

RTAMM 2011

Chapter 2011: Not Helping

They were clearly a family staying under the same roof, yet the atmosphere was even colder than that between strangers meeting for the first time. Even strangers would give each other friendly nods and acknowledge each other.

The father and daughter's relationship had undergone a drastic change, and it had not gone unnoticed by Ding Jiayi. But now, Ding Jiayi had too many things to worry about. As such, she had no time to persuade Qiao Zijin to stop throwing a tantrum toward Qiao Dongliang or to counsel Qiao Dongliang and convince him to understand Qiao Zijin's situation.

All three of them understood that their relationships were at a standstill but not a single one of them was willing to take the first step in order to warm up the familial relationships.

On the second day of Jiajia's middle school examination, Qiao Nan once again received Qiao Dongliang's text message. Now, Qiao Nan had already gotten used to receiving at least one text message a day from Qiao Dongliang. As such, she took her phone out to look at the message. But when she finished reading the message, her expression changed, and her smile turned into a frown.

The text might have been from Qiao Dongliang, but Qiao Nan knew from the message that it had definitely not been written by her father. After thinking about it, Qiao Nan sent a reply. "Do you want to embarrass everyone by creating trouble? Go ahead. Brother Zhai and I may not even live in Ping Cheng after getting married."

Brother Zhai had always been stationed in the capital. After getting married, Brother Zhai would probably be fully recuperated. Qiao Nan knew that they would leave Ping Cheng for the capital. As such, Qiao Nan was not afraid just because Ding Jiayi was threatening her and trying to force her into meeting her.

If Ding Jiayi had the money and energy and was even willing to chase her across the country, she would truly take her hat off to Ding Jiayi.

After seeing the reply, Ding Jiayi flew into such a rage that her eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. Ding Jiayi's hands trembled so much that she nearly dropped Qiao Dongliang's phone onto the floor.

At the sight of Ding Jiayi's response, Qiao Zijin had pretty much guessed that Qiao Nan had given an unsatisfactory response, but she still took the phone over from Ding Jiayi's hands. "Aiyoo, she really does sound like someone who has found a meal ticket for herself. That's why she's so bold with her words. Mom, are you sure that Qiao Nan is really still Qiao Nan? Do you think the Qiao Nan of the past would have dared to say such things?"

No matter how upset Ding Jiayi was, she was still unwilling to believe such things. "That's dumb! It's alright for you to say this in front of me but you'd better not say that in front of your dad or that wretched girl. Think about it. If that wretched girl isn't our family's wretched girl, let's not even talk about being afraid. Since she isn't the wretched girl, there's no way she'll treat me as her mom or you as her sister."

It would definitely benefit them if Qiao Nan were to marry into a good family.

No matter how she looked at it, Qiao Nan was still Qiao Nan. How could she have become another person? Qiao Zijin had truly read too many novels and watched too many television dramas. If that person was not Qiao Nan, then the Qiao family would not get a single cent no matter how good the family that woman married into was. How could Zijin, as a university student, not understand such simple logic?

Qiao Zijin's expression stiffened. She had indeed forgotten about that. "Don't worry, Mom. I remember everything you've taught me. I won't make that mistake. Besides, I was probably just brought astray by those television dramas and novels. How could Qiao Nan not be Qiao Nan? If she isn't Qiao Nan, how could she understand our family's situation so well?"

She had already encountered a lot of trouble in her life because Qiao Nan was no longer as easily controlled as she had been in the past. If that person was not even Qiao Nan, she would be the first person in trouble. Her mom was right. From her point of view, there was no way Qiao Nan could get into any accidents. Otherwise, she would be the one suffering the most.

Qiao Nan was still Qiao Nan, and Qiao Nan had to take care of the Qiao family and her parents. Qiao Nan had better not try to shirk away from these responsibilities. If Qiao Nan was no longer Qiao Nan, this family would have nothing to do with Qiao Nan. Since Qiao Nan had nothing to do with the family, all these responsibilities would naturally fall to her.

Qiao Zijin hit her own head, deciding not to spend her free time on those novels again. If not for those novels, she would never have come up with such a ridiculous idea.

Fiction was nothing more than fiction. Reality was reality.

“Then again, what should we do, Mom? Given her tone, it’s obvious that she won’t be of any help.” After such a long time, the matter of her becoming a civil servant still remained unresolved.

“What are you afraid of? Just go for the examination and leave the rest to me.” Even if Qiao Nan said that she was not going to help out, could Qiao Nan really get rid of their relationship and not interfere? No, she would let Qiao Nan know with her actions that she would never get her way. She would simply use Qiao Nan’s name to solve the issue. Qiao Nan did not even need to appear.

If she succeeded in doing so, she would not even need to worry about Qiao Nan being unfilial to her in the future. She would be able to make Qiao Nan treat her as the empress and support her as she had done in the past. Qiao Nan would have to listen to whatever she said and keep them in mind.

Qiao Zijin furrowed her brows. Her mom seemed to have come up with a solution but she would not bother about it anymore. She had already put forth a disclaimer, so whatever happened afterward would depend on her mother’s performance.

After deciding to leave everything to Ding Jiayi, Qiao Zijin was in a relaxed mood. Even if she decided never to read her novels again, she would never get bored with the television and computer at home.

In the blink of an eye, Jiajia had completed her middle school examination, and the first day that Jiajia was free happened to be Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng’s wedding day.

“Wow, auntie. You look beautiful in that red dress. I’ve seen so many white wedding dresses, but today, I realized that our country’s red wedding dress is beautiful as well! Your hairdo is exquisite too! It looks like those I see in television dramas.” Jiajia could not help but get envious. All young ladies liked looking beautiful, after all. Seeing Qiao Nan made Jiajia green with envy.

Jiajia decided inwardly that she would follow in Qiao Nan’s footsteps instead of wearing a white wedding dress when she got married in the future. White western wedding dresses were no match for their Chinese red wedding dresses. People really did not appreciate them enough.

Miao Jing nodded in agreement. “Our Jiajia has such good judgment. That’s right. The red wedding dress looks really festive and beautiful!” It was a pity that she had not been able to wear a red wedding dress during her wedding to Old Zhai. At that time, the green military uniform was already good enough for her, let alone a red wedding dress.

Chapter 2012: Marrying From the Zhu Family

“It’s really quite nice.” Zhai Hua nodded in agreement. Zhai Hua wondered whether it was due to her age that she could no longer remember what she had worn on her wedding day. But it was just as well. That had not been a joyous occasion anyway. It was no wonder she no longer remembered it.

“Mom, is it really a good idea for Qiao Nan to be marrying in from the Zhu family’s house?” Looking around at her unfamiliar surroundings, Zhai Hua felt rather uneasy. The Zhai family was not on bad terms with the Zhu family, but neither were they on exceptionally good terms.

After Old Chief Zhu had found out about their family’s situation, he had taken the initiative to contact them, allowing Qiao Nan to leave from the Zhu family’s house. Zhai Hua had been taken aback by this sudden offer and wondered if they had gotten the wrong person.

The Zhai family’s relationship with the Zhu family had always been rather average. There was no way Qiao Nan would have known the Zhu family, much less Old Chief Zhu.

It was only when Qiao Nan was truly about to get married from the Zhu family’s house did Zhai Hua realize that they had not gotten the wrong person. So, was the Zhu family doing this for the Zhai family’s sake?

Zhu Chengqi was someone of his father’s generation, but he looked much older and frailer than his father. It was indeed true that it did not matter how high of a position one held in life if one did not even have any family around him. A life like that was simply too miserable.

When others ended up all alone in their old age, it was usually by their own doing, but not Zhu Chengqi. Zhu Chengqi had never done anything. His wife had died during childbirth while Old Master Zhu had died of old age. The most pitiful death was that of Zhu Chengqi’s son, who had been beaten to death while he had been in junior high school.

