

RTAMM 1741

Chapter 1741: Feeling Unwell

His aunt had not even felt sad about leaving such a huge villa empty. Instead, she had even graciously handed the keys to the villa to these children, saying that they could stay at the villa if the need arose. His aunt had said that young people needed their own space occasionally. As long as they did not go over the top and deal with things that they should not deal with, she was totally fine with them letting loose once in a while.

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Where else would he find such an enlightened and open-minded aunt?

Qiao Nan herself had never been to any of the houses that Old Lin had left to her, including the villa. But these children had been there several times for various reasons, especially Tian Haoran, who was involved in research. Whenever he reached a bottleneck in his research and needed somewhere to calm down, he would always go to this house.

Zhu Yu scratched his flat head. "If only these people were men instead of old ladies. I would definitely fight with them and punch them and kick them. That way, everything would be solved."

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"Didn't I tell you that you're all brawns and no brains?" Gao Feng chuckled uncontrollably. He had once thought that Zhu Yu was quite intelligent. But after he entered the military and got recruited into the special forces, it seemed as though his brain regressed. He was no longer as cunning and sly as he was in the past, and he would choose to use his force to solve problems most of the time. "Apart from going on missions and exercises, have you let your brain rest too much now that you're used to using physical force to solve your problems?"

Zhu Yu rubbed his fists. "Why? Do you want to fight me? Just say so if you do. Shall we go to the side and spar?" He might not be able to handle other people, but did Gao Feng really think that he would not be able to handle him?

Gao Feng huffed. “How unreasonable!”

Did Zhu Yu think he was using his feet to think too? Even when they were younger, he had never won against Zhu Yu. Now, Zhu Yu was a special forces soldier and was on the path to becoming the king of the soldiers. Fighting Zhu Yu now? That was just picking a losing battle. He had never allowed his brain to rest, so he would never do something as foolish as that!

Zhu Yu replied gleefully, “Have you forgotten what Auntie Qiao taught us? I can take on ten people!” Zhu Yu proudly raised his fist. “In the face of guns, all reactionaries are nothing more than paper tigers!”

“There are so many paper tigers in front of Auntie Qiao. Why don’t you defeat one to show me how you can defeat ten with your own strength?” Gao Feng impolitely embarrassed Zhu Yu. Everyone there had grown up together. Could they really deceive each other about their own abilities?

Come on, just stop it.

Zhu Yu laughed. “What a cheap brotherhood! Our friendship is so fragile, like a boat that can tip over at any time!” He could not continue with this conversation.

Gao Feng was overjoyed. Zhu Yu was a special forces soldier, and ever since then, they had only been able to meet Zhu Yu twice in a year. But Zhu Yu was still as cheeky as he had been. He had not grown up at all, and neither had he become inflexible because he was now a special forces soldier. He was still that old Zhu Yu they were familiar with.

“Can you treat us to a glass of wine?” Just as they were in the midst of their chat, a woman scantily clad and wearing heavy make-up walked toward the trio, smiling seductively. The woman pointed toward where she had come from. As expected, there were several other girls sitting there, dressed in the same manner as this young lady was. They were clearly used to playing the game. What she meant by drinking was that she wanted to get to know them better to see if they could hit off. If they got along well, then it was unquestionably a night’s out after that.

Tian Haoran refused her politely. “I’m sorry. We can treat you to a drink, but we won’t be going over. Enjoy, beauty. But remember to pay attention to your own safety.” As children raised by Qiao Nan, all three of them were very self-disciplined and would not fall for such a trap. Not everyone lacked self-discipline and was an animal that needed to let it out.

Such things would only feel good if involved parties had feelings for each other.

Actually, it was not just because of Qiao Nan's education. Their parents had all gotten together because of their feelings for one another. A good relationship between parents would always have a good impact on their children. Tian Haoran and his friends were rather old-fashioned in this aspect and were not the kind to mess around.

They were unlike those young people who liked to play around. Many parents did not really bother about how their own children played around outside. What they cared about was that their daughter should find a partner like the children of the Zhai family. Only children like that could keep their daughter down to earth.

Of course, families with sons also felt that marrying a wife like Zhai Yu would allow them to lead a simple and honest life. They could not appreciate the vibrant and colorful lives of young people nowadays. Their mindsets were old-fashioned and could not be changed. Otherwise, if their son brought home just any woman on the street, they would even have to worry about whether the baby in her stomach was their son's.

"Handsome, let's just have a chat and make friends." That woman did not know how to give up. She was used to playing around, and her eyes were smoking hot. Even though the trio had not ordered expensive wine, she could tell from their clothes that these three people were not the kind who dressed up in expensive clothing just to show off.

This woman also felt that they were handsome and tall. If they were rich as well, he would not just be a target for a one-night stand. They were clearly candidates for marriage!

This one-night stand could turn into scoring a good husband. When would she ever get a second chance like this? As such, she refused to give up easily. She wondered if this was the first time that these three handsome guys had come to a place like this. Were there still tall, handsome, and rich guys who were still innocent?

If it was really true, she was in luck!

Gao Feng lifted up his chin. "Beauty, if you want to make friends, I think those few people over there seem interested. Why don't you give it a shot?" He had bumped into such a hard wall after getting into an early relationship. To be honest, Gao Feng had become a little frightened at the thought of women because of his encounter with Ma Yuanyuan.

Even though he was already a university student, and it would no longer be an early relationship, Gao Feng was not yet prepared to get into one. Since he was not planning on getting into a relationship, Gao Feng was even more so unwilling to ‘make friends’ like this. Gao Feng was worried that he might ‘make’ a friend tonight but get a good beating from his mom and dad once they found out about it tomorrow.

The young lady’s expression soured. She had already thrown herself at them, but not only had they refused, but they had even offered her to someone else! The lady pouted and eyed the trio uncomfortably.

Chapter 1742: Cold

In the end, the beauty harrumphed but accepted Gao Feng’s suggestion. With her ten-centimeter-high pumps, she whipped around and went off to ‘make friends’ with those handsome men.

“...”

Tian Haoran and his two friends frowned. “We’d better strike this place off our list. We are not suited for such a place. We were just thinking of having a change of environment for once, but it’s been proven that such an idea was wrong. I think we’d better just head down to auntie’s villa. There’s no lack of alcohol there, and we’ve everything we need there too.”

“I agree.”

“Seconded.”

Although Gao Feng and Zhu Yu had no experience in that area, it did not mean that they were fools and were ignorant about what that woman’s glance meant earlier. It was truly because they were good-natured. Otherwise, they might very well have gotten into a fight with women like that.

“All right, don’t get upset. Maybe she was trying to goad us into action. It would be ridiculous to treat people like that seriously.” After calming down, Tian Haoran thought more about the matter. He clearly realized that the beauty had indeed accepted Gao Feng’s suggestion. But the problem was that even while talking to those men, that woman’s eyes would glance toward them from time to time. It was clear that she had not given up.

That was expected. After all, when ordinary men encountered such a suspicious thing, and with the other party offering herself up to them at no cost, they would typically not be able to resist themselves and would fall for it.

Tsk!

Tian Haoran felt that their way of thinking made it seem as though they were not normal men. “Let’s go back to the villa. It’s already quite late. If we go back now, we’ll probably wake the emperors and empresses at home. If that happens, there will really be a commotion then.”

“Auntie Qiao is indeed wise.” Gao Feng raised both his hands in approval. Without Auntie Qiao’s villa, they would have no choice but to stay in a hotel for the night. There was no way a hotel could compare with their homes in terms of comfort. Long live understanding, long live Auntie Qiao.

Zhu Yu hit Gao Feng’s head. “Auntie Qiao’s not even here. Stop trying to suck up to her! She won’t even know anything about this anyway!” Gao Feng was a rascal, who had known to curry favor from an early age. He had always tried to behave and please Auntie Qiao. How cunning!

