

## **RTAMM 101**

### Chapter 101: Not Gullible Anymore

“What do you mean?”

“Mom, you may not understand the workings of this society. Though the times now are unlike the times then, there are some similarities after all. Mom, think about it, do you still remember how you got your job?”

“With Grandpa Lee’s help.” Because of Elder Lee, Ding Jiayi was willing to marry Qiao Dongliang who was without any relatives.

She knew that Qiao Dongliang was close to Elder Lee. If he continued to maintain the relationship, with Elder Lee’s help, they would be able to lead a good life.

“That’s right. I heard that it’s useless to be good in one’s studies, one needs to have connections. I have thought it through, if I really get into a college, it would cost a bomb. Mom, I can’t bear to see you working your guts out. Don’t be too hard on yourself. With the money that you earned, spend and use it on stuff that you need.”

Ding Jiayi felt nervous at her words. “Zijin, what do you mean by this? You, you intend to quit school?”

“No, Mom. Don’t be anxious, hear me out first. I am still going to study, be it high school or college. But we are going to have a change in plans. I plan to stop my studies in the second half semester of year three. Of course, I won’t be sitting for college entrance exams either. I will look for a job and start to earn money. I intend to enroll in an evening school and to get my certificates. Mom, don’t worry, I promise to do you proud.”

Qiao Zijin pulled at her mother’s hands, sounding sincere and heartfelt.

“Why?” Ding Jiayi disagreed. “Those schools are not as good as Tsinghua University or Peking University. If it’s about money, don’t worry, your Dad’s bark is worse than his bite. Besides, our agreement is only for the three years in high school. If you really get into Peking University or

Tsinghua University, even if he has to sell everything in the house, he would definitely finance you through university.”

“Mom, it has nothing to do with this.” It was rare that Qiao Zijin could explain to Ding Jiayi patiently. “I really can’t bear to see Dad and you to work so hard. It pains me to see that you are working through the night. Besides, as I have said, society is different now. Even if your results are very good, you might not find a good job after you graduated. Initially I am worried that my plan may not work out well, but now that we have the support of the Lee family and the Zhu family, I would have no trouble finding a job.”

Zhu family and Lee family were established and prominent, they would definitely get a decent job for her.

With a decent job, it would be much more valuable than having good results.

“This...” Ding Jiayi hesitated for a while. Ding Jiayi had been through this, the future that Qiao Zijin painted, it was definitely much easier and much faster.

After all, the main objective of studying was to get a good job, and to earn lots of money.

“But Zijin, are you sure you are not hiding anything from me? By the time you stop going to high school Qiao Nan would be in her second year of high school. If both of you are to study in the college at the time, even if your Dad had exceptional abilities, he wouldn’t be able to make the money to finance both of you through college. In that case, by that time...” One of the two sisters would be able to continue their studies.

With this situation, Ding Jiayi was quite sure that she would be able to make Qiao Nan quit school and work.

But if Qiao Zijin wanted to work, Qiao family would not be in such a fix. Wouldn’t Qiao Nan that wretched girl stand to gain from it?

“Mom, after all, Qiao Nan is my sister. Even though she treats me badly, I shouldn’t do this to her. It doesn’t matter to me, if she wants to study then just let her be. Anyway I am not losing out either.” She had to depend on Qiao Nan to get a good job.

Hopefully the Lee family and the Zhu family would help Zijin on account that Qiao Nan helped Zhu Baoguo to improve on his results.

Even though Qiao Zijin only spent half a year in The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, she did not waste her time there.

To put it bluntly, all of her classmates either came from rich families or families with influential background. Otherwise, who would buy two, three sets of new clothes for their children to wear during Lunar New Year. It was already good enough to have one set of new clothes.

These people never had to worry about their future, they went to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China all because of its reputation.

Moreover, Qiao Zijin always told her parents that her results were good and she had made improvements, but she had a guilty conscience. She had cheated to get these results.

If she managed to cheat her way through college entrance exams, she would have to enter the college. But she didn't have the capabilities to study in a college!

She would rather come up with ways to get herself out of the predicament, than making a fool of herself in two and a half years' time.

Qiao Zijin might be young, but she was able to know what was best for her and what she could do to benefit the most out of it.

“That’s true. She had no conscience, but you are still so considerate towards her. Don’t be so silly in the future. You looked upon her as your sister but she never treated you as her elder sister. But your words make sense, I will think about it.”

“Oh, take your time to consider, Mom. This is just my two cents’ worth. You are more experienced than me, you would be able to make a well considered decision. Whatever you say, I would definitely follow your wishes.”

“That’s my good girl.”

What a pair of loving mother and daughter in the room. On the other hand, the atmosphere outside was stiff. “Nan Nan, just now your Mom...”

“Dad, don’t put in good words for Mom. After this Lunar New Year I will be sixteen years old, not six years old. I am no longer a gullible kid. I know very well if Mom is good to me or not. I am also very clear if she is just muddleheaded or biased.”

When she thought of the horrifying memories of her last dying moments in the previous life, Qiao Nan could not help but say such harsh words, exposing the beautiful lies that Qiao Dongliang weaved.

“Dad, I will return to my room to rest.” With that, Qiao Nan left.

Qiao Dongliang was left all by himself in the living room. He stomped his feet in frustration, resisting the urge to punch Ding Jiayi.

Today it was all Old Ding’s fault!

“Why would you be free to drop by?” The next day Zhai Sheng who was reading in the storeroom saw Qiao Nan and paused momentarily. “Aren’t your family in the midst of preparations for Lunar New Year?”

“Yes, but I am just a kid, and the youngest in the family, I shouldn’t be doing the preparations.” In the past, she would be helping with most of the work, Qiao Zijin was the darling daughter, while her father was the master of the house. They would be idling around waiting for food to be served.

She had worked hard the whole day, yet during reunion dinner her mother would take all the credit to herself, and complained that the three of them only knew how to wait around for food.

This Lunar New Year, she would no longer be called Qiao Nan if she was to help out with any of the chores. “But Brother Zhai, why are you here?” Or rather, why was he here again, she remembered that Brother Zhai had a study room?

Why would Brother Zhai not stay at his study room and keep coming to the storeroom. Maybe the geomancy at the storeroom was good, one could study well there? Could this be the reason why she was very efficient in her studies recently?

## Chapter 102: Thigh to Thigh

Zhai Sheng turned serious, clasped his hands and placed them on his knees. He asked Qiao Nan in a serious manner, “Is there anything strange with me reading in my own house?”

“No, absolutely no!” Qiao Nan stiffened her spine and stood straight like a soldier at attention, shaking her head continuously. She who was not a member of Zhai family could be allowed entrance to the storeroom, Brother Zhai had the right to be there.

But, was there something strange?

Qiao Nan was in awe of Zhai Sheng. Gone was the calm and alert Qiao Nan, instead she could not think properly and was slow in reacting.

“Since there isn’t any problem, come over here to read.” Zhai Sheng slightly pushed at the chair beside him and motioned for Qiao Nan to take a seat.

Under Zhai Sheng’s gaze, Qiao Nan was a bundle of nerves. Her body stiffened and she walked awkwardly over to the chair.

When Qiao Nan finally came to her senses and realized that she had made a fool of herself in front of Prince Charming, her face blushed red as an apple.

Qiao Nan stole a quick glance at Zhai Sheng. She heaved a sigh of relief when she noticed that he had gone back to reading his books. She quickly regained her composure and sat down at the speed of light, lest she make a fool of herself again.

But she had only sat down for a while before she realized that there were more awkward moments to come.

Her chair and Zhai Sheng’s chair were placed side by side. Though it was winter now and Qiao Nan was bundled up in clothes, she could sense Zhai Sheng right beside her and felt the warmth radiating from his thigh. She felt uneasy.

Qiao Nan stole a glance at Brother Zhai. He looked cold and aloof yet his body temperature was so high. His wife would not have to worry that the warm water bag was not warm enough for the winter, he himself was a natural human warm water bag.

That aside, Qiao Nan still felt uncomfortable.

In her previous life, even though Qiao Nan was no longer young, till the day she died she was still a maiden. She did not have much experience in getting along with the opposite gender, let alone being so close to them.

Even with her first love Chen Jun, they only held hands. But Qiao Nan felt embarrassed to be seen holding hands by others, so in the end she shook off his hands.

The warmth radiating from Zhai Sheng gave Qiao Nan the false impression that they were sitting thigh to thigh. She felt uncomfortable, and awkward, and could not wait to get out of the room.

