

RTAMM 121

Chapter 121: Unwilling

Zhu Baoguo used to have a nasty temper. Even if he was telling the truth, as long as no one believed him, he would go out of control and lose his temper. Wang Yang could easily win any argument with such a bad-tempered Zhu Baoguo.

But today was different. Zhu Baoguo calmed down easily with a word or a glance from Qiao Nan.

Wang Yang felt uneasy. The situation was not favorable to him.

Wang Yang looked guilty when he heard that Zhu Baoguo had kept his urine from that day.

“Tell me, what to do now?” Zhu Baoguo looked at Qiao Nan after he had calmed down slightly.

“Call your dad,” Qiao Nan said.

Naturally, Elder Zhu was closer to his grandson, Zhu Baoguo, as compared to his maternal grandson, Wang Yang. Regardless, Wang Yang had been very well-behaved and looked frail and thin as if he would be bullied by others. From this point of view, Elder Zhu would certainly be protective of and biased towards Wang Yang.

It was a tough call for Elder Zhu. Due to Zhu Baoguo bad behavior records, not many people would believe him and stand on his side.

“It is useless. My dad always felt Wang Yang was much well-behaved than me, he would not help me.” Zhu Baoguo’s expression darkened. He did not tell Qiao Nan that in fact, his father disliked him.

“We do not need his help. Your dad is a soldier. He is more cool-headed than anyone else here. Call your dad, and we will go to the hospital to do the tests. When the result is out, your dad will understand at the very least.” In the Zhu family, Zhu Chengqi was the one in charge, not Elder Zhu.

Hence, Zhu Chengqi’s attitude and views on this matter were what truly mattered to Zhu Baoguo.

“No!” Wang Yang stood up abruptly. “Never.”

Initially, Zhu Baoguo still had doubts about Qiao Nan’s solution, but when Wang Yang denied the plan, Zhu Baoguo knew that this would work. Without any delay, he slapped on the table and said, “Fine, let’s settle it this way. I will call my Dad now.”

“You...” Wang Yang wanted to bite back his tongue. He regretted it when he first disagreed to Qiao Nan’s idea.

He had been too agitated and anxious and could not stop himself from objecting to Qiao Nan’s idea. He shouted another ‘No’ to her idea.

While Zhu Baoguo was gloating over Wang Yang’s outburst, Elder Zhu and Zhu Qin looked surprised. Wang Yang paled in anger and turned to glare at Qiao Nan.

“What are you doing!” Zhu Baoguo saw Wang Yang’s ferocious stare. With a ‘whoosh’, he stood up to give Wang Yang a push. “What is wrong? Are you unwilling to go with the plan? Are you scared? It’s too late! I would punch you if you dare to glare at Xiao Qiao!”

“Stop it.” Elder Zhu pulled at Wang Yang. Wang Yang turned green in anger instantly.

It was always like this!

Why was it that whenever Zhu Baoguo got into a quarrel with him—even though it was Zhu Baoguo who initiated the fight—his Grandpa would always pull him aside to stop the quarrel?!

Wang Yang, who had been through these, knew it all too well that in these situations, whoever was pulled to a side would be rendered defenseless, not having a chance to retaliate.

“Make the call now. If they were to continue with the quarrel, would I still dare to visit my parent’s house? Can Yang Yang still stay here?” Zhu Qin was annoyed as well. “Is no one going to make the call? Should I do it?”

Zhu Qin picked up the phone and dialed the number that she knew by heart. “Hello, is that you, Brother? I have something to tell you...”

Wang Yang was speechless when Zhu Qin made the phone call. That was his mother, his biological mother!

But he dared not do anything now. If he hung up his mother’s phone, it would be tantamount to confessing without being pressed, admitting that someone indeed plotted against Zhu Baoguo that day so that he would oversleep, and that the mastermind was him.

Still, even if he did not stop his mother, his smart uncle would be able to make the connections when traces of sleeping pills were detected in Zhu Baoguo’s urine.

Wang Yang’s visage was green and purple with fear. His expression changed swiftly like a chameleon. Qiao Nan could not help but feel awful for him.

Whether they were going to investigate or not, it was hopeless for Wang Yang nonetheless. There was no way he could escape unscathed.

“Qiao Nan, next...” Elder Zhu was not muddleheaded. He noticed Wang Yang’s countenance had changed and his attitude was different from before. He seemed to have understood what was going on.

Qiao Nan pursed her lips. Did he mean to shoo her off?

Qiao Nan looked at Zhu Baoguo. “Can you handle what is going to happen next?”

Zhu Baoguo blushed. He treated Xiao Qiao as his younger sister and had mentioned that he would help her out if she met with any problems. But now it seemed like Xiao Qiao was the one who rendered her help. “Don’t worry, I can handle the rest.”

Xiao Qiao had helped him make all the necessary arrangements. As long as his father came back, it should work out as planned.

After getting an affirmative response, Qiao Nan stood up. “Elder Zhu, excuse me for imposing on you.” With that, Qiao Nan left.

“...” Elder Zhu did not know whether he should cry or laugh. He just noticed Qiao Nan always addressed his relative by marriage as Grandpa Lee, whereas she addressed him as Elder Zhu.

He was not pleased that Qiao Nan, an outsider, was here to meddle with their family’s affair. Honestly speaking, Qiao Nan was not willing either.

A few days back, Elder Zhu had just said that he would find a chance to thank Qiao Nan for helping Zhu Baoguo with his results and his conduct. With such an incident at home, he did not thank her but had offended her instead.

All in all, Qiao Nan had nothing to do with their family dispute. She only came to help Zhu Baoguo.

As an outsider, she went to great lengths to help his grandson. On the contrary, as his family, what did they do for him?

At the thought of Wang Yang who was embroiled in this dispute, Elder Zhu’s headache acted up again. Wang Yang had always been obedient and well-behaved so why would things turn out like this?

After Qiao Nan left the Zhu family’s residence, she went straight to Zhai family’s residence.

Qiao Nan could spend hours poring over the books and cassettes that Zhu Baoguo gave her. Even after the exams, she decided to keep to her habit of doing revision daily. Otherwise, she might be too lazy to pick up this habit again in the future.

“Brother Zhai, you are back?” Qiao Nan was surprised when she saw Zhai Sheng. She had not seen him for almost half a year.

“Yes. Have you finished your middle school exams?” Zhai Sheng grew to be even more reticent in less than half a year. The aura he exuded had changed as well.

In the past, Zhai Sheng did not know how to conceal his abilities. He used to exude a strong and domineering aura like that of an unsheathed sword; now he knew to hide his light under a bushel, similar to an unsheathed sword that lulled the enemy’s vigilance.

Although his sense of presence was no longer so domineering, Qiao Nan still felt stressful even when he was at a considerable far distance from her.

Qiao Nan scolded herself for using such a bad analogy. She was not writing classical Chinese now. She should compare Brother Zhai to a gun instead of a sword.

“How did you do on your middle school exams?” Zhai Sheng noticed Qiao Nan’s complexion was rosier than before. It seemed like this young lady had led a good life in the past half year during his absence.

Chapter 122: Not the Same School

Zhai Sheng appeared to be dejected when he thought of that.

“It was quite good. I guess the results will be coming out in a few days.” This time, Qiao Nan walked automatically out of habit to the seat beside Zhai Sheng and sat down. There was no need for Zhai Sheng to motion her over.

“You seem to be pretty confident. Where did you get these books?” Zhai Sheng looked at the foreign language books on the desk.

“My deskmate gave it to me.” Zhai Sheng held an English book which Zhu Baoguo gave her in his hands. “Since I am free this summer break, it would be good to do some reading. When I go to high school, I would still need to take English as a subject after all.”

“Do you like English?”

“It is okay.” In her previous life, she managed to earn a fair amount of extra income with her proficiency in English. It could be out of habit that she had the love and will to do well for English.

“You can read those books as well.” Zhai Sheng had flipped through the foreign language books that Qiao Nan had. It was covered with detailed notes. It looked like she put in a lot of efforts in them.

Qiao Nan's English proficiency level was way higher than the standard of a junior high school student. In fact, she had the talent in foreign languages.

Therefore, Zhai Sheng picked some books from his study room that were suitable for Qiao Nan and brought them over today.

"These books... Are they for me?" Qiao Nan's eyes lit up. She took the books in excitement and started to look through them. She realized that these books were suitable for her standard.

Qiao Nan had already read through most of the books Zhu Baoguo gave her and was fussing over what she was going to do for the rest of the summer break.

"Thank you, Brother Zhai!"

"Use them well." Qiao Nan's eyes sparkled with excitement, shining brightly like the stars in the night. Zhai Sheng turned awkwardly to avoid eye contact with her.

