

RTAMM 191

Chapter 191: Regain Economic Authority

Qiao Dongliang gave Ding Jiayi an icy stare. "Let's not talk about what you have done in the past. Let's just talk about this past year. Have you forgotten about the ridiculous and unbearable things that you have done? Ding Jiayi, what is it that you want? You did everything I dislike and hate. Do you still want to stay as a couple?! Yesterday, you changed the topic and refused to hear what I wanted to say. I gave in and didn't continue with the topic, but you went overboard. Today, you acted as if nothing happened and had the audacity to gang up with Zijin to steal the money that Nan Nan earned. Ding Jiayi, aren't you shameful of yourself?!"

Qiao Dongliang was so furious that he gave Ding Jiayi a slap on the face. "You should have said earlier that you don't wish to stay together. We can go our separate ways."

Zijin had been spoiled by Ding Jiayi. He could not watch Ding Jiayi do more harm to Nan Nan and do nothing about it.

"You... what do you mean by this? You have no conscience. When you had no relatives back then, and no one was willing to marry you, I did not look down on you and chose to marry you. You have not made your mark, yet you want to divorce me. Do you have another woman outside? Are you looking down on me?!"

Ding Jiayi was shocked. She never thought that Qiao Dongliang would talk about going their separate ways and divorcing her.

The reason why Ding Jiayi knew no limits was that she was sure that Qiao Dongliang would never divorce her.

Qiao Dongliang had no relatives. In the eyes of others, he was not a good catch.

Once Qiao Dongliang divorced her, he would not be able to get another wife.

Because of this, Ding Jiayi paid no heed to Qiao Dongliang's warnings or anger. Even though she was in the wrong, she could hold her head high in front of Qiao Dongliang. She only agreed to Qiao

Dongliang's requests to appease him for the time being. She did not really mean it deep inside her heart.

But today, Qiao Dongliang brought up divorce. Ding Jiayi was shocked and scared.

Ding Jiayi looked like an unreasonable shrew right now. Qiao Dongliang was reminded of the time when he laid on the hospital bed, waiting to go into the operating room for his surgery. Ding Jiayi had kicked up a fuss at the hospital and refused to repay the money she owed Qiao Dongliang's comrades. At the thought of all these, Qiao Dongliang's face turned sullen, resembling the dark clouds on stormy days. It was as if bolts of lightning would strike anytime soon.

"Do you still want a thrashing?!"

At this moment, Qiao Dongliang was not in the mood to consider the fact that his two daughters were still there. Even if things got ugly between him and Ding Jiayi in the presence of the two children, it would not change anything.

"How could you not know whether I have a woman outside? I gave every single cent I earned to you. Which woman would be willing to stick with a penniless man like me? If there is such a woman, she must be really unfortunate. Ding Jiayi, where's your conscience? Is that something you should say? I worked my guts out and gave my entire salary to you. Yet, you spent everything behind my back, leaving us without any money that I almost died in the hospital. Ding Jiayi, is your heart made of stone? How dare you be angry and be fierce at me?!"

"Nan Nan is unlucky to have such a mom who is out of the line like you. But Nan Nan is sensible. She worked to earn money for my medical expenses. What have you been doing as her mother and as my wife? Ding Jiayi, you are so heartless to spend your daughter's hard-earned money! Did you really think that you do not need to repay the money you borrowed? Do you think that if you play some shameful tricks and act pitiful, then there is no need for you to repay the money? Are you plain stupid?!"

Qiao Dongliang was too angry to speak. Ding Jiayi was unreasonable, ignorant, and brainless.

Could it be that after staying at home for so many years, Ding Jiayi became foolish?

Otherwise, why would she have such ridiculous ideas?

Qiao Dongliang scolded Ding Jiayi right in front of his daughters. Qiao Zijin who stood by the side dared not utter a word. Qiao Nan's only reaction was a pregnant silence.

She kept silent for a long while before letting out a long sigh. She did not know how much her mother had suffered back at her grandma's home when her mother was still young.

What she knew was that ever since her mother married her father, she had been spoiled by her father.

Her mother knew that one must repay the money that one borrowed. But she had the mentality that she did not need to repay the debts since her father could earn the money when he had recovered from his injuries. Thus, he would be responsible for repaying the debts. Basically, her mother thought that these things had nothing to do with her.

Therefore, when her debtors demanded that she repaid her debts, her mother never once looked at the issue from their point of view. She never considered the fact that they might be in need of money as well. She was only capable of procrastinating.

Ding Jiayi had planned to put it off until Qiao Dongliang had recovered and was able to work to repay the debts.

She did not care whether her debtors would create a din because of the money that she owed them.

To put it bluntly, her mother was downright selfish.

Besides Qiao Zijin and Qiao Dongliang, she did not care about anyone else.

To Ding Jiayi, Qiao Dongliang, Qiao Zijin and herself were people of the same circle. She did not care about those outside the circle.

Of course, Qiao Dongliang had no idea what was going through Ding Jiayi's mind. When he saw Ding Jiayi in tears, he was even more furious. "Why are you so shameless and spent Nan Nan's money? I... forget it. It's useless to talk with you since you are heartless and brainless. It is just like playing the lute to a cow. Hand over all of your pay to me right now!"

One side of Ding Jiayi's face was swollen. "What do you want to do with it?"

“Give me all the money!” Qiao Dongliang banged his palm on the table, rattling the small change Ding Jiayi left on it.

Ding Jiayi sniffed and had no other choice but to return to her room. She took out all the wages she had earned in the past six months and dared not keep any for herself.

Qiao Dongliang took the money Ding Jiayi had with her without another word. He counted them and took out fifty yuan. He placed it together with the two hundred and fifty yuan that was on the table. “Nan Nan, this is the three hundred yuan that you earned. Take it and keep them in a safe place. Don’t keep it at home. There is a huge and sneaky ‘mouse’ here, so it’s not safe.”

“Okay.” Qiao Nan nodded briskly. She kept the three hundred yuan in her pocket without another a word. Tomorrow morning, she would put the money at the Zhai’s residence.

Ding Jiayi pulled a wrinkled face when she saw how Qiao Nan reached for the money and kept it inside her pocket. She looked distressed and heartbroken as if a slice of her flesh was cleaved from her. Just one look at her face, one could feel the pain and devastation that she felt.

“Old Qiao, this won’t do. There isn’t enough for Zijin’s tuition fees.”

Chapter 192: Do You Look Down on Me

Ding Jiayi refused to give up. “We spent a huge amount of money on your hospital stay. We will not be able to repay all the debts within a short time. The priority is to save them for our household expenses. Zijin’s study is important as well. Can... can we use the money to pay for her tuition fees first? I promise that I will repay the money in the future!”

Qiao Dongliang snorted, not taking her words seriously. “Zijin, come over here.”

Qiao Zijin’s face was ashen. She hunched her shoulders and dragged her feet, walking toward her father. “Dad?”

“Zijin, you played a part in what happened today. Tell me, who is in the wrong?”

“Dad...” Qiao Zijin found it difficult to look at Qiao Dongliang. She put the blame onto Qiao Nan. “Nan Nan, Mom is our elder. Do you want your mom to apologize to you and admit her mistakes?”

Qiao Nan snorted. “Sister, do you mean that it is indeed wrong of Mom for stealing my money and she should apologize to me, but since she is our elder, we should just disregard her mistakes? Mom, did you hear that? My sister thinks that you are the only one who is at fault today!”

She knew what Qiao Zijin was up to. She wanted to push all the blame to her mother.

Qiao Zijin was dumbstruck. She never put it that way.

“You...” Ding Jiayi certainly would not believe in Qiao Nan’s words, and she could hear Qiao Zijin’s words clearly. Qiao Zijin was trying to push the blame to Qiao Nan. “Old Qiao, you can blame me, lecture me, or even hit me, as long as you are appeased and feel good. But there’s only half a month before Zijin starts school. Can you give us the tuition fees first? I will do anything according to your wishes, how about it?”

After Qiao Dongliang slapped her and mentioned that he was going to divorce her, Ding Jiayi no longer dared to act rashly. She dared not show her anger now.

Ding Jiayi had severed her ties with her relatives. Though Qiao Zijin painted a beautiful picture, saying that she would take care of her mother, after all, Qiao Zijin was still a student. Ding Jiayi could not rely on Qiao Zijin to take care of her. Qiao Dongliang was the pillar of the family. There was no one else for her to rely on.

