

RTAMM 2031

Chapter 2031: Ruining Her Image

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The Zhai family had already guessed that Zhai Sheng would change after marriage but they had never expected such a drastic change. It was enough to leave the Zhai family's jaw agape.

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“Wow... Is uncle carrying auntie down?” Jiajia's jaw dropped. Her classmates dated but they were all rather reserved. Few even held hands in front of others. If they went on a date, they would choose somewhere where other schoolmates would not go.

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They would never be as daring as her uncle and auntie. Her uncle's arm was around her auntie's waist! If her eyes were not lying to her, her auntie's feet had not even touched the ground!

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“Ahem...” Zhai Hua rolled her eyes at Zhai Sheng. “Watch it. Jiajia's still young.” Zhai Hua had no way of explaining to her daughter that her uncle and auntie were not expressing their love for each other. It was because her uncle had exhausted her auntie that she could not even walk. She would have no answers to Jiajia's questions. As such, Zhai Hua chose not to dig a hole for herself in case she accidentally buried herself in it.

“Nan Nan and I are legally married now. It's permissible by law for us to be intimate with each other. What's wrong?” Zhai Sheng sat Qiao Nan by his side before scooping a bowl of congee for her. “Sit down and drink some of this to fill your stomach. It's nutritious.”

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“I’ll do it myself.” After resting for a while, Qiao Nan did have some energy, after all. She had not rejected Zhai Sheng carrying her down the stairs because her legs were simply too sore. Walking on flat ground was still alright, but going down the stairs was still a little too much for Qiao Nan in her current state.

Zhai Yaohui looked at Miao Jing proudly. He had already said that they would not have a honeymoon baby but a baby on the first day of the marriage! But the books that Miao Miao had been reading did say doing so too frequently was not beneficial for pregnancy. He would have to remind Zhai Sheng about that.

It was only when the bowl of congee reached her stomach did Qiao Nan feel alive. “Sister Zhai Hua, have you bought your tickets to Sanya? What time is it? Shall I get Brother Zhai to send you guys to the airport?”

Before Zhai Sheng could even give her a reminder, Zhai Hua quickly rejected the offer. “That won’t be necessary. There are parking lots at the Ping Cheng airport. I’ll drive there and park my car there. It won’t cost much to park my car there for a few days. It’s just as well. When we come back, we won’t need to get a cab and we’ll be able to come back on our own too.”

It was no longer early and they had to leave as soon as possible. Otherwise, the southern courtyard’s gate would be blocked once again.

It was such a nice morning, and there was a tacit understanding not to mention anything about the Qiao family. Upon finishing their breakfast, Zhai Sheng headed into one car, and Zhai Hua headed into another. Both cars left the Zhai family’s compound, headed for different directions. In an instant, the Zhai family’s house that had been bustling just a day earlier was now empty, save for someone who dropped by occasionally to take a look at the condition of the house.

“Don’t stop me!” There was a huge ‘commotion’ early in the morning at the gate of the southern courtyard. Ding Jiayi’s face was filled with rage and displeasure. “I want to talk it out with them. Who dares to send her own mom and sister to the police station? So what if she married into a good family? No matter what, I was the one who gave birth to her. She can’t choose not to acknowledge me as her mom. I won’t let this go just like that! Let’s see just how she can continue being so shameless once this matter gets out!”

When Qiao Zijin had aired her suspicions to Ding Jiayi, Ding Jiayi had exploded. The world was upside down. How could a daughter have called the police, asking for her own mother and sister to be arrested?

“Before you try to reason it out with them, shouldn’t you think about whether your actions were appropriate? Do you think the police would have arrested you and detained you for half a day if you did nothing wrong? The police have to go by the books. Besides, I’ve already explained to you many times that you guys getting detained had nothing to do with Nan Nan. There were so many guests at Nan Nan’s wedding yesterday. She couldn’t even manage...” How could she have had the time to think about Old Ding and Zijin?

Ding Jiayi’s expression revealed her disbelief. “That can’t be true. We’re now in-laws with the Zhai family. Aside from that heartless wretched girl, who else would have dared to call the police on us? Do they have something against the Zhai family? Or are they truly that bold and not afraid to die?”

Ding Jiayi was being unreasonably arrogant. While she looked down on Qiao Nan, she also prided herself on being in-laws with the Zhai family. How on earth had Ding Jiayi formed such complex and contradictory feelings?

Qiao Dongliang was truly exhausted mentally. “Old Ding, do you still not understand? The person who married into the Zhai family was not you. It was Qiao Nan. Do you really think that you are on good terms with the Zhai family?”

“But I’m Qiao Nan’s mom!” Why would she not be on good terms with them?

“Yes, Nan Nan did marry into the Zhai family. But are you on good terms with Nan Nan? Since you aren’t even on good terms with Nan Nan, do you really expect the Zhai family to have a close relationship with you? The Zhai family’s attitude toward you depends on Nan Nan’s attitude. As for Nan Nan’s attitude, I don’t think I have to say anything more. I’m sure you understand it well. You don’t have a normal mother-and-daughter relationship with Nan Nan.”

If she did, would she not have told her mother that she was getting married? Would she not have invited her mother to her wedding? Similarly, if Ding Jiayi had just the slightest feelings toward Qiao Nan, she would never have needed to wait until the age of forty to get married.

Qiao Dongliang had to admit that Qiao Nan had been right about one thing. While it was true that she had the good fortune of getting married to such a brilliant man like Zhai Sheng at the age of forty, there was no need for her to thank Ding Jiayi for the sufferings she had gone through, causing her to remain unmarried until the age of forty before getting the opportunity to get married.

There was not even a relationship to talk about between Qiao Nan and Ding Jiayi.

Ding Jiayi had never given anything to Qiao Nan. In fact, Ding Jiayi had always been on the receiving end. Since Ding Jiayi thought that Qiao Nan had married well and was giving her some face by marrying into the Zhai family, all the more she should have helped Qiao Nan organize her wedding well so that no one would be able to fault Qiao Nan in any way.

But what did Ding Jiayi do instead?

Qiao Nan herself had not had any problems, but Ding Jiayi's appearance made Qiao Nan seem like someone riddled with problems. Because of that, Qiao Dongliang did not even want to persuade Qiao Nan otherwise.

Ding Jiayi gritted her teeth. "Do you mean that that wretched girl purposely ruined my image in front of the Zhai family, causing them to misunderstand me?" No wonder she had never even crossed the southern courtyard's gates even once after that wretched girl got into the Zhai family!

Chapter 2032: Nonsense

She had already said that it was that wretched girl, Qiao Nan, who had created all these problems. She could not bear to see the Qiao family living in peace. This wretched girl had been born to take revenge on their family!

Qiao Dongliang did not know whether to laugh or to cry. "Misunderstand you as a bad person? Have you forgotten how you and Zijin were on the news last year? Do you really think it's a misunderstanding? Let's not talk about whether you are a good person. Do you think you have been a good mother to Nan Nan? If you had been good to Nan Nan, she might have been willing to explain your situation to the Zhai family so that they would change their mind about you. In that case, there's no need for Nan Nan to do anything or even say anything. There's no way the Zhai family will have a close relationship with you like other in-laws."

Given this situation, there was no need for Nan Nan to say anything. Her attitude alone was sufficient. Up until now, Old Ding was still unclear about this.

