

RTAMM 1991

Chapter 1991: Involvement

Upon learning of the reason for Qiao Dongliang's fall, the doctor could only say that the patient's family did not take care of the elderly well. Not only had he taken a bad fall, but it was so severe that he had even been injured a second time!

"Thank you, doctor." Qiao Nan was not at all surprised that Qiao Dongliang was fine. In her dream, Qiao Dongliang had been even more severely injured and had been hospitalized. Then, he had recovered all the same.

"No worries." With that, the doctor left.

Qiao Nan pushed Qiao Dongliang into the ward with Zhai Sheng by her side. Perhaps, the hospital was not as busy these few days. As such, Qiao Dongliang was the only person in his ward. After the nurse took her leave, the only ones left in the ward apart from the Qiao family was Zhai Sheng.

Qiao Dongliang had not awoken and the four people who were awake dared not take the initiative to speak, making the atmosphere extremely awkward.

Qiao Zijin wrapped her arms around her waist, poking Ding Jiayi, asking her to take the first step. Ding Jiayi's expression was stiff. If Zhai Sheng was not around, she would have scolded Qiao Nan to death a long time ago, so much so that Qiao Nan would not even have the guts to lift her head. But because Zhai Sheng was around, Ding Jiayi had no idea what she should say.

Qiao Nan had been away from home for a long time, yet Ding Jiayi could not bring herself to express concern toward Qiao Nan. On the other hand, Ding Jiayi felt as though Zhai Sheng would beat her up if she were to scold Qiao Nan in front of him.

Apart from throwing airs around Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan, Ding Jiayi was not of much use at other times. Zhai Sheng had a different air to him, and people with ill intentions like Ding Jiayi shivered in fear at the sight of him.

But she could not keep silent forever. Qiao Zijin was hurrying and urging her to say something. If she remained silent any longer, Qiao Nan might just take her leave. She thought about how Qiao Dongliang would incur even more expenses after being discharged since he would need to

recuperate at home. In short, Zijin was right. Old Qiao was not Zijin's father alone. Qiao Nan was her and Old Qiao's daughter too.

Qiao Nan had to take up the responsibility and fork out some money now that Old Qiao had gotten into such a situation and needed money for his rehabilitation. Zijin was divorced and had not found a job yet. There was no way Zijin would be able to bear this responsibility of taking care of Old Qiao on her own.

After clearing her throat, Ding Jiayi looked guiltily at Zhai Sheng before saying, "Qiao Nan, your dad was injured so badly this time. We'll have to spend quite a bit of money on nourishment and medications for him. What do you think we should do?"

Qiao Nan was not afraid of letting Zhai Sheng gain a clearer understanding of her family's situation. Dirty linen should not be aired in public? Just a few months ago, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin had been in the headlines on a daily basis. What else was there that outsiders did not know about their family? "Dad may not be awake now, but amongst the three of us, you're the most senior here. Apart from you, Zijin is older than me too. I think it's funny. I didn't even question you about how my dad got injured in case I embarrass you, yet you're trying to make me take responsibility for this?"

Did Ding Jiayi think that she would try to keep up appearances and be a good person in front of Brother Zhai? Did Ding Jiayi think that she would happily take on all responsibility to prove to Brother Zhai that she was a good daughter and sister?

That was exactly what Ding Jiayi was thinking. Since Ding Jiayi felt this way, she thought that Qiao Nan would think in the same way too. It would be even weirder if Qiao Nan was willing to expose all of the Qiao family's dirty laundry out in public.

Divorce was still possible after marriage, and Qiao Nan had not even gotten married to Zhai Sheng yet. Zhai Sheng could change his mind at any time and decide not to marry her.

Qiao Nan's uncooperativeness angered Ding Jiayi. If not for Zhai Sheng, Ding Jiayi would have gone much further than simply staring at Qiao Nan. She would have been lambasting Qiao Nan while raining blows on her. "There's no choice. You are clear about our family's situation. Amongst the four of us, you're the most capable and the one with the most money. Who am I supposed to look for now that your dad has been hospitalized if not you?"

"Why don't you look for that amazing daughter of yours who graduated from university?" Qiao Nan sneered. "Haven't you been saying that all these years? Haven't you always said that Qiao

Zijin is more capable than me and that you'll never be able to depend on me? Only she will be able to give you and Dad a good life and support you in your old age. Both you and Dad are in your sixties and she's already forty-two. If she doesn't let you enjoy your lives now, when will you get the chance to do so? I'm nothing but a useless wretched girl. It's good enough that I haven't become a burden to you. Are you trying to mock me by saying that I am better than her and more capable than her?"

Ding Jiayi had nagged at her with these very words for over two decades, ever since Qiao Nan left school and Qiao Zijin started high school. Even if Qiao Nan was not trying to remember those words, she could spit them out backward in order.

Upon hearing Ding Jiayi say that she was the most capable and earned the most in the family, Qiao Nan had no other reaction than to laugh. It was true. She was only useful when the family needed some money to spend. "Don't get angry. Think about how you guys treated me. Yes, you guys are still my parents, so I won't shirk any responsibility I ought to take on. Qiao Zijin might be divorced but I'm not married yet, so our situations are pretty much similar. Once I get married, I'll have my own private life as well. Besides, I've already forked out fifty thousand for Dad's hospitalization bills. As for all those expenses that you talked about, it's easy. I'll split it equally with Qiao Zijin."

From the day that she secretly left the hospital and started her new life afresh, the Qiao family should have known that she was no longer the same Qiao Nan whom they could easily boss around.

She would fulfill her duty as a daughter, but Qiao Zijin should never think of shirking that responsibility either.

"You..." Qiao Nan no longer treated her words as an imperial edict and dared to go over her head! She even treated herself as the boss by telling them what to do! Ding Jiayi felt that Qiao Nan was challenging her. Ding Jiayi had had enough. "No, you... You're so heartless. Don't you know that your sister's divorced? She might have some money on hand but she still has a long life ahead of her. You can't possibly expect her to use up all her money now, right? What will she do in the future then? Will you take care of her if she spends all her money now?"

That would be fine if that was truly the case.

"Do you mean that she's the only one with half a life ahead of her? Do you think I'm a god who can live on air and water alone?"

Chapter 1992: Money Is More Important Than Life

“I don’t think Qiao Zijin treated me very well when she was living comfortably in the past either. At that time, we lived our own lives. Since we weren’t capable, it was better not to drag someone else down. Wasn’t that what you said? Alright, take it as though I never said anything.”

Qiao Nan suddenly stopped herself. She had only let it out because she had not been able to hold it in at that moment. Trying to reason with Ding Jiayi was simply a waste of her breath and effort. “In short, I will split all of my dad’s expenses with Qiao Zijin. Qiao Zijin is a university graduate while I had to start working before graduating from middle school. As compared to Qiao Zijin, you guys definitely spent less time and money on me. I don’t even want to talk about who was supporting the other in the end.”

Qiao Nan was not sure if Qiao Dongliang was awake but she could not stand staying any longer. “Let’s leave, Brother Zhai.” It was always like that. It was always her responsibility alone whenever something happened to someone in the Qiao family and needed to pay for the hospital bills. It seemed as though Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were strangers.

She was nothing more than a human ATM for the Qiao family.

“Alright.” Zhai Sheng had been standing by Qiao Nan’s side silently, giving her moral support. Now that Qiao Nan expressed her intention to leave, Zhai Sheng took Qiao Nan’s hand in his, feeling Qiao Nan’s temperature with his palm, giving her some support before leaving that stifling room. “Dad and Mom are still waiting for us at home. Jiajia’s been asking to get a wedding photo taken with us. If we don’t do it now, we might not get it in time for the wedding.”

Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng, who were about to get married, were busy with the wedding preparation even though Miao Jing and Zhai Hua had taken care of most of it. Taking wedding photos was something that only the two of them could do themselves.

If not for Qiao Dongliang being hospitalized and Qiao Nan insisting on going down to the hospital to pay for Qiao Dongliang’s bills, Zhai Sheng would never have agreed to let her show up at the hospital. Zhai Sheng felt that Qiao Dongliang was Qiao Nan’s father, after all, and that they should never try to shirk any responsibility that they should bear.

Since Qiao Dongliang had been injured at home, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin had to take responsibility for that. As such, they should be the ones handling this matter. But Qiao Nan shook her head in disagreement. “Brother Zhai, do you really not understand my mom’s and Qiao Zijin’s temper? My mom still has feelings for my dad. If she has any money, she would definitely hand it over to my dad. As for Qiao Zijin... She’s been spoiled by my mom and she isn’t very normal. Besides herself, she has no one else in her head.”

If Qiao Zijin was not such a selfish person, would she have gone astray in her marriage and be caught red-handed by Chen Jun? No matter what Chen Jun did, Chen Jun was capable of cleaning up after himself and would never let anyone grab a chink in his armor. Qiao Zijin was different. She was incapable of doing so, yet she followed in Chen Jun's footsteps.

With a mom like that, Chen Feng would never have been able to get a good learning environment if he did not leave Ping Cheng. Moms always cared the most about their children, but given Qiao Zijin's selfish nature, she could not even be bothered with her own son!

Qiao Nan did not expect someone who was so cold and heartless to her own son to be filial to her parents and repay them for raising her all these years. It would never happen in a million years.

"Even if Qiao Zijin sold that house, I was the one who paid for that house. But Qiao Zijin will never have that kind of self-awareness. Because the money went into her pockets, she would definitely think that it's hers to keep. She'll never fork out that sum of money to pay for my dad's bills." But they could not afford to wait to pay those bills.

Just half a year ago, she had been so decisive in leaving Qiao Zijin in the hospital without leaving a single cent for her because she knew that Qiao Zijin did not have cash, but she did have a house. With that house, there was no way Qiao Zijin would run out of money for her treatment. She would even have enough to support herself for a while after that.

Qiao Nan was not so confident now that Qiao Dongliang was in this situation.

No matter how incapable the Qiao family was, they would have spent every single cent they had left on Qiao Zijin. With the property deed of the courtyard in her hands, the Qiao family would not even be able to take a loan by mortgaging it so that they would be able to pay for Qiao Dongliang's treatment.

As such, Qiao Nan had already known from the day she received the property deed that she would never be able to run away from the Qiao family's matters. As long as it concerned the Qiao family, she would have to continue worrying about it. There was no way out of that.

Hearing Qiao Nan's words, the Zhai family was initially in disbelief. Qiao Zijin could not possibly be so heartless. With 1.6 million yuan in her bank account, would she be so stingy as to not use a few thousand yuan for her dad's treatment? Was Qiao Zijin the Qiao family's biological child?

In fact, Qiao Nan had been the one who had paid for the house. The money from the sale of the house was no different from a sudden windfall. If Qiao Zijin was not even willing to spend such undeserved money on her parents, it was no longer a question about her identity as a child but her morals as a person.

The Zhai Sheng had thought that Qiao Nan had been exaggerating, but Zhai Sheng thought that it would be better for him to go along with Qiao Nan if she was worried about that. Logic was one thing, but no one could be sure that nothing would happen. Moreover, Ding Jiayi had gotten someone to phone the Zhai family. Did this not mean that she was waiting for Qiao Nan to foot the bill?

As such, Zhai Sheng felt that Qiao Nan's worries were not unfounded. It was very likely that the situation was just as Qiao Nan had described.

Just as expected, when Zhai Sheng arrived at the hospital with Qiao Nan, they learned that Qiao Dongliang's bills had not been paid and he could not undergo the surgery. Upon hearing this, Zhai Sheng instructed Qiao Nan to wait for him while he settled Qiao Dongliang's hospitalization bills.

Only with everything in place and the money paid did Qiao Dongliang manage to undergo his surgery.

Now that Qiao Dongliang's surgery was over and there had been no complications, Zhai Sheng felt that it was very reasonable for Qiao Nan to take her leave. If she stayed on, it would not only cause him to lower his limits again and again. More importantly, he was afraid that Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi would vent their anger toward Qiao Nan or even anger Qiao Dongliang so much that he might just jump up from his bed!

Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi's obsession with money was much worse than what Nan Nan had described. Perhaps, in their hearts, money was even more important than anyone's lives as long as Nan Nan was around, even if that man was their husband or father!

Chapter 1993: Afraid

In the event that Qiao Dongliang wasn't treated in time due to lack of money and he ended up losing his life, that mother-daughter pair would only think that Nan Nan was the one who caused Qiao Dongliang his death as she valued money more than Qiao Dongliang's life.

This was the first time Zhai Sheng truly felt that the family Qiao Nan used to live with was a problematic one. Upon thinking that Qiao Nan didn't go astray even after having grown up in such an environment, Zhai Sheng was really thankful.

"If you're tired, take a rest first. I'll call you when we're home." Once they got in the car, Zhai Sheng asked Qiao Nan to rest. Really, even if nothing happened today, having to deal with the Qiao family alone was enough to make Qiao Nan physically and mentally exhausted.

Qiao Nan laughed bitterly. "It's fine. I'm used to it." Due to Brother Zhai's presence today, Ding Jiayi only asked her to fork out money. If Brother Zhai wasn't around, her mom's usual ways would be to first force her to fork out money that far exceeded the cost of her dad's hospitalization. Then, she would poke her head and scold her for being useless and lacking a conscience as she arrived so late after her dad was hospitalized. Otherwise, she would say that her wings had hardened and that she no longer cared about her parents' life and death.

If not for her not taking good care of her dad, would her dad have to be hospitalized, undergo an operation, and suffer so much physically? In short, she had to fork out the money. All the mistakes were committed by her.

At least, they only took half of her money today and she didn't get a scolding. To Qiao Nan, this was already a fairly good treatment.

The more Qiao Nan said this, the more Zhai Sheng felt heartache.

Zhai Sheng was still feeling miserable. Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin, the mother-daughter pair who had a good relationship, were arguing. "Mom, you're really letting Qiao Nan go just like that?" Qiao Zijin was shocked. Zhai Sheng was right in front of them. Why didn't her mom say all those nice words that she had said before? In front of Zhai Sheng, she was as timid as a quail.

"What else can I do?!" Ding Jiayi replied unpleasantly. "Can I control Qiao Nan or the Zhai family's son?"

"Why not? Doesn't he want to marry Qiao Nan? That means he's your son-in-law, which is equivalent to half of your son. He will address you as mom and you can control your son. Why can't you control him?" Zhai Sheng had to listen to her mom's words as well.

After being nagged at by her daughter, Ding Jiayi became furious and said, "Qiao Nan's already forty-years-old. If someone like Zhai Sheng is willing to marry Qiao Nan, I should be very thankful

that my daughter could be married off and that someone is willing to have her. Back when you were young, you married Chen Jun while being pregnant with Feng Feng. Since when did Chen Jun treat me as his mom and listen to my words?”

A son-in-law was half a son and thus, he should be listening to her words?

Ding Jiayi had two daughters. She became a grandmother and had a son-in-law early. However, she never experienced the joy of this before. Every time Chen Jun came to the Qiao family, he was like a master to be served. She was deeply afraid that if she didn't treat Chen Jun, the son-in-law, well, her daughter's life would be made difficult by the Chen family.

Her son-in-law was the Qiao family's number one VIP!

To put on airs in front of her son-in-law? Sorry, she hadn't tried this before and she hadn't learned it even now. Furthermore, that man she faced today wasn't her son-in-law yet. She didn't have the confidence to put on airs as a mother-in-law.

