

RTAMM 2001

Chapter 2001: Congratulations

If she wanted a good life, she would have to be educated to be presentable. If not for that, she would never have furthered her studies.

“There’s no harm in trying. Perhaps, if Qiao Nan is willing to help you, you might become a civil servant even if you hand in a blank test paper.” Ding Jiayi had no other choice. The stingier Qiao Zijin got, the more she wanted Qiao Zijin to find a job for herself.

It did not matter even if it was an easy job that paid little as long as they contributed to her retirement funds. But who would have known that Qiao Zijin had no intentions of looking for a job even after Old Qiao was discharged from the hospital? In the one week that she was looking after Old Qiao, Zijin had not been of much help at all.

At the mention of a job, Zijin was reluctant to even get out of the house, choosing to laze around at home instead, watching the television or chatting with others online.

Qiao Zijin’s eyes glimmered. “If Qiao Nan is really that capable and can get the Zhai family to help, don’t talk about handing in a blank paper. I won’t even need to attend the examination to become a civil servant. The problem is that I’m not sure whether Qiao Nan is that capable and whether she’ll be willing to help me out.”

If she did not need to take the exam, she would not mind becoming a civil servant. She had heard that civil servants took home a salary of at least ten thousand yuan every month. Besides, she was the sister-in-law of a chief. Would they let her do those entry-level jobs?

Because she had finally been able to successfully convince her elder daughter to get a job, Ding Jiayi was over the moon. As such, she would make the impossible possible. “Don’t worry. You can count on me. No matter what, I’m still her mother. I have no other demands toward her other than getting you a job. As long as she does that, I won’t make trouble for her in the future. Besides, isn’t she getting married to Zhai Sheng? If she is good to us as her family, I’ll make sure she looks good on her wedding day.”

Getting a peaceful wedding in exchange for Zijin’s job would be no loss to Qiao Nan.

Qiao Zijin smiled. “Mom, I know that you’re the only one who treats me well in this world. But Dad...” If her dad found out about how her mom used this to threaten Qiao Nan, he would never take it lying down.

Ding Jiayi said in a low voice, “Your dad’s still sick, and the most important thing is for him to recuperate well now. There’s no need for your dad to know about such a trivial matter. Besides, we’re killing two birds with one stone by having Qiao Nan get married and getting you a job. Your dad should be happy about that.”

Although she had said that, Ding Jiayi had purposely lowered her voice to prevent Qiao Dongliang from finding out about the matter before it was settled so as to avoid an argument from breaking out. This seemed like a perfect solution to Ding Jiayi, but she knew that Qiao Dongliang would probably think otherwise.

Qiao Zijin laughed. “I’ll listen to you, Mom.”

Qiao Zijin rolled her eyes. “I never imagined that Qiao Nan would be so capable. I even thought that she would never get married at her age. Even though my relationship with Chen Jun is a little awkward, his background is still good. Since I can’t be husband and wife with Chen Jun, I might as well let Qiao Nan have Chen Jun. There’s nothing bad in that. With Qiao Nan around, I wouldn’t have to worry about Feng Feng’s life in the future since Qiao Nan is his biological aunt, after all. Forget it. Feng Feng is my son and Qiao Nan is my younger sister.”

“Once Qiao Nan gets married to Zhai Sheng, I’ll ask her to take Feng Feng under her wings and prop him up. I can’t control what kind of stepmother Feng Feng will have in the future. Now that there is a conflict between Feng Feng and Qiao Nan’s happiness, I have no choice but to sacrifice my son’s to let Qiao Nan lead a good life.”

Ding Jiayi slapped her thigh. “Isn’t that right? You’re such a good sister! For the sake of her happiness, you’re willing to let your son suffer. It’s nothing more than a job in the civil service, and Qiao Nan just has to open her mouth to ask for it. Now that you’ve made such a great sacrifice for her by giving up your son’s happiness, she would be heartless if she refuses to help you with such a trivial matter. She’s my daughter, and if she’s going to be this heartless, I’m going to teach her a lesson.”

She had given birth to Qiao Nan. If Qiao Nan did not know what to do, she would simply teach her what to do. “Don’t worry. You can count on me. I gave birth to her and raised her, so she has to listen to me.”

After listening to Zijin's words, Ding Jiayi thought that they had, in fact, made a huge compromise for Qiao Nan. Their initial plan had been to let Qiao Nan marry Chen Jun. That way, she would never have to worry about her grandson having a bad stepmother in the future or him having more half-siblings who would snatch his things away from him.

Besides, Qiao Nan was already forty and still unmarried. It was embarrassing to even mention that to outsiders. Marrying Qiao Nan to Chen Jun would be helping Qiao Nan solve the biggest problem in her life. Qiao Nan would never be able to find a man better than Chen Jun.

If Qiao Nan was not her daughter or Zijin's sister, she would never have gotten such a good opportunity.

With such a mindset, Ding Jiayi did not think that Zhai Sheng's appearance was not a slap in her face. The facts had proven that a man that was a hundred times better than Chen Jun was willing to marry Qiao Nan. In fact, Ding Jiayi had not even played a role in it. Without Ding Jiayi's help, Qiao Nan had been able to marry someone better!

"Mom, I'm counting on you." With a brother-in-law like Zhai Sheng, Chen Jun was nothing. If her mom could make Qiao Nan listen to her as she had in the past, her son could very rise to a position even higher than Chen Jun's. At that time, Chen Jun would have to address his son as his supervisor or chief.

Ding Jiayi patted her chest, assuring Qiao Zijin that she would definitely be able to resolve the matter.

As the mother and daughter were discussing how to deal with Qiao Nan, Qiao Dongliang was on the phone with Qiao Nan at the very same time. "You... Congratulations..." Qiao Dongliang knew that Qiao Nan would be getting married to Zhai Sheng in a week's time, and he simply said a word of congratulations rather distantly.

There was no other choice. As Qiao Nan's father, Qiao Dongliang should have been the first person to find out that his daughter was getting married and whom she would be marrying. In reality, however, if his neighbors had not spread that rumor, he would have truly believed that the Zhai family had simply helped his daughter out of goodwill because she was struggling.

Chapter 2002: The Bride's Father

Even though he now knew that his daughter was getting married and the wedding was a week away, he felt as though he was an outsider when his daughter simply reminded him to attend the wedding.

Qiao Dongliang had not forgotten why he had been admitted to the hospital in the first place. Not only so, but he had even spent fifty thousand of his younger daughter's money. Previously, he had wanted to prepare a dowry for his younger daughter, but he did not even have a single cent now. "Nan Nan, your dowry..."

Qiao Nan smirked. Dowry? Whether it was in her dream or in reality, she had never once dreamed of the Qiao family preparing anything for her. "There's no need for that. I'll make preparations on my own. You don't have to do anything."

It was natural for her to take care of the Qiao family's matters, and it's even more natural for her to take care of her own matters alone. It had always been this way. Was there another way out?

Since Qiao Nan had so said, there was nothing else Qiao Dongliang could say. Qiao Dongliang felt as though there was something stuck in his throat and he could neither swallow it nor spit it out. It hurt so badly. "You're getting married. Should... Should I send you off? You can't possibly keep staying in the Zhai family's house. I..."

Qiao Dongliang wanted to see Qiao Nan leave from the Qiao family's house, but he was not confident in controlling Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin such that the pair would not ruin Qiao Nan's wedding. He had not even been able to control them while he had been well. Now that he had fractured a bone and was in a cast, it would be even harder for him to do so. As such, he could not even promise that Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin would not make trouble during the wedding.

