

All R. Artist 401

Chapter 401: You are the Younger Female Disciple

The decision about the screening schedule also requires the approval of the cinema chain. All of these depend on the quality of the movie. Otherwise, no matter how influential Starlight is, the cinemas would not run the film out of sheer goodwill unless Starlight is willing to bear the cost of production as a kind of publicity—

Some film companies do this.

But it usually happens when it comes to promoting arthouse films.

Having decided on this course of action, the post-production of “Hachiko” became the top priority for the company’s film department in the short term. The best of the post-production resources were earmarked for the film, as there were no other concurrent film projects within the company.

Generally, Starlight still seems to prioritize music, as it’s not possible to ramp up film production in just a year or two.

Lin Yuan can’t really contribute much anymore.

His requests during the filming period have been fulfilled by the production team. All he needs to do now is wait. During this idle time, he started writing his serialized Hercule Poirot Series again.

Now it is October, and several stories of the Hercule Poirot Series have been published.

Although in the eyes of the outsiders, Chu Kuang’s Hercule Poirot Series have never produced a classic detective tale on the level of “Murder on the Orient Express”, it’s natural.

Does every piece by Su Shi reach the level of “How Long Will the Full Moon Last”?

Often, one peak is more than enough.

As long as the overall quality of the Hercule Poirot Series is ensured, readers will continue to be interested.

This assertion is evident from the consistently strong sales of the series.

Throughout the serialization of the Hercule Poirot Series, the fictional detective Poirot, created by Chu Kuang, has already gained a firm place in people's hearts.

Awhile back, there was a gruesome murder case. The police swiftly solved it, and many netizens commented that the investigative officer was as brilliant as Hercule Poirot, which demonstrates people's recognition of Poirot's deductive abilities—

And that's also a kind of recognition for the officer who quickly solved the case.

Netizens in the Celestial Dynasty should be no stranger to such an expression.

Many people would use “possessed by Sherlock Holmes” to describe someone who suddenly shows wisdom.

There are similar descriptions such as “possessed by Conan”, which further confirms people's acceptance of Poirot.

In addition,

News from some film companies suggested that they were preparing to make a movie based on the Hercule Poirot Series and were currently busy casting. All these have helped to boost Poirot's fame.

Apart from this,

Since Chu Kuang has made it clear that he will continue to serialize the Hercule Poirot Series, there are also production companies interested in buying the TV rights for Poirot, apparently intending to create a TV series named after Poirot.

Lin Yuan agreed to this.

If the Hercule Poirot Series is made into a television series, it can be filmed for many seasons. Based on the parts already serialized, the plot has enough material for the first season.

Sherlock Holmes gained worldwide fame through these sorts of adaptations.

Lin Yuan couldn't possibly achieve all these accomplishments on his own.

Since he has the determination to develop Poirot, he naturally couldn't refuse the potential influence of turning his novels into films and TV series.

Just like how "Harry Potter"'s literary influence has spread all over the world with the help of movies.

There are too many successful cases of similar promotions. These adaptations are needed to break the limitation of text.

...

As Chu Kuang's alias appears to be stable and thriving, the situation with Shadow is also quite good.

With the serialization of the comic, "Death Note" has firmly secured its position as one of the three mainstays of Tribe Comics, thanks to the combined influence of the art style and plot.

As for Lin Yuan, he has finally decided to fulfil his promise and officially teach Luo Wei traditional Chinese painting!

Upon hearing this news, Luo Wei was so excited: "Are you teaching me now?"

"Right now."

"Death Note" was just uploaded for continued serialization today, and Lin Yuan happens to be free, enough to teach for quite a while.

“I’m ready!”

Luo Wei took out the tools for painting and sat properly, looking at Lin Yuan with a solemn look.

Lin Yuan nodded: “Let’s begin then.”

Lin Yuan then picked up his brush.

Tutoring art is different from tutoring music composition. No need for a character card possession, Lin Yuan himself is a top-master in the art world. With the help of the Teacher’s Halo, tutoring Luo Wei is not a bother at all.

The time for teaching art passed little by little.

Half an hour later,

Luo Wei looked at Lin Yuan in a daze, her emotions roller-coasting.

After witnessing Lin Yuan’s painting skills, Luo Wei had always been grateful for choosing to be Lin Yuan’s assistant.

But it was only after officially learning Chinese painting from Lin Yuan that she realized her decision was a turning point in her life!

No matter how many years have passed, she will always be grateful for the decision to be Lin Yuan’s assistant.

Lin Yuan is such a good teacher!

You must know that Luo Wei has sought advice from many famous artists to improve her painting skills, including several old timers in the world of Chinese painting.

However, none of these master artists of Chinese painting could offer Luo Wei comprehensive guidance. By just learning from Lin Yuan for a short while, Luo Wei felt that many problems she couldn't solve before have been clearly addressed!

And when two hours had passed,

Luo Wei felt a strange sensation, which was vivid and strong, deep in her heart: "I think...I've gotten stronger..."

"Keep practicing on your own,"

Lin Yuan said. "I'll teach you some comic techniques tomorrow."

"I have to learn about comics too?"

"How else are you going to ghostwrite for me?"

"I understand, Teacher..." Luo Wei smiled softly.

Shadow is still the same lazy Shadow.

It's just that her recent level of comic illustration can't keep up with Lin Yuan's, so she's been the one doing all the drawing.

In order to continue being lazy, he even plans to improve her comic drawing skills to keep co-writing some of the content for him.

However, Luo Wei enjoys the feeling of improving her skills, so she doesn't mind.

"Teacher, here's your tea."

After a while, Luo Wei even prepared a cup of tea and respectfully handed it to Lin Yuan.

Not thinking too much of it, Lin Yuan just drank the tea. However, he didn't expect Luo Wei to suddenly bow three times towards him.

“Ding Dong.”

The system notification read, “Congratulations, you have taken a new apprentice. This apprentice is very good at drawing, please cultivate her well.”

“What's going on?”

Lin Yuan looked at Luo Wei.

“It's a ceremony for accepting me as a disciple.”

Luo Wei stated earnestly, “Teacher drank my tea, taught me how to paint, and accepted my three bows. From now on, I am your good apprentice. This wasn't formal, though. Tomorrow, I'd like to invite friends and elders from the art circles to witness.”

“No need,”

Lin Yuan simply answered. He is not a person who likes complications.

The system has recognized it, so the disciple is unquestionably accepted.

Furthermore, Luo Wei has a high talent for painting and will certainly help Lin Yuan earn many prestige points in the future. There's no reason to push her away.

It's just that he had already promised Luo Wei that he would teach her how to paint. Today, he was merely fulfilling his promise, so he had never thought about taking on a disciple.

“Hello, Master.”

Luo Wei smiled sweetly, “If Master takes any new disciples in the future, I'll be the senior disciple. I love the feeling of being number one!”

“No,”

Lin Yuan said, “You’re the junior disciple.”

Luo Wei: “???”

Chapter 402: Cry

“Why?”

Luo Wei wore a puzzled look on her face.

“I’ll explain it to you when we have time,” said Lin Yuan.

After he spoke, he left the studio.

In the following few days, Lin Yuan did not go to the company as much. Instead, he frequently visited the studio to draw and teach painting.

While Luo Wei was learning to paint, she was always contemplating Lin Yuan’s mysteriously profound announcement of “You are the younger fellow apprentice.”

Did other people also learn how to paint from the teacher, she wondered.

Luo Wei was feeling strangely abandoned by the idea of “I am not the earliest here.”

She had consulted Jin Mu about this. Jin Mu burst out laughing when he heard her problem and said, “Congratulations on becoming the boss’s fourth apprentice.”

“Fourth... Fourth apprentice?”

Luo Wei thought she’d have one fellow apprentice but, it was beyond her wildest imagination that there were three before her!

Seeing that Jin Mu was still laughing, she was panicking: “Am I really the fourth one?”

“Yes.”

Jin Mu had a mysterious look on his face.

Luo Wei acted a bit cute with a sad voice and said, “Uncle Jin, please tell me who the other three are.”

“The preceding three...”

Jin Mu paused for a moment, looked around carefully, and lowered his voice: “Can you keep a secret?”

“Yes, I can!” Luo Wei spoke with a thievishly loud voice.

Jin Mu pointed at himself: “So can I.”

Luo Wei: “???”