One should not hit a person in the face or expose their shortcomings. Both mother and daughter had committed this taboo. Animosity filled the atmosphere. “Oh, now that you have Zhai Sheng as a son-in-law, you're complaining that the Chen Jun I married to in the past isn't good enough? You're bringing up old scores now? Heh. I thought only Dad looked down on me, the elder daughter, because Qiao Nan's about to marry Zhai Sheng. After so much fuss, you're just like Dad. You really deserve to be husband and wife.”

Ding Jiayi's face turned pale when she heard her daughter's unceremonious words. “How can you say this? Don't forget that I'm your mom. After hitting your birth dad, you're lecturing me, your birth mom?”

When Zhai Sheng was around previously, Ding Jiayi was especially worried that Qiao Nan would ask how Qiao Dongliang became injured. She couldn't possibly tell Qiao Nan that when she and Qiao Zijin were conspiring to destroy the Zhai family's impression of Qiao Nan, they got into an argument with Qiao Dongliang after he overheard their words, and Qiao Dongliang fell after being pushed by his birth daughter, Qiao Zijin, right?

Until now, Ding Jiayi wasn't willing to accept this truth.

Qiao Dongliang was old and in poor health. This meant that she was in a similar situation. Through Qiao Dongliang's situation, Ding Jiayi couldn't help but worry about herself. If she and her elder

daughter got into a dispute because of something, would her elder daughter push her like how she did to Old Qiao?

She thought of how Qiao Zijin refused to fork out the money when they first entered the hospital and insisted on waiting for Qiao Nan to arrive so that they would split the cost and not benefit Qiao Nan in any way. Before Qiao Nan left, she also said that she would split the cost with Qiao Zijin. It was obvious that Qiao Zijin had forgotten about her own persistence before Qiao Nan's arrival as she was very dissatisfied with having to split the cost.

Speaking of Qiao Dongliang's injuries, Qiao Zijin felt a little guilty. "Mom, don't make it sound so serious. You know that I'm filial to you and dad. How could I lay a hand on you? That time was an accident. I didn't want this to happen either." She knew that she couldn't afford to lay a hand on the elderly.

She wasn't the kind of person who complained that she had too much money in her hands and thus deliberately injured the elderly in the family to spend the money on hospitalization bills instead. If there was really a serious illness, the money in her hands wouldn't be sufficient at all.

Ding Jiayi sighed. Now that things had become like this, Ding Jiayi didn't know if she should be angry with Qiao Zijin or herself. "Before Qiao Nan arrived, you insisted that Old Qiao was the father of both you and Qiao Nan. There was no reason for you to fork out the money and benefit that unfilial Qiao Nan. Now that Qiao Nan has already forked out fifty thousand yuan, I shan't say anything else. Transfer fifty thousand yuan to me immediately. I still have to take care of your dad. If we have finished spending all the money and your dad hasn't recovered yet, I'll get money from both you and Qiao Nan again. Both of you should split the cost."

Since there was already a start, there was no reason to go back. Since they agreed on splitting the cost, then that should be done from the beginning to the end.

After being exposed by Qiao Zijin, the angry Ding Jiayi couldn't care about doting on her elder daughter anymore. She knew that Qiao Zijin wasn't willing to fork out money when Qiao Dongliang was hospitalized today. If she had to be hospitalized one day, based on Old Qiao's temper, he would definitely not be able to get money from Zijin. Did that mean that once she was sick, Zijin would completely ignore her life and death and run far away?

As she thought about this, not only did Ding Jiayi feel cold, but she also felt terrified. She became a different person.

The daughter whom she always thought was successful wasn't that successful. Based on this incident, the daughter whom she always thought was filial wasn't that filial.

However, she and Old Qiao were old. They couldn't work and earn money to support themselves. If both daughters were unfilial, how would she and Old Qiao lead their lives in the future?

After thinking about it, Ding Jiayi felt that the only solution was to make sure there was more money by her side. That would make her feel more at ease. As such, once she knew that Qiao Nan had forked out fifty thousand yuan, Ding Jiayi asked Qiao Zijin for the same amount as well.

"Mom, are you kidding me?" Qiao Zijin nearly jumped. "My dad's suffering a fracture. It's not that serious. It's just a minor operation today and it won't cost much. There's definitely an excess from the fifty thousand yuan Qiao Nan forked out. You can just use the remaining money to buy some nutritional products for dad."

A fall and a fracture cost one hundred thousand yuan. Was her dad made of precious gold? She only spent over four hundred thousand yuan for her kidney transplant.

"Mom, don't feel that I still have a lot of money in my hands because of that one million yuan. I'm just forty-two years old. My life's only halfway down the road. I still have plenty of places to spend money on in the future. Mom, you've changed so much that I feel I don't recognize you anymore. You're not like this in the past. You used to be very considerate of me."

Before her dad was hospitalized, her mom was still thinking of how to ruin the Zhai family's good impression of Qiao Nan so that she could get closer to them and obtain benefits.

It was just a short two hours. The way her mom asked her for money was exactly the same as when she asked Qiao Nan for money.

Ding Jiayi pursed her lips together and said in a low voice, "There's no choice. Your dad and I are old. Aside from the house I bought for you, all the money I got from Qiao Nan was handed over to the hospital when you contracted uremia. I don't have any money by my side. Your dad's ill today. It might be me the next time. A person can have anything but illness and can lack anything but money. Didn't you say that you will split the cost evenly with Qiao Nan? Since she forked out fifty thousand yuan, you can do the same. You're not on the losing end."

So what if one hundred thousand yuan wouldn't be spent? She could save the excess. If anything happened to her or Old Qiao next time, at least there was a little money at home for them to go to the hospital and get treated.

After having such an experience once, Ding Jiayi couldn't help but worry if the person being admitted next time was her, would Qiao Zijin be the same as today? Would she have money in her hands but refuse to hand it in and insist on Qiao Nan doing so instead?

Ding Jiayi knew that as long as she was alive, even if she had to first fork out the money when she was hospitalized, she would still be able to get the money Qiao Nan should fork out from Qiao Nan after being discharged from the hospital. Thus far, out of a hundred times that she asked Qiao Nan for money, Qiao Nan didn't reject her for ninety-nine times.

The only exception was when Zijin was hospitalized and had to undergo a kidney transplant.

However, when Old Qiao was hospitalized today, not only did Qiao Nan appear, but she even handed over fifty thousand yuan without another word. As such, if she was really ill and had to be hospitalized, Qiao Nan, that wretched girl, would most likely be willing to hand over money so that she could receive treatment.

"You yourself said to split the cost evenly. Since Qiao Nan forked out fifty thousand yuan, tell me, shouldn't you do the same?" Ding Jiayi didn't say anything else. She was only eyeing that fifty thousand yuan.

Qiao Zijin really didn't want to hand over the money. "Mom, if you're really worried you won't have enough to spend, you can get more from Qiao Nan again. Isn't Qiao Nan going to be related to the Zhai family soon? She definitely wouldn't be lacking money. Unless she doesn't want to be together with Zhai Sheng, if you as a mother ask Qiao Nan for money, she wouldn't dare to refuse. If she really refuses to do so, you can ask for money from the Zhai family."

There were so many people her mom could ask for money from. Why did she only eye her?

Ding Jiayi shook her head. "Qiao Nan is Qiao Nan. You are you." Ding Jiayi didn't feel that she could control Qiao Nan just by complaining to the Zhai family. Didn't they see that Zhai Sheng accompanied Qiao Nan to the hospital today? She was afraid that the Zhai family already knew that Zijin had money in her hands but refused to pay for Old Qiao's treatment.