“If you want to read then sit properly, do you have needles on your bottom? Stop fidgeting.” Zhai Sheng said in a slightly cold and stern tone. Qiao Nan paled at his words, she straightened her back and flipped open a book. With the pen in hand, she started to do her sums, not daring to move half an inch.

She put her concentration into her studies and eventually forgot about the awkwardness.

As a result she did not catch the glint in Zhai Sheng’s eyes, nor the upward lift of the corners of his mouth. Zhai Sheng glanced at Qiao Nan’s knees that had touched his. He could not help but feel comfortable in this position, hence he did not move his feet but remained in that position.

When Qiao Nan went back to Qiao family residence, Zhai Sheng also left the storeroom. He took his book and went back to the main building of his house, pouring himself a cup of tea.

Zhai Hua who just came out of her bath dripping wet saw her brother and said, “I have turned into a mud man in this current mission. I couldn’t imagine the clumps of mud that I just scraped off myself.”

It was just a bath, but Zhai Hua felt as if she was alive again.

“As a soldier, if you are not mentally prepared and readied, you had better tell Dad that you want to discharge from the army.”

“Come on, I am not discharging from the army. it was just a simple remark, can’t I complain for a bit?” Zhai Sheng rolled his eyes. Children of the Zhai family were born to lead a soldier’s life, though she was a lady, the love for army life was in her blood, she could never change her personality in this life. “By the way Zhai Sheng, where have you been just now? You weren’t at home when I came back?”

She was still wondering where Zhai Sheng was since he came home earlier than her. He was not someone who liked to spend his time outside.

“Nothing much, I was doing some reading in a quiet place.”

“A quiet place? Is there a noisy place in our house?” Zhai Hua rolled her eyes. “You have emptied out your study room and moved everything to the storeroom, where else can you go to do some reading? Besides, I have already said that I am seldom at home, if you are willing, you can use my study room. ” Zhai Hua gave Zhai Sheng a generous pat on the shoulder. “No matter what, I am your elder sister.”

Zhai Sheng shot Zhai Hua a cold stare. “You can keep your study room to yourself, I don’t want to spot things that I should not see in your study room. I would be in a difficult position in front of Mom and Dad. You do not have to worry about me, I know what to do.”

“Oh, what do you mean? Where have you been doing your reading? Care to tell me?” Zhai Hua raised her voice at Zhai Sheng who was leaving. “I have been to your study room, you are not there. You young brat!”

Zhai Hua was infuriated. Despite all her prying, Zhai Sheng refused to tell her.

Zhai Hua felt that Zhai Sheng had a big part to play for her bad temper as well as her impatient and tomboyish personality. If not for a spoiled brat brother like Zhai Sheng, she would not have turned out like this.

Back at his room, Zhai Sheng took off his clothes, getting ready for a hot bath.

He could not give an answer to Zhai Hua's questions as he was clueless as well. Without him realizing, he had taken his book and sat down in the storeroom. This was not the first time that he had done this.

Since Zhai Sheng liked going to the storeroom, he did not bother to find out the reason. He just followed his heart.

"Nan Nan, what's wrong with you?" Today was Qiao Dongliang's last day of work in the year. When he reached home he noticed that Qiao Nan seemed to be limping on her way back home. "Have you sprained your leg? Is it serious? Let me take a look. I will boil some hot water for you. Don't worry about the hot water, have a soak, after which I will rub your feet with some medicine. I promise you will be able to run in no time."

Qiao Dongliang knelt down, thinking to take off Qiao Nan's shoes to take a closer look at her feet. But Qiao Nan shifted to one side.

Qiao Nan was not used to be in such close proximity to Zhai Sheng. She felt uneasy to be this close to her biological father as well. "Dad, don't worry, it may be that I was too engrossed in doing my sums that I remained in the same position without moving my legs. It's only numbness in the leg. I will be fine when the numbness subsides."

Qiao Nan's words were laced with truths and lies. She did not forget to move her legs, in fact, she was frightened out of her wits, she was so nervous that she stayed in that same position all along.

By the time Qiao Nan realized what was happening, her legs were numb.

Qiao Nan dared not let Zhai Sheng know that her legs were numb. She pretended to be calm and walked out of his house. By the time she reached the front door, her legs gave way and she could only lean on to the wall, the numbness and ache spreading through her body.

Qiao Nan's feet were still numb with pain on her way back home.

"Nan Nan, though studies are important, you must take care of yourself as well. It would not be good to sit for long periods of time. You should stand up and move about after sitting down for half an hour. Don't do this next time, understand?"

"Dad, don't worry. I will not do it again."



This time round it was Brother Zhai who pulled the chair for her. She was overwhelmed by the special favor and without thinking she just sat down on the chair.

Next time round, she would pull the chair to a more comfortable position before sitting down. In that case, there would be no such problems any more.

“Alright, remember your words. No, it won’t do. From tomorrow onwards, After waking up run two laps around the quad before doing your reading. You would faint easily during the exams if you are not strong enough.” Qiao Dongliang wanted Qiao Nan to prepare herself for the middle school exams that would come in a few months’ time.

“Dad, don’t worry. I will take note of all these. I would never allow myself to make such mistakes.” Qiao Nan smiled at the genuine concern that her father rarely displayed.

“Hmph.” Ding Jiayi was annoyed at the show of affection between Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan at the doorstep. Such a moving scene between a loving father and a filial daughter.

“Mom, let them be.” Qiao Zijin had her sights set on securing a good job on account of the relationship Qiao Nan had with the Lee family and the Zhu family. She had kept a check on her temper recently. Not only did she not create troubles for Qiao Nan, she even persuaded Ding Jiayi to rein in on her temper, and to stop picking on Qiao Nan.

At Qiao Zijin’s words, no matter how annoyed Ding Jiayi was, she could only curb her temper and went to prepare for reunion dinner.

At the dining table, Qiao Dongliang kept on giving meat and fish dishes to Qiao Nan. “Nan Nan have more of this, you must take care of yourself. Always bear this in mind, good health is a prerequisite for work.”

Qiao Dongliang still remembered what the doctor said when he took Qiao Nan to the hospital half a year ago.

In the past half year, Qiao Dongliang tried very hard to build up her immune system and to give her more nutritious food. There was once when he asked an aunt to buy a laying hen who was bred in the countryside and prepared chicken stew for Nan Nan.

Qiao Nan had all the chicken by herself, apart from Qiao Zijin who had two of the drumsticks, Qiao Nan drank all the soup and ate all the meat. Ding Jiayi was not allowed any either.

So in half a year's time, Qiao Nan was no longer skinny and thin as before, she was now a young lady with delicate curves and full features.

But Qiao Nan would be sixteen years old after the Lunar New Year, she had yet to have her first period.

Qiao Dongliang was worried that her malnourished condition led to her stunted growth.

As a father, Qiao Dongliang could only show his concern for Qiao Nan, he could not possibly ask her about her first period. But from his observation of her daily life, he was sure that till now Qiao Nan had yet to ask for sanitary products from Ding Jiayi.

Qiao Dongliang was all the more worried at Qiao Nan's delayed growth. As a result he ended up like Ding Jiayi, he would now give most of the meat and fish dishes to Qiao Nan, not stopping before he was assured that she had her share.

Qiao Nan laughed and dug into the heaps of meat on her bowl.

Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin stiffened. Ding Jiayi could not contain her anger anymore and was just about to explode when Qiao Zijin stopped her. "Dad is right, Nan Nan is too skinny. Nan Nan, we shouldn't be affected by others and believe that a skinny person would look nice. Good health is most important. You should eat more and be healthy. In that case, Dad would not be worried over you."

Qiao Nan had wondered why Qiao Zijin and her mother kept their silence at her father's actions. But Qiao Zijin's words had given her away.

In the past she was very skinny, but everyone knew the reason behind it, whether she starved herself to look pretty or whether it was her mother who controlled what she ate.

Qiao Nan was still thinking to herself that according to her experience in the previous life, whenever her mother and Qiao Zijin stopped picking on her, they must be cooking up something and she had to be wary of them.

But now that Qiao Zijin spoke ill of her, she felt relieved.

Qiao Zijin had no idea of what was going through Qiao Nan's mind. She was just used to badmouthing Qiao Nan and she did not know that her words would have such an effect.

Since ancient times, it was difficult to be on one's guard at all times.

If Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin wanted to plot against Qiao Nan, even if she was very careful, there was no way that she could prevent it.