Is it OK to play her like this?

Luo Wei was angry now: “Uncle Jin, please be kind-hearted!”

After she spoke, Luo Wei rolled her eyes and left in a huff.

Outside the studio.

Starlight’s post-production department finished the final touches of the movie ‘Hachiko’ with a long sigh from Yi Chenggong.

“Phew”.

Yi Chenggong stood up, thanked the Post-production staff who had worked with him and then called Lin Yuan.

The first round of quality control certainly needed approval from Lin Yuan.

Not long after receiving the call, Lin Yuan arrived at the company.

“Notify Director Zhou to screen it.”

Lin Yuan ordered; the company had an internal screening system that wouldn’t leak any footage.

“Okay.”

Shortly, Zhou Ruiming arrived, along with several high-level executives from the movie department.

“Mr. Lin.”

Everyone greeted Lin Yuan politely, who answered back with a socially expected polite smile.

They entered the screening room to watch ‘Hachiko’.

The film ran for ninety minutes in total. Adding the starting and ending credits, a few more minutes could be counted.

Lin Yuan was intentionally observing.

As soon as the professor starts to die on-screen, sobbing can be heard within the screening room.

With the passage of time, more and more people started crying. As if their emotions were contagious, only a few people held back their tears while rubbing their noses.

The most horrifying was Ol' Zhou.

Everyone else was sobbing quietly, still aware that they were watching a movie.

He was outright weeping so loudly that Lin Yuan got a shock.

Also, influenced by Ol' Zhou, the rest of the high-ranking officials who were sobbing quietly began crying out loud, totally disregarding their dignified image.

This affected all the leaders who were previously controlling their tears.

None were spared.

Lin Yuan believed that if this were a movie theater, Ol' Zhou would have been thrown out by now for being a jinx.

As for Lin Yuan himself...

He was the calmest one in there.

Not only because he had watched the original version, but also because the dog Xiao Ba was his own pet.

Whenever Lin Yuan watched the dog on the screen, he remembered how a couple of days ago, his pet had urinated outside his bedroom door.

Even though accidents like these are bound to happen when you own a dog, but the stink took Lin Yuan out of the movie and saved his tear ducts.

You must know, Lin Yuan was also a sensitive person.

If this brilliant dog actor happened not to be Lin Yuan's pet, his tears would probably not be lesser than others'.

“I’m getting old,” sighed Yi Chenggong, rubbing his eyes.

He was the one who edited the film, and he was in charge of shooting the movie. But, even the completed version of the movie made him cry, partially because he was moved by the final product.

Outside the screening room.

Staff members who were waiting for the bosses to finish watching the movie were having a light chat, then suddenly they heard a burst of crying coming from inside. They were startled and almost couldn’t help but rush in to see if there was any kind of emergency.

“What’s going on?”

“Why is someone crying so miserably?”

“Is something wrong with the movie?”

“Well, I heard from one of the post-production guys that this movie is a bit emotionally taxing.”

“So, they are crying because of the movie?”

“Would a normal person cry like this?”

“...”

As the staff members were discussing, the crying from inside the room grew louder and more intermittent.

They didn’t know how much time had passed.

The door to the projection room suddenly opened.

The first one to emerge was Ol’ Zhou, but his appearance startled the staff at the entrance—

Ol' Zhou's hair was disheveled, his eyes were bloodshot and there was a hint of a runny nose.

"Director Zhou..."

"It's nothing, do you have a cigarette?"

"Huh?"

"Do you have a cigarette or not."

"Yes, yes, yes, the cigarettes are not very good, if you don't mind."

One of the staff members hurriedly took out a cigarette from his pocket and handed it to Ol' Zhou.

"Give me one too."

"And me."

"I'll smoke one too."

"I don't smoke, but I'll just keep you company."

Yi Chenggong and several senior executives from the film department also came out from the projection room one after another, quickly sharing a pack of cigarettes that had just been opened.

Though not as exaggerated as Ol' Zhou, these executives too had bloodshot eyes and looked as if they had just experienced a traumatic separation.

As this group of people went into the bathroom with their cigarettes, the staff at the door exchanged glances.

What kind of movie drives people to smoke like this?

At this moment, Lin Yuan also leisurely walked out.

The staff members sneakily peeked at Lin Yuan's face and found that Lin Yuan did not appear unusual at all. He was not like the middle-aged men before him with red, tear-stricken eyes.

"Do you want a cigarette?"

One of the staff members carefully asked.

Lin Yuan was taken aback for a moment, then waved off, "I don't smoke, but thank you."

After saying that, Lin Yuan went back to his office.

The staff members watched Lin Yuan leave, speculating:

"Is this movie about a midlife crisis?"

"Probably."

"Otherwise, why is Mr. Lin not affected at all?"

"Ah, he's Mr. Lin?"

"Yes, you've been in the company for so long and you don't know?"

"I never have the chance to go to the music department..."

"If we didn't know any better, we would thought Director Zhou and his team got beaten up by Mr. Lin in there given how upset they were compared to him."

"Hahaha, right."

As they went into the projection room to clean up, they saw the ground was full of tissues.

It appears that not only did this film cause a smoking spree but also a tissue-wasting frenzy.

Bloody hell!

Meanwhile...

A lower-level leader from the film department was clutching his stomach and dashing into the bathroom, but as soon as he stepped inside, he was choked by the dense smoke and started coughing uncontrollably.

“Damn, who the hell smokes in here!”

Looking above to see a thick cloud of smoke, he swore angrily and stormed in.

“You guys get the hell out of...”

The junior leader’s voice abruptly stopped, as if someone had grabbed his throat.

The senior executives of the film department, who also happened to be the bosses of this junior leader, collectively looked up at him with their eyes all red. No one said a word.

At that moment...

The junior executive suddenly remembered a time from his primary school days when he had caused a big trouble and had been subjected to collective ‘death stares’ from junior leaders as he read out an apology letter in front of the whole school.

Gulp.

He swallowed.

The junior leader's bowel movement was scared back into his stomach.

Chapter 403: The Fish Changes Color When Speaking

A minor movie department leader, trembling with fear, was collectively threatened by the highest ranks of the movie department to keep what he had seen confidential.

The junior leader was quite sure of this:

If he dared not to keep secret what he had seen today, tomorrow he might be fired from Starlight Entertainment company by the high rank for the reason that he dared to take the first step into the company with his left or right foot.

The junior leader nodded with tears in his eyes.

After that, the junior leader never went into that restroom again, no matter how urgent he was, even if he would wet his pants or even poop on his pants, he would always go to the restroom on other floors of the company to meet his physiological needs...

But this is beside the point.

After dealing with the minor leader, Ol' Zhou looked around at several individuals:

"How was it?"

"Great film."

"Then I will arrange a screening."

"Invite more people."

"Definitely."

“Any comments or suggestions?”

“Bring some cigarettes.”

“And don’t forget to tell the staff to prepare more tissue.”

“...”

All of this had nothing to do with Lin Yuan.

Having watched the movie, Lin Yuan felt very satisfied.

The reactions of Ol’ Zhou and the other higher-ups of the movie department have already proven that this movie had achieved the ultimate in certain effects.

Tear-jerking!

Awfully tear-jerking!

No wonder the System considered “Hachiko” a tear bomb level.

The company should be preparing to take publicity channels now.

Lin Yuan thought about it and simply posted a tribe update from Admirable Fish’s account. The content of the update was brief and to-the-point:

“New movie ‘Hachiko’ will be released on November 11th, please stay tuned!”

No poster, no cast list, just a simple sentence, but it instantly hooked the interest of countless fans.

“Teacher Admirable Fish’s new movie?”

“Wow, what genre this time?”

“Looking forward to it, Admirable Fish is finally making a new movie, I really liked ‘The Piano Tuner’, looking forward to another masterpiece from Admirable Fish!”

“I like ‘Flirting Scholar’ better, it’s hilarious.”

“I also like watching ‘Flirting Scholar’, I’ve watched it five or six times and I’m not tired of it. It’s weird, I can’t help laughing every time I watch it.”

“I hope the new movie can be as hilarious as ‘Flirting Scholar’. If you can, laugh me to death, and I won’t make you responsible!”

“‘Flirting Scholar’ is not only funny but also healing, every time I feel down, I watch it and get healed. I hope the new movie can be even more healing.”

“...”