Even if she made a fool of herself, it couldn't be compared to Zijin's practice today. If they really wanted to discredit Qiao Nan in front of the Zhai family, it had to be something that Qiao Nan really did. Otherwise, based on Zijin's and her actions, would Qiao Nan's image be worse than the two of them?

Toward the end, Ding Jiayi felt irritated as well. "So, you're not going to fork out this fifty thousand yuan?" She had two daughters. She should rightfully be enjoying the care from both daughters.

Ding Jiayi, who was extremely afraid after seeing Qiao Dongliang being hospitalized, wasn't asking for a lot of money. It was just fifty thousand yuan. If she really fell sick, this fifty thousand yuan would definitely not be enough. If Zijin wasn't even willing to fork out fifty thousand yuan, who knew how it would be like if she had to spend more than fifty thousand yuan in the future?

"Zijin, until today, out of the two children, you're the one I can answer to the most. You didn't earn that remaining 1.6 million yuan from the sale of the house. If not for Qiao Nan knowing how to earn money and me taking all her salary to buy the house, you would neither have the money nor the house. You're not even willing to take out fifty thousand yuan now. Zijin, if I run into an accident in the future like your dad today, do you think I can count on you?"

At this moment, Ding Jiayi couldn't help but be alert.

Based on Zijin's current situation, to let her enjoy life? Zijin herself couldn't enjoy life soon. It's fine if she wasn't able to enjoy life. However, if she was sick, would Zijin be unwilling to fork out money for her treatment and just watch her die?!

The more Qiao Zijin was unwilling to fork out the money, the more Ding Jiayi was unwilling to let it go. After all, this sum of money concerned if Ding Jiayi could still receive treatment and continue to live in the event she was ill. To Ding Jiayi, who cherished life, being alive was naturally more important than anything else. She had raised her elder daughter into a university student. Wasn't she counting on her to let her lead a good life when she was old?

Qiao Zijin felt both panicked and guilty. "Mom, what are you talking about? I'm divorced from Chen Jun and Feng Feng isn't by my side. I only have you and Dad now. How can I not care about you both? Isn't it just fifty thousand yuan? I can transfer it to you now." She would definitely suffer if she fell out with her mom.

If Qiao Nan were to really marry Zhai Sheng, what kind of life she would be able to lead in the future would depend on how well her mom could control Qiao Nan.

Compared to falling out with Ding Jiayi, fifty thousand yuan was really nothing. However, Qiao Zijin was someone who refused to give up until she reached her goal. Unless it was a last resort, Qiao Zijin would delay the possibility of forking out any sum of money.

This time, Ding Jiayi's looks changed and her tone was completely different. Qiao Zijin hurriedly took out her mobile to do the transfer. Upon hearing the short message prompt from the bank system, Ding Jiayi took out her mobile. Indeed, fifty thousand yuan had been transferred over.

Chapter 1995: Too 'Filial'

Upon seeing this short message prompt, Ding Jiayi wasn't happy at all. She had to force this fifty thousand yuan out of her. Because of Zijin, Old Qiao was injured and had to be hospitalized. According to reason, Zijin should fork out this sum of money on her own initiative. She shouldn't have to ask for it.

What was more infuriating was that Qiao Nan, the wretched girl who was lacking conscience, forked out fifty thousand yuan without saying a word, but Qiao Zijin was still delaying payment until she lost her temper. The difference between taking the initiative and being forced was too big.

She thought of how well she had treated Qiao Zijin over the years and how she only valued Qiao Zijin instead of Qiao Nan. Qiao Zijin was young and had money in her hands, but she was unwilling to take good care of Old Qiao. What should she do in the future...

The more Ding Jiayi thought about it, the more panicked she became. "Zijin, this won't do. I don't mean to urge you, but I'd like to reason with you. You're just forty-two years old this year. You yourself said that you're still young. The retirement age set by the country is fifty years old. While you're still young, go and find a job. It's alright if the salary is lower as long as there are some retirement funds."

It would definitely not work if she kept on eating but not working.

As long as Zijin found a job, had a certain amount of income every month, and received some retirement funds from the company, her expenses would no longer be a problem. Even if the income was lower, it was better than Zijin staying at home all day and only having an outflow of cash.

Perhaps when Zijin was working and had income, she might even be more filial toward her and Old Qiao.

In short, Zijin had to have an income to resolve her panic. Zijin hadn't been working. The money in her hands was decreasing day by day. Not only was Zijin feeling panicked, but she herself was as well.

Qiao Zijin's face changed. Did her mom really think that she could control her life just because she addressed her as mom? So what if she didn't have a job? As long as her parents didn't burden her when they were old and went to Qiao Nan if they were sick, all was good. Even if she didn't work, the 1.6 million yuan in her hands was enough for her to eat and drink until she died.

She could obviously lead an easier life. Why did she have to find a job and be exhausted? The money earned each month wasn't as high as the interest the bank provided. She wasn't stupid.

"Mom, let's talk about this in the future. I'm worried since Dad's in such a state now. You're also tired from taking care of him alone. Let's take turns to take care of him. Oh right, Mom. Zhai Sheng accompanied Qiao Nan to the hospital today to visit Dad. What do you think is the relationship between Qiao Nan and the Zhai family?" What made Qiao Zijin upset was still Qiao Nan's relationship with the Zhai family.

Even if Zhai Sheng accompanied Qiao Nan over today, she didn't feel that things were really as rumored and that Zhai Sheng was going to marry Qiao Nan. Didn't big families like to acknowledge god relatives? What if Zhai Sheng was only recognizing Qiao Nan as his godsister? She didn't even have the chance to marry Zhai Sheng. It was already lucky for Qiao Nan to have the chance to know Zhai Sheng.

Marrying Zhai Sheng? Wasn't Qiao Nan afraid of being crushed to death by this huge blessing?

"How do I know?!" Ding Jiayi felt irritated. Especially when Qiao Zijin changed the topic and didn't agree to find a job, Ding Jiayi's mood became worse. "You saw today's situation as well. I'm only concerned about your dad. From the start to the end, I didn't say a word to that wretched girl. How would I know what her relationship with the Zhai family and Zhai Sheng is? Alright, stop thinking about these matters. You should think about when your dad will wake up."

Ding Jiayi wasn't in the mood at all now that her man was hospitalized. How would she think about Qiao Zijin and find ways to snatch over all of Qiao Nan's good things for her?

Ding Jiayi sat on the edge of Qiao Dongliang's bed. She was shocked for a while. Then, she said, "You're right. I'm old and not in good health. I can't possibly take care of your dad alone. Why

don't you go home and rest now and take over my shift at night? It shouldn't be a problem for you to keep watch overnight, right?"

Qiao Zijin wanted to say that there was a problem. She would rather stay and take care of her dad now, who had not yet woken up and didn't have any other needs other than sleep. It was tough to keep watch overnight. If her dad woke up and was in pain or needed to go to the toilet, it would be troublesome for her.

Thankfully, Qiao Zijin wasn't a fool. As long as she was still counting on Ding Jiayi to help her take advantage of Qiao Nan, she had to continue coaxing Ding Jiayi and not fall out with her. "Sure, I'll head back first then. Let me see if there are any free-range chickens. I'll get one. Mom, you know I don't know how to cook. After heading home later, brew some chicken soup to act as supplements for you and Dad."

A chicken cost at least one to two hundred yuan. She felt the pinch.

Forget it. No pain, no gain. Her mom was already unhappy. If she didn't fork out this small sum of money and her mom became biased toward Qiao Nan like her dad and treated her as her precious daughter, she would be done for.

"Yes. Be careful on the way back."

"Mom, I'll get going first."

After Qiao Zijin left, Qiao Dongliang opened his eyes. Ding Jiayi leaned forward. "Old Qiao, why didn't you say that you had woken up? You even got me to send Zijin away. When did you wake up? Are you thirsty? Do your injuries hurt?"

