

RTAMM 111

Chapter 111: One of a Kind

While Qiao Dongliang was talking to Qiao Nan, Qiao Zijin was beside Ding Jiayi and they were leaning on each other's heads. Qiao Zijin said, "Mom, school will re-open in three days, where are my tuition fees?"

Ding Jiayi's expression turned dark, she could not answer Qiao Zijin at that instance.

"Mom, it's been so long, Dad has not softened his attitude towards you?" Qiao Zijin knitted her brows and asked doubtfully. "I don't think I've seen you talking to Dad recently, Dad has not admitted his mistake and apologized to you? Then what about my tuition fees?"

At the beginning of the year, as she was at loggerheads with Qiao Dongliang and did not want to lose her face before Qiao Zijin, she spent almost half the money that was meant to be used frugally as living expenses.

In the end, Qiao Zijin not only bought the bracelet that she liked, but also a set of new clothes.

They went out everyday, watching some movies and eating at restaurants. All these required spending.

As one could imagine, Ding Jiayi did not have much money left in her pocket.

Not to mention Qiao Zijin's tuition fees for this semester, she could not even afford one month of living expenses for Qiao Zijin.

"Mom?" Seeing her mother's expression, Qiao Zijin was in trepidation. "Mom, Dad has not pleaded mercy to you? But school is reopening soon, what will happen to my school fees? Although I may not go to College but I need to graduate from high school!"

If she could not graduate from high school, she would not be able to face anyone.

“You, you don’t be anxious, I will settle this matter for you. I will ensure that you have money for schooling.” Ding Jiayi’s face turned pale and comforted Qiao Zijin again and again.

“Mom, I don’t care, no matter what, you have to find a way to raise my tuition fees. I am going to school one day earlier before it reopens so that I can sun my blanket in the hostel. So, Mom, by the day after tomorrow, you must pass me the tuition fees and living expenses.”

Qiao Zijin directly gave Ding Jiayi an ultimatum. She did not care if her words would cause Ding Jiayi to feel troubled. Neither did she care if it was possible for Ding Jiayi to raise the money. Having finished her words, Qiao Zijin walked away like a queen.

Ding Jiayi’s pale face twisted slightly, she rubbed her face with her palms that were rough. “Money money money, how am I going to find the money in such a short time.”

When Ding Jiayi looked up, Qiao Dongliang was just coming out of Qiao Nan’s bedroom.

Ding Jiayi’s eyes shone, she quietly followed Qiao Dongliang and returned to the couple’s room.

After returning to the bedroom, Ding Jiayi sat beside Qiao Dongliang without saying a word, then she stared straight at Qiao Dongliang.

Qiao Dongliang knitted his brow. He moved away and changed his position. Ding Jiayi kept quiet and followed and stuck to Qiao Dongliang wherever he moved to.

“What are you doing!” Qiao Dongliang was annoyed. He wanted to raise his voice but he controlled himself eventually.

“School is starting soon. It’s time to pay Zijin’s tuition fees.”

“Then you can pass the money to Zijin.” Qiao Dongliang sneered. He already found Old Ding’s current behavior odd. For the past few days, they were having a cold war and Old Ding was giving him the cold shoulder, but she pestered him today. True enough, when she opened her mouth, it was for the sake of money again!

“I don’t have money!” Ding Jiayi was anxious. If she had money, she would have already given it to Zijin. She could not wait to give all that she had to Zijin.

However, she was a mother who was not capable. She could not earn big bucks and could only let Zijin suffer with her.

“Who can you blame for not having money? I did not take a single cent of your salary.” Qiao Dongliang sneered. “This matter, you have to resolve it yourself. Do I need to remind you about what you did during the beginning of the year? You don’t have money. No, you are rich!”

“I spent it all.”

“Don’t look for me after you spent all your money. Zijin’s tuition fees and living expense, you have to find a way to settle them yourself. I have already told you this a long time ago, not just today. No money, who can you blame!” Having said that, Qiao Dongliang steered away from Ding Jiayi.

Ding Jiayi took a deep breath. She was keeping quiet again. Just like what she did a while ago, she stuck closely to Qiao Dongliang, and then stared straight at him till he felt uneasy all over. She wanted Qiao Dongliang to relent and take out his money.

Qiao Dongliang tolerated again and again, his expression was worse than Ding Jiayi.

In the end, Qiao Dongliang simply took out a book to read.

When it was almost eight o’clock, Qiao Dongliang boiled some hot water, washed his face and feet and removed his shoes and clothing before he took himself to bed. Ding Jiayi could watch him for as long as she liked. Anyway, he would not know anything after he fall asleep.

Who knew, Qiao Dongliang was really too naive.

Qiao Dongliang was lying down. Before he even warm his blanket and was dozing off, Ding Jiayi, who was lying beside him, reached out her hand and gave him a hard push. Qiao Dongliang was awakened suddenly. “What are you doing?”

“I can’t pay Zijin’s tuition fees. Is she still continuing her studies?”

“That’s up to you all, don’t ask me!”

“If this matter is not resolved, I can’t sleep. If I can’t sleep, I need someone to chat with me, you need to accompany me. Old Qiao, can you help me think of a way. Zijin will be going back to school the day after tomorrow.” Ding Jiayi said with persistence. She even purposely reached out to push Qiao Dongliang one more time. “Don’t sleep, please.”

“What the hell do you want?” After being awakened by Ding Jiayi a few times, Qiao Dongliang was furious.

Fortunately Qiao Nan was sleeping. If Qiao Nan saw what was happening, she would sigh and agree that Qiao Zijin was definitely Ding Jiayi’s daughter. Both mother and daughter’s pestering skills and behavior were one of a kind.

“I don’t wish to do anything.”

Qiao Dongliang narrowed his eyes and gave Ding Jiayi a sinister look. “You.... you are really.”

Qiao Dongliang really wanted to scold Ding Jiayi. They had agreed long before that they will take in hand one daughter each. But now, after Ding Jiayi had spent all her money at the beginning of the year, she wanted him to tidy up the mess. Wishful thinking!”

Ding Jiayi’s eyes flashed with complacency. She said before that she did not believe she could not subdue Old Qiao.

Before Ding Jiayi could smile, Qiao Dongliang suddenly got up from the bed with a stomach full of fury. Ding Jiayi panicked and also sat up. “What are you doing?”

“What am I doing?” Qiao Dongliang stopped what he was doing and looked at Ding Jiayi with sarcasm. “I’m letting you have the place.”

Having said that, Qiao Dongliang rolled up his blanket and pillow, and then left for the study room with them.

The study room was small. It was good and cozy for one person.

Once Qiao Dongliang left, Ding Jiayi was so scared that she got up from the bed. She hurriedly put on a coat and chased out.

When she caught up with Qiao Dongliang, Qiao Dongliang was already inside the study room. He also conveniently locked the door.

After confirming that Ding Jiayi could not come in, Qiao Dongliang wrapped himself with a blanket and leaned against the study table. He buried his head into the blanket so that he would not be disturbed by Ding Jiayi again.

Chapter 112: Determined Not To Interfere

Ding Jiayi knocked on the door for a long time but she could not get Qiao Dongliang to open it for her. Instead, she woke Qiao Zijin who was sleeping. “Mom, what are you doing in the middle of the night. You’re not letting people sleep!”

As there were not enough tuition fees and living expenses, her mood was already bad enough. Her mother had to make so much noise in the wee hours of the night. What did she mean by that?

“Zijin, go and sleep. I, I have to talk to your dad. You better sleep soon. If not, Mom will knock softly and you can cover your head.” Ding Jiayi was tiring out herself in the middle of the night. Wasn’t it all for the sake of Qiao Zijin?

Although she saw that Qiao Zijin was not understanding was furious with her, the bad-tempered Ding Jiayi was not her usual self. Despite Qiao Zijin’s complaint, she was not angry. She still coaxed Qiao Zijin nicely and assured her that she would lower her volume. What an attitude.

“Fine, then lower your volume,” Qiao Zijin replied sullenly and continued to sleep with her head in the covers.

As to why Ding Jiayi and Qiao Dongliang had to talk to each other outside of their bedroom, Qiao Zijin was not concerned at all.

Qiao Zijin was not concerned, Ding Jiayi did not mind. She stayed outside the study room and continued to knock on the door stubbornly.

Qiao Dongliang's body was covered with a thick layer of blanket but Ding Jiayi only had her coat on.

Within a few minutes, Ding Jiayi could no longer endure the cold weather. She turned pale and her teeth chattered.

