

### Chapter 281: A Rivalry From Her Previous Life

At seven o'clock, Lu Yi left his office and made a beeline for Yan Huan's apartment. He was not alone; with him was Lei Qingyi, who arrived with takeout. Yan Huan let out a sigh of relief when she saw the extra food; there would be enough to go around now.

Luo Lin was glad to see Lu Yi. Yan Huan was in a good mood, and Lu Yi was here for dinner; that meant that Yan Huan had probably told Lu Yi about Su Muran.

As long as Lu Yi was willing to help them, the Su family would not be able to lay a finger on Yan Huan. The Lu family was related to the Ye family by marriage, and they were also close to the Lei family. The Su family could not afford to step on any of their toes.

"Here." Yan Huan served the dumplings. Everyone else had their share of the dumplings served on plates, but not Lei Qingyi: he received his share in a massive bowl.

Lei Qingyi's eyes lit up. He did not feel the least bit embarrassed about the size of his share. What was there to be ashamed about? It was a blessing to be able to eat. He ate a lot, which meant that he had to be one of the luckiest, happiest people alive. His mother had said that he had a face that seemed destined for happiness, and he was quite sure that it was because of his large appetite.

Yan Huan's dumplings were delicious. Lei Qingyi ate his entire bowl, but his stomach was still not quite full.

"You're such a pig." Yi Ling was feeling second-hand embarrassment for Lei Qingyi. She was a glutton herself, but Lei Qingyi made her look like a dainty eater in comparison. He could eat two of Yi Ling's portions, which was equivalent to four or five of Yan Huan's.

"Haha..." Lei Qingyi did not mind. Yi Ling had called him that many times now; he was used to it.

"Do you want more? I can give you mine."

Yi Ling lifted her plate to show the dumplings in it. She had kept aside some of her dumplings because she knew that Lei Qingyi could not possibly be full, not with his monstrous appetite.

"Yes, of course. I want more."

Lei Qingyi pushed his massive bowl over to Yi Ling.

The corner of Yi Ling's mouth twitched in exasperation. "I'm surprised you haven't bankrupt your family with your bottomless stomach by now." She felt sorry for the Lei family; if she had had an appetite as massive as Lei Qingyi's, she was sure that she would have cleaned out Mrs. Yan's bank account and caused Yan Huan to starve to death.

"Don't worry. My mom can afford to feed me." Lei Qingyi stuffed another dumpling into his mouth, his brow slick with sweat from his overly enthusiastic eating. Yan Huan's dumplings were the best he had ever tasted. He was thankful to Yan Huan for the heavenly dumplings, but he was even more thankful to Yi Ling now for giving him her share.

He grinned at Yi Ling, his eyes full of warm affection. Yi Ling's face turned a shade of red as she quickly looked away. She picked up a dumpling, put it into her bowl, and then walked off to feed the dumpling to Little Bean.

Yan Huan looked from Yi Ling to Lei Qingyi.

She hoped the two of them would get together. She did not particularly mind who Yi Ling ended up with, as long as it was not that scumbag Ding Ming. She had succeeded in kicking the vile man away; if he came crawling back to her, Yan Huan would not hesitate to crush him beneath her heel.

Three days passed, and it was now the first day of the shoot for *Beauty*. By the time Yan Huan arrived on set, all the other actors were already there—except for Su Muran. She was evidently one of those divas who thought she was too important to be punctual.

Director Jin was sincerely apologetic when he saw Yan Huan. He had not known how to tell her about Su Muran; it had been out of his control, but he felt like a dirty liar nevertheless. The higher-ups had forced him to reassign the role of the female lead to Su Muran, even though he vastly preferred Yan Huan to all the other actresses. Director Jin knew Yan Huan was a charismatic actress with amazing acting skills, and her recent mega-hit at the box office proved it—the movie had been a massive hit because of her superb performance, and not because of marketing and PR.

"It's okay, Director Jin. I prefer the secondary female role to the female lead, anyway," said Yan Huan.

Director Jin assumed that Yan Huan was only saying that to make him feel better. He felt even worse.

But he did not allow himself to get side-tracked by feelings of guilt. He knew he had to warn Yan Huan of Su Muran, the actress who had appeared out of nowhere to steal the role of the female lead—the two actresses would be acting opposite each other in many scenes, after all.

"Be careful of Su Muran. Keep out of her way, and try not to step on her toes," Director Jin said in a low voice. He meant well; he was afraid that Yan Huan would be angry with Su Muran and get into a fight with her. If that happened, he was quite sure that Yan Huan would end up drawing the short end of the stick.

"Don't worry, Director Jin. I get what you're saying," Yan Huan said reassuringly. She inwardly added to herself: But I have my way of doing things.

Yan Huan was not foolish enough to start a fight with Su Muran, but she could not help her competitive streak: she enjoyed going all out in her performances and trying to out-act the other actors. Some of the actors appreciated the healthy rivalry, while others resented it and took it personally. She had a feeling Su Muran was part of the latter camp.

Yan Huan walked into the dressing room. She was surprised to see that the makeup artist was someone she was familiar with: Yue Ran.

Yue Ran greeted her cheerfully. "Hi. We meet again."

His hair was now long enough to brush his shoulders, but the hairstyle did not make him look effeminate. In fact, he looked like one of those beautiful men from the classical paintings.

He looked more like a sophisticated scholar than a makeup artist.

“Yes, good to see you again.” Yan Huan walked over and seated herself. She looked in the mirror and pointed at her face. “You have to make me look beautiful. I was robbed of my lead female role, and I’d rather drop dead than lose in terms of appearance too.”

“Oh...” Yue Ran gave a snort of laughter. “Don’t worry. I won’t turn you into an ugly woman.”

As he was scrutinizing Yan Huan’s features, the door suddenly swung open, disrupting his thoughts. Yue Ran’s expression darkened; he did not like being interrupted, and whoever opened the door had not bothered to knock beforehand. He said sharply, “Did no one teach you to knock before entering?”

He had barely finished his admonition when the intruder burst into contemptuous laughter.

“Oh my, it’s you. How did you end up here?”

The person who had spoken was an effeminate man with short hair and slanted phoenix eyes. Yan Huan turned to look at him, and saw that the man was standing with his arms crossed and pinky finger extended: it was the stereotypical “flamboyantly queer” pose.

Yan Huan did not know who he was, but she knew she preferred Yue Ran to the overly dramatic man standing in the doorway.

Yue Ran had been her good friend in her previous life. They had worked together for many years, and understood each other very well. Yan Huan knew Yue Ran could be trusted.

Yue Ran’s expression darkened as soon as he saw the effeminate man; the two men were evidently not on good terms. Yan Huan did not know the history between them, but she was a loyal friend: Yue Ran’s enemy was no friend of hers.

“Allen, are you ready?”

Another voice sounded from outside the door. It was nauseatingly sweet.

Yan Huan’s fingers tightened on her lap as she carefully maintained the unassailable smile on her face.

We meet again, Su Muran. It’s been a while.

“Ms. Su, I’m ready.”

The makeup artist by the name of Allen had placed his makeup kit on the table. He shot Yue Ran a challenging, contemptuous look, and then put on an expression of mock confusion as he asked:

“I’m Ms. Su’s personal makeup artist. Who might you be?”

Yue Ran gave a cold, mirthless laugh. “My name is Yue Ran. I’m not anyone’s personal makeup artist.” Yue Ran picked up a comb and began brushing Yan Huan’s hair with it as he said to her, “I’ll turn you into the most beautiful woman in the world, another Helen of Troy. Do you have faith in me?”

## **Chapter 282: Protecting Someone**

“I have faith in you.” Yan Huan smiled demurely at their reflection in the mirror. A second later, she saw, through the mirror, a woman entering the room: it was Su Muran, dressed in a white one-piece dress from a famous clothing brand. The white, pristine dress made Yan Huan feel like throwing up.

Yan Huan could tell that Su Muran was going for the innocent White Lotus look, even though she was really nothing more than a fake Green Tea Bitch.

Su Muran had just entered the room when she heard Yue Ran say he would turn Yan Huan into the most beautiful woman in the world, another Helen of Troy.

