

His Genius Wife Is A Superstar #Chapter 31 - Pursuit Of Knowledge - Read His Genius Wife Is A Superstar Chapter 31 - Pursuit Of Knowledge

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"How to know if you're feeling horny," Jin Liwei read aloud in English. His accent sounded a bit American. "Number 1: You fantasize about the person you're into."

He glanced down at Iris. "Do you fantasize about me?" he asked in Mandarin.

"No."

Displeased by her quick answer, he scowled. However, he continued reading aloud. Most of the points were very general. Jin Liwei thought that these should be considered as common sense, so why did the girl look so confused earlier?

"Number 7...uh..." He coughed. "Uhm."

Iris read it aloud herself. "Number 7: Your vagina is tingling."

Jin Liwei's eyebrows rose in surprise. This girl was becoming more and more mysterious. She actually spoke English with a British accent.

The investigation results he ordered about her reported that she only spoke passable English with the usual Chinese accent. Her English marks at school were also too tragic to even look at.

So what happened? Was she just acting then?

It was at this moment that her assistant returned. "Boss, lunch will be ready shortly."

"Dom, you're right on time. How does one know when one's vagina is tingling? Do you know how it feels?"

"Ah? Boss, how would I know? I don't have a vagina. Do you want me to ask Grandma Yi Mei or some of the married maids?"

"Yes."

"Right away, boss!"

"Wait! What are you two doing?" Jin Liwei couldn't believe them. "Aren't you embarrassed?"

Iris looked at him like he was an idiot. "Why should I feel embarrassed in the pursuit of knowledge? Wise people don't pretend to know everything. When they don't know something, they aren't embarrassed to ask questions."

Jin Liwei almost choked hearing her answer.

This was pursuit of knowledge?

His mouth opened and closed, but no words came out.

"Pft! Bahahaha!" Dom couldn't stop himself. He doubled over, laughing loudly while holding his abdomen.

Jin Liwei glared at him.

Dom tried so hard to stop his laughter. He could feel Jin Liwei's murderous intent directed at him. But it was just too funny! The famed Jin Liwei didn't know how to deal with his boss' straightforwardness. As expected of his boss!

Even Dom himself was surprised by his boss' brutal honesty when he started working for her. But now he was used to it and even became influenced by her. For him, this was normal now.

She ignored them and continued to read the last point aloud perfectly in English. "Number 8: Your vagina becomes wet...huh?"

Maybe she really felt horny when Jin Liwei kissed her earlier? She wondered, feeling the slight dampness between her thighs.

"Hm? What's wrong? Are you wet? Did I make you wet?" he teased, his voice husky.

"Yes," she admitted as she continued to read the article in silence. She didn't find anything wrong in being honest with him. She had no idea that her honesty would affect him so much.

He inhaled sharply, his eyes darkening. His breath quickened. He leaned down close to her ear and whispered, "Be careful with your words, Long Xiulan. You might unknowingly release a beast that you can't control."

"What are you talking about?" She turned her head to him. Seeing the intense expression on his face, she instinctively moved her torso away from him.

He was tempted to kiss her senseless again.

"Young Miss, Mr. Jin. Lunch is ready. Please follow me." Yi Mei, now recovered from her earlier shock, called them as she returned from the kitchen.

Jin Liwei straightened up. His face regained its usual cold expression, but his eyes couldn't disguise the lust he was feeling.

Iris released a breath of relief. "Yi Mei, please get the first aid kit and treat Mr. Jin's lip first."

"Yes, Young Miss. Please wait."

Moments later, Yi Mei returned with the first aid kit.

Jin Liwei turned to Iris. "You treat me."

She gave him a side eye. "I don't know how. Yi Mei, go ahead."

"Mr. Jin, please stay still." Yi Mei looked like a butcher about to slaughter a mighty bull for premium beef.

Dom snickered. Jin Liwei shot him a deadly look. Dom immediately shut up, but Iris glared at Jin Liwei instead.

Dom was her assistant. What was the damn arrogant man glaring at her assistant for?

Yi Mei opened the first aid kit, used sanitizer to clean her hands before disinfecting and treating Jin Liwei's wound.

He stiffened at the stinging pain, but otherwise stayed unmoving; his face a mask of cold indifference.

Chapter 32 - Give Me Your Number

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Yi Mei made sure to press hard on the man's cut. How dare he eat her Young Miss' tofu in her own home? If Yi Mei was not mistaken, Jin Liwei was already in his thirties.

The Young Miss was barely in her twenties, only recently leaving her teenage years, and this old man wanted to lay his lusty paws on her? An old cow eating young grass! What a villain! The Young Miss was too gentle, only leaving a small cut on his lip. She should have bitten this evil man's tongue off!

He might be the most powerful man in the country's business world, but to the old housekeeper's eyes, Jin Liwei was just a lustful brat who set his lusty eyes on her innocent Young Miss. Yi Mei roughly applied a small bandage on the man's injury.