Today Qiao Nan was studying at Zhai family residence. All of a sudden she felt a sharp pain in her stomach and frowned deeply.

"What's wrong?" Zhai Sheng who was usually there reading his book with Qiao Nan noticed her discomfort immediately.

"Brother Zhai, I have a stomach ache, can I use the toilet?" Maybe she ate the wrong food and had an upset stomach? But this pain did not seem like an upset stomach.

"Go ahead, do you know the way?"

"Yes." Upon the owner's approval, Qiao Nan stood up immediately and rushed towards the toilet at Zhai family residence.

If she really had an upset stomach and had to use the toilet, there was a high chance that she would be farting as well.

Qiao Nan wanted to die when the thought that she might fart in front of the future Chief and her Prince Charming crossed her mind.

In order to prevent such embarrassing and humiliating things from happening, Qiao Nan looked as if she was about to do a hundred meter dash to the toilet, to end things quickly.

“Hold on.” Qiao Nan might be fast, but Zhai Sheng was faster than her. He pulled her hand and stopped her with a strange look on his face. “You, you go to the toilet first, I will bring you some stuff.”

Qiao Nan who tried her best to hold it in was puzzled. She stared foolishly at Zhai Sheng who left the storeroom before her.

By the time she sat on the toilet bowl and spotted the red spots on her pants, she flushed red in embarrassment, her face scalding hot as the boiling kettle. “Brother, Brother Zhai, could he have seen it?” Brother Zhai was a soldier, he had good eyesight. He must have seen it!

But Brother Zhai was a man, he probably, possibly, likely did not know what it meant.

Qiao Nan tried means and ways to console herself. But all those thoughts disappeared when she saw the stuff that Zhai Sheng passed into her toilet cubicle!

#### Chapter 104: Not Puppy Love

Qiao Nan’s face blushed to a bright red. It was so red that blood could almost be seen dripping down from it. Among the pack of stuff that Zhai Sheng passed to her from under the door, she saw that in it was clean underwear and a very old, wingless sanitary napkin.

Qiao Nan gritted her teeth while she put them on. She had changed her undergarments, but what about her pants...

Zhai Sheng had waited for a long time by the time Qiao Nan came out with a flushed face.

Zhai Sheng did not say anything when he saw Qiao Nan. He took his own jacket and tied it around her waist. “Today you... better go back home earlier to rest, have lots of warm water, don’t, oh, don’t drink cold water.”

Qiao Nan hung her head through all these. She could almost felt steam coming out from her ears. While Zhai Sheng spoke, she hung her head lower, she was so embarrassed that she could not even utter a word.

“Well, well, Brother Zhai, I, I will head back home first.” Even if Brother Zhai was to object, Qiao Nan was too embarrassed to stay at Zhai family residence. She sprinted off like a rabbit and left his house.

Qiao Nan was so regretful that she could not wait to give herself a punch back at home.

She had dirtied her pants; they were soaked through, and the chair that she sat on today...

“Nan Nan, you are back so early today?” Qiao Dongliang who was out pouring away dirty water, took a look at the younger daughter who stood dazed and rooted outside their house. “Why don’t you go in? It’s winter now, it’s so chilly standing there, the northwesterly wind is very cold and harsh. Hold on, what is this piece of clothing that you are wearing?”

Qiao Dongliang was anxious when he realized that the jacket that Qiao Nan had around her seemed to belong to a man, “Nan Nan, you didn’t go out for revision today? Did you meet someone else?”

Qiao Dongliang took a day off to go to Qiao Nan’s school for the Parents-Teacher conference.

Qiao Dongliang was bursting with pride because of this Parent-Teacher conference. A lot of the parents asked him how he taught Nan Nan so well and what she learned at home.

But it was also at this Parent-Teacher conference that Qiao Dongliang came to know that teenagers nowadays were actually into relationships. They had puppy love relationships at such a crucial time where they were still studying.

Qiao Dongliang used to think that this had nothing to do with his family. But when he saw the jacket on Qiao Nan, he started to feel anxious. Nan Nan’s studies could never be affected by some young brat outside.

“Dad, don’t misunderstand. It’s, it’s just that I have dirtied my pants, so someone lent me their jacket to cover it.” Qiao Nan lowered her head and realized that the jacket that she had around her waist was Zhai Sheng’s, she was so embarrassed that she was rendered speechless.

The undergarment that Brother Zhai handed to her was definitely for women. Brother Zhai had a elder sister, so it must have been hers. Naturally the sanitary napkin must be hers as well.

But since Brother Zhai had given her Sister Zhai's undergarments and sanitary napkin, why would he give her his jacket to put around her waist?

Qiao Nan who had never been in relationships never would have known that an unenlightened Zhai Sheng was already acting territorial towards her.

"Your pants are dirty? How did you dirty them, let me take a look." Qiao Dongliang looked at Qiao Nan anxiously. She was so awkward that she wanted to escape right then. "Dad, don't, don't look, I, I could have grown up!"

She had her period.

"Oh?" Qiao Dongliang paused momentarily, he did not know how to react.

Seeing that her father was stunned, Qiao Nan quickly dashed into the house and to her room. She took out the dirty undergarment, took off her soiled pants and changed into a clean pair of pants.

After changing into the clean clothes, she ran to look for Qiao Dongliang. "Dad, give me some money, I have to buy that." There were three women and one man in Qiao family, and her mother and Qiao Zijin would have use of it every month.

But they would never let her have them. Besides she did not care to use theirs, and to tolerate their temper.

"Oh..." Qiao Dongliang grew awkward as well. "Nan Nan, do, do you know how to use it? if you have any questions, you can ask your Mom. If you don't wish to ask her, you can ask your sister. Is your stomach, stomach painful?" Qiao Dongliang took out some money and passed it to Qiao Nan.

Qiao Dongliang was still worried about Qiao Nan's first period a few days ago, and now he got what he wished for, it happened so quickly...

No matter what, Qiao Dongliang finally breathed a sigh of relief. Nan Nan's development was not affected by Old Ding. He did not ask for much, he only hoped that his two daughters would be safe and healthy.

“Dad, don’t worry, I know. When it first happened to sister, I was the one waiting on her. I know roughly what it is all about. Luckily unlike sister, I don’t have the stomach cramps.” Qiao Nan smiled, took the money and went out to buy sanitary napkins.

Qiao Nan could not help but laugh at the thought that Qiao Zijin would have the cramps whenever she had her period.

Qiao Zijin would always crave cold food during summer. She would spend all the money that their father gave them on popsicles. She would have two, three popsicles a day but would ask her mother for money to buy more popsicles.

Whenever Qiao Zijin got to eat popsicles and she did not have any, Qiao Zijin would make it a point to savor her popsicles in front of Qiao Nan.

Looking at the way she devoured the popsicles, it was no wonder that she would have the cramps when she had her period.

In the previous life, Qiao Nan was thankful that Ding Jiayi was so stingy and harsh with her. She never got to eat a single popsicle in her childhood. Even if it was wintertime, she would use the warm water from the well for washing, unlike the water from the river which was ice cold.

As a result, she took better care of herself than Qiao Zijin in terms of feminine care.

Their first periods had a stark contrast.

When Qiao Zijin had her first period, she would be crouching in pain and groaning in agony and it was the same for her monthly period. As for Qiao Nan, apart from the initial pain, she felt better now, she could no longer feel the cramps.

Qiao Dongliang finally set his mind at rest when he saw how lively and unaffected Qiao Nan was. “Tell me if you feel any discomfort, do not put up a strong front. Also, leave your soiled clothes alone, I will get your Mom to wash them, you should stay away from water these few days.”

“Alright, I will do as Dad says.” Qiao Nan had planned to wash her own clothes, but she agreed instantly at Qiao Dongliang’s words.

It was rare that she had such privileges, it would be foolish of her to say no. She might not be in pain, but she felt lethargic and heavy in her legs, as if she could not walk. “Dad, I will lay down on the bed and do some reading. I do not have cramps but my legs feel heavy.”

“Go.”

Even if Qiao Nan did not say anything, Qiao Dongliang would want her to rest.

Qiao Dongliang did not see Elder Lee during the Parent-Teacher Conference today. Instead he saw Zhu Baoguo’s grandpa, Elder Zhu and they sat side by side.

### Chapter 105: It’s Payback Time

Many did not even know who Elder Zhu was, let alone his identity. Many treated him like an ordinary elderly man who attended the Parent-Teacher Conference for his grandson. Qiao Dongliang was the only one feeling extremely nervous to see him.

