

RTAMM 341

Chapter 341: Emboldened With the Backing of the Daughter-In-Law

After that, Old Master Zhai made a move to attack and yelled loudly, “Checkmate!”

Zhai Hua was stunned. “How can you checkmate? That’s too fast. No, I shall take the original move. You must not checkmate.”

“No matter what, you won’t win against Grandpa.” Zhai Sheng took a glance at the game of chess that Zhai Hua had messed up and shook his head. “Come over and lend me a hand. After that, you can have Grandpa to play another round with you.”

“What is it?”

Zhai Hua, who was in utter defeat, put down the chess pieces and followed by Zhai Sheng’s side.

Zhai Hua might act like a child when she was with Old Master Zhai, but back in the army, she was a female officer. She was in charge of training female soldiers and was very awe-inspiring in the army.

However, Zhai Hua noticed that although she might have been very impressive in the army, she looked very pathetic whenever she was at home.

In fact, she was embarrassed that she lost to her grandpa. Hence, she was quick to agree to render assistance to Zhai Sheng.

What Zhai Hua did not know was that she had only just walked away when Old Master Zhai breathed a sigh of relief. At his age, he felt tiring to have a game of chess with his granddaughter who was not good at chess.

“What are you doing here?” Zhai Hua followed Zhai Sheng to the place where the family stored the food. “What? Are you so anxious to send some food to Nan Nan? Let me remind you. You must not let Mom find out. Otherwise, Mom’s impression of Nan Nan will only get worse. If you want to marry Nan Nan, you won’t be able to get Mom’s approval.”

On Lunar New Year's Eve, Zhai Sheng did not stay at home but was with his wife-to-be. He only came back to the house at eight o'clock in the morning of the Lunar New Year's Day.

Zhai Sheng was too rampant.

"Don't worry. Mom may be the first person who will no longer pose a problem in our house." Zhai Sheng picked the food that he wanted to give to Qiao Nan while grinning to himself.

"How is that possible?" Would her mother like girls like Nan Nan?

"Mom wants me to give some food to Nan Nan. According to my guess, after Mom went out today, she went to see Nan Nan and chatted with her."

"Do you mean that the person who influences Mom is, in fact, Nan Nan? Are you serious? It can't be such a coincidence. Back then when Ding Jiayi framed Nan Nan at our doorway, Mom was annoyed at Nan Nan. It has not been that long, so why would Mom accept Nan Nan who is of such family background? I don't believe it!"

Had hell frozen over? It was too incredible that her mother would listen to Nan Nan's advice and be influenced by her.

"Mom doesn't know that the girl I like is Nan Nan." Zhai Sheng might be happy but he was aware of the difficulties he faced as well.

His mother gave him two years. Zhai Sheng was very clear what his mother meant.

In the past year that he had known Qiao Nan, the actual time that he spent with Qiao Nan had only been around half a month's time. This was the reason why Zhai Sheng often sent letters to 'remind' Qiao Nan not to start a relationship when she was too young.

He was worried that as he was not by Qiao Nan's side, she would fall for those boys who chased after her.

Therefore, even though his mother had agreed, in fact, his mother was hoping that their relationship would not stand the test of time. In the two years' time, when Nan Nan realized that Zhai Sheng, as a soldier, did not have much time to spend with her, she would be displeased or angry with him. Eventually, she might take the initiative to break up with him. His mother did not need to do anything and she would achieve her aim nonetheless.

In the end, her mother had what she wanted and she did not need to play the bad guy. She would have the best of both worlds.

“Nan Nan is brilliant to be able to come up with such a plan. Initially, I was worried that Mom will not like a girl like Nan Nan. Now, it seems that Nan Nan has a way of being close to Mom.” Zhai Hua finally felt at ease after figuring out the entire matter. “In that case, Mom locking up the pair of high heels that Dad gave her was also thanks to Nan Nan? Let's go together. I have to ask Nan Nan how she managed to do that.”

She was her mother's daughter. However, after years of persuading, her mother could not bear to part with the shoes and treated them as her treasure, refusing to listen to anyone.

She was curious about how Nan Nan persuaded her mother and resolved the matter.

“You should stay at home and play chess with Grandpa.”

“Zhai Sheng, how dare you kick someone to the curb after they've outlived their usefulness!”

“Did you just realize it now?” Zhai Sheng was done with selecting the food that he wanted. He admitted shamelessly that he had kicked her to the curb after she had outlived her usefulness. “Alright, it's rare that you are at home. You should spend more time with Grandpa. I will be back soon.” At this time, Uncle Qiao should have gone back home from the Qiao family's residence at the quad.

With Uncle Qiao around, it was inconvenient for him to chat with Nan Nan. He would leave after passing her the food.

Zhai Hua snorted childishly. After returning to the living room, she asked that her grandpa continued to play chess with her.

Zhai Sheng had asked some people to move the food into the car.

Seeing the car key in his hands, Zhai Yaohui frowned in displeasure. “You just came back, why are you running out again? I have to make a call to the army. I don’t believe that there will be so many missions on the first day of the Lunar New Year.” Most importantly, if it was to do with the army, Zhai Sheng would not be so relaxed.

Zhai Yaohui was displeased that apart from the work in the army, Zhai Sheng was concerned about other stuff but not the engagement with Qiu Chenxi. He did not care about his marriage at all. Instead, he put his focus on other insignificant things. What was Zhai Sheng thinking about?

“It has nothing to do with the army. Apart from the army, he has relatives and family members.” Miao Jing ground her teeth. “I asked him to run an errand for me. Is there anything wrong?”

As Zhai Yaohui’s wife, Miao Jing knew very well why he was so angry with Zhai Sheng.

In the past, Miao Jing had yet to sort out her thoughts. In order to please Zhai Yaohui, she would stand on the same side with Zhai Yaohui and discipline Zhai Sheng. But now that Miao Jing had sorted it out, she was unhappy that Zhai Yaohui lectured her son because of someone else’s daughter.

“Old Zhai, is it that apart from the army, Zhai Sheng has to put Qiu Chenxi as his first priority? Even before his mother?”

If that was the case, did it mean she no longer has any foothold in the family once Zhai Sheng married Qiu Chenxi and the latter joined the family?

“What nonsense are you talking about in front of the children? I don’t mean that.” Zhai Yaohui did not expect that Miao Jing would act out of the blue. Not only did she not take his side, but she also argued with him, making him embarrassed.

“It’s good that you do not mean that. Zhai Sheng, you should get going.” An angry Miao Jing crossed her arms around her chest.

Zhai Hua and Old Master Zhai stared at each other. Since when did her mother become so emboldened in front of her father?

Old Master Zhai pulled at Zhai Hua. “Recently, your mom...”

Chapter 342: Retribution for ‘Abducting’ Someone Else’s Daughter

“Did anyone agitate your mom, or is she unwell? Her temper is not the same as before.” Miao Miao was a good daughter-in-law, but she always gave in to Zhai Yaohui, resulting in him being too arrogant.

“If your mom used that temper on your dad long ago, he would not behave like how he is now.”

“That’s right. My dad has been pampered by Mom.” Zhai Hua nodded in agreement. Her future sister-in-law, Nan Nan, was so capable. She had not married into the family, yet she had such an impact on their family.

She was sure that Nan Nan would bring good luck to the husband. When Zhai Sheng married her, their house would be lively.

“Do you know what is going on?” Miao Miao could not possibly change her temper all of a sudden without apparent reason.

“I don’t know.” Zhai Hua darted her eyes. She dared not look at Old Master Zhai.

However, Old Master Zhai’s gaze had already returned to the chessboard. “You are right. You are a scatterbrain, so you won’t notice even if there is any situation.” Old Master Zhai knew that although Zhai Hua was a female, she could be as wild as a monkey, totally out of control.

Zhai Hua, who was despised upon, rolled her eyes. If it was not for the fact that she had to keep Nan Nan’s identity from everyone, she really wanted to tell her grandpa that she knew everything!