Jin Liwei couldn't help but wince a bit, but his pride wouldn't allow him to make a sound or complain. He looked sharply at the old housekeeper, but the housekeeper quickly rearranged the first aid kit and stood up, not meeting his eyes.

"Thank you, Yi Mei," Iris said.

"At your service, Young Miss."

"Let's go to lunch." Iris stood up.

Everyone followed the housekeeper.

The three—Iris, Jin Liwei and Dom—ate lunch together. Poor Dom felt like the brightest light bulb. If murderous intent could kill, he would be dead so many times already.

Although Jin Liwei didn't show much expression on his face, Dom was also a man so he could definitely sense that Jin Liwei wanted him to leave the two alone together. He didn't know whether to laugh or cry. What could he do? His boss wanted him to eat with them.

They enjoyed a simple yet hearty meal of roasted Peking duck and Ma Po tofu as the main dishes. Jin Liwei had not eaten such a common meal for a long time. The personal chef he hired to cook for him at home ensured that he always had high class, five-star worthy meals every single day. And as the head of the country's number one company, people would always clamour to serve him similar high class dishes during business meals, hoping to impress him and gain advantageous deals with Jin Corporation.

Eating traditional Chinese cuisine like this was not bad at all. It reminded him of the family dinners during his childhood. Now everything was so formal that it was stifling.

He enjoyed eating a meal for the first time in a long time. Not to mention that he had a mysterious and intriguing beauty to admire beside him as he ate. This felt good.

The two men ate several servings, looking like they were inhaling all the food.

As they ate, Jin Liwei once again tried to persuade Iris to accept his offer to hire her for her detailed and comprehensive reports. She didn't want to waste time arguing with him anymore, so she reluctantly agreed.

Jin Liwei was immediately in a great mood.

After lunch, Jin Liwei was ready to leave, carrying a box full of sponge cakes.

"Xiulan, give me your personal phone number."

Iris narrowed her eyes. The arrogant man now dropped her surname?

"No need, Mr. Jin. You can contact me anytime via e-mail. You also seem to have my assistant's phone number already. You can reach me through him."

"No. I want your own phone number," he insisted. "I'm not leaving until you give it to me."

No matter how Jin Liwei tried to find her personal phone number, he couldn't. Iris made sure to conceal it.

Jin Liwei turned to her assistant, threatening him with a look.

"Her number is..." Dom immediately recited his boss' number.

"Got it." Jin Liwei instantly memorized it. He was very pleased.

Iris was taken aback. She glared at her traitor of an assistant. "Dom! Do you want to get fired?!"

"Ehe. Sorry, boss. I won't do it again. Ah! My stomach suddenly hurts. I need to run to the washroom! See you later, boss! And have a good day, Mr. Jin! Bye!" The traitor ran away.

"You..." She could only sigh.

Iris had no choice but to send off Jin Liwei to the private elevator herself. The two stood in front of the elevator door looking at each other.

"Xiulan, you must answer my calls. If you don't, I'll come here again."

She glared at him.

"Xiulan."

"Fine." She inwardly harrumphed.

"And good luck on the release of your comeback album. I'm looking forward to it."

Her eyes softened. "Thank you."

"Take care of your health. Don't push yourself too hard."

"Yes. Thanks."

"I'll leave now."

"Okay."

They looked at each other.

Jin Liwei pulled her into his arms and kissed her once again. Hard.

Before she could react, he already released her.

She was dazed and breathless.

"Goodbye, Xiulan. I'll call you."

He stepped inside the elevator and the door closed behind him.

Chapter 33 - Drastic Change In Style

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By the second day, the video posted on all of Iris Long's social media accounts already accumulated a combined total of more than 10 million views. And the amount was still climbing every hour.

A big part of this was because her name was repeatedly mentioned alongside a superstar like Jin Chonglin.

Not mentioning Jin Chonglin's massive army of fans, there were also a lot of bored netizens who only wanted to discuss something exciting. The rumoured love triangle between Iris Long, Jin Chonglin and Fan Luo definitely counted as an exciting topic.

Adding to the rumour of Iris Long's secret pregnancy with Jin Chonglin as the father of their love child, it was a recipe for a potential scandal. Something that these bored netizens were always eager to sink their bloodthirsty fangs on.

There was less than two weeks remaining until Iris Long's comeback album "*Rebirth*" would be released.

JJ's record label and Bright Summit Entertainment Company heavily promoted her upcoming comeback album online, on TV and radio commercials, newspapers and public advertisements.

This hinted to everyone the confidence JJ and Bright Summit had for Iris Long. People were baffled but also curious as to why.

Was Iris Long really talented to garner this kind of excellent treatment from these bigshots?

Wasn't she only a second-rate teen pop idol who was just lucky to have viral songs?

What poison did she feed JJ and Bright Summit to sign someone like her under their companies?

Even though she was already popular before her abrupt retirement, her previous record label and talent management company never promoted her as hard as this.

She managed to enjoy decent fame before because many of her songs were catchy and went viral. However, her songs were like shooting stars. They would shine brilliantly for a short period of time before disappearing amidst the sea of other brighter stars.

