

RTAMM 1621

Chapter 1621: Guilty Conscience

Zhou Zheng's second wedding had not been as cheery or glorious as Qiao Dongliang had expected.

"..." Qiao Dongliang was taken aback. He had not expected that Qiao Zijin was the one who had wronged Zhou Zheng first. Even if he was Qiao Zijin's father, he felt that he had no right to stop Zhou Zheng from finding a second wife who was even younger and prettier than Zijin. But what he still could not get over was how Zhou Zheng specifically chose the day of Zijin's funeral to get married and even prevented his granddaughter from attending her birth mother's funeral.

Other than that, Qiao Dongliang did not really mind if Zhou Zheng got remarried, although he did cling on to the hope that Qiao Zijin would reconcile with Zhou Zheng. Qiao Dongliang did not even mind, so he was extremely shocked to hear that Zhou Zheng's parents had disagreed. "Wh-why?"

"Why?" Zhai Yaohui was gleeful. "You're foolish, but that doesn't mean that other people are foolish too! Parents have a great wealth of experience that their children do not. Do you really have to ask why? No wonder your Qiao family is in such a mess. The father doesn't act like a father, but the daughter has to act like an ancestor. Just one woman can turn the whole family upside down and create so much trouble." All these were just a good start for Qiao Dongliang. It was not just because of Ding Jiayi.

As head of the house, as long as Qiao Dongliang had been smarter and taken responsibility, Qiao Dongliang should have been able to rein Ding Jiayi in no matter how brilliant or how foolish she was. Unfortunately, after the incident, Qiao Dongliang, as was his habit, simply pushed all responsibility to Ding Jiayi, feeling that it was entirely Ding Jiayi's fault that their two daughters turned out like this.

No. Qiao Dongliang was the one who had 'contributed' the most.

"Not only that, but Mother Zhou had also renovated a large house, intending for Qiao Zijin to move in with her husband and children after she had a second child. I won't repeat whatever happened afterward. Since Zhou Zheng was going to get remarried, Zhou Ying's status and position in the family became rather awkward. So, Mother Zhou made a decision for the two elders to bring Zhou Ying to that new house and to leave the old house to Zhou Zheng and his newly-married wife, as well as the children that the woman would bring with her."

In this matter, apart from Zhou Zheng, the behavior of the Zhou family was indeed praise-worthy.

“Don’t mind my harsh words. The truth is usually brutal. The Zhou couple has done so much more than you as a birth father for a daughter-in-law who started an affair outside. I hope you won’t disturb Qiao Nan anymore in the future if you have any problems. Now, Qiao Nan’s most important identity is as the daughter-in-law of the Zhai family. Secondly, as the mother of my three grandchildren. Thirdly, she’s an independent individual. Being your daughter comes in fifth or sixth place. If you have any problems, it’s best not to disturb ‘other people’.”

1

Qiao Dongliang chewed on his lips. Zijin was gone, so Nan Nan was now his only daughter. How could he be ‘other people’ in Nan Nan’s eyes?

“I know you haven’t said a word, but you’re silently disagreeing with what I just said. I won’t try to beat around the bush with you.” Zhai Yaohui was used to bigger occasions and matters, and not at all used to these trivial family matters. But his working style as a chief would never change. “Qiao Nan has been married into the Zhai family for over a decade now, and the three children are already in junior high school. Have you realized that you have never addressed me as your in-law and have instead always addressed me as your chief? As for me, I’ve never taken the initiative to ask you to drop that courtesy and address me more casually since we are a family. I’ve always taken it for granted that I should accept you addressing me as your chief.”

Qiao Dongliang felt immensely guilty. He had indeed felt that way but had never asked about it. He had thought that it would be too embarrassing for him to ask about such a matter. “I’ve always addressed you as chief because I respect you deeply.”

“Is that so?” Zhai Yaohui denied what Qiao Dongliang had just said. “Is it because you respect me? Or is it because you feel guilty toward Qiao Nan and thus have no right to be her father? That’s why you don’t feel like part of the family even after Qiao Nan gave birth to three children. I’m sure you know best in your heart.”

From the beginning to the end, Qiao Dongliang himself was clearest about that.

The one whom he owed the most to was not Qiao Zijin, but Qiao Nan. Because of this debt, Qiao Dongliang had never been able to stand tall in front of his daughter, Qiao Nan. Qiao Dongliang could not even face Qiao Nan proudly, much less Qiao Nan’s in-laws.

“Actually, I’m now on a tangent. Let’s get back to the matter at hand. You’re already clear of the Zhou family’s attitude, so are you still thinking of having the whole Zhou family fall into bad luck along with Zhou Zheng?” Zhai Yaohui quickly stopped. He knew all too well that his words would be a slap to Qiao Dongliang’s face, and that would cause Qiao Dongliang to hold back a little. But it would not be for more than a few days. After a few days, Qiao Dongliang would be back to normal.

Qiao Dongliang shook his head as guilt filled his face. “Chief, you’re right. They have done much more than I have as a father.” He was useless. Whatever he had done for Zijin could not compare to whatever the Zhou family had done. “In this matter, Zhou Zheng is the only one at fault.”

If Qiao Dongliang still brought the rest of the Zhou family into this matter, then he was being utterly shameless. It would be no different from an ancient emperor who would drag all three generations of a criminal, or even his entire clan, into the matter.

“Fine, since you’ve said that, we’ll continue our conversation. Nan Nan is a good kid. Because of Qiao Zijin, our family has made efforts to help Zhou Zheng have a stable job. You know that too.” Without their arrangement, there was no way the Zhou family would have treated Qiao Zijin so well and let her live such a luxurious life.

Qiao Dongliang felt increasingly awkward. “I... I know.” It was just that when he had his days, he chose to forget that the only few good years that Qiao Zijin had were all due to her younger sister, Qiao Nan. Although Qiao Nan disliked the Qiao family on the surface, she had never shortchanged them as her family. In fact, she had done more than what other daughters would do for their families.

Qiao Nan had sacrificed too much for the Qiao family, but all three of them chose to ignore Qiao Nan’s sacrifices. Instead, they focused on how stingy and revengeful Qiao Nan was. Because of some small incidents when she was younger, she chose not to acknowledge her mother and sister, and she even had a poor attitude toward her birth father.

Zhai Yaohui led Qiao Dongliang on step by step. If Qiao Dongliang remained silent and did not answer him, he would not speak either. Only when Qiao Dongliang responded in the manner that he wanted did he continue. “Didn’t I mention earlier that Zhou Zheng isn’t a particularly intelligent person? If he wants to commit any bad deeds, he won’t be able to do it well. So, Zhou Zheng has already left his job and gone to find a new one somewhere else.”

With the Zhai family looking out for him, as long as Zhou Zheng did not commit a huge mistake, the Zhai family would simply remind the Zhou family, and Mother Zhou would help clean up after Zhou Zheng's mess before it escalated into an even bigger problem. It was truly a joint effort between his parents and the Zhai family that Zhou Zheng was able to hold on to his position for so many years.

On the contrary, the Zhai family would no longer try to help Zhou Zheng because of Qiao Zijin. Mother and Father Zhou had initially taken Zhou Ying with them and started to live separately from Zhou Zheng. Without help from the Zhai family, even if Mother Zhou was willing to acknowledge Zhou Zheng as her son and help him, there was no way for her to clean up the mess before the problem had happened anymore.

And because of this, Zhou Zheng was dragged down from his position.

Zhou Zheng was infuriated because his life was already in a mess because of his work. At such a time, would Zhou Zheng still care about whether Qiao Zijin was dead or alive? Even after Qiao Zijin had been buried for such a long time, he had never once taken Zhou Ying to pay her respects to Qiao Zijin.

"I'm sure you don't need me to tell you how pathetic Zhou Zheng is now that he doesn't have Mother Zhou looking after him and now that he's lost his job, right? I'm sure you can guess."

