

RTAMM 1461

Chapter 1461: Something Was Amiss with the Old Master

At this time, it was almost the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties.

Aside from the tomboy Zhai Hua, there was only a female, Miao Jing, in the Zhai family. Miao Jing was bullied by Qi Minlan, and she didn't even have a close friend. Perhaps she was too agitated from Qi Minlan's bullying that after Old Master Zhai walked out from the sadness of Grandma Zhai's early passing, Miao Jing handed over her two children for Old Master Zhai to bring up. She stayed by Zhai Yaohui's side, and as the chief of the army's wife, she flew around with Zhai Yaohui on business trips.

At that time, outsiders really didn't perceive the Zhai family to be so glamorous.

Old Master Zhai mentioned this today not to say anything else. It was just that he remembered Grandma Zhai's crying expression when he got injured. Who would have imagined that Old Master Zhai, who had fought in wars and lived in snowy mountains before, could live to his eighties and watch his three great-grandchildren go to school? However, Grandma Zhai could only see the birth of her two grandchildren.

Old Master Zhai was old. He used to say that men seldom lived to their seventies. Furthermore, Old Master Zhai was already in his eighties. He had really led a long life.

Today, listening to Old Master Zhai mentioning Grandma Zhai's passing, everyone in the Zhai family felt uneasy.

Old Master Zhai, who had caused the people around him to feel uneasy, didn't realize this at all. After saying this, he kept his expression. Seeing that everyone was staring at him and not eating, he said, "Why are all of you looking at me? Could it be that I have a flower blooming on my face? I'm old. It's normal for me to think about the past. Okay, hurry up and eat. If you don't, the triplets will be too frightened and not eat as well."

The triplets were still young. Old Master Zhai didn't feel that they could understand anything. They must have been influenced by the emotions of adults.

Miao Jing looked at Zhai Yaohui worriedly. Old Master Zhai had always been healthy. His mental health was good as well. The problem was his age. After hearing her father-in-law say the words her mother-in-law had said before her passing, she felt cold in her heart, as if it was an ominous sign.

Zhai Yaohui patted the back of Miao Jing's hand, signaling her not to worry. "What are you looking at? Haven't you heard what Old Master said? The weather's hot now. Cold dishes don't taste as nice as hot ones. Da Bao, eat a little more." Zhai Yaohui was worried about Old Master Zhai as well. However, Zhai Yaohui couldn't say anything or ask anything now.

After the meal, Old Master Zhai was the first to return to his room to rest. Qiao Nan took care of the triplets first. After they fell asleep, Qiao Nan went to find Zhai Sheng as she was worried. "Brother Zhai, why do you think the old master mentioned the past when everything's fine? How about you accompany him tonight?"

With elderly in the family, especially after they had behaved as such, under normal circumstances, the young people at home wouldn't be able to fall asleep with ease.

"Okay." Even without Qiao Nan mentioning it, Zhai Sheng had such an intention. The most memories he had when he was young was Old Master Zhai's back view. When he saw Old Master Zhai looking blissful and sad every time he mentioned Grandma Zhai, Zhai Sheng's heart became complicated and contradictory.

If it was possible, he didn't want to be caught in a woman's hand, like his grandpa. After this woman was gone, his grandpa had almost lost the motivation to continue living. This was simply too scary for Zhai Sheng, who was always calm and rational. It was so scary that he couldn't imagine the procedure.

He completely couldn't accept that he would be the same as his grandpa one day. Besides yearning about a woman day and night, he would see the safety of her as more important than his own life. After his grandpa lost his grandma's company, he often gave Zhai Sheng a feeling of darkness and despair.

How was Zhai Sheng willing to let all his emotions and feelings to be controlled by a woman?

It was just that after seeing the example of Old Master Zhai and Grandma Zhai, regardless of how superfluous Zhai Sheng's worries were, the nonsensical thoughts he had when he was young became absurd after he met such a person. Wouldn't it be fine as long as he cherished and protected his own family in a peaceful age?

To meet a woman whom he could love as much as his grandpa did his grandma, it wasn't a disaster in his life but God's blessing.

After the couple discussed, Zhai Sheng carried a pillow downstairs to find Old Master Zhai. When he was heading down, Zhai Sheng coincidentally bumped into Zhai Yaohui, who also came out of the room with a pillow. "Dad."

"Yes." Both father and son had the same idea. Without having to say anything, everyone understood each other. "I'll accompany him tonight. You'll accompany him tomorrow." Old Master Zhai was already old. Zhai Yaohui had already started to worry about Old Master Zhai's health condition.

Even Zhai Yaohui was a little shocked at what the old master had said today.

"No, I spend less time at home. If nothing's wrong with the old master, then that would be the best. If I'm not at home, Da Bao is still young. At that time, you will have to work harder." Zhai Sheng disagreed. He spent too little time at home. As such, during the time he was around, he hoped to spend more time with his family.

When he was young, he had grown up with Old Master. Zhai Sheng and Zhai Hua's feelings for the old master didn't pale in comparison to Zhai Yaohui's.

"Okay, why are you standing at the door? If you really want to, both of you can accompany him." Miao Jing heard some sounds at the door. It seemed that Zhai Yaohui hadn't headed downstairs yet. Donning slippers, Miao Jing came out to take a look and saw Zhai Yaohui and Zhai Sheng standing by the door, discussing who should go and find Old Master Zhai.

"Count with your fingers yourself. Which one of you had spent more time by the old master's side? If there's a chance, the three generations should spend more time together. There's nothing bad to that. Hurry up and go." Thankfully, it wasn't winter yet. If it was winter and they were discussing as such, they would first catch a cold before arriving at a decision.

After listening to Miao Jing's words, Zhai Yaohui and Zhai Sheng looked at each other and felt that made sense. Old people lack companionship. They wouldn't dislike it if their juniors accompanied them more.

It was rare that the three generations could spend time together. Zhai Yaohui and Zhai Sheng listened to Miao Jing's suggestions and both of them crept into Old Master Zhai's room.

Zhai Yaohui stepped forward to take a look at the old master. He lowered his voice and said to Zhai Sheng, "All's good. The old master's sleeping well."

Upon hearing Old Master Zhai's heavy breathing, Zhai Sheng nodded. "The old master should be snoring in a bit. I'll make the bed."

Chapter 1462: Death Will Come Eventually

There was no shortage of such blankets in the Zhai family. As soldiers, Zhai Yaohui and Zhai Sheng had lived through much tougher circumstances. Tonight, they had just laid down a futon in Old Master Zhai's room. Because the warm temperatures of September had not completely passed, it was much more cooling to sleep on the floor rather than the bed, even if the floor was a little hard.

After a night, Zhai Sheng, who was in his early thirties, did not feel anything at all. On the other hand, Zhai Yaohui, who was almost sixty, was feeling sore all over, and he looked frail.

Seeing Zhai Yaohui in this state, Miao Jing quickly pulled Zhai Yaohui back to their room and helped Zhai Yaohui massage his back and waist. "You're already quite senior in age. Just admit it." In the past, there was no way that Old Zhai would face such severe consequences from sleeping on the floor for one night.

Zhai Yaohui's face darkened as he eyed Miao Jing impatiently. "Are you disdain me because I'm old? Weren't you happy the night before yesterday?" Had his performance been so poor that he had been unable to satisfy Miao Miao?

Miao Jing's face flushed with anger and she landed a hard slap squarely on Zhai Yaohui's back. "You old foggy! What are you blabbering about? The triplets are still young. Just wait and see how I'll deal with you if the triplets hear these dirty words." Miao Jing did not wish for Da Bao and Er Bao to know too much and speak like hooligans.

As for San Bao, she should be a pure girl who was clear like crystal. These dirty words were in no way suitable for any of her grandchildren to hear.