Su Muran thought that was a massive over-exaggeration. Surely she was prettier than whoever this Yan Huan was?

Su Muran strode confidently into the room—and stopped short when she saw the enigmatic smile on Yan Huan’s perfect face.

Yan Huan’s odd, knowing smile made her feel uneasy, but Su Muran decided she would not waste her time engaging with lowly peasants.

She was the main character, after all. Everyone else was only there to make her look good.

Yue Ran began to work his magic. He had a unique approach to makeup; instead of winging it and trying to get the correct look through trial and error, he spent a lot of time perfecting the look he was going for inside his head. His method worked, because the end result was always mind-blowing.

Yan Huan’s perfect features only made things easier for him.

When Yue Ran had finished applying her makeup, Yan Huan could only stare in amazement at her reflection in the mirror. The radiant woman looking back at her was every bit the woman she had read about in the script for Beauty—the woman who had married into the rich Qin family and now ran the household; the sophisticated, highly-educated daughter of a distinguished government official; the girl who had grown up among calculative, backstabbing women.

Yan Huan’s lips curved into a small smile. She was invincible.

Beside Yan Huan, Allen was working on Su Muran’s makeup. When he saw Yan Huan, his hand slipped, leaving a large swathe of eye shadow on Su Muran’s cheek. Anger erupted within Su Muran when she saw his mistake, but she controlled herself and did not say anything.

Su Muran was arrogant by nature. She was the only heir to the Su family; everyone was therefore nothing more than an insignificant ant in her eyes. She commanded the wind and the rain, and she was not about to let a nobody like Yan Huan outshine her.

But principal photography had yet to begin, and already Su Muran felt that she had lost to Yan Huan. She stared at Yan Huan’s reflection in the mirror: all she could see was Chen Jing. The serene woman with her long lashes and flawless profile no matter which way she turned her head, was Chen Jing brought to life. The tinge of arrogance in her every expression—the sort of haughty dignity that could only be found in children of wealthy families—was entirely characteristic of Chen Jing.

The role of Chen Jing fit Yan Huan so well everyone who saw her wondered whether the role had been written specifically for her. It was either that, or Yan Huan had been born to play the role.

When the full-costume photos were ready, Director Jin could only shake his head.

“Director, Chen Jing looks so much more sophisticated and dignified than Mei Rushi in these photos. In fact, Mei Rushi looks like an uncultured country bumpkin in comparison.” It was clear what the staff was implying: there was no way the audience would take the show seriously if the supporting actress stole the limelight from the female lead.

Director Jin sighed again. “It isn’t just their looks. I’m pretty sure there’s a huge gap in their acting skills, too.”

He knew what he was talking about: this was his third time working with Yan Huan, after all. Even Liang Chen, the superstar who was famous for her acting skills, had been impressed with Yan Huan’s acting. On top of that, Yan Huan had won Best Newcomer and Best Supporting Actress at the Golden Phoenix Award, and her first feature film had grossed over 600 million yuan at the box office. It was obvious by now that she was no ordinary actress; it would take an even better actress to outshine someone like Yan Huan.

It was just a full-costume photo, but Yan Huan had proven that she was leagues above Su Muran. There was no room for debate; the point had been made.

One was a queen. The other was nothing more than a cabbage, in comparison.

The queen was Yan Huan, of course. If this had been a fight, her stately aura alone would have been enough to pulverize the poor little cabbage that was Su Muran.

This made Director Jin all the more concerned for Yan Huan’s future. Yan Huan was an outstanding actress, but she could not afford to step on Su Muran’s toes. The Su family was extremely powerful; they had to be, for the role of the female lead to be forcefully taken from Yan Huan and given to Su Muran instead.

The director knew that Yan Huan could not help outshining Su Muran. Yan Huan was a true professional, one of those actresses who were 100% committed to their roles. Only a superstar like Liang Chen would be able to act opposite Yan Huan without paling in comparison.

Was Su Muran as talented as Liang Chen?

No, of course not.

Liang Chen winning the Best Actress award was proof of that. The award would have gone to Su Muran, otherwise.

Director Jin hoped his misgivings about Su Muran were completely off the mark; perhaps the actress would turn out to be another dark horse, just like Yan Huan. At least, that was what he repeatedly told himself, because the alternative was too horrifying to think about: if Su Muran was not up to the task, the entire show would be ruined. No amount of tears and regret would save it then.

This was precisely why he hated it when actors got on his projects through “backdoor” connections.

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Lu Yi drove his car into a quiet mountain villa. It was no ordinary mountain villa, however, as evidenced by the sentries posted along the perimeter. The villa was under strict military management.

Security was tight, but Lu Yi's car entered the villa without any issue; the gates were programmed to automatically open for him once the infrared cameras scanned his car.

He walked to a two-story building and knocked on the door.

A moment later, a woman who looked to be in her forties emerged from behind the door. As soon as she saw Lu Yi, her face split into a smile. Her eyes twinkled merrily.

"Good of you to come, Lu Yi. Your grandfather was just talking about you yesterday. He was wondering why you haven't visited for a while now."

Lu Yi greeted the middle-aged woman with a simple "Hello, Auntie." He entered the building.

The house belonged to Lu Yi's grandfather on his mother's—Ye Shuyun's—side. The Ye family usually stayed out of the public eye, but that did not change the fact that they wielded tremendous power within the military and business spheres.

Lu Yi was a respectable, successful young man, but that was not the only reason the Lu family treated him with the greatest respect. He was also related to the Ye family, having inherited the Ye family blood from his mother. Ye Jianguo was especially fond of Lu Yi as he was the only grandchild from his daughter, Ye Shuyun; in fact, the old man liked him better than his other grandchildren, having personally coached Lu Yi ever since he was a young boy.

"I'm here to see you, Grandpa."

Lu Yi changed into a pair of indoor shoes. He walked over to Ye Jianguo and seated himself before him.

Ye Jianguo was already retired, but he still looked like a war stallion, ready for battle. His hair had turned gray, but his eyes were bright and alert. His mental faculties were still as sharp as ever, and his movements had not slowed with age. In other words, he did not seem at all like an old man.

Ye Jianguo had been meditating. He opened his eyes. "To what do I owe the honor of this visit?" He looked at his grandson over, and was pleased with what he saw. Lu Yi did not hunch or slouch like the others; he sat like a military man, with a very straight back. It was only natural for Lu Yi to have grown into a disciplined and accomplished adult under his grandfather's watchful eye.

"I need your help, Grandpa." Lu Yi did not beat around the bush. He was here for a reason.

He accepted the cup of tea the Lu family caretaker had brought him and lifted it to his lips for a small sip. "Excellent tea!" It was high quality Longjing tea, his grandfather's favorite; only the Lu family caretaker knew the correct way to brew the tea to bring out the full depth of its flavors.

"Haha..." The caretaker chuckled warmly. "I haven't forgotten that you like this tea. You and your grandfather share the same tastes."

Lu Yi set his cup down. He could still taste the tea on his lips. His compliments had been entirely sincere; he was not the type to hand out fake compliments just to be polite. He meant every word he said.

"So, what is it?"

Ye Jianguo watched his grandson intently as he tried to guess what the young man wanted. But it was no use: Lu Yi had inherited his stoic demeanor from his grandfather, and now, not even Ye Jianguo himself could tell what his grandson was thinking. Instead of feeling flummoxed, however, Ye Jianguo was immensely proud of his talented and accomplished grandson. He could ask for nothing more in life.

### **Chapter 283: That Is Their Problem**

“Grandpa, I would like you to help protect someone.”

Lu Yi furrowed his brows slightly before continuing, “It is related to the Su family.”

“Su family?” Ye Jianguo stood up. He was still playing with two walnuts that he was holding in his hand. They were incredibly smooth and he must have handled them for a really long time.

“You cannot solve this alone?” Ye Jianguo asked his grandson. So long as Lu Yi was willing, the Su family would still give him some face.

“I can still handle the normal ones, but I cannot this time.” Lu Yi brought up his cup again and drank a mouthful of tea. “This concerns their precious daughter, I believe they will not give me this face.”

