

Losing Money to Become a Tycoon: Starting with Games

Chapter 356: You're Not Worthy of Raising His Child

December 14th, Tuesday.

Early that morning, Pei Qian arrived at the filming site of A Better Tomorrow.

He hadn't been here for a while, and he couldn't help feeling uneasy.

The last time he came was two weeks ago. Back then, Pei Qian had casually suggested that Lu Zhiyao play the role like a "salted fish", only to be completely blindsided when Lu Zhiyao suddenly delivered an explosive performance. That single scene earned unanimous praise from everyone on set.

Because of that, Pei Qian had been deliberately suppressing his anxiety and staying away from the set ever since.

He was afraid that one careless sentence from him would trigger yet another "epiphany" from Lu Zhiyao, and once that happened, things might spiral completely out of control...

But avoiding the set forever clearly wasn't an option.

Pei Qian felt that he couldn't keep burying his head in the sand like an ostrich. If something really went wrong, it would already be too late.

Better to discover problems early and deal with them early.

Even if the situation had already become irreversible, knowing sooner would at least give him time to mentally—and financially—prepare, so he could reduce his losses as much as possible.

So, with nothing else pressing today, Pei Qian once again came to the filming location.

The set was bustling with activity. Crew members hurried back and forth, clearly very busy.

Pei Qian didn't want to disturb anyone's work. He simply stood off to the side, quietly watching the filming.

The surrounding set was no longer the cramped capsule apartment, but an exterior scene of a futuristic city.

Of course, “exterior” was only in name, it was still being shot inside a studio, just with large green screens set up everywhere.

Those dazzling futuristic cityscapes would all be composited later using special effects.

The foreground, however, was built with real, physical sets. For example, in this scene, the male and female leads were eating together at a roadside food stall. The entire shop had been constructed from scratch: tables, chairs, tableware, decorations—everything was real.

In addition, the shop's signboard, the roadside trash bins, the costumes worn by the two leads and all the background extras were also custom-made.

These were all carefully crafted props from the art department, realistic enough to pass for the real thing.

From the set design alone, one could already tell that this was meant to be a steampunk-inspired slum district.

According to director Zhu Xiaoce's plan, the architecture in this film would broadly be divided into four distinct styles:

1. The capsule living spaces where the male lead resides—high-tech in appearance, but cramped, narrow, and highly standardized. These are mass-produced welfare facilities.
2. The slums of the outside world, where the male and female leads meet and go on dates. This area is filled with small shops and carries a steampunk vibe—neon-lit and lively on the surface, yet chaotic and disorderly underneath.
3. The glamorous outer world, including scenes like the talent show. These areas are spacious, grand, and sleek, with strong sci-fi aesthetics—what people would typically imagine as futuristic architecture.
4. The residences of the upper class, primarily styled like classical mansions, complete with elegant fireplaces, large oil paintings, and expensive-looking wooden furniture. They're lightly adorned with high-tech elements to distinguish them from real-world luxury homes.

In the story's setting, only the elite could afford "classical arts" like oil paintings and pianos. Within their social circles, "retro" architectural styles were considered fashionable—a way to differentiate themselves in taste from ordinary rich people.

The scene being filmed now took place in the "future slums" of the city, carrying a distinct cyberpunk flavor.

This was Pei Qian's first time seeing the female lead of the film.

The actress's name was Lin Ruyi. She had a round face, big eyes, and two very charming dimples when she smiled—a textbook "first-love" type of face.

Pei Qian had previously tried searching for her background, but couldn't find any well-known works. Later, he learned that she was a newcomer freshly scouted from a film academy, and hadn't even graduated yet.

Judging purely by looks, Lin Ruyi wasn't stunningly beautiful. Because of her slightly round face, she wasn't particularly photogenic.

But in this case, that actually fit the script's setting perfectly.

Because in the script, the female lead is not meant to be a breathtaking, nation-toppling beauty.

If she were, she would have long since been noticed and taken in by the upper class, and none of what follows in the story would even be possible.

Pei Qian had no particular requirements for the actress playing the female lead—only one: she shouldn't be too good-looking.

After all, this is an era where everything revolves around looks.

If the female lead were too beautiful, she might easily become a trending topic. And if her acting were even slightly good on top of that, the consequences would be disastrous.

What if the female lead were gorgeous, played a scheming green-tea character, yet the audience couldn't bring themselves to hate her, instead falling madly in love with her?

That would be a total catastrophe.

Of course, Pei Qian also knew that finding a truly unattractive actress to play the female lead was unrealistic.

So, a newcomer whose looks weren't especially striking—like the actress in front of him—was already a pretty good choice in his eyes.