If Zhu Chengqi’s son had still been alive, he would not be as lonely now.

Zhai Hua knew that Wang Yang and his wife had always been by Zhu Chengqi’s side. However, no matter how close his nephew was, there was no way he would be closer than his own son. It was not as though they were close relatives. In fact, they were quite distant relatives.

Miao Jing eyed the Zhu family and sighed. "There's nothing bad about it. Nan Nan, I hope you don't mind it."

To be honest, while she had been looking for somewhere for Nan Nan to get married from, she had never even considered the Zhu family's house. All along, the Zhai family had only grown in size while Zhu Chengqi had become the only one left in his entire family. Besides, the Zhai family was celebrating getting a daughter-in-law while Zhu Chengqi had already lost his wife and child a long time ago.

If they were to get Zhu Chengqi involved in this occasion, would they not just be mocking and ridiculing him?

Moreover, the entire Zhu family was gone apart from Zhu Chengqi alone. Leaving aside superstition, Zhu Chengqi was truly unlucky. Miao Jing did not believe in it, but she had to consider Qiao Nan's and Zhai Sheng's feelings for fear that they would mind.

She could not possibly ignore the feelings of the two children for the sake of elevating Qiao Nan's status. Besides, they were not even sure that Zhu Chengqi would agree to it even if they were to ask him.

Since the situation was so complex, Miao Jing had never even considered it. Because Zhu Chengqi had taken the initiative to offer his services, everyone in the Zhai family, including Zhai Hua, had been taken aback. But no one had realized that Qiao Nan, who had nothing to do with the Zhu family, was the calmest person present. It seemed as though she had already expected this to happen and had an indifferent expression.

Compared to Miao Jing's and Zhai Hua's unease, how could Qiao Nan not be at ease? This was not her first time getting married to Zhai Sheng, and neither was it her first time getting married and leaving from the Zhu family's house. The only difference was that she had even stayed in the Zhu family's house for three days in her previous life. This time, she had only spent two to three hours at the Zhu family's house on her wedding day.

It had not been so busy in the Zhu family's house in a long time. Naturally, Qiao Nan could not simply just sit around in the Zhu family's house before leaving. The Zhu family rarely entertained any guests, but now, there were lanterns hanging around and the windows had been decorated with red double-happiness characters too. It was obvious that the Zhu family had just purchased these decorations.

The Zhu family's neighbors could not help but make a joke. Ever since Zhu Baoguo passed away, the Zhu family had never been as lively as it was today, not even during the new year period. Others might even misunderstand that the bride was the Zhu family's child and Zhu Chengqi's daughter. Given this level of liveliness and care they put into this, that could very well have been the case.

Wang Yang had heard quite a few of such comments. As one of the owners of the Zhu family, Wang Yang had no power or ability to revoke a decision that Zhu Chengqi had made. No matter how upset Wang Yang was, he could only follow Zhu Chengqi's instructions and liven up the atmosphere in the Zhu family, even playing the role of Qiao Nan's family by welcoming her guests.

Wang Yang had not even been this busy on his own wedding day. Physical fatigue was nothing. It was the unresolvable doubts in his mind that were the most torturous.

Wang Yang's phone rang in his pocket. He did not need to take it out to know whom the message had been from.

After instructing the helpers to get things done, Wang Yang returned to his room, seeing the person who had sent him the message upon opening the door. "Don't you know how busy I am today? What's so important that you have to keep sending me messages? Spill it!"

Wang Yang's wife felt aggrieved. "Why are you being so mean? Is it my fault? You were the one who made me stay here in this room. Otherwise, would I be so bored to send you messages?"

At the mention of this, Wang Yang's wife was upset. Both she and Wang Yang had always been taking care of Zhu Chengqi at the Zhu family's house. To youngsters, there was nothing more important than their phones. When Wang Yang's wife went out for high tea, even the cafes had WiFi available, but the Zhu family's house, where she lived, did not!

With no other choice, Wang Yang's wife could only use her mobile data. Usually, apart from playing on her phone, Wang Yang's wife could watch the television as well. But because Qiao Nan was getting married from the Zhu family's house, she could not leave her room and could only play with her mobile phone until it ran out of battery. As she used it while charging it, it became incredibly hot.

Left with no other choice, Wang Yang's wife could only get in touch with Wang Yang. "Are you planning to keep me in here for the whole day? This is the Zhu family's house, not the Qiao family's or Zhai family's. Why should I lend this place to them and have to hide away as an owner? Don't you think that the Zhai family is crossing the line?"

They had gone far beyond lending Qiao Nan a place to leave for her marriage from. They had gone much further and beyond.

Chapter 2013: My Responsibility

The Zhu family treated the Zhai family and Qiao Nan so well, so were the Zhai family and Qiao Nan not being too overbearing?

“You’re a stupid one, aren’t you?” Wang Yang rolled his eyes. “Who said that the Zhai family and Qiao Nan were the ones who requested for you not to go out? They don’t even know about your existence, alright?”

“What do you mean?” Wang Yang’s wife was confused. If the Zhai family had never asked for it, then why had Wang Yang told her that it would be inconvenient for her to be present? She had thought that the Zhai family had asked her husband to pass on this message to her.

That was why she had been annoyed. She had never had any contact with the Zhai family, much less seen Qiao Nan in her entire life. So, what rights did Qiao Nan have to force her, the owner, to be hidden away from sight when she was getting married from the Zhu family’s house? What a joke!

“Have you forgotten why I married you?” Wang Yang poured a glass of water for himself. He was thirsty and tired from busying around the whole morning. “There will be quite a few people coming over to our house since Qiao Nan is getting married from here. It won’t just be the Zhai family. There will be other guests too. They’re not blind either. What do you think people will think if they realize how similar you and Qiao Nan look?”

He had married her to coax Zhu Chengqi. But given the special situation today, he would feel aggrieved if others misunderstood that he had feelings for Qiao Nan. More importantly, Wang Yang was reluctant to be embarrassed, no matter the reason, and even more unwilling to be looked at in a different light.

“I...” Wang Yang’s wife was left speechless. Even today, she had only seen the silhouette of a lady in a red wedding dress. She had not even caught a glimpse of Qiao Nan’s appearance. That was why she had forgotten that she bore some resemblance to Qiao Nan. However, she knew nothing about how similar they looked and that was the reason for her curiosity and desire to meet Qiao Nan.

Wang Yang rolled his eyes. He had always known that he had married someone who was not particularly intelligent. “Are you sure that you kept a close eye on that old foggy in the past month without making any mistakes?”

“Yes, of course...” Wang Yang’s wife nodded. “What’s the matter?” Wang Yang’s expression looked strange today. Could something have gone wrong?

“The problem is that I don’t know what’s wrong. That’s why I’m frustrated.” Wang Yang grabbed at his hair. “That old foggy agreed to let Qiao Nan leave for her marriage from the Zhu family’s house. Why do I think that there’s something weird about this? That old foggy is really...”

He had invested so much in trying to get rid of Qiao Nan. Initially, he had thought that that would be the end of it and that Qiao Nan would no longer pose a problem to him. Who would have known that today’s incident would give Wang Yang a timely reminder not to rejoice just yet because the matter was not as easy as it seemed?

In recent years, Zhu Chengqi no longer talked about Qiao Nan. Wang Yang had hoped that Zhu Chengqi had forgotten all about the past at his age, would never mention Qiao Nan, be disappointed in Qiao Nan, or think about Qiao Nan. Zhu Chengqi should have forgotten all about Qiao Nan in a matter of days, let alone a few years’ time.

Everything had been progressing well, but Zhai Sheng’s wedding and the appearance of Qiao Nan’s name once again reminded that old man of Qiao Nan’s existence. Wang Yang hated that fact.