JJ's record label released previews of some of her music videos online. Iris and Bright Summit actively shared them to their own respective online followers.

These previews topped the search and view rankings in various websites. After people watched them, they were shocked by Iris' drastic change in style.

"Wow. Is this even Iris Long? She looks completely different from before. I'm not saying that her face changed or anything like that. Her face looks the same as before but looks...different. Am I even making sense? Do people understand what I'm trying to say?"

"Poster above. Yes, we know what you mean."

"Oh my God. It's just a preview but I already cried watching '*Phantom of Your Love*'."

"The credits say that Iris Long is also the composer of these songs. Are you kidding me? Does she even know how to compose songs?"

"Poster above. Answer: ghost composer."

"The song '*Black Star*' gave me goosebumps! I can't wait to hear the whole song!"

"What sorcery is this? This is not Iris Long! I don't believe it. It must be an impostor!"

"I didn't know that Iris Long could play the piano."

"What playing the piano? It must be a camera trick or CG. Who'll believe that she can play the piano? If she really can, she would've bragged about it and showed it off for everyone to see a long time ago. Why wait until now?"

The reactions were mixed. Many of the fans of her previous musical style of dance pop didn't know how to feel about this drastic change.

A few of them were dismayed, accusing Iris Long of being a traitor, even becoming her anti-fans.

Some of them were very excited and thought that this style suited her voice better.

The majority were neutral, withholding their verdicts until the album was officially released.

An announcement was posted on all of Iris Long's social media accounts. She would be performing on "*MusicFest Tonight*" this coming Friday, a week before the official release of her album "*Rebirth*".

"*MusicFest Tonight*" was a popular concert TV program aired live every Friday night from 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM, where singers, bands, idol groups, and musicians perform in front of a large audience.

The previous Iris Long was a frequent guest performer in this program because many of her songs were quite popular that time. It would be more than two years since she performed on this stage.

"*MusicFest Tonight*" would mark her official comeback performance since her disappearance and abrupt retirement two years ago.

Many were looking forward to this coming Friday's "*MusicFest Tonight*" episode for different reasons.

Her haters couldn't wait for her to mess up her comeback performance, humiliate herself, and become a laughingstock.

It was a fact, however, that people were curious about Iris Long. She disappeared for so long after all.

How would she perform?

Was the hype surrounding her upcoming comeback album "*Rebirth*" worth it?

Was she really changing her musical style?

Would this change in style be successful?

What really happened to her during her absence?

All sorts of questions popped into people's minds. They were hoping that Iris Long would provide them with answers this coming Friday.

Chapter 34 - Senior Jin Chonglin

Chapter 34: Senior Jin Chonglin

Friday.

Iris arrived at the TV station building where the big studio for "*MusicFest Tonight*" was located.

Dom, her new manager Tang Yiyi, a makeup artist and a hair stylist provided by Bright Summit accompanied her.

She wore big, dark sunglasses and a mask, so the crowd of various fans outside the building wouldn't recognize her.

They were greeted by one of the show's assistant directors who led them to a dressing room. Fortunately, she didn't need to share it with other artists like before. Iris could feel the influence of both JJ and Bright Summit.

They were fifteen minutes early.

They first familiarized themselves with the dressing room. The makeup artist and the hair stylist started arranging their equipment. Finally, the two started working on Iris.

Tang Yiyi was busy speaking to someone on the phone.

A flat-screen TV hanging on a corner showed that tonight's episode already began airing. They watched the opening artists' performances and short interviews, while Iris was having her hair and makeup done.

Dom was pacing back and forth with an anxious expression on his face.

"Dom, can you stop? You're making me dizzy." Iris finally couldn't stand his nonstop pacing anymore.

"But boss, I'm so nervous! I can't breathe! I feel like puking. I think I'm gonna have a heart attack!"

"Why are you nervous? I'm the one who's performing on the stage, not you."

"Dominic Chua, stop spreading your nervousness!" Tang Yiyi rebuked him. "You should be encouraging Iris instead. Do your job as an assistant properly! If you can't calm down, get out of the room!"

"I...sorry, Big Sis Yiyi! Boss, just ignore me. I'll calm down." Dom took exaggerated inhalations and exhalations.

Tang Yiyi rolled her eyes before turning to her new artist. "Don't be nervous. Relax and perform your best. I know you can do it. I've seen how hard you worked making this album and rehearsing for this performance. Show everyone the new Iris Long. Show them that you deserve this comeback!"

Iris smiled at her. "Don't worry, Elder Sister Yiyi. I'm only feeling a little nervous. I'll be alright."

"Good. The symphony orchestra has arrived. Everything's in order."

"Thank you, Elder Sister Yiyi."

She changed into an elegant emerald dress similar to the one she wore at the end of the video she posted on her social media accounts. However, the style was slightly different. This dress had subtle sparkles that glittered when the light hit them.

"Oh my God, boss! You're gorgeous! Let me take pictures of you!" Dom excitedly snapped some photos of her from different angles.