Ding Jiayi had no choice but to return to her bedroom. She wore a thicker layer of clothing and continued to squat outside the door of the study room, knocking at the door from time to time.

On the morning of the second day, Qiao Dongliang opened the door of the study room. He was prepared to wash up, have breakfast and go to work. He discovered that Ding Jiayi, who was wearing a thick layer of clothing, had been squatting and leaning against the door and she slept through the night.

When Qiao Dongliang opened the door, Ding Jiayi, who was leaning against it, fell straight into the room.

At the sight of Ding Jiayi, Qiao Dongliang was both angry and amused.

No matter what, they had been a couple for decades. Facing this sight of Ding Jiayi, Qiao Dongliang certainly did not feel good.

However, when he thought of how Ding Jiayi led Qiao Zijin to squander away all the money, he forced himself to be hard-hearted and decided not to interfere in this matter.

They were not a wealthy and prosperous family. All the family savings were gone. If they do not reduce expenses, how were they going to survive?

It was not easy. He waited so long and his two daughters were becoming successful soon, he must think of a way to allow both of them to continue with their studies.

Whatever it takes, he must correct Old Ding's corrupted thoughts!

Otherwise, with Old Ding's foolishness, at least one of the two daughters' futures would be negatively affected.

Qiao Dongliang gritted his teeth. He did not bother about Ding Jiayi, neither did he call her. As per his usual routine, he washed up, had his breakfast and went straight to work.

"Mom, why are you sleeping here?" Qiao Zijin, who woke up only at eight o'clock, was all dressed up and ready to leave the house when she saw Ding Jiayi lying on the floor and sleeping at the entrance of the study room.

"Aiyoh." Ding Jiayi screamed pitifully when she was awakened. With that sleeping posture overnight, Ding Jiayi's entire body felt numb and stiff. "Where is your Dad?"

"Dad? It's already eight o'clock. Dad must have gone to work."

"What, already eight o'clock!" Ding Jiayi gave a scream. "I'm done for. I'll be late. They will deduct money from my salary."

Having said that, she hurriedly wore her shoes and ran out, without bothering about Qiao Zijin.

Fortunately, she had already dressed up for work last night and could leave the house after putting on her shoes. Otherwise, she would be late by two hours.

"Mom, my, my breakfast?" Even Qiao Zijin, whose tummy was rumbling with hunger, could not stop Ding Jiayi from leaving. "Qiao Nan! Qiao Nan!"

Qiao Zijin looked for Qiao Nan as she wanted Qiao Nan to prepare breakfast. However, when she walked over to Qiao Nan's room, the door was shut tightly. She had long left home.

Facing this situation, Qiao Zijin was in a terrible mood. She could not tolerate any more. She lifted her feet gave a few hard kicks to the door. "It's just a bedroom. It was locked so tightly everyday, as if it was hiding tens of thousands of dollars and afraid of attracting thieves. Who is she guarding, so shameless!"

Her father must have passed the tuition fees to Qiao Nan, whereas Qiao Zijin did not know where her tuition fees were.

It was all her mother's fault. If she was under her father's charge, she would have new clothes. She also would not need to worry about the tuition fees.

It was a pity that her father would definitely not allow her to swap with Qiao Nan now. Her mother said her father loved her more and would be taking in a son-in-law for her. However, her father obviously sided with Qiao Nan more. If this was the case, then her father should not expect her to be filial to him in future.

At this juncture, Qiao Nan, who was reading books at the Zhai residence, did not know the thoughts of Qiao Zijin. She also did not know that her existence had been discovered by the Zhai family.

Father Zhai knitted his brows and looked towards the direction of the storeroom. "Why is there an outsider in our house?"

"Dad, you don't need to bother about this." Zhai Hua was munching an apple as she stretched herself. She was tired out during the Lunar New Year. "That young lady was let in by my younger brother. Zhai Sheng has already given her the key to our back door."

"What is going on?" Father Zhai frowned and did not look happy. "Zhai Sheng is not someone so irresponsible." Was it right to give their house keys to any Tom, Dick and Harry?

"No issue, this young lady is fine. She has been borrowing our place to read books for half a year." Something would already have happened if there was a problem with her. "That young lady behaves with propriety. Besides the storeroom, she has never even stepped into our front yard."

It was also because Qiao Nan knew her boundaries, Zhai Hua did not interfere in this.

Otherwise, if Qiao Nan had displayed any sign of inappropriate behavior, even if she had caused any detriments to the Zhai family, or if Zhai Sheng brought her home, Zhai Hua would have chased her out at the first sign of trouble. Thereafter, Zhai Hua would take back the key.

"Dad, don't worry. You know Zhai Sheng's temperament. He has a good judgment of character."

"Borrow the place to read books?" After listening to his elder daughter, Father Zhai's expression was more relaxed.

The current situation seemed stable, but there were many who were watching them closely and lusting for the opportunity to pull them down.

“This young lady is quite unlucky, she has an unreliable mother at home. The mother sold all her textbooks and wanted her to quit school. As a result, the young lady went to the waste recycling station and bought many pre-loved textbooks.. Dad, do you know, she is quite lucky in one matter. She picked up Peng Yu’s book at the waste recycling station.” Zhai Hua did not hide anything. She told Father Zhai the truth about Qiao Nan’s situation.

“She is quite determined and self-driven. No problem, just let her be.” There was no need for Father Zhai to be unhappy over the young lady. “But this kind of matter. I will only allow it to happen once. There should not be a second time.”

“Dad, this, you can be assured. Does Zhai Sheng seem like a busybody. This is an exception.” Although she did not know how the exception came about.

Chapter 113: Relented Again

At this point, Zhai Hua, who was convincing Father Zhai, never expected that to Zhai Sheng, the appearance of this exception would lead to many other “exceptions”.

Ding Jiayi had caught a cold after leaning and sleeping on the study room door for an entire night. Fortunately, she did not have a fever but the runny nose and sneezing were non stop.

“Mom, drink some hot tea.” Hearing the sound of Ding Jiayi blowing her nose, Qiao Zijin smirked and knitted her brow. She reluctantly poured a cup of hot beverage for Ding Jiayi.

Ding Jiayi was feeling so sick that tears welled up in her eyes. “Zijin, stay away from me in case I pass the cold virus to you.”

Although she was drinking the hot tea, Ding Jiayi did not feel any better.

“Mom, have you taken your medicine?”

“Not yet.”

“I will bring you the medicine.” Qiao Zijin went and searched for a long time. “Mom, there’s only the fever medicine leftover by Qiao Nan when she had fever last time. The cold medicine ran out. Mom, you give me money, I’ll go and buy for you.”

Ding Jiayi gave a long sigh. “Forget it. It’s just a cold. I will drink more water later and get well soon.”

Of course, she did not buy the medicine as she was unwilling to part with the money.

Otherwise, she could have bought and taken a few tablets of the medicine on her way back from work.

At this juncture, Ding Jiayi truly felt a little regretful over mindlessly spending so much money during the Lunar New Year period.

Ding Jiayi could not predict Qiao Dongliang’s stand now. Also, the money in her pocket could barely afford Qiao Zijin’s one month of living expenses. There was no way that she could cough up the tuition fees.

Having been married to Qiao Dongliang for so many years, this was the first time that Ding Jiayi felt so desperately poor.

“Mom? Is Dad reluctant to pay my tuition fees?”

“Your Dad, I don’t wish to say anything. Why do you think I caught a cold? Your Dad is too heartless and stubborn.” She was married to Old Qiao for so many years, yet he could bear to let her lean against the door and slept through the night. He did not even cover her with a piece of outerwear. Where was Old Qiao’s conscience?”

“Then what should we do now. School is starting the day after tomorrow. I have to go to school tomorrow!” Qiao Zijin’s eyes were red and she was close to tears. “Without the tuition fees, I will not study anymore. It is so humiliating to owe the tuition fees. I can’t do this!”

“Don’t cry, don’t cry. Mom is sick but it’s bearable. But when you cry, my heart goes out to you. Don’t be anxious, Mom has an idea.” Ding Jiayi pinched her nose, stomp her feet and rushed into her bedroom.

Following that, Ding Jiayi turned the bedroom upside down.

Qiao Nan that wretched girl hid the money well, but she did not believe that Old Qiao would do the same.

Clearly both are Old Qiao’s daughters, there was no reason that only that wretched girl could use Old Qiao’s money?

If Old Qiao was unwilling to hand over his money, then she would take herself!

“Mom, let me help you.” Qiao Zijin hesitated for a while at the entrance. But at the thought that she had to go to school tomorrow, she daringly entered her parent’s bedroom and helped Ding Jiayi on the search.