Did the Zhai family not know about the Zhu family’s situation and how Zhu Chengqi was the only person left in his family? They could get married by all means. No one was stopping them from doing so. But could they not spare a thought for other families? Why did they send their wedding invitations blindly? Did they not know how much trouble they were causing?

Without that invitation, there would not have been so many things that followed, causing him to be in such a bad mood. He had not even been so busy on his own wedding day, so why did he have to slave away on Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan’s wedding day?

Wang Yang’s wife quickly cajoled him. “Don’t worry. We’ve worked hard for such a long time. We won’t fail. What’s the use even if Qiao Nan is the ideal daughter in that old man’s eyes? Didn’t Qiao Nan go astray in the end? Not only did she leave school, but she also got into an early relationship with a boyfriend that that old man disliked. Apart from being a sliver of the ideal daughter’s image that old man has in mind, Qiao Nan has nothing. We’re different. We’ve stayed by his side to take

care of him for so many years, even neglecting our own parents. We've treated him so well. That old man won't leave us in the ditch and give everything that should belong to us to an outsider."

If he really did give them to an outsider or Qiao Nan, all those years of their efforts would go down the drain.

"Hehe..." Wang Yang sneered. He did not think that Zhu Chengqi was such a person. If it had been so easy, Zhu Chengqi would have handed all of the Zhu family's assets and connections over to him the moment he retired from the military.

But in reality, apart from acknowledging him, the nephew, Zhu Chengqi had given him nothing at all. All of Wang Yang's efforts were still an investment that had not seen any returns.

Wang Yang's wife gritted her teeth. "If you are really worried, I won't play my mobile games anymore from today on. Aside from the time when that old man is asleep, I'll try my best to spend all my time with him. I'll make sure that he won't have the chance to contact anyone else but me. How's that?"

If they were to do that, Wang Yang's wife would have it tough and it would probably reflect poorly on them as well. Zhu Chengqi did not have a good temper. If one were to put it nicely, his niece-in-law was helping take care of him by sticking by his side. But given Zhu Chengqi's temper, he would not hesitate to declare that everyone knew best whether his niece-in-law was actually taking care of him or monitoring him.

Once they were exposed, Wang Yang and his wife would definitely be at a disadvantage.

But now that they had already come so far, Wang Yang's wife had no choice but to bear this burden for the sake of their futures. She would just have to be scolded. As long as her efforts brought her a return in the future, everything would be worth it. "Dear, if that old man ever loses his temper and flares up, just side with him and scold me as well. You can be the good cop and I'll be the bad cop. As long as our futures are secured, it doesn't matter if we're scolded now. Dear, let's do that!"

Wang Yang looked at her. "It's not that it won't work, but you'll certainly suffer quite a lot. You're my wife. If you act insensibly, that old man will surely blame me for it too. Then, both of us will be in trouble."

“If you don’t perform well, it means that I, as a husband, didn’t manage you well. Thus, do you know the significance of doing this?”

If they were going to act, their actings had to be real to deceive that old man. Once that old man realized something was wrong, all their previous efforts would be in vain.

Wang Yang didn’t understand. The elderly in other people’s homes were all confused. Why was it that the elderly in theirs became smarter as he grew older? When he was working in the unit, he didn’t feel tired no matter how many people he dealt with. It was only when he was facing that old man at home that he often felt restrained and unable to cope.

Wang Yang’s wife became guilty. “Then... What else should we do?” Wasn’t it enough to suffer scoldings?

“What else can we do? In front of that old man, we have to get physical. The only thing I can grasp is the severity of your injuries and where to hit you.” That old man was a soldier. He didn’t believe in hitting women, but his eyes were sharp. That old man would definitely not believe it based on scoldings alone.

No pain, no gain. It was the same reason. Nobody would believe in words alone.

Upon hearing that they were going to get physical, Wang Yang’s wife felt pained. However, she frowned and agreed. “Hit me then. All’s good if I can help you fulfill your dream. However, husband, once you are able to lead a good life in the future, don’t treat me as an old and haggard woman and be like those people outside who raised a few vixens to infuriate me.”

Wang Yang was both angry and amused. Women were still quite alert and had a number of tricks up their sleeves. “Aren’t you my wife? What is the biggest dream of my life? Others may not know, but would you not know? If there are a lot of such incidents, how would I be able to climb up the ranks in the future? I won’t sacrifice my future just for a woman.”

Lust was dangerous. He didn’t feel that he couldn’t control himself well. If it was a mistake that could be avoided, why would he let it happen again? As a person who wanted to mingle in the political circle, lust was more prone to problems than money.

Even if there wasn’t the incident today, Wang Yang wasn’t flirtatious. Otherwise, he didn’t need to be so good to his wife and in-laws. He understood that as long as his in-laws understood that they

shouldn't cause trouble to him, he could continue to advance under the premise of maintaining this marriage.

"That's good." After getting Wang Yang's assurance, Wang Yang's wife expressed that it was really nothing to suffer a few beatings before that old man died. If she was willing to do this, there would be a lot of good days waiting for her in the future. Compared to leading a good life, the things before her were really nothing. "Husband, let's go according to what we've planned just now. I'll keep an eye on that old man. You and that old man stand by the side until he dies."

As long as that old man didn't leave a will that was unfavorable to them, even if he died from natural causes, everything from the Zhu family would naturally belong to her husband. The two of them were just waiting for such a day.

In the room, Wang Yang and his wife were discussing how to face Zhu Chengqi in the future. On the other hand, Qiao Nan's marriage was not stopped. Zhai Sheng, who was dressed up in a military uniform, appeared at the Zhu family's doorstep at the appropriate timing. He was there to fetch his bride!

"He's here!" Jiajia stood by the windows. She jumped with excitement when she saw her tall and handsome uncle appear. Indeed, the lively Jiajia now looked like a naive teenager.

Zhai Hua smiled with a headache. "Don't jump around. Be careful of your feet." It would take at least three months for the injuries to the bones and tendons to recover. Although Jiajia had recovered from her fracture, she still had to continue recuperating. Didn't they see that Zhai Sheng's recuperation for half a year even got him a wife?

Once Jiajia was happy, she forgot about her fracture. Indeed, she was still a child.

Unlike Zhai Hua's nervousness, Jiajia naturally didn't think it would be an issue for her to jump up and down. "Mom, I'm fine. Uncle's going to pick Aunt up." True love wasn't easy. She saw how her aunt got together with her uncle. When her aunt gave birth to a son or daughter in the future, she could still treat them as a younger brother or sister.

"Nan Nan, I'm here to pick you up." Zhai Sheng's voice sounded outside the door. Qiao Nan vaguely combined the voice of that young man in his twenties in her dream with the forty-five-year-old man today.

Qiao Nan took a deep breath. She had tears in her eyes. She was going to marry him again.

Miao Jing's face was flushed as if she had put on a lot of blusher. She was obviously receiving a daughter-in-law today. However, she felt like she was marrying a daughter off. However, no matter what, their family would have a new family member starting today. Perhaps within a year, there would be another one or two new members.

Upon thinking about that cute little kid addressing her as grandma, Miao Jing couldn't wait to cancel the wedding banquet and just hurriedly lock Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng in a room. Miao Jing herself couldn't remember how long she had waited for this day.

"Nan Nan, you have to be well with Zhai Sheng in the future." She held Qiao Nan's hand and delivered her to her son. Although Miao Jing said this to Qiao Nan, more of it was directed to Zhai Sheng.

In a family, Zhai Sheng had to have a more tolerant heart, take care of everything for Qiao Nan, and support their small family. Only then was Zhai Sheng a qualified man to get married and have children. Otherwise, even if Zhai Sheng was married, he would only let his wife and children suffer.

