

RTAMM 251

Chapter 251: Spitball

“How dare you!” Xu Tingting was shocked. She then hid behind Chen Jun as if she was very weak and needed protection. “Senior Chen, you have to help me. I was just telling the truth.”

“Help you?” Zhu Baoguo smiled. “Don’t forget that he is your senior, not your dog. How long and how much can he help you with?”

Zhu Baoguo hated the sight of the man who took the initiative to be close to Qiao Nan.

Chen Jun frowned. “How could you say something like that?” Nobody had scolded Chen Jun in such a manner before.

“It’s up to me to say what I want. If you are displeased, you can point it out and we can fight it out.” Zhu Baoguo stared at Chen Jun. He could tell that Chen Jun was not a wimp. The latter seemed to have some guts in him.

However, Chen Jun would be in for a big surprise if he believed that Xiao Qiao would take a fancy to him with his dilettantish efforts.

“Senior Chen!” Xu Tingting stood behind Chen Jun, her hands holding on to Chen Jun’s shirt. “Senior Chen, you must teach him a lesson lest he becomes too arrogant.”

Zhu Baoguo was right. She could not expect that her senior would always be there to protect her.

If her senior could teach Zhu Baoguo a lesson before leaving, then Zhu Baoguo might have to listen to her in the future.

Most importantly, Xu Tingting wanted Chen Jun to stand up for her.

“Childish.” Chen Jun calmed himself down. “I merely came back to Ping Cheng High School to take a look. I have no intention to fight. But the junior over here, you do not seem to have a good temper. Be careful that you will not have many friends and offend a bunch of people in the future instead.”

“I am not afraid!” Zhu Baoguo smiled. He was not one to shy away from fights!

Chen Jun twitched the corners of his lips, narrowed his eyes, and smiled grimly. “It’s getting late. I should go back. All of you should study hard. I hope to see you again at college.” He was not here to fight, but it was indeed a pity that his plans did not go well.

“...” Xu Tingting held on to Chen Jun’s clothes nervously and looked at Zhu Baoguo with fear in her eyes.

Zhu Baoguo had said that he was going to hit her. How could her senior leave her alone?

“Hey junior, you can rest assured. What he just said was merely a joke. This is a school, and we are all students. The teachers are not to be trifled with. They will not allow people to fight in school. Chen Jun took a step forward, forcing Xu Tingting to release her grip on his shirt.

If not for the fact that Xu Tingting and Qiao Nan were in the same class, he would not have asked Xu Tingting to lead the way.

Chen Jun had seen a lot of girls like Xu Tingting in his years of studies. He was not the least bit interested in them or in their whining. No matter what moves Xu Tingting made, Chen Jun was already immune to them.

“Are you really leaving, Senior Chen? If there is a chance in the future, I want to study at the same college as you. If I have a problem, I can seek your help.” She was just reminded by the senior that if Zhu Baoguo really dared to mess with her, she could complain to the teacher.

Zhu Baoguo could never call the shots at school. Every student would be fearful of their teachers.

Chen Jun gave a polite and distant answer. “All of you have just started high school. The college entrance examination is in two years’ time. Don’t worry. If there is a chance, it is not too late to be acquaintance with each other by then. Alright, I will make a move first. Study hard.”

“Xu Tingting, your senior is leaving. You should send him off. Don’t forget to get his contact info.” Zheng Lingling mocked Xu Tingting.

She could never understand how a besotted girl like Xu Tingting managed to make it to class one of Ping Cheng High School.

But it mattered not. The first monthly exam would be coming in another half a month’s time. If Xu Tingting did not do well, she would be kicked out of class one.

In the future, as long as they were not in the same class, Xu Tingting could act like a besotted fool for all she cared. Otherwise, she would feel embarrassed being classmates with Xu Tingting.

Whenever Xu Tingting spotted a capable man, she would behave like an infatuated fool and embarrass herself. Zheng Lingling had no idea why she was so shameless and thick-skinned. As a young lady, did she not find it embarrassing to take the initiative?

“Fine, I will say goodbye to him.” Xu Tingting lifted her chin and chased after Chen Jun.

Zheng Lingling was lost for words. She did not mean for Xu Tingting to say goodbye to the senior. Could Xu Tingting not tell that she was mocking her?

“What is this situation?” Tang Mengran covered her face as she could no longer bear to see it. Although she liked handsome guys as well, Xu Tingting’s behavior was simply too much.

“Xiao Qiao, I have something to tell you. I think the senior is not a good person.” Zhu Baoguo had a stern expression on his face. He could not keep his feelings about Chen Jun to himself and not tell Qiao Nan. “I have a feeling that he has ill intentions toward you. Ignore him in the future.”

Thinking of how Xu Tingting and Tang Mengran were infatuated over Chen Jun, Zhu Baoguo could not help but feel gloomy. He might not have said it, but he knew that he felt inferior to Chen Jun.

In the eyes of others, Chen Jun was very outstanding. He dressed well and his family was well-to-do. He was good-looking and graduated from a key high school.

As compared to the person he was from a year ago, he barely passed his middle school examinations. Sitting for the college entrance examination was a much higher hurdle in comparison. Zhu Baoguo felt particularly bitter when he saw how outstanding Chen Jun was. He felt stifled and suffocated. He was angry for losing out to other men in front of Xiao Qiao.

“Xu Tingting is back. What do all of you think? Did she manage to get the senior’s contact number?”

“How would I know? Let’s just ignore her.” He Yun rolled her eyes and went straight back to her seat.

Xu Tingting did not look good. When she chased after Chen Jun, she could not even see the sight of him, let alone get his contact info. She had chased after him as soon as he left, but why could she not catch up with him?

Xu Tingting felt a slight bang on her head. She was stunned. Someone had thrown something at her. Fortunately, it was not a heavy object and she did not feel much pain from the blow to her head.

Xu Tingting was furious. She touched the spot on her head that had been hit and looked around the class, searching for the culprit. She met Qiao Nan’s eyes inadvertently. “Who...”

Xu Tingting was about to ask who hit her when she saw a spitball next to the legs of her chair.

The students on duty had just cleaned the classroom. There should not have been any rubbish around.

Chapter 252: From Whom to Whom

Out of curiosity, Xu Tingting picked up the spitball and spread it out. On it was a line of words written in bold. It seemed to be the handwriting of a man.

The content was very clear-cut. It was the address of a college. It also indicated the department and the level.

Could this be the contact address of the senior?

But who gave this to her?

Xu Tingting pursed her red lips. It was definitely not given to her by her senior. It did not make sense that she saw the spitball only now. In that case, it must be given to her by someone in the classroom.

The handwriting on the spitball had bold and powerful strokes. It was obviously written by a man. It would not be a woman's handwriting. Xu Tingting felt that it must be written by Chen Jun.

"..." Xu Tingting grounded her teeth and looked at Qiao Nan. However, Qiao Nan was looking at her books. She did not even glance her way.

Not getting a response from Qiao Nan, Xu Tingting pressed her lips into a straight line and hid the spitball quietly.

No matter who gave this spitball to her, since it was given to her, it was now hers!

"Xiao Qiao, what did you just throw at Xu Tingting?" After making sure that Xu Tingting was no longer looking at Qiao Nan, Zhu Baoguo pulled at Qiao Nan's clothes.

"Something that Xu Tingting fervently hopes for." Qiao Nan flipped a page of her book.

"What is it that she fervently hopes for?"

"Why did she chase after Chen Jun just now?" Qiao Nan read her book, saw an important point, and made a note on the book.

