

## **RTAMM 161**

### Chapter 161: Fate

“Nan Nan?” Qiao Dongliang was stunned. A few days ago, Brother Zhou had insisted on getting Nan Nan as his daughter-in-law. Today, Nan Nan seemed as if she knew Brother Zhou’s son. Could it be that...

“I had to thank you for what happened last time.” Nan Nan smiled in embarrassment. She did not know the name of the man who stood in front of her. She only knew that he was a soldier.

“It’s... it’s you?” Zhou Jun blushed. His attitude changed from being aggressive to being cautious. He felt so uneasy and conscious of himself. “Oh, I remembered. Someone in your family is sick, and he stays in this hospital as well.”

“Yes.” Qiao Nan nodded and put down her bag. She poured a bowl of terrapin soup that she prepared for today and brought it to Qiao Dongliang. “My dad was injured and had to stay in the hospital.”

“Oh, Un-Uncle, how are you doing?” After knowing who Qiao Dongliang was, Zhou Jun gave a ninety-degree bow to Qiao Dongliang.

Qiao Dongliang was injured and his mobility was restricted. Otherwise, he would have been startled and jumped up at Zhou Jun’s behavior. “Nan Nan, do you know Zhou Jun, the son of Brother Zhou?” He wanted Qiao Nan to explain to him what was going on.

“So you are his son.” Qiao Nan was surprised. The world was very small.

“Nan Nan, you should address Brother Zhou as ‘uncle’.” Qiao Dongliang corrected Nan Nan. In the beginning, they were not as close to each other, hence it was alright to be less strict in the form of address. Now, it was inappropriate to be so casual in the form of address.

“Uncle Zhou.”

“Oh, good girl.” It would be all the better if Qiao Nan addressed him as ‘father’. “Jun-er, are you acquainted with Nan Nan?” Zhou Bing had a devilish sparkle in his eyes. His wife was right about this.

Zhou Bing cast a look of admiration at his wife. His wife lifted her chin proudly. Zhou Jun was her son. She knew what kind of girls her son liked.

“Jun-er, how did you get to know Nan Nan? Didn’t you spend all your time in the army?” Zhou Jun’s mother was perplexed and found it strange. It was impossible for her son to get to know such a good lady like Nan Nan.

He stayed in the army all this while and he seldom came home. Nan Nan was still a student. The only place she frequented would be the school.

No matter how she thought about it, she could not figure out how they came to know each other.

“Emm... Brother Zhou helped me greatly in the past.” Qiao Nan pondered for a while before replying. She found it embarrassing to say that Zhou Jun came to pass her the money at Zhai Sheng’s orders.

“No, no, it was not me who helped her. I only passed her things on behalf of someone else.” Zhou Jun blushed. He only went on errands for Zhai Sheng and did not help the young lady.

“But I still troubled you to make the trip.”

“What is going on, Nan Nan?” Qiao Dongliang was clueless.

Nan Nan said that Zhou Jun had helped her, while Zhou Jun denied helping her. Both of them did not seem to be lying.

“Dad.” Qiao Nan pondered for a while and leaned toward Qiao Dongliang’s ear. “When you were sent to the hospital on that day, Brother Zhai had something on, so he asked Brother Zhou to pass me the money on his behalf.”

“I see... Then, I would have to thank him for his help.” Qiao Dongliang finally understood what was going on.

The Zhai family was an established and prominent family. Though Zhai Sheng was quite young, he had served in the army for years. He had achieved many military exploits and rose through the ranks without the help of his family.

Even though Zhou Jun was older than Zhai Sheng, Zhai Sheng ranked higher in the army than Zhou Jun.

“It is fate... It is all fate.” Although Zhou Bing did not really understand what was going on, to him, his son and Qiao Nan were destined to get to know each other. There might be a chance that she would be their daughter-in-law.

“Dad.” Zhou Jun felt embarrassed and angry. He quickly poured his father a cup of tea. “Dad, you must be thirsty after such a long chat. Have some water.”

Zhou Bing took the cup of tea and glared at his son. His son was so disappointing. He did all this for the sake of his son!

“Emm...” Qiao Nan blinked. The atmosphere seemed to be awkward. In particular, Zhou Jun’s parents seemed to be casting meaningful looks at her. “Dad, what is going on?”

“Nothing.” Qiao Dongliang patted Qiao Nan’s hands a few times, assuring her that nothing was wrong.

Even though Zhou Jun passed the money to Nan Nan on behalf of Zhai Sheng, it was just a simple task. There was nothing much to it.

Nan Nan was still young, she still did not understand what a relationship was about. It was too early to discuss marriage.

“Oh.” Since Qiao Dongliang said so, Qiao Nan did not give it much thought. “Dad, have the soup while it is still hot. Otherwise, it will be too fishy when it turns cold.”

After pouring a bowl of soup for Qiao Dongliang, Qiao Nan poured another bowl of soup for Zhou Bing as usual. “Uncle Zhou, terrapin soup is good for the body.”

“Terrapin soup is very nutritious. We don’t get to drink this type of soup nowadays.” Zhou Bing’s eyes sparkled. He did not seem like a patient during his stay in the hospital. In fact, it seemed like he was enjoying life. “Delicious! Nan Nan, you have good culinary skills. Jun-er, do you want to have a taste?”

Zhou Bing passed the bowl of soup to Zhou Jun reluctantly.

As the saying goes, the quickest way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.

With such good culinary skills, Nan Nan would be a good wife in the future.

“Dad, you can have it. I am in good health.” Zhou Jun did not know how to react to this situation. He was strong and healthy while his father was injured. How could he have the bowl of soup that was intended for his father?

Zhou Jun might find it ridiculous, but his mother was elated. She would go to all the troubles to get Nan Nan as her daughter-in-law.

“It’s so crowded today.” Ding Jiayi had worked overtime for a few days to make up for her absence. After having a good rest in the morning, she came to the hospital with Qiao Zijin.

To her surprise, she saw an unfamiliar young man at the hospital.

“Hi, Auntie!” Zhou Jun stood up at attention and greeted Ding Jiayi enthusiastically.

Ding Jiayi was all smiles at Zhou Jun’s polite greetings. However, Zhou Jun’s mother gave a strong tug at her son’s hand. Jun-er was such a fool. Despite being a soldier, he was so poor in judging people and assessing the situation! He had flattered the wrong person!

Qiao Zijin and Qiao Nan were supposed to go back home whenever Ding Jiayi was at the hospital, but judging from Ding Jiayi’s unreliable nature and Qiao Nan’s cold attitude toward her, Zhou Jun’s mother could tell that Qiao Nan and Ding Jiayi were not close to each other.

Zhou Jun’s mother used to think that ‘Parents always have their good reasons’. Ding Jiayi might be impolite and unreasonable, but she was Qiao Nan’s mother after all. Qiao Nan was so nice to her father, so how could she be so cold toward her mother?

Then, she learned from her husband that Ding Jiayi was unreasonable and biased.

## Chapter 162: Embarrassed to Look at the Dimwit

Particularly, when Zhou Jun's mother heard that during Qiao Dongliang's first night in the hospital, Ding Jiayi indiscriminately slapped Qiao Nan until the latter bled, she understood that Qiao Nan was a very sensible young lady. She also understood why Qiao Nan never had any smile on her face whenever she saw her own mother.

Her man had an accident, yet Ding Jiayi could only sit on the ground and wailed that she was penniless as she slapped her thighs. In the end, the money was coughed out by the younger daughter.

Indeed, if Qiao Nan had not been such an excellent child, given Ding Jiayi's temperament, she dared not be in-laws with such a family!

"Brother Zhou, your son is in the army." Ding Jiayi smiled brightly at this moment, and her tone was unprecedentedly good. Her smile gave Zhou Bing and his wife goosebumps. They were murmuring in their hearts, "Is Ding Jiayi possessed today?"

During normal times, she did not even bother to greet them. Her face was always black as if they owed her money. Why was she so sweet-tongued all of a sudden today?

"Yes, he is in the army." Zhou Bing felt extremely uneasy as he unwillingly spoke to Ding Jiayi. He also hinted to his wife with a look in his eyes so that she would deal with Ding Jiayi directly.

"Judging from the look, he seems to be a company commander. How old is the child?" Ding Jiayi's eyes were very sharp. At a glance, she knew the designation of Zhou Jun in the army without even asking.

It was also because Zhou Jun came in a hurry today. Once he received the news that his father was hospitalized, he rushed here immediately without changing his army uniform.

Ding Jiayi used to be the wife of a military officer as well. Furthermore, Qiao Dongliang once held the position of a company commander. Therefore, when she saw Zhou Jun's dressing, Ding Jiayi knew his rank immediately.