Furthermore, the children of the two families were deskmates. Qiao Dongliang could only sit next to Elder Zhu and was unable to change his seat. Qiao Dongliang’s hands were sweating.

He still recalled that, at that time, when Elder Zhu spoke to him smilingly, asking him if he was Qiao Nan’s father, and praising how extraordinary and outstanding Qiao Nan was. Till today, Qiao Dongliang still felt overwhelmed with pride and unsettled at heart.

“What, let me wash her pants, did she lose her hand or break her leg, that she had to lie in bed like a handicapped? I’m not waking up, let her wash herself!” Ding Jiayi raised her voice and rejected flatly after being told.

Ding Jiayi could not even remember the last time she had washed clothes for Qiao Nan.

Once Qiao Nan was at the age that she could properly do the laundry, Ding Jiayi had often dumped the whole family’s clothes to Qiao Nan to wash.



“Nan Nan has grown up, her body is very weak now. You are her mother, why can’t you help her wash. Also, don’t forget it’s Lunar New Year now. Don’t say such things to provoke my anger.” Qiao Dongliang tugged at Ding Jiayi to hurry her.

“You too know that it’s the Lunar New Year period, and you have to ask me to wash those things for her, aren’t you afraid that I will be unlucky for the year and cannot earn a single cent?” Ding Jiayi was reluctant as soon as she heard that she needed to wash those dirty clothes.

“Are you really not washing?” Qiao Dongliang’s face turned stiff. He did not know what to do with this wife.

He was initially in a good mood but why did Old Ding have to anger him?

“Not washing!”

“Fine. Zijin!” Qiao Dongliang raised his voice and called Qiao Zijin directly.

Qiao Zijin, who was in the bedroom, jumped at the sound. Before she could ask Qiao Dongliang the reason for calling her, she heard Ding Jiayi saying, “Old Qiao, what do you mean by this, why are you calling for Zijin? Zijin is not Qiao Nan’s servant, Qiao Nan can wash her own dirty clothes, why should someone else help her. You still call for Zijin, is Zijin someone who is suited for this type of chore?”

She could not even bear to let Zijin wash her own clothes, not to mention those of Qiao Nan. That would be out of the question.

“Why do I remember that, every time Zijin dirtied her clothes because of those days, regardless of winter or summer, Qiao Nan helped her wash all of them?” Qiao Dongliang smiled coldly, he had not aged that much and still had a good memory.

“How’s that the same?!”

“What’s the difference? If you are not able to explain it well, Old Ding, don’t blame me for not giving you face this Lunar New Year, you’re the one who didn’t want it. All these years, I never lose my temper, do you really think that I’m a man without any?”

Qiao Dongliang also admitted that, because he did not have a son, he did not feel motivated in life and was not interested in his job. He was also not really involved in his daughters' affairs, so sometimes, he just did not bother to lose his temper.

However, as both Qiao Nan and Qiao Zijin had improved in their studies, Qiao Dongliang suddenly found the source of motivation and joy in his life. If Ding Jiayi dared to oppose and provoked him, Qiao Dongliang definitely dared to deal with Ding Jiayi.

“You... ” Ding Jiayi thought of the initial years when she was first married to Qiao Dongliang, he really dealt with her a little, although it was not much, it was enough to make her fear Qiao Dongliang. “At that time, wasn't Zijin sick?”

“Nan Nan is also not feeling well now. I remember Zijin is not having her period now. In other families, it is always the elder one giving in to the younger one. But in our family, it's actually the other way round. Zijin is the elder sister, shouldn't she set a good example for Nan Nan? Not only she did not set a good example, but also she was usually taken care of by Nan Nan. That's also acceptable!”

Qiao Dongliang had put in both good and ugly words, if Ding Jiayi still refused, she'll see if Qiao Dongliang would be able to let this matter off easily.

Qiao Zijin, who understood the matter, was nervous now. Why did she have to repay Qiao Nan, Qiao Nan was the one who owed her. She did not want to wash Qiao Nan's pants, it's so dirty!

“Zijin, Zijin, come out!” Not looking at Ding Jiayi, Qiao Dongliang shouted towards Zijin's bedroom door.

Qiao Zijin was so anxious that she was circling the room. She did not want to go out, but yet could not find an excuse to reject. She was so anxious that she wanted to dig a hole and bury herself in it so that her father could not find her.

You, why are you shouting. I, I will wash for Qiao Nan. Will this do?” Ding Jiayi was also furious, she did not expect that Qiao Dongliang would be so serious this time, and he went on and on.

Ding Jiayi was reluctant to wash for Qiao Nan but she was more reluctant to let her precious daughter wash the dirty clothes for Qiao Nan. She thus had to do it herself. “She's such a lazy bone, even worms are growing on her. Such a small matter, and she had to seek help. A lazy girl like her.

No one will dare to marry her. You can continue to dote on her, can you look after her for the rest of her life?"

Even she could not change the fact that she had to wash Qiao Nan's pants, she felt unjustified and wanted to chide Qiao Nan with her stinging words.

"So you think that this is being lazy?" Qiao Dongliang did not waste his breath on Ding Jiayi. "Nan Nan, remember, next time if your sister is not feeling well, you don't need to help in any of her matters, let your sister or mother settle on their own."

"Okay, got it!" Qiao Nan's muffled voice could be heard coming from the bedroom immediately.

Obviously, Qiao Nan had heard the entire conversation between Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi.

"You, you all. Both father and daughter are bent on bullying me right? Qiao Dongliang, can I still carry on with such a life?" Ding Jiayi was burning with anger, she raised her hands and wanted to dump Qiao Nan's pants on the floor.

"You dare to throw!" Qiao Dongliang glared at her. "It will become more dirty if you throw it on the floor, and you still have to wash it. You have to re-wash it if it's not clean. If you don't wash, or did not wash it thoroughly, fine, you ask Zijin to come out."

Qiao Dongliang was fully aware of Ding Jiayi's temper, there was no use reasoning with Ding Jiayi. Being unreasonable was also ineffective. But at the mention of Qiao Zijin, it was as if he had grabbed her Achilles heel, his wife would conform to his demand every time without any exception.

"Fine, fine, I will wash the clothes for your daughter. Will this do?" Ding Jiayi was burning with anger as she said this. Thereafter, she stomped her feet on the ground. Looking at the back of Ding Jiayi who was leaving, Qiao Dongliang could feel smoke rising from her head. "I am the only Head of the Family, I don't believe that I can't manage you."

Having said that, Qiao Dongliang was in such a good mood that he started humming songs, and then went to his study room to read.

Nan Nan was so determined to do well. Today, he was even unexpectedly requested to speak on stage on behalf of the parents. He was uncertain if he had done well and whether he had disgraced Nan Nan. What if this happened again, what should he do?

He must be prepared in advance for such situations.

## Chapter 106: Distribution of Red Packet

The next day, Zhai Sheng saw Qiao Nan frowning again when she came. “Didn’t I ask you to rest properly at home yesterday, why did you come again?”

“I, I, I’m alright now.” Qiao Nan tiptoed on the ground as she took frequent peeps at her chair through the corner of her eyes.

Yesterday, her pants were in a mess, this chair...

When she peeped at the chair, it seemed to be very clean. Qiao Nan secretly let out a sigh of relief. “Brother Zhai, you don’t need to worry about me. I am alright. Perhaps it was because I took better care of my health this year. Brother Zhai, you’re so caring. Sister Zhai is very fortunate.”

Brother Zhai knew so much, it must be because he took care of his own sister.

In the past, she heard from someone that a brother with a younger sister is the most gentle brother in the world, and a sister with a younger brother is definitely the most bad-tempered sister in the world.

Sister Zhai had a younger brother like Brother Zhai who was so warm and caring, it was really a blessing for her.

Zhai Sheng pursed the corners of his lips, then pulled out the chair beside him. “If you don’t have anything else on, then sit here and read your books, don’t waste time.”

Qiao Nan’s little face was rosy, Zhai Sheng could see for himself if she was really alright or pretending to be fine.

After confirming that Qiao Nan was fine, of course, Zhai Sheng would not insist on making her leave.

Qiao Nan, who was just swearing that she was alright, felt her legs wobble at the sight of that chair.

The reason why she came to the Zhai family so early this morning was not to read books. She was so worried that she had stained the chair in the storeroom. That would have been embarrassing. So, she came early today and was prepared to clean the chair secretly if she had dirtied it.