"That wretched girl isn't educated and she's quite stupid. Do I need to teach her to say good things about me in front of the Zhai family? She should know to do that without me asking. Our family's situation and peace are beneficial to her too. Isn't she afraid that the Zhai family will think badly of her once they find out about our family's situation?" Ding Jiayi stomped her foot. How she wished she could drag Qiao Nan in front of her and give her a good beating.

Spare the rod, spoil the child. If she did not teach Qiao Nan such a simple principle, Qiao Nan seemed not to know about it at all. Was Qiao Nan really such a fool? Did she need to teach such a simple thing? Did she even need to teach Qiao Nan how to eat?

Qiao Dongliang could not reason with Ding Jiayi and could not understand whether it was Ding Jiayi's brain that was empty or his that was empty. Why was there always a black hole appearing every time the couple tried to reason with each other? They could never come to an agreement, much less him succeeding in convincing Ding Jiayi.

Qiao Dongliang sighed. "Fine. You can go ahead if you want to. I won't stop you from embarrassing yourself." Nan Nan should know Old Ding's character and should probably not be at home anymore, right? That would not do. Should he make a call to find out first?

Qiao Dongliang quickly whipped out his phone, wanting to explain the situation to Qiao Nan. When he took out his phone, Qiao Dongliang realized that Qiao Nan had already sent him a message half an hour ago. At that time, he had been trying to stop Ding Jiayi from going to the Zhai family's house. It had probably been too noisy for him to hear the notification sound from his phone.

Upon reading the content of the message, Qiao Dongliang breathed a sigh of relief and did not try to stop Ding Jiayi anymore. There was not a single person left in the Zhai family's house. It was impossible for Ding Jiayi to enter the southern courtyard, much less create a din at the Zhai family's house. Even now that Nan Nan had officially become the Zhai family's daughter-in-law, the Qiao family had still been unable to enter the southern courtyard freely.

This privilege had to be granted by the Zhai family. It was not simply awarded to them because they had become the Zhai family's in-laws in name.

Ding Jiayi could not wrap her head around this problem and Qiao Dongliang finally agreed to let Ding Jiayi dig her own grave. He did not care if more people found out about their family's dirty laundry and mocked or ridiculed them any further.

Seeing that Qiao Dongliang no longer tried to stand in her way and was even heading back home, Ding Jiayi hesitated. There was nothing stopping her from proclaiming to the world that the Zhai family was her in-laws and that she was the biological mother of the Zhai family's daughter-in-law. Besides, she had to give Qiao Nan a good lecture after being thrown into the police station the previous day. Qiao Nan had to understand that she had to be filial to her mother!

“Dad, why did you come back alone? Where’s Mom?” Seeing that Qiao Dongliang had returned alone, Qiao Zijin was surprised. “Has Mom met Nan Nan? Did Mom blow her top? Actually, Nan Nan is the one in the wrong. As long as Nan Nan explains the situation to Mom and apologizes to her, I’m sure Mom will forgive her. We’re a family, after all.”

Of course, there would be a list of conditions for Qiao Nan to fulfill when she admitted her mistake. And a good eighty percent of those conditions benefitted Qiao Zijin directly.

Before confirming that she would be receiving these benefits, Qiao Zijin was extremely concerned about this matter. “Dad, did you leave Mom there along the way?”

That was very likely. Now that Qiao Nan had married a golden son-in-law like Zhai Sheng, her dad had gotten even more biased, completely ignoring her. No wonder it was often said that it was easy to add brilliance to one’s present splendor but difficult to provide help in one’s hour of need.

After getting married to Zhai Sheng, Qiao Nan would never have to worry about money. Her future was unbridled, unlike hers. She was divorced, and neither was her son by her side. Even the money that she had in the bank was not a significant sum. Qiao Nan was already so rich, but her dad had handed the property deed of the courtyard over to her all the same.

Qiao Zijin could not understand how she landed in this state. This time last year, her reputation had been much better than Qiao Nan’s even though she had been divorced. Qiao Nan had earned the ill reputation of being an old lady of forty who could not get married. In less than a year’s time, Qiao Nan had risen up from the ashes to become the chief’s wife, marrying such an impressive man like Zhai Sheng!

Sometimes, Qiao Zijin wondered if she was dreaming or having a nightmare. Otherwise, how could her smooth-sailing life have taken such an expected turn? Not only had she gotten divorced, but she had even gotten severely ill, even needing to sell her one and only asset.

On the contrary, Qiao Nan seemed to have sucked all of her good luck away. Not only had she managed to get married, but she had even gotten married to someone whom she had never dared to even dream about. In the past, her parents had only cared about her. Now, her dad seemed to have had a change of mind and was suddenly being loyal and kind to Qiao Nan, saying that he had to be fair and that the courtyard belonged to Qiao Nan in the first place.

All right. There was not one person in the Qiao family who was being reasonable. If her dad was so reasonable, would the first forty years of Qiao Nan’s life have turned out in this way? Apart from

Qiao Nan, who had been easily bullied in the past, no one in the Qiao family was a good person. Why did they try to act like good people?

“Your mom wants to make a fool of herself and I couldn’t stop her. But there’s no reason for me to join in on her nonsense too.” Qiao Dongliang’s expression darkened. “Since you care so much about your mom, why don’t you go join her?” That was what Qiao Dongliang was most depressed about.

He was unsure of what ill intentions Qiao Zijin had but he believed that Qiao Zijin was simply doing what would benefit her the most.. Thinking about Ding Jiayi, who had rushed off to the southern courtyard in anger, Qiao Dongliang had a feeling that there was a gun in Qiao Zijin’s hands.

Chapter 2033: Don’t Know

This feeling had become more apparent lately.

Qiao Zijin laughed guiltily. “Mom’s gone to ‘see’ her daughter. Why should I tag along? Qiao Nan just got married to Zhai Sheng yesterday. She’s still a new bride. Wouldn’t I be standing in their way if I were to go and visit her?”

Her mom was only going because her daughter had been insensible. As a mom, she had to educate her daughter. She was Qiao Nan’s elder sister and was of the same generation as Qiao Nan. She had no right to demand anything of Qiao Nan. Besides, if her mom were to create too much of a din, her presence would only draw attention to the both of them. What would the Zhai family think of her not stepping in to persuade her mom to back off?

She knew the position and status the Zhai family held. She would be digging her own grave if she were to do such an insensible thing in front of them.

It was better for her mom to take the lead and settle the matter. Then, she would simply go in with a few words of comfort. In that way, she would save her face in front of the Zhai family while benefitting from the situation. It was a perfect solution.

This was an opportunity for her to leave a good impression on the Zhai family, and there was no way she would give it up so easily. She would play the good cop and the role of the bad cop was naturally left to her mom. Qiao Zijin was clear about that and was careful about her attitude toward the Zhai family.

Qiao Zijin had made her careful calculations, but unfortunately, given Ding Jiayi's tendencies, it did not matter whether Qiao Zijin showed up. The Zhai family had never had a good impression of her either way.

Given last year's news, the Zhai family had already formed an impression of Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. There was no need to wait until they did so. Qiao Zijin might have made her careful calculations, but others were no fools either. They had not forgotten about what they had seen on the television, especially about someone as deceitful as Qiao Zijin.

If that was really the case, the three generations of chiefs should not have come from the Zhai family but from the Qiao family instead.

"Hehe..." Qiao Dongliang sneered. "That's right. You're always right and full of reason. Alright, I won't try to reason with you. I left your mom there along the way. How would I know the details? If you really want to know about it, you can ask her directly when she's back."