Zhai Yaohui was dissatisfied. "Weren't you the one talking about it?"

“Did I mean that?” Miao Jing retorted with a shout.

“To men, as long as you mention it, that is what you mean!” Zhai Yaohui refused to back down.

Qiao Nan, who had wanted to ask if she could help with anything, stood awkwardly at the door. She had inadvertently overheard her parents-in-law flirting and felt second-hand embarrassment.

In the past two years, Qiao Nan had clearly felt that her parents-in-law’s relationship had improved tremendously as compared to ten years ago.

At such a time, Qiao Nan naturally would not have been so foolish to knock on the door to interrupt her parents-in-law. Instead, she got the triplets, who had already woken up and changed, to quickly head downstairs for breakfast before sending them to school.

“Great-grandpa!” Da Bao shouted loudly when he saw Old Master Zhai return to drink soymilk after shadowboxing.

Old Master Zhai’s expression lightened and he burst into a wide smile. “Ah, good morning, Da Bao! Our Zhai family’s children should be like this indeed. Greeting with a loud voice, just like shouting commands in the army. Come, Da Bao. Come drink soymilk with great-grandpa!”

Da Bao nodded and automatically sat next to Old Master Zhai, holding up his cup and drinking his soymilk. Old Master Zhai valued Da Bao but loved Er Bao and San Bao all the same. So the soymilk that the three children drank was all poured by Old Master Zhai alone.

As such, Er Bao and San Bao had never felt as though their great-grandfather, Old Master Zhai, was ever biased. Their great-grandfather loved all three of them equally.

“Great-grandpa, we’ve eaten our fill and we’re going to school now.” Upon finishing their meal, the three children did not need any reminders or help from the adults. They picked up their hefty bags and followed obediently after Qiao Nan to take their leave.

Old Master Zhai nodded with a smile. “Okay. Great-grandpa will wait for you to return home.”

“Okay,” the three children replied in unison. Only with that did they let their mother send them to school.

Qiao Nan and her children went to work and school respectively. On the other hand, Zhai Sheng, who rarely had time to spend at home, was idle with nothing to do. Zhai Sheng had discussed it with Qiao Nan, and he would find something to occupy himself with. “Mom, I’m going next door to see Old Lin. Nan Nan said that Old Lin rarely comes out to walk around nowadays. Sometimes, Nan Nan takes the three children to visit Old Lin but he is never willing to open the door for the four of them.”

It was not just Old Master Zhai that worried them, but Lin Yuankang worried them too.

The problem was that if Lin Yuankang did not open the door for them to enter, Qiao Nan could not possibly force the door open and scare Old Lin. But after a few days of not seeing Old Lin, Qiao Nan had become very uneasy. If not for the few sentences that they exchanged through the door, Qiao Nan might even think that...

Qiao Nan did not understand why Old Lin refused to see her and her three children anymore. And since she could not make any progress, the only person Qiao Nan could call on for help was Zhai Sheng.

“Fine.” Miao Jing sighed anxiously. “Old Lin is around the same age as our old master. I know that Nan Nan has been so worried about Old Lin’s health these days that she hasn’t been able to sleep well.”

The mention of this topic made Miao Jing’s eyes turn red.

When the elderly reach a certain age, there is only one thing that their family constantly worries about. Moreover, Old Lin and Old Master Zhai’s health was deteriorating by the year. It was not as if they did not know that.

Two years ago, Old Zhu could no longer hold on and among the veteran revolutionaries, and he was the first to pass on.

At Old Zhu’s age, passing on could have been seen as a closure as well as joyful. But as joyful as it was, losing a loved one was ultimately painful for the Zhu family.

Zhu Chengqi had already lost his wife at a young age. And now that even his father had passed on, he only had his son, Zhu Baoguo, by his side. Even though Zhu Chengqi had never uttered a single word, Miao Jing could still sense deep sorrow and loneliness in this tough chief.

The only thing the Zhu family could rejoice about was that Old Zhu had always kept Zhu Baoguo in his mind before his death. Zhu Baoguo was already a young man of over twenty years old. As a mother, Qiao Nan did not want to say, but her children could fend for themselves and were already in kindergarten. But there was nothing from Zhu Baoguo's side. Old Zhu said that he was uneasy if he were to leave just like that.

In order to reassure the old man, Zhu Baoguo told Old Zhu that he actually had a girlfriend and that his girlfriend was Shi Qing. It was just that the two of them were too passionate about the army and did not want to get married too early. Hence, they had kept it under wraps.

Zhu Chengqi and Shi Peng had all along known about the situation between the two children. Thus, the two of them decided to arrange for the engagement of their children before Old Zhu passed on so as to reassure him.

Old Zhu was rather satisfied with Shi Qing as his granddaughter-in-law. He personally witnessed Zhu Baoguo and Shi Qing exchange engagement rings. And maybe it was because his wish had been fulfilled that Old Zhu passed on that very night. When the Zhu family found him, Old Zhu's lips were still curled up in a smile.

Half a year later, Old Zhu's in-law, who was also a family friend of the Qiao family, passed on as well. With the deaths of two veteran revolutionaries, everyone felt uneasy. Especially those of similar age, they were worried and did not know when such a day would come for them too. Perhaps if they shut their eyes today, they would never open them again.

The death of Old Lee cast another shadow on the Zhu family. On the day of Old Lee's funeral, Qiao Dongliang specially rushed back from Ping Cheng to mourn Old Lee's death.

Chapter 1463: Elder Lin Was Seriously Ill

Seeing Elder Lee's deceased portrait, Qiao Dongliang cried uncontrollably. His agitated look was comparable to Elder Lee's children. Qiao Dongliang remembered that after he lost his father, Elder Lee was like a father to him as he helped him, took care of him, and watched him form a family.

Even if Ding Jiayi wasn't an understanding wife and loving mother and their lives were a mess in the later days, Qiao Dongliang never put the blame for these things on Elder Lee and felt that it was

his fault. Ding Jiayi was his wife. If something was wrong with Ding Jiayi, she should be managed by him, the husband.

He was the one who didn't realize it and let Ding Jiayi have the chance to teach one of them bad and neglect the other of them, causing a family to become scattered. Words couldn't describe the sadness Qiao Dongliang felt when he thought of how much Elder Lee had helped him but he couldn't do much in the end to repay him.

He even developed the worry that he would be like Elder Lee someday, where he suddenly couldn't see the sun of the next day.

If other families had the same worry, the Zhai family naturally felt that way as well.

After arriving at the Lin family's home next door, Zhai Sheng pressed the doorbell. Who knew that before Zhai Sheng could state his identity, the door of the Lin family's home opened electronically.

Zhai Sheng was stunned and formed negative thoughts in his heart. Elder Lin refused to see Nan Nan and the triplets but was willing to open the door for him at this moment. It was afraid that Elder Lin's situation was no longer optimistic.

Thinking of how much respect and importance Qiao Nan placed for Elder Lin, as well as how close his triplets were to him, Zhai Sheng's face sank. His footsteps were no longer as powerful as before. Instead, there was a feeling of stagnation.

"You're here." Upon seeing Zhai Sheng, Elder Lin smiled. It was just that when Zhai Sheng saw Elder Lin's skinny face, his heart felt like it had been hammered and he nearly couldn't breathe. "Elder Lin, why did you..." Become so skinny?

Seeing that Elder Lin was seated in a wheelchair, Zhai Sheng guessed that his weight should be lighter than an average woman's. "Are there issues with your health? If yes, don't worry. We can rush to the hospital for treatment. Nan Nan will accompany you. She's willing to do so." Nan Nan mentioned before that she wanted to take care of him.

Elder Lin smiled confidently and happily, "I know. I accepted this disciple myself. I know too clearly what kind of girl she is." It was said that no filial son could be found by the bedside of a parent with long-time illness. However, he could proudly tell everyone that by his bedside, there would definitely be Qiao Nan, his disciple, who would not abandon him.

