

RTAMM 1691

Chapter 1691: Believing Her Son

The Zhai family was gathered together to celebrate the Spring Festival together. As such, the atmosphere was great. After giving Qiao Dongliang the cold shoulder for three years, the Zhai family once again invited Qiao Dongliang to celebrate the Spring Festival with them from the fourth year on. They even invited Qiao Dongliang to stay over at their house and only return to his home on the third day of the new year.

He had learned his lesson in the past. Besides, Qiao Zijin had already been gone for eleven years. No matter how much Qiao Dongliang's heart ached for Qiao Zijin for passing away at such a young age, Qiao Zijin had already been gone for eleven years. In these eleven years, he had never allowed the incense on Qiao Zijin's altar to go out. As for more practical matters, Qiao Dongliang did not do anything. Neither did he dare to do anything.

In these eleven years, Qiao Nan and Qiao Dongliang had established a tacit agreement: never to mention Qiao Zijin or Ding Jiayi.

On New Year's Eve, Qiao Nan dragged Qiao Dongliang to the study room for a chat because of Er Bao. This was the second time that Qiao Nan had been so serious and somber when talking to Qiao Dongliang after Qiao Zijin's death. Qiao Dongliang was so scared that he immediately sat up straight in his seat. "Nan Nan, what's the matter? Don't tell me that your mom is bothering you again?"

1

He had thought that Ding Jiayi had been living apart from them for eleven years without any trouble. Ding Jiayi was already old and might not have many more years left. She probably would not try to cause trouble now. Or had he guessed wrongly? Could Ding Jiayi be a troublemaker even in her old age?

"This incident has nothing to do with Mom. I'm just keeping you informed. Dad, you should remember that you have another granddaughter apart from the triplets."

“Do you mean Zijin’s daughter?” Qiao Dongliang only knew about the existence of this granddaughter, but Qiao Dongliang knew nothing about how old she was, how she looked like, whether her academic results were good, or which school she attended. He had not raised that child, so it was only natural that Qiao Dongliang’s feelings toward Zhou Xing were not as deep as his feelings toward Qiao Zijin.

“Yes.” Qiao Nan told Qiao Dongliang about Zhou Xing’s intentions. “At that time, my life wasn’t entirely bad. At least, I was still alive and had the chance to study. But it is true that I did not get to live like other children because of Qiao Zijin. I can forget about how you guys treated me. I even let Qiao Zijin marry into the Zhou family, but she was greedy and dissatisfied with what she had. I think that my conscience is clear toward my family and I have done my duty as a daughter. But my three children owe the Qiao family nothing. If anyone schemes against my three children, I won’t care if the other party is my niece. I’ll deal with her all the same. No one will be able to change my mind. Do you understand, Dad?”

“Yes...” Qiao Dongliang’s face paled. “But as for this matter, even if you decide to be softhearted and not take issue with it, I won’t agree to it either. If we really let Zhou Xing and Er Bao get together, what would happen? Wouldn’t that be incest?” Now that there were fewer children, the relationships between cousins were not all that different from between siblings. How could they get together?

Leaving aside the Zhai family’s identity, even if Nan Nan was married to an ordinary person, he would definitely not allow his granddaughter to get together with his grandson! “I may not be as educated as you, but I know that the law doesn’t allow for such unions. If the two of them get together and have a child, this child won’t be normal. Isn’t this putting someone in danger?”

Endangering yourself was nothing, but it was too much to make the next generation bear the consequences!

“I think that this lass, Zhou Xing, is even crazier than Zijin in the past. I did say that your mom is the kind of person who knows nothing about raising a child. The Zhou family couple is indeed muddleheaded. How could they hand Zhou Xing over to Ding Jiayi? Ding Jiayi is Zhou Xing’s grandmother, and I’m her grandfather. If Zhou Xing had followed me, I would never have allowed Zhou Xing to do such a thing or even have such ridiculous and scary ideas.”

If Zhou Xing dared to have such an idea, he would break Zhou Xing’s leg immediately to prevent Zhou Xing from carrying out her plan.

At that time, he had already felt that Ding Jiayi had raised Zijin wayward. Because he pitied Zijin and felt that he owed Zijin, he had hardened his heart and decided to teach Zijin a lesson. That was why he ended up sending his own daughter off.

If he were to get custody of Zhou Xing, he would never commit the same mistake again with Zhou Xing. Spare the rod, spoil the child. Even if this was not set in stone, it was very often useful. If children were disobedient? Spank. Spank them until they were in pain. He did not believe that Zhou Xing would not repent.

“Why didn’t you tell me about this earlier? If I had known about this, I would have directly gone to her school to find Zhou Xing. Now, Zhou Xing must have gone back to Ping Cheng to spend the new year with Ding Jiayi. If this child continues to live with Ding Jiayi, she will turn into a second Zijin sooner or later. From next year onward, I’ll take charge of Zhou Xing. I’ll take Zhou Xing home during her holidays in the future!”

This time, Qiao Dongliang had really made up his mind.

Qiao Nan was not the least bit surprised at Qiao Dongliang’s strong reaction to this matter. But Qiao Nan had not expected Qiao Dongliang to want to care for Zhou Xing.

She had thought that it would already be very understanding of Qiao Dongliang if he did not blame her for being so ruthless toward Zhou Xing. She had never expected that her father was prepared to be ruthless himself.

For herself and for the sake of the Zhai family, Qiao Nan knew that it would be best for Qiao Dongliang to discipline Zhou Xing strictly. “Alright, Dad. You’ll pay more attention to that child, Zhou Xing. How Zhou Xing turns out in the future will depend on how ruthless you are and whether you’re able to right this wrong.”

Qiao Nan was unsure if Qiao Dongliang would be able to do something that he had not even been able to do with Qiao Zijin and whether he would truly be able to handle this responsibility.

Anyway, she would let her dad take care of the matter first. Only when her dad could no longer do it would she interfere in the matter.

The father-daughter duo finished their discussion before exiting the study room. When they emerged from the room, no one from the Zhai family questioned them about what they had talked

about in the room. Because the issue of Zhou Xing was a little sensitive, Qiao Nan had not told Zhai Yaohui or Miao Jing about the matter. She had only informed Zhai Sheng about this earlier on.

As such, Zhai Sheng did not ask about it, but he could guess that the father and daughter had been discussing how to deal with Zhou Xing.

In Zhai Sheng's eyes, if Zhai Xin could not even handle such a small problem like Zhou Xing and was even confused by Zhou Xing, then he had raised his son for nothing. The problem was that he did not think that his son was such a fool. Besides, his son had grown up seeing his mother. Qiao Zijin was no good egg, so her daughter Zhou Xing was probably not much better.

With a pearl like Nan Nan in front of him, Zhai Xin should be able to see just how crooked Zhou Xing was. Zhai Sheng chuckled. What more was there for him to say? It was always that sentence. He trusted his son.

1

Chapter 1692: Two-Faced

If Zhai Xin failed to live up to his trust and made his wife cry, he would personally disown his son!

1

Seeing that Qiao Nan and Qiao Dongliang had come to a tacit understanding, Zhai Sheng was in no hurry to do anything. After all, there was no use for Zhou Xing to put in so much effort if Zhai Xin did not cooperate with her. The only thing Zhai Sheng had to do was to 'educate' his son. That way, it would not matter how Zhou Xing plotted against Zhai Xin. It would all be in vain.

Zhai Xin, who was helping Miao Jing serve the dishes, suddenly felt an indescribable coldness attack him, and he could not help but shiver. Zhai Xin lifted up his head to take a look around him. It was already Lunar New Year's Eve, so it did not look as though there was going to be a drastic change in the weather. Besides, he was at home where there were heaters all around. Why was he feeling cold?

Miao Jing saw Zhai Xin standing motionless with a dish in his hands and asked, “Er Bao, what are you doing just standing here? You don’t look too good. Are you feeling sick? Do you want to go to the hospital to get checked?”

It was inauspicious to visit the hospital over the Lunar New Year, but there would be no choice if her grandson was really sick. Thinking about how Er Bao had always been as strong as a bull ever since he was young and had hardly fallen sick, Miao Jing got even more anxious. She was afraid that because Er Bao did not fall sick often, it would get out of control once he did, and it might even cost him his life!