Iris chuckled. She accommodated her assistant, striking classy poses which made Dom squeal in delight.

"You look beautiful." Tang Yiyi nodded her appreciation.

"Thank you. Elder Sister Yiyi, I need to go the washroom."

"Alright. I'll go with you. Dominic, stay here and guard our stuff."

"No problem, Big Sis Yiyi!"

When Iris and Tang Yiyi left the dressing room, Dom sent the photos he took of his boss to Jin Liwei.

"Ehehe."

Dom didn't feel guilty at all. He figured that it was only a matter of time before his boss and Mr. Jin Liwei officially became a couple. Dom was also a man. He knew when a man was interested in a woman.

His Momsy told him before that he had a fearsome intuition. That was why he insisted that he worked and lived in China, even though his beloved family was in the Philippines. He just felt deep within his bones that his fortune was in this country. Others called him reckless, but for him, it was just walking the path God destined for him.

If things went according to Dom's predictions, then Mr. Jin Liwei would marry his boss. Then wouldn't Mr. Jin eventually become his boss as well? It wouldn't hurt to start presenting a good impression to his future sir boss now.

"Ehehe."

###

Miles away.

Jin Corporation.

A cold-faced Jin Liwei was leaving his company building followed by his assistant, Xu Tian. His employees respectfully bowed and bid him goodbye as he walked past them.

As the car drove out of the parking lot, Jin Liwei's phone beeped. He took a look and saw that it was a message from the girl's assistant.

Moments later, a smile brightened the cold man's face. Xu Tian glanced at the rear-view mirror and just happened to see the President smiling.

He almost crashed the car.

"Xu Tian, drive to a florist. Order one hundred fresh red roses and send it to Long Xiulan's home tonight."

"Understood, President."

Jin Liwei spent almost the entire drive looking at the photos, a dangerous smile on his face.

###

Back at the TV station building.

Iris and Tang Yiyi left the washroom after they were done. They hadn't met other artists so far, only encountering some of the show's staff who they exchanged greetings with.

Iris could see the curiosity for her in their eyes when they recognized her. She just smiled at them, not speaking much.

However, they soon met a familiar face in the hallway while they were heading back to her dressing room.

"Eh? Is that you, Iris Long?" Jin Chonglin called out to her, his eyes widening in surprise upon seeing her.

Iris stiffened and stopped walking for about a second before putting a formal smile on her face. She gracefully walked towards Jin Chonglin. He was accompanied by his manager, Lin Dong.

She knew that he would also be performing tonight because she saw his blog post a few days ago saying so. She just didn't expect that she would meet him in the hallway like this.

An image of Jin Liwei rose in her mind, warning her to stay away from his brother.

Suddenly feeling annoyed, she pushed the arrogant man out of her mind as she greeted the damn man's younger brother in front of her.

"Greetings to Senior Jin Chonglin!"

Chapter 35 - Alarm Girls

Chapter 35: Alarm Girls

Jin Chonglin was also an artist managed under Bright Summit Entertainment Company. This means that he was, technically speaking, Iris Long's senior.

"Good to see you, Junior Iris Long." Jin Chonglin followed her example smoothly.

He made sure to look at her thoroughly from head to toe and back up again. The long dress complemented her alluring figure, and the emerald colour made her white skin glow like the purest of pearls.

Damn! She looked absolutely gorgeous. He subconsciously nodded his head in appreciation of her beauty.

Tang Yiyi and Lin Dong nodded at each other in greeting.

"So how are you?" Jin Chonglin asked her, making conversation. "You seem to be doing well."

"Yes. Thank you, senior," she replied politely.

Jin Chonglin waited for a few seconds, but she didn't say anything else. "Good luck on your comeback performance tonight. I'll be sure to watch."

"Thank you. I also wish senior good luck on your performance."

He gave her his best smile; his famous smile that never failed to send his fans screaming and even some fainting. He won over a lot of women and bent a lot of men with this trademark killer smile.

However, Iris was unmoved. Her expression remained polite.

He was a bit disappointed when he didn't get more of a reaction from her aside from her polite smile.

Wasn't she supposed to be interested in him?

Didn't she follow him around before?

Why was she acting so distant now?

"If senior will excuse us, we need to return to my dressing room. I might get called for my turn soon."

"Sure, sure. Go ahead. See you sometime in the company. Good luck." He stepped aside to let Iris and her manager through.

"Watch your actions," Lin Dong warned him when the two women disappeared from their view. "It's best not to get too close to Iris Long at this time. Your fiancée hates her guts. The public thinks that there's a love triangle going on between you three. They even think that you fathered a child with her. Don't make trouble."

"I know, I know! Gosh, you don't trust me!"

"I do trust you but not when it comes to women."

"Hmph!"

"Let's go."

The two men walked to Jin Chonglin's dressing room.

###

Iris and Tang Yiyi almost reached their dressing room but along the way, they were blocked by a trio of brightly and skimpily dressed young women.

From the original Iris' memories, she recognized them as the girl group called Alarm Girls. These girls and the original Iris shared the same musical style.