"Of course!" Great! This was great! Zhou Zheng had indeed been bitten by karma and had been taught a lesson. People like Zhou Zheng should have it tougher. If it was not for his own incapability, Qiao Dongliang would really want Zhou Zheng to suffer even more so that he would regret getting a divorce from Qiao Zijin. If Zhou Zheng had not divorced Qiao Zijin, Qiao Zijin would still be alive and well in Ping Cheng. She would not have caused such a huge fuss and turned to suicide after her relationship with Qiao Nan soured.

1

"Now that we've settled the Zhou family's issue, let's talk about Qiao Nan." On the account that they were in-laws, Zhai Yaohui was giving Qiao Dongliang special treatment by wanting to talk it through politely with Qiao Dongliang before resorting to physical force. "Do you remember the order of Qiao Nan's identities that I told you about earlier? Since you call me chief, you should understand how special our family is. The Qiao family had caused too much trouble for Qiao Nan, making her life very difficult indeed. I'm not sure if your end goal is to make Qiao Nan become as

ordinary as you guys so that she won't be able to survive in the central committee. Maybe you even intend for her to offend the Zhai family and get divorced from Zhai Sheng..."

1

"No, chief. You're mistaken. You're really mistaken. How could I have such a terrible thought? I know I'm not a good father, especially to Nan Nan, and I'm clear about how well your family treats Nan Nan. I also know that Nan Nan only knows how it feels like to have a family because she married into your family. How could I wish that Nan Nan would get divorced from Zhai Sheng? Zhai Sheng treats Nan Nan so well. If Nan Nan were really to get divorced from Zhai Sheng, she would never find a better man!"

If a person was not afraid of losing something, it was because he knew there would be something even better ahead.

But since there was no better choice than Zhai Sheng, Qiao Dongliang would never have such a thought. Even if Zhai Sheng was not so good, as long as the couple could lead a peaceful life, Qiao Dongliang would never rationally ask his daughter and son-in-law to get a divorce.

Zhai Yaohui smiled once again, but this was a cold one. "Are you sure you've never thought this way? If it's true, then I apologize for having misunderstood you. I misunderstood your opinions toward Nan Nan and Zhai Sheng's marriage. Don't mind me. It's really your family's actions that are misleading me. Who doesn't want to have a simple and peaceful life after getting married? But your family has not only caused so much trouble for Qiao Nan, but you guys have also made the Zhai family an easier target. Do you know that every single incident that you guys create can become an excuse for our enemies to use against the Zhai family? How do you think the Zhai family would view Qiao Nan if that were really to happen?"

At the time when Qiao Nan had first married into the Zhai family, many bystanders had wondered if the Zhai family was doing charity by taking in a young lady of such poor family background. Was it because they pitied her?

At that time, Qiao Dongliang had felt eternally grateful to the Zhai family for not rejecting Qiao Nan as a daughter-in-law just because of her family background.

"In ancient times, people were particular about whether a married couple comes from equal family background and social status. Our family was already unbothered by Zhai Sheng marrying a wife who would not be able to help the Zhai family. I felt that Zhai Sheng was very ambitious in his career and should continue to climb up the ranks based on his own efforts to support his own

family. That would be a real man. We can put aside nepotism in our family. The problem is that even after the Zhai family has looked past how his wife cannot help our family, her family is constantly trying to pull us down. What do you think about your family's actions, Qiao Dongliang?"

"While you guys were fussing around, did you really not stop to think about Qiao Nan and whether the Zhai family would turn against her because of these matters? Didn't you ever think that there would come a day when we would finally explode after all those of years of accumulating our troubles and the couple would get a divorce?"

"No, you guys would never do that," Qiao Dongliang said 'no', but his face was pale, and cold sweat dripped continuously from his head. "Zhai Sheng and Nan Nan have a good relationship, and they already have three children. The triplets can't go without their mom!" If Nan Nan were really to get divorced from Zhai Sheng, there was no question that the custody of the three children would be awarded to the Zhai family. At that time, Nan Nan would have nothing.

"You see, you know for yourself that we won't do such a thing, and not that we won't have such thoughts. So, you should be clear that whatever the Qiao family does will eventually affect our views toward Qiao Nan. Knowing is one thing, but it's obvious that you don't care. You're betting on my son's deep relationship with Qiao Nan. You know that Nan Nan is a good kid who's filial and can never say no to her father. And because of that, you're always trying to squeeze Nan Nan dry, and you're even making the entire Zhai family work for you. Qiao Dongliang, let me ask you something. If Zhai Sheng were really to get divorced from Nan Nan, how would you ever make it up to Nan Nan? I'm afraid you'd never be able to make it up to her even until you die!"

Zhai Yaohui's hawk-like stare pierced through Qiao Dongliang's gaze. Everyone had thought that Qiao Dongliang was a useless man who could not even handle a woman like Ding Jiayi. But Zhai Yaohui had seen through the darker side of Qiao Dongliang.

Qiao Dongliang, who was seemingly inept, had unknowingly become the person who was above even the Zhai family. It could be said that Qiao Dongliang was not just another incapable person. Quite on the contrary, he was at the top of the food chain.

Initially, as long as the Qiao family kept their place, Qiao Nan's temper was already quite good, and she let it go too.

Chapter 1623: What Type of Ending Do You Want?

It was like how Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi were doing harmless things. Ding Jiayi wanted a house and money, while Qiao Zijin wanted to marry into a good family and bring Qiao Dongliang over to the capital so that she could provide him for his old age. Zhai Yaohui knew all of these and had silently agreed to them.

However, in the face of how overboard the Qiao family had become recently, Zhai Yaohui wasn't as easy to talk to as before. He didn't let Qiao Dongliang squander his feelings and patience.

If Qiao Dongliang could do it, he shouldn't blame Zhai Yaohui for exposing him and making everything clear.

Qiao Dongliang's hands shivered badly. He tried a few times but still couldn't pick up the teacup. "No. No, chief. I know our Qiao family is in a mess and we have caused a lot of trouble to Nan Nan and the Zhai family. However, it's not like what you said. I have never..." Yes, he didn't. He really didn't.

He already felt that he had let Nan Nan down. He only hated himself for being unable to make it up to Nan Nan and Zijin. How could he have harbored such overboard thoughts about Nan Nan? It wasn't like this.

Zhai Yaohui's voice was indifferent. "Perhaps, you really didn't have such thoughts..." Seeing that Qiao Dongliang relaxed his expression, Zhai Yaohui snorted and added. "However, you had really done it. It's actually harmless to have thoughts. It's like how the law only admits to factual crimes and wouldn't send someone who is just thinking of committing a crime to jail. What you have done is worse. You have turned your invisible thoughts into explicit actions and words."

"I don't know if you will change after our conversation today. I want to tell you that Nan Nan is filial to you and is softhearted. She might indulge in your every whim. However, sorry. Our Zhai family's relationship with you is like how we address each other; there's actually no relationship. When your behavior exceeds our Zhai family's tolerance, I'm sorry. No matter how good Qiao Nan is, our Zhai family can't afford to have her. I'm more curious as to how you will make use of Qiao Nan after leaving the Zhai family."

After saying these words which seemed to have put Qiao Dongliang into hell, Zhai Yaohui turned around and left coldly.

Qiao Dongliang held the cup that was still warm tightly and kept taking deep breaths. He wanted to calm himself down. No, Chief Zhai was just scaring him. Nan Nan had such a good relationship

with Zhai Sheng. Looking at Zhai Sheng's attitude toward Nan Nan, how would he divorce her? No. He definitely wouldn't.

However, not too long later, Qiao Dongliang couldn't help but panic. He was certain that the Zhai Sheng now wouldn't get a divorce with Qiao Nan. What about a few years later or ten years later? It wasn't that easy to maintain a husband-and-wife relationship. He had divorced Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin had divorced Zhou Zheng. Could it be that he really had to experience Qiao Nan's divorce?

No, that was too scary.

