



Fifteen Minutes in the Makeup Room: An Analysis on the Flirtations of Xiao Zhan and Wang Yibo

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Abstract— Following the widespread popularity of *The Untamed*, a live adaptation of the novel *The Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, many behind-the-scenes clips have been released, allowing fans to see how the actors interacted with each other during *The Untamed*'s filming process in the summer of 2018. This paper analyzes the interactions between *The Untamed*'s two leads, Xiao Zhan and Wang Yibo, within a fifteen minute behind-the-scenes clip from the makeup room on the set of *The Untamed*, and argues that their mode of interaction with each other was meaningfully different from how they interacted with other actors on set, and indicates a relationship developing past typical professionalism or friendship between co-stars.

Keywords— Xiao Zhan, Wang Yibo, The Untamed, The Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation, Real Person Slash, BJYX

I. PREFACE

To get a full understanding of what led to the fifteen minutes in the makeup room this paper references, it is critical to first know what occurred just before it. The sequence of events were pieced together over time as more behind-the-scenes clips emerged, and the general consensus is that prior to the scene shown in the fifteen minute compilation, Wang Yibo had offered to help purchase food for Xiao Zhan. The two had a short exchange in which they plan what food to ask Wang Yibo's assistant to order for them. Wang Yibo insisted on ordering stir-fried rice noodles, and Xiao Zhan indicated he wanted chaoshou, a style of wontons in a chili oil sauce, instead. At the end of this stand-alone clip, we hear Wang Yibo asking his assistant to order chaoshou for Xiao Zhan.

II. JI LI BEHIND THE CAMERA

When the clip opens, Ji Li, the actor for Nie Huaisang, is the one holding the camera, and he approaches Wang Yibo, who is busy eating a container of stir-fried rice noodles. Ji Li attempts to engage Wang Yibo on camera, and we can immediately see that Wang Yibo isn't in the best mood, and is unwilling to play along. When Ji Li asks him 'Yibo, did you get your makeup done already?', Wang Yibo responds with his famous line: 'I'm not Yibo, I'm Lan Wangji's body-double.'

The key detail that strikes me here is how little effort and energy Wang Yibo puts into playing along with Ji Li.

Wang Yibo doesn't respond to Ji Li's compliments ('Even Lan Wangji's body double has features this exquisite') and rebuffs Ji Li's continued attempts to engage him with: 'Why are you interviewing me? I'm Lan Wangji's body double.' Throughout this portion, Wang Yibo keeps eating and barely looks up at Ji Li or the camera. Pretty quickly, Ji Li moves on.

When Ji Li moves over to Xiao Zhan, Xiao Zhan is getting his hair done, and watching a Korean drama on his phone at the same time. Xiao Zhan puts his phone down briefly just to jokingly scold Ji Li for getting his phone screen on camera, and then raises his phone back up to continue watching his drama. He also doesn't seem very interested in engaging with Ji Li either.

However, very quickly, Wang Yibo moves over to take the camera over from Ji Li. What's interesting is, Ji Li actually went around and 'interviewed' quite a lot of other actors, including the actors of Jin Guanyao, Xue Yang, and Song Lan. Wang Yibo didn't step in at any point, and only went to take the camera from Ji Li once he'd headed over to Xiao Zhan. Further more, as soon as Wang Yibo takes over the camera, Xiao Zhan abandons the drama and places his phone down on the table.

From this section we can immediately see the differences in how Xiao Zhan and Wang Yibo treat each other versus how they treat another member of the cast that they are also friendly with and frequently joke around with (as seen in other behind-the-scenes clips). With Ji Li, both were unwilling to engage beyond the bare minimum, and preferred to keep their focus on what they had been doing before. With each other, they place full focus on the other person.

Note that even though Wang Yibo was so unwilling to in-

teract with Ji Li when he was 'interviewing' him, he voluntarily goes to take the camera from Ji Li to use it to 'interview' and interact with Xiao Zhan.

III. "WHAT DID ZHAN-GE EAT TODAY?"

First note that once Wang Yibo gets the camera directed at Xiao Zhan, Xiao Zhan immediately says, 'I knew you were going to do this.' This indicates he knows already the thing that becomes increasingly obvious in the next minute of the clip: Wang Yibo is in a bad mood because Xiao Zhan didn't eat the stir-fried rice noodles Wang Yibo had bought for him, and also perhaps that Xiao Zhan hadn't had anything to eat at all.