Gao Feng refused to take Zhu Yu’s bait. “You’re just jealous that Auntie Qiao likes me better!” It was because Zhu Yu had not been able to win Auntie Qiao’s favor when he was younger that he was always finding an excuse to fight with Gao Feng and to use his strength to take Gao Feng down. Was Zhu Yu a fool? Nonsense! Zhu Yu was just playing dumb to take advantage of him!

Every time they fought, he would always lose. Moreover, all the adults always thought that Zhu Yu had been bullied first and had only tried to defend himself by fighting back. At least nine times out of ten, the adults would always feel that Gao Feng had been the one to start the fight with Zhu Yu.

Gao Feng had been maligned by Zhu Yu while growing up. Gao Feng and Zhu Yu’s relationship was truly the epitome of loving and killing each other simultaneously.

“Can’t compete with you?” Zhu Yu laughed. “I think you’ve got it wrong. I guess it’s because you won’t be Auntie Qiao’s favorite if you don’t use some underhanded methods.” When they were younger, Gao Feng had already been annoying. Now that he was older, he had become even more irksome.

“All right, you guys are not three-year-old children anymore. Look at where we are, will you? Can you stop embarrassing me?” Tian Haoran quickly interrupted the childish fight between the pair,

lest they be seen as laughingstocks. Tian Haoran did not care how they settled it in private, no matter how childish it might be.

But they were still outside, so they had to pay attention to their behaviors.

If that beauty had tried to goad them into action earlier, Zhu Yu and Gao Feng foolishly fighting with each other would only make the beauty feel thankful that she had changed her target.

Tian Haoran quickly left with Zhu Yu and Gao Feng before they embarrassed themselves.

Seeing that the three of them were not taking her bait and were not as impulsive and temperamental as other young people, the beauty was upset. “Handsome, you’ve drunk quite a lot of alcohol, but the night’s still young. Didn’t you say that you have a car? How about bringing us for a joyride?”

She might have been wrong. These three men looked rather young and fresh. Perhaps, she had made a wrong judgment. They were not rich, handsome, and tall. Maybe they were just tall and handsome, but not rich.

“All right.” The other party showed off the car key to his Mercedes-Benz. At that, the smile on the beauty’s face relaxed. “Let’s hurry up and get some fresh air.”

They had not sat down and chatted for long before they finished their alcohol and left to take a spin. At the door, that beauty specially kept her eyes on the parking lot. She had calculated the time. If those three young men had a car, they would definitely not have left. But if she had left and did not see any sign of those three handsome men, that could only mean that those three handsome men were broke. No wonder they had refused to sit with them and treat them to drinks. Their pockets were cleaner than their faces, after all.

People were often like that. It might not be good to get something, but one would miss it like crazy if they did not get it. Sigh. In the end, that beauty really saw it.

Initially, the beauty had not been paying attention. When she saw the brand new Jaguar drive past her, she was still grumbling in her heart that this was truly the capital, where branded cars were everywhere. A Jaguar was so common. It was not until the Jaguar parked not far away from her and she saw Zhu Yu and Gao Feng walking toward the Jaguar and getting in the car that the beauty was truly dumbfounded. The man sitting in the driver’s seat was the one who had treated her to a drink but had rejected her!

She opened the door and widened her eyes to observe the scene carefully. It was really Tian Haoran!

When the handsome man who had asked the beauty out arrived and saw her eyeing on the Jaguar, he chuckled. “Kids nowadays are really something. I think those three boys haven’t even graduated from university. It’s so late at night but they even dare to drive their family’s car out! I’m a down-to-earth person. This car may not be the best, but it’s still all right. At the very least, I bought it with my own money.”

The man had wanted to show off his ability to make money and that he did not rely on his parents. He was different from those men who only knew how to ask their parents for money. Putting one-night stands aside, women should marry men like him.

Unfortunately, the beauty did not buy that. What was wrong with asking their parents for money? If their parents did not have the ability, would they buy a brand new Jaguar for their son to drive at whim? She had never thought of enduring hardships with a man. She liked rich second-generation or third-generation heirs because she would be able to lead a comfortable life. What was wrong with that?

If she had known that the three handsome men drove a Jaguar, she would never have been so stupid as to give up the tall, handsome, and rich guys for a salaried worker who was so boastful! All of a sudden, that beauty lost all desire to go for a spin or to have a one-night stand. She came to the sudden realization that she had just brushed shoulders with three gold mines, but they had just gotten further and further from her until they were nowhere to be seen. In an instant, her heart felt tremendously cold.

Chapter 1743: Company

She had had good judgment and had picked out a gem. Unfortunately, she had not persisted and had given up such a gold mine! One would never be able to understand such a pain if they were not the party concerned.

Because she could not take this lying down, the young lady headed down to the bar every night for a whole month just to see if she had any luck bumping into the three young men who drove a Jaguar.

Who could be so sure about something like fate? What if she really ran into them? If they had no fate, she would not have bumped into them the first time, right?

Of course, Qiao Nan had no idea about this small episode. What she knew was that her two sons who had followed in their father's past were finally free to come home for a week. She was practically overjoyed. "You two rascals! Now that you're in the army, you're even crazier than your dad was when he was younger! I've lived half my life, but I've never had such a hard time because of him. But I've always been counting the days to see when the two of you would finally be back! Now that you're back, spend more time with your grandma and grandpa. Do you understand?"

Qiao Nan sighed. Now that she was older, her mindset had changed completely. The triplets were all grown up and had already gone out into the workforce, but Qiao Nan had gotten married and given birth to her children early. Because of that, Qiao Nan still looked very young.

Unlike Qiao Nan, Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing were really old. They were so advanced in age that they had to rely on crutches when going out and had to walk extremely slowly for fear that they might fall if they were to walk faster. At this age, their bones were particularly brittle.

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No matter how much Qiao Nan tried to nourish the two elders with calcium, she could not change the fact that the elderly couple was already in the seventies to eighties. Now, Zhai Yaohui was finally making up for his regret in his youth. He was finally able to stay by Miao Jing's side every day. And for that, he was rather happy.

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But Miao Jing felt differently because she had her regrets.

Having five generations under the same roof was truly a great blessing because it was rare that five generations could live together. It was not particularly difficult for four generations to live together. Unfortunately, Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin were both soldiers and had no chance of meeting girlfriends at all. Her son, Zhai Sheng, had not gotten very early, and Zhai Hua had only married in her thirties. If her grandson and granddaughter were to get married so late in life, they might not even get the chance to meet their great-grandchildren!

At the thought of this, Miao Jing could not help but sigh. Her father-in-law had been much more fortunate than her. Not only had her father-in-law been able to live with three other generations, but he had also had the good fortune of meeting three great-grandchildren all at once. She was not expecting to see three great-grandchildren just because she had three grandchildren. But the problem was whether she would even be able to meet even one!

Thankfully, Miao Jing was old but not muddleheaded. These were just her thoughts. She would not go so far as to force her grandchildren to get married just because of her own wishes.

Zhai Hua had married well, and Zhai Sheng had married even better. It was always better for young people to have feelings for each other as a foundation before progressing on. Only then would they have a good life together in the future.

Qiao Nan could not be clearer about what Miao Jing was thinking about. Miao Jing might not have said anything to the triplets about her little private wish, and as their mom, it was even more so that Qiao Nan could not force her children to do something against their own will.

It was indeed no mean feat to deliver a great-grandchild to the elderly couple all of a sudden. But her children had finally returned home, so Qiao Nan was still very willing for the triplets to spend more time with their elders.

Even though that meant she would have less time and opportunity to spend time with her sons, she was still young. She would still have twenty to thirty years with her children. Thus, she was more willing to let her two sons spend time with her parents-in-law now to appease them and put them in good moods.

“Don’t worry, Mom. I’m sure grandma will be elated to see me.” Zhai Xin patted his chest to reassure her. He rarely had the time to come home, so he wanted to cherish this time more than anyone else to spend time with his family.

When he was younger, Zhai Xin had held it against his father because other families’ fathers were always by the children’s sides, unlike their dad. Because they had spent so little time with their father when they were younger, he did not even have much of an impression of his father in the past.

