

RED STRING

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. BUS STOP OUTSIDE TEMPLE ENTRANCE - MORNING

Sitting under the bus-stop, an elderly lady; dressed in a floral blouse and wrinkly like a raisin, AHMA, looks up and waves towards the bus that has just arrived.

AHMA

Ahboy! Over here! Over here!

A young man in his mid-twenties, QIN, smiles and waves back, acknowledging the old lady. He walks over and gives her a hug.

AHMA (CONT'D)

Come, let's go. The fortune teller very *zhun* one. The queue is always very long. Hope that we're early enough.

Qin smiles and nods, holding onto Ahma's hand, the pair walks towards the entrance of the temple. Ahma slows to a stop as she cranes her neck.

AHMA (CONT'D)

Ah YAN? Old CHEW? Eh? Ah Li?

AUNTIE YAN

Ah Chen? What a coincidence! Who is this? Your grandson?

AHMA

Ya! This one my grandson, Qin. Ahboy quickly call Auntie Yan, Uncle Chew and Auntie Li.

QIN

Aunties, Uncle.

Qin breaks into a sorrowful smile, glancing towards the pinky finger of the elderly present. He sees a red string tied to both Auntie Yan and Uncle Chew's fingers, floating around. Auntie Li's string is dragging along on the floor, like cut kite strings.

AHMA

Qin? Auntie talking to you.

Ahma taps Qin's hand as Qin shakes his head.

QIN

Sorry Auntie, what did you say?

AUNTIE YAN

Oh, it's okay boy. Auntie just wanted to know if you had anyone special in your life.

Ahma looks expectedly at Qin. Qin, returns the gaze and shakes his head once again and gives a bitter smile.

QIN

No Auntie, I've not met anyone special yet.

Ahma's shoulders slump as she looks down and sighs.

AUNTIE LI

Aiyo, don't worry la boy. The strings of fate always tie those meant to be together. You will find the right one some day one!

QIN

(Muttering) But what if I don't have a string to begin with..

AUNTIE YAN

Ya la! If not Auntie Li can always introduce her granddaughter to you too!

Qin's shrugs his shoulders as a wry smile hangs on his face.

AHMA

Ahboy, go and queue first. I'll talk to my friends first then I'll come find you.

Qin nods lightly and threads slowly towards the temple gates.

INT. TEMPLE - MORNING

Qin walks into the temple and sees a bearded elder in stained monk robes, FORTUNE TELLER, by a wooden table plastered with talismans and various religious tools scattered about the table with a cloth covering what appears to be a box.

Fortune Teller is seated on a stool resting his back against a wall with one leg resting on his other knee, fanning himself with his eyes closed.

Qin comes before the wooden table, Fortune Teller, with his eyes still closed, slides his fan shut. He opens his eyes and scans Qin from top to bottom. Fortune Teller pulls out another stool and taps his fan on it, before opening his fan in one fluid motion and continues fanning himself.

Qin sits down and twiddles his thumb nervously.

QIN

My Ahma tells me your fortunes are never wrong. Even TOTO and 4D numbers cannot evade your heavenly prediction.

FORTUNE TELLER

I have been expecting you. Come, tell this Ahpek what questions you have.

QIN

I've been seeing some strange things since I woke up last week. I don't understand what's going on. Even doctors think I'm crazy.

Fortune Teller closes his fan and strokes his beard while nodding his head.

FORTUNE TELLER

What do you see?

QIN

Red strings. Everywhere. Tied to Everyone. Except me..

Fortune Teller pauses and pulls the cloth that is covering the box up and reveals a cage. He opens the door of the cage and places a small cup with various wooden sticks in front of the cage.

FORTUNE TELLER

Go ahead Polly. Pick what you feel from this young man.

POLLY, a white parrot with a huge yellow mohawk tuff pokes his head out of the cage door. Polly grabs one wooden stick from the cup and pulls it out and drops it on the table. He then retreats back into his cage and pulls down the door.

POLLY

SQUAWK!

Fortune Teller drops a snack into the cage and covers it back with the cloth again. He picks up the wooden stick.

FORTUNE TELLER

String of fate. Interesting.. Young man, do you know any legends about fate?