However, their looks (already enhanced by cosmetic surgeries) couldn't compare to Iris Long's natural beauty. Their vocals were mediocre at best. Their songs also weren't as popular as Iris' viral songs.

Some of their fans started comparing them to Iris Long; more specifically, on how they couldn't compare to her. Then some fans started accusing the three girls of imitating Iris Long. It happened so often that the girls started hating Iris.

The original Iris didn't care about them at first, but when the trio started provoking her whenever they met, Iris would lose her temper and retaliate. Trading insults was a regular occurrence between them.

Iris was curious about how the trio would act this time. She watched them approach, not saying anything.

"Well, well, well. So the biggest slut in showbiz is really making a comeback?" Wanwan, the trio's leader, laughed sarcastically at Iris.

"I heard you got pregnant? How's the baby? Or did you abort it?" Feifei followed their leader.

"Of course she aborted it! She dared to pin the responsibility to Jin Chonglin? How shameless!" Mimi sneered.

"Excuse me. Stop causing trouble. Or we'll report your outrageous behaviour to your management company." Tang Yiyi stepped forward, blocking them from Iris.

The trio ignored her; their aggro was firmly on Iris.

Wanwan: "Do you really think that just by changing your image and your musical style, you'll be welcomed back in the industry with open arms? How naïve! You should never have come back! You don't belong here anymore."

Mimi: "Yeah! You're nothing but an outdated and damaged product now. Nobody wants you here so go back to retirement where you belong!"

Feifei: "You're nothing but a bitch! A slut! A whore!"

Chapter 36 - Furious Dominic

Chapter 36: Furious Dominic

"You!" Tang Yiyi was enraged. "Security? Security! There are people causing trouble here!"

The door to Iris' dressing room opened. Dom came out, wanting to know who was causing so much ruckus. Seeing his boss and Sis Yiyi surrounded by three girls who looked like hookers, he immediately walked over to protect the two.

The hair stylist and makeup artist also stuck their heads out of the door, but Tang Yiyi motioned them to stay inside the room. They obeyed, closing the door firmly behind them. However, they stuck their ears close to the door and even tried peeking through the slit to see what was happening.

Seeing such a cute young man suddenly step in front of them, interest gleamed in the trio's eyes.

Dom shuddered. He felt like the three hookers were stripping him naked with their eyes.

When the Alarm Girls saw him acting protectively of that Iris slut, their hatred and jealousy towards her deepened even more.

Feifei: "A slut will always be a slut. You're not satisfied with Jin Chonglin? Now you've seduced another man?"

Mimi: "Mister, don't be fooled by that slut. She seduces all handsome guys that she sees and sleeps with them. You should stay away from a dirty woman like her. I'm saying this for your own good."

Wanwan: "Mimi, don't bother warning him. Everyone knows that Iris Long is a slut. Men choose to be with her because they want to fuck her. That's what a slut is for, anyway."

Hearing such disgusting words coming from their dirty mouths, Dom was instantly furious. "*Putang ina!* Shameless! Who do you think you bitches are?! You're the sluts! Your whole family are sluts!"

How dare these hookers say such immoral things about his boss? Unforgivable!

He wouldn't normally hit females because his Mommy raised him well, but if these bitches go too far, he would wipe their ugly faces on the floor. Just watch him.

Some of the show's staff were already making their way towards them, responding to the commotion.

"Dom." Iris finally spoke after staying quiet. She stopped her assistant who was about to lose control and charge at the three girls.

Iris stepped forward, looking at the three girls with cold eyes. In a deceptively gentle voice, she spoke to them.

"I don't know if you've heard, but I got in a serious accident two years ago and was comatose for a whole year. As a result, I'm suffering from selective amnesia. Excuse me, but I don't remember who you are. At all. Please kindly move aside. We have to return to my dressing room."

"You bitch!" Forgot about them? How dare this slut?! Wanwan charged forward to attack.

"What's going on here?" One of the show's staff finally arrived and asked aloud.

The other two girls pulled at their leader when they saw the staff.

"These girls are causing trouble to my artist!" Tang Yiyi immediately aired her grievances, threatening to use Bright Summit to make a formal complaint.

More staff members reached them. They separated the two parties and mediated.

The manager of Alarm Girls was called and politely reprimanded for the incident.

The trio tried to shift the blame to Iris and her manager, accusing the two of bullying them. The staff members turned their attention to Iris and Tang Yiyi, asking what they had to say to the accusation.

Tang Yiyi was enraged but she was professional and managed to keep her cool.

As if on cue, Iris blinked several times and her eyes suddenly watered, her face forlorn. Added with her natural beauty and grace, the staff members panicked seeing her heartbroken expression. They immediately felt protective of her and inwardly shifted the blame on the three girls.

How could someone with such an angelic face bully others?

They didn't notice that her "heartbroken" expression was shallow, only focusing on her beauty.

"Now, now. Miss Long, please don't cry. We sincerely apologize that this happened to you." The staff member turned to the trio's manager. "What kind of manager are you, letting your artists cause trouble in a place like this? Do you think this is your own house?"