“...”

“...”

Because of Zhou Jun's appearance, Ding Jiayi's attitude toward the Zhou Bing couple changed drastically. Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan's face turned black. They were furious and utterly speechless.

They had been sharing the same pot of rice for years. Would Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan not know what Ding Jiayi was trying to do?

Qiao Nan was given birth by Ding Jiayi. However, from top to bottom and inside and out, there was only one thing that she had in common with Ding Jiayi: her fondness for military personnel or soldiers.

Otherwise, Ding Jiayi would not have readily agreed to marry Qiao Dongliang who did not have any next-of-kin.

The biggest regret in Ding Jiayi's life was that she insisted on having a second child when Qiao Dongliang was about to be promoted to battalion commander. Qiao Dongliang was forced to retire from the army, and she did not become the wife of a battalion commander eventually.

One must know that there was a sixty percent chance of being promoted from company commander to deputy battalion commander, meaning that there would be more than fifty percent chance that Zhou Jun would climb to the position of deputy battalion commander. Thereafter, the probability to move from deputy to battalion officer would be about fifty percent.

Nevertheless, Zhou Jun was already the company commander at the very least!

As long as he performed well, there should not be much difficulty for him to rise to the position of deputy battalion commander. Afterward, there was still a fifty percent chance for him to be promoted to the battalion commander role!

“Zijin, why are you standing there in a daze? Serve them a cup of tea.” At the thought of the battalion commander position, Ding Jiayi’s eyes lit up and pulled Qiao Zijin closer smilingly. “Zhou Jun, you have not seen my elder daughter. She is called Qiao Zijin and she is still studying in high school. She is attending The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

When these words came out of Ding Jiayi’s mouth, Qiao Zijin aside, the other five people who were present could not help having the same reaction. In the imaginary speech bubbles above their heads were a row of black lines; and in their hearts, countless ellipsis.

Qiao Nan was used to the shamelessness of Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. Armed with the experience from her previous life, she was well-trained to tolerate this.

Qiao Dongliang might be a grown-up man, but his face still turned reddish black in color. He was so embarrassed that he wished he could tug the blanket covering his body and bury his head in it. It was so embarrassing! The thing that Qiao Dongliang could not understand was why Ding Jiayi’s hearing was so good today. She already knew the name of Zhou Jun.

The Zhou family felt extremely awkward. Ding Jiayi was too obvious in making her stand. It was impossible that the Zhou family of three would fail to understand her intentions.

Qiao Zijin was red with embarrassment. She was also feeling a little not used to it. However, she still obeyed Ding Jiayi’s words and served some hot water to Zhou Jun. “Brother Zhou, here is the hospital. Both our fathers are patients and should not drink tea in consideration of their current health, so please make do a little.”

“...” Ding Jiayi satisfactorily smiled at Qiao Zijin’s thoughtful and sensible words. On the other hand, the Zhou Bing couple grimaced, making it obvious that they had nothing good to say about Qiao Zijin. So merciless!

“Thanks.” Zhou Jun quickly nodded. “Just put it on the table.” The cup was too small. What if he accidentally touched the lady’s hand when he reached out for it?

“Uncle Qiao Dongliang is quite blessed. Both daughters are very filial. One brews soup while the other is so thoughtful.” Zhou Jun secretly glanced at Qiao Nan. He intended to get close to Qiao Dongliang, so he decided to sing praises of his two daughters. His sequence of praise implied who he was mainly impressed with.

“Ha, haha...” Qiao Dongliang smiled dryly.

Zhou Jun’s mother could not help standing up. She pulled Zhou Jun to the seat that she had been sitting on earlier. “You just arrived. It must have been quite tiring for you. Mom is not sitting anymore, so you can have the seat.” Silly son! He was usually quite quick-witted when he was in the army. The proudest thing for the Zhou Bing couple was that Zhou Jun became a company commander at such a young age. Why did he keep making blunders today!

Afraid that her son would say the wrong things again, Zhou Jun’s mother took a deep breath and forced a smile before she said, “Qiao Zijin’s memory is quite good. She remembers what Nan Nan once said before. No wonder she can study in The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China.”

These were words from someone caring and knew how to take care of patients. How could it be from the pampered Qiao Zijin? These words were from Nan Nan!

At that time, Qiao Zijin was so bored in the hospital while she was taking care of Qiao Dongliang. She was unhappy that she only had plain water to drink every day. As such, she wanted to buy some ready-made beverages, saying that the drinks could be used to serve Qiao Dongliang’s visitors.

Qiao Nan immediately expressed her opinion. Firstly, given the Qiao family’s situation, why would they have any unknown visitor? These people would always leave soon after visiting her father and putting down the things they brought. They would not sit around.

Secondly, it was not necessary to buy these things as they were not suitable for a patient’s consumption.



That being said, who did not know the real reason for Qiao Zijin's request? It was to satisfy her personal desire.

When Zhou Jun, who initially wanted to refuse the seat, heard what his mother said, he was stunned and looked at Qiao Nan in a silly manner. His brain was in a fix and he did not even turn his head.

At the sight of the dim-witted behavior displayed by their son, the Zhou Bing couple was too embarrassed to look at him. Zhou Jun's mother hoped that she could slap the back of her son's head to tell him to be wittier.

"Yes, my family's Zijin does not have many other positive qualities but this cleverness of hers resembles me most." Hearing Zhou Jun's mother's rare praise for Qiao Zijin, Ding Jiayi was pleased. She did not realize that Zhou Jun's mother was just trying to remind her own son.

#### Chapter 163: Differential Treatment

Facing the situation where Ding Jiayi only selectively listened to what she wanted to hear without understanding the meaning in others' words, Qiao Dongliang wondered for the first time why he previously felt that Ding Jiayi was quite good as a potential wife. "Sorry about the embarrassing behavior."

"No, no."

"No worries," The Zhou Bing couple replied at the same time.

The corners of Ding Jiayi's mouth became stiff. What did that mean?

At the sight of the decent-looking Zhou Jun, Ding Jiayi's thoughts were back to him again. "Zijin, the weather is so hot. There are not many suitable things to buy. Why don't you go and buy some fruits such as watermelon or something?"

Ding Jiayi took out some money from her pocket and tucked it in Qiao Zijin's hands. "Remember to ask the boss to pick a good one."

“Oh.” Qiao Zijin was quite happy to take the money. However, at the thought of the big and heavy watermelon which she had to carry back by herself, she felt that it was too hard on her. “Mom, why don’t we let Nan Nan come with me? The watermelon is too heavy. I can’t carry it. Nan Nan is quite strong. If she accompanies me, she can help carry the watermelon.”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

Qiao Zijin’s words made the Zhou family of three had the same expression. This expression was exactly the same as when they just heard Ding Jiayi’s earlier words.

Zhou Jun inconspicuously knitted his brows. None of them were blind. The elder sister obviously looked stronger than her younger sister. In what way did the younger sister seem to have more strength than the older one?

Although in the recent year, Qiao Nan ate much better than before, she was born to be slim. Regardless of how much she ate, her body still looked slender.

The difference was that Qiao Zijin resembled Ding Jiayi, and she would become fat if she ate too much. Hence, she had to control her diet.

In comparison to Qiao Nan, Qiao Zijin was not considered fat but she was as round as a pearl.

“Silly child! What a remark to make! I know that you are very close to Nan Nan and wanted Nan Nan to go along with you, but Nan Nan is your younger sister. It’s not possible for her to have more strength than you.” Ding Jiayi realized that Qiao Zijin’s words were inappropriate. Most importantly, with this, she could say the words that followed, “Zhou Jun, why don’t we do this? Can you accompany Zijin to buy the watermelon?”

When it came to carrying the watermelon, there was no one more suitable than Zhou Jun for the task.

Zhou Jun's mother's face turned black. She immediately pulled Zhou Jun's hand and said, "Jun-er, you must have rushed here when you heard that your dad is in hospital. Look at all your sweat. You must be tired. Take a good rest."

Zhou Jun blinked his eyes and replied smilingly, "I am really quite tired. Before I came to see my dad, I was in the midst of a mission and just returned to the camp. So I came late."

Zhou Jun was not lying. He was indeed carrying out a mission before he rushed to the hospital.

Nevertheless, this little amount of exercise was nothing to him.

Qiao Zijin's face turned pale and she gritted her teeth angrily. What did the Zhou mother and son mean? It was just a small matter to accompany her to buy a watermelon. They would not lose anything by helping her carry the watermelon. Moreover, when she brought it back, the Zhou family would also eat it. During this period of time, the Zhou family also drank a lot of stuff from the Qiao family!