Qin shakes his head.

QIN

No, I don't.

FORTUNE TELLER

The legend of the Red String of
Fate and Yue Lao, the God of
Marriage. You should look them up.

QIN

What are the stories about?

Fortune Teller chuckles and shakes his head and looks at his watch, Qin raises an eyebrow. Qin frowns and stares at Fortune Teller, but he continues fanning himself as he taps the face of his watch and returns a smile. Qin shakes his head.

QIN (CONT'D)

What about my own string? Why can't
I see it?

Fortune teller smiles. He folds his fan and sits upright and taps his fan in the palm of his other hand three times.

FORTUNE TELLER

There's a saying in my profession.
One can only divine for others and
not themselves. That's all I have
you for now, I have other people
that I'm expecting.

Fortune Teller points his fan at the growing queue behind them. A vein bulges on Qin's forehead. He clenches his fist slightly then takes a deep breath.

INT. CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

Qin holds Ahma's hand and walks her to her doorstep.

QIN

Ahma, do you know about any legends
about fate?

Ahma trembles slightly

AHMA

The Fortune Teller said something
about it?

QIN

Mmh. "String of fate" was drawn as
my fortune. He told me to look up
on Yue Lao and legends about the
Red Strings of Fate.

Ahma sighs.

AHMA

Legend says that fated partners are connected to each other by a red string.

Ahma holds her right hand up and looks lovingly at her pinky.

AHMA (CONT'D)

I saw my own red string. It was how I met your Ahgong.

Qin's body stiffens and his jaw drops with his eyes wide open.

AHMA (CONT'D)

The moment he left this world, our string withered. But I never see the strings of others before.

Ahma forces a smile.

AHMA (CONT'D)

I tired already, Ahboy. Go home be careful.

Ahma turns in to return home but pauses and turns back to Qin.

AHMA (CONT'D)

And about what Auntie Yan said about finding someone special, don't think too much about it and don't put it to heart. What's important to me is that you're happy.

Ahma enters her house and shuts the door. Qin sighs and leaves, visibly fatigued. Qin's face fills with conflict, unsure whether to be happy or sad at this discovery. He looks down at his own pinky and sighs.

INT. BUS (TOWARDS HOME) - AFTERNOON

Qin is staring intently at his phone. He types something on his phone and a page of old Chinese mythologies appear on the screen. He scrolls the screen continuously with his thumb.

QIN (V.O.)

It is said that the red string of fate ties us to our fated partner.. Individuals follow the path the string of fate carves out, going through tangles and knots life and hope they reach the other end of the string, and reach their fated partner..

Qin cups his chin with his right hand and begins rubbing.

QIN (V.O.)

But I don't remember seeing any knots or tangles.. What Ahma saw should have been the path to her fated partner.. But, that shouldn't be the same case for me..

Qin returns to searching for information on his phone and a page on Chinese deities appears.

QIN (V.O.)

Yue Lao.. The old man of the moonlight, also known as the god of marriage.. He ties would-be couples to be together with red string...

Qin looks up in a daze and zones out, with a blank expression on his face. He returns from his stupor shortly after and shakes his head, smiling woefully.

QIN (V.O.)

It couldn't be.. Could it?

Continuing his series of taps on his phones, a search page on divination appears.

QIN (V.O.)

Divination taboos.. One can only see the fortunes of others and not themselves..

Qin cups his chin and looks out the window.

QIN (V.O.)

Does this mean I just can't see the string of me and my fated partner?

The bus bell rings and Qin jolts up from the sudden noise. He looks around and quickly gets up from his seat. Qin elbows and trudges his way through the sardine can of a bus.

The bus lets out a spurt of air, signaling its preparation to leave. Qin quickly reaches for the nearest "Stop" button and forces himself through the crowd.

He gets out the bus exit but his foot gets caught onto someone else's and he falls face first out the bus.

QIN

Ah!

Qin crashes into another person, YAN TING, pushing her butt first onto the ground.

YAN TING

Ouch!

A crowd forms, as bystanders glance at the two people on the ground. Qin slowly sits up after the collision.

QIN

Ah.. Just my luck.