“No!” Qiao Dongliang refused adamantly.

“Why not? Do you want Zijin to stop her studies? You finance Qiao Nan through her studies but you refuse to do so for Zijin. Isn’t that being biased? What right do you have to say that I am biased?” Ding Jiayi was full of hatred. It was Old Qiao who said that he wanted Qiao Zijin to stay with the family and to take in a husband for her.

Qiao Nan, that wretched girl, would be married off sooner or later.

No matter how good Qiao Nan was in her studies, she was of no use to the Qiao family. She would only benefit others.

Why did Old Qiao not understand that the money spent on Qiao Nan was as good as wasted? Why did he insist on being so nice to Qiao Nan?

On the contrary, Zijin would stay with the family. They would have someone to depend on if Zijin was successful.

“You can rest assured. I will treat them fairly. You pay for Zijin’s tuition fees, but I don’t give Nan Nan any money for her tuition fees. I only give her money for her meals. That said, Nan Nan receives less money than Zijin. How am I biased?” Qiao Dongliang looked at Ding Jiayi in mockery.

“That isn’t the same. Qiao Nan does not have to pay for her tuition fees!” But Zijin had to pay for hers.

“If Zijin has the ability, she does not need to pay her tuition fees as well. Is it Nan Nan’s fault that she has good academic performance and that the school exempted her from paying tuition and miscellaneous fees?” Qiao Dongliang looked at Zijin. “Zijin, tell me, who is biased? Is it your mom or me? Is it because you have not studied hard enough, or is it Nan Nan’s fault for being good in her studies?”

Qiao Zijin’s face was stiff and her eyes stung. Did her father look down on her, feeling that Qiao Nan was better and smarter than her?

It was her mother who was at fault. They should sort it out among themselves. Why did they have to vent their frustrations on her and compare her with Qiao Nan?!

“Dad, do you think that my grades are lousy?” Qiao Zijin broke out in tears and looked at Qiao Dongliang with a pair of sorrowful eyes.

Qiao Dongliang turned his face away, gritted his teeth, steeled his heart, and said, “Compared with Nan Nan, you did not do as well. Zijin, you are the elder daughter of the family, you should be more sensible than Nan Nan. Nan Nan gave up the chance to study at The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China and chose Ping Cheng High School instead. You should know why she did that. Nan Nan is so sensible and has made so many sacrifices for this family. Zijin, ask yourself,

what have you done for this family, and what has this family done for you? Zijin, you have not taken up the responsibility as the elder daughter of the Qiao family.”

In the past, whenever Qiao Nan did well for her exams and Qiao Zijin did badly for hers, Qiao Zijin always put on a sorrowful and inferior look in front of Qiao Dongliang. He would then comfort Qiao Zijin, saying that the results were not the most important thing. What was important was that she had done her best.

But today, Qiao Dongliang acted out of the blue. Contrary to Qiao Zijin’s expectations, he did not console her. Instead, his words put Qiao Zijin in an awkward position.

Qiao Zijin cried out in tears at Qiao Dongliang’s truthful words.

Seeing Qiao Zijin in tears, Qiao Dongliang was heartbroken, but he knew that this time he could not be soft-hearted again. He could not be the same as before. “Fine, Ding Jiayi, listen to me. If you want to stay as a family, I will be in charge of money and expenses in and outside the house. You are dishonest and have a tendency to squander money. I can’t let you ruin this family and the two children. If you disagree, let’s have a divorce since we cannot stay together anymore. Qiao Zijin will stay with you and Nan Nan will stay with me.”

“Mom...” Qiao Zijin was so scared that she stopped crying. She quickly stood beside Ding Jiayi, shaking her head at her. She did not want them to go their separate ways.

She had so many classmates, but no one had parents who were divorced. She did not want to embarrass herself. She did not want to be the oddball among her classmates.

Most importantly, if her parents ended up divorcing, and she stayed with her mother, there was no way that her mother could raise her up with her low pay. She had to stay with her father in order to lead a stable life.

Ding Jiayi heard the word ‘divorce’ and was devastated. “Old Qiao, do you really want to divorce me?”

“You still have a choice now. Decide for yourself whether you want us to divorce.” If Qiao Dongliang did not steel his heart and do something about Ding Jiayi and her crooked mentality, it would be completely over for all of them.

“No. No, I don’t want to... I will give you all the money.” Ding Jiayi blew her nose in embarrassment. Her eyes were red and swollen.

If she had a divorce at her age and her family, particularly her mother, found out, she would be gloating over her divorce.

Like Qiao Zijin, Ding Jiayi could not live without Qiao Dongliang.

“Since you have said those words, don’t blame me for being unruly and ruthless if you fail to keep your promise.”

“I will bear that in mind. I do not want a divorce!”

Chapter 193: Discovering What Was Wrong With Qiao Zijin

Ding Jiayi wiped her tears dry, her voice hoarse.

She really did not expect that taking the three hundred yuan with her gained her nothing but big trouble in the end. Moreover, she was disgraced thoroughly.

“You must also bear in mind that Nan Nan is the daughter of the Qiao family. She bears my surname Qiao, whereas your surname is Ding. If you dare to do anything to Nan Nan or hit her, Nan Nan may not be able to retaliate as you are her elder, but I will give you a taste of your own medicine and make you suffer worse than what you do to her.”

Whenever Ding Jiayi was angry, she would use force on Qiao Nan. Today, she did the same thing right in front of the police. Qiao Dongliang’s face was stern. He had to set the rules straight.

“Did you hear me?!”

“I heard you...” Ding Jiayi answered weakly. She knew that Qiao Dongliang’s words were not empty threats or jokes. He was serious.

“Since you heard it, you should clean up Nan Nan’s room right now. Since you messed it up, you must put it back to how it used to be. If you do not put every single thing back in order, you will not get to have dinner tonight!”

“Oh.” Ding Jiayi, who was trembling in fear, dared not say ‘no’. She dared not go against whatever Qiao Dongliang said. If he wanted her to head east, she would not dare to head west.

“Dad, it was my fault. Since I already knew about it, I should have persuaded Mom. I should not have created troubles with her. It’s just that Nan Nan is young, and she cannot safeguard the money. In fact, I am worried that she will develop a bad habit of splurging because she has so much money with her...”

When Ding Jiayi left, Qiao Zijin had a pitiful and sorrowful look on her face. She softened her tone and sounded as if she was really sorry and remorseful, explaining and making excuses for her behavior.

Qiao Dongliang sighed. “Zijin, it’s better for you to not say anything now. The more you say, the more uncomfortable I am. Zijin, in my heart, you have always been a well-behaved child. I hope you will not ruin the good impression I have of you.”

If Zijin genuinely cared about Nan Nan and was worried that she would develop the bad habit of splurging money, there were other ways to show she cared. She did not need to make use of him to get Nan Nan out of the house and collaborate with Ding Jiayi to steal Nan Nan’s money.

In less than a day, Ding Jiayi had spent a sixth of the three hundred yuan that Nan Nan had. It did not need a genius to figure out that Ding Jiayi must have used the money to buy things for Zijin.

Qiao Dongliang refused to believe that his elder daughter came up with such a plan just for the three hundred yuan—that she collaborated with Ding Jiayi to orchestrate a full-scale drama in front of him. He did not want to believe that the elder daughter was a person who would betray her family for money, disregarding the feelings of her father and her sister.

However, he could not convince himself that the elder daughter was innocent—that Ding Jiayi was the mastermind.

Qiao Dongliang felt thoroughly disappointed at Qiao Zijin. Otherwise, he would not have said those words that put Qiao Zijin in an awkward situation. He would not have compared Qiao Zijin’s results with Qiao Nan’s.

“...” Qiao Zijin had thought of how she was going to insist on her innocence, but her words were trapped in her mouth after what Qiao Dongliang said. She curled the corner of her lips reluctantly. “Dad, Mom has done an injustice to Nan Nan. I will help Mom clean up Nan Nan’s room. Nan Nan, you... you must not be angry with me. I did not do it on purpose.”

With that, Qiao Zijin went to Qiao Nan’s room to clean up without another look at Qiao Nan. This was her way of showing that she had yielded to her.

“...” Qiao Nan pursed her lips. She had to hand it to Qiao Zijin.