"That man's contact address? Wait a minute, how do you know that his name is Chen Jun?!" Zhu Baoguo arched his eyebrows. "Xiao Qiao, let me tell you. You are still young. Your most important task right now is to study hard and to get into a good college in the future so that your mom, who is biased, will realize which of her daughter has a brighter future. You have worked hard for so long and have suffered so much. Is it worth it to give up everything for a man? If you really want to find one, you should find someone who is..."

What Zhu Baoguo wanted to say was that if Qiao Nan wanted to start a romantic relationship, she must at least find someone who was more outstanding than him.

But come to think of it, Chen Jun was more outstanding than him. It was Qiao Nan who tutored him and helped him make it to high school. It was due to the Zhu family and the Lee family that he was able to be in the same class and be deskmate with Qiao Nan.

At the thought of this, Zhu Baoguo could not finish his sentence.

“Xiao Qiao, there’s no need for you to be in a hurry since you are still young. There are a lot of eligible and outstanding men in the world.” He might not be as outstanding as Chen Jun now, but he would definitely outshine him in the future.

Xiao Qiao often said that he was very smart. He would start to work hard from now on, and he would definitely become an outstanding man.

By that time, if anyone dared to pursue Xiao Qiao, they would have to get his approval first. Whoever could not match up would have to scram!

Zhu Baoguo kept nagging at her like an old woman that Qiao Nan almost wanted to get something to smear his face. “Where do you think I got the paper from? Since I gave it to Xu Tingting, do you still think I am interested in Chen Jun?”

The note was given to her when Chen Jun walked up to her side previously.

Qiao Nan did not want to take it, but she was worried that she might not be quick enough like Chen Jun. If anyone saw her handing the note back to Chen Jun, there was no way she could explain herself.

Those who did not know might think that she had given her address to Chen Jun. She did not want to be misunderstood by them.

“Are you serious? Or are you trying to pacify me because you know I don’t like Chen Jun?” Zhu Baoguo did not want to admit that he had benefited from this. He suppressed his smile and spoke

with one's tongue in one's cheek. "In fact, it is totally up to you. As your big brother, as long as you are happy and really like him, I will not stop you."

Xiao Qiao wanted to study. Although her mother forced her to work, she did not budge at all.

Since Xiao Qiao gave Chen Jun's address to Xu Tingting, it must be either Xiao Qiao really did not like Chen Jun or she considered Zhu Baoguo more important to her than her mother that she was willing to listen to him. Regardless, Zhu Baoguo was happy.

Qiao Nan had been through so many things in her two lifetimes. She could tell that Zhu Baoguo was happy right now.

The life in high school was much more hectic than in junior high school. In the blink of an eye, they had finished their military training and school had started for a month. After going through the examinations for several major subjects, many students came out of the exam hall feeling dazed. "Hasn't school just started? How could it be a month already? We still have to take the monthly exams! I felt giddy from so many exams."

"Don't bring it up. I keep feeling that I have not done well. I will be spanked at home!"

"I am still in shock. I must have a good meal to comfort myself when I go back home. Honestly, are we having exams or are we being tortured by exams?"

As soon as Qiao Nan came out of the exam hall, she could hear students from the same level complaining about the exams.

"Nan Nan, how did you do for the exams?" Tang Mengran, who also lacked confidence in her exams, knitted her eyebrows and pursed her lips as she came out of the exam hall.

"I don't know. I have to see the results to know." Qiao Nan took her pencil case and said, "The exams are over. Don't ponder it. Otherwise, you will be under immense pressure."

"I can't help but think about it. I heard that the students in class one may change. If you don't do well in the monthly exam or other important exams, the school will transfer you to other classes. I don't want to be transferred out of class one. It will be a shame. My parents were elated when they knew that I went to class one at Ping Cheng High School. They bragged and boasted to others about it. My parents will beat the hell out of me if I flunk the exams and got transferred out!"

Tang Mengran turned pale at the thought of such an outcome.

“You should not think too much. Even if the students of class one are reshuffled, it will not be based on the results of a single exam. Otherwise, the teachers will have a hard time. Besides, even if you did not do well this time, there will definitely be other opportunities. As long as you catch up with the results, it will not be a big problem.” Qiao Nan patted Tang Mengran’s shoulder and reassured her.

“Yes, I still have a chance.” Tang Mengran breathed a sigh of relief. “Nan Nan, luckily you have been leading us to study. The monthly exam was too easy. Many students did not prepare well for the exams, but we have been following your lead and working hard. I believe that if I did badly, someone would definitely do worse than me!”

Tang Mengran immediately felt much better.

“That’s right. Someone spent all her time chasing after the boys, the two instructors, and the senior. She only has eyes for the boys. Tang Mengran, since she is not worried about her results, what are you afraid of?” Zheng Lingling joined their conversation.

Chapter 253: I Liked Spicy Food

Tang Mengran smiled bitterly. “Lingling, you are wrong. Even though I don’t want to admit it, Xu Tingting is very smart. I was in the same junior high school as her. When she was in junior high school, she had been like this, always interested in boys who have good results, good looks, and good background. In short, she knows how to live by her wits. But even so, her grades have always been good. Think about it. She was admitted into class one and was appointed vice class monitor like Nan Nan. She is pretty capable.”

“How did Xu Tingting do for the middle school examination? How much did she score to get into class one?” He Yun was interested as well. She had the impression that Xu Tingting was just a besotted fool. She did not know about her results.

“The second place in the class.” Fang Fang adjusted her glasses and said, “However, there is a huge gap between her score and Qiao Nan’s score.”

Qiao Nan was the top scholar of middle school examination. Her results were way much higher than that of the student who came in second place in the province. Xu Tingting's results might be good, but she was still ranked behind the person who came in second place in the province. As such, there was a wide gap between Qiao Nan's and Xu Tingting's scores.

At the thought of this, Fang Fang only had one thought in her mind—abnormal!

Obviously, she was referring to Qiao Nan.

Tao Zhenqin smiled and said nothing. "One really couldn't tell that she is pretty smart."

Qiao Nan was taken aback as well. She was focused on her own studies and never bothered to know how her classmates did in their exams. It never crossed her mind to find out who was in second place and how their results were as compared to hers in the middle school examination.

It was only now that Qiao Nan found out that Xu Tingting was quite smart as well. "Okay, all the exams are over. It is time to go home. Be it good or bad, we cannot do anything about it. If we did not do well this time, let's work harder next time and strive for better results."

"Qiao Nan, you will definitely do well. Thus, you are not worried at all." Tao Zhenqin felt bitter. Some students like Xu Tingting and Qiao Nan were just different from the rest.

Xu Tingting chased after the boys every day. She did not seem to have any time for her studies, yet she did very well. As for Qiao Nan, the most annoying thing about her was that, she took her studies very seriously in the class, but once lessons were over, she would be very relaxed and would not be seen studying.

Take the monthly exams for instance. All of them in the dormitory would bring their books back to the dormitory and burn the midnight oil. However, Qiao Nan was the only exception. During the exam period, as soon as she returned to the dormitory, she would sleep right after she bathed.

While Tao Zhenqin revised for her exams late into the night, Qiao Nan would be sleeping soundly next to her. Tao Zhenqin would always feel bitter inside.

Tao Zhenqin sighed. It was exasperating and pointless to compare with others.

“Qiao Nan works hard every day. It is not surprising that she has good results.” Fang Fang made pertinent comments about Qiao Nan’s efforts. She noticed that Qiao Nan was an effective and efficient learner. When she was studying, she concentrated wholeheartedly. Whenever she was in the classroom, she would be fully focused on her studies.

She was very sure that Qiao Nan spent as much time, if not more than any of them, on her studies.

The only difference was that, Qiao Nan devoted her full attention to her studies when she was in class, while the rest of them would lose their focus and be side-tracked. As a result, they had to study during their rest time.