Ding Jiayi thought for a while and said, “If your Dad discovers this later, just push all the blame on me. Say that I am the only one who searched the room. You tried to stop me but could not.”

“Mom, I know.”

“Dad, you’re off work?” Outside the Qiao residence, Qiao Nan, who was on the way back from the Zhai residence, coincidentally met Qiao Dongliang who was coming back after work.

“Nan Nan, where have you been revising your studies all this while? Is that place convenient?” Qiao Dongliang saw his daughter carrying the books and only realized the problem at this point.

“It won’t be inconvenient. It’s quite good.” If Brother Zhai did not help her, then it would be very inconvenient. After all, she was not only storing books but also money. If she had put them away at any public place or any Tom, Dick or Harry’s place, how could she not worry?

Most probably she would have sleepless nights from worrying about the tuition fees.

“Fine, then let’s go home.” Qiao Dongliang could not think of where Qiao Nan had hid her books and money. But judging from how assured Qiao Nan looked, Qiao Dongliang was not worried anymore.

While at work today, he behaved like a wandering soul. He could not concentrate and made a few blunders when working.

One year had passed, undoubtedly, his wife did not have any money left on hand. But the elder daughter was going to school soon. Was he really going to let his elder daughter owe the tuition fees?

He knew that his elder daughter was afraid of losing face. Qiao Dongliang was in a dilemma. What if the elder daughter refused to attend school. Then they would have wasted the 5000 yuan spent earlier. Moreover, the elder daughter’s grades had improved and were good now.

After putting in so much efforts and facing the prospect of giving up halfway, Qiao Dongliang was in a dilemma. “Nan Nan, your sister is starting school soon, you know your Mom’s character. Do you think...”

At a loss of what to do, he was not sure why, but Qiao Dongliang suddenly asked Qiao Nan for her opinion.

When she heard Qiao Dongliang’s words, Qiao Nan was silent for a while. She actually felt very disappointed.

Her father was relenting and thinking of paying Qiao Zijin’s tuition fees.

However, her father had already made his point harshly to her mother, and even quarreled so badly with her yesterday, he needed an excuse so that he would not lose face. Hence, he asked Qiao Nan about it.

To let Qiao Dongliang give the money to Qiao Zijin was contrary to what Qiao Nan thought.

In her previous life, the family was adamant about her quitting school and there was no room for negotiation. In this life, despite spending all the family savings, Qiao Zijin happily enjoyed herself for one year. Now, Qiao Zijin had to let her father to clean up the mess when she did not have enough money to pay the tuition fees.

Although her father kept saying that he would like to teach her mother and Qiao Zijin a lesson, at the critical juncture, he would always soften his stance. No wonder her mother and Qiao Zijin were fearless.

However, if she rejected him outright, Qiao Nan was afraid that this would affect her image before Qiao Dongliang. If she met with any problems in future and her father did not help her, she would have no status in the Qiao family. Her well-being was at stake.

Qiao Dongliang was the only backing that Qiao Nan had to allow her to continue staying in the Qiao family instead of living independently outside.

“Dad, why don’t we do this. Both of us know Mom and Sister too well. My sister has a bad temperament and can’t endure hardship, but you can’t let her spend all the money at home then quit school because of her pride. That will be equivalent to dumping the 5000 yuan into the sea. However, what my Mom and Sister did during the Lunar New Year was definitely unacceptable. If they continue to spend like this, don’t mention about saving money, they will probably owe money. After you go back, have a good talk with Mom and Sister. If they are willing to admit their wrong and change for the better, then you can consider giving the money to my Sister?”

Without a choice, Qiao Nan could only portray a more neutral stand.

Qiao Nan was only hoping that with, given her mother and Qiao Zijin’s character, they might flare up further without constraint. This would provoke her father and then they could forget about receiving the money.

These were just thoughts. However, what would happen eventually was beyond her control.

So, on the way back home, Qiao Nan did not look too good. She looked gloomy.

Chapter 114: Done Themselves In

When the daughter and father reached home, Qiao Nan would never expect that Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin would give such awesome performances.

Maybe they were too involved in their search, but Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin never heard the sounds coming from Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan who had reached home.

Qiao Dongliang heard what Qiao Nan said just now and felt that it made sense. He wanted to have a talk with Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. But who would have known that the moment he arrived at home, he would find them looking high and low through his room. They had almost torn down the whole house, ransacking the room.

They were all drenched in sweat, what were they searching for?

Of course it must be money!

Qiao Dongliang drew in a breath, his face turned bright red in anger. He stumbled and almost fell.

Qiao Nan hurried forward and supported him with her hands. She widened her eyes in disbelief when she saw how the room was turned upside down as if there was a burglar. “Mom, what are you and sister doing, should Dad and I give you a hand?”

Her mother and Qiao Zijin were searching for father’s money?

Ridiculous!

Ding Jiayi jumped in surprise. She turned and saw Qiao Dongliang staring intently at her, she could feel her heart thumping loudly. “You, you are back.”

“Dad, Dad.” Qiao Zijin was in shock as well, her hands caught in mid air, she did not know what to do with them.

“Didn’t you hear Nan Nan’s question, what are you two looking for, should we give you a hand?” Qiao Dongliang snarled.

“No, no need, it was nothing important, it’s alright if we cannot find it.” Ding Jiayi dared not say outright that she was looking for the money that Qiao Dongliang stashed away.

There were things that one could help with but could not say.

“You really do not need our help?” Qiao Dongliang’s hesitation and kindness just now vanished as soon as he saw how the mother and daughter went through his room. “Nan Nan, come and help me.”

“Oh.” Qiao Nan pursed her lips. She really wanted to praise Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

It was such an opportune time for them to go through the room. She did not have to do anything and her mother and Qiao Zijin had done themselves in.

“Old Qiao, what are you doing?” Ding Jiayi turned a shade whiter when she saw that Qiao Dongliang was going through his clothes.

“What am I doing? Nothing, I am giving up the room to you, you can do your search in whichever ways that you like in the future.” Last night Qiao Dongliang merely stayed for a night, now he had a change of mind, if he was to sleep on the same bed as his wife, he would be so furious that he would not be able to sleep at all.

Qiao Dongliang took some clothes and moved to the study room.

The study room might not be small, but there wasn’t much space after placing a desk.

Qiao Dongliang took out the desk and placed it in the living room. He made a small bed in the room and put his clothes and belongings into the study room.

Luckily there were blankets at home and Qiao Nan was used to doing chores, the father and daughter had the blanket spread out in no time.

Qiao Dongliang sat down on the bed, he looked around the small cramped space and remembered that Qiao Nan had stayed in this room for fifteen years.

“Nan Nan.”

“Yes?”

“Nothing.” Qiao Dongliang swallowed the words that were already at his mouth. It didn’t matter if Nan Nan used to find this room too cramped or not, it was good enough that she got to sleep in a more spacious room now.

“Nan Nan, I can’t do anything about your sister’s matter. You should ignore them as well. If your Mom pretend to be very pitiful in front of you, just take it that you didn’t hear anything. We could never lend your sister your school fees. Your Mom and sister are capable, you do not need to help them, do you get it?”

Qiao Nan’s eyes sparkled, “I have got it.”

“Go back to your room, lest your room... I am tired, I want to rest for a while.” Qiao Dongliang’s heart was tired.

“Dad, I won’t disturb you.” Qiao Nan backed out of the small room and closed the door.

As soon as she came out of the room she was stopped by Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. “Qiao Nan, what did father speak to you about? Is he angry?”

“We are asking you a question, are you mute?” Ding Jiayi blushed nervously at the mention of what happened just now.

Qiao Nan who was given no chance to speak at all was being scolded by Ding Jiayi. “Dad did not say anything to me, as for whether he is angry or not, can’t you tell?”

“What kind of attitude is that, can’t you tell us upfront if your Dad is angry or not?” Ding Jiayi lifted her hands and wanted to give Qiao Nan a knock on the head. But she was stopped by Qiao Zijin.

“Nan Nan, I have something to discuss with you.” With that, Qiao Zijin pulled Qiao Nan into Qiao Nan’s room, “Nan Nan, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“I couldn’t help you.”

“You don’t know what favor I am asking, yet you rejected me. Are you my sister? Don’t worry, you will definitely be able to help me with this. Has Dad given you your school fees? Can you lend me

your school fees first? When Mom receives her pay I will return you your school fees, what do you think? Nan Nan, good Nan Nan, please do me this favor. I am the only elder sister that you have.”

“I couldn’t help you. You don’t wish to owe school fees, neither do I.” Qiao Nan rejected her upfront.