Half an hour ago, Qiao Zijin hated her father for blowing up the matter and embarrassing her.

However, in the blink of an eye, Qiao Zijin was like a different person as soon as her mother left the room. Not only did she yield to her father but also sounded apologetic for her mistakes. She acted like she was very sorry toward them both.

Qiao Zijin was only eighteen years old now!

It was no wonder that in the previous life, both her mother and father loved and favored Qiao Zijin. Qiao Zijin seemed to exhibit schizophrenia in front of her parents, displaying two opposite personalities.

To put it simply, when Ding Jiayi was around, Qiao Zijin would act as if she sided with Ding Jiayi and vowed to help her. However, when Ding Jiayi was absent, Qiao Zijin became a good child who knew the ways of the world, having upright and correct worldviews and humbly accepting all criticisms.

The two opposite personalities that Qiao Zijin displayed when she was with her mother and father seemed to suggest that she had been influenced by Ding Jiayi and thus had corrupt worldviews and bad behaviors.

Qiao Nan frowned. In the previous life, she always felt that Qiao Zijin was spoiled by her mother. But in this life, Qiao Nan suddenly thought otherwise.

Indeed, her mother doted on Qiao Zijin. In fact, her mother would listen to what Qiao Zijin said most of the time instead of the other way round.

The best proof was in the previous life, the moment she inadvertently overheard the conversation between her mother and Qiao Zijin. If it was not for Qiao Zijin's suggestion, her mother would not have thought of using Qiao Nan's kidney to save Qiao Zijin.

They insisted that Qiao Nan donated her kidney to Qiao Zijin regardless of whether she was willing or not. Come to think of it, Qiao Zijin had been the one who planted the thought in her mother.

If Qiao Zijin had not mentioned it, given her mother's education level, she would not have known that one could donate kidneys for free as long as it was between relatives. The matching level was also higher than that of nonrelatives.

Qiao Nan was reminded of another case from when she just 'returned' a year ago.

Her mother tended to do things in a straightforward manner. She was not one to come up with a careful and well-thought-out plan. Take for example the case of wanting her to work and quit her studies. Her mother did not devise a plan to make her quit her studies. Instead, she sold her junior high school books without any further thought. In doing so, one could seize upon the chinks in her armor easily.

Besides, her mother did not like her, so she prohibited her from having meat and fish dishes at home.

Though her mother pretended to be otherwise in front of her father, her mother did not hide her dislike for her. She sided with Qiao Zijin outright and never intended to hide her favoritism toward Qiao Zijin.

Even when her mother wanted her to quit school, her mother had told her clearly that she had to work.

On that rainy night when someone came into her room while she was asleep, that person not only took away the blanket she used to protect herself from the cold but also opened the window next to her to make her catch a cold and develop a fever. This did not seem to be what her mother would do.

On the contrary, in the previous life, Qiao Zijin had called Chen Jun as her brother-in-law in front of Qiao Nan, but in a short period of three months, Qiao Zijin told her that she was two months pregnant with Chen Jun's child and wanted her mother to stand up for her.

Did she and her father have the wrong idea all this while?

"Nan Nan, what are you thinking about? Why are you looking at your sister in such a way?" Qiao Dongliang quickly discovered that Qiao Nan was lost in her thoughts. He could tell that Qiao Nan had a strange look in her eyes. "Nan Nan, your sister, she..."

Chapter 194: Brainwashed

"Dad, you don't have to say anything else, I can tell what you want to say. Dad, to tell you the truth, I am different from you. You are my sister's biological father, so you are willing to believe that your child is good-natured. Even if she may have some bad character traits, it is not a big problem. Actually, at the hospital that day, Brother Zhou had told me the conversation between Sister and Mom. As long as she treats you well, you will be lenient toward her and blame her behavior on Mom who has spoiled her, assuring yourself that she will learn the right way. The Buddha said that it is fate that two individuals become husband and wife, and the children are born to collect debts from their parents. If there's no fate, they will not be husband and wife; if there's no debt, they will not be parents and children. However, no one said that the elder sister is born to collect debts from the younger sister. Dad, I know very clearly in my heart what kind of person my sister is."

Qiao Nan would not believe that a woman like Qiao Zijin who snatched her sister's boyfriend would have good character traits.

Coupled with the clues that she noticed in this life, Qiao Nan felt that her sibling was not a simple person.

The reason why she did not understand it before was that her mother would always be the one who took the lead, and Qiao Zijin did not need to do anything. She only had to give instructions to her mother and her mother would follow suit.

How could such a person be good-natured?

She was not good-natured at all!

One could not say for sure whether Qiao Zijin was spoiled by her mother, or that her mother listened to what Qiao Zijin said.

Faced with such a complicated person like Qiao Zijin, Qiao Nan would definitely die for the second time if she let her guard down.

“I know how my sister has treated me all these years. The relationship between parents and children is different from the relationship between siblings. Dad, I never ask you to do anything for me, but there are some things that I hope you won’t persuade me to do as well because it’s useless. I am a straightforward person. I can’t keep secrets or put on a show. But we are siblings, after all. We will always be relatives, but our relationship will be no more than that.” Qiao Nan did not wish for Qiao Dongliang to put in a good word for Qiao Zijin. She told him upfront that no matter what he said, it was useless.

Though she would not fall out with Qiao Zijin, she would not be on good terms with her. There would never be a day where she would be close with her.

“Nan Nan, you are still young, so you don’t understand. You should have seen it. When I was sent to the hospital, a young child like you would not need to take matters into your hand if I had a brother. I do not have any relatives, while your mom’s relatives are unreliable. If your mom and I are no longer around, you and your sister will be the only ones left. If you encounter any difficulties, you only have your sister to help you. Nan Nan, you have to understand that one person alone cannot save the situation.”

Qiao Dongliang sighed, the elder daughter’s personality was indeed cold and self-centered, the typical honey-mouthed and stone-hearted person.

When he was reminded of how Qiao Zijin thought of him, Qiao Dongliang was angry, feeling wronged and furious.

But just like what Qiao Nan said, children are the debts owed by the parents in the previous life. Today, Qiao Zijin showed a little bit of concern for Qiao Dongliang, and his heart melted. He was willing to believe that Qiao Zijin was a good child.

“It is better to maintain your relationship with your sister from an early age rather than begging for her help when you are at your wit’s end. Nan Nan, Dad has suffered in this life. I do not want you to suffer as well.” When one had no relatives with them, especially when they encountered difficulties, one would be thrown into isolation, helplessness, and depression. It was sheer torture.

Qiao Nan looked up and glanced at Qiao Dongliang. “Dad, does it mean that both you and Mom feel that my sister will be better than me?”

Why was it that Qiao Nan would be the one who encountered difficulties and had to beg Qiao Zijin for help? Why wasn't it the other way round—that Qiao Zijin might not do well in life and need her support instead?

At least in the previous life, she never asked Qiao Zijin for a single cent no matter how hard it was.

“Dad, all of you say that now is the age of knowledge—that well-educated people will be successful. Dad, is my performance worse than my sister? How can my life be worse than hers? Even if we do not talk about results, I am down-to-earth and can persevere. Although I may not be wealthy, I am able-bodied. I can support myself!”

Did her father look down on her?

“The rich lead their rich life, while the poor lead their poor life. I am thrifty and frugal. I know to increase income as we decrease our expenditure. I also have plans for my life. In case of any problems, I can also find a way to solve them. Dad, don't blame me for being so blunt. When you were waiting for surgery at the hospital, why was my sister incapable of gathering the money needed for it?”

“This...” Qiao Dongliang had wanted to persuade Qiao Nan, but he was rendered speechless by Qiao Nan.

That was true. If Zijin was really capable, what had she done when the family encountered difficulties?

Qiao Dongliang looked back and thought carefully. From his hospitalization to discharge, Qiao Nan was the one who managed everything, be it at home or outside. Even an adult like Ding Jiayi could only run errands for Qiao Nan and followed her directions, not to mention Qiao Zijin who did not help with anything.

With this in mind, Qiao Zijin could not compare to Qiao Nan. Even Ding Jiayi could not match up to her as well.

Obviously, even if Qiao Nan was not rich in the future, she would be able to lead a good and simple life.

Nan Nan was capable, but why did he have the impression that Zijin instead of Nan Nan would be the one with the most promising future between the two daughters?

