

## RTAMM 1801

### Chapter 1801: Baffled

That young lady's life was already so miserable. She had never done anything wrong in her life, and yet, she had been bullied so extensively. There was no need for outsiders like them to add to this young lady's troubles. This young lady's life was even more miserable than his own!

At least, he had met his savior, the chief, at the lowest point in his life. After he retired from the military, the chief had made a suggestion and had even lent him money to start his own company. Qiao Nan had no such savior in her life to pull her up at her lowest.

"Young lady..." Zhai Sheng's reaction was a little strange at the mention of these two words. "She is indeed still a young lady." And a young lady nearing the age of forty at that.

When he had first heard that Qiao Nan was single, Zhai Sheng's first thought was that Qiao Nan was just like himself and had gotten married but then gotten divorced years ago. That was why he had felt at ease. But now that he knew that Qiao Nan had never been married, Zhai Sheng could not understand why, but he felt joy in his heart.

"Isn't that right? With a family like this, she would never have the chance to change her status of a young lady even if she wanted to!" Sun Guohong felt that it was unfair to Qiao Nan. He was thankful that he could make his own decisions as a man.

At least, after learning of the kind of person his younger brother was, he had safely held all his earnings in his own hands and had not let his mom or brother take advantage of him any longer. But Qiao Nan was different. Even after knowing what kind of people her family was, Qiao Nan had still been oppressed and squeezed dry for so many years. She was almost forty years old, but she did not even have a boyfriend, let alone a partner for marriage.

The only time she had ever dated in her life, she had almost walked into a church and gotten married. But everything had been ruined by her own biological mother and sister. 'Pitiful' was insufficient to describe her situation.

"The news has been talking about their family of four lately. Chief, you might not have watched the news. That's why you haven't seen how ugly her mom is. Before everyone knew about their family's situation, she had been sobbing and acting pitiful. She had even painted a horrible portrait of the Qiao family. Now, everyone knows that the Qiao family not only has a house but even has two apartments. But they still claimed that they're poor and have no money for treatment, and they

even begged others for donations. Knowing that they wouldn't be able to get those donations, that crazy woman went on a rage and called everyone around her all sorts of nasty things!"

The more Sun Guohong saw, the more empathetic he felt toward Qiao Nan. He finally understood why Qiao Nan had decided not to stay in Ping Cheng and had instead moved to such a rural town like Qingshui Town.

If she did not move away, Qiao Nan would never be able to lead a good life with her family around. It was only by distancing herself from her family would Qiao Nan be able to start a new life afresh. Forty was not a young age. If she did not start a new life for herself, Qiao Nan's whole life would truly be a tragedy.

"I saw it." Sun Guohong's information was rather detailed, but he had not been able to show Zhai Sheng the clips from the news. However, Sun Guohong had managed to include newspaper clippings and articles from magazines for Zhai Sheng to see. "You said that this is Qiao Nan's first time in Qingshui Town. Are you sure?"

"Yes, don't worry, chief. This is absolutely reliable."

"From your impression, do you think it's possible that the situation of the Zhai family's old villa could have been leaked?" Since this was Qiao Nan's first time in Qingshui Town, she must not have been to the Zhai family's old villa in the past. If that was the case, wasn't Qiao Nan's behavior even more worthy of consideration and attention?

"How could that be?" Sun Guohong shook his head. "When the Zhai family's old villa was being rebuilt, Old Meng personally found someone to do it, and he was the one who personally oversaw the rebuilding. There's no way it could have been leaked." Old Meng had not been in such a dire situation as he had, but he had similarly been unable to continue in the army after getting injured during a mission.

In the end, with the chief's help, Old Meng set up an architecture team and started constructing houses. No one had expected that the property market in China would be such a booming industry and that the property prices would rise so dramatically. Of course, Old Meng's team in the construction industry earned a hefty sum from that.

It was rare that the chief finally had something for him to do. As such, he gave his all and did everything to the best of his abilities to help the chief. Knowing the special position the chief was in, they all sealed their mouths shut about the Zhai family, the Zhai family's house included. They had never leaked a single thing regarding the Zhai family.

Only Old Meng and his workers knew about the internal structure of the Zhai family's old villa. Even he himself did not know which room was which without anyone guiding him, let alone outsiders. "Chief, is there anything wrong?" The chief kept asking whether anyone else knew about the internal structure of the Zhai family's old villa. Could it be that someone had found out about it?

"No, there's nothing much." The strange thing was that Qiao Nan had behaved quite abnormally. But Zhai Sheng did not tell Sun Guohong about this situation. "All right, now that you've given me all the documents, you can leave. I heard that your business is booming lately. I won't stand in the way of you getting rich." Zhai Sheng had been rather happy that Sun Guohong had pushed aside all other orders to help him settle this matter.

The soldier that he had raised was no ingrate.

Sun Guohong pulled on the corners of his lips, feeling as though he was being thrown aside now that he had served his purpose. "Chief, you're so realistic. Do you know that I had to fly over from the capital just to hand this over to you? Can I claim the cost of my return airfare?"

"Of course!" Zhai Sheng, who was now in a jovial mood, knew that Sun Guohong was simply joking with him, but he still asked seriously, "How much did you spend on those two tickets? I'll transfer the money over to you. I won't shortchange you of that!" After all, Sun Guohong's service fees were much more expensive than the cost of those two tickets.

"I'm kidding, chief." Sun Guohong became a little awkward.

Zhai Sheng laughed. "Do you think I was being serious or was I joking?"

"..." Sun Guohong did not give in. "Chief, don't joke around with me. My heart can't take that kind of stress. Chief, you should rest well since you're recuperating. You're so fierce. Do you think there is anyone in this world who isn't afraid of you?" If his memory served him well, the parents of the chief could not handle him either.

If not for the fact that he could not have biological children, he would not have adopted a child. But the chief was different. The chief could still have his own biological children. He was practically an old man, yet still refused to get remarried, much less talk about having a child.

At times, Sun Guohong truly could not understand Zhai Sheng. He wondered what Zhai Sheng was being persistent about and what he was avoiding.

## Chapter 1802: Ask About It Yourself

Did the chief really not want a child?

Children were small and soft. Hugging them felt like hugging a pillow with no bones. They were extremely adorable. What was there not to like?

“You can’t take jokes? Then, why aren’t you leaving?” Zhai Sheng was finally willing to let Sun Guohong off. “I’m not joking about this. You can leave. I still have many things to settle. I can’t keep playing host to you around here. But if you’re hungry, you can stay for a meal. I’m not sure if you’ll be used to the dishes cooked by the new nanny that Xiao Xu hired.” He still felt that Qiao Nan’s cooking suited his palate more.

Sun Guohong pretended to wipe away his sweat. “Wow, it was so difficult to get treated to a meal. I really have to thank my chief.” To be honest, Sun Guohong was truly hungry. He had not been in a hurry to leave because he was looking for a chance to take a look at the woman named Qiao Nan.

After knowing the chief for twenty years, this was the first time that the chief was taking such a keen interest in a woman outside of the Zhai family! He believed in whatever he had found. Qiao Nan was not an aggressive woman, and neither was there anything wrong with her. As such, it was really interesting that the chief was paying so much attention to her.

He had to see for himself what kind of woman she was to be able to move a man like the chief, who was like an iron tree that had not bloomed in years.

Xiao Xu had heard Zhai Sheng and had come to bring Sun Guohong for dinner. Xiao Xu was probably clear that Sun Guohong had once been his senior, an old soldier who had been under Zhai Sheng’s helm. As such, Xiao Xu’s attitude toward Sun Guohong was very good. He affectionately addressed Sun Guohong as his ‘elder brother’.