With that, Qiao Nan started to pore over the books.

Whenever Qiao Nan was into her books, she would be so focused to the point of being oblivious to her surroundings. She forgot all about Zhai Sheng who was beside her and failed to notice his occasional glances.

By the time Qiao Nan went back home, Zhai Sheng still did not ask the burning question he had had with him all this while.

"Maybe she has thrown it away."

He remembered that he gave Qiao Nan a slip of paper half a year ago but never received a single phone call from her in the past half year.

"Dad, Mom, Sister." The three of them were already back by the time Qiao Nan reached home.

“Your sister just had her exams. She finally had her school break; the two of you could have a good chat.” Qiao Dongliang was in a good mood today because his two daughters had finished their exams, and they were all back at home.

“Nan Nan, this is an expensive book. Where did you get it from?” Qiao Zijin had sharp eyes. She did not hear what the conversation was about, but she spotted the book in Qiao Nan’s hands.

Without getting her consent, Qiao Zijin grabbed the book to read. “Published overseas... Where did you get the money to buy such books?!”

“Return it to me!” Qiao Nan pulled a long face and snatched her book back like a young leopard cub who would not take no for an answer. “You can put your heart to rest. Dad did not give me so much money, and I did not buy this book. Someone lent it to me. If you tear the book, we could not afford to compensate for the loss!”

Qiao Nan went straight to her room afterward.

“Dad, look at Nan Nan’s attitude!” Qiao Zijin stomped her feet. If she could bring the book to school next semester, she would be the envy of all other students. Qiao Nan was too stingy. She did not want the book for herself; she only wanted to borrow it. There was no need to be so tensed up.

“Is that book really very expensive?” Qiao Dongliang was more worried about the book.

“If I am not wrong, it is priced in US dollars, not Chinese currency renminbi. It must be very expensive.”

“So expensive?” Ding Jiayi was shocked. “Old Qiao, you had better tell Qiao Nan to return the book. She should know that we do not have the money to compensate for the loss so how could she have the guts to bring the book home? Something must be wrong with her. For a book to cost that much, is it made of gold?”

“What do you know? Isn’t it natural for books to be expensive?” Qiao Dongliang was shocked at the price as well. Though he was conscious about the price, he did not ask Qiao Nan to return the book. “Nan Nan must have needed it for her studies. Since a young age till now, Nan Nan had been very careful with her things. She knows what she is doing so you do not have to worry about the book.”

He was curious where Nan Nan borrowed such an expensive book from.

Qiao Zijin was annoyed at the fact that Qiao Dongliang would always side with Qiao Nan. “Mom, did Qiao Nan say how she did for her middle school exams? Can she go to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China?”

“I am not too sure.” Ding Jiayi twitched the corner of her lips. “It seems like she did not flunk her exams. If not, she would not behave this way. She acted her usual ways; it shows that she performed well.”

“...” Qiao Zijin was displeased. “Mom, are you really going to allow her to advance to high school? Didn’t you say—”

“Shh, don’t talk nonsense.” Ding Jiayi covered Qiao Zijin’s mouth. “Don’t speak of a word to anyone, especially your dad, about what I said last time. It was just a joke. I gave birth to Qiao Nan. Why would I do that? Besides, she has given her word. If her results are good, she would go to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China; if her results are not as good, we would not spend a single cent on her for such a purpose.”

Previously, she had said that she would think of ways to make sure Qiao Nan could not sit for the middle school exams. But she had been too angry then and only said those words out of anger.

After that Ding Jiayi had reconciled with Qiao Dongliang and her temper gone, she also could not remember her words said in a moment of anger.

If Qiao Zijin had not brought it up today, Ding Jiayi would have forgotten all about it.

“I don’t want to be in the same school as her!” Qiao Zijin was upset. “You know about the incident with the essay. If Qiao Nan studies in The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, how am I going to continue my studies there? How would my teachers view me?”

Not everyone in the school knew that she copied Qiao Nan’s essay, but there had been rumors going around about her.

If both of them were in the same school, what would other students think of her?

“I don’t care, Mom. You have to come up with a way to help me. No matter what, Qiao Nan cannot go to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. I cannot be disgraced.”

“Alright, we will decide when Qiao Nan’s results are out.” Ding Jiayi had a headache. “Zijin, do you not think that you have made things too complicated at times? It is good if Qiao Nan can get into The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China based on her own abilities. After all, it is the best high school in Ping Cheng.”

She would be so proud to let everyone know that both of her daughters were students at The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. Everyone would think that she did a good job as their mother.

“Mom, are you not helping me?!”

“Alright, I will think of ways.” Ding Jiayi was helpless when Qiao Zijin used this tactic on her.

Chapter 123: As Long As You Know What You Are Doing

“Mom, I know you are the best.” After getting a favorable answer, Qiao Zijin smiled. “I have a date with my classmate to buy a dress. Mom...” Qiao Zijin drawled her words pleadingly. At the sound of this, Ding Jiayi’s heart crumbled.

Ding Jiayi gave a long sigh. “Zijin, you know that because of your tuition fees, Mom already... Try to save as much as you can whenever possible. It is not like you do not have any clothes to wear. I am not forbidding you to buy, but at least refrain from buying too much.”

“I know, I know. I assure you it is just this once. After I buy this dress, I won’t ask you for money again during the whole summer vacation. Actually, I have discussed with my classmate. During the vacation, I will be taking up a job together with her. In the future, if I really want to buy something, I won’t have to ask you for money anymore.”

“Taking up a job? That will be so tiring for you. If there is really a need to work and earn money, let Qiao Nan do it instead. Don’t get too tanned under the sun. You won’t look good then.” Ding Jiayi immediately objected.

“Mom, it won’t tire me out. This job is not difficult, I can manage. You have to trust me.” Qiao Zijin tugged at Ding Jiayi’s arms. “Mom, I will definitely use my first salary to buy you a gift. When the time comes, don’t dislike it if it is just a small gift.”

“Why would I? As long as you know what you are doing...” Ding Jiayi was smiling so lovingly as though she had eaten sweets.

Qiao Nan, who came out to get water, heard the idiotic conversation between the mother and daughter pair. She did not know what to say and laughed. “Sister, are you going to work?”

Although she did not know how her mother managed to cough out that sum of money at the beginning of the year for Qiao Zijin’s tuition fees, she was certain that it did not come from her mother’s earnings or savings. She probably borrowed from others.

Didn’t she need to return the money that she owed?

Could Qiao Zijin really work? Couldn’t she just save some money and ask for less tuition fee from her mother?

The fact was that Qiao Zijin wanted to spend the money on her own self. Buying a gift for her mother was mere sweet talks. However, her mother thought the sun shone out of Qiao Zijin’s arse; that was what made Qiao Nan speechless.

“What’s wrong? Are you looking down on me? Nan Nan, it’s not that I want to chide you. It is not easy for Dad to earn money. Your vacation starts earlier than mine and the duration is so long. You should find a job as well to reduce Dad’s burden. We are not grown-ups, but we should know how to be filial,” Qiao Zijin lifted her chin and chided Qiao Nan in her face.

“Listen, listen! Do you see how sensible your sister is? You are the heartless one who only knows how to spend money in the family!” Ding Jiayi echoed.

“I remember Sister spent all the family savings last year. During the two months of vacation, she, too, did not step out of the house to work.” In this life, Qiao Nan would not be cajoled into finding a job just because of a few sarcastic comments. If she heeded their words, her hard-earned money would eventually benefit Qiao Zijin in her material pursuits of new clothing and shoes.

That being said, Qiao Nan returned to her room after she got her water, not bothering about Ding Jiayi's and Qiao Zijin's reactions.

"Old Qiao, I need to discuss a matter with you." At night, Ding Jiayi pulled Qiao Dongliang to sit on the bed as she talked.

"Speak."

"After Qiao Nan completes her examination, which school do you plan to admit her to?"

"If Nan Nan is eligible, it certainly will be The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China," Qiao Dongliang said as a matter of fact.

"This will not do!" Ding Jiayi shook her head. "This is not appropriate. If Qiao Nan goes to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, then what will happen to Zijin?"

Qiao Dongliang did not understand what Ding Jiayi meant at that instant. "Nan Nan is Nan Nan, Zijin is Zijin. Both are not mutually exclusive. What do you mean by what will happen to Zijin if Nan Nan is admitted to the school?"

