en” sound, hugging his waist.

Chapter 15

When Si Nian returned to her own room, her entire body was aching all over. She went straight to bed, sleeping late into the night.

Only when the doorbell rang, did she wake up in a daze. She turned around and then went back to bed, hugging her quilt.

Her phone rang, vibrated, rang, and then vibrated again...

Si Nian finally fumbled for her phone, placing it on the side of her face. "Hello..."

"Open the door."

"Si Nian?"

Hugging the phone, she fell asleep again.

It was not until that she sensed the entire room was illuminated and there was a faint smell of food that she woke up with a sharp pain. Even so, she couldn't find the strength to even move a single muscle in her body. Cheng Chen wrapped her in the quilt and carried her. Si Nian placed her chin on his shoulder, nose wrinkling as she commented, "How smelly."

There was a scorched, burning smell, and that smell of sandy soil. In conclusion, it smelled completely repulsive.

"I'm afraid you'll be hungry, so I came over without washing up." Cheng Chen propped her up with a pillow. He took off his outerwear, threw it on the sofa, and then went into the bathroom.

The sound of water flowing quickly stopped.

He came out with clean face and hands.

Si Nian was finally almost completely conscious. "How did you come in..."

"I handed the hotel my ID and told them I'm your husband."

He pulled another chair to sit next to her, placing the food container on the table and arranging them with care. Si Nian watched as he opened all the containers, watched as he took out a pair of disposable chopsticks for her, watched as he handed them to her.

She muttered, "... and they believed you like that?"

Cheng Chen didn't reply.

The hair on near his temples was still wet. He looked visibly exhausted.

When their eyes met, Si Nian looked away instantly. She didn't dare to look up, as if she was some young, newly married wife. Taking the chopsticks from him, she pretended to be calm. "How can the people at this hotel be so irresponsible and let you in just because you gave them your ID... what if something happens to me?"

He laughed a little. "It's the celebrity effect."

"But you're not a celebrity. A director that can be recognised by the public, I think it's probably only people like Ang Lee, Tsui Hark, and Zhang Yimou..."

Cheng Chen took off his glasses, placing them on the bedside table. He closed his eyes and massaged his temples. "Shen Zhe is there, he can settle any married and unmarried men and women."

Shen Zhe?

Si Nian looked at him with a flabbergasted expression.

Did he said those words in front of Shen Zhe?

... they just got back together recently, isn't this moving too fast?

Cheng Chen seemed not to have noticed her reaction. He only leaned on the headboard, eyes firmly shut. He quietly said, "Eat quickly, the food is almost cold."

Si Nian made an "en" sound. Sitting on the bed, she starting eating the dishes he brought her.

It was pretty wasteful, there was no way she could finish everything.

When she turned around to ask if he wanted to eat as well, she realized that he was already asleep. Leaning on the headboard, his face looked worn and tired. She bit on her chopsticks, watching him look so pathetic, she suddenly felt very touched. She was unfathomably moved by that scene, overwhelmed by her own feelings.

She quickly finished eating and quietly got off the bed to clean up. Then she climbed up into bed, careful not to wake him, and helped him remove his shirt. Cheng Chen was a light sleeper but because he knew it was Si Nian, he didn't open his eyes and allowed her to do whatever she wanted.

Si Nian helped him off his shirt and placed it on the sofa. She hesitated when she saw his pants. *Take off, or don't take off?*

"Let me do it myself," Cheng Chen said, his voice low. He started undoing his belt.

Si Nian hurriedly turned off the lights and climbed under the quilt.

She could sense Cheng Chen removing his pants and climbed into bed with her. She began to get nervous but all he did was hugging her from behind, kissing her shoulder. He quickly fell back asleep.

Si Nian had slept for an entire day, she was completely wide awake.

Lying in his arms, she thought for a long time about the script for her next film, contemplating this and that, before slowly falling asleep.

The next day, he also left early.