Anyway, Nan Nan and the Zhai family had already left. Even if Ding Jiayi were really to show up, she would receive the same treatment upon trying to enter the southern courtyard. It would be easier for her to be brought to the police station. There was simply no way she would be able to create trouble for the Zhai family.

Seeing Qiao Dongliang return to his room after leaving such a cold remark, Qiao Zijin took a bite of her watermelon unhappily. She had finally realized that Qiao Nan was just like her dad. They did not care about familial relationships at all. She was already living such a good life. Why could she not give her elder sister a helping hand?

If Qiao Nan had self-awareness, she would not have to work so hard to think of such far-fetched solutions to her problems.

Forget that Qiao Nan would not help her. Now that she had come up with a solution to keep herself fed and clothed, her dad was even despising her for it! Was everything Qiao Nan did was right in her dad's eyes while everything she did was wrong?

That was unfair!

"Mom, why are you back too? That was fast!" Qiao Zijin had not even managed to have much of her watermelon before Ding Jiayi returned in a huff. Qiao Zijin's heart sank.

Even though she had already known that it would not be easy to resolve this matter, the reality was much worse than she had expected. “What’s with you, Mom? Why are you so angry? Did Qiao Nan provoke or disobey you again?”

So, had her parents met Qiao Nan and talked to her? Had they managed to tell Qiao Nan about helping her with her civil servant entrance examination? Or tell the Zhai family about it?

“Don’t even talk about it.” Ding Jiayi slammed the table. “That wretched girl thinks that she’s no longer a Qiao after getting married and has nothing to do with us. Why should I have to go to visit her after her marriage? Shouldn’t she bring Zhai Sheng to visit me here instead? She should be serving me tea! Yes, she married Zhai Sheng and became the chief’s wife. That’s why I compromised and took the initiative to look for her, but who would have known that she already hid away a long time ago!”

Met her?

She had to be around for there to be a chance of meeting her.

No matter how determined Ding Jiayi was to wring Qiao Nan out whether she was dead or alive, she could not control Qiao Nan’s uncooperativeness. As such, Ding Jiayi had not been able to put even a single of her great plans into use before returning home today.

“She hid away? She isn’t around? Where did they go?” Qiao Nan had disappeared without a trace! Qiao Zijin had never expected that to happen! “But this is the first day of their marriage! Isn’t she afraid that the Zhai family will think badly of her for not staying in the Zhai family’s house for even one day?”

When she had gotten married to Chen Jun, it happened to be the period of his promotion. Besides, she had been pregnant when she had married into the Chen family. As such, on the first day of her marriage to Chen Jun, and even the one to two years following that, she had stayed at home to raise her child, faithfully sending Chen Jun off to work every day.

Her ex-mother-in-law had never allowed her to go window-shopping nearby, much less go out to play, saying that she was pregnant. If she really wanted to exercise, there was more than enough space for her to do so in the family’s garden. There were too many people outside and it was way too crowded. Besides, the air quality was poor. It did not matter even if she did not care about herself, but the Chen family would never let her off if she were to hurt the baby in her stomach.

To tell the truth, an average woman was usually treated like a queen in her ten months of pregnancy. But that was not the case in the Chen family. The Chen family had strong opinions toward her and controlled her strictly. It was only after a few years did the situation improve.

The Zhai family was of a much higher status than the Chen family, and neither had Qiao Nan married into the Zhai family while pregnant. Besides, Qiao Nan's current situation was much more complex than hers had been at that time. So, why was it that the results differed so much? She could not even go out on the streets, yet Qiao Nan could leave the house so happily! "Did they go on their honeymoon?"

Talking about that, she had never been on a honeymoon herself.

"How would I know about that?" Ding Jiayi rolled her eyes. "The guards only told me that there's no one in the Zhai family's house."

Chapter 2034: What Can I Do?

"The Zhai family left in two separate cars early this morning and left the house to the original housekeeper." As for where the Zhai family or Qiao Nan had gone, there was no way for Ding Jiayi to find out about that.

Qiao Zijin's expression stiffened. "So, you're saying that you made a trip in vain today and that you didn't meet the Zhai family or Qiao Nan?" Much less make her requests known to Qiao Nan so that the Zhai family would help her out? "Mom, are you really trying to help me? The civil servant entrance examination is already over. Very soon, the announcement will be out for the interviews. If I didn't pass the written tests, I won't be able to attend the interviews. If that happens, you can solve the problem yourself! Didn't you say that you already thought of a solution? Is this it?"

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Qiao Zijin was truly enraged. It was a civil service job! While she had still been married to Chen Jun, she had once made such a request to Chen Jun as well. She had not wanted to stay at home with nothing to do all day and wanted to find a job instead to earn her own keep. Of course, she had not intended to neglect her family just because of her job.

She wanted a job that would not require her to be present often. Basically, she wanted a job that would allow her to have free time after work without anyone pressing down too hard on her. If she were really to get such a good job, she would be able to take care of her family while holding down a job.

Ping Cheng happened to be recruiting civil servants just as Qiao Zijin raised this issue with Chen Jun. Qiao Zijin had not explicitly expressed her desire to become a civil servant, but her motive was clear since she had talked about this during such a time. As such an intelligent person, Chen Jun had immediately figured out Qiao Zijin's motive the moment she had opened her mouth.

In the end, the conclusion of their 'discussion' was that Chen Jun would increase Qiao Zijin's monthly allowance by five hundred yuan and Qiao Zijin would stay at home to take care of their child and his parents. There was no need for her to get a job.

He had no other choice. After marriage, Chen Jun had realized that Qiao Zijin only had brains when trying to deal with Qiao Nan. In any other situation, Qiao Zijin had neither IQ nor EQ. Besides, Chen Jun worried that Qiao Zijin would end up bringing more trouble to him because of his position, thus ruining his reputation and his future.

Instead of giving Qiao Zijin a job, Chen Jun would much rather spend just a little more money every month to maintain his family's reputation and save himself from trouble. He would simply treat it as though he was paying for some peace of mind.

She had not managed to become a civil servant while being married to Chen Jun, but now that Qiao Nan had gotten married to Zhai Sheng, she had gotten this idea in her mind once again.

Qiao Zijin remembered clearly that her mind had been in a daze upon seeing the questions on the written examination. She had not even been able to understand a single question, much less answer any. Since she had not done so, how could she have received any marks for her examination?

To put it simply, Qiao Zijin's mind had simply shut down upon receiving the paper. Then, she had simply stared blankly at the examination paper. Invigilators cared only about whether test-takers were cheating, and not about whether they were doing their best to answer the questions.

Although they had not seen many like Qiao Zijin, she was not the first. Seeing that Qiao Zijin was only here to try her luck and had gone blank, the invigilators did not even bother about Qiao Zijin again after ensuring that she was not cheating. There was nothing they could do since Qiao Zijin was not cheating, and neither was she causing any disruption to the examination procedures.

As such, Qiao Zijin had completed the examination in a 'peaceful' manner.

After handing in a blank paper, Qiao Zijin placed all her hopes of becoming a civil servant on Ding Jiayi. It was Ding Jiayi who had assured Qiao Zijin that she had come up with a solution and would be able to fulfill Qiao Zijin's dreams.

