

## RTAMM 291

### Chapter 291: Did Not Treat Me as a Mother

Ding Jiayi did not mutter a word after she was scolded by Qiao Zijin because she could not refute her. However, she would definitely not agree to plead for Qiao Nan's forgiveness.

"Didn't you say that you're unwell? How are you?" Qiao Zijin had no choice too as Ding Jiayi was unwilling to say anything.

"I've taken the medicine but am still a little feverish. It's not as serious as a couple of days ago."

"Since you're still feverish, lie down on the bed to rest. There's medicine at home. I'll boil you some water."

"There's no more medicine."

"Then, give me the money. I'll help you buy them."

"No need. Anyway, the fever temperature is not high. I'll most probably recover after I cover myself with a blanket and sweat it out." Ding Jiayi could not bear to spend money to buy the medicine.

Qiao Zijin agreed immediately as she was not willing to make the trip too. "Alright, then lie down on the bed and sleep. It's quite late. I'll go and buy two lunch boxes with the money that you gave me."

"It would be better to buy some groceries with the money instead. That will last us two to three meals." Ding Jiayi was not willing to part with the money. "Why don't we do this? I'll give you some money and you go to buy some fresh vegetables back." Ding Jiayi was embarrassed to say that she was not feeling well and it was healthier to have some fresh vegetables.

"Buying vegetables is not a problem, but who's going to cook them afterward?"

“You, of course!”

Qiao Zijin laughed. “Mom, you must be kidding. You know that I’m not good at this. Since a young age, I don’t know how to do manual work such as frying vegetables. What if my hands become rough? What if the oil spurts onto my hands and they become blistered like Qiao Nan’s and yours? It’s not that you don’t know. My skin is not as good as Qiao Nan. Blisters on her hands will disappear without leaving a scar in less than a month’s time, but it will take me two to three months to recover from a scar. It’s too ugly. I don’t want this.”

Ding Jiayi was stunned. “Then, do you expect me to get up and cook for you?”

“Of course, you’re my mother. You should do all this work.” Qiao Zijin sounded bold and righteous.

“But I’m unwell. Can’t I rest for one—no, a mealtime?” Ding Jiayi said stubbornly.

For the past two days, Zijin was still at school and could not take care of her as she was not by her side. Although she had a fever, she had to force herself to get up, take medicine, and have meals. Now that Zijin was back, couldn’t she enjoy a little privilege as a patient?

At the thought of Qiao Nan taking such good and proper care of Qiao Dongliang when he was hospitalized due to the car accident, Ding Jiayi was full of envy.

Zijin was spoiled by her. Would she not know how capable she was? She did not need Zijin to serve her the same way as that wretched girl did to Old Qiao. However, she should at least take care of her and make her feel loved, shouldn’t she?

“Mom, I think you’re confused by the illness. Forget it. I’ll just take the money and simply buy two lunch boxes.” Clutching the money in her hands, Qiao Zijin ran off to buy food without even waiting for Ding Jiayi’s reaction.

Although the lunch boxes were a little more expensive than cooking by themselves, there were both meat and vegetables in them.

With this little sum of money, they could get a lot of vegetables but definitely no meat. Furthermore, she had to cook. She was not so stupid as to agree to her mother’s brainless request.

“Zijin... Do all of them want to drive me to my grave?” Ding Jiayi could not stop Qiao Zijin from running off to buy the lunch boxes.

Ding Jiayi hit her chest and went back to her bedroom listlessly. She then dropped herself onto the bed and covered herself with the blanket. She thought about how she went looking for Qiao Nan to discuss the matter of Qiao Dongliang moving house despite having not fully recovered but ended up being sent to the police station by the school. She had to endure suffering that she had never experienced before. Ding Jiayi could not help but cry again.

Ding Jiayi cried to sleep by the time Qiao Zijin was back.

At the sight of Ding Jiayi sleeping peacefully and no sign of waking up anytime soon, Qiao Zijin simply finished her lunch box and left Ding Jiayi's share on a stool beside her bed.

When the sleeping time came, Qiao Zijin yawned and went to bed.

Ding Jiayi was awakened in the middle of the night because of thirst and hunger. She sat up and turned on the lights. When she saw the cold lunch box sitting on the stool by the bedside, tears welled up in her eyes. Both were parents, but when Old Qiao was hospitalized, he was not only served hot meals but also good soup.

Why was she not given hot food to eat and good soup to drink when she was sick?

Ding Jiayi took small mouthfuls of the cold rice slowly. She actually tasted a bit of bitterness in the rice that was meant to be sweet.

When Old Qiao was hospitalized, the wretched girl took such good care of him. Now, it's her turn to fall sick. The wretched girl did not even treat her like a mother. The wretched girl was still the same. It did not occur to her how tough it was to give birth to her in the past.

“Alright, I know. Thank you.” Qiao Nan only found out on Friday, the day after Ding Jiayi came looking for her at school.

When she heard from the security guard that Ding Jiayi ended up in the police station, Qiao Nan could not help but sigh. She did not know what to say.

Her father was overseas and would definitely not bail her mother out. She was just a student and had not even reached eighteen years old. She was penniless and could not afford the bail. Hence, she could not help even if she wanted to.

“Are you okay?” The security guard asked with concerned when he saw Qiao Nan leaving.”

“I’m fine.”

“But that’s her biological mother.”

“She shouldn’t do that although she’s the biological mother. Alright, there shouldn’t be any issue. Didn’t she say thanks? Didn’t you see her forced expression when she said thank you?”

“I didn’t see that.”

“It’s good that you didn’t. Hurry up. It’s school dismissal time. Be on your guard.”

“Okay.”

Qiao Nan was holding the key from Teacher Liu. She found the place with the address given by Teacher Liu. When she saw the new small quad, she was surprised. This quad was a good place. It was worth a lot of money even at the end of the 20th century. In the 21st century, within a few years, the quad would fetch a high price.

The school was too generous to lend them such a good place to stay.

This was the first time she knew that there was such benefit for the top student of the school.

Qiao Dongliang reached shortly after Qiao Nan. When he saw that the door of the quad was opened, he directly called, “Nan Nan?”

“Dad, you’re back?” Qiao Nan put away her schoolbag. “Dad, where have you been for the past few days? Why did you only come back now? Is your body taking it well?”

“Look at Dad. Do I look like I’m not well?” Qiao Dongliang smiled.

“Not really. You seem to look much better. Right, Dad, I have something to tell you...” Qiao Nan wanted to bring up the matter regarding Ding Jiayi.

## Chapter 292: Not Bailing Out?

“Nan Nan, wait for a while first. Dad just came back and is full of dirt and smelly. Boil some water. Dad will take a shower first. We can talk later.” Qiao Dongliang tugged at his clothes uncomfortably. He had been out for a few days and unable to bathe at all. It nearly stifled him.

In the past, Qiao Dongliang was not someone who bathed diligently. However, ever since he was discharged from hospital, Qiao Nan had been watching him like a hawk to ensure that he managed his personal hygiene.

He was now used to taking baths regularly. All of a sudden, he had to revert to the time where he did not bathe and wash his hair for a few days. He really could not take it.

“Oh.” Interrupted by Qiao Dongliang, Qiao Nan did not manage to tell him about Ding Jiayi. She quickly boiled some water for Qiao Dongliang. “Dad, you came back late. You most probably have not taken your meal, have you? Since it’s still early, I’ll go and buy some groceries back. But is there still any rice at home?”

“Yes.” He had shifted over all the rice he bought earlier.

Ding Jiayi ‘reported’ to him every day to cook for him. She was as diligent as when she had just gotten married to him. Qiao Dongliang knew clearly what Ding Jiayi was thinking.

Previously, Qiao Dongliang could turn a blind eye and allow Ding Jiayi to earn a meal. However, Qiao Dongliang had already moved house and did not inform Ding Jiayi. He could not possibly leave the rice that he bought there to feed Ding Jiayi to her fill, could he?

“Fine.” Qiao Nan nodded. There was a lot of firewood in the small quad. Qiao Dongliang must have prepared them before he left. It was thus very easy for Qiao Nan if she wanted to start a fire and boil

water. The chore took less than ten minutes. “Dad, the water is ready. Help yourself. I’m going out to buy groceries.”