What was the reason?

Qiao Dongliang thought hard for a long time, but he could not come up with an answer to Qiao Nan's question. With a perplexed look on his face, he asked Qiao Nan, "Why do I always think that Zijin will have a brighter future than you? What's the reason?"

You're reading on V ipnovel.com Thanks!

Qiao Dongliang thought hard and finally realized what was wrong.

It was because of Ding Jiayi.

The words that Qiao Dongliang just said to Qiao Nan were what Ding Jiayi had been instilling in Qiao Dongliang for more than ten years. To put it bluntly, Qiao Dongliang was completely brainwashed by Ding Jiayi.

Ding Jiayi had always said that being bright at an early age did not necessarily bring success upon growing up.

Qiao Nan's current grades might be fantastic, but that was only for her elementary school and junior high school results. Things would get difficult when she started high school. Young ladies were not as smart as the boys. Qiao Nan's performance might be good now, but she would fall behind in the future.

Ding Jiayi had said that Qiao Nan was blockheaded and did not know how to interact with people. Nowadays in society, if one did not know to mix well with people, they would be at a disadvantage. It was useless if one only knew to work hard. They would be bullied, having no chance to be successful. They were destined to be bullied for their whole life.

Ding Jiayi also said that not only was Qiao Nan not good with her words and not as smart, she was also not as pretty as Qiao Zijin.

Chapter 195: You Were a Good Father

As a girl, Qiao Nan might be able to find a rich husband and lead a good life in the future if she was pretty.

However, Qiao Nan was not as pretty as Qiao Zijin. In the future, it would be good enough if she could find someone who would be true to her. Given her looks, it would be impossible for her to find a man who was rich enough to provide her with a good life.

It was amazing what a spouse could do. Ding Jiayi had brainwashed Qiao Dongliang for eighteen years. Qiao Dongliang no longer used his own judgment to decide whether Ding Jiayi's words were correct or wrong.

Now that Qiao Dongliang calmed down, he could finally make his own judgments.

Being bright at an early age did not necessarily bring success upon growing up. If that was the case, Zijin would not have any big achievements when she grew up.

Impossible...

Yes, Nan Nan might not be as good with words as Zijin, but Nan Nan was the industrious type. What was the use of being good with words? People could tell whether one was capable or not from their performance.

Speaking of looks...

Qiao Dongliang looked at Qiao Nan's face closely, and his heart became more and more depressed.

Qiao Dongliang used to be a soldier. As he was always out under the sun, his skin complexion was very dark. Naturally, Ding Jiayi looked fairer in comparison. Ding Jiayi often said that Qiao Zijin looked like her, having skin as fair as her. Apparently, Qiao Zijin had the same complexion as Ding Jiayi.

However, although Qiao Dongliang might have a dark complexion, the parts of the body that were not exposed to the sun were fair, a tone lighter than Ding Jiayi's.

In terms of skin complexion, Qiao Nan was like Qiao Dongliang, fairer than Qiao Zijin.

As the saying goes 'A fair complexion is good enough to cover one's faults'. Qiao Nan had an advantage over Qiao Zijin. Besides, Qiao Zijin had facial features like that of Ding Jiayi: a rather square face. Meanwhile, Qiao Nan looked like Qiao Dongliang. She had a defined chin, the most popular face shape in the 21st century.

Others might need to do plastic surgery, but Qiao Nan was born with it.

Qiao Zijin's face, while round and fleshy, was slightly square. On the other hand, her body shape was exactly the preference of the elders at the end of the 20th century. According to the elders, women with this type of body shape would have children easily.

But Qiao Dongliang was a man. He knew that as compared to how elders judged and decided who the best daughter-in-law was, men judged women based on different sets of standards.

Qiao Dongliang did not know which face shape was popular in the 21st century, but he knew that people with pretty-looking faces could make others happy regardless of what the popular face shape was at that time.

Qiao Nan's face was a typical example. Her face was the size of the palm. She had a defined chin, dewy jet-black eyes, a little cherry-shaped mouth, and a noble nose.

The more Qiao Dongliang looked at his own daughter, the more he felt that not only did she have extraordinary features but also beautiful. Her looks could rival those of superstars on TV.

Given all these attributes, Nan Nan had the good looks and the brains. She was nothing like what Ding Jiayi had said—that she would not have a promising future and would be worse than Zijin.

How did Ding Jiayi come to this conclusion? The strangest thing was how did he believe in this kind of nonsense for eighteen years? Why did he not realize his mistakes earlier?

In terms of Qiao Zijin's and Qiao Nan's abilities, Qiao Dongliang had the firsthand experience. Qiao Nan was more reliable than Qiao Zijin in all aspects.

If what Ding Jiayi said was true—that Qiao Nan would not do as well as Qiao Zijin in the future, and she might have to rely on Qiao Zijin to aid her financially—then why did Zhou Jun and his family not take a fancy to Qiao Zijin and insisted on telling Qiao Dongliang that Nan Nan was better when Ding Jiayi had wanted to introduce Qiao Zijin to Zhou Jun?

“Dad, what’s wrong with you?” Seeing that Qiao Dongliang was in a daze, Qiao Nan was worried that he might have been angered by her words and could not accept what she said.

“Nothing, I feel that I have been too muddleheaded in the past.” Qiao Dongliang smiled bitterly. He had been misled by Ding Jiayi.

Both of them were obviously his biological daughters, yet it took him such a long time to finally tell the differences between his daughters.

“Nan Nan, since you know what you are doing, I will not persuade you anymore. Zijin and you have a mind of your own. Both of you shall lead your own life in the future. Your mother and I cannot and are unable to intervene.” Qiao Dongliang shook his head.

“Dad, are you angry?”

“No.” Qiao Dongliang smiled reluctantly. “I just feel that I am too muddleheaded. Your sister was right to say that about me to your mom.”

“Dad, don’t take my sister’s words to heart. To me, you are definitely a good father. There are four people in our family. All this time, Dad has been the sole breadwinner. Our family has to depend on Dad to provide for us. Dad is also able to finance both of us through school, so how can Dad be useless? Before I was born, Dad used to be a soldier. A soldier is the most useful and wonderful person in the world. Dad, I am proud of you!”

The conversation between Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi had made Qiao Dongliang lost confidence in himself. After hearing what the younger daughter said, he felt slightly at ease and was no longer in low spirits. “Nan Nan, are you telling the truth? Do you really think that I am a good father?”

“Of course. I have the best dad in the world!”

Looking at Qiao Nan's sincere eyes, Qiao Dongliang was touched, but he felt bittersweet at the same time.

Qiao Dongliang had a guilty conscience. For the past eighteen years, he gave all his love and attention to the elder daughter, Qiao Zijin. He owed Qiao Nan an awful lot.

He doted and protected the elder daughter wholeheartedly, but she complained that he was useless and incompetent behind his back.

On the contrary, he did not give much love to his younger daughter, yet she told him steadfastly that he made her proud and that he was the best father in the world.

Qiao Dongliang had mixed emotions.

"Nan Nan, do you think that I am biased—that I side with your sister and did not treat you as well as I treat her?" Qiao Dongliang asked tentatively.

Nan Nan might see him as a good father, but did his foolish behavior in the past ruin their relationship?

"Yes, you are very biased." Qiao Nan frowned. "Dad, I am not asking that you acknowledge what I have done. When you are in the hospital, what have I done and what has my sister done for you? Today, just because my sister supported you while you took a stroll, you were delighted that she was being filial to you. Dad, it's no wonder Mom said that since I am not good with words, I will not be successful in the future. Is it true that all that I have done for you cannot be compared to the honeyed words sister said?"

Qiao Dongliang's face was stiff and his eyes flashed with remorse. "No, there will be no such thing in the future."

Although he had discharged from the army, how could he have forgotten about the army life? He had been corrupted by life and Ding Jiayi.

"Nan Nan, I know that I am biased, but am I still a good father in your heart?"

“Yes!” Compared with her mother, her father was definitely a good father. No matter how biased he was, he still knew his limits.

Chapter 196: Have a Discussion

“Good.” Qiao Dongliang’s nervous mood relaxed in an instant. “Nan Nan, you can rest assured. From today onward, Dad will really be a good father.”