Qin eases the bruise on his head and shakes his head. He turns and sees another person on the ground, patting off dirt from her snow white skirt and massaging her shoulder.

Qin quickly gets back up on his feet and offers his free hand to help Yan Ting up. Yan Ting takes his hand and Qin supports Yan Ting to stand up again.

Qin looks at Yan Ting's hand, free of any string.

QIN (CONT'D)

Your pinky..

Yan Ting looks at Qin's hand, confused and releases his hand as if she was holding on to a dismembered arm. Yan Ting falls back down, butt-first. Her tote bag slips off her arm and some of her belongings spill onto the ground.

Qin is wide-eyed at her second fall, and stares at Yan Ting blankly as she soothes her aching behind from a second cushioning.

A cough wakes Qin up from his stupor and he helps retrieve Yan Ting's belongings that are rolling away.

Qin gathers Yan Ting's belongings and goes next to her as he attempts once again to help her up.

Yan Ting glances at Qin's helping hand and looks away. She puffs her cheeks and stands up on her own.

YAN TING

Hmph! I don't need your help. I don't want to fall down again for the third time.

Qin pulls back his extended hand and scratches his head as an wry smile forms on his face.

QIN

Your bag, miss.

Qin offers Yan Ting her bag, while taking peeks at her pinky. Yan Ting takes a hard look at Qin's hands. She takes her bag and walks away. Qin follows after her.

QIN (CONT'D)

Miss, I would like to apologize. It was an honest accident.

Yan Ting stops, side-eyes Qin and looks away while puffing her cheeks. Qin gives a helpless smile and rubs the back of his head.

QIN (CONT'D)
Are there any injuries? Should I
bring you to a clinic?

YAN TING
No. I'm fine. There's no need to
worry.

Yan Ting takes out her phone and begins to fiddle with it. Qin's shoulder slumps a little, he inhales and puffs his chest.

QIN
My name is Chen Qin, you can call
me Qin. Miss, may I have your name?

Yan Ting looks up and raises an eyebrow.

YAN TING
Yan Ting. Li Yan Ting.

QIN
Ah.. Miss Li. This is my number.
Please keep it. In case any
complications arise, please don't
hesitate to contact me.

Qin reaches into his bag and pulls out notebook, tears out a blank page and quickly scribbles into it. He hands the note to Yan Ting.

Yan Ting takes the paper and shoves it straight into her bag without taking a look. She pulls out a pair of earphones and plugs them in to her phone and puts them on. Qin looks on awkwardly.

QIN (CONT'D)
Miss Li, I-

A bus pulls over at the bus-stop and Yan Ting looks up. Qin looks on with a helpless look as Yan Ting walks towards the bus.

Qin takes a step forward and reaches out to grab Yan Ting's hand, but hesitates and clenches his hand into a fist and slowly pulls it back.

Yan Ting tilts her head back slightly and turns back to face the front, biting her lower lip with her brows creased. She boards the bus and takes a window seat.

She looks at her right pinky and looks towards Qin, who is stroking the back of his head with both his hands. She giggles and takes out a crumpled piece of paper from her bag.

Yan Ting takes out her phone and taps on the screen.

YAN TING
Chen.. Qin.. Saved.

Yan Ting giggles with her phone covering her mouth. The bus leaves the bus-stop. Qin squats and he drags his hand from the back of head, down his neck.

Qin shakes his head and massages his own shoulder.

QIN
(Muttering) If it was meant to be,
I'll hear from her soon.

INT. QIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Qin's phone rings on his bed. He steps out of the toilet as he dries his hair. He sees an unknown number and hesitates. He picks up his phone and answers the call.

QIN
Hello? Who is this?

Qin raises an eyebrow, finger ready to hang up.

INT. YAN TING'S ROOM - NIGHT

YAN TING
Have you forgotten about me
already? I'm still hurting all over
from this afternoon!

INTERCUT QIN/YAN TING

QIN
Ah.. Miss Li?

YAN TING
Yan Ting is fine. So, are you
serious about the words you said
earlier?

Qin's eyes widen, a grin opens wide on his face.

QIN
About being responsible? Of course
I am. I couldn't live with myself
if anything happened to you.