If Qiao Nan were to stay at the Zhai family's house, it would make it seem as though she did not have a family of her own. This would not reflect well on Qiao Nan or the Qiao family. But Qiao Dongliang did not have a solution to this problem.

Qiao Dongliang laughed bitterly. "I'm so useless. I can't even think of a solution to such a simple problem. No matter what, this wedding is the most important event in your life. Not only am I unable to help you, but I'm even dragging you down. Nan Nan, it's really unfortunate that you were born into this family..."

Qiao Nan was not unfamiliar with these words, but they no longer stirred up any feelings in her heart. "Dad, you don't have to think too much about where I'll leave from. My in-laws have already thought about that. If you're willing to come to the wedding, you can. As for anything else, don't

forget about the news. Anyone who watched the news knows about what happened to our family. There's nothing much to be surprised about anymore."

In other words, the Qiao family had pretty much aired all of its dirty laundry in public. If Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin continued with their antics, it would no longer be surprising. In fact, it would probably be expected.

There was nothing much left in the Qiao family that outsiders did not know about. As such, being self-conscious about that would just be deceiving themselves.

"..." Qiao Dongliang had no way of retorting Qiao Nan. It was true. Outsiders knew the Qiao family almost inside out. Even if they had not known about it, the news had already exposed everything afterward. Nothing would come as a surprise to outsiders now. "Alright. As long as you've thought it through. No matter how tough your life was, you've gotten through it. Don't think too much about it now. You should just think about yourself and lead a good life after getting married."

"Since you escaped and went into hiding the last time, it shows that you've already realized how to lead a good life, so I won't say anything else. I just want to remind you not to bother about your mom's and sister's antics. If you can't handle it, get Zhai Sheng to do it. He's your man and he should take up that responsibility. Your mom and sister may dare to be fierce to you, but they would never dare to go against Zhai Sheng."

Qiao Dongliang was absolutely sure of that, just as sure as Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were that Qiao Nan would listen to them.

Once they realized that, it would not be that difficult to deal with Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi. Qiao Nan had already stayed hidden from the pair for close to a year. After getting married, there would be nothing wrong with Zhai Sheng dealing with these two people.

"Alright." Qiao Nan was stunned. She had never considered getting Zhai Sheng to deal with Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. But Qiao Dongliang's suggestion had given her a new idea. Even if Zhai Sheng was not at home due to his work, she could find someone else to help her out: Zhai Hua.

Even after leaving Wei De, Zhai Hua had never gotten less aggressive. Zhai Hua's skills were more than enough to deal with people like Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

“I guess you should be quite busy since you’re getting married. I won’t disturb you any longer. I’ll attend your wedding.” Qiao Dongliang felt bitter as he said that as though he was eating medications without any water. He could even feel the bitterness in his heart.

Which father would only show up on the day of his daughter’s wedding as though he was just a guest attending a wedding? Which father would not turn up in advance to help out during the wedding?

Qiao Dongliang had two daughters, and Qiao Zijin had been married before. At that time, the Qiao family had been so busy preparing for Qiao Zijin’s wedding to Chen Jun, and he had pampered her like a princess. Thinking about Qiao Nan and how her in-laws had been handling everything for her, it seemed as though she had no family of her own.

After hanging up the call, Qiao Dongliang was extremely regretful that he had been talked into being biased toward his elder daughter by Ding Jiayi. Because of that, they had spoiled their elder daughter such that she did not even know how to repay their kindness, while their younger daughter was just shy of cutting all ties with her family.

Other families were always joyful when marrying their daughters off, but the atmosphere in the Qiao family seemed even colder and more somber than a funeral’s now that their younger daughter was getting married.

Seeing that Qiao Nan had ended the call, Zhai Hua hit Qiao Nan on the head. “What’s wrong? You look like you spread tomatoes all over your face. Don’t forget that you’re getting married in a week’s time. With this expression, others might misunderstand that we forced you into this marriage.” The Qiao family was really too much. They could not even go a day without hearing something about that family.

Zhai Hua’s experience with Wei De had made her grow a lot as a person. It was only with a comparison that she realized the truth. Zhai Hua had never liked Zhai Yaohui, thinking that he was not a normal dad.

Chapter 2003: Tomorrow

But now, Zhai Hua was sure that her dad could not get any more normal.

When Wei De had bullied her, her dad had stood up for her and had never let others take advantage of her. Compared to Qiao Nan’s dad, her dad could not get any better. Zhai Hua could not help but think that she would never be able to live if her dad was anything like Qiao Nan’s.

Talking about her mom, she might have been slightly cowardly in front of Qi Minlan in her youth and her life had revolved around her dad, barely caring about her or Zhai Sheng. When she was younger, Zhai Hua had always seen other kids get picked up by their parents. She, on the other hand, always went home alone or with Zhai Sheng. She had always been upset about that and had been envious of other children, even resenting her parents for that.

Old Master Zhai had not been in great health and it was inconvenient for him to pick the children up. Besides, Zhai Hua wanted her parents to pick her up, not her grandpa.

Every time there was a parent-teacher conference in school, her classmates' parents would show up without fail while her parents' seats were always empty. Was she even her parents' biological child? Had they simply picked her up? She could not possibly be their biological child!

Although she had been angry and upset at that time, Zhai Hua knew that she was loved now that she had seen how Qiao Nan had been treated. Qiao Nan was probably the one who had been picked up by her parents.

After her divorce, Zhai Hua realized that her life was only getting better and that Qiao Nan had had a huge role to play in that. Zhai Hua had immense sympathy for Qiao Nan, who was about to become her sister-in-law. "Don't worry. I do sort of understand. You should know that no one dares to continue with their antics in front of the Zhai family. Even if you marry into our family, you are you, and the Qiao family is the Qiao family. We can't mix things up just because you've married into our family."

The Qiao family could not really be treated as in-laws, especially Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. Since Qiao Nan herself did not acknowledge them, there was no need for the Zhai family to do so either.

Qiao Nan smiled bitterly. "Then, I'll have to rely on you in the future."

Looking at Zhai Hua, the person whom Qiao Nan was truly thinking about was Tian Dong. When Jijia had been hospitalized, she had finally been able to meet Tian Dong in this lifetime. Since he had been able to calm Sister Zhai Hua down, the two of them must have shared quite a good relationship while they had been younger.

"Sister Zhai Hua, when Jijia was hospitalized, did you meet someone by the name of Tian? He said he was going to attend my wedding to Brother Zhai. Is he really coming?"

Zhai Hua raised her eyebrow. “Dongzi seems quite interested even though you’re already getting married to Zhai Sheng. I’ve always felt that Zhai Sheng’s a petty guy. I won’t misunderstand you, but you’d better take care of yourself in case Zhai Sheng overhears this.”

“It’s purely out of curiosity.” Qiao Nan laughed awkwardly. “Although I haven’t known you for very long, it’s my first time hearing you guys talk about an outsider. I guess you must have quite a good relationship with him. I was just wondering if I should get to know the family’s situation a little better. That was why I asked that question. Otherwise, it would be quite embarrassing for me if I don’t even know whom I’m meeting in the future.”

After hearing that explanation, Zhai Hua agreed. “Alright, I’ll tell you. How should I put this? Our family is neither on good nor bad terms with the Tian family. When Tian Dong was younger, probably before he turned six, we played and grew up together. After that, the Tian family moved abroad with Dongzi and they’ve never returned since then. We haven’t kept in touch all these years, so you don’t have to feel too burdened about Dongzi. Even though we haven’t kept in contact, Dongzi has a very good temper. He probably won’t go overboard in his treatment toward you.”