Now that Zhai Sheng had Miao Jing’s backing, he did not care about his father. He walked out of the house steadfastly.

Zhai Sheng drove the car and was just about to leave the quad when he saw a disheveled-looking Qiao Dongliang running outside with a coat on.

Zhai Sheng frowned at the look of panic on Qiao Dongliang's face. "Uncle Qiao, are you going back to look for Nan Nan?"

"Oh, Zhai Sheng. That's right..." Qiao Dongliang looked up. His first reaction was to give an honest answer. "Since you have something on, you can go first. You do not need to wait for me." Qiao Dongliang could not help but blame himself at the thought of what happened last night.

He was a father, but how could he not know that Nan Nan had left the Qiao family's residence at the quad!

"Old Qiao, look at the time. Have some glutinous rice balls before you go. Bring Qiao Nan here." After what happened yesterday night, Ding Jiayi seemed to be in high spirits. She looked radiant and had watery eyes. Her voice was especially sweet as well.

"I won't eat!" Qiao Dongliang was even angrier at the sight of Ding Jiayi. "As her mom, you had no idea when Nan Nan left the house. If Nan Nan... It's the Lunar New Year. I don't wish to say those unlucky words. Ding Jiayi, you..."

Qiao Dongliang wanted to say that if anything happened to Qiao Nan, he would definitely not let Ding Jiayi off.

But as Zhai Sheng was around, he could not bring himself to say that in front of an outsider.

"That was all because I was too tired yesterday. You should know as well. You didn't notice any sound either." Ding Jiayi pouted her red and swollen lips, expressing her displeasure.

The more Ding Jiayi behaved in that manner, the more Qiao Dongliang regretted what he did yesterday. He must be too muddle-headed. The most ridiculous thing was that Ding Jiayi's attitude today was very different from yesterday. Qiao Dongliang felt so absurd that he did not even have the strength to sneer at her.

"Zhai Sheng, where are you going? Can you give me a ride?"

What he wanted to do now was to get back to the small quad as fast as possible and see how Nan Nan was doing. With another look at Ding Jiayi, he would feel like what happened yesterday night

was a total nightmare. He did not expect that Ding Jiayi would have such a thought. It was too ridiculous!

“Sure.” Ding Jiayi pulled at Qiao Dongliang, refusing to let go. Zhai Sheng turned sullen at the sight of her. “Uncle Qiao, get in the car.”

“Thank you.” Qiao Dongliang shrugged Ding Jiayi’s hands away, opened the door, and sat on the passenger seat without a word.

“Then, I will go too.” Ding Jiayi refused to let Qiao Dongliang go. Moreover, there was a glimmer of greed in her eyes when she saw the army green jeep that Zhai Sheng drove. She had never had the chance to sit in a car like this. It was one of a kind!

“I...” Qiao Zijin, who stood by the door, heard the conversation and started to say something.

“It will not be convenient.” Ding Jiayi might be quick-witted but Zhai Sheng’s hands were faster than her. He locked the door immediately so that Ding Jiayi could not open it. “Uncle Qiao, sit tight. I will start the car now.”

“Sure, let’s go.” All that Qiao Dongliang wanted was to go back home and ascertain that Qiao Nan was safe. As for Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin, he did not have the energy to care about them.

Ding Jiayi coughed uncontrollably at the car exhaust fumes. “That was too much...” Why would Zhai Sheng drive by at this time? Otherwise, she would have been able to make Old Qiao stay behind.

Yesterday, Old Qiao was very nice to her. It showed that during the time that they were apart, she was not the only one who missed Old Qiao. He missed her as well. She knew that as they had been husband and wife for so many years, Old Qiao definitely missed her.

“Mom, Dad is gone. Let’s go back to the house. It’s very cold outside.” Qiao Zijin looked pitifully in the direction of the car. She sighed and went back to the house.

Ding Jiayi stomped her feet to rid herself of the cold before going back to the house. “When did Qiao Nan leave this morning? That wretched girl is bent on creating trouble. She is displeased now that I am getting along well with Old Qiao and just has to make life difficult for me. I really owed her in my previous life. In this life, I gave birth to her to pay my debts.”

If not for Qiao Nan who left early in the morning, she could still have a reunion breakfast with Old Qiao.

She believed that with her coaxing, Old Qiao would not be so heartless as to leave her and Qiao Zijin alone. He would definitely bring Qiao Nan back to stay with them.

“How will I know when she left? I slept very early, but I woke up later than all of you. If Dad didn’t argue with you, I still wouldn’t know that Qiao Nan is not at home.” Qiao Zijin yawned. It was so cold outside. She had to hand it to Qiao Nan who left the warmth and comfort of her bed early in the morning.

Ding Jiayi paused momentarily. “Your dad went to that wretched girl’s room to check. The bed felt cold. The room looked the same as yesterday...”

“Mom, do you mean that Qiao Nan didn’t sleep in the house last night?” It could not be possible. Did Qiao Nan really leave because of what she said yesterday? “It’s already ten o’clock when we went to bed. It was pitch dark outside. Qiao Nan must have been really daring to leave by herself.”

“If this is not the case, will your dad be so furious early in the morning?” The wretched girl really went back in the middle of the night. She was so daring to do that. Is she not afraid that she would run into bad guys?

Qiao Zijin’s face sunk. “Mom, it’s no wonder that Dad is so angry. You may have to be mentally prepared. It will be good if Qiao Nan is fine. Otherwise, there is no chance of Dad and you reconciling in this life.”

Chapter 343: Daughter and Son-In-Law Stood United

“Is Qiao Nan crazy? Why would she act in a fit of pique and go back alone in the middle of the night, putting herself at risk?”

“Is it so serious? There aren’t so many bad people around. Nothing will happen to her.” Ding Jiayi was dumbfounded. She had not thought of this.

Qiao Zijin sneered. "If there aren't so many bad guys, why do we need so many policemen? That said, there is no need for people like Zhai Sheng then. You watch television and news every day. Don't you know what it's like?"

No bad guys?

There were too many bad guys in this world.

Qiao Nan was really crazy!

"Okay, let's not scare ourselves. There may be bad guys around, but Qiao Nan is very lucky. We can only hope that bad fortune will not befall our family." Qiao Zijin rubbed her forehead. "It's not that easy for something to happen to Qiao Nan. It is as difficult as winning the lottery."

"That's right. It won't happen. As they say, whom the gods love dies young, while a bad thing never dies. Nothing will happen to that wretched girl. Since I am already up, I will make breakfast." Even though Old Qiao had gone back, she and Zijin still need to eat. "Zijin, do you want to eat sweet or salty glutinous rice balls?"

"Sweet."

"Alright, the fillings are ready-made. I will go make glutinous rice balls now." Since Qiao Zijin said nothing would happen, Ding Jiayi put her mind at ease. She was not worried about Qiao Nan at all.

On the contrary, Qiao Dongliang who was in Zhai Sheng's car could not seem to sit still. He kept fidgeting as if there were nails on the seat.

Zhai Sheng could tell from his peripheral vision that Qiao Dongliang was fidgety. He did not know what to say to him.

"Zhai Sheng, thank you." As soon as the car reached their house, Qiao Dongliang opened the door right away and dashed into the house. "Nan Nan? Nan Nan?"

At the entrance of the small quad, Qiao Dongliang saw the wet and frosty bed sheets and blanket that were hung out to dry. Qiao Dongliang could tell from the pattern that they belonged to Qiao Nan.

Since the bed sheets and the blanket were washed, it showed that Nan Nan must be at home. The sun was not out yet. The bedding would freeze if brought out to dry. Hence, he deduced that Nan Nan had just washed it not too long ago, which meant that Nan Nan reached home safely yesterday.

Qiao Dongliang sighed with relief after ascertaining that Nan Nan was alright. “Nan Nan, why did you come back without a word? You gave me a scare.”