"It's regarding the essay competition. If Qiao Nan goes to Zijin's school, how will the teachers view both of them? Zijin said the matter has not been spread to others in the school. If Qiao Nan attends the same school and others ask her about it, will Qiao Nan be able to refrain from talking about it? If this matter is made known to everyone, is Zijin still going to continue her studies? Yes, Zijin is in the wrong, but shouldn't a second chance be given to people who committed mistakes? Is it good to keep harping on this matter? Old Qiao, don't keep thinking for Qiao Nan's sake solely because her grades are better than Zijin's. You should also spare a thought for Zijin."

"Then, do you mean we should sacrifice Nan Nan because of Zijin?" The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China was an excellent school. If both his daughters studied there, that would be such a good thing. Why couldn't they admit Nan Nan to the school?

"No, we are not sacrificing Qiao Nan because of Zijin. For me, it is because of the 5,000 yuan. I know you blame me for spending all the money without discussing with you first, and for seeking Uncle Lee's help. But Zijin is our daughter. Helping her also means we are helping ourselves. After we dumped in the 5,000 yuan, Zijin's grades have been improving. She has been progressing and is going to be successful soon. If Zijin becomes distracted because of this matter and cannot concentrate on her studies, won't our 5,000 yuan go down the drain then? Furthermore, Qiao Nan is

intelligent and able to pick things up well. Let me ask you, will Qiao Nan only receive good grades if she attends The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China? Qiao Nan is not Zijin. Zijin's foundation in studies is weaker than Qiao Nan's and will not learn well without the help of good teachers. What about Qiao Nan? Old Qiao, you lack confidence in Qiao Nan. She relies on herself, not the teachers. There won't be much impact on her if she does not attend The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China."

"..." Qiao Dongliang looked at Ding Jiayi in disbelief and shock. "After all, you know that Qiao Nan is smart and good in her studies. Zijin cannot be compared to her at all. I thought that in your eyes, Zijin is the only child that is smart in the entire world, whereas the rest are all idiots."

"..." Listening to Qiao Dongliang's words made Ding Jiayi feel like pinching her own mouth.

Why was she talking nonsense as if she was obsessed?

Ding Jiayi's face turned pale and Qiao Dongliang laughed. "It is okay. You probably did not realize that you were speaking from your heart. See, you actually know that Qiao Nan's grades are much better than Zijin's. From the bottom of your heart, you feel that with Nan Nan's capability, she will not suffer in her grades even if she does not attend The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. If you know Nan Nan is smart and promising in the future, why don't you treat her a little better? It is our blessing to have Nan Nan as our daughter, but why did you have to make so much noise? Do you really want Nan Nan to sever ties with you?"

"She dares disown me?! I gave birth to her!" Ding Jiayi said stubbornly. "Fine, we're not discussing this. What are your thoughts regarding what I said just now? Is it alright? Give me a direct answer."

She really did not want Qiao Nan to study together with Zijin; it would affect the latter's studies.

As for the praises regarding Qiao Nan, Ding Jiayi also did not understand why she said all that as if it was a matter of fact.

"You have to let me think about it. I also have to ask Nan Nan for her opinion." Qiao Dongliang was deep in thoughts and did not want to decide right away.

Chapter 124: A Heartwarming Little Jacket

“Fine, you are the head of the family. You will have the final word.” Ding Jiayi smiled. She knew that for Qiao Dongliang to say this, his heart must have wavered.

Even if Qiao Nan was unwilling, Qiao Dongliang would definitely try to convince her to agree to it.

Knowing that Qiao Dongliang would certainly be able to persuade Qiao Nan, Ding Jiayi was happy to save her breath. Regardless of what being said, let Old Qiao be the bad guy in front of Qiao Nan. This would also prevent the situation where Qiao Nan that wretched girl severed their ties and disowned her as a mother.

It was not easy to have raised this wretched girl up. After a few years, she would have completed her studies and found a job.

If the wretched girl did not take her as a mother, then how could she fling Qiao Nan’s money into her hands in the future?

After investing so much over the years, she had to take back the money she spent raising this daughter up.

Feeling contented and satisfied, Ding Jiayi lied down and slept. However, Qiao Dongliang tossed and turned as he laid on the bed, unable to fall asleep. There were bursts of panic in his heart and he felt very uneasy.

If he had to do this, Qiao Dongliang would keep feeling sorry and unjustified for Qiao Nan. However, if he did otherwise, he might be wasting the previous savings he dumped in exchange for a good learning environment for Qiao Zijin. No matter what, that was the hard-earned money that he had saved up over a decade.

Due to this matter, Qiao Dongliang had a sleepless night. He tossed and turned till dawn.

Contrary to Qiao Dongliang, Ding Jiayi slept particularly well that night. She woke up with a rosy face the next day.

When Qiao Zijin woke up, she glanced at Ding Jiayi. Ding Jiayi smiled at Qiao Zijin to hint that the matter had been resolved.

Qiao Zijin's face brightened immediately. "Mom, I need to meet my classmate so that I will not waste the opportunity. It should be decided by today which type of job I will be taking up."

"Alright, please be careful." Ding Jiayi nodded her head and took out two yuan from her pocket. "Don't go hungry."

"Mom, you are so good to me!" Holding the two yuan, Qiao Zijin happily kissed Ding Jiayi hard on the face.

"Really... How old you are now, yet still so mushy. Alright, hurry up and go. Don't let your classmate wait for you." Having received a kiss from Qiao Zijin, Ding Jiayi was happy beyond words as if she had just consumed an extremely nutritious soup.

"Mom, I am leaving first."

Qiao Nan, who just woke up and came out from her room, saw the mushy scene. She laughed at the thought that Qiao Zijin had already taken two yuan from her mother prior to earning a single cent from her so-called vacation job.

Still the same saying. If her mother was willing, no one can stop her.

"Qiao Nan, your dad has something to tell you. In our family, your dad doted on you the most, so you should also dote on him and don't let him be in a difficult position." When she saw Qiao Nan, Ding Jiayi did not feel embarrassed despite having given Qiao Zijin, but not Qiao Nan, some money. She looked calm and even spoke to Qiao Nan in a reprimanding tone.

"What is happening to my sister again?"

"What about your sister? It's your dad!"

"Ah." Qiao Nan sneered. Whenever her father or mother came looking for her, it was always pertaining to Qiao Zijin's matters.

When Qiao Nan saw Qiao Dongliang who just got out of bed, she had a shock. "Dad, did you not sleep yesterday?" He had dark circles under his eyes like a panda.

“Nan Nan, I... I have something to discuss with you.” Qiao Dongliang took a long and deep breath. He opened his mouth a few times, and only with great efforts could he finally muster up the courage to speak to Qiao Nan.

“I know, Mom told me. Dad, tell me frankly, what does my sister want?”

“...” Qiao Dongliang smiled bitterly. “Nan Nan, you also know the matter about the essay competition last time. Your sister left a bad impression on the teachers in her school. If you also attend The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, then your sister’s situation in school would be...”

Qiao Nan’s glance stilled. Her eyes, which were like black pearls, looked at Qiao Dongliang gloomily. “Dad, let me first ask a question. Is my sister wrong in this matter, or am I the one in the wrong?”

“Of course it was your sister!” There was nothing to doubt about it.

“Do you mean that although it was my sister who committed a mistake, you want me, her younger sister, to settle this mess for her? Dad, in other families, the elder sister always gives in to the younger one. When the elder sister gets into trouble, does the younger sister have to tidy up the mess for her? Are these among the things that I should—no, must do? Do I owe my sister?”

“No, of course not!” Qiao Nan’s words colored Qiao Dongliang red with embarrassment. He was nearly unable to lift up his head. “Nan Nan, Dad was muddle-headed. You are totally right in this matter. On the contrary, your sister owes you. Even if any problems occur, your sister should tolerate and accept them; there is no reason for you to give way to her. Just take it that Dad did not talk to you about this. Dad did not sleep well last night and was talking nonsense.”

“Dad, don’t be anxious. What I said earlier was not meant to embarrass you. I just hope that you will understand. Despite us being sisters, I am not expected to do anything for her sake. I wish my sister could be like an ordinary one and takes better care of me, her younger sister. I hope this won’t happen again in the future. Even if my sister has some thoughts, don’t blindly kick up a fuss like my mother at the very least. It does not only allow my sister to continue with her nonsense but also dragged me into it.”

After making firm her stand and placing herself at the highest point of justice and morality, Qiao Nan switched the tone of her conversation. “However, Sister always thinks of all these to make

things difficult for you all. Since Dad has asked me about it today, it will not be good if I do not agree. I will study at Ping Cheng High School.”

Ping Cheng High School was the same as Qiao Nan’s current school. The school also provided high school education besides junior high education.

Actually, Ping Cheng High School is also quite famous, just not as famous as The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China.