His mom had told him that it was only after they turned three that they finally remembered and recognized that the man who visited them once in a while was their father!

Now that they themselves lived away from home, Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin could finally understand their father's feelings and responsibility on his back at that time. They were beyond grateful that their father had set such a good example for them, and they even had a good mother, who took care of the entire household on their father's behalf. She had even constantly reminded them about how their father was a great hero.

Thus, even though they lacked a fatherly figure in their childhoods, the three of them had never felt that their childhoods had been any different from others'. Neither did they have any regrets because of that. Perhaps, separation made the heart fonder and made people understand that it was truly precious to get together.

Qiao Nan patted Zhai Xin on his shoulder and let out a meaningful smile.

When Old Master Zhai was still alive, he had said that Zhai Xin's personality was the spitting image of her father-in-law's when he had been younger. He had been as playful and cheeky as a monkey, completely unlike his matured and stern self now.

Her mother-in-law had never seen her father-in-law when he was younger. Hearing Old Master Zhai say that, her mother-in-law had always felt that watching Er Bao grow up was as though she was participating in her father-in-law's growth. As such, her mother-in-law had shown a special preference toward Zhai Xin. This was the reason it had arisen.

It was just that the Old Master Zhai had simply mentioned this in passing when the three children were still young. At that age, they might not have understood that. Even if they did, they probably would not have any impression of it anyway. When the three children grew older and started understanding the world around them, no one ever talked about how Zhai Xin resembled her father-in-law when he was younger so as to protect her father-in-law's image.

Thus, the misunderstanding caused by her mother-in-law's bias toward Zhai Xin had continued up until this very day.

Qiao Nan, who knew the truth, simply smiled at her son without saying a word as though she was agreeing with Zhai Xin.

"Mom, this is today's newspaper, right? I'll bring it over and read it to grandpa." When he was home, Zhai Xin did not give up entirely on training, even though the intensity of his own training was nowhere as high as it was in the army. Now that he was free, Zhai Xin unhesitatingly chose to spend all his time on his elders.

In this way, Zhai Xin realized that he might have come home to rest, but it seemed as though he was even more worn-out and had less free time as compared to when he was back in the military.

“Go on.” Her father-in-law’s presbyopia had worsened significantly. If not for Zhai Yu who read the newspaper to her father-in-law after returning from work every day, her father-in-law might not have been able to continue with his habit of staying abreast of current affairs, given his dislike for wearing glasses. “Now that the two of you are back, Zhai Yu’s spending less time at home. All three of you are getting busier by the day.”

Chapter 1744: Valued

“Thankfully, I have your dad by my side. Otherwise, I really think I would not be able to pass my days.”

She had thought that the children had been too noisy when they were younger. But now that she was older, Qiao Nan felt that there was nothing much to her life other than work since her children were not by her side.

Qiao Nan, who was utterly bored, could not help but have the same idea as her mother-in-law. How fulfilling would her life be if she had a grandchild whom she could take care of!

Qiao Nan tried to restrain her smile. “Don’t forget about your maternal grandpa once you’ve coaxed your paternal grandparents.”

“Don’t worry, Mom. I know what to do.” Zhai Yi was the one who answered Qiao Nan.

Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin still had some vague impressions of what had happened when they were younger. Just a few years ago, Zhou Xing had suddenly appeared out of nowhere and had refreshed their memories of their maternal grandma’s family. Thankfully, their family had not encountered any more major problems after that. Neither had their maternal grandpa created any trouble or done anything wrong because of these troubles and problems.

Thinking about their maternal grandpa’s age, the sensible and grown-up Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin became much more considerate. Zhai Yu was the only child who stayed by Qiao Nan’s side. While Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin were not around, Zhai Yu had done her brothers’ share of filial piety on their behalves. As such, if anything happened to any of the three elders, Zhai Yu had to busy herself with both sides of elders.

Zhai Yi's gaze was filled with tenderness. "Mom, it's been hard on you all these years." In the past, the one who had it the hardest had been their mom. Now, San Bao had taken over the burden from their mom, and she was now the one who worked the hardest amongst the three of them.

In other families, it was usually the elder brothers who took care of their younger sisters so that their younger sisters would be able to live a comfortable and easy life. But in the Zhai family, it seemed as though they were always out of the ordinary. The women in the Zhai family always needed to bear more responsibilities than the men of the Zhai family.

This was his only younger sister. He had wanted to pamper and spoil her.

"Children are their parents' debt, but you and Er Bao have to treat San Bao well in the future. When the day comes when your dad and I are no longer around, the only ones that San Bao can rely on are the two of you, her elder brothers. The three of you have to get along well. Do you understand?"

Qiao Nan did not want to overthink matters. But seeing all the examples around her, she could not let it go just like that. There was a saying that men often neglected their mothers after marriage. Qiao Nan felt that with Zhai Sheng by her side, she would not despair even if her children really distanced themselves from her because of their partners. Of course, it was only natural that her heart would ache. But at least, she still had her life partner by her side.

As long as her children lived good lives on their own, Qiao Nan would not mind it. Even if her children were to leave her, she would still find a way to enrich her own life. But if this were to happen to her own children, Qiao Nan felt that she might not be as calm and collected.

Qiao Nan believed that her children were good kids, but what worried Qiao Nan was that the children were bound to have their own partners once they grew up.

It was not just a matter of having another mouth to feed or laying out another pair of chopsticks during mealtimes. Having an additional person in the family meant that there were one more person's feelings to consider. There might even be a problem between Zhai Yu and her sisters-in-law. If there came a day when neither she nor Zhai Sheng was around, San Bao would naturally have to rely on only Da Bao and Er Bao.

It was easy for girls to be taken advantage of. If San Bao was unlucky and they followed suit, judging a person wrongly and handing San Bao over to the wrong person, San Bao would suffer and

be wronged in the future. Then, San Bao would need Da Bao and Er Bao to seek justice on her behalf.

Da Bao and Er Bao would definitely not let it go if San Bao were to be bullied. Qiao Nan had never doubted that and had the utmost faith in her own sons. The only thing she was worried about was that Da Bao and Er Bao would have their own ideas after getting married and settling down with their own families. Perhaps, Da Bao's and Er Bao's feelings would no longer be as sincere and intense as before because of their partners' influence.

“You're all the Zhai family's children. Zhai Yu's desire for the army is probably as intense as yours and Zhai Xin's, but this child is considerate and chose to sacrifice herself for our sakes. It may be a little early to say this, but I'm afraid that you won't understand even if I say it now since you have no context behind it and won't feel much for it. Whenever the two of you are away, San Bao's the only one who takes care of all three of your grandparents. She's already a grown-up young lady. If she isn't busy with work, she's busy taking care of all three of your elders. She doesn't even have any free time to spend on shopping or catching a movie like any other young ladies her age should be doing, much less have any time to get herself a boyfriend.”

At the mention of her sensible daughter, Zhai Yu, Qiao Nan's tone was full of tenderness and affection.

“Everyone praises San Bao for being a down-to-earth young lady. To be honest, I had never wished for your sister to be so simple and down-to-earth given our family background. Do you mean we can't even afford a branded bag? Or pretty clothes? All those makeup products that young ladies use may be expensive, but couldn't our family afford them? It's just that San Bao's too busy. She's such a beautiful young lady but has no time for herself! It breaks my heart as a mother.”

Zhai Sheng was a man, after all, and it was inevitable that he was a little crude and careless when it came to small details. What would a man who spent all his time in the military with other men know?

But Qiao Nan was different. As a mother, Qiao Nan herself had once been a young lady. She knew exactly how San Bao was feeling as a young lady.

In her first lifetime, she did not have the financial ability. In reality, when she was in her teenage years and in her twenties, she had handed all her earnings over to her family to raise Qiao Zijin. At that time, when she saw her peers dressing up beautifully while she had not been able to buy even a single piece of new clothing for herself even after a few years of work, Qiao Nan had not only felt inferior but had also felt extremely envious of her peers.