“Nan Nan?” Knowing that Qiao Nan was safe and sound, Qiao Dongliang lowered his voice and went to Qiao Nan’s room.

Qiao Dongliang opened the door gently and saw a small lump on Qiao Nan’s bed. Under the blanket laid Qiao Nan who was fast asleep. Qiao Dongliang finally put his mind at ease.

Qiao Nan who had been asleep for a long time heard someone calling her. She opened her eyes slowly and called out softly, “Dad, you are back.”

“Nan Nan, why didn’t you tell me that you went home?” Since Qiao Nan had woken up, Qiao Dongliang simply sat on her bedside. “Why did you wash the bed sheets and blanket early in the morning? Didn’t you wash them not long ago? Are you feeling unwell?” Qiao Dongliang reached out his hands and touched Qiao Nan’s forehead. Her temperature was normal.

“I don’t feel very good but I’m alright now.” The discomfort that she felt on the first day of her menses had disappeared. Her legs and back were not as sore as before. “Dad, I will get up now.”

“Alright. Hurry up. I will make breakfast for you.”

After shutting Qiao Nan’s door, Qiao Dongliang turned and almost bumped into Zhai Sheng. “Zhai Sheng, you have not left? Thank you very much for the ride. You should get going.”

He just kicked Zhai Hua to the curb after she had outlived her usefulness. He did not expect that he would receive the same treatment. “No need to worry. I am here to look for Nan Nan. It was just nice that I could give Uncle Qiao a ride.”

“Look for Nan Nan?” Qiao Dongliang felt a pang of jealousy when he heard how Zhai Sheng called Qiao Nan. “Why are you looking for Nan Nan? Is it because of the money that you lent to Nan Nan

previously? You can rest assured. I will definitely return the money. Nan Nan said that she has written an IOU. Since Nan Nan borrowed the money for me, and she is still a young student who does not have the ability to earn money, can you draft another IOU? I will return you the money.”

Qiao Dongliang almost forgot that his family still owed Zhai Sheng more than a thousand yuan. Zhai Sheng was their creditor.

Zhai Sheng’s eyes flashed. He looked composed, unlike Qiao Dongliang who was nervous. “There’s no need to draft another IOU. What Nan Nan has written is sufficient.”

“Brother Zhai, why are you...” Qiao Nan dressed herself and came out. She was shocked to see Zhai Sheng.

It had not been half an hour since Auntie Miao left and Brother Zhai was here after her. Were they playing hide-and-seek?

“My mom told me to bring these over.” Zhai Sheng pointed to the two big sacks on the ground. “One sack contains Xinjiang jujubes, raisins, and the walnuts. The other sack contains fresh winter jujubes and sesame seeds. You can peel the walnuts and grind them together with the sesame seeds into powder. You must have more of them. It is good for you.”

Sesame walnut powder was good for the brain.

As for the fresh and dried jujubes, it went without saying that they were for Qiao Nan to nourish the blood.

“How can we accept your kindness?” Before Qiao Nan could say anything, Qiao Dongliang spoke up. “Previously, you lent Nan Nan a big sum of money. Without that money, I wouldn’t be standing here today. If not for our family background, we should have visited your house with gifts. How can we still accept things from your family? This won’t do.”

Qiao Dongliang not only refused but also took the initiative to bring the two big sacks of dried food onto Zhai Sheng’s car.

However, although Zhai Sheng took no effort in bringing the sacks in, Qiao Dongliang noticed that they were very heavy when he tried to lift the sacks.

Zhai Sheng took the two sacks from Qiao Dongliang and put them on the ground, lest Qiao Dongliang sprained himself. “Uncle Qiao, you must not stand on ceremony with me. We have a lot of these at home. Chairman Mao said being wasteful is shameful. There are only a few of us at home, and we cannot finish all these. If we keep them at home, it will be spoiled. As for the people in the quad, it is inconvenient to share it with them. Uncle Qiao, you must accept them. You are doing us a favor so that we will not waste so much food.”

“Yes, Dad. The dried food is suitable for me. I have a hard time studying. Walnuts and sesame seeds that are grounded into powder are just nice for me.” Qiao Nan stood by Zhai Sheng’s side and spoke up for him.

The two sacks of dried food meant nothing to the Zhai family. Just like what Brother Zhai said, they would not be able to finish all of them and it would be a waste.

Furthermore, Brother Zhai was being good to her. Qiao Nan had no wish and no reason to refuse.

Chapter 344: Father-In-Law and Son-In-Law Stood United

Since Qiao Nan stood on Zhai Sheng’s side, there was nothing that Qiao Dongliang could say.

Qiao Dongliang twitched the corners of his mouth when he saw how his daughter stood side by side with Zhai Sheng. He tried to school his expression and pulled Qiao Nan to his side. “Nan Nan, since you said that these foods are good for you, we will keep them. Zhai Sheng, thank you for looking out for Nan Nan.”

Zhai Sheng could tell from Qiao Dongliang’s tone that he was suspicious and wanted to sound him out. He deflected it cleverly. “My mom asked me to bring them here.”

“Your mom?” Qiao Dongliang looked at Zhai Sheng suspiciously. Nan Nan was not acquainted with the wife of the chief of the army. At most, she had seen her once and it was an unpleasant experience. The reason why the wife of the chief of the army still remembered Nan Nan was probably due to Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. She could not possibly have a good impression of Nan Nan.

How would she have Nan Nan in mind and ask Zhai Sheng to bring her dried food? Did Zhai Sheng think that he is a three-year-old child?

“Auntie Miao is too polite. I merely let her in and had a chat with her.” Qiao Nan slanted her head and looked at Zhai Sheng with a questioning look in her eyes. Was Zhai Sheng telling the truth? Did Auntie Miao ask him to bring the dried food over and it really had nothing to do with him?

“Nan Nan, when did you meet the wife of the chief of the army?” Qiao Dongliang refused to believe what Zhai Sheng said.

“About half an hour ago.” Qiao Nan recalled.

Qiao Dongliang widened his eyes. “Have you really seen the wife of the chief of the army today? She came to our house?” Was Nan Nan dreaming?

“That’s right. Auntie Miao asked me a few questions.”

Qiao Dongliang hesitated. He pulled Qiao Nan to the side and whispered, “Nan Nan, are you very close with the wife of the chief of the army?” He thought that since what happened last time, apart for Zhai Sheng, everyone in the Zhai family did not have a good impression of them, especially the wife of the chief of the army.

“Not very close. I have only had three encounters with Auntie Miao, and we have spoken twice only.” Qiao Nan gestured with her hands.

“But, why?”

“Dad, you must not think that since she is the wife of the chief of the army, she must be haughty and arrogant. Back then, Deng Xiaoping and Premier Zhou were very approachable. They were Chairman and Premier, yet they were close to the people. Auntie Miao is the wife of the chief of the army. Why would she be high up in the air? Look at Brother Zhou. He is young and promising, the most outstanding child in our quad. When did he act arrogant and haughty? Didn’t he address you as ‘uncle’?”

Qiao Nan was trying to sweet-talk Qiao Dongliang.

If her father was in awe of the Zhai family, then the relationship between Brother Zhai and her would not work out.

Qiao Nan did not want her father to lower his head out of inferiority when he met the Zhai family in the future.

“T-this is true.” At the mention of the chairman, Qiao Dongliang was in awe. His eyes were full of worship and admiration.

As the daughter of Qiao Dongliang, how would she not know who her father looked up to?

“Zhai Sheng, please express gratitude to your mom when you go back. Our family...” Though the gifts that Zhai family gave them were not very expensive, the goodwill was deep. However, Qiao Dongliang had nothing valuable to give to them.

“My mom likes Nan Nan very much and wants me to take care of Nan Nan. Uncle Qiao must not stand on ceremony with us.”

Qiao Nan shot Zhai Sheng a disdainful look. She was sure that Zhai Sheng was lying.