Cheng Chen's assistant booked her an afternoon ticket. Before leaving the hotel, she sent him a text. Only after she reached the airport and about to board, did he called her. "I was busy earlier, have you reached the airport?"

Si Nian made an "en" sound, handing over her boarding pass to the inspector. "I'm about to board the plane."

"Si Nian." He called her name.

Si Nian walked into the air bridge, patiently waiting for him to

continue.

“Director?” She heard Liu Qing Qing’s voice from the other end.

Cheng Chen made an “en” sound. “Tong Jia needs to make a public appearance the day after tomorrow, her entertainment company has already requested leave...” The conversation seemed to go on and on. Cheng Chen listened patiently, while Si Nian was close to fuming waiting for it to end.

When she found her seat and settled down, Liu Qing Qing finally ended her longwinded speech.

But the plane was going off soon.

“Sprite is filming in Beijing,” Cheng Chen suddenly said, “In a few days my friend will bring him over to Hongqiao Airport. Help me bring him home, okay?”

Si Nian made a sound of acknowledgment.

The air hostess was already walking over, reminding Si Nian to turn off her phone.

Cheng Chen seemed to have heard that and quickly added, “I will text you the details.”

Si Nian made another “en” sound. “Remember to text me your friend’s number as well.”

Under the air hostess’s watchful eye, she finally gave up and hurriedly ended the call.

To pick up Sprite, Si Nian called Shen Wei Jue the same day to request a drive to the airport. Sitting on the passenger seat, Si Nian gently scratched Cola’s chin, causing the cat to close her eyes with contentment and lean into Si Nian’s palm. While driving, Shen Wei Jue gleefully said, “A director’s dog is simply different, he can even guest star in films.”

“Appearing in films is a kind of suffering,” Si Nian replied, frowning, “Even a human is worked like a dog, what would happen to an actual dog?”

“If you put it that way, actors truly have it harder than us.”

“Much harder,” Si Nian agreed. “If I have any children in the future, I would definitely prohibit them from being actors, they will have to wake up early and sleep late to work. No matter how popular they are, they still have to cater to others’ mood, there’s seriously nothing good about being actors.”

Shen Wei Jue was about to reply but her phone suddenly rang.

She slipped on her earphones, listening for a moment. She immediately replied, “Civil or criminal case?” “Did the person die?” “Dead? That’s good!” Si Nian quietly stared at her...

It was obviously a work-related call. She said, “I know you’re a legal programme reporter... but you don’t have to be so cold-blooded, do you?” She shivered a little. “You should change your programme, you’re close to being a psychopath...”

Shen Wei Jue stared at her, eyes wide. “I’m a dainty, feminine woman. How am I cold-blooded?”

Si Nian snorted, can’t be bothered to argue with her.

When they picked up Sprite, Si Nian was overwhelmed with heartache.

Sprite had beautiful coat of fur but he looked exactly like Cheng Chen that night, worn and tired. Furthermore he was kept in a cage, he looked nervous. Only when he saw Si Nian, did he started shaking his tail. His eyes were pitifully watery.

Si Nian originally planned to have lunch with Shen Wei Jue but upon seeing Sprite in such a state, she no longer had the mood. They bought takeaway and went home. Shen Wei Jue sat in the living room, gorging on the food, while she bathed Sprite in the bathroom. When her hands were covered in foam, Cola came in with her phone. The phone was vibrating, Cheng Chen’s name was flashed across the screen.

Si Nian wiped her hands clean, pressed ‘answer’. Cheng Chen’s voice was a little unclear. “Did you pick him up?”

“En.” She lightly nudged Sprite and the dog obediently jumped into the bath tub. “Which company did you lend Sprite to? They’re completely awful, I think they didn’t even give him a bath.” Cheng Chen laughed. “They’re filming outdoors. Humans don’t even have the privilege to bath, what more with dogs.”

“If you saw him, you’ll definitely understand my heartache,” she said. She poured water all over Sprite, cleaning him off the bubbles. Seeing Sprite not opening his eyes, she immediately told Cheng Chen, “I think the foam got into his eyes. I’ll call you later.”