“Alright, let’s go home. I am going to ask my mom to prepare something delicious for me. It is so tiring and exhausting after the exam. I cannot imagine how we are going to survive the three years in high school!” Tang Mengran screamed in agony and pressed her hands to her head.

“Let’s go home now. Else, it will be too late,” Zheng Lingling said nervously.

The six of them hurried back to their dormitory, packed their things, and went back home.

Luckily, this time around, Chen Jun did not wait for Qiao Nan on her way home. As soon as she entered the house, Qiao Nan saw someone whom she was surprised at seeing but had expected to see in her house.

Ding Jiayi had an unabashed look on her face. She wiped her wet hands on the apron. “Nan Nan, you are back. You must be tired. Put down your bag. I will pour you some tea. Dinner will be ready in a while. You have a hard time studying. You must have good food for nourishment.”

This was the first time Ding Jiayi behaved in this way toward Qiao Nan.

Her words were familiar. This was what she would always say to Qiao Zijin. For this reason, Ding Jiayi did not find it awkward at all. But this was the first time she cared for Qiao Nan’s well-being.

Qiao Nan put down her bag and scanned the house silently. She noticed that the house had become neat and tidy. Qiao Nan knew that her mother had come over when she went to school. “Is Sister coming today?”

Did it mean that her mother and Qiao Zijin decided not to stay at the comfortable house back at the quad but to move in with them in this new house?

“Your sister knows the directions. She will come here as soon as school is over,” Ding Jiayi smiled and said nicely. Her attitude was vastly different from how she used to treat Qiao Nan in the past. She used to find Qiao Nan an eyesore and would always pick on her.

Qiao Nan pursed her mouth. This small quad was pretty small. In fact, it was not a small quad. Technically speaking, it was a one-story cottage. The dining area was located in the kitchen, and there were only two bedrooms. She could not say anything if her mother wanted to share a room with her father. However, if Qiao Zijin had to share a room with her, she would not accept it. Given Qiao Zijin’s temper, it was likely that she would not agree as well.

“Nan Nan is back.” Qiao Dongliang came back on a bicycle.

“Dad, you went to work? Did I not tell you to rest for another month?”

“I am fine. Look, I feel very good and healthy.” Qiao Dongliang smiled and placed the bicycle properly. “This is your favorite small yellow croaker. Dad bought it specially for you. It’s a special dish just for you. Ding Jiayi, cook it well. Cook it according to how Qiao Nan likes it to be. Do you know her preferences?”

“I... I know,” Ding Jiayi said reluctantly. She had no idea what the wretched girl’s preference was.

Anyway, her cooking was quite up to standard. Qiao Nan should not be so picky since she already got to eat her favorite small yellow croaker.

“Mom, I like to eat spicy food. You should put in more chilies. It would be good to braise the croaker.” Qiao Nan knew that Ding Jiayi did not know her taste, so she hurried to make herself clear.

“But your sister doesn’t eat...” spicy food.

Qiao Dongliang sneered. “As I have said, cook it according to Nan Nan’s preference. I like it braised and spicy as well. You should cook it according to Nan Nan’s wishes and put in more chilies. If you do not know how to cook it, I can do it. Let me change my shoes and wash my hands first.”

Qiao Nan's taste was similar to Qiao Dongliang's. They liked spicy food, whereas Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi could hardly take in spicy food.

Qiao Zijin, particularly, due to her constitution, could not take in spicy food. In fact, she was even harder to please than Ding Jiayi.

Chapter 254: In What Ways Were You Good to Me

Qiao Zijin could not have spicy food. If she had them, she would have acne on her face and her back.

In the past, when Ding Jiayi was in charge of the meals, she usually cooked the meals according to Qiao Zijin's preference. Qiao Dongliang, who had to have spicy food to go with his rice, had to quit this habit of his. Occasionally, when he craved for spicy food, he would have them outside.

The reason why Qiao Dongliang did not say anything was that he thought that Qiao Nan did not like spicy food as well. At least, that was what Ding Jiayi told him.

But her lies were exposed today.

"No, I can do it. But there isn't any chili at home." Ding Jiayi tried to put up the last fight. If she added chili to the small yellow croaker, it was almost impossible for Zijin to eat them.

"Don't worry. I will go buy some." Qiao Dongliang put down his briefcase and cycled off.

Since Qiao Dongliang was so determined, there was no way that Ding Jiayi could stop him.

As soon as Qiao Dongliang left, Ding Jiayi pulled a long face and looked at Qiao Nan as if she was her enemy. "Aren't you happy now?! You should at least take into account that I gave birth to you. I am your biological mom! Why will you do me harm? You insist on sowing discord between your dad and me. Are you bent on seeing us both go our separate ways? Why are you so evil and heartless? Do you not treat your sister and me as your family? Don't you care about your dad? How can you leave him alone and go to school? Your dad is nursing his injuries. If you care for him, you should know what to do!"

Qiao Nan ignored Ding Jiayi, poured a cup of water for herself, and sat down. “Mom, you should save all the troubles. No matter what you say, it is useless. You should know clearly whether I truly sowed discord between Dad and you or whether it is you who are bent on picking on me and siding with Sister. Dad can tell as well. Now that Dad and you have ended up this way, I am not at fault. You only have yourself to blame.”

“You...” Ding Jiayi had not expected Qiao Nan to say this. She had been close to begging Qiao Nan to stop making things difficult for her, yet Qiao Nan said these words to her.

She was the one at fault?

That wretched girl and her nonsense!

“Mom, don’t try to use Dad as an excuse. I didn’t persuade him to go back for his own good. What good is it to Dad for him to go back to you? Dad likes to eat spicy food, but are you willing to cook spicy food for Dad despite knowing Sister cannot eat them? My dad was injured, but were you able to fork out the money for his medical fees? Do you understand what is on Dad’s mind? Are you able to make him happy every day? Can you promise that he will not be unhappy like how he used to be in the past?”

“Don’t be too proud of yourself! Is this how you talk to your mom? This is the adults’ affairs. You do not know anything! Couples will occasionally quarrel. This is normal!” Ding Jiayi refused to admit that she was wrong—that she was too domineering and had disregarded Qiao Dongliang’s feelings. “Don’t think too highly of yourself just because you managed to borrow money for your dad’s medical fees! You are his daughter. It’s only right that you take care of him!”

“Yes, that is my duty. But what about my sister’s and your duties to dad? He is your husband, my sister’s dad. Is it my responsibility alone to take care of him while both of you simply watch from the side? If that’s the case, then all the more reasons I should not persuade him to go back. If he goes back with you, he will have to work his guts out and give all his pay to you—which, in return, will be spent by you on my sister. If he falls sick, he will have no money to pay for his medical fees. But if he stays with me, that will not happen. Mom, are you really being nice to Dad, or do you just want Dad to work his guts out for the both of you?”

It was unreasonable. She was the only one who cared for Qiao Dongliang, but he had to make sacrifices for both Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

In the end, both her mother and Qiao Zijin stood to gain.

Ding Jiayi's face turned bright red. She raised her hand in a bid to hit Qiao Nan. "Qiao Nan, you have the audacity to speak to me in this manner. Your dad must have spoiled you! I am going to teach you a lesson today! Otherwise, you will not know who is in charge here!"

"Mom, I advise you to think twice. If you slap me right here, how are you going to answer to Dad when he is back? Believe it or not, if you dare to raise your hand against me, I will tell Dad what happened. From then on, you will not be able to enter this house!" Qiao Nan stared coldly at Ding Jiayi, her tone firm and strong.

Ever since she went through rebirth, her mother had raised her hand against her for more than once. In one instance, she was beaten until her ears were bleeding. It had become a habit of hers!