Even in her second lifetime, Qiao Nan's conditions had not been very good. Before she married Zhai Sheng, her only goal in life was to graduate from university with her own efforts. After marriage, she was always busy with her studies, her family, and her career. She might look young and full of vitality, but she was inevitably older than many others.

At that time, she really had no energy to care about putting in some effort to dress up.

But San Bao was different. San Bao's life had always been sunny and bright. San Bao herself was bright and cheery. Whatever a typical young lady liked, San Bao was sure to like it too. Such a vibrant young lady was living the life of an old lady! How could Qiao Nan's heart not ache for her?

Qiao Nan felt that it was apt to talk to her sons about this topic today.

Between them, Qiao Nan valued Da Bao more. She knew that she only had to leave a strong impression on Da Bao. That way, even if Er Bao were to commit a folly in the future and treat San Bao poorly, Da Bao would definitely correct Er Bao.

Chapter 1745: Private Collection

"Mom..." Zhai Yi was rather moved. He would never have thought of such a thing had his mom not said something about it. He had never known that the younger sister that he had always wanted to protect had sacrificed so much just so that he and Zhai Xin could fulfill their dreams. He had thought that he understood everything, but as it turned out, what he understood and knew was just the tip of the iceberg.

He thought about how other younger sisters could party all day and throw tantrums willfully and recklessly. It might be chaotic, but at least, they were free. Then, he looked again at his younger sister. She was simply too obedient. She was so obedient that he really wanted to tell her that there was no need for her to be so obedient. She could live her life like other children did and throw a tantrum every once in a while.

The princess of the Zhai family should not have to lead such a life!

"Da Bao, remember all that San Bao has done." Qiao Nan said seriously and firmly while clasping onto Zhai Yi's hand.

Zhai Yi laughed bitterly. “Mom, what’s the matter with you? San Bao is our only younger sister. If we don’t treat her well, who’ll we treat well? But I can’t deny that I don’t know enough about how much San Bao has sacrificed for us and how hard she’s worked. Mom, thank you for telling me about this today. San Bao should lead a more carefree life! She’s worked too hard just for Zhai Xin’s and my sake.”

Qiao Nan took a deep breath, feeling that she might have gone a little over the top with her words today. “I don’t know. Perhaps my age is catching up on me. It’s normal for older people to nag and reminisce, after all. I’m fine now. Let’s go have our dinner. Let’s see if San Bao’s back.”

There were too many surprises in life.

In the past, she had not even lived to the age of forty and had remained single with neither partner nor children her entire life. In this life, she had two sons and a daughter and even had such a good husband like Zhai Sheng. Perhaps it was because her life was too blissful that it felt too surreal and unrealistic to her.

Qiao Nan was not afraid of anything else, except for the fact that she might wake up and suddenly realize that she was not Zhai Sheng’s wife, nor the triplets’ mother. What would she do if this was nothing but a dream, and she would never get a chance to see her family and children again?

It was because her thoughts had suddenly been stirred that Qiao Nan had said such worrying words to Da Bao.

“Mom, you’re not old! My new colleagues in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have no idea about our relationship, but they’ve been asking me if we’re sisters because of our resemblance to each other! It’s true! Where on earth would we find another mother who looks just as fresh and young as her daughter? Mom, how did you take care of yourself? You should at least teach me! I’m your only daughter!” Zhai Yu’s eyes were slightly red, and her voice was also slightly hoarse.

Obviously, Zhai Yu had heard Qiao Nan’s conversation with Zhai Yi. That was why Zhai Yu had been so moved that her eyes reddened and her voice was hoarse.

“They’re blind.” Upon seeing her only daughter, Qiao Nan burst into a warm and wide smile as though spring had come. “How many people in this circle don’t know that we’re both working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Those who say such things are just trying to suck up to us. Do you really think they mean what they say? I’m just like the bark of an old tree. How could I ever

compare to a young lady like you? Don't deceive yourself and treat other people's flattery as the truth!"

Qiao Nan had never taken it to heart when others called them sisters. She was already in her fifties. In another two years, she would reach the age of retirement. How ridiculous was it to say that she was still young and was just as fresh and tender as her daughter!

Maintenance?

All she could say was that those bottles on her dressing table were all gifts from either Shi Qing or Fang Fang. She had never spent a single cent purchasing any toners or creams for herself.

At times, Qiao Nan felt that this was the advantage of having best friends. No matter what they bought, they would also have her in mind and would buy some for her too.

Unlike Zhai Hua, Shi Qing had made better progress in the military as compared to Zhai Hua. But Shi Qing cared much more about beauty than Zhai Hua. Even when she was in the military, Shi Qing paid great attention to her face. Not only had Shi Qing never neglected the use of makeup and skincare, but all the products that she used only got more expensive by the year!

It was Shi Qing who had taught Qiao Nan that she needed to layer all these skincare products onto her face layer by layer until there were about seven to eight layers.

Apart from Shi Qing, the other one who paid the most attention to dressing up was undoubtedly Fang Fang. Fang Fang was the kind who would always buy two sets of anything she bought so that she could give a set to Qiao Nan.

For a period of time, Fang Fang had fallen so deep into her hole that she stocked Qiao Nan up with a good two years' worth of supplies! The money that Fang Fang spent was Gao Yan's. Gao Yan did not even control Fang Fang's spending, but the funniest part was that Qiao Nan had gotten so afraid to receive her gifts! After all, these were products with expiration dates. Qiao Nan felt that it would be better to use fresher products.

It was fine if Fang Fang could not help herself and still wanted to shop. Qiao Nan simply hoped that Fang Fang would not purchase two sets of the same thing and send them over to her house.

At that time, these two women bought only expensive anti-aging products. It was not even suitable for Qiao Nan herself to use, so it was even more so unsuitable for her to give them to San Bao.

Of course, once San Bao grew up and started paying attention to her appearance, Qiao Nan never needed to worry about it. Fang Fang and Shi Qing had it all covered.

Qiao Nan herself did not mind, but whenever someone asked her about her secret to staying so fresh and young, Qiao Nan could not help but wonder if it was thanks to the products that her two friends had been sending her.

It was not just Shi Qing who gave her these products. Fang Fang did as well! And with all these products piling up at home, Qiao Nan was not one to be wasteful. In her previous lifetime, Qiao Nan would never have used such expensive products. Even if she were to walk past the brand in the shopping mall, she would have made a detour to avoid it at all costs!

To someone who felt that buying a new piece of clothing was an unnecessary expense, splurging on such expensive skincare products was simply unthinkable!

Now that she had this opportunity in this lifetime, Qiao Nan felt that she might as well be more daring when using these products, lest they go to waste after their expiration dates. Qiao Nan slapped those products thickly onto her face as though they cost nothing at all. A single set of toner and cream would last Qiao Nan no more than three months.

It was only by maintaining that speed that the stockpile in Qiao Nan's house had not increased. She had used good products and had used them sufficiently. Qiao Nan touched her face. Was there really a right way to do this?

Seeing Qiao Nan touch her face, Zhai Yu was over the moon. She might not have admitted to it, but they were all women, after all. She could not believe that her mom really felt no joy upon hearing other people's praises about how she looked young. There was not a single woman on earth who would hate hearing such things. "Mom, don't be humble about it. My dad has been entranced by you for decades! Sigh. Why does the good guy have to be my dad?"

"That's right. This good man has already become your mom's private collection. Don't even think about it." Upon hearing his daughter's words, Zhai Sheng was not moved. Instead, he added on very seriously.

“It’s true that it’s hard to find a man as good as your dad. But don’t worry. I’ll help you find someone who’s just slightly inferior to me.”

Zhai Sheng was not overjoyed by his daughter saying that she would like to marry her dad when she grew older. He already had a wife. He did not want his daughter to look for a husband that resembled him. It was more important to find a husband that was suitable for her.

“...” Zhai Yu rolled her eyes at that public display of affection. She had never liked chatting with her dad since she was young. Every time her dad said something, she never knew how to continue the conversation. “Dad, I’ve actually just returned home. I’ll go get changed before coming down to join you guys for dinner.”