Qiao Zijin, who was used to being admired by the guys in the school, was not pleased. She, in fact, did not like Zhou Jun much. It was all her mother's doing.

It was obvious that Zhou Jun was unwilling. Qiao Zijin could not pretend that she did not understand.

Qiao Zijin's pouted her lips and returned the money to her mother. "Mom, I accidentally twisted my ankle on the way here. Let Nan Nan help you buy the watermelon." She was not going to be as foolish as Qiao Nan. The food that Qiao Nan painstakingly prepared always went into someone else's mouth and stomach.

"Zijin." Ding Jiayi was angry but she was even more embarrassed.

She did not mind Zhou Jun being older in age and was willing to let Qiao Zijin interact more with him. But what kind of attitude was the Zhou family displaying? They looked down on Qiao Zijin instead!

However, Qiao Zijin's attitude was indeed inappropriate. Ding Jiayi did not want Qiao Zijin to embarrass herself in front of the Zhou family who already looked down on her.

“Forget it. I’ll go and buy it.” Qiao Nan stood up. Without a word, she took the money from Ding Jiayi’s hands.

Qiao Nan was expressing that her eyes would turn blind soon from the various scenes acted by her mother and Qiao Zijin if she continued to stay in the ward.

“I will go with you!”

The moment Qiao Nan took the money from Ding Jiayi’s hands, Zhou Jun stood up forcefully from his chair, causing his own mother to jump in surprise.

Zhou Jun’s mother’s face seemed to be trembling because of the words ‘I will accompany you’ from Zhou Jun earlier. It was so sudden and loud, just like what he did during a march in the army. The shout was loud and deafening. “That’s... That’s good too since it’s late and thus unsafe for Nan Nan to go shopping alone. You have to protect Nan Nan properly. Don’t let anyone bully her.”

“Don’t worry, Mom. I assure you that I will accomplish the mission!” Zhou Jun was so excited that he gave his mother a bow directly.

“Silly boy.” Zhou Jun’s mother did not know whether to laugh or cry. She had guessed that Jun-er would definitely like Nan Nan, but she did not expect that he would have such a big reaction and be so enthusiastic. There was no sign of his previous attitudes such as ‘I am still young’ or ‘I don’t wish to get married now’.

With Zhou Jun’s attitude, the Zhou Bing couple was extremely pleased. Most probably, this young daughter-in-law would be theirs and have no escape route!

“!” The Zhou Bing couple was happy. Qiao Zijin’s face turned pale with anger on the spot.

What accompanying her to buy watermelon?! One said her son was tired, the other said he just came back after completing a mission. Why was it that when Qiao Nan said she was getting the watermelon, Zhou Jun appeared as if he had been injected with chicken blood and did not seem tired anymore?

Qiao Zijin was most displeased with the Zhou Bing couple's attitude. In front of others, Qiao Zijin was always the one who was most well-liked and often received praises from the elder ones.

But before the Zhou family, she was unable to bring out any of these merits. She did not know which nerve was wrong with the Zhou Bing couple's brains that they actually preferred Qiao Nan to her. How blind!

"Sure, you can go ahead." Ding Jiayi's face became solemn and her tone was colder. "Zijin, you come with me to get some hot water. Your dad still needs to take his medicine later."

Silently following behind Ding Jiayi, Qiao Zijin started to complain when she was out of the ward. "Mom, what did you mean by that?! If not for you, I would not have embarrassed myself. I was even disliked by others. Qiao Nan is climbing all over my head and stepping several times on me. Mom, did you do it on purpose?!"

"Your words pained Mom's heart. Why would Mom help Qiao Nan instead of you?" Ding Jiayi said angrily but did not take issue with Qiao Zijin.

She knew that the Zhou Bing couple's attitude had affected Qiao Zijin. Qiao Zijin only said that to her without reservation because she was too furious. "Mom's initial thoughts are that since Zhou Jun is already a company commander, he will most probably rise to the role of a battalion commander before he reaches forty years old if he works for another seven or eight years. When the time comes, you will be the wife of a battalion commander."

## Chapter 164: Murderous Aura

"Having said so much, isn't he just a stinking soldier?" Qiao Zijin did not care. "I don't want to marry a military officer. He will be in the camp all year round and have no time for me. To put it bluntly, do you want me to become like you, Mom? After giving birth to a baby, I will have to raise the baby alone? The Zhou family is obviously rural people. I've been doing well as a city dweller. Why should I be married to the countryside and become a village girl? Mom, what exactly are you thinking? What's so great about a company commander? I don't even care if he's a battalion commander. Mom, didn't you say that Dad would have become a battalion commander if you did not give birth to Qiao Nan? But look at the situation now! Dad had to depend on his daughter to borrow the money for his hospital expenses. What kind of success is this? Don't even talk about raising a child! He's so poor that he can't even afford to feed himself!"

In the future, if she were to find a partner, not only the other party must have a good social status, but also, most importantly, must be from an extremely wealthy family. Otherwise, she would rather not marry.

She already had a hard time in the Qiao family. After marriage, she certainly did not wish to continue living in the same way.

“What nonsense are you talking about?” Ding Jiayi’s expression changed. “You’re still a child. What about having or not having children? Aren’t you afraid of letting others hear you? Besides, your dad will always be your dad. Don’t you think you’re too much to talk about your dad like that? Why isn’t your dad capable? Didn’t he raise Qiao Nan and you till this age? Wasn’t your dad the one who forked out all the money for both your studies? Zijin, you’re not allowed to say all these again. You’re letting your dad down by saying these.”

“Fine, I won’t say it. I don’t want to bother saying it.” Qiao Zijin was unconvinced. “My father is good to me because Qiao Nan is not a son. If Qiao Nan was a son, there would be no place for me in this family. Since Dad wants to have a child, then he must raise the child. Raising me and letting me attend school is all expected of him!”

Seeing that Ding Jiayi was about to give her a scolding again, Qiao Zijin simply said, “Fine, Mom, don’t talk about it anymore. I’m troubled to death by this. Anyway, I will only say these words to you. I won’t say it again. Will this do?”

What was the world coming to? She did not even have the right to express her true opinion. It’s so annoying!

“Alright, quickly get some hot water. Regarding what you’ve said earlier, I’ll take it that you’ve not matured and don’t know the hardships Dad and Mom face. When you are older and become a mother, you’ll realize what you’ve said today is too heartless.” Ding Jiayi reprimanded Qiao Zijin with a few sentences before pulling her to leave.

“Uncle Qiao...” Zhou Jun’s face was filled with awkwardness. The hands he was using to hold Qiao Dongliang’s hands seemed to be stuck. He could not move.

With the current situation, they could not move forward. It was even worse to leave.

In the end, Zhou Jun persisted and asked, “Uncle Qiao, do you still want to go to the restroom?”

While Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were getting water with a vacuum flask, Qiao Dongliang felt the urgency to use the restroom after drinking the soup brought over by Qiao Nan earlier, and Zhou Jun took notice of this.

Hence, Zhou Jun directly volunteered to bring Qiao Dongliang to the restroom before he accompanied Qiao Nan to shop for the watermelon. Unexpectedly, the two of them heard that conversation between Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin at one of the corners of the hospital.

“Go.” Qiao Dongliang’s expression softened a little. He then sighed.

Now, he knew that his elder daughter was not only sweet-tongued and had a bitter heart but also totally heartless. If he was not going to the restroom, was he going to die by holding his pee?

At the thought of Qiao Zijin’s assessment of him earlier, Qiao Dongliang felt so sad that his heart was constantly overturning. It was as if he had swallowed a piping hot dumpling which he had not managed to bite, and the dumpling was stuck in his heart. It was so hot that Qiao Dongliang wanted to cry. He was unable to vomit it out, and neither could he swallow it. It continued to be stuck in the same position in his heart. He felt so uncomfortable and was choking in a panic.

When he heard Qiao Dongliang said that he was still going to the restroom, Zhou Jun did not delay further. After helping Qiao Dongliang to the restroom, he then helped him back to the ward and let Qiao Dongliang lie on his bed.

“Qi-Qiao... Qiao Nan, can we go and buy the watermelon now?” While facing Qiao Dongliang, Zhou Jun was quite normal. But as soon as he looked at Qiao Nan, Zhou Jun’s tongue became entangled.

“Sure, sorry to trouble Brother Zhou.” At a glance, Qiao Nan saw that Qiao Dongliang’s expression did not seem too good after he came back. She did not reject Zhou Jun and went out with him to look for a fruit-selling shop.

While picking watermelons, Qiao Nan asked, “Brother Zhou, did you encounter anything on the way when you helped my dad out? Why do I feel that my dad seemed unhappy?”

“This...” Zhou Jun hesitated for a while. Still, he told Qiao Nan exactly what happened.

