

Yin Chang

Born Under a Lucky Star

by Pamela Price

If you're watching TV and you think you've seen "that girl," you're right. You probably know her from *Gossip Girl*. Her name is Yin Chang. She played Nelly Yuki, the academic mean girl of Blair Waldorf's click. You might also recognize her from the national Time Warner Cable commercial where she runs frantic around a broken washing machine. This April audiences will see Yin in the much anticipated Disney film *Prom*, where she relives the greatest High School event. But before getting there, Yin had to overcome some obstacles. Growing up in Long Island, New York, she was raised in a traditional Asian family with parents who would have much rather had her attend a business school or, better yet, study medicine. If it wasn't for Yin's artistic grandfather, she might have never been allowed to pursue acting. She quickly fell in love with it. However, she takes great pride in her Asian-American background, so much so that she made it a point to speak and write Mandarin fluently. Being born under a lucky star, Yin auditioned for *Gossip Girl* while in college. She got the part, which validated her as a working ac-

triss. She remained on the series for two seasons. Yin eventually moved to LA and, shortly thereafter, landed her costarring role on *Prom*.

You are known for being a part of Blair's infamous click on *Gossip Girl*. Was the show your first big acting project?

Yes! *Gossip Girl* was definitely my first big acting job. It was really nice to have a job that was like a second home to go to for about a year and a half. I booked it while I was in college so I had to take a semester off. I remember getting notes for my professors from Warner Bros. saying, "Please excuse Yin Chang from class." It was so embarrassing! Funny story about my character, Nelly Yuki: she was originally supposed to be the Asian version of Blair Waldorf. She was meant to be sexy and pretty. I was like, "Wo! I wouldn't go with the sexy side, but I'll make it my own!" (Yin bursts out laughing) So I auditioned for the role as a B-I-T-C-H. I realized they changed the character to a nerd when they put some nerdy glasses on me at the fitting. The costume designer, Eric Daman, said, "You didn't know the producers are changing her to a nerd?" I went with it! I'm sure the Asian-American community was like, "What, another nerd?" But I had a lot of fun with the character acting. It was great to work with the cast, as well. I know it's cliché to say, but they're all fantastic people. Most of my scenes were with Leighton Meester, as well as the mean girls. Leighton has such a warm and open heart. Whenever

she had parties at her place, she would always offer me to stay over because I lived in Long Island.

You're from New York. Did you come to LA after *Gossip Girl*?

Yes! I made the move in 2009, and hopefully I'll make LA my permanent home.

Do you audition for any role available, or only roles with breakdowns specific to Asian-American characters? What's your experience as an Asian-American actress?

I have noticed that there are a lot more Asian-American roles being written in, whether they're adopted or half Asian. Now I get sent out for Caucasian and roles for all ethnicities. I would say it's still tough, but we're definitely making an improvement with more roles for Asian American actors. I look up to Sandra Oh as an Asian American actress. She's incredible in everything that she does.

How did you get involved with the Disney film *Prom*?

They had a very long casting process for several months. I came in later on and went out on a regular audition, just like everybody else. I think it was a combination of timing, luck and hard work! I remember memorizing my lines until around 5am. I was a nervous wreck!

I've seen your character going frantic in the *Prom* trailer. Who do you play in the film?

My character, Mei, is very stylish and artistic. She and her boyfriend, who's played by Jared Kusnitz, are the 'it' couple in High School. They're always kissing, holding hands, planning to go to college together, and get married. Mei is definitely in love with her boyfriend, however, she has a little secret that could affect their future. Mei definitely explores her individuality. I think a lot of teens can relate to the



me, but I decided to go with my girlfriends instead. But I was still the odd one out since all of my friends had dates. The cool thing about my *Prom* was that I made my own dress! I had good times with my girlfriends, although I really just hung out at the table eating! I prefer the *Prom* movie scenario.

You want to write scripts in the future. What kind of film genres do you want to write?

I've always loved writing. I had a double major in creative writing and media at Hunter College in NYC. I do write in my free time and I plan on publishing a book one day. I would love to do something in the vein of Amy Tan's work. *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *The Joy Luck Club* were phenomenal. She's written about past generations in Asia and Asian-American culture in such a beautiful way. I have a lot of in-

teresting family stories about our history that are very heartbreaking and moving. I would like to shed light on the Asian-American culture in my films.

Do you have any interest in directing?

Yes, I would love to write, direct and be in my films. Actually, I would love to direct my two little sisters, who are thirteen and fourteen, in my films one day. They are both wonderful actresses.

You've been noted as one of Hollywood's rising stars. What kind of work do you want to do in the future that gains you star recognition?

Well, the geeky side of me would like to gain recognition from doing films like *X-Men*! However, I would love to focus on independent films and projects that go to Sundance. There's something gritty and authentic about those types of films. Usually an independent film's message isn't something that a commercialized film would touch on.

Are you signed on to any new projects right now?

I shot a guest spot for a show called 'Love Bites,' but I'm not sure when it's airing. That was fun because I got to work with Greg Grunberg from 'Heroes'. Other than that, *Prom* comes out on April 29th!

Your hobby list runs long, from jewelry making to playing piano. What do you love to do most in your free time?

Well, right now I don't have a piano at home! When I do have a piano, I can sit for six to twelve hours learning piano covers. I love hip hop, soft rock (like Eric

Clapton and Bryan Adams), and oldies, especially the Supremes. I do love looking at YouTube videos of David Sides, who plays popular hip hop music on the piano. He's really talented. Thank goodness I live with my best friend, because we keep each other entertained. We're always doing character acting. We're insane! But, our goofing around

makes life really fun!

With her bubbly personality and energy to match, there's no doubt that Yin will continue to flourish in any endeavor she takes on in front of or behind the camera.

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kind of situation where you think something is going to go one way, and then they make a complete 180° when another possibility pops up for your future. Mei definitely bottles up her secret, so she tends to be a firecracker at times!

With your role in *Prom* and your past roles, do you use a specific acting technique?

I just hit the ground running! I built my acting experience from working and observing other people's work. I definitely learn from others and from the director's guidance. I also use my personal experiences to connect with my characters.

A lot of people have interesting stories about their *Prom*. What was your *Prom* experience in the film versus your *Prom* in real life?

Let's just say that my *Prom* experience in the movie was A LOT

better than my real life *Prom*! First of all, I didn't have a date. I remember that there were two guys who wanted to go with



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