When her embarrassment faded after a few days, she would then come to the Zhai family again to read.

Never did she expect that Brother Zhai was here so early.

“Why are you standing there in a daze, sit down.” Seeing that Qiao Nan looking silly and not moving, Zhai Sheng frowned and chided her a little.

“Oh!” With Zhai Sheng’s summon, Qiao Nan’s mind was in a blurry state as she took a seat beside Zhai Sheng. She sat in the same posture as she did yesterday.

Seeing that the two chairs were placed so close to each other, there was a flash of confusion in Qiao Nan’s eyes.

If not for the fact that she knew that Brother Zhai was a decent and ethical man, if it were others, she would definitely say that the other party was deliberately taking advantage of her or playing dirty tricks. A boy and girl, from the age of seven, should not be seated together. There was no need for the two chairs to be placed so closely together.

However, the person in front of Qiao Nan was Zhai Sheng, so she dispelled any such thoughts.

“It’s the Lunar New Year’s Eve today, let me say something.” In a blink, the year is coming to an end. Tonight, the Qiao family had prepared a feast for dinner and Qiao Dongliang looked especially radiant. “Our family...”

At the thought of money, Qiao Dongliang’s expression changed, “Although we do not have much money left, as long as our family of four are healthy, and illness and disaster do not strike, these are the things that cannot be exchanged with wealth. So I wish everyone better health in the coming year, and wish Zijin and Nan Nan better grades in your studies!”

Now, besides Qiao Nan, Qiao Zijin's academic performance also became more consistent. She was often ranked seventh or eighth in the class.

Of course, it would be the best if Qiao Zijin's grades could improve further, otherwise, as long as she continued to maintain them, Qiao Dongliang was also very satisfied.

Although he did not have a son, but his two daughters were so capable and were a hundred times stronger than the son of many other families. This made Qiao Dongliang feel very contented. "Zijin, Nan Nan, here's a red packet for you, keep it and spend them slowly."

Qiao Dongliang took out two red packets from his pocket, and gave his daughter one each.

"Thank you Dad!" Receiving the red packet, Qiao Zijin smiled instantly.

"Thank you Dad." Qiao Nan did not decline. She held the red packet tightly, all the learning materials that she had now were all from Brother Zhai.

If not, with the family condition of the Qiao family, she would not be able to buy even one book even if she scrimped and saved everyday.

"Mom, how about you?" Qiao Zijin received a red packet but was not satisfied. She looked directly at Ding Jiayi smilingly. "Mom, I fared so well in this exam. You didn't give me any reward."

"Who said there isn't a reward." Ding Jiayi looked at Qiao Zijin, half amused and angry. "Where did the new clothes that you are wearing come from? That was bought for you with your Mom's hard earned money after staying up for a few nights to do manual jobs."

When she said this, Ding Jiayi's tone was filled with pride.

"Mom... these are two separate matters, I want a red packet during Lunar New Year." Qiao Zijin reached out her hands before Ding Jiayi and insisted on a red packet.

"Fine, will Mom not give you any?" Having teased her elder daughter enough, Ding Jiayi took out a red packet that was similar to that of Qiao Dongliang and passed it to Qiao Zijin. "Don't waste it."

“Thank you Mom, you’re so good!” After receiving the red packets, Qiao Zijin smiled. Putting together the money from the two red packets, she should be able to buy the bracelet that she had her eyes on while shopping for clothes previously...

She only had one set of new clothes. Hence, she must definitely buy something else to grace any occasion.

Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin was so happy, but Qiao Dongliang’s expression turned gloomy. Qiao Nan continued to have her meal without any expression on her face.

Throughout the whole dinner, Ding Jiayi behaved as though she had Qiao Zijin as the only daughter, as if Qiao Zijin was her daughter while Qiao Nan was not.

Qiao Nan was used to this, but Qiao Dongliang was not.

Qiao Dongliang took a few deep breaths, put down his chopsticks and returned to his bedroom without a word.

“Hey, what are you doing, we have not finished our reunion dinner.” At this juncture, Ding Jiayi was stunned as she had not reacted to the situation, she did not know why Qiao Dongliang was acting crazy again.

After Qiao Dongliang made a trip to the bedroom, he soon came out and had another red packet in his hand. “Nan Nan, take this, both you and your sister will have two red packets, no one should have less.”

If Ding Jiayi had not gone overboard, Qiao Dongliang was still willing to tell a white lie on behalf of Ding Jiayi, and said that Ding Jiayi had left Qiao Nan’s red packet in the bedroom.

However, Ding Jiayi’s blatant behavior already showed that she did not have a care, Qiao Dongliang could not even be bothered to cover up for her.

Just as his younger daughter had said, she was no longer a three-year-old kid, she understood many things. This layer of shroud was only useful in deceiving himself.

“Thank you Dad.” Qiao Nan pursed her little mouth and smiled. She took the red packet from Qiao Dongliang’s hands as fast as she could.

Ding Jiayi had just raised her hand to snatch the red packet from Qiao Dongliang’s hands but she was not as fast as Qiao Nan, so she could only watch helplessly as the second red packet fell into Qiao Nan’s hands. “Old Qiao, didn’t you say that we don’t have a lot of money, why did you give her two red packets? Qiao Nan, pass me the red packet, Mom will save it up for you. No, you’re still young, you don’t know how to manage your money.”

## Chapter 107: Hijacked

“The money for these two red packets, pass to Mom to keep for you. When you are older, Mom will return them to you.”

Having said that, ignoring Qiao Nan’s response, Ding Jiayi started searching Qiao Nan’s body for the red packets.

“No need, I will manage them myself.” Qiao Nan was like a slippery loach that managed to escape from Ding Jiayi’s hands with one twist of her body.

If she passed the money to her Mom, she could forget about seeing them again in her entire life. Furthermore, she had some use for this money.

“Dad, I have finished my dinner. I’ll go back to my bedroom first!” With the mood in the family, Qiao Nan could not be bothered to watch the Lunar New Year evening show together with Qiao Zijin and her mother.

“Go ahead.” Qiao Dongliang did not say anything else. He initially hoped that his family of four could sit together and watch a television show harmoniously. However, his hopes of improving their relationships were dashed with Ding Jiayi’s behavior just now.

He would rather forget it.

If Nan Nan continued to sit with Old Ding, with Old Ding’s personality, he would be thankful if the rift between both mother and daughter did not widen, not to mention to get along harmoniously.



As such, while other families had a bustling Lunar New Year Eve, the Qiao family only had one person, Ding Jiayi, watching the television program. Even Qiao Zijin also went back to her room, saying that she wanted to read some “books”.

Seeing that she was the only one in the spacious living room, Ding Jiayi was totally oblivious to what was played on the television screen that evening.

As she had stayed overnight for a few days, the tired Ding Jiayi could no longer hold her fatigue, so she yawned and listlessly returned to her room.

However, Ding Jiayi saw that there were two blankets on the big bed, Qiao Dongliang occupied one side of the bed and covered himself with one blanket, the other side that was empty was obviously hers. Somehow, Ding Jiayi felt bitterly cold.

The couple had been married for almost two decades, except during that argument where the two slept in separate rooms, they had always been sharing the same blanket.

What did Old Qiao mean by this?

Ding Jiayi kept feeling that even the blowing and howling wind outside was not as cold as those in her house.

After some time, Ding Jiayi could not even be bothered to wash her feet. She removed her shoes and wriggled into the blanket to sleep. She even deliberately lay down with her back facing Qiao Dongliang.

Was it all because she was not good to Qiao Nan? She would continue to treat Qiao Nan this way. Why should she treat Qiao Nan otherwise?

Didn't she work hard most of her life for the sake of this family, for the sake of Old Qiao. Old Qiao treated her like that just because of Qiao Nan, he was really a heartless man.

Zijin was so outstanding, just like her when she was young. The day would come where she would let everyone know that she was the one that was right about things.

Ding Jiayi's heart was churning with anger. The more her temper rose, the more she wanted to be at odds with Qiao Dongliang.

So, during Lunar New Year's Eve, it was extremely quiet in the Qiao family. On the first day of Lunar New Year, there was no one at home.

Qiao Dongliang took Qiao Nan directly to Elder Lee to wish him Happy New Year. As to where Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi went, Qiao Dongliang did not know and did not want to know. "Uncle Lee, Happy New Year."