The house Qiao Dongliang lived in wasn't big. However, at this moment, Qiao Dongliang felt extremely lonely. He could only hear his breathing in this house. There wasn't anything else that was living.

Qiao Dongliang, a man who had become a grandfather, suddenly hugged his head and started sobbing. He really didn't think of letting the Zhai family serve him because of his relationship with Nan Nan. How would he have the guts to have such a mindset? He always hoped that Nan Nan could lead a happy life forever. However, someone told Qiao Dongliang that he had always been ruining the happiness that wasn't easy for Qiao Nan to get hold of.

At this time, Qiao Dongliang couldn't help but admit that he had indeed feared nothing because Qiao Nan was his daughter. He didn't have such thoughts, but he had done so.

He wasn't capable and he felt that his younger daughter was more capable. As such, he let his more capable younger daughter handle his elder daughter's affairs. He had never thought about the fact that regardless of how capable his younger daughter was, she was still a newbie in this circle and had limited connections with others. Furthermore, that was Ping Cheng, not the capital. Qiao Nan only joined the central government when she was in the capital.

Since Qiao Nan couldn't do it, then the Zhai family had to help Qiao Nan do it.

As such, Qiao Dongliang couldn't deny that although he didn't think of it, he had actually done it.

To a person like Qiao Dongliang, who liked to deceive oneself, Zhai Yaohui's simple and straightforward words had simply removed the layer of cloth that was covering Qiao Dongliang's face, giving him numerous blows.

On this day, what Zhai Yaohui did was unknown to Qiao Nan. Their last meeting was really unpleasant. Qiao Nan was still hesitating how to tell Qiao Dongliang that Zhou Zheng had lost his job when Zhai Yaohui told her that there wasn't a need for her to worry as Qiao Dongliang was already aware of this piece of news.

Qiao Nan felt relieved. In a short period of time, Qiao Nan really didn't want to face Qiao Dongliang, her father, again. She had enjoyed too little in the Qiao family. However, if something happened to the Qiao family, she was always the one who had to shoulder it single-handedly. Qiao Nan couldn't accept it anymore that she would naturally be the one to take care of things if something happened but was considered an extra if there was nothing.

In the beginning, Qiao Nan only wanted to calm down. At the same time, she wanted Qiao Dongliang to reflect calmly. If the feelings parents had for their children became unreliable, then the filial piety children had for their parents would change as well. However, as time passed and it was going to be the new year soon, Qiao Nan realized in shock that since that incident, Qiao Dongliang had never looked for her once.

Qiao Dongliang didn't look for Qiao Nan. Naturally, it was impossible for him to see the triplets. Qiao Dongliang might be avoiding Qiao Nan, but it was definitely impossible for him not to want to see the triplets. Thus, what was wrong with her father?

After finishing her work at hand, Qiao Nan picked up her bag and prepared to head home. Without Li Dawei, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had returned to a harmonious state like before. Qiao Nan wasn't curious at all what kind of life Li Dawei and Xu Xinming had been leading ever since they were transferred out.

"Mom!"

"Mom!" Once the triplets saw Qiao Nan's car, they were especially happy. "Mom, the final term exams are over."

"Yes. Get in the car quickly. Put down your bags first. It's so heavy to carry them on your bodies." Because of Qiao Zijin, Qiao Nan had already overcome her psychological obstacle for the second time and started driving. Initially, once she saw this car, Qiao Nan couldn't help but think of Qiao Zijin and develop a phobia.

In the end, it was naturally with the help of Zhai Sheng that she could recover herself and face that incident with Qiao Zijin.

Chapter 1624: Acting Like a Young Lady

Of course, the three children had pulled their weight too, and the elders in the family took this to heart. So, every time they were driven around by their mom, the three children had completely different feelings.

“Don’t think about it after finishing the exam. You’re only in your second year of junior high school. Even if it’s an examination, don’t put too much stress on yourselves or let yourselves get too nervous.”

“Mom, relax. You’ve said this so many times. We can probably recite it backward.” Nervous? Them? What a joke! Even though he had never been able to overtake Da Bao and claim the first position in the level, he and San Bao were still equally matched. The second and third positions always belonged to either one of them, and they would take turns to hold those positions at any one time. But from this incident, Er Bao felt that Da Bao was no longer in agreement with him and San Bao.

He and San Bao were still taking turns to claim the second and third positions. Da Bao should occasionally give up the first position and let him and San Bao claim it too! Was it not boring to always claim the first position?

Knowing that Er Bao was going to start a rant, Da Bao gritted his teeth and forced a smile at Er Bao. It’s not boring! He could give in at anything, except for his academic results. Besides, was it a matter of giving in when Er Bao and San Bao fought for the second and third positions? It was clearly because the two of them were not as stable as he was in their studies. And they even had the guts to push all responsibility to him?

He was indeed the elder brother, but he refused to take on this burden.

Seeing Da Bao change his icy cold façade to reveal a smug smile, Er Bao fumed with anger. “This is inappropriate in Mom’s car. Why don’t we have a go when we get home?” He would have to teach Da Bao a lesson to let Da Bao understand that he should love and take good care of his younger siblings. It was his duty to do so.

Da Bao retracted his gaze indignantly. So be it. When had Er Bao ever won against him anyway? Perhaps, Er Bao would surpass him during the next examination and take the first position!

“Oh, right, why don’t I bring you to visit...”

“Mom, I’m hungry. I want to go home for lunch.” Da Bao cut Qiao Nan off because he knew what his mom wanted to say. Sorry, but he had not sorted out his own feelings and was unwilling to meet his grandpa. It might even be better if they saw less of their grandpa for the time being.

If they saw less of him, they would slowly forget all the mean things that their grandpa had said to their mom as time went by. But if they met him again too quickly, he was afraid that he would recall the incident and flare up even more.

“I can get something along the way...”

Er Bao refused to eat junk food. “Mom, don’t you always tell us that the food sold along the streets is unhygienic and dirty? Besides, they’re laden with MSG. Why are you changing your tone now? If you do that, we’ll learn from you too. Don’t regret it in the future.”

San Bao kicked her feet and said, looking all innocent, “Mom, I’m really hungry. Even before school ended, my stomach was already grumbling loudly. The food sold outside is either way too salty or too heavy for my palate. Mom, I want to eat what grandma cooks. Grandma is definitely cooking something delicious at home for us now. Mom, it’s not good to waste food. Grandpa and grandma won’t be able to finish all that food.”

If they were only three years old, maybe they would not have understood what their grandpa had said to their mom that day. At most, they would have felt that their mom was mad at their grandpa. Consequently, they would also be angry at their grandpa. But within a few days, they would be on good terms and playing happily with their grandpa again.

But the fact was that they were already in their second year of junior high school. Not only did they understand what their grandpa had meant, but they also understood how wronged their mom must have felt because of this incident.

She would much rather be labeled a bad kid than go visit her grandpa at this time. No! Definitely not!

The three children were resolute and Qiao Nan was afraid of making a fool of herself. Therefore, she went along with the children and returned straight to the Zhai family's house instead of visiting Qiao Dongliang.

As expected, as soon as the three children reached home, they were immediately greeted with fragrant wafts of food.

Er Bao cheered loudly, dumped his schoolbag, and picked up a pair of chopsticks to stuff food into his mouth even before washing his hands. "It's true that the nutritional value of the meals in our canteen is not bad, but grandma's cooking skills are so much better! What I miss the most while I'm in school is always grandma's food. I'm finally getting to eat it!"

"Rude." San Bao made a funny face at Er Bao to tease him, but Er Bao knew that whatever San Bao had said in the car on the way home had been true. On the way home, he had really heard San Bao's stomach growling as he sat beside her.

Er Bao said that he was her elder brother, so he would not be stingy with San Bao. With his chopsticks, he picked up an even bigger slice of food and stuffed it into San Bao's mouth. San Bao, who had still been joking with Er Bao a second earlier, opened her mouth widely upon seeing the piece of food coming her way and swallowed it whole.

