

Love, Ah Ma

By

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INT. KITCHEN - DAY

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

AH MA (O.S.)  
No no, that's too much ah! 不可以, 这样太多了!

MEI QI (O.S.)  
Like this?... Eh Ah ma, I'm scared there won't be enough! 是吗? EH AH MA. 我怕会不够 LEH

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! 不够什么? 不够 ICING? 已经很甜了!

The cupcakes are garishly iced. Piped onto the cupcakes are "Happy Birthday" (in Chinese) and the numerals "21".

MEI QI  
No! Not the icing Ah ma, the cupcakes!

Mei Qi douses rainbow sprinkles over the tray of already heavily iced cupcakes. She rattles on excitably, while clasping onto a piping bag. Ah Ma nods gently, her eyes fixated on the cupcakes as she pipes (chinese lettering) onto them.

MEI QI  
Don't you know how many people are coming? Or who? I thought I told you before?! Like, like Stephanie and Yin Ling... You remember them right?! Ahhh! 我不是跟你讲过, 很多人会来。你知道谁吗? STEPHANIE 和 YIN LING. 你记得他们吗?

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.

AH MA  
Of course... Ah ma used to bring you to the playground to meet them everyday... 当然记得。你小时候我每次带你去楼下 PLAYGROUND 跟他们一起玩的吗

(CONTINUED)

Mei Qi watches serenely as Ah Ma salvages her mistake; smiles registering on both their faces.

(BLACK OUT) Title: <Love, Ah Ma>

Ah ma rummages through items on the kitchen counter, coming across empty bottles of her prescription pills. In the background, Mei Qi tips out the last contents of her bottle of rainbow sprinkles.

MEI QI  
Oh no, we ran out of sprinkles AI YA. 那个彩色糖酒 (?) 用完了

Ah ma hears Mei Qi's call for help, and sets down her empty prescription bottles.

AH MA  
I'll go buy more sprinkles 没管系啊, AH MA 去楼下买多一包

MEI QI  
Thanks ah ma

AH MA  
Mei Qi, by the way, Ah ma has to go to the doctor's this Saturday 美琪 AH, AH MA 这个星期六要去看医生

MEI QI  
Oh how come? Should I wait for you to start the party? 去做什么 LEH? 那我要不要等你回来才开始 PARTY?

AH MA  
No need, don't wait for me 不用, 不用等我。

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? 不过, 你还是会回来和我一起庆祝对吗?

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 当然, AH MA 会陪你庆祝的别担心

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

Ah ma is collapsed on the floor. Mei Qi rushes toward Ah Ma.

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

Mei Qi shakes Ah ma. She fumbles with the house phone and dials frantically.

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. FATHER (50 years) sits teary eyed and sniffing. MOTHER (50 years) concludes a telephone call, phone book opened on her lap.

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

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

Neither Mei Qi or her Father register any response. The trio sit in an uncomfortable silence; broken only by sniffs.

MOTHER  
 ...the casket took the body in  
 already. We'll have the wake...  
 then the cremation on Saturday...

Mei Qi interrupts, aghast.

MEI QI  
 Ma... this Saturday is my birthday

Silence ensues, Mei Qi's Mother unable to answer. Her Father finally breaks his silence; emotional.

FATHER  
 You're still thinking of  
 celebrating? Be sensible!

Balloons pop in the background. Mei Qi tries meekly to defend herself.

(CONTINUED)

MEI QI

Ah ma would've wanted...

FATHER

You want to have your birthday, go and have your birthday! Ah ma is gone now! ...Forever!

Father's voice cracks.

MEI QI

Stop talking like that! You think I'm glad that Ah ma is gone?! I'm devastated! The last thing I want to do is bury Ah ma on my birthday!

Silence elapses.

FATHER

...Mei, just not now ok. Not this year

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

(Note: Next night; match cut) Deathly silence at the kitchen table. The remaining trio (Mother, Father, Mei Qi) eat dinner; Mei Qi picks at her food. Colourful party streamers remain hanging from the kitchen ceiling (a visual juxtaposition). One seat is empty - Ah ma's seat.

(After dinner; jump in time) Mei Qi opens the fridge door to keep left-over food, then stalls. Her eyes well up and mouth quivers. In the fridge sits a baking tray; the cupcakes Ah Ma and her were icing. She pulls the tray out, and holds a cupcake with "Birthday.." (in Chinese) piped halfway on it.

She gorges herself with the cupcakes, one after another, sobs and slumps next to the open fridge. 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!

MEI. 你做什么? 你不是讲不够蛋糕? 你这样吃 PARTY 不就没有蛋糕了吗? 你看, 我把包糖回来了

In Ah ma's hands is a plastic sack of rainbow sprinkles. She holds it out, and sprinkles pour out onto the baking tray in Mei Qi's hands.

(CONTINUED)

MEI QI

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

AH MA! 你为什么选这个时候走?  
你不可以等到我生日过后吗?

Chunks of cupcake drop out of Mei Qi's mouth as she speaks,  
sobbing. Rainbow sprinkles pile on the baking tray, and  
gather around Mei Qi's body.

AH MA

What are you talking about Mei?...  
Ah ma is right here!

AH MA 没有走。。

Ah Ma wipes the tears and coloured icing off Mei Qi's face.

AH MA

... Ah ma never left

Mei Qi rests her head on Ah ma's shoulder. Both of them sit  
side by side on the kitchen floor.

MEI QI

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

AH MA. 你说你会一直陪我的。

AH MA

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

有啊, 你这 21 年, 我都看你长大

MEI QI

Ah Ma, don't go. Stay.

AH MA. 不要走, 留下来。

Mei Qi sits alone on the kitchen floor; slumped next to the  
fridge. The single tray of smeared cupcakes next to her. In  
her hands is a cupcake; a single lit candle stuck on it.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY/NIGHT

(match cut) Lit candles sit on a table before Ah ma's casket  
(Buddhist set-up). A languid, solemn atmosphere weights the  
room. Father and Mother attend to family members. Guests sit  
dispersed in the funeral parlour. Peanut shells and packet  
drinks scatter the tables.

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).

Two girls enter the frame and approach Mei Qi. One of the  
girls passes Mei Qi a paper bag with brightly coloured crepe  
paper sticking out from it.

(CONTINUED)

STEPHANIE  
Happy Birthday Mei

YIN LING  
Take care Ok. I'll give you a call  
tonight?

The girls each give Mei Qi a hug.

MEI QI  
Thanks for coming Steph, thanks for  
coming Yin...

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mei Qi is in the kitchen. She picks up a pastel coloured envelope and retrieves a card from it. She opens it to read.

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

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

MOTHER & FATHER  
Happy Birthday to you...

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

Birthday card and envelope (opened) on the table, in the foreground.

AH MA (V.O.)  
Ah ma is so proud of you

The three of them stand around the kitchen table. Mei Qi blows the candles, and cuts the cake.

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

FADE TO BLACK.