Although Lin Yuan is still a newcomer in the film industry, his reputation from his previous two films is evident, so when fans heard he had a new film coming out, they were extremely excited.

Next, Lin Yuan reposted this news from Chu Kuang and Shadow’s accounts.

In the past, Lin Yuan didn’t want to bother. He just needed to repost it from Chu Kuang’s account.

Shadow had only a few fans, so it didn’t matter whether he reposted it or not.

But with the great success of “Death Note”, Shadow is now the top artist in the manga industry, with a surge in fan count and a certain degree of promotional capacity.

So Lin Yuan had Shadow join in the action.

This was just a casual action on his part, but to many netizens, it clearly conveyed more meaning:

“Hahaha, the three bros finally joined forces!”

“Before, it was all Chu Kuang and Admirable Fish collaborating, there was no sounds from Shadow.”

“Moved to tears! Shadow finally keeps up with the big group!”

“Shadow: I’m not invisible anymore, brothers please take me to play together!”

“Shadow, with the popularity of ‘Death Note’, finally acquired the... qualifications to collaborate with Admirable Fish and Chu Kuang.”

“Shadow: Let’s all go watch the movie together!”

“So real, before it was just Admirable Fish and Chu Kuang crazy collaboration, now that Shadow has taken off, he joined the movie publicity team.”

“...”

The jokester netizens loved to play the “bros” gag.

Latterly, because of Shadow’s invisible attribute, everyone began to tease Admirable Fish and Chu Kuang and unintentionally ignored Shadow.

Now with the huge success of Shadow, the “Three Bros” had once again become a focus of attention for many people.

From this perspective, netizens are very realistic.

But the news means something entirely different to the music world!

At almost the same time as Admirable Fish announced that a new movie would be released in November.

Countless musicians who were to participate in the November competition had a sudden contraction of their hearts, and then panic ensued!

Oh no!

New movie from Admirable Fish in November?

Are there hidden treasures in his film this time?

Is this a signal that Admirable Fish is subtly participating in the November New Song Chart?

No wonder they are so nervous.

The previous movie from Admirable Fish, “The Piano Tuner”, had done such a thing.

A typical movie, which had squeezed in several classic songs, especially the piano piece “Marriage d’Amour”, which had blown the minds of Chu People!

With the previous experience, of course, everyone would be nervous about Admirable Fish’s new film launching again!

Along with this tension, countless calls flew in to Starlight.

The phones of many Starlight executives were bombarded, all of them came from the companies behind the singers who were going to participate in next month’s new song chart:

“Is Admirable Fish dropping a new song in November?”

“Is Admirable Fish’s song hiding in the movie?”

“Does the movie ‘Hachiko’ have songs in it?”

“Can you persuade Admirable Fish not to participate in the November New Song Chart?”

“...”

The Starlight executives were baffled and rushed to ask Ol’ Zhou about the situation, then they responded each number on by one.

These executives were almost swearing:

“In Admirable Fish’s current movie, there really are no hidden music productions!”

“It’s just standard movie scoring, not by Admirable Fish himself, you can rest assured!”

“Admirable Fish is really not participating in November’s competition, you can play your own!”

“...”

After rounds of such explanations, they were finally able to pacify those leading singers.

The Starlight executives finally understood just how severe some people’s fish phobia was in the industry.

“Great, Admirable Fish is causing havoc in the movie industry!”

The leading singers participating in the November battle were thrilled to pass the news around.

Thinking about it, after all, it involves the interests of so many music companies, how could Starlight cause such a massive upset by dropping Admirable Fish into the New Song Chart on November 11th?

They were just too sensitive to the word “Admirable Fish”, causing them to lose their normal judgment.

“Fish Fever.”

In response to this, Ol' Zhou couldn't help but sigh.

The movie department leader next to Ol' Zhou laughed, "Now I'm wondering, will there come a day when the movie industry also has Fish Fever?"

Ol' Zhou was stunned, he started to say it was not possible, but then he hesitated.

"I'm just joking."

The leader next to Ol' Zhou gave him a strange look, "Has the screening been arranged?"

Ol' Zhou nodded, "The invitation has been sent out, in three days, the screening of 'Hachiko', the location is set at the Earth Cinema in the city center, which is an establishment of the Earth Cinema Line, I also invited representatives from the Earth Cinema Line to attend."

The future of this movie depends on the reaction at the screening.

Chapter 404: Ye Hongyu

And so, three days passed.

The day had come for Starlight to arrange a screening of "Hachiko".

City center of Su City.

Inside the lavishly decorated Earth Cinema.

The director Ol' Zhou and the senior executives of Starlight's film department stood at the entrance of the theater with the best effects, welcoming the arrival of representatives from various major cinema chains.

"Welcome, please come in."

“It’s been a long time, Manager Wang.”

“Oh, Manager Zhou is here too.”

“You’re the representative of the three-gold cinema chain, aren’t you?”

“...”

As the representatives of the major cinema chains arrived one after another, Ol’ Zhou and the senior executives of Starlight’s film department shook hands and exchanged pleasantries with the newcomers. The atmosphere was quite lively.

At this moment.

A tall woman in a red coat, wearing sunglasses, appeared, walking in high heels that tapped rhythmically on the floor.

She exuded a strong aura.

Instantly, all eyes were on this woman. The expressions in their eyes varied, and some people were whispering, their tones full of playfulness:

“Ye Hongyu has arrived.”

“Starlight really has some clout.”

“No wonder they chose this theater for the screening, it turns out they’re cozying up to the Earth Cinema chain, but Ye Hongyu’s presence isn’t necessarily a good thing.”

“Who doesn’t know that Ye Hongyu has extremely high standards for movie contracts.”

“She’s the renowned ‘Iron Lady’ of the Earth Cinema chain. This is not a joking matter.”

“...”

Everyone’s attention was on Ye Hongyu, not because she was beautiful.

These representatives of the cinema chains are all influential individuals within society. If they wished, they would not lack for beautiful women in their lives.

Despite the fact Ye Hongyu was indeed quite beautiful. Her heavy makeup, paired with her sunglasses, gave her an heroic appearance. It was as if she was walking against the wind, yet she also projected a strong feminine flavour that felt overwhelmingly domineering but endlessly charming.

But...

The most notable thing about this woman was the cinema chain she represented – Earth Cinema!

Cinema chains also had various tiers.

The large cinema chains controlled a huge number of theaters, something the smaller chains couldn’t compare with. And the Earth Cinema that Manager Ye represented was one of the top cinema chains with the largest scale in Blue Star!

Therefore, Ye Hongyu was the most significant representative invited today!

If she agreed to sign “Hachiko” on behalf of Earth Cinema, the contract provided by this one company alone would match the scale of several other cinema chains combined!

So in the face of this woman, even Ol’ Zhou was a tad more enthusiastic than before:

“Manager Ye, you’re here!”

He shook hands with Ye Hongyu: “Thanks to the Earth Cinema for providing the venue for the screening. I hope you will have a favorable impression of our movie!”

The corner of his mouth hooking up into a slight smile.

Ye Hongyu removed her sunglasses, revealing her beautiful face. Despite her bold makeup, she didn't look vulgar:

“Director Zhou is too polite.”

She shook hands with Ol' Zhou and smiled: “I have high expectations for Starlight's movies.”

“That's what we hope for as well. This movie also happens to be Xian Yu's new film, and Manager Ye's name also contains the character ‘Yu’, which translates to ‘Fish’. In a way, you could say that you are of the same origin. We hope that you will take care of Starlight and Teacher Xian Yu in the future.”

“Director Zhou, you have quite the sense of humor.”

Ye Hongyu's smile remained: “But my expectations are sincere.”

“...”

Ol' Zhou also laughed, but inwardly he was unruffled.

He, of course, knew that Ye Hongyu's “expectations” were nothing more than pleasantries.

She had most likely said similar things at every screening she had attended.

But if she was ultimately dissatisfied with the movie, even if the movie was made by her father, she would never agree to sign the contract.

Because she is Ye Hongyu!

The ‘Iron Lady’ of Earth Cinema!

There was also a rumor about this woman in the industry: during the screening process, nobody could ever guess her attitude towards the movie based on her reactions!

This woman wouldn't laugh at comedies, cry at tragedies, nor furrow her brow at horror films.

No one would know her opinion on a movie until the very end.

This is why Ye Hongyu was known as the "Iron Lady".