Zhai Sheng held Qiao Nan's hand firmly. His strength wouldn't hurt Qiao Nan, but it gave her a feeling that Zhai Sheng would never let her go in the future. "Mom, Nan Nan and I will definitely lead a good life and not let you and Dad worry. It has been tough on the both of you over the years."

Zhai Sheng had always felt that getting married was his own business and his parents had worried too much. Not only was it enough to give him Qiu Chenxi, but they hoped for him to have a second shot at marriage. However, Zhai Sheng no longer thought this way.

Zhai Hua was stubborn and reckless to marry Wei De. His actions of casually marrying Qiu Chenxi, then divorcing Qiu Chenxi, and remaining single until today were equally stubborn. All in all, he and Zhai Hua were indeed siblings. Both of them had caused a lot of worry to their parents.

"Alright, both of you will lead a good life. Both of you are good children." It was rare for Zhai Sheng to say such a sincere sentence. Miao Jing, who was already sentimental, felt touched and her voice became hoarse. Her children had grown up and become sensible. No wonder old people often said that it was only when someone formed a family could they be considered to have really grown up. The day she had been waiting for was finally here.

Chapter 2015: Didn't Understand It

Zhai Sheng patted Miao Jing's shoulders in comfort. Then, he wanted to carry Qiao Nan downstairs.

Qiao Nan immediately thought of Zhu Chengqi. “Brother Zhai, before we go, should we visit Old Chief Zhu?” Zhu Baoguo was gone. The entire Zhu family was left with Old Chief Zhu. Old Chief Zhu was willing for her to be married off from the Zhu family again. This meant that he similarly wanted to treat her as a daughter, just like in her dreams.

Upon thinking about this, a trace of gloom flashed past Qiao Nan’s beautiful face for the first time. Qiao Nan didn’t forget how Chen Jun, that scumbag, had appeared in her life. The culprit who caused all of this was staying in the Zhu family, just like her. This made Qiao Nan feel extremely uncomfortable.

If not for Zhu Chengqi’s kindness and compassion toward herself, Qiao Nan would never want to have anything to do with Wang Yang in her life.

Zhu Baoguo was gone. Wang Yang had deliberately attracted that group of gangsters to teach Zhu Baoguo to commit crimes. However, that happened so many years ago. Also, most from that group of gangsters had escaped back then. Even if Qiao Nan wanted to clarify the matters, she didn’t have any evidence and they were mere words without a factual basis.

Wang Yang, who was walking over, heard Qiao Nan’s words. Wang Yang raised a corner of his lips and there was a trace of contempt in his eyes. If not for Zhai Sheng being blind and willing to marry Qiao Nan, a person with Qiao Nan’s background would definitely not have the chance to enter the Zhu family’s house in this lifetime. With him around, he would definitely not let Qiao Nan lower the Zhu family’s status.

That was just a thought. Qiao Nan’s lowly status was a thing of the past. After Qiao Nan married Zhai Sheng, her status would skyrocket. As such, Wang Yang was polite and cheerful on the surface. “The bride looks beautiful and her heart is more beautiful. Thank you for your kindness. My uncle’s not in good health and prefers the quietness. It’s your big day today. Don’t delay it and keep your relatives and friends waiting.”

“...” Qiao Nan clenched her hand on Zhai Sheng’s shoulders tightly and grabbed his shirt unhappily. She wanted to ask if it was really Old Chief Zhu who wanted the quietness or that Wang Yang deliberately wanted to prevent him from seeing outsiders.

Upon thinking that Wang Yang was now young, strong, and in his heyday, even if Old Chief Zhu was a mighty tiger, he was now an old one. If Wang Yang was up to no good, Old Chief Zhu might not necessarily be Wang Yang’s match. Furthermore, Wang Yang always had ill intentions toward the Zhu family and was eyeing it.

“We’re not in a rush.” Zhai Sheng understood Qiao Nan’s insistence. After carrying Qiao Nan downstairs, they headed to Zhu Chengqi’s room. “Old Chief Zhu, it’s Nan Nan’s and my big day today. Thank you for your help in making our wedding run so smoothly. Nan Nan and I would like to offer you a cup of tea. Is that alright?”

Zhu Chengqi lifted his weak eyelids and responded. “Drinking a cup of tea is alright.” If Baoguo was still alive, he would already have grandchildren now.

“Old Chief Zhu, please drink tea.” Qiao Nan’s face lit up when she heard Zhu Chengqi’s agreement. Perhaps Zhu Chengqi’s kindness to her incorporated a little of the intention to do bad things with best intentions. However, from Qiao Nan’s perspective, she was still thankful to this elder who didn’t have any blood relationship with her for willing to treat her as his daughter for two lifetimes. Such kindness was not given to her by her blood relatives.

“Old Chief Zhu, drink tea.” Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan knelt side by side. It was considered that they had given a big present to Zhu Chengqi. With such a formal tea ceremony, it was as if Qiao Nan wasn’t borrowing the Zhu family’s house to be married off but instead, the Zhu family’s daughter was about to be married off.

When Wang Yang, who had been standing by Zhu Chengqi’s side and guarding him, saw this scene, the sense of uneasiness in his heart returned again. If Wang Yang’s eyes could turn into daggers now, Qiao Nan would have been stabbed to death.

If you’re getting married today, just get married. Why must you offer tea? Our Zhu family has nothing to do with you, Qiao Nan. You’re not going to depend on our Zhu family just because we lent you a piece of land, right?

If there was a choice, Wang Yang would prefer to spill Qiao Nan’s and Zhai Sheng’s cups of tea. If his uncle wanted to drink tea, he could make ten pots for him, let alone a cup. After all, they were outsiders pretending to be good. Who cares about their tea?

Regardless of Wang Yang’s mentality, Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng eventually offered tea to Zhu Chengqi. Not only could Wang Yang not splash the tea, but he even had to properly receive both cups of tea from their hands and hand them over to Zhu Chengqi. “Uncle, blow it. Be careful. It’s hot.”

Zhu Chengqi looked at Wang Yang. “There’s no need to. It’s good enough that I’ve received their kind intentions. Leave them aside. Since you have offered me tea, I can’t possibly let you do so for nothing. I’ve prepared this red packet for you. Take it. Since you’ve decided to get married, both of you have to accommodate each other and lead a good life. Don’t get addicted to divorces after experiencing it once.”

Zhu Chengqi’s last sentence was directed at Zhai Sheng. Zhu Sheng was remarrying now. This was Qiao Nan’s first marriage. As such, the problem of being addicted to divorces didn’t fall on Qiao Nan.

Zhai Sheng was once again surprised. It seemed that it wasn’t accidental that Old Chief Zhu asked Nan Nan to be married off from the Zhu family. At least, these words proved that Old Chief Zhu had a good impression of Nan Nan. “Old Chief Zhu, don’t worry. I’m marrying a wife home to love and will take care of her well. Nan Nan’s different from the previous one.”

The other was given to him by his parents. He had found the person before him himself and worked hard to pursue her. As such, both of them couldn’t be compared together. This was unfair to both Nan Nan and him.

“Yes.” Zhu Chengqi agreed with Zhai Sheng’s explanation. To be honest, if Zhu Chengqi didn’t think this way as well, how would it be so easy for Zhai Sheng to marry Qiao Nan? He wanted to acknowledge Qiao Nan as his goddaughter but had not succeeded until now. However, if he wanted to be a matchmaker and introduce someone good to Qiao Nan, that was much easier. “Both of you will lead a good life. Go ahead. Don’t delay the auspicious timing. I’m tired as well, so I have to rest.”

“See, Chief Zhai?” Once Zhu Chengqi said he was tired, Wang Yang immediately chased them away. When Zhu Chengqi didn’t want to drink the tea Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng offered to him initially, Wang Yang couldn’t help but curve his lips. He thought that Zhu Chengqi treated Qiao Nan just like that and didn’t have any special significance. He had really scared himself previously.