"It's Xiao Qiao and Nan Nan. Quickly take a seat, Ah Chun, bring two cups of hot tea here. Nan Nan, Happy New Year, this is the red packet from Grandpa Lee. I wish you well in your studies in the coming year, may your grades never stop improving, and may you have a smooth life in future." Elder Lee took out the red packet that he had prepared and stuffed it firmly into Qiao Nan's hands, he was not prepared for any rejection.

The Qiao family had spent all their savings on Qiao Zijin. This, Elder Lee was aware.

Elder Lee also knew what Ding Jiayi was like.

Nan Nan was a big girl. It was too much if she did not have any money on hand.

He heard from Zhu Baoguo that Qiao Nan's secondary textbooks were bought from the waste recycling station as Ding Jiayi sold all her books previously, Elder Lee did not know what to say about that woman Ding Jiayi.

Elder Lee regretted a little. If he had known that Ding Jiayi was such a woman, he would not have paired her up with Qiao Dongliang in the past. He found Ding Jiayi pitiful at that time.

But when he saw Qiao Nan, he knew that Qiao Nan would not exist if Qiao Dongliang did not marry Ding Jiayi. He could not imagine what would have happened to his own grandson. Elder Lee was in a dilemma.

He felt that he really had become old. The more he thought, the more confused he felt. It was as though his brain was missing a nerve.

“Thank you Elder Lee.” Qiao Nan did not decline and took the red packet.

Seeing that Qiao Nan was naturally unrestrained and not fazed by attention, Elder Lee nodded his head in satisfaction. A black hen lays a white egg. Although Ding Jiayi was not a good person, the daughter that she gave birth to – Qiao Nan, was a rare gem. “I have something to talk to your dad about. You can have fun on your own.”

Although he did not think that Qiao Nan was those who like to have a lot of fun, it was not so appropriate to have her by their side. Hence, Elder Lee simply freed Qiao Nan and let her make her own arrangements.

“Dad, I’ll go out for a walk then.”

“Go ahead. Be careful.” Qiao Dongliang nodded.

Qiao Nan did not know what Elder Lee would be talking to her father about. Just when she left the Lee family’s residence and was a few steps away, she was suddenly hijacked by a group of people.

“You are Qiao Nan?” The leader of the group was a boy who was quite decent looking and had a clean hair cut. He looked like he was of the same age as Qiao Nan. Although the boy was smiling, Qiao Nan pursed her lips with disdain – the boy had a strange look in his eyes.

“Who are you?”

“You don’t need to care about who I am. You are probably Qiao Nan.” Wang Yang laughed. His fair and clear-skinned face should exude a sunny feel, but Qiao Nan sensed a sinister aura that made her feel uncomfortable. “Qiao Nan, I don’t have the habit of not hitting girls. I’ll teach you a lesson today. If you don’t want to be beaten, don’t be a busybody in the affairs that do not need your interference. Keep away from those that you should not keep in contact with. If it happens again, ha ha ha...”

Wang Yang laughed coldly. The way he looked at Qiao Nan was cold, as if he was a venomous snake lying in a dark corner. This caused Qiao Nan to have goose pimples.

The confused Qiao Nan nervously clenched her fists. Obviously, the other party was not going to give her a clear explanation and tell her who she should be avoiding.

Most critically, the other party seemed to have made up his mind to beat her up on the first day of Lunar New Year.

“Go.” Wang Yang was not prepared to dirty his hands, as such, he would not be afraid even if Qiao Nan reported a complaint after the beating.

“Young lady, don’t blame us for being rude.” The guy beside Wang Yang was like a hooligan, he was younger but obviously did not belong to the school. He looked like he had been out in society.

When these people saw Qiao Nan’s tiny face that was particularly pretty, especially the pair of black and bright eyes that were like black gemstones, they suddenly laughed.

A corner of Wang Yang’s mouth curled up. “Just a little will do. I don’t care about the rest, you can do whatever you like.”

“Thank you!” They were paid to work for Wang Yang. With Wang Yang’s consensus, what else do they have to be afraid of.

## Chapter 108: As Long As You Are Simple

The fact is, when they were out, they relied on Wang Yang to back them up.

Qiao Nan ground her teeth, backing off secretly, primed herself in the direction of Lee family’s home and was ready to shout for help.

Wang Yang was not old but still difficult to deal with, he deduced that Qiao Nan was quite far from the Lee family’s place, it would thus not so easy to ask Lee family for help. That was why Wang Yang dared to confront Qiao Nan.

Looking at Qiao Nan’s defiant poise, Wang Yang gave a scornful smile. He wished to see how Qiao Nan could escape.

“What are you doing?” Just as the group was about to catch hold of Qiao Nan, a cold and clear voice rang out. This startled the arrogant Wang Yang, who considered himself a world above the rest, and froze him like a bolt of ice.

“Brother Zhai!” Qiao Nan’s eyes lit up. She made a small dash towards Zhai Sheng and then hid behind Zhai Sheng. Qiao Nan continued, “Brother Zhai, they want to beat me!”

“Beat you?” Zhai Sheng knitted his brows and looked towards Wang Yang, “What is the meaning of this?”

Wang Yang’s face stiffened and asked cautiously, “Brother Zhai, do you know Qiao Nan?” In Wang Yang’s mind, he was hoping that it would not be such a coincidence.

In the quad, Wang Yang was not afraid of anybody, not even his cousin who was bossy. If anybody offended Wang Yang, he could still find somebody to beat him or her up until they were unrecognizable by their parents.

But there are exceptions to everything. To Wang Yang, Zhai Sheng was such an exception.

In the quad, everybody knows that Zhu Baoguo is the bully – bad tempered and loves to bully people. However, nobody knows that Wang Yang’s temper was even worse than Zhu Baoguo. It was due to the fact that Zhu Baoguo was frank whilst Wang Yang was more discreet and did things behind people’s back.

In addition, Wang Yang was pleasant looking, so there was no lack of people that treated him well. In this way, Wang became even more emboldened.

Wang Yang was the same age as Qiao Nan. In his sixteen years, Wang Yang only ever lost out to one person and that was Zhai Sheng. It was also a very bad loss and therefore resulted in him fearing Zhai Sheng.

“Wang Yang, do you still remember what I said?” Zhai Sheng’s voice rang out, ignoring Wang’s earlier question. He stared coldly at Wang Yang.

In the face of Zhai Sheng’s icy and piercing eyes, Wang Yang’s face turned pale.

Yes, the feeling was coming back. Everybody in the quad took care of Wang Yang, only Zhai Sheng did not take a liking to him and would teach him a lesson.

Wang Yang felt that in Zhai Sheng's eyes, he was no better than a mouse scurrying in dark corners and munching rubbish. Wang Yang hated this feeling.

“Brother Wang?” The gangsters asked, sensing some anxiety in Wang Yang. “Should we deal with this guy as well?”

They clearly outnumbered Zhai Sheng as Zhai Sheng was alone. In addition, Zhai Sheng had to protect the feeble pretty girl. The odds definitely favored Wang Yang's group.

“Deal with them together?” Wang Yang took a deep breath. “If only you all had the ability to do so. You all should hurry and leave unless you intend to have your meals in jail.”

Who could afford to offend the Zhai Family!

Once the gangsters heard that they might be provoking someone who could jail them, their expressions changed. Without the need for Wang Yang's prompting, they ran off as fast they could and nearly left Wang Yang behind.

“Phew...” Looking at the group that had been chased off by Zhai Sheng, Qiao Nan breathed a sigh of relief. “Brother Zhai, who was the little boy that you were talking to? He was really nasty. He purposely found someone to hijack me. How did I offend him, he even warned me not to get close to people whom I should not get close to.

“I heard you have been giving tuition to Zhu Baoguo and Zhu Baoguo's grades had improved significantly?” Brother Zhai asked.

“Yes, he is Grandpa Lee's grandson and my Dad is grateful to Grandpa Lee. I am doing this as a favor for my Dad, I had no choice.”

After listening to Qiao Nan's explanation, Zhai Sheng's eyebrows relaxed slightly and asked, “You are not doing this out of your own will?”

Qiao Nan did not know whether to laugh or cry and replied, "I am about to have my middle school examination. How stupid would I have to be to accept this assignment. Fortunately, Zhu Baoguo is fairly intelligent and able to understand more of what I teach. I only taught him once and he would complete the revision questions by himself. Hold on, why are you bringing up Zhu Baoguo, how is that person related to Zhu Baoguo?"

"His name is Wang Yang, he is Zhu Baoguo's younger cousin."