“Don’t. Why should you lower your standards to enter Ping Cheng High School when you have the ability to attend The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China? Dad has thought clearly about this. Your sister is bad-tempered and thinks too much, don’t bother about her.” After thinking through, Qiao Dongliang did not agree to this matter anymore.

Qiao Nan tugged the corners of her mouth. If she did not agree to this, there would be no peace at home. “Dad, do you know what the most important reason for me to choose Ping Cheng High School is?”

“What is it?”

“Actually, before the exams, Teacher Chen granted me an opportunity to be admitted directly to Ping Cheng High School without the need to sit for the exams. I declined. If I am eligible to go to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China but choose to go to Ping Cheng High School instead, as long as my ranking is not too bad, Ping Cheng High School will waive my tuition and miscellaneous fees. As such, our family does not need to fork out a single cent for my high school education. If I do well, I will probably receive scholarships too.”

Although Qiao Dongliang was a grown-up man, he was close to tears after hearing Qiao Nan’s words.

Qiao Dongliang had been really anxious about the family situation. To put it blindly, with no savings at home, he even dared not fall sick, not to mention applying for sick leave.

Because of money, Qiao Dongliang was so worried that he grew a lot more white hair.

Unfortunately, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin did not seem to feel anything for him. Their spending habits even worsened by the day.

Chapter 125: Should They Be Swapped

Qiao Dongliang could not control Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. He had to save as much money as he could on his own.

Except for family expenses, Qiao Dongliang, as a grown-up man, had managed to reduce his expense to five yuan a month. He did not even dare to buy protein dishes for his lunch. He only ate vegetarian dishes and simply ordered one dish for every meal.

As the head of the family, Qiao Dongliang was very worried, yet he was embarrassed to tell the three ladies at home.

Qiao Dongliang always thought that the person who cared for him the most in the family was his wife, Ding Jiayi. No one knew it was actually his younger daughter, who was usually the quietest and did not talk much, who cared the most.

“Nan Nan, you... Is it because you know Dad is very worried about money that you decided to go to Ping Cheng High School?” Qiao Dongliang pinched his nose and sounded stuffy.

“Yes, if both my sister and I are going to college, I know that both Mom and you can’t afford it.” Qiao Nan replied without showing much emotion. “I know I am different from my sister. Dad and Mom favored my sister since young. I know what Mom meant when she previously insisted that I find a job. It was not easy for Dad to support me in continuing my studies. Although I cannot earn money now, I can help lessen a bit of your burden at the very least.”

“Nan Nan, isn’t Dad quite useless? I wanted daughters but was not capable of raising them.” Qiao Dongliang’s tone was full of bitterness. So the younger daughter knew all along but did not say a word. Instead, she silently endured everything. “Nan Nan, are you suffering?”

“Initially, I was. I do not understand why Sister and I are treated so differently though we are both your daughters. But after a long time, I do not feel anything anymore.”

The more indifferent Qiao Nan was, the more Qiao Dongliang blamed himself. The child had suffered for so long that she was already numb to it. She did not have much affection left for her parents.

No wonder neither did Qiao Nan say a thing nor persuade them to stop each time he quarreled with Old Ding in the recent year.

“Dad, leave for your work. You do not ever need to worry about this again. You still have two years to save up for my sister’s college fees. As for mine, let’s talk again in the future.” At the thought of the Qiao family’s financial situation, Qiao Nan’s head was also in great pain.

Actually, she could really find a vacation job with her current situation, and she would definitely be able to earn more than Qiao Zijin.

However, she did not want it to become a habit for her family. They would think she knew how to earn money and could settle everything on her own. If that was not enough, they might even ask her for money when they met with any financial problems.

She had already had enough of being her mother and Qiao Zijin’s mobile ATM in her previous life.

“Okay, it is finally the summer vacation period. You should rest more too. Don’t always read books, it’s not good for your eyes.” Qiao Dongliang perked himself up. Nan Nan had spared considerable thoughts for him. If he did not get his act together, he did not deserve to be called ‘Dad’ by Nan Nan.

“Old Qiao, you are in quite a good mood today.” When Qiao Dongliang arrived at the factory, his colleagues greeted him with smiles. “How is it? Has the problem been resolved?”

“Is it so obvious?” Qiao Dongliang touched his chin.

“Yes, but you should also know how sharp your brother’s eyes are. Have you settled the issue regarding the money for your daughters’ studies?” The colleague was well aware of Qiao Dongliang’s situation. He knew that Qiao Dongliang had two daughters; both were studying and were only one grade apart from each other.

Education would cost more as it progresses toward its completion.

“My younger daughter’s grades are good and could most probably attend The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. If she is eligible, has a good ranking but chose to attend

Ping Cheng High School instead, the tuition fees will be waived and she will also receive a scholarship.”

“Really? Your younger daughter is so capable!” The colleague was surprised. “She will rather study in Ping Cheng High School than The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. Old Qiao, you are so blessed. No wonder the elderly always say that daughters are like a little jacket. If only that lousy son of mine is more diligent and make me flare up less for his grades, I will consider him filial. At this age, having a son is no better than a daughter.”

“My family’s Nan Nan is quite sensible.”

“But Old Qiao, isn’t your elder daughter from The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China as well? Why didn’t she do the same previously? If she also did that and entered Ping Cheng High School, then your two daughters’ high school education would be free of charge. When they are in college, money will flow out like running water; there will be more expenses than earnings. One should save as much as possible during the high school days.”

Qiao Dongliang’s expression changed. “My elder daughter is not as considerate as my younger one.”

Rather than helping him save money, Zijin spent all the money in the family instead. Only then did she have the opportunity to study in The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China.

Nan Nan had the opportunity to enter The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, but she would rather attend Ping Cheng High School in order to save money. Zijin did not meet the mark, yet insisted on entering the school.

Comparing the two daughters, Qiao Dongliang became a little apprehensive.

Raising children was akin to preparation for old age. As he did not have a son, he wanted to take in a son-in-law for Zijin so that she could remain in the family. However, with that character of hers, could he rely on her in his old age?

Looking at the current situation, Nan Nan was obviously more filial than Zijin.

“I see. But it is already good enough. Both your daughters are cut out for studies. For you to have one that is so sensible is also a blessing. Having raised such a daughter is much less worrying than having a son.” Patting Qiao Dongliang’s shoulders, the colleague went back to his work.

His colleague’s words pulled the strings in Qiao Dongliang’s heart and triggered a thought. He secretly assessed this possibility.

If he really had to pick a daughter to remain by his side, he would certainly pick a better one—one that was more capable than a son.

When they were young, Zijin seemed bubblier than Qiao Nan. She also had a sweet tongue and was active in interacting with others.

But looking at the current situation, although Nan Nan was often silent, she was very clear-minded and able to assess what was right and wrong.

Qiao Nan did not know that the plan she had decided long ago would change Qiao Dongliang’s mind. To save the tuition and miscellaneous fees, she really did not want to attend The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. Most importantly, she wanted to stay further away from Qiao Zijin to avoid being plotted against and bullied by her again.

Never did she expect that Qiao Zijin also had the same thoughts. She unknowingly granted a huge favor to Qiao Nan and allowed Qiao Nan to mercilessly gain a strong foothold in Qiao Dongliang’s heart, establishing the image of a model daughter with three important virtues: good in studies, life attitude and health.

At this point, Qiao Dongliang only had one thought in his mind. If he wanted to raise a daughter, he would prefer to have one like his younger daughter.

Qiao Nan, who was still at home, was stunned as she stared at the empty house.

It was really rare that Qiao Zijin left the house earlier than her since the vacation started.

There was no one at home. Did she still need to revise at the Zhai’s residence?

“Is anyone at home?” Before Qiao Nan could decide on whether she was going to the Zhai’s residence, she heard a stranger’s voice coming from the door.

“Who’s that?!” Qiao Nan’s sense of alert heightened. She did not dare to just open the door for anyone.

Qiao Nan walked to the side of the window and looked out. She saw a big, tall blurry figure and was puzzled. Who was this?

When Qiao Nan vaguely saw the man’s facial features, which she found slightly familiar, she realized who the person was. “It is him. Why did he come?”

Chapter 126: Negotiation

After confirming that the visitor was not entirely a stranger, Qiao Nan opened the door. “You are...” Looking at the man before her, Qiao Nan paused for a moment “Officer Zhu?”

“If you do not mind, you can call me Uncle Zhu.” Zhu Chengqi was subtly sizing up Qiao Nan with a few glances. “Can we go in and talk?”

Zhu Chengqi just came back from the army, and he had not changed out of his military attire. Wearing the cold and crisp military uniform, Zhu Chengqi exuded a feeling of aloofness that kept people away.

“Come in.” Qiao Nan could not bring herself to call him ‘Uncle’. “Do you have any matter for today’s visit?”