“...” Qiao Nan’s face turned black. “Brother Zhou, I am really sorry.” Qiao Zijin talked bad about two people at the same time. She looked down on her father and Zhou Jun. Unfortunately, she was caught red-handed by the two of them. Did this mean that Qiao Zijin deserved it? That when a man brings it upon himself, there is no hope of escape?

“No worries. She was not wrong in saying that. It is true that my family is from the village.” Zhou Jun had a positive mindset. Although he was looked down upon by Qiao Zijin, he was not angered and had a stable temperament. “However, when Uncle Qiao heard it, he seemed to be quite sad. He was already injured. You have to show him more concern these few days.”

“Thank you, Brother Zhou.”

“No issue. This watermelon is heavy. Let me carry it.” Zhou Jun picked up the watermelon in one hand as if he was picking up a bottle of mineral water. He did not seem to have used much effort.

“Nan Nan.” Qiao Nan and Zhou Jun did not walk for long before they heard someone calling them.

“Brother Zhai?”

“Regiment... Regiment commander?”

At the sight of the person who called Qiao Nan, both Qiao Nan and Zhou Jun were stunned.

Qiao Nan immediately smiled happily. “Brother Zhai, why are you here?”

“I have something to tell you.” Zhai Sheng knitted his brows. “Zhou Jun, why are you here?” Furthermore, he was with Qiao Nan.

“Reporting, Regiment Commander, my dad is injured and in the hospital now. I am here to visit my dad!” Zhou Jun was older than Zhai Sheng, but he was more serious and restrained in front of Zhai Sheng than when he was before Qiao Nan.

“Yes, it’s such a coincidence. Uncle Zhou and my dad stay in the same ward.” Qiao Nan nodded in affirmation.



“Zhou Jun, I have something to talk to Nan Nan about. You go back to the hospital first. Thereafter, tell Uncle Qiao that Nan Nan has gone home.” Zhai Sheng took a large step with his long leg, silently moving forward. He secretly created a path to separate the current distance between Qiao Nan and Zhou Jun, feeling that the two were too close. This naturally made the two of them move in opposite directions and back away a little so that Zhai Sheng could walk over.

“Ah, okay.” Zhou Jun was already aware that Qiao Nan and the regiment commander seemed to know each other. When he first met Qiao Nan, he was helping the regiment commander send something to Qiao Nan.

But, what was the relationship between Qiao Nan and the regiment commander?

He kept having the feeling that the regiment commander looked strange today. Compared to when he first joined the army as a new recruit and was training under him, he was much fiercer now. His whole body exuded sinister murderous aura, looking as if he was ready to kill someone.

Well... Maybe he had got it wrong. The regiment commander was a famous smiling Yama, the King of Hell, in the army.

Chapter 165: What's the Difference?

In the army, Zhai Sheng usually was not the smiley boss. Whenever he showed some expression, especially when he smiled, someone would be very unlucky. Hence, he was given such a nickname by the soldiers under his supervision.

However, his expression today seemingly revealed his anger blatantly. This was the first time that Zhou Jun had seen this after being under Zhai Sheng's wing for so many years. Hence, Zhou Jun immediately doubted his eyes.

“Zhou Jun?” As he had not received a reply from Zhou Jun after some time, Zhai Sheng knitted his eyebrows slightly, his eyes looking stern.

“Yes, Regiment Commander!” Zhou Jun put his feet together, stood up straight, placed his hand beside his ear, and saluted Zhai Sheng.

“Alright, take the watermelon and go back first.”

“Yes, Regiment Commander!” Zhou Jun reacted according to Zhai Sheng’s every command.

He consecutively made two 180-degree turns with his hands by the side of his waist and ended in a ready-to-run posture. Thereafter, he started to run toward the hospital. Qiao Nan was stunned at the sight of this.

Zhou Jun left so quickly after being led around by the nose by Brother Zhai.

Wait, why did she use the idiom ‘lead by the nose’?

“Brother Zhou, why are you looking for me?” Qiao Nan shook her head, trying to shake away the word, which was not so nice, from her mind. Brother Zhai was so upright and noble. How could he possibly make a fool of Brother Zhou? Moreover, there was no reason for Brother Zhai to do that. She must be deluding herself.

“Do you know Zhou Jun very well?” Zhai Sheng did not reply to Qiao Nan. He questioned her instead.

“No. We only met twice.”

“Twice?” Wasn’t that considered a lot too?!

“Yes. Didn’t Brother Zhai send Brother Zhou to pass me the money last time? Including that time, it was a total of two times.” Qiao Nan stretched out two of her fingers and showed the word ‘two’. Her sign really resembled the word.

Looking at Qiao Nan’s gestures, Zhai Sheng’s face, which looked like it was shrouded in a gloomy cloud earlier, was suddenly bright and clear. His pursed lips were more relaxed and the corners of his mouth curled up slightly into a smile.

But shortly afterward, Zhai Sheng managed to hold himself back and continued to pose a serious demeanor. “Was Zhou Jun the person who sent you the money last time?”

At that time, Zhai Sheng was very anxious when he received Qiao Nan's call. Because of Qiao Nan's crying at the other end, Zhai Sheng's heart burned like a fire, and he wished he could immediately gallop over, fast as a horse, to Qiao Nan's side.

Zhai Sheng did not expect that he would, unfortunately, receive a mission assigned by the top at that juncture.

In the face of national interest, even if Zhai Sheng was unwilling, he had to cast all of his personal matters aside. Thus, he could only find someone to send the money to Qiao Nan on his behalf.

At that time, Zhai Sheng was too anxious. He could not remember who he sent to pass Qiao Nan the money.

Today, he finally realized that Zhou Jun was the one he called out to that day. Coincidentally, Zhou Jun's father was also sick and staying with Qiao Dongliang in the same ward. The two fathers became ward mates.

"Wasn't Brother Zhai the one who asked Brother Zhou to send me the money?" Qiao Nan was stunned. Why was Brother Zhai asking her this question?

"Brother Zhou? You obviously know him quite well." Zhai Sheng's expression changed again. He looked cold.

"..." Qiao Nan had a huge question mark above her head. What had she said wrongly again? Why did Brother Zhai seem mad?

"Brother Zhou is older than me... He is older by seven years, so I call him 'brother'. Is there a problem?" Why was Brother Zhai unhappy?

"Do you call me 'Brother Zhai' because I am older than you by five years?" To Zhai Sheng, this explanation was very poor. It made his mood gloomy again.

Qiao Nan's small mouth was nearly sewn shut by Zhai Sheng's question. "Brother Zhai is Brother Zhai. Brother Zhou is Brother Zhou. It is not the same. Brother Zhou helped my dad by sending the money over last time. If the money did not reach me in time, my dad would not be able to have the surgery. Out of courtesy, I should also thank Brother Zhou. Given the age gap between Brother Zhou and me, is it not natural to call him 'brother'?"

This... wasn't this human nature and common in practice? If she did not call Zhou Jun 'Brother Zhou', then should she simply call him 'Handsome Zhou' instead?

"What about me, then?" Was it because he helped Qiao Nan so much that the latter's attitude toward him was so good? Was everything because of gratitude?

The more he thought about it, the darker Zhai Sheng's face was. It resembled black clouds that could rain anytime. It was so dark and gloomy that it made people fearful.

Qiao Nan did not know whether to laugh or cry. "Brother Zhai, why do you keep comparing Zhou Jun with yourself? Can that be compared? Brother Zhou is older than me. Am I supposed to call him by his name, 'Zhou Jun'?"

"So, is your greeting to Zhou Jun out of courtesy?" Zhai Sheng felt slightly better.

"Otherwise?" Qiao Nan frowned and questioned him instead.

"What about me?" Zhai Sheng suddenly said this. There were many types of 'brother' in this world. Among them was 'brother' in a romantic sense. Which type of 'brother' was he in Qiao Nan's heart?

Just when this question arose in Zhai Sheng's heart, he was stunned. Why would he have this type of query?

Being locked in place by Zhai Sheng's pair of eyes, which was as black and shiny as a gem, Qiao Nan's heart nearly stopped. She could not help feeling nervous, and both her legs were so stiff that they could not move. Her face was red and her eyes twinkled. She seemed to be shifty while trying to meet Zhai Sheng's eyes. "Brother Zhai, you... What's with you today? Why do you keep asking these strange questions? I am confused by your questions. What do you really want to know?"

"..."

Zhai Sheng's restrained his eyes. Indeed, what was he trying to find out by asking these questions?

“Be prepared tomorrow. I will bring you to see someone.”

“Ah?” Qiao Nan’s mouth opened even wider. Was she on this topic with Brother Zhai just now?  
“Brother Zhai, is this why you looked for me?” So he was not making a fool of Brother Zhou?

