

## RTAMM 181

### Chapter 181: A Life of Her Own

“Dad, if I can, I am sure you can do it too. It is only a matter of whether you will be happier being together with Mom or by yourself. Dad, Sis and I can’t always live on behalf of Mom and you, and the same goes for both Mom and you. We have grown up. Just like birds, one day, we will fly out of this nest and have another home of our own. Life is short. In the premise of being responsible, you definitely have a choice to choose a way of life that you are more comfortable with.”

She was neither willing to restrict her parents nor was she willing to be restricted by them.

In this lifetime, she wanted to live for herself, and her father should also make the same choice.

“I will think about it. Let me think about it carefully.” The calmer and objective Qiao Nan was in her words, carrying no personal emotions, the more confused Qiao Dongliang felt. All of a sudden, he could not figure out clearly what he wanted to do.

“Dad, you can’t rush your decision in this matter. It is similar to getting married. You have to think about it properly.” Qiao Nan nodded.

When Qiao Dongliang talked about divorce, Qiao Nan would not express her enthusiasm and support. Now that Qiao Dongliang had wavered, Qiao Nan also would not express any disappointment.

After all, it was also because she had resolved the matter regarding her father’s surgery in the hospital that day too easily.

She was someone who had died once. Only such a person understood what utter despair was.

Her father harbored the idea of divorce because he was too furious with her mother’s recent behavior and doings.

The more Qiao Dongliang behaved in this way, the more Qiao Nan felt assured with the words she just said.

“Dad, rest more, I’m going back to my room.” Without bothering further about whether Qiao Dongliang wanted to divorce Ding Jiayi, Qiao Nan was now more concerned about the money she had on hand.

It was most probably because she was used to keeping all her important stuff in the Zhai’s residence. As there was a lot of money in her pocket, Qiao Nan felt extremely insecure. She felt that she must put the money away in the Zhai’s residence before she could feel at ease.

However, it was already so late. It would be difficult for her to explain if she went out at this hour.

It would be troublesome too if she continued bringing it wherever she went. She would also have to waste her breath explaining if she was discovered.

“Sure, go ahead.” Qiao Dongliang forced a smile. “During this vacation, it has been hard on you because of Dad. Now that Dad is back, you don’t need to be so busy anymore. Read more if you want to, but pay attention to having a balance between study and leisure. Many children of the workers in my factory already have myopia.”

“I will.” Qiao Nan returned to her own bedroom after acknowledging Qiao Dongliang’s concern for her.

When she left Qiao Dongliang’s room, Qiao Nan actually saw Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin cleaning up the house. Her eyes flashed with surprise. Her mother and Qiao Zijin were usually not such down-to-earth chaps. Could it be that her father’s decision to sleep alone in a separate room had scared her mother to the point that she had to restrain herself for two days?

She had no choice, being Ding Jiayi’s daughter for two lifetimes. Qiao Nan kept feeling that today’s Ding Jiayi was a little odd.

Even if Ding Jiayi was scared because of Qiao Dongliang, Ding Jiayi would pretend to be obedient and honest in front of Qiao Dongliang at most. She would then vent all her frustration on Qiao Nan.

It was strange today. Although Qiao Nan left Qiao Dongliang's room after a long while, Ding Jiayi did not frown at her or show any contempt. She also did not rush up to her to find out what Qiao Dongliang had said to her.

Qiao Nan knitted her brows. It might be the calm before the storm. This was the perfect saying to describe a person like her mother.

The more silent her mother was, the more possible it was for her mother to do something drastic. She had better be more careful.

"Mom, Qiao Nan went back to her room!" Once Qiao Nan closed the doors, the eyes of Qiao Zijin, who was tidying up the room, lit up. "She is definitely going to hide the money. If she hides it at home, we'll definitely find it!"

"Shush, be quiet. If she hears us, then don't even think about it." There was a little excitement in Ding Jiayi's eyes.

Ding Jiayi had the same thoughts as Qiao Zijin. If Qiao Nan hid things outside the house, she would have no means to find them.

But if the money was at home, Qiao Nan could forget about touching a single cent.

"Mom, I'll be starting school in half a month's time."

"Although I don't know how much money Qiao Nan has on hand, with my salary and the money, it should be enough for you to pay the tuition fees."

"Mom, I have already said that Qiao Nan definitely has a lot of money. When I knocked into her, I could feel the money in her pocket." In addition to paying her tuition fees, there would certainly be a lot left.

"Alright, do you think Mom will shortchange you if there's so much money? Whatever you wish to buy, as long as Mom has the money, I will let you buy them. Will that do?" Anyway, the money was from Qiao Nan. Old Qiao's recent temper was so eccentric, and he was so biased to Qiao Nan. Nothing he did was fair to Zijin.

She might as well spend all the money on Zijin unreservedly so that Zijin would not be shortchanged lest only Qiao Nan benefit.

Ding Jiayi was worried that Qiao Nan would get Qiao Dongliang to force her to return the money after Qiao Nan discovered it.

Regardless, she would not and did not want to return the money to Qiao Nan. Hence, the best way was to spend them all.

In short, Ding Jiayi just wanted to play rogue.

“Mom, you’re the best. Don’t worry, I’ll certainly find a better husband in the future. He must be rich and of certain status. When I’m married, I will bring you over to my house and we’ll stay together.” Ding Jiayi’s earlier words were exactly what Qiao Zijin wanted to hear.

Qiao Zijin did not care about the source of Ding Jiayi’s money as long as Ding Jiayi was willing to spend it generously on her.

She did not have many requirements for her future husband. He just had to be good to her and willing to let her spend money. He also should not be controlling or restricting her.

Ding Jiayi was smiling from ear to ear. “You... you’re still studying. Why are you talking about marriage? If you really think that Mom is good to you, put more effort into your studies when you’re still studying.”

If not for fear of Qiao Zijin being unhappy and flaring up, Ding Jiayi would have used Qiao Nan as an example to educate Qiao Zijin.

Speaking of Qiao Zijin’s and Qiao Nan’s learning attitude, Qiao Nan was the bird flying in the sky, whereas Qiao Zijin was the worm crawling on the ground.

Unfortunately, Ding Jiayi’s eyes hurt when she saw Qiao Nan progressing every day. She dared not say anything despite being angry about Qiao Zijin’s laziness. Even when she occasionally tried to persuade Qiao Zijin to change, she dared not be too serious in her tone because Qiao Zijin did not like to listen to such thing.

“Mom, aren’t my grades quite good now?” Qiao Zijin was unconvinced. Why did her mother keep asking her to study? What was the use of studying?

She dared to bet that she would marry a better man, and into a better family than Qiao Nan would. When Qiao Nan could not go on with her life, she still had to come and look for her help.

However, Qiao Nan was going against her all the time and did not treat her as the elder sister. When she had a good life in the future, Qiao Nan could forget about getting any benefit from her!

“Very good. Since your grades are so good, why don’t you study in college?”

## Chapter 182: You Are Hiding Something from Us

“Zijin, if you wish to marry a good man, you still have to study in college. Otherwise, if everyone is a college graduate while you’re just a high school graduate, do you think you...” The kids nowadays were all highly educated. It was not the issue of learning to become successful or finding a good job. If the other children were all college graduates while Zijin was only a high school graduate, then it would not be nice to hear that from others.

Speaking of the truth, which wealthy and powerful family would be willing to have a daughter-in-law with a low academic qualification?

“I need to think about this again.” With Ding Jiayi’s advice, Qiao Zijin’s stand did waver.

To put it bluntly, there was no other reason to study except to ‘package’ her own self nicely so that she could keep up her pretense in the future.

Qiao Nan, who was in the bedroom, did not know what Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were chatting about. When she came out from the room, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin had tidied up most of the house. It was much cleaner than before.

“Mealtime.” It had been almost a month since the family of four last sat together for a meal. Ding Jiayi felt that a lifetime seemed to have passed, and she was feeling nostalgic.

At the sight of one plate of green vegetables and one plate of scrambled eggs, Qiao Zijin did not have much appetite. “Mom, Dad has not recovered. Didn’t you say that you will cook something good for Dad to nourish his health? We don’t need a feast, but there should at least be some protein dish.”

“Tomorrow... I’ll buy them tomorrow.” Ding Jiayi looked at Qiao Zijin and hinted at her to stop talking nonsense. It would be best for her to keep quiet.

During the past month, Ding Jiayi had lost ten pounds straight. The fats she had accumulated over a decade were seemingly lost during this one-month period. Apparently, it had been really hard on Ding Jiayi.