The manager of the trio panicked. He repeatedly bowed and apologized to Iris and the staff.

Feifei: "Why are you apologizing? We did nothing wrong! It's all that bitch's fault!"

Mimi: "That's right! We're being wrongfully accused!"

Wanwan: "Are you people blind?! Can't you see that she's faking her tears?!"

"You three, stop it. Apologize to Miss Long right now." Their manager pleaded with them.

Wanwan: "No way! We'll never apologize to a slut like her!"

The staff members looked at the three girls with disgust.

Iris suddenly swayed and grabbed Tang Yiyi's arm for support. Her eyes drooped; her face pale. Her pretty eyebrows were scrunched into a painful frown. She lightly gasped for breath.

She looked like she was going to faint.

"Putang ina" is a Filipino curse phrase which translates to "(Your) mother is a slut".

Chapter 37 - Acting Duo

Chapter 37: Acting Duo

Seeing Iris Long's suddenly weak and ill appearance, the staff members were alarmed.

Iris threw a quick, meaningful look at Dom before continuing to sway as if she was going to fall at any moment. She held onto Tang Yiyi's arm tightly as if her life depended on it.

Dom caught his boss' look and immediately understood her intention. Without any hesitation, he brought out his over-the-top, award-worthy acting performance. He gasped loudly. His expression was filled with fear and righteous indignation.

"Oh no! This is bad! Miss Long is going to faint! Don't you know that she was comatose for a year?! Her heart can't handle too much stress! How could you agitate her this way! Quick! Take those troublemakers away! How dare you three bully her?! Do you plan on killing her?! You murderers!"

Dom wailed loudly, alarming the surrounding staff even more.

Tang Yiyi immediately panicked. She had no idea that a performance was currently playing in front of her, starring the acting duo of Iris Long and Dominic Chua. Although there was something unnatural and awkward about the actions of the two, Tang Yiyi was still concerned because it was a fact that Iris was comatose before. She wrapped her arms around Iris protectively. Iris dropped her head to her manager's shoulders, closed her eyes, and let her knees buckle.

"Iris!" Tang Yiyi was afraid. She held up Iris' limp body to prevent her from falling on the floor.

Dom swooped down and carried his boss princess-style.

"Is Miss Long gonna be okay?" The staff asked worriedly. "Someone call an ambulance!"

"No need," Dom quickly stopped them. "Miss Long brought her medicine. I'll just give her some and she'll be fine. Just please give us a few minutes to ourselves. I know that Miss Long won't want her condition to cause trouble for you and the show."

"Yes, yes. Of course. We'll leave you inside your dressing room. Don't hesitate to call any of us and we'll immediately assist you if you need anything."

"Thank you. Please excuse us." Dom carried his boss inside the dressing room; a panicked Tang Yiyi following behind them.

"Big Sis Yiyi, please close the door behind you."

"Yes, yes." She fumbled with the door before she was able to close it properly. "Will Iris be really okay? What do we do now? I think we should call an ambulance. This looks serious. Wait, let me cancel her performance first."

"No need for that, Elder Sister Yiyi." Iris' calm voice almost made Tang Yiyi's soul fly out of her body.

"Iris!"

"Sssh!" Dom gestured for her to be quiet, as he put his boss down on her own feet.

"W-what's going on?" Tang Yiyi was confused alongside the hair stylist and the make-up artist.

"Boss, boss! Ehe. How was my performance? Was I good? I was good, right? No, I was awesome!"

Iris smiled. "Yes, Dom. You were awesome. Worthy of the best supporting actor award."

"Ehehehe. Of course! Who do you think I am? I'm your assistant! If I can't even do this much, then I'm not worthy! But boss' acting also deserves the best actress award. Did you see everyone's faces when you started tearing up and fainting? Ahaha!"

Iris turned to the makeup artist. "Sorry, but can you do a quick touch up of my makeup?"

"Y-yes." The makeup artist woke up from her daze and immediately set to work. The hair stylist followed suit and fixed Iris' already immaculate hair.

"You two! You were acting?!" Tang Yiyi couldn't believe them. "You almost scared me to death!"

So that was why their actions didn't feel natural. However, everyone was too caught up in the moment that nobody paid close attention to whether Iris and Dom were faking it or not.

"Forgive us, Elder Sister Yiyi." Iris spoke in a calm voice. "If Dom and I didn't do that, we would've all been forced to stay in that disagreeable situation for a long time. I don't have the time nor the energy to spare arguing against those stupid girls. I just want to focus on my upcoming performance and do my best."

Tang Yiyi's eyes softened. Finally, she sighed and said, "I understand. Just don't scare me like that again. But are you really okay?"

"Don't worry, Elder Sister Yiyi. I'm healthy."

"Do you really have selective amnesia?" Tang Yiyi remembered what Iris told the three girls earlier.

Chapter 38 - I Will Perform Tonight

Chapter 38: I Will Perform Tonight

Iris giggled. "Of course not. My memory is perfectly fine."

