

Love, Ah Ma

By

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INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Scrap papers and buntings are strewn across the kitchen counter, balloons crowd the kitchen floor.

AH MA (O.S.)
No no, that's too much!

MEI QI (O.S.)
Like this?... Eh Ah ma, I'm scared
there won't be enough!

MEI QI (20 years) and AH MA's (75 years) necks are craned over a table brimming with cupcakes. Ah ma guides Mei Qi as she ices the cupcakes. The amicable duo chat, evidently comfortable with one another. Mei Qi sits with her legs crossed up on the chair, a child-like demeanor.

AH MA
Enough what? Enough icing? Isn't it
already too sweet!

The cupcakes are garishly iced.

MEI QI
No! Not the icing, the cupcakes!
Oh! And Stephanie and Amanda just
told me they're coming... You
remember them right?

AH MA
Of course Ah ma remembers, I used
to bring you down to play with them
everyday

Ah Ma nods gently, her eyes fixated on the cupcakes as she tops them with rainbow sprinkles.

MEI QI
Yes! So I counted... If they
come... That makes it over 50
people I invited! Which is super
great but... Ahh!

Mei Qi exclaims. She loses her focus while animatedly confiding in Ah Ma, squeezing icing off the cupcake. Ah Ma laughs and reaches over to take hold of the piping bag. She fixes Mei Qi's mistake, turning her accidental stroke into the stalk of a flower.

Mei Qi watches serenely as Ah Ma salvages her mistake; smiles registering on both their faces. Ah ma tips out the last bit of sprinkles onto the cupcake; emptying the plastic bottle.

(CONTINUED)

MEI QI

Ah ma, I can't wait for this
Saturday... Oh no! We ran out of
sprinkles...

AH MA

I'll go buy more sprinkles

MEI QI

Thanks ah ma

Ah ma turns to rummage for her purse, and comes across an
emptied bottle of prescription.

AH MA

Mei Qi, by the way, Ah ma has to go
to the doctor's this Saturday

MEI QI

Oh how come? Should I wait for you
to start the party?

AH MA

No need, don't wait for me

Balloons bounce afloat as Ah ma wades her way out of the
kitchen.

MEI QI

But you'll still be there for my
party right?

Ah Ma pauses at the doorway of the kitchen and answers with
a reassuring smile.

AH MA

Of course, Ah ma will always be
there

Ah ma steps out of the kitchen. A moment later, we hear a
loud bang, followed by a feeble shout.

AH MA

Ahhhh

Mei Qi is startled, stands bolt upright.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mei Qi dashes from kitchen into living room.

Ah ma is collapsed on the floor.

MEI QI

Ai yo! Ah ma! What are you doing on
the floor! Ah ma? ... Ah ma!

Mei Qi rushes toward Ah Ma and shakes her, no response.
Mei Qi is frantic, scrambles to the the house phone and
dials, clasping the phone tight, tapping furiously.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

(match cut) Mei Qi sits slumped on the floor, next to the
house phone, staring into the abyss. Her parents flank her
sides, seated on armed chairs. MOTHER (50 years) texts on
her handphone; teary eyed and sniffing. FATHER (50 years)
concludes a telephone call (newspaper or phone book opened
on his lap).

FATHER

Okay, you take care too Kwee Peng.
Ah, see you.

...Ma, I contacted some of her
close friends already, in case they
don't see the obituary.

MOTHER

Eh, Mei Ling asks if she should fly
back...

Mei Qi is seemingly indifferent to her parents' converse,
void of emotion.

FATHER

It'll be expensive... but I think
she shouldn't miss this. Anyway...
I've also called up the Casket.
They should be able to receive the
body tomorrow. We can hold the wake
on Saturday, and have the
funeral...

Mei Qi perks up at the mention of Saturday, and interrupts.

MEI QI

But Pa, this Saturday is my
birthday party

(CONTINUED)

Her father is stopped mid-sentence. Brows furrowed, he stands up appalled.

FATHER

What?! You're still thinking about your party?! This is not a time to celebrate.

Balloons pop in the background.

MEI QI

Ah ma would've wanted me to...

Her father does not compromise and is firm.