Zhai Xin smiled. “Of course not. I think I just got a muscle cramp. I’m feeling just fine. Grandma, you spent the whole day preparing so much delicious food for me to fatten me up, so how can I possibly feel unwell? Grandma, you’d better go take a seat. I’ll serve the dishes. The old master will surely come after us if you get scalded.”

In a few years’ time, it would be time for Zhai Yaohui to become a great-grandfather and take on the title as ‘old master’.

“All right.” Miao Jing patted Zhai Xin on his firm arms and smiled. Wow, this body was muscular and as tough as bricks. It was just like Zhai Yaohui’s and Zhai Sheng’s bodies when they were younger. The men of the Zhai family were all the manliest of all men. Today, her grandsons were even more outstanding!

1

Miao Jing was exceptionally proud of having raised two brilliant grandsons. “I wonder which young lady will benefit from your mom’s and my hard work in raising the two of you.”

She was not boasting. Her grandsons were truly the best kids in the courtyard. So many people had hoped that the triplets would grow up crooked, as though heaven was being unfair if the triplets did not grow up crooked. It would be as though everyone good in the world had been given to the Zhai family alone. What did they mean by trees having branches that looked good when they were young but became rotten with age?

The triplets were already outstanding as young children. These people were rather shameless. And to think that they were the triplets’ elders! Since the three children were already doing well as children, they could only hope that the children would change for the worse as they grew up.

Humph. The children of the Zhai family, whether they were young or grown-up, were always that good, that brilliant, so much so that they outshone everyone else.

The Zhai family not only had three good grandchildren. The most infuriating thing was that the children of the Zhai family were so excellent that just one of them could beat three other children. Whether it was in terms of quality or quantity, the Zhai family surpassed all the other families.

Miao Jing actually disliked these gossipmongers. Who were these ‘neighbors’ who were so eager to see her grandchildren turn for the worse? How could they have the cheek to say such things about her grandchildren? Usually, when they bumped into each other, the triplets would even address them as aunts, uncles, or grandma and grandpa. How could these people be so shameless?

If she were really to make a comparison, her days living in Ping Cheng all those years ago in that courtyard were much more comfortable. At least, the people there spoke sincerely. Knowing that the Zhai family had three grandchildren like the triplets, there would definitely be more people who were happy than those who hoped that they would fail.

“Don’t.” Zhai Xin’s expression changed the moment his grandma touched on this sensitive topic. “Grandma, I’m still young and in my second year of university. I intend on joining the air force. I’m going to give my life and time to our great motherland. I don’t have any time to start a relationship too early.”

Benefit a young lady?

What was she talking about?

After that experience with Zhou Xing, if he were to encounter a similar situation in the future, even if he truly only thought about the other party as his younger sister, he would never give her the chance of calling herself his girlfriend. Let alone talk about it with emotions.

“Haha, even if you wanted to, grandma can’t bear to let you go. It wasn’t easy for me to raise you. You should stay at home for a few more years.” Miao Jing was proud of how Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin were only getting more brilliant. In no time, they would surpass their outstanding father and godparents!

These were two promising young people.

In the past, the Zhai family usually produced only one chief per generation. If this trend continued, perhaps there might be more than two chiefs per generation in the Zhai family! The state chose talents and did not have a rule that omitted family members of recruited elites. There was no rule that one son of the Zhai family would stand no chance and be eliminated if the other son was chosen. It was not as though one would lose out if the other was appointed.

Once these two Zhai brothers reached that peak, the Zhai family would really take off. No in-laws could be better than the Zhai family, and no sons-in-law could be better than Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin.

Thankfully, these two people filled with potential were still young. As such, only those who lived with them and were familiar with the Zhai family knew about this matter. While Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin were still single and available, they tried to enjoy the benefits of their favorable positions and 'reserve' these two young lads for their own daughters or even their relatives' daughters.

The men in the Zhai family were all good and responsible men.

This was not just about finding a responsible and capable husband. It was to find a powerful ally for the whole family. That would be a win-win situation for their daughters and whole families.

Knowing that there was everything to gain and nothing to lose, only a fool would not pay attention to these two Zhai children.

One could only imagine the continuous stream of people with such an idea who visited the Zhai family daily to ask Miao Jing whether Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin had anyone in mind and whether they wanted any introductions to young ladies. Each of them was afraid that they had been a step behind and that Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin had already been claimed by other people.

In this kind of matter, he who strikes first prevails, and he who strikes late fails.

What if they heard about how good their family's young lady was and agreed?

Seeing all these people, Miao Jing was indeed proud, yet she was extremely annoyed at the same time. Who were the people who were eager to see the Zhai family's children mess up and ruin the family name? Was it not these people? Those people who usually spoke ill of Da Bao and Er Bao put on one face. But now, they were revealing their other face!

Miao Jing was never one to be easily fooled, not even in her old age.

Miao Jing refused without any hesitation. Da Bao and Er Bao were still young and were university students. It was better to put dating and relationships aside until they graduated. Besides, today's society was all about the freedom to love. She had no requirements for her grandsons' relationships. She only hoped that they would take after their father and have good judgment in finding girls who would love them back.

As for those girls who were of bad character and came to visit, she could only say that she did not take a fancy to any of them.

If they were really to consider their family backgrounds, would their family have accepted Nan Nan as a daughter-in-law or had the triplets as grandchildren?

If family background was so important, then it should be the Zhai family running around to reserve those outstanding and brilliant young ladies for Da Bao and Er Bao.

The Zhai family did indeed have two grandsons, but she had never worried that her grandsons would not be able to find girlfriends. For people like them, it was better to do without than to settle for something substandard.

After a moment of feeling proud and pouring out her grievances, Miao Jing lifted up her chin and counseled Zhai Xin. "Er Bao, your dad and Da Bao have given you a good start. If you really want to get into a relationship in the future, we won't bother about the girl's family background. But when that time comes, you have to think about your mom. A girl like your mom is truly a good young lady, a young lady that you can marry. There's an old saying that the husband of a virtuous wife seldom suffers misfortune. If a man doesn't marry well, he'll be unlucky his whole life. Our family has both positive and negative examples. So if Da Bao or you take a fancy to a girl, you guys had better think it through."

The positive examples were naturally their maternal grandpa, Zhai Yaohui, and their father, Zhai Sheng. As for the negative example, there was no way Qiao Dongliang could run away from this as the children's grandpa.

Miao Jing used the most vivid, thought-provoking, and bloody example to remind Zhai Xin to open his eyes while looking for a partner. If he found a good partner, not only would his family be harmonious like his father's, but their lives would also only get better as days went by. If they were like Qiao Dongliang and did not open their eyes while looking for a partner, their family would break up sooner or later. Even if they stayed together, there would be disharmony and quarrels every day. There would be no peace to speak of. If his partner had a bad temper or a bad character

or personality, that would still be all right. The most worrying thing was all these harming the next generation!

That was absolutely unacceptable!

Zhai Xin nodded solemnly. “Grandma, don’t worry. You and Mom are the best positive examples. Zhai Yi and I will find our girlfriends based on the traits of the two of you. I’ve already discussed this matter with Zhai Yi long ago.”

Zhai Xin was not embarrassed and even answered Miao Jing seriously.

In the past, he had never felt deeply for these words. Even if the example of Qiao Dongliang hit close to home, he was not personally involved, after all, and had no way of experiencing his grandfather’s feelings. But after the incident with Zhou Xing, Zhai Xin could not get a clearer understanding of the saying that the husband of a virtuous wife seldom suffers misfortune.

Upon seeing a girl like Zhou Xing, he had only one thought, which was to run away as far as possible. How retarded would he be to jump into another grave the moment he climbed out of Zhou Xing’s?

“Good boy. You have good judgment and a good mindset.” Because her words had been validated by her grandson, Miao Jing was incredibly pleased. Even though her glasses had become thicker and her eyesight had deteriorated, her brain was still functioning well. Humph! It was the Lunar New Year and the children had finally come home for a few days of holiday. If they did not chat with each other and get updated about each other’s lives, what was the point of coming home?