“Nan Nan, good Nan Nan, I beg you to please help me. Since a young age till now, you have been so good to me, please just help me one last time?”

When she was going through the room just now, Qiao Zijin knew that it was impossible for her father to fork out another sum of money for her school fees.

There wasn’t much money at home and it was controlled by her father. She could only work on the money that Qiao Nan had.

“No, there’s no room for discussion.”

“Nan Nan, you can hand in your school fees at a later time.”

“These words are for you as well. If it’s alright for me, then it’s alright for you as well. Why would you borrow the money from me? If it’s not alright with you, you would feel shameful, then it’s the same for me. No one wants to be disgraced.”

Qiao Nan was firm in her attitude, leaving no room for discussion. This made Qiao Zijin boil with anger. “Nan Nan, when, when did you become so heartless, with total disregard for our sisterhood. You don’t care a bit for me at all. I am your only sister!”

“There’s no need to emphasize that you are my only sister, you are my elder sister, I am your younger sister. Since a young age, you have never been nice to me.”

“Nan Nan, if you continue to behave in this way I am going to be furious. In the future I won’t defend you against Mom.” Qiao Zijin was simply outrageous, she had a favor to ask, yet she still lost her temper at Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan pursed her lips and looked Qiao Zijin in the eyes.

“You, you don’t regret it!” Qiao Zijin pushed at Qiao Nan with all her might.

Luckily there was a bed behind Qiao Nan, if not she would have fallen to the ground.

But even with the bed, Qiao Nan still had a bad fall.

Chapter 115: Gift

Qiao Zijin ran off angrily. With that, Qiao Nan laughed to herself, a cold glint in her eyes. She knew things would turn out like this.

“Happy Lunar New Year.” On the day for enrollment, Qiao Nan handed in her school fees and arranged for the boys in her class to carry the books and distributed them to the students.

It used to be the Class Monitor’s responsibility. But the Class Monitor seemed to have caught a cold and did not come today, The Class Monitor even arranged for someone to help to hand in the school fees. As a Vice Class Monitor, Qiao Nan would then have to help out.

“After receiving your books, flip them open and check through. If there’s any problems please come over to me to make a note and exchange your books.”

The students seldom need to exchange their books, but to be on the safe side, Qiao Nan still instructed them to check.

“Hmph, bullying people by flaunting one’s powerful connections.” Zhao Yu was furious when she saw how Qiao Nan directed people around on the podium.

Zhou Lei had gotten used to Zhao Yu who would act up once in a while. “During Lunar New Year this year, you must have eaten the aged vinegar.”

“What do you mean?” Zhao Yu paused momentarily, she was slow to react.

“Sour.” Zhou Lei wrinkled his nose in disdain. “But don’t let the sourness drift towards me. I don’t like sour stuff.” With that, Zhou Lei paid attention to Zhao Yu no more, he focused on helping Qiao Nan to distribute the exercise books.

“You are the one who is sour.” Zhao Yu finally understood. If she still did not get the drift, how could she be the Chinese representative?

“For you.” Zhu Baoguo placed a nicely wrapped box on Qiao Nan’s table. A flower was tied on top of the box.

“For me?” Qiao Nan arched her eyebrows. “Where have you been during the Lunar New Year, I didn’t see you in the quad.”

“I am not at the quad, I went overseas on holiday. Did you see the shoes that I am wearing now, they are the trendiest sports shoes overseas. They were pretty expensive as well.” Zhu Baoguo lifted his leg to flaunt off his new shoes, letting Qiao Nan to have a close look.

“That’s really trendy of you to spend the Lunar New Year overseas.” For the older generations, not to mention in the 21st century, most families would choose to spend the Lunar New Year having reunion dinner at home.

It was only the end of the 20th century now, the Zhu family was very open minded.

“This is my gift for you from overseas, open it and take a look to see if you like it. You can’t get it here.” Zhu Baoguo pushed the gift towards Qiao Nan. “I spent half a day choosing a gift for you. If your house has a phone, I could just make a call and ask your preferences, I can buy whatever that you preferred. Oh, it’s such a headache to pick a gift.”

It was supposed to be words of concern, but Zhu Baoguo made people feel uneasy with the way he put it across.

Qiao Nan who was used to the way people behaved in the 21st century, unwrapped the box that Zhu Baoguo gave her without hesitation.

While Qiao Nan was unwrapping the box, everyone in the class was waiting to see what was inside the box.

Why was Qiao Nan so lucky this year? First there was someone who gave her the revision notes, and now Zhu Baoguo gave her a present, and they heard that it was bought from overseas. What could be inside the box?

Qiao Nan was quick and familiar in unwrapping the box.

When she finally unwrapped the box and saw what was inside the box, she gave a small shout of surprise. "Walkman?"

"There's more." Zhu Baoguo smiled. "I heard that your English is pretty good, but while I was overseas I overheard a lot of the people who said that the Chinese students are only good in written English, they do not place focus on conversational English. You can listen to the native speakers and practise your conversational English, you would definitely be able to speak good English in the future."

Other than the walkman, Zhu Baoguo also picked quite a lot of English cassettes for Qiao Nan. It seemed to come in a set and must have cost a bomb.

Looking at the gift, Qiao Nan hesitated for a while. "I really need this, I won't refuse your good intentions, Zhu Baoguo, thank you."

It was rare that Qiao Nan would be full of gratitude towards him. Zhu Baoguo shuddered and rubbed his elbows. "Don't, don't ever do that. I am used to your cynicism, I can't take it when you are nice to me."

Zhu Baoguo might have expressed his dislike, but his lips curled upwards to show that he was in fact very pleased.

"Scram, are your eyes okay? Do you have red eyes?" Zhou Lei who was finished with distributing the books had just sat down and saw Zhao Yu whose eyes turned red and scary. They were not red from crying, but glaringly red. Zhou Lei had such a bad fright that he almost jumped up. "I heard from my Dad that eyes infections are contagious. Zhao Yu, maybe you should consider applying for leave to go back home and have your Mom to take you to the doctor. It's only enrollment today and there aren't many classes. Don't frighten other students."

"It's your eyes who are infected." Zhao Yu closed her dry eyes and tried to contain her jealousy.

Qiao Nan was just a lackey, no wonder she was so nice to Zhu Baoguo. Even though he was such a lousy student, she still mixed with him. So it turned out that she was sucking up to him, hoping to gain something out of it.

Zhu Baoguo must be blind as well, she was such a good lady, yet he befriended Qiao Nan instead of her.

Just you wait and see, Zhu Baoguo would definitely stand to lose if he kept on mixing with Qiao Nan. By then, Zhu Baoguo would finally realize who the good person was.

Zhu Baoguo had given her such expensive gifts. Qiao Nan dared not keep the books at home, let alone these walkman and cassettes. She would be a fool to bring them home.

Qiao Nan had a bitter smile on her face. She was finally done with keeping the newly distributed textbooks for the new year and the walkman and cassettes that Zhu Baoguo gave her at Zhai family residence.

To her, Qiao family residence did not seem like a house. It was in fact a den of thieves, a bandit's nest. If she put her things at the Qiao family residence, there would be the possibility of them being snatched away.

Bearing this in mind, whenever Qiao Nan had anything of a considerable value, she would bring them a little by little to Zhai family residence.

Because of this, there would be a day in the future where Qiao Nan would become a member of the Zhai family. By then, she had no need to move her things at all.

When Qiao Nan reached home, she put down her school bag and went to look for Qiao Dongliang. "Where's Mom? Did anything happen?"

Today she had to go to school for enrollment, while Qiao Zijin went back to school yesterday.

"Nothing." Qiao Dongliang frowned.

“What about my sister’s school fees?” Where did her mother get the money to pay for Qiao Zijin’s school fees in two days’ time?

Judging from Qiao Zijin’s temper, if she did not have the money, she would not go to school.

“No idea, they probably borrowed the money.” Qiao Dongliang was furious when he saw the mother and the daughter went through his room to search for money the day before yesterday. Even if he did not lament them, one could tell that he was boiling over with rage from the fact that he moved from the bigger room to the small study room and slept by himself.

“Where did Mom borrow the money from?” As soon as the words slipped out of her mouth, Qiao Nan regretted her words, she should not shoot off her mouth.

As long as it wasn’t her father’s money. it didn’t matter where her mother borrowed it from.

“Don’t bother about it.” Qiao Dongliang said in anger. “Your Mom is way too unreliable, Nan Nan, you must remember to just ignore her.”