“All right, go on.” Zhai Sheng, who stood by Qiao Nan’s side like a guardian angel, had all his focus on his wife, Qiao Nan, alone. When his daughter was younger, he had not had the time to manage her. Now that his daughter was all grown up, Zhai Sheng felt that there was no need for him to manage her anymore. Even if something were to happen to his daughter, it should be her two elder brothers stepping in to help her out.

Zhai Yi had already been used to having only his mom around and his dad having eyes for only his mom. As such, Zhai Yi quietly turned around and left so that he would not be an unnecessary third wheel.

“Da Bao, why did you come up?” Zhai Yu had just finished changing when she heard a knock on the door. She was rather surprised to see who had come into her room. “What’s the matter?”

“I just want to have a chat with you.” Zhai Yi dragged a stool over and sat down. “Did you hear everything Mom said earlier?”

“Yes.”

“San Bao, I’ve always wanted to pamper you like a little princess...” Zhai Yi smiled bitterly. “You are Er Bao’s and my only younger sister. But in the end, you had to take on our responsibilities as well. Mom is right. You’ve sacrificed too much. San Bao, it’s been hard on you, and I’d like to apologize to you.”

He did not know why his mom had told him these things, but his mom was right. San Bao had indeed made huge sacrifices for him and Er Bao. He had never thought that he would forget about his younger sister, San Bao, even if he were to get married. But his mom’s words today had been a

timely reminder. At least, he would know to pay attention to this area when looking for a marriage partner.

He would be away from home for long periods of time. If the person he married was not like his mom and could not take up the responsibility as the matriarch of the Zhai family and was not tolerant of others, it would not be good for the Zhai family. It might even be dangerous for San Bao.

Marrying a wife was not just a matter of sharing his bed with another person. More importantly, he had to maintain a harmonious relationship within the family.

San Bao sniffled. “Da Bao, would you believe me if I said that I had never thought that I had been doing anything impressive or amazing before hearing what Mom said? Perhaps it’s because Mom is such a good role model for me that I’ve always felt that she is the best woman on earth and that all good women should act just like her. I simply thought that everything I’ve been doing is what’s required of me. I’ve never thought that I’ve been doing anything special.”

She had never expected that her mom would feel sorry and aggrieved for her because of everything she had done. Moreover, her mom had wanted an assurance from Da Bao on this matter.

Zhai Yu was just a young lady in her twenties. Of course, there were times when Zhai Yu felt exhausted and wanted to indulge herself. But at those times, she would think about how her own mother had toiled through all those years. If she herself felt exhausted and needed a break after only two years, would her mom not need a rest more than she did?

“Da Bao, I’m actually quite happy hearing what Mom said because it makes me feel like I’ve become just like Mom. But I feel like on the verge of tears hearing that Mom’s heart aches for me. Da Bao, who do you think has been concerned about Mom all these years?”

Her mom had sacrificed much more than she had. She could not even imagine what her mom had gone through since she was young. “Da Bao, do you think Mom’s happy having the three of us and Dad by her side?”

“Of course she’s happy!” Zhai Yi nodded firmly and said, “Have you forgotten how Mom used to hug the three of us whenever Dad was not at home and how she used to tell us that she felt so blissful that it all seemed like a dream to her?”

When she was younger, Zhai Yi might not have understood what his mom had meant. But as he grew up and learned about what his mom had experienced at his grandma’s house, Zhai Yi finally

understood why his mom felt that such an ordinary and hard life was so blissful that it seemed like a dream to her.

Zhai Yu smiled out of relief. “Yes, Mom has never asked for much. She feels sorry for me, but she’s never felt sorry for herself. Mom already thinks that such a normal life is an extremely blissful one. Da Bao, I have a request. I don’t want a sister-in-law who is unfilial and wants to fight for power. Do you understand what I mean?”

Zhai Yu was no fool. As a daughter of the Zhai family, she had her own ideas too. Zhai Yu was in her twenties and had already been in the workforce for two years. She had never lacked any suitors chasing after her. But Zhai Yu had always known that these guys who were chasing her were after either the Zhai family’s name or her mom’s shares in the Tian Corporation.

As such, Zhai Yu had always rejected all these suitors who came with hidden agendas. Anyway, she was in no hurry to date, much less get married. If she really wanted to get married to a man who was only after her money and power, she would have no problems finding a man like that even in her seventies or eighties, less say now that she was still young. Life was just that realistic.

Zhai Yu had never worried about this, but she could not help but worry about Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin. “There weren’t many girls in the university that you two studied in. Now that you guys are in the military, you hardly even see a female mosquito. I’m just worried that you and Zhai Xin might meet women with ill intentions and that you guys won’t be able to distinguish them. Then, you might bring trouble into our family and create more trouble for Mom to worry about!”

Zhai Yi’s expression changed. All his previous overwhelming emotions disappeared in an instant, and he knocked Zhai Yu lightly on her forehead. “You wretched girl. You don’t have to worry about these things. What’s Mom’s will always be Mom’s. No matter whom I get married to in the future, as long as she dares to set her sights on what’s Mom’s, I’ll definitely divorce her! It’s true that military marriages are protected, but I’ll just have to go through a bit more of a hassle. As long as I write a report and have a good reason, I’ll still be able to get a divorce.”

Zhai Yi had never felt that he would be so blind as to accept a woman who was only after his family’s wealth and power.

Zhai Yu was unconvinced. “Don’t speak too early. Hasn’t Zhai Xin already made that mistake? Don’t tell me you don’t know why Zhou Xing came after Zhai Xin and wanted to date him.”

Zhai Xin was upset. “Young lady, it has already been a few years since that incident happened. If you had not mentioned Zhou Xing’s name, I wouldn’t even remember her. That was an accident.

How can you use that as an example in this situation? San Bao, are you trying to pick on the chink in my armor?”

Zhai Xin was depressed. That was a dark past that he himself did not even want to remember.

Chapter 1747: The Best

As his own biological sister, could she not mention it?

“What were you two even talking about? First, it was divorce, and then you suddenly brought Zhou Xing into the picture.” Zhai Xin looked curiously at Zhai Yi and Zhai Yu. “Come on, talk to me too! Don’t hide any secrets from me. We’re triplets! Are you trying to leave me out?” That would not do. He would never agree to it.

“Nothing much.” Seeing Zhai Xin’s cheeky self, Zhai Yu clutched her forehead. She felt as though she could no longer continue with this conversation. She could not understand how Zhai Xin alone had turned out to be such a weird freak when the three of them were triplets, and both she and Zhai Yi had turned out just fine. Based on Zhai Xin’s personality and character alone, no one would know that Zhai Xin was part of the Zhai family if he made no mention of his name. He was too immature and childish and behaved just like a monkey.

“We were just talking about how we hope that you’ll keep your eyes wide open in the future. The incident with Zhou Xing may be in the past, but we hope that we won’t have to see another Chen Xing, Li Xing, and Bai Xing in the future,” Zhai Yi said half-jokingly.

Zhai Yu was a girl and had a room to herself, while Zhai Yi shared a room with Zhai Xin. This answer was not enough to satisfy Zhai Xin’s curiosity. When they returned to their rooms to sleep, Zhai Xin would bother him and keep him awake so as to satisfy his own curiosity.

As such, Zhai Yu could choose to ignore Zhai Xin, but Zhai Yi could not. It was truly unfortunate that he shared a room with Zhai Xin.

“I don’t believe you.” Zhai Xin gave Zhai Yi a look as if to remind the latter that he’s not a three-year-old. “Everything’s fine and nothing has happened recently. Zhou Xing even changed for the better after that. I’m sure no one is willing to bring up Zhou Xing’s name for nothing in this family. Tell me the truth. What provoked the two of you? What are you two hiding from me?”

He had already asked the auntie when he came back, but she had replied that nothing had happened and everything had been peaceful.