"You!" Ding Jiayi raised her hand but stopped in mid-air. What Qiao Nan said was true. As early as a few months ago, Qiao Dongliang had warned her that Qiao Nan was his daughter. If she dared to do anything to Qiao Nan, he would let her have a taste of her own medicine!

Ding Jiayi stomped her foot, covered her face with her hands, and cried loudly. "Qiao Nan, I am so disappointed in you. I am your mom! Everything I do is for your own good. I hope that you will have a bright future. Why can't you understand my efforts and treat me as an enemy instead? You are still young, so you don't understand. But you can't repay kindness with ingratitude and sow discord between your Dad and me. When you become a mother, you will understand that everything I do is for your own good."

"I never blamed you for moving out with your dad, but what you said is very hurtful. Nan Nan, you used to be a well-behaved child. What caused the change in you? Is anyone leading you astray? Nan Nan, you must not trust those outsiders. I am your mom. I am the only one in this world who will not do you any harm. Whatever others tell you, they are all lies. They are trying to mislead you and disrupt the harmony in our family. Don't be fooled by those people."

Qiao Nan was rendered speechless. She lifted her head and looked upward silently. She then looked at Ding Jiayi and asked her in a mocking tone, "Mom, maybe I am young, and thus don't understand anything. Can you tell me why you and my sister insisted that I was a thief even though Auntie Zhai had said that all their belongings were intact? Why were you so persistent even though Sister Zhai Hua had said that she was the one who gave me the keys?"

Chapter 255: An 'Unbelievable' Ding Jiayi

“You wanted me to admit that I was a thief. You insisted on it. How is that being good to me? Tell me. I am all ears. Mom, if you treated me as your daughter, why did you mistake someone else who was in the same dress as me for your daughter? Mom, do you recognize your daughter from the dress she wears?”

“I was mistaken about you having stolen from the Zhai family. That was why I was upset and I mistook someone else for you.” Ding Jiayi lied blatantly. “As for... I was afraid that you would do the wrong things. I just wanted you to know that as long as you admitted your mistake, you could still turn over a new leaf. I was worried that the Zhai family would cover up for you since you were still young. We must let you know of your mistakes so that you will not commit them again!”

Ding Jiayi sounded as if she was right, as if she had not maligned Nan Nan. “Nan Nan, this is a very serious matter. Only people who are genuine to you will be strict with you. You can tell who your family is and who the outsider is from this incident. If you do something wrong, outsiders will not stop you and you will sink even further. Contrariwise, your family will do everything they can to help you correct your mistake. It’s not good for the family if others know that someone in the family is a thief. But despite all this, we want to make it known so that you will learn from your mistakes!”

“Mom, you are unbelievable.” Qiao Nan pressed her hands against the back of her neck and looked upward, lest she was too angry that her blood pressure shot up.

Qiao Nan finally understood why she had led such a miserable life in her previous life.

Both Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi were very good at brainwashing others.

After listening to what her mother said, she almost believed it to be true and started to doubt that she had been wrong—that in fact, her mother was a good mother who wanted the best for her daughter, but she was being narrow-minded instead and did not understand her mother’s good intentions.

This was her second life, and yet she was almost fooled by her mother’s words again. Given her foolish personality in the previous lifetime, if she was not fooled by Qiao Zijin, she would definitely be brainwashed by her mother such that she could not tell right from wrong.

Apart from her mother, nobody could have made such unreasonable behavior sound as if it was justified and for valid reasons. She definitely had the 'talent'!

"What do you mean by that? Are you scolding me?" Ding Jiayi did not understand what Qiao Nan meant. She took it that Qiao Nan was scolding her.

She might not be entirely right, but Qiao Nan had more or less meant that way.

When she said that Ding Jiayi was 'unbelievable', she had indeed meant it in a sarcastic manner.

Qiao Nan sat motionless in the chair. "Mom, you are definitely older and wiser than me. I don't wish to say anything now." Her mother was good with her words. No one was her match.

They were not having a debate, and she did not care for sophistry. She found it pointless to argue with her mother. Anyway, what was important was that both she and her father knew the truth.

Qiao Nan always remembered the miserable life she had led in her previous life and how she had died in the end.

She was angered to death by her mother!

If this was how her mother loved her, cared for her, and protected her, then she did not need this kind of torturous love. Her mother could give all these love to Qiao Zijin!

"Why have you gone silent? Do you admit that what I said is the truth? If you truly understand, you should know what to do when your dad is back." Ding Jiayi wanted Qiao Nan to repent and become meek and submissive as she used to be in the past. She wanted Qiao Nan to obey her words, not having a mind of her own.

Of course, Qiao Nan had to report everything that happened to her and everyone she had met with to Ding Jiayi!

Ding Jiayi was jealous at the thought that Zhai Hua and Qiao Nan had such good relationship that Zhai Hua was willing to hand over the keys to her back door to Qiao Nan, and allowed Qiao Nan to do her revision in her house for more than a year.

If she knew that Qiao Nan was acquainted with Zhai Hua, she would have tried to be close to Zhai Hua as well. If she had befriended Zhai Hua, it would mean that Qiao family are friends with Zhai family.

With such a strong backing from Zhai family, she did not need to be mindful of the Lee family and Zhu family anymore.

By that time, she would not need to please the Lee family and the Zhu family. It would be the other way round.

It was a pity that Qiao Nan had wasted such a great opportunity.

If not for Qiao Dongliang, Ding Jiayi would have given Qiao Nan a beating to make sure that she learned from her mistakes.

Qiao Nan leaned back on the chair and remained silent.

“Did you hear what I said?” Since Ding Jiayi could not raise her hands against Qiao Nan, she could only give her a push. Qiao Nan sat motionless on the chair, refusing to say a word. Seeing that she could not get a response from Qiao Nan, Ding Jiayi pursed her lips and said, “If you remain silent, I will take it that you understand what I said. Remember, you have to keep your promise. Don’t let me down. Otherwise, I won’t help you next time. I will be like those outsiders who indulge your every whim and watch from the side as you make mistakes. I will give up on you as well. Nan Nan, you must not force me to give up on you.”

The market was not far from the house that Qiao Dongliang rented. He was back in ten minutes’ time. Qiao Dongliang came back and asked, “Has the fish been cooked?”

“Not yet.” Ding Jiayi jumped up from the stool. “I had a chat with Nan Nan just now. I will clean the fish now. Have you bought the chilies?” At the sight of the red chilies in Qiao Dongliang’s hands, Ding Jiayi could not help but feel that her throat was on fire, her stomach upset.

“Nan Nan, your dad is so good to you. He knows that you like spicy food and has bought so many chilies for you. Do you have anything to say to him?” Ding Jiayi blinked at Qiao Nan, wanting her to stand on her side.

Qiao Nan looked to the side, completely avoiding Ding Jiayi's eyes.

"Nan Nan, what's wrong with you? Why are you so listless? Tell me, did anyone bully you when I was away?" Qiao Dongliang directed his anger toward Ding Jiayi. They were left alone while Qiao Dongliang went to get chilies. She was the only one who could have bullied Qiao Nan!

"Old Qiao, I am innocent. I care about Nan Nan and wanted to have a chat with her. I just wanted to know how she's doing at school recently. Why would I bully Nan Nan? Is that right, Nan Nan?"

Chapter 256: The Unlikable Spicy Fish

Qiao Nan sat up. "Dad, I am hungry. When can we eat?"

"Soon. Dad will prepare the fish for you." When Qiao Dongliang heard that Qiao Nan was hungry, he could not be bothered with Ding Jiayi. He ran to the kitchen with the freshly bought chilies.

"Wait, I will do it." Ding Jiayi looked at Qiao Nan angrily. From the looks of it, Qiao Nan was determined to have her small yellow croaker with a lot of chilies in them.