It was just that one couldn't be so selfish.

He Yi told him that this period of time was most critical for Qiao Nan. Through these years of hard work, Qiao Nan's capability and ability were not only recognized by a lot of people in the ministry but also by the leaders in the central authority, who understood that Qiao Nan, who was like new blood, existed and was injected into the ministry.

There was nothing absolute in this world. There wasn't a female diplomat or minister in the history of China in the past. This didn't mean that there couldn't be one now.

Lin Yuankang didn't want his matters to distract Qiao Nan. He wasn't afraid that nobody was willing to take care of him if he was sick and hospitalized. Instead, he was too worried about Nan Nan's filial piety to him. She would definitely apply for leave just to take care of him and miss the best chance to perform in vain. She would not leave him and would take care of him until his last breath.

No. He couldn't do that.

He had worked so hard for so long and helped his disciple so much so that she could persist until today. Wasn't this all in hope that she could replace He Yi when he relinquished his role?

His disciple now had the ability and qualifications. Her popularity in the ministry was also high. If something happened at this time, wouldn't his and his disciple's efforts and hard work for the past ten years be in vain?

Zhai Sheng said in a low voice which carried with it a hint of disapproval, "You should understand that if Nan Nan knows about the truth, she would definitely not be able to accept it and would feel pained. Nan Nan has a thin affinity with kinship. It could be said that Nan Nan's frozen heart was thawed because of your appearance back then and your care and love for her. To Nan Nan, you are her close kin. No one else could be more important in this world."

Of course, career couldn't.

When Lin Yuankang accepted Qiao Nan as a disciple, Qiao Dongliang was still a fool and Ding Jiayi's heart was biased.

If not for Zhai Sheng's help and Lin Yuankang's approval, even if Qiao Nan could persevere and survive, her heart wouldn't have been able to become warm, let alone believe that others would have true feelings for her.

Only Zhai Sheng, the person sleeping next to her, knew best that Elder Lin's appearance was the first beam of sunlight in Qiao Nan's life, who was in despair back then.

Elder Lin sniffed and his voice became low. "I know. Of course I know. This kid has a great heart. I understand. It's precisely because I understand that I can't. I have not lived my life for nothing. It has been pretty exciting. What you don't know is that I have been feeling empty as well. Nan Nan's my disciple. I dote on her like she's my daughter at times and love and protect her like she's my granddaughter at others. How would I bear for her to be sad and blame herself?"

Only heaven, earth, he, and his disciple knew who exactly was whose savior.

"No one can change matters of birth, death, illness, and old age. If Nan Nan stays by my side for a few more days, I won't live for a few more hours. However, I know that Nan Nan's heart has always been by my side. That's enough." How could he let his own health burden his disciple's future?

Two words: No way!

"Zhai Sheng, I let you see me today for the sake of widening Nan Nan's and the triplets' hearts. Perhaps, on the day that I leave, Nan Nan will blame you. However, you must remember that you're a man. You should hold the sky up for Nan Nan. You have to tolerate her scoldings and beatings. We are doing this for the sake of Nan Nan. After I leave, you have to help me dote on her more, okay?"

At Elder Lin's old age, he had seen all kinds of occasions and experienced all kinds of life-and-death scenarios. However, now that it was his turn, he finally understood how complicated and pained his feelings were.

When he was young, he was often scolded and beaten. In a foreign country, he fought hard to survive. Even if he had a hard time, he didn't shed a single tear.

However, when Zhai Sheng mentioned Qiao Nan and the triplets, Elder Lin couldn't hold it back. Tears seeped out from the corners of his eyes. "I... I can't bear it."

Chapter 1464: It's Too Difficult to Persevere

Nan Nan's family relationship was shallow, and so was his. No matter how much fame, fortune, and power he had, he still did not have any family by his side.

Nan Nan's appearance truly filled a gap in his life.

He had lived for eighty-odd years, but only in the ten-over years after accepting Qiao Nan as a disciple did he really feel that he was living a good life.

Old Lin always wondered why he had to 'leave' his good life so quickly in a blink of an eye after having endured so many hardships throughout his life.

Every time he did not allow Qiao Nan and her three children to enter his house to see him, he saw the expressions on their faces. The person who was the most miserable from this was Old Lin. The moment Qiao Nan and her children left, Old Lin would lock himself in his room and not even open it for the auntie who took care of him.

Even though Old Lin had made mental preparations, he still felt as though he was being stabbed when he finally opened up to Zhai Sheng. "Zhai Sheng, I entrusted Nan Nan to you. If you don't take good care of Nan Nan and let her suffer, I'll never let you go."

He no longer had any energy to continue protecting her. No matter how painful it was for Old Lin, or how much he could not let her go, he could only pass this sweet burden on to Zhai Sheng.

"What illness?" Zhai Sheng did not reply, but Lin Yuankang knew that Zhai Sheng had agreed. After all, it was Zhai Sheng's wife and children they were talking about. Looking at Old Lin's frail body, Zhai Sheng shut his eyes and asked somberly.

"Stomach cancer." In the face of his incurable disease, Old Lin replied calmly. "It's in the late stage. There's no way of curing it."

"How did it happen? Didn't you notice it earlier?" Zhai Sheng knew that if it was in the early or intermediate stages, it could still be cured.

At this point, Old Lin was able to speak calmly with Zhai Sheng about his health problems. “I did find out about it early.” With Qiao Nan as his disciple and his three lovely little apprentices, Old Lin thought that his life was a bed of roses and that his life was getting better and better.

But as soon as one knows that his end is near, he will naturally start to appreciate life.

Knowing that he was no longer young, he knew that there were parts of his body that were sure to ‘malfunction’ and need ‘fixing’. This was the only way to ensure he would lead a long life so that he could spend more time with Qiao Nan and her three children. And so, with such consciousness of his health, Lin Yuankang went to the hospital for physical examinations from time to time.

Actually, the first time that the doctor found a problem with Old Lin’s stomach was four years ago. That was the last time Old Lin went abroad for a business trip for the country while protected by Peng Yu.

At that time, Old Lin not only completed the task that had been assigned to him by the state, but he had also gone to confirm his health status. After receiving the same diagnosis, Old Lin bought the treatment plan from foreign doctors and returned to China for the Chinese doctors to treat him.

At that time, Old Lin was suffering from only intermediate stomach cancer.

As long as he removed the tumor and the tumor did not recur, Old Lin would recover.

After a round of surgery, the doctor observed Old Lin for half a year and declared that Old Lin had recovered. But the doctor also reminded Old Lin that even though he had recovered, he should continue to return to the hospital for checkups just in case so as to avoid the recurrence of cancer and a late discovery.

Although the first few years had been fine, when Old Lin returned to the hospital last year for his checkup, he was not only informed that his stomach cancer had recurred but that his cancer had skipped the early and intermediate stages and had reached its late stage! There was no cure for it!

After contracting cancer, Old Lin was willing to endure chemotherapy and medications. But there was no way his old body could endure such torture. Gradually, Old Lin was afraid that Qiao Nan would notice something amiss, so he made up the excuse that his legs were weak and asked the caretaker to push him around in a wheelchair. In this way, Old Lin put on more and larger clothes and covered his legs with a blanket, saying that his legs were frail and could not withstand the wind

blowing on it. Moreover, even when the two of them met, Old Lin never allowed Qiao Nan to stay in his presence for long.

After half a year, Qiao Nan indeed mentioned occasionally that Old Lin had lost some weight. But every time she asked Old Lin about it, he would deny it. Once, Old Lin even said, "I've lost weight, but it's quite normal. I'm already old and I don't exercise much. My appetite is also not as good as you youngsters. People who gain weight at my age probably don't exist, right?"