Today, after being slapped in the face by Qiao Dongliang, Ding Jiayi finally stopped resorting to any tricks. She and Qiao Zijin cleaned up the room for Qiao Nan and went to cook right away. “Old Qiao, dinner is ready, shall we eat?”

As soon as he saw Ding Jiayi, Qiao Dongliang’s face turned cold. Turning his face to look at Qiao Nan, he kept his voice low and said with an affectionate tone in his voice, “Nan Nan, come over for dinner.”

Seeing the expression on Qiao Dongliang’s face, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin turned hostile in an instant.

Ding Jiayi was furious, while Qiao Zijin’s expression was somber.

She could not help but feel that she did not only fail to spend the three hundred yuan, but her father also ended up to be on Qiao Nan’s side. He seemed to dote on her even more! What exactly went wrong and caused Dad’s drastic change of attitude toward Qiao Nan?

“Old Qiao, what about Zijin’s tuition fees?” Sitting down, Ding Jiayi mustered the courage to ask Qiao Dongliang about Qiao Zijin’s tuition fees.

“Mom, there is still half a month before school starts. I will try to look for a job and earn as much as I can.” Qiao Zijin took a deep breath. “Nan Nan, you spent all of the summer vacation taking care of Dad, yet you managed to earn three hundred yuan, much higher than Dad’s salary. Nan Nan, can you recommend me to such a good job? If I can earn more, I can pay for my tuition fees and Dad’s medical expenses as well. Nan Nan, have you ever mentioned who did you borrow the money from to pay for Dad’s medical expenses?”

She was curious. Aside from Zhu Baoguo, Qiao Nan did not have any other friend. Who did she borrow the large sum of money that was close to two thousand yuan from? Also, how did she manage to earn three hundred yuan within a short summer vacation?

“Qiao Nan, you’d better not do anything shameless and disgraceful!” Ding Jiayi widened her eyes and started shooting her mouth off again.

“Are you looking for another slap in the face?” Qiao Dongliang had no wish to hit women, especially in front of the two daughters. But Ding Jiayi was really asking for it. She could not bear to see Qiao Nan do well. Qiao Dongliang was so angry that he almost picked up the chopsticks and threw them directly at Ding Jiayi’s face.

“No, no! I... I am concerned about Qiao Nan. Qiao Nan is young and insensible. You won’t want Qiao Nan to do disgraceful and shameless acts in order to make money. As her mother, I am teaching her the ways. I don’t want her to go the wrong way. I heard that nowadays, young girls can make money by...”

Ding Jiayi lowered her voice. She made excuses for herself, refusing to admit that she was wrong. She also spared no efforts to defame Qiao Nan.

“Mom, dig in, stop talking!” Qiao Zijin was scared at Qiao Dongliang’s darkened expression.

As for Ding Jiayi’s words, not to mention Qiao Dongliang, Qiao Zijin also thought that what her mother said was not something she should say in front of the children. Did her mother mean that Qiao Nan ‘sold’ herself for money?

Qiao Dongliang cast a cold glance at Ding Jiayi. “Ding Jiayi, you are getting from bad to worst. Be careful with your words in the future. My temper is not as good as before.”

Knowing that she had said the wrong words and only made matters worse by explaining, Ding Jiayi stuffed some food into her mouth and kept eating lest she provoked Qiao Dongliang again.

Whenever she talked about Qiao Nan, Ding Jiayi just had the tendency to defame her.

In addition, Ding Jiayi had been working for a while. She knew more people and heard more gossips. When women were in groups, they were bound to gossip. Ding Jiayi could not help but associate the gossips she heard with Qiao Nan.

“Nan Nan, have some vegetables.” After scolding Ding Jiayi, Qiao Dongliang gave Qiao Nan some vegetables, like a father taking care of his daughter.

“Dad, thank you.” Qiao Nan had her dinner, unaffected by her mother’s words. Qiao Zijin was perplexed. Did Qiao Nan not understand what her mother meant?

“Nan Nan, you haven’t answered my question. I want to lighten our parents’ burden as well. If you have a good way of earning money, let me know as well. We are one family. You will not refuse to help me, right?” Qiao Nan was not foolish. How could she possibly do the kind of things her mother said?

Qiao Nan definitely had some connections and was acquainted with some influential people. Hence, she landed herself a simple and high-paying job.

“Nan Nan, it is for the good of everyone that I want to work and use the shortest time to make the most money. Dad can’t work for the time being and Mom doesn’t earn much. If you and I don’t work hard, when can we pay off Dad’s medical expenses? I am the elder sister. I can’t be so selfish. I can’t make you bear the responsibility of earning the money by yourself, can I? He is my dad and he is Mom’s husband. Since you know of a good way to earn money, you must share with all of us.”

Qiao Nan finished her dinner in the speed of light.

She was worried that if she was to listen to more of what Qiao Zijin was going to say, she would have indigestion and lose her appetite.

Did Qiao Zijin finally remember that Qiao Dongliang was her father as well? Then, what had she been doing all along?

Her only motive was to know where Qiao Nan earned her money.

It was rare that Qiao Zijin could come up with a convincing argument and make some sense in what she said. However, she had wicked and evil motives.

In the previous life, Qiao Zijin put up a pretense that she was concerned about Qiao Nan to get Qiao Nan to tell her about Chen Jun’s family situation. In the end, Chen Jun was as what Qiao Nan said.

He could be a good husband, but he ended up as Qiao Zijin's husband instead of Qiao Nan's husband.

"You want to take on the job that I am doing? Okay." Qiao Nan took out a piece of paper in English and placed it in front of Qiao Zijin. "If you can translate this document from English to Chinese, I will share the job with you when there is another opportunity. Of course, if you have the ability, you can be fully responsible for it, and you can have all the money."

As soon as Qiao Zijin saw the piece of document that was in English, she blanked out and could not understand a word. "Was that how you earned the three hundred yuan?"

Among the many subjects that she had to study, she hated science the most, followed by English. It was too difficult to memorize all the grammar and vocabulary.

Qiao Zijin never did well for her English. It was good enough that she could score an average grade for her English. It was sheer torture to have her do English to Chinese translation.

Qiao Zijin wanted to make money, but she was incapable of doing that.

"Nan Nan, are you lying? This document is in English. I can't do it, but can you do it?"

"There is someone who teaches me." Brother Zhai would teach her whenever she stumbled upon areas that she did not understand.

"Someone taught you?" Qiao Zijin's eyes sparkled. "Nan Nan, I will not ask that you tell me who teaches you. But can we discuss this job of yours?" She thought of an easy way to make money from this job!

Chapter 197: Split in Half

Since she had finished dinner, Qiao Nan crossed her arms and looked at Qiao Zijin with a look of indifference in her eyes. "What kind of discussion?"

“I remember Dad said that your English is very good. If you don’t have the ability to do it, it will be very difficult even if someone teaches you. Why don’t we do it this way? I will do the translation. You can help check through and edit those that are translated wrongly or parts that I have trouble translating. We will split the money in half. What do you think?”

Ding Jiayi twitched her mouth as if she wanted to say something. She was very dissatisfied with what Qiao Zijin said.

Since the document was translated by Zijin, and Qiao Nan only helped make some changes, Zijin should have all of the pay. Why did Qiao Nan have the cheek to take half of the money?

But today Ding Jiayi had been ‘disciplined’ by Qiao Dongliang. When she was reminded that Qiao Dongliang had said that he wanted a divorce, Ding Jiayi kept a check on herself and did not say another word.

Qiao Nan knew what was going through Ding Jiayi’s mind, but she paid no attention to her. What mattered to her was Qiao Dongliang’s reaction. She turned to look at him.

Qiao Nan saw that Qiao Dongliang looked calm and did not seem to have any thoughts about this matter. She breathed a sigh of relief. Did it mean that whatever she had said to her father previously was useful, and that he would not side with Zijin anymore?

If it was in the past, her father would have agreed on her behalf and asked her to help and get along with Qiao Zijin.

After all, Qiao Zijin wanted to ‘improve’ and ‘make progress’.

“Nan Nan, what do you think?” Qiao Zijin looked at Qiao Nan smilingly. Her tone was soft and gentle like the spring rain. It was comforting, but to Qiao Nan, she could feel the chill hidden in the spring rain.

“No.” Qiao Nan drank some water. “It’s not that I look down on you, it’s just that you are not able to do it.”