“We’ve not been provoked. Stop making wild guesses. We don’t necessarily have to be provoked before we chat about such things. Perhaps, it could have just been that we were overcome with emotions. The three of us are not young anymore, and I’m sure we all know about how grandma and grandpa are. Mom and Dad have never pressured us, but I think it’s only a matter of time before we get married and have children. If we don’t find good partners, there will be chaos in this family. We all know the reason as to why Zhou Xing became so stubborn. That was why San Bao and I started talking about how it was important to choose our future partners wisely, and Zhou Xing came up as an example.”

There was really no way for Zhai Yi to explain today’s situation clearly to Zhai Xin. After all, it had just been a hypothetical situation. He could not possibly tell Zhai Xin that their mom had been overly sensitive today and had specially let him know about how much San Bao had sacrificed for them and how she hoped that both he and Er Bao would be able to take care of San Bao when she was no longer around.

Their parents were still so young. It might be a little more normal if their grandparents had said such things. The problem was that it was their mom who had said such a thing. It was truly strange to hear such words from their mom. It felt as though their mom was about to leave them and would no longer be able to take care of her three children.

Because of such suspicion, Zhai Yi’s gaze suddenly changed. “San Bao, you’re at home more often than we are. Has Mom been behaving abnormally lately? Has she felt any discomfort or gone to the hospital for any checkups?” Could it be that their mom was hiding something from them?

“No, don’t scare me.” Zhai Xin became anxious all of a sudden. “From what I remember, Mom has always been in good health.” On the other hand, their dad had always been on the front line in his years of service in the military. There was not a single male in the Zhai family who had not suffered from any internal injuries. He would believe it if there was something wrong with his dad’s health, but there was no way his mom would be sick!

Zhai Yu was utterly confused. “No, there’s nothing wrong with Mom’s health. You guys know that Mom and Dad are of a certain position, so they go for annual health checkups. I always accompany them there. I personally go through Mom’s health reports and I even consult her doctors about it. How would I not know if there’s something wrong with Mom?”

It was not just her parents that Zhai Yu was concerned about. She was concerned about all three elders in her family and would arrange annual health checkups for every single one of them without fail. Even if the one who was clearest about the situation was Qiao Nan, Zhai Yu would always be by Qiao Nan's side when she collected her reports.

"Zhai Yi, have you gotten any news?" How could that be? Even San Bao had no idea. Zhai Yi had been in the military with him, so how could Zhai Yi know more than San Bao did?

"No." Zhai Yi spat out. "All right, don't get anxious over nothing. Zhai Xin, why did you have to butt in? You almost made a mountain out of a molehill. All right, it's quite late. Everyone is probably waiting for us to have dinner together. You can't possibly be expecting them to come and get us, right?"

Zhai Yi was the first to exit Zhai Yu's room with a gloomy expression. After rolling her eyes at Zhai Xin, Zhai Yu followed behind Zhai Yi. Zhai Xin, who had endured the stares of Zhai Yi and Zhai Yu, felt tremendously aggrieved. What wrongs had he done that Zhai Yi and Zhai Yu were ostracizing him in this manner?

That would not do. He had to reason it out with Zhai Yi and Zhai Yu. They had all been in their mom's stomach together. The two of them could not be so biased and ostracize him alone.

"The three children in our family get along just as well as they did when they were children." Seeing the grown-up triplets coming down the stairs, Miao Jing was in a good mood. "Time really flies. Our triplets are already old enough to be parents." She wondered if she had the good fortune of living to see that day.

"Grandma, we don't get along at all. Da Bao and San Bao have ganged up to bully me. Grandma, you have to help me!" Zhai Xin ran toward Miao Jing without hesitation and asked Miao Jing to be the judge.

"Of course! Of course I'll help Er Bao. Who will I help if I don't help Er Bao?" Seeing her tall and strong second grandson willing to squat by her side and pretend that he needed her help as he had done when he was younger just to coax her, Miao Jing was over the moon.

Indeed, a family seemed like a family only when there were children around to liven the mood. Even if the children were all grown up, such a blissful feeling would never change or disappear.

Zhai Xin was appeased. “Grandma, you’re the best! Da Bao and San Bao have been led astray by others now that they’ve grown up. They’ve forgotten who their real brother is.” He felt so aggrieved but said nothing about it.

Zhai Yu had washed her hands and sat down to eat. “That’s right, brother.” Zhai Yu emphasized on the word ‘brother’. Zhai Yu really admired Zhai Xin for being willing to put down all pride for the sake of pleasing his elders. She really wanted to ask Zhai Xin how he managed to do it.

Chapter 1748: Dream

No wonder she had once heard her grandma let slip that Er Bao had been cheeky and full of mischief since a young age.

Even though she no longer had many impressions of their childhoods, seeing Zhai Xin behaving in this manner, Zhai Yu could totally imagine how Zhai Xin had no moral values as a child. At that time, Zhai Xin would have had even less restraint than now.

With such an elder brother who behaved like a younger brother, Zhai Yu silently mourned for three seconds.

Was the doctor really sure that Zhai Xin had been born earlier than her? Was Zhai Xin really her second brother? Could it be that the doctor and nurses had gotten it wrong?

Zhai Xin had no idea about these doubts in Zhai Yu’s mind, much less Qiao Nan. In front of her lively family, Qiao Nan smiled widely and thought of bringing her dad over since everyone was at home. Everyone had grown older and since everything had already passed, she did not want to think about the past anymore. All she wished for was to live an even more blissful and fulfilling life at the present moment.

Living and smiling were the most genuine things.

When Zhai Sheng returned to his room with Qiao Nan, he asked Qiao Nan while hugging her, “What’s with you today? You’re smiling so happily as though Zhai Yi and Zhai Xin brought their wives home.” Nan Nan was usually quite cheery, but today’s smile was different.

“It’s nothing much. I just feel that it’ll be time for me to retire in a few years’ time. Now that I have sons and a daughter, it probably won’t be long before I have grandchildren. Most importantly, I

have you by my side. I was just thinking about how I've been fortunate and blessed in this life," Qiao Nan said blissfully.

Zhai Sheng looked at Qiao Nan seriously. "Do you really feel that marrying me and having a family like this is something that brings you joy?" Zhai Sheng's hearing was very good. He had happened to pass by the children's room and had heard part of Zhai Yi's conversation with Zhai Yu.

There was no reason for Zhai Sheng to be upset over his children feeling sorry for their mom.

He knew that Qiao Nan had taken on a lot of responsibilities for his sake because his passion for the military meant that he was unable to make sacrifices for his family like other men did. Almost all women who married soldiers lived their lives like this.

At times, Zhai Sheng felt that he had put Qiao Nan in a tight spot by marrying her. But what surprised Zhai Sheng was that Qiao Nan had always thought that their marriage was blissful and complete and that there was nothing lacking. Compared to the other military spouses who always liked to complain about their lives, it seemed like his Nan Nan was truly the most suitable one.

"I'm happy. Extremely." Qiao Nan nuzzled in Zhai Sheng's embrace like she had done when she was younger. "But I'm afraid I've spent a few lifetimes' worth of luck on meeting you. Brother Zhai, I know that you think you've spent too little time at home and with me. But it's all right. I don't mind. I know that you're always with me in your heart and you've never left me. To me, you're the best and most perfect husband on earth."

Her current life was already so blissful that she felt as though she was floating amongst the clouds. It was all so surreal. If it got any more blissful, she might just faint from happiness.

"You're so easily satisfied." Zhai Sheng laughed. After having been together for so many years, Zhai Sheng could tell when Qiao Nan was speaking the heartfelt truth and when she was just trying to comfort him. Hearing Qiao Nan's saccharine tone, Zhai Sheng's heart felt especially warm and touched. "Contentment is happiness. To be honest, I'm the one with good fortune for having married you."

Thinking about the number of people who had gotten into arguments with their spouses because of such issues, Zhai Sheng felt that Qiao Nan's sensibility and support had been the reason why he had been able to become a chief earlier than his dad had.

If Qiao Nan had not taken care of his family by taking up the responsibility of caring for the elders and children at home, there was no way he could have turned all his attention to the military to become the youngest chief since the establishment of the state. It's just like what he had said in the military at that time. While it was true that his blood and sweat had gone into achieving what he had, there was also Nan Nan's sacrifices and support.