The key point for me here is that Xiao Zhan makes a (very accurate) assumption that Wang Yibo would a) pay attention to what he'd eaten and b) would be upset that he hadn't eaten the food. It takes a really special relationship to be able to assume that someone else would actually be upset that you hadn't eaten. This single-dog author would like to sadly express that in her life, she would only be able to make this assumption about her mother.

It's unclear what happened to the chaoshou we heard Wang Yibo ordering for Xiao Zhan in the clip that's considered the 'prelude' to this compilation, but this section makes clear that instead, only stir-fried noodles had been ordered.

Throughout the course of their exchange, Wang Yibo asks Xiao Zhan 'What did Zhan-ge/Xiao-laoshi eat today?' a total of five times, while Xiao Zhan keeps saying 'I was wrong' and tries to get him to move away. Wang Yibo pesters Xiao Zhan into answering why he didn't eat the rice noodles he'd brought him, and Xiao Zhan answers: 'The container you gave me was untouched, I thought it wouldn't be good (for me to eat it).'

This response highlights three things. One, Wang Yibo had personally brought the food to hand over to Xiao Zhan. Two, Wang Yibo had saved for him a container that was new and untouched. Three, Xiao Zhan's excuse carries with it a bit of 'guest-feeling', a term in Chinese that refers to how you're only polite and extremely considerate of things like whether it's appropriate to eat a container of food if the person that bought it hadn't eaten any yet, if you don't feel super close with the person. It's entirely possible that Xiao Zhan just didn't feel like eating stir-fried rice noodles (remember, in the preceding clip, when Wang Yibo was insisting on ordering rice noodles Xiao Zhan had explicitly said he didn't want them and wanted chaoshou), and the 'it was untouched' was just an excuse he found to give Wang Yibo. However, I posit that this 'guest-feeling' response is something that added salt to Wang Yibo's wound of Xiao Zhan not eating the food he'd bought for him.

Thus, after circling around to film Xiao Zhan's left profile, when Xiao Zhan keeps trying to get him to move away (perhaps in part to stop feeling guilty about not eating, and in part because he hadn't had his makeup done yet?), Wang Yibo moves away to return the camera to Ji Li.

IV. THE MUA DESERVES A RAISE

This next segment after Xiao Zhan gets ahold of the camera and goes over to film Wang Yibo is one of my favorite seg-

ments of behind-the-scenes ever, because it showcases just how silly the two of them can be together to the exclusion of everyone else around them, as well as Xiao Zhan's keen sense of when Wang Yibo is upset and the way he knows exactly how to coax him out of it.

Xiao Zhan goes over to Wang Yibo and starts off with a dick joke/pun on Lan Wangji's name (Lan Wangji-ba, where 'jiba' = 'dick') that made me want to facepalm even three years after this was recorded and watching through my computer screen. The MUA calls them two elementary schoolers, and you can see Wang Yibo's personal assistant and childhood friend actually facepalm in the background. Once again I was struck by the difference in how Wang Yibo responded to Xiao Zhan behind the camera vs Ji Li. The pure and utter affection in his voice when he calls Xiao Zhan silly ('sha') as he's gleefully repeating his stupid dick pun actually made me blush.

The MUA already knows putting makeup on Wang Yibo is going to be impossible with Xiao Zhan there and she tries in vain to get Keke, Xiao Zhan's personal assistant, to take him away.

At this point, Wang Yibo is still a little upset/irritated, seen in the way he responds a little snappily to Xiao Zhan asking him if he's getting his makeup done: 'You can't tell by looking? Did you not bring your eyes?'

At this point, Xiao Zhan switches gears into complimenting Wang Yibo (his eye makeup is the most intricate, his eye lashes are really pretty, etc). He stays there to keep complimenting him, even though the MUA is clearly telling him to go away (this woman is trying to do eyeliner!! and Wang Yibo just doesn't stay still when Xiao Zhan is there messing with him!)

After a string of more compliments from Xiao Zhan, Wang Yibo is already in a better mood and starts throwing the compliments back at him. It is also around this point that the MUA just gives up completely and lets Wang Yibo get up.

V. CHASE AROUND THE MAKEUP ROOM

At this point, Wang Yibo's mood and energy has done a complete 180 from the beginning of the video... after just a few minutes of Xiao Zhan complimenting him... and the two of them devolve into a literal play fight/chase around the makeup room. The highlight for me is how they're completely in their own world, and everyone else in the makeup room just ignores them completely, like this is a common occurrence that they can't be bothered to deal with anymore.