Who knew that his happiness didn’t last for more than three seconds?

Zhu Chengqi’s final words to Zhai Sheng seemed to strike Wang Yang’s heart as well, and Wang Yang felt a headache. Wang Yang looked at Zhu Chengqi with complicated eyes. What exactly was his uncle thinking? He really didn’t understand him.

Chapter 2016: A Good Day for Marriage

To say that he treated Qiao Nan badly wasn't true as he seemed to care about her. To say that he treated Qiao Nan well wasn't true either as his uncle didn't seem to give Qiao Nan face for some matters.

After all, based on his uncle's capabilities, if he really wanted to give Qiao Nan face, Qiao Nan could get more than everything she had today. In the face of such a complicated old man like Zhu Chengqi, Wang Yang started to worry that if Zhu Chengqi were to live for a few more years, wouldn't he be tortured by Zhu Chengqi so much that he became bald?

"Excuse us." Zhai Sheng was still anxious to get married. He was willing to offer Zhu Chengqi tea to thank him for being willing to step out and help them. "Nan Nan, let's go. We have chances to visit Old Chief Zhu in the future."

Zhai Sheng's words made Wang Yang's legs go soft and he nearly fell. It wasn't enough that they took advantage of the Zhu family today? They were going to come again and continue taking advantage? Could they not come to see that old man? He really didn't welcome Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan to visit him. Who could be sure that they wouldn't sense any problems from their repeated visits?

"Bride, bride..." After the wedding car drove out from the Zhu family's house, it drove half a circle around the quad in Ping Cheng before returning to the southern quad, just like in her dreams. Children were naturally happy when they witnessed this scene. They stood in their way and asked for a lot of wedding candy so that they could fill their own pockets fully.

When Zhai Sheng carried Qiao Nan out from the car and into the house, Qiao Nan saw Qiao Dongliang, who was dressed in a refreshing suit, sitting at the main table and smiling at her. Qiao Nan secretly heaved a sigh of relief. At least, it wasn't that she didn't have someone from her family attending the wedding today.

It was just that Qiao Nan was pretty curious how Qiao Dongliang managed to shake off Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin and attend the wedding banquet alone. Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were only upset that they didn't get to see her. Upon knowing that she was getting married, they would only become more fearless and confident and use this to threaten her so that she would satisfy their greed.

In short, if Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin weren't around, they wouldn't cause a scene at her wedding. This was considered something great to her.

"Congratulations. Wishing you happiness for a lifetime."

“The bride’s quite pretty. She looks gentle.”

“The daughter-in-law of the Zhai family naturally couldn’t be too bad.”

A few conscientious individuals had already specially promoted Qiao Nan’s existence previously. Those comments were naturally bad, trampling Qiao Nan to her death. After hearing a lot of bad things about Qiao Nan, a number of people didn’t have a good first impression of Qiao Nan. They even thought that her image was particularly bad and that Zhai Sheng had no choice but to marry Qiao Nan after being conned by her.

However, after seeing for themselves how the bride looked like today, they didn’t feel that the bride was the kind of person as rumored. A person’s eyes couldn’t deceive anyone. If they couldn’t even tell from this, they would have lived their lives in vain all this while.

Also, all of them were men. They could tell if the bride had conned Zhai Sheng so that she could marry him or that Zhai Sheng really cherished his bride and wanted to marry her. It was obvious that Zhai Sheng was relatively satisfied with this wife and loved her.

Zhai Sheng didn’t cherish Qiu Chenxi. As such, they got a divorce after being married for three years. They guessed that this bride would remain in the Zhai family for a long time.

After confirming this, the wise individuals were naturally enthusiastic about Qiao Nan and even complimented her in an exaggerated manner. As such, the Zhai family had a great sense of judgment as well since they fancied such a daughter-in-law.

Once the attitude of the guests changed, the atmosphere became so good that it was as if Qiao Nan was equally outstanding and compatible with Zhai Sheng. The changes of these outsiders actually had little effect on Qiao Nan and the Zhai family. However, Qiao Dongliang felt relieved.

Qiao Dongliang felt guilty for sitting at the bride’s table and was lacking confidence. The bride today was his daughter. As a man who was going to marry off his daughter, he didn’t prepare anything at all. He was like an outsider, and he was actually thick-skinned enough to attend the wedding. It was estimated that such a way of marrying off a daughter was extremely rare.

All the guests the Zhai family invited were high-profile. Qiao Dongliang felt even more inferior in the face of these big shots who he couldn’t usually see. He understood that he had such a chance

like today because Qiao Nan and the Zhai family weren't calculative. Without Qiao Nan and the Zhai family, he would never be able to come into close contact with these people in his lifetime, let alone sit in a better position than these people.

Qiao Dongliang felt even more ashamed when he faintly heard people discussing that the Qiao family had benefited from raising a daughter like Qiao Nan. The truth was that not only did outsiders think this way, but Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi thought so as well. Those two women in the family were thinking of how they could make use of Qiao Nan to get more benefits after she married Zhai Sheng and became the Zhai family's daughter-in-law.

Thankfully, Qiao Nan's attitude became tougher and she refused to see Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. This minimized their chances of doing evil. Otherwise, Qiao Dongliang would be having a headache on how to stop the perverse behaviors of this mother-daughter pair. The more they did and the more benefits they got, the more precarious Qiao Nan's and Zhai Sheng's marriage would be.

If Qiao Nan really got a divorce from Zhai Sheng, Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi wouldn't think that it was their fault for harming Qiao Nan. They would only think that Qiao Nan was useless for not securing Zhai Sheng's heart.

Qiao Dongliang only felt a headache when he thought of those two women's misdeeds. Even if he was drinking Sprite now and was attending his younger daughter's wedding banquet, he only felt that the Sprite was sour and the dishes were bitter. As the head of the family, he couldn't even control at least one of the two women. What kind of head was he?

No wonder Ding Jiayi didn't treat him as a husband and discuss matters together with him. When something happened, she would make the decision alone. In his elder daughter's eyes, her father was useless and she couldn't wait to not have a father like him.

When Qiao Dongliang's thoughts were wandering, Jijia walked over. After sitting down, she addressed Qiao Dongliang. "Grandpa."

"Oh, hello." Qiao Dongliang became nervous when facing a child. He didn't know how this girl before him was related to the Zhai family. As such, he knew that it was just a polite greeting that this girl addressed him as grandpa and that he wasn't really like one. "Are you in high school yet?"

Chapter 2017: Identity

After thinking about it, Qiao Dongliang started with a relatively safe topic so that it wouldn't be too awkward for the two of them to be sitting at the same table but not talking.

Jiajia smiled. "Yes, I just finished my middle school examinations yesterday. I'll be going to high school in the next semester."

"Just finished your middle school examinations..." Qiao Dongliang was in a daze when he heard that Jiajia was of this age. He couldn't help but think that before Qiao Nan could graduate from junior high school, she was forced by Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin to drop out of school, start working, and shoulder the entire family's financial burden. Other people's children were still having fun at this age.

In reality, his family was in the same situation. What was different was that the person who was having fun wasn't Nan Nan, but Zijin. When Nan Nan was studying, her results were fantastic. If Nan Nan had had the chance to take the middle school examinations, he believed that Nan Nan definitely would have gotten good results.

Nan Nan was like him, too soft-tempered and too easy to talk to. That was why she was bullied at home. As a girl, if Nan Nan could think more about herself earlier, she would have gotten married and had her own children, family, and life earlier.

"Grandpa, let me pour you a drink. What do you want?" Jiajia roughly knew that this unfamiliar grandpa should be a relative of her new aunt. In fact, he was most likely a close relative. The Qiao family's news was pretty big. However, Qiao Dongliang was the only one in the Qiao family who wasn't featured on camera. When there was a ruckus back then, only Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were involved.