Half an hour ago, Auntie Miao came to ask her how to break up Zhai Sheng and the girl that he liked. She did not believe that Auntie Miao would want Brother Zhai to take care of her.

Zhai Sheng winked at Qiao Nan right in front of Qiao Dongliang. Some things were better left unsaid. Sooner or later, his mother would accept her.

Previously, Zhai Sheng was still uncertain of Qiao Nan’s attitude toward their relationship, but now he was assured.

From the words that Qiao Nan said to Qiao Dongliang, he could tell that she was paving the way for their future.

Qiao Nan laughed in exasperation. Brother Zhai sounded righteous and just, but he was teasing her right in front of her father. Was it suitable for him to do that? It might smear the reputation of the soldiers!

Qiao Dongliang did not notice the subtle interactions between the two of them. He smiled and said, “The wife of the chief of the army is really gracious. You are so busy with your work in the army and you seldom have time for your family. If you are free, you must spend more time with them and take a rest as well. You may be young and healthy, but the tough training in the army will be very tiring for the body.”

Qiao Dongliang was a man. Even though his daughter and Zhai Sheng tried to hide it, how could he not notice anything?

Qiao Dongliang was telling Zhai Sheng that if he was free, he should be more concerned about his family. As Nan Nan’s father, Qiao Dongliang would take care of her. Outsiders did not need to care for and take care of her.

It was said that a daughter was her father’s lover in his previous life. In that case, the son-in-law would be the rival.

Qiao Dongliang was quick to sense that he was faced with his ‘rival’.

“Dad, Brother Zhai was the one who sent me back last night.” Qiao Nan pursed her lips. She knew that she should not sneer at this time, but she felt pleased that her father was protective of her.

Since she had ‘abducted’ the son of another family, Auntie Miao always came looking for her.

Now that Brother Zhai had ‘abducted’ her, it was understandable that her father behaved in such a manner.

“That was so rash of you!” Qiao Dongliang glared at Qiao Nan with a half-anxious look. “How could you do that? If you wanted to go back, why didn’t you tell me? Walking alone in the middle of the night is dangerous! You gave me a big scare!”

At the mention of this, Qiao Dongliang felt like spanking Qiao Nan’s bottom. How could she be so disobedient and give him such a shock on the first day of the Lunar New Year?

The first thing that came to mind after Qiao Dongliang woke up this morning was to ask if Qiao Nan slept well yesterday.

However, when he opened the door, there was nobody in the room.

Qiao Dongliang knew that Qiao Nan would always stack the blanket in a particular way.

But the blanket on the bed was not folded properly. One look at it and Qiao Dongliang knew that Qiao Nan did not use the blanket at all. In other words, Qiao Nan did not sleep in the Qiao family's residence at all!

Qiao Dongliang who had a big fright early in the morning was wide awake. He put on his clothes and ran outside, checking to see if Qiao Nan had gone home.

“This is indeed Nan Nan's fault.” Zhai Sheng turned serious and looked at Qiao Nan. “Nan Nan, you must realize your mistakes. Even if you really want to go back in the middle of the night, you have to find someone to accompany you so that others could rest assured.”

Chapter 345: Disliked the Qiao Family's Residence

“Even if Uncle Qiao is not convenient to go with you, you can find someone else, or you can look for me. If I didn't come out to run some errands and ran into you, did you intend to go back home by yourself?” Zhai Sheng's expression turned grim.

“That's right.” Qiao Dongliang nodded in agreement. “I am your dad. You should look for me.” Qiao Dongliang made known that Qiao Nan must look for him as a top priority.

Qiao Nan was his daughter. If she had any problems, the first person to look for must be her father. Why should she seek help from outsiders?

Qiao Dongliang did not realize that Zhai Sheng was interested in Qiao Nan. But as a man, he was very conscious that Qiao Nan was his daughter, and she should not go looking for others. He made this point clear to Zhai Sheng as well.

Qiao Nan was speechless under the attack of the two men. “Are you sure I should look for either of you?”

Yesterday was the Lunar New Year's Eve, and Brother Zhai should have spent the time with his family. How could she, an outsider, ask him to send her home? What would other people think? It would not be good for their future relationship.

If she went looking for him, the elders in the Zhai family would have a bad impression of her.

In this way, she and Brother Zhai did not even have to try because their relationship would not work out at all.

As for her father, Qiao Nan was not willing to recall what happened last night.

Under that situation, if she went looking for her father, both her parents would blame her. Even if her father did not blame her, he would be very embarrassed.

Among both of them who were closest to her, who could she look for to help her?

“...”

“...”

Zhai Sheng and Qiao Dongliang were lost for words. They knew that Qiao Nan was telling the truth.

“Zhai Sheng, it was the Lunar New Year's Eve yesterday, but why didn't you stay at home with your family? Why would you come out and run into Nan Nan?” Qiao Dongliang thought about it and noticed that something was not right. Since Nan Nan did not go looking for Zhai Sheng, how did they run into each other?

Who would come out in the middle of the night on the Lunar New Year's Eve and walk in the cold?

“We finished the soy sauce, so I came out to buy soy sauce,” Zhai Sheng said without batting an eyelid. Qiao Nan almost spat at his words.

The soy sauce was finished? What a blatant lie Brother Zhai came up with.

Even if the Zhai family had not gotten ready for the Lunar New Year and had finished their soy sauce, there was no need for Brother Zhai to buy it himself. The aunt whom they hired to help with the chores was not on leave.

“I see. Did you delay your family’s reunion dinner because you sent Nan Nan back?” Qiao Nan almost burst out in laughter. Her father would actually believe in Zhai Sheng’s excuse. Previously, he was as perceptive as a detective, but he became slow-witted in the next instance.

Brother Zhai and her father were living treasures.

“No.” Zhai Sheng sounded as if he was telling nothing but the truth. “I came out early in the night. After sending Nan Nan home, I went home and was just in time.”

“I would have to thank you for your help yesterday night. You have been a great help to us for umpteen times. If not for a brother like you who took care of Nan Nan, she might have been bullied.” No matter what, Zhai Sheng helped him send Nan Nan back home safely. He had to thank Zhai Sheng since he failed to fulfill his duties as a father.

“Uncle Qiao, you are too polite. It’s my mom who likes Nan Nan very much. In the future, if my mom comes looking for Nan Nan, or invites Nan Nan to come to our house, Uncle Qiao, you must not reject her kind intentions due to the gossip of others.” Since Qiao Dongliang was at the topic, Zhai Sheng grabbed hold of the opportunity to gain Qiao Dongliang’s approval to go out with Qiao Nan.

“This...” Was Nan Nan so close with the Zhai family that they would have close interaction with each other?

“Uncle Qiao, is there any problem?”

“No, no, sure.” Qiao Dongliang shook his head. There was nothing wrong about his request, but he could not help but feel odd. He did not know that Nan Nan was so close with the Zhai family.

Looking at the two big sacks of dried food on the floor, Qiao Dongliang was all the more perplexed.

Now that science and technology had advanced and society had changed, although it was possible to have such food during the Lunar New Year, it was not easy to get them. Besides, there were two big sacks of dried food. It must have been quite expensive.

These could come easily for the Zhai family, but to the Qiao family, they would not prepare so much dried food for the year.

“That’s good. Uncle Qiao, I have something to do. I will go back first.” Zhai Sheng did not intend to stay for long at Qiao Nan’s place, lest it aroused his mother’s suspicions. Furthermore, now that Qiao Dongliang was back, in order to respect Qiao Nan’s wishes, Zhai Sheng knew his limits. He must not be too aggressive, lest Qiao Dongliang discovered anything about them. It would not be for them as well.

Zhai Sheng understood that haste made waste.

“Oh, well, I will walk you to the door.” Qiao Dongliang somehow felt relieved that Zhai Sheng was leaving. He walked him to the door and watched as Zhai Sheng got onto his car and drove off. “Nan Nan, why were you in such a hurry to go back? That is your home as well.”