It had been a few days since the written examination, and it would very soon be the day of the interviews. Qiao Zijin was anxious just thinking about that. As such, Qiao Zijin had not even tried to stop Ding Jiayi from going to lecture Qiao Nan even though it was the first day of Qiao Nan's marriage. In fact, she could not wait for Ding Jiayi to hurry there without any delay.

She was on tenterhooks about whether she would succeed in becoming a civil servant, so why should Qiao Nan be able to enjoy her first day of marriage so blissfully after being 'satisfied' by her husband? Life was not always smooth-sailing. If Qiao Nan was so insensible, she would not mind teaching Qiao Nan a lesson as her elder sister.

"I know. I remember everything. I said that I'll help you become a civil servant even if I don't get to meet Qiao Nan. When have I ever gone back on my word? What's the hurry?" Ding Jiayi retorted in frustration. There was no other choice. Her most obedient and most 'unpromising' daughter had become disobedient. This had almost always been the case lately and Ding Jiayi was upset, feeling as though she had lost all dignity.

Every time Qiao Zijin posed that question, Ding Jiayi would always give her the same reply. Qiao Zijin could not help but stomp her feet. "Fine, I won't care about it anymore. If the results come out and my name isn't on the interview shortlist, you can deal with it, Mom! This is the biggest event of my life. Besides getting married, getting this job is the only thing I can count on to give me a good life in the future. It's all up to you whether it fails or succeeds. I'm your only daughter now. You can't possibly leave me to die!"

The conversation between the mother-and-daughter pair had been overheard by Qiao Dongliang, who had been in his room. Qiao Dongliang could not understand how Ding Jiayi was so confident that she would be able to secure Qiao Zijin a civil service job even without meeting Qiao Nan or the Zhai family.

What was Ding Jiayi's solution? Albeit given Qiao Dongliang's understanding of Ding Jiayi, he could not put his finger on Ding Jiayi's plan.

Qiao Zijin did not believe Ding Jiayi, and neither did Qiao Dongliang, but he could not help but worry that Ding Jiayi would create more trouble for Qiao Nan once again. It was only when the interview name list was announced that everyone in the northern courtyard was caught by surprise.

Qiao Zijin had been rather intelligent in her childhood and was a university graduate too. Ten years ago, she could have gotten away with it.. But now that Qiao Zijin had graduated from university and had spent quite a lot of time back at the Qiao family's house, and given that these neighbors had educated their children on their own, they were clear about how much knowledge Qiao Zijin truly had.

Chapter 2035: Examination?

The neighbor who had asked Ding Jiayi for a favor the previous time had a daughter who had graduated with decent results and had even won a few scholarships in school. However, even her daughter had not managed to be shortlisted for the interview. How had Qiao Zijin been able to do so? And that was why the northern courtyard went into a frenzy.

This neighbor, who had once asked Ding Jiayi for a favor, was the first to show up at the Qiao family's door, clearly displeased. "Didn't I say that Qiao Nan married well? She's so amazing. How could it be possible that she doesn't have any abilities at all? But as neighbors, it's just a favor. One or two more won't make a difference. Don't you think so, Sister Ding?"

Qiao Zijin's intelligence was no match for her daughter. So, why was it that Qiao Zijin managed to get to the interview while her daughter had not been able to do so? It was simply because she had not given birth to a sister like Qiao Nan, who had married into a good family.

Upon hearing that Qiao Zijin had managed to get through the written examinations and was shortlisted for the interview, she was willing to bet her life that the Qiao family must have pulled some strings.

They were old neighbors and old friends, after all. Qiao Nan must have gotten the Zhai family's help to give Qiao Zijin the opportunity to be interviewed. She could let that go, but only on the condition that her daughter could do so as well.

They could use the excuse that there had been computational errors or that the percentile cut-off for the interview had been shifted. Anything was fine, really. She did not care what methods Qiao Nan or the Zhai family used for her daughter to be accepted for the interview and the job. Then, she would promise never to leak a word about Qiao Zijin's matter.

If...

If the Qiao family did not treat them as neighbors and refused to help them out with this favor, letting her capable daughter be treated so unfairly, she would definitely fight back on her daughter's behalf. She would make those people who bullied her daughter suffer as well!

The Zhai family was powerful. There was no way she could do anything to them. But if this was to be exposed, a simple investigation of Qiao Zijin's paper would immediately result in her name being removed from the interview shortlist.

Perhaps, if Qiao Zijin's name were to be removed, her daughter's name might even be added to fill that space!

"We've been neighbors for such a long time. Shouldn't we help each other out in these situations? Only by helping each other out will we be able to improve our relationship. Isn't there a saying that a close neighbor is much better than a distant brother? Sister Ding, you watched my daughter grow up. You have to help me out. Zijin may have been shortlisted for the interview, but my daughter wasn't. I really didn't know that Zijin was so knowledgeable. Shall we let our children get together some time? My daughter has quite a few problems that Zijin might be able to help her out with."

In short, there was no way Qiao Zijin was going for the interview if her daughter was not.

This old neighbor had already made her intention clear with such a threat. As long as Qiao Zijin wanted to go for her interview, her daughter had to go too. Otherwise, she would find a way to disqualify Qiao Zijin from the interview.

"..." Ding Jiayi's expression was terrible. This neighbor was not very capable herself and she was trying to get her daughter a job in the civil service? She was threatening her with such an average family background? Did she forget that Ding Jiayi's daughter was the wife of a chief?

No matter what, it was that wretched girl, Qiao Nan's, fault. If Qiao Nan had gotten married from the Qiao family's home, the entire courtyard would know that Qiao Nan was the Qiao family's daughter. Anyone who looked down on the Qiao family or tried to harm the Qiao family would be going against Qiao Nan and the entire Zhai family.

If Qiao Nan had hardened her attitude, there was no way these people would dare to threaten her for a favor in this manner! Did they want to become civil servants with her help? Fine!

The problem was that there were no free lunches in this world. Before getting anything, one first had to give up something. Did they really think that simply saying that they were old neighbors would suffice? They were all adults. Could they be more rational and mature?

She had not even received all those benefits she had envisioned, nor had she been flattered, before she had been threatened. As such, it was only natural for Ding Jiayi to be in as bad a mood as Qiao Zijin had been earlier.

Ding Jiayi hesitated for a moment. Should she help the neighbor's daughter, or should she simply tell her neighbor off? Her daughter might be the chief's wife, but no matter how far her connections reached, that was the Qiao family's matters. If they wanted to take advantage of the Qiao family, they had better act more humbly and courteously.

Ding Jiayi deliberated between her two options for a while before sneering. "Alright, it seems as though you don't need my help. You seem more capable than me. I believe that with a mother like you, your daughter can become the head of state if she wants, much less a mere civil servant. I'm nowhere as capable as you are. Your daughter will have to work hard to become a civil servant by her own efforts. All the best. I'll be cheering for you."

The neighbor's expression paled. "Sister Ding, we've been old neighbors for such a long time. Do you really want to bring things so far? It'll be awkward for all of us in the future. We should be generous to others at times. Problems can be solved by compromises. Of course, we won't expect you to help us for free. You are free to make any demands and requests."

Before coming, the neighbor's daughter had told her that it was impolite to show up empty-handed if they wanted a favor. No matter how underhanded their methods were, that was still the Qiao family's own matters. What if they needed even more help from the Qiao family in the future?

There was no need to worry about spending money in this society. One only needed to worry about not having anywhere to spend their money. It was obvious that Qiao Nan's marriage to Zhai Sheng and her becoming the chief's wife had caused the Qiao family to become all high and mighty. Given their family's history with the Qiao family, they could count on having the Qiao family's help if they needed it in the future.