Zhai Hua herself had not noticed, but Qiao Nan realized that even though they had not kept in contact with each other in more than ten years, Zhai Hua still had a good impression of her old playmate, Tian Dong. In fact, he put Zhai Hua at ease.

The more Zhai Hua behaved in this manner, the more miserable Qiao Nan felt. Before meeting her, Brother Zhai had already been married to Qiu Chenxi. Could she really hope that Tian Dong, who was almost in his fifties, was still unmarried without a family or children?

People were often this way. Dreams were one thing, but one’s feelings could not be controlled by logic. Qiao Nan could not help but think about hypothetical situations.

It was only when Tian Dong announced that he had to return without attending Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng’s wedding, and had gone to the Zhai family’s house to deliver his gifts in advance did Qiao Nan finally give up.

“Why don’t you stay for a few more days? My wedding is happening on the following day.” Zhai Sheng did not mind the wedding gifts that Tian Dong had presented and simply handed them over to Qiao Nan. “Why are you in such a rush to leave?”

“I don’t have a choice.” Tian Dong smiled faintly. “I won’t be able to attend your wedding, so I can only give you my congratulations in advance. Uncle and auntie aren’t young anymore. You guys had better have children as soon as possible to bring some joy into their lives.”

Zhai Sheng shook his head. "I never imagined hearing such a thing from you. You even sounded quite fluent. Do you use that to counsel others very often, or do others often counsel you?" Zhai Sheng was trying to find out about Tian Dong's situation.

Tian Dong smiled without answering his question. "Alright, I'm flying off tonight."

"Do you want me to send you off?" He was in a hurry indeed if his flight was that very night. "Is something going on in your family?"

"Yes, my eight-year-old son is sick. Because of his illness, his temper isn't very good, so I have to go back to spend some time with him." Tian Dong shared a close relationship with his son. Knowing that his father was busy with his business, his son must have been really ill to have thrown a temper. His son had been so ill that he had been hospitalized.

Tian Dong cared very deeply about his son.

Knowing that his son had been hospitalized, Tian Dong naturally wanted to return to his son's side immediately to cheer him up.

Qiao Nan's heart shattered. "Your son is already eight?" He was almost half of Jiajia's age... Qiao Nan looked at Zhai Hua regretfully, thinking that Zhai Hua probably had something to do with how Tian Dong's son was only half Jiajia's age.

At this time, Qiao Nan could not help but feel that it was Tian Dong's and her own bad luck with the Zhai family's children. Because they had not met the Zhai family's children at the right time, their lives seemed to have been a mess.

Chapter 2004: I'll Give You A Ride

On the other hand, without them, the Zhai siblings seemed to be freer and had gotten married without any delay.

Zhai Hua was the least aware and self-aware person present. Hearing that Tian Dong's son was only half of her daughter's age, Zhai Hua laughed. "Haha, our Jiajia is much older than your son. When

you bring your son back, Jiajia can help babysit him. Dongzi, you must not have been very good. Don't they always say that foreigners are more liberal? How could you only have an eight-year-old at your age?" Logically speaking, that eight-year-old son should be his second or third child.

Tian Dong's eyes shot toward Zhai Hua, who had made fun of him, and he made a cold remark. "That may be true, but that's their business. Although our family migrated, our mindsets are still traditional. When I was younger, I focused on my career and it was inevitable that I got married a little later."

Since that was the case, his child would naturally be younger.

As for the true reason as to why he had gotten married at a later age, Tian Dong did not even want to talk about it once he thought about his eight-year-old son. No matter what, he had already gotten married. His son was lively and adorable, did well in school, and was a sensible child. Besides, his relationship with his wife was not bad.

His wife was capable in every aspect. While he focused on his career, she took care of his elders and son. He was already satisfied with having such a life. Everything else was buried as memories in the past because he was no longer a willful person.

Not only was he a son, but he was also a husband and a father.

"..." Qiao Nan bit on her lip as the discomfort in her chest increased. Previously, she had felt miserable on Zhai Hua's behalf, pitying Zhai Hua for having missed out on such a good man like Tian Dong for a man like Wei De. Now, she felt miserable entirely because of Tian Dong.

Unfortunately, Zhai Hua had absolutely no idea why Tian Dong's son was only eight years old and knew nothing about Tian Dong's feelings. She had even made such a joke.

Qiao Nan herself had gotten married late in life. As a traditional Chinese, no one knew better just how much pressure and stress a person would feel due to getting married late in life than Qiao Nan. That was why Qiao Nan could relate to Tian Dong.

In her previous life, Tian Dong had only gotten married to Zhai Hua at the age of thirty. At that time, the Tian family had already been doing very well, yet the Tian family had no intention of being picky about their daughter-in-law. They were already grateful enough that their son had finally been willing to get married and give them a grandchild.

Tian Dong had already faced such great pressure to get married at the age of thirty. But Tian Dong had pushed that back even further and had only gotten married at the age of thirty-five, having a child even later on in life. It had definitely not been easy for Tian Dong all those years. Those years were probably not good memories for neither him nor his parents.

With such a comparison, it seemed as though Tian Dong was much more pitiable.

Feeling Qiao Nan's uneasiness, Zhai Sheng took Qiao Nan's hand into her own. "Since your child's sick, I won't try to keep you here any longer. There's nothing more important than your child's health. Your family is rather traditional. I heard that children raised by foreigners are much more liberal. Alright, I wish you a safe journey. I'll give you a treat when you return the next time."

The ends of Tian Dong's lips curled up into the slightest smile, and after a simple answer, he took his leave. Although he said that he was flying off that night, his flight was actually in the evening. After sending his gifts, Tian Dong had to rush off to the airport. Otherwise, he would probably miss his flight and be unable to be by his son's side when he went for his surgery.

Seeing that Tian Dong was about to leave, Zhai Hua sighed. "We finally met after such a long time, but it's unfortunate that there were too many things going on, so much so that we couldn't even have the chance to have a meal together. He was as weak as a young lady when he was younger, but he's all grown up and is even a father now."

Zhai Hua could not help but marvel at how her old playmate had truly grown up to become a tall, strong tree that supported his whole family. "He truly is our old playmate. Men should be like him. They should be responsible and take care of their wives and family."

A man like that was a true man, unlike Wei De...

Qiao Nan had not drawn her hand away from Zhai Sheng's. As newlyweds, Qiao Nan felt that Zhai Sheng could have the same ideas as her. After all, bystanders were able to understand the situation the most clearly. Zhai Hua's words, in particular, had shocked Qiao Nan so much that she almost regarded Zhai Hua as a fool.

Yes, Tian Dong was a good man, but Zhai Hua had given up such a good man for a bast*rd like Wei De. Every bite and sip was preordained. If Zhai Hua had not fallen for Wei De's words and gone through that failed marriage with Wei De, she would not have gotten such a sweet and charming daughter, Jijia.

Conversely, Tian Dong had always remembered that he had a blissful family life now after having endured a few tough years. Tian Dong was responsible toward his family, and Qiao Nan knew that since Tian Dong had been willing to get married and have a child, he would definitely be responsible and sincere toward them.

Tian Dong's blissful life had not come easy.