“Oh, you mean that your mom was the one who found the caretaker for the chief? Your mom’s amazing! She’s always thinking about you and helps you out! Xiao Xu, you’re really blessed.” Sun Guohong patted Xiao Xu on the shoulder a little too strongly. There was no other choice. Even if Xiao Xu did not know about Sun Guohong’s situation, it was truly asking for a beating by talking about how amazing his mom was in front of someone who did not have a mom.

Of course, Xiao Xu felt a little pain in his shoulder. But he only took it as Sun Guohong emphasizing how good his mom was and did not pay any attention to it. “That’s right. My mom treats me so well! Her judgment is great too!” His mom had done a great job in finding Sister Qiao this time!

Looking at Xiao Xu, who did not seem to understand what was going on, Sun Guohong sighed. Without the chief in the picture, Xiao Xu should probably address him as ‘uncle’. It did not seem too good to be bullying his junior. “By the way, I’m not planning on leaving just yet. I’m thinking of having a tour around Qingshui Town. Do you have any recommendations? Where’s your house?”

He had found all information related to Qiao Nan, but they all dated back to before Qiao Nan had left Ping Cheng. It had only been two months since Qiao Nan left Ping Cheng and moved to Qingshui Town. There had been nothing much for him to investigate these past two months. Besides, Zhai Sheng had only asked him to look into Qiao Nan’s past in Ping Cheng. Thus, Sun Guohong truly had no idea about where Qiao Nan was living.

The innocent and simple Xiao Xu hid nothing from the sly and cunning fox, Sun Guohong, and directly gave Sun Guohong his address. “Qingshui Town has a good environment, but I don’t think we really have any interesting attractions around. If you like to enjoy the scenery and take in some fresh air, I can recommend two places to you. These two places are in the mountains and are surrounded by good scenery. They’ve built a path so that hikers can go up there. You can hike and train your body while enjoying the view! Some people like things like that.”

Because Qingshui Town had a good environment, all those projects that would pollute the environment were banned in Qingshui Town. Over time, Qingshui Town still retained the taste of the ancient days when compared to the new and ever-changing world outside.

“Oh, I see. Alright. Thanks!” Sun Guohong automatically filtered through Xiao Xu’s words, keeping only the important information and simply chucking the unnecessary ones away. “All right. You still have to stay by the chief’s side to take care of him. I’ll go and have a look around. I had a little too much food just now. I think a walk will help my digestion. Oh, should I go to the pharmacy and get some digestive pills?”

“Do you need me to guide you to the pharmacy?”

“That won’t be necessary. Don’t you see that I have a mouth? If I really can’t find my way there, I’ll just ask someone along the way. Thinking about it, Qingshui Town’s residents should be quite helpful, right?” Sun Guohong shook his head. Would he not be shooting himself in the foot if he let

Xiao Xu follow him? He could not possibly bring Xiao Xu along to see what kind of woman Qiao Nan was, after all.

Zhai Sheng could not be left alone in such a huge old villa. Apart from Zhai Sheng himself, there was only Sister Zhao, who had just arrived. It was truly difficult to find a third living person in such a big house. As such, Xiao Xu quickly nodded. "All right. Be careful."

Sun Guohong patted Xiao Xu's shoulder with normal strength this time. "You rascal, have you forgotten what I used to do? If I had not retired from the military at that time, I'd be your boss now. You're undermining your superior's abilities. Rascal, don't doubt the abilities of your leaders!"

If people like him had to watch out for his safety, then other people would not even dare to leave their houses.

Knowing that his concern had been treated as a joke, Xiao Xu scratched his scalp and remained silent. Perhaps all businessmen had such glib tongues. If he were to say anything more, he might make a bigger joke of himself.

After successfully ditching Xiao Xu, Sun Guohong headed directly to the apartment that Qiao Nan had rented.

Coincidentally, Qiao Nan had accidentally dropped the keyboard she had been using, breaking it. If she bought another one on Taobao, the earliest her parcel would arrive was the next day due to the different regions. She might even have to wait several days.

Because of taking care of Zhai Sheng, Qiao Nan's work had piled up over the past few days. What gave Qiao Nan the biggest headache was that it was nearing the end of the year. As such, there were quite a few companies that were trying to settle their accounts, and they looked for Qiao Nan for translation works, thus increasing her workload by more than ten times!

Of course, with the two days' worth of work that she had already owed, the rapid increase in her workload meant that Qiao Nan was struggling to cope. Waiting a day for a new keyboard meant that she would lose another day's worth of work. Qiao Nan could not afford to wait any longer. She did not have any more time to waste.

The functions of keyboards were all quite similar. At most, they differed slightly in terms of functionalities. In order to clear her workload as soon as possible, Qiao Nan decided to head downstairs to the supermarket to buy a new keyboard.

## Chapter 1803: Something Wrong Again

Qiao Nan was rather happy that she was able to purchase the keyboard at the supermarket. She had indeed picked a good location. Otherwise, she would have wasted another day.

Unexpectedly, Qiao Nan bumped right into Sun Guohong while heading back with her newly-purchased keyboard. Sun Guohong had come to see Qiao Nan and had spotted her from a distance away. He had made his own evaluations and judgment of Qiao Nan. She was a woman of almost forty years old but looked no less fresh and tender than a young lady in her twenties. She was beautiful and had a good figure as well.

Sun Guohong could not deny that he was superficial and had a preference for slim and thin women. Someone who had gone through so many trials and tribulations like Qiao Nan would never be able to grow fat. Not to mention how Qiao Nan was naturally the kind of person who would never gain weight no matter how much she ate.

Based on her appearance from the back, Sun Guohong had already rated Qiao Nan an eighty-five out of a hundred.

When Sun Guohong finally returned from his trance and wanted to take a look at Qiao Nan's face, what he saw was Qiao Nan's surprised expression and her open mouth. Sun Guohong raised his eyebrow in confusion and looked around him. There was no one. Apart from him, only Qiao Nan was on the same walkway as him.

So who was Qiao Nan's expression of familiarity meant for?

Sun Guohong did not know Qiao Nan. If not for Zhai Sheng, he might not even know that there were other people in the same boat as him who probably led even more miserable lives than him. Since he, a private detective, did not know Qiao Nan, how could Qiao Nan, who had not even graduated from junior high school and had never left Ping Cheng, know him?

Qiao Nan took in Sun Guohong's reaction and quickly closed her gaping mouth, acting as though her earlier expression had not been because of Sun Guohong. Then, she simply walked off toward her rented apartment with her keyboard in hand.

Yes, in this lifetime, not only had she never interacted with Brother Zhai, but neither did she ever have the chance to know Sun Guohong. If she were to call Sun Guohong at this time, she might

very well scare him to death. But there was indeed such a person with such a face! Was his name really Sun Guohong? Did he know Zhai Sheng?

It had clearly been a dream that she had constructed in her mind, but people that she could never have known in real life were now starting to appear in front of her one by one. Qiao Nan frowned and her heart fell into disarray yet again.

“Wait a minute.” Qiao Nan rushed to leave, wanting to clear her thoughts, but Sun Guohong immediately stopped her. Qiao Nan stopped in her tracks and looked at Sun Guohong in a frenzy. “Is-is there anything wrong?”

“Don’t worry. I’m not a bad guy and neither do I have any ill intentions. I’m just here to look for someone and wanted to ask for directions. Oh right, I’m looking for Xiao Xu.” Thinking about how Qiao Nan was staying in Xiao Xu’s family’s house, he quickly mentioned Xiao Xu so that Qiao Nan would not have any misunderstandings toward him.

“Xiao Xu?” Qiao Nan rubbed her temple as the uneasiness in her heart grew. “Oh, they don’t live here. They live on the next street. The house with red roof tiles is the Xu family’s house.”

Xiao Xu was the soldier that took care of Zhai Sheng. Since Sun Guohong knew Xiao Xu, would he not know Zhai Sheng?

If it had not been inappropriate, Qiao Nan would have asked for the other party’s name. But she felt that doing so would be too out of the blue, so she could only leave with her keyboard after pointing out the directions to Sun Guohong.