At some point the camera ends back in Wang Yibo's hands and he uses it to film... 'Xiao-laoshi's slender legs, Xiao-laoshi's leg hair, Xiao-laoshi's beautiful legs, Xiao-laoshi's eyebrows, Xiao-laoshi's lips, Xiao-laoshi's fingers' (in Wang Yibo's own words of what he's filming). In fact, after he says, 'Xiao-laoshi's slender legs', he adds a 'whoooo!' This author failed to find a heterosexual explanation for this.

When Xiao Zhan does his classic 'pretend to be angry and leave' routine, Wang Yibo matches him at the same level of gremlin energy and calls him on it: 'Ok then go outside, stay outside.' (Which of course Xiao Zhan does not, and they continue their chase in the makeup room in front of everyone's hotpots.)

At the same time Xiao Zhan is filming Wang Yibo on his



own iPhone. At one point a cameraman offers to get Xiao Zhan another behind-the-scenes camera to record Wang Yibo on and he brushes him off very quickly, 'No my phone is convenient.' (Just say you want the footage of Wang Yibo on your personal phone and go, Xiao Zhan.)

The funniest thing to me about this segment is how they both keep saying 'Wang-laoshi is hitting me'/'Xiao-laoshi is hitting me' like they're telling on the other person to someone, but... literally no one is paying attention to them. At one point the MUA literally says again, 'just ignore the schoolchildren.'

VI. TRUCE? 3, 2, 1...

Finally, they calm down a little and call a truce, for both of them to lower their cameras at the same time after counting down from 3. Naturally, after they finish counting, neither of them lower their camera, and they burst into laughter about it. This is a moment that really hammers home for me how the two of them just 'get' each other and are on the same wavelength. After they laugh, they then actually do put their cameras away, and things appear to calm down a little.

The camera gets put down by Wang Yibo and picked back up by the actual behind-the-scenes camera man, who then proceeds to film Wang Yibo going back over to Xiao Zhan to nag him about if he'd eaten anything yet. Xiao Zhan says yes, a little unconvincingly, and then goes, 'I want to eat 3+2,' a type of crackers, to Wang Yibo's visible grumpiness. After he gets up from his chair, Wang Yibo steals the chair, and so Xiao Zhan returns with the 3+2 crackers and makes a point of standing directly behind Wang Yibo's chair as he eats (even though there's an empty chair right to the side).

Wang Yibo is on his phone as Xiao Zhan is munching away, but he glances up into the mirror twice (to confirm that Xiao Zhan is, in fact, eating – even if it's a snack and not a proper meal).

This is where this behind-the-scenes clip ends, and what strikes me about it is that after all the chaos, Wang Yibo didn't forget about the initial thing he was fixated on: whether or not Xiao Zhan had eaten a meal.

There's a lot to be said about food-giving and food-sharing as an expression of love, especially in Chinese culture, where a common greeting to people you're close with is 'have you eaten?' and there's the stereotype that parents who are bad at verbally expressing love and affection do it through providing food.

It's amazing to me just how much of a single-minded focus Wang Yibo has on it, and I view it as a manifestation of how he's trying to draw their relationship closer and at the same time demonstrate his ability and willingness to be someone Xiao Zhan can rely on – that despite him being six years younger, he knows how to take care of others too, and that when Xiao Zhan is with him, he doesn't have to stay in the role of 'older member and caretaker' and can instead relax and sajjiao and be taken care of in turn.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

A more complete analysis would have included the other behind-the-scenes clip that tie in along the same themes, namely the way Wang Yibo asked Xiao Zhan to eat two

bowls of chaoshou as his 'penitence' for accidentally hitting Wang Yibo while filming, and another makeup room clip in which Wang Yibo heard Xiao Zhan say he was going to fast, was upset, and told him 'If you don't eat then I won't either.'

However, even without the context of these other behind-the-scenes videos, just these fifteen minutes in the makeup room in a vacuum is more than enough to showcase the way Xiao Zhan and Wang Yibo's interactions with each other were entirely different from the energy and attention span they gave to other cast and crew members around them. From the way Wang Yibo was focused on Xiao Zhan's meal habits to the point of being sulky he hadn't eaten the food he'd bought for him, to the way Xiao Zhan knew exactly how to get Wang Yibo to feel better and lift his mood, to the extremely push-and-pull of their chase around the makeup room, this behind-the-scenes video is a joy to watch.

BJYXSZD. Thank you for reading.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Many thanks to my fellow passionfruit clowns who saw me going off the rails a little upon my re-watch of this makeup room behind-the-scenes, and encouraged me to clown even harder. Even more thanks to Xiao Zhan and Wang Yibo, for having brought so much joy to my life this past year.

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