Although she had had it hard during this period, the money in Ding Jiayi’s pocket never increased.

When Qiao Dongliang was in the hospital, almost all the food needed for his nourishment was provided by Qiao Nan.

Ding Jiayi would occasionally cook for Qiao Zijin. Hence, it was not the same for Qiao Zijin. In half the vacation period, Qiao Zijin actually put on three to four pounds of weight.

Now that the family of four was having a meal together again, Qiao Nan would no longer prepare additional dishes. Hence, the meal expenses for the family of four would have to be borne directly by Ding Jiayi.

Ding Jiayi could still manage occasional meals for Qiao Zijin while she settled her own meals modestly.

However, now that there were two more mouths to feed, Ding Jiayi could not handle it.

If Ding Jiayi was not careful in managing her money, there was no way to live on.

“Okay.” Qiao Zijin felt more assured at the thought of the money in Qiao Nan’s hands.

“Nan Nan, eat more.” Qiao Dongliang did not notice the eye contact between Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. He simply placed some eggs into Qiao Nan’s bowl with his chopsticks. “Nan Nan, you have become skinny.”

“Thanks, Dad.” Qiao Nan lifted her head and looked at Qiao Dongliang. She noticed the embarrassment in Qiao Dongliang’s eyes as he tried to gain her favor.

Qiao Nan pursed her lips. At the sight of this, she knew that her father must have cooled down and did not want to divorce her mother anymore.

It is human nature. When one is agitated, and the more people advise them to do something, the more they tend to do it. On the contrary, the more others advise them against it, they will hesitate to do so.

Qiao Nan was a little disappointed, but she did not regret what she said to her father previously. She was contented as long as her father led a good life. When she entered high school, she would be staying at the hostel, and the time she spent at home would probably not exceed three months once she entered college.

Such an arrangement would be quite good.

Now that Qiao Dongliang was back home and recovering, the three women in the Qiao family could finally relax and have a good sleep.

The next morning, Qiao Nan woke up a little later than usual.

After Qiao Nan washed her face and brushed her teeth, she wanted to go to the Zhai’s residence to put away the money. However, Qiao Zijin rushed over with a face full of panic. “Nan Nan, hurry. Help me bring Dad back.”

“What happened? Where is Dad?” Qiao Nan was stunned when she found out that Qiao Dongliang was really not at home.

“Didn’t the doctor say that Dad should exercise moderately when he is back since it will benefit his health? Today’s weather is quite good and the morning air is fresh, so I brought Dad for a stroll. I didn’t think that I’ll lose my grip on Dad, causing him to fall. You know that I don’t have much strength. I can’t help Dad up on my own. Quickly come with me.”

Qiao Nan was both angry and amused. It was rare that Qiao Zijin would show concern for her father. Unfortunately, she was making matters worse with her try to do something good. “What’s with the hurry? Dad had a car accident and suffered serious injury. Even if he needs moderate exercise, there’s no need to do it today. You are really... Forget it. Where’s Dad? Hurry and help him back. Is he alright?”

“I’m not sure too. I was also afraid that his wounds will be affected, so I dare not move him. I came to ask for your help directly.”

“Alright, lead the way.” Qiao Nan sighed. “Oh, right, where’s Mom?”

Qiao Zijin, who was walking in front of Qiao Nan, tripped and nearly fell when she heard that. “What time is it now? Where else can Mom be except at work?!”

“So early?”

“Early? Don’t you know that because of Dad’s matter, Mom’s boss requested her to work overtime to make up for the lost hours? If Mom doesn’t go, her salary will be deducted. Hurry, Dad’s still waiting for us!”

Then, Qiao Zijin simply started running without giving Qiao Nan any time to react.

“Hey...” Qiao Nan was caught off guard and could only follow suit. Otherwise, she would not be able to catch up with Qiao Zijin and would lose Qiao Dongliang’s whereabouts. “I say, why are you in such a hurry?”

“Dad is alone by himself. Of course it’s normal for me to be nervous!” Qiao Zijin gritted her teeth. “Why are you saying so many things that do not make sense today? Help me if you want to. If not, forget it.”

“Look who’s the one talking too much.” The corners of Qiao Nan’s mouth curled as she caught up. “Dad!” Shortly after, Qiao Nan saw Qiao Dongliang resting by the side of the road.

“Nan Nan, you’re here.” At the sight of Qiao Nan, Qiao Dongliang smiled.



When Qiao Zijin saw that Qiao Dongliang was still waiting at the same place, she heaved a sigh of relief. “Dad, you’re tired. Since we’re already out and the morning air is fresh, why don’t you stay outside longer? Nan Nan, keep Dad company. I saw someone selling buns over there. I’ll buy a few. We might as well eat to our fill before we go back.”

Qiao Zijin felt the pinch from her own words. She was nearly broke.

“Did the sun rise from the west?” Qiao Dongliang felt surprised and found it strange.

Zijin was someone who could not save any money. If she did not spend every single cent she had on hand, she would have a sleepless night.

Unless Zijin was yearning to buy something that cost five yuan but only had one yuan, she would not wait until she managed to save five yuan, immediately spending it all. She was like a mouse that would not leave any food overnight.

Notwithstanding that Qiao Zijin was normally unable to save any money, the fact that Qiao Zijin was willing to buy buns for Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan out of her own pocket alone was rare. It hardly ever occurred.

“Sister, are you hiding something from us?”

Chapter 183: Not Worth It

Qiao Nan believed there is no free meal in the world. Although Qiao Zijin was her biological sister, the things she gave were more like traps than freebies.

“Aren’t they just a few buns? Dad, Nan Nan and you were exaggerating.” Qiao Zijin’s eyes were elusive. She nearly let the cat out of the bag.

In actual fact, treating Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan to buns was a trick that Qiao Zijin had to play in the absence of better solutions.

According to the original plan, Qiao Zijin was to bring Qiao Dongliang to a further place before she got Qiao Nan to come over. That way, she could buy more time for Ding Jiayi to prevent the matter from being exposed too early.

Qiao Zijin's act to bring Qiao Dongliang out for a stroll was part of the plan, but Qiao Dongliang's injury was real.

Hence, they did not walk that far before Qiao Dongliang started to feel overwhelmed and was unable to move further.

Qiao Zijin wanted to help Qiao Dongliang up, but she did not have the strength to do so. Therefore, Qiao Zijin had no choice but to watch on helplessly as Qiao Dongliang sat down and refused to move further.

"Sure, then Nan Nan and I will wait for your buns." Qiao Dongliang smiled. As a father, he was always willing to believe that his elder daughter was not rotten to the bones—that she was just spoiled by her parents.

A child will grow up and they will become sensible as they mature.

At the sight of Qiao Zijin running off to buy the buns, Qiao Dongliang felt consoled as he smiled. "Your sister seems to be more sensible now."

"Really?" Qiao Nan knitted her brows. Wrong. Something was very wrong. She would rather believe that Qiao Zijin was trying to poison her and thus took the initiative to buy her buns, than believe that Qiao Zijin knew how to be reciprocal to others.

"Dad, Sister said you had a fall. Where were you hurt? Is it painful? Are your wounds alright?" Remembering the reason she came for, Qiao Nan looked at Qiao Dongliang from head to toe and realized that he looked clean and fine. There was no sign of him having fallen down.

"Fell? I didn't fall down." Qiao Dongliang was stunned. "Did Zijin tell you that I fell down?"

"Yes, Sister said you had a fall and she could not help you back by herself, so she requested for my help."

“I didn’t fall down.” Qiao Dongliang did not understand. Clearly, he did not have a fall, yet why did Zijin tell Nan Nan otherwise and lie about it?

After thinking for a while, Qiao Dongliang said, “Could it be that your sister was afraid that you would be angry, so she... Was she trying to create an opportunity for the three of us to spend time together? That’s right, as long as your mother, that trouble stirrer, is around, the three of us can’t even have a good conversation. Actually, when Zijin is not with your mother, she is like a changed person. She’s more normal, not so spoiled and insensible.”

“It looks like your sister is quite sincere to be able to think of this method. That’s good. Let the three of us have a good talk today. We will be able to clear any misunderstanding after talking.” His wife was unreliable, but Qiao Dongliang hoped that his two daughters would provide each other help and support, and be more united than the siblings in other families.

Qiao Nan managed to hide and suppress the sarcasm beneath her eyes. “Have a talk? Dad, I am the only one chatting with you now. Sister is not even around.” Qiao Zijin had nothing to say to her.

Nevertheless, she believed that Qiao Zijin had a lot to say to her father to curry favor with him.