“Ah, okay.”

After receiving a response, Qiao Nan put some money in her pocket and left straight for the market.

When Qiao Nan was back from the market, Qiao Dongliang had not only finished bathing but also washed his clothes and hung it outside to dry. “Nan Nan, you’re back. Rest a while. Dad will cook.”

“Okay.”

“Oh yes, Nan Nan. That matter at your school... Has it been resolved?” When Qiao Dongliang took the groceries over from Qiao Nan, he asked Qiao Nan in a hesitating and worrying tone. Ding Jiayi had created so much trouble this time and Nan Nan was affected badly. “Teacher Liu said that there should not be any problem. Your mom did not create any trouble for you again, did she?”

“Right!” Qiao Nan slapped her forehead. “I nearly forgot about this. Mom probably knew that we moved house again but didn’t know where our new place is. She lost her temper and came looking for me at the school yesterday. The security guard did not let her in and she created a fuss. In the end, she was sent to the police station. Dad, are you going to bail her out from the police station?”

“Nan Nan, your mom hurt you in such a way, yet you’re still asking me to bail her out?” Qiao Dongliang looked at Qiao Nan and asked.

Qiao Nan smiled bitterly. “Dad, you said it yourself. She’s still my mom. I take it that it’s my bad luck and destiny to have such a mother. She has never been to a police station. This time, at the very least, I think she will be taught a lesson.”

She was angry with her mother, hated her even. She could not wait to keep as far a distance from her as much as possible. However, she had never wished for her mother to die soon to put an end to all this.

“Nan Nan, you’re truly a kindhearted child.” Nan Nan was badly bullied, and Ding Jiayi nearly caused her to quit her studies. She did not take issue with Ding Jiayi and even asked him to bail her out. Nan Nan was really too kind and softhearted. That was the reason why she was always bullied by others.

“Dad, Mom has been locked up for a day. Aren’t you going to bail her? As for the money...” Qiao Nan gave a long sigh again. “Take it that we’re breaking a fortune to avoid the disaster. As long as Mom learns a lesson and behaves properly for some time, that will suffice.”

It was just a night at the police station. Qiao Nan did not expect too much change in Ding Jiayi after this. “Money can always be earned back. I’ll find a part-time job during the winter vacation. I can also save up for my school fees.”

“Every time we finally have some savings, your mom just has to create some trouble. Even if we can earn the money back, it’ll never be enough as it will be spent by your mother!”

“Then?”

“Not going!” Suddenly, Qiao Dongliang objected firmly. “According to what you have said, she did not commit any serious offense. Based on regulations, the police station will release her if no one bails her out after a few days. Learn a lesson? I think she has not been taught enough lessons, or, rather, the lessons did not leave a deep impression on her. That’s why she carries on with her misdeeds. If we can’t teach her a deep lesson, then let outsiders deal with her. That’s a good thing too.”

“Really not going?” Qiao Nan pulled her lips and forced a smile. “Dad, Mom is always very unreasonable in front of us, but she’s in fact very timid.”

“That’s right. Your mom is a lion at home, but a mouse abroad. Alright, I know what to do about this matter. Nan Nan, don’t worry about this.” The kinder Nan Nan was and the more she did not take issue with others, the more he needed to be harsh and help Nan Nan discipline Ding Jiayi.

“...” Qiao Nan’s lips gently relaxed. “Alright, then I shall not interfere in this anymore.”

“That’s right. Okay, go back to your room and do your homework. Recently, were your studies affected by your mom?” If that was the case, he really wanted to murder Ding Jiayi.

“No.” Don’t even mention this occasion in particular, objectively, she would never be affected by her mother in both her studies and work in this lifetime.

“That’s good. Right, Ping Cheng High School is a good school. They knew the students’ situation very well. Otherwise, with those words said by your mom, Dad wouldn’t know how to help you too.” Qiao Dongliang looked as if he had survived a big disaster.

These few days, Qiao Dongliang had been thinking. If Ping Cheng High School did not understand the truth and misunderstood Qiao Nan because of what Ding Jiayi said and even wanted to expel Qiao Nan, what could he, as a father, do for his daughter?

In the end, Qiao Dongliang realized sadly that he could not do anything.

Due to the rumors ‘marketed’ by Ding Jiayi, he feared that the people from Ping Cheng High School would not believe him no matter how he explained for Nan Nan and be her witness. They would think that the truth he said were lies that he deliberately conjured up to help Nan Nan.

At the thought that the truth he said nearly became lies that no one in the world would believe, Qiao Dongliang was aggrieved and fearful.

“Okay,” Qiao Nan was puzzled and replied in a distracted manner.

Qiao Nan was not very clear about how the matter was resolved. When she knew about it, Teacher Liu just gave her a key and then the principal announced to the entire school that the apartment her father and she were staying at was specially arranged by the school. No rent was collected from them.

## Chapter 293: Give Me the Money

The school had confirmed that what was prevalently spread earlier were actually false rumors.

After what happened, Qiao Nan and Zhu Baoguo were also curious as to how the school and Teacher Liu managed to find the truth before Qiao Nan could explain to them the situation at home. They even went to the extent of providing her with free accommodation!

At that time, when Zhu Baoguo asked Qiao Nan what she intended to do, Qiao Nan did not have any alternative and was even prepared to transfer to another school.



Unexpectedly, before Qiao Nan could worry about such a difficult issue, before she lost a strand of hair over this, it was resolved. Happiness came too suddenly. Till now, Qiao Nan did not feel that this was real.

“Nan Nan, is something the matter?”

“Nothing, I was just thinking of something.” Qiao Nan smiled. She had requested Zhu Baoguo to help investigate how the matter was resolved when he was back at home.

“We’re having a meal now. Focus on eating. Learning is important but there should be a balance too. Have more food.” Qiao Dongliang filled Qiao Nan’s bowl with a lot of vegetables.

“Thanks, Dad.” After finishing dinner, as Qiao Nan stayed in the unfamiliar quad and covered herself with a familiar blanket, she kept feeling that this did not seem real. Was it true that the matter had been so easily resolved?

In her previous life, she had been down on her luck all the time. After she was reborn, there was a great change in her character. Her self-worth and face value also suddenly escalated. As such, even when she encountered a major problem, she was able to avoid it and turn the misfortune into a blessing.

Qiao Nan fell asleep peacefully. Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were so angry that they nearly had a sleepless night.

“What kind of lousy school is that? Isn’t there a designated dismissal time? Why did they dismiss the first-year students one lesson earlier today?” Ding Jiayi continuously lamented. She stomped her feet furiously, causing the death of a few innocent ants that passed by.

“Mom, don’t complain anymore. I’ve asked you to go earlier but you refused to listen. In the end, you didn’t get your half month’s salary and was also scolded by that boss of yours. You didn’t even manage to see Qiao Nan. Dad is so good to Qiao Nan. She should know where he has moved to. Dad will not leave Qiao Nan in the lurch.” Qiao Zijin had a stomach full of fury too.

She did not need to go to school today, and thus she had urged her mother to go with her to Ping Cheng High School to wait for Qiao Nan so that they would not miss her.

However, Ding Jiayi refused to do so.

As she had been unwell, Ding Jiayi had been absent from work for three days. When she saw that Qiao Zijin was around, she wanted to pull Qiao Zijin along to muster her courage and act pitiful in front of her boss. She hoped that her boss would not take issue with her on this occasion. After all, she was sick and could be considered on medical leave. At most, they would deduct three days' of salary from her.

However, the boss was unwilling to relent. He fired Ding Jiayi as she did not inform the company of her absence. He could not afford to hire this kind of employee.

Because of this matter, Ding Jiayi argued with her boss directly.

“How would I know that it would turn out this way?” Ding Jiayi would not admit her mistake. She timed it accurately and was not even late by one minute. The school brought forward the dismissal time. This was not her fault.

“Why do I feel that people from Ping Cheng High School have a weird look on their face when they see you, Mom? Did you go to Ping Cheng High School before? Do they all know you?” Right. Putting aside the fact that they did not manage to see Qiao Nan, was her mother able to explain the reaction of the security guards?