"I'll go in first."

Ye Hongyu said with a slight smile, taking her two sidekicks into the theatre.

When not watching a movie, Ye Hongyu was rather expressive. However, once in 'movie-watching mode', she would seem expressionless.

Ye Hongyu was just a sideshow.

The remaining theater representatives arrived one after another and entered the theater.

At this time,

Some theater representatives who had entered the theater noticed that besides Starlight's arranged drinks and popcorn next to each seat, there were also individual packs of tissues.

"Why have they put out so many tissues?"

One of the theater representatives asked Ol' Zhou, looking puzzled.

Is this movie gonna be that intense?

What's the deal that could pass censorship?

And it's public, isn't that inappropriate?

Not to mention, there are ladies present here!

Ignoring the guy's imaginative rant, Ol' Zhou mysteriously said, "It would be terrible if your sleeves got wet."

The theater representative was startled.

Meanwhile, after everyone settled down, another high-ranking member of the film department next to Ol' Zhou was chatting with a familiar theater representative. He suddenly pulled out a cigarette mid-conversation:

"Want a cigarette?"

"Thanks, but I don't smoke, and we're in a theater, we can't smoke."

"I didn't mean for you to smoke it now."

"I won't smoke it even after the movie."

"Trust me, brother, keeping it won't do you any harm."

"..."

The theatre representative had no choice but to place the cigarette behind his ear, feeling strange about what Starlight was up to.

Row eight in the theater.

Ye Hongyu didn't touch her drinks or popcorn; she just crossed her legs slightly and waited for the movie to start in the most comfortable position.

It was clear

that Starlight had special treatment for major theater representatives, especially Earth Cinema, so this was one of the best viewing positions.

The people sitting to the left and right of Ye Hongyu were her entourage.

The one on the left whispered, "Sister Red Fish, may I ask a question?"

"Ask."

Ye Hongyu responded indifferently.

The young follower was named Yang An, a newcomer being cultivated by the company.

Yang An would represent the theater at some screening meetings in the future, so Ye Hongyu brought him out to groom him.

As for the other follower, he was Ye Hongyu's assistant.

Yang An respectfully asked, "Why do you keep reminding us to manage our expressions while watching a movie?"

Ye Hongyu replied in a low voice, "As theater representatives, if we show a lot of psychological activity during the screening, the film company will seize the opportunity to lower the price when identifying our preferences for the film. So no matter how much emotion you feel, you must hide it. Only by doing so can help us keep our thoughts unclear and maintain the initiative when signing the contract even if we really like the movie."

"I see!"

Yang An firmly nodded, "Sister Hongyu, rest assured, I will control my emotions. I won't let people figure out my preferences, regardless of whether the movie is good or bad!"

Ye Hongyu didn't say much.

At this point, the big screen had gone completely dark. There were no commercial slots; after Ol' Zhou went on stage to remind everyone that the film was about to start, he quickly went back to his seat.

It's worth mentioning that...

Ol' Zhou's seat was in the ninth row, a position from which he could see many people's reactions, which he chose specifically in order to negotiate the final contract with the theater representatives.

Chapter 405: Its Acting Skills are Better than Humans -1

The light in the movie theater dimmed. Amidst the relaxed and melodious orchestral music, black subtitles fluttered, listing the names of the crew. However, the representatives of the cinemas didn't pay much attention to this. The only thing that got their attention was the name Zhang Xiuming.

Zhang Xiuming is a movie emperor.

Even more prominent than Zhang Xiuming's name was the scriptwriter's name, enlarged and written as "Xian Yu". This name had transitioned from unfamiliar to well-recognized in the film industry after two movies.

The orchestral music abruptly stopped.

Simultaneously, a slightly naive off-screen voice vibrated: "Xiao Ba is very mysterious. No one knows where he came from. Maybe from a dog shelter, maybe from someone's car, maybe from an airport, or maybe from an unknown small city..."

The darkness gradually faded.

In the gradually clear picture, a rosy-cheeked child was narrating on the stage, behind him, on the blackboard, were four skewed characters:

Hachiko.

The camera swiftly shifted.

A blue truck appeared on the road. Many cages were placed on the truck, and on the top level, there was a young dog. As the truck sped, the scenes on both sides whizzed by.

Close-up of the puppy's eyes.

Pure innocence.

The child's voice was very serious: "On that rainy night, Xiao Ba appeared at the train station of the small town where my grandfather lived. We didn't know where Xiao Ba came from, but we knew where Xiao Ba was headed ..."

The camera switched.

A wet railway station, bustling under the dim light.

On a moving freight train, a dog cage suddenly fell to the ground. The weak cage door broke open, and the dog inside escaped through the small hole.

No passerby paid attention to this dog.

The dog's eyes were filled with confusion and panic.

This description might sound strange since it's usually hard for people to tell a dog's emotions through its eyes.

But for some reason, when everyone saw this puppy's eyes, they definitely felt a slight panic and confusion.

In an instant, a lot of people felt an inexplicable affection.

The puppy ran about aimlessly, seemingly trying to avoid the crowd, but suddenly halted in the shadow of a lamp post.

A pair of legs appeared on the camera.

The camera panned upwards, revealing a handsome and mature face. This man was on the phone.

“No need to pick me up, I’ll walk ... I miss you too.”

All the cinema representatives knew, this actor is Zhang Xiuming, but nobody broke the storyline.

When Zhang Xiuming appeared in the movie, he seemed to naturally fall into the role.

That’s the talent of a movie emperor, naturally making the audience forget reality.

Ending the call, a man and a dog, face to face ...

“It’s a drama movie as expected.”

In the eighth row in front of the big screen, Ye Hongyu slightly raised her eyebrow: “From the opening music to the camera work, they are all trying to create an atmosphere.”

“What kind of atmosphere?”

“Yang An quietly asked.

Ye Hongyu smiled: “An emotional atmosphere. If things go as anticipated, this movie will suddenly switch to melodramatic mode at some point. The scriptwriter and director will use all their tricks to try to move the audience.”

Usually, Ye Hongyu wouldn’t talk during a movie.

But considering Yang An is a newcomer who needs to be mentored, so she explained a bit: “If you end up being moved, the movie is considered successful.”

Yang An confidently said: “I have high tear threshold.”

Ye Hongyu did not comment.

In terms of tear threshold, she was professionally trained.

No matter how touching the film might be, she could remain unmoved.

Unless...

Meanwhile, between their conversation, the movie was continuing its undramatic narrative.

The male protagonist played by Zhang Xiuming tried to hand the dog over to the station security but was rejected. The security guard explained:

“I’m sorry, but I’m a bit allergic to dog fur. You can take the dog home for now, and if anyone comes looking for it, I’ll let Professor An know.”

Turns out, Zhang Xiuming was playing the role of a professor.

Professor An, reluctant to abandon the dog, could only bring him home, leading to his wife’s dissatisfaction.

In this process, whether it was the dog’s natural cuteness, or the interaction between Professor An and his wife, everything brought about a rather warm feeling.

It was clear this was a loving couple.

Their love was so deep that even though the wife didn’t like dogs, she still allowed Professor An to temporarily keep the dog at home, waiting for the owner to claim it.

However, the woman had one requirement; she wouldn’t allow the dog to stay inside the house.

Helpless, Professor An could only raise the dog outside.

Some audience members noticed that there was a deserted dog house in Professor An's yard.

Why was there a dog house?

The cinema representatives had no idea, it seemed like a foreshadowing.

After much fuss, Professor An finally refurbished the dog house and settled the dog there.

As he turned around to go back inside, Professor An heard the dog softly whine.

He paused, turned around and looked at the dog, only to find traces of grievance in the dog's eyes.

Grievance?

For the second time, the audience was deeply moved by this strange feeling, their hearts seemed to be melting, wishing desperately to hold the dog and console him.

They could not understand how they could see emotions in a dog's eyes.

At the railway station, the dog's eyes were filled with confusion, panic and a hint of fear.

At that time, everyone thought it was a wonderful coincidence formed by the director's management of the lighting and usage of the camera.

However, at this moment, the hint of grievance in the dog's eyes could not deceive anyone, and everyone realized that maybe the emotions conveyed by the dog were not just the coincidences of camera and lighting effects.

The little guy is really upset!

Familiar representatives of the cinemas quietly exchanged words:

“I can’t believe I’m seeing acting skills in the eyes of a dog. This dog’s acting skills are even better than many young actors!”