Her father was the biggest source of income in the family. If Qiao Zijin could gain her father’s favor and make him give her money like their mother, then Qiao Zijin would have succeeded in her motive.

Hence, she would never be the one Qiao Zijin would fawn on.

“Your sister will be around when she is back later. Nan Nan, don’t vent your frustration toward your mom on your sister. For your sister to become like that, your mom and I are the ones who should bear the greatest responsibility. She’s still young and insensible. When she grows up, she will know that it has not been easy for Dad and Mom. She will become a better person.”

“...” At that instance, Qiao Nan was so angry that she felt pain in her liver.

She had been so busy for the past month, serving her father soup and water every day. In return, her father’s attitude toward her turned better as compared to how it was in her previous life. He finally began to value her.

But Qiao Zijin?

Clearly, because of what happened at the hospital a week ago, she saw the obvious disappointment and coldness in her father's eyes when he looked at Qiao Zijin. Only a few days had passed and her father had seemingly forgotten his scars and pain. Qiao Zijin had won her dad over just with one bun? Qiao Zijin had become a good kid again?

At the thought of the efforts she had put in, Qiao Nan felt it was unfair.

In the end, whose feelings were more precious to her dad?

Qiao Nan's face turned pale. She thought for a long time and consoled herself that she did everything in line with her conscience.

In this household, besides her mother, her father was also very good to Qiao Zijin. It was not that she only knew this in this lifetime. She should have been used to this long ago.

She was the one who painted a picture that was too rosy. She always felt that her father would one day understand and find out the true colors of her mother and Qiao Zijin—that he would then spare more thoughts for himself and give up on the hopes and fantasy he had for the two of them.

At this juncture, Qiao Nan discovered that, in fact, the one who had been harboring unrealistic hopes was her, not her father.

Forget it, whatever would happen, would happen. She could not be bothered about it.

She maintained her stance that her father would have to choose his own life. If he was willing to get along with her mother, then so be it. If he felt that Qiao Zijin was a good child, then he could continue to do so.

Whatever would happen to this family in the future, she would not be bothered. It was not up to her to interfere anyway.

In her previous life, she died so tragically because she was too accommodating to her mother and Qiao Zijin. She could not determine what would happen to her father in this lifetime. She drew a lesson from her painful experience. If her father suffered badly because of Qiao Zijin, she would at most lend a helping hand.

None of the preventive measures would work on her father!

“Dad, Sister has been away for so long. The place that sells bun is not that far. Why isn’t she back yet?” Qiao Nan knitted her brows, thinking. She felt that something was amiss.

Regardless of whether Qiao Zijin had truly become sensible, she took too long to buy a bun. Did she run to Beijing to buy?

“Yes, it has been so long, why hasn’t she returned?” After Qiao Nan said that, Qiao Dongliang also felt that Qiao Zijin was taking too long. “Why don’t you go and find your sister? Could she have met with any mishap?” That was unlikely, though. It was broad daylight and everyone living in and near the quad knew one another.

“Dad, you just came home from the hospital. Why did you suddenly feel like going out for a walk to rehabilitate?” The discomfort in Qiao Nan’s heart intensified as she stared at Qiao Dongliang.

“I didn’t. Your sister suggested it.” Qiao Dongliang revealed a fatherly smile. “Really, I’m not the one. Your sister has truly become more sensible and obedient. She said that morning air is the best and wanted to bring me out to breathe in the fresh air. Actually, I wanted to wait a few more days before getting out of bed. But it was rare for your sister to be so sensible, and I don’t want to be a wet blanket. Besides, she’s right. The morning fresh air is indeed good. My mood became better after taking a walk.”

“Oh no!”

Chapter 184: Stood in the Way Home

When she heard Qiao Dongliang’s words, Qiao Nan was in shock and trepidation.

She had been Qiao Zijin’s sister for two lifetimes. Who could possibly be in Qiao Zijin’s heart? Qiao Zijin did not care about anyone but herself. Her father had just come back from the hospital yesterday and should rest for a few days before considering rehabilitation.

But Qiao Zijin was suddenly so concerned about her father. Furthermore, her father clearly did not fall down. Why did Qiao Zijin tell her that her father fell down and then asked her for help?

“Why?” Seeing that Qiao Nan’s expression had changed, Qiao Dongliang held on to Qiao Nan. “Is there any urgent matter so early in the morning? Don’t blame your sister. I am tired out from the walking, so your sister asked you to come along to help me.”

Qiao Dongliang misunderstood that Qiao Nan did not look happy because Qiao Zijin had disrupted her learning schedule today, angering her in the process. Hence, he tried to explain to her on Qiao Zijin’s behalf.

“Dad, I have something on and have to go home first. Sit here for a while. I will come back for you later.” Qiao Nan could not determine what the issue was, but she knew that Qiao Zijin certainly had an ulterior motive for having done so many things.

Qiao Zijin spent so much effort and made use of her father to deceive her to leave the house. Obviously, she was Qiao Zijin’s target today.

What did she have currently that made Qiao Zijin feel worthy of going to such great lengths?

Qiao Nan thought about it carefully. Other than that sum of money that Zhai Sheng gave her yesterday, there was no other possibility.

However, how did Qiao Zijin know that she had money?

Qiao Nan did not have time to think so much. She stood up and ran home.

At this juncture, Qiao Zijin, who seemed to have disappeared to the point of no return, ran out and stood in Qiao Nan’s way. “Nan Nan, where are you going? I can’t help Dad up on my own. Let’s bring Dad back together. Anyway, it’s still early today. Since it’s the vacation period, don’t always coop up at home to read books. It’s bad for the eyes. Let’s take a walk.”

No, she must stop Qiao Nan from going back now. What if her mother had not found the money?

“Where are the buns that you’ve bought?” Qiao Nan saw that Qiao Zijin was empty-handed. She was certain that there was a problem with Qiao Zijin. “Qiao Zijin, you are really ‘good’!”

“Where are you going?” Qiao Zijin was so scared that her face turned pale. When Qiao Nan was about to leave, Qiao Zijin pulled her back with all her might without care. “No, you can’t leave! I won’t let you leave!”

“Do you really think that I’m a pushover?!” Qiao Nan was red with anger. She did not hesitate to mercilessly bite Qiao Zijin’s hand that was grabbing onto her.

“Ouch!” Qiao Zijin shouted in pain loudly, quickly withdrawing her hand.

It was summer now and Qiao Zijin was wearing a short-sleeved top. Qiao Nan’s bite directly bit into her flesh. The teeth marks on Qiao Zijin’s arms were deep and obvious.

If Qiao Zijin had withdrawn her arms a little later, she would have bled.

“What are you doing?! What are the both of you doing?!” Qiao Dongliang was stupefied. Everything was fine earlier. In the blink of an eye, his two daughters started fighting with each other.

Qiao Dongliang wanted to stop them, but his injuries had not recovered and he felt extremely breathless after taking a few steps. He was thus unable to separate the two of them.

Qiao Nan glared at Qiao Zijin. Without saying a further word to Qiao Dongliang, she took off and ran toward home.

In an outburst of energy, Qiao Nan ran home at her fastest speed and returned to her bedroom.

True enough, once she reached home, Qiao Nan saw that her room had been turned upside down and was in a big mess. The place where she had hidden the money was empty, not a single cent could be found.

Looking at the situation, Qiao Nan sat on the bed and wiped her tears. After a couple of wipes, she could not tolerate it any further and suddenly burst into tears.

The current scene made Qiao Nan recall the countless consecutive nights in her previous life where she swallowed her tears.

She worked so hard every day, painstakingly, because she wished to have a home of her own. But no matter how much she earned, her mother would always clean out the money in her pocket, not even leaving her the steel shovel.

Qiao Zijin squandered away her earnings. When she was having steak, Qiao Nan was living on instant noodles for a month.

Qiao Zijin was married to Chen Jun and stayed in a villa, yet she took her hard-earned money to buy a house as her dowry.

Why was her mother so merciless to her? Why wasn't she picked up from the streets? She would rather be an orphan without parents than to be a daughter of such a mother!

"What exactly is happening?" On the other end, when Qiao Dongliang saw Qiao Nan's expression changed, then ran back home, he was very anxious. Nan Nan was such a sensible child. What could have forced her to have that kind of expression? "Zijin, tell me, why did you stop Nan Nan from going back?"

"Dad, why are you still siding with her?! Look, she bit me!" Qiao Zijin felt unjustified. Till this age, she had never been bullied by Qiao Nan. Even her parents could not bear to touch a strand of her hair. "Dad, it's entirely your fault for spoiling Qiao Nan. She nearly made me bleed with her bite!"