“It is regarding Baoguo. I already know about it. First, as a father, I would like to thank you for the positive influence on Baoguo. As for what happened during his middle school examination, I have clarified the matter.” Since Zhu Chengqi’s sitting posture was very prim and proper, people around him also felt obliged to sit upright in a serious manner.

“You have clarified the matter?”

“Yes, I have,” Zhu Chengqi said. He seemed to be deep in thoughts as he glanced at Qiao Nan. He did not expect that the most cool-headed person in this matter was not his son, sister or father; it was someone who did not belong to the Zhu family—a classmate of his son.

“Good that it has been clarified.” Qiao Nan nodded with relief. “There is one matter which was not convenient for me to speak about in the residence of the Zhu family at that time. However, I feel that, as Zhu Baoguo’s father, you should know about this.”

“What is it?”

“Around the beginning of this year, Wang Yang once led a group of people to round up on me. As for the reason, I believe you should know by now without the need for me to explain. Wang Yang harbored a sense of enmity toward Zhu Baoguo. Regarding the incident where Zhu Baoguo was so badly beaten, not finding out the truth of the matter indicates that you failed to fulfill your responsibility as Zhu Baoguo’s father.”

Elder Zhu was quite good to Wang Yang, his maternal grandson. Zhu Qin would definitely side with her own son.

Qiao Nan knew that if she revealed the matter about Wang Yang rounding her up at that time, Zhu Baoguo would be furious to the point of losing his sanity and make a fuss about it. That would cause the situation to go out of control and become unfavorable to Zhu Baoguo. There was no advantage in doing that.

Zhu Baoguo was like a little calf. As long as he saw something red, his eyes would burn with anger, and he would lose his mind easily.

Wang Yang drugged Zhu Baoguo and nearly caused him to miss the middle school examination. However, neither Elder Zhu nor Zhu Qin believed it. If she were to reveal that Wang Yang was the mastermind behind the previous incident where Zhu Baoguo was nearly killed by the hooligans, would Elder Zhu and Zhu Qin believe her?

Zhu Chengqi was shocked. He did not expect the matter Qiao Nan was referring to was actually this. “Really?”

“I do not have the need to lie,” Qiao Nan replied very calmly.

“Alright, I know.” Zhu Chengqi looked at Qiao Nan. “No matter what, you have been a great help to Zhu family this time. Is there anything you want?” (Boxno vel. co m)

The matter about Wang Yang aside, Qiao Nan had been indispensable in helping Zhu Baoguo with his middle school examination. The Zhu family did not have the habit of owing others a favor.

After hearing what Zhu Chengqi said, Qiao Nan’s expression changed.

Zhu Chengqi said directly, “You do not need to feel burdened by this. Everyone has their own ways of doing things. Even if you accept my gratitude, you can still continue to be friends to Baoguo. I will not stop you, and I also do not have the intention of looking down on you.”

“You think too much.” Qiao Nan shook her head. The discomfort she felt earlier eased immediately.

Since ancient times, people are particular about whether a married couple comes from equal family background and social status. Sometimes, the same goes for befriending someone.

The situation of the Qiao family could not be compared to that of the Zhu family’s. Because of Zhu Baoguo, the Zhu family owed her a big favor, and this favor had to be repaid. Rather than waiting for the Qiao family to ask for the sky, Zhu Chengqi would rather take the initiative to return the favor they owed first.

Qiao Nan stood up quietly and returned to her own bedroom. She took out a set of English books, tapes, and sound recorder. “These are the gifts from Zhu Baoguo. The Zhu family does not owe me anything. Zhu Baoguo and I also have an innocent relationship.”

“So these things bought by Baoguo previously were for you.” Zhu Chengqi was clearly aware that the things in Qiao Nan’s hands were not things the Qiao family could afford.

Looking at those things, Zhu Chengqi nodded. “Alright, then this will do. As the father of Zhu Baoguo, I still want to say a word of thanks to you.”

“Xiao Qiao!” Just when Zhu Chengqi and Qiao Nan’s conversation was coming to an end, the voice of Zhu Baoguo could be heard from outside. “Xiao Qiao!”

“Yes?” Qiao Nan knitted her brows and let Zhu Baoguo in.

“I heard that my dad came to look for you. What did he tell you? No, no matter what he told you, don’t take it to heart. My dad doesn’t even like me, his own son; of course he won’t like my friends too. So, whatever he tells you are untrue. He is him, I am me. Don’t mistake his words for my attitude.”

Zhu Chengqi, who was walking out, knitted his brows. “One should always stand and sit in proper manners. What did I normally teach you?”

“Have you ever taught me? Don’t put up a fatherly front every time you appear. I don’t buy your tactics!” Zhu Baoguo’s eyes became still and his tone was defiant.

“If both of you want to quarrel and bond with each other, go back to the Zhu family. This is the Qiao family.” Qiao Nan curled the corners of her mouth. They looked as if they were about to quarrel at the entrance of her house.

“Who is bonding with him!”

“Sorry to disturb.”

Zhu Baoguo gave Zhu Chengqi a stare. “There are 365 days in a year. For how many days are you at home? You only see me a few times a year. Let me tell you. Don’t interfere in Xiao Qiao’s and my matters. My auntie is crazy. Do you want to follow in her steps? Xiao Qiao is my sister; we are not in the messy relationship she mentioned. She did not even admit to her son’s wrongdoing and still acted innocent. Damn, yours truly—your father, was the one being harmed. She still had the cheek to say Wang Yang was wronged!”

“Whose father are you?”

“Whose father are you?”

At this juncture, Zhu Chengqi and Qiao Nan had the same expression as they shouted at Zhu Baoguo.

Zhu Baoguo gave Zhu Chengqi a defiant stare. Nevertheless, because Qiao Nan also said the same thing, Zhu Baoguo did not reply with uglier words in the end.

“I seemed to have heard something else just now. Should Officer Zhu give me an explanation on this?” Qiao Nan’s face turned stiff. She looked at Zhu Chengqi without any reservation. She could not choose her next-of-kin and was unable to escape the constant bullying from her mother and Qiao Zijin. However, the same saying still applied. She would not allow anyone outside the family to bully her easily regardless.

“It was just a false guess. You do not need to take it to heart.” Zhu Chengqi was not flustered.

“Rumors—it is all a matter of perspective. But you must know. If you say a false thing a thousand times, someone will believe it. If the rumors affect me negatively, who will be responsible? Officer Zhu, don’t you think you made it sound too simple?” Qiao Nan became solemn. “I do not wish to get into trouble. Officer Zhu, are you forcing me to state my stand?”

Chapter 127: Reversed

“...” Zhu Chengqi was stunned for a while.

He was very happy that his son had a good teacher and friend like Qiao Nan. He did not intend to object to their relationship. Unexpectedly, the other party had a temperament of avoiding trouble and wanted to retreat instead.

“What do you mean? You don’t act like a father yourself, yet you don’t let me make friends with others?” Zhu Baoguo inferred from what he heard that Qiao Nan intended to break off friendship with him. He was so anxious that he wanted to bang Zhu Chengqi a few times.

“Then, who do you want?”

“Can what I want be done?” She knew how to play Tai Chi as well.

Zhu Chengqi raised his eyebrows with interest. Compared to the young lady before him, his own son seemed like a fool. “Alright, if there are any unfavorable rumors of you from the quad, I will personally bring the members of the Zhu family to explain to you. Is this fine with you?”

Zhu Chengqi’s position in the army was not low. The reason Wang Yang plotted against Zhu Baoguo was also because Zhu Baoguo had a formidable father.

Most people in the quad had to bow and nod when they saw Zhu Chengqi. Whoever dared to make him initiate a visit to their doorstep would always pay a visit to him instead. Whether they could see Zhu Chengqi during the visit would also depend on their luck.

“This is fine,” Qiao Nan replied in a serious manner.

Given Zhu Chengqi’s status in the quad, who dared to not believe what he said.

“Are you relieved now?” Zhu Chengqi looked at Zhu Baoguo and asked.

As long as it was a good friend, he would not stop his son from mixing with them. Obviously, Qiao Nan fell into this category.

However, Zhu Chengqi had taken the issue regarding his nephew to heart. He did not expect that his nephew, who was seemingly sensible and obedient, actually had these ill intentions.

Judging by this, the grandson did not inherit the qualities of the Zhu family at all. He inherited the Wang family’s temperament.

Many years ago, he disagreed when Zhu Qin wanted to marry Wang Qinglin.

“Hmph,” Zhu Baoguo snorted in disapproval. What was there to be satisfied with? If not for the fact that everyone believed Wang Yang but not him, this comedy would not have come about. Subsequently, Xiao Qiao would not be angry with him. At the end of the day, it happened all because of his family.