When Ding Jiayi glared at Qiao Nan, the latter had lowered her head and was reading her books.

Qiao Nan waited until her mother left before putting down the book. For people like her mother, the best way would be to ignore them.

"Nan Nan, as expected, you are back earlier than I am." Carrying a schoolbag, Qiao Zijin, who came back from school, had to take almost half an hour more than before to reach the place Qiao Dongliang rented.

Qiao Zijin was tired to the bones, whereas Qiao Nan had it easy as the place she stayed in was very near to her school. Qiao Zijin pulled a long face at the sight of Qiao Nan.

"I only arrived slightly earlier than you. It seems that the dismissal time for The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China is earlier than that of Ping Cheng High School." Qiao Nan lowered her head. By right, the curriculum in The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of

China should be more time-consuming than that of Ping Cheng High School. But in comparison, Qiao Zijin would always reach home early during the weekends.

“Nan Nan, didn’t you have your monthly exam? How was it?” Qiao Zijin smiled and avoided Qiao Nan’s question.

“Yes. I suppose you also had your exam, didn’t you?” Qiao Nan looked at Qiao Zijin. “From the looks of it, you seem to have done pretty well.”

Ever since Qiao Zijin studied at The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, her grades had indeed improved a lot.

The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China was indeed the most famous and best school in the area. They had good teachers and had a way with the students. They could transform Qiao Zijin from someone who used to dislike studying in the previous life to a student with good grades.

Qiao Zijin lifted her chin and said, “It’s more or less the same as before. Nan Nan, you haven’t told me how you did for the exams. I heard a lot of the students who studied at Ping Cheng High School have good results. Furthermore, you are in class one. You must be under a lot of stress.”

Qiao Nan grinned. “Sister, have you forgotten? I entered Ping Cheng High School as the first place in the province for the middle school examination. Not to mention Ping Cheng High School, even if I go to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China, it will be the other students who will feel the pressure. If I remember correctly, the second place was behind me by more than twenty points.”

“But the syllabus in high school is much more difficult than that of junior high school. I heard people say that the difference between boys and girls will be apparent when one reaches the third year in junior high school. If not, one will still be able to tell the difference in the second year of high school. Nan Nan, since you are so smart, do you intend to choose science subjects next year?”

“Science subjects? Sister, do you want to choose science subjects?” In most of the cases, there would be more boys than girls in the science classes and more girls than boys in the humanities and arts classes. Many girls found Mathematics and other science subjects too difficult for them when they advanced to the second year. They would, in turn, choose humanities and arts subjects.

“That’s impossible. I am not as smart as you. I can’t survive in the science classes. I have already decided on humanities and arts, and have filled in the form. Nan Nan, since you are so smart, it is better for you to choose science classes.” Qiao Zijin sneered.

She had asked around. No matter how well one did for the middle school examination, if girls chose the science classes in high school, only one or two among ten would be able to maintain their standard.

No matter how good they were, most of the girls would definitely fall behind in terms of performance.

She wanted to know how Qiao Nan would remain the top scholar in the middle school examination if her results fell behind in high school. “Nan Nan, there is another year left before you need to make a decision. I remember that you had a perfect score for the science subjects during the middle school examination. It would be a pity if you do not choose science classes. Nan Nan, what do you think?”

Qiao Nan touched the bangs on her forehead. She finally realized what Qiao Zijin was up to.

It turned out that Qiao Zijin wanted her to choose science classes and watched by when her results fell behind as she could not keep up with the syllabus. “There is still one year to go before I need to decide. I can consider it later. But there isn’t much difference whether I choose science or humanities and arts classes. I will decide later.”

“That’s right, Nan Nan. You have been doing so well, so it doesn’t matter which classes you choose. But there is a lot of memory work to do in the humanities and arts classes. You certainly can’t handle it. Though science subjects are much more challenging, you will do much better when you learn more about it. Since I have been reading up as I need to make the decision, I am sharing the information with you lest you are at a loss when you start your second year.” Qiao Zijin held Qiao Nan’s hand affectionately.

There was no hurry. There was still one year to go.

In this one year’s time, she would definitely think of ways to persuade Qiao Nan to choose the science classes.

“Sister, you seem to be very happy. Is there any good news?” Qiao Nan pulled her hand back. Chen Jun had not graduated from college, and there had not been any holidays, yet he was not at school,

but here, in Ping Cheng. In this life, she had met Chen Jun earlier than she did in the previous life. Maybe it was the same for her sister?

If Qiao Zijin had met Chen Jun, then it would be a good thing for her.

By then, Qiao Zijin would put all her attention on getting close to Chen Jun and would not have time for her.

Qiao Zijin blinked. “Good news? What do you mean?”

Qiao Nan looked at Qiao Zijin’s eyes and noticed that she did not have the besotted look of a young lady who was in a relationship. It seemed like Qiao Zijin had not met Chen Jun yet.

Could it be that, like the previous life, she would have to be their matchmaker and pave the way for Chen Jun and Qiao Zijin?

“Nothing.” Since Qiao Zijin and Chen Jun were not acquaintances yet, Qiao Nan would not find trouble for herself.

“Nan Nan, why are you behaving strangely today?” Why would she stop her sentence midway?

“Dad has bought small yellow croakers today.” This time, it was Qiao Nan’s turn to change the topic.

Qiao Zijin’s eyes lit up. “I haven’t eaten small yellow croakers for a long time. Nan Nan, you must have more of the small yellow croakers later.” Ever since her father was hospitalized, it had been ages since she had a sumptuous meal.

Her father was so good to Qiao Nan. If she did not come to their house today, Qiao Nan would have the small yellow croakers all to herself.

Qiao Zijin could not hide her anger when she saw the plate of small yellow croakers on the table. “Mom, you should know that I can’t eat spicy food. When I eat something spicy, I will have acne. Why do you put so many chilies in the small yellow croakers when you know that I can’t eat spicy food? How am I going to eat them?”

Chapter 257: Don't Be a Loose Woman

After suffering the wrath of Qiao Zijin, Ding Jiayi was full of grievances. "You don't like spicy food, but Qiao Nan loves it."

"..." Qiao Zijin widened her eyes. The plate of small yellow croakers covered with chilies was cooked according to Qiao Nan's taste? "I don't eat spicy food. How am I going to eat this?"

"If you can't eat spicy food, then don't eat it." Ding Jiayi sat down and handed Qiao Zijin her bowl of rice. "I can't eat spicy food, yet I didn't say anything."

Ding Jiayi made it clear to Qiao Zijin that she could not eat spicy food as well. The small yellow croakers were covered with chilies. She could not have a single bite as well.

Qiao Zijin was so angry that she almost broke the chopsticks in her hand. In the past, her mother would consider her preferences when she prepared the meals. Now, in order to please her father, her mother had disregarded her daughter totally.

Ding Jiayi had rarely treated her in this way.

"Fine, I will not eat the croakers!" Qiao Zijin said in anger. Though she did not have a single piece of the small yellow croakers, her eyes turned red from stifling her tears.

Seeing the aggrieved look on Qiao Zijin's face, Ding Jiayi felt sorry toward her daughter. "Old Qiao, why don't we prepare a spicy version and a non-spicy version next time?"

Qiao Zijin snorted. Her mother was such a hypocrite. She was the one who prepared the small yellow croakers. If she had cared for her, she would have prepared two versions of the same dish, spicy and non-spicy.

"Ding Jiayi, you never took our preferences into consideration when you prepared the meals in the past. You never prepared two versions of the same dishes." Qiao Dongliang had a bite of the small yellow croakers. It was very delicious, salty and spicy.

“I... I thought that both of you did not mind having non-spicy food. We couldn't help it that Zijin has a weak constitution. She will have acne if she has spicy food.” Ding Jiayi could not possibly say that she valued Qiao Zijin more so than her husband.