“Where did they find this dog? It’s perfect, I want to keep a dog like this.”

“A dog like this could naturally gain the audience’s affection.”

“I’m sure a dog would not understand acting, perhaps it’s genuinely expressing its emotions.”

“What should I do, it’s too cute!”

“I really like this dog.”

“...”

In the ninth row, Yi Chenggong’s mouth curled into a slight smile.

Just as he anticipated, the audience fell in love with Xiao Ba in record time.

However, these people could never guess that the dog’s superb acting skills were all down to Xian Yu’s credit.

If the crew hadn’t witnessed it in person, Yi Chenggong would also find it hard to believe that someone could get a dog to cooperate for a performance.

“I’m sorry, you’ll have to bear with it tonight. I hope someone comes to pick you up tomorrow.”

Professor An apologised to the dog with a bitter smile, then turned and went back to his house.

The camera turned to grayscale.

This was the dog’s perspective. He huddled in the doghouse, looking out from the doorway.

In the lonely yard, there was only the moon hanging high in the night sky, and the faint chirping of unknown insects in the darkness.

At this moment.

The audience started feeling strong sympathy for the dog, and dissatisfaction towards the uncompassionate mistress.

Chapter 406: Heart Knot

That night.

Professor An, cradling his wife, was deep in sleep.

Suddenly, a flash of light burst through the window, followed by a dull rumble of thunder, accompanied by the pitter-patter of rain –

It started raining.

Professor An was suddenly startled awake. He glanced at the window, then carefully got up.

He tiptoed out of the bedroom, not even having time to put on a robe, and ended up outside the front door, where a seemingly sleepless dog in the kennel began barking at him.

“Don’t be afraid…”

Professor An felt around with his right hand, presumably looking for an umbrella, but couldn’t find one. He could only rush into the rain towards the kennel, picking up the dog.

The rain got worse.

Professor An used his body to shield the dog from the rain, holding it as he entered his study. He then found a blanket from a box and wrapped the dog in it:

“You might feel a bit cold.”

He said with a laugh, looking at the dog, only to sneeze.

The dog licked the back of his hand and whimpered as if awkwardly consoling him.

On the screen.

The audience watched this affectionate scene, their eyes filled with stars.

“Professor An is so kind.”

“It’s breaking my heart.”

“Indeed, a dog is the real love.”

“I hope Professor An doesn’t catch a cold.”

“He turned his study into a dog kennel. His tolerance of his wife is actually a form of respect. What a man.”

“...”

At this moment, female viewers with more delicate emotions seemed to be particularly touched. And Professor An’s personal charm was gradually revealed with his dialogue and demeanor, in combination with the plot.

He is a gentle, mature, kind-hearted man.

The dog spent a warm night in the study.

At seven o’clock in the morning, Madam An got up to find Professor An reading a book on the living room couch with his glasses on.

“You woke up so early today?”

“Yeah.”

“It seemed to have rained last night.”

“Achoo...”

“Have you caught a cold?”

Madam An walked to the door somewhat suspiciously, only to see the dog obediently sitting in its kennel, wagging its tail at her.

Turns out, Professor An deliberately woke up early to send the dog back to its kennel so his wife wouldn't find out.

His expression was calm, and his acting was superb. His wife didn't notice anything awry.

Staring at the courtyard after the heavy rain, then looking at the dog, Madam An bit her lip and turned around:

“Take some cold medicine.”

“I already did.”

“Will you get rid of it today?”

“Yes.”

“It's better that way.”

His wife still didn't want to keep the dog, so Professor An could only go out to find the dog's owner.

In the morning, he distributed flyers in alleys and streets; in the afternoon, he went to the pet shelter to inquire; he even contacted a friend who had pets to ask if they were interested in adopting the dog...

But after several days, he got nothing.

Professor An could only continue this routine—bringing the dog to his study every night when his wife was asleep, then sending it back to the kennel early the next morning.

However, when Professor An's daughter came to visit her parents, she was instantly attracted by the adorable dog and delightedly asked:

"I like it! What's its name?"

Madam An glanced at Professor An: "It's called 'Send Away Tomorrow'."

Professor An smiled warmly.

The daughter ignored her mother's sarcastic remark towards her father, thought for a moment, and said: "How about calling it Xiao Ba?"

Professor An's smile faltered for a moment.

Madam An, who was pouring a cup of coffee, suddenly paused, then looked out the window at the renovated kennel.

"It's been eight years."

Suddenly, the daughter said quietly, "It's exactly eight years since Xiao Hei passed away. Maybe it's Xiao Hei reincarnated to find us, we should take care of it as it grows up..."

Madam An's expression remained calm.

Yet, Professor An chuckled abruptly, "Then let's call it Xiao Ba. What do you think, dear?"

"Whatever you want, it won't stay for long anyway."

Madam An left her steaming coffee behind and fled back into her room, burying her head deep within the bedding.

A moment later, she got up and took out a picture from the drawer.

In the photograph was a family of three and at their feet, startlingly, was a dog.

So, eight years ago, Professor An also kept a dog which passed away for some reasons.

Madam An was reluctant to keep another dog because she feared to suffer another blow. Perhaps, the appearance of this dog always reminded her of her past beloved pet.

"So that's it."

"That's why Madam An doesn't want to keep a dog."

"I think I understand. I had a cat that ran away and could never be found. I cried for a long time and since then, I dared not keep a cat."

"Madam An is not that bad after all."

"Because she had showered love on that previous dog, she is resisting so much now. It's hard for outsiders to understand such feelings."

"Did Professor An bring the dog home to comfort his wife?"

"Being a gentle man, he sure is considerate."

“...”

The audience seemed to have a degree of sympathy for Madam An that gradually overshadowed her indifference towards the dog.

“Xiao Ba!”

The daughter’s suggestion made Professor An begin to call the puppy Xiao Ba.

He tried to understand Xiao Ba’s habits and played with him. While Professor An played the piano during the day, Xiao Ba would silently listen, or lick the sheet music on the piano...

The style of this film is very subtle.

The story being told doesn’t have many ups and downs.

But the audience doesn’t find it tedious or boring, instead, they are completely engrossed. The theatre is filled with warmth and joy.

Everyone is willing to believe that this is a heartwarming story of a family, who lost a beloved dog eight years ago and was comforted by the arrival of Xiao Ba.

The film utilizes the technique of storytelling through a child’s perspective in a retrospective manner.

Occasional slow motion, long takes to enhance realism, and the natural pursuit of depth of field in emotional films, are all used in a balanced way over the first twenty minutes to narratively unfold this story of a human and their dog.

The soundtrack starts with slow piano music.

The perspective of the dog appears from time to time in the movie, with shades of black, white, and gray, allowing the audience to empathize with Xiao Ba to the maximum extent.

However, Madam An's mental block wasn't that easily resolved.

One afternoon, half a month later.

She made the first attempt at driving Xiao Ba out of the house.

As a rational woman, she didn't wish to be ruled by soft-heartedness.

Xiao Ba stood at the door, facing the closed door, crying and whimpering, finally lying flat, showing no intent of leaving at all.

The camera then moved inside the door.

The audience was astonished to find out that after closing the door, Madam An didn't go back to her room immediately, instead, she stood still in a daze, not as heartless as she appeared.

Dusk arrived.

Madam An finally took action, she carefully peeked out through the door slit, only to make eye contact with Xiao Ba looking at her.

"Woof, woof!"

Xiao Ba started barking, cheerfully...

Madam An's tears abruptly fell. She turned around and decisively went back to her room, her footsteps were resolute and heavy.

Still hasn't changed her mind?

Was Xiao Ba abandoned just like that?

Some viewers felt an overwhelming sense of pity.

Then in an instant, a ray of light shone through in the hearts of the audience, making their eyes slightly teary!

Click.

Amazingly, Xiao Ba nudged the door open with his head and returned to the yard, his bark was even more cheerful. In the suddenly accelerated piano rhythm, his joyous barking sound is beautiful, as beautiful as the approaching dusk in the evening!

It turns out...

In the end, Madam An really did unlock the door, only she left it slightly ajar pretending as if it was still locked.