Er Bao said while feeding San Bao, "We should really let those fools in school see how their favorite goddess behaves at home. You're opening your mouth so widely that I can see your tongue. Don't you think it's ugly? And you said that you were a young lady?"

San Bao slapped Er Bao on his elbow. "This is my house. When we're at home, why would I need to pretend to be a young lady? That's for outsiders to see. Anyway, grandma's food is really too delicious. I can't even stop myself from doing that."

"You two have such sweet mouths! You've only just stepped into the house but you're already coaxing your grandma like that. I'm telling you that grandma will take your words to heart. If there are any leftovers later, you'll have to stuff them into your stomachs no matter what." Miao Jing was overjoyed. She had initially learned to cook because of the three children, so there was nothing that would make her happier than hearing the three children's praises.

"Ahem..." Da Bao coughed, reminding Er Bao and San Bao not to go overboard. Of course there was a need to please such a good elder like their grandma, but there was still another emperor at home who became jealous easily. Even if it was to coax their grandma, they had to know their limits.

Every time their grandpa coaxed their grandma and praised her cooking skills, their grandma was nowhere near as elated. When their mom or the three of them were not around, their grandma could not even be bothered to cook for their grandpa. It was their auntie who cooked for them.

Their grandpa resented them quite a lot within his heart. Their mom was next in line after them. It was all right for them to deflect some hate for their mom, but if they went overboard, they would have to face both their grandpa's and dad's wraths at the same time.

Chapter 1625: Children, Don't Be Silly

The three of them were still young. Too violent a storm would make them die early.

Da Bao knew his limits. When Er Bao and San Bao coaxed Miao Jing together, they would often not care about anything else. "It's time to eat soon. Both of you follow me to the washroom to wash your hands. Something like this isn't good, after all. Don't be so stubborn just because grandma always pampers you." Da Bao, who had a conscience, pulled Er Bao and San Bao into the washroom. The three of them stood in a row and started to wash their hands.

Er Bao exhaled. "When I first came in, I seemed to have seen grandpa's face turning dark. What's wrong? Grandma is throwing tantrums again and refusing to cook for grandpa now that we're leaving?" Their situation was really an unexpected calamity. They weren't the ones who asked their grandma to stop cooking for their grandpa. Their grandma was just following her mood. How could their grandpa vent all his anger on the three of them?

San Bao snorted daintily. "It's because we're still young and good to bully. Grandpa is like that, and Dad is like that as well. I'll just be on good terms with grandma and Mom to anger them to their deaths!"

Da Bao looked at San Bao with eyes that spelled 'don't be stupid'. "San Bao, don't be 'pranked' by these two old men first before angering them to their deaths. Have you forgotten the extremely painful lesson we went through in our summer holidays this year?" Upon thinking of how tanned their fair-skinned sister became, Da Bao and Er Bao joined forces to challenge Zhai Sheng so that they could 'take revenge' for their sister.

Zhai Yaohui didn't know how the three of them were arranging the elders in the washroom. What Zhai Yaohui knew was that he was satisfied with Da Bao for bringing away Er Bao and San Bao in time. When he was young, he would occasionally find Miao Jing being too clingy. However, when the triplets were born, Zhai Yaohui found out that Miao Jing could be even clingier.

It was a pity that Miao Jing was no longer clingy to him now. Instead, it was to the triplets. Over the past ten years, Zhai Yaohui couldn't count the number of times Miao Jing had neglected him in order to take care of the triplets. Forget it that they were young in the past. The triplets were now junior high school students and were about to become senior high school students in one and a half years.

Could it be that these three grown-up children didn't know how to take care of themselves? The triplets had parents. If anything were to happen, their parents should be the ones to worry. Why did Miao Miao join in the excitement? Miao Miao only needed to manage him well.

"Mom, your dishes are getting more and more delicious." Qiao Nan was in awe. The 'Auntie Miao' who had ordered her around at home in the past was now the 'mother-in-law' with superb culinary skills. Indeed, nothing in the world is difficult for one who sets their mind to it. Mom's talent for cooking was obviously much better than hers. "I'm starting to get worried. What should I do if the three children love your cooking and refuse to eat my food anymore in the future? Mom, why don't you teach me when you're free?"

Miao Jing, who had something to do again, became happier. "Sure. Mom will teach you whatever you want to learn. As long as you have time, I can make the arrangements on my end. Remember, in this house, Mom's time is all yours." Miao Jing really didn't expect that she could be a master to someone one day. She felt a great sense of achievement.

"Mom, my wife's time is all mine." Zhai Sheng added quickly when he heard this sentence upon reaching home. This was the tacit agreement between Zhai Sheng and Zhai Yaohui. They would definitely not let each other's wife take up their own wife's time.

Miao Jing didn't take Zhai Sheng's words to heart. "Then, you have to be at home as well. If you're not at home, Nan Nan's time is all mine!" After taking care of the three grandchildren, Miao Jing had learned how to make similar childish expressions as theirs well.

"..." Zhai Sheng was helplessly and mercilessly defeated by Miao Jing's realistic words. Even though he was spending more time at home now, he still couldn't compare to his mother. When he wasn't around, Nan Nan's time was his mother's. This was a fact and he couldn't refute it. Zhai Sheng looked at Zhai Yaohui pitifully. At the very least, when he was around, Nan Nan's time was all his.

However, his father was old and was spending more time at home now, but his mother wasn't willing to spend any more time on him now. After making such a comparison, Zhai Sheng could say with satisfaction that he was much luckier than his father.

Money couldn't be exchanged for the lively atmosphere that was created when a family sat down together for a meal. "Oh, right. Mom, Nan Nan, do you want to watch the Lunar New Year eve's evening show live?" Zhai Sheng asked when they were having fruits after the meal.

As the Zhai family, it was appropriate for them to sit in the big hall to watch the Lunar New Year eve's evening show. It was just that when the Zhai family had first moved over to the capital from Ping Cheng, Zhai Yaohui wasn't willing to be too eye-catching. He also used the excuse that Old Master Zhai liked the peace and the quiet atmosphere would be more conducive to his health to reject the opportunity.

The Zhai family had been living in the capital for over ten years now. Zhai Sheng didn't directly decline the invite to the evening show this year. He felt that the timing was right. If his family wanted to attend, then they should. If not, it would be just like the previous years. It wasn't a problem to refuse. Occasions like this would only have issues of not having enough seats, and not that there were too many empty seats.

Miao Jing frowned and looked at Qiao Nan. "Nan Nan, do you want to go?"

Qiao Nan understood immediately once she saw Miao Jing's expression. "I don't. I prefer us as a family sitting down together for a meal. If there's a need to, we can watch the performance on the fifteenth day of the first month." Qiao Nan was someone traditional as well. To her, it wasn't necessary for a family reunion on Mid-Autumn Festival. However, it was compulsory for a family to have a meal together on the eve of Lunar New Year.

Even under the bad atmosphere of the Qiao family, it was rare for Qiao Nan to spend the Lunar New Year alone. Furthermore, Qiao Nan wasn't someone who particularly loved crowds. As a Chinese, she was purely curious about how the live performances were. In the past, she could only watch it on TV. Now that she was qualified to watch it live, she did have some sort of reaction.

However, when she saw that Miao Jing was unhappy, Qiao Nan refused without thinking further. "Our reunion dinner only happens once a year. Let's stay at home. It's too tormenting and noisy to go outside. So many families like to book a table at a restaurant nowadays, but we don't even join in the excitement for this. We like to prepare the meal at our house. Let's forget about the evening show."

Miao Jing felt a little embarrassed. “Nan Nan, could you tell that I wasn’t very willing to go? Actually, it doesn’t have to be like this. I’m old and I don’t like crowds. I can’t tolerate loud noises. You’re still young. If you like, let Zhai Sheng bring you there.”