Certainly, so long as he went, the Su family would give him face. But that was only for other things. This concerned Su Muran and it wasn’t that simple.

Everyone knew how important Su Muran was to the Su family. Afterall, Su Muran was the only person in this generation.

“What happened, you offended Su Muran?” Ye Jianguo raised his white brows. He didn’t feel anything special. The Su family were nothing in his eyes but he was surprised. Why did this grandson of his offended the daughter of the Su family?

“No, a friend.” Lu Yi put down his cup before he told Ye Jianguo everything. From how Yan Huan’s role had been snatched to how she might offend Su Muran with her acting in the near future.

“People from the Su family really cannot afford to lose.” Ye Jianguo gave a cold laugh. He couldn’t stand such tyrants like the Su family. They were incredibly unrestrained. They only had one son and their son had given birth to a granddaughter. They had no one to carry on the bloodline.

“Do not worry,” Ye Jianguo sat down. “I will help you solve this.” Of course there was something else that he didn’t pursue. It was why Lu Yi wanted to help this small actress. He couldn’t care about his grandson’s personal life. This grandson of his rarely came to him for help while he was growing up. No matter what, he needed to help his grandson.

Lu Yi ate a meal and played a few rounds of chess with Ye Jianguo before leaving. Ye Jianguo was in a decent mood and he didn’t forget what his grandson had asked him to do.

He took up the phone and phoned a number.

The person who picked up was someone from the Su family.

“I am looking for Old Su, tell him it is Ye Jianguo.”

It didn't take very long before the phone was passed to someone else. The voice in the receiver was the old man from the Su Family, Su Ancheng, Old Su."

"Old Su, it is me. I have something for you." Ye Jianguo said steadily in a loud voice.

Su Ancheng quickly lifted the receiver away from his ear, "I am not deaf yet, you don't have to be so loud. Do you really think you are a gangster?"

"My voice has always been this loud." Ye Jianguo yelled back, "I have never denied I started off as a gangster."

"Say, what is it?" Su Ancheng didn't want to talk to Ye Jianguo. They had no relation to each other and he was wondering what he was doing looking for him.

"Nothing big," Ye Jianguo continued playing around with the walnut in hand. "I heard that the granddaughter of yours went to act in a TV show?"

"What does that have to do with you?"

Ye Ancheng couldn't help but shudder upon listening to his granddaughter's name. Why was this old man asking about her. Was he about to do something against her?

"It isn't much," Ye Jianguo still talked in a calm manner, he wasn't angry nor was he happy. "I forgot to tell you that there is one of my people in the movie that your granddaughter is acting in. I hope you do not interfere in young people's things. Let them settle it themselves, whether it is good or bad."

Su Ancheng immediately understood upon hearing this. If he didn't, he would have wasted a good part of his life. The person, she really must be someone.

"Say, what is her name. I will ask my granddaughter to steer clear of her, alright?"

At this moment, Old Su was gritting his teeth.

Ye Jianguo was still incredibly calm. "You are already so old, don't get so angry. If not you will die from anger. Wouldn't that bring more trouble to your children?"

"Ye Jianguo!"

Old Su almost shouted. The two of them had a combined age of almost 160 but they were shouting at each other through the phone. The longer they lived, the more frustrated they got.

"I do not have dementia, you don't have to remind me of my name." Ye Jianguo raised his eye. "That's all I have for you, you can see how you want to handle this. Oh by the way, she is called Yan Huan. Do you remember the name? No matter what friction they have, it is between them. I hope you do not interfere or else. I will not sit here and do nothing."

With that, he hung up the phone coolly. The helper gave him a thumbs up as he raised his chin, looking incredibly pleased with himself.

He wasn't happy for long. He walked into his room and picked up a photo frame on his desk. The photo frame had a picture of him when he was young and a beautiful partner. There was a boy that almost reached his shoulder and a small girl in the arms of his partner.



Honey, it has been so long. You have almost left me for 20 years. Have you seen our Rongrong?

He extended his hand and touched his partner's face as well as the small girl in her arms. Tears started welling in his eyes, someone as almighty as him.

Their daughter, his Rongrong. He might not see her again in this life.

Lu Yi just reached home when Little Bean ran towards him and nudged her head against his leg.

It wanted to eat.

He grabbed some cat food for it to eat before loosening his tie and taking out his phone to give Yan Huan a call.

Yan Huan was just preparing to go to the set when she received his call.

"I have already settled that thing. Don't worry, you can settle your personal grudge with Su Muran alone. If you cannot handle it, I will come forward. The Su family will not interfere."

"Thanks..." Yan Huan gripped her phone tight as she finally heaved a sigh of relief.

So long as they did not interfere, what was Su Muran?

She only had her name to her's.

But this name allowed her to be way ahead of everyone else.

"Also..." Lu Yi brows furrowed. "I need to go on a working trip. I will pass Little Bean to my mother to take care. Are you okay with it?"

#### **Chapter 284: A New Low**

"I'm okay with that." Yan Huan did not mind; as long as Little Bean had food to eat and water to drink, the cat would be in no danger of starving to death. Ye Shuyun had been Yan Huan's aunt-in-law in her previous life, and Yan Huan vaguely remembered her to be sophisticated and kind-hearted—the type of woman who would never abuse a cat. Little Bean would be in safe hands.

After ending the call, Yan Huan tossed her phone into her handbag. She was ready to leave now.

Su Muran. Mei Rushi. Let's see who gets the last laugh.

Yan Huan's lips suddenly curved into a smile. Her eyes, filled with mocking disdain, gleamed with excitement at the prospect of revenge, but it was hard to tell whether she was trying to avenge herself, or someone else.

Once she arrived on the set, Yan Huan found a chair in a corner and seated herself. She watched Su Muran impassively; the latter was in the middle of shooting a scene.

Su Muran was still very young. She had just graduated from acting school, and this was her first time shooting an actual TV show. She acted according to what she had learned in school, but it was clearly not enough: she did not truly understand her character, Mei Rushi.

At that moment, Su Muran was dressed in cheap, shabby clothes. The makeup on her fair face made her look the part, but something was still not lacking from her performance. She tried her best to seem nonchalant and relaxed, but everyone could see that she was nervous: she kept forgetting her lines, forcing Director Jin to yell “Cut!” and restart the scene several times.

Director Jin’s eyebrows were drawn so tightly together they could have crushed a fly between them. He had hoped that Su Muran would turn out to be a dark horse—she had had the balls to ask for the role of the female lead, after all—but it was now clear to him that it had been nothing more than wishful thinking. Not everyone was born to be an actor.

At the very least, Su Muran was evidently not a natural-born actress. In fact, Director Jin had to wonder whether she had actually read and understood the script—she seemed to have an abysmally poor understanding of the role she was playing.

“Cut!” yelled Director Jin.

His sudden shout felt like a bucket of ice water to Su Muran. She was jolted back to reality, right when she had been about to get into character.

“Su Muran, you’re supposed to be a farmer, a poor, orphaned farmer. Not some princess from a wealthy family.”

“Director, I know Rushi is a farmer, but she’s proud and dignified, isn’t she?” Su Muran did not agree with Director Jin. What was wrong with her performance? She was quite sure that she understood the character she was playing: Mei Rushi was a lowly farmer, but she had an air of dignity about her. Su Muran carried herself with the utmost dignity at all times, due to her background and upbringing—she was practically playing herself, so what was the problem here?

“This is a romance, not some kind of reincarnation revenge drama.”

Director Jin’s expression darkened. He was a veteran director with many productions under his belt, but he had never had an actor talk back to him before this. Su Muran was the first.

“Okay, I’ll keep that in mind, Director,” said Su Muran, without actually meaning it. She was quite sure that she was right, and that Director Jin was wrong, but she decided against arguing with him. She did not want to quarrel with the director, not when they had only just begun shooting the show. It would make the rest of the shoot extremely awkward.

Su Muran had failed to realize that she had shot herself in the foot with her inflexibility; her inability to accept the idea that there might be a different way of interpreting her character meant that she was no longer on the same page with Director Jin.