"You!" Tang Yiyi didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "After promoting your album, perhaps we should start auditioning you for acting roles. But you need a little more training."

"I'll leave it to you, Elder Sister Yiyi. But right now, I want to focus on music."

"Hey, Big Sis Yiyi! Why don't you compliment me? I'm a great actor, right? I was awesome just now, wasn't I? Right? Right?"

Tang Yiyi chuckled. "Yes, yes. You're a good actor, Dominic. But of course Iris is slightly better than you."

"Ehehehe! Of course. Boss is the best!"

They heard a knock on the door.

Iris immediately reverted to looking slightly weak. The makeup artist and hair stylist stepped back.

Dom looked at his fellow accomplices and nodded before opening the door, appearing overdramatic by doing so.

It was a staff member. Seeing that Iris was finally awake, he was visibly relieved. "Miss Long, we are truly sorry about what happened. We already reported the Alarm Girls and the incident to our higher-ups."

Tang Yiyi snorted. "Your higher-ups should expect a call from our Bright Summit's higher-ups. Inviting artists with such questionable morals and allowing them to bully one of our artists...what are you going to do if something happened to our Iris? What if she fails to wake up and becomes comatose again?"

The staff member paled. "We're terribly sorry. We will make sure to demand a proper apology and explanation from the Alarm Girls' management company. Please don't worry, Manager Tang."

"Elder Sister Yiyi, it's not the staff's fault. With so many artists performing, they can't possibly control and monitor everyone at the same time. Don't be too angry. See? I'm alright now." Iris turned to the staff member. "How much longer till it's my turn to perform?"

"Ah? What? You're still performing?" The staff member was shocked.

"Of course."

"B-but...but you fainted. Are you sure you're okay? Don't worry. We can reschedule you for another episode. You have legitimate reason. We won't blame you."

"You better not blame my artist," Tang Yiyi warned.

"No. I am scheduled to perform tonight, so I will." Iris spoke calmly but with conviction.

Admiration filled the staff member's eyes. "I understand. As long as you're really okay. There are still a few more performances to go. Just stay here and wait. We'll call you for standby when it's almost your turn."

"I understand. Thank you."

The staff member left.

Iris and company watched the ongoing performances on the TV inside the dressing room.

After a few more performances, Iris was finally called out for standby backstage. Tang Yiyi and Dom went with her, trying to calm her down when they were the ones more nervous than her. She just smiled at them, appreciating their care.

Onstage, the male and female hosts were interviewing a newly formed male idol group after their performance.

Behind the curtains, a symphony orchestra started climbing on the stage, preparing for the next performance.

The interview with the male idol group finally ended. The audience was in high spirits.

"Are you ready for the next performance?" the male host asked the audience.

"Yes!" the audience screamed at the top of the lungs.

"Our next performance is a special one," the female host said in a mysterious tone.

"Ooooooh!"

The audience was very receptive.

Male host: "Yes, it is special indeed. Our next performer abruptly retired and disappeared for two years. Now she is back and will also release her new album a week from now."

The audience quietened, whispering among themselves. They were already beginning to guess the next performer's identity.

Female host: "You're right. What's more shocking is that she changed into a new musical style! Even I am shocked. This will be her official comeback performance after her two-year retirement."

Male host: "Everyone, can you guess who it is?"

"Yes!" the audience shouted.

Female host: "Everyone please welcome our next performer!"

Male host: "From her upcoming album '*Rebirth*', singing the song '*Black Star*' for the first time on television..."

Both hosts: "Iris Long!"

Polite applause.

The lights went out.

Chapter 39 - Black Star

Chapter 39: Black Star

The stage at the front was in total darkness, but the audience glowed like a sea of stars in the night sky. Seeing the spectacular effect of their light sticks in total darkness, the audience cheered louder.

They were interrupted when the edge of the stage lit up like Christmas lights. However, they still couldn't see anything on the stage itself which was still shrouded in darkness.

There were still some whispering among the audience, but when they heard a mournful piano melody reverberate throughout the entire studio, everyone finally closed their mouths and became quiet. Holding their breaths, they focused entirely on the music.

After a few more notes, an ethereal voice began singing along with the piano melody. The voice was just humming, harmonizing perfectly with the piano melody, yet was able to convey so much emotion without lyrics.

The voice sounded like a crying goddess descending from the heavens, heartbroken by the darkness in the hearts of mortals.

The lights at the back of the stage turned on, showing a well-dressed symphony orchestra. The orchestra started playing, harmonizing with the piano and the ethereal voice seamlessly.

Moments later, the spotlight finally lit the grand piano at the centre of the stage and the beautiful young woman sitting in front of it.

Her fingers flew above the piano keys like butterflies flitting from flower to flower.

The audience gasped when they finally saw Iris Long. They almost couldn't recognize her.

Was this really Iris Long?

Her emerald dress sparkled gently like stars, giving the illusion that she was glowing with divine light.

A goddess.

No, a fairy.

A fairy goddess.