With that, Qiao Nan thought for a while. Indeed, she had never seen anyone who had gained weight at Old Lin's age. And so, Qiao Nan dismissed her suspicions. How would she have known that Old Lin would play a silly trick and put up a false front, successfully cheating her? After all, she had never thought negatively and was thus naturally less suspicious.

The caretaker auntie had been working for Old Lin for several years. Although Old Lin did not have any family, his temper was good and he was quite a good man. Whenever the caretaker auntie faced any troubles, like financial problems at home, Old Lin would always extend a helping hand.

Thus, knowing that Old Lin wanted to hide it from Qiao Nan, the caretaker auntie helped out. Without her help, Old Lin would never have been able to hide it from Qiao Nan up until today.

Hearing that Old Lin had admitted to Zhai Sheng that he was critically ill, the caretaker auntie could not help but cry out. "Now, Old Lin practically can't eat anything." A few months ago, Uncle Lin used to eat and then throw up, and then eat again.

Because Uncle Lin knew that if he did not eat, he would be weak and without energy. Such an intelligent lady like Qiao Nan would definitely suspect something.

Watching Old Lin force himself to eat in pain, the caretaker auntie was tempted to tell Qiao Nan the truth from time to time or snatch the food away from Old Lin. It's said that living is better than death, but living in this way was simply excruciating.

Now, Old Lin's illness had reached such an advanced stage that he was no longer able to eat.

Old Lin could no longer eat. That was a given. With his health condition, even if he deteriorated slowly, he would still deteriorate as long as he was still alive. In a mere two to three days, Old Lin, who was not fat to begin with, lost so much weight that he seemed like a skeleton.

How could Old Lin allow Qiao Nan and her children to see him in such a state?

Old Lin was a man. He did not care about beauty. But even then, he could not accept his appearance, let alone others. Hence, when Zhai Sheng entered Lin's house and found out about it, he found that there were no reflective glass surfaces in the entire house, much less a mirror.

The caretaker auntie had been watching how Old Lin lived every day in pain and torture. Today, seeing that Zhai Sheng had come to visit, she was actually rather happy. She hoped that Zhai Sheng would be able to convince Old Lin to make up his mind and free himself. Really, it was much better to die than live like this.

Chapter 1465: The Last Perseverance

The auntie expressed that if this were to happen to her, it was afraid that she wouldn't be able to survive for three months, let alone a year, which was how long Elder Lin had persevered for.

She'd rather die readily instead of being tortured endlessly every day. Even if he had fallen asleep, his eyebrows were knitted together due to the pain he was experiencing. Within ten minutes, he would definitely wake up.

The auntie knew that she couldn't tolerate the repeated process of waking up from the pain and trying to fall asleep after that. She would definitely go crazy.

However, this thin old man in front of her had hung in there for so long. The auntie cried every day. She cried so much that tears couldn't seem to flow out today.

After listening to her words, Zhai Sheng's mood became gloomier. "Elder Lin, have you really decided to tell Nan Nan the truth only after you have persevered to the very last moment? I'm worried that your perseverance will let Nan Nan regret for life as she won't have the chance to see you for the very last time. Elder Lin, you choose to hide from Nan Nan in the name of her own good but completely ignore the pain she will feel after knowing the truth. Elder Lin, don't you think you're being too selfish?"

In Nan Nan's heart, career would never be ranked above kinship.

Elder Lin revealed a smile that was uglier than a cry. "It's not the first day you and Nan Nan know about my bad character. I'm old and about to die. Could it be that you're not willing to let me be

stubborn for the last time before I die? I feel heartache for Nan Nan. I can't accept Nan Nan crying in front of me. No, I can't."

Elder Lin choked a sob and couldn't continue his words.

If he had a choice, he wouldn't wish for this as well. It was just that when he thought of his disciple and the triplets crying, Elder Lin realized that his heartache was three times stronger than the physical pain his body was suffering from. Everyone said that he had a heart of stone and didn't care about relationships. However, he realized he wasn't that strong. He couldn't even handle a single tear from his disciple and the triplets.

"Zhai Sheng, we are all selfish. Don't worry. I have an arrangement for Nan Nan. After I leave, spend more time to accompany her. With children, I believe Nan Nan will walk out of this very soon. In the future during Tomb-Sweeping Day and Winter Solstice, don't... don't... don't forget to come visit me in a family of five."

The auntie eventually couldn't hold it back. She covered her mouth and ran to the side to cry.

If it wasn't that he couldn't hold on any longer, Elder Lin would definitely not say such things to Zhai Sheng. He was pricking Zhai Sheng's body with a knife, cutting the flesh from his heart. "What shall we do? The triplets are about to celebrate their birthdays. Can... can I..." He only wanted to live for a few days more. Just a few days more.... At least until the triplets celebrate their birthdays this year. Would that be okay?

Elder Lin didn't have much energy to begin with. After saying so many things to Zhai Sheng, his emotions fluctuated badly. Elder Lin couldn't breathe and his voice lowered. It hurt so much that he almost couldn't utter any sound.

Zhai Sheng took a deep breath and poured a cup of water for Elder Lin. He placed his hand behind Elder Lin's back and soothed him. "You're really suffering a lot." Zhai Sheng could feel that if not for Elder Lin's perseverance, he would have already passed away from the pain he was suffering every second and minute.

Not only did Elder Lin feel heartache for Qiao Nan, but he also loved the triplets.

He didn't want the triplets to shed tears, especially on their birthdays, because of his illness, even if they could celebrate their birthdays every year.

On the account of Elder Lin working hard for the sake of the triplets, Zhai Sheng, who was the father, felt a sense of shame. He didn't think that his love for the triplets was any less than Elder Lin. However, the perseverance Elder Lin had was something he was unable to have now.

"It's... not tough." Elder Lin had said these so softly that Zhai Sheng could hardly hear them. Elder Lin only had one thought, which was for Qiao Nan and the triplets to be happy for as long as possible. This was also why he was protecting Qiao Nan and the triplets. As long as they were well, all his sufferings were worth it.

Seeing that Elder Lin was about to use up all his energy, Zhai Sheng quietly pushed Elder Lin back to his room. He carried Elder Lin to bed, personally removed his shoes, and helped cover him with the blankets.

Before he left, he ordered the auntie to pay close attention to Elder Lin's situation. If Elder Lin's behavior was the slightest bit unusual, regardless of how late it was, she shouldn't hesitate and should inform him immediately.

Elder Lin didn't have anyone else around him. Given that he was so seriously ill, if something unexpected really happened, she couldn't have handled it alone. Aside from bearing the pain and reluctantly agreeing to Elder Lin's perseverance, there was nothing else Zhai Sheng could do for this old man.

The auntie's eyes were swollen and she cried until her throat was hoarse. She could only nod to express that she had heard and remembered Zhai Sheng's words.

The moment he came out from Elder Lin's house and the second the door to Elder Lin's house was shut, Zhai Sheng suddenly thought of Old Master Zhai. Elder Lin would rather suffer, vomit, and tolerate the side effects from the medicines he took so that the triplets could celebrate their birthdays without being gloomy. What about his old master?

Zhai Sheng and Zhai Yaohui had slept on the mattress next to Old Master Zhai yesterday night. That night, Old Master Zhai slept especially well. Indeed, as what Zhai Sheng had said, he even snored. Upon hearing Old Master Zhai's snoring, Zhai Yaohui and Zhai Sheng felt more at ease and smiled.

Based on the old master's loud snores, he should still be in the pink of health. Were they too sensitive? Upon hearing the old master mentioning his wife, they became worried that something had happened to him.

However, at this moment, Zhai Sheng was no longer that certain.

Those closely involved couldn't see clearly. Nan Nan trusted Elder Lin, thus she hadn't discovered Elder Lin's strange behavior. On the other hand, didn't this also prove that Elder Lin had put on a very successful act in front of Nan Nan?