"What's wrong?" Qiao Nan saw the change in Zhai Sheng's gaze. Zhai Sheng looked at Zhai Hua. "If I'm not wrong, there's something wrong with Dongzi's car. Isn't he rushing to catch his flight? Zhai Hua, why don't you give him a ride?" Zhai Hua owed it to Tian Dong.

Zhai Hua had no self-awareness at all and agreed without hesitation. "Is that so? Alright. I'll give him a lift." If Dongzi had not refused their offer, she could have given Dongzi a ride even if his car had not been spoiled. No matter what, it had been Dongzi who had sent Jiajia to the hospital after the accident, allowing Jiajia to receive treatment immediately.

Tian Dong's expression was pale as he realized that his car would not start. It was not a big deal to repurchase another ticket for a later flight, but that would mean that he would miss his son's surgery. His son was nervous about undergoing surgery, and just yesterday, his son had asked him several times over video call whether he would be back in time for the surgery. Tian Dong did not want to break his promise to his son.

There was no other choice. Tian Dong could only make a call and let his employees deal with his car while he hailed a cab to the airport. However, hailing a cab would pose a challenge too since it was the peak hour. It would be an even bigger problem if he were to encounter a traffic jam.

Honk! Honk! The car horn drew Tian Dong's attention.

Chapter 2005: What Do You Mean

Zhai Hua rolled down the car windows and smiled at Tian Dong. "How about it? Do you want me to give you a lift?"

Tian Dong didn't react for a while. When he spoke, he refused. "No need. Go and do what you have to do. It shouldn't be too difficult to hail a taxi here. I shan't delay you." He was willing to let go of some things, but this didn't mean that when he was facing them, he wouldn't feel uncomfortable in his heart at all.

Zhai Hua felt that she was busy and thus didn't manage to find a chance to have a meal with Tian Dong. However, Tian Dong knew it in his heart that he didn't want to have this meal at all. Even if there were this time and opportunity, he would pretend that he didn't know about it and just miss it time and time again.

He had already missed out on that most important time. The interaction that shouldn't have been missed out now had already become the existence of a mistake.

Zhai Hua rolled her eyes. "Are you pretending to be a fool deliberately? At this age, Zhai Sheng's eyesight and listening are still good. No wonder he always thinks about getting married and having children. He told me that your car broke down. Initially, I thought he was joking. Alright, get in the car. I deliberately drove to send you to the airport. Are you not going to give me face? You sent Jiajia to the hospital. How big a matter is it that I send you to the airport? Don't be as wishy-washy as when you were young." How unlike a big man.

"When I was young?" How rare it was that Zhai Hua still remembered what happened when they were young. It was a pity that she didn't remember those that she should but remembered those that she shouldn't. "Sure. I'll trouble you then."

Putting the luggage into the trunk of the car and then sitting next to Zhai Hua was a huge test for Tian Dong. He was married for ten years and his son was already eight years old. It was only now that he felt that everything he thought he had forgotten was actually deeply carved into his bones.

He was feeling so uncomfortable, but the woman next to him was still smiling. Tian Dong smiled lightly. "Zhai Hua, you're really a heartless person."

Zhai Hua's behavior made Tian Dong understand that he should really let it go. "My wife's a great woman. She's very gentle and helps me take care of the elderly and children at home. She cares a lot about me too. She deserves better treatment and a better life."

Zhai Hua felt like her heart was pricked. Her facial expression was inexplicable. "But of course. You have already married her. Of course, you have to treat her well. This is what a man should do. You shouldn't just say them but do them. Seeing that you're so tall and muscular now and that your figure is comparable to the soldiers in the army, I thought you became a real man. Listening to your words, I realized that you're the same as before, so wishy-washy. To think that we joked when we were young that when you grew up, I would marry you."

“...”

“...”

After Zhai Hua's words, Tian Dong didn't say anything. The atmosphere immediately became quiet. After a long while, Tian Dong broke this awkward silence. He smiled very faintly and said, "Is that so? Did you say this when you were young? I don't remember it."

No matter how slow Zhai Hua was, she also felt that the atmosphere was strange now. "Brat, you have such a bad memory. That's true as well. So many things happened after that, and so many years have passed. It was just a joke made in the past. It's pretty normal to forget about it."

If it wasn't that she chatted with Dongzi today by chance, she herself could hardly remember the words that were said during their childhood times.

"Yes, it has been so many years. It's pretty normal to forget about it."

Tian Dong repeated Zhai Hua's words as confirmation. Although Tian Dong was obviously agreeing with what she said, Zhai Hua didn't know why but she felt that his words sounded strange. There seemed to be another meaning to them. "Dongzi, since when did you start to speak in circles with me? Is your skin itching for a fight?"

In the face of her childhood playmate, Zhai Hua was like the past. She felt that the best way to improve relationships was to fight. She was like that when facing her younger brother, Zhai Sheng, as well.

Seeing the look of helplessness on Zhai Hua's face, Tian Dong really smiled this time. "Childish. Don't forget that I'm in a rush. You have a daughter and I have a son. My son is undergoing surgery and waiting for me to return." A fight? Ten years ago, he really wanted to have a fight with Zhai Hua. He wanted to knock her on the head and ask if she really treated the words she had said previously as rubbish.

However, Tian Dong felt that everything was over now. He didn't even have the energy to argue or fight with Zhai Hua anymore. Some things were over and should be left at that. Even if Zhai Hua was divorced, Zhai Hua had her own life and he had his own family. It was good to forget about it. Things that were forgotten shouldn't be mentioned again, lest they hurt each other again.

After Tian Dong finished talking, Zhai Hua nearly couldn't continue the conversation. It was at least twenty minutes away to the airport. How awkward was it if they didn't say anything the entire time? There was no choice. Zhai Hua asked, "Didn't you say you have an eight-year-old son? What's his name?"

"..." Tian Dong closed his eyes and seemed to be resting. "Tian Huaguang."

"What does it mean?" Zhai Hua's heart skipped a beat. Tian Huaguang. Both their names had the same character, Hua. How coincidental.

"The light of China." Tian Dong said, "No matter what, I haven't forgotten that I'm Chinese. My son has been learning Chinese since primary school. My generation might not be able to return and make a comeback, but I believe my son will return to the country to develop and become the light of China."

Great. Zhai Hua felt that she was slapped in the face. That short moment when she felt her heartbeat race had completely disappeared. "It turned out to be this meaning. The light of China. That's a good name. It's particularly meaningful. I believe your son, Xiao Guang, can do it in the future."

"I think so too." Seeing that Zhai Hua looked embarrassed, Tian Dong felt a little happier. This was the first time he realized he was actually quite petty. That was true as well. Not only was the promise he had kept and cherished deeply in his heart for more than twenty years forgotten, but the other party even fell in love and got married behind his back. Even a saint would get angry in that case.

As they chatted, the twenty-minute journey wasn't considered especially slow. After sending Tian Dong to the airport, Zhai Hua secretly heaved a sigh of relief. When Dongzi was young, he was like a girl as he was very good-tempered. How did he change so much after growing up? She almost didn't know how to talk to Dongzi anymore.

Damn. Thankfully, they had already arrived at the airport. Otherwise, she was already prepared to be a mute.

As he brought down his luggage, Tian Dong looked deeply at Zhai Hua.

Chapter 2006: It Was All Over

“There are no hurdles in this world that can’t be passed. I hope you can be happy in the future and meet a man who truly treats you well again.”