FATHER

... Ah ma's body will rot ah if we wait for you to have your party!

MEI QI

no but I

FATHER

Don't be crazy. The wake is this Saturday - final. You better not be disrespectful. You say ah ma doesn't mind? ...Over my dead body!

Father looks a little unsteady at saying that. Mother shoots him a disapproving look.

FATHER

Choy ah, choy. (touch wood)

Father flustered by the argument, fumbles for the wooden arm of the living room chair and sits himself back down. Mei Qi is silenced. A call from the house phone intercepts and ends their conversation.

FATHER

Hello! (flustered, angry) Eh, Ah bee. Yeah.. Old age ah... these things cannot predict...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Deathly silence at the kitchen table. The remaining trio (Mother, Father, Mei Qi) eat dinner; Mei Qi picks at her food. One seat is empty - Ah ma's seat.

(CONTINUED)

(After dinner; jump in time) Mei Qi opens the fridge to keep left-over food. She stalls. Her eyes well up and mouth quivers. In the fridge sits a baking tray; the cupcakes Ah Ma and her were icing. She takes the tray out of the fridge, and holds it above the bin, hesitant.

She hovers a cupcake over the mouth of the bin, on it is written/piped halfway in Chinese "Birthday..". Instead of dumping it, she stuffs it into her mouth. Then she gorges herself with the cupcakes, one after another (it's too painful and great of a waste to throw them), and sobs. Coloured icing smears around her mouth.

Ah ma stands next to her and laughs.

AH MA

Mei, what are you doing! If you eat everything there won't be enough for the party! Look, I got the sprinkles that we need!

In Ah ma's hands is a plastic sack of rainbow sprinkles. She holds it out, and sprinkles pour out onto the kitchen table.

MEI QI

Ah ma! ...What are you saying, this is not the time to have a party.

AH MA

What are you talking about?

The table is now covered in heaps of rainbow sprinkles. Fairy lights drape the kitchen behind Ah ma. Hands enter the frame, each holding a different party element (party hats, masks, etc).

MEI QI

Ah Ma! Why did you have to choose this timing to go? Why couldn't you wait till after my 21st?

Chunks of cupcake drop out of her mouth as she talks, sobbing.

AH MA

What are you talking about, I'm right here!

Ah Ma wipes the tears off Mei Qi's face, and wipes her mouth clean. She tucks Mei Qi's hair behind her ear and gazes at her.

MEI QI

Ah ma, you said you'd always be
there for me

AH MA

But I have been. For 21 years Ah ma
has watched you grow up.

MEI QI

Ah Ma, don't go. Stay.

We see the girl actually alone at the kitchen table, the
single tray of smeared cupcakes next to her.

EXT. FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT

(match cut, track out) Mei Qi sits centre-frame at a round
table, prying open peanut shells with a forlorn expression
on her face. She wears a plain white shirt (standard funeral
decorum). Languid, solemn atmosphere weighs in as others
encircle the casket in the background (vaguely visible) and
sit dispersed around other tables in the parlour. Condolence
bouquets flank the casket.

Two girls enter the frame and approach Mei Qi gingerly.

STEPHANIE

Hey, Amanda and I are going to make
a move okay?

AMANDA

I'm so sorry Mei Qi...

The girls give Mei Qi a hug, then walk off.

MEI QI

Thanks for coming Steph, thanks for
coming Amanda...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mei Qi disposes the empty bottle of sprinkles to the bin.
Her parents enter the kitchen from behind her.

MOTHER & FATHER

Happy Birthday to you...

Mei Qi turns around to see her Mother and Father enter the
kitchen, singing, birthday cake cradled in hand.

(CONTINUED)

AH MA (V.O.)
Mei Qi, today you are twenty one
years old.

Mei Qi breaks out into a smile.
I've watch you grow up into such a
sweet and beautiful girl

The three of them stand around the kitchen table; just as Ah
ma and the girl had done so when they were baking. Mei Qi
blows the candles, and cuts the cake.

AH MA (V.O.)
I'm so proud of you

Birthday card tacked up on the fridge in the foreground.

AH MA (V.O.)
...Happy Birthday. Loving you
always, Ah Ma.

FADE TO BLACK.