Filming for her scenes progressed at an unusually slow pace. Some of the more difficult stunts had to be performed by a stand-in; Su Muran was simply not up to the task.

Director Jin sighed. He had a feeling that Su Muran was slowly but surely sabotaging his show with her subpar acting.

He desperately wanted to replace her, but he knew that was completely out of the question. Instead, he explained to Su Muran what he wanted from her, to no avail; after several failed attempts at getting her to understand, he gave up and let her do whatever she wanted. It was out of his hands now.

Yan Huan accepted the cup of water Yi Ling handed her and drank it in steady, measured gulps as she considered the situation.

Su Muran was the proverbial newborn calf who was simply too ignorant to be afraid of anything. She acted according to her narrow, limited understanding of her character, and refused to acknowledge there may be other ways of interpreting the role. An actor's acting skills were largely determined by experience and hard work; in Yan Huan's previous life, Su Muran had eventually won an Oscar for Best Actress, presumably because she had acted in a number of movies and TV shows by then, and had picked up a thing or two from her A-list co-stars. She had been blessed with well-written scripts as well, which had greatly boosted her chances at winning the award. Nevertheless, Yan Huan was quite sure that Su Muran winning that Oscar had been nothing more than a fluke.

The Su family had helped pave Su Muran's path towards stardom; therefore, the actress's journey had been utterly devoid of any kind of hardship. Yan Huan could not understand how Su Muran had gotten an Oscar for Best Actress in her previous life; the movie she had been nominated for had been impressive in many areas, such as plot, music, et cetera, but Su Muran's performance had not been as good as Yan Huan's at her peak. Yan Huan suspected that the Su family had pulled some strings for Su Muran to have gotten that award.

Yan Huan was a much better actress now than she had been at the same point in her previous life. But she did not flaunt her talents; she had learned the importance of keeping a low profile. Nevertheless, she could hardly wait to begin shooting her scenes with Su Muran and show the actress how badly outmatched she was.

After shooting for a week, *Beauty* went on air. The Su family had evidently poured an enormous amount of money into the production: they had bankrolled top-of-the-line equipment and facilities, a top-class director, first-rate marketing, and A-list actors to fill out the supporting roles, just to make sure Su Muran would make a massive, showy splash in her acting debut.

Yan Huan secretly hoped that the Su family would continue pouring money into the project. The higher their hopes, the worse it would be for Su Muran when she inevitably fell flat on her face.

The first two episodes went on air. It was clear from the top-class cinematography, expensive sets, and exquisite costumes that this was a big budget show, but despite the aggressive marketing, the audience did not seem impressed. The lukewarm reception was reflected by the abysmally low viewer ratings.

The biggest, most famous VOD website was streaming the show simultaneously as the episodes aired on TV. Ironically, the comments left on this site were a lot more interesting than the actual show.

"Ugh, that new actress is horrible. It's totally obvious she only got the part because of her connections. Her acting sucks! She only has two expressions, the wide-eyed look and a pout. Does she even know how to smile? This is a TV show, not some kind of fashion shoot!"

"The cinematography is fantastic, and the plot is passable. But the acting is horrendous."

“Dropping this after the first episode. Waste of my time. Pointless, over-exaggerated drama just for the sake of drama. How am I supposed to relate to any of the characters?”

“Same, I’m dropping this too. Not gonna waste my time on this garbage. There are better shows to watch.”

The comments section was flooded with scathing criticism for Beauty, despite the aggressive marketing to drum up hype for the show beforehand. But the negative comments did not stay up for long; within a few hours, they were removed and replaced with gushing praise instead.

“I’ve never seen such a beautiful female lead. She’s an amazing actress! This may be her acting debut, but her performance is absolutely flawless.”

“Yeah, the female lead is gorgeous. The story’s great, too.”

“I can’t get enough of this show! I want more episodes!”

“I stay at home all day watching this. This is the only thing on my mind these days.”

### **Chapter 285: Many Netizens**

Yan Huan looked at the comments below. She could only say that the people the Su family hired to post these comments were pretty professional. However if it was nice, it is nice. If it wasn’t nice, it wasn’t. Even though there were many comments by these netizens, the ratings of the show was there for all to see and it was last among all the shows in that time slot.

No matter how many people they hired, if the entire county didn’t buy the show, what solution do they have? Their recognition didn’t represent that of others or in another words: they were all blind.

After a few days, Yan Huan’s Please Close Your Eyes started broadcasting.

The show had a small production budget but the storyline was very eye-catching. Especially the female lead, Yu Jie’s moves. It was incredibly professional. The show aired two episodes each day and by the second day, its rating started to rise to the top. It managed to get almost 70% of the ratings while Beauty which was advertised everywhere only had 10% of the ratings. This was definitely a slap to Director Jin’s and the entire crew’s face.

The ratings for Please Close Your Eyes increased day by day. As for the show by Director Jin, even though the plot was attractive, it was too straight-forward and at the start, there wasn’t much fame and stardom attraction to the show as the female lead couldn’t act. Hence, many people gave up on it.

The director’s face got darker and darker as the days went by and he started scolding more and more people.

The pressure on Su Muran got even bigger and even though she was taking up the role of the first female lead now, she felt even though her acting was decent, she couldn’t win over the viewers.

This led to her being out of the loop even though the show was a few episodes in.

Yan Huan was the clearest and most relaxed person among the cast. In any case, it had nothing much to do with her, she was still getting paid. She wasn't the first female lead and even if the show was bad, it wasn't because of her.

Anyway, her other drama had reached a new viewership rating and it was due to her.

"Yan Huan, your turn."

Director Jin yelled at Yan Huan. She stood up. She was wearing a period suit and had an exquisite make-up. She had a red dot between her brows that only brought out her beauty even further. It wasn't too much to say she looked like a beauty from heaven.

She only appeared from episode 6 onwards. Her appearance was late indeed.

At this moment, she was lying on a mat with her lips painted red. Her eyes were slightly closed and she had a light breathing, almost as if every breath was about to take everyone's breath away. She was tugging at their heartstrings with a simple breath.

And everywhere the melody went, everyone got drunk off of it.

"What is up? Is there anything with the lord recently?" She opened her eyes as the light gathered in them. She looked proud and elegant and there was definitely an air of arrogance around her. This arrogance wasn't the same as Su Muran's arrogance.

The girl at the side lowered her head and answered softly, "He doesn't have much recently but he likes to disturb a lady."

"Lady?" The woman sat upright suddenly. A storm immediately brewed in those peaceful eyes. That man.

"Heh..." She laughed in a very cold manner.

Disturb? Why not say interested? A leopard doesn't change its spot. I am hearing all sorts of people now.

She extended her arm and the girl immediately understood and walked over. She placed her hand under the arm of the rich woman.

She stood up and exuded elegance in every step and movement she made. Such elegance radiated from her and it made one hard to stare at.

Director Jin nodded. This was indeed Yan Huan's acting. She was whomever she was acting.

On the other hand, Su Muran couldn't hold a candle to her at all.

She sat in the hall as the girl quickly brought over a cup of good tea and placed it on the table.

The woman brought it up and placed the cup in her hands. No matter how she moved, one could tell that she had a good upbringing.

She wasn't anyone else. She was the lady of the Qin Manor. She was the wife of Qin Jun, Shen Jing. She had been brought up among books her whole life and had read a lot of poetry. She had a good upbringing from one of the top families in this city.

She was ruthless and would kill without so much as a blink. No matter who Qin Jun was involved with, all those flowers would end up being uprooted by her.

"Madam, Mei Rushi is here."

A boy ran over to tell Shen Jing respectfully.

Shen Jing extended her hand and calmly waved her hand. He understood immediately, she wanted to see her.

It wasn't long before a few strong women dragged a young lady in.

Shen Jing placed her cup down as she closed her eyes and carefully tasted the tea in her mouth. Her red lips lifted slightly and that curve gave one a feeling of icy danger.

"Kneel!" The few women made Mei Rushi kneel down.

Mei Rushi stared deadly at Shen Jing before she gave a cold laugh.

"Yan Huan, how can you make me kneel. Who do you think you are?"