"I'm asking you. Why did you stop Nan Nan just now and refuse to let her go home!" Qiao Dongliang was angry. Nan Nan was too much to have bitten Zijin, but he also saw what happened clearly. Zijin was the one who pulled Nan Nan back and refused to let her leave. Nan Nan was so anxious that she had no choice but to bite Zijin.

Although this was the case, Qiao Dongliang had no idea why the two sisters were kicking up a fuss in front of him.

"I... Didn't I mention that it's rare for the three of us to spend time together? The morning air is good and we can take a walk together." Qiao Zijin pursed her lips and continued to use the same excuse to fool Qiao Dongliang.



“Good, very good!” Qiao Zijin was shaking with anger. He had just put in some good words for Zijin in front of Nan Nan, and Zijin was already lying with her eyes opened. “Didn’t you say that you will be buying buns for Nan Nan and me? You were away for so long, so where are your buns?”

“I didn’t manage to buy them. Business was good today, and all the buns were sold out.” Qiao Zijin said without thinking.

“Really?” Qiao Dongliang sneered. His eyes glanced toward Qiao Zijin’s skirt.

He could see that the rim of Qiao Zijin’s skirt, especially the area at the back, was all wet.

It was already autumn. There was always some dews and mist in the morning. The rim of Qiao Zijin’s skirt was wet. There was only one reason for that: Qiao Zijin had hidden in the grass and squatted there for a long time!

Qiao Zijin did not buy the buns at all. For a long time, Qiao Zijin was clearly hiding, squatting behind the grass and bushes while keeping an eye on Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan.

“I’m going back.” Something must have happened at home. He had to go back and find out.

“Dad, don’t. The weather is so good. We... we can continue to take a stroll...” Qiao Zijin was not sure whether Ding Jiayi had found the money. If Qiao Nan was the only one that went back, Qiao Zijin believed that Ding Jiayi would definitely be able to take the money before Qiao Nan’s eyes.

## Chapter 185: Report to the Police

Hence, it was no use even if Qiao Nan went back home. That sum of money would not slip away.

However, it would be different if her father went home. Once her father was back, she would definitely not be able to get the money if her mother had not taken it by then.

“I’m not taking a stroll anymore! Help me back!”

“I’m not going back. Go back yourself if you want to. I... I still want to continue strolling!” Qiao Zijin was playing rogue and refused to help Qiao Dongliang up.

Qiao Dongliang was so furious that he turned pale. He initially believed that Zijin was really concerned about him today—that she was not truly that heartless and still had her parents in mind. Looking at the current situation, it was only wishful thinking on his part.

Piecing the puzzle together with the questions from Qiao Nan earlier, Qiao Nan took a deep breath. His eyes were gloomy as he asked coldly, “You specially brought me out today for a walk because you wanted to trick Nan Nan into leaving the house, didn’t you? What are your mom and you trying to do?”

Had a fall? The elder daughter must have used his ‘fall’ as a lie to trick Nan Nan out!

All the concern expressed by his elder daughter today was all fake. On the contrary, she even made use of the younger daughter’s care and concern for him to trick the latter into leaving the house. He did not know what his wife and the elder daughter were up to. At these thoughts, Qiao Dongliang was so furious that his heart was about to explode.

When Qiao Dongliang recalled how he helped Qiao Zijin put in good words in front of Qiao Nan and the expression on Qiao Nan’s face, Qiao Dongliang was so furious that he wanted to give Qiao Zijin a slap. “You’re not going back, right? I don’t need you to help me. I will walk back myself! Even if I need to crawl, I can crawl back on my own!”

The earlier question posed by Qiao Dongliang made Qiao Zijin dumbfounded.

Seeing that Qiao Dongliang was so insistent on going home, Qiao Zijin was so scared that she did not know what to do. She completely could not cope with the current situation.

Qiao Dongliang stuck to his words. Not waiting for Qiao Zijin to help him up, he walked toward his house step by step and tried his best to rush home as fast as he could.

Qiao Zijin was fearful that Qiao Dongliang would be home too early and thwart Ding Jiayi’s ‘good plan’. Hence, she only dared to timidly follow behind Qiao Dongliang. Although she could see that Qiao Dongliang was walking with difficulty and sweating profusely, she refused to catch up with Qiao Dongliang and offer him any help.

“Nan Nan, what happened to you?” When he reached home, Qiao Dongliang heard Qiao Nan’s cries.

Qiao Nan was sixteen years old this year. Qiao Dongliang heard Qiao Nan's cried the most when she was a one-year-old baby who knew nothing besides drinking milk. Since Qiao Nan was three years old, Qiao Dongliang had never heard her cry again.

Qiao Dongliang's heart could not help twinging with pain. What kind of matter would force Nan Nan to this extent and make her cry so miserably?

"Nan Nan, don't cry. Dad is back. Tell Dad what happened. Who bullied you?"

When Qiao Dongliang entered Qiao Nan's room, he saw her room being turned upside down as if there had been a burglary.

On the contrary to Qiao Dongliang's concern, Qiao Zijin felt assured and smiled when she heard Qiao Nan's cries. That meant that her mother managed to take the money!

Qiao Nan, who was wiping her tears, looked up and saw the conspicuous smile on Qiao Zijin's face. She jumped up in anger and rushed straight to Qiao Zijin. She wanted to hit her. "You're happy! You're complacent now!"

"What are you doing?" She had just been bitten earlier. Without thinking, Qiao Zijin raised both her hands up to protect her own face. Even so, Qiao Nan's slaps crackled down on her, hitting her on both arms. Qiao Zijin was in so much pain that she breathlessly grimaced in agony.

"Dad, Dad! Look at Qiao Nan. She's turning crazy!"

"Nan Nan, don't be angry. Tell Dad, what is going on exactly?" Qiao Dongliang who sat down to rest gave Qiao Zijin a stare. "You have to let Dad figure out what happened."

Qiao Zijin was yelling loudly as Qiao Nan was hitting her. Qiao Nan's hands were red when she stopped but her breathing was still irregular. "Dad, I want to report to the police."

When Qiao Nan was saying this, both her fists were clenched and her teeth gave out a creaking sound.

“Report to the police?”

“Report to the police?”

Both Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Zijin were shocked by her words, especially Qiao Zijin. “You’re mad. Why are you reporting to the police when nothing happened? You’ll land in jail if you call the police without an apparent reason. You’ll have to stay there for a few days!” In the end, Qiao Zijin simply used the jail to frighten Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan sneered. Did they think that she was a three-year-old kid who was easy to bluff?

Qiao Nan meditated and exhaled three long breaths to calm herself down. Then, she poured Qiao Dongliang and herself a cup of water each. After drinking the water, she said in a hoarse voice. “Dad, I want to report to the police. Something has been stolen from our house. My money had been stolen.”

She had said it before. She did not want to be an idiot in this lifetime.

How doting her mother was on Qiao Zijin was her parents’ business. She did not care and would not interfere. She would not bring away a speck of dust from his family. All belonged to Qiao Zijin, and she was fine with it.

However, whatever she earned from her own hard work, efforts, and sweat, her mother could forget about taking any single cent to subsidize Qiao Zijin!

In this lifetime, her money was not only difficult to get, but would also burn those who stole it!!!

“Your money has been stolen? How much has been stolen?!” Qiao Dongliang’s face was straight and he became serious. There had actually been a burglary in his house?!

“What do you mean by your money has been stolen? Qiao Nan, are you talking in your dreams in broad daylight? You’re a student. Where did your money come from? Dad and Mom have no money, so how can you have any?!” Qiao Zijin had thought about it thoroughly last night. It was impossible for Qiao Nan to have borrowed from someone. Qiao Nan would not have the ability to borrow so much money again and again.

Qiao Nan clearly had a sum of money but refused to tell the family about it. She even secretly hid the money. Perhaps this sum of money did not come from legitimate sources. Either that, or Qiao Nan was building up her personal savings behind the family's back.

Whether it was the former or the latter reasoning, Qiao Nan should feel guilty about it.

When that time came, her mother would take the money away anyway. If Qiao Nan did not have a good reason in the first place, she could only keep her grievances to herself. Even if the money was lost, Qiao Nan could not say anything since she was secretly hiding it to avoid letting others find out about it.

Hence, Qiao Zijin had never expected Qiao Nan to tell Qiao Dongliang outright that she had lost the money and wanted to call the police.

As soon she heard the four words 'report to the police', Qiao Zijin was scared terribly.