Chapter 1626: Stunned

“But I’ll make it clear that you guys can go, but you can’t leave the two of us alone to celebrate the new year alone. The triplets must stay behind to accompany me and Old Zhai.”

Since she could not hold her son and daughter-in-law back, having her three grandchildren around was good too.

“...” Miao Jing’s words made Zhai Yaohui, who had been slightly happy, upset. Why would the two of them not be able to celebrate the new year alone? He had even been considering bringing Miao Miao out on the first day of the new year for a date if there was no one else at home. That would be a perfect arrangement, but everything was ruined the moment Miao Miao spoke.

“...” The triplets who had been unwittingly brought into the matter were resentful. Why was their grandpa looking at them with such a strange gaze? They had not chosen to be a third wheel. In fact, they were more interested in being a third wheel to their parents!

Qiao Nan wiped out the juice that had made her hand sticky. “Mom, it’s not like that. I don’t really like these events either. Haven’t you seen that in all these years that I’ve always been at home for my meals apart from the ones that I have no choice but to take in the office? Even when it comes to department celebrations, I try hard to avoid them too. I love our family.” Of course, one could also describe her as a homebody.

“All right, so we’ll still be celebrating the new year as a whole family this year!” Miao Jing grew happier, and her tone expressed her excitement. Er Bao and San Bao, who had grown curious about the New Year’s Gala, kicked their feet in frustration. Sigh, they were going to be disappointed yet again this year.

Qiao Nan quietly tussled with Er Bao and San Bao’s hair. These two children were still young. There would be an abundance of opportunities in the future. When that time came, the three children would not even need to rely on their relationship with Zhai Sheng to enter but would be invited in based on their own capabilities. That would be even more meaningful for the children.

“Don’t be unhappy. We’re advanced in age. How can we be as energetic as you kids? If I didn’t have to go to work every day, you guys know very well that I’m the epitome of a homebody!”

The best-behaved Da Bao sat by Qiao Nan and peeled a mandarin orange for Qiao Nan. “Mom, the way you speak is so hip. Don’t bother about these two monkeys. Our school organizes quite a few cultural and literary activities too, but the two of them never ever participate in them. Worse still, they often sleep through them! The New Year’s Gala may be more expensive in terms of its facilities and organization, but in essence, it’s almost the same. They won’t even like something like this!”

After peeling the mandarin orange and passing it to Qiao Nan, Da Bao started to lecture Er Bao and San Bao. “Have you forgotten what great-grandpa taught us in the past? We have to look past the appearance of things to see their true essence. Don’t act like a three-year-old and just join in wherever the fun is at!” It was more important to stay by their elders’ side and ensure that they were in good moods.

Da Bao’s words warmed the hearts of everyone sitting there. Miao Jing could not help but wrap Da Bao within her embrace. She paid no heed to Da Bao trying to hide in embarrassment or Zhai Yaohui’s piercing gaze at Da Bao. Instead, she continued shouting, “You’re such a good boy, Da Bao. You’re a good grandson! Grandma is so pleased to hear what you just said! You’re grandma’s darling! How could our Da Bao be such a good boy? You’re the best!”

Da Bao was truly shy because he had already learned about the differences between genders. Now that he was being hugged by his grandma like that, Da Bao was feeling embarrassed. Da Bao pleaded Qiao Nan to rescue him, but Qiao Nan only returned a comforting gaze. Son, just treat it as though you’re pleasing your elders. Since it’s the new year, just let your grandma be happy.

Er Bao and San Bao, who had been disciplined by Da Bao earlier, were gloating at Da Bao’s predicament now. After disciplining them, karma was coming back for Da Bao now!

1

Would Da Bao allow his younger siblings to step all over him? No way!

Da Bao shifted his gaze and immediately tried to shift Miao Jing’s attention. “Grandma, don’t just hug me! Think of how much Er Bao and San Bao love you! Don’t just hug me in front of them! If you hug only me and don’t hug them, they’ll get upset and jealous and throw a tantrum!” Since it was unavoidable, they might as well ‘suffer’ together.

It was not as though grandma was his grandma alone. If they needed to coax her, the three of them should do it together. None of them could escape and laugh in a corner as a bystander. Humph! Did they think it was so easy to take advantage of him?

Miao Jing's eyes twinkled. "Hug! All three of you! You three are all grandma's darlings, grandma's precious little one! Come! Let grandma kiss you." With all three children within her embrace, even if she could not entirely embrace them, Miao Jing was overjoyed.

Miao Jing would not trade the world to have this: to have her three grandchildren together and to spend time together as a family.

Even the three others who were not involved in this smiled along. Zhai Sheng hugged Qiao Nan, with the widest smile. It was indeed true that mothers were a blessing to their children even at his age. With his mom around to take care of the three rascals, there was no one to fight over Nan Nan with him.

Zhai Sheng had never given in to anyone over the ownership of his wife, not even to his own daughter, San Bao. Seeing Zhai Yaohui with empty arms and bitterly and aggressively downing tea, Zhai Sheng felt as though he was in heaven when he felt that figure within his arms and smelled that fragrance.

Zhai Yaohui's lips twitched. He had just helped Zhai Sheng settle Qiao Dongliang's problem. Was this rascal going to kick him to the curb now that he had outlived his usefulness?

Feeling Zhai Yaohui's gaze turning dangerous, Zhai Sheng did not forget that he was the father of the three children and smoothly rescued the children from their grandpa's piercing gaze. "It's late. You children should head to bed. Children should go to bed early and wake up early. Only then will you be healthy and grow up well."

The triplets felt that they had been 'ravaged' by their grandma, and their father's words had undoubtedly saved them from their grandma's 'evil grip'. The triplets had never listened to Zhai Sheng so well. "All right, Dad. Whatever you say. We'll return to our rooms and go to bed early so that we can wake up early. That's great!"

The three children were escaping after having started a fire. But they had learned this skill under the cold gazes of Zhai Yaohui and Zhai Sheng.

When they went to bed that night, Qiao Nan had only just laid within Zhai Sheng's embrace when she immediately grabbed onto Zhai Sheng's elbow and asked, "My dad hasn't looked for me in a long while and hasn't seen the triplets either. That's really strange."

After forcefully planting a kiss on Qiao Nan's lips, Zhai Sheng laughed with that low voice of his. "Are you suspecting that I did something to your dad? Why? Does your heart ache for him? Do you pity him?" If he had really done something to Qiao Dongliang, that would be understandable too. He viewed Nan Nan as his treasure, but Qiao Nan was not even worth as much as a stalk of grass in Qiao Dongliang's eyes!

Chapter 1627: Sharp-eared

Nan Nan was at Qiao Dongliang's beck and call. Zhai Sheng was really eager to try and do something to Qiao Dongliang.

"..." Qiao Nan had a complicated look on her face, as if she was in a dilemma. "Who asked me to be his daughter? Who asked him to be slightly better as compared to Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi? If I could be tolerant of the both of them, then my tolerance level for my father would naturally be higher." However, regardless of how high it was, she would still feel hurt and upset. "Don't change the topic. What happened?"

Brother Zhai was her father's son-in-law. As such, Brother Zhai would only be like her. It wouldn't be convenient for him to lay a heavy hand on the Qiao family.

"Nothing much. It was just that my father was free and in a good mood one day. Thus, he had a chat with your father. That's it. How could the people from my family use violence on your father? You have thought too much." Zhai Sheng patted Qiao Nan's shoulders and smiled. "It's so late. It's not good if we disturb others by not sleeping. Let's do this. If you can't sleep, let's do some 'exercise'. You're sure to sleep well after that."

2

"..." Before Qiao Nan could roll her eyes, Zhai Sheng had already suppressed her. Men on bed were really bullish. No matter what topic they were talking about, it could always be linked to this. It was really not easy.