Ding Jiayi exploded with anger. “I don't wish to talk about it anymore. I was sent to the police station previously all because of those two people. I will remember them for life even if the two of them turn into a pile of bones!”

“Is it that simple?”

“Alright. Don't ask anymore. It's that simple.” Ding Jiayi was very vexed. “We didn't manage to find Qiao Nan, so how are we going to find your dad?”

“What's the hurry? The monk can run away, but the temple won't run with him. Even if we do not know where Dad is, Qiao Nan is still a student at Ping Cheng High School. If we couldn't find Qiao Nan today, you could go to the entrance of Ping Cheng High School to wait for her again in the coming weekend. You've lost your job anyway. Your priority task now is to find out Dad's whereabouts. Go earlier and don't be late. You can't enter Ping Cheng High School. If you're unable to stop Qiao Nan before she enters the school, then I don't have any other way.”

However, if that was the case, the worse thing was that she could not personally ask Qiao Nan the reason why her father flared up so badly and tortured her mother all of a sudden. Everything seemed well initially.

Qiao Zijin firmly believed that her father would not lose his temper without a reason. Her mother must have provoked her father. It was most terrible that her mother had no sense of self-realization. Until now, she had no idea why she had provoked her father.

“That’s true. Zijin, it’s good that you’re back. Otherwise, I would have no one to discuss with after what happened. Clearly, I had raised two daughters, but when I was sick, you’re the only one by my side. Zijin, Mom is only left with you.” Ding Jiayi looked calmer after finding a way.

“Alright, Mom.” She could recite these words as she had heard them umpteen times. It was just to remind her to be more filial when she grew up.

“Okay, okay, okay, I’ll stop saying it.”

Qiao Zijin put away the homework that she had completed. “Mom, give me the money.”

“Didn’t I already give you the allowance for the next two weeks?” Why were you asking for money again?”

“It’s not about the meal allowance.”

“Then, what is it for? What did your school want you to buy again? I heard that there’re supplementary classes in senior high school. Have you also joined them? How much do you need?”

“It’s not that!” Qiao Zijin gave a stare. “I won’t join those supplementary classes. It’s a waste of time and money. I’m talking about the fee for bailing you out last time. You were released from the police station yesterday because my form teacher, Teacher Cen, helped you pay the bail first. I need to return the money to my form teacher, don’t I?” In fact, she had nearly forgotten about this matter.

“B-bail out fees?” At the mention of money, Ding Jiayi’s face looked distorted. “I… I heard that the fee will be returned, though?”

“Are you saying that we will wait for the police station to return the fee before giving them back to Teacher Cen? Do you mean we should continue to owe her money for the time being? Mom, how could you say that?” Qiao Zijin stared at Ding Jiayi. This was the first time she personally experienced Ding Jiayi’s ludicrous behavior and understood how it felt.

“The teachers in your school are all very rich. It won’t hurt them to have a little less money. Our family’s situation is different. Anyway, it will be returned. Let that teacher of yours wait a while.” Ding Jiayi shrank her shoulders and said weakly, “Moreover, I feel that there’s a problem with this. I didn’t commit any heinous crime. Given my situation, shouldn’t I be released after signing something? Why did they need us to pay the bail?”

The police officer should not have locked her up!

“Mom, one word. Are you giving me the money to pay back Teacher Cen?” Qiao Zijin could not be bothered to waste her breath with Ding Jiayi. She reached out her hands and her attitude was firm, as if to say, ‘It’s best to give it to me. You have to give me the money!’

Chapter 294: Brother Zhai, Was it You?

“Mom, Qiao Nan only has Dad in her heart. You also don’t want me to be like Qiao Nan, to look at you in a different light and be closer to Dad instead of you, do you? If not for the sake of giving me face, would Teacher Cen make a personal trip to the police station to bail you out? Isn’t it embarrassing? Mom, are you going to make me lose face in front of Teacher Cen and make her dislike me in the future?”

“Give. Of course, I will give you the money.” As soon as Qiao Zijin spoke harshly, Ding Jiayi had no choice but to relent. “But I really don’t have so much money with me. It’s fine. I’ll give it all to you. I should be able to find a way to survive for the next two weeks. Before I find your dad, I definitely can’t look for a job. I won’t have any income if I don’t work. Are you going to ask me for meal allowance the next time you’re back?”

“I don’t care. You have to think of a way yourself. Teacher Cen helped you because she gave me face. You have to protect my image in front of Teacher Cen. If you don’t have any money, then borrow from others like what you did before. We have so many neighbors and Dad has so many old friends. You should be able to find a way to borrow some money.” Qiao Zijin looked as if she suddenly recalled something. “Right, try not to borrow from those people that you’ve borrowed from before in case they talk nonsense. You can borrow from them only if you don’t have any other choice. Anyway, we have already paid them back the last time.”

Although they were the ones who borrowed the money, Qiao Zijin's word 'we' directly neglected the fact that that sum of money was repaid by Qiao Nan alone.

When Ding Jiayi heard that there was such a solution to this problem, she rubbed Qiao Zijin's head. "If Mom has a way, I will not let my precious daughter suffer. Alright, it's Saturday tomorrow anyway. We will have to wait till the day after to look for the wretched girl. I'll try to borrow some money tomorrow. When the police station returns us the bail, we'll be able to pay these people back."

"That's more like it. Mom, I'm hungry. Buy some nice food back. You've been sick for the past three to four days. You've lost weight and should eat something better and more nutritious."

"Why don't I go and buy back a pound of meat?"

"Mom, you're the best. I love to eat lean meat the most. Don't buy those that are too fatty."

"Alright, how could I not know your preference? I'll go and buy them now."

When Ding Jiayi reached the market and bought Qiao Zijin's favorite lean meat, she then regained her senses. Didn't Zijin say to buy something more nutritious for her? Wasn't her favorite pork belly?

Ding Jiayi brushed the thought aside as soon as it appeared. As long as Zijin was happy, Ding Jiayi would be happy even if she did not eat any piece of meat. It was more nutritious than having it herself.

"Dad, I'm going out." The next morning, when Qiao Nan woke up, she went out instead of doing what she usually did: staying at home to revise.

"Okay, be careful on the road." Qiao Dongliang did not question further. He trusted Qiao Nan.

With one yuan in her hand, Qiao Nan quickly found a place that she could make a phone call. "Hi boss, I'd like to make a call."

“Sure, help yourself.”

“Okay.” Lifting up the phone, Qiao Nan dialed a number that she was very familiar with, one that she knew by heart. When she heard the beeping sound at the other end of the call, she somehow felt nervous.

“Hello?”

“Zhai... Brother Zhai?” Qiao Nan stuttered as she was too nervous.

“Nan Nan?” Zhai Sheng’s face softened immediately. “Why did you call me today? Do you have something to tell me?” Ding Jiayi’s problem should have been resolved. Did Nan Nan want to talk to him about something else that was bothering her?

“Zhai... Brother Zhai, was it you?” After some time, Qiao Nan suddenly asked this ridiculous and abrupt question.

Zhai Sheng did not react to this initially but understood thereafter. “What makes you think that I was the one?”

Qiao Nan let out an air of breath. “Then, it’s really you, isn’t it?” she said. She could not have been so lucky. Such a major problem had been resolved fully without her taking any action.

“Did your mom come asking for trouble again?” Zhai Sheng tightened his hold on the phone. He had clearly informed Teacher Liu. At the very least, they would not let Ding Jiayi go near Nan Nan within the school compound.

“Not yet.”

“...” Not yet... This meant that Ding Jiayi would be looking for Nan Nan again very soon.

“Brother Zhai, aren’t you in the camp? You... How did you know about my matter and help me resolve it?” After asking the question, Qiao Nan’s face turned red. The matter was resolved as soon as it occurred. It was as if Brother Zhai had been watching over her and thus knew about what was happening to her. He then helped her settle the problem at the fastest speed before the situation turned for the worse.

“Your form teacher is considered one of my relatives.” After many twists and turns, he was still a distant relative beyond five generations nonetheless.

“Teacher Liu is your relative? But I didn’t hear you mention it during the military training?” There was such a coincidence?