At least from the appearance and mood, Nan Nan didn't feel that anything was wrong with Elder Lin's health condition.

Old Master Zhai had already made him worried enough. He didn't expect that after going to the Lin family's home, he would find out about the pain and unbearable truth. Zhai Sheng had a cold face to begin with. Now, it turned so dark that even dogs would have to run around him if they saw him.

"What's wrong? You look terrible. Did something happen to Elder Lin?" Miao Jing was shocked at Zhai Sheng's face. "Say something. You know how much Nan Nan values her master."

Chapter 1466: Couldn't Persuade Him

"Although Nan Nan relied on her own efforts and bought a small house for Qiao Dongliang in the capital so that she could fetch him over and take care of him, we all know in our hearts that Qiao Dongliang isn't as close to her as Elder Lin is."

As such, if something really happened to Elder Lin, Nan Nan would be the first to be uncontrollably sad. Miao Jing didn't wish for such a situation to happen. Upon thinking that the triplets at home cared about Elder Lin a lot, Miao Jing became more upset. "What exactly happened? I can tell you that if anything happens, you won't be able to coax even one of the three children, let alone Nan Nan."

They weren't afraid of anything if the elderly in the family became old. They weren't afraid that the elderly required people to take care of them if they were old. They were afraid that the juniors couldn't accept that the elderly's life had come to an end.

"Elder Lin's situation isn't optimistic. However, it's going to be the triplets' birthday soon. Elder Lin wishes for them to be happy. Thus, he has been dragging this matter."

With a clang, the shocked Miao Jing couldn't even hold the cup in her hands well. It fell to the ground, smashing into smithereens. "How... how did this happen? He was still fine last month.

Why did he..." According to Zhai Sheng, could it be that Elder Lin couldn't even survive for a day after the triplets celebrated their birthdays? "No, why? How did this happen to Elder Lin? There should be a reason, right?"

How would a healthy old man be at the risk of losing his life just like that? If it wasn't a terminal illness, then it should be an accident. Which category did Elder Lin belong to?

"Stomach cancer. Last stage." Zhai Sheng took a deep breath. "The auntie, who's taking care of Elder Lin, said that he is no longer eating. It's tough to take medicines to continue one's life. There are a lot of side effects from the medicine. Under such torment, even an average young man wouldn't hang in there and choose to give up, let alone an old man like Elder Lin. If not for the triplets..."

If not for the triplets, Elder Lin didn't have to suffer so much and could choose to die from the illness a long time ago.

Zhai Sheng felt very incompetent at Elder Lin's perseverance and stubbornness as he didn't know what he could do to help this old man relieve the physical pain. Furthermore, he was tolerating the pain for his wife and three children.

Miao Jing was so shocked that she covered her mouth. Stomach cancer. Last stage!

Oh, god. Why did something like this happen?

"Has he really reached that stage where there's no cure at all?" Of course, Miao Jing knew how scary cancer was. Just hearing the words 'last stage cancer' alone made Miao Jing feel terrified. She couldn't imagine someone around her having such a scary illness.

Zhai Sheng sat down with a defeated look. "If there's any possibility of saving him, do you think Elder Lin will bear not to see the triplets and Nan Nan for a few days? Elder Lin was worried that his current look would scare the four of them. He's not willing to let Nan Nan worry about him and neglect her own career in the process."

"..." Miao Jing didn't say anything. However, she understood Elder Lin's mindset and thoughts.

Zhai Sheng sighed. “Mom, I’m not only worried about Elder Lin now. Do you still remember what the old master said yesterday night? Initially, when Dad and I saw his sleeping look yesterday night, we were both relieved. However, after seeing Elder Lin today, I’m afraid...”

“You’re afraid that his mindset is the same as Elder Lin’s and that they are both hanging there for the sake of the triplets’ birthdays?” Miao Jing’s heart shuddered. No, it couldn’t be. It must not be like this. Elder Lin was in his last stage of stomach cancer. He couldn’t be cured, thus his days were numbered. However, the old master’s health was always good. He didn’t have any illness or pain, and he even insisted on doing a set of punches every morning.

No matter how she looked at it, she didn’t feel that the old master’s situation was similar to Elder Lin’s. “Zhai Sheng, could it be that you have thought too much? He wouldn’t do this. He has a strong relationship with your grandma. It wasn’t the first time that he mentioned her in front of us. It might be that he purely thought about your grandma that day and wanted to chat more about her with you so that you would remember that you had such a grandma. I think the old master didn’t mean anything else.”

At this point in time, Miao Jing didn’t dare to agree that Old Master Zhai’s performance yesterday night was because his health condition was similar to Elder Lin’s and that he was hanging in there just for the triplets’ birthdays. “However, your worries are valid. Why don’t we do this? Let’s bring the old master to the hospital to do a physical examination since we are concerned for him. In that case, we can also buy peace of mind. The hospital results wouldn’t be wrong, right?”

Miao Jing still didn’t feel that the old master was the same as Elder Lin and that they were about to finish walking the last moments of their lives. A few days ago, someone had seen the old master and even joked with her that based on how he was looking, he could probably still live for another seven to eight years.

It was rare to see someone reaching his or her hundreds. However, it was highly possible that their old master could reach his nineties.

How could a man whom everyone felt could live to his nineties just pass away without any warning when he hadn’t even reached the age of ninety? It should be that Zhai Sheng was too agitated by Elder Lin and felt that everything was pessimistic.

“Okay, you can just mention these words to me here. In front of your dad, don’t say anything. Otherwise, he will hammer you to death. At that time, even I can’t help you. As for Elder Lin, it’s not easy to pass the stage with Nan Nan and the triplets.” If Nan Nan and the triplets knew about Elder Lin, they would definitely stay by Elder Lin’s bed all the time.

Miao Jing sighed. “He chose to hide it from Qiao Nan such that she didn’t even have a chance to take care of him. He made such a decision alone. Do you think that he will regret it after he passed away?” People were the most vulnerable when they were sick. She believed that Elder Lin not only needed Nan Nan’s care but also desired it.

“No.” Zhai Sheng shook his head, indicating that his mom had thought too much. “I persuaded Elder Lin for a long time, hoping that he would be willing to tell Nan Nan his condition. However, regardless of what I said, he refused to agree to it. He even forced me to hide it from Nan Nan together.”

There was no doubt about Elder Lin’s feelings for Nan Nan. It far exceeded that for her parents, Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi. Ding Jiayi never paid attention to Nan Nan and never treated her as a daughter to be cherished. As for Qiao Dongliang, he wasn’t the father of only Nan Nan.

It was a tough call.

Compared to these two people, Elder Lin’s feelings for Nan Nan were simpler and stronger.

Chapter 1467: The Situation Doesn’t Look Too Good

After getting such an answer, Miao Jing could not be happy for Qiao Nan. She was all too clear that once Qiao Nan found out the truth, what Qiao Nan would face was not sadness but the biggest blow from which she might never recover from. “Zhai Sheng, I’m anxious. I’m afraid Nan Nan and the triplets may not be able to take the shock.”

Zhai Sheng did not say anything, but his expression was even more somber than Miao Jing’s. Based on his understanding of Qiao Nan, not only would what his mother had said be true, but in reality, it would be even more extreme than what his mother had said.

Old Lin sincerely treated Qiao Nan as his own kin, and so did Nan Nan.

“Mom, it’s not that she won’t be able to accept it. Rather, she won’t be able to bear it. I’m also worried about this.” The previous day, he had gone to pick the four of them up from work and school. Along the way, he listened to the incessant chatter of Er Bao and San Bao. There was bound to be a mention of Lin Yuankang every few sentences. Even though he did not participate in the conversation, every time Er Bao and San Bao talked about not having seen Grandpa Lin recently and how they felt as though their lives had become empty and cold, Da Bao would perk his ears up

and listen closely. The words of Er Bao and San Bao resonated deeply with him and Da Bao could not help but clench his face and nod along.