If Nan Nan had not run into Zhai Sheng last night and something happened to her, he would not forgive himself in this life.

“Dad, I felt uncomfortable staying at that place.” Qiao Nan was unhappy. “I have no sense of belonging in that place. Dad, there is something that I have to tell you. To you, Qiao Zijin is a good daughter, but to me, she is not a good sister. Mom is not a good mother either. When you go back, Mom and Sister are happy to see you, but they do not welcome me. You may not feel it, but I am the party concerned, so I know it very well. I am no longer the same as before. Besides the Qiao family’s residence, I have this place to go to. Dad, I can’t stay in that place. Since they don’t welcome me, I can always go back to my house.”

She no longer needed to suffer or endure their displeasure.

She had a place of her own. This place had nothing to do with her mother. Her mother needed her consent to enter her territory.

With such a good haven, there was no way that Qiao Nan would stay in the Qiao family’s residence and suffer in the hands of Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

“No, no...” He knew about Ding Jiayi, but Zijin...

“Haven’t you been getting along well with Zijin? Since a young age, both of you would always hang out together.” Qiao Dongliang was confused. “It’s true that your sister will make small mistakes, but that’s because she is spoiled by your mother. You must not let your mom affect your relationship with Zijin.”

“It’s not that I like to be with my sister. It’s Mom who insisted that I watched over my sister so that she would not be bullied by other people. My sister has never been good to me unless she has something to ask of me. Otherwise, she acted very arrogantly toward me. Dad, think about the last time when Mom framed me for stealing the keys to the Zhai family’s residence.”

Chapter 346: Dad, Sister Was Not As Good As What You Thought

“Was my sister worried for me and hence, like Mom, insisted that I was a thief? Or was it because she couldn’t stand that I was doing well and wanted to gang up with Mom to frame me?”

“This...” There was no way that Qiao Dongliang could speak up for Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin.

These two muddle-headed women, one could not recognize her daughter, while the other could not recognize her younger sister.

They could not even recognize Qiao Nan. It proved that they did not really care for Qiao Nan. Qiao Dongliang could not defend them at all.

“Dad, I am not sure what happened in the past. But according to my sister, I learned that when my mother was pregnant with me and she thought that I was a son, she neglected my sister and did not treat her well. You seemed to ignore my sister as well. Dad, my sister bears grudges for that.”

Qiao Zijin would only sweet-talk her parents. She did not do anything for them.

In the previous life, Qiao Zijin married Chen Jun and led a pampered life where she did not need to work and spent all her time shopping and enjoying life.

Though she had a good life, Qiao Zijin did not do anything in particular for her parents or the family. On the contrary, she would come up with all sorts of excuses to get money from her parents.

Their parents did not have any money and so her mother exploited her to meet Qiao Zijin's demands.

Back then, everyone was full of envy that her parents had nurtured such a capable elder daughter who married well. They thought that the Qiao family could rely on the relationship with the Chen family to have good days ahead.

However, only the Qiao family knew that after having the Chen family as in-laws, their lives had not improved but in fact, other than looking good on the surface, they had not enough money to make ends meet.

"No, it cannot be." Qiao Dongliang was dumbfounded. He wanted to keep Zijin at home and to take in a husband for her. He had been very good to his daughter since she was born. He would always feel sorry toward Nan Nan as he did not give her the same treatment as Qiao Zijin.

Other than Nan Nan, he had been very good to Ding Jiayi and Zijin.

"Impossible?" Qiao Dongliang had a look of disbelief on his face. He still had not seen through Qiao Zijin. For the sake of her own future, Qiao Nan had to make Qiao Dongliang come to his senses. "I don't know about other matters, but unless what Brother Zhou Jun said were lies, why would my sister look down on you? If she did not harbor grudges against you, then would she say those words about you?"

"That is because..." He really did not have the ability to give Zijin a good life. Zijin had high expectations of him and he could not satisfy her needs. That was why she complained about him. Was that not the case?

"East or west, home is the best. It applies to one's parents as well. One must not despise those nearest and dearest to us no matter how plain and insignificant they are." To put it bluntly, Qiao Zijin despised everything about her parents and her family.

"Dad, my sister did not despise you because of the harsh reality. She despises you for no apparent reason." In the previous lifetime, Zijin had uremia and had to be hospitalized. Yet, although she had a lot of assets, she asked her parents to fork out money for her to treat her illness.

Qiao Zijin was like a chimera that would take money from others but refused to take a single cent out.

If not for her, there was no way that her parents could satisfy Qiao Zijin's demands. Even if they sold their blood and organs, they would not be able to satisfy Qiao Zijin.

"No, it's impossible. Your sister is being spoiled by your mom. She may be selfish and inconsiderate of others, but she won't be as bad as what you said. She would not be without a conscience." He did not believe it!

"If she is not like what I said, why is it that when Mom did the handiwork late into the night in order to earn money for her tuition fees, she did not offer her help at all? Dad, back then, you wanted to give Mom a lesson, so you did not help her. But my sister stood by without doing anything. Why was that?" In the past, she had no wish to care about what Qiao Zijin did. After all, they were Qiao Zijin's parents as well. If they were willing to give everything to Qiao Zijin, she could not do anything about it. She would not say anything as long as they did not bother her.

But she could not do that anymore.

If the relationship between her and Zhai Sheng worked out, she was worried that her mother and Qiao Zijin would pester her and get favors from the Zhai family through her.

At that time, they would need someone who was clear-minded to control her mother and Qiao Zijin, and that person had to be her father.

Hence, she had to let her father understand the person that Qiao Zijin was and to see her true colors.

Selfish? This was not an apt description of Qiao Zijin. She was heartless and cold!

"Let me think about it, let me think about it." Qiao Dongliang had lost the ability to think properly. It was as if he had been beaten by a group of hooligans and there was a buzzing sound in his head. Actually, Qiao Dongliang still remembered the things that Qiao Zijin had done in the past one year.

Back then, Ding Jiayi worked on the handiwork through the night in order to earn money for Qiao Zijin's tuition fee.

Qiao Dongliang might have acted as if he did not care for Ding Jiayi and slept in the small study room, but in fact, he never had a good sleep those few nights. He would wake up at least four to five times in the middle of the night to check on Ding Jiayi and see if she had gone to sleep.

It was only when Ding Jiayi stopped working, turned off the lights, and went back to sleep, could Qiao Dongliang sleep well.

In comparison, Qiao Zijin was not affected at all. She slept early and got up late in the morning. It was only in the daytime that she would be willing to help make a few handmade products. Nonetheless, she was too slow and could only do a few handiwork a day. Most of the work was done by Ding Jiayi.

Qiao Dongliang knew that his daughter was indeed selfish, and she was indifferent, not knowing how to care for others.

But Qiao Dongliang believed that it was because Qiao Zijin had never been a parent, so she did not know the hardships of her parents. There would be a day she realized their effort and would not behave in such a manner anymore.

This was a growing up process that everyone must go through. As her parent, what he needed to do was to give her the time and opportunity.

But Qiao Nan was telling Qiao Dongliang that this was not the case. Qiao Zijin knew it but it was just that she could not be bothered and she was unwilling to be good to him and Ding Jiayi.

There was no way that Qiao Dongliang could accept such a cruel and harsh reality.

“Dad, think about it yourself. Don’t you find it odd? That night, you and Mom had gone back to sleep, and there were only my sister and I around, but why did I leave?” Qiao Nan secretly added more fuel to the flames.

Qiao Dongliang covered his face with his hands and closed his eyes.

Chapter 347: Keep Up Appearances

Knowing that she had said enough, Qiao Nan spoke no more. She returned to her room and took out her book to do her revision.