Chapter 116: Middle School Exams

“I feared that if they carried on like this, your sister would learn all the wrong ways. Your mom is getting more and more daring. Forget it, I should not have told you all this. You would be sitting for your middle school exams this year. Do your best.”

“I understand.” Qiao Nan nodded. From then on, she put all her concentration on her studies, ignoring Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

For some unknown reasons, this amazing pair of mother and daughter had not been bothering Qiao Nan for a long while. Qiao Zijin also did not ask Qiao Nan to help her on account of their ‘sisterhood’.

“Xiao Qiao, there is one more month to go before middle school exams. Are you nervous?” Zhu Baoguo did not study in the past. Now that he put in more efforts to study, he never thought that time would fly past, and middle school exams would be coming in the blink of an eye.

“Not nervous. What is there to be nervous for?” Qiao Nan looked at the scattered test papers on her desk calmly. There would be a small test once every three days and an exam every five days. On top of that, they also had to do numerous practice papers.

In this situation, what was there to be nervous about. “Why? Are you scared?”

“I am not scared, I am just guilty.” It was rare that Zhu Baoguo was so honest. “The students who sit for the middle school exams have nine years of solid foundation. I, I only studied hard for less than a year.”

“Having no confidence in yourself is normal in your case. But you must trust me,” Qiao Nan said in a mocking and encouraging tone as she patted Zhu Baoguo on the shoulder.

“Crap.” Zhu Baoguo rolled his eyes. “There is no one else like you who would praise themselves in such manner.”

“There is. Here is one standing right in front of you.” Qiao Nan grinned at him, showing off her sparkling white teeth.

Zhu Baoguo was speechless. He twitched one corner of his mouth. On second thought, he always lost when he bickered with Xiao Qiao. He would rather spend the time to do a few more questions than being mocked by Xiao Qiao.

“Everyone, do not be nervous. Middle school exams are in fact similar to the exams that we used to have. You must prepare your stationery. It is okay to bring more pens with you in case they run out of ink and could not be used. Furthermore, a few of the students from our class might be arranged to be in the same classroom. You have been classmates for three years. You should be friendly and helpful toward each other. If any of them has unusable pens and you have an extra with you, don’t be stingy. There would be students from other classes in the classroom as well. It would be a laughing stock if people from the same class refuse to lend their pens, whereas people from the other classes are willing to lend them their pens. Do you understand?”

Everyone was baffled by Teacher Chen’s words. But Zhao Yu who blushed to a bright red knew clearly what Teacher Chen was referring to.

A lot of the students were whispering to themselves that they had been classmates for three years after all. If it was only a pen, no one would be so stingy to the point they would refuse to lend a pen. This would never happen to Class One.

The more they discussed it, the redder Zhao Yu's face became.

Other students might not have noticed Zhao Yu's expression, but Zhou Lei could see it clearly.

Zhou Lei looked at Zhao Yu in suspicions. Zhao Yu gritted her teeth and shot him a glare. "Don't make any wild guesses. I have nothing to do with what Teacher Chen said!"

"Did I say that it has anything to do with you?" Zhou Lei smiled. Did she just expose her own deed?

"Anyway, just bear in mind that you had better not shoot your mouth off. If I hear of anything, I would settle scores with you."

"Zhao Yu, do you really think that I am scared of you? If you have the capabilities, just come at me. Show me what you are capable of. I am a man. I will not shoot my mouth off like you girls. Initially, I had no intention to say anything. Now that you have given me a warning, I would be letting you down if I did not say anything. I will be waiting for you to settle scores with me!"

Zhou Lei was agitated by Zhao Yu.

Zhou Lei had long wanted a change of seats. But Teacher Chen did not see the need to as they would be graduating soon. Besides, Teacher Chen believed that Zhou Lei had decent self-control, hoping that he would bear with it for the time being.

Zhou Lei was a man after all. Since Teacher Chen had already said so, he would have to agree. He thought that it would be fine as long as he did not interact with Zhao Yu.

It would have been alright if Zhao Yu had not threatened to deal with him. Now that she made the threats, Zhou Lei was not going to give in. "Let's wait and see!"

Zhao Yu was in a panic. "No, I... I was just joking with you, don't treat it seriously." If this was to spread in the school, she would not be able to hold her head high.

Zhao Yu had already felt that the teachers looked at her strangely this semester.

Although she was still the Chinese representative in class, Teacher Lee would rather get other students to do the tasks than asking for her help.

Even a simple task like handing out the test papers was done by other students. Zhao Yu did not feel good about it. In fact, she felt uneasy.

“There is no point crying over spilled milk. It is too late for regrets!” Once angered, Zhou Lei was not to be trifled with as well.

“Alright, these are the points to take note of. Have a good rest today and be ready for middle school exams.” Zhao Yu and Zhou Lei did not make much of a commotion, hence Teacher Chen did not say anything.

“Xiao Qiao, here is a special exam weapon for you.” While everyone was packing their bags, Zhu Baoguo was the only one who was busy taking things out from his bag. “Bring this back with you, I guarantee that you would feel refreshed and energized after drinking it.”

“Coffee?”

“You knew about it?” Zhu Baoguo was amazed. “Take it and drink it. If you are tired, it can work wonders for you.”

Looking at the coffee, Qiao Nan hesitated for a while. “Zhu Baoguo, middle school exams is just around the corner. If you trust me, be careful with what you eat after going back to the Zhu family, especially if the food is given by other people. Though there is no way to reject those single servings food, do not eat them. You can throw them away later when no one is looking. No matter what, just bear this in mind and stay alert.”

Qiao Nan had intended to tell Zhu Baoguo about Wang Yang earlier but it slipped her mind and she could not find the right time to bring it up until now.

If what Brother Zhai said was true, Wang Yang could not bear to see Zhu Baoguo did well for his middle school exams.

If so, Wang Yang would be up to no good tonight.

“Xiao Qiao, have you heard of something?” Zhu Baoguo’s countenance changed.

“No matter what, I would not do you harm. You had better be careful.” There was no need for her to hear it from someone else. She had the first-hand experience and was almost beaten to a pulp because of Zhu Baoguo.

“Qiao Nan, thank you. Don’t worry, I understand.” Zhu Baoguo knew it all along that his cousin did not get along well him.

But his cousin would always address him politely in front of everyone. Zhu Baoguo felt uneasy and displeased, but there was no way to reject him.

If he pulled a stern face at him, his grandpa would lecture him that as an elder brother, he should give in to the younger brother. Grandpa also reminded that his cousin was well-behaved and obedient so he should bring him along whenever he went out.

Since a young age till now, Zhu Baoguo could not remember the million times he had been taken advantage of by his cousin.

But they were only small pranks; it did not matter much. Hence, Zhu Baoguo did not take it to heart.

Chapter 117: Reached in Time

However, if Wang Yang dared to make troubles for him during middle school exams, do not blame him for being unruly.

He was merely his cousin. Even if it was his biological brother creating troubles for him, he would still bash him to a pulp!

“Alright, it is good that you know what you are doing.” Qiao Nan nodded and did not mention it anymore.

“Don’t just worry about me. I heard that things are not going so well at your house either. Even though it might not escalate to that extent, you have to be careful. Don’t oversleep or be late. Once you are late, you would be forbidden to sit for the exams.” Zhu Baoguo reminded her out of concern.

“You do not need to remind me about this, I know the rules very well.” Qiao Nan felt comforted by his concerned words but a cold sparkle flashed in her eyes.

Wang Yang and Zhu Baoguo were merely cousins, hence he had no qualms about targeting Zhu Baoguo. But her family was definitely one of a kind.

“Nan Nan, have a good rest today. You have been doing your revisions conscientiously, there’s no need to revise tonight. Just have a good night’s sleep.” Qiao Dongliang was especially anxious for the middle school exams this time. As soon as Qiao Nan reached home, he poured her a cup of tea personally.

It was rare for her to have this treatment. Qiao Nan was overwhelmed by the special favor. “I understand, Dad.”

“You make it sound like she is the only one sitting for middle school exams, whereas everyone else is not qualified to sit for the exams.” The more Qiao Dongliang valued Qiao Nan, the more annoyed and frustrated Ding Jiayi was.

When Qiao Zijin had her middle school exams, she was the one who took care of her meals and waited on her. Old Qiao did not even pour her a cup of water, neither did he ask about how she was doing.

“Ignore your Mom.” Qiao Dongliang patted Qiao Nan on the shoulder.

“It is okay, I am used to it.”

“You...” Qiao Dongliang was frustrated and did not know what to say about Qiao Nan’s matter-of-factly attitude. “Have a good rest tonight.”

“Okay.” Qiao Nan took a bath and got ready for bed after dinner.