"Dad, do you still remember about that day—the day when you were still hospitalized, and I took some documents to the hospital, working on it for a long time?" Qiao Nan refused to waste her breath on Qiao Zijin. She was speaking directly to Qiao Dongliang.

Qiao Dongliang nodded to acknowledge that there was indeed such a matter.

"The money that was stolen was the remuneration for that job. Our family owed a lot of money. This, you are aware of, Dad. I originally intended to save up this sum of money. After paying for my school expenses, the remaining would be saved up. When we have enough money, we will eventually need to return the money borrowed for your hospitalization and surgical expenses. Now the money is lost. Dad, tell me, should we report to the police?"

## Chapter 186: Honest Confession

"!" Qiao Zijin's eyes went still. She did not expect that Qiao Nan had earned the money from working. Most importantly, the money was not from illegitimate sources, and Qiao Dongliang knew about it all along.

Qiao Dongliang closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He then looked at Qiao Zijin gloomily. "Was that why you're suddenly so concerned about me today and brought me out for rehabilitation?"

“No, it’s not like that, Dad...”

“Nan Nan, go ahead and report to the police.” Before Qiao Zijin could finish her words, Qiao Dongliang said coldly.

“Dad, Nan Nan is crazy. Have you gone crazy as well? Can we report to the police for such casual matters? And... and we didn’t lose much money.” No, she must not let Qiao Nan report to the police.

“The amount of money that had been stolen is not small. It should meet the minimum sum required for filing a police report. Dad, I am going to file it now.”

“Don’t... Don’t, don’t, don’t! Don’t report to the police! Nan Nan, don’t report to the police!” Qiao Zijin’s face turned pale. She opened her arms, like a mother hen, leaning on the frame of the door and blocking the exit firmly. “Nan Nan, you can’t go to the police. You really can’t. The money is not stolen. It’s Mom. Mom took it. Nan Nan, you’re still young. It’s not safe for you to keep so much money by your side. Mom is helping you keep them. We are one family. You definitely can’t report to the police!”

Qiao Zijin, who was only eighteen years old, ultimately lost her cool. Once she heard that they would be reporting to the police, she confessed without the need for Qiao Dongliang’s interrogation.

“Zijin, you must have made a mistake. In this world, there is no mother who will take her daughter’s money. There must have been a burglary in our house. It’s not your mom who took it. Nan Nan, report this to the police.” Qiao Dongliang gritted his teeth. If he did not teach Ding Jiayi a lesson this time, this woman would really become unruly and out of control.

This was unexpected. He did not discipline Ding Jiayi in front of his two daughters yesterday, nor did he take issue with her regarding the money she had borrowed from his former comrades before he was hospitalized. As such, he felt that Ding Jiayi would at least be well-behaved and restrained herself for a couple of days.

However, within a short time span of one night, Ding Jiayi was so shameless that she had to steal her daughter’s money. She even collaborated with Zijin to ‘kidnap’ him to bluff Nan Nan.

There were only four people in the family. Although he was not aware initially, he had also been made use of. Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin actually collaborated to steal Qiao Nan's money. At these thoughts, Qiao Dongliang could feel Qiao Nan's pain and grievances.

"You can't report to the police, Dad. It's true. I assure you that Nan Nan's money was definitely taken by Mom. It's not the burglar. There is no burglary."

"I don't believe it. Your mother went to work early this morning. Before Nan Nan came, you were keeping me company outside and not at home. How did you know that the money had been taken by your mom and not the burglar? Zijin, don't fuss about this. If we report to the police early, the police can help us find Nan Nan's money back as soon as possible." Qiao Dongliang's expression was cold and insisted to make a police report.

"..." Qiao Zijin cried with anxiety. She was sure that her mother, and no one else, had taken the money. But how could she make her father and Qiao Nan believe her?

"Sister, don't block my way. If there's any delay, the money that I wanted to return to others would be all gone. At the very least, the money that was borrowed covered Dad's surgery and hospitalization expenses. I can't be so thick-skinned as to keep the money I earned for myself and not return it to others. This kind of shameless thing, I can't do it!"

It should not be her responsibility alone to return the loan!

Her mother even wanted to steal the money meant for repaying Brother Zhai. Why was her mother's character now more unbearable and worse than her previous life?

"Nan Nan, do you want Mom to go to jail? Dad, I was really in the wrong. I-I... Mom took that sum of money. This morning, I brought you for a stroll. Then, I told Nan Nan that you had a fall and asked her to come with me to help bring you back. Once Nan Nan left the house, Mom went to Nan Nan's bedroom. Mom didn't go to work." The panicky Qiao Zijin explained the whole matter.

"You pair of mother and daughter are really..." Qiao Dongliang's heart nearly stopped. There was darkness before his eyes as he nearly fainted.

"That was Nan Nan's hard-earned money. Both of you, being her mother and sister, spent so much effort to steal her money. Do you have to be so shameless?"

Qiao Dongliang was brimming with hate. He hated Ding Jiayi for teaching Qiao Zijin inappropriately, causing her to become like this.

The money was borrowed by Nan Nan to save his life. This sum of money should be paid back by the parents, not Nan Nan, who was just a child!

Nan Nan's tuition fees and miscellaneous expenses were already all waived, but she was still trying to find ways to return the money. Her purpose was to lessen the burden of her parents so that they would not be so stressed.

On the surface, Nan Nan was not good to Ding Jiayi and disliked her, but among all the things that Nan Nan did, which one did not benefit their family or her parents?

In other families, parents always worry about their children for the sake of the latter's well-being. It was exactly the opposite in their family. Why did Ding Jiayi always have to make them worry?

At this juncture, Qiao Dongliang suddenly felt that he not only owed Ding Jiayi, but also Qiao Zijin, in his previous life. Otherwise, why did he have to be tortured so badly in this life?

Nan Nan did not receive any care in this family at all. Yet, she had to look out for this family all the time.

What a sin!

"Dad, don't... don't be like that. You're scaring me." Qiao Zijin was in tears and her eyes were red. Her speech was intermittent, swallowing hard as she spoke.

She did not expect that the plan did not proceed smoothly. Her mother successfully took the money, but Qiao Nan, the trouble maker, discovered it soon after.

Her mother was right. Qiao Nan was a trouble stirrer. As long as Qiao Nan was around, there would be no peace in the family.

She did not understand. Wasn't Qiao Nan part of this family? Why did she have to be so merciless, creating trouble every day and causing her parents to quarrel, to the extent that they could not carry on with their daily lives?!



Qiao Nan was burying her face in her hands and asked sulkily, “Dad, did Mom really give birth to me? Did you all not bring home the wrong baby?”

It was not possible for her to be picked up from the streets. Her parents wanted a second child, a son to be exact. Even if they wanted to adopt a child, they would not adopt a daughter.

Qiao Dongliang was able to feel the utter despair and the slight hope in Qiao Nan’s words. Qiao Nan was hoping that Ding Jiayi was not her biological mother. In that case, it would be easier for her to accept the situation she was facing.

If she was her biological mother, then why was there such a mother in this world?

“Nan Nan, what are you talking about? If Mom didn’t give birth to you, would Dad and Mom raise you up till this age? Your words are too heartless!” Qiao Zijin scolded Qiao Nan.

“Shut up!” Qiao Dongliang yelled at Qiao Zijin, but he could not bring himself to reply to Qiao Nan’s question.

At this moment, Ding Jiayi, who did not know what happened at home, was in a good mood since she had taken the money successfully.

When she left the Qiao residence, Ding Jiayi found a secluded place and started counting the money.

## Chapter 187: Someone We Know Committed the Crime

“There’s three hundred yuan!” When Ding Jiayi did a count of the ten-yuan stack in the envelope and realized that there was three hundred yuan, her eyes lit up. She was both happy and angry as she said, “Qiao Nan’s age is so young but she dares to hide away the money. She’s really ill-disciplined and beyond my control. If Old Qiao doesn’t always side with Qiao Nan, I’ll be able to teach her a lesson based on what she did with this sum of money. Qiao Nan is still a child but has a knack for hiding things in private. She doesn’t treat me as her family member at all, hiding things so treacherously!”

She did not expect that this wretched girl had her means. Earlier, she managed to borrow money for Old Qiao's medical expenses. Now, she brought home another three hundred yuan.

This would not do. She had to think of a way to get Qiao Nan to bring more money back. In that case, she did not have to worry anymore even if Qiao Zijin went to college.

She had already mentioned before that it was needless for that wretched girl to continue with her studies. It would be better if she stepped out into society to find a job and earn some money. This would lessen the burden for the family. However, Old Qiao would not listen to it.