Her long black hair was artfully arranged in gentle waves flowing behind her. Her entire aura bespoke a noble countenance.

She began singing; her voice so exquisite that the audience felt their chests tighten.

"I was young and fearless

Blazed through my dreams without direction

Tried to reach the sea of the brightest stars in the sky

Looking down on all of us dreamers

The stars above

Our land of dreams"

The young people in the audience felt their blood boil when they heard the lyrics. All of them had dreams they were trying to achieve. They felt inspired. Yet why was the melody so heartbreaking?

"I sang a song

A song not mine

A song everyone else is singing

I lost my voice

I lost myself

I lost the essence of my dream"

Oh. The audience thought about the methods they were using to achieve their dreams. Weren't they just doing what everybody else was doing? They were always competing with each other using the same, old formula. It became all about crushing the opponents to get ahead or even just riding others' momentum, instead of staying true to themselves.

"My shooting star lost its light

I died, I faded

I am nothing

Nothing but a black star

A black star in the grave of dreams

I cried, I prayed

Yet I'm still nothing

Nothing but a black star

A black star crawling up the grave of dreams"

In the audience, the ones who failed to successfully achieve their dreams felt like someone stabbed a sharp knife into their hearts and twisted hard. Some had tears in their eyes, remembering the hopeless feeling of despair when they realized that they weren't good enough, lucky enough to achieve their dreams. They were failures in life; no choice but to give up their dreams and settle for the safe, easy paths.

"Oh, stars above

Oh, land of dreams

I failed but I'm still dreaming

The meaning of life is to live our dreams

We fail, we fall

Yet still we keep on dreaming

No matter how far a black star falls

It's still a star that can glow again"

Their hearts thumped. They already failed. They had already given up. Could they really keep on dreaming? Should they keep on dreaming? Could their passion really ignite once again?

Unbeknown to them, a tiny flame of hope had already lit up within their hearts.

Chapter 40 - A Song Entirely Mine

Chapter 40: A Song Entirely Mine

The melody intensified, the symphony orchestra reaching crescendo as Iris' crystal clear voice effortlessly reached the high notes.

Beautiful.

The piano was no longer mournful, but hopeful instead.

"Now I sing this song

A song only I can sing

I found my voice

I found myself

I once again found the essence of my dream"

Heat spread through the audience's veins. It sounded so nice. It would surely feel great if they could once again find the passion to chase after their dreams. They clutched their hands to their chests, feeling their racing hearts as they focused and listened to the song.

Iris sang with all her might, as if singing for her life. She threw her head back as her pounding fingers gradually slowed and softened, gently caressing the piano keys like a mother to her infant child. Her voice also softened, almost turning into a whisper as she sang the last notes of the song.

"I'm a black star with no light

But so what? I'll glow again

My dream glows bright in my heart

I'm a black star that'll light up, you'll see"

Iris closed her eyes as the music stopped, gasping; her face filled with emotions.

The song finally ended.

Silence.

One second. Two seconds. Three seconds.

Booming sound of loud applause! Cheering! Whistling! Screaming! Crying!

It was deafening.

"Iris! Iris! Iris!"

It was unknown who started it, but soon the entire audience was chanting her name. They all stood up, clapping their hands as hard as they could. Many were in tears.

Iris shuddered as the loud applause washed heavily over her. In her past life, she was almost always alone. Sure, she had bodyguards and servants but they were too well-trained. They weren't allowed to befriend her or they would be severely punished.

Her father and older brother, as the leader and heir to their family organization, were always out working and travelling somewhere in the world. Her mother was an

emotionless robot whose sole purpose was to dedicate her life and talents to the family organization.

She also had a dream then: a dream to live her life freely, to share her music to the world. To stand onstage and listen to an audience clap and cheer for her. To leave her mark in the world, to prove that she existed.

However, her identity in her previous life never permitted her to be the centre of attention. She was fated to live in the darkest shadows of the Underworld.

But now, in this second life of hers, she finally had a taste of living her dream! An intense, foreign emotion welled and rose from deep within her, spilling out of her eyes without her control.

She stood shakily and walked to the front of the stage. Tears flowed nonstop down her face, but she still looked beautiful. She swept her eyes across everyone in the audience.

She raised both of her arms high up in the air; a gesture of triumph. A big smile lit her face. Utter delight and excitement.

After a few moments, she gave the audience a deep, elegant curtsy bow. Her body so low that it almost touched the floor, showing them the depth of her gratitude.

The applause and cheers grew even louder. Everyone in the audience felt honoured to be on the receiving end of such a beautiful and elegant curtsy bow.

"Iris! Iris! Iris! Iris!"

Iris stood up, touching her chest with both hands, nodding her head and mouthing the words "thank you".

Then she turned around and repeated the deep curtsy bow to the symphony orchestra who performed with her. The orchestra musicians, in turn, bowed deeply to her.

She stood up and clapped her hands to the orchestra's direction, gesturing for the audience to give them much-deserved applause as well.

"Iris! Iris! Iris! Iris! Iris!"