It was for Da Bao and Er Bao to get familiar with those young ladies. If they fell in love at first sight with one of them, their mission would be accomplished. Even if Da Bao and Er Bao did not fall in love with their daughters at once, giving them a chance to meet each other earlier would give their daughters a conversation starter should they ever ‘bump’ into each other in the future.

Well, everyone grew up in the courtyard together. If they were really to talk about it, there was nothing wrong with being childhood sweethearts.

The thought of those flamboyantly dressed-up young ladies angered Miao Jing. The smell of perfume on these young ladies was so strong it made her feel faint. What kind of perfume was this? It was even ridiculously expensive! It was much more like poisonous gas! It was true that every

household had heaters in their houses here up in the north. But it was freezing cold outside now. Did they not feel cold wearing such thin clothes under their coats?

1

It was wintertime, and they chose to wear skirts instead of warm clothing. If women did not pay attention to this area, they would find themselves plagued with a whole lot of health problems once they got older.

Talking about these young ladies, Miao Jing had lots to complain about.

In the past, Miao Jing did not feel much about this matter. It was because the year was coming to an end that she finally had all three of her grandchildren by her side. She had not even spent time with her grandchildren, and now, these neighbors who had no relation to them were ruining this moment for her! Could Miao Jing really stay calm and not get angry?

Miao Jing was just shy of yelling at them about how she was already old and could not stand such a ruckus. If they did not care for their own family reunion, the least they could do was to not interrupt someone else's!

“Tell Da Bao that those young ladies who have visited our house in the past few days are all your younger sisters. When we talk about familial relationships, these sisters are fake sisters. But when we talk about getting into a romantic relationship, you two must remember that these are your biological sisters! Do you understand?”

“...”

Zhai Xin felt shivers running down his spine. Now, the phrase ‘biological sister’ was enough to send him into a panic. It was like a routine reaction to these words. “I understand. Don’t worry. Da Bao and I will definitely listen to you. They’re all our biological younger sisters. We’ve never had much contact with them, and nothing will develop in the future either.”

“Good.” Knowing that Zhai Xin had completely understood what she meant, Miao Jing burst into a wide smile. With light steps, she brought the dishes out.

Seeing Miao Jing like this, Zhai Yaohui knew that Zhai Xin must have successfully coaxed his wife. Zhai Yaohui could not understand. The two of them had enjoyed such a good relationship while

they were younger, but now that they had aged, there was no way he could coax Miao Miao once she got into a bad mood. But the moment Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin returned, Miao Miao would be in a joyful mood and be as bright as a flower without much effort from the boys.

Was his charm of no competition for his two grandsons now that he was old?

The thought of this caused Zhai Yaohui's expression to darken. No matter how he looked at his grandsons, they were no longer pleasing to his eye.

1

Chapter 1694: Celebrating the New Year

No matter how he compared them, his grandsons could not match up to his granddaughter. Among his three grandchildren, only San Bao was on his side.

At this time, Zhai Yaohui felt thankful that Qiao Nan had not only given birth to sons but also a daughter. If their family had only grandsons who would swindle his wife away from him, he would really lead a miserable life as an old man.

He was still upset about this when Zhai Yu took a newspaper over and said, "Grandpa, shall I read the news to you for a bit?"

Zhai Yaohui was now advanced in age and was farsighted, but his temper was far worse than when he was younger, and he refused to wear glasses. He felt that it was incredibly uncomfortable at his nose bridge once he wore glasses. But Zhai Yaohui had already cultivated the habit of reading several newspapers daily to stay abreast of national matters.

1

If he did not wear glasses, he would not be able to see the small words in the newspaper. But if he wore glasses, he would feel uncomfortable and throw a tantrum. For this, Qiao Nan had invested much thought and effort into this. Knowing that it was inconvenient for Zhai Yaohui to go out and that he was unwilling to go out, she decided to choose quite a number of frames for Zhai Yaohui to try on.

She would then see which pair fit Zhai Yaohui the best and then bring Zhai Yaohui to that particular shop to get a pair of glasses fitted for him. Unfortunately, her efforts all went down the drain when Zhai Yaohui refused to agree to a single frame that Qiao Nan had picked out. In the end, the only result was Qiao Nan being exhausted from all this effort.

Seeing how Zhai Yaohui tortured Qiao Nan, Miao Jing went up in a rage. If he did not want to wear glasses, then there was no need to make a pair for him. Anyway, the one who felt uncomfortable while reading the newspaper was not Nan Nan, but Zhai Yaohui himself. If Zhai Yaohui would rather deal with this discomfort than wear glasses, no one else should have to worry about this on Zhai Yaohui's behalf and think of a solution for him.

She felt that Zhai Yaohui's temper and tantrum was getting too out of hand as he aged. Thankfully, Qiao Nan was patient and did not see Zhai Yaohui as an evil father-in-law. Even after spending a whole day busy with her own work, she was still willing to be tortured by Zhai Yaohui in this manner

Miao Jing directly reprimanded Zhai Yaohui, saying that Zhai Yaohui should try doing this with someone else's daughter-in-law and see who would even bother with him!

After that lecture, Zhai Yaohui could only give in and rest his case. In the end, the good-natured Qiao Nan told Zhai Yaohui not to wear glasses if he did not want to. She was typically busy with work, but she could still take some time out, of around half an hour, in the mornings and evenings to read the newspaper to her father-in-law.

It was only his eyes that did not work well. There was nothing wrong with his ears. Since he could not read, he could listen instead.

It was only with Qiao Nan's solution that peace was restored in the family.

Typically, it was Qiao Nan's job to read the newspaper to Zhai Yaohui. But now that the three children were back to celebrate the new year, Zhai Yu, who had returned the earliest, naturally took over her mother's job to read the newspaper to her grandpa, Zhai Yaohui.

When Zhai Yu took over the job, the amount of time Zhai Yaohui could listen to the newspaper being read increased tremendously. It was as though he was reading the newspaper himself and was only satisfied when he finished flipping through the whole newspaper.

“All right, let’s read the newspaper.” The moment his granddaughter took the initiative to say so, the discomfort Zhai Yaohui felt in his heart immediately disappeared with no trace. Miao Miao had her two grandsons to coax her, while he had his granddaughter. No wonder people always said that girls were like heartwarming little jackets. San Bao was her grandpa’s little jacket!

Upon seeing that the three children had dealt with Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing, the auntie secretly let out a sigh of relief. Compared to other employers, the Zhai family did indeed have a better temper. Even though the family enjoyed a high status, they treated her well and humanely.

If she did not know better, she might even have mistaken her employer’s family as an ordinary family. Their tempers were simply too good.

But things were always relative. No matter how good an employer was, they would always have times when they would throw a tantrum. What made her feel thankful was that her employers had never let their anger out of her even when they were in a bad mood. Typically, it was Qiao Nan who dealt with the two elders.

It was rare to see a daughter-in-law who got along so well with her parents-in-law.

Now that her employer’s three children were home, the elderly couple was being coaxed into a good mood every day, and they never lost the temper. The three children had been brought up well by her employer, Qiao Nan. No matter how much the two elders fussed, the younger ones never made a big deal out of it. This was only because Qiao Nan had set a good example for them. Which other daughters-in-law could be so caring toward their parents-in-law?

Zhai Sheng spent less time at home as compared to other men, and neither was he home every day. If anything cropped up at home, Qiao Nan was the one to handle it all alone. The auntie felt that it was truly not easy for Qiao Nan to be dealing with all these.

But in the face of such a situation, Qiao Nan had still managed to arrange everything properly and let her elders live comfortably. It was no wonder that the atmosphere in the Zhai family was different from other family’s. It was exceptionally good. It was truly her good fortune to be able to work for the Zhai family.

In the auntie’s heart, she had secretly assigned a title for Qiao Nan: a good Chinese daughter-in-law.

She also had a son. When her son grew older in the future, she would have to find a daughter-in-law with a temper like her employer’s, even if she could not find a daughter-in-law who could match up

to her employer. A girl who had nothing in common with her employer was definitely unacceptable. She was afraid that she would have to tolerate her daughter-in-law's temper and have no one to look after her in her old age even after sacrificing her whole life for her family.