If Qiao Nan wished to continue with her studies, then it's fine. There was still one-third of the vacation period left.

As long as Qiao Nan managed to earn five hundred yuan during the remaining period of her vacation and gradually pay off the loan for Old Qiao's earlier medical expenses by herself, she would allow her to continue with her studies.

Otherwise, Qiao Nan could forget about going to school. Qiao Nan, this wretched girl, was useless. She only knew how to consume!

"With this three hundred yuan, I don't need to worry about Zijin's tuition fees anymore. I heard that all of Zijin's classmates have good family backgrounds. This won't do. I must quickly buy two sets of clothes for Zijin in case she doesn't have any new clothes to wear to school. She'll lose face in front of her classmates."

Having said that, Ding Jiayi happily went to buy new clothes for Qiao Zijin.

Ding Jiayi had deferred her annual leave previously. It was a rare occasion that she could get off work two hours earlier today.

Ding Jiayi was carrying the new clothes she specially bought for Qiao Zijin and humming a small tune as she walked home leisurely.

Just as she was reaching the entrance of her house, Ding Jiayi halted her steps. She restrained her happy expression and combined the two bags of new clothing into one.

After doing all these, Ding Jiayi then felt assured to go home. “Hm?”

Ding Jiayi was shocked to find a crowd at the doorstep. There were even police vehicles parking by the side. Ding Jiayi jumped. “What happened... What happened to us? Did something happen to Old Qiao?”

Could it be that Old Qiao had another accident just after he was discharged and had to be sent to the hospital again?

Or could it be...

“Is it because they managed to find the driver whose car hit Old Qiao that day?!” As long as the culprit could be found, they should be able to receive a huge sum of compensation!

“Ding Jiayi, you’re finally back. I wonder which of your family member offended the deities this year for one thing to happen after another. A burglar broke into your house and stole five hundred yuan!” The neighbor quickly told the ‘clueless’ Ding Jiayi, who had just returned from work, about what happened.

“Five hundred yuan was stolen? Impossible!” Even if she searched the whole house and overturned the beds, she would not find five hundred yuan.

“It’s true. I’m not lying to you. If there was no burglary in your house, then why did the police come? Aiyo, quickly go home. Ask your Old Qiao if you want to find out more.” The neighbor gave Ding Jiayi a push and asked her to go home quickly to discuss with Old Qiao.

During the end of the 20th century, five hundred yuan was not a small sum of money. If any household lost this amount of money, they would surely feel the pinch and lose their appetite for a few months.

Ding Jiayi was in a state of confusion. She felt very uneasy but she squeezed herself into the crowd and went inside. “Old Qiao, what happened? Why are there so many police officers in our house? The neighbor told me that there was a burglary in our house and that we lost five hundred yuan. When did we have five hundred yuan?”

All the money at home had long been spent.

If there were five hundred yuan, wouldn't she have used it to pay for Old Qiao's medical expenses earlier?

Qiao Dongliang looked at Ding Jiayi coldly. Thereafter, he glanced at the bag in Ding Jiayi's hands. "We don't have any money, but Nan Nan has. Some time ago, Nan Nan found a job and earned five hundred yuan. It was stolen this morning, so we had to report to the police directly. The police said that we can file a report with five hundred yuan."

"F-Five hundred?" Ding Jiayi's heart and soul were shivering. She was shocked by the figure she heard from Qiao Dongliang. "Are... are you mistaken?"

Five hundred yuan! Where did the five hundred yuan come from? She had counted a few times. There were only three hundred yuan.

Wrong. She was the one who took Qiao Nan's money. When did it become a burglary? Even the police came. Could they file a case?

"Where's Zijin?!" As an ordinary citizen, although she was the wife of a former military officer, Ding Jiayi's legs shivered and wobbled when she saw the policemen.

"Mom..." Qiao Zijin came out from her bedroom quietly and ran toward Ding Jiayi.

Ding Jiayi quickly pulled Qiao Zijin to one side and asked her, "What's the matter? Why did they report to the police?!"

As she said that, Ding Jiayi gave Qiao Zijin a hard push, reproaching Zijin for being so muddle-headed. Others might not know, but would Qiao Zijin not know where Qiao Nan's money went to? Moreover, this matter was initiated by Qiao Zijin.

She took the money. Why did they report to the police? Who would the police catch? Her?!

Qiao Zijin face was sulky as she cried. "Qiao Nan said she wanted to report to the police and Dad agreed. I could not stop them. Qiao Nan immediately discovered that the money was lost once she reached home. She simply told Dad..."

There was no need for Qiao Zijin to continue. Ding Jiayi could guess what happened thereafter.

“You! Why didn’t you stop them?” Ding Jiayi was so anxious. The police were already here. How were they going to resolve this matter? If the police found out that she was the one who took the money, then would she be imprisoned?

Qiao Zijin was annoyed as well. “Dad wanted to report to the police. Could I possibly stop him? Mom, if you’re around, would you be able to stop him?”

She had already told her father the truth, but her father insisted on filing a police report. What else could she have done!

Till now, Qiao Zijin could not understand why her father insisted on reporting this to the police when he clearly knew that her mother was the one who took Qiao Nan’s money.

“Then... then, what do we do now? Will the police find out?” Ding Jiayi’s face was red and swollen. She felt extremely nervous.

The thing she feared most happened. As Ding Jiayi was worrying about the police’s findings, they already had the preliminary results of the investigation. “We’ve finished investigating. Only your younger daughter’s bedroom was turned upside down. Your doors and windows have no traces of being pried open. Most importantly, the thief only searched your younger daughter’s room. This shows that the thief who came to your house knew that your daughter had a sum of money, and that the money was kept in her room.”

## Chapter 188: Will Be Imprisoned

“Based on this situation, the thief that came to your house is most likely someone you’re familiar with. Most critically, they should be someone in possession of your house keys. Otherwise, he would not be able to enter your house so easily without being discovered. Obviously, this is a criminal case committed by someone you know well.”

The police officers were taking down notes. “So, you can think carefully about people around you who may be a suspect. If you’re able to provide us with many leads, we’ll definitely try our best to help you retrieve the money as soon as possible.”

“Mr. Policeman, what will happen to the thief if they’re caught? Is five hundred yuan considered a lot to steal?” Ding Jiayi, who had a guilty conscience, was so nervous that her palms were starting to sweat.

Clearly, she only took her own daughter’s money. How did she become a thief? Even the police were summoned!

“...” When the police officers heard Ding Jiayi’s words, they had a strange feeling. The female owner of this house seemed to be implying the stolen five hundred yuan was not a huge amount and was hoping that the thief would steal more. Was she trying to help the thief get away with it?

“Stealing five hundred yuan will not constitute as a criminal offense. At most, there will be ten-day detention with both warning and fine imposed. But your family’s situation is a little different as it’s considered a break-in burglary. This is more serious. If convicted, the culprit will be imprisoned for up to three years.”

Just as the police officer finished his words, Ding Jiayi’s face turned pale. Her legs wobbled and she dropped to the floor, squatting down on her butt.

I-Imprisoned for three years?!

At the thought of the three years’ imprisonment term, Ding Jiayi, who had never been so humiliated in her life, stood up and shouted, “Argh!” She then pounced on Qiao Nan. “You’re a jinx! Are you trying to do me in?! I’m your biological mother! You crawled out from my womb! You’re doing me in! You really want me dead! You’re a little brute, a wretched girl.”

“What are you doing?! Domestic violence in front of the police?! Do you know that the country has been discussing the ‘Law on the Protection of Minors’ for a few years? You’re hitting your child in front of the police. Do you wish to go to jail? What kind of parent is this?!” The police officer was confused.

Money had been stolen from the house. The mother was not anxious and wanted to hit the younger daughter instead. What logic was that?

As law officers serving the citizens, of course they would not tolerate the occurrence of any domestic violence before their eyes. The police officer simply moved in front of Qiao Nan to hold back Ding Jiayi.

Ding Jiayi, who was gesturing in a threatening manner, toned down as soon as she saw the police.

“Mr. Policeman, I’m not filing this case. We didn’t lose any money. Nothing’s lost!” Ding Jiayi shrank her neck in fear, remembering the critical thing she had to do.

The police report must not be filed and had to be withdrawn. She did not wish to be jailed and she could not allow Zijin to have a former jailbird as a mother.

Ding Jiayi was subconsciously aware that if she was jailed and had a criminal record, given Qiao Zijin’s character, she might not even acknowledge Ding Jiayi as her mother in the future. Ding Jiayi could then forget about Qiao Zijin keeping her by the side and being filial to her.