"Zhu Baoguo's younger cousin?!" Qiao Nan made a realization. "I have heard that he does not get along with his younger cousin. Is it because Zhu Baoguo's grades have improved and that is why he came to make trouble for me?"

What did this mean, Wang Yang cannot bear to see Zhu Baoguo do well, why?

Qiao Nan's face was full of ambiguity. Zhai Sheng continued, "Zhu Chengqi is Elder Zhu's only son and Zhu Baoguo is Zhu Chengqi's only son. If Zhu Baoguo was useless, it would greatly increase Wang Yang's chances of inheriting the Zhu business."

Qiao Nan was completely taken aback. "He, he is only sixteen years old!"

"Ignorance is bliss," Zhai Sheng replied with a smile that was beautiful as the winter's first sun.

"Brother Zhai, are you complimenting or demeaning me?" Qiao Nan felt that Brother Zhai's words did not sound right. She continued, "However, this incident did remind me, the next time I meet Zhu Baoguo, I have to tell Zhu Baoguo. Don't believe it when Zhu Baoguo appeared quite fierce, he is actually very simple and direct."

If Zhu Baoguo knew that Wang Yang took an issue with him, given Zhu Baoguo's character, why didn't she hear him bring this up?

"Ah," Zhai Sheng smiled but did not object to what Qiao Nan said. "You can be simple yourself but don't think others are as simple as you. Silly girl, be careful so that you do not get taken advantage of."

Whilst Zhu Baoguo had not mentioned to Qiao Nan, it did not mean that he knew nothing about Wang Yang.

Nonetheless, these were the Zhu Family issues, Zhai Sheng could not intervene, nor did he have the spare time to intervene.

Qiao Nan pursed her lips. Technically, she was mentally older than Zhai Sheng and Zhai Sheng might even have to address her as Aunt Qiao. She continued, "Brother Zhai, do not belittle me, my Mom and Sister are no longer able to bully me."

"As long as you know what you are doing. If you ever meet with any trouble, feel free to look for me," Zhai Sheng said assuringly.

"Brother Zhai, if I really meet with any trouble, where do I look for you?" Qiao Nan asked, her heart filled with joy. Brother Zhai spent a lot more time in the army camp than in the quad.

If Qiao Nan's dad was still in the military, she would have a lot of opportunities to go to the army camp. However, since her dad left the military, she had no more opportunities.

Zhai Sheng thought hard and took out a notepad and pen from his pocket. He wrote a telephone number down and passed to Qiao Nan, saying, "If you meet with any trouble and I am not at home, you can call this number."

"That, that is not too good," Qiao Nan shook her head, afraid to accept the telephone number. "I don't think I would have any major trouble that will require your assistance."

Whatever "major" issue that Qiao Nan or the Qiao family might face, it would certainly be minor compared to the issues Brother Zhai had to take care of. Those were the real "major" issues.

"Hold it," said Zhai Sheng. Although it was the first day of Lunar New Year, Zhai Sheng still had to report back to camp and would not be at the quad soon. Zhai Sheng continued, "Don't be nervous, if you meet with trouble you can pick up the phone and call. If you do not meet with any trouble, then you can ignore the phone number's existence."

Chapter 109: Backing



Looking at the slip of paper in her hand, Qiao Nan smiled. “Then thank you Brother Zhai,” After saying that, Qiao Nan put away the slip of paper with extreme care.

“Alright, I’m leaving,” Having said this, Zhai Sheng left the quad and was picked up by a car just after he stepped out of the entrance.

“Brother Wang, since that man has left, do we continue to deal with that little babe?” Wang Yang and the group, who had seemingly left, were in fact hiding at a corner and watching Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng.

Wang Yang looked pale. If his eyes were not playing tricks on him, that man with surname Zhai took a glance towards his direction before he boarded the car.

His parents and grandparents had told him this before – amongst the many children in the quad, he could offend anyone except for Zhai Sheng.

He did not yearn for anyone’s liking, but it would be an achievement if Zhai Sheng could see him as his younger brother.

When he was younger, Wang Yang tried, but Zhai Sheng saw through him immediately. No matter how obedient and sensible he portrayed himself to be in front of Zhai Sheng, the latter had never spoken a good word to him.

After a long time, Wang Yang understood. It was not possible for him to be in Zhai Sheng’s good books.

Although he could not gain Zhai Sheng’s liking, at the very least, he could not let Zhai Sheng increase his dislike towards him. As such, Wang Yang usually avoided Zhai Sheng.

The reason Wang Yang hid in this place was to find out about the relationship between Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan.

If Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan were just hi and bye friends, he would not let Qiao Nan off if she continued to help Zhu Baoguo to change for the better and wreck his plan.

However, the situation was different now. That harsh look of warning that Zhai Sheng cast at him before leaving was telling. Wang Yang was not stupid and he understood.

In other words, if Wang Yang dared to make any trouble for Qiao Nan, it would mean that he was going against Zhai Sheng. So, he had to take this into careful consideration when he acted.

Qiao Nan had Zhai Sheng's backing, Wang Yang dared not create trouble for her anymore.

"Let's go!" Wang Yang's face was red with anger. It had cost him a bomb to hire these people for today.

In the end, he did not accomplish anything despite spending so much. He was feeling the pinch.

This would not do. When he was back, he needed to think of a way to prevent Zhu Baoguo from changing for the better. All that belonged to the Zhu family must become his eventually.

Since he could not lay his hands on Qiao Nan, then he would continue to deal with Zhu Baoguo.

He grew up with Zhu Baoguo and was very clear of Zhu Baoguo's temperament. He did not believe that he could not cajole Zhu Baoguo just like he had done before.

At the thought that Elder Zhu thought so highly of Zhu Baoguo, there was a flash of fury in Wang Yang's eyes. "Still not leaving, there's no money for you if you stay here!"

"Leaving. Of course we will obey Brother Wang." As soon as the leader of the hooligans heard that he would be receiving the money now, his eyes lit up. He was not in a hurry to leave.

He was pursuing the matter and unwilling to give up on Qiao Nan because of the money in Wang Yang's pocket. It was not really because of Qiao Nan's beauty.

"Thanks Brother Wang." After successfully receiving the money, the hooligan leader smiled.

"Brother Wang, if you need anything in future, please feel free to contact the few of us, we will always make ourselves available for you. We rely on you to look out for us going forward."

“After you take the money, please hide for the next few days, don’t get caught. Do you still remember what you did not long ago?” Wang Yang said with a gloomy face.

“Don’t worry Brother Wang. We remember.” The hooligan leader’s expression changed and became solemn.

The matter mentioned by Wang Yang was none other than the last incident where Zhu Baoguo was nearly beaten till death.

At that time, Wang Yang only gave the hooligans a sum of money and instructed them to make Zhu Baoguo a handicap.

After they completed the task, he would then think of a way to pay them a large sum of money, and let them leave Ping Cheng to make a living in other places.

He did not expect that Zhu Baoguo, being too stubborn and bad tempered, said things that nearly drove the hooligans mad. While beating him, the hooligans had already forgotten Wang Yang’s instructions, they were so furious that they wanted to kill Zhu Baoguo.

After the police chased them away, the hooligans were in cold sweat and totally regretted what they had done.

They were well aware of what the Zhu family was like.

They dared to lay their hands on Zhu Baoguo only because Wang Yang was the grandson of the Zhu family.

Unless the Zhu family was willing to disown Wang Yang and send him to jail, otherwise, there should not be a major issue if they just followed Wang Yang’s instructions. If not, they could simply sell Wang Yang out. He was the mastermind anyway.

However, they did not have the guts to kill someone.

Wang Yang was the maternal grandson of the Zhu family. If Zhu Baoguo was dead, even if Wang Yang was the paternal and not maternal grandson, there was no reason for the Zhu family to side

with him when he did not even care about the death of his cousin. Furthermore, Zhu Baoguo was the only paternal grandson of the Zhu family.

Hence, when Qiao Nan called the police during the incident, she not only saved the life of Zhu Baoguo, but also that of the hooligans. To the hooligans, she appeared at the right time.

“Brother, we didn’t expect that this young lady was the one who saved Zhu Baoguo last time, she’s quite pretty,” said one of the lads beside the hooligan leader after he got the money.

The hooligan leader Zhao Shan smiled as he counted the money in his wallet. “She’s really not bad looking.”

“Brother, whenever you take a liking to any young lady, don’t mention about touching a strand of hair, you will not give up if you did not touch people’s bosoms. You seemed to have lost your touch today?” One of the brothers laughed and expressed that Zhao Shan was out of form today.