“She’s quite pretty and her voice is nice too. Her only weakness is that she’s a little timid like a bunny.” Sun Guohong touched his face. He was not exceptionally handsome, but neither did he look very fierce. Why had Qiao Nan been in such a hurry to get away from him as though she had encountered a ghost?

Thinking about how Zhai Sheng was infamous for being stern and unsmiling, there was not a single new soldier who would not be scared by Zhai Sheng, let alone women. The suspicion that had just arisen in Sun Guohong’s mind thus quickly dissipated.

He did not feel that anything would happen between Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng. Qiao Nan’s background was truly a sight to behold. Besides, with Qiao Nan’s mouse-like courage and Zhai Sheng’s fierce appearance, the two of them did not seem to match each other at all. If Qiao Nan



were really to get together with that fierce man, Qiao Nan might get scared to death in just a few years' time.

But what Sun Guohong did not know was that Qiao Nan was not actually timid. She had only been frightened by his sudden appearance. If the person who had appeared in front of her had been Zhai Sheng, Qiao Nan would not have been frightened. She would have been extraordinarily bold instead.

After returning to her rented apartment, Qiao Nan had almost lost all her mood to open her newly-purchased keyboard. If not for the sight of the mountain of undone work on her computer screen, Qiao Nan might just have wasted another day because of Sun Guohong's appearance even after purchasing a new keyboard.

The frustrated Qiao Nan stood up and splashed her face with cold water in the middle of winter. The shock caused goose bumps to rise up all over her body. But that was the only way to chase all those random thoughts and suspicions out of her mind and sober up.

Qiao Nan spent a good three days, working for more than twelve hours a day, before she was finally able to finish her work. With her high efficiency and with this mountain of workload, it was only natural that Qiao Nan forgot all about Zhai Sheng and Sun Guohong.

Just then, there was a series of knocks on the door.

Qiao Nan, who had just finished her work, stretched lazily before heading to the door breezily. "Who's that? Is anything the matter?" Qiao Nan was in no rush to open the door and instead waited for a reply. She then tiptoed and looked through the peephole to scan the situation outside.

As a single lady who had spent more than a decade renting an apartment alone, Qiao Nan was already used to being this vigilant and alert.

"Sister Qiao, it's me. Xiao Xu." Xiao Xu's face was flushed and he looked embarrassed.

Only after confirming that it was Xiao Xu did Qiao Nan open the door. "Oh, it's you. What's the matter? Shouldn't your mom be the one looking for me?" Xiao Xu had his job and had to stay by Zhai Sheng's side to take care of him. If there was anything wrong with the house, there was no reason for her landlord to bother her son.

“Yes, something’s wrong...” But how should he phrase it?

Qiao Nan bit on her lip. “Does it have to do with the house?” There was probably no other probability than the house, right?

“No, no. There are no changes to what we initially agreed on. Sister Qiao, would you like to have two years of free rent?” Xiao Xu was too embarrassed to even ask, but he felt that tempting her with something like that would make it easier for him to bring up his request.

#### Chapter 1804: Not Greedy

Qiao Nan looked at Xiao Xu, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. “That won’t be necessary. We shouldn’t be too greedy as people. You’ve already waived a year’s worth of rent for me. I already feel quite embarrassed about that. How can I let you waive another year’s worth of rent?” Was Xiao Xu here because of Zhai Sheng?

What could be wrong with Zhai Sheng? Did he not have someone to take care of him?

Help should be rendered in times of urgency and not poverty. She had rendered her help during an emergency earlier as a favor to her landlord. But why were they still looking for her even now that Zhai Sheng had someone to take care of him?

Xiao Xu’s pupils quavered. “Sister Qiao, if you really feel bad for having one year’s worth of free rent and are too embarrassed to accept it, I’ll give you another chance so that you can receive it with no shame.” He could simply change the way he spoke about this matter as long as he accomplished his goal and reached the same outcome in the end.

Qiao Nan crossed her arms in front of her. Was he trying to trick her? In her dream, she had been a teacher to so many soldiers in the military. What had she not seen or handled before?

“That won’t be necessary. I’ve already discussed this with the landlord. I’m sorry. Everything’s already settled and I have no plans of changing anything. Since I already feel embarrassed, let’s not make me feel any more embarrassed, shall we?”

Xiao Xu laughed guiltily. “Sister Qiao, have you already guessed it?” Sister Qiao was indeed impressive. His mom had told him that Sister Qiao had agreed to her request at once. He had thought that Sister Qiao would be very easily persuaded and would agree without any hesitation as long as he asked.

But he had beaten around the bush and had yet to have a chance to tell Sister Qiao about the true reason he was here. Sister Qiao was truly not one to provoke!

Qiao Nan shook her head. “No, I haven’t.” If she admitted that she had already guessed why he was here, and yet displayed such an attitude, was she not telling him that she was unwilling to help him out? She could afford not to care about Xiao Xu, but she still had to give her landlord some face. As such, acting as though she knew nothing was the best solution.

Seeing Sun Guohong a few days earlier had nearly driven her crazy. She had taken three days to numb herself with work and let herself calm down. Seeing Zhai Sheng again? No way!

“Sister Qiao...” Xiao Xu said with a sad face. “Just do some good and help me out. The chief’s appetite hasn’t been very good these few days. He keeps saying that he wants to eat this and that, but once Sister Zhao makes them, the chief keeps criticizing them, saying that they don’t taste right. I have no other choice. The chief says that what you cook is the kind of thing he wants to eat.”

He had never imagined that such a brilliant and powerful chief could be as willful and stubborn as a child, being picky about the food he ate. However, because of his habit of not wasting food, he would still swallow them forcefully with no other choice.

Although Xiao Xu thought that whatever he ate was delicious, the chief disagreed and kept saying that he had no appetite and did not feel like eating. Otherwise, he would criticize the dishes for not tasting right. Thinking about how much he had been forced to eat over the past few days, Xiao Xu almost burst into tears. He suddenly thought about how Sun Guohong had been hesitating about whether to buy some digestive pills on his walk a few days earlier. Sun Guohong had no need for that! Xiao Xu was the one truly in need of them!

“Xiao Xu, you won’t be able to solve your problem like that. Even with the same ingredients and recipe, the final dishes will still taste different when made by different people. Xiao Zhao’s dishes may not suit the chief’s taste buds. My suggestion for you is for Xiao Zhao to continue doing all the other household chores and find someone else to replace her in the kitchen. I can help out with one or two meals occasionally, but if I help out for any longer, are you prepared to waive my rent forever?”

She could tell that Zhai Sheng would still have to stay in Qingshui Town to recuperate for quite a while longer. If one meal meant a month’s worth of free rent, she would get a year’s worth of rent for free in just four days. If she worked for forty days, that would be forty years’ worth! Did Xiao Xu really think that she intended on staying in their house forever?

She had already bought a house. It would take ten years at most for her to be able to move into that house. Perhaps it would only take three to five years.

“It’s true. Instead of finding me to save you all the time, why don’t you ask Chief Zhai to endure it for a few more meals while you work hard on finding someone who’ll be in charge of only cooking for Chief Zhai? That seems like a good way to solve your problem once and for all.”

“About this...” Xiao Xu scratched his head. He had already said something similar to this to the chief. It could have been his own illusion that he had misunderstood the chief. Or perhaps, that was exactly what the chief meant. He felt that finding another chef would not be a long-term solution to the chief’s appetite. Only by bringing Sister Qiao back would he be able to accomplish his task of taking care of the chief.

But why did he feel this way?

Was he crazy?!

Xiao Xu wanted to hit himself on the head to sober himself up. But no matter how much he struggled internally, he only dared to act according to his instincts and not his rationality. At such a time, instincts seemed more reliable than logic.