Qiao Nan had no idea that the auntie had so many of such ideas. This auntie was younger than Qiao Nan, and Qiao Nan asked the young auntie to address her as Sister Qiao.

"All right, it's the Lunar New Year's Eve today. You'd better hurry home and spend time with your family before it gets dark. Your son is still young. He'll probably cry if he doesn't get to see you." It was almost seven o'clock, so Qiao Nan instructed the auntie to take off her apron and head home to her family.

As for everything else at home, there would not be any major problems with her around.

"I'll take my leave first, Sister Qiao." The auntie was rather happy. She had already done everything she could. Initially, she had already been starting to panic, wondering when she would be able to go home to spend time with her son. Now that her employer had said so, the auntie knew that she could really return home now.

"Yes, hurry on home." Qiao Nan placed the apron that the auntie had taken off back into its position and handed the auntie a red packet. "It's been hard on you this year. I'll have to trouble you to continue taking care of us next year. Happy New Year! Take this to buy some sweets for your son."

It was not the first time the auntie received a red packet from Qiao Nan. The amount of money in the red packet was not so much that it was frightening, but neither was it a small sum. It was almost two months' worth of her salary!

It was quite a considerable sum for a red packet!

Chapter 1695: Biological Mom

"Thank you, Sister Qiao!" After all, this was not her first time receiving it, so the auntie received it happily without refusing. Where would she ever find such a generous employer with a good temper, was not petty, and did not make trouble for her?

She had expressed long ago that the money earned from working for the Zhai family was good, but most importantly, it was worry-free!

With this fat red packet, the auntie purchased some gifts for her son, elders, and her lover on the way home. The auntie even picked out a nice coat for herself. Since it was already the New Year, there were many clothes on sale. The auntie was exceptionally pleased, feeling that she had saved quite a lot of money this time!

So as to protect the environment, the government had banned the use of firecrackers and fireworks within the city for the fear of air pollution. Even still, the air was still thick with the smell of New Year's celebrations.

As she watched the Spring Festival Gala being broadcast on television, Qiao Nan heard the sounds of firecrackers being set off across several provinces. Qiao Nan felt that this was no different from setting off firecrackers in her own home.

Zhai Yu felt that it was a pity. "Mom, have we ever done this to celebrate New Year at home?" It had been twenty-one years, but she had no impression of ever doing so.

"We've never set off firecrackers at home." Qiao Nan answered with a smile.

When she first arrived in the capital, the ban on firecrackers had not yet been implemented. The problem was that Qiao Nan was all too clear about the air quality in the capital. She knew that the issue of haze in the capital would become a hot topic, and there would be no sense of security going out of the house without wearing a mask.

Even if it was just a small contribution, the Zhai family had never set off firecrackers under Qiao Nan's subtle influence. Then, the state explicitly implemented a ban on this. It was even more impossible for the Zhai family to knowingly go against the law and the state.

"We can't do that in the capital. Grandpa can bring you to our old home in the future. We can probably still do that back in my hometown." Ping Cheng was not as developed as the capital. Such a ban was also implemented based on regions. Qiao Dongliang could not bear to see his granddaughter's disappointed face and thus brought up such a suggestion to Zhai Yu.

Qiao Nan rolled her eyes at her daughter. "Do you think you're a three-year-old child? Our family didn't even set off firecrackers when you were younger. Why are you suddenly interested in it even though the government has explicitly banned it? You're really regressing with age! You're not as obedient as you were when you were younger."

Return to Ping Cheng?

She had not yet returned to Ping Cheng, but all the troubles in Ping Cheng had come to find her instead! If she were really to return to Ping Cheng, there would only be more opportunities for 'troubles' to find her and her family in the future.

In recent years, even Ding Jiayi had stopped torturing her. But now that Qiao Zijin had left, it was Zhou Xing's turn. Since her mother was gone, her daughter was now taking her place. It turned out that Qiao Zijin was her greatest creditor. Even after paying her back for two lifetimes, it was still insufficient! It seemed as though she owed her this debt for two whole generations!

Qiao Nan vaguely remembered that in her previous lifetime, Qiao Zijin had not given birth to a daughter after marrying Chen Jun. Instead, she had given birth to a son. But similarly, Qiao Zijin had handed over the custody of her son to Chen Jun after their divorce.

Perhaps it was because she was already too down and out at that time. Her life was nowhere as glamorous as this life had been. Apart from Qiao Zijin clinging to her like a leech and viciously picking at her blood vessels to suck her dry, she had never seen Qiao Zijin's and Chen Jun's son.

At that time, Chen Jun had successfully chased her and should have successfully completed the task set out by Wang Yang. With Wang Yang's support, the Chen family did extremely well. As the only grandson of the Chen family, how would he ever remember that he had a younger auntie who was still unmarried at almost forty years old if he did not lead a hard life?

There was no way the Chen family could be bothered about small fry like her.

Zhai Yu made a face at Qiao Nan. "Mom, we're celebrating New Year today, but you're so fierce! I'm just joking. Why are you being so serious about it? Dad, I think you've spent too little time at home with Mom. That's why Mom's hormones are imbalanced and she's getting angry so easily."

He was not like Uncle Gao, who always stuck by Auntie Fang Fang's side. Auntie Fang Fang always acted as though she disliked Uncle Gao. But at least, when Uncle Gao was not around, Auntie Fang Fang was extremely kind and gentle toward the few of them. Even if Gao Feng was naughty and got into trouble, Auntie Fang Fang would never fly into a rage.

No matter what, women who had men by their sides were always the gentlest.

In their family, her mom did not just hold up half a sky. She supported the whole Zhai family's sky. Did her mom really think of herself as a man? She was too tough of a lady! "Dad, it's the New Year. Let's not go through all those outdated customs of visiting and all that. My mom has been married to you for twenty-three years, and we're already twenty-two years old, going into our third year of university. But you probably haven't even spent three years with my mom! It's only because my mom is good-natured. Other military spouses follow their husbands, but my mom decided to stay at home to take care of your whole family. After coaxing one, she has to take care of another. Dad, when will you coax my mom too and properly spend some time with her?"

As she grew older and was about to face relationship problems herself, Zhai Yu suddenly realized that it had truly been hard on her mom all these years.

She was not denying that her birth father was good. But the problem was that her grandma had always said that the men in the Zhai family had never let their country, military, party, or the people down. The only people whom they let down were their own wives. This custom seemed to have been passed down from her great-grandma's generation to her mother, who was the third generation.

At this time, Zhai Yu could not help but pity Zhai Yi's and Zhai Xin's future wives because these two young ladies would be the fourth generation of their Zhai family.

Zhai Yu felt a little regretful that she had not been able to join the military and don the military uniform. But unlike other children, she had grown up in the military. In that sense, she had grown up wearing the military uniform and had fulfilled her dreams of being a soldier.

As such, the first requirement she had for her future boyfriend was that he must not be a soldier. She had seen too many of those people. She felt that her mom and uncle were incredibly strong people. But she did not want to be so noble. She herself was not a soldier, so why would she find a soldier as her partner?

Unless the situation was like in the case of her godparents, where both of them were soldiers. That would, at least, be fair.

Since she could not join the military, neither should her partner be in the military. She was not her mother. She was truly afraid that she had not inherited her mother's good nature and tolerance for being alone. She was even worried that she would not be able to take up the responsibility of caring for the whole family like her mother had.

After thinking about so much, Zhai Yu had finally formed her own opinions toward her father, Zhai Sheng. There was no choice since the one dearest to her was her own biological mom.

Chapter 1696: What Time Did You Go To Bed?

Not to mention, this was her father's fault in the first place for spending too little time with her mom. Zhai Yu could not help but think that their dad had spent more time with the three of them when they were younger than he had with their mom.

The summer vacation lasted for two months, and the winter break for one. Two times a year, for seven days, the three of them would always follow their dad to the military. So did their dad spend even a quarter of a year with their mom? Probably not.

Upon hearing Zhai Yu's words, the atmosphere at the Zhai family's table suddenly became icy cold. Zhai Yu had only spoken the truth, so they could not say that she was wrong. But Zhai Sheng could not do as Zhai Yu had said.