Chapter 407: Feel the Pain

People thought this failed eviction might be the catalyst for Madam An to accept Xiao Ba. Her heart was slowly softening, but they didn't expect this to happen. While Madam An didn't have the heart to evict Xiao Ba herself, she continued to pressure Professor An. After Xiao Ba accidentally shattered a bowl in the kitchen, a fierce argument between Madam An and Professor An ensued—

"I've had enough! You will send him away tomorrow!"

"Tomorrow?"

"You've been saying that for over half a month!"

"I'm sorry."

Professor An said softly after a moment of silence.

It seemed like he had made up his mind.

The camera then naturally switched to Xiao Ba's perspective.

Xiao Ba seemed to have sensed something. Through the gaps in the wooden boards in the grayscale world, it watched the figure of Professor An apologizing and slowly stopped wagging its tail.

"Please don't!"

"Don't send him away."

"He is your dog."

"He has already chosen his owner."

An audience member murmured, their voice laced with a hint of pleading.

Sensitive female audience members were holding back tears, their eyes full of sympathy for Xiao Ba in the frame.

"..."

Yang An, who previously boasted a high breaking point for tears, bit his lip as his nose began to sting.

He quietly glanced at Ye Hongyu next to him.

Ye Hongyu maintained the same composure since the beginning of the film, without any unnecessary expressions on her face, just as she always did when watching any other movie—

The epitome of calm and rational.

Yang An, as if reminded, sniffed and suppressed his stirring emotions.

On the big screen.

The sky had darkened once again.

Like the past few days, Professor An quietly got up again after his wife fell asleep and took Xiao Ba to his study.

He took out the canned dog food and dog treats he had bought and fed Xiao Ba.

Before, he would not let Xiao Ba eat too many snacks as he felt that picky eating wasn't a good habit, but today, he took out all the cans and snacks.

"Today, you can eat however you like."

Professor An smiled at Xiao Ba, though his smile was somewhat stiff.

Xiao Ba, who used to be extraordinarily excited in front of these snacks, was extremely stubborn today, staring at Professor An without moving a muscle.

Xiao Ba didn't touch the canned food or snacks at all.

As if these things didn't exist at all.

Professor An's eyes were slightly moist. He picked up Xiao Ba, gently patting its back, and softly repeated, "Good boy, good boy..."

Xiao Ba did not make any noise.

In past nights, when Professor An secretly brought Xiao Ba into his study, he always had to ask it to be quiet to prevent an excited Xiao Ba from waking up Madam An.

But tonight, Xiao Ba was particularly understanding. It didn't utter a whimper of grievance, lying silently in Professor An's arms.

At this moment.

The camera angle subtly shifted.

Outside the study, Madam An stood wearing her nightgown, looking at her husband. No one knew how long she had been standing there before she quietly turned and went back to the bedroom.

Perhaps, that night, everyone was especially exhausted.

The next day, when Professor An woke up, the sun was already high in the sky.

The wife who used to be beside him was no longer there.

Professor An abruptly remembered the dog was still in his study. He slapped his forehead in annoyance, put on his robe over his pajamas, messed up hair and all, and bolted towards the study.

However, when he reached the study, he was stunned by what he saw.

Madam An was gently stroking Xiao Ba's head, watching gently as Xiao Ba ate the snacks he refused to eat the day before.

Before he could say anything, their home phone rang.

Madam An got up to answer the phone. A kind voice on the other end said, "Hello, I heard you have a dog looking for a new home. I am willing to adopt him, I really like dogs..."

"I'm sorry."

On the sunny and relaxed little town, the ancient and peaceful happiness gradually flowed.

As Madam An watched a nervous Professor An, she smiled and said to the person on the phone: "Xiao Ba already has an owner."

Thump.

Xiao Ba seemed to understand; he suddenly stopped munching on his snack and, surprisingly, carried the strip-shaped snack in his mouth and delivered it to Madam An's feet.

"Xiao Ba, she doesn't eat this."

Professor An chuckled, his body seemingly instantly relaxed, the relief of that moment shining as brilliantly as the sunlight outside the house.

"Plop."

Xiao Ba jumped up excitedly, knocking over a chair, causing Madam An's face to instantly fill with rage: "Xiao Ba, get out of here!"

"Woof!"

Xiao Ba barked at her, with the snack in its mouth, and ran off.

Madam An and Professor An exchanged glances and suddenly burst into hearty laughter.

"No more getting up in the middle of the night," Madam An warned after laughing a while. "Anyway, it is your own study; you can give it to anyone you want."

"Did you find out?"

"I knew it long ago."

The woman had unraveled her misgivings, but the audience couldn't determine whether it was out of love for her husband or her reluctance to let go of Xiao Ba.

Perhaps, both.

Some of the audience in the front started to wipe their tears and looked around for tissues, only to find them on the side of their seats, causing them to smile involuntarily.

Finally, someone understood why tissues were placed here.

But having tissues at every seat was a bit too dramatic.

“This is nice.”

Yang An looked at Ye Hongyu, whose expression seemed to be perennially unchanged, and spoke to himself inwardly.

He didn’t notice that Ye Hongyu had slightly raised his eyebrows.

The following scenes were entirely about Xiao Ba...

Xiao Ba had grown up bit by bit.

The grown-up Xiao Ba was still as adorable as ever, if not more spirited.

In these intricate and warm shots, the purest and most genuine emotions between humans and animals were displayed without reservation.

With Xiao Ba’s growth, the movie was able to convey the subtle warmth between humans and dogs to the audience just through gestures and movements, no words necessary.

The camera more frequently adopted a low angle for filming.

Black, white, and gray.

The movie led everyone to view the world from Xiao Ba’s perspective.

Along with the everyday interactions between Xiao Ba and Professor An, a countless number of warm emotions had already sprung up in the hearts of the audience.

Becoming the pet dog of Professor An's family, familiarity and tacit understanding grew bit by bit.

Whenever the professor was about to board a train for school, Xiao Ba always followed behind. Watching Professor An get on the train, Xiao Ba would sit across from the train station by the flowerbed all day long.

At first, Professor An often shooed it away, asking it to go home.

Later, the professor found that Xiao Ba, as though bewitched, always insisted on seeing him walk out of the train station before it would finally leave. Hence, the professor gave up and let it wait.

Over time, even the uncle who sold egg pancakes and the auntie from the newspaper booth at the train station got to know this little dog that saw the professor off to work every day and waited for the professor to come home-

Xiao Ba was very loyal.

Everyone loved it, and some people even gave Xiao Ba food. Whenever this happened, Xiao Ba would express its gratitude in its own way.

Yang An was particularly fond of Xiao Ba.

In front of the big screen, watching Xiao Ba dig a hole under the fence to see the professor off to work. Yang An's mouth curled up into a smile. Watching Xiao Ba's tail wag excitedly and rush up to greet the professor upon his return from work, Yang An's eyes shifted slightly...

Humans and dogs had an attachment to each other.

Halfway through the movie, no one knew what was going to happen next, but the interaction and growth between humans and dogs were so endearing that no one found it boring. It was a feeling that blockbuster films laden with special effects couldn't evoke.

It seemed like realizing the charm of light dishes after having too much rich food.

However, few people knew it was a warm trap carefully crafted by the movie.

And the ones with the most say in this matter were Yi Chenggong, who was sitting in the ninth row, and the executives at Starlight who had watched the movie once before.

“Get ready to feel the pain...”

Ol’ Zhou muttered in his heart, while glancing at a female audience member in the row in front of him.

The female audience member was a representative of a medium-sized movie theater. She was looking up slightly, like savoring a sweet ice cream in summer, her face filled with cozy joy...

Ol’ Zhou’s gaze swept over the others.

Everyone was completely absorbed, without exception.

Chapter 408: Agreement

The gentle trap, it catches people off guard, and they fall into it without noticing...

Professor An was accustomed to waiting for Xiao Ba.

Xiao Ba had grown used to Professor An’s returns.

They were like the most synchronized pair, always understanding each other’s intentions at the very first moment.

If anything were less than perfect, it probably was that Xiao Ba never showed any interest in fetching a ball.

Other people’s dogs would fetch the ball tossed by their owners.

It was a way of playing and interacting.

But Xiao Ba wasn't fond of ball-fetching. Instead, it would rather frolic with Professor An, showing no interest in a rolling ball.

So it went on.

Days went by.

At some point, Professor An began to wear glasses, and his hair turned gray. He could no longer play with Xiao Ba as freely as before.