After understanding the circumstances, Qiao Dongliang didn't take the initiative to contact her. Qiao Nan also didn't give Qiao Dongliang a call. As for living expenses, Qiao Nan had long given Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi a card each. She would transfer money to these two cards monthly. This way, Qiao Nan could avoid Qiao Dongliang more completely.

In the blink of an eye, it was close to the end of the year. It was the eve of Lunar New Year tomorrow. According to the habits of previous years, knowing that Qiao Dongliang was alone in the capital, the Zhai family would invite him over for the new year. However, the situation was a bit awkward this year.

Miao Jing didn't dare to ask Qiao Nan. As such, she could only ask Zhai Yaohui. "Are we inviting him or not this year?" It was highly likely for Qiao Dongliang to spend the eve of Lunar New Year alone. When Miao Jing thought of how Qiao Dongliang probably wouldn't even be in the mood to celebrate the new year, she couldn't help but pity him.

Zhai Yaohui turned the newspaper over. "Women are capricious. No wonder Qiao Dongliang would have such a temper. If Qiao Nan could be ruthless, there's no reason why Qiao Dongliang couldn't change all his habits."

"Isn't Nan Nan Qiao Dongliang's daughter? Is it right for a daughter to cure her old man?"

"No one else would know. What's there to be afraid of?" Zhai Yaohui looked like he couldn't care less. "Qiao Dongliang is a coward and doesn't treat Qiao Nan well. He changes his mind more frequently than women. However, we have to admit that he really didn't think of not letting Qiao Nan lead a good life. If Qiao Nan really did something to Qiao Dongliang, he would only tolerate it."

This could be considered the biggest shortcoming in Qiao Dongliang's character. When a child needed to be disciplined, stronger means had to be used to let the other party understand that this was definitely unacceptable and to prevent a situation like this to happen a second time.

He didn't manage when he should, and his love as a father grew when he shouldn't be managing. That was why Zhai Yaohui found him displeasing to the eye. Qiao Dongliang's love never seemed to happen at the right time.

If Qiao Zijin could do this, Qiao Nan could naturally do so as well. However, if Qiao Nan was half as ruthless as Qiao Zijin, would Qiao Dongliang have dared to make unreasonable demands to her? Qiao Dongliang's issue was formed out of habit.

He didn't even pamper his own son and grandchildren. Would he let the people around him pamper an 'outsider' like Qiao Dongliang? What a joke!

"Let Qiao Dongliang spend the new year alone this year. However, let Qiao Nan know to transfer more money to him such that he could eat to his fill alone outside. I do want to see how he feels spending the new year alone with a large sum of money." Nowadays, most children reached out to their parents for money.

It was commendable for Qiao Nan to provide for her parents. Now, Qiao Dongliang was left with only one daughter, Qiao Nan. Qiao Dongliang was good to Qiao Nan and their father-daughter relationship had improved. However, Qiao Dongliang would only have to prepare for the new year alone in the years ahead.

Miao Jing was happy to give Qiao Dongliang a lesson. "Sure. I'll tell Nan Nan then. Old Zhai, you're right. Nan Nan is too easy to talk to and has treated Qiao Dongliang well. We have to be cold toward Qiao Dongliang so that he can appreciate how good Nan Nan had been to him all along by bringing the triplets to see him from time to time!"

Without a daughter like Nan Nan by his side, how different was Qiao Dongliang from a walking corpse?

After the discussions, Qiao Nan's attitude was calm. On the 29th, she transferred a sum of money to Qiao Dongliang. Even if banks weren't operating on the new year, he could withdraw the money from ATMs. In terms of material needs, Qiao Nan had never treated Ding Jiayi badly before, let alone Qiao Dongliang.

It was the eve of the Lunar New Year, and the atmosphere was lively in all households. Even if they were planning to head outside for a meal, the house was full of festive decorations with red flowers and words of blessings. As for those who were celebrating at home, preparations for the reunion dinner were in full swing.

"Mom, I've stir-fried the vegetables." Qiao Nan followed Miao Jing and became her little assistant. San Bao joined in the fun and helped wash or cut the ingredients. She was only short of personally cooking up a meal in the kitchen now.

“It’s crooked. Move to the left a little. Yes, that’s it. Very good.” Er Bao and Da Bao were putting up words of blessings and spring couplets. As for spring cleaning, the whole family had already worked together on the 27th to get that done early.

“Oh, it’s really not easy. It’s already six in the evening. I’m getting confused.” After a busy day, Er Bao’s face was a little dirty. Da Bao looked at Er Bao with disdain. “Before having the reunion dinner, I would advise you to wash your face as well as your hands. I don’t know which dirty monkey from the zoo ran over to our house for a meal.”

1

Er Bao, who had started paying attention to his looks, became anxious and ran to the washroom without a word. Before washing his hands, he cleaned his handsome face.

1

Da Bao snorted. “You’re not San Bao. Why do you like to look pretty like her?”

San Bao glared at Da Bao. “Don’t think that I can’t hear you just because I’m helping Mom and grandma. Don’t say bad things about me behind my back.”

Chapter 1628: Why Are You Calling?

Da Bao was speechless. How did she hear about the bad things he was saying behind her back?

Qiao Nan and Miao Jing brought out plates of hot dishes. Seeing that the three of them were at it again, Qiao Nan could neither laugh nor cry. “Okay, stop. Before washing your hands, give grandpa a call and remind him to have a good meal outside tonight. You have to send him greetings tomorrow morning as well.”

“Oh.”

Da Bao responded and picked up the phone. He skillfully dialed Qiao Dongliang’s number. The phone rang a few times and the other party picked up the call quickly. “Hello? Is this Nan Nan?”

Da Bao raised his eyebrows. Didn't grandpa use to ask about the triplets first when he picked up the call?

"Grandpa, it's me. I'm Da Bao. Er Bao and San Bao are beside me. It's the eve of the Lunar New Year today, so we are giving you a call. Grandpa, remember that it's the eve of the Lunar New Year today. You must eat something good and stay healthy. Don't be reluctant to do so." Da Bao knew that his mother had transferred a sum of money to their grandpa. There was definitely enough money for their grandpa to open three tables and invite people over to have a meal, let alone opening just one table.

"Yes, grandpa. Remember to eat something good. Just order whatever you want to. We can afford to eat one table of food and throw away the other table of food. We can be that willful since we have money." Er Bao joined in the excitement blindly by the side. His grandpa would eat alone this reunion dinner, unless he was willing to invite outsiders over to eat with him.

"Grandpa, I'll call you again tomorrow and send you greetings," San Bao stretched her body and said carelessly to the receiver. Regardless of whether they liked it or not, they had to complete the task assigned by their mother. Otherwise, their mother would be upset and their father would deal with the three of them.

To save herself and on account that it was the eve of the Lunar New Year today, the quirky and bad-tempered San Bao vowed to be an obedient child. Wasn't it just a call? How difficult was that? She didn't have issues sending him multiple greetings, let alone just one.

"Oh, oh. Yes. The three of you, remember to eat more as well. Eat something good so that you'll grow taller." Qiao Dongliang seemed to have lost himself for a while and nearly swallowed the words that had reached his mouth. "Da Bao, is there anything else you would like to say to grandpa?"

The triplets had already given him a call. Even if he couldn't celebrate the new year with Nan Nan this year, didn't she have anything to say to him today?

"Oh, right, Mom is helping grandma with the dishes, so I'll say this on behalf of her. Grandpa, Mom said that your good health is her greatest blessing. She wishes for your health to be better in the next year." Even though Qiao Nan didn't say these words, Da Bao could still say them at his fingertips.

He had thought that their mom would come over to say a few words after they were done? Their grandpa was too naive. If their mom had such thoughts, did she have to transfer money to their grandpa for the meal on the eve of the Lunar New Year?

“...” Qiao Dongliang was disappointed. Today was the last day of the year. He wasn't able to have a meal together with Nan Nan. Could it be that Nan Nan wasn't even willing to say a few words to him? Facing the loneliness at home, Qiao Dongliang felt that his mood was colder than the winter in the capital.