“It’s not something very important.” Zhai Sheng’s lips curved at the corners and he seemed a little awkward.

There was no other reason. During the military training, Zhai Sheng himself was not even aware that he had such a distant relative.

It was because Teacher Liu was Qiao Nan’s form teacher. After knowing this fact, when Zhai Sheng returned to the camp, he asked someone to help investigate Teacher Liu’s background. He then found out that they could be considered as distant relatives. As such, he directly contacted Teacher Liu in the name of his relative so that Teacher Liu could tell him more about Qiao Nan.

To put it bluntly, without knowing it, Teacher Liu became a spy that Zhai Sheng arranged by Qiao Nan’s side.

“Oh, no wonder...” Qiao Nan, who did not know the situation at all, told Zhai Sheng in a silly manner that she had understood the situation. “Brother Zhai, thank you so much for your help in this matter.”

“No problem.” Zhai Sheng smiled. “If you really want to thank me, prepare more dishes for me to eat when I’m back. During that period, you have fed your dad quite well. The food that I’ve tasted was not bad.”

“That’s fine. I’ll prepare a table full of dishes for you! Not a problem at all,” Qiao Nan proudly said like an obedient little girl.

“Okay, feel free to call me in the future regardless of whether you have any issue. Don’t forget what you’ve promised me. Focus on your studies when you are at school.” Don’t be fooled by those messy wild men.

“Brother Zhai, you’re being paranoid. I’ll never be involved in any romantic relationship so early!” After the matter regarding Chen Jun in her previous life, although she wished to have a family of her own and give birth to a child that resembled her, Qiao Nan was also uncertain if she was truly able to muster the courage to accept a man who would completely walk into her life.

Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng had chatted happily. In comparison, Ding Jiayi’s Saturday was not a happy one.

“What did you say? Could you repeat? I didn’t hear you clearly,” Ding Jiayi said in disbelief.

### Chapter 295: No One Is Willing to Lend You Money

“Sister-in-law, I’ll give you the same answer even if I repeat myself thrice. I don’t have any money to lend you. Sister-in-law, it’s late. You should go back,” the other party replied without hesitation.

“You... Old Qiao treated you so well in the past. Now, our family is facing some difficulties. We’re just borrowing, not asking you for money. Why did you give me this kind of reply? Aren’t you afraid that Old Qiao will feel disappointed when he knows this?” Ding Jiayi was thick-skinned enough to come and borrow money but did not expect to face a white-eyed wolf.

“It is precisely because Old Qiao took care of me in the past that I have ‘no money’.”

“You! What do you mean by this? After all, are you even worthy to be Old Qiao’s friend if you are not willing to lend me money? Don’t you know that Old Qiao is someone who cares about his reputation? If I had a choice, would I come and borrow money from you? You have no conscience at all.” Ding Jiayi was red with anger. This person was nurtured by Old Qiao in the past.

The other party twitched his lips. “Sister-in-law, you may not know. We’re all aware of what happened the last time you came to borrow money.”

At this juncture, Ding Jiayi’s face turned redder. She was both angry and embarrassed. “All of you are grown-up men. Furthermore, you’re soldiers in the army. Why do you act like women? So big-mouthed and gossipy. Which family doesn’t have cash flow issues at some point in time? Didn’t we already pay back all the money we owed? Why did you have to smear the name of my Qiao family?”



So shameless!

“Sister-in-law, I can’t lend you any money even if I have it.” That person was angry too. “Other people may not know how much money we earn as soldiers in the army. But Sister-in-law, shouldn’t you know? We don’t have much expense when we’re in the camp, but our whole family is waiting for us to feed them. It’s not easy for us to have money in our pocket. If there’s any, it’s all ‘squeezed out’ from somewhere. Sister-in-law, the money you borrowed previously was repaid by Nan Nan. Sister-in-law, you really feel there’s no problem with that, don’t you?”

Ding Jiayi’s reputation had spread to the ears of Qiao Dongliang’s former comrades, and so did that of Qiao Nan.

If not for Qiao Nan, Qiao Dongliang’s reputation in the army would have been tarnished.

“She’s just a child. How much money could she have in her pocket? The money was from our family.” Ding Jiayi wanted to maintain her pride and refused to admit her mistake.

“Sister-in-law, did you feel guilty when you said that? You don’t know anything, do you? A few days ago, Old Qiao came back to see us for the first time after so many years. He even stayed here for a night. Otherwise, Nan Nan, this child, would be ruined by you.”

“Old Qiao was here? How many days ago? When did he leave? Did he…” Did he say where he was staying at now?

“Sister-in-law, we know how Old Qiao resolved his problem previously even if you don’t tell us. You’ve cornered Old Qiao to this extent. Sister-in-law, you’re truly a talent.” The other party sneered. Having that said, he simply went back to the army.

Simply put, ‘Wish to borrow money? No way!’

“You! You’re so heartless for not remembering the past!” At the sight of the other party walking back into the camp, she was stuck at the entrance and did not even have a chance to scold him. In the end, Ding Jiayi could only stomp her feet and leave unwillingly.

This place did not work. Ding Jiayi had to change her strategy. Ding Jiayi was prepared to repeat her old strategy of borrowing from more people but in a lesser amount as compared to before. If the amount was not huge, these people would definitely not chase her to pay them back.

Unexpectedly, when Ding Jiayi went to borrow money, she discovered something bizarre. No matter whom she asked from and how confident she was, the outcome was always the same: unable to borrow any money.

The most unacceptable thing to Ding Jiayi was that these people met Qiao Dongliang recently.

“What? You’re unwilling to lend me money too?!” In the end, Ding Jiayi had no alternative but to borrow from the neighbors after returning to the quad.

It could be said that borrowing from the neighbors was Ding Jiayi’s last resort since she really had no other way.

Qiao Dongliang wanted face, and so did Ding Jiayi. If the family lacked money, why wouldn’t Ding Jiayi borrow from the people she was familiar and in close contact with in her daily life first? Instead, she had to look for Qiao Dongliang’s former comrades. In the latter case, Qiao Dongliang, and not her, would be the one embarrassed.

On the other hand, people in the quad saw one another frequently and chat every day. Hence, if she borrowed money from them, Ding Jiayi felt that she would be deemed inferior.

After facing countless rejections, Ding Jiayi gave up her last bit of dignity and borrowed from the neighbors. Unexpectedly, the answer that she received was the same!

“Ding Jiayi, it’s not that we’re not willing to lend you. We can’t lend it to you.” The neighbor accidentally let the cat out of the bag. “Your Old Qiao told us about the situation in your family. If we lend you money and you can’t return them to us, Old Qiao will definitely not help. It’s not easy for each family to earn money. These are all hard-earned money. We lend for urgent matters and not poverty. Ding Jiayi, did anything serious happen to the Qiao family again this time? When Old Qiao was hospitalized last time, you didn’t ask me to lend you money, did you?”

“What? Old Qiao said that? Old Qiao asked you all not to lend me money? If you lend me money and I can’t return them, he’ll definitely not help me?” Ding Jiayi was dumbfounded. “Was that really what he said?”

“Yes, that’s right. A few days ago, Old Qiao made a trip back to the quad. He went to almost everyone that I know. I think he said the same thing to everyone. So, Ding Jiayi, forget it. You won’t be able to borrow any money from anyone in the quad.”

Who did not know that Qiao Dongliang was the main pillar of the Qiao family? He was the one who earned all the money for the family.

If Qiao Dongliang would not return the money, given Ding Jiayi’s ability, they would definitely be throwing their money down the drain if they were to lend her any.

Which family’s money was not earned after much difficulty? It was all hard-earned money. Since they clearly knew the outcome, they would be an idiot to lend the money. Furthermore, Qiao Dongliang had already made himself clear, just in case they were unknowingly ‘tricked’ by Ding Jiayi.

Old Qiao aired his dirty linen in public. He was kind enough to do this.

This was much better than the situation where they lent the money, taking into account that they were neighbors who should help one another, but could not get it back eventually.

“Old Qiao really said that?” Ding Jiayi refused to believe. She even dug her ears. “Did you hear it wrong or did I get it wrong?” She did not believe that Old Qiao would do that to her. He was so heartless.