Given Zhu Baoguo’s character, Zhu Chengqi had to hint Qiao Nan with his eyes. Qiao Nan nodded her head to express that she would not reveal that matter to Zhu Baoguo.

Zhu Baoguo had been vigilant enough toward Wang Yang because of the incident during the middle school examination.

Unless Zhu Baoguo and Wang Yang abstained from interacting with each other for the rest of their lives, or Wang Yang no longer visited the Zhu’s residence, it was really inappropriate for Zhu Baoguo to know about this matter.

“Baoguo, can you go back with me now?” Zhu Chengqi felt more assured gradually that his son was learning together with Qiao Nan. No wonder people often say young ladies are much more mature than boys.

Clearly, this young lady was younger than Baoguo by a year, yet her manners and thoughts were similar to that of an adult. It was really rare.

At Zhu Chengqi’s position and level, he had seen a lot of people.

Not to mention having such a conversation with a child, Zhu Chengqi had encountered many grown-ups who could not even understand what others were talking about. A hint notwithstanding, they might not even get it if the matter was explained in an outright manner.

Therefore, Zhu Chengqi normally found it most annoying to interact with others.

For today’s visit to the Qiao family, Zhu Chengqi had put in great efforts and preparation. The reason was that the other party was not only his son’s friend but also someone who had helped his son many times.

In the end, the interaction process was unexpectedly smooth.

The father and son were walking on the road, one at each side. They were at least about one meter apart, ignoring each other and silently walking on their own.

Soon after, Zhu Chengqi spoke, “This little classmate of yours is quite interesting. You should learn more from her. She definitely has the ability to be your teacher. Your grandpa has a good judgment of character.”

Naturally, Zhu Chengqi knew his father-in-law was the one who found his son this little teacher, Qiao Nan. Unexpectedly, his father-in-law found a really suitable teacher for his son.

“That is indeed true. Xiao Qiao is very good, and she is so smart. She clinched the first place in the provincial essay writing competition during the last semester. Xiao Qiao’s English is excellent. I think she can fulfill the role of a diplomat or something in the future.” At the mention of Qiao Nan, Zhu Baoguo’s eyes lit up and had a lot more to say to Zhu Chengqi. “You will see. We can probably

check the grades tomorrow. Xiao Qiao will definitely do well for this middle school examination. Don't always say that Wang Yang is good in his studies. Compared to Xiao Qiao, those grades of Wang Yang are nothing."

His son's words were not graceful, nor did it have the decency and seriousness of a soldier.

However, Zhu Chengqi was never close with this son of his. Although his family tried hard to create bonding time for just the two of them, he and Zhu Baoguo would always sit at both ends of the sofa each. There would be space for at least two or three people to sit between them.

Surrounding the father and son was silence and nothing else.

Zhu Baoguo was deliberately not talking to him to show his displeasure. Zhu Chengqi had so much to say but did not know how to begin.

It was rare that his son had so much to tell him. As such, Zhu Chengqi did not bother to correct Zhu Baoguo on his minor poor manner of speech.

At the thought of how his son's earlier word 'your father' had provoked Qiao Nan's displeasure, and the way that son of his shut up in return, Zhu Chengqi knew that it was certainly not because of him. In the past, his son would always sing the opposite tune of him for anything Zhu Chengqi objected to. Thus, the reason his son was willing to shut up today was undoubtedly because of the young lady.

Upon these thoughts, Zhu Chengqi suddenly felt that even if what Wang Yang said was true—that his son really had a romantic relationship with the young lady—there was nothing bad about it. They would be considered childhood sweethearts, just like his wife and him.

Putting aside other matters, it was a fact that the young lady could tame his son.

"Hey, are you really listening to what I said?" Zhu Baoguo spoke like a never-ending stream for a long time but did not get any reaction from Zhu Chengqi. This seemed to have stirred up a nest of hornets and made Zhu Baoguo unhappy. "You were the one who asked me about Xiao Qiao, but you were in a daze afterward. Don't listen if you don't want to. I will not force you to. You all are really too much. Why didn't anyone in the family give me such a sensible and good sister like Xiao Qiao? As a result, I had to find a sister from outside the family. That's where you all did not fulfill your responsibility!"

“...” Zhu Chengqi sighed and was stunned by the fact that his son had not been enlightened. He only wanted a sister, not a girlfriend. What could he say? “Alright, it is time to go home. Grandpa is still waiting for you.”

“Why wait for me? Does he still want to scold me or say that I wronged Wang Yang? Wang Yang is so merciless and full of bad intentions. He actually thought of boiling the sleeping pills and soaking the fruits in the dissolved solution. Damn, such a person is most suitable for the role of a spy or traitor during war times!” As he said that, Zhu Baoguo acted as if he had a whip in his hand and pretended to whip someone.

“Alright, do not bring up this matter again when we are back.” The slight curve at the stiff corners of Zhu Chengqi’s eyes revealed his amusement. That young lady was so calm and steady, but his son behaved like a child. The picture of the two of them together obviously did not seem like that of an elder brother and younger sister; their roles should be reversed.

Chapter 128: No Eggs Can Remain Unbroken When the Nest Is Upset

What Zhu Chengqi did not know was that, to Qiao Nan, looking after Zhu Baoguo was akin to looking after a son.

“Alright, I won’t bring it up. I am the least bit interested to hang out with Wang Yang. It was Wang Yang who always stuck to me at home, addressing me as his brother. He even lodged a complaint to Grandpa, saying that I ignored him. What a cunning, deceitful, and vicious mean boy!” A childish Zhu Baoguo used all the negative expressions he could think of to describe Wang Yang, wanting Zhu Chengqi to understand that Wang Yang was a bad person.

Zhu Chengqi pressed his lips, creating a thin line. “You should really learn from Qiao Nan; in particular, learn Chinese from her. I believe she would definitely come in the first place for her essay.”

Qiao Nan could let him know of Wang Yang’s character and behavior in one sentence, yet his son had to use all the expressions he could think of to describe Wang Yang. Zhu Chengqi found it amusing.

Their standards were worlds apart.

“Do you know which high school Qiao Nan is going to?”

“Xiao Qiao has told me long ago. It is Ping Cheng High School.”

“Isn't The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China better?”

“Xiao Qiao said that if she studies at Ping Cheng High School with her results, she could be exempted from paying tuition and incidental fees. Xiao Qiao's family is not well-to-do, and her mother is a fool. She spent all the money they had to ask Grandpa to arrange for her sister to study at The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. If she did not have the ability, she should not insist to study there. She must be a fool. But the biggest fool is Xiao Qiao. Her sister could spend all the savings they had at home, so why does she have to save up for the family by studying at Ping Cheng High School and getting a scholarship? She is too nice and too filial. This is what we call unquestioning filial piety!”

Zhu Baoguo was pleased and proud of himself that he could use the expressions accurately. Time spent with Xiao Qiao was not wasted; his Chinese had improved tremendously.

“Unquestioning filial piety?” Zhu Chengqi gave a meaningful smile. “Baoguo, after learning Chinese for such a long time, do you know the meaning of ‘no eggs can remain unbroken when the nest is upset’?”

The young lady was not foolish. On the contrary, she was very smart.

Qiao Dongliang was the sole breadwinner of the Qiao family. If anything happened to him, not to mention Qiao Nan, both sisters would not be able to continue with their studies.

Qiao Nan made it easier for Qiao Dongliang to ensure she would have the opportunity to study.

If this young lady was fit, she would make a good soldier in the army. She was very quick-witted.

It might seem like she was at a disadvantage, but in fact, even if she did not gain any advantage, she had protected her own interests at the very least.

Under such dire situation, Qiao Nan was able to protect her interests to the very best. She was not to be underestimated.

Qiao Nan went to great lengths to make sure she could continue with her studies, yet his own son had brawns but no brains. Zhu Chengqi did not know what to say.

By right, with such a grindstone like Wang Yang at the Zhu family, he should see some improvements in Baoguo, but reality proved him wrong.

“Alright, we have arrived.” Zhu Chengqi patted his son’s shoulder. Zhu Chengqi pulled Zhu Baoguo into the Zhu family’s residence. By the time they reached home, Wang Yang and Zhu Qin were nowhere to be seen.

Not to mention Wang Yang, even Zhu Qin was too ashamed to stay at Zhu family’s residence. She was too disgraced to face her nephew, Zhu Baoguo.

Zhu Baoguo overslept on the day of middle school exams because he ate fruits that had doses of sleeping pills in it.

To think that Wang Yang came up with the idea of soaking the fruits in sleeping draught and had Zhu Baoguo eat the fruits... There was no way that one could say Wang Yang did it unintentionally.