Xiao Xu scrunched up his face. “Sister Qiao, help me just this once! The chief has made great contributions to the people and the nation! The Zhai family is an old revolutionary family and their family background is truly impressive. The chief has done so much for the country and the people. Just take it as though you’re taking care of the chief on behalf of the nation and the people. Sister Qiao, I’m begging you.”

If he did not manage to bring Sister Qiao back today, his task would not be accomplished.

If he had known that this would be the case, he would never have made that trip down to Ping Cheng to find Sister Zhao. He would simply have allowed Sister Qiao to continue taking care of the chief. “Hey, what if I address you as ‘auntie’? Auntie, just take it as though you’re helping a junior out. If you don’t agree, what about I get my mom down to talk to you?” He did not hold enough power. His mom was still the more impressive figure who could guarantee success the moment she showed up.

Now, it was Qiao Nan's turn to be rendered speechless. Had she just been cornered?

"Are you sure you want your mom to come down? I'm just a tenant. Your mom returned me my deposit recently. I just helped you guys cook a couple of meals and you've waived a few months' worth of rent for me. Honestly, even if I were to move away now, I'd lose nothing." Yes, she would have to give her landlord some face if she were to show up.

The problem was that if she were to move away and have a new landlord, would she still have the responsibility to uphold the Xu family's dignity?

The more Xiao Xu begged her to go, the more Qiao Nan did not want to go. Without meeting Zhai Sheng, Qiao Nan was already having a hard time sorting out her feelings. If she were to keep meeting that husband from her dream, what would she do?

"Sister Qiao..." This time, Xiao Xu was really at his wit's end. Qiao Nan had even suggested moving out. Xiao Xu was not ill-tempered and had brought his mom into the picture with much difficulty. That had already been Xiao Xu's limit.

Chapter 1805: Can I Take a Look?

Xiao Xu could not go to the extent of forcing Qiao Nan to move out because of this matter.

After a long discussion, Qiao Nan was still unwilling to agree. Thus, Xiao Xu had no other choice but to leave. Earlier, upon knowing that Qiao Nan was still single, Xiao Xu had been afraid that a woman of her age would harbor ulterior motives and try to stick to the chief because of his excellent background.

Now, not only had that not happened, but Sister Qiao was even trying her best to avoid the chief. She was not even willing to take a step closer. What should he do? The chief really did enjoy eating Sister Qiao's dishes.

Qiao Nan thought that Xiao Xu would finally give up now that he had left. She was no professional chef and was capable of cooking some simple dishes at most. It would not be a difficult task for Zhai Sheng to hire someone who could cook authentic Ping Cheng dishes. If one was unsuitable, he could just try another one until he found someone suitable.

'Borrowing' her to help out was a bad idea. One always needed to return whatever they borrowed.

Since that was the case, he might as well find someone whom he could accept from the start so that that person would never have to leave. In that way, Xiao Xu would not need to waste so much time and effort.

Xiao Xu had willingly left and neither had her landlord turned up. Thus, Qiao Nan had thought that that was the end of this matter and that she could lead her own peaceful life from now on. But who would have expected the matter to have been more complicated than that?

When someone knocked on her door again the next day, Qiao Nan did not think much about it and simply asked who it was. Upon hearing the same answer and learning that it was Xiao Xu once again, Qiao Nan pursed her lips before opening the door. “Xiao Xu, what I suggested was... Why are you here?”

The person who had answered her earlier had clearly been Xiao Xu, but the moment she opened the door, she realized that the person standing in front of her was not Xiao Xu, but Zhai Sheng. “Where’s Xiao Xu?” Zhai Sheng was sitting in his wheelchair in front of the door. Clearly, Zhai Sheng had still not been able to get rid of his wheelchair in such a short period of time. Otherwise, Zhai Sheng would never have chosen to use his wheelchair outside of his house, given his temper. He would never reveal his weakness in front of outsiders.

“Xiao Xu is keeping an eye on the car,” Zhai Sheng replied. “Aren’t you going to invite me in for a drink? This is my first time getting out of the house ever since I’ve been in Qingshui Town.”

Qiao Nan indeed did not want Zhai Sheng to enter her house. It did not seem right for a male and a female to be in an enclosed space together with no third party around. What if something happened and they were unable to explain it in the future?

But before Qiao Nan could reply and ask Zhai Sheng to have a chat somewhere else, Zhai Sheng had already barged his way into the house. Qiao Nan had no choice but to let go of the door and step aside, allowing Zhai Sheng to enter her house.

Qiao Nan’s head hurt as she poured a glass of water for Zhai Sheng. “Chief, have some water.”

Zhai Sheng’s eyes were sharp and he scanned through Qiao Nan’s apartment. Even though she lived alone, he could tell that Qiao Nan was hardworking and maintained her rented apartment well. Moreover, the seasonings in the kitchen had all been opened and were half-empty.

This meant that Qiao Nan often cooked for herself too. From his observation, this apartment did not seem like Qiao Nan's rented apartment. Qiao Nan had put in a lot of effort into creating a home for herself.

"Chief?" Zhai Sheng picked up the glass and took a sip. "I remember that you used to call me Brother Zhai. Why have you suddenly changed your way of addressing me in just a few days' time?"

Qiao Nan sighed. "Chief, don't joke around with me. Even though we used to live in the same quad, we've never met before this. I wouldn't dare to address you as my elder brother." More importantly, addressing Zhai Sheng as Brother Zhai would only make it seem as though she was still in her dream.

The words 'Brother Zhai' were an affectionate term in her dream. But in reality, these words were like a curse.

"It's all right if you don't have that confidence. I can give you that confidence." Zhai Sheng's gaze sank. "Isn't it just a way of addressing me? Don't think too much about it."

Seeing how stubborn Zhai Sheng was about her addressing him as an elder brother, in order to differentiate her dream from reality, Qiao Nan could only change her tone. "Can I address you as Bro Zhai then?" As long as it was not 'Brother Zhai'. After all, she had been addressing Zhai Sheng as 'Brother Zhai' throughout her marriage in her dream for twenty to thirty years, up until the moment she woke up.

There was no difference between 'Brother Zhai' and 'husband' to her.

"That's fine too. It's all up to you." Although 'Bro Zhai' did not sound as pleasing to the ear as 'Brother Zhai', Zhai Sheng still accepted it reluctantly. "I heard that you don't want to come back to help out? Do you treat the Zhai family's old villa as a ferocious beast? Or do you think I'm a ferocious beast?"

Qiao Nan had already guessed that Zhai Sheng had come to find her for this matter. "Bro Zhai, I won't lie to you. I've already said earlier that I have a job. Earlier on, I only agreed to help out because I knew that I would only be needed for two days. Because of those two days, I had a lot of backlogs to catch up on and had to work nonstop for twelve hours a day for three days before I finally managed to complete all my work. I'm not young anymore. This kind of work intensity is too straining on me. Spare a thought for me. Now that I've finally got a chance to relax a little, I should grab this opportunity by the hand and live a little!"

“How much do you earn in a month?”

“...” It was rather strange for Zhai Sheng to be asking her about this. Could it be that Zhai Sheng was trying to win her over with money? “I make as much as I work. If I work more, then I’ll make more money. I have a few return clients who prefer me to take on their jobs. If I split my workload out well and do a little bit every day, I’m not actually that busy.”

As such, she really had no time to care for Zhai Sheng’s meals if she wanted to lead a more comfortable life.

“What’s your job?” It seemed so flexible.

“Online translations.”

“Are you good at English?” Zhai Sheng was rather taken aback because he knew that Qiao Nan had not even graduated from junior high school before she had been forced to leave school to work to support Qiao Zijin. Sun Guohong’s investigation report had only said that Qiao Nan had taken on many part-time jobs. He had not seen translating as one of them.