“What the hell do you know. If not for this young lady, Zhu Baoguo would have been killed by us. Even Wang Yang cannot save us then. Today, take it that we are repaying her for saving us.” Zhao San snorted. He believed that even thieves had their code of conduct.

“Brother you are so loyal to your friends, we made the right choice to be under your wing.” After hearing what Zhao San said, the group of hooligans felt more at ease. “Brother, where do we go next?”

“Where? Let’s have a good feast, go!”

On a separate note, hearing from Zhai Sheng that Wang Yang was such a character, Qiao Nan could not help getting worried for Zhu Baoguo.

Most importantly, Zhao Shan recognised Qiao Nan. When she saw Zhao Shan, she also had a sense of familiarity.

Linking to what Zhai Sheng said earlier, Qiao Nan could not help thinking for the worse.

In the previous life, Zhu Baoguo was beaten to death. It could have been Wang Yang’s doing. This, this was too merciless!

In the previous life, Qiao Nan was only occupied with earning money. She did not know Zhu Baoguo's situation. She only knew that after Zhu Baoguo's death, all the hooligans that were involved in this matter went to jail and were shot as they were given death sentences.

As to what happened to the Zhu family subsequently, Qiao Nan had no impression.

If Wang Yang was plotting against Zhu Baoguo because of Zhu family's assets, she would be driven to her grave if she found out that Wang Yang really got his wish after Zhu Baoguo's death.

## Chapter 110: Who Will Be Subdued

"Why?" When Qiao Dongliang finished chatting with Elder Lee and came out, he found Qiao Nan looking a little unwell.

"Nothing, I'm probably not feeling well due to the wind." Qiao Nan shook her head. She did not reveal the matter regarding Zhu Baoguo and Wang Yang to Qiao Dongliang. Certain things could not be said.

"I see, when we are back, I will make some ginger soup for you. Don't be afraid of the spiciness. You'll be better after drinking it."

"Okay, dad, let's go back. I think Mom and Sister are probably home."

At the mention of his spouse and elder daughter, Qiao Dongliang could not sustain his earlier good mood. "Let's not bother about them, Nan Nan, the money that Elder Lee gave you just now, you need to take care of it properly. If you really don't have a proper place to put them, keep them at the place where you store your books. Don't ever leave it at home. Your Mom and your Sister..."

It was the Lunar New Year and Qiao Dongliang did not want to curse anyone or say anything unlucky. Otherwise, he would have said that his wife and elder daughter were sick in the mind.

They clearly knew that the family was poor. Yet, they went out to have fun everyday.

He did not believe that Old Ding would not spend any money when she was out with Zijin everyday.

During the Lunar New Year period, Ding Jiayi did not work and had no income. Yet, they spent money everyday. Qiao Dongliang no longer wanted to care about the matters pertaining to Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

He had made up his mind, that, if there was not enough money for Qiao Zijin's tuition fees, he would not interfere in it. If Old Ding wanted to spoil Zijin, he would not care too.

If he indulged Old Ding, he would be indulging both Old Ding and Qiao Zijin!

Qiao Nan was unaware that Qiao Dongliang, under the influence of Elder Lee, was so determined to wash his hands of Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. At this moment, her mind was occupied with matters pertaining to Zhu Baoguo.

To prevent Zhu Baoguo from changing for the better, Wang Yang found a group of people to make trouble for her. This was despite that she only had a slight positive influence on Zhu Baoguo.

She could infer that Wang Yang would not allow Zhu Baoguo to have any normal friends or those who could positively influence Zhu Baoguo.

No wonder Zhu Baoguo's reputation was so bad in the quad. Everyone said he was a bad juvenile. Probably Wang Yang was the cause of all this.

When school re-opened, she had to find out from Zhu Baoguo about the situation in the Zhu family and why Wang Yang picked on him.

When Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan returned home, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were not back yet.

Seeing this situation, Qiao Dongliang did not say a word. Anyway, the first and second day of Lunar New Year just passed and there was a lot of leftover food. Qiao Dongliang asked Qiao Nan what food she liked so that they could heat them up to eat. Father and daughter decided to wash up and sleep after finishing their dinner.

As for Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin, Qiao Dongliang totally did not bother about them.

When mother and daughter finished happily watching a movie and reached home, they saw that the whole house was in darkness.

“Mom, do you think Dad will be angry?” Qiao Zijin was having so much fun that day, but when she saw that the house was in darkness, she could not help tugging Ding Jiayi’s hand and asked worriedly.

“What’s there to be afraid of? He’s angry, then what about me? I’m going to give him the cold shoulder and make him understand who is the one who will accompany him and stay by his side for the rest of his life. If he is capable, he can go ahead and lead a life with just one daughter,” Ding Jiayi said with anger.

Usually, she waited on Old Qiao with his food and clothing. She was the one who took care of all his daily needs.

Old Qiao depended on her for his daily needs, but he actually refused to use sleep in the same blanket as her because of Qiao Nan – that wretched girl.

“Mom, I’ll listen to you.” After hearing Ding Jiayi’s words, Qiao Zijin felt a little more assured. But when she felt the lack of warmth in the house, she was unhappy. “Mom, I’m feeling chilly. Even if we do not bathe, we need to wash our face and feet too. Otherwise, I will be too cold to fall asleep.”

“There will be hot water.” Ding Jiayi also felt chilly as they just came back from outside.

Ding Jiayi went to take the hot water pot to wash her face and feet together with Qiao Zijin. However, all the pots in the house were empty.

“This Old Qiao, without me waiting on him, there isn’t even any hot water at home?” Ding Jiayi was angry yet smug.

See, man cannot do without a woman. Without her, the house did not even have any hot water.

Just a few more days and Old Qiao would become so sloppy. She did not believe that he would not relent.

How a couple gets along – either the east wind prevails over the west wind, or the west wind prevails over the east wind. One will subdue the other. She needed to tame this bad temper of Old Qiao.

“What, no hot water. Mom, I’m thirsty and cold. How?” Qiao Zijin’s mood hit the rock bottom. “I don’t care, if I’m unable to wash my face or feet, I can’t sleep. Mom, I’m going back to my room. After you boil the water, let me know.”

Having said that, without waiting for Ding Jiayi’s response, Qiao Zijin stomped her feet as she went back to her room.

Ding Jiayi smiled and shook her head. Boiling water was a mundane task, how could she let Zijin help on this?

After a whole day of fun, it was almost midnight when they reached home. Ding Jiayi was alone in the kitchen boiling water. After the hot water was ready, she brought it to Qiao Zijin’s room and waited on her. After Qiao Zijin washed up, was comfortable and in bed, Ding Jiayi then had the time to take care of herself.

After she warmed her feet, Ding Jiayi felt more relaxed.

Looking at Qiao Dongliang who was sleeping soundly in bed, Ding Jiayi snorted. Based on the situation today, Qiao Dongliang definitely could not sustain this for more than a few days.

When Old Qiao softened and relented, she would then have a say in how much he gives Qiao Nan in future.

Qiao Nan should consider herself lucky to be able to continue with her studies. She would not give a single cent more to her.

With this thought, Ding Jiayi happily fell asleep.

Never did Ding Jiayi know that, Qiao Dongliang’s parents passed away early and he had no relatives at home, if he did not know how to do all this mundane housework, how did he survive before he married Ding Jiayi?



It was not that Qiao Dongliang did not boil hot water. He only boiled it for Qiao Nan and himself.

If Ding Jiayi knew the truth, it was uncertain if she could still laugh or have the mood to sleep so peacefully.

As both Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi each had their own thoughts and plans, the Qiao family went through the Lunar New Year in a strange way. In the blink of an eye, it was time for Qiao Zijin and Qiao Nan to return to school.

“Nan Nan, keep the money properly,” Qiao Dongliang passed Qiao Nan her tuition fees two days in advance of the payment date. He trusted Qiao Nan. “It’s day three of the Lunar New Year. This is your final year. If you need any revision materials, go ahead and buy them. You can ask me if it’s not enough. Understand?”

Looking at the sum of money that was obviously more than the tuition fees, Qiao Nan smiled. “Dad, I know.”

“As I said before, these money... ”

“I will definitely not keep them at home.” Previously, her mother was not able to find the little change that she had. But recently she had more money on hand. Hence, even if her father did not remind her, she would not feel at ease keeping the money at home too.

To her knowledge, her mother and Qiao Zijin were so money-faced that their eyes would shine at the sight of money.