As such, Jiajia knew how Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin looked like. It was the first time she saw Qiao Dongliang today.

Qiao Dongliang was embarrassed. He should be doing this instead. "There's no need to. This is too sweet. I can't get used to it. I'll just drink plain water." If Qiao Dongliang really wanted to drink today, he would have drunk alcohol instead of sweet Sprite.

"I'll get you some plain water then." Jiajia didn't pretend to be polite to Qiao Dongliang. She went to get whatever Qiao Dongliang wanted to drink. Her uncle was getting married today. She was considered a little host. As the host family, of course she wanted to make everyone who attended the wedding today feel at home.

Not to mention that this man before her was her aunt's family. She had to take care of him more.

As for the nonsensical matters in her aunt's house, her aunt had said that she was still a child and didn't need to worry so much. As long as she did her part and was polite, she completely didn't have to bring the adults' emotions to herself. Her aunt said that as a child, she should live simply and happily and try not to be entangled with the adults' matters.

Jiajia understood what Qiao Nan's words meant. With regards to those 'relatives' from the Qiao family, Jiajia didn't need to take them to heart. She could treat them as ordinary strangers. As such, Jiajia didn't need to discriminate against the Qiao family. Of course, she didn't need to really treat the Qiao family as relatives and welcome them with the attitude of welcoming relatives.

With Qiao Nan's words as a base, Jiajia was quite comfortable when facing Qiao Dongliang.

"Oh, okay. Thank you." Qiao Dongliang didn't reject her. He really didn't dare to drink alcohol at this time and felt that it was more reliable to drink plain water. There were too many things hidden in his heart. He was afraid that he would get drunk after taking a few sips. If he caused Qiao Nan trouble again, he would really have let Qiao Nan address him as 'dad' for nothing all these years.

As the bride's father, Qiao Dongliang didn't dare to walk around in the Zhai family and treat the Zhai family as his home. Jiajia said that she wanted to help him. Qiao Dongliang naturally couldn't reject her. If he rejected her, they would have nothing to talk about anymore. "Thank you. You're so polite. You're a child of the Zhai family. Are you Zhai Hua's daughter?"

Qiao Dongliang knew a little about the Zhai family's situation. Of course, he knew that Zhai Hua's daughter was the only child of the Zhai family thus far. He thought of how the forty-year-old Qiao Nan still stood a chance of giving birth. By then, when his grandchild was born, he didn't know if this girl would get along well with his grandchild. "Little girl, do you like younger siblings?"

Jiajia drank a sip and smiled. "Yes, my mom's Zhai Hua. Grandpa, don't worry. I like younger siblings. I believe that after I become an older sister, I can take good care of the younger brothers and sisters. When they are old enough to go to school, I can even teach them homework and play with them."

Her aunt's father wasn't particularly bad to her aunt and still cared about her.

Upon thinking that there were three people in the Qiao family but only Qiao Dongliang alone turned up for the wedding today, Jiajia understood that Qiao Dongliang was the only person in the Qiao family who still wanted to treat Qiao Nan well.

“That’s great. You’re so sensible. You’ll definitely be a good sister in the future.” All was good as long as this girl didn’t feel that his grandson was born to compete with her. How could the younger one win against the older one? It was like how Nan Nan was bullied by Zijin all this while.

Jiajia smiled. “Yes, I also think that I would be a good sister. I’m just waiting for Aunt to give birth to a son or daughter now.”

“Do you prefer a brother or a sister?” If it was a brother, without a doubt, his grandson would be the little master of the Zhai family in the future. If Nan Nan gave birth to a daughter, then would it...

The reason why Qiao Dongliang had such worries was because of the Zhu family’s situation. Zhai Sheng was getting married. The Zhai family’s lively wedding attracted many people’s attention. At the same time these people were discussing Zhai Sheng’s marriage, the Zhu family, who had similar background conditions as the Zhai family, were inevitably brought in.

The Zhai family had already produced three generations of chiefs. Although the Zhu family didn’t have three generations, they had two. Furthermore, the reason why the Zhu family didn’t produce a third generation of chief wasn’t that the Zhu family’s child had gone astray but that he had passed away early.

The Zhu family could be regarded as a big family business. The contacts accumulated by the two generations of chiefs from the Zhu family were a powerful source of wealth. It was a pity that Zhu Chengqi’s only son passed away. Instead, Zhu Chengqi’s sister had a son. This child was naturally Zhu Chengqi’s nephew.

Everyone was spreading that as soon as Zhu Chengqi kicked the bucket, the big Zhu family might have to change its surname to Wang and belong to Wang Yang alone. As such, there was no difference in giving birth to a son or a daughter. What was more important was that the child born had to live for a long time. Even if it was a daughter, she could still get a share of the family’s inheritance and everything.

With the Zhu family as an example, it was inevitable for Qiao Dongliang to share this example with Jiajia. At this moment, Jiajia was the only child of the Zhai family. One could imagine how pampered she was.

Chapter 2018: Refusal

When Qiao Nan’s child was born, more than half of Jiajia’s pampering would definitely be shared.

Jiajia could laugh and say that she liked younger siblings and would take good care of them now. With the arrival of such a child, Jiajia would understand how much she would lose. Qiao Dongliang wasn't sure if Jiajia could still tell him then with a pure and innocent expression that she was still that good sister from before.

Jiajia didn't understand the complicated feeling in Qiao Dongliang's heart. She said as a matter-of-fact, "Both are equally good. As long as they are born to my aunt, I will like them. A brother's cute but a sister's prettier. It's the same." After being subjected to a family where boys were preferred over girls, Jiajia expressed that she wouldn't discriminate against younger brothers but would dote on younger sisters more.

Qiao Dongliang hesitated for a while before giving a faint 'oh'. It sounded like this child liked a sister more?

Forget it. There was no use thinking about it now. Nan Nan just got married to Zhai Sheng and wasn't pregnant with a child yet. After the child was born, he would help Nan Nan watch over him or her and see if there were changes to this child. If there were no changes, he wouldn't be a wicked person. He would say nothing at all. However, if this girl changed, he had to remind Nan Nan to pay more attention to her.

Didn't someone say a few days ago that Old Chief Zhai's son was beaten to death by a group of gangsters then? Nobody knew if this was accidental or intentional. What everyone knew was that after Old Chief Zhai's son passed away, the nephew surnamed Wang from the Zhu family would undoubtedly be the final winner.

Qiao Dongliang couldn't help but worry if such an incident would similarly happen to his grandchild. Once Nan Nan gave birth to his grandchild, as long as it was possible, he had to help Nan Nan take good care of him so that no one could hurt him and make his grandson the second Zhu Baoguo.

"Oh? Who is this? What a handsome aunt!" Jiajia didn't have much to talk to Qiao Dongliang. Since Qiao Dongliang was remaining silent, Jiajia couldn't continue the conversation and her bright eyes wandered around. At this moment, Jiajia heard a little commotion. The people who attended the wedding seemed to be discussing something.

Jiajia looked up and saw a handsome aunt in a green army uniform just like her uncle's walking over. Jiajia blinked. After thinking, she said, "Grandpa, take a seat here and eat whatever you want. If there's anything you need, you can ask our aunt. A guest just arrived, so I'll go take a look." Her

mom would definitely recognize this handsome-looking aunt. She was going to ask her mom about her.

“Shi Qing, why are you here today?” Zhai Hua was very surprised to see Shi Qing. It was rare for her to have a good impression of this woman. “Today is Zhai Sheng’s big day. Do you remember how I used to bring you around in the army when your dad was still around? You have to give me face.”