Did Old Qiao know that she would come to borrow money as she had no other alternative? If she could not borrow any, Old Qiao... Did Old Qiao want to drive her to the grave?

“He really said that. Ding Jiayi, if you don’t believe me, you can also ask the other people in the quad. Ding Jiayi, I didn’t hear anything happening to your family recently. After Old Qiao was discharged, he seems to be doing quite well. Your Qiao family doesn’t seem to be in need of money.”

This was one of the reasons why the neighbors were reluctant to lend her money.

When Qiao Dongliang was hospitalized, the people in the quad did think of lending him money. They even visited him at the hospital. However, at that time, Qiao Dongliang expressed that he did not need the money.

## Chapter 296: The Left Eyelid Kept Twitching

Now that life was slightly peaceful in the Qiao family, why would there be a need to borrow money? Sure enough, Old Qiao was right. Ding Jiayi was used to splurging.

At the thought of that, the neighbor's expression changed. "Ding Jiayi, Old Qiao has two daughters. It is not easy to support the family of four. As his wife, you must learn to be thrifty in managing the household, earn more income, and cut down expenses to lighten Old Qiao's burden. However, you are only interested in spending his hard-earned money. It's no wonder that Old Qiao will be like this. Ding Jiayi, I don't know what to say about you."

Anyway, this troublesome shrew had nothing to do with him. No matter what, he would not lend any money to Ding Jiayi.

The neighbor did not care that Ding Jiayi was angry. He closed the door after finishing what he had to say.

Ding Jiayi was at a total loss. She walked back home and plopped down on the chair.

"Mom, that's fast. Have you borrowed the money? Give it to me now. I have to give it to Teacher Cen tomorrow." Qiao Zijin was surprised at the sight of Ding Jiayi. It was still early and her mother had already managed to borrow the money. Last time, when she was out borrowing money, she came back much later than today. "Mom, where's the money?"

"There isn't any money." Ding Jiayi sighed.

"There isn't any money? How can that be? Did you not borrow any money? That's impossible. You always told me that when Dad was in the army, he had a good relationship with his comrades. Didn't you manage to borrow money previously? Why is it that you couldn't borrow any this time? I don't believe it. Mom, did you do it on purpose?" Could it be that her mother wanted to stall for time and purposely not borrow the money, hoping that the police will return the bail money to Teacher Cen directly?

“On purpose? Zijin, what have I done on purpose? As your mom, I have given you everything and I regard you as my precious daughter. I tried to satisfy your every single request. Zijin, why did you say these words? Do you still have any conscience?”

Ding Jiayi had walked the whole day, enduring the sarcasm and cold treatment of others. When she returned home, she was misunderstood by Qiao Zijin, saying that she had done it on purpose. This was more hurtful than the words of rejection she had heard earlier.

“I... I don't mean that,” Qiao Zijin said with a guilty conscience. “I am anxious. After all, Teacher Cen is my form teacher and I am in her class. I cannot afford to offend her. If I offend Teacher Cen because of the money, I will have a difficult life at school. Moreover, the money is indeed hers. We have to return it to her.”

“Zijin, even if you are anxious, you can't make such hurtful remarks. I treat you so much better than that wretched girl. Because of this, your dad is angry at me. You may have advised me to treat that wretched girl better, but I know that if I do that, you will be unhappy with me. Did I not do all these for you?” Ding Jiayi vented all her frustrations on Qiao Zijin.

“I...” Qiao Zijin was lost for words. Talks were cheap. She did not really mean it when she told her mother to be better to Qiao Nan. She knew all along that Ding Jiayi would not do it as well. However, she had thought that it was because her mother hated Qiao Nan. She never knew that her mother was being considerate of her feelings.

“Mom, don't be angry. I am in the wrong. I didn't mean it. But now that it's like this... Mom, what shall we do next? I have to answer to Teacher Cen. Previously, when we went to the police station, Teacher Cen was already unhappy with me. If I do not return the bail money to her, I don't want to go to school anymore.”

Ding Jiayi pulled a sullen face, “I am helpless as well. I spent all the money at home to send you to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. I have no idea where your dad is now and I have lost my job. We may not even have any money for our meals next month, let alone returning the bail money to your teacher. I...”

Ding Jiayi could not understand how her initially happy family ended up this way. She was so poor that she might have to go hungry.

“Don't worry, there must be a way. Mom, think about it again. Who else can we borrow money from? There must be someone who is willing to lend us money.” Though Qiao Zijin reassured Ding Jiayi, telling her not to fret, in fact, Qiao Zijin was like a cat on a hot tin roof.

“Let me think about it.” Ding Jiayi thought hard but she could not think of anyone who would lend them money. “It’s useless. This time, your dad is really ruthless.”

“What does this have to do with Dad?”

“If not for your dad, would I have such difficulties in borrowing money? Not only did he hide from us that he moved to a new place, but he also went to the neighbors when I was sick a few days ago and told them that I am not good at managing the household and that I am a spendthrift, reminding them not to lend me any money. Obviously, your dad came to the quad while I was sick, but he didn’t even bother to drop by to check how I was doing. Even if I die in the house, he will not know.”

Ding Jiayi felt that she had led an ill-fated and miserable life. She fell ill and was down with a fever all because of Qiao Dongliang, yet he was so heartless to her.

“How could Dad do this?! He will do us in. Didn’t he know that you spent all the money on me? Besides, we did not squander the money but spent it wisely.” Qiao Zijin was fuming. So it turned out that her father was the reason why they could not borrow any money.

“Mom, you must ask around again. I don’t believe that Dad did not need any money to move house. Mom, we must find a way to find Dad. You are his wife. He should be the one who bailed you out when you were taken to the police station. Even though Teacher Cen helped bail you out, he should still pay for the bail money!”

Qiao Zijin decided that Qiao Dongliang had to be responsible for everything that happened.

“Where can we find your dad? How do we start searching?” It was easier said than done.

“I have a way!”

“Good morning, Dad.” On the weekend morning, when Qiao Nan had just woken up, she noticed that Qiao Dongliang already had breakfast ready.

“Good morning, Nan Nan. Come and have the porridge.” Qiao Dongliang finally had some peaceful days without Ding Jiayi around to create troubles.

Qiao Nan sat down and had the porridge. She noticed that Qiao Dongliang kept rubbing at his eyes. “Dad, what happened? What’s wrong with your eyes?”

“I have no idea. Today, my left eyelid kept twitching. I felt very uncomfortable.” With that, Qiao Dongliang could not help but rub at his eyes again. Unfortunately, it did not alleviate the situation.

#### Chapter 297: Qiao Zijin Was Sent to the Hospital

“The eyelid kept twitching?” She had no solution to this minor problem. There was no way that they could go to the hospital for this either.

“Old Qiao, are you around?” Sounds could be heard from outside the house.

“Old Tan, what’s the matter?” Qiao Dongliang could recognize the voice of Old Tan, his neighbor in the quad. He put down the bowl and chopsticks and went out. “Come in and have some water. Is anything the matter?”

“I have no time for water.” Old Tan shook his head. “Old Qiao, there’s bad news. Your elder daughter, Qiao Zijin, had a fall and it seemed to be quite serious. She has been sent to the hospital. Ding Jiayi said she was worried that Qiao Zijin might suffer from a concussion. She was so scared that she burst into tears. I don’t know the exact situation. We have to wait for the doctor’s diagnosis. The situation did not seem right, so I came to inform you.”

“What? Zijin had a fall? What do you mean by concussion?”

“I don’t know. It seemed to be quite serious.” Old Tan shook his head.

“Nan Nan, do you know what ‘concussion’ is? Is it very serious?” Qiao Dongliang panicked and looked toward Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan had a shock when she heard that Qiao Zijin fell and had a concussion. She spilled the porridge in the bowl. “C-concussion?”

“Yes, concussion.”

“Nan Nan, what is concussion?” Qiao Dongliang looked at Qiao Nan. Among the three people who were present, Qiao Nan was the most educated. He could only ask Qiao Nan for an explanation.

“There are different severities of concussion. If it is just a mild concussion, there will not be much of a problem, and a short rest will do. But if it is a serious fall...” Then, it would be fatal.