Qiao Zijin hated English to the core. The reason why Qiao Nan took out the document was that she wanted Qiao Zijin to back out of a difficult situation. She never knew that Qiao Zijin would be so shameless.

If she was really only sixteen years old, she might not understand Qiao Zijin's schemes. But she was almost 'forty-six years old', so how could she not see through the traps that Qiao Zijin set?

"Why can't I do it? Nan Nan, you can't look down on people!" Qiao Zijin was not convinced. It was not that she was incapable. It was that Qiao Nan refused to help her. She did not want her to earn the money. Qiao Nan did not want her father to know that Qiao Zijin was capable and was as good as Qiao Nan!

To put it bluntly, Qiao Nan could not stand that Qiao Zijin was better and more capable than her!

Qiao Nan kept her cool. She passed a pen to Qiao Zijin calmly. "Since you say that you can do it, try to translate the documents right now."

Qiao Zijin ground her teeth. Was Qiao Nan doing this on purpose?

"Give me a minute. Let me get an English dictionary." She did not believe that she was not as good as Qiao Nan.

"Okay, the whole family is waiting for you." Qiao Dongliang drank his tea. He wanted to know whether Qiao Zijin had really become sensible and learned the right way.

"Zijin, don't worry, we have the time. Take your time to translate. Since it's not an exam, there is no time limit." Ding Jiayi dared not scold Qiao Nan, so she could only encourage and cheer for Qiao Zijin.

"Mom, I know." Qiao Zijin sighed. Her mother was right. This was not an exam, and there was no time limit. She could do it slowly. No matter what, she had to do her best now so that she could share half of Qiao Nan's earnings rightfully.

Qiao Zijin had never been so serious and concentrated on a task before. She flipped the dictionary and wrote down what she found.

Qiao Zijin sat still working on the translation for an entire hour. Her eyes were either staring at the dictionary or the documents. She repeated the same actions for an entire hour.

“Sister, it is eight o’clock now. Okay, you don’t have to translate everything. You can stop translating. Let me take a look.” Qiao Nan yawned and took the documents from Qiao Zijin calmly.

“Oh...” Qiao Zijin turned green, watching helplessly as Qiao Nan took the document back. She did not even have the chance to grab it from her.

Qiao Zijin might have worked at it for an entire hour and wrote down a lot of words, but she did not translate much.

Qiao Nan took out a red pen quietly and started to edit the translation that Qiao Zijin tried hard to finish.

Qiao Nan crossed out a short sentence and wrote the correct translation by the side. Then, she drew a large cross on a long paragraph and did not bother to provide the correct translation.

In the end, Qiao Nan had no choice but to draw circles on the documents.

Qiao Zijin took more than an hour to translate, while Qiao Nan used less than three minutes to read through. “Sister, take a look for yourself. Aside from those that I marked in circles, the rest are wrong. There isn’t a single sentence that was translated accurately. Tell me, are you able to do this job? You say that you will translate, I will help you correct the mistakes, and we will split the money? Sister, are you sure that after you are done with your translation, I only need to make minor changes? Or do I have to redo it again?”

Though Qiao Zijin was very serious and careful, she did not get a single sentence correct. How could she take up the translation work?

Most importantly, Qiao Nan knew that in order to secure the translation job in front of the whole family, Qiao Zijin gave her full attention to translating and worked at it for more than an hour. But when Qiao Zijin landed the job, her attitude would be completely different.

By that time, Qiao Zijin might not even look through the dictionary. She would just grab any book and copy some sentences from the book before handing the translation back to her.

Qiao Zijin never intended to work to earn money. What she had in mind was a way for her to get the money without working!

In the end, the translation would be done by Qiao Nan alone, and yet she had to give half of the money to Qiao Zijin!

Ding Jiayi did not believe in Qiao Nan's words. She took the documents and saw that it was full of crosses. Only a few areas were circled. "Are you sure that you have not made a mistake? Your sister did not even get a single sentence correct?"

How was it possible? Zijin was one level higher than Qiao Nan. It was impossible that Qiao Nan could translate while she could not. Furthermore, she had done badly for her translations. "Qiao Nan, you can tell your sister the correct translations, and she will write them down. This way, the job is done by both of you. Qiao Nan, yours is a simpler job since you only need to tell Qiao Zijin the translations. The money can be split between both of you."

"Mom, do you think that one just needs to talk to do a translation? The most important thing is to use one's brains. I do not need Sister's help to write these words down. I can do it myself." Qiao Nan refused immediately.

"You... why are you so stubborn? You do not consider your sister's feelings. You should help your sister. In the future, your sister will also help you when you need help."

Chapter 198: Clothes Were Stolen

Ding Jiayi was furious, but she dared not speak up. She could only suppress her frustration and speak nicely to Qiao Nan.

Qiao Dongliang put down the cup, his expression serious. "Zijin, do you think what your mother said is appropriate?"

"..." Qiao Zijin pursed her lips and was extremely reluctant to answer this question.

"Since you don't say anything, it means that you agree that it is not appropriate as well. Okay, then we shall not have any more discussion about this." Qiao Dongliang stood up with difficulty. "Nan Nan, help me back to the room. All of you can go to bed earlier."

“Okay, Dad.” Qiao Nan helped Qiao Dongliang stand and supported him back to the room.

When Qiao Dongliang sat down on the bed, he sighed. “Nan Nan, Dad has lived all these years for nothing. It seems that you are a better person than Dad. Your attitude toward your sister is better than that of Dad. In the future, you will do as you deem fit. I believe you can handle it well.”

Qiao Nan nodded. “Dad, you can rest assured. I know what to do.”

“Nan Nan...” Qiao Nan had just come out of Qiao Dongliang’s room, and she was blocked by Qiao Zijin. “Nan Nan, I didn’t give it my best shot today. Can you give me another chance?”

Qiao Nan leaned on the doorframe. She knew that Qiao Zijin would not give up so easily. At the mention of money, Qiao Zijin’s obstinacy was unrivaled. “You really want to take up this job and give it another try?”

“Yes!” No matter what, she had to get the job first. Afterward, she would come up with ways to get the money without working.

Qiao Nan sneered. “Alright, but let me tell you beforehand. It is impossible for me to edit and make changes to your translation. I will tell the boss about our family’s situation. I will give you part of my workload. You will be paid based on how much you translate. Of course, I do not have the final say as to whether your translation is up to standard. The boss will have the final say. After all, the boss is the one who pays us, not me.”

Qiao Zijin’s face turned green. If she did according to what Qiao Nan said, given her standard, she could not get a single cent at all. The most important thing was that if she really wanted to do this, she had to work on the translation conscientiously.

As soon as she thought of how she worked on the translation for more than an hour and still could not come up with a decent translation, Zijin lost all interest in the job.

“Forget it. It is too much trouble. If you really say this to your boss, your boss may misunderstand you. If you lose your job as a result, it will be my fault. Okay, you can continue with the translation. As for my tuition fees, I will find another way.”

Since she did not get what she wanted, Qiao Zijin could not be bothered to waste her time on Qiao Nan. She walked away without another word.

As soon as Qiao Zijin returned to the room, Ding Jiayi, who had been waiting for her, stepped forward and asked, "How is it? Did Qiao Nan, that wretched girl, agree to it?"

"Fat chance. Qiao Nan is as sneaky as a thief. She seems to know what I want to do and is thus on her guards." If not for the fact that Qiao Nan asked her to translate the document on the spot in front of the whole family, and she made a fool of herself, she would be able to make sure that Qiao Nan gave her half of the salary.

Ding Jiayi shot disdainful looks. "I have already said that Qiao Nan has no conscience. If I knew that she would be so heartless, I should have thrown her away when I gave birth to her. Raising her was a waste of money. That wretched girl is so ruthless. We are one family, yet she does not want to lend you a helping hand. Zijin, you have to bear this in mind. When you become successful in the future, you must not help her if she comes to you for help."

"I will definitely not help her. Since she doesn't treat me as her biological elder sister, why should I treat her as my biological younger sister?" Qiao Zijin was frustrated. Till now, she still could not understand how Qiao Nan knew what was on her mind. How did she know that she intended to use that method to take advantage of Qiao Nan?

"But Mom, what about my tuition fees?"

"There's no other way. Even if you go out to find a job now, you can't find a job within half a month. Let's do it this way. I will take some handiwork back to do. You will do them during the day, and when I am back from work at night, I will do it with you." Ding Jiayi could only think of this method.