Before long, Pei Qian figured out the plot of this scene.

The female lead had already appeared on a talent show, but failed to get selected.

Now, the male lead—played by Lu Zhiyao—was resting with her at a small roadside shop, drinking beverages together.

Lu Zhiyao's character tried hard to cheer Lin Ruyi up, while Lin Ruyi responded absent-mindedly, half-heartedly going along with the conversation.

And when Lu Zhiyao finally revealed that he had saved up enough money to buy a two-person living capsule, Lin Ruyi would suddenly explode—delivering several emotionally charged lines before storming off.

This scene was one of the early-to-mid story's emotional peaks.

In six words: the male lead gets cheated on.

Ah, a timeless and classic poison point.

Pei Qian couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

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At this moment.

Lu Zhiyao was enthusiastically imagining the future, wearing a full-on hopeless simp expression—humble to the extreme.

However, because he was good-looking, even when acting like a simp, it didn't feel overly uncomfortable. Instead, it made people feel a bit sorry for him.

Lin Ruyi, on the other hand, stared blankly at the drink cup on the table, nodding occasionally or offering perfunctory responses. It was obvious her mind was elsewhere.

"I heard a pretty good restaurant opened nearby," Lu Zhiyao said.

"They sell really tasty synthetic meat, standard purified water, and red wine."

“The synthetic meat we had last time could only simulate about 60% of real meat’s texture, but it was already delicious. This place is said to reach about 80%, and they have beef, chicken, all kinds of flavors.”

“And the standard purified water—everything we’ve had before had this rusty taste. But theirs supposedly has almost no off-flavor at all, and even a faint fragrance. Way better than the water in the living capsules.”

“And red wine too. The bottled wine sold in capsule vending machines is super expensive. Their prices are only about 70% of that, and supposedly the taste is almost identical.”

“How about we go try it tomorrow or the day after?”

Lu Zhiyao looked at Lin Ruyi across from him.

Lin Ruyi gave a polite smile.

“Mm, sounds good.”

As she smiled, two shallow dimples appeared on her cheeks, making her look quite charming.

But the smile vanished quickly. She went back to staring distractedly at the cup, casually lifting it to take a small sip, her expression clearly saying that the drink was utterly tasteless.

Lu Zhiyao had talked at length, only to receive three words in return. He couldn’t help feeling a little helpless.

Still, he quickly adjusted his mood.

Because today, he had prepared a big surprise.

The two fell into a brief silence.

Lin Ruyi was still lost in thought, while Lu Zhiyao sipped his drink, finally steeling himself to speak.

“I know failing the talent show last time hit you really hard.”

“It’s okay. It’ll pass.”

“Don’t worry. I’ve already planned our future—for the two of us.”

Lin Ruyi raised her head and looked at Lu Zhiyao blankly, clearly not understanding what he meant. “Huh?”

Lu Zhiyao couldn’t hide the smile at the corner of his mouth. “I’ve saved up enough money to buy a double capsule!”

“We can go pick a suitable place tomorrow, and then you can move in.”

“Even though a double capsule isn’t very big, we can slowly move to a bigger place later.”

“Maybe one day we’ll even be able to afford a 60-square-meter luxury apartment with a kitchen, and our child will be able to go out at six in the evening. If we’re lucky, they might even get to see the sunset.”

Lu Zhiyao excitedly painted a picture of a beautiful future he imagined.

However, there was no joy at all on Lin Ruyi’s face. Instead, she grew more and more impatient.

“Keep the money. I don’t want to live in a double capsule, and I don’t want to marry you or have children with you.”

“Let’s break up.”

Lu Zhiyao’s smile froze on his face.

“Why?”

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Ever since the audition, you’ve been acting strange...”

“It was just one audition. It doesn’t really matter...”

Lin Ruyi said coldly, “You don’t understand how I feel. Of course you think it doesn’t matter.”

Lu Zhiyao felt helpless. “Honey, I *do* understand how you feel! I worked so hard to save up the registration fee. This was a huge loss for both of us!”

Lin Ruyi seemed even angrier. “A huge loss for *you* too?”

“You just lost a bit of lousy money, but I lost my dream!”

Lu Zhiyao fell silent.

He suddenly realized something was wrong and pressed on. “Honey, what’s really going on with you?”

“I don’t think I did anything wrong. I just wanted to buy a double capsule for us. What exactly are you angry about?”

“What am I angry about?” Lin Ruyi’s emotions seemed to spiral further out of control. “Everything!”

They were speaking English, so the word *everything* came out with particular force.