“No, I have to go to the hospital to take a look!” Qiao Nan had not finished her sentence, but Qiao Dongliang had already understood her meaning. In other words, if the fall was serious, his elder daughter would be in trouble.

“Yes, you should hurry to the hospital. Remember to bring along some money. If need be, you must not save on the money.” Old Tan sighed. The Qiao family had been down on their luck these few years. Misfortunes befell the family one after another.

“Right, I will bring some money.” Qiao Dongliang took all the money at home, put on his clothes, and was about to leave.

Qiao Nan stood up. “Dad, shall I go as well?”

“No, you shall stay at home. If your sister’s situation is not serious, I will be back soon. You must not tire yourself out. In case your sister’s condition is serious, you still have to go to school today. Studies are always more important.” Qiao Dongliang put on his clothes and headed outside with Old Tan, telling Qiao Nan to stay behind. “Old Tan, is it the same old hospital?”

“Yes, it’s the hospital you went to last time.”

“Alright, let’s go.”

Qiao Nan leaned against the door frame with a look of worry as she watched Qiao Dongliang and Old Tan left the house.

But the next instant, Qiao Nan gaped in shock. “Wait, that’s not right. Mom and Dad are not well-educated. If Dad doesn’t know what a concussion is, how would Mom know about it?”



By the time Qiao Nan realized that the situation was not right, it was already too late.

Qiao Dongliang was very worried about Qiao Zijin. He pedaled as fast as he could and rushed to the hospital in no time. “Hello, do you have a patient by the name of Qiao Zijin? I am her father. I would like to know how my daughter is right now. What’s her condition? Is she okay? Did she have a concussion? Is it serious?”

“Qiao Zijin?” The nurse paused momentarily. There was a strange expression on the face. “There is such a person, but...”

“So how is she doing now?”

“Well...” The nurse twitched the corners of her lips. She was about to continue when a voice interrupted their conversation.

“Dad!”

“Zijin?” Qiao Dongliang turned and saw Qiao Zijin standing right behind him. She smiled at him and looked perfectly fine. “Zijin, are you okay? I heard that you fell down. Where did you hurt yourself? Does your head still hurt? Tell me if you feel uncomfortable. What did the doctor say?”

“Dad, don’t worry. I’m fine.” Qiao Zijin’s eyes flashed a glimmer of victory. She knew that her father still cared a lot for her. “I might have been too nervous and stressful for my studies. This morning, I fainted and fell. Mom was so worried that she sent me to the hospital. Dad, rest assured. I am in good health, and there isn’t anything wrong with me.” Most importantly, she managed to get her father to come out of his ‘hiding place’.

Qiao Zijin grabbed the arm of Qiao Dongliang. “Dad, I am back from school this week. Why didn’t you come to see me? Mom said that you have moved. Where did you move to? Why did you ignore me?”

“Are you really okay?” Qiao Dongliang did not believe her words. He looked at her intently. “If you don’t feel well, you must let me know. Don’t hide it from me. I heard from Nan Nan that concussion is not to be taken lightly.”

Qiao Zijin smiled. It was rare that Qiao Nan's intelligence would actually aid her in her plan to get her father to come looking for her. "I am fine. The doctor said so. It's just that I am under a lot of stress. I will be fine after some rest. Dad, since I am fine, shall we go home?"

"No, let me get more information from your doctor." Qiao Dongliang wanted to know the details as this concerned his daughter's life.

He needed to hear from the doctor himself that Qiao Zijin was fine.

"What's there to check? Can't you see that it is so crowded at the hospital? The doctor is busy with the patients. Anyway, the doctor said that Zijin is fine. Are you hoping for something to happen to her?" Ding Jiayi was full of anger at the sight of Qiao Dongliang. "Alright, stop wasting the doctor's time. The doctor needs to check on other patients. Everything is fine, so let's go home."

"Dad, let's go home. I have been away for half a month. I miss you, Dad," Qiao Zijin said with a smile. She dragged Qiao Dongliang to the Qiao's house in the quad.

By the time Qiao Dongliang returned to the courtyard house, it was already late in the afternoon.

"Dad, you are back. I will be off to school then." Qiao Nan carried her bag in silence and prepared to go out.

Qiao Dongliang looked embarrassed. "Nan Nan, aren't you worried about your sister's condition?"

Qiao Nan smiled reluctantly. "Dad, rather than worrying about my sister, I am more concerned about your wallet."

"You knew about it?" Qiao Dongliang was shocked. He was not as shocked when he realized that Qiao Zijin was fine.

Qiao Nan smirked. How could she not know? When she realized that her mother could not possibly have known about concussion, she was reminded of how her mother would always come up with tricks to get money from her time and time again in the previous life. "Dad, I am going to school. Dad, you know what my mom did previously. The school lent us this place to live in, so it will not be appropriate for mom to come here. Perhaps, you should consider moving back to the quad."

## Chapter 298: Met Her 'Mother-In-Law'

Qiao Nan was aware that the school reported Ding Jiayi to the police due to the rumors that she spread at school. What Ding Jiayi did not only had an impact on Qiao Nan, but it also almost ruined the reputation of Ping Cheng High School.

If Ding Jiayi knew about this place, she would definitely come every day.

Qiao Dongliang's expression turned grim. "There's no need for that. You can rest assured that your mom won't find out about this place. Even if she knows about it, I won't let her in."

"Alright, I will go to school then."

She had no idea who came up with this plan today. Regardless, Qiao Zijin and her mother had succeeded once again.

Qiao Nan went to school while Qiao Dongliang stayed by himself at home. The more he thought about what happened today, the angrier he was. He felt like thrashing the furniture. But he remembered that everything in this house belonged to Qiao Nan's school and stopped himself in time. "Ding Jiayi, since you plotted against me, I will fight with you till the end!"

With this thought in mind, Qiao Dongliang went to the police station with the household register and the marriage certificate.

On the other hand, Qiao Nan, who had known that this would happen, did not show much response. She went to school without any expression on her face.

Qiao Nan silently told herself that she must strive to enter a good university, and she would definitely choose a university that was far from Ping Cheng.

"Oh my god." A very well-dressed woman in front of Qiao Nan screamed and slipped on a muddy puddle. The expensive suit she wore was stained with mud.

Qiao Nan gasped and ran forward to check. "Are you okay? A-Auntie Miao?"

Qiao Nan was surprised when she found out that the person who fell was none other than Zhai Sheng's mother. "Auntie Miao, why are you here? Let me help you up first."

"No need for that. My clothes are dirty. If you help me up, your clothes will get dirty as well." Miao Jing was in a sorry and miserable state. Even though her face had been stained with muddy water, she still carried that look of indifference on her face. Her tone was cold and aloof, telling Qiao Nan that she did not need her help.

"It doesn't matter." Qiao Nan reached out her hand and pulled Miao Jing up, her hand stained with mud in the process. "Auntie Miao, there is a river terrace over there. Let's have a seat while I help you wipe off the mud with a handkerchief."

No matter who slipped and fell, Qiao Nan would render her help, not to mention that this person was Zhai Sheng's mother.

"There's no need for that." Miao Jing, who stood up with Qiao Nan's help, rejected her assistance for the second time. She retracted her hand and said, "I will go home now. I can simply change out of these dirty clothes later."

"How are you going to walk back in those high heels?" Qiao Nan looked down toward Miao Jing's shoes.

There had been a heavy downpour in Ping Cheng for the past two days. Many of the muddy roads were particularly slippery. It was no wonder that Miao Jing, who wore a pair of fashionable high heels, would slip and fall.

Because of the fall, the right heel of Miao Jing's shoes was broken.

A fleeting look of self-mockery and bitterness could be seen on Miao Jing's face, but she schooled her expression within seconds that Qiao Nan almost missed it. "Auntie Miao, let me help you to the river terrace. Even if you want to go back home, you can't go back home like this."

Droplets of muddy water could be seen dripping from her body. Qiao Nan rarely ran into Auntie Miao, but every time she saw her, she would be dressed nicely and neatly like the noblewomen described in books.

In fact, with her status, she was worthy of such attire.

However, it would not be appropriate if the wife of the chief went back home drenched in muddy water with a pair of broken high heels.