"Cut!" The director cut the scene angrily, his face was red from anger.

"Su Muran, did you read the script?"

Script? Su Muran's body stiffened. Yes, the script. There was indeed such a scene in the script but she was the girl from the Su family. She had never kneeled in her entire life before. Why should she kneel to someone like Yan Huan?

"Director, I do not want to kneel." Su Muran could compromise on other things but she wouldn't give in to kneeling to another woman. She cannot bend her knees like this to kneel to someone else.

Director Jin walked over and stood in front of her. "Miss Su, if you cannot make some sacrifices as an actress, tell me, how can you act well? How can you portray your character realistically? How can you let the viewers believe it is real?"

"If it is acting, it cannot be real."

Su Muran lifted her chin. Even if she was an actress, she wouldn't play with her pride. She wouldn't do things that would need her to put down her pride. Anyone from the Su family would be the same.

Director Jin's face was white from anger. If he had a brick in his hand, he would probably throw it at her. He would keep doing so till she died.

"Replacement, find a replacement." He turned around and ignored Su Muran. He never wanted to use such an actress again. Whoever chose her was unlucky.

## **Chapter 286: Bullied**

Yan Huan gently traced the rim of her cup. Her lips curved upwards, but there was neither joy nor anger in her face, only a far-off look in her eyes.

A moment later, a stand-in walked over and knelt in place of Su Muran. All Su Muran had to do now was read her lines according to the script.

“What’s your name?” Yan Huan asked Su Muran with a smile that did not reach her eyes. No, that was not quite right; they were no longer Yan Huan and Su Muran, but Chen Jing and Mei Rushi.

“Mei Rushi,” Su Muran said arrogantly, her head held high.

“Slap her,” Chen Jing said placidly with a wave of her hand. The elegant curve of her fair fingers brought to mind demure, delicate orchids—an image that was promptly shattered by the no-nonsense, domineering command that had issued from her cherry red lips.

The maid walked obediently to Su Muran. Once she was in position, the actress playing the maid lifted her hand and pretended to slap Su Muran, trusting the director of photography to find the right angle to make it look like the slap had connected. With a little post-production sound editing, the slap would be convincing enough to fool most viewers.

It would still be less realistic than an actual slap to the face, of course, but everyone on the set knew by now that Su Muran was a self-obsessed diva who would never agree to a real slap.

The maid had only just lifted her hand when Su Muran dodged to the side and snarled, through clenched teeth, “Yan Huan, who do you think you are? How dare you ask her to slap me!”

Yan Huan leisurely returned the cup in her hand to the table. She rested her chin on her hand as she looked expectantly at Director Jin.

“Director Jin, are we still going ahead with this take?”

Director Jin was in such a state of shock he had forgotten to yell “Cut.”

Su Muran’s sudden out-of-character outburst had ruined the take. They would have to start from the beginning.

Director Jin clutched at his hair in exasperation. He was teetering on the brink of a complete meltdown—oh gods, he thought, someone, anyone, save us from this mad woman! Is she trying to wreck my show?!

Yan Huan stood up and walked over to Su Muran. There was a cold, distant smile on her face, the kind of smile that did not reach her eyes.

“Ms. Su, we’re actors. We act. If you would prefer to remain dignified at all times, perhaps the role of Qin Jun’s mother would be better suited for you.”

Su Muran’s face purpled with rage.

“Very funny,” said Su Muran, with a slow, sarcastic golf clap. “You’ll regret that, Yan Huan.”

Yan Huan waved dismissively in reply. She walked nonchalantly towards her break-time chair, seated herself, and waited serenely for Su Muran to make her “regret that.”

Before Su Muran could do anything, however, Director Jin called for her and gave her a long, angry lecture about her incompetence. The actress returned with red, puffy eyes.

Director Jin walked over to Yan Huan. "Yan Huan, please be patient with Su Muran. It's her first project. You'll have to carry her, I'm afraid." He knew that as long as Yan Huan was willing, an actress of her caliber would be able to carry a newcomer like Su Muran through the shoot.

"Why is she the female lead, if this is her first project?" Yan Huan had not meant for it to sound like a sarcastic jab at Director Jin; she was merely criticizing Su Muran for being too greedy. The new actress was like a little child who had stuffed her face with the biggest slice of cake she could find, without stopping to consider whether she had perhaps bitten off more than she could chew.

Director Jin felt his cheeks grow warm with embarrassment.

But he had had no choice in the matter.

"Yan Huan, think of it as a favor for me, please?" said Director Jin meekly. He did not blame Yan Huan in the least; the situation was entirely Su Muran's fault. She had butchered his show, and even created a record low in viewer ratings. It seemed entirely possible that she would end up destroying his reputation, despite all the sweat and tears he had poured into his career over the years.

"Okay, I'll do it." There was a hint of something else in Yan Huan's tone, a veiled suggestion that no one had been able to catch.

I'll carry her, all right.

I'll carry her all the way to a ditch, throw her in, and make sure she won't be able to climb out.

Su Muran, you never missed a chance to gloat about your achievements in my previous life. You were so sure that your privileged background was enough to win you the race. Well, maybe it's time for you to learn what it feels like to be completely helpless.

Yan Huan assumed that Director Jin's angry lecture had finally gotten through Su Muran's thick skull, because the actress was a lot more cooperative in the following scenes. Her acting was still mediocre, but at the very least she obeyed the director's instructions and no longer behaved like a spoiled brat.

In the next scene, the maid slapped Mei Ruishi across the face, leaving a red slap mark on her cheek. Mei Rushi glared balefully at the beautiful woman dressed in red sitting above her.

"Is there something wrong?" Chen Jing fanned herself with the circular silk fan in her hand. The elegant rise and fall of her hand was oddly hypnotizing; like many of the deadliest animals on earth, there was something irresistibly alluring about her every move.

Everyone who saw her was mesmerized by her beauty, but no one dared approach her for fear of her deadly poison. They could only linger at a distance, reluctant to leave.

She stood up, walked over to Mei Rushi, and patted the latter's cheek with her fan. The simple gesture was both demeaning and entirely humiliating. Mei Rushi opened her mouth to speak; before she could do so, however, Chen Jing lifted a hand to her mouth and began to laugh, cutting her off.



“I see that you resent me. Who do you think you are?” Chen Jing’s eyes abruptly narrowed; all at once, the deadly aura around her intensified. To Mei Rushi, even the slightest breeze from Chen Jing’s movements felt like a knife pierced and then twisted into her ribs.

“You’re just another one of the Qin family dogs. A dog should dutifully watch the gates, instead of wasting its time drooling over things that are beyond its reach.” Chen Jing shifted the fan from her right hand to her left; with her free hand, she casually adjusted Mei Rushi’s clothes.

“You shouldn’t think too highly of yourself. Some people are born with their noses in the air—their inflated egos prevent them from realizing how insignificant and worthless they truly are. Don’t you agree, my dear Rushi?”

“My dear Rushi”—those three words grated on Mei Rushi’s nerves. Her expression darkened, and her shoulders trembled with rage.

Chen Jing was not the least bit perturbed by Mei Rushi’s reaction. She turned and returned to her chair with perfect nonchalance as the camera lingered upon her instead of Mei Rushi. This was a conscious decision by the director; Su Muran’s Mei Rushi was so unconvincing and unlikable there was no point giving her more screen time than absolutely necessary.

Su Muran stomped furiously into her private waiting room. Her performance had been out-classed by Yan Huan’s in every conceivable way; Su Muran had been forced to follow Yan Huan’s lead like a dull-witted cow. As a result, Yan Huan had deftly exposed all the rough, unpolished edges in Su Muran’s mediocre performance.

She took out her phone and called her father, Su Qingdong.

As soon as the line connected, she launched into her complaint.

“Dad, I was bullied.”

She recalled how she had been insulted on the set, and felt a new wave of resentment wash over her. She knew it was just an act, that it was Chen Jing insulting Mei Rushi, but she could not shake the feeling that Yan Huan had meant every word.

She told herself, over and over again, that it was just an act. Even so, she could not stand being humiliated; it had felt uncomfortably real. She did not like Yan Huan’s face, or the look in her eyes.