“But, Brother Zhai, you... When did you start calling me ‘Nan Nan’?” At the thought of Zhai Sheng calling her ‘Nan Nan’ in front of Zhou Jun just now, Qiao Nan’s face reddened a shade deeper.

During the past year where she interacted with Zhai Sheng, the latter had never addressed her so intimately before.

“From today onward, can’t I?” Zhai Sheng stepped forward and walked in the direction of the quad. Nevertheless, he did not walk too fast so that Qiao Nan could catch up with him.

“No, not really.” Qiao Nan shook her head. “Brother Zhai, who will I be seeing tomorrow?” In this world, no one except her father would call her Nan Nan. Qiao Zijin would also address her as such whenever Qiao Zijin needed her help or money.

All of a sudden, there was one more person who addressed her as ‘Nan Nan’. Qiao Nan felt a little strange.

“You will know when you see the person tomorrow.” Zhai Sheng was afraid that Qiao Nan would be nervous, so he added one more sentence, “Actually, all you need to do is to be your usual self.”

“Oh... Brother Zhai, did you purposely come looking for me in regard to this matter?” For Brother Zhai to make a trip personally, just who was the person she was meeting tomorrow? “Brother Zhai, are you carrying some fruits?”

Chapter 166: Don’t Waste Your Breath, Just Fight

Halfway through the conversation, Qiao Nan discovered that the usually cool and suave Zhai Sheng was a little different today. She saw the future chief carrying two heavy bags of fruits in his hands.

“...” There was a flash of embarrassment on Zhai Sheng’s face. After clearing his throat, he said, “My sister is back. This is for her.”

“Sister Zhai Hua is back, then Brother Zhai will have someone to keep you company at home. Sister Zhai Hua will be able to cook for you too.” Qiao Nan was quite happy. She was thinking that being home alone was too quiet and lonely.

“She does not know how to.” Zhai Sheng looked at Qiao Nan. “You do not wish to cook for me anymore. Do you find me a nuisance?”

“No no no, that’s certainly not what I meant. Sister Zhai Hua not being able to cook is no issue. Brother Zhai Sheng, continue to bring over the ingredients, I will do it. After all, my family is the one taking advantage of Brother Zhai.” Brother Zhai would bring over good stuff each time, such as the wild terrapin today.

During this time, terrapin was not a popular food. Nevertheless, Qiao Nan knew that it was good stuff.

In fact, Qiao Nan realized that the food brought over by Zhai Sheng each time was particularly suitable for nourishing Qiao Dongliang’s body. It helped him recover well.

Hence, Qiao Nan also suspected that Zhai Sheng was intentionally helping her.

“I am glad you know.” Zhai Sheng’s eyes flashed. He did not want to let the Qiao family take advantage of him. He only wanted one person—Qiao Nan—to take advantage of him.

After returning to the quad, Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan went on separate ways. One went back to the Zhai’s residence and the other the Qiao’s residence.

Zhai Sheng had just reached home and placed the two bags of fruits on the floor. Zhai Hua, who happened to be at home, saw this and shouted with surprise. “Zhai Sheng, is your brain immersed in water? Didn’t you mention that you’re bringing the fruits to visit a patient? Why did you leave with two hands full of fruits and return with them?”

Was her brother training physically?

Nonsense!

Zhai Hua always touched the soft spot, poking her nose into matters that she should not be interfering.

In front of his sister, Zhai Hua, Zhai Sheng was not so good-tempered and patient. “After thinking about it, it is better to leave it at home and let you have them.”

“Oh, you’re finally doting on your sister. Wait, what do you mean?” Zhai Hua was stunned. “You said that you bought these for a patient, but now you’re leaving them here for me to eat. Are you implying that I’m sick?! What sickness do I have?”

Having that said, Zhai Hua jumped and patted her chest. “Your sister’s body is awesome!”

Zhai Sheng sneered with a ‘Ha, ha’. “Given this one action of yours, don’t you think that you are sick? Remember, although you are a man at heart, you are physically a woman after all.” Which woman would slap her own chest before a man?

At the thought of Zhai Hua’s frequent ‘idiotic’ behavior, Zhai Sheng was deeply concerned for his future brother-in-law.

Zhai Hua was not embarrassed to pat her own chest, but not many people would be so thick-skinned to watch her doing that.

“Zhai Sheng!” Zhai Hua exploded with anger immediately. She swiped a kick toward him directly. “What younger brother, it’s indeed the most annoying creature in the world!”

Damn, why didn’t her parents give her a nice-smelling, gentle, sensible, and obedient younger sister?

When Zhai Sheng was born, he was so fair and chubby. His whole body was soft and he was quite adorable. But he was not as adorable anymore when he grew up. He’s getting more and more evil!

“What sister, it’s indeed the most useless existence in the world.”

Both Zhai Sheng and his sister would start fighting once they argued. The fierce-some way they fought made them look more like brothers.

Sigh, every brother with a younger sister is as gentle as an angel, and every sister who has a younger brother is always as grumpy as the demon.

“You really know how to slack. You could even go home when buying a watermelon.” On the other hand, not long after Qiao Nan reached home, as she was still thinking about what Zhai Sheng said, Qiao Zijin came back.

Qiao Zijin sneered. “Nan Nan, congratulations to you. It seems that the Zhou Bing couple has taken quite a liking to you. I heard that Zhou Jun is their youngest son. They’re targeting you and hoping that you’ll be their little daughter-in-law. You’re so young and already all set to marry. You don’t need to worry about being left on the shelves!”

At the thought of the obvious differential treatment displayed by the Zhou Bing couple, Qiao Zijin was extremely bright at this moment and actually understood what was happening.

“Qiao Zijin, you’d better not annoy me now.” Qiao Nan did not take Qiao Zijin’s words to heart. Ding Jiayi’s and Qiao Zijin’s demeanor today was already very embarrassing.

At the sight of a mother like Ding Jiayi and a sister like Qiao Zijin, Qiao Nan felt that the Zhou family’s brains were a little dented. Otherwise, why would they want to be in-laws with such a family?

Furthermore, Zhou Jun was already twenty-three years old, and she was only sixteen.

After she graduated from college, Zhou Jun would be about thirty years old. It was impossible between Zhou Jun and her.

“Yo, it seems like someone has given you the guts. You’re so arrogant now and didn’t even greet your sister. In the past, the elderly did not take a liking to you. Now, they like you instead of me. Aren’t you’re happy and complacent? Ah yes, Zhou Jun is, no matter what, a company commander. If you marry Zhou Jun, you’ll be the wife of a company commander at the very least. I’ll really have to congratulate you.”

That Zhou Jun was a stinking soldier. He would be in the army all the time.



If Qiao Nan became Zhou Jun's wife, she could only remain in the countryside all day long and look after the Zhou Bing couple, the father and mother-in-law. Moreover, Zhou Jun would not be able to stay by Qiao Nan's side throughout the year.

Just at the thought of this, Qiao Zijin felt that Qiao Nan, who would lead this kind of life, would be very miserable.

It was only a wife of the company commander that she could not be bothered to care about. Take it that she gave in to Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan gritted her teeth. "Qiao Zijin, you are still going on about this? It is not interesting to quarrel. Tell me, will you choose to shut up or have a fight with me?!"

"You dare to hit me?" At the sight of Qiao Nan clenching her fists, Qiao Zijin was both angry and anxious. She lifted her chin, refusing to concede defeat. "You dare! If you dare to touch a strand of my hair, Mom will not let you off!"

"Mom will not let me off, but I still have Dad to protect me. If Mom dares to touch me, you will see if Mom will not let me off or Dad will not let Mom off. In that case, do you mean that you wish to pick a fight? Qiao Zijin, as a person, you need to have some self-awareness. I may not be pleasing to your eyes, but you also prick my eyes. I have been worrying about not having a chance to beat you!"

For two lifetimes, Qiao Zijin had always been so self-centered.

Qiao Zijin was her sister and closest next-of-kin. She could not kill Qiao Zijin for revenge. Murder is illegal in this society. She would be jailed or shot to death.

However, Qiao Zijin was always in her sight and provoking her, pissing Qiao Nan off.

Killing her was out of the question. Scolding would only be a waste of energy and breath. She only wished that she could have a physical fight with Qiao Zijin and let her know what pain feels like!

Qiao Nan was just rolling up her sleeves when Qiao Zijin backed away continuously in fear. She ran toward her bedroom and shut the door tightly. "Qiao Nan, I'm older than you, but you have no

regards and respect for your seniors. If not for the sake that you are my sister, see how I'll deal with you!"