Amongst them, Qiao Dongliang's feelings were the most complex. In this life, he felt the sorriest toward his two daughters. There was no way he could ever make it up to his elder daughter, Qiao Zijin, and no one could say if he would ever have a next lifetime. As for his younger daughter who was still alive and well, Qiao Dongliang did not have the ability to make it up to her even if he wanted to.

Conversely, as a father, he had never been able to do anything for her younger daughter even until his three grandchildren had all grown up. From the time she was in high school, the house they had stayed in was all thanks to his younger daughter. He had not needed to spend a single cent. When his younger daughter went to university, she not only won scholarships, but she even got married to Zhai Sheng.

Thus, he had nothing to do with his younger daughter's expenses. All that fell on the Zhai family.

Once his daughter was capable, he had not even been able to do anything for her before she started working and was even able to provide for him! Now that he heard that his son-in-law had not been able to spend much time with his daughter, causing the responsibility of caring for both families to fall on his daughter's shoulders, Qiao Dongliang very much wanted to stand in Qiao Nan's shoes to lecture Zhai Sheng so that he would cherish Qiao Nan.

But Qiao Dongliang did not dare to do so. If he was really to compare, even though his son-in-law spent little time by Nan Nan's side, Zhai Sheng treated Nan Nan much better than he did as a biological father.

In that case, he had no right to reprimand Zhai Sheng as a father-in-law.

It would be even more awkward for Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing since the one being lectured was their own son. If their son made any mistakes, it was naturally because they had not raised their son well. If they really wanted to talk about it, the couple would then feel that they were being wronged. Zhai Sheng was doing well, after all. At least, he was doing much better than Old Zhai himself.

The men in the Zhai family were all soldiers, so the women who married into the Zhai family could only accept their fates.

Just as Zhai Yu made the atmosphere stiff, leaving everyone in an awkward position and speechless, only Qiao Nan was the calmest. Her expression revealed that she understood exactly what Zhai Yu meant. "I've already said that it's not easy for you to have a break from school. It's all right for you to give yourself a break from reading textbooks and read some other books for leisure from time to time, but you shouldn't get too engrossed in them either. Don't you know that you should strike a balance between work and rest? It's because I've been looking out for you that you don't have myopia. Now that you're able to make decisions for yourself, are you going to ruin your eyesight? Tell me. What time did you stop reading novels before going to bed last night?"

Qiao Nan was drunk. She herself did not have any time to read those novels, but she had never opposed her daughter acquainting herself with these new things. Her daughter had always been obedient, but why did she have such poor self-control now?

The first time Qiao Nan realized that her daughter had developed such a bad habit was three days earlier. Perhaps it was because she had drunk too much water before sleeping that Qiao Nan was awoken at around half past one in the morning.

After going to the washroom, it was easy for her throat to become dry and itchy if she stayed in a heated area. Since Qiao Nan had already finished the glass of water that she had placed by her bedside, she had no other choice but to put on her clothes and head downstairs to get some water.

When she passed by Zhai Yu's room, Qiao Nan realized that there was light coming from under Zhai Yu's door. Qiao Nan thought it was weird that the light in her daughter's room was still on. Could it be that her daughter had gotten up to use the washroom and needed to get a drink too? Qiao

Nan knocked on the door, wanting to check on her daughter. However, even after knocking a few times, there was no answer from within.

After about a minute, Qiao Nan frowned and entered her daughter's room without her daughter's permission. It was then that Qiao Nan realized that her daughter had not woken up in the middle of the night. In fact, she had not even gone to bed!

Zhai Yu had been thrown into the military by her dad since she was young to be trained alongside Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin. The three children had the habit of folding their blankets into dried-tofu shape no matter where they were. When Qiao Nan walked into the room, the blanket on Zhai Yu's bed was properly folded into the shape of a square, with no signs of having been used.

Not only so, but the garbage can beside Zhai Yu was even filled with tissue paper that it overflowed onto the floor. After Qiao Nan entered, she could clearly hear San Bao sniffing as though she was crying. Sure enough, Zhai Yu picked up a piece of tissue paper to wipe her face. Without even lowering her head, she tossed the used piece of tissue paper toward the already overflowing garbage can.

That was how Zhai Yu was caught reading web novels by Qiao Nan, and she was the kind to read until two to three o'clock in the morning! Qiao Nan finally understood why the auntie asked if Zhai Yu was exhausting herself at school. Because when she was back home this time, she always woke up just in time for lunch.

It would be a wonder if she was able to wake up in the morning after reading web novels late into the night.

After hearing Zhai Yu being overcome with emotions today, and then linking back to Zhai Yu crying until the waste paper basket was full, there was nothing her mother did not understand. This silly girl had been reading some kind of novels lately, was suddenly overcome with emotions in the moment, and had let them all out through her situation.

The moment Qiao Nan finished her sentence, the Zhai family grew even quieter.

Especially Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin, who looked at Zhai Yu incredulously, with a stare that was enough to pierce a few holes in Zhai Yu's forehead. When he met Zhou Xing, Zhai Yi wondered more than once whether this young lady had been reading too many novels so much so that she was able to do something as crazy as getting into a relationship with Zhai Xin.

But he had never expected that this situation would occur in his family, and to his very rational and logical biological younger sister, no less! How could Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin accept this shocking news out of the blue? “Novels... Are they really that interesting and impactful?” Look. They were able to make even San Bao emotional! San Bao was no longer the same San Bao of the past.

Zhai Yu, who had been exposed, was utterly embarrassed and stared straight back at Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin. “Isn’t what I said the truth?” It was true that they did have a little impact on her, but just a little bit. She did indeed think that her mom had a hard life and was aggrieved.

The difference was that she was never this emotional in the past. She knew that her father placed great importance on the military and the state, so she tried her best to understand his decision. But her emotions got the better of her, and the words that came out of her mouth were just that little bit different from usual, as though she had lost all control.

“What time did you go to bed last night?”

Chapter 1697: All of Them Have Grown Old

Qiao Nan did not let Zhai Yu off easily. What had to be asked had to be asked. “I think you don’t want me to wake up to check on your room tonight, right? How about I install an electric meter in your room? I’ll check it before I go to bed and check it again when I wake up the next morning.”

“Mom, my good mother, you’re exaggerating! You’ve already taught me well with love. How can I commit these wrongs knowingly? I was really good last night and went to bed at ten o’clock. I’m serious!” Zhai Yu felt aggrieved. If she got caught, she would have to return to being a child and sleeping beside her mother! How would she still dare to make such a mistake again?

Actually, she rather enjoyed sleeping together with her mom when she was younger. But her biological father was simply too mean. He said that he wanted to develop their independence and thus made them sleep on their own beds. If she were to sleep together with her mom now, her dad would definitely cause trouble for her once he returned. This was her dad, her biological father, no less!

With such a jealous father, Zhai Yu had no choice but to listen to Qiao Nan and promise that this would never happen again. She swore to go to bed by ten o’clock and not stay up late into the night. It was only then that Qiao Nan gave up the idea of supervising Zhai Yu.

Qiao Nan eyed Zhai Yu suspiciously. "I'll believe you for now. But if I ever catch up again, you know what will happen. Besides, you have to restrain yourself in this area when you go back to school. Don't forget what's most important while you're in school." She would accept relaxing from time to time, but she would take matters into her own hands if her daughter was overly engrossed in it.

"For sure." Oh, dear, her mother had only caught her just this once, but she was already bringing up the matter at the dinner table. If she were to make her mom get upset about this matter again, her dad would come after her the next time. If that protective dad of hers were to make a move, she would only be in a worse-off state than now.

At times, Zhai Yu was confused. Her dad treated her well when she was younger. Didn't everyone say that daughters were their father's lovers from a previous lifetime? But that was absolutely not the case in their family!

She was not like her father's lover from a previous lifetime. Instead, she was much more like a love rival from her father's previous two lifetimes. When she was with Da Bao and Er Bao, her dad would still take care of her. But in front of her mom, nothing could compare to her mom.