### **Chapter 287: Might of the Supporting Actress**

Moreover, her face darkened and so did her heart. Yan Huan’s acting was superb. She was the female lead while Yan Huan was just a supporting actress. How can the second female lead act better than the first? Wasn’t this a slap to her face?

She didn’t know then that Yan Huan would be part of the cast. If she did, she would have kicked her out of it. She didn’t think too much at the start since she had stolen Yan Huan’s position. For someone who had some fame like her, they would usually have some ridiculous pride and superiority. Since they have lost the first female lead position, they wouldn’t act as the second female lead.

However, she didn’t expect Yan Huan to be so unpredictable like this. She knew how to act these roles that others didn’t know how to and she knew how to do things that others didn’t. They were following

the script but for some reason she was always being pushed down. She had no time to react and was being led by her nose. She knew clearly that Yan Huan couldn't appear within the cast or else, she wouldn't be able to act her role.

Yan Huan hadn't act much yet and she believed that no matter who went up against her, she could act better than them.

Su Qingdong was furious when he heard that his precious daughter was bullied. An icy glow erupted from his eyes that didn't look kind to begin with.

"Ranran, tell me, who? Who is so brazen to bully my daughter?"

"Dad, she is called Yan Huan." Su Muran held the phone tightly in her hand. "Help me kick her out of the cast, I hate her."

She waited for his approval upon saying this. She hadn't expected her father to disagree with her on something like this. So long as she asked for it, Su Qingdong would agree, much less kicking away an actress who had no support.

However, she was wrong this time.

Su Qingdong didn't reply to her; he didn't promise her too.

Su Muran didn't understand. Could it be that Yan Huan had someone backing her? He needed to consider this for so long. Moreover, what relationship could Yan Huan have with her father? Was she becoming her stepmother?

If that was the case, she understood. No wonder a newcomer like her who is only 21 years old could have a skyrocketing career and win the best newcomer award. If she didn't have a support, how could she have such a smooth career?

Su Qingdong sighed.

"Ranran, daddy will help you deal with anyone. But do not go offend Yan Huan."

As expected, Su Muran gave a cold laugh. "Dad, do you have something with her?"

"What nonsense are you talking about?" Su Qingdong's voice deepened. "how can you say that about your father? The Ye family is protecting Yan Huan."

"Ye family, which Ye family?"

Su Muran couldn't think of it in that moment. Where did this Ye family come from. Who were they to block her way?

"What other Ye family is there?" Su Qingdong felt as if it was a waste sending her overseas to study. She wasn't even clear of the situation now.

"Tell me, what other Ye family does the Su family fear? Ranran let me tell you. The old man from the Ye family had called grandpa directly to protect Yan Huan. She is under them."

“I will let you choose whatever path you want to take and help you deal with whoever stands in your way but I cannot do so this time.”

“We cannot fall apart with the Ye family.”

“I understand,” Su Muran was a little frustrated as she hung up. She was thinking how Yan Huan had connections to the Ye family. The Ye, Lu and Lei family all had connections.

Only the Su family was estranged from them. Offending any house meant offending the other houses. She wasn't that stupid to bring a calamity to the Su family that will not stop brewing.

Anyone was fine

Only those who were from the Ye family.

But could she stomach this?

No, she shook her head. She hated this but she cannot admit defeat like this. Yan Huan, don't you want to compete? Let's compete then. Let's see who can stand at the peak at the end of the day, overlooking the entire world.

However, she had underestimated Yan Huan and overestimated herself. Acting was a process that required experience and even if she had graduated from a professional school, what did that matter? Her acting wasn't good enough to kill Yan Huan.

Even though she was incredibly serious in the next few scenes and was willing to put down her status, she still made many mistakes.

Even so, Director Jin heaved a sigh of relief. At least she knew how to act properly now.

How could Su Muran not act properly? She couldn't chase away the person she hates and couldn't take care of this mess. She had a feeling that she and Yan Huan were meant to be rivals.

Beauty continued to show every day. Yan Huan only appeared on the seventh episode. She was dressed heavenly and had an elegance to her. She was really acting from head to toe.

Her every smile, every sentence, every action. They all brought about a deadly yet exquisite beauty to it. It was incredibly surprising and refreshing and was very different from Yan Huan's previous image.

With a smack, her palm landed on Mei Rushi's face. Every viewer was pumped up by this. They couldn't help but imagine themselves slapping her.

“Who do you think you are?”

Mei Rushi was about to speak but was cut off.

“You are but a dog in our house. A dog needs to remember its use, to look after the house. Be a good dog and don't imagine things, thinking of all the things a dog shouldn't be thinking of.” As she said this, she squinted and used the fan in her hands to hit Mei Rushi's face.

At this moment, Mei Rushi's face was incredibly pale. She was angry and full of hatred.

The comments went crazy.

“My goddess is here, no she is the queen now. She is amazing. Kill that bitch, that whore.”

“This is funny, this is the first time I want the supporting actress to kill the lead actress.”

“The supporting actress is so much prettier. Her acting is excellent too. How can a newbie act as the first female lead? She has no acting skills and can only stare and pout. She has no expression. Could there be more to this?”

“If there wasn’t a good supporting actress, I would have given up on this show a long time ago.”

“I agree with what was said above, if there wasn’t a good supporting actress, I wouldn’t follow this show too.”

The comments below were like a gust of wind that was blowing things to one side. The ratings started to rise and was no longer last.

Su Muran almost fainted from anger upon seeing the comments below. Why must she be dragged in relation to Yan Huan? Did they have to push her down while complimenting Yan Huan?

### **Chapter 288: Who’s Out-Acting Whom?**

There was nothing her manager could do about it.

The role of the female lead had been Yan Huan’s to begin with. Yan Huan had the acting chops, the pretty face, the fame, and someone powerful looking out for her. The manager did not know for certain who was backing Yan Huan, but it had to be someone powerful—powerful enough to neutralize Su Muran’s attempts at sabotage. Otherwise, Yan Huan would have been banished from the production and showbiz by now.

Su Muran shut her laptop with more force than necessary. Her pupils constricted with anger; she seemed ready to shoot icy daggers out of her eyes.

It was time to film the next scene.

Bam! The door flung open, but Chen Jing did not react. She continued to lie calmly upon the chaise longue as a young maid carefully fanned her with a silk fan.

Qin Jun strode over to the maid and snatched the fan out of her hand.

He turned to the maid and snarled: “Scram!”

The maid nearly jumped out of her skin in fright. She hurried out the door.

“Chen Jing, I’m warning you, don’t cross the line.”

“Cross the line?” Chen Jing sat up and adjusted her clothes. “When have I ever crossed the line?”

“Don’t try to deny it,” sneered Qin Jun. “You ruthlessly break and destroy the women around me. You may be the daughter of a government official, but you’re absolutely heartless. You have no conscience to speak of. You’re a poisonous Black Widow.”

He suddenly stepped forward and grabbed Chen Jing’s hand. He did it with so much force he almost shattered Chen Jing’s bones in his grip.

“If you have a problem, take it up with me. I won’t stand by and let you take anyone from me.”

The dark expression on his face reflected the vicious ruthlessness within. He looked like a snarling, bloodthirsty wolf who would not hesitate to tear Chen Jing into a million pieces.

Yan Huan frowned. This was not part of the script—Bai Qiu was obviously trying to intimidate her into forgetting her lines.

Qin Jun abruptly let go of Yan Huan’s hand. He stepped to the side, keeping himself at a distance as he regarded Chen Jing with an expression of complete and utter contempt. It was the kind of look that one would direct to a pile of rotting garbage.

Chen Jing calmly got to her feet as she lowered her sleeve to hide the bruise on her wrist. She made sure not to hide it completely, however; she knew Director Jin would be astute enough to spot the bruise and capture it on camera. He was the kind of director who did not hesitate to use every microsecond of footage that contributed to the story, intentional or otherwise.

Chen Jing walked over to Qin Jun and stopped before him. She was still every bit of the proud daughter of a government official; she showed neither anger nor sorrow on her face. Instead, she stared directly into Qin Jun’s eyes.