It seemed like Miao Jing had a bad fall just now and might have sprained her ankle. When Qiao Nan helped her walk toward the river terrace, although she did not utter a word of discomfort, she knitted her eyebrows in pain.

“Auntie Miao, have a seat first.”

Qiao Nan picked a clean spot and ushered Miao Jing to sit down.

Usually, given her status, Miao Jing would not be seen sitting by the river terrace, but Qiao Nan had already seen her in a sorry state. There was no need for her to worry about maintaining her image, and so she sat down without a word.

Miao Jing had a look of indifference on her face as Qiao Nan used her white and clean handkerchief to wipe the mud off Miao Jing’s blouse and skirt. Her handkerchief turned brown with mud.

There was no way she could clean them thoroughly. She could only wipe away the mud as much as possible.

Qiao Nan was so tired that her face turned red and her forehead was covered with sweat. “Auntie Miao, that’s all we could do for the clothes. What about your shoes? Do you want me to buy another pair for you?”

Miao Jing sat by the river terrace. She placed her legs together and tilted them to one side, looking like a noble lady. “Last time, I gave you the cold shoulder and I took back the keys from you. Why are you being so good to me? Is it because I am the wife of the chief? Young lady, one should not be so scheming at your age. If you think that you can benefit from this, then you have got things wrong. My husband is very impartial.”

Miao Jing softened her tone as she felt that, after all, Qiao Nan had helped her this time. “On the account that you have helped me, as long as it is within my ability and is not too unreasonable, I will fulfill your request. However, there’s no way that my husband will do anything for you.”

“Auntie Miao, there’s no need for that. I help you because you are Br—no, Sister Zhai Hua’s mother. Speaking of which, both of you did me a favor in the first place.” Undeniably, most of the people had something in mind when they tried to be close to the Zhai family. It was the same for her as well. She wanted to repay Brother Zhai’s kindness.

Brother Zhai was very capable, and he did not need her help in any way. She might not have the chance to repay his kindness in this life.

But ‘luck’ was on her side. She ran into Auntie Miao and could render her help to her. This could be considered as repaying Brother Zhai’s kindness as well.

“Think about it before you refuse. There’s no need for you to put on a strong front. This is my promise to you. It will be very useful to you. If you haven’t thought about it yet, you can look for me after you have decided.” Miao Jing lifted her chin and said in an assertive tone, “You have tired yourself out and made yourself to be as dirty as me. I won’t take advantage of you. It is common for the Zhai family to help others, but I don’t have the habit of owing others.”

Brother Zhai and Sister Zhai Hua were quite easy to get along with as they did not put on airs. Why was it that Auntie Miao was so difficult to get along with? Besides, she just could not understand her words.

Qiao Nan frowned. She moved to stand in front of Miao Jing.

Miao Jing looked at Qiao Nan without batting an eyelid. “Have you thought of what you want? Oh my! What are you doing?!”

Miao Jing, who composed herself with dignity, paled and let out an uncharacteristically loud scream. She watched helplessly as Qiao Nan squatted down and took off her shoes!

Chapter 299: Who Was That Warrior?

Qiao Nan went back to the river terrace with Miao Jing’s shoes in her hands. Miao Jing cried out in a high pitch, “Do you intend to throw my shoes into the river? Fine, I will give you money to get me a pair of shoes, okay?” She could not throw the shoes away. It was...

Qiao Nan glanced at Miao Jing. She was sure that Brother Zhai and Sister Zhai Hua were unlike Auntie Miao. Perhaps they took after the chief?

Qiao Nan broke the left heel of Miao Jing's shoes with her hands.

After breaking off the heels of the shoes, Qiao Nan used her handkerchief to wipe them clean and returned them to Miao Jing. "Auntie Miao, actually, I feel that one should not be too hard on oneself. The shoes may look nice, but it is not practical. The most important thing is that shoes must be comfortable to wear. It's normal that women like to look pretty, but no matter what, one should find a pair of shoes that are fitting."

Qiao Nan noticed that Miao Jing's feet had turned red and were full of blisters from walking in her high heels.

Luckily, she was not born in ancient times where she might have to bind her feet. She also had to thank her lucky stars that her mother never cared about her in the previous life. She had never cared for fashion, and when she had some money, she would spend them on food. She did not have the extra money to torture herself with high heels.

Miao Jing stared at the pair of high heels blankly. It used to squeeze and cut her feet while she tiptoed in them. Now, it had turned into an ordinary pair of flats. She was lost for words.

Qiao Nan twitched her lips. Miao Jing was the wife of the chief after all. She had an air of arrogance about her.

Qiao Nan had no choice but to bend down and put on the shoes for Miao Jing. "Auntie Miao, it's getting late. You must hurry back. If it is too troublesome, you can consider making a phone call to arrange for your family to pick you up. The journey back to the Zhai's residence is quite long. If you want to walk back, you may only reach by midnight."

"I don't mean that." Miao Jing hurried to deny. She was not waiting for Qiao Nan to put on the shoes for her. She was lost in her thoughts. "Thank you."

But Qiao Nan was simply too fast. Without waiting for her to react, Qiao Nan had already put on the shoes for her. "Wait here, I..." Miao Jing took out ten yuan from her bag to give it to Qiao Nan.

“Now that you can wear your shoes and I do not need to help you to buy new shoes, I have no need for this money.” In this way, Miao Jing would not be able to say that Qiao Nan used the excuse of buying new shoes to hanker after her money.

“No, what I mean is that your handkerchief is dirty and can’t be used anymore. This is for you to buy a handkerchief.” Miao Jing was a little embarrassed.

Qiao Nan wiped away her beads of perspiration and put the handkerchief away. “I only need to wash the handkerchief and it will be clean. I don’t need to buy a new handkerchief. Besides, if Auntie Miao gives me ten yuan, I can buy tons of handkerchiefs and can even start selling them.”

Her small handkerchief only cost her fifty cents.

“Auntie Miao, I have to go to school, or else I will be late. You can find a place to make a phone call. There’s also a phone at the guardhouse near our school gate.” With that, Qiao Nan turned to rush off to Ping Cheng High School. She did not have time for Miao Jing.

After Qiao Nan left, Miao Jing took out a small cell phone from her bag.

Around this time, the cell phone was not as thin and light as those in the 21st century. It was heavy and thick.

Miao Jing took a deep breath and dialed a number. “I am... yes, come and pick me up. Okay...”

Miao Jing had no problem reaching the Zhai family, but she did not want to do so just now. Nevertheless, it seemed like she had no other choice now. She lowered her head and looked at the high heels that had been turned into flats. They were still as tight and painful as before. She let out a long breath.

She simply loved this pair of shoes even though they were not fitting.

“Mom, where have you been? Why are you so late? What’s wrong with you? Have you fallen into a pit?” Zhai Hua knew that the chauffeur had gone to pick up Miao Jing. She could not help but laugh at the sorry state that Miao Jing was in.



Miao Jing had always composed herself with dignity and decorum in front of her children. She was even more serious than Zhai Yaohui. But Miao Jing, who followed the rules strictly, ended up in such a sorry state instead. Zhai Hua could not help but laugh at her mother.

“It’s true that I have fallen into a puddle.” Miao Jing was too tired to care about her image. She leaned back on the sofa to rest. “Hua Hua, is it right of you to break into laughter at the terrible sight of your mom? Bring me a pair of slippers. I sprained my foot when I fell down just now.”

“Seriously? Have you seen a doctor?” Zhai Hua was anxious. She looked at Miao Jing’s feet and an exaggerated scream followed. “Oh my god! Mom, your shoes! Your shoes!”

Zhai Hua ran over and lifted Miao Jing’s feet to take a closer look at the shoes. “Who broke off the heels of your shoes, Mom? Did you kill the person who did that?”

“Spoiled brat, stop saying stuff like that. Killing is illegal.” Miao Jing smacked Zhai Hua’s head lightly. Why was it that her daughter was so different from the daughters of other families?