Zhai Sheng felt that he had only come so far because he had Qiao Nan as his wife.

"It's good that you're grateful for what you have. Anyway, it's not early anymore. Hurry and go to bed. I'll have to trouble you to fetch my dad over tomorrow and send him back home once Zhai Yi's and Zhai Xin's vacations are over." Now that they were older, Qiao Nan herself might have put down the past, but that did not mean that others could do the same.

Perhaps Zhai Yaohui's one and only heart-to-heart talk with Qiao Dongliang after Qiao Zijin's death had really hit a certain nerve. From then on, Qiao Dongliang had never put forward any more excessive demands on Qiao Nan. If the three children were not at home, Qiao Dongliang hardly ever went to disturb his daughter, Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan did not mind it, but Qiao Dongliang did. He was worried that his frequent visits and presence would only evoke those unpleasant memories of his daughter's past.

At his age, there was nothing left that he could not let go. All he had left was his daughter, Nan Nan. As long as Nan Nan was living a good life, nothing else mattered to him. Besides, Nan Nan was not even trying to be filial to him.

In this way, apart from being earnest in meeting his grandchildren, Qiao Dongliang tried his best not to disturb Qiao Nan's peaceful life.

"All right." He always listened to whatever his wife had to say. "It's still a little early to go to bed now. Let's exercise a little before going to bed." Hugging his fragrant and charming wife in his embrace, Zhai Sheng smiled. If a man could really fall asleep like that, he was no man at all.

As Zhai Sheng exerted his strength on her, Qiao Nan's face was entirely flushed. Her children were about to become parents themselves. She could not understand why Zhai Sheng was still so keen and passionate about this. Decades were truly nothing more than a day to him. As long as Zhai Sheng was at home and she was not on her period or feeling any discomfort, there was not a single night that she had been able to escape from her fate.

After the couple's harmonious 'exercise', Qiao Nan always fell into a particularly deep sleep. It was also because Zhai Sheng was by her side that she could sleep peacefully. Because her mind was at rest, it was only natural for her to fall into a deep sleep.

Being accustomed to having good days like these, Qiao Nan indulged herself in sleep. After all, Zhai Sheng would definitely wake her up the next morning. Even if Zhai Sheng did not, her daughter, San Bao, would. The mother and daughter had to go to work together since they were colleagues.

What made Qiao Nan confused was the feeling that she had grown older. She had a feeling that she could sleep until the end of time.

But the problem was that even though she felt that she had slept for a long time as though she had slept for several days, she could not wake up even if she wanted to. Worst of all, perhaps it was because they felt sorry for her that not a single person in her family came to wake her up. Instead, they thought that she hardly had any time to relax and thus decided to let her sleep in.

Qiao Nan did not know whether to laugh or cry because of this.

Chapter 1749: Car Accident

She could not go on sleeping like that. What if she got thirsty or hungry?

Just thinking about that made Qiao Nan's throat feel hoarse. Her mouth also felt dry and uncomfortable. Even though she was asleep, her eyebrows were deeply furrowed into a frown.

Before long, she felt as though someone had smeared a layer of cold water on her mouth, slightly reducing the discomfort that she had been feeling.

Qiao Nan herself had no idea how long she had been in this state. To her, it felt as though she had been in this state for a whole century. Once she woke up and could finally speak, she would have to give a good lecture to Zhai Sheng and her three children. Even if they wanted to let her have a good rest, this was no way of doing it. Were they not afraid that she would never wake from her sleep or that she might even become disabled?

"You're awake?" The moment Qiao Nan's eyelids fluttered, a woman by her side was pleasantly surprised and asked if Qiao Nan was indeed awake.

Qiao Nan very much wanted to reply to her, but she could not force any sound out of her mouth. What confused Qiao Nan was that this woman sounded rather foreign to her. It was neither the voice of the auntie at home nor her mother-in-law's, much less her daughter, San Bao's. When had an unknown woman entered her house without her knowledge? Was this a newly hired auntie?

“Don't be in too much of a hurry. I'm sure you're thirsty. Get a sip of water.” That unknown lady had fair and tender skin, a particularly good attitude, and was dressed in white. She seemed so surreal under the sunlight. The lady helped Qiao Nan up and fed Qiao Nan some water. “You're finally awake. If you didn't wake up, you would have been in danger. I'm sure you're hungry, but you can't eat or drink for now. Let me check if there's any porridge available. It's better for you to have something light and liquid for now.”

When the glass of warm water entered her stomach, Qiao Nan finally sobered up significantly.

Qiao Nan's eyebrows were deeply furrowed. She was completely baffled by the sight in front of her. “It hurts...” What Qiao Nan knew was that the young lady had only helped her up and stuck a straw into the mug for her to drink from. Such a simple action made Qiao Nan feel sore all over as though her bones and muscles had all been ripped apart. It was so painful that she wanted to cry.

She could not even remember how long she had not felt such intense pain that was enough to bring her to tears.

“Bear with it. You were in a car accident, and you sustained fractures in many parts of your body. Thankfully, you were lucky, and none of your internal organs were damaged. That was why the doctor was able to save you. You're probably feeling intense pain because the anesthesia has worn off. I'll ask the doctor if you can have some painkillers for now.” How could it not hurt after she had gotten into an accident so serious that her blood had pooled on the ground?

The surgery had been quite successful, but weirdly enough, this patient had not reacted like other patients and had not woken up immediately after the anesthesia wore off. Instead, she had gone into a deep sleep for much longer than other patients.

It had been three whole days. In these three days, the patient had no sign of ever waking up. It was as though she had been in a vegetative state. After a long analysis, the doctor said that the patient's recovery might pose a problem should she not wake up in time, even though the surgery had gone well.

“A car accident?” A vast white expanse entered her sight, and her senses were overwhelmed by the smell of disinfectants that was unique to hospitals. Qiao Nan blinked. “I got into an accident and was hospitalized?”

No, that was impossible. Just yesterday, she was clearly having a meal with her entire family. She had fallen asleep in Zhai Sheng’s arms and had not yet woken up. How could she have gotten into an accident and hospitalized in the blink of an eye?

Besides, if she had really gotten into a car accident, there was no way her three children would not be by her side. Zhai Sheng would never leave her side either. There would surely be at least one or two of her family members around to take care of her at such a time.

“You don’t remember anything?” The nurse could fully understand what Qiao Nan was going through. “Miss Qiao, do you remember that you raised a hundred thousand yuan for your sister to undergo surgery three days ago? That’s right. Do you remember that your sister got uremia and needed a kidney transplant? After that, you ran out from our hospital and were knocked down by a car on the main road in front of our hospital...”

Hearing the nurse’s long-winded explanation, Qiao Nan could not hold back her tears.

Just yesterday, she had told her husband that her life was so blissful that it seemed surreal. In the blink of an eye, what she was worried about the most had happened! That blissful life, a responsible husband, a mother-in-law who treated her like her own daughter, her three adorable children—everything had been nothing but an illusion that she had made up for herself in her dream. Nothing was real...

No wonder there had been times when she had felt uneasy about having all these in her dream. But that dream had been too real and genuine. The nurse told her that she had been in a coma for three days, but she truly felt as though she had crossed into another life and had been immersed in her dream world for decades.

“Don’t cry.” The nurse was at a loss upon seeing Qiao Nan in this state.

Since Qiao Zijin had been hospitalized for such a long time, the nurses and doctors had found out all about the Qiao family’s matters. They knew that the Qiao couple was biased toward their elder daughter, who had married well, and treated their younger daughter horribly. Their elder daughter had her own house but did not want to sell it. Instead, they forced their younger daughter to raise funds for their elder daughter’s surgery.

Such biased parents were truly a rare sight. Miss Qiao lying here on the hospital bed was really pitiful.