“Did I cross the line?” Chen Jing asked Qin Jun.

Qin Jun frowned.

Before he could come up with a reply, Chen Jing had opened her mouth to speak again. There was now a bitter smile on her lips, but she kept her chin up—she would not show any kind of weakness to anyone.

“Well? Did I cross the line? You’re my husband. We exchanged marital vows, and consummated our marriage. I’ve been married to you five years, and not once have I ever been disloyal to you. You accuse me of breaking and destroying your mistresses, but haven’t you done the same to me?”

“Qin Jun...” She laughed bitterly. “You accuse me of being heartless. Well, what about you?”

“In any case...” She turned around. The smile was still on her face, but her eyes were bright with unshed tears. She pretended to adjust her clothes, even as the color drained from her face. “It looks like you care deeply about Mei Rushi. Fine. We’ll see who gets the last laugh—either she dies first, or I do.”

“You’re unbelievable!” With an angry, dismissive wave of his hand, Qin Jun stormed out the door. He knew, however, that he had been beaten at his own game: he could not find the words to defend himself.

Qin Jun was too ashamed to remain in the presence of Chen Jing.

Just as Bai Qiu was too ashamed to remain in the presence of Yan Huan.

The room lapsed into silence. Chen Jing turned back around, her lips still curved in a heartbreaking smile. Suddenly, she closed her eyes, allowing the tears to roll down her cheeks. The haughty smile remained on her face as the tears continued to fall—she clung stubbornly to her pride and dignity even as her world collapsed.

Beside the set—out of sight of the camera—Bai Qiu watched Yan Huan, his fingers clenched behind his back. He had used a few tactics to throw Yan Huan off her game, such as deliberately deviating from the script and suddenly grabbing her hand. He had meant to either make her forget her lines, or mess up the take in some other way out of sheer panic.

But he had underestimated Yan Huan's ability to adapt to the situation. She had improvised her own lines to match his, and had even turned the tables on him. He had tried to use what was commonly known as "pressure acting" on her, but had ended up being out-acted instead.

The woman was a formidable opponent.

"Didn't I tell you to use pressure acting on her? Well?" Su Muran was evidently not happy. "You promised, and you failed to deliver."

Bai Qiu fully regretted being taken in by Su Muran. He had agreed to help Su Muran because she had promised to give him the role of the male lead in Director Jin's next project if he turned the heat up on Yan Huan and stop her from performing to her full potential. It had been a tempting offer—the role of the male lead was not easy to obtain. He had only landed the role for Beauty out of sheer luck, and he knew that he would have to be a truly exceptional actor to get the role again in the future.

Unlike Su Muran, Bai Qiu did not come from a powerful family. He was nowhere near as talented as Yan Huan when it came to acting, either. All he had was a sudden stroke of good luck, and he knew he could not depend on it happening again. He had therefore agreed to Su Muran's request—only to discover that there was a reason why Yan Huan's first feature film had earned 600 million yuan at the box office, and also why she had won both the Best Newcomer and Best Supporting Actress award, despite having only made her acting debut in less than two years ago.

Her acting skills were the real deal.

"I'm no match for her." Bai Qiu lifted his chin. He met the look of frosty disdain on Su Muran's face evenly, without shrinking away.

"Ms. Su, you should try to improve your acting skills instead of wasting your time thinking up ways to sabotage other people. You may be able to fool yourself—and perhaps even the director and the rest of the production crew—but you won't be able to fool everyone.

"We all have eyes. We can see and judge for ourselves. And there's nothing to stop us from sharing our opinions.

"The world has changed. The internet makes it easy to share information. Don't underestimate the internet—you'll be surprised at how quickly word of mouth spreads across the net. It's downright scary."

With that, he turned and walked away. He swore inwardly to himself that he would never be tempted by similar offers in the future. Everyone wanted to take the shortcut to the top, but some shortcuts were simply too risky to take—one misstep would be all it took to send his career to an untimely end.

## **Chapter 289: Pinched**

Su Muran stared at Bai Qiu's back. She was smiling, but the smile was cold.

She then turned to leave but her back was a little stiff.

Not long after they left, another woman appeared from the corner of the wall. It was Yan Huan. She caressed her wrist lightly and something flashed past between them.

Su Muran, our competition has just begun. I hope you can grow like how you were in the past. Only a competitor like this will be interesting. That Su Muran is the real Su Muran. You still have a chance to grow.

Her lips curved. The hatred in her eyes slowly faded.

When she returned to where she was staying that night, she quietly applied medication to her wrist. She was afraid Yi Ling would know and make a huge fuss. It was easier not to say and it wasn't anything big anyway.

She tricked Yi Ling and Luo Lin into eating BBQ. The two of them had been around her the whole time recently and they were busier than her. Now that there was time, they deserved to take a break and she would be able to have some peace too.

However, they didn't leave for very long before there was a knock outside.

What happened, it is so early? Was there nothing nice to eat? Yan Huan placed the medicine bottle on the table and stood up. However, she felt things were weird. She thought they would be back late. After all, Yi Ling's appetite couldn't have been satisfied that easily.

She walked over and opened the door.

"Why are you all..."

She hadn't managed to finish her sentence before she stood there in shock.

"Why are you here?" She managed to say after a really long pause. She thought Yi Ling might be back or that it might be someone else but she hadn't expected him. Didn't he say he was on a work trip? Why was he here?

"I came across the area and thought of meeting up with you."

Lu Yi stood outside without moving at all. He was tired from travelling and his lips were cracked. His eyes were bloodshot and it was evident he hadn't had a good rest in a long time.

Yan Huan quickly stepped aside to let him in. She then ran to the kitchen to pour some water.

Lu Yi walked in. He was pretty satisfied with this place. It was quiet and clean, a suitable place to live in. It was definitely more comfortable than hotels.

He took the medicine bottle from the table. It was for people with injuries. He opened the bottle and placed it under his nose. As expected, he caught a whiff of a strong medication smell. The smell spread throughout the whole house and he had smelt it when he first entered.

Why, where was she injured?

Yan Huan brought over a cup of water and placed it in front of Lu Yi.

“Thanks.” Lu Yi took it over and finished half a cup in one mouth. He must have gone without water for a long time. But, this man could always endure and no matter how thirsty or hungry he was, if he didn’t want to say, one wouldn’t have been able to guess.

“Come here.”

Lu Yi placed down the cup and asked Yan Huan to extend her hand.

Yan Huan didn’t understand what he wanted to do. But in the end, she walked over obediently and stood in front of him.

“Where are you hurt?”

Lu Yi asked. Just as he expected, there was a strong medicated smell from her.

Yan Huan hesitated before she extended her arm.

Lu Yi grabbed her hand. His palm then was incredibly dry and she could feel the calluses on his fingers. This man was totally different from Lu Qin.

Lu Qin was brought up in a comfortable and rich lifestyle and to put it bluntly, he was a spoiled brat. However, Lu Yi did everything himself and he would never counted on others.

Hence, his achievements were always higher than the rest, including Lu Qin.

As for Lu Qin, he had stepped over a woman and her name was Yan Huan.

Lu Yi exposed her sleeve and saw the streak of bruises on her arm. They were full of marks and she was scratched. The person must have used a lot of strength. Was he trying to break her arm?

“How did this happen?” Lu Yi could confirm that it was scratched by someone.

“It was an accident, don’t worry.” Yan Huan lowered her head and looked at her feet. She felt her eyes swelling with tears.

At this moment, he was the only one who knew that she was hurt and only he would worry for her and help her.

Lu Yi sighed, he had nothing to say.

He took the medicine and poured some of it in his hand. He rubbed his palms together till they were hot before helping Yan Huan apply it to her bruises.

“You have to rub the bruise away or it will take longer to recover. This might hurt a little, endure it.”

As his hand landed on Yan Huan’s arm, she felt a sharp pain almost as if her bones had break. It was an aching pain that came in streaks.

Even though she couldn’t touch it, it was a pain that was hard to endure.

“How did this happen?” Lu Yi asked again. He didn’t believe her excuses and it was obviously from someone. She hadn’t knocked against anything. If she was for real, she could do it again and let him see.