"Do we really need to do handiwork? It's tiring and we can't make much money from that. Mom, is there any other work?" Qiao Zijin did not want to stay through the night and work on the handmade products every single day.

Ding Jiayi let out a long sigh. "I will definitely recommend you to jobs that are easy and pay well if there is any. Forget it. Bear with it for the time being. When you grow up, get yourself a good husband and you will have a good life. In this life, I am stuck with your dad. Unless you marry someone rich, I will have to endure my miserable life."

With that, Ding Jiayi touched the left side of her face which was swollen and felt a throbbing pain.

“Mom, it’s getting late. You should boil an egg and rub it on your face to reduce the swelling. After that, you should hurry to sleep.”

“Oh, have an early rest as well. I will bring the materials back tomorrow.” Ding Jiayi was still hurt from the harsh words Qiao Dongliang said today, but she felt comforted by her elder daughter’s concerned words.

There were not many eggs left in the Qiao’s family, and each was precious.

After rubbing the freshly boiled egg on her face, Ding Jiayi placed it back into the bowl of warm water, saving it for Qiao Zijin tomorrow.

The evening next day, Ding Jiayi took a bunch of handiwork materials home. “Zijin, you have to do it well. If the material is spoiled, we have to compensate.”

Upon hearing this, Qiao Zijin pulled a long face, displeased.

“Okay, don’t pull a long face. Now that we don’t have any skill, it is not easy to make a living. If we are like Qiao Nan who is good in English, we can stay at home all day and earn three hundred yuan easily.” Ding Jiayi patted Qiao Zijin on the shoulder. “Be good and do the handiwork. I have something for you.”

“What is it?”

“Have you forgotten that I have spent fifty yuan of Qiao Nan’s money?”

Ding Jiayi, who was in high spirits yesterday, bought two dresses for Qiao Zijin. She panicked when she came home to see the police at her house. On top of that, after a big fight with Qiao Dongliang and being slapped by him, Ding Jiayi had forgotten all about the dresses that she bought for Qiao Zijin.

It was only when she was at work today, sitting in the factory, did Ding Jiayi remember that she had bought the dresses. She could use them to make Qiao Zijin happy.

“New clothes!” Sure enough, as soon as Qiao Zijin heard that there were new clothes, she broke into a smile immediately.

“Give me a minute, I will bring it over.” As long as Qiao Zijin was happy, Ding Jiayi was happy as well. She rushed to get the plastic bag in which she kept the clothes. “Hey, I remembered that I put the clothes here yesterday. Where are the clothes?”

Qiao Zijin’s smile vanished. “Mom, are you sure you put the new clothes here? Maybe it was too messy yesterday and someone took the new clothes you bought for me?”

Qiao Zijin acted like a thief, so she treated everyone as thieves as well and made harsh comments.

Chapter 199: My Turn to Call the Police

“No, there are no such people in our quad.” Ding Jiayi shook her head. “Look carefully again. It may be somewhere here.”

“Well, hurry and look for it.” These two new clothes were supposed to motivate Qiao Zijin to work hard for the next few days.

However, despite having searched high and low in the house and covered in dust, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin could not find the bags in which they put the clothes that were bought yesterday. “No, no, it cannot be. Did someone take it away?” Ding Jiayi could not help but wonder since she still could not find the new clothes after searching for a long time.

Initially, Ding Jiayi was furious that she had to surrender the rights to family funds and had to fork out fifty yuan from her salary to make it up to Qiao Nan. But at the thought that she had spent fifty yuan in advance to buy new clothes for Qiao Zijin, she felt slightly comforted.

As for Qiao Zijin’s tuition fees, she would come up with ways to get the money.

That said, they could settle the problem of the tuition fees somehow, and Qiao Zijin could have two pieces of new clothes for her new school term. Everything was going smoothly for the start of a new semester. But now that the new clothes could not be found, everything became imperfect.

Who would be so daring as to steal things from the Qiao’s residence? Did they have no regard to the police?!

Ding Jiayi was so angry that she wanted to call the police. Just then, Qiao Nan came back home.

Initially, Ding Jiayi did not pay attention to Qiao Nan. The sight of Qiao Nan irritated her eyes. Therefore, she turned away after one glance. But in the next instant, her gaze returned to Qiao Nan again. “Where did you get the new dress you are wearing from? I bought it for your sister! You... you take it off right now! Where is the other piece?!”

The new dress Qiao Nan wore today was exactly the same as the one that Ding Jiayi bought for Qiao Zijin, the one that she could not find anywhere at home.

“A thief cries ‘thief’. Yesterday, you called the police. It is my turn to call the police today. You are so young, yet you picked up bad habits, becoming a thief and stealing your sister’s belongings. Now that your dad is not at home, I will make sure you pay for your mistakes!”

“Who said that I am not at home?” Qiao Dongliang came back just in time. He had a stern look on his face. His eyes narrowed, looking at Ding Jiayi’s raised hand.

Ding Jiayi trembled at Qiao Dongliang’s piercing icy stare. Ding Jiayi lowered her hand instantly. “Old Qiao, you cannot blame me for what happened today. You really have to lecture Qiao Nan. She stole the dresses I bought for Zijin. You are a soldier, so you should know the saying ‘he who steals a pin will steal an ox’. You always praise Qiao Nan for being well-behaved, but she is not well-behaved at all. She has learned to be a thief!”

“Mom, what are you talking about? Nan Nan did not do it on purpose. She must have thought that the clothes are beautiful and wanted to try them on. I don’t blame Nan Nan.” Qiao Zijin sneered in her heart. Qiao Nan also hankered after her clothes, yet she acted as if she was above material pursuits. Today, she had given herself away. “Nan Nan, please return the dress to me if you are done wearing it. There is another new piece of dress. Do return it to me as well.”

Now that Qiao Nan was caught stealing her clothes, she did not believe her father would still think that Qiao Nan was a good daughter and side with Qiao Nan.

Qiao Dongliang smiled. “Ding Jiayi, you stole three hundred yuan from Nan Nan, but you insisted that you merely took it from her. Why is Nan Nan labeled as a thief just because she wears a new dress? Nan Nan did not take the dress. I give it to Nan Nan, and it has nothing to do with Nan Nan.”

Of course, he knew that these two pieces of new clothes must have been bought by Ding Jiayi for Qiao Zijin. They were bought with the money that Qiao Nan earned!

“...”

“...”

Qiao Dongliang's words made Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin dumbfounded, especially Qiao Zijin whose face turned green and couldn't speak at all.

In the Qiao family, Qiao Nan's belongings were Qiao Zijin's, while Qiao Zijin's belongings were hers only. Whoever had the same surname as her, their belongings were all hers. It had always been this way. Qiao Nan's belongings were thus naturally hers. No matter what happened, Qiao Nan could never claim ownership for Qiao Zijin's belongings.

But this time, the new clothes that Qiao Zijin took great lengths to get ended up being Qiao Nan's. Qiao Zijin was so angry that she almost fainted.

Ding Jiayi grew agitated as well. “Old Qiao, I bought them for Zijin! Why did you give it to Qiao Nan?!”

“Because it was paid using Nan Nan's money.”

“Yes, that may be the case at the beginning, but then you took my money and gave it to her to make up for what I took from her. In that case, it could be considered that I bought Zijin the clothes with my own money. What right do you have to give Qiao Nan the clothes I bought for Zijin?!” Ding Jiayi was the one who had this kind of unreasonable and arrogant behavior, but why did Old Qiao act like this today?

“You may have earned the money but are they yours? Don't forget that I am in charge of our family's household funds now. Since I say that this dress is Nan Nan's, it belongs to Nan Nan.”

“Old Qiao, why are you so unreasonable?”

“Unreasonable? I learned it from you. When you spent five thousand yuan that I earned so that Zijin could study at The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, did I lament to you about it? If you intend to argue with me about whom the money and clothes should belong to, fine. As

long as you return the five thousand yuan I earned, I will buy you dresses that are identical to those you bought. If you are unable to do that, keep quiet then!”

Qiao Dongliang had seen the two new dresses yesterday and boiled with anger for the whole night.

He barely survived the accident, and his family owed a lot of debts.