That being said, Zhai Hua was still confident about Shi Qing. Shi Qing wasn’t Qiu Chenxi. She wouldn’t do things that wouldn’t allow her to lead a good life but also wanted everyone in this world to accompany her. The truth was that when Zhai Hua first saw Shi Qing, she didn’t like her. Who asked Shi Qing to be Qiu Chenxi’s cousin and Qiu Chenxi was Qi Minlan’s birth daughter?

After that, Shi Peng became Zhai Sheng’s master. After interacting more with Shi Qing, she realized that Shi Qing was totally different from Qiu Chenxi. There wasn’t any trace of Qi Minlan on her. Instead, they were quite in sync. It was precisely because of this that when Shi Qing went to the army with Shi Peng later, Zhai Hua was especially willing to bring this younger sister out to play and let her train together with her.

It was just that after they grew up, a lot of things had happened. She obviously knew that Shi Qing, like Qiu Chenxi, liked Zhai Sheng. However, Zhai Sheng married Qiu Chenxi in the end. After Shi Peng was gone, Shi Qing followed her mom to Mo Du first and then returned to the capital. She didn’t come to Ping Cheng again.

They were playmates who got along well when they were young. After they grew up, they lost contact with each other. When they met again, her daughter was already at the age when she and Shi Qing knew each other back then.

Shi Qing smiled. “Sister Zhai Hua, you have thought too much. Do you think that I’m still eighteen years old and would bring a gun over to snatch the groom?” Actually, even if she was really an eighteen-year-old, she wouldn’t do such a crazy thing.

When she was young and most frivolous, had she not watched the man she liked marry her cousin? After that, she left quietly. She wasn’t so impulsive back when she was in her second year of junior high school. Now that she was past that age, it was more unlikely for her to do such a thing.

The only man who had touched her heart was going to marry again. She was just here to see what kind of woman could touch her male god’s heart such that he was willing to remarry.

As a single old woman in her forties, Shi Qing was also facing a headache as she was being urged to marry. In the past, Shi Qing often used Zhai Sheng, her senior, as a shield. Now that even Zhai Sheng was getting married, Shi Qing had a headache. She didn't know what kind of reasons and excuses she could use to reject her mom the next time she urged her to get married again.

Really, she was already forty-one years old. What else could she not let go? Even without getting married, she was still leading a good life and was more carefree than anyone else. She didn't need to rely on men. However, she managed to do things that some men couldn't do!

Every time she thought of this, Shi Qing felt extremely proud. So what if she was a woman? She was looked down on by her grandpa and her maternal grandpa's family. However, which one of them, who used to look down on her, wasn't holding her up, flattering her, or seeing her as pride? Upon thinking that her maternal grandpa's family nearly wanted to 'sell' her away when she was young to fulfill her uncle's career, Shi Qing's gaze turned cold.

She couldn't rely on these relatives. As such, she wouldn't let them rely on her as well. There was no use in saying any good words. Even if her mom was invited, she would still refuse!

"Brother Zhai's getting married. I'm just here to attend the wedding. Brother Zhai's the only disciple my dad has accepted when he was alive. Rather than saying that I'm here to attend the wedding, I'm actually attending it on behalf of my dad. Before my dad passed away, aside from caring about me, he was most concerned about Brother Zhai's marriage."

That day when Brother Zhai married Qiu Chenxi, her dad didn't enjoy the wedding. When they returned home, her dad told her that he was worried that even though Zhai Sheng married Qiu Chenxi, this marriage wouldn't last long. Zhai Sheng was his disciple. He knew clearly what kind of temper Zhai Sheng had.

Chapter 2019: Congratulations

Zhai Sheng did not spend much time at home to begin with, and after getting married, he spent even less time at home. Qiu Chenxi had been pampered while growing up, and because of that, there was no way she could have tolerated the loneliness.

It could be said that Shi Peng had been absolutely right about Zhai Sheng's divorce from Qiu Chenxi. It was just that Shi Peng's health had not allowed him to live to see that day, or to counsel Zhai Sheng to be more open-minded, to stop thinking about Qiu Chenxi, and to find a new relationship instead of giving up on himself because of his family's influence.

Knowing that Zhai Sheng was getting married, Shi Qing was happy and sad at the same time. She was happy because she knew that her dad would finally be able to stop worrying about Zhai Sheng. The sad part was that the one man whom she had liked was getting married, but she was not the bride.

Hearing Shi Qing talk about Shi Peng, there was sadness in Zhai Hua's expression. Shi Qing smiled upon seeing her reaction. "Sister Zhai Hua, don't be like that. It's been such a long time. Besides, my dad passed away in the military that he was the most passionate about. For my dad, it was probably the greatest blessing in his life that he was able to go to rest in this land."

Besides, it had already been so many years. Much of her grief had already dissipated.

Zhai Hua patted Shi Qing on the shoulder. "It's been hard on you."

Shi Peng's passing was definitely not such a simple matter. Even though they had not really kept in touch, Zhai Hua had heard about Shi Qing's situation after Shi Peng's passing. She knew that the Feng family had tried to force Shi Qing into marriage, but that had happened after Zhai Hua's marriage to Wei De and when her relationship had gone downhill.

Because she was busy enough trying to handle her own relationships and life, Zhai Hua had no time to care about Shi Qing. At that time, it was unsuitable for Zhai Sheng to step in either since it would probably cause even more trouble if he could not handle it well.

Shi Qing laughed. She had already been through the worst times of her life. Now, she was in a great place. Her grandmother's family no longer controlled her life or expected help from her. Of course, there was no way her grandmother's family would dare to sell her off just to help her uncle get a promotion as they had done in the past.

What she was capable of doing now was much more than what her grandmother's family had been capable of doing in the past. Since they had not succeeded in selling her off at the time, whether or not her grandmother's family could get what they wanted would depend on whether she allowed it to happen.

Shi Qing did not mention that the Feng family no longer dared to mention that incident anymore. She could not help but wish that everyone on earth would stop mentioning it. That way, she would naturally forget about it as time went by. There was no other choice. The man whom the Feng

family had found for Shi Qing had nothing but a good family background. Not only had he not been able to make a name for himself, but he was also a failure in life.

Shi Qing had refused to get married to that man and had gritted her teeth and decided to follow in Shi Peng's footsteps, joining the military while gritting her teeth and bearing with the pressure and scoldings from everyone around her. That man would never stay a bachelor just because Shi Qing refused to marry him.

Without Shi Qing, there would still be Zhou Qing or Wang Qing.

It was only natural that that man would find another woman to marry him if Shi Qing refused to do so. Not only had that man gotten married, but he had even managed to stay married up until now. But it was not that he did not want to get divorced. It was simply that he could not get a divorce.

Not only had that man fooled around outside even after getting a wife and having children, but he had even gotten an STD that he had passed on to his wife. He had been utterly humiliated because of this matter and had even become a running joke among his friends.

That family's life could not get any worse. That proved that Shi Qing had made the right decision by severing her ties with her grandmother's family and refusing to get married. The Feng family had claimed that they had found a great candidate for marriage for Shi Qing. In reality, they had not even known the kind of man they had found and had been ready to throw Shi Qing into a fiery pit.

That alone was more than enough proof that the Feng family did not just care about Shi Qing because of their familial relations. If the Feng family knew what kind of man that guy was and thought that it was normal for men to fool around before marriage as long as he changed for the better after marriage, it showed that the Feng family was simply treating her as a playing card to further their own interests. They were not at all interested in Shi Qing's life after marriage or how bad it would become.

Without her husband, Feng Cheng naturally grew closer to her own family. Initially, Feng Cheng had agreed to let Shi Qing get married to that man. After all, she did agree that that man's background was good. Shi Qing had a bad temper, so she might just be able to live a good life in the future if she could keep that guy in check.