“It’s lost!” Just as Qiao Nan was about to speak, Qiao Dongliang was a step quicker as he said in a loud and clear voice. “Mr. Policeman, don’t listen to her. She just came back from work and don’t know a thing. We lost our money. Five hundred yuan is lost!”

Qiao Nan shut her mouth and looked at Qiao Dongliang perplexedly.

In fact, she did not understand what her father was trying to do.

Qiao Zijin had clearly explained and said that her mother was the one who took away her three hundred yuan earnings.

Qiao Nan thought that, given her father’s character, he would definitely not alert the police. At best, he would wait for her mother to come back after squandering all the money and settle the scores with her. She had expected it to be great cry and little wool.

Nevertheless, if Qiao Dongliang really did that, Qiao Nan would make known that she would no longer care about the matter and leave it to Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi to gradually earn and pay the debts. However, she could not bring herself to do that as she personally borrowed the money from Zhai Sheng.

What made Qiao Nan surprised was that although Qiao Zijin had explained the situation and Qiao Dongliang had also calmed down for some time, he still insisted on making the police report.

Since the police report had already been made, Qiao Nan was prepared to take the plunge.

If she did not think of a way to teach her mother a lesson and instill fear in her today, her mother would definitely take every single cent away from her pocket in the future.

Therefore, Qiao Nan was resolute to kick up a big fuss today. But before she could do so, Qiao Dongliang had said everything on her behalf, leaving her no chance to do so.

Qiao Dongliang sighed and quietly pulled Qiao Nan behind him. He hinted at Qiao Nan to keep quiet as he told the whole story. "Mr. Policeman, I just had a car accident. My medical expenses were borrowed by my daughter. That's why I'm still alive and standing here today. The driver who hit me escaped. The money stolen today was earned by my daughter during her vacation to help me repay the loan for the medical fees. It's been hard on my younger daughter. That's her hard-earned money. It's also because the adults in our family are useless, forcing the child to be so sensible at a young age. It's been really hard on her. Therefore, you must help us."

Hearing Qiao Dongliang's words, both police officers were moved. "Don't worry, we will!"

Qiao Dongliang's voice was neither loud nor soft, but it was loud enough for the neighbors who were crowding at the main entrance of the Qiao family to hear.

"It's been so hard on Nan Nan."

"Yes, I heard about it too. Old Qiao's surgery fees were borrowed by Nan Nan."

"Nan Nan not only did the quad proud by doing well in her studies but also very filial. Old Qiao is so blessed."

"Speaking of it, the most detestable person is the thief. Nan Nan is such a capable and determined child. She did so well in her studies and all her tuition and miscellaneous fees have been waived. She has helped her family save a huge sum of money. Yet, the thief had to steal the money needed to repay the debts. Why don't the thief go and die!"

"That's right. We have to be careful too lest the thief steals from us."

The more sensible and caring Qiao Nan was, the more detestable and hateful the thief seemed to be.



Shortly after, all the neighbors were cursing and scolding the thief, saying that they deserved to die. Ding Jiayi was shivering all over with anger when she heard these.

“Mom, what should we do now?” While Ding Jiayi was so furious that she was nearly driven to her grave, Qiao Zijin was scared out of her wits. The situation was getting worse and all the neighbors were cursing and swearing.

If she had known that this would happen, she would have planned more carefully so that Qiao Nan would be compelled to suffer in silence.

She should not have been so anxious. She had allowed Qiao Nan to see through her plan, causing matters to escalate. It was so embarrassing.

Right now, Qiao Zijin’s head was hanging as if there was a big stone pressing at the back of her neck. She could not lift her head. She was worried that the police would find out that her mother stole the money. If that happened, what should she do? Would her mother be imprisoned for three years?

Didn’t they say that stealing five hundred yuan would not constitute as a criminal offense? Why did she have to go to jail?

## Chapter 189: Truly a Pea-Brain

As things had turned out this way, Ding Jiayi was at a total loss. “Mr. Policeman, can you come over for a bit? I have something to tell you.” At the thought of the neighbors crowding the entrance and the words that she was going to tell the police officers, Ding Jiayi’s aged face turned red and could not lift her head in front of the police officers.

“Speak your mind.” The police officer who advocated justice did not like Ding Jiayi’s behavior and asked her to be open about her thoughts.

“I wanted to say that we did not lose any money. This is a misunderstanding. My younger daughter did not lose her money. I... I was the one who took it. It’s true. I’m really sorry to have caused you inconvenience. My child is the one who’s insensible and ignorant. I’ll get her to apologize to you.”

Ding Jiayi was clearly the one in the wrong, but she insisted on using Qiao Nan as her shield at this point and shoved all responsibility to Qiao Nan.

“What? You took it? Is it true?” The police officer looked at Ding Jiayi suspiciously. “I’m telling you. If you lie to us, that constitutes as giving false statements and you’ll be liable legally. Don’t tell me you know who the thief is and you’re purposely saying that to find a scapegoat for him?”

“Why would I? It’s true. That sum of money is really with me. It’s not lost.”

“You took your daughter’s money without telling her or your husband. You just took it like that yourself?” At the thought that no one in the whole family knew where the money went to, the police officers felt strange.

“My daughter is still young. I’m afraid that she will squander the money away if she keeps it with her. So, I... I just wanted to help her safe keep the money for time being. I didn’t know that this child is such a money-grubber and would cause you so much trouble. Sorry, sorry. I didn’t teach my child well. Mr. Policeman, don’t worry. I’ll definitely educate my children properly later.”

“It doesn’t make sense. Didn’t you all mention that the money earned by your younger daughter was meant for paying off the debt? Why would she squander it away?” The police officer knitted his brows. “This friend, come over. Can your family of four clarify this? Did you really lose the money?”

“It’s not lost, definitely not lost. It’s all with me.” Ding Jiayi snapped and emphasized continuously that the money was with her.

“I don’t believe her words too. Every family has its hardships...” Qiao Dongliang sighed. “My wife is not reliable. Otherwise, my hospitalization and surgery fees would not have been borrowed by my younger daughter last time. We even need my younger daughter’s help to pay it off now. Please investigate this thoroughly.”

“O-Old Qiao, what are you trying to do? Do you really want me to go to jail? The money is with me. When was it stolen? If you don’t believe it, I’ll show you!” Ding Jiayi jumped with anxiety, her eyes red.

She did not understand why everyone doubted her although she was clearly telling the truth today. Why didn't anyone believe her?

No one believes those who tell the truth in this world anymore!

Ding Jiayi did not care. She took out all the money in her pocket. Some of it was in stacks of ten yuan, but there was also a lot of change. "See, I'm not lying. The money is here."

"How much money is this?" The policeman expressed some doubt. Although he did not work in the bank, it did not look like there were five hundred yuan in that pool of money.

"..." At the mention of the amount of money left, Ding Jiayi's face immediately swelled and turned dark red. She was so embarrassed that she did not know what to say.

In the end, Ding Jiayi sounded like a mosquito as she said sulkily, "Two hundred and fifty yuan..."

"What?" The police officer could not hear Ding Jiayi as she had spoken too softly.

"There... there're still two hundred and fifty yuan..." When she heard the police officer questioning her, Ding Jiayi was frightened and her reply was much louder this time.

"..."

"..."

After hearing Ding Jiayi's words, everyone present in the house went silent, especially the two police officers who resisted rolling their eyes at Ding Jiayi.

No wonder that man had been saying that his wife was unreliable. She was indeed unreliable. They had felt strange that the medical expenses for the man's accident were borrowed by the younger daughter. Where was the man's wife at that time?

The money was borrowed by the younger daughter and now the younger daughter wanted to earn money to repay the debt. This family was too much. Every matter had to depend on the young lady. What had the parents been doing?

Didn't they say that this young lady had just enrolled in senior high school?

She was just a child!

“Five hundred yuan. Why is it only half left after you took it? Half the day has not even passed yet.” The police officer shouted and looked at Ding Jiayi in a serious manner. “You said that your child is young and did not know how to guard the money. My friend, did you feel guilty when you said that? This money was earned by your younger daughter to repay a debt, but you... you spent it just like that?”

The police officer's mind was filled with the two words 'spent it'. The younger daughter's earnings meant for repaying debt were all spent by the mother. Spent it, spent it...

“No no no, it's not five hundred yuan. It's three hundred yuan. The sum of the money in her envelope was only three hundred yuan, not five hundred yuan. I spent fifty yuan, not two hundred and fifty yuan!” Ding Jiayi was about to cry. She counted umpteen times and was certain that there was only three hundred yuan. Where did the five hundred yuan come from? Unless...