## Chapter 167: A Bad-Tempered Old Master

Qiao Nan laughed coldly at Qiao Zijin's words and returned to her room.

Qiao Zijin had not recovered from the shock last night. Qiao Nan's attitude last night gave her a big scare. Qiao Zijin had thought that Qiao Nan would give her a beating when there was no one around. Hence, she went to the hospital to visit Qiao Dongliang early in the morning. With Qiao Zijin gone, Qiao Nan had the chance to calm herself down.

Qiao Nan did not forget what Zhai Sheng said yesterday. She picked a bright-colored shirt, ironed it, and put it on. She was about to go to the Zhai family's residence to look for Zhai Sheng.

But when she opened the door, to her surprise, Zhai Sheng's car was already waiting outside her house.

Qiao Nan could not help but feel as if she did something wrong. She glanced around, making sure that there was no one around, and walked toward the car. She got in the car at lightning speed. "Brother Zhai."

"Fasten your seat belt."

"Okay."

Qiao Nan had just sat down and buckled her seat belt before Zhai Sheng stepped on the accelerator and drove out of the quad.

The people from the quad caught sight of Zhai Sheng leaving in his car and exchanged comments with each other. "Why is Zhai Sheng still at the quad? I seemed to have seen the younger daughter of the Qiao family in the car as well. Have I seen wrongly? Why would the younger daughter of the Qiao family be acquainted with the Zhai family?"

“Brother Zhai, where are you bringing me to? Who do you want me to meet?” Silence permeated the air in the car. Qiao Nan felt uncomfortable and tried to break the silence.

“You will know when we arrive.” Zhai Sheng did not bother to explain and concentrated on getting to the destination.

Since Zhai Sheng was doing the driving, Qiao Nan had no idea where she was going and did not take note of the directions.

“It is so crowded.” After a while, Zhai Sheng stopped the car suddenly. Qiao Nan saw that the road in front of them was full of cars.

“...” Zhai Sheng had anticipated that it would be packed with cars, but he never imagined that it would be so packed early in the morning.

Zhai Sheng changed to the reverse gear. Since the front gate was packed with traffic, he would have to enter the Lin family’s residence from the back gate.

Only a few people knew about the back gate of the Lin family’s residence. In other words, only those who were on close terms with the Lin family would know about its existence.

The Lin family must have been used to these situations. Hence, their back gate was bigger than the front gate that one might even mistake it for the front gate.

“It is me.” Upon reaching the gate, Zhai Sheng rolled down the windows and notified his arrival.

“So it is you. I will open the gate right now.” The guards saw that it was Zhai Sheng and opened the gate without another word. “Today is more crowded than yesterday. It has been hard on you to enter by the back gate all the time.”

“Is Uncle Lin around?”

“Yes.”

“That is good. Can you help me park my car?” Zhai Sheng opened the door and got off the car.

Qiao Nan knew that they had reached their destination. She unfastened the seat belt and was about to come out of the car, but Zhai Sheng glanced at her before getting off the car. Qiao Nan did not know what he meant by that, so she stayed in her seat.

Zhai Sheng came to her side and opened the door for her. She blushed and was helped out of the car by Zhai Sheng.

After she got off the car, Zhai Sheng led her inside. He passed the car and its keys to the guards.

The place where Zhai Sheng brought Qiao Nan to had modernized architectures, adopting the European style. The architecture was in white and yellow. It looked bright and refreshing. Even though there was no lavish pool-like fountain in the garden, Qiao Nan was captivated by the exquisite water feature. It was made up of three layers of white porcelain limestone urns. Water cascaded from the urns into a pond. In it were koi fish which glittered under the sunlight.

It was summer now, and the flowers in the garden were in full bloom. One felt relaxed and joyful as they took in the refreshing scent of the flowers.

Qiao Nan could not help but be in awe of the contemporary design of the building. Its design would never be outdated for years to come. It was not only magnificent but also classic and exquisite.

The owner of the house must be very rich.

Qiao Nan worked hard all her life but could only afford a thirty square meters rented house. To her, it was good enough if she could own a house, let alone a beautiful and expensive small villa.

In the previous life, Qiao Nan paid for the house Qiao Zijin stayed in. Thus, if Qiao Nan wanted to own a house, it should not be too difficult. If she worked hard enough, she might be able to buy a house for herself.

Zhai Sheng stopped in his tracks, remembering that Elder Lin had a bad temper. He said to Qiao Nan, "Can you stay here and wait for me? I will be back soon."

"Sure."

Qiao Nan remained on the same spot while waiting for Zhai Sheng.

She enjoyed admiring the flowers in the garden.

While she was captivated by the flowers, she did not realize that an elderly was scrutinizing her, looking displeased.

The elderly came out and stood in front of Qiao Nan, asking her in an angry tone. "How did you get into the house?"

"..." Qiao Nan paused momentarily. She had no idea why the elderly appeared to be very unhappy. "I did not come in by myself. Someone brought me in."

Lin Yuankang's expression darkened at Qiao Nan's explanation.

She was stating the obvious. If no one 'brought' her in, there was no way she could enter the Lin family's residence!

"I never know that the teenagers nowadays have so many tricks up their sleeves." Lin Yuankang said in anger. It seemed like he had to change the guards. They had the audacity to let such people inside his house.

"..." Qiao Nan curled the corner of her lips. She had no idea why this elderly would lash out at her, but she was innocent. "Grandpa, have you mistaken me for someone else?" This was her first time here. She did not know anyone in the house and could not possibly have done something wrong or anger the elderly.

"Do you have no idea who I am?" Lin Yuankang arched his eyebrows, contempt apparent in his eyes.

"This is my first time here."

"First time? It is your first time indeed!" This young lady did not get her facts right, yet she had the audacity to come to the Lin family's residence, wanting to get in through the back gate. "It seems like you have nothing to do now. Can you do me a favor?"

“But I am waiting for someone.” It would not be good if Brother Zhai came back and could not find her.

“Hehehe.” Lin Yuankang laughed coldly. “Forget it. I will do it myself.” Since this lady was being ‘brought’ to the Lin family’s residence, she must have some connections. She was too arrogant to help an ‘old man’ like him.

Lin Yuankang snorted. He turned and brought out the ‘new favorite’ he acquired recently, wanting to transplant the plant to a suitable spot.

Qiao Nan who stood on the same spot was undecided on whether to help him or not. It was such a large pot of flowers, and the flower pot itself was heavy, let alone the total weight of the soil and the flowers. Did this old master wish to sprain his back?

#### Chapter 168: Unreliable

Actually, it was someone else’s duty to move and transplant the flowers, but Lin Yuankang was in a bad mood and wished to be alone. Hence, he decided to take a look at his ‘new favorite’.

Lin Yuankang who tried to put up a strong front regretted it as soon as he tried lifting up the pot of flowers.

It was too heavy that he could not lift it at all.

Just when he was about to give up and asked someone else for help, the flower pot became light in an instant. It was lifted off the ground easily.

“Oh, Grandpa, do not let go. If you let go now, I can’t handle the weight of the flower pot by myself. By then, we would have our toes crushed.” Qiao Nan felt a shift in the weight and shouted out in surprise. Was this old master reliable or not? Could he handle the weight?

“Hmph.” Lin Yuankang snorted awkwardly when he saw that it was Qiao Nan who helped him. He still gave her the cold shoulder even though she helped him with the flower pot.

Luckily, Qiao Nan had a good temper that was not usually found in sixteen-year-old kids.

Otherwise, who would be willing to help a stranger and be given the cold treatment? No one would want to help an 'old man' like Lin Yuankang and to be scolded by him.

Since Qiao Nan had a good temper, she did not pay any heed to Lin Yuankang's nasty temper. After helping him move three pots of flowers, she stopped and made no move to help him.

"Hehehe, what's wrong? Are you dropping your pretenses? Have you heard of the saying 'Carry something through to the end'? All of you youngsters nowadays do not have determination and perseverance, and like to give up halfway, implicating others and oneself." There were only two pots of flowers left to move, yet she gave up right then. As expected, she was pretending to help him just now.

Qiao Nan was drenched in sweat, and her clothes were plastered to her body. After helping the elderly move the flower pots under the hot summer sun, she was being scolded by him again. She could not help but feel slightly angered. "Grandpa, are you sure you still want to move the flower pots? Are you sure you will be able to get up from the bed tomorrow? Are you sure that you have been exercising often? I would advise you to prepare a bottle of medicated wine. Do not have a cold shower just because it is summer now. You'd better take a hot shower and rub the medicated wine on your waist, elbows and the muscles on your legs. Give them a good rub. Otherwise, I guarantee that you would need to rest on the bed for one full day before you can get up."