Although he had taken his childhood promise seriously, didn’t he also get married and have a son? Zhai Hua was not yet fifty years old and still had a few decades in her life. As such, Zhai Hua shouldn’t stand still because of a failed marriage and waste her remaining time.

Zhai Hua rubbed her elbow against his in an exaggerated manner and had a look of disdain. “Yes, I know you’re living a happy life now. Don’t agitate me, this loner. Don’t forget that you have a son and I have a daughter. I don’t have so many thoughts about marriage. I’ve regretted so much that I left the army early. Now, I am relieved. I’m not going to do something so troublesome. However, I can still be a veteran soldier and make some contribution to the army.”

Tian Dong nodded. “As long as you’re happy, you can do that. Goodbye.” Goodbye, my childhood. Goodbye, my first love.

He was really returning to his family this time.

2

Zhai Hua rubbed her lips lightly and her frowning eyebrows loosened. “Goodbye. You have to be happy too.” Many things were over in the past. She couldn’t think about it or regret it. Otherwise, she would lead a more painful life.

“I’m already very happy now.” Tian Dong entered the customs with his luggage. After returning this time, if there were any projects in the country in the future, he could send someone else from the company over and didn’t need to make a trip back personally. This was because the knot in his heart had been untied.

2

“Mom, you’re back.” When Zhai Hua returned home, not only had Jiajia returned from school, but she had also finished her meal. “Mom, you haven’t eaten, right? Grandma left you this. It’s still warm. Eat it quickly.” She knew that her birth mother had sent that uncle from the other day to the airport. Jiajia even knew that that uncle had a son who was much younger than her. More importantly, that uncle was childhood playmates with her mom.

It turned out that that tall and handsome uncle had such a good relationship with their family.

“Oh, alright. I’ll wash my hands first.” Zhai Hua’s reaction was a little slow. After putting down the car keys, she went to the toilet and washed her hands. Then, she looked at herself in the mirror for a very long time.

“Mom, hurry up and have your meal. Why are you looking at yourself in the mirror? Mom, since when did you like to look pretty?” In the past, before her parents got a divorce, her mom never looked at herself in the mirror. Indeed, now that she was back at her own family, did her mom’s habits change?

Zhai Hua rubbed her face and smiled at Jiajia. “Alright, I’ll listen to you. Let’s eat.”

Jiajia leaned on Zhai Hua. “Mom, what’s wrong with you today?” It was a little weird and different from usual.

“What’s wrong with me?” Zhai Hua raised her eyebrows and smiled. “Didn’t you ask me to eat? Are you planning to let me chat with you while I eat? Okay, shouldn’t you go read some books now?”

Jiajia blinked. “Mom, did you forget that I have my middle school examinations tomorrow?” As such, she left school today earlier than usual. There was only one activity in the afternoon, which was to get familiarized with her examination hall and find her seat. The first day she finished the middle school examinations was also the day her uncle was marrying her aunt. “Mom, are you really alright?”

Didn’t her mom just send a childhood playmate to the airport?

“Mom, did Dad trouble you again behind grandma’s back?” It was possible that her dad hasn’t given up yet and wanted to get back together with her mom. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have gotten into a car accident earlier and be hospitalized for a few days. Her teacher couldn’t help but worry about her. She had only transferred over in the second semester of her third year but had gotten into a car accident before the middle school examinations. There were so many unexpected changes.

After a few bites, a small bowl of rice landed in Zhai Hua’s stomach. Zhai Hua looked at her and said, “Don’t spout nonsense. Your dad didn’t come to find me. Have you forgotten about my physical strength? Between your dad and me, the general phenomenon of strong men and weak women doesn’t exist. Your dad can’t win a fight against me. Scold me? I can’t be bothered to argue

with him. Ever since that, I haven't seen your dad. I hope your dad knows how to be a better person in the future. If he continues to be such a fool at this age, he might burden you then."

Speaking of Wei De, Zhai Hua slowly recovered herself. She rarely heard about Wei De recently. It was difficult for Wei De to appear in front of her again. All she knew was that after their divorce, Wei De's life was getting worse.

Wasn't it just a divorce? Although she and Jiajia left Wei De, he still had his parents, wife, and son by his side. As long as he led his life seriously, even if the Wei family couldn't enjoy a good life, it would not be too bad at least.

Who knew that when she heard about the Wei family's situation after their divorce, Zhai Hua couldn't help but doubt if that Wei family she heard about was the one she had lived with for more than ten years? It was also the first time she realized that the Wei family's dependence on her had reached such an extent.

No wonder Wei De would rather commit suicide to force her not to file this divorce lawsuit.

Marrying the right woman could save a man from fighting hard for ten years. Zhai Hua always felt that the Zhai family didn't help Wei De much. Even if she was marrying into a family of lower status, the situation between her and Wei De was far from that of an ugly duckling man's. However, now that things had developed to this point, Zhai Hua truly understood that even though no one from the Zhai family really helped Wei De, Wei De had relied on her so much that the Wei family's quality of life had improved tremendously.

"Then, what's wrong with you?" All was good as long as her dad didn't approach them. After being in a car accident and upon thinking about the existence of her birth father, Wei De, again, Jiajia was more or less a little psychologically scarred.

Zhai Hua smiled again. "Didn't you say that you're having the middle school examinations tomorrow? Don't think about the rest too much. Try your best for the examinations. Of course, don't give yourself too much pressure. I'm already an adult. Let's not say nothing happened to me now. Even if something happens, I will solve it on my own. If I can't solve it and I need someone to discuss with, you, as my only daughter, can't escape even if you want to. In recent years, so many things had happened. It's normal for me to be distracted at times. Little housekeeper, remember to rest well tonight and get enough sleep so that you can take the examinations well tomorrow."

"Alright." Jiajia felt more at ease and stopped asking her mom what was wrong.

Miao Jing wanted Jiajia to relax after having her meal and digest the contents in her stomach before sleeping.

Chapter 2007: Upset

Otherwise, it was easy to feel some discomfort from sleeping after a heavy meal. If she had not needed to wait for Zhai Hua, Jiajia would have returned to her room to read her books. Now, Jiajia no longer insisted on waiting and returned to her room as she had intended to do instead. After glancing through her book, she fell asleep on her bed.

After Jiajia fell asleep, the adults decided to retire for the night as well so that they would not disturb Jiajia from her sleep.

The moment Qiao Nan returned to her room, Zhai Sheng followed her in. “Shall we have a chat in the study room?”

Qiao Nan frowned. “What’s the matter?”

“Zhai Hua and Tian Dong?”

“...”

Qiao Nan’s shoulders relaxed. All right. She could deceive anyone but Zhai Sheng. “Alright, let’s go.” Although they were about to hold a wedding and had already become legal husband and wife, the couple, who had a combined age of over a hundred years, followed the rules even more strictly than anyone and slept separately. Now that he wanted to have a chat in the middle of the night, Zhai Sheng did not even step into Qiao Nan’s room.

His insistence on doing so was just to prevent others from scolding Qiao Nan even more than they already would. They had already gotten their marriage certificate. Would Zhai Sheng be in such a great hurry to swallow Qiao Nan like a tiger would his prey?

It was only when he reached the study did Zhai Sheng ask, “How did you know about Zhai Hua and Dongzi?” It was just like how Nan Nan had been familiar with the Zhai family’s old villa the first time she had visited the place.

Although Zhai Sheng had never asked about these matters, it did not mean that they did not exist. After the Zhai family's old villa was renovated, the Zhai family themselves had hardly stayed there and had only gotten caretakers to look after the place.