Her dad treated anything or anyone who upset or angered her mom like an enemy that he needed to wipe out with full force. As such, there were two women that one could not afford to offend in the family. One was her grandma, and the other was her birth mom. That was because the emperor dowager and the emperor in the family placed great importance on these two people.

It was already considered quite good that the adults in their family did not leave the three of them to fend for themselves.

"Yes." Zhai Yu begged for mercy, so Qiao Nan finally let it go. She had only caught her daughter in the act once, after all. Of course, Qiao Nan never woke up in the middle of the night to get a glass of water from then on.

"San Bao, eat more to nourish your eyes." While Qiao Nan was disciplining her daughter, Qiao Dongliang could not bear to see his granddaughter being scolded, but neither did he dare to cut in and protect her. But once Qiao Nan finished disciplining her child, Qiao Dongliang would always use actions like taking food for his grandchildren to comfort them. "San Bao, your mom is right. You're so pretty. You won't look good if you have to wear glasses because of your poor eyesight in the future. Your mom's eyesight has been good ever since she was young. She didn't even like to watch the television. Young people nowadays are always either glued to the television or computers.

Many young children who have just started going to school are already wearing glasses that are bigger than their own faces!”

Every time he witnessed this, Qiao Dongliang was glad that not a single one of his grandchildren was like this. If they really wanted to join the military, having good eyesight was crucial.

These children who started wearing glasses from a young age had no affinity with the military. These children could lead such lives, but not the children of the Zhai family.

“Thanks, grandpa.” Zhai Yu had no intention of rejecting the pile of green vegetables in her bowl. On a winter day like that, vegetables were great. When the weather got cold, the prices of vegetables were even higher than that of meat. Thus, Zhai Yu ate it heartily.

Zhai Yu did not need to control her appetite just because she was a young lady. Since it was New Year’s Eve, she would eat as much as she wanted. Of course, Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin would only eat even more than their younger sister, Zhai Yu.

Now that Zhai Yaohui was in his old age, his appetite was not as voracious as when he was younger, but it was still better than Qiao Nan’s and Miao Jing’s. After eating one and a half bowls of rice, he put down his bowl, saying that it was best not to eat too much. Otherwise, he would be too full to fall asleep that night.

There was no change in Zhai Sheng’s appetite. He was at his peak, an ‘old man’ of almost fifty, but his spirit and vigor was much better than that of a young man of twenty or thirty. As such, getting sufficient energy to maintain such a good mental and physical state was crucial.

Zhai Sheng and his sons unanimously became the incarnates of rice buckets. Even though Qiao Nan and Miao Jing had prepared a whole table full of dishes, the father and son trio swept the whole table clean.

Most of the time, as long as the father and son trio were around, Qiao Nan and Miao Jing never worried about having leftovers, wasting food, or that the food would no longer be nutritious when reheated. After a meal, they could cook completely new dishes without needing to reheat leftovers. This was much healthier. Since they had been a family for so many years, Miao Jing and Qiao Nan had always taken this into consideration when preparing the dishes. It was with the knowledge of how much Zhai Sheng and his sons could eat that they prepared this whole table’s worth of food for New Year’s Eve.

“Wow, Da Bao and Er Bao are eating so well.” Seeing her two grandsons repeatedly refilling their bowls with rice made Miao Jing let out a wide smile. The sight of her grandchildren eating well made Miao Jing even happier than eating an extra bowl of rice herself. “It’s unfortunate that you guys will be spending less time at home in the future. After today, I’ll be a year older. I don’t know how long more I’ll be able to cook for the two of you. Maybe it won’t be long before I’ll get too old to even cook.” Miao Jing sighed emotionally.

1

Her health was good sometimes and bad at other times. It was only slightly better than her mother-in-law’s health when she had still been alive, but far worse than a typical healthy old person’s. Miao Jing could not be sure when her condition would improve. If this continued, she might not even have the strength to cook for her grandchildren even if she wanted to in a few years’ time.

Looking at the silver strands of hair sprouting out from between Miao Jing’s black head of hair, the triplets were beginning to feel upset. The three children had realized long ago that it was not only their grandparents who were beginning to grow more white hair. Their parents were not spared from it either.

1

Chapter 1698: In Another Twenty Years

Especially her mom. Even though she looked young, there was the occasional strand of gray hair that constantly reminded them of the fact that their elders were growing older by the day.

Zhai Xin thought for a moment before cajoling Miao Jing. “Grandma, I want to join the air force in the future, but I’ve heard that the food in certain areas in the army is really delicious. How about this? I’ll try to learn from them. You’re a year older, and so am I. Don’t forget that I’m already a young adult. I’ll cook for you in the future. Grandma, you won’t despise my poor cooking skills, will you?”

His grandma was already in her sixties. If not for her love for her grandchildren, a woman nearing the age of seventy would definitely not be able to go into the kitchen to whip up such a feast. Even if the majority of the food was cooked by his mom, and grandma had started to delegate work to his mom, it was still hard work.

“No?” Zhai Yaohui huffed. “Your grandma took so much effort to raise you up and even made so many delectable dishes for all of you, yet you dare to ask your grandma to eat it? If you don’t cook well, then you’d better learn until you get good at it. We’re already so old. We don’t want to be your guinea pigs. Only when you’re successful should you serve the best and most satisfactory dishes to me and your grandma.”

Was the food cooked by Er Bao even edible? Would they get food poisoning from it?

Thinking about how he had never been able to hone his culinary skills, Zhai Yaohui looked at Er Bao, who was similar to himself, with a gaze full of distrust.

When he was younger, Miao Jing had gotten pregnant and given birth to Zhai Hua and Zhai Sheng. At times, their elders had not been able to rush down in time. Thus, the responsibility of taking care of Miao Jing naturally fell on him, her husband. Unfortunately, the soup that Zhai Yaohui made was as bad as drinking poison.

Miao Jing had only tried it once in her life, but it was unforgettable. What was even more embarrassing was that he had wanted to take good care of Miao Jing for once, but he had made such a fool of himself. Zhai Yaohui clearly remembered that he had followed the instructions to boil the soup and had not taken matters into his own hands by adding whatever he pleased. Nonetheless, after Miao Jing drank the soup, she almost had no milk to feed her child, saying that something had triggered her.

From then on, Zhai Yaohui gave up on honing his culinary skills. If he really wanted to take care of Miao Jing, he would find some other ways to do so. It was best not to expose such a weakness to others in the future.

It was because of such an ‘experience’ that Zhai Yaohui had such a huge reaction upon hearing Zhai Xin’s words. He was definitely more reliable than Zhai Xin. Even so, Miao Miao had no milk left after drinking the soup that he had made. If Miao Miao were to eat Er Bao’s food, would she be sent directly to the hospital? That was too high a price to pay.

After giving it some thought, Zhai Yaohui corrected himself. “Didn’t you say that you wanted to join the air force because your goal was to fly in the sky and not hide in the canteen as a cook? There’s no point in learning how to cook. Our family has already hired an auntie. Your grandma’s health is not good, but we have an auntie to help us out with the household chores. You don’t need to worry about these small things.”

Initially, Zhai Yaohui wanted to say that he and Miao Jing were living very well because they had a daughter-in-law like Qiao Nan taking care of them.

But knowing that his son, who shared the same temper as him, was present, Zhai Yaohui swallowed these words and held back. At this time, the auntie that the family had hired came in handy and Zhai Yaohui successfully used her as an excuse.

Upon hearing Zhai Yaohui's words, Miao Jing recalled that 'special' memory, and she chuckled stiffly. At that time, she was a first-time mom, and Old Zhai had just become a dad for the first time. Her mother-in-law's health was poor, and her father-in-law tried his best to take time out to spend time with his wife and to take care of his wife. As for her, she was a military wife and lived with Old Zhai in the army camp.

As such, when she gave birth, her mother-in-law was not by her side to take care of her. Only when she gave birth to Zhai Hua did her mother-in-law think that Old Zhai was not able to take good care of them. As such, she hurried down to the army camp to help out with Miao Jing's confinement.

Because she had drunk Old Zhai's soup, she had almost run out of milk, causing Zhai Hua to starve for several meals. This angered her mother-in-law so much that she beat into Old Zhai for a long while. Old Zhai was brilliant in every way, but he just could not get a hang of cooking.