The young lady was rather good-natured about the situation. She had probably already expected this situation and thus spoke gently. On the other hand, her mother was enraged.

Her daughter was clearly a hundred times better than Qiao Zijin in every way. Qiao Zijin had bought her way through university while her daughter had won scholarships. Qiao Zijin had graduated more than two decades ago and had never so much as touched a book after graduating!

Chapter 2036: Very Blessed

On the contrary, her daughter had recently graduated from university and was in the most knowledgeable period of her life.

She could not bear to see her daughter lose to someone like Qiao Zijin, much less hand her hard-earned money over to someone like that. Everyone in Ping Cheng knew just how badly Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi had treated Qiao Nan.

Even though Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi had treated Qiao Nan so badly, they had still been able to leech off Qiao Nan and ride on her laurels after she married well! Why was that so?

The neighbors were filled with resentment and dissatisfaction. All sorts of complex emotions jumbled up together. As such, that old neighbor had not agreed to her daughter's proposal. Initially, that neighbor had even threatened Ding Jiayi to help her.

However, her anger lasted only for a moment. After all, what mattered was her daughter's job. She could not possibly cause her daughter to lose that job just because of a moment of anger. But once Ding Jiayi's hardened her attitude, that old neighbor had no other choice. There was no way of salvaging this deal.

Alright, she would pay for her help if necessary. As long as Ding Jiayi was willing to help her family and let her daughter attend the interview with Qiao Zijin, spending a little was fine with her. Her daughter was right. It was better to have somewhere to spend her money than have no money to spend. But what frustrated her most was that even though she was willing to spend this sum of money, she could not find anyone who was willing to accept her money!

It had not been easy for a family like the Qiao family to appear in the northern courtyard and this was good news to everyone in the northern courtyard. At least, they would have someone they could depend on in the future. "Sister Ding, you don't have to feel burdened. I have only one daughter. It doesn't matter how hard her dad and I have to work as long as it benefits her!"

She thought about Ding Jiayi's greed and how Ding Jiayi wished to suck Qiao Nan dry of everything she had. Qiao Nan was her biological daughter, no less. She was only an outsider. Now

that she was willing to pay Ding Jiayi, she was afraid that Ding Jiayi might make her family go bankrupt!

There were limits to everything, after all. She could only hope that Ding Jiayi would have a little conscience and propose a smaller number on the account that they had been neighbors for a long time.

“Auntie, look at what you’re saying. If my mom can really help you, she would.” Qiao Zijin’s ears were extremely sharp. She had just thrown a temper at Ding Jiayi, but the moment she heard that someone had arrived at their house, she momentarily forgot about her anger and perked up her ears to listen in on the conversation happening outside. The more she heard, the more interested Qiao Zijin got.

It was not the first time Qiao Zijin encountered such an incident since she had once been the Chen family’s daughter-in-law. However, she had not been in charge in the Chen family. Chen Jun was still on the rise and could not afford to have anyone drag him down. As such, the Chen family had always rejected such requests.

It was Father Chen’s decision to make. If he decided to accept them, Chen Jun could only accept his decision and Qiao Zijin would only hear about it afterward. As for how much the Chen family benefited from it, Qiao Zijin had no idea since she was never consulted in the process. But her years of experience in the Chen family had, at least, taught Qiao Zijin how to handle such matters.

‘Money’ could not rule the matter, even if the Qiao family were not officials like the Chen family. The Qiao family could not afford to be accused of having received bribes. Besides, they had to be even more careful, given their relationship with the Zhai family.

While she had been in the Chen family, she had never been allowed to interfere in such matters. Now that she was back in the Qiao family, it was only natural for her to take things into her own hands. Such a new experience delighted Qiao Zijin. Her mom was right. It did not matter that Qiao Nan did not acknowledge them as her family. Because Qiao Nan had once been part of the Qiao family, she would always be part of the Qiao family. There was no way she could cut her ties off just like that.

Even if Qiao Nan no longer saw herself as part of the Qiao family, others would still regard Qiao Nan as part of the Qiao family as long as the Qiao family was willing to acknowledge her. In that case, Qiao Nan would never be able to rid herself of this familial relationship. It did not matter even if Qiao Nan was reluctant to help her family and give them better lives. They would have their own solutions to that.

Connections and backdoors solved everything. She would not even need to bring up the matter of money. There would be a whole horde of people waiting to throw their money at her, even begging her to accept it.

Seeing that Qiao Zijin had emerged, the old neighbor felt even sourer. Even so, she had to force a smile out for the sake of her daughter. "Zijin, you have such great fortune. You have a good mother and a good sister. Congratulations. You're going for the interview, right?"

Qiao Zijin smiled in glee. "Auntie, your news sources are great! You found out about it before I did! But I just received the notice earlier too. Yes, I have good fortune, but so does your daughter. She has a good mother, at least."

Yes, she had good fortune. It had always been good since she was young. Qiao Nan, who had risen to become a phoenix, was her younger sister, and she had a mother who was devoted to her. This was something that others could only dream about. "Auntie, it isn't early anymore. We should get ready. After all, this situation is a little different. There are some things that should be prepared ahead of time."

The old neighbor's lips twitched. "Alright. I'll come and find you again tonight." To send some money over.

The old neighbor had never expected Qiao Zijin to be much more sophisticated than Ding Jiayi and to accept her money without much thought. The problem was that the Qiao family had not specified the sum of money they wanted, so how much should she actually give them? If she were to give them too little, they might be unwilling to solve their problem. That would be a waste of money. On the other hand, it was heart-wrenching to give them too much.

She could not wrap her head around how the Qiao family had the cheek to accept such a huge sum of money from her. After all, they had shared such a long history and got along quite well too. Helping them meant nothing to the Qiao family and could be done without them even doing anything. As expected, the entire Qiao family, apart from Qiao Nan, was so materialistic. They were inhumane!

After receiving an affirmative answer, the old neighbor rushed home to discuss with her husband and daughter how much to give the Qiao family. Since her husband was uncertain, her daughter hesitated for a moment before suggesting a hundred thousand yuan. It was a six-figure sum, and the old neighbor felt like her heart was already bleeding. Contrarily, her daughter even asked her whether it would be sufficient!

Of course!

She had initially intended to give just a few thousand yuan. That was already more than enough in her opinion. But who would have known that her daughter would immediately propose a six-figure sum? “Won’t it be considered bribery if we give the Qiao family so much money at once?”

Chapter 2037: Would Rather Not Accept It

Thinking about how her family’s hard-earned money was going to people like Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin, that old neighbor felt uncomfortable on all levels. Even if she were to hand the money over, she would definitely find a way to get it back from the Qiao family once her daughter became a civil servant.

“Mom, don’t...” The neighbor’s daughter was on the verge of tears. Why were things going from bad to worse? “If you want to do that, you might as well not hand the money over in the first place. I’ll just give up the civil service entrance examination and get a normal job. Why don’t you think about how the one doing the work is the Zhai family while the Qiao family is simply the one receiving the money? Since the Qiao family is doing nothing apart from receiving the money, it can’t possibly be bribery. If the money does indeed go into the Zhai family’s pockets, then what you said might have some truth to it. Besides, given the Zhai family’s capabilities... I know you’ll want to get your money back after I secure a civil service job. Don’t think that a job in the civil service is a cradle-to-grave job. There is nothing absolute in this world!”