She hung up as soon as she said those words. She soaked her towel in water and cleaned Sprite’s face.

When she was about to change a new towel for Sprite, she saw someone leaning on the doorframe, watching her.

Cheng Chen was rubbing his eyes with the sleeve of his shirt, smiling at her without saying thing. He didn’t even remove his outerwear yet.

Dumbstruck, she stared at him, not knowing what to say.

“I took leave,” he said.

Si Nian lifted the corners of her lips, “En.”

It was actually only one week since they last met.

“One of the cast left for a publicity event, so I came back,” he said, walking over to Si Nian. “I’m not going to be here for long, only a day.” She hugged his neck, laughing softly. “If it’s just one day, why come back?”

He said nothing, placing Si Nian on top of the marble counter. Leaning in, he placed his face close to hers, touching slightly.

She evaded him, reminding him with a quiet voice. “Shen Wei Jue is still in the living room, be more sensitive.”

“She left after opening the door for me.”

Si Nian looked at him with a flabbergasted expression.

What a miracle, how concentrated as she while cleaning Sprite that she didn't realize the person in her house was replaced by another.

Since it was just him and her, she no longer put up appearances and planted a gentle kiss on him. "Why are you also smelly, exactly like Sprite."

Cheng Chen smiled at her. "Why don't I wash up first?"

"No," she said, glancing at Sprite who was staring at the both of them. "I want to finish washing up Sprite or else he'll catch a cold. Wait another ten minutes..." As if remembering something, she turned to look at him. "Did you bring a change of clothes? I don't have any of your clothes here. Why don't I buy some while you're in the bath?"

While talking, she kept on thinking about the shopping mall in her area.

Then she heard him cough once.

She looked at him. "What's wrong?"

"When I was in university, I rented a room nearby and there was no heater. I kept on remembering you saying you would spend your winter reading romance novels near the heater. Once you read, you would read until late into the night," he said, saying things of no relevance. "Back then there were a lot of girls who wanted to date me. Even though they were all from theatre department, they were still girls, so they would still try to look reserved. When I look at them, I would always remember that the first time you called me, you called me 'hubby'..."

Si Nian felt her heart soften and she couldn't respond.

He caressed her cheek. "I was a little afraid these few days, I kept on wondering if I met someone decent and got together with her, would I regret when I met you?"

"Would you? Who knows, maybe you would find someone better." Si Nian could only say words that didn't at all reflect her true feelings, but deep down she was afraid he would agree with her.

“I would.” Cheng Chen suddenly laughed. “When I first met you, I was still a poor student. I don’t have a credit card, I don’t even have a phone. I can only call you on the public phone. Other than mailing you snacks occasionally, I couldn’t buy you anything. During Valentine’s Day, I could only talk to you for three hours, talking to you and trying to make you happy. I can’t buy a car, I can’t buy a house, I can’t even buy the cat you like. Thinking about it, other than having good grades, there’s nothing good about me...”

Si Nian stared at him, a little stunned. She wanted to say something but kept quiet.

His voice had traces of exhaustion but was still gentle and clear.

He sounded exactly like he did so long ago, in the beginning of the beginning.

She was leaning near the phone, waiting for his first phone call and voice. Back then he had just finished his final exams, it was also the day of the fourth month anniversary since they first met. They promised to talk on the phone that day, to hear each other’s voices.

She could still remember now, how nervous she was, how erratic her heartbeat was. It was only after a long time that she managed to say the words “hello”.

Yet it was his voice, accompanied with sounds of traffic in the background, calling her name.

“Si Nian, also *si nian* (longing).”

Sprite could no longer take it. Jumping out from the tub, he stared at the two person staring at each other with much confusion.

Because of the heat from the bathroom, Cheng Chen’s glasses were fogged. He took them down. His eyes were as dark and clear as the night, having said all those words that he kept buried.

“The person who I loved back then, and also the person who loved me, in this lifetime there is only you.”

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