“It’s okay.” She knew that Zhai Sheng was a soldier, but he was a gifted student too. In her dream, she and her master had taught the triplets foreign languages from a young age. When the triplets spoke foreign languages, Zhai Sheng did not miss a beat and could reply to them fluently too. Even though that was just a dream, it could not be denied that many things that happened in her dream seemed to reflect reality. As such, Qiao Nan dared not look down on Zhai Sheng’s ability in case she made a fool out of herself. “Technology is really advanced nowadays. You don’t have to leave the house to get a job. There are many different kinds of jobs that you can find online. Clients can also make their requests online. On legal sites and with bound accounts, everything is quite safe. There won’t be any problem of information being leaked.”

“Can I take a look?”

Chapter 1806: Maligned

After being rejected once again by Qiao Nan, Zhai Sheng did not rush to veer the conversation back to the original topic. Instead, he turned his focus to Qiao Nan’s lifestyle.



Qiao Nan wanted very much to say no because this felt as though her privacy had been invaded. Even her mom, Ding Jiayi, did not know anything about her accounts on her computer. If her mom knew all about it, there was no way she could have come up with a hundred thousand yuan in such a short period of time after Qiao Zijin was diagnosed with uremia and was hospitalized.

She had claimed that the hundred thousand had been a loan. In reality, however, it was her earnings from her online translation work. It was just that she had not settled her accounts earlier and had simply left the money in her online account. Qiao Nan was no fool. She was neither married nor did she have any children. If she did not save up now, retiring would pose a problem in the future.

If not for Qiao Zijin's illness and how she might actually die if she did not get a kidney transplant, Qiao Nan wouldn't have forked out a hundred thousand yuan. Even after withdrawing her money, Qiao Nan played safe by saying that she had taken a loan for this sum of money. But she did not count on her family working and helping her repay this hundred thousand yuan.

At least, Ding Jiayi knew that she had a debt of a hundred thousand yuan and had taken it on only because of Qiao Zijin. That would keep Ding Jiayi at bay for a period of time. This period of time might not be sufficient for her to make up a hundred thousand yuan, but she would be able to get back half of that at the very least.

It was no wonder that Qiao Nan felt uneasy and unwilling to expose a secret that not even Ding Jiayi knew about to Zhai Sheng.

After thinking for a while, Qiao Nan simply opened the site she worked on but did not enter her personal account details. "Look, Bro Zhai. This is where I work. The details and contents of our translation work are a little sensitive. We have to sign confidentiality agreements for them."

"If they're really a big company, there's no reason why they can't afford such talents within their own company, right?" Since it was confidential, they might as well raise a worker within their own company instead of trusting a virtual person that they could not see on the internet.

"Foreign languages are already so common. Is there still a demand for such work?"

Qiao Nan laughed bitterly. Zhai Sheng had hit it where it hurt. He was right. Big companies had vast amounts of resources and the ability to hire all sorts of gifted students. Someone like her who had never graduated from junior high school did not even have the qualifications to fill in an application form, let alone enter such a large company.

As more international students entered these large companies, their jobs were slowly being taken away. Compared to the situation a few years ago, it was not just a little harder to work in this industry now. But this did not mean that there was entirely no way for her to survive in it.

Thankfully, she had entered the industry rather early and had made a name for herself. Many of those clients who were willing to look for her had already worked with her for several years.

“Take a look.” Zhai Sheng closed the site. “I feel that you still need the job over on my end. Now that the industry’s tightening, you don’t have as many jobs. What’s different is that you’re not being picky about these online jobs, but you’re being picky about mine.”

Zhai Sheng was truly impressive. He had only glanced at the website for a while and had been able to draw such conclusions about the market as a whole. The remunerations for translations of different difficulty levels were different. But even the highest level was not much in Zhai Sheng’s eyes.

Since Qiao Nan had been able to accumulate three days’ worth of work and had even worked for twelve hours a day, she was definitely not being choosy about the jobs she took on. In that case, his instincts had been right. Qiao Nan had been avoiding him.

Now that Zhai Sheng had already made his intentions clear, it was a little hard for Qiao Nan to continue acting as though she did not know anything. “Bro Zhai, think about it. You’re divorced, right? I’m unmarried. At our age, it’s best to keep our distance. More importantly, I’m afraid that I’ll never be able to get married and have children if I were to get used to you.”

Qiao Nan, who had no other choice, chose to flatter Zhai Sheng.

That’s right. If she got used to seeing such an outstanding man like Zhai Sheng, she would never take a liking to any man who was worse-off than Zhai Sheng. “Bro Zhai, I don’t want to talk about my life in the past. I left Ping Cheng and came to Qingshui Town because I wanted to start a new life afresh. If I were to face you day and night, it would be no fresh start for me. It’s like walking into a dead end!”

It was not as if she had not heard it. She had been the one to pick up the phone that day. Had Old Chief Zhai not questioned Zhai Sheng upon hearing a woman’s voice?

In her dream, she had confidently stood by Zhai Sheng’s side all the while. But in reality, it was impossible for her to be with Zhai Sheng!

“You’ve said that you’re unmarried and have no boyfriend. I’m single too. Does it really matter what other people say?” Zhai Sheng’s eyes glimmered for a split second. It was so brief that Qiao Nan did not notice it.

Qiao Nan was dismayed. “Of course. Once those people open their mouths, they won’t have anything nice to say. Bro Zhai, think about your status and position. My situation... That’s right. You don’t know about it yet, do you? I have no boyfriend and I’m unmarried.” Qiao Nan spoke as though she had given up on herself.

She was neither ugly nor disabled, yet at almost forty years of age, she neither had a boyfriend nor a husband. This was not something to be proud of. In fact, she was utterly ashamed of it. As such, Qiao Nan felt especially embarrassed having to put herself down in front of her idol and her husband in her dream.

But now that she had already started, it was easier to spill out all those things that were even more so embarrassing.

“It’s true that we’re both single and no one can say anything about us since we’ve not done anything immoral. But you’re a chief and I’m a woman who’s nearing forty years of age and has never even graduated from junior high school! It might be fine when talking about you once our names are put together. But think about how people will look at me! I’m just an ordinary woman. My heart isn’t that strong. I’ll feel upset and depressed if people look down on me and despise me. Besides, there’s nothing going on between us!”

If that really happened, she would feel better about bearing that responsibility. But what scared her the most was that others might misunderstand and think that she was trying to seduce Zhai Sheng if they were to hear her address Zhai Sheng as ‘Bro Zhai’. Who would dare to speak ill of Zhai Sheng? They would only speak ill of her! But she did not even have such intentions! She would be truly maligned if she had to listen to all that name-calling!

“You care about gossip?” Zhai Sheng asked.

Chapter 1807: Want

Qiao Nan retorted, “Do you not? People’s words are scary. I’m already of this age. It’s best that I live a simple life.” It took too much effort to endure being scolded and lambasted for something that was fictional and a figment of their imagination.

Just like how Qiu Chenxi had always caused trouble for her in her dream, Qiu Chenxi had found the right owner in the end. She had indeed been Zhai Sheng's girlfriend. As such, Qiao Nan had not been too surprised at that time.

But everything was different now. She had nothing to do with Zhai Sheng. She was just a hired help at the very most. So why did she have to bear that burden of being humiliated and lambasted?

"Since you know very well that you should lead a good and comfortable life, why do you care about the gossip? You're the one living your life, not others."

"..." Qiao Nan wanted to grasp at her hair. "Why don't you understand? All right, Bro Zhai. Think about it. If I really agree, I'm just your hired help. The problem is that I don't need your salary, but I'll have to suffer malicious comments hurled at me because of it. What would you do if you were in my position?"

It did not seem worth it to have so many people scolding her for a job that she did not even need. It was not as though she needed this salary to save a life. Even though it was no longer as easy to survive on the translating website now, it was not difficult to support herself with whatever she earned there. Even if she could not survive on this job alone, it was not as though there were no other jobs in Qingshui Town. In fact, she already had one on hand.