“Tell me, did you spend the other two hundred yuan then blame it on me?!” Yes, why didn't she realize that she had clearly taken only three hundred yuan, but the police mentioned that five hundred yuan was lost? The numbers did not tally!

That wretched girl not only hid money from her but also spent half of it boldly. If the police were not around, Ding Jiayi would have greeted Qiao Nan's face with a slap long ago.

“Talk nicely. You dare to behave like that in front of the police!” Now, the police officer was really furious.

The child was so sensible to help the family lessen the burden. This was a blessing for the parents. But this person took all the blessings for granted. This was really unreasonable.

The young lady could not spend the money that she earned, yet the mother used the excuse of safekeeping to take her money without asking and even spent it. Spent it!!!

Was there any reasoning in this?!

“Your younger daughter has her rights too. Her parents can help her safe keep but not use her money. I believe your younger daughter has reached sixteen years old. Even if a 16-year-old child does not pass her money to the parents for safekeeping, that’s legal in the eyes of the law. Your action of taking without permission, to put it bluntly, was no different from stealing. You still blamed your younger daughter for being insensible. I think you’re the one that’s the most insensible one in your whole family. You spent your daughter’s money that was meant for repaying the debts. Tell me, what were you thinking? Two hundred and fifty yuan? I think you’re really a pea-brain!!”

“Tell me, how do you intend to settle this situation now?” The other police officer was impatient. He was most annoyed whenever he came into contact with confusing housewives.

### Chapter 190: Could No Longer Tolerate

“File the case. At the very least, I hope that there will be a criminal record for today’s matter,” Qiao Dongliang gritted his teeth and said firmly.

He insisted on filing a police case and said on his own accord that there were five hundred yuan instead of three hundred yuan to teach Ding Jiayi a lesson.

Ding Jiayi was not fearful of him and dared to do anything for the sake of Zijin now. He did not feel much for himself but it would be hard on Nan Nan who had to endure endless suffering.

Qiao Dongliang had considered that although Ding Jiayi was not a good mother, she was Qiao Nan’s biological mother after all. From the outsiders’ point of view, although Ding Jiayi was not that perfect, as a daughter, Qiao Nan could not go overboard in doing certain things too. It would be wrong of her even if Qiao Nan did them for the sake of protecting herself.

China is a country that advocates filial piety first. In many people’s thinking, the traditional value of ‘foolish filial piety’ still exists.

These things must be carried out by Qiao Dongliang in order not to let Qiao Nan suffer and damage her reputation.

Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi were of equivalent seniority and he was the head of the family. If Qiao Dongliang was the one who fronted these things, Qiao Nan would not be implicated at all. Everyone would likely point their fingers at Ding Jiayi.

Even if Ding Jiayi had ten thousand reasons, today's matter couldn't be allowed to pass just like that!

"Are you sure?" The police officer asked.

"I'm sure."

"What do you mean by sure? No, you can't give me a criminal record!" Ding Jiayi dashed to the police officer, wanting to grab the book from his hands. "What happened today is simply a private matter of our family. It's not up to the police officers to interfere. You all can't give me criminal record!"

Ding Jiayi would not allow such a shameful matter to occur.

Somehow, Ding Jiayi felt that if she had a criminal record due to today's matter, it would be difficult for her to do anything to Qiao Nan in the future. She would definitely be subjected to others' control.

The police officer's eyes turned still. "You're overboard. Are you trying to attack the police?"

The police officer's initial thought was to convince Qiao Dongliang not to file the case and resolve the internal conflict amongst themselves. He felt that dirty linen should not be aired in public.

But when Ding Jiayi pounced on them all of a sudden, the police officers were furious. She treated them as if they were her daughters, as if they had to listen to her when she told them not to file the case. She even dared to grab the books from them! Did she still regard them as the people's law officers?

"Mom, Mom!" Qiao Zijin was so embarrassed that she wanted to cover her face so that the police officer would not remember her.

However, Qiao Zijin ultimately could not tolerate Ding Jiayi's idiotic behavior and held the latter back. "Mom, you're mad. Sorry, Mr. Policeman. My... my mother did not rest enough recently. She's thus not in a clear state of mind. Please don't take issue with her. Misunderstanding, it's all a misunderstanding. Nevertheless, we understand that you have to go by the books if need be. Do whatever you deem fit. We will abide accordingly."

Well, leaving a criminal record was better than landing in jail.

Attacking the police?

If her mother was really convicted of this crime, she would definitely land in jail for a few days!

She could not afford to lose her face like that.

"It must have been tough on you all to have such a family member." The police officer's face was sullen as he wrote the report as quickly as he could. "Alright, please sign."

Qiao Dongliang took a glance at the contents and signed his name without a word after he got the gist of it.

It was Ding Jiayi's turn to sign thereafter. However, Ding Jiayi wanted to refute when she saw the contents in the report which stated that she had 'stolen' five hundred yuan from her daughter, spent two hundred and fifty yuan, leaving two hundred and fifty yuan. Clearly, she only took three hundred yuan and spent fifty yuan!

"Mom!" Qiao Zijin shouted in a deep voice. "Mom, can you stop creating a din? Haven't you been embarrassed enough? Most likely, everyone in the quad will hear about today's matter. You... you think for a bit! How am I going to face everyone in the future? If you continue to kick a fuss, will it look good on you?!"

Qiao Zijin could not wait for the police to immediately leave the Qiao's residence so that she could shut the house's main entrance tightly and isolate herself from the sounds of the neighbors' gossip.

After being shouted at by Qiao Zijin, Ding Jiayi could only grit her teeth and signed her name humiliatingly.

“That’s fine. Then, we’ll be leaving.” After obtaining the signatures, the police officers put away the report and left in no time.

“Left? They just left like that?”

“I didn’t expect that Ding Jiayi would be the one who took the money. What kind of person is she?”

“Tsk tsk tsk, she spent all the money she took from Nan Nan in the split of a second. Nan Nan, this child, is such a poor thing.”

“Moreover, I saw Ding Jiayi carrying a bag of clothes when she came back. Most probably, the money was spent on buying clothes. Guess who she bought them for?”

“Who else could she have bought them for? All of us stay in the same quad, but have you ever seen Nan Nan wearing new clothes? Ding Jiayi was really ‘good’. She took Nan Nan’s hard-earned money for repaying debts to buy clothes for Qiao Zijin. Qiao Zijin would be happy to have such a mother but Nan Nan would suffer. There’s no reason to be biased in this way.”

“Shut the door. Shut the door! Quickly, shut the door!” Each and every word of those gossips transmitted clearly into Qiao Zijin’s ears.

Qiao Zijin’s face turned pale as she covered her ears and shrieked. She did not want to hear those words ever again!

Why was it that Qiao Nan could gain everyone’s sympathy like a pitiful little rabbit but she had to be mocked at because of her relationship with her mother?

She did not think that Qiao Nan was pitiful. In fact, Qiao Nan was detestable and hateful!

Her mother was Qiao Nan’s biological mother, and she was Qiao Nan’s biological sister. Because of mere five hundred yuan, Qiao Nan had to damage both her mother’s and her reputation. As a result, they could not hold their heads high above others. Why did Qiao Nan have such a malicious heart?!

The more Qiao Zijin thought about it, the more humiliated she felt. She then looked at Qiao Dongliang with a face full of tears. “Dad, you’re too heartless. I’ve already told you that Mom took the money. We all belong to the same family. Why did you have to report to the police and make



things so embarrassing? Dad, how am I going to face everyone in the future? Now, everyone in the quad thinks that my mother and I are the bad guys! Even if you're doing this to protect Qiao Nan, you can't sacrifice me for her sake. This is unfair! Dad, do you still treat me as your daughter?!"

"What? Old Qiao, you already knew about it before this and you're the one who wanted to report to the police? Old Qiao, you're really..." Ding Jiayi gritted her teeth and shrieked, rushing toward Qiao Dongliang.

So, she was so embarrassed today and Zijin was angry all because of Old Qiao.

At the sight of Ding Jiayi who was rushing toward him, Qiao Dongliang's eyes turned cold. He raised his hands and slapped Ding Jiayi. The sound was extremely deafening and harsh to the ears.

The side of Ding Jiayi's face which was hit immediately went numb with pain.

Ding Jiayi held that painful side of her face and looked at Qiao Dongliang in disbelief. "O-Old Qiao, you... you dare to hit me? I've been married to you for nineteen years. You actually hit me today?!"

"I don't have the habit of hitting a woman, but you made me feel compelled to do so!"