It was true that the hundred thousand yuan would never reach the Zhai family. But if they were to provoke the Qiao family, she could be dismissed from her job the same way she had gotten that job. Then, they would have worked so hard for nothing in the end.

After going through all those underhanded methods, she would never need to think about having a government job. Even better state-owned enterprises would not dare to hire her. Who would dare to hire a worker like her? Did they have too good of a relationship with the government authorities that they would dare to hire such a sensitive person who would only ruin everything?

If she did not try for a civil service job, none of these problems would surface and she would not need to be ostracized and embarrassed in that manner.

“Listen to her!” Her husband took a sharp puff of his cigarette. “Our daughter has been intelligent since she was young and she’s knowledgeable. Nothing will go wrong if we listen to her.” Their daughter had said to try asking the Qiao family for a favor even if they needed to pay them. Now

that the interview name list had been announced, if the Qiao family was still willing to accept their money, it meant that their daughter still had a chance.

It would take another few years to earn that hundred thousand yuan, but he had no other choice. He had only one daughter. This sum of money could not be compared to his daughter's future. He could always earn that sum of money back. Besides, once his daughter became a civil servant, she would be earning good money. In that case, a hundred thousand yuan was less than a year's worth of her daughter's wage.

They would just treat it as though their daughter's salary in her first year was the Qiao family's. But after that first year, whatever their daughter earned would be their family's.

The man stubbed his cigarette while mulling through the matter. "Let's just do as she said. Firstly, we can choose to give up the civil service job. Secondly, we can choose to mend our relationship with the Qiao family and give Ding Jiayi a hundred thousand yuan. You're so short-sighted and petty. Didn't you hear what our daughter said? It's better to have somewhere to spend our money than have no money to spend. After our daughter becomes a civil servant, her yearly salary will be much more than a hundred thousand yuan! Do you think we'll have to pay the Qiao family more than once for this one matter?"

A hundred thousand yuan sounded like a huge sum of money and it was indeed heart-wrenching to hand it over to someone else. However, if they were to look at it from a long-term perspective, not only would their family not lose out, but they would even make a fortune from it!

His wife had made such a fuss simply because she wanted the Qiao family, their long-term neighbor, to help them because Qiao Nan had married a man with such a good family background. On the other hand, their daughter was only twenty-five, was pretty, and highly educated. It would not be easy for them to find a son-in-law half as good as Zhai Sheng, much less on par with him.

"Young lady, don't bother about what your mom said. She's just sour because the Qiao family has been in a mess for such a long time and has been the joke of the entire courtyard. No one would have guessed that the Qiao family's younger daughter would rise from the ashes and get married to such a man." On the contrary, their family had always been harmonious and peaceful all along.

Women were indeed petty.

The young lady nodded. "Mom, which one would you choose?" She had to let her mom make the decision. Otherwise, her mom might go back on her word and try to take the money back from the

Qiao family later on. Then, there would be no way of salvaging the situation, and all their efforts would be in vain.

Because both her husband and daughter were in agreement, there was nothing the old neighbor could say. "Alright. The both of you are trying to lecture me together. I know what you guys mean. I won't make any more trouble. Will that do? Humph! At times like these, you two are a family while I'm an outsider. I'm the only bad guy, right?"

This concerned her daughter's future. She could never do something that would hurt her daughter's future no matter how upset or angry she was. They simply had to explain it to her nicely. She was not an unreasonable person.

"Mom, that's not true. I'm always on your side." The young lady winked at her dad. She had only said such things to appease her mother. In reality, she was always in cahoots with her dad. The young lady's father had no choice but to smile. He was already so advanced in age. How could he let his daughter coax him instead?

"Alright, hurry and get out of my way. Old Qiao is an old foggy, and Qiao Nan may look like she's distant and cold, but I think it's because she was too aggrieved by the Qiao family. That's why she's the way she is. The two of them are the most honest in the Qiao family, while Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin are the most cunning and evil. They are already waiting for us to send the money over. If we make them wait for too long, they might decide not to help our daughter anymore. I have to go to the bank to withdraw a hundred thousand yuan and bring it over to them!"

Now that they had come to a decision, the old neighbor did not hesitate any longer and rushed to the bank to withdraw that sum of money.

While the old neighbor was withdrawing the money, the Qiao family was busy too. After their neighbor left, Qiao Zijin hugged Ding Jiayi out of joy. "Mom, how did you do it? I thought you didn't meet Qiao Nan or the Zhai family? I..."

She had clearly handed in a blank sheet of paper, but she had still passed the written examination! She had already said that nothing was impossible as long as one had the right connections. The only unexpected thing was that her mom had indeed succeeded! But what had her mom done?

"Even your son doesn't jump around like that. You're already a mother, but you're even more mischievous than your son. Hurry and get down! What will other people think if they see you like this?" Ding Jiayi felt extremely proud and elated in the face of her daughter's adoration and admiration. "See, I wasn't just bragging. Didn't I manage to solve this problem for you?"

Chapter 2038: Sending Money Over

“Yes, yes. My mom’s the best!” She was so amazing that she could hardly recognize her! “Mom, I may have passed the written examination, but what about the interview?” The written examination was nothing compared to the interview. Since she had already passed the written examination, had her mother already paved the way for her such that she only needed to appear for the interview to be able to pass it?

Ding Jiayi smirked smugly. “Don’t worry. As long as I’m here, I’ll make sure that everything goes smoothly. The interview’s just a formality. Dress well and just show up. I’ll arrange for everything else.”

“Mom, you’re awesome! Mom, I love you so much!” She realized for the first time that her mom was not only capable but extremely capable! Compared to her dad, her mom was a few hundred times more reliable! “Mom, what about our neighbor? The results for the written examination may be out, but you can do your magic again and settle that too, right? Don’t worry. We won’t work hard for nothing. Of course, if they are stupid and try to pay us off with just a little bit of money, I’ll definitely not make you go through so much hard work!”

They could dream on about getting a favor with a small sum of money.

If they were capable, they could use that small sum of money to get help elsewhere.

Ding Jiayi frowned. “Zijin, do you really want me to interfere in that matter?” Zijin was her daughter and that wretched girl, Qiao Nan’s, elder sister. That was why it had been easy to settle Zijin’s matter. But if they were to talk about that neighbor’s daughter, it would get much more complicated. “If this happened before the results were announced, I might have been able to do something about it. But it’s too late now. After all, everyone knows about the results. It’ll be too hard for me to effect any change now.”

Ding Jiayi had thought that Qiao Zijin was simply trying to shoo their neighbor away by mentioning money. Ding Jiayi had self-awareness, at the very least. That neighbor was asking for a favor for the sake of doing so. What a joke! The civil service entrance examination was such an important event. Was it something that neighbors could help each other with?

She would never get herself involved in something like that. It was only because Zijin had taken the test that she had done something about it. Did other family’s daughters concern her?

The moment the results of the written examination came out, Ding Jiayi gave up all hope. And after her neighbor threatened her earlier, Ding Jiayi had gotten even more upset. Initially, she had been a little fearful but she came to a realization later on. What kind of situations had those people in the department not seen?

These people definitely had a backup plan for themselves. Besides, it was not easy for ordinary citizens to check on the civil servant examination papers. She was even more certain that there would be nothing wrong with her daughter's papers. It did not matter that Zijin did not know how to answer those questions as long as those people did.