Yet Xiao Ba was still full of energy.

It still sent Professor An to his car every day and waited for him at the corner of the station, as if they had an unspoken pact.

Then one day.

As usual, Professor An was heading to the station for work. Unexpectedly, he found that Xiao Ba was carrying the ball it never used to play with and was following him.

"You want to play?"

Professor An was taken aback. He test-threw the ball to a nearby spot, and indeed, Xiao Ba fetched it back.

"Well done!"

It felt as if Professor An had become a few years younger. He picked up the ball again, threw it farther, and Xiao Ba, without hesitation, fetched it back as before.

Professor An was extraordinarily joyful.

That day.

The ball-adverse Xiao Ba suddenly wanted to play fetch with him. For the first time, Professor An missed the first bus due to his immersion in the unexpected joy.

The scene brought smiles to the faces of those at the station.

Professor An and Xiao Ba played for a long time before he finally set off for work, reluctantly.

Throughout his commute, he tightly held the small yellow ball in his hand.

With this, the gentle trap finally unveiled its long-prepared, shocking snare!

Not everyone was oblivious.

Among the representatives of the cinema chains present, some were furrowing their brows, musing over the implications of this scene, sensing a slight discomfort.

Next to Ye Hongyu.

Yang An quietly clenched his fists; an inexplicable agitation stirred in his heart. Why had there been such a twist? Was there a special reason why Xiao Ba wanted to play ball?

At this moment, Yang An noticed that Ye Hongyu, whose leg had been bounced all this while, had lowered it.

His unease was rapidly magnifying!

The movie continued.

Professor An, a music teacher by profession, began to lecture his students on his understanding of music after playing a piano piece.

Time had aged him, but it had also made his temperament more reserved. This man seemed even more attractive now, but he was somewhat mischievous.

While teaching a piano lesson, he held in his hand the yellow ball with which he had played with Xiao Ba before work.

He occasionally squeezed the ball, making it emit a cute sound.

“We...”

Professor An glanced at the ball, smiled, and was about to speak when his face changed abruptly. He clutched his chest, reaching out for support, touching the piano.

“Hum.”

His hand had unintentionally hit the black and white keys, producing a disjointed sound from the piano, which attracted all the students. Amid their startled gaze, Professor An collapsed suddenly.

Clatter!

The students jumped up in confusion...

In the slow-motion shot with just the focus, the yellow ball was still tightly gripped in the professor's hand, but it was no longer squeezed to make a sound, as if the fallen Professor An on the classroom floor would never wake up...

Professor An was dead.

It was like a sinister plot crafted by the scriptwriter, yet it felt like a sudden accident.

The glow of the big screen illuminated all the faces in the audience.

Countless pupils were dilating.

The faces of the audience shifted from disbelieving shock to immediate panic, then overwhelming sorrow, until finally, they were completely covered by enormous grief.

A small gap in the depths of the soul, slowly enlarging and spreading, until it collapsed.

At this moment, everyone's mind was a blank!

Just like a piece of deadwood that couldn't think.

By the time people realized what had happened, some of the audience were already enveloped by the rapidly rising despair!

All of a sudden, the big screen, like the audience's mood, dimmed.

In the darkness, there was nothing, and nothing could be seen.

Thump thump thump thump...

There was no contrived sentimental music, only the sound of a heartbeat drumming in the darkness, growing slower and slower, until it disappeared completely.

Squeak.

It was the faint sound of the ball.

The big screen lit up in an instant, but the expressions of the audience were strikingly different from those a few seconds before the darkness, as if it were a movie edit.

Those were teary faces...

The shot cruelly switched to the old train station, where Xiao Ba was still squatting by the pool on the opposite side. The camera slowly panned upwards, in the long shot only the helpless silhouette of Xiao Ba was left.

Alone and sad.

As though frozen in time.

In the back row, tears flowed like a broken dam from Yang An's eyes, unable to be held back.

Perhaps Ye Hongyu was the only one holding back, seemingly unfazed as though it was her creed, but her lips had turned white from biting down too hard, and she still did not loosen her grip despite the pain.

Yang An couldn't see this.

His ears were filled with the sound of the entire cinema sobbing. As the gentle trap began to close in, few were left untouched.

Chapter 409: Agreement

In a cinema hall like this, tears are the cheapest form of release!

The uncles and aunts who set up stalls at the train station financial worker shift one after another.

The man in the security room glanced at the time on his watch and looked at Xiao Ba squatting on the flower bed, tried to call him, but Xiao Ba did not respond.

At this time.

The sky had completely darkened, and Xiao Ba was left with only the ice and snow that had not completely melted this winter.

The lens zooms in quickly, Xiao Ba's lower jaw against the ground, his breathing slowly becoming heavier,

In the end, it was Professor An's daughter who brought Xiao Ba home.

The lights in the house did not go out that night.

Xiao Ba simply refused to enter the study.

It seemed to have returned to the day it first joined this family, peering through the small gap at this black and white world, like a pitiful orphan.

The only difference was that Madam An cried all night.

The next day, a grand funeral was held for Professor An, his face became part of people's memory, etched onto the tomb.

Xiao Ba did not show up.

As always, it went to the flower bed across the station and squatted, watched the morning train heading towards the distance as always, and the passing crowd as always...

What was it looking for?

What was it waiting for?

The answer to this question seemed meaningless, just like Xiao Ba's aimless waiting, which was also meaningless for many people.

The snow started to flurry again that night.

Everything was bleakly white.

The man in the train station security booth walked up to Xiao Ba and said softly, "You don't have to keep waiting, he's never going to come back."

Xiao Ba remained still.

In the snowy night, what was reflected in its eyes, was unknowingly the light, or the moonlight.

The man in the security booth shook his head, but in the eyes of the audience, it was clearly an extreme sadness.

The big snow covered Xiao Ba's fur, Xiao Ba seemed not to hear, and the station attendant brushed the snow off Xiao Ba's body, smiled helplessly, he knew this was Xiao Ba's stubbornness...

The sobbing in the cinema had become intermittent, even the crowd that was originally trying to suppress it, could no longer restrain themselves.

Ye Hongyu's eyes, as if illuminated by the fire, were filled with red.

It was then that Yang An noticed that Ye Hongyu's body was slightly trembling, like himself, his throat was blocked, and he could only try to alleviate the surging tears in a manner close to disgrace.

That year, Madam An sold the house, as if trying to escape from this city.

Professor An's daughter brought Xiao Ba back to her house, but Xiao Ba escaped that same day.

Only then did Professor An's daughter realize that the Xiao Ba before her was no longer the one that no matter what could not be driven away or scolded away.

The black and white grey world still had no color.

Amidst the passing scenery, it was running out of breath.

It crossed the forest of withered branches and leaves, and also crossed the endless fields, it returned to the home where the former him lived, this road it would always remember.

However, this home, already had new owners.

"Are you lost?"

The new owner of the house looked at Xiao Ba, the scene was just like the first time Xiao Ba and Professor An met, that man bent down and asked with a gentle face:

Little guy, are you lost?

It was not lost, it returned to the flower bed across from the old station again, as if to hold onto a never existed, or perhaps a silent agreement.

Sometimes when it is tired from squat, it would lie down to rest, it's just that those eyes which seemed to be able to speak, never left each passing train, and every handful of people arriving at the station.

Yes, this is where he left, it might never be lost.

It's just the person it's waiting for, could he not find the way home because he was lost?

Professor An's daughter took it home again, tried to tie it up, but Xiao Ba refused to eat or drink, refused by fasting, just like the night Professor An tried to send it away—

After a few days, Professor An's daughter suddenly understood something.

She chose to release the chain that held Xiao Ba and opened the tightly shut door, crying and smiling, "Maybe I understand you."

For the first time, Xiao Ba did not wildly escape.

It looked at Professor An's daughter, as if saying a serious goodbye.

The scene changes.

It was still the flower bed across from the old station, and Xiao Ba was back in his squatting position here again.

It looked as if it had grown together with this place, the passing trains always managed to lift Xiao Ba's spirit right away, but the familiar scent was lost among the passing crowds, so all it received was one disappointment after another.

Its fur had become disgustingly messy.

The black, white and grey in its eyes, were cold and chilly, piercing to the bone.

At night, it would sleep under the wheels of the discarded train carriage.