Even if Wang Yang was to argue that he did it because he was worried Zhu Baoguo would be too nervous to sleep—and if he told Zhu Baoguo the truth, he would not eat them—one could tell that the doses were too high from the fact that Zhu Baoguo fell into a deep sleep.

These were sleeping pills. If anything went wrong, life would be at stake.

More importantly, like what Zhu Baoguo had said, such a coincidence as there was no one but Wang Yang at Zhu family’s residence that day—telling everyone he saw Zhu Baoguo went off to school early in the morning—was almost improbable.

Even if he had a good reason, one could not help but be suspicious of him. Besides, not only was his reason not good enough, it was full of loopholes.

“Baoguo, you are back?” Wang Yang and Zhu Qin left straight away. Elder Zhu who had nowhere to go to was awkward. He did not know what to say when his beloved grandson came home.

“Oh,” Zhu Baoguo responded dully.

“You and your dad have met the younger daughter of the Qiao family, have you not?” Elder Zhu smiled bitterly. It seemed like Baoguo had some grudges toward him, but Wang Yang...

Elder Zhu had a bad headache. He did not know whether he should believe that Wang Yang’s mistake was committed out of good intentions, or that he really harbored evil intentions toward his cousin.

“We have seen her. The young lady is pretty smart. It would be good for Baoguo to hang out with her often. He would be able to learn from her and will not be easily plotted against in the future. But Dad, regarding Wang Qinglin, there is no need to consider further. We would go by the book. His promotion would be dependent on his abilities.” Zhu Chengqi sat down and poured tea for Elder Zhu and himself. This was going for peaceful measures before using force.

Elder Zhu had always pampered his daughter, Zhu Qin.

Otherwise, Elder Zhu would not have been so generous to Wang Yang.

Zhu Chengqi would always look out for his brother-in-law, Wang Qinglin, on account of his younger sister, Zhu Qin.

He spent most of his time in the army; he seldom stayed at home. In the army, he would look after Wang Qinglin. Contrariwise, Wang Qinglin’s son had the impudence to bully his son at Zhu family’s residence.

Zhu Chengqi’s eyes darkened when he thought of what Qiao Nan told him today.

“Chengqi, it is normal for youngsters to quarrel. You should not...” Elder Zhu hurriedly put in a good word for his son-in-law when he heard that his promotion might be affected.

Elder Zhu had retired long ago, and he had handed everything over to his only son, Zhu Chengqi. Zhu Chengqi was the master in the house, not Elder Zhu. When all was said and done, Elder Zhu was still Zhu Chengqi's father. Thus, Zhu Chengqi could not disregard his father's words.

"Dad, tell this to Baoguo. If you can do that, I will help with Wang Qinglin's promotion." Zhu Chengqi was not angered by his father's words. He maintained his calm and composure as if Elder Zhu did not side with Wang Qinglin.

"Oh..." Elder Zhu wanted to talk to Zhu Baoguo, persuading him to help his uncle.

However, when he saw how angry Zhu Baoguo was, he could not bring himself to say a word. After all, he was still closer to his grandson as compared to his maternal grandson.

In the past, Elder Zhu would always dote on Zhu Baoguo. He would always go according to his wishes. It had become a habit. He had made an exception because of Wang Yang's incident today. If he was to say anything more, it would be too much to ask of Elder Zhu.

Elder Zhu sighed, giving in to Zhu Chengqi. He would not object to how Zhu Chengqi handled Wang Qinglin's promotion.

"Dad, Zhu Qin was a married woman. She is a part of the Wang family now."

Chapter 129: Top Female Scorer

"According to the old practices, she is no longer Zhu Qin but Wang Zhuqin. Dad, do you get my meaning?" There was some truth to the saying 'A daughter married is like water spilled'.

His sister, Zhu Qin, was now biased toward the Wang family.

Although she always visited the Zhu family, it was not to maintain her ties with them but to get Zhu Chengqi to help Wang Qinglin.

“Alright, do as you see fit since you are the one who makes the decisions in this house.” Despite being angry, Elder Zhu had no other choices. “I am tired. I will have a rest on the bed. No one is to disturb me.”

Elder Zhu walked off angrily. Zhu Baoguo scooted near to Zhu Chengqi. “Dad, is Grandpa angry with us?”

Zhu Chengqi glanced at the proximity between his son and him. They had never been so close to each other before. He said nonchalantly, “Are you afraid that your grandpa would be angry with you?”

“What is there to be scared of? I am still angry with him. He praised Wang Yang in front of me, saying he was well-behaved and I should learn from him. What is there to learn? He was simply a bad guy who is full of wicked ideas. I have never liked him since I was little. I hope I will never see him at our house again!”

Zhu Baoguo was pleased with what Zhu Chengqi said just now.

“It is impossible for him not to visit our house.” There was no way they could sever ties with the Wang family. Zhu Chengqi looked at Zhu Baoguo. “Know your limits. After being plotted against by Wang Yang this time, you should learn how to be smart. Look at the way Qiao Nan deals with things. You are older than her, yet you have to learn from a young lady like her. You should keep your wits about you.”

“Hmph,” Zhu Baoguo snorted and walked off to his room.

Back at his room, Zhu Baoguo jumped around happily.

Seventeen years... It had been seventeen years. Not counting the years when Wang Yang was born and was still very young. Since Wang Yang was three years old, he had been pulling all sorts of pranks on him. Today, Wang Yang finally suffered a setback and was knocked down brutally. Thinking about it made him happy.

Apart from Qiao Nan, no one in the Qiao family knew about what had happened at the Zhu family.

The next morning, Qiao Dongliang had just woken up and was brushing his teeth when he heard exploding sounds of firecrackers coming from outside the house. He frowned at the loud sounds. “Who sets off the firecrackers early in the morning? Are they asking for a beating?”

“Who created such a din in the morning?” Ding Jiayi yawned as she came out, putting on her jacket. She did not have the time to comb her hair; it looked very messy.

“No idea, there is no wedding or any other happy occasion in the quad.” Qiao Dongliang shook his head, feeling perplexed. “It is getting late. We must hurry to wash up and go to work.”

Qiao Dongliang had a look of doubt in his eyes when he glanced at Ding Jiayi.

Qiao Dongliang still could not figure out how his wife managed to come up with the money to pay for the elder daughter’s school fees for this semester.

It had been very peaceful and quiet for the past half a year and that made him uneasy.

“Xiao Qiao.” Elder Lee’s voice could be heard from the door.

“Uncle Lee?” Qiao Dongliang was shocked. He quickly rinsed off the toothpaste foam in his mouth, wiped his mouth with the towel, and hurried to open the door. “Uncle Lee, why would you visit us so early in the morning?”

“Set off the firecrackers.” As soon as Qiao Dongliang opened the door, Zhu Baoguo, who was by Elder Lee’s side, shouted for the surrounding people to set off the firecrackers.

Deafening sounds of the firecrackers could be heard all over the quad. Everyone knew it was the Qiao family who set off the firecrackers. What could the happy occasion at Qiao family residence be?

A lot of neighbors crowded around in no time.

“Uncle Lee, what... what is the meaning of this?” Qiao Dongliang was dumbfounded. He did not understand Uncle Lee’s intention.

“Uncle Qiao, Xiao Qiao did fabulously in the middle school exams. She is the top scorer in Ping Cheng!” Zhu Baoguo gave a thumbs-up. He looked so excited and proud as if he was the top scorer.

“What? Our Nan Nan came in at which place?” Qiao Dongliang paused momentarily. The sounds of the firecrackers were too deafening, obscuring Zhu Baoguo’s words. He had a buzzing sound in his ear and was starting to hear things.

Qiao Dongliang knew Nan Nan had pretty good results, but he thought that was only within Ping Cheng Junior High School. There were a lot of other junior high schools in the whole of Ping Cheng. She could not possibly do so well.

“Uncle, I guess I am not fully awake. Did Baoguo just say that our Nan Nan came in first in the middle school exams and is the top scorer in the city?” Qiao Dongliang blinked his eyes in confusion.

“You have heard it correctly. The results were out last night, so we specially came over to congratulate you. Nan Nan is so smart. She did well for her middle school exams and made the quad proud.” Elder Lee smiled. He could understand that Qiao Dongliang must have found the unexpected piece of happy news to be too surreal.

The elders toiled hard for their whole life, and their only wish was for their juniors to be successful.

“What? Did the younger daughter of the Qiao family come in first in the middle school exams?”

“Cannot be, it’s the middle school exams. There are so many students in Ping Cheng; it is not even easy to come in first in the class.”

“Did she rank first in Ping Cheng or the whole province?”