Zijin was not the only one who had passed the written examination. The people marking the papers could simply copy the right answers exactly, or with minor modifications, onto Zijin's paper. In that way, no one would suspect a thing.

It was because of this that Ding Jiayi had not been afraid of her neighbor's threat. Since she had already vented her anger, Ding Jiayi was already prepared to leave the matter at that now that the difficulty had intensified. "Zijin, I've thought about it. I don't want to get involved with it. Although I settled your matter and helped you get into the interview round, we shouldn't be too cocky and let our guards down. It'll be easier to settle everything when we keep low profiles."

If Qiao Nan had not gotten married to Zhai Sheng, she would never have thought to do such a thing. Ding Jiayi's success was nothing more than a fluke. As an ordinary citizen, Ding Jiayi wanted to live a normal life. She could not possibly assure others that she could ensure that they would pass the civil servant examinations and reap benefits from others because of that.

Her daughter might have succeeded, but what would she do if she accepted money and they failed in the end? Would they take it lying down as long as she returned their money to them? Helping Zijin alone was alright. It was not such a huge matter that would draw too much attention. She would always be able to clean up after herself.

If there were too much money and too many personnel involved, however, Ding Jiayi was afraid that she would no longer be able to handle everything. There was no way she could stand up tall and commit so many crimes.

Qiao Zijin was in a frenzy. While she had been in the Chen family, she had never gotten the say in such matters. Now that she was back in her own family, why could she not make the decisions in the same situation? "Mom, can't you be a little braver? Don't forget that your daughter is the wife of a chief. If anything goes wrong, you can always use your position against them. The people who arrest you will have to invite you out respectfully unless they have a death wish. Besides, there's

only one other person apart from me who needs your help. What's so difficult about that? I think we can even accept one or two more people in the future."

Of course, that would all depend on how much all those people were willing to pay. If the sum of money was satisfactory, they would render their service. Otherwise, they would have to find someone else for help.

"Mom, there's no hurry. Let's just see how much they are willing to give us before we make a decision. If you really decide not to do it because it's too troublesome, then I won't stop you from rejecting them. You're my mom. I want you to be happy. As long as you're happy, I will support you no matter what decision you make. I can't possibly stand on other people's sides against my own mom!"

Qiao Zijin was anxious but her brain still worked just fine. She knew very well the kind of temper her mom had. The only thing her mom took a fancy to was money. If that neighbor was smart and was willing to fork out a reasonable amount of money, she did not believe that her mom would be so adamant in rejecting her.

As long as money came into the picture, she would not even need to interfere in the matter. Her mom would agree to the matter herself. Her mom was almost seventy and did not have many more years to live. How much could she possibly spend in those few years? As such, all of her mom's money would eventually belong to her alone after her mom's death.

If they succeeded this time, Qiao Zijin knew that there would definitely be a lot more people coming to ask the Qiao family for favors in the future. Of course, this would mean that there would be even more money being stuffed into their pockets.

When that time came, she might be able to repurchase the big house that she had sold off previously. In fact, she might even have enough money to buy a villa!

Chapter 2039: Terrible

Then, she would have a house, a car, and money. Why would she need to find a man to get married to? She might as well find a young and handsome guy to date instead!

Just thinking about a life like that made Qiao Zijin over the moon.

Qiao Dongliang had not overheard the conversation between the mother and daughter, but he knew clearly just how capable Qiao Zijin was. As such, something must have gone wrong for Qiao Zijin to have passed the written examination. This meant that Ding Jiayi had not simply been bragging when she said that she would be able to solve the problem. Ding Jiayi had actually succeeded!

It went without saying that Ding Jiayi's success definitely had to do with Qiao Nan. Qiao Dongliang whipped out his phone anxiously and made a call to Qiao Nan to explain the situation. "Nan Nan, hurry and get Zhai Sheng to check what's going on. Otherwise, you and Zhai Sheng might get into trouble!"

Yes, Qiao Dongliang had always thought that he would no longer have to worry about Qiao Nan now that she was married to Zhai Sheng. The divorced and jobless Qiao Zijin was the one he would have to worry about. Of course, there was nothing better than having his younger daughter giving his elder daughter a hand.

Qiao Dongliang had wanted to ask Zhai Sheng for help to secure Qiao Zijin a job in the civil service. Although they all shared the same goals, there was a huge difference in their methods.

Qiao Dongliang could only rest assured if Zhai Sheng was the one handling the matter. Qiao Dongliang believed that nothing would go wrong as long as Zhai Sheng was the one arranging everything. These people were sophisticated and would never let anyone find any fault with them.

Although Qiao Dongliang believed in Zhai Sheng's ability, it did not mean that he believed in Ding Jiayi's. Even though she had succeeded, Qiao Dongliang was still worried that Ding Jiayi's crude methods would leave a chink in her armor that people would be able to catch in the future. Then, not only would Qiao Zijin lose her chance of becoming a civil servant, but the Zhai family might even be implicated, affecting Nan Nan's marriage.

He hoped that both his daughters would have good lives in the future, not for both of them to live poorly. He had no intention of sacrificing one of his daughters for the other. It was only good if both of them were well.

Once there were any conflicts in his daughter's interests, he would definitely choose Qiao Nan. If not for anything else, Qiao Dongliang simply felt that he owed Qiao Nan too much for the first forty years of her life. Qiao Zijin, the elder sister, owed Qiao Nan a lot as well.

As such, it was only natural to prioritize Qiao Nan's interests if there were to be a conflict.

“Dad, don’t worry. I already knew about it. I’ll tell Brother Zhai about that. If you hear anything at home, you can just send me a text message.” After she hung up the call, Qiao Nan’s expression was somber. She had not expected Ding Jiayi to succeed. How was that possible?

Besides, on the day of her wedding, her dad had already mentioned this. Brother Zhai had even said that he had already assigned people to keep a watch on this. Since Brother Zhai’s subordinates were already taking care of this matter, how could Ding Jiayi have succeeded in the end? “Brother Zhai, come here. I have something to discuss with you alone.”

The confused Qiao Nan pulled Zhai Sheng into the room and sat him down in front of her.

Zhai Sheng raised his eyebrow. “What’s the matter? Why do you look so serious? Why do we have to talk here?” He could not stop his mind from drifting to a certain place now that he was in an enclosed space with Nan Nan.

“Brother Zhai, Qiao Zijin passed the written examination and was shortlisted for the interview round of civil service examination.”

Upon hearing that, Zhai Sheng was taken aback too. “Are you sure that Qiao Zijin doesn’t have the ability to get so far on her own?” He did not have any understanding of his sister-in-law. The only thing he knew was that the Qiao family had sacrificed Qiao Nan to let Qiao Zijin enter university. Typically, university graduates were still worth something.

Qiao Nan sneered. “I don’t mean to look down on Qiao Zijin, but ever since she was in high school, the Qiao family had been using money to get her through school. Rather than saying that Qiao Zijin was studying, it would be more accurate to say that the Qiao family bought Qiao Zijin a degree to package her as a university graduate. If Qiao Zijin was just a little smarter, I might not even be so angry about all the sacrifices I’ve made all these years.”

She had wanted to study so badly, but the Qiao family had snatched that opportunity away from her. On the other hand, Qiao Zijin took her hard-earned money and squandered it, not retaining any knowledge at all.

What infuriated Qiao Nan was how she had been forced to drop out of school while she had been in junior high school. To completely deprive her of any chances of continuing her education, Ding Jiayi had sold all of her junior high school textbooks with Qiao Zijin’s encouragement.