Every morning when the first train woke it up, it would, as usual, run to the other side of the train station, sit upright on the unchanged steps, waiting for a certain returnee that will never appear.

No matter whether it was windy, raining, or when the familiar heavy snow was floating down from the sky.

No one ever brought it into the study again.

No one ever gave it a blanket to keep warm.

Only time hurried by, people hurried by.

Only the train would continue to hoot, only sunrise would alternate with sunset, only the bright moon turned into a thin moon.

One year passed, then two years, then three years...

The people around would provide Xiao Ba with food for survival.

Everyone was moved by Xiao Ba's loyalty to his master, and even the newspapers published news about Xiao Ba waiting for his master to return for years, and there were also spontaneous donations from the public...

"Xiao Ba has gotten old."

One day, the security guard who still worked at the station quietly said that.

It started to falter, its dirty fur became sparse day by day, because there was no one to groom it for a long time, it no longer had its previous gloss.

It was still waiting, day after day, for a full ten years.

Spring, summer, autumn, and winter, the four seasons cycled.

No one knew whether Xiao Ba knew that he would never return, the distance between life and death, perhaps a dog really couldn't perceive it.

It was just stubbornly believed that his master would return.

So it waited forever, but its life couldn't stand the erosion of time, like a flowing stream, little by little on the bluestone platform of the station, year after year it passed and withered away.

As a dog, this was its own vigil, and also the destination it chose for itself.

From birth to old age and sickness, to death, never leaving nor abandoning, it used ten years of time to completely become a landscape.

When the former gleaming Madam An came to the small town station, she saw Xiao Ba as soon as she walked out of the station.

Xiao Ba, it was already so old that it could only lie there, not wanting to waste even a little bit of strength to move.

With just one glance, Madam An cried her makeup off.

Just like the Ye Hongyu in front of the movie screen who claimed to be able to keep her composure forever, for the first time in her life she took the paper from Yang An, crying so hard that she couldn't breathe.

Chapter 410: Laughter and Tears

This was the first time Yang An saw Ye Hongyu's strength crumble, her heavily applied makeup unable to withstand the relentless assault of her tears.

Like a puppet whose strings had been cut.

Boxes of tissues found their ultimate purpose in the cinema, but no one had the time to ponder about this peculiar arrangement.

The entire theatre was bathed in a thick sadness.

At this point, almost all the representatives from the various cinemas didn't dare to continue watching.

The sides of Ye Hongyu's nostrils were red from the constant rubbing with tissues, but she still determinedly lifted her head to watch the big screen...

The lights remained dim.

Xiao Ba's face as he lay sleeping under the abandoned train cabin was old and lined, and the marks that age had carved into him were clear. But everyone knew that it wasn't the condition of the train station that was torturing him, but the fact that the familiar call of "Xiao Ba" would never sound again.

Snow fell like knives.

It was winter again.

The audience felt a certain dislike for winters like this. The train's whistle, tirelessly sounding, woke Xiao Ba, who could only watch the train pull away once more.

Accompanying all this was the heavy, slow rhythm of pianos playing in the background.

Xiao Ba braved the snow, dragging his weary steps along the train tracks.

The lights in the homes on either side of the tracks were progressively going out.

It seemed tired.

Returning to the familiar flower bed, it lay down wearily, lacking the energy even to whimper. Xiao Ba gently closed his eyes.

Suddenly, it seemed as though the train had returned.

The whistle that had sounded for the umpteenth time in the last ten years.

But this time, the lights of the train were exceedingly bright, and even the street lamps on either side seemed to have lit up again.

The scene transitioned in a montage-like manner, to the bright sunlight.

In his dream, Xiao Ba heard someone calling him:

“Wake up.”

“Xiao Ba.”

“Let’s go.”

Xiao Ba opened his eyes and saw Professor An’s familiar face appearing in the hazy view, waving at him.

The scene flashed back.

The sunny spring afternoons spent running around freely; the evenings when the train had returned and they would embrace each other; the moments when the crowds started boarding, and they would bid each other goodbye; the day when it started pouring, and they would seek warmth in the study...

In the memories, he was still young.

In the memories, it was still fit and nimble.

It turns out this was just a dream of Xiao Ba's, and in this dream of Xiao Ba's is the world in color.

The music picked up, faster and higher.

Xiao Ba suddenly woke up, hearing the sound of train doors opening.

Before its eyes, to its shock, it was actually Professor An—waving at it and calling its name fondly.

It abruptly sat up.

Its fur seemed to become neat and clean again, its movements nimble and vigorous.

Whoosh.

It charged into Professor An's embrace swiftly as it had done countless times in the past—against the snow which fell even more sharply like knives—

That evening.

Xiao Ba left.

The audience's cries were nearing breaking point now, even if they knew that this was Xiao Ba's inevitable end!

From the back of the theatre,

Ol' Zhou could keep an eye on the whole theatre, including Ye Hongyu's reaction.

Ol' Zhou wasn't surprised.

The second time he watched “Hachiko” he still couldn’t hold back, savoring the sour and salty taste of his tears. What more for these audience members, who were watching the movie for the first time?

An Iron Lady?

She was still a woman after all.

Who was truly heartless?

Xiao Ba has passed away, yet the movie isn’t over. Amid the audience’s breakdown and tears, the boy’s voice-over begins, the camera slowly shifting back to the bright and clean classroom: “I don’t have much of a memory of my grandpa, but after hearing his story with Xiao Ba, I feel like I understand him. Don’t forget those you love, that’s why Xiao Ba is my eternal hero.”

Next to the podium, the teacher rubbed her eyes.

Some of the kids in the audience had slightly reddened eyes.

After school, as the boy stepped off the school bus, in the distance, a dog was quickly rushing toward him. It looked exactly like Xiao Ba when he was young.

It felt as if the audience was witnessing a great cycle.

Although this cycle initially seemed cruel, as the boy and the dog crossed the railroad tracks and strolled by the clear creek, amidst the painful sobbing, a sense of comfort took root in everyone’s hearts.

At that moment, everyone understood Madam An.

Maybe the audience’s sentiment mirrors the conflicting feelings Madam An had when first accepting Xiao Ba into her life, as depicted in the first half of the movie.

Fearing the end so one refrains from starting in the first place.

Regardless of who leaves first, the pain inflicted on the one left behind is everlasting.

Professor An had once had a dog named Xiao Hei.

After Xiao Hei's death, Madam An was left with a mental scar.

This scar was evident in her repeatedly refusing to let Xiao Ba join the family and in her attempts to get rid of him.

The passing of a dog leaves a void in one's heart.

However, Xiao Ba's arrival ultimately faced Professor An's departure.

A person's departure, from a dog's perspective, carries a deeper impact. For this reunion into oblivion, it waited ten years—

Some lost their dogs.

Some dogs lost their owners.

Yet people still harbor a beautiful vision in their hearts, which is the hope that all those who lost their loved ones can meet again in heaven.

The movie ended.

No one stood up.

Ye Hongyu leaned back in her seat, wiping her tears, a thought surfaced in her mind again: "We are professionally trained, no matter how moved, we manage to stay calm, unless we can't hold back."

"Sis Hongyu..."

Fearing Ye Hongyu might feel embarrassed, Yang An quietly said, "Everyone is crying."

“Hmm.”

Ye Hongyu smiled, “There’s something I forgot to teach you.”

“What is it?”

“Humans aren’t stones, we can’t be indifferent forever. When we can’t hold back, cry if you want to cry, laugh if you want to laugh. It’s our freedom.”

Yang An was stunned, then nodded in agreement.

At this time, the staff credits appeared again on the big screen.

Unlike the indifference at the beginning-

This time, everyone was watching the credits intently.

All contributors, whether they were the director, actors, or crew were engraved into people’s hearts.

Finally, the credits highlighted three main entries.

Star: Zhang Xiuming

Director: Yi Chenggong

Scriptwriter: Xian Yu

Featured Performer: Xiao Huang (with photo, young dog)

Featured Performer: Antarctica (with photo, adult dog)

Featured Performer: Big Huang (with photo, old dog)

For the years they've been watching movies, the cinema representatives witnessed for the first time dog names being displayed in the credits, and even more prominently than Xian Yu. Perhaps this was another comfort for the audience.

In the movie, Xiao Ba was gone.

But outside the movie, these dogs who participated in the performance were still alive and healthy.

At this moment-

A thunderous round of applause resonated in the movie theatre.