“I have said long ago that the younger daughter of the Qiao family is very smart. I can tell that she is very quick-witted from a single look. I heard from my child she had very good results in her school. She even took first place in the whole province for essay competition.”

“What kind of food did the younger daughter of the Qiao family consume to have grown up to be so smart?”

Comparisons were odious.

If their own child could come in first place in class, not to mention first in the whole province, they would be so overjoyed that they would wake up from sleep with a smile.

All of a sudden, everyone in the quad was discussing how brilliant, well-behaved and nice Qiao Nan was. Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin turned green in anger at their words.

“Uncle, our Nan Nan really ranked first!” Everyone was saying Qiao Nan came in the first place. The news finally sunk in. Qiao Dongliang asked the question again out of happiness and surprise.

“It is true. Nan Nan’s school must have received the notice as well. I suppose Ping Cheng Junior High School will hang the banner today. By then, everyone in this area would know that Nan Nan is the top scorer in the middle school exams.” Elder Lee smiled and nodded. It might have been a good decision for Xiao Qiao to give up on the army and had a second child. “Xiao Qiao, it seemed like your decision back then was right. It is good that you had Nan Nan; she is such a good daughter.”

“Nan Nan, you are up.” Elder Lee looked at Qiao Nan with affection. “Nan Nan, congratulations. You came in first in the middle school exams; you are the top female scorer.”

“The results are out?” Qiao Nan arched her eyebrows in surprise. “That is so fast. First place? Are you sure?” Even though she felt she did well, she did not think she would come in the first place and be the top scorer.

“Definitely. You are not only the first place but also more than 220 points ahead of others. Nan Nan, your results are fabulous.” Elder Lee was all praises for Qiao Nan’s good results.

She had full marks for Mathematics and English. Her Chinese only had a deduction of two marks.

Elder Lee’s heart jumped a beat at the thought of Qiao Nan’s results. How did she do it?

Apart from Elder Lee, the teachers who read the exam papers all had mixed emotions when they saw Qiao Nan’s papers and her marks.

It was such a pity that the student with such good results was not their student!

No, there must be some mistakes. It was not elementary exams, so how could it be so easy to score full marks for a few subjects. They must have overlooked or missed out on some parts.

Following this train of thought, several teachers who were in charge of marking the papers went over all of Qiao Nan's papers several times. They checked every single detail carefully. They were so detailed that they were just a step away from using magnifying glasses and microscopes.

Qiao Nan's results had been under the strictest examination and marking of many teachers.

Mathematics was more straightforward; there wasn't much to check. The punctuation Qiao Nan used was just right, not too many and not too little.

As for Chinese, all of the Humanities and Arts teachers were exasperated when they saw her papers.

Looking at the exam paper which had two marks deducted, they wished it had received a full marks score instead.

Qiao Nan scored full marks for her essay, which was a very rare result. They had nowhere to deduct marks from. Sadly, she made a single mistake in the section which tested students on their memory. Those senior teachers could not help but feel frustrated at the mistake. They had nowhere to release the pent-up frustration and almost choked from the anger.

The teachers who were in charge of marking the papers were happy, yet angry at Qiao Nan's results. They were happy because she had such good results. It was such a pity she was not their student. The teachers were also angry and exasperated, finding it frustrating that she lost precious marks in areas that she could have managed through sheer memorization.

"Xiao Qiao, you are so amazing." After setting off the firecrackers, Zhu Baoguo patted away the dust on his hands. "You must be the only one who shines the brightest in our school this year. You have such good results; the school will definitely reward you."

With Xiao Qiao's results, she might be able to get her scholarship if she was to study at Ping Cheng High School.

"Thank you... Thank you, everyone." Qiao Dongliang finally believed what he heard after receiving congratulations and well-wishes from people in the quad and the neighborhood. He felt as if he was stepping on clouds, all soft and fluffy. He had the impression he was floating and still had not come to grips with what just happened. "Uncle Lee, come in for a cup of tea. I was so happy that I forgot to invite you in."

Qiao Dongliang finally realized how impolite he was for letting his guests stand at the door for such a long while.

"This is a piece of good news. I can understand, I can understand." Elder Lee smiled and walked into the Qiao family's residence. As for the neighbors in the quad who gathered around just now, some had dispersed, whereas some stayed to discuss Qiao Nan the top scorer.

"Uncle Lee, I must thank you for bringing me this piece of good news early in the morning." Qiao Dongliang brewed a pot of hot tea for Elder Lee.

"Don't say so." Uncle Lee drank the tea and cast Qiao Nan a meaningful glance. "Come to think of it, I should thank Nan Nan. Xiao Qiao, you have raised a good daughter. When you left the army for Nan Nan, I could not understand you. But now I want to tell you that you had made an excellent decision back then. It was worth all the sacrifices to have a daughter like Nan Nan. She is such a brilliant and filial child. Xiao Qiao, there is nothing you could ask for more. You will have good days ahead."

"Yes, Uncle Lee is right. I have Nan Nan. I would be able to lead a good life in the future." Qiao Dongliang was lost in happiness.

It was only a year ago when Nan Nan started secondary three and had done badly for her first exams. How did Nan Nan manage to be the top scorer in only a year's time?

"Xiao Qiao, I heard Nan Nan wants to study in Ping Cheng High School instead of The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China."

"... Yes." Initially, Qiao Dongliang was quite relieved by the younger daughter's decision. He would have a breather while he worked hard for the next two years to earn money for the elder daughter's college fees.

But Qiao Dongliang could not smile in front of Elder Lee now.

The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China was definitely better than Ping Cheng High School. Nan Nan was so brilliant. If he agreed to let Nan Nan study at Ping Cheng High School so that he could save some money, would it affect her studies?

“Don’t give me that expression, I am not criticizing you. Nan Nan is very sensible. She must have her reasons for making this decision. What I want to say is that for the next three years, I would still need Nan Nan to keep an eye on our Baoguo.” Elder Lee gave a benevolent smile and looked at Qiao Nan who stood by Baoguo’s side.

“Uncle, how did Baoguo do for his exams?” Qiao Dongliang slapped at himself, realizing he had forgotten to ask about Zhu Baoguo’s results.

“Thanks to Nan Nan, our Baoguo did fairly well. He should be able to study at Ping Cheng High School with Nan Nan.”

Ping Cheng High School might not be as good as The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China and the cutoff point was lower, but not everyone can enroll in Ping Cheng High School as well.

From Elder Lee’s words, one could tell that Zhu Baoguo had done pretty well this time. At the very least, he managed to get into Ping Cheng High School based on his abilities, not with the help of the Zhu family or the Lee family.

Just this alone was enough for the Zhu family and the Lee family to be proud of.

As compared to the Zhu Baoguo in the past who would always create troubles, he was now considered very well-behaved.

Zhu Baoguo’s results were way better than a lot of the students who had always done well in their exams. The Zhu family felt proud and elated because of his results.

Elder Lee could stand with his chin up in front of Elder Zhu.

Baoguo was a well-behaved child. It was just that there was no one to supervise him. He took Baoguo under his care for a year, and he had made such tremendous improvements. This showed the Zhu family did not know how to raise a kid well!

“Really?! Congratulations to you as well.” Qiao Dongliang was so thrilled that he made irrelevant remarks.

“Xiao Qiao, did you hear that? We would still be deskmate in the future.” Zhu Baoguo smiled smugly.

“It’s classmates, not deskmates.” Qiao Nan rolled her eyes. “How can you be so sure we would be deskmate in Ping Cheng High School? Besides, don’t mix up the names.”

Elder Lee called her father ‘Xiao Qiao’. If Zhu Baoguo also addressed her as ‘Xiao Qiao’, wouldn’t it sound awkward?

“Hehehe.” Zhu Baoguo laughed but did not explain. No matter what, he would not change his way of addressing her. If there was anyone who had to change, it would be his grandpa.

“Dad, are you still going to work?” Qiao Nan glanced at Qiao Dongliang, reminding him that it was getting late.

“Right, right. I... I still need to go to work.” Qiao Dongliang remembered he had not finished brushing his teeth. “Old Ding, Zijin, both of you must have been so happy and forgot the time. If we don’t get going, we will be late. Uncle Lee...”

“Alright, I understand. I just wanted to let you all know of the good news. Those who need to work should hurry along.”

After patting Qiao Dongliang on the shoulder, Elder Lee left with Zhu Baoguo.

After receiving Elder Lee’s recognition, Qiao Dongliang was excited and full of energy as if he had chicken blood. “Nan Nan, since you have decided, then you will study at Ping Cheng High School. You must work hard. Dad will think of ways to finance you through college!”

“Oh.” Qiao Nan replied lightly.