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That woman is so glamorous,” Shirley said, nudging Lily to look. Two Caucasian women were seated across the restaurant at the table in the alcove. “I wonder if she’s going to a show.”

It was Friday night in the middle of the dinner rush, and the Eastern Pearl was almost full, but Lily knew immediately who Shirley was talking about. The red paper lanterns hanging overhead shed a warm glow over the woman’s blond hair; it was pulled up in a twist and pinned with something glittering that matched the droplets in her ears. She wore a royal-blue satin sleeveless dress with a scoop neckline, which showed off her creamy skin, and a matching blue bolero jacket hung over the back of her seat. Her companion was dressed much less glamorously. In fact, she wore trousers—gray flannel ones, with a soft-collared white blouse tucked in at the waist. Her hair was cut short in the current style, but on her it looked a bit less gamine than mannish, which drew Lily’s attention. There was something about her posture that felt subtly masculine. Lily couldn’t put her finger on it, but it intrigued her.

Lily realized she was staring and turned her attention back to the messy pile of napkins in front of her. Beside her, Shirley was moving rapidly through her own stack, transforming them into crisp swans. Lily had spent countless hours in the restaurant with Shirley since they were little, and over the years she’d helped out with various small tasks as needed. Now they were about to start their senior year

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in high school, but she still couldn't fold a napkin into a decent swan. She picked apart the one she had been working on and started over.

On weekend nights, the Eastern Pearl mainly attracted tourists rather than local Chinese. Shirley said it was because one of the tour companies that brought people to Chinatown recommended it, which led to good business for the restaurant. Lily wondered if the women in the alcove were tourists, and she snuck another glance at them.

The blonde was removing a silver cigarette case from her handbag, and her companion pulled a matchbook from her trouser pocket, leaning toward her as she struck a match. The blonde cupped her hand around the flame, drawing her friend's hand close to her face as she inhaled. Afterward, she sat back and offered the case to her friend, who removed a cigarette and lit it quickly, pulling the cigarette away from her mouth with her thumb and index finger. Smoke curled up into the red-lit ceiling.

"You're making a mess of those," Shirley said, glancing at Lily's poorly folded swans. "Ma won't like them."

"Sorry," Lily said. "I'm no good at this."

Shirley shook her head, but she wasn't annoyed. This was the way it always was. "I'll redo yours," Shirley said as she pulled Lily's napkins toward her.

Lily sat there for a moment, watching Shirley shake out her messy swan, and then she reached for the *Chronicle*. She always enjoyed the theater and film reviews and society columns, with their photographs of women in furs and diamonds, and she wondered idly if the blonde had ever been in the paper.

"Maybe she's an heiress," Lily said to Shirley. "The blonde over there."

Shirley glanced across the restaurant again, briefly. "An heiress to a gold mine?"

"Yes. And her father recently died and left her with a fortune—"

“But she’s discovered that she has a half brother—”

“—who’s fighting her for the inheritance—”

“—so she hired a private investigator to seduce him!”

Lily shot Shirley a confused glance. “What?”

“Well, who do you think that other woman is? She looks like a female private investigator. Only a female PI would look like that. She was probably undercover.”

Lily was amused. “Undercover where?”

“Oh, who knows.”

They had played this game since they were children—inventing stories for strangers they saw in the restaurant—but Shirley tended to lose interest in their inventions before Lily did.

“Did you see the new ad my parents placed?” Shirley asked, setting the latest napkin swan next to the others, all lined up like a funny little army.

“No.”

“It’s in there—I saw it earlier. Keep going. It’s on the same page as the nightclub reviews.”

Lily obediently flipped the pages of the *Chronicle* to the “After Night Falls” column, which took up half of the page. The other half was filled with ads for restaurants and nightclubs. She skimmed them, hunting for the Eastern Pearl ad. MEET ME AT JULIAN’S XO-CHIMILCO: SERVING THE BEST MEXICAN DINNER. ALL-CHINESE FLOOR SHOWS—SUPERB FULL-COURSE CHINESE OR AMERICAN DINNER—FORBIDDEN CITY. An illustration of four faces—father, mother, son, and daughter with a bow in her hair—advertised GOOD FOOD! GOOD LIVING INCLUDES DINING AT GRANT’S.

“There it is,” Shirley said, pointing to an ad near the bottom of the page. A simple black rectangle with the type in bold white read: EXPERIENCE THE FINEST ORIENTAL CUISINE AT THE EASTERN PEARL—THE BEST OF CHINATOWN.

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But Lily's eye was drawn to a square box directly above the Eastern Pearl ad. It read: TOMMY ANDREWS MALE IMPERSONATOR—WORLD PREMIERE! THE TELEGRAPH CLUB. 462 BROADWAY. It was a relatively large ad that included a photo of a person who looked like a handsome man with his hair slicked back, dressed in a tuxedo. Something went still inside Lily, as if her heart had taken a breath before it continued beating.

"It's not very big, but Pa thinks it will get noticed," Shirley said. "What do you think?"

"Oh, I—I'm sure it'll get noticed," Lily said.

"People read that page, don't they? They always want to know what stars are in town."

"You're right. I'm sure people will see it."

Shirley nodded, satisfied, and Lily forced herself to look up from the photo of Tommy Andrews. Across the restaurant the two women were paying their bill. The woman in the blue dress took a wallet out of her handbag, while the woman with the short hair unexpectedly pulled a billfold out of her trouser pocket. Their dollars tumbled limply onto the table.

Behind the counter, the swinging door to the kitchen opened. Shirley's mother poked her head out and called, "Shirley, come help me for a minute."

"Yes, Ma," Shirley answered. She gave Lily an exasperated glance. "Don't touch the napkins. I'll finish them when I get back."

The bell attached to the restaurant's front door jingled, and Lily saw the two women leaving. The short-haired woman held the door open for her friend, and then they were gone, and Lily was staring down at the ad for the Telegraph Club again.

Four-sixty-two Broadway must be only a few blocks from the Eastern Pearl. There were several nightclubs on Broadway, just east of Columbus. Lily's parents always told her to avoid those blocks;

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they were for adults, they said, and for tourists. Not for good Chinese girls. Not for girls at all. Lily understood that she was supposed to think the clubs were tawdry, but every time she crossed Broadway (always during the day, of course) she'd look down the wide street toward the Bay Bridge in the distance, her gaze lingering on those closed doorways, wondering what they hid from view.

Her palms were a little damp. She glanced over her shoulder, but no one was behind the counter. She quickly tore out the page with the Telegraph Club ad, folded it into a neat, small square, and tucked it deep into the pocket of her skirt. She closed the newspaper and slid it back into the pile of *Chronicles* beneath the counter. As she straightened the stack, she realized her fingertips were smudged with newsprint. She ran to the bathroom and turned on the sink, scrubbing at her fingers with the harsh pink soap until no trace of ink remained.