Before meeting Qiao Nan, even Zhai Sheng himself had stayed in the old villa for not more than a few days. If Qiao Nan had appeared earlier, outsiders might even misunderstand that Qiao Nan was the true owner of the house, given her familiarity with the place. Zhai Sheng was not even as familiar with the place as Qiao Nan was, and had to take some time to get used to the environment.

Since Zhai Sheng was naturally more sensitive about matters that concerned Qiao Nan, it was not hard for Zhai Sheng to realize what Qiao Nan was thinking from the way Qiao Nan glanced at Zhai Hua and Tian Dong. There was no way Qiao Nan could hide her true feelings in front of Zhai Sheng.

Qiao Nan lowered her head, not really wanting to answer this question. "Would you believe me if I were to say that it's a woman's intuition? We all know just how worried Sister Zhai Hua was when Jijia got into an accident even though she wasn't severely injured. The weird thing was that Sister Zhai Hua became much calmer the moment Tian Dong arrived. I'm a woman too, and I know how women behave. A man who can bring such peace to a woman must have made a good impression on that woman. There are only a few situations in which women have that much trust in a man."

Zhai Sheng hugged Qiao Nan. "We can leave it at that if you don't want to talk about it. You don't have to explain it to me if you can't. Otherwise, others will see through you too easily. Nan Nan, you're a bad liar."

This explanation was truly too far-fetched. The entire Zhai family, including his parents and Zhai Hua, had probably already forgotten about what had happened in their childhood. Zhai Sheng was different. Zhai Sheng was the only one who knew that Tian Dong had returned when Zhai Hua had gotten married. Not only had he returned, but he had also secretly attended—or rather, observed, Zhai Hua's wedding to Wei De.

After witnessing the wedding, Tian Dong had immediately flown off again. Ever since then, Tian Dong had never returned.

A man behaving so stubbornly could only mean one thing, and one did not need a woman's intuition to understand that.

Zhai Sheng did not think it was strange that Zhai Hua had not kept the promise she had made in her childhood, treating it as nothing more than a memory. It was only when Zhai Sheng found out that

Tian Dong had specially returned on Zhai Hua's wedding day did he realize that Tian Dong was serious about it.

Unfortunately, Zhai Hua was serious about marrying Wei De at that time, and nothing was going to stop her. Besides, the couple had already registered their marriage. Zhai Sheng knew that Zhai Hua would not change her mind even if he told her about Tian Dong, much less get divorced from Wei De. After all, they had simply thought of that promise as a joke. How could they possibly have believed that they would keep to that promise even after growing up?

It would only make things more awkward between Zhai Hua and Tian Dong if he were to talk about it.

Between Zhai Hua and Tian Dong, Zhai Sheng had naturally chosen Zhai Hua. It was also good that he remained tight-lipped so that Zhai Hua would not know what she had missed out on.

But years later, Zhai Hua was now divorced and Tian Dong had returned for his business, and the two of them had unexpectedly met each other!

Thinking about Zhai Hua's reaction today, Zhai Sheng had a premonition that Zhai Hua might have realized something. Dongzi's behavior had made it obvious enough, had it not?

Zhai Sheng's decision to let her go and drop the matter caused Qiao Nan to heave a sigh of relief. "Brother Zhai, I'll return to my room to sleep then."

"Alright, go ahead. Don't think too much about this and rest well. We'll be getting married in two days." Zhai Sheng had finally met a woman whom he loved and he would leave things as they were even if he could not clear the air. What else could he do since he loved her and her alone?

After leaving Zhai Sheng's study, Qiao Nan finally relaxed. But when she opened her door, she saw Zhai Hua, who seemed as though she had been drained of all energy. "Sister Zhai Hua, what are you doing here?"

"Where did you go?" Zhai Hua looked restlessly at Qiao Nan. "You guys are already getting married soon. Aren't you guys getting too close? Just hold on for a little longer. It's just another two more days. Why don't you think about the single and divorced person here?"

She had been feeling miserable and had wanted to have a chat with Qiao Nan. She had not expected to see no one after opening the door. The Zhai family was only that big and there were only that many people in the family. It did not need a genius to figure out whom Qiao Nan had gone to see.

Zhai Hua had wanted to relax by having a chat with Qiao Nan. Unfortunately, the moment she opened the door, she had witnessed Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng showing public displays of affection, agitating her. "Hurry on over. I'm so frustrated right now. Why don't you tell me a joke?"

She could not tell Jiajia about this matter and could only talk to Qiao Nan about it. If she did not talk about it, she felt that she might just suffocate.

Qiao Nan walked over and lay down on her bed, allowing Zhai Hua to lie down beside her. It was not the first time Qiao Nan had encountered such a situation, so she took it in her stride.

Chapter 2008: Sour

"I might not be able to tell you a joke, but I'm open to listening to you. Why don't you tell me what's keeping you up and making you so frustrated?"

"Qiao Nan, tell me. Will you treat a six-year-old's joke seriously?" Up until now, Zhai Hua had not figured out whether her discovery was a result of her own narcissism or that Tian Dong had never meant that at all. No matter how Zhai Hua tried to convince herself, Zhai Hua knew that it was not simply because of her own narcissism.

Qiao Nan placed her arm behind her head and sighed inwardly. Indeed, she intended to talk about this issue. No wonder even Brother Zhai had looked for her to talk about this. Perhaps, everyone in the family, apart from Jiajia, had felt it. After all, the Zhai family had watched Tian Dong grow up and had a good understanding of Tian Dong's temper.

"Sister Zhai Hua, why don't we put it this way? You win some battles and you lose some. There's no point in being stuck in the past since it won't improve your life in the future. Just think about how good of a daughter Jiajia is and how much you love Jiajia. Don't think about anything else."

Qiao Nan could not bring herself to say that Zhai Hua was divorced but Tian Dong was still married and not divorced. Letting Zhai Hua know that she had missed out on a good man who had kept his promise from the age of six to the age of thirty for a bast*rd would be a big blow to her.

As such, it was much better not to know about such 'good news'. For Zhai Hua, the most important person in life should no longer be a man but her daughter, Jiajia. "Sister Zhai Hua, stop thinking about this. Jiajia will be sitting for her middle school examination tomorrow. Jiajia cares very much about your feelings. What if your behavior affects Jiajia?"

Zhai Hua laughed bitterly. "You're right. I shouldn't think too much about this. To me, Jiajia is indeed the most important." When she had gotten a divorce from Wei De, she had already decided that she would never get remarried. She would simply lead a life with Jiajia as the center of her life.

She knew that her family would never mind Jiajia and her staying with them.

So, what was she thinking about? Dongzi had a wife and a son. He had a good career and a family. Even if she were to get an answer, she had already missed out on a good opportunity. Zhai Hua turned around and looked at Qiao Nan. "I suddenly feel as though bad luck strikes a person all at once and that bad things never happen alone."

Not only had she gotten married to such a bast*rd, but she had also missed out on a good man because of that. Really...

Qiao Nan covered Zhai Hua with the blanket. "You'll definitely gain something every time you lose something. At least, you're not without anything. You must remember that everything is worth it since you have a daughter like Jiajia now."

What else could she have said? Could she have possibly have told Zhai Hua that she would have gotten a sensible and obedient son, Tian Xiao Bao, instead of Jiajia if she had not married Wei De and had instead waited for Tian Dong to return?