Yan Huan kicked her shoes, “Someone pinched it.”



“Who?”

“Bai Qiu.”

She pouted slightly, “He wanted to suppress my acting, but I pushed his down instead.” She wouldn’t normally push other’s acting down unless someone had offended her.

“You have a grudge against him?” Lu Yi rolled her sleeve down before staring at her face. He was expressionless but his black eyes were clear; there were two reflections of Yan Huan in his eyes.

At that moment, he only had eyes for her.

What about you?

Yan Huan grabbed her arm and pouted; it was still in pain.

“He was helping Su Muran. SHE couldn’t do anything when I suppressed her acting and she went to find him. Money carried weight for the people from the Su family and they might have promised him something. But she had no idea whether that promise could be fulfilled.

Lu Yi rubbed her hair.

“Take care.”

“Yes,” Yan Huan lowered her head and kicked the side of the table again. She felt a brush of wind against her face; that man had stood up.

“Are you leaving?” She raised her head and asked. She was a little reluctant to see him leave

“Yes, do you have anything else?” Lu Yi still had to travel. He came quickly but had to leave quickly too. He did have something urgent or else, he wouldn’t have gone on this trip too. However, he still had driven a few hours to see her.

But he didn’t say any of this.

Yan Huan lowered her head and didn’t reply.

### **Chapter 290: I Won’t Be Your Mistress**

“I have to go now.” Lu Yi withdrew his hand and shoved it into his pocket. He wanted to say something else, but could not bring himself to say it.

He was not the talkative type—he was a man of action, the kind of person who would rather do things than talk about it.

“Okay.” Yan Huan kicked the leg of the table again, feeling the dull pain in her toes. She was trying to use the external pain as a cover for what she was feeling inside.

Lu Yi turned and walked to the door. Just as he was about to step over the threshold, Yan Huan abruptly got to her feet.

“Lu Yi...”

“What is it?” Lu Yi stopped, but did not turn around.

With a few quick steps Yan Huan closed the distance between them. She hugged Lu Yi from behind, burying her face in his back. She was struck with a sense of déjà vu: in her previous life, she had hugged him in a similar fashion, using her small, petite body to shield him from harm. She did not regret dying to save him in her previous life, and she knew she would willingly do the same for him in this life, too—she would step in front of him if someone came at him with a knife, and give up her life to save him.

Lu Yi was momentarily stunned. After a moment, he slowly lifted a hand and placed it over Yan Huan's hands, which were still clutched around his waist.

"Lu Yi..."

"Yes?" Lu Yi's face had grown warm, but he did not turn around.

"I won't be your mistress. I'm not a boyfriend stealer, or a homewrecker."

"No, you're not." Lu Yi paused, before adding, "I've already broken up with Fang Zhu."

Yan Huan sniffled, her face still buried in Lu Yi's back. She could smell the faint scent of sand and dust on him, but she did not find it unpleasant. In fact, she did not want to let go.

She had to gather every last bit of her courage to take this step in their relationship.

And he had not pushed her away—that meant that he liked her too, right?

Lu Yi lowered his head. Suddenly, his lips curved into a small smile. When he spoke again, his voice was warmer than usual; the change was so slight it was almost imperceptible, but Yan Huan picked up on it all the same.

"I have to go now. Wait for me, I'll be back."

Those six words at the end—"Wait for me, I'll be back"—encapsulated everything he wanted to say. He would be back for her. And after that...

Those six words were all Yan Huan needed to hear right now.

Yan Huan finally released him. She awkwardly smoothed her hair, and then abruptly turned and fled into her room. She had to escape—she could not face Lu Yi at that moment.

Lu Yi shoved his hands into his pockets, balling them into tight fists as he strode away.

He vowed to himself that he would return very soon.

Both Yi Ling and Luo Lin had eaten so much their bellies bulged in an unsightly manner. The two women had to hold each other up as they painstakingly made their way back to the apartment.

"Huanhuan." Yi Ling poked Yan Huan's cheek with a finger. "Hello? Earth to Huanhuan!"

Yan Huan finally looked up. Her eyes rested on Yi Ling's stomach. "I think your waistline is bigger than your chest now."

"Ooh, I'm going to kill you, Yan Huan!" Yi Ling jumped to her feet and lunged for Yan Huan, who countered by throwing her body pillow at Yi Ling. It was late at night, but that did not stop the two women from engaging in a lively pillow fight.

Luo Lin rubbed her bulging belly. She shook her head as she vowed never again to have dinner with Yi Ling—she would rather not die of overeating.

Luo Lin could tell that something was different with Yan Huan now: her eyes appeared to shine with eager anticipation. There had been a hint of uncertainty in Yan Huan's eyes before this—as though she was not quite sure she was on the right path—but that uncertainty was gone now, replaced by a lively twinkle that signified her firm conviction.

The next day, Yan Huan was just about to make her way to the set when she received surprising news: they would be shooting only her solo scenes that day, as Bai Qiu and Su Muran had been hospitalized.

“What happened?” Yan Huan asked Luo Lin. “Why are they in the hospital? Did they really slip and sprain an ankle in the bathroom last night? Seems too much of a coincidence for that to happen to the both of them on the same night, don't you think?”

Luo Lin shrugged. “They said they fell and injured themselves, but I asked around and apparently a complete stranger beat up Bai Qiu last night. From what I heard, he was out on the street late at night, going through his lines, when a savage ran up to him and beat him to pulp for no reason. Su Muran saw the whole thing, and was traumatized by it.”

“Do you really think there are actual savages running around, in this day and age?” Luo Lin added incredulously. She did not believe the story.

Yan Huan merely smiled in reply.

She had a pretty good idea who the “savage” was.

She was surprised that Lu Yi would actually do something like that for her. She found it hard to imagine that the renowned Prosecutor Lu—the man who was famous for placing the law above all else—had beaten someone to a pulp for her. For a moment she almost pitied Bai Qiu: he had to have suffered serious injuries at the hands of someone as skilled as Lu Yi.

Yan Huan did not visit Bai Qiu and Su Muran at the hospital. She was not the type to kick her enemies when they were down, but she was not the type to help them up, either. She merely stood by and allowed karma to do its job—it was none of her business.

The scenes scheduled for the day were shot quickly and efficiently. Everyone was in a good mood; things seemed to magically fall in place, mostly because neither Bai Qiu nor Su Muran was around to mess things up. Everything went so well the director did not ask for a single retake.

The next day, Su Muran returned to the set. This was not surprising, as she had not been injured in the attack; she had only been in a state of shock after witnessing the beating. As soon as she was back, morale on the set immediately plummeted: no one wanted to work with someone as exasperating as her. Even Director Jin could not keep from cursing his horrible luck—what had he done to deserve her, exactly?

Su Muran was actually a lot more cooperative now, after her brief stay at the hospital. She tried her best to carry out the director's instructions, but there was only so much a mediocre actress like her could do. She was simply not good enough for the role of the female lead.

Director Jin could only sigh and shake his head. Yan Huan, on the other hand, was pleased to see that Su Muran was now clearly aware of her inadequacies as an actress.

As the saying went: “Comparison is the thief of happiness.”

It was important for Su Muran to know just how badly she compared to Yan Huan. This would teach her that having a powerful family could not save her from being a mediocre actress.

Three days later, Bai Qiu finally returned to the set. He looked thin and haggard, but there was no visible injury on his face. The rest of his body had been beaten black and blue, but the “savage” had made sure not to touch his face. If the “savage” had gone all out, the makeup artist would have had to use an entire bottle of foundation just to cover up the bruises on Bai Qiu’s face.

The production team was taking the film-as-we-air approach for Beauty, and the story was finally taking off—thanks to the introduction of Chen Jing—after a lackluster start. There was only one problem: Chen Jing out-classed Mei Rushi in every conceivable way, and the viewers could not shake the feeling that Chen Jing was supposed to be the female lead of the show.

But the show was called Beauty—the female lead therefore had to be Mei Rushi, whose name was a Chinese pun that translated into “as beautiful as a poem.”