If she said this, there would be no chance of them reconciling with each other.

“Dad, this small yellow croaker tasted somewhat different as compared to the rest. It is not spicy enough. It is as if they are from two different pots.” Qiao Nan frowned, staring at the small yellow croaker in the soup.

Whenever Qiao Nan had fish, she liked to dip them into the soup since it would taste better that way. The small yellow croaker right at the bottom would usually be soaked with a lot of the soup. Today, Qiao Nan intentionally took the small yellow croaker placed at the bottom, the one that was soaked with soup. But to her surprise, it did not taste as good as the rest.

It was weird!

Qiao Dongliang took a piece and tasted it. “It seems so.”

Ding Jiayi felt guilty under the doubtful gazes of Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan.

In the end, Qiao Dongliang gave Ding Jiayi a look and said, “Forget it. I will cook it next time.”

Ding Jiayi breathed a sigh of relief and did not dare to say anything more.

Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan shared the plate of small yellow croakers between themselves, finishing everything except for the soup and the bones. Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi could only watch by as they enjoyed their dinner.

Qiao Zijin, who had nothing but vegetables for dinner, was full of grouches. “Mom, what is the sleeping arrangement today?”

“What do you mean? You will sleep in your room.”

“I don’t have any room here!” She had checked. There were two rooms in total. In other words, she had to sleep with Qiao Nan. That thought made Qiao Zijin uncomfortable. In the past, if there were only two rooms, her parents would share a room and the other room would undoubtedly be hers. As for Qiao Nan, the hoyden, she would have to sleep in a make-shift bed in the hall.

Now, she had to bring herself to share a room and a bed with Qiao Nan. Qiao Zijin just could not take it lying down.

“Let’s go back.” Ding Jiayi used the fastest speed to clear the dishes, cleaned them, and returned them back to the rack. “Zijin, we must hurry before the sun sets. You should get your schoolbag now.” Back in the past, Ding Jiayi sold Qiao Nan’s books away. Hence, she paid special attention to Qiao Zijin’s schoolbag, lest someone did something to her schoolbag and books.

“What? Why are we going back? I won’t!” After learning that she had to make the long way back, Qiao Zijin refused adamantly. “I have been studying for two weeks, and I am very tired. Now that lessons are over and I am back from school, I just want to have a good rest. On my way here today, it took me an hour more than usual. Now you are telling me to make the trip back? Mom, the level of exercise today is way beyond what we have for physical education classes at school.” Did her mother intend to exhaust and tire her out?

“Listen to me. Let’s go back. As you have seen, there are two rooms here. I know that you like to sleep by yourself. Otherwise, you will not be able to sleep. When we arrive home, you get to sleep comfortably in your own bed. Isn’t that good? Alright, let’s go back.” Ding Jiayi pulled at Qiao Zijin. She seemed to be very insistent on going back home.

In the future, if Zijin was tired and wanted to stay the night, she could share a room with Qiao Nan if she did not mind. But not today.

“Mom!” Qiao Zijin threw her tantrums at her mother. However, her mother refused to listen to her pleas and dragged her out of the house regardless.

Not to mention Qiao Zijin, even Qiao Nan would not agree to share a room with Qiao Zijin.

But Qiao Nan found it weird that her mother acted strangely today. Qiao Zijin was already unhappy over dinner. Ding Jiayi, who had always doted on Qiao Zijin, was unusually firm in her attitude. “Dad, what’s wrong with Mom? Isn’t she worried that sister will be angry with her?”

Qiao Zijin was her mother's only hope. If she annoyed Qiao Zijin, nobody would take care of her for the rest of her life.

Qiao Dongliang seemed to know what was going on. He sneered. "Your mom has a lot of tricks up her sleeves. You can rest assured that it will not be long before your sister cools down and stops being angry with your mom. In fact, she may be delighted. Let's not talk about her. Next time, it's better to cook whatever that I buy from the market myself."

Ding Jiayi was downright shameless.

"Mom, don't you know that I studied very hard at school? Why did you pull me out? Anyway, Qiao Nan's room is not that small. At most, I can sleep on a make-shift bed and do not need to share the bed with Qiao Nan. My feet are sore from walking such a long distance!" Qiao Zijin could not stop complaining as soon as she came out of the rented house. "Don't you want to reconcile with Dad? If you stay here tonight, you can share a room with Dad. By then, you will be able to make up with him."

Ding Jiayi blushed. She did not expect that her daughter would discuss this with her. "This is the adults' affairs. Children must not meddle. Besides, Zijin, you seem to know too much. I heard that many children are mature for their age and start a relationship at a young age. Did you..." Ding Jiayi's expression changed in an instant. She glared at Qiao Zijin. "Zijin, you must not do anything shameless. Back in the olden times, if you have any intimate relationship with other men, you will be labeled as a loose woman."

Chapter 258: For the 'Interests' of Nan Nan

"Men are very concerned about whether women have many past relationships. If you are labeled as a loose woman, it will be difficult for you to marry a good husband."

Anyone who had money and influence would not be willing to accept 'second-hand goods'.

"Mom, what nonsense are you talking about? I am not someone who is licentious with no self-respect," Qiao Zijin said with a red face. Even though she had a lot of admirers at school and many wanted to have a closer relationship with her, she was not stupid. She would not act so rashly or behave in such a way.

“Mom, times are different now...”

Qiao Zijin had wanted to explain further but she was interrupted by Ding Jiayi. “No matter what age we are in, girls should have self-respect. Otherwise, nobody will cherish them.” Even for people like Old Qiao, he was concerned whether it was her first time on the first night of their marriage.

She did not believe that men would not have the same concerns twenty years since then.

“Mom, it’s not the same as it used to be. The school has taught us about relationships between men and women. It’s normal that I have some knowledge on this subject. It’s good that I know so that I will not be easily fooled or bullied by others. I learned whatever I know from the books. Mom, don’t let your imagination run wild and call me names like what you do to Qiao Nan. If others are to hear what you said just now, I will not be able to hold my head up high.”

“I see.” Ding Jiayi felt assured. “Zijin, don’t be angry. Mom is worried about you. Do you know why I insisted to bring you home today? You may feel that I only have eyes for your dad, but you are the only one I am most concerned about. Look at what I have here with me.” Ding Jiayi took out a bag. It seemed to contain some soup.

“It’s still warm. What is this smell? Small yellow croakers?!” Qiao Zijin was thrilled.

“Silly girl. I will never make you suffer. You don’t understand me at all. The weather is very warm now, so the food will turn bad easily if it’s kept till the next day. If we do not hurry home, the small yellow croakers will turn bad. Hurry, you can have them when we get home.”

She could not bear to see that Zijin merely had rice and vegetables for dinner just now.

Old Qiao was so heartless toward Zijin and her. Since there were so many small yellow croakers, he should have allowed her to cook them in two separate ways so that the four of them could enjoy the food. If that had been the case, she would not have needed to make more food specially for Zijin.

“Mom, let’s hurry home. The small yellow croakers are still warm.” Qiao Zijin felt energized at the thought of the small yellow croakers. She rushed home at the fastest speed.

Qiao Zijin got her chopsticks ready and was full of anticipation as Ding Jiayi placed the small yellow croakers in a bowl. “There’re only two of them?” Qiao Nan had at least three or four of them today.

“I could only get two of them. Your dad only bought a few of them today. He did not have much to eat and left most of it for Qiao Nan. It’s not that easy to get these two small yellow croakers. If your dad finds out about it, he will not let me into the house next week,” Ding Jiayi said sulkily.

Old Qiao had only bought a few small yellow croakers. It was already good enough that she managed to hide two of them.