“This pair of high heels was given to you by Dad five years ago. You always found it painful to wear and Zhai Sheng and I have advised you time and again to throw it away, but you refused to do so. There was once when the right heel broke, I wanted to throw it away, but you insisted on getting it fixed. Mom, isn’t it just a pair of shoes? If you love it, I will get Dad to give you ten more pairs of shoes.” She did not understand. She did not like to wear high heels, but why would her mother be so attached to this pair of high heels?

If it was because of the fact that her father was the one who bought her the shoes, she could just get her father to give her mother ten more pairs of shoes.

Her mother forbade Zhai Sheng and her to throw away the shoes. Yet, someone broke the heels of her shoes today! She did not believe that her mother would let that person get away with it.

Who was the brave warrior? Did her mother make that person suffer for their actions right on the spot?

Miao Jing let out a long breath. “I won’t throw the shoes away, but I won’t be wearing them either. Get someone to put them in the storeroom.”

“Mom, are you running a fever? You have decided not to wear it but to keep it?” Was her mother willing to do that?

“Are you a repeater for the day? Why do you keep repeating my words? Get me the safflower oil and rub it on my feet!” Miao Jing gave Zhai Hua an angry look.

The Empress in the house was angry, so Zhai Hua dared not fool around. She abidingly brought the safflower oil and rubbed it on her feet. Zhai Hua was full of curiosity. What happened to her mother today, and what kind of person did she meet today? She felt that her mother was acting strangely.

Qiao Nan, who was at school, had just taken out a book to read when she had a loud sneeze.

“Xiao Qiao, the weather has been alternating between hot and cold recently, and the difference in temperature difference is huge. Did you catch a cold?” Zhu Baoguo looked at Qiao Nan, depressed. “Xiao Qiao, I am sorry. I didn’t manage to find out anything about the matter you told me to investigate. I have no idea how the school resolved your problem either.”

“Oh, there is no need to find out any longer. If we don’t know, then just let it be. The most important thing is that everything has been solved.” Qiao Nan smiled in a relaxed manner. She rubbed at her nose. “I didn’t catch a cold. It’s just that it is itchy. By the way, what happened to Zhao Yu and Xu Tingting?”

### Chapter 300: Did Not Want Me to Do Well

Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu had noses and faces that were as swollen as pigs. One look at them and Qiao Nan could tell that the mastermind behind these was none other than Zhu Baoguo. Besides him, nobody would be capable of that.

Zhu Baoguo cracked his knuckles, giving off loud sounds. “The two of them asked for it.”

Ding Jiayi started the rumor while Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu added fuel to the flames.

After learning about it, Zhu Baoguo did not do anything to them at school. He waited till today before getting two groups of people to stop them on their way to school.

As soon as the two groups of people saw Zhao Yu and Xu Tingting, with nary a word, they put sacks over their heads and gave the two of them punches and kicks.

The people whom Zhu Baoguo gathered were veterans at beating people. They knew how much force to exert.

Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu might have slight bruises on their faces, but the injuries were not serious. Those areas that were covered by clothes were hit the worst and they were the most painful of all.

“Beware that they may lodge a complaint against you.” This was not a baseless accusation. It was a fact that Zhu Baoguo sent people to beat them up.

Zhu Baoguo smiled. “No matter how brave they are, they will not dare to do so. These two women are smart. They will not dare to provoke me or the Zhu family. They will only bully defenseless people like you.”

Qiao Nan, who was teased by Zhu Baoguo, propped her head and looked at him. “They knew you would back me up, but they had no qualms about bullying me. If it’s my problem, then it’s your problem as well.”

Zhu Baoguo paled. “Then, I will get people to give them another beating!” He did not believe these two women would be so headstrong that they were not fearful of him.

“Do not go overboard. Otherwise, Teacher Liu will have a talk with you.” Qiao Nan could not help but laugh at the sight of Zhu Baoguo’s brusque way of dealing with things.

“Qiao Nan, why is it that you are so firm toward Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu, but so softhearted when it comes to your mom and Qiao Zijin and let them bully you? Xiao Qiao, where is your temper?” Zhu Baoguo said indignantly.

If not for Ding Jiayi, who had started the rumor in the first place, Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu would not have the opportunity to create troubles. The main culprit was Ding Jiayi. There was no use in beating the sense out of Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu. As long as Ding Jiayi kept on creating troubles, there would be more of such things in the future.

Ding Jiayi was the source of the problem. They had to deal with her in order for Xiao Qiao to be able to have a good life in the future.

“Do you think I don’t want to?” Qiao Nan sneered. “One of them is my mom, and the other is my sister. Do you think I can be so ruthless as to give them a beating or find a way to get rid of them? This is a lawful society where killing is illegal. You should know what Wang Yang has been up to, and you have fallen for his tricks time and again. Yet, how did you deal with him? Wang Yang still frequents the Zhu’s residence as he likes. To your Grandpa, he plays the role of a good grandson, doesn’t he?”

It was very true that those who hurt you deeply were your closest kin.

Ding Jiayi was her mother. Be it morally or legally, she could not do anything to her.

Don’t even mention a fight. She could not even raise her voice at her.

If she was harsh to her mother or used a swear word on her, even though she might be the innocent party, the tables would be turned on her to favor her mother.

“So we cannot do anything about it?” When Qiao Nan used Wang Yang to make an analogy, Zhu Baoguo was lost for words. When Wang Yang made him take sleeping pills right before his middle school examination, he could not do anything to Wang Yang other than losing his temper.

What Xiao Qiao had said was true. Wang Yang still frequented the Zhu’s residence as usual.

Regardless of how the Zhu family treated Wang Yang, in the eyes of outsiders, Wang Yang was the Zhu family’s grandson, the cousin of Zhu Baoguo.

Wang Yang still benefited from being a member of the Zhu family.

“We can’t beat them or scold them. As for killing them... Forget it. Does it mean that we are destined to be bullied?” Zhu Baoguo said in disgruntlement. He was the one who bullied others all along, but now he could not retaliate or take revenge even though he was bullied. This kind of life sucked.

“Wang Yang hopes that you will be led astray so that you will not have a bright future. That way, he can get everything that is yours. Wang Yang is after material gains. Even if you can’t retaliate against Wang Yang or to make life difficult for him, you won’t let him have it easy. What you can

do is to work harder and show him that you are capable. Not only must you take charge and assume responsibility in the Zhu family, but you must also ensure that the Zhu family thrives much better than when in your dad's hands. For now, Wang Yang has to depend on your dad. Hence, what you must do is to be in charge of the Zhu family so that Wang Yang will have to answer to you in order for him to lead a good life in the future!"

After listening to Qiao Nan's clear and simple analysis, Zhu Baoguo felt motivated and wanted to work harder.

"That's right. Everything in the Zhu family belongs to me. I must work harder to make the Zhu family more successful than before. I must gain control and power so that if Wang Yang wants to lead a good life, he must be submissive to me!" Zhu Baoguo calmed down. He was not as depressed as before. "Xiao Qiao, what about you? You helped me come up with a solution, but what about you? Your mother and your sister are not easy to deal with."

"Why do you think I spend so much effort on my studies? The knowledge I gained is mine alone, and no one can take it from me. My mom and my sister are one of a kind. Given the current situation, do you think my sister will be more capable and earn more money than me? In the future, will she be able to lead a better life than me?" Based on her abilities, there was no way that Qiao Zijin could buy a house or a car by herself.

"That is impossible!" Zhu Baoguo had no doubts about that. "But even if you earn more money than Qiao Zijin, given your mom's temper, won't she take it away from you?"

What he worried the most was that Xiao Qiao's hard-earned money would be given to Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

"Zhu Baoguo, you have to remember this. If I am unwilling, my mom can't get a penny from me." In her previous life, she had been too foolish to have let her mother do whatever she wanted.

"Are you sure? What if your mom snatches it from you?" Zhu Baoguo asked in disbelief.

"Snatch? My mom has to stay close to me in order to snatch the money from me." Her mother and Qiao Zijin were her biggest disaster. She could not afford to have any entanglements with them. Since she could not provoke them, she could only hide from them.

"You want to be a deserter?" Zhu Baoguo was displeased. This was not his way of dealing with problems.

Qiao Nan flipped the book open and said calmly. “My situation is different from yours, so we can’t lump them together. The method that you use is not suitable for me. Both my mom and sister do not want me to do well.”