It was only when Ding Jiayi sat next to Qiao Dongliang did she realize that he was already awake. As to when Qiao Dongliang was awake, Ding Jiayi had no idea at all. Qiao Dongliang wanted Qiao Zijin to leave first. Even if Ding Jiayi didn't understand it, she had done so.

"When did I wake up?" Qiao Dongliang asked himself. "I don't remember. However, I heard quite a bit of your conversation with her. A few months ago when Zijin was hospitalized, I remember I was so anxious that I couldn't sleep for the first few nights and had insomnia for a long time. I didn't expect a few months later, she would be the one to send me to the same hospital. She couldn't even bear to part with fifty thousand yuan for me, her birth dad. Ding Jiayi, we have really raised Zijin this daughter 'well'."

Filial?

Zijin took so much money from Nan Nan but couldn't bear to spend fifty thousand yuan on him. She didn't even feel guilty for his fracture and hospitalization. Heh, this was Ding Jiayi's so-called good daughter. She was really too 'filial'!

As the anesthetics wore off a little, Qiao Dongliang woke up and heard such a conversation. As a father, he was really unwilling to see Qiao Zijin, his daughter, now.

Chapter 1996: Keeping One's Promise

The presence of this daughter of his was a constant reminder of what a failure he had been as a father and how blind and deaf Ding Jiayi had been all along.

Both he and Ding Jiayi had wasted decades of their lives! They were both blind!

Ding Jiayi's expression was poor. Even if she did feel that way in her heart, there was no way she would admit to it. "You can't blame Zijin for that. We're at fault too. Zijin was always better than Qiao Nan. It's just that the news of Qiao Nan marrying into the Zhai family shocked her. That's why she went out of line and injured you accidentally. That was only an accident. Zijin didn't mean to do it. After you were admitted, she was very anxious and afraid, and she felt extremely apologetic toward you too."

If she were in Zijin's place, she would behave in the exact same way as Zijin. As parents, they could not possibly expect Zijin to be a saint. Zijin's reaction was perfectly normal.

"As for money..." Ding Jiayi felt a little tug on her heart. "Don't think that 1.6 million is a big sum of money that makes Zijin rich. Don't forget that Zijin doesn't have a job. This sum of money will only get depleted. She transferred fifty thousand to me today and she handed me ten thousand for my living allowance in the past too. She hasn't had that money for a long time but she's already spent sixty thousand. Zijin's not old, so there's nothing wrong with being concerned about money. Didn't Zijin hand that money over in the end?"

The process was unimportant. What mattered was the outcome. Zijin had not abandoned Old Qiao, after all, and had handed over the money she ought to. She did not feel that Zijin had been unfilial or any worse than that wretched girl, Qiao Nan.

“I believe that Zijin would definitely treat us well if she leads a comfortable life herself. Given her situation now, we can’t expect too much of her. Otherwise, how will she lead her own life?”

Qiao Dongliang felt as though his ears were bleeding from just hearing Ding Jiayi trying to protect Qiao Zijin with her excessive explanations. The reason why he had asked Qiao Zijin to leave was to have a private chat with Ding Jiayi about what had happened today. No matter how foolish Ding Jiayi was, she should, at least, have found out how her elder daughter was as a person and how selfish she was, right?

Who would have known that Ding Jiayi had not even remembered what had just happened? In fact, she had forgotten all about it and was even trying to find an excuse for Qiao Zijin, saying that her life was tough. Qiao Zijin’s selfishness was understandable, and as parents, they had to understand and accept that.

Thinking about how harsh Ding Jiayi had been toward Qiao Nan all these years even after all that Qiao Nan had given to her, and how Qiao Nan had only earned the title of ‘wretched girl’ after everything, Qiao Dongliang could only shut his eyes. He truly had no words. No wonder he had only heard his elder daughter’s and Old Ding Jiayi’s voices when he awoke. Nan Nan had not been around.

Nan Nan had already guessed that this would happen and had thus taken her leave. Even though Nan Nan already knew the kind of personalities Old Ding and Zijin had, it would probably still hurt and upset her every time she encountered such a situation. Instead of making herself miserable, it was better to avoid this situation.

“Alright, since you’ve always felt that only Zijin can let you enjoy your life, I’ll let you hold on to that belief. I can’t be bothered to say anything more. Zijin is our child and it’s our fault that we didn’t raise her well. Both you and I are at fault for raising such a daughter, so we have no choice but to live our lives like that.”

As long as he was around, he would still be able to rein Ding Jiayi and Zijin in and stop the mother-daughter pair from kicking up a fuss in front of Nan Nan. When Qiao Zijin mentioned that Zhai Sheng had accompanied Qiao Nan here, Qiao Dongliang had the urge to make a call to Qiao Nan to ask what her relationship with Zhai Sheng was and whether those rumors in the quad were true.

Previously, Qiao Dongliang had not even dared to contact Qiao Nan for fear of exposing her. Since Qiao Nan had already shown up today, Qiao Dongliang could be much more at ease about contacting her.

But today was not a good day to speak to her. Qiao Dongliang tolerated the pain and shut his eyes. "I'm going to sleep. You can do whatever you want."

Whether or not Ding Jiayi could live a good life in the future would depend on whether she encountered the same situation that he had today. If she did run into the same situation and need to be hospitalized and undergo surgery because of Zijin, Old Ding would finally experience first-hand just how filial her daughter, Zijin, was.

Qiao Nan knew nothing about all these matters. With the Zhai family urging her on, Qiao Nan, who was already forty, had the chance to don a white wedding dress to take wedding photos with Zhai Sheng in the warm sunlight. Unlike youngsters, the couple had not gone abroad to take their wedding photos at famous landmarks but had chosen beaches within the country, such as Sanya.

After all the photos were taken, Qiao Nan was exhausted. She was no longer young and it was only natural that she did not have as much energy as young people. Even though she had gone all the way to the scenic and beautiful Sanya, she no longer had the energy or mood to go on a tour around the city. After returning from Sanya, the first thing that Zhai Sheng did was to bring Qiao Nan to the Civil Affairs Bureau to get their marriage certificate.

It was only as she held that red book did Qiao Nan suddenly realize that she had gotten married to Zhai Sheng for the second time.

"In the future, you'll be my wife." Zhai Sheng, who was getting married for the 'first time', thought that this red book was rather interesting. He was over the moon at the thought that his relationship with Qiao Nan had been legally acknowledged with this little thing and had conveniently chosen to forget the fact that he had once gotten the same book with Qiu Chenxi. "This thing is too small. It won't be easy to look for it in the future. I'll keep it safe."

He did not even wait for Qiao Nan to agree to his suggestion before grabbing the red book from Qiao Nan's hand, holding it in the pocket closest to his heart.

Zhai Sheng had done the exact same thing as in her dream.

Qiao Nan's eyes reddened. She knew that it was truly her good fortune to have been able to marry the same man in both lifetimes. "Yes, from today on, I'm your wife and you're my husband. I'm finally married." She was forty and had finally gotten married at the age of forty to the best man in the world!

“Let’s go. Dad, Mom, and Jiajia must be waiting for us at home. We should let them know about this good news.” Zhai Sheng was finally able to put his mind at ease after getting his marriage certificate.

See, he had said earlier that he acted quickly. In fact, this was a huge matter. He had said that he would get married in less than three months. It had not even been three months, but he had already gotten his marriage certificate!

Chapter 1997: Invisible Weapon

All that was left was holding a wedding to announce to everyone that Qiao Nan was Zhai Sheng’s wife and that Zhai Sheng had a family of his own.

“We’re back.” Qiao Nan did not refuse Zhai Sheng’s hand and the couple returned home sweetly and happily.