Since she was drawing a salary all the same, why would she not find a simple and pure job instead of one that would bring trouble to her? She was not even hankering after fish, but other people were taking the initiative to offer it to her! She was being wronged!

Zhai Sheng finally understood a little more. "What if it's real?"

"What's real?" Everything she had said was merely a hypothetical situation. Nothing was for real yet.

Zhai Sheng, who had always been invincible in front of Qiao Nan, suddenly felt a piercing feeling in his head. Before Zhai Hua had gotten married, she had always said that he was a robot without any feelings. Now, he suddenly realized that his emotional intelligence was not very low. In fact, there was someone who had an even lower emotional intelligence right in front of him.

"You're forty this year and I'm forty-five. We're actually still quite young. We should still have another forty years left in our lives. Have you made any plans on how you're going to spend the rest

of your life? Are you planning on remaining single and free like you are now? From what I hear, you're looking for a man to settle down with, right? Perhaps you can consider me."

She should probably understand what he meant now.

"..." Qiao Nan landed a tight slap on her own face. "Oh, am I still dreaming?" It hurt. Yes, it hurt. But the problem was that she felt pain in her dream too.

It must have been because Xiao Xu had looked for her yesterday that she had misunderstood and was now dreaming again. Now, she had dreamed that Zhai Sheng had not only personally come to visit her, but Zhai Sheng had even fallen for her at this age, saying that he wanted to get together with her. This dream was too ridiculous and frightening. She had to wake up as soon as possible!

"I'm sorry. I think I'm still dreaming. Why don't you return first and let me wake up? Once I wake up, everything will be fine. But Bro Zhai, your words are scary even in a dream!" Thinking that she was still in her dreamland, Qiao Nan put down her defenses toward Zhai Sheng and treated him more freely. "It's true that you dream of what you think of in the day. If I had known this would happen, I would never have agreed to meet Xiao Xu yesterday. I'm dreaming about you wanting to get together with me! If this goes on any longer, I think I'll go crazy!"

Perhaps her plan of living in Qingshui Town would no longer be feasible. Should she leave Qingshui Town and move elsewhere? But Zhai Sheng would only be in Qingshui Town to recuperate for a few months. Once he got well, the country and army would not allow him to remain in Qingshui Town.

Once Zhai Sheng left Qingshui Town, she would move back. After all, she had already purchased a house in Qingshui Town.

"You often think of me?" Qiao Nan's slap had caught Zhai Sheng off guard. Even though she had not slapped him, Zhai Sheng felt pain on Qiao Nan's behalf. Although Qiao Nan's words were confusing, Zhai Sheng had understood the gist of it.

Qiao Nan looked at Zhai Sheng with an urge to cry. "I don't just miss you. I miss the triplets as well." When she was alone and felt lonely, she especially missed the family she had had in her dream. She had a father-in-law, mother-in-law, a husband who loved her, and three adorable children. That dream had been like heaven to her.

"The triplets?" It was understandable that she missed him, but who were the triplets?

Seeing that Qiao Nan looked a little unwell, Zhai Sheng did not press her any further. "If you're tired, you should return to your room and get a good rest. Keeping your body healthy is the most important thing. We can chat again once you've gotten some rest."

Perhaps his words had come as too much of a shock to Qiao Nan. It was not just Qiao Nan who had been surprised. He himself had been surprised by his own words. He had come to find Qiao Nan today for a very simple reason. He had simply wanted to incite Qiao Nan back to take care of him. Clearly, there were other women of about the same age.

But he felt rather at ease when Qiao Nan was by his side, even if she did not speak to him or do anything. Zhai Sheng had subconsciously accepted Qiao Nan in those two days that she had taken care of him.

But compared to Xiao Zhao, Zhai Sheng suddenly realized that he did not despise Qiao Nan. He actually quite liked that peaceful feeling that Qiao Nan brought to him.

It was only because Qiao Nan kept harping on how she was afraid that other people would gossip about her that Zhai Sheng could not help but say what if he did indeed have a relationship with Qiao Nan. What about that?

Zhai Sheng did not know how other people would react to this, but what Zhai Sheng knew was that unlike a decade ago when he had agreed to marry Qiu Chenxi, this time, he did not feel oppressed and upset about such a hypothetical situation. In fact, there was a voice in his head telling him that his second marriage would not be such a chore if he were to get remarried to Qiao Nan.

It seemed like his future would be good if he were to choose to spend it with Qiao Nan. Now, Zhai Sheng had a little recollection and felt that Qiao Nan was a very comfortable person to be around with, was pleasing to the eye, and he had feelings for her!

Even without any feelings for Qiu Chenxi, he had managed to live with her for three years. Now, it was clear that he felt differently for Qiao Nan from other women. It was not that passionate love written in books but a more subtle warm feeling like the sun in spring.

Chapter 1808: Are You Picky?

After finding out his true feelings for Qiao Nan, Zhai Sheng was no longer in a hurry to force Qiao Nan back to take care of him. Could it be that the discomfort he had been feeling these past few

days had been due to lovesickness? If he truly had such feelings toward Qiao Nan, he could not possibly ask Qiao Nan to take care of him. He would have to take care of Qiao Nan instead.

Zhai Sheng was not a person who relied on his thoughts without putting it into action. With such a thought, Zhai Sheng felt that he should return home and settle some matters. In that way, he would eventually be able to get married to Qiao Nan. Otherwise, such a future would never be realized.

Things had to be done. They were not going to get settled simply by thinking about them.

Qiao Nan nodded and returned to her room. She took off her slippers and covered herself with a blanket before going to sleep. Zhai Sheng left Qiao Nan's house, closing the door behind him. Right then, Xiao Xu ran out of the car toward Zhai Sheng. "Chief, has Sister Qiao agreed?"

Xiao Xu did not have much hope when asking that. Sister Qiao did not look like someone who needed this job. The moment Sister Zhao had arrived, Sister Qiao left immediately. If it had not been for his mom, Sister Qiao would never have agreed to help them with this favor.

Sister Qiao was really strange indeed. She was still unmarried at this age. Did she not like men? Otherwise, why had she not been moved by the chief who was more masculine than other men? He had caught Sister Zhao stealing glances at the chief from time to time, but she had never crossed the line. She only did her job before handing it over to Xiao Xu to pass it to the chief.

Well, people were very strange indeed. Earlier on, Xiao Xu had been afraid that Qiao Nan would take a fancy to Zhai Sheng because of her single status. Now, he was confused about how Qiao Nan had such poor judgment when it came to men. She had not even been moved in the slightest bit by such a good catch. It was as though Qiao Nan liked women instead of men.

"There's no hurry. We'll resolve this matter soon." Now that he had changed his mindset toward the matter, it was only natural that Qiao Nan's position and status would change as well once she returned to his side. "Send me back."

"All right, chief." From the chief's expression, it seemed that his mood had improved. Why did it feel like he knew less about the chief nowadays?

After returning to the Zhai family's old villa, Zhai Sheng immediately made a call to Zhai Yaohui. Whether or not they had a good relationship, Zhai Sheng had always respected the existence of Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing. "Hello, it's me."

“Wow, it’s rare that you’re taking the initiative to call me.” Zhai Yaohui wanted to ask if the sun would rise from the west tomorrow. He had thought that he would never receive a call from Zhai Sheng up until the day he died.

It was not that Zhai Yaohui was pessimistic, but there was nothing Zhai Yaohui was not open to now that he was already advanced in age. When he was younger, he had been too full of himself and had paid too little attention to his family. As such, Zhai Yaohui did feel a little guilty. The way he saw it, both his children’s marriages had been failures.

His son had gotten a divorce, and although his daughter had not, she might as well have done so. But his daughter was stubborn and refused to give in, and chose to endure the hardships the marriage brought instead. They did not even mind and had paved the way for their daughter to get a divorce, but there was nothing they could do since Zhai Hua herself disagreed.