Qiao Nan's lips twitched, indicating that she no longer wanted to continue with the conversation. Was it true that bad things rarely happened alone?

The Zhai family placed great importance on Jiajia's middle school examination, and Zhai Hua personally fetched Jiajia to and from school in case she got into an accident along the way. Jiajia had already pretty much recovered from the earlier accident and it would have no impact on her performance. But if she were to get into another accident, Jiajia might very well face the consequences for the rest of her life.

“Jiajia, don’t be too anxious and just do your best. There’s no need to put too much pressure on yourself. Did you bring along your pens and your exam admission ticket?” Zhai Hua was no different from other parents and nagged at Jiajia continuously.

Jiajia laughed. “Don’t be like that, Mom. I wasn’t anxious, but I can’t help it now that you’re acting in this manner.” Was it not just a middle school examination? She had been revising for it for the past half a year and she had been taking exams all the time. Examinations were nothing out of the ordinary to students like her. “Mom, you don’t have to wait for me. I’ll be having lunch at school. I won’t be going home, but I won’t be leaving the school compound either. You can go home and come back for me later.”

After a moment of consideration, Zhai Hua nodded in agreement. “Alright. Remember not to leave the school compound until I pick you up later.”

Wei De had not left the capital, much less given up on her. With such a situation, Zhai Hua had to be careful of Wei De looking for Jiajia again. That one accident was more than enough. Even if Wei De had lost all custody over Jiajia because of that accident, Zhai Hua felt that it was still insufficient to make up for Jiajia’s suffering.

If he were to turn up a second time, she would not care about the law and would kill Wei De with her own hands. Did Wei De not care about Jiajia because she was not a son? She knew that Wei De would stop at nothing and would not even care about the hurt Jiajia would suffer in the process of achieving his own goals.

Forget it. She did not want to think about it anymore. Qiao Nan was right about one thing. With a daughter like Jiajia, she should stop thinking about everything else. Otherwise, she would only make herself miserable.

While Jiajia was busy with her middle school examination, the rest of the Zhai family was not lazing around either. Everyone on good terms with the Zhai family knew that Zhai Sheng would be getting married in two days’ time. Everyone knew who Zhai Sheng was, but not the bride’s identity.

After Old Li, who was sour about how Qiao Nan was getting married to Zhai Sheng, exposed Qiao Nan’s identity as a ‘caretaker’, there had been somewhat of a storm. But that had subsided quickly.

People were no fools. Given Zhai Sheng’s family background, he could choose anyone to marry. He would never settle for a mere caretaker even though it was his second marriage and even though he was already forty-five. The most important premise of Zhai Sheng getting married was that he was willing and had fallen for that woman.

Since both parties were willing, there was nothing wrong with Zhai Sheng getting married to any woman. The ones who made the greatest fuss were those who had unmarried daughters or those whose daughters were divorced and looking for a second marriage partner.

1

Their excuses sounded high-sounding and dignified, but in fact, these were the people who were the most hypocritical.

Of course, these hypocritical people were not all outsiders. Among them were two of Qiao Nan's 'relatives'. Her closest ones, in fact.

Chapter 2009: Help

Hearing that someone from the northern courtyard's Qiao family had come to find her, Qiao Nan did not even need to ask who it was. "Tell them that I'm busy." In other words, she was not going to meet them.

The people in the southern courtyard knew that Qiao Nan was the Zhai family's daughter-in-law and was no different from the matriarch of the Zhai family. Not only did Qiao Nan have the right to enter the southern courtyard freely, but the guards also had to listen to her. As such, the guards naturally denied Ding Jiayi entry into the southern courtyard. "I'm sorry, but you aren't allowed inside. Miss Qiao isn't free now. Perhaps, you can try to contact her and meet her somewhere else."

There was no way anyone living in Ping Cheng did not know about the Qiao family's news. The majority of the public understood Qiao Nan's reasons for being heartless and refusing to meet the Qiao family. They did not think that Qiao Nan was out of line for doing so. "Humph! She really married well. Now, she won't even acknowledge her own family. She's so heartless! No wonder her own biological mother treated her in that way. There must be something wrong with her. It's just that the news didn't report that side of her!"

Upon receiving that rejection, Ding Jiayi's expression darkened and she returned to the northern courtyard while gritting her teeth. Along the way back, Ding Jiayi received quite a few gazes filled with ridicule. All these people had come to ask her for favors, yet they were the most hypocritical and could not wait to see their family fall.

“Mom, did you not meet her?” Qiao Zijin was anxious, yet helpless. Seeing that her mom had returned in less than ten minutes, she knew that it was impossible for her mom to have met Qiao Nan, explained the situation, and asked her for help. “Was Qiao Nan not around, or is she deliberately trying to hide from us?”

“What do you think?” Ding Jiayi stomped her foot. “This wretched girl has gotten so bold. She ran away previously and now, she’s taking advantage of the fact that the Zhai family will back her up. That’s why she doesn’t even care about her biological mother! She won’t even meet me. Has she forgotten that I gave birth to her?”

Qiao Zijin was upset. “Mom, the civil servant examination is happening soon but there’s nothing going on on our side. Even if I sign up for it, it will only be a waste of my effort if Qiao Nan doesn’t help us out. I’ve already agreed to get a job and sit for the exam like you asked me to. But if you can’t exert your power and I don’t become a civil servant, don’t ever ask me to get a job again. I’ve already tried and failed. It’s not my fault.”

She did not mind trying for a job in the civil service since it was easy and would bring her a salary of about ten thousand a month. At the very least, she would have some spending money.

Aside from being a civil servant, she had no interest in getting another job.

“There’s no hurry. It hasn’t been decided yet. The Zhai family has raised three generations. To put it bluntly, the Zhai family is equally capable of making you a civil servant whether or not you sign up for the examination. Why are you in a hurry and worried?” She had already heard all about it.

Even if everyone else was incapable of doing so, the Zhai family was, as long as they wanted to make it happen. Since that wretched girl was going to marry Zhai Sheng, Zijin would be Zhai Sheng’s sister-in-law. It was only right for him to do a small favor for his family.

If that wretched girl had a heart, neither she nor Zijin had to worry about this. The Zhai family should already have realized Zijin’s situation by now and would step forward to solve the issue of Zijin’s unemployment.

She had not even waited for the Zhai family to take the initiative and had done so herself. Was that not enough for them?

Unfortunately, Qiao Nan stood in her way. That was what truly upset Ding Jiayi. Today's rejection at the gate made Ding Jiayi realize once again that Qiao Nan seemed to have damaged her brain because of the accident. It was as though she was an entirely different person who was no longer as obedient and easy to control as she had been in the past.

Qiao Zijin's expression brightened slightly. "Yes, that's true. The Zhai family is indeed capable of doing that. But Mom, are you sure that they'll be willing to do so?" Qiao Zijin bit on her lip. "Mom, Qiao Nan's changed. She's different now. She didn't even care about me when I was sick, so she might not care about me now either. Mom, don't you think that ever since the accident, Qiao Nan's entirely changed. I wonder if that person whom we know is actually Qiao Nan!"

It was not that she was being superstitious or spouting nonsense. At that time, Chen Jun had been Qiao Nan's boyfriend whom she was about to get married to. Not only had Qiao Nan not resisted nor thrown a tantrum, but she had even helped raise her son.

Looking at Qiao Nan now, who not only took her money but also refused to acknowledge the Qiao family, she seemed like an entirely new person. Even if she had really damaged her brain, her personality could not have undergone such a drastic change, right?

