Dong Shan Cai was a student at Ying De Academy. She was the only child of her father and mother. Shan Cai worked part-time at a bakery with her best friend, Xiao You. At school, she became acquainted with the F4. She later fell in love with F4's leader Dao Ming Si, despite hating him initially.

Shan Cai had an overall likable appearance, despite some of her rich classmates calling her "plain". She had a round face with symmetrical features, including her almond-shaped, dark brown eyes. Her most distinct characteristic was her long, black hair, which Jing described as "straight and silky". She wore her hair in a variety of ways, including leaving it down, braiding it into pigtails, and putting it up into a ponytail or bun. Shan Cai also wore a variety of hairclips. Her wardrobe typically consisted of casual and simple clothing, such as t-shirts, jeans, and long skirts.

Shan Cai had her ears pierced, but usually wore just one earring in her left ear. She also had three tattoos, one on the back of her neck of a six-pointed star, the other on her left hand of a flower, and another small one on her left ankle.

Before university, Shan Cai was generally well-liked and popular among her peers. Qing, He described her as kind, cheerful, and courageous, as well as the kind of person that always stood up for her friends. At Ying De, Shan Cai's kindness was lost on her rich, spoiled classmates who only seemed to care for money and status. Her courage was diminished after witnessing the way the F4 controlled the school and bullied other students. However, she became disgusted with herself for "playing it safe." Shan Cai was able to regain some of her old self after standing up to the F4.

In some matters, Shan Cai was naïve especially when it came to relationships or love. For example, it took her a while to realize her own feelings for Lei and then a much longer time to understand Si's feelings for her.