"Stop looking down on me!" After Qiao Nan's explanation, Lin Yuankang realized that he had mistaken Qiao Nan. He blushed but he was unwilling to admit that he was in the wrong. "How can you be so sure that I don't exercise often? I might be thin, but I am still very healthy!" Most elderly refused to admit that they were old. Lin Yuankang was one of them.

"Shall I address you as 'old master'? Look at yourself. You are as fair as a young lady. Why don't we compare our arms? Do you think you are bold enough to repeat what you said just now?" Qiao Nan reached out her hands in front of Lin Yuankang.

Although Qiao Nan had fair skin, she was not easily tanned.

However, Qiao Nan's complexion had indeed darkened slightly from shuffling between the hospital and Qiao family's residence during the day.

Most importantly, Qiao Nan used to help out with household chores at home. Her arms might not be thick, but the 'old man', Lin Yuankang, had arms as thin as hers.

Despite their gender and age differences, Lin Yuankang's arms were thin and frail. It did not look like he had been through difficult times. He did not seem to have gone through training or have physical strength either.

"Old master, it is useless to lie about this."

If she was to continue to help move the flower pots, he would definitely hurt his waist.

Facts speak louder than words. An adult like Lin Yuankang was rendered speechless by Qiao Nan who was just a child.

Besides, as a man, and an old man, Lin Yuankang felt humiliated that his arms were as thin as the young lady.

After he calmed down, Lin Yuankang was not as confrontational when he looked at Qiao Nan, but he was still prejudiced against her. "Fine, since you helped me move three pots of flowers and are drenched in sweat, you can come with me inside the house to clean yourself."

Qiao Nan no longer felt dry and refreshed like when she first arrived. She looked terrible and wet just like a small white flower that was soaked in morning dews.

Her face was flushed red and her bangs were plastered to her forehead.

Most importantly, Qiao Nan's clothes were wet and they clung to her body.

"No, I am waiting for someone. If I leave with you, he might not be able to find me." Qiao Nan felt very uncomfortable. She longed to wash her face and had a drink. But this was not the Zhai family's residence or the quad. She dared not wander off lest she angered the owner of the house and disgraced Brother Zhai.

If Brother Zhai could not find her when he was back, he would be very anxious. "Old master, you do not have to worry about me. I am alright. You should heed what I said just now and rub some medicated wine. Otherwise, you would be aching all over."



Lin Yuankang frowned. Qiao Nan looked as if she was sincere about helping him, yet she refused to follow him into the house. “Do you really have no idea who I am?”

He thought that the young lady pretended not to know him. After all, he had seen a lot of such situations in the past. Thus, he made her move the flower pots, teaching her a lesson for trying to get in through the back door and not working hard.

Albeit looking frail, the young lady was quite strong. She had helped him move the pots of flowers.

“Old master, this is really my first time here.” Qiao Nan was exasperated. This old master must have a persecution complex.

“Then, why are you here?” She wanted to get in through the back door, yet she did not get the facts right. How audacious and daring she was!

“My friend brought me here. I have no idea why he brought me here as well.” Brother Zhai did not tell her his reasons for bringing her here.

“Who is the one who brought you here?” Lin Yuankang pulled a sullen face. This young lady was being brought here without knowing anything. What was she here for? Was she here to get in through the back door?

“Brother Zhai.”

“Zhai Sheng, the young brat from the Zhai family?”

“Old master, do you know Brother Zhai as well? My words are so redundant.” Even though Brother Zhai was not the chief yet, he was the most promising star in the army. Besides, with his family background, most people would know of him.

“Did Zhai Sheng really bring you here?” Lin Yuankang was surprised. Whenever Zhai Sheng came to his house, he would always come by himself. Besides, Zhai Sheng was not someone who would get in through the back door.

“Fine, if it is really Zhai Sheng who brought you here, you can follow me into the house. If Zhai Sheng wants to look for you, he will be able to find you.”

“Are you sure?”

“Of course I am sure. Young lady, do I look like someone who is unreliable?” If he was not sure in his own territory, then who else would be sure?

“Hehehe.” Qiao Nan could only laugh it off. Lin Yuankang could not help but be frustrated at her response.

### Chapter 169: Being Treated as a Young Nanny

There was no need for words right now. Qiao Nan could only laugh it off. It was better than telling Lin Yuankang that he was an unreliable person. He would feel so embarrassed and disgraced.

Lin Yuankang’s expression changed. He felt frustrated. Why would he disgrace himself in front of a young lady?

“Are you following me or not?!” Lin Yuankang did not want to look like a loser in front of the young lady. He straightened his back and walked into the house without waiting for Qiao Nan.

Initially, Qiao Nan did not intend to follow such an unreliable old master into the house. But she remembered that Zhai Sheng had reminded her to look smart. It would be very disrespectful if she went to meet the person that Zhai Sheng wanted her to meet in sweaty clothes.

She could only follow Lin Yuankang into the house.

The house looked beautiful on the outside and magnificent on the inside. The floors were covered with ceramic parquet tiles, its patterns lovely and exquisite. The chandeliers which were mounted on the ceilings were beautiful. They sparkled and glittered like snowflakes and ice crystals.

“Take it. Don’t worry, the towel is new. The restroom is over there. Do you know how to use it? Should I get someone to show you?” Lin Yuankang’s house was furnished with uncommon

furniture and facilities. Qiao Nan seemed countrified and uncouth. He asked her lest she did not know how to use them.

“...” Qiao Nan gave him a disdainful look. Was he looking down on her?

She came from the 21st century. Whatever new gadgets the old master used, she knew how to use them as well. For those that the old master did not know of, she could handle them with ease as well. “Thank you for your concern. I just need some exploring. It would not be a big problem.”

Qiao Nan followed Lin Yuankang and found the way to the restroom easily.

After locking the restroom and checking that the doors and windows were closed, Qiao Nan opened the tap, rinsed the towel with water for a while before using the wet towel to wipe off her perspiration.

She could wipe the perspiration off her, but there was nothing she could do about her shirt which was drenched in sweat. It would take some time for it to dry.

It was so embarrassing. If she knew she would run into such a strange old master, she would prepare another set of clothes. At the very least, she would bring another shirt with her.

After wiping off the perspiration, Qiao Nan had no other choice but to tug at her shirt, hoping it would dry faster.

“Little girl, are you done?” Seeing that Qiao Nan had been in the restroom for such a long time, Lin Yuankang knocked on the door to check on her.

“Almost done.” Qiao Nan shouted back. She checked herself in the mirror. Her shirt was still wet. Her shoulders drooped in surrender. “I am done.”

When Qiao Nan came out of the restroom, Lin Yuankang took a look at her and felt awkward.

There were neither children of Qiao Nan’s age in the Lin family, nor was there any young lady who was about the same size as Qiao Nan. Lin Yuankang noticed that Qiao Nan’s shirt was still wet, but there were no clothes of her size to change into. Lin Yuankang felt awkward that he could do nothing about it.

“We do not have any young lady your age here. It is not suitable for you to change into men’s clothes as well. I owe you one for this.”

“It is not a big problem. You do not have to trouble yourself.” Qiao Nan waved her hands. She helped the elderly out of her own accord. She could not possibly let him owe her a favor because of that.

“Young lady, you should think twice before rejecting. You should always leave a way out for yourself. Do you think it’s that easy for me to owe someone a favor?” Lin Yuankang snorted. This favor could come in handy in the future.

“There is really no need for that.” Qiao Nan curled her lips and insisted with a smile. “Old master, where’s Brother Zhai?”

“Wait.” Lin Yuankang was exasperated that he was looked down upon by this little girl. If he sported a beard, it would point up out of anger. Qiao Nan was such an unlikable young lady. She did not know how to please others or the elderly to make them happy. She was such a blockhead!

Qiao Nan had just relaxed and was about to sit down when someone stood in front of her and asked, “Do you know where the restroom is?”

It was a lady’s voice. She seemed to be pretty young, but she sounded haughty and arrogant.

Qiao Nan was clueless. Why was it that she kept bumping into people who were full of themselves? “Over there.”

“Oh.” Qiu Chenxi nodded, took ten yuan from her handbag, and threw it at Qiao Nan. She then walked toward the restroom in her heels.

“Crap.” Qiao Nan who caught the ten yuan looked at the money and curled her lips. “Just what kind of place did Brother Zhai bring me to?”

Everyone she met today seemed to be abnormal.

Qiao Nan wondered what to do with the ten yuan. She bent her knees and was about to sit down when the lady from before came back. “Are you skiving? You are not supposed to sit down here!”

“Miss 1, you dropped the money just now.” Qiao Nan pursed her lips and smiled sweetly. She returned the ten yuan to Qiu Chenxi.