Moreover, her daughter's marriage would benefit her elder brother. Unlike her in-laws, her family would never hurt her or her daughter.

Feng Cheng's willingness was based on the premise that Shi Qing would be happy after getting married. If Shi Qing was not going to lead a blissful life, Feng Cheng would never agree to it either.

Shi Qing's refusal to get married and running away from home to secretly join the military made Feng Cheng fly into a rage, nearly causing the mother and daughter to sever their ties. But just a few years later, Feng Cheng could no longer get angry at her daughter upon seeing the kind of man her daughter had almost gotten married to. In fact, she even felt guilty toward Shi Qing.

At that time, Shi Qing had already toiled in the military for several years. She was no longer that helpless young lady who had no one to rely on after her father's death. Upon closer analysis, Shi Qing and Feng Cheng realized what the Feng family had been up to. Knowing that her own family had tried to take advantage of her daughter, Feng Cheng was infuriated at her family and hated them very much.

While her father-in-law had been alive, he had been biased toward Qiu Chenxi, but at the very least, he had still cared about her daughter. On the other hand, her family seemed to care for her daughter on the surface, and yet, they had been plotting such things behind their backs. They were indeed much worse than her father-in-law.

Now that Shi Peng was gone, Shi Qing was Feng Cheng's closest kin. The Feng family came after Shi Qing. If she had to make a choice between her daughter and her family, it went without saying that her daughter would come first.

As such, Feng Cheng toughened her attitude and no longer tried to speak well of the Feng family in front of Shi Qing. Even when Shi Qing rose through the ranks in the military, even surpassing that of her uncle in the Feng family, Feng Cheng had never once wavered in her stance.

Chapter 2020: Reluctant

The facts had already proved that they were alone. They could never depend on the Feng family to give them a good life. In fact, the Feng family had nearly thrown her daughter into a fiery pit. With a family like that, why would Feng Cheng be willing to give up her only daughter for her family?

Feng Cheng could not be clearer about distance and importance of relatives at this point.

After distancing herself from the Feng family, the Feng family seemed to treat Feng Cheng and Shi Qing with greater respect and spoke cautiously as though they were their ancestors.

The more her family did that, the more united Feng Cheng and Shi Qing were. Did the Feng family need a favor from her daughter? Of course, they had a right to talk about it, but it would be her daughter's decision whether she would help them. She would not try to interfere in the matter. As such, the Feng family could not possibly accuse her of not treating the Feng family as her family.

Qing Qing was the most important to her. If the Feng family were to neglect Qing Qing, they could take it as though she did not exist and was not part of the Feng family.

In short, the mother and daughter were alone. That was why they had to band together so that no one, not even their 'relatives', would be able to bully them.

Once Feng Cheng's attitude changed, the Feng family immediately became helpless. As such, they could only treat Feng Cheng and Shi Qing politely, and of course, there was no way they could try to control Shi Qing's life to their advantage anymore.

Without Shi Peng, Shi Qing had managed to rise up from the ashes to stand back up on her own feet by her own abilities, even propping the entire Shi family up. Shi Qing was the pillar of the Shi family. She would not need to depend on anyone, much less the Feng family. She was an independent individual!

Shi Qing had grown from a young girl who knew nothing about the world into a female general whom everyone, including the Feng family, looked up to. Shi Qing was the only one who knew how hard it had been along the way. As such, Shi Qing's reputation had been rather good in her circle of acquaintances even though she was the only one left in her family, and she had become the 'other people's children' that others often talked about.

Most people only envied Shi Qing's success, but a good friend like Zhai Hua felt bad for Shi Qing for all the suffering she had gone through while she had been forced to grow up. Everyone had to pay a price while growing up. Often, this was not a small price. One had to be like a knight, cutting through the thorns until one was riddled with injuries so as to grow through those experiences.

Shi Qing smiled. "We haven't been in contact for such a long time but you're still willing to acknowledge me as your younger sister. It seems that I was a little too much for never coming to visit you." It was not that she had not wanted to visit. She had not dared to do so. Just hearing about what had happened to Brother Zhai, she had almost felt that her young heart was still beating for Brother Zhai.

But even before Zhai Sheng had married Qiu Chenxi, Shi Qing had already realized one thing. Even if Zhai Sheng had not married Qiu Chenxi, and Qiu Chenxi had never appeared, Zhai Sheng would

never have married her. In Zhai Sheng's eyes, she was the same as Zhai Hua. She was simply Zhai Sheng's younger sister. How could a brother develop romantic feelings for his own sister?

After realizing that, Shi Qing could only try to control her own heart and distance herself from Zhai Sheng in case she fell even deeper for him. Now that Zhai Sheng was getting married again, Shi Qing wanted to see for herself if Zhai Sheng would be able to gain happiness so that she would finally be able to give up on him.

"Don't worry. I'm older than you. I won't take issue with such a trivial matter." Zhai Hua hugged Shi Qing's shoulder, magnanimously declaring that she would not care about that. Zhai Hua knew how Shi Qing felt toward Zhai Sheng.

Before Zhai Sheng had married Qiu Chenxi, Zhai Hua had given Zhai Sheng a suggestion because she could not stand Qiu Chenxi and Qi Minlan. If he was going to get married, he might as well marry Shi Qing. No matter what, Qiu Chenxi had only gotten close to the Zhai family because of Qi Minlan, who had been their mother's love rival. Instead of marrying the daughter of their mother's love rival, he might as well marry their master's daughter instead.

Qi Minlan was Zhai Sheng's master's younger sister. That made for quite a close relationship.

Of course, Zhai Sheng had not agreed to Zhai Hua's suggestion. Zhai Sheng simply repeated what he had told Shi Qing to Zhai Hua. He did not have any feelings for Qiu Chenxi, whom he treated as a stranger. On the contrary, he did have feelings for Shi Qing, but Shi Qing was nothing more than a sister to him.

As such, there was no way he could have such a relationship with Shi Qing.

"Mom, who's this auntie?" Seeing that Zhai Hua was chatting joyfully with Shi Qing, Jiajia drew closer to Zhai Hua and tugged on her arm, wanting her to introduce Shi Qing.

Zhai Hua smiled as she caressed Jiajia's head. "Shi Qing, this is my daughter, Jiajia. Jiajia, this is Auntie Shi Qing. We played together when we were younger. Now, she's a female general and I can tell you very proudly that I was the one who made her this way."

"Wow, she's amazing!" Jiajia's eyes widened. Zhai Hua had been passionate about the military and so had Wei De. With such parents, Jiajia was naturally influenced and had a different mindset toward the military. Upon hearing that Shi Qing was a rare female general, and an exceptional one at that, Jiajia nearly became starry-eyed. "Hello, Auntie Shi Qing, I'm Jiajia. I just graduated from

junior high school. When I grow up, I want to go to the military just like you and become an exceptional soldier.”

A female general was so cool!

“You want to join the military too?” Shi Qing raised her eyebrow. “You resemble your mom in that aspect.” She wondered if this child would follow in Sister Zhai Hua’s footsteps, abandoning her ideals and passion for so-called ‘love’ and ‘marriage’.

Zhai Hua stopped Jiajia. “Don’t talk nonsense. What do you mean by joining the military? Didn’t you say that you want to be a doctor?” She treated her daughter in a different way from the way she treated herself.

Zhai Hua enjoyed being in the military, but that was a tough life. Society might be more peaceful now, but there were many other factors that could destabilize this peace both locally and abroad. As such, a soldier could be sent on a mission at any time. Then, whether or not a soldier would be able to return would depend firstly on his ability, and secondly, his luck.

Apart from her family, Zhai Hua had only Jiajia left. There was no way Zhai Hua would allow her only daughter to take such a risk or suffer to become even stronger than ordinary women. It’d be better for her daughter to get a normal job and live peacefully for the rest of her life.