It was amazing what one could do when they were driven up the wall. Ding Jiayi decided to set herself against Qiao Dongliang. He had reminded Qiao Nan not to revise tonight but to have a good rest for the exams that would start tomorrow instead. Therefore, Ding Jiayi purposely created a din in the middle of the night to make it impossible for Qiao Nan to rest well.

Qiao Nan was awakened by the loud sounds from the room next to her.

After ascertaining that the sounds came from Ding Jiayi's room, Qiao Nan curled the corner of her lips as she contemplated if she should stuff some cotton in her ears and go back to sleep. Just then, she heard the sounds of someone opening the door.

It seemed like Qiao Nan was not the only one who was awakened by the din that Ding Jiayi created, Qiao Dongliang was awake as well.

Nobody knew what happened thereafter, but Ding Jiayi finally quietened down.

By the time Qiao Nan woke up the next day, she saw Qiao Dongliang walked out of Ding Jiayi's room. Ding Jiayi's complexion was not as pale as the past few days. On the contrary, her complexion had a tinge of red.

Most importantly, Ding Jiayi, who always pulled a face when she saw Qiao Nan, did not give the latter the cold shoulder today. She simply gazed at Qiao Dongliang with tenderness. "Shouldn't you bring your belongings back?"

What did Old Qiao do yesterday? Did they make up?

"We will talk about it later," Qiao Dongliang said curtly. Qiao Dongliang seemed to be embarrassed in front of Qiao Nan.

Qiao Dongliang felt uneasy, especially when he looked into Qiao Nan's bright and sparkling dark eyes which seemed to be able to see through one's mind.

Qiao Dongliang reassured himself that Qiao Nan was still young; she could not have understood the affairs of the adults.

“Nan Nan, have some breakfast. Dad will send you to school before going to work.” This way, Nan Nan could save some time on transport and would have more time to go through her notes at school as she rested.

“Why the need to send her to school? Last night... aren't you tired?” Ding Jiayi gave Qiao Dongliang a gentle pat on his shoulder. She turned to Qiao Nan, “Is there any problem going to school by yourself?”

“No problem.” Qiao Nan shook her head. Without another word, she took her bag and went to school after she had her breakfast.

“Where is Zhu Baoguo?” Qiao Nan had reached school, but she didn't see Zhu Baoguo anywhere. She asked around in the class. “Has anyone of you seen Zhu Baoguo? Did he come to school today?”

“No sight of him.”

“No idea.”

“Maybe he went to the washroom?”

Qiao Nan looked at the clock hanging on the wall. There was half an hour left before the exams; there was still some time.

Nevertheless, by the time it was twenty minutes to the exams, Zhu Baoguo still could not be seen anywhere. Qiao Nan could not help but frown. If she had known this would happen, she would have stopped over at Zhu family's residence to take a look.

Qiao Nan gritted her teeth and ran in the direction of the office to look for Teacher Chen. “Teacher Chen, Zhu Baoguo is not here yet. There are only twenty minutes left until the exams. Can you lend me your bicycle? I want to go to the Zhu family's residence to have a look.”

If Qiao Nan walked to the Zhu family's residence and walked back to school, she would not make it in time. She could only ask her teacher to lend her the bicycle.

“Zhu Baoguo is not here yet?” Teacher Chen was alarmed. Zhu family placed a lot of focus on Zhu Baoguo’s studies. Today’s the first day of middle school exams, it’s impossible that the Zhu family would be so late in sending Zhu Baoguo to school. “Lend you the bicycle? No. Tell you what—you will stay in the school, I will make the trip.”

It would be worse if Zhu Baoguo missed the exams and Qiao Nan, the top student, was delayed as well.

“Then I would have to trouble Teacher Chen.” Qiao Nan nodded.

Teacher Chen informed Teacher Lee to arrange for the students of Class One to enter the exam hall, after which Teacher Chen got on the bicycle and went to the Zhu family’s residence with lightning speed.

In general, for middle school exams, one would need to enter the exam hall ten minutes before the start of the exam.

As Qiao Nan was worried about Zhu Baoguo, she stood outside the entrance waiting for him while the rest of the students went into the hall.

“This student here, you can go into the exam hall!” The invigilator arched their eyebrows and shouted at Qiao Nan.

The invigilator was from another school, hence they were stricter with the students.

When they saw students like Qiao Nan who dawdled and refused to enter the exam hall as if they were up to no good particularly, the invigilators would be harsh on them.

“Yes, teacher.” Qiao Nan frowned and walked very slowly toward the teacher.

At the turn of her head, Qiao Nan saw Teacher Chen and Zhu Baoguo arriving in the nick of time. She finally breathed a sigh of relief and felt more comfortable as she walked into the exam hall.

“?” The invigilator found it strange that minutes ago Qiao Nan was still dawdling outside the exam hall. Now she looked as if she could not wait to go in. The invigilator frowned in confusion.

“Alright, I will give out the exam papers now. Everyone be silent. It would be considered as cheating otherwise.”

At the invigilator’s order, the classroom turned silent; no one dared to make a single sound. One could only hear the “swoosh swoosh” rustling sounds of the exam papers being handed down.

The first subject on the first day of the exams was one that Qiao Nan was good in; it was an exam on modal particles. After half a year of revision, she knew the knowledge inside out. There was no way that she would score zero marks for this segment.

Chapter 118: Settle Scores

“This is bad. I... I did not finish my essay.”

“The classical Chinese comprehension this year is so difficult. I just scribbled the answers.”

“Don’t bring it up. I am having a headache from the exams.”

When it was time to hand in the papers, all the students who were in the same exam hall as Qiao Nan groaned. The Chinese exam today was difficult. All the students looked awful.

While everyone was busy tallying their answers, Qiao Nan stood out from the rest. She kept her stationery and walked toward the exit of the hall.

“Zhu Baoguo!” She ran in the direction of Zhu Baoguo’s exam hall and saw the ghastly look on Zhu Baoguo. His clothes were all wrinkled up. Qiao Nan frowned. “What happened this morning?”

It was such a close shave. There were only five minutes left. If Zhu Baoguo was late by even a few seconds, he would be barred from entering the exam hall.

“Wait for me. Let me go to the washroom to have a wash.” Zhu Baoguo looked awful. He ran to the gents and splashed his face with cold water, his collar wet from the wash.

Zhu Baoguo walked out of the gents, his face dripping wet. “I owed you for a second time. I have to thank you for what happened today. Qiao Nan, you have helped me time and again; I am indebted to

you. There is no way I can repay you.” Zhu Baoguo mocked at himself, a look of dejection on his face.

“You did not do well?”

“How is that possible!” Zhu Baoguo puffed out his chest. “Just like what you said, I may not believe in myself, but I should have trust in you, my young tutor. I am not sure how well I fared in this Chinese exam, but at least I would not do too badly.”

“Then that’s it. Middle school exams are your topmost priority now. As for other matters, leave them aside first. Have you heard of a saying that goes ‘Revenge is a dish best served cold’?” Qiao Nan did not probe. It was by no coincidence that Zhu Baoguo looked so disheveled and was almost late for the exams.

“You are right. I will focus on the exams first. As for the rest, I will deal with it later when I have the time. Let’s go, there are exams in the afternoon. Let me treat you to a meal. We will have some meat for lunch!” Zhu Baoguo wiped off the water droplets on his face and head with his sleeves and went for a meal with Qiao Nan.

According to the schedule, there were two exams a day. Whenever Qiao Nan came back home from the exams, Qiao Dongliang would not ask about her performance. He would always remind her to have more rest instead. Since the exams for the related subjects were over, there was no point in thinking about it. One should have a good rest in order to work hard for the coming exams.

During the three days when Qiao Nan had her exams, Qiao Dongliang shared a room with Ding Jiayi.

By the time she finished the three days of exams, Qiao Dongliang went back to the small study room to sleep again.

“Uncle Qiao.” Zhu Baoguo came over to Qiao family’s residence to look for Qiao Nan. He ran into Qiao Dongliang who was about to go to work.

“Baoguo, why are you here? Is it to look for Nan Nan?”

“Yes.” Zhu Baoguo nodded. “Is Xiao Qiao at home?”

“Yes.” Qiao Dongliang turned and shouted, “Nan Nan, Baoguo is looking for you.”

“Oh.” Qiao Nan, who was used to spending her free time at Zhai family’s residence, did not know what to do with her free time now that the middle school exams were over. “Is anything the matter?”