Da Bao's care toward Old Lin was not any less than Er Bao or San Bao.

If Old Lin was really gone, Zhai Sheng was afraid that Qiao Nan and the children would not be able to handle it and would break down. If it were really the case that Old Lin were to pass on, it would be difficult for him to persuade Qiao Nan and the children before he went to join the army.

“So what should we do?” Even Miao Jing herself had goose bumps upon hearing the news. The thought of Qiao Nan and the children being upset about Old Lin made Miao Jing panic. “If that really happens, should I comfort Nan Nan or the three children?” There were too many ‘treasures’ in the family. Now that all four treasures were going to face a challenge at the same time, Miao Jing was in a panic about who to comfort first.

No matter who she comforted, Miao Jing could not bear to see them sad and shedding tears.

Thinking of all these, Miao Jing was in a frenzy. “Zhai Sheng, do you think the medical skills of doctors abroad are better? If we hurry and send Old Lin overseas for treatment, do you think we can buy some time for Old Lin?” Every day counted when they were talking about delaying Qiao Nan and the children's misery.

What if foreign medical equipment and treatment methods were so advanced that they could really cure Old Lin's illness?

Actually, Miao Jing herself knew that this was superfluous.

She had never suffered from cancer, but she knew how terrible this illness could be. Once a person suffered from advanced cancer, there was practically no medication in the world that could cure it. Besides, the problem of treatment would not be a long-term solution. In other words, advanced cancer could really only be cured by a miracle pill. Otherwise, there was no point in eating anything else. Even if they were to send him abroad and search through all the hospitals in western developed nations, she knew that it would only tire Old Lin out and make him suffer even more before his death.

“No, let's not talk about going abroad. With Old Lin's health condition now, he can't even get out of his house, take short-distance transportation, or even digest well.” Today, Old Lin had only said a

few words to him, and while speaking, his mood fluctuated drastically. In the end, Old Lin was too tired to continue and his voice was raspy and he could not even speak any longer.

If they insisted on sending Old Lin abroad for treatment, he could not guarantee that Old Lin could get on the plane safely in his current condition.

This would no longer be about treatment but about sending Old Lin off even earlier.

“Sigh...” Other than sighing, Miao Jing did not know what else she could do. “How about I send Old Lin some nourishing chicken soup? It doesn’t matter how much he can drink. However much he can drink, even just a single drop will be good.”

With that, Miao Jing immediately stood up and huddled in the kitchen with the auntie to cook up chicken soup for Old Lin.

Miao Jing, who had been consumed with cooking, had completely forgotten what Zhai Sheng had mentioned earlier about how he had suspicions that Old Zhai had similar thoughts as Old Lin, which was to survive to celebrate the birthday of the three children.

Miao Jing did not believe that. She wanted to forget about this, but these words were spoken by Zhai Sheng himself. How could Zhai Sheng be confused by his mother and not remember what kind of important questions they had been discussing just five minutes earlier?

Zhai Sheng would never rest easy about Old Lin and would call the caretaker auntie from time to time to check on Old Lin.

Perhaps it was Zhai Sheng’s return that gave Old Lin someone to talk to. It was not that Old Lin did not think of seeing himself as an ordinary elderly who needed someone to take care of him now that he had this illness.

But his care for Qiao Nan’s well-being triumphed over his own desires. And so, it was rare for Old Lin, who had been in a panic this whole time, to have someone to share his secrets and burden with.

After he had endured for a period of time and finally getting a release, it was the most relaxing day he had had ever since he fell ill. As Old Lin chatted and eventually fell asleep, he was carried into the room by Zhai Sheng and he rested for half an hour before he finally opened his eyes and realized that he had fallen asleep unconsciously.

This had been the most comfortable and peaceful day that Old Lin had had in the last ten days.

In this half an hour, Old Lin was peaceful and at rest and did not scrunch his eyebrows up in pain. Neither did he wake up suddenly in pain or in shock. And just half an hour of good sleep was enough for the auntie to be eternally grateful.

When Qiao Nan came home from work after picking up the children, she immediately asked Zhai Sheng, “Have you gone to see my master? What’s the matter with him? Why has he been refusing to allow the children and me into his house? He’s been saying he’s down with the flu. Has he visited the doctor? What did the doctor say? This flu has been going on for too long.”

The last time her master had caught the flu, he had clearly agreed that they would be allowed to visit him as long as the children wore masks. This time, she wanted to use this method to enter, but her master would have none of it. He refused to see her, and even the children did not even stand a chance at entering his house. If they wanted to chat with him, they had to do so through a door!

Thus, Qiao Nan had asked Zhai Sheng to take a look to get a clear answer. “Is my master throwing a temper?”

Chapter 1468: Everyone Was Weird

At that time, she expressed that she wanted to use her salary to buy a small house for her father so that she could fetch him over and take care of him. Her master had thrown tantrums back then.

He had so many houses that he could become a landlord. Her master felt that there wasn’t a need for her to waste this sum of money. Her father could just move in to his house. Not only would she save money, but there would also be someone looking after her master’s house.

However, Qiao Nan was not used to taking advantage of other people. She was bent on the house. Although the house was for her father to stay in, the owner of the house was Qiao Nan.

Even if she had only bought a small house now, Qiao Nan knew that based on the soaring housing prices in the capital, the value of this small house would increase rapidly in a few years’ time. She would earn no less than stocks and it was much safer than stocks. Or perhaps, these two couldn’t be compared at all.

Who asked this to be the capital and that the small house was in a prime location? The houses in 5th Ring Road wouldn't be cheap in the future. Furthermore, this house was in 3rd Ring Road. Based on this geographical location, it was difficult for the prices not to increase.

One insisted on giving while the other refused to accept. The two of them, who had always been in a good relationship, became anxious and angry over the house. Even if Qiao Nan had already softened her attitude and coaxed Elder Lin, he was still unwilling to accept it and wasn't appeased. Qiao Nan had no choice but to leave her three children with Elder Lin to coax him. She returned to her in-laws' place so that she wouldn't continue to anger Elder Lin. If she caused him to burst a blood vessel, that would be terrible.

That was what happened previously. The problem was that Qiao Nan didn't have any impression of what their contradiction was about this time around. "Is my master angry over something and thus not willing to see us?" She was the only affected party back then. Now, even the triplets were rejected. Qiao Nan didn't feel at ease.

How else could Zhai Sheng have answered? If he told the truth, Elder Lin would definitely not let him off. "Don't think too much. People will always throw tantrums. There might not be a reason for it. Elder Lin's like an old child. Once he throws tantrum, he's more unreasonable than a child. I think that Elder Lin will be appeased a few days later. Also, tomorrow's the triplets' birthday. If you have any questions, you can ask him then."

Zhai Sheng didn't dare to reveal any expression in front of Qiao Nan for fear that she would sense something.

Upon thinking that the triplets' birthday was tomorrow, Zhai Sheng felt especially terrible in his heart. He was a 1.8-meter tall and big man. He obviously knew that such a situation had happened but he couldn't think of a solution and had to watch things develop in a negative direction helplessly.

It was very rare for such a useless moment to appear in Zhai Sheng's life. Once it appeared, it was even more frustrating for him.

It was the triplets' birthday tomorrow. This meant that after tomorrow, Elder Lin didn't need to force himself to be strong and tolerate the pain. However, upon thinking that this also meant that the old man, who doted on Qiao Nan and the triplets the most, could 'leave' any time after tomorrow, Zhai Sheng hoped that tomorrow would never arrive.