Qiao Nan stayed in her room for a long time, studying by herself. It was so long that she had thought that even though her father was dealt with such a big blow, he still could not understand and insisted on deceiving himself. But right then, Qiao Dongliang went into Qiao Nan's study room. He had a grim expression on his face. "Nan Nan, have you known about it all along? Why didn't you say it before? Why did you wait till today to tell me?"

"Because I don't want to be bullied anymore. I used to have some doubts, but I am certain now. Take for example what happened a year ago. If I didn't study and worked instead, who would stand to gain in our family?"

"That would be your mom..."

"Dad, do you really think that Mom could come up with all these things? I once told you that I want to enter college, and I can earn the tuition fees with my own effort. Even when I go to college, I can also work while studying to earn my living expenses. In that case, if I study in college, it will not be as much a burden as what you think. It's just that it will be more tiring on me. Then, why was Mom so insistent, leaving no room for negotiation? Why did she insist that I quit school? Dad, let me ask you. If you know that I can earn most of my tuition and living expenses, will you want me to drop out of school?"

"No." Since there was an opportunity for both of his daughters to go to college together, it would be a glorious thing to have two college students in the family. Why should he stop her from doing that? It was having the best of both worlds.

"Yes, you won't. In fact, Mom won't, either." Qiao Nan nodded.

"Your mom... Nan Nan, you have such confidence in her? I thought..." Nan Nan and Ding Jiayi were at loggerheads with each other. He thought that Nan Nan would not speak up for Ding Jiayi.

"It's true that I am not close with Mom, but I will not badmouth her for this reason. Dad, Mom actually likes to keep up appearances. She wants more than you for my sister to study hard and go to a good college in the future. Otherwise, she would not spend five thousand yuan to let my sister go to The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China. She will feel very proud to have two college students at home. She could brag to her family and hold her head high. Dad, you should know best that Mom does not get along well with her family. Mom always feels that my sister is smart and will definitely have a bright future. She wants nothing more than to bask in her success,

and when she visits her mother's house, she can prove to everyone that her choice was correct. That it was her mother who let her down, but she has chosen a better path for herself.”

Ding Jiayi's past weighed heavily on her heart. She had misgivings with her mother.

Ding Jiayi wanted to prove to her family through all means that she was very blessed and her decision back then was correct.

It was not that she did not care for her family. It was her family who let her down in the first place, wanting to sell her off in return for money.

That was why when Qiao Zijin married Chen Jun in the past, her mother was so happy that she went back to her village where she used to stay with a lot of wedding candies. She went door to door giving them out, telling everyone that her daughter had married well, and that she was in-laws with the superintendent of Ping Cheng police station.

Her mother would do everything she could as long as she could prove to her family that she was better than them.

“Do you mean that the reason why your mom was so determined and that there was no room for negotiation was due to your sister? She gave her this idea? This couldn't be. Didn't you say that you can work while studying? In other words, if you go to college, you will not affect her, and she will be able to study in college as well.”

There was no conflict if both Zijin and Nan Nan went to college. Zijin could not possibly do that.

Qiao Nan had a bitter smile on her face. “Dad, don't forget that Zijin is Mom's daughter. Both of them like to keep up appearances. Since a young age, both of you would praise my sister, saying that she was better than me. Mom, in particular, would insult me while she praised Zijin. Everyone in the quad was full of praise for my sister as well. However, ever since I went to school, nobody would praise my sister or say that she was more outstanding than me anymore. In the quad, as long as the topic is about one's performance in school, they will say that I am their role model. Everyone will praise me for my good results, but what about my sister?”

There was a year when Qiao Zijin did badly for her Mathematics. In the end, she had to help her sister to revise.

“Dad, if I continue to study, even if my sister really has the opportunity to go to college, not only will other people compare their children with me, but they will also compare Zijin with me. Wherever she goes, she will be compared with me. People will tease her, saying that her younger sister has better results than her. Will she feel comfortable after hearing all these words?”

Qiao Zijin framed her and prevented her from studying. It was not merely the issue of money.

“Nan Nan, did you think too much? How could your sister be so...” vicious.

Just because Zijin could not stand that Nan Nan was better than her, Zijin would instigate her mother such that the latter would deprive Nan Nan of the opportunity to study even though both of them had the opportunity to go to college?

This was impossible!

Was it necessary to ruin the future of her sister just for the sake of keeping up appearances?

Qiao Dongliang gasped and could not believe what he heard.

“Dad, I had a fever in the second year of junior high school. Someone opened my window on a rainy night. I recalled that the person who opened the window in my room was my sister, not my mother. I asked my sister about it, but she did not admit it.”

Qiao Zijin orchestrated everything so that she would drop out of school.

Qiao Nan felt weary at the thought of all these.

When she was as simple as a piece of white paper, Qiao Zijin was already very cunning and scheming.

Adults could not even match up to Qiao Zijin’s schemes and wits, let alone her peers.

Qiao Zijin was her mother’s brain, whereas her mother was Qiao Zijin’s gun.

Their relationship was very straightforward.

Every time, her mother would be the one who started the trouble, and nobody would notice Qiao Zijin who hid behind her mother.

In fact, Ding Jiayi was Qiao Zijin's scapegoat. Qiao Nan did not know what to say about this.

Chapter 348: Draw the Line

“Dad, you are different from me. You always feel that my sister will be a good daughter one day. For me, she can never be a good sister. Dad, in the future, you do not have to do anything to improve my relationship with her.”

Qiao Nan was not afraid of anything else. She was only worried that if she was capable enough to break free of her family and be independent, Qiao Zijin, who still had to rely on the family, would suck her dry. If she was not willing, her father would stand on Qiao Zijin's side and ask that she helped her sister.

Besides, she had just confirmed her relationship with Zhai Sheng this morning. She had to be wary.

“Nan Nan, you and your sister...” Did she mean that she would sever ties with her sister?

“Dad, all I can say is that my sister is too scheming. Yes, she is my sister, but there is no reason that I have to be good to her and help her while she plots against me and do me harm. At the very least, I will be happy for her if she is better than me. As long as she does not bother me, I will definitely not do anything to her.”

Qiao Dongliang clenched his fists and put it on his knees. He did not know what else to say. “But if you are good to your sister, perhaps she could come to her senses? Nan Nan, your sister may be insensible, but she is the only sister that you have. Are you going to give up on her?”

Qiao Nan's face sank. She was particularly reluctant to answer this question.

In her previous life, she spent her whole life to be good to her sister. However, not only did her sister not come to her senses, but she also went from bad to worse. She was not touched by her actions at all.

“Dad, is it because I am more sensible than my sister that I have to give in and tolerate her when she makes a mistake, whereas she can continue to be selfish and willful? Yes, she is my only elder sister, but I am her only younger sister as well. Why is it that she can plot against me and I have to give her a helping hand when she needs it? Why? What if my sister never comes to her senses? Does it mean that I have to sacrifice the rest of my life to stay by her side and take care of her?”

Qiao Dongliang shook his head. “No, your sister may be insensible, but she will come to her senses eventually...”

“When will my sister come to her senses? Dad, can you tell me clearly? My sister is insensible now, so she wanted me to drop out of school. In the future, if my boyfriend is more outstanding than my sister’s boyfriend, what will she do? Do I have to break up with my boyfriend for her sake? Do I have to stay single? Or to find a man who is not as good as my sister’s boyfriend to satisfy her desire to surpass me? My sister has a perfect life, but what about me? She has you and Mom to pamper and dote on her, and I will always give in to her. Dad, what will I have in my life then?”

“You...” Qiao Dongliang could not answer.

“Dad, you and Mom are biased toward my sister and treat her well. It doesn’t matter. I won’t fight with her. Without you and Mom, I will be good to myself. Is there anything wrong with that?” Qiao Nan felt bitter inside. She did not ask for much at all.