He had to repay his debts. When he was younger, he had never cared about his children. Now that they were both grown up, he could not care for them and neither could he control them. The one whom he had managed to control ended up in a divorce, while the one he could not control chose to persist to the very end, all the while knowing that it was wrong. At the thought of his children’s situation, there were times when neither Zhai Yaohui nor Miao Jing could sleep well at night.

Their children were all grown up and it was only right for them to let go and let their children lead their own lives. But they felt guilty, after all. Seeing their children lead unhappy lives meant that they themselves could not feel happy either. He had had a successful career and had not let the people or nation down, much less his departed parents. The only people whom he had let down in his life were his two children.

Now that he was old, he had to repay the debts he had owed since his youth. Both he and Miao Miao were now unable to enjoy their golden years and instead spent their time worrying about their children. Zhai Yaohui regretted having been so conceited in his youth. He had let Miao Miao suffer and have so much resentment toward Qi Minlan, and even his son had been dragged down too.

Now, Qi Minlan had lost all face in front of Zhai Yaohui, and Zhai Yaohui almost treated her as an enemy. He knew that Qi Minlan was quite intelligent. But no one was perfect. Qi Minlan was scheming and could be as scheming as a traitor!

Seeing that his son had called, Zhai Yaohui, who never showed any sign of being afraid even in battles, was obviously shaken. “Is anything the matter that you’re calling today? Do you need your



mom to listen to this?” Their son and daughter did not have a very good relationship with them, but the children still shared a relatively closer bond with their mom.

“No, I’ll just tell you.” Zhai Yaohui no longer displayed that youthful vigor and was instead prudent and careful when speaking to his son. It was not that Zhai Sheng had not noticed it, but he had tried to convince his father in the past to no avail. “I might as well tell you. My mom will surely listen to what you say.” In his whole life, his mom listened to no one else but his dad.

As long as he got a definitive answer from his dad, he would simply let his dad inform his mom about this.

“Fine, what’s the matter? Is it about your illness?” That could not be. Miao Miao had just spoken to Zhai Sheng’s doctor yesterday. He had said that Zhai Sheng’s leg was recuperating well and that there was no problem at all.

Zhai Sheng remained silent for a moment before saying, “I’ve said that it’s impossible between Qiu Chenxi and me. If I remain unmarried for the rest of my life, will you force me to get closer to Qiu Chenxi?” Zhai Sheng understood his parents’ persistence.

At that time, he had agreed to marry Qiu Chenxi not because he felt anything toward Qiu Chenxi, but because his parents approved of him being together with Qiu Chenxi. Under the influence of both their parents, he had not interacted with any other women except for Qiu Chenxi. As such, he had no other choice in marriage partners apart from Qiu Chenxi. That had led to a misunderstanding.

“No, we won’t.” Zhai Yaohui only felt that his mouth tasted exceptionally bitter as he said those words. Did his son really intend on staying single and not getting remarried?

“You’re unhappy?” Zhai Sheng could tell at once. “What if I tell you that I’ll get remarried without you guys forcing me to do so? But will you guys be picky about the partner I get married to?”

## Chapter 1809: Regret

To Zhai Sheng, Qiao Nan’s status had never been a problem. But Qiao Nan herself minded, and Zhai Sheng was indeed afraid that Qiao Nan’s fears would be realized. It did not matter what outsiders said, but his family’s attitudes and opinions did matter indeed.

Zhai Yaohui's first reaction was to rejoice before he lowered his voice, afraid that Miao Jing would hear him. "Is your marriage partner a woman?" Zhai Yaohui knew that there were men who did not like women. It was not entirely impossible for his son, who had been hurt by women, to suddenly change his orientation.

Since their son refused to get married, Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing would flip through relevant books while they were free in a bid to understand their son and help him walk out of his shadow. Zhai Yaohui's question evoked a laugh from Zhai Sheng, who nearly got frustrated. "Of course it's a woman!"

If he had no interest in women, would he have any interest in men? His dad was getting confused because of his age!

"Of course there'll be no problem if it's a woman!" As for anything else, Zhai Yaohui could not care less. "Is she still single?" That was right. He would not agree to anything immoral either.

"She's always been single. She's never been married." It was her first marriage.

Zhai Yaohui was pleasantly surprised. Not only had his son finally decided to get married, but he was even getting married to a young lady! "How old is she?" Did his son prefer younger ladies? Hearing that it was her first marriage, Zhai Yaohui thought that the other party would be rather young.

"She's forty, so she's five years younger than me."

"She's forty and she's never gotten married? Could it be that..." There was something wrong with her?

Zhai Sheng frowned. "Fine, then I won't get married." He truly could not understand his parents. At his age, his children should already be in junior high school. Perhaps it was because he was not a parent himself that he could not understand his parents' mentality.

When he said that he did not want to get married, his parents told him that they simply wanted him to have someone by his side, whether it be a male or female. Now that he said that he had someone in mind for marriage, they asked about the person's gender, age, whether he or she had a partner, and whether he or she was sick. They sure had a whole lot of concerns.

Apart from things concerning the military, Zhai Sheng had very little patience for anything or anyone else. Since the Zhai family hardly spent time together nor contacted each other regularly, they did not have a close relationship. They had never tried to have heart-to-heart talks in the past. Now that their parents were trying to do so, both Zhai Sheng and Zhai Hua detested it.

If they agreed to it, they should say so. Otherwise would be fine either. They were all grown up and did not need to listen to their parents when making their own decisions as long as they themselves thought that it was all right. Why did their parents have so much to say? Had this not been the way they had grown up?

While they were younger, it was true that they had needed someone to supervise them. But neither of their parents had done so. Now that they were grown up and had their own families, why did their parents have to interfere? Who could stand having parents like these?

“Don’t.” Zhai Yaohui laughed bitterly. He had angered his son yet again. “All right. As long as you’re happy and think that she’s suitable for you, I won’t have any questions. If I agree to it, your mom will agree as well. Your opinions are the most important.” Initially, he had already lost all hope about his son’s remarriage.

Not getting remarried was fine with him too. If his son got lonely in the future and wanted company, he could still adopt a child even if he did not have a woman by his side. Not forcing his son to get married and have children to continue the Zhai family’s line was already the greatest change in Zhai Yaohui’s and Miao Jing’s mindset.

Zhai Hua was already married, but she had given birth to a daughter. Besides, her daughter’s surname was not Zhai. To traditionalists like them, Zhai Sheng’s child was different from Zhai Hua’s child, after all.

Now that something as hopeless as this had a spark of hope, Zhai Yaohui could not possibly have so many things to nitpick at. “When are you getting married? Are you going to hold the wedding in Qingshui Town or in the capital? Don’t worry. I understand what you mean and what you’re worried about. There won’t be any problems of this sort.”

There might not be any major issues with a lady of forty, but there were bound to be other minor problems. If the other party had a good background, she would already have gotten married and have had children of school-going age. Zhai Yaohui had no choice but to make plans while expecting the worst.

In the end, Zhai Yaohui could only comfort himself by telling himself that it was certainly true that the other party had never had a boyfriend or a husband, given his son's temper. Neither would the other party be a terrorist. She might have some weaknesses, disabilities, or perhaps might even be a little ugly. But as long as his son accepted her and liked her, nothing else mattered.

When Zhai Yaohui told Miao Jing about what their son had said, Miao Jing was happy and sad at the same time. She was elated because her son would not remain single for the rest of his life. Based on their son's attitude, it seemed that that woman's background was truly not ideal. Their son had such an outstanding background, and there were throngs of women willing to marry him. But why had their son settled for someone like that?