“Zhai Sheng, help me take something from the warehouse. When we don’t use it usually, it’s all over the place. Now that I need it, I don’t know where to find it. There are too many things in the warehouse. I can’t move them alone. Come and help me.”

Miao Jing was worried that Zhai Sheng would expose himself in front of Qiao Nan. Qiao Nan was asking more questions and specific details. Miao Jing was afraid that Elder Lin’s condition would be exposed and could only pull Zhai Sheng away.

If it was said that this was Elder Lin’s last wish before he passed away, Miao Jing, who was also an elderly, felt that even if she was upset, she would be willing to respect Elder Lin’s wishes and thoughts.

“I can help as well.” Da Bao put down his schoolbag and wanted to follow along. However, Miao Jing stopped him. “The warehouse’s messy and dirty, full of dust. What can you, a child, do there? Stay here to accompany Er Bao and San Bao. Also, you just came back from school. There’s so much dust. Go and wash your face and hands, then drink some water and eat some fruits. Understand?”

Her eldest grandson was a smart child. Miao Jing had to be careful even in front of Da Bao, let alone in front of Qiao Nan. The triplets had an extremely good relationship with Nan Nan. If Da Bao knew about the matter, it was impossible to hide it from Nan Nan then.

At this moment, the auntie brought out a plate of fruits that contained dragon fruits the triplets preferred to eat. Er Bao and San Bao cheered and pulled Da Bao along to wash their faces and hands. After cleaning themselves up, they ate the fruits.

Da Bao wasn’t that naive. He walked to Qiao Nan and said, “Mom, what’s wrong with master grandpa?” In the past, he was never like this. “I feel that Dad and grandma are a little weird as well today.”

If he helped his grandma in the past, she would always be happy. Even if he eventually wasn’t of help, his grandma would compliment him. Today, his grandma didn’t allow him to help out. This was different from the usual grandma.

After glancing at Er Bao and San Bao, who were foolishly smiling, Qiao Nan gently pulled Da Bao to her side and asked, “You think so as well?” Brother Zhai spent too little time at home. Although Brother Zhai had been promoted, compared to the other soldiers, the time he spent at home was already several times that of ordinary soldiers.

However, in the past, every time Brother Zhai was at home, her mother-in-law would never let him do anything. If Brother Zhai tried to do something at home, her mother-in-law would stop him whenever she could. Furthermore, there were people at home and some things didn't need to be done urgently. Her mother-in-law would rather Brother Zhai rest more and spend his time accompanying the children. It was strange that her mother-in-law had made the request today for Brother Zhai to help out.

“Yes.” Da Bao nodded. “Mom, I haven't seen master grandpa for a few days. I miss him.” Da Bao really missed Elder Lin.

Elder Lin was especially good to the three children. Zhai Yaohui was stern and Qiao Dongliang stayed at Ping Cheng previously, thus they interacted very little with the triplets. A few years ago, the triplets didn't even have an impression of Qiao Dongliang, their grandpa.

What was different was that when the triplets were still drinking milk, Elder Lin had often accompanied them. He played with them, carried them, and touched their little hands. As such, when the triplets started to recognize people, they already showed that they were close to him.

This time around, Elder Lin refused to see anyone. Da Bao felt terrible in his heart. “Mom, does master grandpa not like us anymore?” The three of them were obedient and didn't get into trouble.

Chapter 1469: Fulfilling the Old Man's Wishes

When Er Bao was naughty in the past, master grandpa didn't get angry. He even said that boys should be more mischievous, and thus, it was good that Er Bao was like that.

For the past few days, even Er Bao didn't provoke master grandpa. Why would he suddenly ignore them for no apparent reason?

“How could that be?” Qiao Nan answered Da Bao confidently. “Master grandpa loves the three of you the most. When you were still in my stomach, he hoped every day that you would come out soon so that he could give you this and that and teach you this and that. He said that he wanted to groom you so that you are more outstanding than me. Master grandpa loves all of you, so Da Bao, you can't doubt him.”

Regardless of the circumstances, even if Qiao Nan and the three children were rejected by Lin Yuankang for the past few days consecutively, she never doubted that Lin Yuankang had treated them with this attitude because he had a change of heart and loathed them.

“Then, what happened to master grandpa?” Regardless of how smart Da Bao was, he was just a seven-year-old child. He didn’t understand. If it wasn’t that master grandpa didn’t like them, why was he unwilling to see them? He missed his master grandpa a lot. Didn’t his master grandpa miss him? “We haven’t seen him for a long time. We miss him.”

“Yes. Mom, master grandpa’s unwilling to see us. Doesn’t he miss us?” San Bao felt depressed as well. She was a girl and was especially favored by Elder Lin. In front of San Bao, he was simply an old man who had no limits when it came to doting on his grandchildren.

However, at this moment, even San Bao wasn’t an exception. He refused to see all of them. San Bao was so aggrieved that she felt like crying.

Qiao Nan felt heavy in her heart. She said with pain, “Don’t worry. Perhaps master grandpa encountered something. He will see you. Also, I feel that even if we can’t see him, it doesn’t mean he can’t see us. Don’t forget that he has a telescope at home. No matter how far we are, he can see us. Maybe when all of you go to school and come home from school, master grandpa had hidden to take a sneak peek at you.” Toward the end, Qiao Nan’s heart twitched painfully.

Some things didn’t have to be spoken in order to be felt.

Even if Qiao Nan didn’t understand the situation a few days ago, based on Elder Lin’s behavior recently and what had happened to Old Master Zhai yesterday night, Qiao Nan already had a hunch.

Qiao Nan knew that Elder Lin couldn’t bear to not see the three children for so many days. The only explanation was that he didn’t let them visit him, but he had hidden and secretly looked at the four of them.

“Why?” San Bao didn’t understand. “If master grandpa wants to see us, he can just do so openly. I will dress up prettily and wear the dress that he gave me. Isn’t that better?” Could it be that she would become prettier if he hid and looked at her?

Qiao Nan’s face turned pale. “That’s because master grandpa is mischievous. He’s even naughtier than the three of you. Even Xiao Bao couldn’t be compared to him. Didn’t I teach you before? If master grandpa throws tantrums, you have to help me coax him. He…” is already old. There’s not much time you could spend with him.

However, toward the end, Qiao Nan's throat hurt and she couldn't say the remaining words.

"Mom?" Da Bao's eyes changed. He stayed close to Qiao Nan and held her hand tightly. He didn't know how to explain, but after he heard her words, he felt that something bad was going to happen. He was scared.

Qiao Nan hugged Da Bao gently. She slowly stroked his head lightly. "Da Bao, master grandpa loves the way you smile. Da Bao, bring Er Bao and San Bao to change their clothes. Wear something nice, as if you are celebrating the new year. Shall we go and play in master grandpa's courtyard?"

Da Bao sniffed and his eyes turned red. "Mom, I want to see master grandpa. Is he willing to open the door for us today?"

Qiao Nan forced out a smile and didn't answer him. However, her attitude had already answered Da Bao's question.

Da Bao rubbed his eyes and pulled Er Bao and San Bao along to change clothes. When San Bao was changing into a dress, she couldn't help but ask Da Bao, "Da Bao, what did you and Mom chat about? Why couldn't I understand?"

Da Bao wore the suit that Elder Lin had given him and frowned. "I didn't say anything to Mom. I'm the same as you. We both miss master grandpa."

"Da Bao, why isn't master grandpa willing to see us?" Until now, Er Bao didn't understand why master grandpa would behave as such.

Da Bao sighed in distress. "I was born only one or two hours earlier than you. How would I understand more than you? I... Mom said it. Master grandpa likes us. You don't have to know about the rest. Anyway, we can just dress up nicely and play in master grandpa's courtyard. He will be happy."

When they were in school, Da Bao usually wasn't as lively as Er Bao and San Bao. However, if something happened in class, he was more concerned than Er Bao and San Bao. After listening to it once, he would remember it in his heart.