“Nan Nan, both of you are still young. Are you sure that you need to go this far? Maybe we can give your sister some time. If by then she does not change, you can wash your hands off her?” Qiao Dongliang gritted his teeth. He knew that he was being biased and unfair to Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan smiled bitterly. “Giving her time? Dad, how long shall we give her? My sister is already an adult, and I will be twenty years old in another year’s time. Do we wait till she is in her thirties, or her forties, or fifties even?”

In a person’s life, there were only those few years. Qiao Zijin had been through a quarter of her life, and yet she had to give more time to Qiao Zijin?

“Dad, you are my sister’s father, so you will not give up on her. I can understand that. I am her sister. I don’t want to live with this shadow all my life. There’s no way I can do it as she is not my daughter. Besides, even you can’t guarantee that my sister will change for the better. Dad, I can’t afford to gamble.” She was not willing to gamble again. She had bet her whole life in her previous life!

“Nan Nan, do you intend to draw the line with your sister?”

“My sister does not even want me to stay in the same house with her on Lunar New Year’s Eve. I have no choice but to draw a line with her,” Qiao Nan said helplessly.

Qiao Dongliang rubbed hard at his face. His daughters were still studying, but he could not help but feel as if they had grown up and were about to leave him behind.

His daughters had really grown up and had a mind of their own. As their father, he had no idea at all.

“Alright, this is your own life. You should decide for yourself what path to take in the future. I can’t make the decisions for you. As long as you have a clear conscience, I have nothing to say in regard to what you do.”

He could not ask Nan Nan to help Zijin along for the rest of her life. He had no right to do that. Nan Nan did not have the obligation to help Zijin.

If Nan Nan was willing, it was her love for Zijin. If Nan Nan was unwilling, it was her right to think for herself.

Back then, Ding Jiayi cut off all ties with her family in order to marry him and seek the life she wanted. In the past twenty years, Ding Jiayi never once went home. Now, Qiao Dongliang could understand why Qiao Zijin and Qiao Nan were so decisive when dealing with things, especially when it concerned their families. He could not do that. He would be hesitant to make a decision.

The three of them were the same.

As the head of the family, he only existed in name only.

The three women in the Qiao family had a mind of their own, and there was nothing that he could do.

His wife would not listen to him, and his elder daughter refused to learn.

Qiao Dongliang knew that he could not bully Nan Nan since she had the mildest temper in the family. He could not ask Qiao Nan to sacrifice more for the family.

Unless he had the ability to change Ding Jiayi and Zijin, he would feel ashamed of himself to ask anything more of Qiao Nan.

“Dad, thank you for understanding.” Qiao Nan was relieved that Qiao Dongliang respected her decisions.

Her father was the only person that she cared for in the family.

“Your gratitude will only make me feel guilty toward you. This is the only thing that I can do for you. Your mom and your sister are getting more and more daring and stubborn. I could not even bear to tell you the deeds that they have done. Nan Nan, I should not have said those foolish words just now. Don’t take it to heart. In the future, just go according to your wishes. I will not say another word.” Qiao Dongliang’s shoulders drooped and he waved his hands listlessly, looking to be five years older than his actual age.

Chapter 349: You Were Linked By Ties of Fate with the Zhai Family

Qiao Nan’s heart ached at the defeated look on her father’s face. She almost made the same old mistake.

Qiao Nan gritted her teeth and finally said, “Dad, as long as Mom and Sister do not provoke me, I will still treat my sister as my relative. If she plots against me and doesn’t treat me as her sister, I won’t treat her as siblings either.”

Given what happened in her previous life, she would have treated Qiao Zijin as her enemy if she was strong-willed!

“Alright, I won’t say anything else.” Qiao Dongliang smiled reluctantly. He knew that Qiao Nan had already given in.

Qiao Nan was very gracious to be able to say this given that Qiao Zijin was bent on trampling her.

“You don’t look too well today. Are you uncomfortable? You haven’t gotten up yet even though it’s already eight o’clock.” Qiao Dongliang decided to concentrate on being a good father.

When Qiao Nan said that Qiao Zijin had Qiao Dongliang and Ding Jiayi to pamper and dote on her, but she only had herself, Qiao Dongliang felt as if a knife was stabbed into his heart.

Nan Nan was his daughter as well. How could he not pay attention and not care for her?

“Nothing much, that’s...” Qiao Nan blushed. She felt especially embarrassed to bring up her menses to her father. “I was not careful and stained the blanket.”

Qiao Dongliang understood what she meant. “Did you wash them by yourself?”

Qiao Nan nodded, taking Zhai Sheng’s credit.

“I heard from your mom that during this period of time, it is best not to come into contact with water, especially cold water. Why were you in such a hurry to wash the bed sheets and the blanket? Don’t do that next time. You can put them aside. I will wash them for you.” Indeed, he did not show much concern for Nan Nan, but it did not matter. He would show more concern for her from today onward.

“It’s alright. This would be the only time that I washed it.” Qiao Nan grinned. If she had a choice, she would rather put the dirty clothes aside and wash them by herself when her menses was over.

Qiao Nan, who had been washing her clothes for two lifetimes, did not expect that in this lifetime, her father and Zhai Sheng were willing to wash them for her.

“Alright, I should let you rest. If you are uncomfortable, you should lie down on the bed. I remember that when your sister has a stomachache, she will need to lie down on the bed for a day.” Compared with his elder daughter who was pampered, the younger daughter was not that delicate.

“I am fine.” Qiao Nan stood up and stretched herself. “You must put away the stuff that Brother Zhai brought for us, lest they attracted the rats and wasted.” But did Auntie Miao really ask Brother Zhai to bring the dried food over?

It was true that Auntie Miao had been to their house not long ago.

All of a sudden, Qiao Nan could not tell whether the dried food was from Zhai Sheng or Miao Jing.

“Are you very close to the wife of the chief of the army?” Qiao Dongliang asked curiously.

“Not very close. I have only met Auntie Miao on three occasions, and she chatted a lot with me on two of the occasions.” What she did not understand the most was why Auntie Miao would talk to her about these topics.

“The wife of the chief of the army chatted with you?” Qiao Dongliang was curious. What would the wife of the chief of the army chat with Nan Nan about? “I won’t ask what you chatted about. Don’t tell anyone about that as well. However, it was strange that she had something to talk to you.”

“I still find it very odd. I was very sleepy on the first day of the Lunar New Year, and Auntie Miao suddenly turned up at our house, knocking on the door. She gave me a big fright.” Auntie Miao and Brother Zhai were mother and son after all. One did not go home and stay with her on Lunar New Year’s Eve, while the other one came to her house early in the morning of the Lunar New Year’s Day to ‘greet’ her.

Qiao Nan could not help but flush red at the thought that Miao Jing was, in fact, here to ask her how she should break up Zhai Sheng and the lady he liked.

When the day came for Auntie Miao to realize that she was the lady from the ordinary family who was going out with Brother Zhai, would she kill her?

“Maybe you are linked by ties of fate with the Zhai family. Zhai Sheng treats you as a younger sister, and the wife of the chief of the army treats you as a daughter.” Qiao Dongliang flattered Qiao Nan. “However, you must not let your mom and sister know about this. Maybe... maybe you are right. They are too ambitious and are after material gains. If they know that you have a good relationship with the Zhai family, they may do something ridiculous.” Qiao Dongliang had heard

that after Qiao Nan left in anger last time, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin stayed behind, trying to befriend Miao Jing.

Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin came up with all means and ways in order to befriend Miao Jing. Qiao Dongliang was fearful of them as well.

He was reminded of the last time when they went to the Zhu family's residence for a meal. Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin got along easily with everyone. It only took a meal's time before Qiao Zijin and Wang Yang became as close as siblings. At the thought of that, Qiao Dongliang could not help but frown.

"Nan Nan, you told me that Baoguo's cousin, Wang Yang, is not a good person, didn't you? Last time, Baoguo almost couldn't participate in the middle school examination because of him. Is that right?"

"Yes, there is such a thing."