"All right, if our son himself doesn't mind, why should you? Our son might not like those women that you think are good for him. On the other hand, our son may be satisfied with those women whom you think are not suitable. Do you want our son to be satisfied, or do you want to be satisfied yourself?" Zhai Yaohui persuaded his sobbing wife gently while passing her a piece of tissue.

Miao Jing wiped her tears. "This is evil! This is too evil! When I think about Zhai Sheng and Hua Hua, I regret ever going out with you, Old Zhai!" If she had known that her life would turn out like that by getting together with a handsome and dashing soldier, she would never have agreed. She would much rather have eked out a living for herself under the control of her relatives.

She had gotten lucky and had married someone of a higher social status. It was true that there had been good times, but there had been many more painful moments in her life. In the end, she had even dragged her children down. Neither of them had enjoyed a blissful marriage.

If the person beside her had not been Zhai Yaohui, even if she had only had one child, her only child might have had a better life than Zhai Sheng and Zhai Hua!

She had not figured it out in her youth and had allowed her world to revolve around men. Now that she was old and wanted grandchildren around, her daughter refused to get close to her. As such, she had a distant relationship with her grandchild, much less any opportunity to take care of her. Her son was even better. After getting divorced, he simply refused to get remarried and was thus childless.

Outsiders always spoke well of the Zhai family, but she knew that there were many people who were mocking the Zhai family. So what if they were successful in their careers and had a high societal status? Once it reached Zhai Sheng's generation, the family did not even have a child to light up their lives.

No matter how good the family background was, because of the lack of good familial ties and the lack of a child, there was always some joy missing in the family. Whenever other people started talking about their grandchildren, the Zhai family would never participate in the conversation.

As time went by, Miao Jing simply chose not to associate herself with those old ladies who liked to poke fun at her.

#### Chapter 1810: Resentment

She was truly envious. She could not care less whether it was a grandson or a granddaughter as long as she had a grandchild. Now, she even dreamed of having a grandchild, but she dared not force Zhai Sheng for fear that Zhai Yaohui would come after her.

Zhai Yaohui's face paled. Miao Miao had gone crazy because of her desire for a grandchild. He did not believe that Miao Miao would choose to leave him and get married to another man if she really had the chance. But these words hurt him. "Don't worry. Your dreams of having a grandchild might be realized very soon."

"You're saying that that woman can still give birth even though she's almost forty years old?" Miao Jing knew that she should not have so many demands on Zhai Sheng's marriage partner. But a person's greed was a bad habit that could not be gotten rid of so easily.

Upon hearing that Zhai Sheng's target had an extraordinarily bad background, Miao Jing could not help but feel bad for Zhai Sheng because she felt that Zhai Sheng could marry someone with much better conditions. Now that Zhai Sheng had the intention to get remarried, Miao Jing could not help but want more so as to satisfy her own regrets.

"How would I know?" Zhai Yaohui looked at Miao Jing helplessly. "Zhai Sheng didn't even tell me about how that lady looks, what kind of person she is, or what her family background is like. I'm his father, not his son. Does he need to tell me so much? We'll only know the details when we meet her in person. I've decided to make a trip down to Qingshui Town."

Zhai Sheng had only said that he had someone in mind but had not mentioned when he would bring this lady over to the capital to meet them. Thinking about his son, Zhai Sheng, Zhai Yaohui could only make such a compromise.

Since the mountain would not move, he would.

If his son was not going to come, then he would bring his wife to find his son. Then, they would be able to take a look at the lady whom their son had chosen at the ripe old age of forty-five at the same time. To be honest, Zhai Yaohui felt that this lady must have been quite capable. Both he and Miao Miao had already given up all hope, but there had suddenly been such a drastic turn.

It was not bad indeed.

Whoever was able to change his son's mind about marriage was a female hero!

“All right, let's take a trip back to Qingshui Town.” Anyway, she hated her life here in the quad. Everyone was always talking about their sons and grandchildren. She had a son too! And in no time, she would have a grandson or a granddaughter too. In the future, she would join in their conversations and even bring her grandchild over!

To Miao Jing, there was nothing more important than her son's marriage. Now that the iron tree was finally blooming, Miao Jing could not wait to burn some incense in the temple as thanksgiving. But because the matter of her daughter-in-law had not yet been confirmed, she decided that it was more important to tie her daughter-in-law down now in case she got away.

After making their decision, the couple booked a ticket to Qingshui Town right away. There was no airport in Qingshui Town. As such, the couple had to transit in Ping Cheng before heading to Qingshui Town.

Similar to Zhai Sheng, Zhai Hua did not have a close relationship with her parents. But Zhai Hua could not possibly act as though she did not know that her parents had come from the capital. Thus, she drove to pick her parents up before sending them to the Zhai family's small courtyard. “What's the matter? Why are you guys here?”

Even though Zhai Sheng had been transferred to the capital, he stayed in the army daily. As such, her parents were left at home alone. But they had never expressed any desire to return. That was why Zhai Hua had been rather surprised when the elderly couple called to inform her that they were returning.

“Zhai Sheng is finally willing to get remarried. Your dad and I are back to take a look at Zhai Sheng's marriage partner. If she's all right, we're not going to delay this any further. We're going to let the two of them get married as soon as possible.” The two of them were not young anymore. Only by getting married early would they be able to have children as quickly as possible. Giving birth to children might not have been Miao Jing's only requirement, but now that there was a chance of having a grandchild, she had to make some effort.

Zhai Hua, who was driving, was taken aback. “Are you serious?” Why did it seem like a joke that Zhai Sheng was willing to get married? “Do you know who Zhai Sheng is getting married to?”

“No,” Miao Jing answered honestly while shaking her head. “Zhai Sheng said nothing about that in his call. That’s why your dad and I had to rush back. But no matter what kind of person she is or what her family background is, your dad and I have no demands of her as long as she’s willing to marry your brother.”

“Oh.” Zhai Hua sneered. “If that’s the case, I shouldn’t have rushed to get married at that time. I should have taken a leaf out of Zhai Sheng’s book and waited until I became an old lady. Then, I would get the whole family’s blessings even if I were to get married to Wei De.”

She had found herself a marriage partner, but her family nearly turned their backs on her. All these years, she had gradually gotten more distant from her family and had swallowed the bitter life she had all because of the scene her family had made because of her marriage that year.

Every time something happened to Wei De, he would always bring up how the Zhai family looked down on him as a son-in-law. Even though he had strived hard all these years and had been promoted over the years, the Zhai family had still refused to acknowledge his existence.

It was Zhai Hua’s fault that she had not done her duty to improve the Zhai family’s image of him. Wei De was now in a much higher position than he had been in initially and had made his mark. But compared to the Zhai family, he was still miles apart. This was truly a sore point for Wei De.

Apart from his brother-in-law giving him a hand when he had first gotten married, neither his brother-in-law nor his father-in-law, Zhai Yaohui, had cared about him ever again. They had simply left him to his own devices and allowed him to climb the ranks based on his own abilities.

Without the Zhai family’s help, Wei De had struggled for a long time as a company commander before being promoted to a deputy battalion commander. He had wanted to be promoted to an actual battalion commander but had not had the opportunity. It would be impossible for him to be promoted from a battalion commander to a regiment commander without the Zhai family’s help.

The greater Wei De’s demands, the more dissatisfied he became with Zhai Hua. Zhai Hua was the only daughter of the Zhai family. He could not understand how Zhai Hua could be such a failure that she could not even win over the hearts of her parents and brother. If his parents-in-law were

fond of their daughter, Zhai Hua, the Zhai family could very well regard him as a second Zhai Sheng and raise him as a second son.

Given his performance and with Zhai Sheng's help, he would have become a regiment commander long ago, let alone a battalion commander.

Wei De was truly dissatisfied with Zhai Hua and had extravagant demands on the Zhai family. When they could not be satisfied, Wei De was filled with rage. Since he could not pour it out on the Zhai family, his targets naturally turned to Zhai Hua and their daughter, Jiajia.