In fact, Ding Jiayi had decided to prepare it separately for Qiao Zijin right from the beginning. She would definitely save some of the small yellow croakers for Qiao Zijin. Initially, she had set aside three small yellow croakers for Qiao Zijin and cooked them without adding any chili.

But when she saw that there were only a few left for Qiao Dongliang, Ding Jiayi had a guilty conscience. She took the smallest one out of the three and put it back into the dish with chilies.

This was the one which Qiao Nan had referred to as not as ‘delicious’ as the rest.

No one knew that when Qiao Nan said that it did not taste the same as the rest, Ding Jiayi was scared out of her wits.

Old Qiao had not forgiven her and she had to watch her behavior during this period of time. If something went wrong, her good behavior and efforts for the past half a month would be completely in vain.

“Besides, among the small yellow croakers that your dad bought, these two are the largest. I will always save the best for you.”

“I know that Mom is the best. Mom is the best in the world. A child with a mother is treated like a treasure!” Qiao Zijin felt satisfied. She had the two biggest croakers. In other words, whatever Qiao Nan had, were her leftovers.

This was the right way!

In this house, Qiao Nan could only take whatever she did not want.

“Okay, you should dig in. I will boil some water for your bath. Have a bath and sleep early. You must be tired after a long day.”

“Well, thank you, Mom.” Qiao Zijin ate the small yellow croakers happily, not giving much thought to her mother. Ding Jiayi, who had worked for the whole day and was tired, still had to prepare the bath for her daughter as if she was her nanny. Both Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin did not feel that there was a problem. One was enjoying the food with a peace of mind while the other was willing to wait on the daughter like a servant.

Both were willing parties. It was destined that they were mother and daughter.

“Mom, we have been divided into the science and the humanities and arts classes. When you have the chance, you must tell Dad to persuade Qiao Nan to study in the sciences classes. Just tell him that ‘if one learned their mathematics and sciences, one would fear nothing’.” Qiao Zijin wore the pajamas that Ding Jiayi made for her and yawned loudly.

“That’s Qiao Nan’s business. Why do I need to bother myself with it? Which class did you choose?”

“I choose the humanities and arts class.”

“Isn’t the science class better?”

“Mom, think about it. If the science class was that good, I would not advise Qiao Nan to pick it. Recently, I heard that most of the girls who used to do well will lag behind in the science class. The boys in the class usually will perform better than them. Mom, one cannot have a smooth sailing life. Otherwise, one will not be able to deal with challenges in life. In my opinion, it’s time that Qiao Nan suffers from some setbacks. This is so that she will know that her standard is not that high.”

It was a pity that this would happen a year later. She could not see it right at this moment.

“I see. Okay, I will tell your dad. But he may not listen to what I say. Besides, Qiao Nan has a mind of her own. Will she listen to what your dad says? Your dad may listen to her instead,” Ding Jiayi said tartly.

In the past, when their relationship was going well, he had never been that good to her either. Yet, he had been so caring toward Qiao Nan. She was his wife. He should be nice to her.

“What’s there to be afraid of? There’s still a year to go. This time, you truly ‘care’ for Qiao Nan. Dad has heard of this saying as well, and he will understand. As long as it is for the ‘interests’ of Qiao Nan, Dad will agree.”

Chapter 259: On What Grounds

“Can it really work?” Ding Jiayi was eager to try.

Qiao Zijin said with a smile, “Why not? Mom, you may not know the details since you have not been studying. But in short, you can say that you care for Qiao Nan, and hence you ask around. Nobody will know that girls usually lag behind in high school’s science class. I am in a humanities and arts class, so I will not know. It’s normal that you do not know as well. I have thought it out. Now that Dad is angry with you, you can use this to improve your relationship with Dad. This will be your goal for this year. You must bring up this topic from time to time. Sooner or later, Dad will realize that you care for Qiao Nan and no longer pick on her.”

Actually, when Qiao Dongliang moved out with Qiao Nan, both Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were taken aback.

However, after a month, Qiao Zijin finally calmed down and sorted out her thoughts.

Qiao Zijin had thought it through. If she wanted to be favored by both of her parents, she would have to think of a way. Ding Jiayi was not a problem. The problem was with Qiao Dongliang.

After several failed attempts, Qiao Zijin realized that it was useless to sow discord. She would always be on the losing end. The best way was to make Qiao Nan fall from grace and let her father realize that Qiao Nan was not dependable.

As long as Qiao Nan did not do well for her studies and disappointed her father, there was no need for her to sow discord. Her father would give up on Qiao Nan naturally, and she would be the one smiling in the end.

Given the Qiao family’s situation, they only had the ability to finance one child through college, and she would be that child.

Qiao Zijin sneered. She had a cold and emotionless smile on her face.

Her mother might be selfish, but her father was not any better either.

Her father used to be very good to her. But that was because he felt that she had a way with words, and thus would have a bright future. They would be able to depend on her for the rest of their lives. Her father was only good to Qiao Nan because Qiao Nan had good grades. She would then be able to get into a good college, find a good job, and earn a lot of money.

They could not provide the best for their children, yet all they could think of was how their children could repay them when they grew up. Qiao Zijin twitched her mouth and sneered coldly. Her parents had set a 'good' example for her.

"Hey, what are you smiling for? Why do you have such a strange smile?" Ding Jiayi gave Qiao Zijin a slight push. "It's getting late. You should go to sleep. As for the science class, you can rest assured that I will bear in mind to tell your dad. It's not appropriate to bring it up now. Your dad is still angry with me. No matter what I say, he will not listen. But anyway, didn't you say that there is still a year to go?"

"Yes, there's no hurry." Qiao Zijin stretched her arms, getting ready to sleep. "Mom, I will go to sleep. Good night."

"Good night."

Now that Qiao Dongliang moved out with Nan Nan, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin kept a check on themselves. During the day, when Qiao Zijin was at home with Qiao Nan, she would read her books and do her homework. She was more serious in her studies.

In the evening, Ding Jiayi would drop by to clean up and prepare their dinner. After dinner, she would leave with Qiao Zijin.

When it was the weekend, even though both of their daughters were not at home, Ding Jiayi failed to stay for the night and share a bed with Qiao Dongliang.

“Qiao Nan, you are here.” Since Qiao Nan was the top scholar in the middle school examination, everyone in Ping Cheng High School, including the guards, knew her by the name. “Qiao Nan, which relative of yours is so enthusiastic to send you three letters in a week? If you want to return the mail, you can pass the letters to the reception office. We will help you pass them directly to the postman.”

“Letter?” Qiao Nan blinked. “What letter? There are three of them?” She did not receive any letter, not even one.

Did it mean that she had three letters this week, but she did not receive any?

“That’s right. Did your classmate pass it to you?” The guard was stunned. “I passed it to a girl in your class. I remember that her name’s Tingting. She dropped by to collect her letters, but she did not have any letters. When she realized that there’re letters for you, she volunteered to pass it to you. Is there any problem? I could help you to check with her.”

“Thank you. I can handle it myself for the time being. If need be, I will ask you for help.” Qiao Nan frowned. She had a stern expression on her face. She did not return to the dormitory and went straight to the classroom instead.

“Nan Nan, why are you here in the classroom? When I went to the dormitory just now, Xu Tingting came looking for you. I left a note in the dormitory. Have you seen it?” Tao Zhenqin leaned close to Qiao Nan. “Nan Nan, why do you think Xu Tingting was looking for you? Is it because of the monthly exam two days ago?”

“She was looking for me?” It seemed like Xu Tingting had thrown herself in her way. “I have no idea. If that’s the case, since I have something to settle, I will go back to the dormitory and look for Xu Tingting.”