“Nan Nan, since exams are over, you should take a break and have some fun with Baoguo.” Qiao Dongliang took out five yuan from his pocket and handed it to Qiao Nan. “You do not have to come back for lunch in the afternoon. It is tiring to prepare lunch by yourself.”

“Uncle Qiao, are you going off to work? Goodbye, Uncle Qiao.” Zhu Baoguo grinned at Qiao Dongliang. He was so earnest and sincere when he addressed Qiao Dongliang. With his good looks, everyone would have the impression that Zhu Baoguo was a well-behaved child. No one could tell that he used to be a bully.

“Yes, I am going off to work.” Qiao Dongliang smiled in response and rode his bicycle to work.

“Baoguo is here.” Ding Jiayi heard some sounds and came out. “Baoguo, come in and have a seat. Have you had breakfast? Nan Nan, you are so insensible! You should learn from your sister. You should also invite the guest into the house; it is so rude to keep him standing as if he is being punished to stand.”

“No need. Xiao Qiao, Uncle Qiao has agreed to let you go out with me. Let’s go.” Unlike how he addressed Qiao Dongliang just now, Zhu Baoguo could not be bothered to address Ding Jiayi as ‘Aunt’. He just went off with Qiao Nan.

“Mom, I am off.” Zhu Baoguo could disregard Ding Jiayi, but Qiao Nan could not.

After addressing Ding Jiayi with a poker face, Qiao Nan followed after Zhu Baoguo and left the house. “Where are we going?”

“Zhu family’s residence.”

“Grandpa Zhu.” When Qiao Nan reached the Zhu family’s residence, she noticed that everyone was at home, including Wang Yang whom she had met once before.

“Qiao Nan is here.” Elder Zhu had a forced smile on his face when he saw Qiao Nan. He turned to give Zhu Baoguo a reproving look. What was it that they could not settle within the family and had to bring an outsider to watch them make a fool of themselves?

“Dad.” Zhu Qin pulled a face. She was way more displeased than Elder Zhu. “What does Baoguo mean by this? He has no mother since a young age, and my brother always spends his days in the army. Even though I am his aunt, I practically brought him up from young. When I had Yang Yang, Baoguo was not in good health. Regardless, I fed Baoguo first and neglected Yang Yang. But now Bao Guo was not thankful for all the years that I spent bringing him up and malign our Yang Yang. How could he do this?” Most importantly, Baoguo dared to bring an outsider here!

“Don’t be so agitated. We are one family. We just have to clear up the misunderstanding. No one would spread this rumor outside and hurt Yang Yang, right, Qiao Nan?” Elder Zhu looked at Qiao Nan.

“...” Qiao Nan twitched the corner of her lips. No wonder Zhu Baoguo used to have such a nasty temper. He must have inherited it from the Zhu family. Grandpa Lee was more amiable after all. “That is right. It would be good to clear up the misunderstanding.”

“Have a seat, Xiao Qiao.” Zhu Baoguo did not care that Elder Zhu and Zhu Qin were displeased. He found a comfortable seat for Qiao Nan. “We have to make it clear. We definitely have to make it clear. You have to give me an explanation. Why is it that I slept like a log on the first day of middle school exams? There were so many people at the Zhu family’s residence, why didn’t anyone wake me up?”

He used to have bad results. Not to mention missing the exams for one or two subjects, even if he sat for all the six subjects, he might not be able to make it into high school.

If he did not sit for one or two subjects and was able to get into high school, it must have been due to the Zhu family’s background.

“Did I not say just now Yang Yang mistook someone else for you that day? Yang Yang already apologized to you, what more do you want? Do you intend to harp on his one small mistake and smear his reputation? Yang Yang is your cousin, is it right of you to bully him? Do not think that just because Yang Yang is good-tempered, thus you can bully him.”

Zhu Qin was really displeased. She had always treated this nephew of hers very well as if he was her own.

Chapter 119: Rebellious Little Devil

Now it seemed like she had raised an ingrate?

Even though she did not ask Baoguo to treat Yang Yang as his biological brother, he should not malign her son either, should he?

“Brother, it was my fault. I thought the person whom I saw at the door was you and I never would have imagined there would be no one at home.” Wang Yang looked at Zhu Baoguo with ‘self-reproach’. He looked pitiful with his fair complexion, a pair of bright dark eyes and a clear voice. Zhu Qin felt sorry for him and shoved him behind her to protect him from Zhu Baoguo.

“Look, this is a misunderstanding. It was not intentional.” With that, Zhu Qin sighed. “But Yang Yang, you owe Brother Baoguo an apology. Did you know that because you mistook someone else as Baoguo, and if not for the teacher who specially made a trip to Zhu family’s residence, your brother would have missed the exams for one to two subjects?”

Her nephew had finally bucked up and made an effort in his studies. If he missed his exams because he overslept and had no one to wake him up—hence could not make it into high school as a result—Zhu Qin would find it too ridiculous and a sheer pity.

“Yes, we have to thank Qiao Nan for this.” Elder Zhu looked at Qiao Nan with grateful eyes. “If Qiao Nan had not noticed Baoguo had yet to reach school and notified the teacher, Baoguo might not have been able to make it for his middle school exams.”

“Alright, enough of all the gratitude. I will express my gratitude to Xiao Qiao myself. Now, let’s sort this out first. Why was there no one in our house that day? Even if Wang Yang mistook someone for me, when did I ever sleep like a log and could not wake up at all? If not for Teacher Chen, who kept shouting at us, found out from the neighbor that I was still at home and knocked on our front door till I woke up, I might have just slept the whole day. It was as if I was the reincarnation of the god of sleep! Do you think that I am as gullible as a three-year-old kid?”

Zhu Baoguo could not wait to break Wang Yang’s neck at the thought of what happened that day.

Due to Xiao Qiao's reminder, he had been very careful that day. He did not even drink a sip of the water that Wang Yang poured for him. He never imagined that he would still fall prey to his tricks.

Zhu Baoguo was sure that Wang Yang had something to do with him sleeping like a log!

Everyone in the Zhu family was quiet at Zhu Baoguo's doubts.

Zhu Baoguo was not a sleepy head; he was always full of energy.

Given this situation, no matter how tired Zhu Baoguo had been, it would have been impossible for him to sleep like a log and miss his middle school exams because no one woke him up.

Zhu Baoguo was neither sick nor tired. But why would he sleep like a log?

"Tell me, give me a good explanation!" Zhu Baoguo pulled a face and shouted brashly, "Auntie, I will not deny that you took care of me when I was young. However, between a son and a nephew, we all know who you favor so there is no need to spell it out. Yes, I do not have a mom, but I did not ask for it. Did I even have a choice? If I had a mom, would I need you to take care of me? My mom would take better care of me than you. I might be young, but I know what is going on. These years my dad has given uncle a lot of help. My dad helped him because you are his younger sister; it was on account that you were siblings. It is true that you took care of me when I was young, but why was it considered an act of kindness? Auntie, this is not how one does things."

"Baoguo." Elder Zhu was dumbfounded. The grandson who used to be rebellious had truly grown up. What he said was reasonable and fair.

His words might be curt, yet it made sense.

But his words put his daughter on the spot.

"Grandpa, don't blame me for my temper and don't keep saying that I malign Wang Yang. If we could not clear up what happened that day, I am onto him. Why would he tell everyone that I had left for school early in the morning? It's alright if he mistook someone for me, but it so happened that I slept like a log on that day. Why would there be so many coincidences? Out of everyone, he was the only one who mistook someone else for me. I looked for him as I have doubts, and this is considered as malign? If all of you insist, fine, take it that I malign him. If my dad is here, I would still say all these. If all of you still think that I am maligning Wang Yang, that is simple, tell me what

exactly happened on that day. Don't try to cook up some excuses to deceive me. I have a nasty temper. If you dare to fool me, don't blame me for blowing things up!"

Zhu Baoguo was truly the bully in the quad. He even acted brazenly toward his elders.

His words did not seem to be words from a junior. He was practically a little devil.

Zhu family sunk into silence at Zhu Baoguo's domineering attitude.

No one in the Zhu family believed it was Wang Yang's doing that had caused Zhu Baoguo to barely make it in time for his middle school exams. Wang Yang was so well-behaved; he would never do such ridiculous and useless things.

But no one was able to give a reason as to why would Zhu Baoguo sleep like a log on that day. Why would Wang Yang, who had good eyesight, mistook someone for Zhu Baoguo on that particular morning and told everyone in the Zhu family that Zhu Baoguo had gone to school early in the morning for his middle school exams?

It could all be a coincidence, but nobody had a solid proof.

Zhu Baoguo was the victim. It was reasonable for him to demand an explanation.