Coincidentally, one of their classmate's grandma was ill and passed away. Passed away meant that this person was gone and they couldn't be seen in the future.

"Oh."

"Okay."

Since Da Bao had said so, Er Bao and San Bao no longer asked questions. They listened to Qiao Nan and dressed themselves up.

San Bao wore a dress and she ran to Qiao Nan. She turned in a circle. "Mom, do you think I'm pretty? Every time I wear a dress, master grandpa would compliment me that I'm the prettiest girl in this world. Do you think master grandpa will like it?" Regardless, she liked how she looked now.

"Pretty. Our San Bao is the prettiest when wearing a dress." Most importantly, her master said before that a girl like San Bao should wear a dress and put on shiny leather shoes. Her hair should be braided and she should be dressed like a butterfly. This was the correct way to raise a girl. "You have put on such a beautiful dress. Let's go to master grandpa's courtyard to play. We can't waste this chance."

Qiao Nan got the three children to hold hands. She guarded them by walking on the outer side of the road and walked toward the Lin's residence.

Although the four of them couldn't enter the Lin family's home, they could still enter the courtyard. Unlike previous times, they stayed in the courtyard to play and didn't knock on the door and announce that they were there to visit Elder Lin.

The three children played happily in the courtyard. Er Bao and San Bao were especially hyper.

Chapter 1470: The Cruel Truth

Er Bao provoked San Bao. San Bao deliberately screamed and stomped her leg, then ran after Er Bao like a tigress.

One of them was running and the other was chasing. The quiet courtyard became lively with these two children alone.

The children's vigorous laughter was very attractive. Furthermore, Elder Lin treasured the triplets. He had already noticed them when they appeared in the Lin family's courtyard.

Seeing that Qiao Nan and the triplets seemed to be here to visit him, Elder Lin was both happy and sad. He hurriedly got the auntie to push him toward the hall. He quietly lifted a corner of the curtain of the glass windows and looked out. He was especially worried. If the four of them wanted to enter and visit him, his refusal would cause the triplets to reveal extremely sad expressions.

What was strange was that this time around, his disciple didn't knock on the door. Instead, she brought her three children to play in his courtyard. Elder Lin noticed that they were dressed differently from usual, as if celebrating the festive period. When San Bao ran around, the corners of her dress were raised. To Elder Lin, she looked good.

As Elder Lin looked at the triplets' happy looks when they were playing, he used his hand to rub the corners of his eyes. He didn't know how many more times he could look at such a beautiful scene. It was best to look at them more now.

As such, Elder Lin couldn't bear to blink. He tried his best to open his eyes wide and kept staring at the warm smiling faces of Qiao Nan and the triplets.

Qiao Nan let the three children go back to their home hand-in-hand after the auntie from the Zhai family told them that dinner was ready. From the start to the end, Qiao Nan didn't knock on the Lin family's door and call for her master to open the door to see the four of them.

"Uncle Lin, Qiao Nan and the rest have headed back. Do you want to take a break?" The auntie knew that as long as Qiao Nan and the triplets were still in the Lin family compound where he could still see them, Elder Lin would definitely not move.

Seeing that Elder Lin had hung in there for so long, the auntie was worried that he would be tired. As such, she wanted to push him back to rest.

Perhaps it was because Elder Lin had seen how happy the triplets were while playing that he seemed to be in a particularly good mood tonight. Upon thinking that it was the triplets' birthday tomorrow, not only did Elder Lin drink the soup that the auntie had specially brewed for him, but he even hummed a folk song happily.

Regardless of whether the tune Elder Lin hummed was nice or not, the auntie could tell that he was in a particularly good mood.

It was good that he was in a good mood. The auntie couldn't care about the rest.

"Uncle Lin, do you want to sleep early tonight?" She pushed Elder Lin back to the room on the first floor, helped him to bed, and helped him lie down.

"Yes, I'll rest early today. It's the triplets' birthday tomorrow. I must rest well today so that I accompany them for a great birthday tomorrow." It was also the last birthday he would be celebrating with the triplets.

Elder Lin didn't say this clearly. However, the auntie had already understood the hidden meaning in Elder Lin's words.

The atmosphere of the Lin family improved as Elder Lin was in a good mood. However, the situation wasn't as good in the Zhai family.

Once Miao Jing and Zhai Sheng came out from the 'warehouse', they heard the auntie in their home mention that Qiao Nan and the triplets had dressed up and gone to the Lin family.

Upon hearing this news, Miao Jing felt panicked. She looked at Zhai Sheng and said, "Why do you think Nan Nan brought the triplets to next door?" Regardless of the reason, Miao Jing couldn't calm down.

If the mother and sons insisted on seeing Elder Lin, he would feel terrible in his heart for having rejected them. Having suffered such a serious illness and to be tormented psychologically as well, Miao Jing had the urge to pull the four of them back. If it was another possibility, Miao Jing didn't dare imagine what Qiao Nan would say or do after visiting him. The second 'possibility' was really full of many other possibilities.

Zhai Sheng knew his wife well. He sighed. "Elder Lin's situation is already very clear. Otherwise, Nan Nan wouldn't have gotten me to visit him specially. Perhaps she had already sensed that something is wrong with him. He wouldn't see her and the children but might be willing to see me." That was because once Elder Lin was 'gone', he would become the only one who could replace and include Elder Lin's share of love and protection for Nan Nan and the triplets.

As such, Elder Lin wouldn't see anyone else. However, he would definitely be willing to see him.

From this point alone, Zhai Sheng could feel that although Elder Lin wanted to hide it from Qiao Nan, it might not be that Qiao Nan didn't know anything. "Nan Nan felt something."

"..." Miao Jing's expression froze. "Then, Nan Nan..."

"Don't worry. Nan Nan wouldn't do anything that worries others."

After Qiao Nan brought the children home, the expressions on their faces were still alright. Er Bao and San Bao smiled brightly. Miao Jing secretly heaved a sigh of relief. "It's almost time for dinner. Why did the four of you head next door?"

"To play in master grandpa's courtyard." San Bao exhaled and gulped down water. "It's so hot." It was still hot at the end of September. Coupled with the fact that Er Bao and San Bao were full of energy, sweat started to form on their faces and bodies within a minute.

Miao Jing looked at Qiao Nan carefully. Nan Nan brought the three children next door just to let them play in the courtyard? Were things really that simple?

Zhai Sheng hinted Miao Jing with his eyes. "Er Bao, San Bao, look at how sweaty both of you are. Go to the washroom and wash your face. Wipe away the sweat on your body. Don't catch a cold. Remember to wash your hands clean."

"Here, grandma will bring you there." Miao Jing couldn't gauge Qiao Nan's reaction and was afraid she would ruin things. Once she heard her son's words, she brought the three children to the washroom to wash their faces. Among the three grandchildren, apart from Da Bao, who had completely inherited the genes from his parents, even if Er Bao and San Bao were smart enough, their performance would, at most, be better than an average child's and wouldn't be as overboard as Da Bao's.

As such, Miao Jing would rather face the three grandchildren than Qiao Nan. She was afraid that her words or even an action of hers would let the cat out of the bag.

After Miao Jing led the three children away, Qiao Nan's slightly curved lips couldn't help but lower. Her spring-like temperament immediately became cold, and people couldn't help but feel heartache for her. Zhai Sheng hugged Qiao Nan. "Don't think too much. There are some matters we can't control no matter how unwilling we are."

He had already said before that his Nan Nan was the smartest girl in this world.

Elder Lin's attitude was so abnormal and strong. How could Nan Nan not feel anything at all and not guess the truth? It was Elder Lin who had thought things too simply. This master-disciple pair always thought for each other, making people feel the heartache more.

Qiao Nan buried her face in Zhai Sheng's arms and cried silently.