"Nowadays, your sister always goes out with Wang Yang. Will she stand to lose? I must remind her not to mix with him for the sake of gaining petty advantages. She may stand to lose." Zijin was no match for a scheming kid like Wang Yang.

"Dad, you can do it yourself." No matter what, she would not meddle with it. Wang Yang wanted to make use of Qiao Zijin to deal with her so that she would give up on Zhu Baoguo. On the other hand, Qiao Zijin wanted to make use of Wang Yang to stand out among others.

These two were birds of a feather.

Qiao Dongliang could not blame Qiao Nan for her indifferent attitude toward Qiao Zijin.

Today, Qiao Nan had reminded him of what kind of person Qiao Zijin was, so how could he not understand what Qiao Zijin's intention was by becoming so close to Wang Yang in such a short period of time?

Back then, when Nan Nan gave lessons to Baoguo, Zijin treated Baoguo in the same attitude as she was treating Wang Yang now.

Qiao Dongliang sighed. There was nothing that he could do about Qiao Zijin. She was the kind of person who would flatter whoever could bring her benefits. He was such a failure for not giving her proper guidance. It was no wonder that Nan Nan had that kind of attitude toward Zijin. She had totally given up on her.

Speak of the devil.

“Nan Nan, are you around?” Qiao Zijin raised her voice, pretending to be very close with Nan Nan. “Today’s the first day of the Lunar New Year. We have come to wish you a happy Lunar New Year.”

“We?” Qiao Nan arched her eyebrows. Who else came with Qiao Zijin?

Chapter 350: Who Are You?

“My sister would not have come with Mom.” Her father left the Qiao family’s residence on the Lunar New Year because of her. Her Mom must be angry at her. Besides, since ancient times, it was the custom for juniors to say their greetings to the elders during the Lunar New Year.

“Let’s take a look.” Qiao Dongliang frowned when he heard that Qiao Zijin did not come by herself.

Qiao Nan opened the door for Qiao Zijin. She pulled a long face when she saw the two boys who stood by her side.

“Nan Nan, what’s wrong? Aren’t you going to let us in?” Qiao Zijin almost could not maintain her smile when she saw the dark expression on Qiao Nan’s face.

Qiao Nan took a deep breath and smiled at Qiao Zijin. Her eyes flashed mockery. “Dad, my sister is here with her two ‘friends’ to see you!”

“Friends? What friends?” What kind of friends would not stay at home on the Lunar New Year’s Day or visit their relatives’ houses but tagged along with Zijin to their house? Moreover, Zijin had two of such ‘friends’!

Qiao Dongliang felt that something was not right. He went straight out. When he saw that the two 'good friends' of Qiao Zijin were boys, his face turned black.

One of them was Wang Yang, whom he just mentioned to Qiao Nan. He knew who he was.

But the other boy seemed to be older than Qiao Zijin. At least, Qiao Dongliang had never seen him before. Qiao Dongliang looked hostile. "Zijin, when did you make this friend?"

The young man was tall and handsome, and he looked very smart. Qiao Dongliang was on alert.

Chen Jun smiled politely and bowed to Qiao Dongliang. "Happy Lunar New Year, Uncle Qiao. There is some misunderstanding. I don't know Qiao Zijin. I met her on the way here. I just realized that she is Nan Nan's friend. Today, I am here to look for Nan Nan."

Qiao Dongliang quickly shifted to the side, not accepting Chen Jun's bow. "You are here to look for Nan Nan? Nan Nan, who is this? Introduce him to me."

This young man obviously came with Zijin, yet he said that he was looking for Nan Nan. He must not be a good person.

"That's right, Nan Nan. You should make the introductions. How did you know Brother Chen Jun?" There was a glimmer in Qiao Zijin's eyes. The way she looked at him seemed somewhat different. Qiao Zijin might not be very good in her studies, but she, who valued material needs, could tell from Chen Jun's attire that they were not cheap.

Qiao Zijin thought about it carefully. Among the people that Qiao Nan knew, apart from Zhu Baoguo, when did she make such a rich friend? Why did she not know anything about it?

Why would Qiao Nan have such means and ways to get to know such outstanding men?

"Nan Nan, who is this person?" Qiao Dongliang seemed to be very concerned. Brother Chen Jun? Zijin seemed to have a good impression of this man to address him so affectionately.

"Well..." Qiao Nan looked gloomy and confused. "Who are you? Is anything the matter?"

“...”

“...”

The two people who were present stiffened at Qiao Nan's words, particularly Chen Jun. His handsome face turned green. He was obviously enraged at Qiao Nan's words. “Nan Nan, are you kidding?”

“Kidding?” Qiao Nan appeared to be even more confused. “I'm not kidding. I really don't know you. Have we met each other before? Sorry, I don't have a good memory and I can't recognize faces. For those whom I am unfamiliar with, I will forget them in no time after meeting them once. If we have met in the past, I can only say that I'm sorry.”

Seeing that Qiao Nan answered without any hesitation, Qiao Dongliang relaxed slightly.

Even if Nan Nan had met this man in the past, she was not close to him.

This guy acted as if he were familiar with everyone. Nan Nan did not remember him at all, yet he addressed her in such an affectionate manner. That was so frivolous of him. He was not like Zhai Sheng who was upright and righteous. He seemed to be up to no good.

Wang Yang pursed his lips and cast an angry glance at Chen Jun.

He had asked Chen Jun to deal with Qiao Nan. But no matter what Chen Jun did, Qiao Nan did not even remember who he was!

Chen Jun could sense Wang Yang's angry glare. Chen Jun tried to remedy the situation. “Nan Nan, have you forgotten? I graduated from Ping Cheng High School as well. We have seen each other before. We even communicated through letters.”

The difference was that though he sent letters to Qiao Nan, she never looked at them. The only letter that Qiao Nan sent him had made it clear that she was not interested.

“Hi, so it's you, senior.” From the way she addressed him, one could tell that they were not close to each other. She did not even use his surname. “Senior, I am so sorry. Have you received your letter?”

Xu Tingting was so daring to tear open your letter. Although it was not me who did that, I still have to apologize to you.”

“Nan Nan, don’t keep on chatting with Brother Chen Jun. Shouldn’t you make an introduction?” Zijin interrupted.

What was the relationship between Qiao Nan and Chen Jun? How did Qiao Nan get to know Chen Jun? She was not interested in all these questions. However, she was interested to know what kind of person Chen Jun was and what his family background was.

“He is my senior. He is studying at a first-tier university in Beijing.”

“I see. You are already studying at the university. Nan Nan has just entered high school last year. So you have graduated from high school and entered the university when Nan Nan entered Ping Cheng High School?” Qiao Dongliang nodded. He finally figured out the relationship between Nan Nan and Chen Jun.

He was not her senior. He was, at most, an alumnus.

Qiao Zijin looked at Chen Jun and moved to stand by Qiao Nan’s side. She held Qiao Nan’s hand. “Dad, let the guests come in first. We can chat in the house.”

Qiao Dongliang shot Qiao Zijin a displeased look. Every place had their distinct customs, and there were a lot of customs to follow even in Ping Cheng. Some families would not go to their relatives’ houses on the first day of the Lunar New Year, while some families would visit them.

Regardless, the Lunar New Year was an important day. One either stayed at home with their parents or visited their elders to say their greetings.

This young man had nothing to do with their family. Nan Nan was not close to him as well. It was strange for him to visit their house on Lunar New Year’s Day.

Qiao Dongliang had wanted to find an excuse to make Chen Jun leave. However, since Qiao Zijin had said so, he could not possibly send him away. He could only let Chen Jun inside the house. “It has slipped my mind. Please come in to have a hot drink and keep yourself warm.”

“Thank you, Uncle Qiao.” Chen Jun understood that Qiao Dongliang did not welcome him. Nevertheless, Chen Jun smiled politely and pretended that he knew nothing about it. He went into the house as if he really needed water to warm himself.