Seeing that the two of them had returned, Jiajia immediately ran into Qiao Nan’s embrace. “Can I address you as my aunt from today on?” It had not been easy. Her uncle had spared no effort in marrying Auntie Qiao.

“Of course you have to start calling her your aunt.” Miao Jing was overjoyed. Who would dare to call her son an old bachelor in the future? Her son was a man with a wife! Very soon, they would even have a chubby little kid!

“Auntie!” Jiajia was pleased and she shouted loudly and energetically.

Qiao Nan blushed but did not shy away. In fact, she even took a sealed red packet from her bag and handed it over to Jiajia. It was only natural for her to do so since Jiajia had started calling her ‘auntie’.

Jiajia received the red packet excitedly and placed a kiss on it. “Uncle’s impressive! Auntie, I won’t kiss you. Just take it as though I did when I kissed this red packet. Thank you for your red packet, auntie. I hope you’ll live a long life with my uncle and love each other until the end. Also, I want to be an elder sister. I wouldn’t mind a younger brother or a younger sister.”

If they had another child in the family, she would be able to play with her younger sibling and even teach them their homework.

“Soon.” Zhai Sheng was satisfied with Jiajia’s words. Then, he brought Qiao Nan in front of Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing. “Dad, Mom, I got married today. This is my wife, Nan Nan.”

The Zhai family was all too familiar with Qiao Nan, but Zhai Sheng insisted on going through the formalities of introducing Qiao Nan to everyone as his wife.

Miao Jing’s eyes brimmed with tears and she nodded vigorously. “Yes, you two are married.”

“Dad, Mom.” Qiao Nan blushed as she addressed them as her parents too.

Zhai Yaohui smiled and handed Qiao Nan a red packet. Miao Jing, on the other hand, took out the presents that she had prepared a few months earlier and put them on Qiao Nan’s wrist. “Did you know that Old Zhai and I already knew that Zhai Sheng had someone in mind before we went to Qingshui Town? That was why we made a trip down to the mall to buy these gifts. Thankfully, I’ve finally been able to hand them over to their rightful owner.”

Miao Jing put on a watch on one of Qiao Nan’s hand and a rare jade bracelet on the other. Because Qiao Nan’s skin was pale, the jade bracelet looked even more exquisite on her.

Hearing Miao Jing’s words, Qiao Nan was taken aback, more so than she had when receiving such a valuable jade bracelet. “Didn’t Dad and Mom go to Qingshui Town to take care of you?” Why did it sound as though they had gone there for her sake?

Besides, from what Mom said, Mom and Dad had already found out that Brother Zhai had feelings for her at that time. That was why they had rushed down to Qingshui Town to meet their future daughter-in-law.

Qiao Nan felt embarrassed as she calculated the days. She had not known Zhai Sheng for many days before her parents-in-law had arrived in Qingshui Town. Did that mean that Zhai Sheng had already developed feelings for her that early on?

Zhai Sheng smiled without replying to her because there was simply no need to do so. If he had really needed someone to care for him, he would never have returned to Qingshui Town. Otherwise, his parents would have returned to Qingshui Town with him in the first place.

Of course, it was not that his parents did not want to do so but that he did not need their help. It was only until Nan Nan’s appearance did he realize that he would probably be able to get married once

again. That was why he had not refused his parents' visit. It was rare that their family would be holding a wedding, and as such, Zhai Sheng thought that it would be better for the family to be more united at that time.

“Uncle, I realized that you're quite romantic.” Jiajia might be young, but that did not mean that she had no feelings of her own. She knew how to differentiate good from bad. Because she had spoken to Zhai Hua about her grandmother's family, Jiajia knew quite a lot as well. She had heard her mom say that her uncle had always been a rock and had been cold to everyone, including his own family.

Instead of staying at home, he had chosen to recuperate at the Zhai family's old villa. He had not even grown old, yet he was already becoming a recluse. How annoying!

Jiajia could tell that her mom's complaints were out of concern and love for her uncle because he was recuperating with no family by his side. Just like her grandma had said, her mom and uncle were the typical example of frenemies. The siblings had never been able to speak nicely to each other, and even words of concern were said with tones of disgust.

But she had heard that the moment her uncle had feelings for Auntie Qiao, he had asked his elders to accept her. Jiajia felt that a man like her uncle was good indeed. Although this seemed like a very insignificant move without any flowers, wine, nor music, she felt that this was even sweeter than those actions she had seen on television.

It was truly her aunt's good fortune to be able to marry her uncle.

“Don't spout nonsense.” Zhai Sheng frowned. “I think you'd better stop watching all those television dramas. You're still young. What do you mean by romantic? The most important thing is to find the right person for yourself when you grow up.”

Zhai Sheng did not have a concept of romance and did not think that it was important at all. He had only felt that he had done something good toward Qiao Nan. Being romantic had never even crossed his mind. Because of Jiajia's young age, he was worried that Jiajia would be easily coaxed by a man's words, just as Zhai Hua had at that time, and would lose all rationality.

Zhai Hua rolled her eyes, clearly rejecting Zhai Sheng's gaze. She had no objections to Zhai Sheng educating her daughter, but she would never let Zhai Sheng use her as a negative example in his teaching material in front of her daughter.

Had she not simply taken a fall because of Wei De? Now, she had already gotten back up from that fall and would never make the same mistake again. She had learned from her mistake, so could her family not be more understanding? Zhai Sheng was too much. Now that his life was so blissful, couldn't he give a divorced woman a little more space and stop provoking her?

Jiajia stuck her tongue out. She had once again started a war between her mom and uncle. Her uncle's words were actually meant for her mom and she had simply been dragged into the matter as an innocent bystander!

Qiao Nan laughed and patted Zhai Sheng on the shoulder. "Jiajia's such a sensible kid. Don't be so harsh on her. Dating? That will have to wait until after university. Isn't that right, Jiajia?"

Chapter 1998: Inviting Who?

Jiajia was momentarily stunned and her body stiffened. Then, she smiled at Qiao Nan helplessly. "Auntie, my uncle is threatening me and so are you. Wouldn't I be letting you down if I were to get into a relationship before university now that you've praised me?"

Her aunt was not helping her in front of her uncle. She was clearly on her uncle's side.

Qiao Nan was reluctant to admit to the trap she had set. "Jiajia, do you mean that you intend to do otherwise? Or do you mean that you intend to do something when you're in your last year of junior high school or when you enter high school?"

The moment Qiao Nan said that, everyone in the Zhai family, including Zhai Hua, had their eyes pinned on Jiajia. What could she do?

Zhai Hua had only fallen for Wei De at that time because she had insisted on only getting into a relationship at almost thirty. Jiajia was still in her teenage years and was still young. As compared to her mom who had gotten married at thirty and her uncle who had gotten married at forty-five, it seemed as though Jiajia's life had not even started yet at her age. Which fool dared to snatch her away from the Zhai family while she was still so young?

"..." Jiajia felt like vomiting blood from hearing all these. Were these all not just hypothetical situations? Why were her grandparents and mom treating her uncle's words as though they were real? Why did she not know of the existence of such a boy in her life? Humph! There was no way she was in an early relationship. "Auntie is right. I think that I should only think about dating after university."

She had never intended to get into an early relationship in the first place.

Qiao Nan patted Jiajia on the head. “Good girl. I knew that you wouldn’t distract yourself from your schoolwork when it matters the most.”

Qiao Nan was rather strict while disciplining children. In her dream, few boys got into relationships after university, much less before university. Qiao Nan had always taught her children that it was all right to date, but they had to keep their responsibilities in mind at all times.

If they were unprepared or just wanted to have some fun, there were so many other things they could have fun with. There was no point in playing with someone else’s feelings.

Qiao Nan was in the government service and had a business on hand. As long as the children were willing, Qiao Nan could simply hand some work over to them. That would be enough to tire them out.