The nurse could not bear to tell Qiao Nan about what had happened after Qiao Nan had gotten into an accident and undergone surgery. Because the car accident had happened right in front of their hospital, the hospital staff had immediately carried Miss Qiao back into the hospital to undergo surgery.

What was most heartbreaking was that she had seen it with her own eyes! When Miss Qiao had gotten into an accident and was lying in a pool of her own blood, Miss Qiao's mother had laughed horrifically! She had even been going on about how they now had a kidney and money, so Zijin would not have to die anymore and that Zijin would be cured now.

Up until now, the thought of the scene still gave the nurse shivers.

After calming down and understanding her situation, Qiao Nan's gaze cooled. "Nurse, you said that I've been here for three days. Has anyone come to visit me in these three days?" She was back. It turned out that she had not died after that car accident and had not been driven to her grave by her mom. After being saved by the doctors, she had been asleep for three days and had had a beautiful dream. In that dream, she had a completely different life.

No matter how blissful she had been in that dream, Qiao Nan could never forget about how she had pulled through in the other world. Although she had just woken up, Qiao Nan still clearly remembered all the details of what had happened before her car accident.

Could she really forget it now that she had almost lost her life for it?

"Yes... Your dad came to visit you." The nurse thought about it for a while before answering with the truth.

Chapter 1750: What Are You Laughing At?

Miss Qiao's father had wanted to come to take care of her, but that amazing mother of hers had not allowed him to do so. That brilliant mother of hers said that she herself had to take care of her elder daughter and could not leave her elder daughter's side. Thus, Miss Qiao's father had to take care of both her daughter's and her own meals. As such, Miss Qiao's father had no time to take care of Miss Qiao at all.

“I understand. Thank you.” Qiao Nan took a deep breath, and her expression and emotions quickly calmed down.

“Miss Qiao, do you want to go to sleep?” The nurse especially pitied Qiao Nan and thus paid special attention to Qiao Nan when taking care of her. “If you want to sleep, I can help you lower your bed and draw the curtains.”

Qiao Nan forced a smile out. “That won’t be necessary. I just want to have some time to myself. Oh, right, what about my hospitalization bills?” The day she had gotten into a car accident, she had been supposed to help Qiao Zijin pay for her treatment. She remembered that she had a hundred thousand yuan with her at that time. Hehehe. Her mom had probably been elated seeing her get into an accident since that would mean that Qiao Zijin would have both money and a kidney. That way, Qiao Zijin would not have to die.

That hundred thousand yuan was probably gone and in Ding Jiayi’s pocket by now.

“Don’t worry. It’s been settled.” The nurse laughed slyly. “It was paid for with your own money.” If they had not used Miss Qiao’s money to pay for her hospitalization bills, it would probably go to that woman with uremia. That would be letting her take advantage of Miss Qiao!

“Thank you.” Qiao Nan let out her first smile since waking up. That was good! At least, her hard-earned money had not gone to helping Qiao Zijin.

“You’re welcome.” The nurse was pleased because she had been the one who had done that. “Don’t worry. The perpetrator will also have to take responsibility for this matter because his brakes weren’t very functional. He had intended to send the car in for maintenance, but it was unfortunate that this accident happened before he was able to do so. Thankfully, that guy is willing to admit his mistake and bear all of your treatment costs. But the specific amount of compensation hasn’t been decided on yet because you had not awoken. Miss Qiao, I hope you don’t mind me saying this, but you have to go through these negotiations yourself. Don’t hand the money over to anyone else once you get it. Your sister has a house of her own. Do you think she really can’t afford her own treatment?”

The nurse’s concern warmed Qiao Nan’s cool and hurting body. “Thank you. Thank you very much. Don’t worry. I will.”

“All right, have a good rest, then. I won’t disturb you any longer.” Now that she had finally let out all her pent-up anger, the nurse was feeling much more at ease. She really could not bear seeing parents being so biased. Qiao Nan was such a good person, but she was being bullied so badly.

“Yes.” Qiao Nan answered softly before shutting her eyes to rest.

It was only when the nurse left the room and closed the door behind her that Qiao Nan opened her eyes and started weeping silently. She refused to believe that everything that seemed so real had been nothing but a dream. That blissful life was just an illusion created in her own mind because of her unwillingness to leave it lying down. Her husband was fake. Her children were fake. Her in-laws were fake, and even her friends, education, and career were all fake. Now that she had woken up, she still had to face those cunning and sly relatives of hers.

“Nan Nan...” There was suddenly another person in her ward. That person’s tone had been rather hesitant and contradictory when calling her name. “Nan Nan, are you crying? You’ve just woken up. Are you hurting somewhere? Shall I get the doctor over?”

Seeing his younger daughter who was bruised all over and with a face that was swollen beyond recognition, Qiao Dongliang’s gaze was filled with guilt and heartache. “Nan Nan, are you hungry? I made some porridge. Shall I feed you some? The doctor said that this is all you can eat for now. When you’re better, Dad will make you some delicious food.”

The sight of Qiao Dongliang once again made Qiao Nan’s gaze and expression stiffen.

In her dream, Qiao Dongliang had retired early and had moved to the capital along with her. Without the stresses of life, even though her three children had already grown up in her dream, her father had never seemed so old and haggard in her dream.

She had been supporting her father in her dream. In reality, not only did her father have to work, and scrimp and save, but he even had to part with whatever little money he had for the sake of his elder daughter’s pride. How could he not look old?

“Nan Nan, why are you not saying anything?” His younger daughter’s silence only made Qiao Dongliang feel even guiltier. “This was just an accident. The person who knocked you down didn’t try to escape. He’s been caught. Don’t get upset about this. We’ll surely pursue this matter and get to the bottom of it.”

But thinking about Ding Jiayi's plan, Qiao Dongliang did not dare to say what was to follow. Because Qiao Dongliang knew that if they were really to pursue the matter and get a huge sum of compensation from the other party, Qiao Nan might have been the one who suffered the most, but she would not get a single cent of that compensation. Qiao Dongliang knew it was not right to do so, but he had no means of stopping Ding Jiayi. Besides, his elder daughter's surgery had been put on hold, and a kidney transplant was an expensive procedure.

Nan Nan and Zijin were biological sisters and were the closest kin they each had. Nan Nan would probably understand that her elder sister's life was more important than money.

Qiao Nan's lifeless eyes moved around before falling on Qiao Dongliang. In an instant, Qiao Dongliang's face flushed red and he could not help but lower his head to avoid Qiao Nan's eyes. He always felt as though his younger daughter's gaze was piercing and that she could see right through him. He had no guts to look his younger daughter in the eye.

"Hehe..." Qiao Nan sneered.

Qiao Dongliang raised his head. "Nan Nan, what are you laughing at?" Qiao Dongliang felt particularly uncomfortable seeing Qiao Nan laugh.

"Nothing much." Qiao Nan blinked and her gaze reverted to her naturally calm and harmless state. Whether or not that had been a dream, there was no reason she could not do that now if she had been able to do that in her dream. "Dad, I'm thirty-nine years old this year, right?"

"...Yes." That's right. His younger daughter was already thirty-nine but was still unmarried, let alone with children. At the mention of this, Qiao Dongliang felt as though he was being stabbed. His elder son-in-law had originally been his younger daughter's boyfriend, but his elder daughter had gotten pregnant with his younger daughter's boyfriend's child. In the end, the couple got a divorce because of an affair.

If that was going to happen, why had Zijin snatched Nan Nan's boyfriend away from her? Chen Jun was indeed outstanding, but Zijin had not cherished him even after snatching him away!

"Dad, before my accident, I heard Zijin tell Mom that I was the reason that she got divorced from Chen Jun. Dad, what do you think?"

“...Of course it has nothing to do with you. How can this possibly be your fault?” Qiao Dongliang was actually quite angry about this, but he could not bring himself to say that it was because Qiao Zijin had gotten into an affair that Chen Jun had divorced her.

“Qiao Zijin feels that if Chen Jun has completely forgotten about me, he would be willing to give her a second chance even if she was caught in an affair by the Chen family. Dad, what do you think? Would your elder son-in-law do such a thing?”