As the mistress of this family, Ding Jiayi did not come up with ways to make more money and reduce her expenses so as to clear their debts as soon as possible. Instead, she had the audacity to steal from her younger daughter and squander away the money on new dresses. At the thought of this, Qiao Dongliang had a terrible heartache.

When he woke up this morning, he gave the clothes to Qiao Nan to wear.

It was already so tensed up at home, yet Ding Jiayi had the time and mood to spend money to dress up Qiao Zijin. Qiao Dongliang could do the same.

Nan Nan was young and pretty. She was at the age to dress up. Whatever Zijin had, Nan Nan should have as well.

With this thought in mind, Qiao Dongliang decided not to return the dresses and not to ask for a refund. He removed the label and gave the dresses to Qiao Nan instead.

“Dad, the fabric of this dress is of good quality. It is very comfortable.” Qiao Nan acted just like a child, flaunting the dress and telling her father how good the dress was.

In this era where ten yuan was sufficient to cover one week of expenses for a family of four, her mother was willing to spend fifty yuan to buy two pieces of clothing for Qiao Zijin. The quality of the dresses that were bought using a family’s half-month living expenses had to be good and comfortable.

“It’s good that it is comfortable. If you like it, I will buy them for you next time. You can pick them by yourself.” Qiao Dongliang used to be cold and stern when Ding Jiayi was around. However, in front of Qiao Nan, he was smiling from ear to ear, his tone gentle and soothing.

Qiao Nan shook her head out of genuine concern for the family's situation. "No, these two pieces of dresses are more than enough. I can wear them for two years."

Qiao Dongliang paused momentarily and then smiled. "Nan Nan is right. Given our situation now, we should not be so wasteful. You will have to go to college in the future, and we need to pay off the debts. We have many other expenses."

Chapter 200: Self-Reflection

Nan Nan was obviously more sensible than Zijin. Whenever Zijin received new clothes, she would think of the type of new clothes to buy next. On the other hand, Nan Nan always spared a thought for the family.

To think that he used to consider Zijin more filial than Nan Nan, he wondered if any of the nerves in his brain had gone hay-wired back then.

Qiao Dongliang was fatherly and Qiao Na was filial. Qiao Zijin's face turned black at the sight of this. It was as if the caring and sensible Qiao Nan was the only good daughter in the world, whereas she was the bad one. She felt that she had underestimated Qiao Nan all this while. Qiao Nan was better than her at currying favor and being goody-two-shoes.

She did not believe that Qiao Nan did it for the sake of the family when she refused to buy any more new clothes. If Qiao Nan did not bother, then why must she yield the two new dresses to her!

No matter how angry Qiao Zijin felt, she could only endure it at this moment.

In her bad mood, Qiao Zijin used too much strength and damaged some of the handiwork materials. Ding Jiayi's heart ached at the sight of it. "Zijin, be more careful. Don't use too much strength. We have to pay for damaged materials."

The ten handiworks made by Zijin were not even enough to pay for one set of materials.

If Zijin continued to damage the items, she would be doing this work for nothing.

“!” Qiao Zijin glared as she stomached the anger. She wished that she could immediately throw away all the handiwork materials in her hands and stop working at once. However, at the thought of school reopening in no time, she dared not throw a fit. Although she was unhappy, she could only continue with the work abidingly.

It was only when Qiao Zijin made an effort to complete the handiwork did she realize how hard it had been on her mother last year when the latter worked until one or two o'clock in the wee hours every day to save up her tuition fees.

Four hours later, around ten o'clock at night, Qiao Zijin finally completed a few pieces of handiwork. Her waist felt so stiff that she could hardly straighten it, and her eyes were so dry that they were tearing.

Qiao Zijin, who had been pampered for eighteen years, could not endure the hard work. It was only half a day and she could barely tolerate it. “Mom, when I am older and step into society, I must find ways and means to earn a lot of money. Even if I can't, I'll find a husband that's able to do so!”

“It's not that easy.” Ding Jiayi sighed. “Furthermore, you don't intend to study in college, right? Look at Qiao Nan. Her studies are good. Although she's only a student, she's able to earn money so easily now. When you graduate from high school, you'll be considered lucky if you can find a stable job. Earning big bucks will be difficult.”

Qiao Zijin gritted her teeth. “Since it's not good to be a high school graduate, I'll be a college graduate, then. Mom, I have decided. I will continue with my studies. You're right. Isn't Dad so good to Qiao Nan because her grades are better than mine? I don't believe I can't surpass Qiao Nan in her studies if I study hard!”

In the past, she did not put any effort into her studies as she felt that the purpose of education was just to 'package' herself.

Nevertheless, if knowledge could change her future, there was no reason that she should not work hard for her own future.

“...” Seeing that Qiao Zijin was full of confidence, Ding Jiayi said after some thoughts, “Zijin, actually, you're better than Qiao Zijin in many other ways. Learning requires a lot of efforts, so don't be too hard on yourself.”

“Mom, what do you mean?” Qiao Zijin, who was already burning with anger, almost exploded when she heard Ding Jiayi’s words.

Was her mother saying that she was making things difficult for herself by studying hard and competing with Qiao Nan’s grades?

Did her mother also feel that Qiao Nan was smarter than her, and her grades would definitely not surpass that of Qiao Nan?

After hearing Qiao Zijin’s angry response, Ding Jiayi felt unappreciated. She did not want Zijin to work so hard and achieve nothing in return. “Forget it, do as you wish. Mom is glad that you’re willing to study hard. In Mom’s heart, you’re always the best child in the world.”

“Wait and see. I will prove to all of you that I’m not worse than Qiao Nan. I’m more outstanding than her!”

That night, Qiao Zijin continued working until midnight before stopping and going to bed.

The next morning, it was already eight o’clock when she woke up. “Dad, Mom has gone to work. Is Nan Nan also not at home?” At this moment, there were only Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Zijin at home.

“Yes, Nan Nan went out to read books.” Qiao Dongliang replied and continued to work on his accounts.

Qiao Dongliang was quite good in Mathematics. He occasionally helped the factory’s accountant when the latter was overwhelmed during the busy periods of account-closing.

This month was the account-closing period for the first half of the year. Although the accountant was not overwhelmed with work this time, he fell sick. Shortly after Qiao Dongliang was discharged from the hospital, the accountant was admitted.

When the factory manager knew about the situation, he simply asked his man to send the accounts to the Qiao family’s residence for Qiao Dongliang to work on. He considered this as an extra job and would pay Qiao Dongliang additional income.

Qiao Dongliang was a grown-up man and could not possibly stay at home all day. If he did so, there would only be expenses and no income. Thus, he had no reason to decline this opportunity and started working as soon as he received it.

After Qiao Zijin brushed her teeth and washed her face, she scooped a bowl of porridge, sat down, and drank it. As she looked down, there was a gleam of cunningness in her eyes. She pretended to ask casually, “Dad, it’s almost been a year. Do you know where Nan Nan has been reading her books?”

“Not sure.” Qiao Dongliang did not even look up.

“Oh.” So, Qiao Nan even kept it from her father. She did not tell him where she had been studying all this while. Did she also keep all her books and money there?

Qiao Zijin knew that after such a din happened, Qiao Nan would guard against her mother and her even more.

For almost a year, she did not know how Qiao Nan managed to do it. She did not bring home more than two books. She must have also put away the three hundred yuan in the same place. If she could find out where this place was...

She was curious as to what kind of place would let Qiao Nan feel so assured of keeping all her important items there.

Qiao Zijin fell silent. Qiao Dongliang then lifted his head and looked at Qiao Zijin. “Why?”

“Nothing. Putting aside the days that we’re studying, I just feel that Nan Nan and I don’t have much time to bond with each other since she’s not at home most of the days even though it’s the vacation. I know I have a bad temper and can be annoying at times. I wish to change too, really. But I never had a chance to have a good heart-to-heart talk with Nan Nan. Sometimes, even if I want to change, I don’t know where to start. Dad, can you help me?”

Wouldn’t her father be glad to see her relationship with Qiao Nan improve—that the two sisters would be close to each other?

She felt that her father should be quite happy to hear that.

Unexpectedly, Qiao Dongliang did not appear too enthusiastic. He pursed his lips. “This is a matter between the two of you. I can’t interfere. If you really feel that you have not done well in certain areas, you should reflect on yourself. In fact, you don’t need to ask Nan Nan.”