Things had come to a dead end. There seemed to be no solution to it.

Elder Zhu had a bad headache. He could not say that his grandson was wrong. After all, he almost missed his middle school exams; he was the victim. Sadly, with this attitude of his, no one would see him as the victim.

Besides, he could not bring himself to question Wang Yang.

Wang Yang might have mistaken someone else for him. However, if Elder Zhu was to question him, with Wang Yang's sensitive personality, he might think that they believed Zhu Baoguo's words and thought that he did it on purpose.

“Grandpa, Mom, it was my fault. Brother Baoguo, can you accept my apology? What do you want me to do? I will do it according to your wishes.” Wang Yang gritted his teeth and controlled himself as not to direct his ominous gaze at Qiao Nan.

This wretched woman had spoiled his plans time and again. Last time she helped him with his studies, and now she noticed Zhu Baoguo’s absence in school and notified the teacher to come looking for Zhu Baoguo.

If not for her, Zhu Baoguo would have still been asleep when the first exam was over!

If not for her relationship with Zhai Sheng, he would have dealt with her and made her leave the quad!

“Apologize?” Zhu Baoguo crossed his arms around his chest and smirked. “Do you think a simple apology will do when you plotted against me to make me late for my exams? What is the use of an apology? Why don’t I do the same to you when it’s your middle school exams next year? I will apologize to you afterward, and we will take it as if nothing has happened.”

Zhu Baoguo was someone who requited like for like.

He was not joking or making a threat when he said those words. In fact, he sounded very serious. Zhu Qin and Wang Yang paled at his words.

“Dad!” Zhu Qin had no other choice but to seek help from Elder Zhu. “Yang Yang has such good results. He would definitely do well for his middle school exams. You cannot...” allow Baoguo to ruin Yang Yang.

Chapter 120: What’s the Situation?

Everyone in the Zhu family believed that Zhu Baoguo would make good on his words. Who would not be worried or fearful? Wang Yang stiffened as well, for fear that Zhu Baoguo would do the same to him.

“Elder Zhu, it is actually quite easy for the Zhu family to sort things out,” Qiao Nan who sat quietly spoke up.

Elder Zhu, who was exasperated by Zhu Baoguo, looked at Qiao Nan. “What is it that you want to say? It has been a few days, can we still find out what’s going on?”

Besides, it was an accident. What was there to investigate?

“Xiao Qiao, just tell them what solution you have.” Zhu Baoguo glared at Elder Zhu. Qiao Nan was his guest. Elder Zhu should keep a check on his attitude.

Minutes ago, he was thinking to thank Qiao Nan, but now he looked at her with such an attitude?

“...” Elder Zhu pulled the corner of his lips helplessly. He softened his gaze toward Qiao Nan. His attitude just now was not suitable.

No matter what, it was Qiao Nan who helped Zhu Baoguo improve his results.

If not for Qiao Nan, his grandson would have missed the middle school exams. All those relatives of his could not match up to an outsider who went to such great lengths to help him.

“All of you think it was purely a coincidence that Zhu Baoguo overslept, while Zhu Baoguo felt that someone plotted against him. Science is so advanced now. All we have to do is to do some tests to find out the truth.” Qiao Nan gave her two cents’ worth after she was given the right to make comments.

“You wanted the Zhu family to make use of public resources for private purposes?” Zhu Qin disagreed. “People from the Zhu family would never do this.”

“That is simple. You can pay to do it or send it somewhere where you need to pay to do the tests.”

Wang Yang laughed in disdain. He had thought that Qiao Nan would be able to come up with a clever plan. He only fed Zhu Baoguo some sleeping pills on the night before the first exam.

Three whole days had passed since. Moreover, he only used small, but sufficient, doses to make Zhu Baoguo sleep like a log. He would not die from it. Hence, the body must have already metabolized it. He was not silly.

She was too naive to think that he would be scared and thrown into confusion, giving himself away by her feeble threats.

She was a woman after all, useless and stupid.

“So many days have passed. Will there be any results from the tests?” Elder Zhu was slightly calmer now. It would be good to do a test. Zhu Baoguo could put his heart to rest and Yang Yang could be cleared of suspicions.

Elder Zhu was annoyed at the stalemate just now where he could neither reassure Zhu Baoguo nor could he give an explanation to anyone.

“So it is this method.” Zhu Baoguo’s eyes sparkled and he slapped on his thigh. “Xiao Qiao, you wanted me to collect my urine that day because of this?”

It was the first day of middle school exams. Even though Qiao Nan told Zhu Baoguo to focus on the exams and settle scores when exams were over, she had also reminded him to gather some evidence, lest he ended up being told off for making troubles out of nothing.

“Collect... collect urine?” Wang Yang was stunned. He did not see this coming.

“There was not only urine but also blood.” Zhu Baoguo laughed at Wang Yang’s reaction. “Didn’t all of you want to prove his innocence? Let’s send it for tests. We will then be able to determine who the good guy is and vice versa.”

“Is it accurate?” Zhu Qin paused momentarily. It would be good if it would clear her son of suspicions. But what if it was inaccurate?

“Auntie, we must believe in science.” Qiao Nan laughed. “It might not work for other cases, but it would work for this.”

“Let’s do the test!” Qiao Nan was a good student. In Elder Zhu’s eyes, the words coming from a good student must be right. “Baoguo, do you have everything with you? That’s good. Let’s go to the hospital now.”

There would be no peace at home as long as this matter was unresolved.

He could not possibly do nothing while Baoguo suspected and disliked Yang Yang, and would deal with him when he sat for middle school exams next year.

“Baoguo, if the tests show that it’s a misunderstanding, what would you do?” Elder Zhu looked at Zhu Baoguo, asking for his promise.

“If he is innocent, I will apologize to him in whatever ways you want.” Zhu Baoguo understood Elder Zhu’s meaning. “But if I did not malign him, Grandpa, should you not make a promise as well?”

“That is impossible.” Of course, Elder Zhu would never believe that Wang Yang was the culprit.

“We have not even done the tests, but you already had your answer. What is there to test for! If the results show that someone drugged me, would all of you blame it on the hospital, saying that the machine is faulty, or that the culprit is someone else? If so, why is there the need to go to the hospital? You are just making a fool of me!”

They only wanted to prove that Wang Yang was innocent, not to prove that he was guilty. Such disgusting behavior.

Enraged, Zhu Baoguo widened his eyes like an annoyed bull. He gave a backward kick at the table in front of him, causing squeaking and screeching sounds.

Elder Zhu was helpless. He did not know what to do with an angered Zhu Baoguo. Even his aunt, Zhu Qin, dared not say a word to calm him down. She could only watch on while Zhu Baoguo boiled with anger to the extent that fire could almost be seen spewing from his head, creating a rampage at home.

“What is wrong?” A clear and cool voice, peaceful and calm as the mountain spring, was heard. It was as if ice water was poured over the raging fire. Zhu Baoguo who was huffing and puffing with anger quietened down in an instant.

Though Zhu Baoguo sat down, he was still very agitated. He looked at Qiao Nan and asked indignantly, “Do we just let the matter rest? Should I, your father, suffer in silence?!”

“Whose father are you?” Qiao Nan looked coldly at Zhu Baoguo.

“...” Zhu Baoguo gulped. He was almost at a loss for words. “Looking at the situation now, are you going to find fault with this?”

“Did I say we should let the matter rest? Why is your temper still so nasty? It is not a surprise that you are bullied by the younger siblings. Who can you blame it on but yourself?” Qiao Nan gave Zhu Baoguo a look of disdain and pushed the cup of tea towards him. Without a word, Zhu Baoguo downed the drink.

It was amazing. Zhu Baoguo seemed to have calmed down slightly after the drink.

“...”

“...”

“...”

Elder Zhu, his daughter, and Wang Yang were dumbfounded at the way Qiao Nan and Zhu Baoguo interacted with each other, especially Elder Zhu who almost rubbed his eyes in disbelief. Was the young man who was so well-behaved the same person as his grandson who had a nasty temper?

Not long ago, the ‘lion cub’ was still boiling with anger as if he was all ready to tear apart the prey to vent to his anger, yet it only took some appeasing for Zhu Baoguo to calm down. How was this possible!

Not to mention Elder Zhu, no one in the Zhu family had this capability.

What Elder Zhu found most amazing was that Qiao Nan treated Zhu Baoguo coldly all the while; she did not use the soft approach on him.

In the past, if one was to use that attitude with Zhu Baoguo, that person would have been beaten to a pulp by him. What was so special about Qiao Nan? Why would his grandson listen to the young lady’s words?