YAN TING
Perfect. Just the words I want to
hear. I need you to go out with me.

Qin inhales deeply and silently air-pumps.

YAN TING (CONT'D)
Don't get too happy. I just need
you to pretend that you're my
boyfriend to please my grandmother.

Qin stiffens up and his jaw drops. He lowers himself into a
squat and hugs his legs while burying his face.

QIN
(Long sigh)

YAN TING
Why? Are you unwilling? So much for
promising to make it up to me.

Qin stands back up and clears his throat.

QIN
No... no.. It's not that I'm
unwilling.. It's just.. I'm not
quite sure this is appropriate..

YAN TING
What do you mean by that?! I only
need you this one time so she
wouldn't force me into some match
making session with her friend's
grandson.

QIN
So I'm just acting then?

Qin laughs bitterly while Yan Ting scoffs.

YAN TING
Be glad that you can even pretend
to be my boyfriend! I'll text you
the details in a little bit.
Remember, you owe me!

Qin continues to listen to the dial tone with his head down
and shakes his head. He takes a deep breath, exhales.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE - AFTERNOON

Qin walks gingerly into the cafe, dressed dapperly to
impress. Many eyes drifting on to him while weaving through
the many tables to arrive at the table Yan Ting is sitting
at.

Yan Ting looks up as Qin arrives. She falls into a daze when
she gazes upon Qin.

YAN TING

My, my. I might actually fall for you if you're this dashing all the time.

Qin breaks into a smug grin and adjusts his collar before pulling out the chair next to Yan Ting and takes a seat.

QIN

I'm supposed to be meeting your family today. First impression counts after all.

Yan Ting rolls her eyes and shakes her head. She glances behind Qin and waves. She looks back at Qin and gives a light glare.

YAN TING

My grandmother is here, she's walking over now. Remember, you're my boyfriend. But don't take it too far! Be proper!

Qin chuckles and straightens his posture. He turns to greet the newest addition to the table. But his mouth is left agape, unable to speak.

Yan Ting nudges him and glares.

YAN TING (CONT'D)

Ahma, this is Chen Qin, my boyfriend.

Auntie Li covers her mouth with her hand, and points at Qin, jaw-dropped.

AUNTIE LI

Qin? Ah Chen's grandson?

Qin smiles wryly and rubs the back of his neck not daring to look directly at Auntie Li. Yan Ting tilts her head, unsure of what to make of the situation.

YAN TING

Ahma, you know Qin?

AUNTIE LI

He's the one that I wanted to introduce to you la. Like that no need already.

Yan Ting glares daggers at Qin. He raises his hands in surrender, shaking his head helplessly.

QIN

I didn't know that this was going to happen.

Auntie Li crosses her arms, a pout forms on her face.

AUNTIE LI

Ting, explain properly. I know Qin doesn't have a girlfriend. He just tell me yesterday.

Yan Ting slumps down onto the table helpless as she raises her arms in surrender. Qin chuckles in a corner.

QIN

Auntie Li, I guess we are really tied by the red string of fate.

EXT. PARK NEAR AUNTIE LI'S HOUSE - EVENING

Qin and Yan Ting are strolling along the canal behind the mall. Yan Ting stops and turns to Qin.

YAN TING

Thanks for today. Even though I didn't expect you to have just met my Ahma so recently and cause my plans to go so awry.

Yan Ting rolls her eyes while Qin laughs.

QIN

Hey.. You can't really blame me for that. I didn't know you were Auntie Li's granddaughter!

Yan Ting pouts and folds her arms.

YAN TING

But still! You could have tried to help cover it up! I was given an earful about lying to her while you were just sitting there enjoying the show!

Qin shrugs his shoulders and laughs.

YAN TING (CONT'D)

Hey! It's not funny! You didn't help me in the end and got me into more trouble instead! You owe me double now! How are you going to make it up to me?

Qin raises his hand in surrender and grins.

QIN

Yes, yes. I still owe you. How about dinner this weekend, with Auntie Li? To make up for today.

Yan Ting breaks out into a smile and nods. She gives Qin a peck on the cheek and looks away while a bright red flush fills her cheeks.

Qin jolts and covers his cheek as if protecting a precious treasure.