Then, Qiao Zijin went to high school.

Seeing Qiao Zijin bringing back so many books every school term, Qiao Nan had been so envious. She had always wanted to borrow those books to read. While Qiao Zijin was studying, Ding Jiayi had told Qiao Nan that Qiao Zijin was the only educated person in their family and their family's only hope. As such, Qiao Zijin's books were especially precious. No one else in the family could touch her books for fear of damaging them. How then would she be able to study?

Qiao Nan herself was an educated person, and her junior high school textbooks were in such pristine conditions from the day they were issued up until the day they had been sold. As such, there was no way she would spoil or ruin Qiao Zijin's books.

But Qiao Nan had no choice but to agree after Ding Jiayi said so. Qiao Nan said that she would not borrow Qiao Zijin's books while she was still using them, but she then asked if she could borrow them once Qiao Zijin finished her high school examinations or no longer used them?

When Qiao Nan had asked about that, Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi had readily agreed. However, when Qiao Zijin finally finished her high school examinations, Qiao Nan rushed home eagerly, wanting to receive Qiao Zijin's books, only to find that Ding Jiayi had sold them off. Ding Jiayi had claimed that Qiao Zijin had had too many books and that they were taking up too much space at home. Instead of letting them pile up at home, she had gotten rid of them and had even gotten some money back in return!

The situation remained the same way even after Qiao Zijin entered university.

Qiao Zijin's textbooks were bought using her wages, yet Qiao Zijin treated her textbooks like rubbish and was not even willing to give Qiao Nan a chance to study. The first few times that had happened, Qiao Nan had believed that it had been Ding Jiayi who had sold the textbooks. After all, Qiao Zijin was still young and could not make a decision for Ding Jiayi. After all, Ding Jiayi was the one who called the shots in the Qiao family.

Chapter 2040: Speechless

But after Qiao Zijin entered university, her life was no longer under Ding Jiayi's control. Still, Qiao Zijin had lied to her that the few books that she had brought back had been sold off by Ding Jiayi. Anyway, Ding Jiayi had never questioned Qiao Zijin about how she spent her money. As such, Qiao Zijin's lies had never once been exposed.

Even so, every time Qiao Nan waited for Qiao Zijin to return with her books, Qiao Zijin would always reply insincerely, "Sorry, my memory hasn't been very good lately. I forgot about that, so I didn't bring any books back this time."

At that time, Qiao Zijin was already a university student and Qiao Nan had already come of age. After being trampled on again and again by Qiao Zijin, Qiao Nan slowly understood that kinship did not exist in the Qiao family.

As such, now that Zhai Sheng brought up the matter of Qiao Zijin's knowledge level, Qiao Nan did not try to save any face for Qiao Zijin and simply said that Qiao Zijin had nothing in her. "Once, while she was having a gathering with her friends, I overheard her saying that she had only managed to pass her exams by cheating right under her lecturer's nose. Qiao Zijin never liked to study, but her room in the Qiao family's house is filled with books. Do you know what kind of books those are? Romance novels!"

Apart from those romance novels, Qiao Zijin was unwilling to touch anything with words, even if they were simply instructional booklets. She claimed that her whole body felt uncomfortable just by reading them. Then, she would simply pass the job on to someone else.

How could someone whose head hurt from reading instructional booklets possibly pass the written examination for the civil service entrance examination? What a joke!

Hearing Qiao Nan describe Qiao Zijin's situation, Zhai Sheng did not dare to belittle this matter. Something must have happened for Qiao Zijin to have been able to pass the written examination. Zhai Sheng was not completely ignorant of the Qiao family's situation. As such, if the Qiao family had done anything with regard to this matter, they must have been riding on the laurels of the Zhai family.

Zhai Sheng had never expected Ding Jiayi to be so bold as to do such underhanded things without Qiao Nan or the Zhai family's knowledge. A few decades ago, such boldness would have made her a good spy. Zhai Sheng could not wrap his head around how someone like Ding Jiayi could give birth to a daughter as good as Qiao Nan.

Was it that a black hen lays white eggs?

Qiao Nan cared about this matter, and Zhai Sheng could not let Ding Jiayi have her way, ruining the Zhai family's reputation. As such, Zhai Sheng made a call back to Ping Cheng to find out if there had been any problem with the civil service entrance examination. If anything had gone wrong, they would have to conduct a thorough investigation.

To some people, Zhai Sheng's call frightened them, yet it appeared just in time, helping them solve their problems.

Because of this call, Zhai Sheng gained a deeper understanding of the situation and learned just how much milder Qiao Nan had described the Qiao family to be. "Alright, I understand. You must punish those who are involved. This shouldn't be allowed anywhere. Such ideas are dangerous and we don't need comrades like that. If people have such mindsets toward important matters concerning our country and people, imagine the mess our country will be in."

"Yes, yes..." The other party wiped his sweat while bowing and nodding. Although Zhai Sheng was not in front of him, he was already trembling in fear and could not stop himself from sweating or shivering. Thankfully, he had not gotten himself involved in the matter. Otherwise, he would have gotten himself into a huge mess instead of sucking up to such an important figure in Ping Cheng.

"Don't worry, chief. I'll deal with this matter well. I won't let her in and I'll make sure that the people involved are punished. We will never allow such underhanded methods to be used in Ping Cheng's civil service entrance examinations. Alright, I'll definitely keep you updated on this matter. Goodbye, chief." Upon hanging up the phone, the person who had been on the phone realized that the tissue in his hand was soaked with his sweat.

After ending his call, that man immediately made another call to scold his subordinates. "What kind of people is the Zhai family? They are old revolutionaries and cadres! People don't get any more righteous than the Zhai family! How could the Zhai family possibly be willing to do such things? Conduct a thorough investigation and find out who did this. Don't let a single one of them go!"

It was easy for them to resolve the matter within their department. Because the Zhai family was so clear about their stance on this matter, there was no need for them to worry about kicking that worker out of their department after committing such an error. The only thing he was depressed over was that they had already announced the names of those shortlisted for the interview stage this year.

A name that should not have appeared on that list had appeared on it. How should he resolve this problem with as minimal damages as possible?

After Zhai Sheng hung up the phone, Qiao Nan asked him about the details of the situation. When Qiao Nan realized just what Ding Jiayi had done, she was truly speechless. Yes, she had gotten married to Zhai Sheng. But the one who was a chief was not even on good terms with Ding Jiayi, and neither was he her biological son!

How could Ding Jiayi be so bold as to do something like that? Of course, if Ding Jiayi had a son and took advantage of him in this manner, Qiao Nan could only say that he was even more unlucky than she was. “Is she crazy? She knows that Qiao Zijin might not even succeed, yet she’s taking on another one? Brother Zhai, you have to get down to the bottom of this. Ding Jiayi isn’t one who would do others favors without getting any benefits in return. There must be something more to this. Besides, it’s not just Ding Jiayi. Qiao Zijin isn’t someone like that either.”

Being a civil servant was a glorious thing in the northern courtyard. Qiao Zijin had been prepared to ride on the Zhai family’s laurels to pass the civil service examination. If she was the only one in the northern courtyard who managed to pass this exam in this sitting, Qiao Zijin’s reputation would only get better.

There was no way Qiao Zijin would let someone else share that glory with her. Neither Ding Jiayi nor Qiao Zijin would agree to help others without getting anything in return.