Such an atmosphere reminded Qiao Dongliang of the helplessness he had experienced when Qiao Nan first fetched him over to the capital. At that time, how did he adjust his mentality?

He had relied on his child, Nan Nan. Nan Nan kept visiting him and even brought the triplets over. With the company of his family, he felt a small sense of belonging in the capital, which was a foreign city. Now, the child who made him feel a sense of belonging to the capital was no longer willing to take care of him. Qiao Dongliang became dazed for a while.

Qiao Dongliang couldn't help but ask himself if there was a need to continue living in the capital given current circumstances. It was just that if he wasn't living in the capital, could it be that he had to return to Ping Cheng? Even if he returned to Ping Cheng, he would be left with nothing as well. He was only left with Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan had treated Qiao Dongliang well. It was only once such good treatment was gone did Qiao Dongliang truly realize that the indifferent Qiao Nan actually treated him, her undutiful father, well.

Because of Qiao Nan, the triplets used to like him a lot and were willing to come over to play with him. On the contrary, he always knew that he had a granddaughter, Zhou Ying. Even when Qiao Zijin was still alive, she had brought her daughter over to Qiao Nan's to obtain benefits the first time Zhou Ying came to the capital. However, she didn't remember that he, the grandfather, had never seen Zhou Ying, his granddaughter, before.

Now that Qiao Zijin was gone, Qiao Dongliang still didn't know how Zhou Ying looked like.

What was different was that in the first few years when Qiao Nan was still studying in the capital, her yearly vacation period was limited. Even if she had time, Qiao Nan had to spend the time taking care of the triplets. The triplets were just born then and especially needed their mother.

Qiao Dongliang felt ashamed to go to the capital to see the triplets. Qiao Nan proactively showed him photos of the triplets. It was when the triplets were a little bigger and could go out that he embraced the fleshy bodies of his three grandchildren.

Through this comparison, Qiao Nan was really much more competent than Qiao Zijin as a daughter. The more Qiao Dongliang thought about it, the more regretful he felt. He told himself repeatedly that he couldn't make Qiao Nan worry because of his daughter's matters. It was up to him how he wanted to help his daughter. However, when it really happened, why was it that he became foolish again?

Qiao Dongliang was feeling troubled. Ding Jiayi's situation wasn't any better than Qiao Dongliang's. After losing Qiao Zijin, she didn't even have the chance to send her off on her last journey. No matter how much Ding Jiayi comforted herself that Qiao Zijin said those words in order not to let her feel upset, in reality, Ding Jiayi understood that Qiao Zijin had really hated her and no longer wanted to be her daughter.

Why did the daughter whom she had given all her love to look at her this way?

Ding Jiayi didn't know how she had spent the Lunar New Year. Regardless of how cold the winter in the capital was, it couldn't compare to how cold she was feeling in her heart now.

When it was February, Ding Jiayi couldn't help but give Qiao Dongliang a call.

Once Qiao Dongliang saw that Ding Jiayi was calling him, he didn't want to answer it. It was just that the phone kept ringing and it seemed that Ding Jiayi wouldn't give up until Qiao Dongliang picked up her call. "Why are you calling?"

1

Chapter 1629: Going Back Home

"After Zijin left us, I think that there's no need for the two of us to have any contact anymore. Do you really have to torture Nan Nan until she dies too before you'll be happy?"

Was it not enough that Ding Jiayi had already ruined the life of one of his daughters? Now, did she have her eyes set on Nan Nan to force her to her death too?

In the face of Qiao Dongliang's relentless criticism from the other end of the phone call, Ding Jiayi was extremely calm. Even her breath was normal. "Have you finished? If you've said your piece, it's my turn. I called you to tell you one thing. I'm going back to Ping Cheng to stay in the Qiao family house. You can tell Qiao Nan to stop paying the rent on my apartment from now on."

When Ding Jiayi hung up the call, Qiao Dongliang was baffled. "Is Ding Jiayi for real? Or did she say those things just to please me?"

Even if he doubted the authenticity of what Ding Jiayi had just said, Qiao Dongliang responsibly conveyed Ding Jiayi's intentions to Qiao Nan after receiving Ding Jiayi's call. "Nan Nan, what do you think your mom means by this? Do you think she's being serious, or is she trying to play tricks on us? Don't worry. I'll go and figure out what's going on, so you shouldn't go. Now that Zijin is gone, I'm not sure if she's still normal after being so shaken up."

If Ding Jiayi had really gone insane due to Zijin's death and wanted to pin the blame on Nan Nan and fight it out with her, Nan Nan would definitely be at a disadvantage. She was no match for Ding Jiayi. "Give me your mom's address. I'll take a look. If she has really moved away, you can just stop paying the rent. Remember not to appear in front of your mom. I'm afraid even I won't be able to handle your mom once she starts throwing a tantrum."

"..." Qiao Nan pursed her lips. "All right, then. Thank you for making the trip down."

Suddenly hearing that Ding Jiayi wanted to move away from the capital and had even taken the initiative to revert to receiving only a thousand yuan of living allowance every month, Qiao Nan felt that this could not have been Ding Jiayi's words either. Ding Jiayi was the kind of person who would take all five thousand yuan from Qiao Nan if Qiao Nan earned five thousand yuan a month.

Now, Ding Jiayi had taken the initiative to ask for her increased living allowance to be lowered once again. What kind of joke was this? Was this really Ding Jiayi?

Even though Qiao Zijin had lost her life after intentionally jumping in front of Qiao Nan's car and refusing to let the doctors conduct a surgery on her, Qiao Nan did not put it beyond Ding Jiayi to blame the whole incident on Qiao Nan.

With that thought, Qiao Nan knew that it was entirely possible that Ding Jiayi was trying to fight it out with her over Qiao Zijin's death.

"It's not hard at all." Now that he had finally reconnected with Qiao Nan after much difficulty, Qiao Dongliang was overjoyed. There was no way he would think that such a trivial matter would be hard on him. "Nan Nan, you should still be working at this time. I won't bother you anymore. I'll help you keep a lookout on your mom's matter."

After hanging up the call, the frown on Qiao Dongliang's face eased considerably, and he set off for the address that Qiao Nan had given him with light steps.

When Qiao Dongliang arrived, he happened to see Ding Jiayi come downstairs, carrying only a bag.

Upon seeing this scene, Ding Jiayi's neighbors asked out of curiosity, "Sister Ding, are you going somewhere to visit your relatives? Or are you going to find your useless daughter?"

After living in their neighborhood for so long, they had never seen Ding Jiayi interact with anyone, nor had they ever seen any relatives visit Ding Jiayi at home. They had only heard Ding Jiayi say that she had an extraordinarily capable daughter who was working in the capital. It was this daughter who was taking care of all of her living expenses.

So when they saw Ding Jiayi carrying a bag of things, they all thought that Ding Jiayi was going to visit her relatives.

In these few months that they had not met, Ding Jiayi had grown much more haggard. Qiao Dongliang was sure that Ding Jiayi had lost a considerable amount of weight ever since they last met at Qiao Zijin's funeral. Most importantly, Ding Jiayi's hair had grown much whiter. In the past, she had more black hair than white hair. Now, it was as though she had a whole head of white hair.

Ding Jiayi smiled reluctantly, only tugging at the corners of her lips to force a smile out. "I'm not going to visit my relatives. I'm thinking of moving back to my hometown. I'm already so old, and I can't be of any help to my children. I'm just a burden to her now. Now that I'm old, it's best that I return to my roots."

She thought about how her days staying in the Qiao family's small courtyard had been the best days of her life. Zijin had been born there and had grown up there.

She would be much happier returning to the Qiao family's small courtyard. It would not be like living in the capital. Although her house in the capital was big, and neither did she need to worry about her expenses, it was cold and she did not recognize anyone around here.

Most importantly, Zhou Ying was in Ping Cheng.