1

It was truly not an easy thing to have been able to drink the soup made by her own husband. Because Zhai Yaohui was willing to take the initiative to do such a thing and get down and dirty to make soup for her, Miao Jing was incredibly touched and thought that Zhai Yaohui was truly a good man.

After her parents passed away, she had always been living with her uncle. When she was at home, she could only sit at the same table as her uncle when eating. It was exactly because of this that she had seen too many examples in the village of husbands never helping out once women had given birth and were serving their confinement period.

It was still manageable if the woman's mother-in-law helped out. But for those without mothers-in-law, there would be no peace for even a single day even during her confinement period. Although she would not need to battle the elements and work out in the fields, she would still have to single-handedly manage every single household chore in the family.

Compared to those women, she was so much luckier to have met a good man. The more she thought that Zhai Yaohui was a good man, the more anxious Miao Jing got about Zhai Yaohui because she did not want to lose Zhai Yaohui. Especially with Qi Minlan nearby, Miao Jing's entire focus was on Zhai Yaohui while she was younger, ignoring the growth of her children.

At this age, Miao Jing realized that she was now much calmer when she thought about everything that had happened in the past. She would no longer fly into a rage upon hearing the name 'Qi Minlan'.

No matter what, Old Zhai had only married a village girl who was clueless and almost illiterate because her father had saved her father-in-law's life. And in just a few years' time, she had transformed from a village girl who was destined to be a farmer to an enviable wife of a chief.

"Actually, I think I've been very fortunate my whole life." Miao Jing had not been able to stop herself from blurting out her thoughts.

Zhai Yaohui's expression changed and he gripped onto Miao Jing's hand tightly. "It's the New Year. Don't talk about your lifetime. You still have a long time to live. When you and I both can't walk anymore and need people to push us around on wheelchairs, then you can talk to me about your lifetime."

Miao Jing's words would not comfort anyone and would only make people feel a little jumpy, especially since it was New Year. She was alive and well, so why would she suddenly bring up her past and say that she was thankful for it? She still had a long way to go. Only people who were nearing their deaths would talk about their whole lifetime.

1

"That's right, grandma. You're still so young. When you go out with Mom, you guys are like sisters. What do you mean by a lifetime? We can talk about this in another twenty years."

Chapter 1699: Warning

Zhai Xin was responsible for coaxing Miao Jing. "As long as you stay happy every day and lead a happy life, I'm sure you'll live for twenty more years, or maybe even thirty to forty more years! People in ancient times rarely lived to their seventies. But now, you'll only be considered to have lived a long life if you live to your nineties or even reach a hundred years old!"

“A hundred years old. That would mean that grandma would live a really long life.” Miao Jing chuckled and covered her mouth. A few days earlier, Miao Jing had lost a tooth. If this continued and she lost even more teeth, Miao Jing would not have many real teeth left. Zhai Yaohui said that he would bring Miao Jing to the dentist to see if she could get fitted with a pair of dentures once the holiday was over and after everyone had gone back to work.

Otherwise, how would she eat all these delicious dishes?

“It isn’t that far-fetched of an idea to live a long life nowadays.” Zhai Yaohui picked up some vegetables for Miao Jing. “Don’t talk anymore. Hurry and eat your vegetables. Otherwise, they’ll get cold and won’t taste good anymore. They won’t be good for your health either.”

“All right, don’t take any more food for me. My bowl is already filled to the brim. You know very well just how much I can stomach. Do you think I’ll be able to finish it all if you give me so much food? And to think that you said that you understand me well. Don’t you even remember how much I can eat?” Miao Jing frowned while looking at the huge bowl of food. She was almost seventy years old. Only when she was in her teenage years and after doing a full day’s of hard work could she stomach so much food.

At that time, eating rice was but a far-fetched dream. Now, her days were much better. She could choose to eat only vegetables without any rice, and she could even eat as much as she wanted until she felt bloated.

“Don’t you still have me? I can help finish whatever you can’t.” Zhai Yaohui was not at all worried that he had taken too much food for Miao Jing. Hearing Miao Jing go on, Zhai Yaohui very naturally picked up some food from Miao Jing’s bowl and placed it in his own. “How’s that? Will you be able to finish all that? Otherwise, I’ll take some more.”

Miao Jing was exasperated. “Why didn’t you just place all that food into your own bowl in the first place? What was the point of putting your food into my bowl before picking it up and placing it back in your own bowl? Wouldn’t it be faster if you just put it into your own bowl in the first place?”

Zhai Yaohui tried to coax Miao Jing. “Of course there’s a point in doing so. Am I not helping you now? I didn’t do it intentionally.”

“...”

“...”

“...”

The triplets were already used to their grandpa showing his affection for their grandma from time to time. But they were all still single, after all. It was still all right when they were younger and unclear about what was going on. But now that they were all grown up, it was like a stab to the heart every time they witnessed this. They were celebrating the New Year with a feast. Could they stop with the dog feed? They would much rather eat some human food. If they ate that dog feed, wouldn't their grandma's 'precious effort' go to waste?

Zhai Xin looked at Zhai Yi speechlessly. You've seen it too. With grandpa around, do I still need to coax grandma? Grandpa has coaxed grandma so much that she's blushing like a teenage girl. I guess there's no one nowadays who can be like grandpa and take food from their girlfriend's bowl for himself. That would be too unhygienic.

Zhai Yi looked at Zhai Xin calmly. If grandpa can coax grandma, won't your task be much easier? Besides, you're only back for a few days. If grandpa doesn't coax grandma, how long can grandma be happy for? Talking about cajoling grandma, grandpa is the true main force. You're just a backup, the middle man between grandpa and grandma.

Zhai Yi was clear about this. A grandson coaxing her was different from her husband coaxing her, after all. To prevent their grandma from getting sick of her husband's coaxing, her grandson, Zhai Xin, was roped in to help cajole her into a good mood. Only then could their grandpa's coaxing continue to be effective in the future.

“...” Zhai Xin, who completely understood what Zhai Yi had meant through that gaze, was provoked. Zhai Xin moved toward Qiao Dongliang. He was single and had no girlfriend. His maternal grandpa had been divorced for many years and was single too. Zhai Yi's behavior was atypical. It was better for him to keep his distance from Zhai Yi. Sitting beside his grandpa gave him a greater sense of security.

Zhai Xin, who had self-declared that he was not in a relationship, had completely forgotten about the existence of Zhou Xing. He knew that Zhou Xing was his cousin and that Zhou Xing had been plotting something right from the start. Zhou Xing had had her eyes on Zhai Yi but had only changed and set her sights on Zhai Xin after her failure with Zhai Yi. How could such a relationship count as a proper romantic relationship?

First love should be innocent and pure. Since it was neither innocent nor pure, Zhai Xin insisted that he had never had a relationship and that his first love had not been ruined by Zhou Xing.

Qiao Dongliang had no idea what Zhai Xin was thinking. He simply thought that his grandson wanted to get closer to him, so he smiled and picked up some food for Zhai Xin, asking him to have his fill. To Qiao Dongliang, there was no other time that made him happier than the New Year. In the Zhai family, the only time the whole family was gathered together was for the New Year.

Otherwise, when others were on their breaks, the whole Zhai family, including his daughter, Qiao Nan, was extremely busy. Even during the Mid-Autumn Festival, the family was not as complete as during the New Year's Eve dinner.

Having seen the triplets grow up healthy, with Da Bao and Er Bao growing into handsome young men, and San Bao becoming an outstanding and beautiful young lady like her mom, Qiao Dongliang was deeply moved. His life was not entirely filled with failure. At least, his younger daughter, Qiao Nan, was doing very well and had even given him these three grandchildren.

It was just that...

At the thought of the other granddaughter, Zhou Xing, whom he had never met, Qiao Dongliang's face sunk. If he had not suddenly remembered that it was New Year's Eve, his expression might not even have brightened. Stealing another glance at Zhai Xin, who was leaning close to him, Qiao Dongliang felt especially sorry toward Zhai Xin.