Ding Jiayi thought carefully about it, agreeing with Qiao Zijin. "Zijin, what do you mean by that? What era are we living in? Even I don't believe in such things but you do? Others might not know whether she's Qiao Nan, but how could we possibly not know? If she isn't Qiao Nan, why would she have taken all of her wages and money before leaving? Apart from me, Qiao Nan is the only one who's the clearest about how much she earns."

It was impossible for such a ridiculous thing to happen!

Qiao Zijin turned around in annoyance and sat down. "Then, tell me why Qiao Nan changed so drastically. You always think that Qiao Nan should listen to you just because you gave birth to her. In reality, you're her mom but she won't even agree to meet you. You keep saying that I don't have to worry about becoming a civil servant, but do you think I can still trust you about that?"

She might not be capable, but she was capable of thinking for herself. Ding Jiayi had to stop coaxing her like a three-year-old toddler.

Since she had already bragged about it but had not succeeded, Ding Jiayi felt a little embarrassed herself. "There's no need to be in a hurry. You didn't even want to get a job in the first place. If we settle this a little later, you'll get to rest for a few more days. Won't that be better? As for the civil

servant examination... You've already registered for it. You can decide whether to go for it yourself."

"Initially, I was just trying to be nice to that wretched girl. Compared to getting you a position and asking the Zhai family to help you out of nowhere, it would be better for her if you were to take the examination. At the very least, it would attract less attention."

Chapter 2010: Who's Attending?

"I gave her the choice of a better path so that it would be easier for her but she chose otherwise. If anything happens because she chose this path, she'd better not blame it on us. If Zhai Sheng leaves her because of this, it's all because of her own doing."

It would be best if Zhai Sheng got a divorce from that wretched girl so that she would come to her senses. Did she really think that she could forget all about her family and act all high and mighty now that she had married into a good family? Without her family's help, she would get a divorce even if she were to get married.

Only by getting along well with her family would Qiao Nan be able to secure her marriage in the future. As long as Qiao Nan refused to acknowledge the importance of her family, she would never be able to lead a peaceful life in the future.

Qiao Zijin grabbed a bunch of melon seeds in her hand. It did not matter how much nonsense her mom spouted. Since her mom was so insistent that there was nothing wrong with Qiao Nan even after that accident, there was no point in her worrying any further. In short, her mom would look for Qiao Nan and settle the matter of her becoming a civil servant. Then, she would just have to keep that job and never resign from that job that would pay her ten thousand every month. Conversely, if her mom could not handle that matter, her mom would simply have to be thriftier in the future and she should not even think of asking for an allowance from her. She had half her life ahead of her. 1.6 million yuan was not going to be enough.

Moreover, in such a short span of time, she had already spent quite a few thousand yuan. At the thought of the Qiao family spending even more than she did while she had been in the Chen family, Qiao Zijin felt heartbroken. No matter how great the expenses had been in the Chen family, that had been the Chen family's business and had nothing to do with her. And the Qiao family's expenses had even less to do with her since Qiao Nan was the one taking care of them.

It was only when she had to work did Qiao Zijin feel upset about how quickly Ding Jiayi spent money. Did she really think that their family owned a gold mine and had an endless supply of money lying around? "Mom, I'm unemployed and I gave you fifty thousand when Dad was

hospitalized previously. Before that, I gave you twenty thousand as well, so I think you should cut down on your expenses. Stop asking me for money. If you continue doing that, I might have to go out on the streets to beg for money if I don't get a job."

Her mom had never gotten a job in her life and did not even know how to earn money and yet, she never let up when spending money. In fact, her mom had the best fortune amongst them. Not only did she not have to earn her own keep, but she had also never gone without money. In her youth, her dad had been the one supplying her with funds. Afterward, Qiao Nan had taken up that responsibility, and now, she had to do so.

She had neither met Qiao Nan nor settled the matter of Qiao Zijin becoming a civil servant. As such, Ding Jiayi did not dare to refuse when Qiao Zijin brought up the topic of her allowance. "Alright. Isn't your dad still recuperating from his injury? That's why I spent a little more lately. Otherwise, our family doesn't spend that much in a month either. Don't worry. I won't ask you for any more money this month or next month."

At the mention of money, Ding Jiayi could never hold her chest high. Qiao Dongliang had always been the one controlling the purse strings. Ding Jiayi knew what it meant to be thrifty. Even if she could not increase her income, she could cut her expenses.

Ever since Qiao Nan started working to support the family, Ding Jiayi had started to spend money as though it cost her nothing because of Qiao Zijin's encouragement. Even though she did not always buy expensive things to eat, she always chose the more expensive option, feeling that the freshness was worth the price.

There was no way she would be able to get rid of that twenty-year-old habit that Qiao Nan had cultivated right away. The difference was that Qiao Zijin had been the one to teach her mother that habit in the past because she had not been the one paying for it. No matter how much her mother spent, it was not her money. Unfortunately, every dog had its day and her mother's habit would come to bite her back.

Of course, neither Qiao Zijin nor Ding Jiayi had realized that at this point in time. Ding Jiayi would have spent a considerable sum of Qiao Zijin's money before they did. That sum would make Qiao Zijin's heart break at the very least.

"What are you doing here, Old Qiao? Don't you know how severe your injuries are? You need to let your bones heal. Why don't you just rest in bed?" The mother and daughter had just finished their chat when they saw Qiao Dongliang limping out of the room. Ding Jiayi was taken aback and ran

up to Qiao Dongliang right away in case he fell down and needed to be hospitalized once again since that would incur a hefty cost.

Without a human ATM like Qiao Nan, the only thing the Qiao family ever talked about nowadays was money. In the past, they had spent freely without ever having to worry about money. It was only now that they had to care even about the money that they spent on bare necessities.

Qiao Dongliang's expression was cold. He was not deaf and had heard all about the mother and daughter's plans and ill intentions. "It's uncomfortable to be lying down on my bed for the whole day. I have to get some exercise every once in a while." If he did not move around now, what would happen if he could not attend Nan Nan's wedding?

Unlike Ding Jiayi, who had not been able to contact or meet Qiao Nan, Qiao Dongliang had intermittent contact with Qiao Nan, especially since she was about to get married. Even if Qiao Nan did not look for Qiao Dongliang, Qiao Dongliang would still send her a text every day, asking about how the preparations for her wedding were going.

Qiao Nan was getting married, but he was the only relative who was invited to her wedding. As such, Qiao Dongliang was not going to allow himself to lie around all day, in case he became wasted and needed someone to carry him to his daughter's wedding. How humiliating that would be!

Upon seeing that Qiao Dongliang had come out from his room, Qiao Zijin could not even be bothered to address him since Qiao Dongliang had not done so himself. Qiao Zijin had noticed her father's coldness toward her and could see that Qiao Dongliang had only one daughter in his eyes and heart, and that was Qiao Nan. That was in spite of the fact that she had visited her father while he had been hospitalized and had forked out fifty thousand just as Qiao Nan had!

It was a pity that her fifty thousand was different from Qiao Nan's. Hers was clearly much less valuable. Qiao Zijin was annoyed that the same sum could have different values in her father's eyes.

He could treat her that way if he wanted, but he had better continue treating her as an outsider when he needed money and someone to look after him. If he were to treat her as a daughter only when he needed money and an outsider at any other time, her father would truly be taking advantage of her!

At this point in time, Qiao Zijin was too frustrated to even take a glance at Qiao Dongliang.