Now that Zijin was gone, she could not let anyone bully her granddaughter, Zhou Ying. She would look after Zhou Ying on Qiao Zijin's behalf. If the Zhou family treated Zhou Ying badly just because Qiao Zijin was no longer around, she was willing to throw aside her dignity and beg Qiao Nan to seek justice for Zhou Ying from the Zhou family.

"Going back home?" Everyone was taken aback. Everyone knew that Ding Jiayi's younger daughter was truly capable. No one else was like Ding Jiayi and could simply stay at home without working but still enjoy a life without having to worry about their expenses.

Ding Jiayi was living such a good life in the capital, but she wanted to go home! She must be crazy!

"Goodbye." Ding Jiayi did not bother to explain anything to her neighbors. Her greetings were just out of courtesy. She did not mean to see any of these neighbors ever again.

Seeing how Ding Jiayi was so casual about leaving, many of her neighbors were bewildered. "What do you mean? Are you giving up such a good life to go home? Have you gone mad? Don't elders these days lead good lives wherever their children are at? What do you mean by going home alone?"

"Why do you care so much? It's got nothing to do with us. Let's go."

Qiao Dongliang remained hidden in a corner like a peeping tom from the start until the end. Regardless, he was unable to rest easy and decided to hail a cab to follow behind Ding Jiayi. Only after seeing that Ding Jiayi had indeed bought a ticket back to Ping Cheng and had boarded the train did he believe that Ding Jiayi had not been lying when she said that she was going back home.

As Ding Jiayi's husband, Qiao Dongliang could not understand what Ding Jiayi was trying to do.

But at least, Ding Jiayi would not cause any more trouble for Qiao Nan now that she had finally left the capital.

Chapter 1630: Sounding Out One's Intentions

Based on this point alone, in the face of Ding Jiayi's departure, Qiao Dongliang really wanted to celebrate for Qiao Nan by setting off fireworks.

"She's really leaving?" After receiving Qiao Dongliang's call, Qiao Nan herself wasn't sure what her expression was like when she listened to the contents of the call. "Okay. Trouble you for this matter."

"It's no trouble at all. We would normally walk more when we head out to shop as well. Nan Nan, you're about to knock off work. Head home quickly. Remember to have a good meal. Don't be too hard on yourself." Whenever Qiao Dongliang called Qiao Nan now, he would definitely say words of concern and ask her to take care of herself.

Qiao Nan would never have enjoyed such treatment back in the past.

Qiao Nan felt extremely helpless when she felt Qiao Dongliang's change. She really didn't want to use the term 'worthless creature' to describe her father. However, when she treated her father well, he ignored her every day and looked as if she had thrown him outside alone to fend for himself.

She hadn't really done so now, but a call alone had made her father so happy, and she enjoyed the treatment that only Qiao Zijin would have.

After hanging up the call, Qiao Nan didn't know what else she could say besides sighing.

No matter what, now that Ding Jiayi, a time bomb, was gone, Qiao Nan felt as if she had finished defusing a bomb and was relaxed all over. She had always been guarding against Ding Jiayi because of Qiao Zijin's death. She was uncertain when she would 'explode' and drag her to be buried with Qiao Zijin since she was the one who had knocked her down.

Qiao Nan, who had died in Ding Jiayi's hands once, didn't feel that her thoughts were unfounded or that she had thought too much. However, this time, the alarm was removed.

Without these people disturbing her, to Qiao Nan, time was like sand in her hands. She had obviously grasped it tightly, but it was still running out so quickly.

Seeing that Da Bao and Er Bao had grown up and were now studying in university, Qiao Nan said emotionally, "It seemed that in the blink of an eye, the three of you had finished senior high school and are now in university. Looking at all of you now, I've indeed grown old."

1

San Bao smiled and grabbed Qiao Nan's hand. She said happily, "Mom, come off it. Did you forget that someone else thought that you were my sister when we went out shopping the last time? Mom, tell me. Why does everyone else look older except you? How do you maintain this? Teach your daughter a trick or two. We can't let others misunderstand that we are sisters now and that I'm the elder sister and you're the younger sister in the future."

San Bao's level of envy was still alright. When her godmother came over to their house previously and saw her mother's face, that was called 'hatred'. Godmother said that her mother had obviously gotten pregnant earlier than her and had given birth to three children at once, but it didn't look as if she had aged. Instead, she looked like an auntie when she was standing next to her mother.

Once she thought of how her peer looked like her junior, Shi Qing couldn't help but feel jealous. She couldn't wait to tear off Qiao Nan's face and stick it on her own.

"Don't learn from your godmother. Those words were filled with jealousy. Your godmother is a soldier and has to brave the wind and rain all day. The missions she carries out are dangerous as well. To be honest, I'm already very happy that Zhu Yu still has both parents. I just don't understand why your godmother is still working so hard at this age. Even your godfather has conceded defeat."

"That's because my godmother is a strong career woman," San Bao said happily. Compared to other women, she liked her godmother more. Of course, she was pretty accepting of women like Auntie Xu. "Oh, right, Mom. Are Ling Ling's results still alright after attending senior high school?"

"Yes." Qiao Nan nodded. "Ling Ling is a sensible child. She knows that it isn't easy for your Auntie Xu alone to raise her up, so she's exceptionally obedient and doesn't let your Auntie Xu worry." When she talked about Fang Ling Ling, she felt happy for Xu Shengnan.

Xu Shengnan might have married Fang Shiyong wrongly, but she definitely didn't make a mistake by giving birth to a daughter like Fang Ling Ling.

Strictly speaking, the second year Xu Shengnan divorced Fang Shiyou, Fang Ling Ling was no longer called Fang Ling Ling and she had officially changed her name to Xu Ling Ling. Xu Ling Ling knew that her father and grandmother despised her for not being a son and didn't like her. Her father had found another woman behind her mother's back and wanted her mother to let out her title after this third party had given birth to a son.

There was plenty of such news outside. When it really happened to her, Xu Ling Ling felt that it wasn't that difficult to accept.

Furthermore, although her father and grandmother didn't like her, her mother loved her. Her maternal grandparents pampered her like she was their precious. Compared to other people, she was pretty fortunate.

Xu Ling Ling knew that although she lived in a single-parent family, her mother was capable and didn't let her suffer financially in any way. She was even leading a life better than some children who had both parents in their families. All of these were because of her mother's contributions.

Even though she didn't have a father's love, the sensible Xu Ling Ling never felt that she was a monster. She felt she was no different from others. She might not have a father's love, but her mother loved her wholeheartedly. She was more fortunate than everyone else.

The more sensible Xu Ling Ling became, the fewer worries Xu Shengnan had. When Xu Shengnan was studying, her academic results were good. Otherwise, how would she have made it to Peking University? Under Xu Shengnan's nurturing, Xu Ling Ling became even more outstanding. Her academic results were always among the best.

1

"Yes." San Bao's eyes moved. "Mom, Auntie Xu is pretty and capable. She is not considered old either. Why doesn't she want to find another man? Could it be that she wants to get back with Ling Ling's father again?" That shouldn't be the case. Auntie Xu didn't look like a person who would turn back.

It was just that her close friend, Xu Ling Ling, had such doubts and worries and wanted her to find out more information from her mother. For her close friend, San Bao said that she would help her at the loss of her life. Wasn't it just finding out more information? That wasn't a big deal!

Qiao Nan raised her eyebrows. How could she not understand her own daughter? “Why do you ask? Who are you asking for?”

“Hehe, Mom, you’re really formidable. I’ve long said before that I could never hide it from you. Mom, tell me. I know that you have a good relationship with Auntie Xu. Every time Auntie Xu feels lost and doesn’t know what to do, she would definitely have a chat with you. Mom, tell me. Ling Ling said that her father has been pursuing Auntie Xu diligently recently and wants to remarry her. Her father obviously doesn’t like her, but in order to reconcile the marriage with her mother, he even tried to work on her.”