There were only a few people who would write to her. If there was a letter from Brother Zhai, then Xu Tingting could not blame her for being unruly to her. No matter how Xu Tingting pulled pranks on her, she must at least know her limits.

Qiao Nan saw Xu Tingting leaning against the door frame of the dormitory, waiting for her. Xu Tingting said, “Do you want to drop your things at the dormitory while I wait for you here? I have something to tell you.”

“No need. Just say your piece.”

“It’s not appropriate here. Let’s go to another place.” The doorway was full of people. Xu Tingting led Qiao Nan to the back of the dormitory.

“Okay, there’s no one here. You can tell me what it is that you want to say.” Qiao Nan sounded cold and aloof, different from her usual attitude. She looked at Xu Tingting as if she was just a schoolmate, when in actual fact, they have been classmates for a few months.

“It’s rare that you are angry at me. In the past, when I deliberately sowed discord between you and the classmates in your dormitory, you did not get angry at me. I never knew that you have a temper.” Xu Tingting had a fake smile on her face. “Qiao Nan, you know what, I hate you.”

“It doesn’t matter that you hate me. I don’t like you either.”

“Wow, how dare you say such things? Aren’t you worried that you will offend me and I may do other things that are even more unreasonable in retaliation?” Xu Tingting pulled a long face and had a fierce look. She hated Qiao Nan to the core. From the first time she set her sights on Qiao Nan, she did not have a good impression of her. She wished that she would be kicked out of class one.

It turned out that her sixth sense was accurate. All the boys she had taken a fancy to chose Qiao Nan and rejected her.

On what grounds?

Chapter 260: It Was Useless to Swear

“Xu Tingting, get straight to the point. Do you think that I am the kind of person who dare not fight back when bullied? If you really think so, it seems that Zhao Yu has not told you the full story about me.” Qiao Nan was not scared by Xu Tingting. “Xu Tingting, are you going to pit yourself against me, or should I let you know what I am capable of?”

Xu Tingting bit her lip. It seemed that Qiao Nan was not a nerd. Even without Zhu Baoguo to back her up, she was not easy to deal with. “This is for you.” Xu Tingting took out a letter and handed it to Qiao Nan unwillingly.

Qiao Nan crossed her arms around her chest and refused to take the letter from her. “There seems to be more than one.”

“I don’t think you will be interested in the other two letters. But this letter... is from Instructor Zhai.” Xu Tingting stomped her foot. No wonder Instructor Zhai was immune to her efforts during the military training. He had already known Qiao Nan since way before.

What a devious person Qiao Nan was. If Qiao Nan had told her about it, she would not have wasted her time and feelings on Instructor Zhai.

She was interested in all men who were good-looking and had a promising future. There was only one type of men that she was not interested in. It was those who already had someone in mind.

Xu Tingting was not foolish. From the fact that during the military training Zhai Sheng demonstrated only using Qiao Nan’s blanket, she could tell that something was going on.

When she came to school today and collected the letter from the reception office, it proved that her guess was correct.

“Do you think I will believe your words?” Qiao Nan refused to budge.

Since the letters were hers, it was up to her to decide what she wanted to do with them. Xu Tingting had no right to make decisions for her. She must let Xu Tingting understand this clearly. This time, Xu Tingting had taken her letters without her knowledge. No one knew what she would do next time.

This was what she learned from her mother. At times, one had to stand firm.

“The two letters are here.” Xu Tingting handed the letters to Qiao Nan unwillingly. “I have opened the first letter, but I have not touched the other two letters.”

“In other words, you have read the contents of the letter. Xu Tingting, do you know that it’s illegal to read others’ letters? Yet, you still dare to be angry at me?” Xu Tingting was too ridiculous. It seemed like aside from the two people in her family, there were lots of unreasonable people around.

“Do you want to sue me?” Xu Tingting’s countenance changed in an instant. After all, she was in the wrong.

“Are you afraid? There’s no need for me to call the police. I only need to use the elementary school students’ method, which is to tell the teacher. That will be good enough.”

Xu Tingting clutched the letters to herself. “Why are you so sure that the contents of the letter will not do you any harm? If you tell the teacher about it, the teacher may misunderstand that you have something going on with your senior. Are you sure that you really want to do this? By that time, both of us will be in trouble. Are you so stupid to make such a life-and-death struggle?”

“That’s my business. You have no control over it. I’m willing to clash head-on with you.” Back in the previous life, right till the day when a heavily pregnant Qiao Zijin showed up in front of her, Chen Jun still played the role of a good boyfriend. She had no idea there was a third party in their relationship. He was even about to become a father!

She was a fool. She only realized her folly and learned her ways after being deceived by her mother and Qiao Zijin.

Right now, she was a high school student. No matter what kind of mentality Chen Jun had when he wrote to her, it was absolutely impossible for Chen Jun to write anything that would cause misunderstandings.

Chen Jun was very careful in his previous life so as not to be discovered by Qiao Nan that he had been secretly seeing Qiao Zijin. In this life, even if Chen Jun was just a college student, she believed that Chen Jun would never do anything that would jeopardize his own future.

“Alright, I have no time to listen to you. If you have a clear conscience and believe that Teacher Liu will punish me but not you, then let’s go. Teacher Liu should be in the office.” Qiao Nan turned and made a move to the form teacher’s office.

“No, don’t go!” Xu Tingting was so scared that she quickly pulled at Qiao Nan. “Please don’t let Teacher Liu know. Qiao Nan, I realize my mistakes. Can you accept my apology?”

“No!” Qiao Nan shrugged Xu Tingting’s hand away. “Why do we still need the police if apologies are useful?”

“T-then, what do you want me to do so that you will let me off?” Xu Tingting had no other choice. She would do anything as long as Qiao Nan decided not to press the case this time. She was willing to kneel down as well. “I will do whatever you say. Is that okay?!”

“No!” Qiao Nan said in a firm tone. “You took the letters and read them, yet you come asking what you should do to ask for forgiveness? Xu Tingting, you are so ridiculous. Do you think that I am a pushover? Xu Tingting, why do you not admit that you have received a benefit? Both of us know what I am referring to. But I realized I should not have taken the trouble to do that. If you are interested, you will have the means to get hold of Chen Jun’s address. Why should I help you? Xu Tingting, I regret it now.”

“I will return the letters to you. Will it do? I am sorry. I should not have taken your letters. I should not have opened and read your letter. I will not do it again. Please give me another chance. There will not be a next time.”

Seeing that Qiao Nan was indifferent to her pleas, Xu Tingting almost burst out in tears. “I swear that I will not provoke you from now onward. Will this do?”

It was illegal to open and read other people’s letters. This showed that Xu Tingting did not have good moral character.

Once the teachers in the school knew about this situation, Xu Tingting would not be able to participate in any of the activities in class, and her position as the vice class monitor would be stripped off as well.

Xu Tingting had outstanding performance in her junior high school. Given that high school education was much more important than junior high school, it would be impossible for her to have a bright future if she did not have any achievements in high school.

Xu Tingting used to think that Qiao Nan was dilatory. He Yun and the rest kept saying that she was a nice person. Hence, she had the impression that Qiao Nan was mild-tempered and soft-hearted. Among the three letters, two of them were from the senior and the other one was from Instructor Zhai.

Since Qiao Nan gave her Chen Jun’s address, it was obvious that she was not interested in him.

Therefore, Xu Tingting had thought that as long as she made sure that the letter from Zhai Sheng was intact, Qiao Nan would not be angry at her. Even if she was really angry, she would be appeased with an apology and some coaxing.

She did not know that though He Yun and the rest made Qiao Nan sound as if she was mild-tempered and understanding, Qiao Nan would be so fierce and firm instead, leaving no room for negotiation.

“I never believe in vows. They are totally useless.”