“I’m angry about the watered-down, low-quality syrup drinks from these roadside shops. I’m angry about the greasy, disgusting snacks. I’m angry about only being allowed out for three hours a day to walk in this pitch-dark slum, keeping company with rats...”

Lu Zhiyao was speechless. “But... weren’t we living happily like this before? Why are you saying—don’t tell me you...”

He noticed the increasing number of accessories she was wearing, and the slight bulge in her lower abdomen. A terrifying guess formed in his mind.

Lin Ruyi seemed to collapse emotionally. She covered her face with both hands. After a long while, she raised her head again. Her eyes were rimmed with tears, yet her expression was unusually resolute.

“I’m sorry. I don’t want to hide it from you anymore.”

“I became that judge’s lover—and I’m pregnant with his child.”

“So let’s break up. It’s over between us.”

Lu Zhiyao’s expression shifted from suspicion to shock, then to despair, and finally to utter hopelessness.

His slightly forward-leaning body suddenly seemed to lose all support, and he slumped back into the chair.

Lin Ruyi stood up, preparing to leave.

But Lu Zhiyao suddenly grabbed her wrist.

“He didn’t marry you, and he didn’t give you much money, did he?”

“He doesn’t care about this child at all. Otherwise, you wouldn’t be so broken and lost right now, right?”

“He even abandoned you the moment he found out you were pregnant—didn’t he?”

Lin Ruyi’s body trembled slightly.

Lu Zhiyao knew he had guessed correctly. Realizing he still had a chance, he hurriedly said, “It’s okay. It’s okay...”

“It’ll be very hard for you to live on your own, and no other man would be willing to accept a woman who’s already pregnant.”

“You need me. I’ll help you take good care of this child.”

“Believe me, I won’t mind. I definitely won’t—”

There was a note of pleading in his voice.

Lin Ruyi fell silent for a few seconds, then suddenly shook off Lu Zhiyao’s hand.

“This child has upper-class blood.”

“I don’t want him to turn out to be a useless poor nobody like you.”

Lin Ruyi left with resolute, heavy strides.

Lu Zhiyao could only watch her go. He opened his mouth as if to shout something, but in the end, no words came out.

It was as though all the strength had been drained from his body, and he completely collapsed.

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“Cut!”

“Good, very good!”

“We shot seven or eight takes, and we finally got one we’re satisfied with. Everyone’s worked hard!”

Zhu Xiaoce took the lead in applauding and encouraging the cast and crew.

At this moment, Lin Ruyi’s actress hurriedly bowed to Zhu Xiaoce and the rest of the crew in thanks, then bowed again to Lu Zhiyao.

“Thank you, senior, for your guidance. If your acting hadn’t been so good, I wouldn’t have been able to get into the scene like that.”

Lu Zhiyao smiled. “Your acting was already good. I wouldn’t dare take the credit.”

“Besides, I’m just a so-called ‘box office poison.’ If we’re talking about acting, it’s not clear who would be guiding whom.”

Watching silently from the sidelines, Pei Qian gave a thumbs-up in his heart.

Amazing.

That scene just now gave him goosebumps, he almost felt like hitting someone out of sheer frustration.

Lu Zhiyao had completely brought the role of a simp to life. Especially those final lines—perfectly illustrating what it meant to be a “simp who gets nothing in return.”

And Lin Ruyi had portrayed a green-tea schemer to absolute perfection.

Her subtle emotions earlier were spot-on, and those last two lines were the finishing touch.

Even just watching from the set, Pei Qian felt deeply uncomfortable.

Too toxic.

Men would fall silent watching it; women would end up in tears.

Pei Qian felt that if he ever saw a movie like this in a theater, he'd probably get so angry he'd pass out on the spot.

And then, Pei Qian realized a major piece of good news.

Maybe Lu Zhiyao's improved acting skills were actually a good thing for him.

If Lu Zhiyao acted poorly, the audience might not feel as immersed, and might even feel a bit of schadenfreude seeing him suffer on screen.

After all, this guy didn't have much audience appeal to begin with.

But now that Lu Zhiyao was acting well, people would naturally feel the strong “simp energy” radiating from him and experience an instinctive discomfort.

Lu Zhiyao’s fans would probably be furious too, to the point of smoke coming out of their seven orifices.

That way, there would be even more people trashing this movie!

Pei Qian suddenly felt his mood lift.

It seemed that accidentally improving Lu Zhiyao’s acting a little earlier wasn’t such a big problem after all.

As long as the script was toxic enough, even the best actors couldn’t save it!

A smile spread across Pei Qian’s face as he stepped forward to chat with Zhu Xiaoce.