Did those youths have inexhaustible energy? That problem would never arise in Qiao Nan’s family. No matter how energetic those youths were, Qiao Nan would always have a way of exhausting those rascals.

Qiao Nan had had such strict demands on boys. It was only natural that she cared even more about girls.

Seeing Qiao Nan in this manner, both Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing sighed in relief. Miao Jing whispered into Zhai Yaohui’s ear. “I won’t have to worry when Nan Nan has children in the future. Nan Nan will be a good mother and will raise our grandchildren well.” Miao Jing was turning seventy. Although she did want to raise her grandchildren, she might not have the physical capability to do so anymore.

The same went for Zhai Yaohui.

Because neither Zhai Sheng nor Qiao Nan had any experience parenting, Miao Jing had already been worried before they even had children. She would have to worry even after the couple had children. But today, Miao Jing could finally rest assured, knowing that Qiao Nan could not possibly be too bad of a parent after witnessing how well she educated and disciplined Jiajia.

In the Wei family, Mother and Father Wei could not care less about their granddaughter, Jiajia. As long as Jiajia did not threaten Wei Wei's interests, the old couple could not even be bothered to speak to Jiajia. They felt that not scolding Jiajia was one way of treating Jiajia 'well'.

Wei De was often away from home, and as such, there was no way for him to control Jiajia even if he wanted to. Zhai Hua was willing to take control of disciplining Jiajia, but the problem was that Zhai Hua was in charge of taking care of the entire Wei family alone.

As such, it was the first time Jiajia was experiencing someone disciplining her alone in this manner. It felt strange and uneasy, yet sweet and sour at the same time. What Jiajia could be sure of was that she did not mind her auntie disciplining her in this manner.

Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng's matters had pretty much been settled, and the only thing left was the wedding in half a month's time. Miao Jing grew a little hesitant while speaking about the invitations. "Nan Nan, how's your dad?"

The Zhai family had not forgotten about Zhai Sheng following Qiao Nan to the hospital earlier that day. They had simply chosen not to talk about it because they were afraid of putting Qiao Nan in the spot if they were to discuss how Qiao Zijin cared so much about money that she was not even willing to pay for Qiao Dongliang's hospitalization bills and waited for Qiao Nan to do so instead.

But with something even more awkward ahead, Miao Jing had to pose the question no matter how embarrassed it made her feel. "Your wedding with Zhai Sheng will be happening in half a month's time. Who are you planning to invite from the Qiao family? Will your dad be able to attend the wedding in his condition?"

Qiao Dongliang had been hospitalized before Qiao Nan got married, and this was actually rather unlucky. The elder daughter had gotten into trouble, but the younger daughter had to bear that burden. The Qiao family's situation was truly a mess.

At the mention of the invitations for Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan's wedding, the atmosphere in the Zhai family immediately stiffened. It seemed as though everyone tried to soften their breathing, afraid that they might interrupt Qiao Nan's thoughts.

Qiao Nan forced a smile out. "Let me think this through. We're holding the wedding in Ping Cheng, after all. It's not far away, but my dad's in the hospital now. Give me a few days to think about it. I can inform them just two to three days in advance."

To be honest, Qiao Nan herself did not even know who to invite to her wedding. If possible, she would choose not to invite anyone. In her dream, her dad had attended her wedding. However, her dad in her dream seemed a little different from her dad in reality, yet similar at times. Qiao Nan could not make up her mind just yet and did not know if she should simply invite her dad as she had in her dream.

As for Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin, Qiao Nan did not even bother considering it. These two people would never give her face and would never try to be on their best behaviors just because she was getting married to Zhai Sheng. Given their tempers, they would simply be angry that someone like her could get married to a tall, handsome, and rich man like Zhai Sheng to live a life they could never even dream of.

As such, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin would only cause a ruckus. There was no point in inviting these two people who would only ruin the wedding she was going to have after so much trouble.

The Zhai family was not in the position to intervene in the Qiao family's matters. Since Qiao Nan said she would think about it, Miao Jing did not pursue the matter any further.

Chapter 1999: Unexpected

No matter what, Qiao Nan was getting married and they had to let the Qiao family know about it, even if they informed only Qiao Dongliang alone.

Miao Jing had already learned from Zhai Hua that Qiao Dongliang had secretly handed the courtyard's property deed over to Qiao Nan. Qiao Nan herself did not even think that she needed that property. If so, it was even less possible for Miao Jing to be so shortsighted and shallow to get Qiao Nan to fight for ownership of the courtyard.

Fighting for it was one thing, while logic was another. Qiao Dongliang was rational enough to return to Qiao Nan what belonged to her. In comparison, Qiao Dongliang seemed much more reasonable than Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

Even though this was Zhai Sheng's second marriage, the Zhai family was much more concerned about this wedding than they had been with the first. There were certain problems Miao Jing hoped that Qiao Nan could avoid as a bride. If Qiao Nan got upset, her son would definitely get upset as well. Then, their wedding would be ruined. What was the point in that?

Qiao Dongliang had only sustained a fracture and would be able to return home after a week's stay in the hospital. These seven days were torturous to the Qiao family, not physically but mentally.

Ding Jiayi held her head high and bragged to her neighbors in the quad not to look down on her younger daughter who was already forty and still unmarried. So what if she was still unmarried at forty? The moment she had decided to get married, she had gotten married to such an impressive man. Those poor fools could not even dream of getting close to the Zhai family but her daughter had managed to marry into the family! That was how amazing the Qiao family was!

The moment Ding Jiayi let this word out, her neighbor got into a little bit of a frenzy. Previously, they had only had their own suspicions, but those had just been confirmed. In the entire quad, leaving Qiao Nan aside, even the child with the worst educational qualifications was in college. Their own daughters had only been able to find very average sons-in-law who were part of the working class, earning three to four thousand a month.

How had the Qiao family's younger daughter, who had not even graduated from high school, become the Zhai family's daughter-in-law? Could the Zhai family have weird requirements for their daughter-in-law and prefer a lady with lower qualifications?

That could not be. They had heard that during his first marriage, Zhai Sheng had not only married a university graduate, but that lady had also graduated from a top university. That lady came from a good family, had good qualifications, and was even pretty. Compared to Qiao Nan, it seemed that that lady was much more suited for Zhai Sheng.

But that couple had gotten a divorce after only three years of marriage, so how long could this unsuitable marriage last?

The neighbors in the quad had no idea how long Qiao Nan's marriage to Zhai Sheng would last. What they did know was that the couple was still not married and that it was still too early to discuss divorce. A lady from their northern quad was getting married to the most capable person in the southern quad! That called for a celebration!

The thought of the Zhai family's position and power moved quite a few people. If someone could speak well of them in front of the Zhai family, their children might very well be promoted in their careers or be treated differently with special privileges.

It was especially so for those families whose children were about to take the civil servant entry examination that had more ideas in mind. They would never be able to directly take advantage of a relationship with the Zhai family. They could not even go to the southern quad in the first place. But

now, the situation was different. Qiao Nan was about to get married to Zhai Sheng, and the Qiao family would be the Zhai family's in-laws.

Even if the Zhai family did not bother about them, they had to give the Qiao family some face, right?

In that way, all these people with ulterior motives dropped by the Qiao family's house from time to time with all sorts of presents in their hands, hoping to get closer to Ding Jiayi and help her out. "Old Ding, we've been neighbors for so many years. You have to help me out with this. Now, it's easy for girls to be taken advantage of in society. That's why I asked my daughter to become a civil servant. I'm useless as a mother but you're not. You watched my daughter grow up. You have to help us out this time."