“No need, this is the tip I gave you for showing me the directions. But let me give you a piece of advice. You came to the Lin family’s residence to work. Though they are good-tempered, you should not skive. You should do what you are supposed to do. If people in the Lin family caught you skiving, you might lose your job.”

The servant the Lin family hired was so audacious that she dared to skive around in broad daylight.

After hearing what Qiu Chenxi said, Qiao Nan felt that she was right to address her as ‘Miss’. She was not being insidious at all.

After all, she was being treated as a young nanny and helper hired by the family.

“‘Miss’, I think you have misunderstood. I am not here to work.”

“Do you want to be Elder Lin’s last pupil? Just you?!” Qiu Chenxi widened her eyes and covered her mouth to stifle her laughter.

If everyone who came to seek Elder Lin’s help was like the countrified child right here, she would not need to get her father to think of ways to make connections.

It seemed like Elder Lin hated people who pulled strings. But if one did not do so, the chance of being successful was very low.

Qiao Nan did not understand what Qiu Chenxi meant, but the latter continued with her tirade regardless. “How old are you? Are you still in school? How’re your results in school? How did you do for your English exams? Rather, did you pass your English exams? No, I shouldn’t have asked that. From the looks of it, I believe you know the twenty-six alphabets, but as for the others...”

The vocabulary for English just went on and on. It was torture to memorize them. Besides, grammar was so difficult and was a headache to everyone.

Qiu Chenxi had taken painstaking efforts to learn her English. She knew how difficult this foreign language was. Particularly, it was not easy to attain the level that met Elder Lin's expectations and for him to be willing to take her in as his pupil.

Qiu Chenxi put in a lot of hard work in order to master her English. She worked so hard to the extent that she muttered alphabets like 'A, B, C, D' in her sleep for a long time. She had almost gone crazy then.

Qiao Nan realized that she had been undermined once again.

#### Chapter 170: Public Display of Affection

"I am young. I am only sixteen years old this year and just started high school. I did fairly well in my English class at school and had full marks for middle school exams." Qiao Nan gave the answers to Qiu Chenxi's questions.

"I see. You just started high school." Qiu Chenxi gave a scornful smile. She was more at ease now. "But you scored one hundred for your middle school English exams. You are considered to be very good among your peers. But when you get into society, it is nothing much to be proud of. Little sister, let me give you a word of advice. It is important to gain a competitive advantage against others."

Qiao Nan laughed again. To put it bluntly, what 'Miss' meant was that she knew better than Qiao Nan about the rules of the society!

"You should not waste your time on doing such hopeless things. Since you are still young, you should go back to school and put more efforts into your studies." Qiu Chenxi reminded Qiao Nan 'kindly' to go back home, and that she should not waste her time.

Qiao Nan stared at Qiu Chenxi as she continued with her lecture. When she heard footsteps coming her way, she turned and smiled. "Brother—"

"Brother Zhai!" Qiu Chenxi's surprised voice drowned Qiao Nan's voice. She hurried over to Zhai Sheng. "Brother Zhai, did you specially come because you know that I am coming to the Lin

family's residence?" Qiu Chenxi blushed. She never thought that she would run into Brother Zhai at the Lin family's residence!

Qiao Nan lifted her face and looked at the ceiling which was white as snow. The ceiling looked clean and beautiful.

Zhai Sheng was walking toward Qiao Nan when he was stopped in his tracks by Qiu Chenxi. He dodged to one side, frowned, and asked, "Who are you?"

"..." Qiu Chenxi who was all smiles stiffened. She could not hide her embarrassment.

Qiao Nan who was staring at the ceiling did not pay any attention to them. She fixed her gaze on the ceiling.

"What are you looking at? Come here." Zhai Sheng could not be bothered with Qiu Chenxi who looked upset. He looked toward Qiao Nan who was staring at the ceiling.

"Brother Zhai." Qiao Nan had no other choices but to walk in Zhai Sheng's direction since he had called her name.

"Brother Zhai, do you know her?" Qiu Chenxi schooled her expression. "The little sister is very adorable. She showed me the directions just now. Brother Zhai, where did you get such a pretty little sister? You should tell me so that I can get one for myself as well."

"This is Grandpa Lin." Zhai Sheng did not bother to look at Qiu Chenxi. He brought Qiao Nan to see Lin Yuankang instead.

"..." Qiao Nan blinked in surprise. She did not understand why Zhai Sheng brought her to see 'Grandpa Lin'. But most importantly, the 'Grandpa Lin' Brother Zhai wanted her to visit was none other than the unreliable old master she met just now.

Lin Yuankang lifted his chin. "Little girl, what I said just now still counts. You can ask for a favor." He did not like to owe people favors. As long as they did not make any unreasonable requests, he would always fulfill their wishes.

“Grandpa Lin.” Qiao Nan stood beside Zhai Sheng and addressed him as ‘Grandpa Lin’ as instructed by Zhai Sheng. As for the favor that Lin Yuankang mentioned, she said that it was too windy today, and she did not hear anything just now.

Or rather, she did not understand what he meant.

Qiao Nan blinked at Zhai Sheng. “Brother Zhai, why did you bring me here today?”

Though the unreliable old master insisted that he owed her a favor and that she could make any requests—and the ‘Miss’ looked as if she wanted to get in through the back door—Qiao Nan knew that one should cut their coat according to their cloth. She wanted to go back to where she came from.

Could she say that she was clueless all along?

Qiao Nan blinked her bright eyes at Zhai Sheng. Her long, curly, and luscious eyelashes swept over her eyes. Zhai Sheng looked at Qiao Nan and felt the unidentifiable itch again.

He tried to ignore it, but the itch intensified by the second. He controlled himself not to reach for Qiao Nan’s face and rubbed her head instead. “Be good.”

It was just two simple words. Even though Zhai Sheng said it calmly and briskly, Lin Yuankang and Qiu Chenxi who were bystanders could sense the tenderness and gentleness in his voice.

Zhai Sheng exerted too much force in his hands, and Qiao Nan could not withstand it. Her body slanted, and she had to grab hold of the corner of his shirt to steady herself. “Brother Zhai, I am not a kitten or a puppy. Stop rubbing, I cannot stand properly!”

She had known Brother Zhai for a long time. He never had the habit of rubbing people’s head. She had never seen any cats or dogs whenever she went to the Zhai family’s residence as well.

“Oh...” Lin Yuankang gave a slight cough, reminding Zhai Sheng that they were not alone. It was better not to publicly display his affection for Qiao Nan.

He used to think that Zhai Sheng tended to give the cold shoulder to ladies and preferred to spend all his time in the army, was it not so?



Lin Yuankang felt pleasantly sweet at this scene. On the other hand, Qiu Chenxi was in extreme grief.

“Little sister, I still do not know your name despite chatting for such a long time just now.” When did Brother Zhai get to know this woman?

Wait.

Qiu Chenxi looked at Qiao Nan. She was still young and had yet to develop her curves. Qiu Chenxi felt slightly at ease. Although the woman who stood in front of her was not short, she was still a child. It was impossible for Brother Zhai to fancy her.

Could she be the daughter of Brother Zhai’s relatives?

Lin Yuankang and Qiu Chenxi were curious about Qiao Nan’s identity. They stared at Qiao Nan, waiting for her answer.

Qiao Nan frowned. She was not used to being the center of attention. Zhai Sheng shifted to stand in front of Qiao Nan. “Elder Lin, let’s have a seat while we talk.”

Zhai Sheng had spoken up. Lin Yuankang might be older than him, but he did not have any objections. Nevertheless, things got complicated when they sat down.

Zhai Sheng led Qiao Nan to sit on a two-seater sofa. Qiu Chenxi who wanted to sit beside Zhai Sheng had no place to sit.

Qiu Chenxi remembered her objective today. She turned and walked toward Lin Yuankang, finding a place beside Lin Yuankang and sat down.

Lin Yuankang smiled. He was old after all and no longer as attractive as the young man, Zhai Sheng. But the lady from the Qiu family did not seem to be as good as what he heard.

“Grandpa Lin, here are the assignments I completed in these few days. Would you take a look for me?” Qiu Chenxi quickly took out her ‘homework’, hoping to prove to Lin Yuankang that she was capable.

Lin Yuankang did not look at the stack of papers he took from Qiu Chenxi. Instead, he passed it over to Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan did not wish to take the stack of papers, but Zhai Sheng took it from Lin Yuankang and gave it to Qiao Nan.

“Young lady, I am old, and my eyesight is getting worse. I have presbyopia, but I cannot find my spectacles. Can you take a look for me first?” It would be very interesting if this young lady was the one who translated the documents Zhai Sheng took from him last time.