Had it not been the mess created by the Qiao family that he had not cleaned up, there was no way Zhou Xing would have set her sights on Zhai Xin and gotten him into such a bizarre relationship. Putting Zhou Xing and Zhai Xin together was just like putting Qiao Nan of the past with Qiao Zijin together. As such, Qiao Dongliang decided to stand on Zhai Xin's side and support him without any hesitation.

Qiao Dongliang had seen Zhai Xin grown up. Up until today, Qiao Dongliang had never once seen Zhou Xing.

Qiao Dongliang stayed in the Zhai family's house until the fifth day of the new year before he finally returned home alone. Once he reached home, Qiao Dongliang's expression darkened, and he made his first phone call back to Ping Cheng in ten years.

When Ding Jiayi saw that the caller was from the capital, she was taken aback. “Hello, who are you looking for?”

“Hehehe...” Qiao Dongliang laughed. “I guess your life must be quite fulfilling with your granddaughter that you don’t even remember my phone number. Fine. I don’t wish for you to remember my phone number either. I’m calling just to warn you about one thing. If you let Zhou Xing walk down the same path that Zijin did, Ding Jiayi, I might just become a great-grandpa at my age.”

Chapter 1700: Is It Important?

“Isn’t it enough that you’ve ruined one of my daughters? Are you planning on ruining my granddaughter, Zhou Xing, now? Ding Jiayi, believe it or not, I’m ready to fight it out to the death with you!”

“Even if I die, Nan Nan will still be alive, and I still have my three grandchildren. Ding Jiayi, when you die, I’ll bet that no one will be willing to burn paper money or pay respects at your grave. When Zijin died, she didn’t even want to let you meet her for the last time. Zhou Xing is still young and insensible, so she’s been cheated by you to believe that you’re a good person. But one day, she’ll be like her mom and finally open her eyes to see the truth. When that time comes, Zhou Xing’s attitude toward you will only be more resolute than Zijin’s in the past. Remember. If you really want to go to that extent and force yourself into a corner, don’t drag Zhou Xing down with you. Don’t ruin Zhou Xing!”

The only reason Zhou Xing got into a relationship with Zhai Xin must have been because she had been influenced by Ding Jiayi. He could not understand how crazy Ding Jiayi must have been to have agreed to Zhou Xing doing such a thing given the relationship between Zhou Xing and Zhai Xin.

It was the New Year and with Qiao Dongliang scolding her so viciously, Ding Jiayi immediately broke down. “What rights do you have to criticize me? Do you even know the whole truth of the matter? Right from the very beginning, I disagreed with Xingxing getting close to the Zhai family. Do you really think I don’t know what will happen if she gets together with Zhai Xin? Do you think I’ll stand by and watch Xingxing’s offspring become abnormal?”

Yes, even at this juncture, what Ding Jiayi cared about was only about Zhou Xing’s child being abnormal, not Zhai Xin’s child being abnormal.

“But Xingxing is just as stubborn as Zijin. She won’t listen to me no matter how hard I try to persuade her. She’s all grown up and has her own opinions. Besides, what can I do? She’s studying in the capital, while I’m back here in Ping Cheng. If I didn’t call Qiao Nan to tell her about this, would Qiao Nan have found out about her identity? I haven’t celebrated the New Year properly this year. Xingxing said that I had done her much wrong, that I betrayed her, and that I sold her out to Qiao Nan just for that living allowance that Qiao Nan gives me. I gave birth to Qiao Nan and raised her to marry her off. It’s only right that I take her money. But how can Qiao Nan ever compare to Xingxing in my heart?”

It was torturous to Ding Jiayi. It was supposed to be a festive holiday, but Ding Jiayi had not even had a good night’s sleep.

When Zhou Xing returned, she found out that it was because of Ding Jiayi’s call to Qiao Nan that Qiao Nan had found out that Zhou Xing was Qiao Zijin’s daughter. As such, Zhou Xing had thrown a huge temper, saying that Ding Jiayi had betrayed her.

But she was unlike Ding Jiayi. Ding Jiayi could only stay in the Qiao’s small residence. Father and Mother Zhou had left two or three houses to Zhou Xing. In a fit of anger, Zhou Xing returned to the house that she used to live in with Father and Mother Zhou. She would much rather spend the New Year alone than spend time with Ding Jiayi. Even the sight of Ding Jiayi made her angry.

Zhou Xing was stubborn, but Ding Jiayi was nowhere as stubborn as Zhou Xing. Zhou Xing was only seventeen years old this year. Ding Jiayi was worried about leaving Zhou Xing alone in such a big house and also worried about how Zhou Xing would settle her meals.

As such, even though Zhou Xing was angry at her and did not wish to see her, Ding Jiayi still sent her home-cooked meals to Zhou Xing, for the fear that Zhou Xing would starve herself.

At that time, Ding Jiayi had completely forgotten that Zhou Xing had signed up for culinary classes long ago. To attract Zhai Xin’s interest in her, she had already found a place to cook and even made soup for Zhai Xin. With such culinary skills, how could Zhou Xing starve?

An onlooker sees the game best. Moreover, Ding Jiayi had gone through life in a daze and had never really been clear-headed.

While others were having the time of their lives, she alone was lonely without even the company of her favorite granddaughter. Ding Jiayi was still saddened by this when she received Qiao Dongliang’s call. Qiao Dongliang’s lecture brought her to tears.

“Is that important?” Qiao Dongliang, who was on the other end of the call, laughed. “That’s right. You’ve always placed more emphasis on Zijin and neglected Nan Nan. Now, you’re putting emphasis on Zhou Xing. You don’t even think of Nan Nan’s children as your grandchildren. That’s why there’s such a difference between the triplets and Zhou Xing. The triplets are already in a top-tier university, but Zhou Xing couldn’t even graduate from high school and is now in some art school. Ding Jiayi, don’t you realize that the children that you care about have made nothing out of their lives? Ding Jiayi, I think you’re blind. You’ve always had your eyes on the wrong people. Or maybe you’re just unlucky. Whomever you like will definitely be unlucky as well.”

Qiao Dongliang’s words were indeed a little harsh. He was just shy of saying that Ding Jiayi was a jinx and whoever stayed with Ding Jiayi was putting their life on the line.

In the past, Ding Jiayi liked Qiao Zijin. Now that Qiao Zijin was gone, she placed her focus on Zhou Xing. He was only afraid that Zhou Xing would be ruined sooner or later.

“You don’t have to admit to it. I’ll just leave you to think about that question. I’m calling you today to warn you. If you dare to spout any nonsense to Zhou Xing and slander Nan Nan and the three children, you’d better watch out. Ding Jiayi, if you push me to my limits, I’m capable of doing anything. If I had the guts to get rid of you when I was younger, there’s no way you’d be living a life like this now. Since you can’t rein Zhou Xing in, I’ll do it. Isn’t she studying in the capital? It’s nearby. I’ll keep my eye on Zhou Xing. If you dare to butt in, just wait and see. Zhou Xing will become the second Zijin.”

Upon finishing his sentence, Qiao Dongliang viciously hung up the phone with a loud thud.

Qiao Dongliang was just calling Ding Jiayi out of courtesy. Once he took over the responsibility of caring for Zhou Xing, if Ding Jiayi had any opinions and wanted to stop him, he would definitely deviate from his beliefs in the past. He would probably lose his cool and hit women in a fit of anger, sending Ding Jiayi to the hospital.

Even though he had never done such a thing in his youth, he would not mind doing it if Ding Jiayi forced him into a corner. After all, Ding Jiayi had owed him this beating for decades.

Hearing the beeping sound from the other end of the phone, Ding Jiayi wailed even harder. Qiao Nan did not acknowledge her, and Zijin blamed her. Even her ex-husband wanted to fight it out to the death with her to prevent her from harming another child. Now, even her granddaughter, Zhou Xing, could not care less about her.

Ding Jiayi felt that her life was so tough. She had sacrificed everything for her family and children, but why was she in this state where everyone was scolding her and blaming her?

Fine. She would wash her hands off Xingxing. Xingxing was indeed rather similar to Zijin in the past. Her temper was so bad that Ding Jiayi could not handle her. If Qiao Dongliang could do it, she would definitely not get in the way.