Seeing how all these neighbors who had mocked her because of the news coming to suck up to her now, Ding Jiayi was elated. "I'm just an ordinary citizen like you. How capable could I be? I do remember your daughter being rather intelligent while she was younger. I can't believe how quickly time flies. She's already going for the civil servant entry examination? I remember that I bumped into her one time, but she didn't even remember me anymore."

She did have some impression of that young lady. She had a short temper and was wild as a child. No matter what, she was her elder, but she did not even greet her when she saw her. Moreover, she had snorted at her before walking off.

If she bothered to help this young lady, she would not be Ding Jiayi.

The neighbor was slightly embarrassed because she did believe that her daughter was capable of doing such a thing. The Qiao family's matter had made the headline the previous year and her daughter had looked down on the Qiao family after learning about it. She especially disliked Ding Jiayi, feeling that Ding Jiayi was not a good mother and had disgraced the entire quad. But she had never imagined that the Qiao family's useless younger daughter, who had never been able to get married all these years, was about to get married to the most capable person in their quad.

If they had known just how capable the younger daughter of the Qiao family was, she would have gotten her daughter to stay as her playmate. As long as the Qiao family's younger daughter thought of her own daughter as a younger sister, she would not even need to care about Ding Jiayi today.

Was Ding Jiayi this shameless? Had she really forgotten how she had treated Qiao Nan in the past? It was truly Qiao Nan's bad luck to have such an 'impressive' mother whom she could never get rid of. "This child is going crazy from studying. She spends her entire day studying at home. Do you

know just how many books civil servants have to study? And they're all so thick! Because of the exam, she hasn't even been out of the house. I wonder if she can even recognize her own mother now."

"Is that so?" Ding Jiayi laughed, and everyone understood what she meant by that. "Alright, it's not early anymore. I have to prepare dinner for Old Qiao. Let's chat again some other time. Your daughter is a university graduate, unlike my younger daughter who couldn't even graduate from high school. So, you don't have to worry about your daughter's future at all. With such educational qualifications, I'm sure she'll be able to become a civil servant. How hard could it be? See you!"

With that, Ding Jiayi chased her neighbor out.

"Fool!" The neighbor who had just been chased out immediately flew into a rage.

Chapter 2000: Civil Servant Examination

"Let's see how much longer you can act this way. Qiao Nan really exhausted eighteen lifetimes worth of bad luck having a mother like you. Do you really think that you have a normal mother-daughter relationship with Qiao Nan? We'll see how you'll be slapped in the face in the future."

She had only gone to Ding Jiayi for help as the last resort. Based on what Ding Jiayi had done in the past, there was no way an average person would acknowledge Ding Jiayi as her mother. Had Qiao Nan not run away from her?

So what if Qiao Nan married into a good family? That had nothing to do with Ding Jiayi at all. No matter how well Qiao Nan lived in the future, Ding Jiayi would never enjoy the same life. There was no way Ding Jiayi would be able to take advantage of her relationship with Qiao Nan.

After chasing her old neighbor away, Ding Jiayi felt angry yet joyful at the same time. Ding Jiayi had mentioned Qiao Nan not having graduated high school to provoke her old neighbor. Was it not embarrassing that their daughter, who had not even graduated from high school, could get married to a chief, yet a university graduate wanting to become a civil servant needed help from a primary school graduate?

But Ding Jiayi was truly enraged. Qiao Nan was practically semi-literate with her educational qualifications. How blind was the Zhai family to have taken a liking for someone like Qiao Nan,

who had only graduated from primary school, while giving up such a good university graduate in her family?

Zijin had once been married and had already given birth to a child, but so had Zhai Sheng. Since they were both divorced and they were both university graduates, it seemed only right for Zijin to be with Zhai Sheng instead.

In the past, no matter how much Ding Jiayi worried about Qiao Zijin's future, she would never have dared to put her hopes on Zhai Sheng. After all, the Qiao family was worlds apart from the Zhai family. There was no way they could even get to know each other.

The problem was that Zhai Sheng was now in a relationship with Qiao Nan and was even about to get married. With such a situation in front of her, Ding Jiayi was much bolder and was now thinking of pushing Qiao Zijin toward Zhai Sheng.

"They left?" Qiao Zijin emerged from the room with a dark expression. "Mom, what's with those neighbors? When we got into trouble last time, they didn't even try to help us. They even mocked and ridiculed us. Next time, don't even bother opening the door to them. It's so noisy."

They were always talking about how capable Qiao Nan was, asking Qiao Nan to meet them. If they were incapable themselves, whether Qiao Nan did well or not had nothing to do with them at all. It was annoying how they always came over to their house to make a din.

The neighbor who had just taken her leave was still all right. Previously, Qiao Zijin had met a neighbor who had used to praise her. But now, they did not even change their words and simply changed her name to Qiao Nan's instead, even praising Ding Jiayi for having such brilliant children.

At that time, Qiao Zijin had been so infuriated that she had wanted to leave right then and there. That neighbor was slapping her in the face and Qiao Zijin felt that she had never been so embarrassed and humiliated in her life, even when she had been in the headlines.

Qiao Zijin could not help but wonder if Qiao Nan was her jinx. While Qiao Nan had been down on luck, she had been living her best life. But once Qiao Nan got away from the Qiao family and started her own life, Qiao Zijin's life had only been going downhill. It was as though the worse her life got, the better Qiao Nan's got.

If Qiao Nan was not her jinx, Qiao Nan must have put a curse on her to steal all of her good luck away from her. Otherwise, how could it be so coincidental that her bad luck seemed to happen at the very same time as Qiao Nan's life improved?

"Don't worry. She won't come to our family anymore." These few days, Ding Jiayi had been happy yet suffering at the same time. What she had once envisioned was now becoming reality. Her daughter was the most capable person in the quad and had married a brilliant son-in-law. Because of her daughter and son-in-law, everyone in the quad was now trying to get into her good books.

But the biggest difference between her dreams and reality was that that 'good' daughter was not her favorite elder daughter but her younger daughter that she hated the most.

It had not even been half a year since their news had been broadcasted on television. Now that others were praising her for raising her daughter well, Ding Jiayi felt that these were not actually praises but ridicules.

When had she treated Qiao Nan well or raised Qiao Nan well? If she did not remember it wrongly, she had been criticized and called the worst mother on earth when the news had emerged.

With such complex feelings, Ding Jiayi was frustrated by those people coming to look for her, especially by those who were trying to get a favor from her.

Civil servant examination?

It was good being a civil servant. They had stable incomes.

But if she could really do others this favor, she would be much better off getting her own elder daughter to become a civil servant instead of helping someone else. Civil servants had stable incomes from the government and were paid higher than other working-class workers. More importantly, it was an easy job.

The job was easy while offering a high pay. Was that not suitable for Zijin? She would be a fool to let someone else take advantage of that instead of letting her own daughter do so. All those people who had come to ask her for a favor were all fools who did not use their brains.

“Zijin, I think being a civil servant is rather good. This year’s examination is happening soon in Ping Cheng. Why don’t you try it out?” In the past, Ding Jiayi had never said such a thing, but now, she thought that Qiao Zijin had a shot at it.

Qiao Zijin was annoyed. She had already thrown all her books away on her graduation day. That day, she had already promised herself never to study another day or to take another exam in her life.

She had no intention of studying at the time of her graduation. Now, her mom was expecting her to pick up a book and revise her knowledge twenty years down the road? What a joke!

“Mom, stop joking around. Do you think just anyone can take that exam? What’s the point of going to take the exam when I know that I won’t be able to pass it?” She did not want to add to her own suffering, and neither did she want to be disgraced.

Qiao Zijin had not forgotten about how she had graduated from university.

A few decades ago, Qiao Nan had been put aside just for her to have the chance to study. Qiao Zijin had only done so because she knew that she would never be able to improve her life if she did not study. It was not because she enjoyed studying.