

RTAMM 541

Chapter 541: Spot On

“Don’t look down on me. I have a lot of underpants. If you want, I can buy you plenty of them. I insist on betting with you.” As the saying went, ‘Unlucky in love, lucky at cards’. She had lost to Qiao Nan in the exams. At the very least, she should be able to have a change of luck by winning in the bet?

Qiao Nan was not Brother Zhai. There was no need for her to be as outstanding as Brother Zhai and to be better than her in everything they did.

They must make a bet!

Qiao Nan rested her chin on the back of the chair. “Are you sure?”

“Yes!”

“How many days will it be?”

Shi Qing stretched out her palm. “Five days.”

“Okay, five days. But let me say in advance. I won’t accept used underpants. The new underpants are worth considering though.”

“Deal.”

When it was time for class in the evening, Shi Qing arched her eyebrows at Qiao Nan, hinting to her that their bet had started.

Qiao Nan nodded. She had not forgotten about it.

Perhaps it was a tacit understanding between Qiu Chenxi and Qiao Nan. Both of them stood outside the hall to wait for their students.

They had no other choice but to acknowledge each other.

Qiu Chenxi dressed like a gentlewoman, unlike her indecent style of dressing from a few days ago. Qiao Nan widened her eyes in surprise. “Who reminded her?” She had thought that Qiu Chenxi would dress in the same way for all her lessons in order to defeat her.

“Don’t underestimate her. She has her wits about her. She was only slightly confused at that moment.” What Shi Qing said was praise spiked with blame. Qiu Chenxi was about to be expelled from the army. If she still refused to reflect on herself and realize her mistakes, she would never admit that she was her relative in the future. “She was confused yesterday. Hence, she dressed up in that manner.”

She had already been in the army for two to three days. She had known all about the mistakes that Qiu Chenxi had committed.

Because of how she dressed up previously, Qiu Chenxi did not have a good review in the army and her reputation almost ended up in shatters.

Qiao Nan leaned toward Shi Qing. “Thank you for your reminder.” If she let her guard down and underestimated Qiu Chenxi because of the recent incident, she might end up in serious trouble.

Shi Qing lifted her chin proudly and refused to admit it. “That was not a reminder. You think too much. We are relatives. I have always felt that I am very smart. Therefore, she can’t be that foolish. Regardless, I have suffered under the hands of someone who is not as smart as me. I am reflecting on myself, trying to figure out why I was bullied by someone who has a lower IQ than me. Understand?”

“Understood.” Qiao Nan snickered.

Qiu Chenxi, who stood by herself at the door, saw that Qiao Nan and Shi Qing were having a happy chat. They looked as if they were relatives. Qiu Chenxi turned jealous at the sight.

When everything was over, she would tell her maternal grandparents about Shi Qing’s behavior today.

She bit the hand that fed her. She had forgotten who her family was!

Qiu Chenxi glared at Qiao Nan, while Qiao Nan gave her a polite smile. Qiu Chenxi felt that Qiao Nan was provoking her on purpose. She gritted her teeth and gave her a fierce look.

Two soldiers who came their way had intended to attend Qiu Chenxi's class, but they turned to Qiao Nan's classroom at the last minute upon seeing the fierce expression on Qiu Chenxi's face. "Teacher Xiao Qiao, good evening!"

"Good evening." Qiao Nan gave Qiu Chenxi another smile at the unexpected surprise. She had to thank her for that. "It's about time. Let's go in."

"Alright, I am tired of standing here. It's as if I'm being punished." Sure enough, the number of students in Qiu Chenxi's class was two-thirds of the number of students yesterday. Shi Qing was satisfied at the results and went back to the hall, leaving Qiu Chenxi to stand at the entrance.

"G-good evening, everyone." Qiu Chenxi took a deep breath and walked onto the stage. She looked at the few students in the class and her face turned black. She began to stutter as if it was the first day of the lesson.

Back then, Qiu Chenxi stuttered as she was nervous. This time, she was mad.

Qiu Chenxi looked around the classroom and noticed that even Qian Yanyan did not come to her class. Her face darkened. She almost tore up the lesson plan that she had taken a long time to prepare.

At this time, a figure closed in.

Qiu Chenxi's eyes lit up. She would be glad to have one more student in her class.

Two days ago, Qiao Nan did not have many students with her. Today, all her students went over to Qiao Nan's class.

Since Qiao Nan could persist despite having few students, she could do it as well!

Shi Qing, who sneaked in and sat down, noticed that Qiu Chenxi had fixed her bright eyes on her. She seemed very happy to see her. Shi Qing grinned and waved at Qiu Chenxi as if saying that as her relative, she was on her side, and that she was there to make up the numbers for her.

Now that she was here to support Qiu Chenxi, she could no longer complain to her grandparents.

Qiu Chenxi pulled a long face. She was bursting with anger. She would rather not have Shi Qing in her class. Was she here to laugh at her?

She could tell that Shi Qing was gloating at her.

Compared with Qiao Nan's fluency, a good grasp of the rhythm, and good management of the class, Qiu Chenxi, who no longer had Qiao Nan's lesson plans, had to conduct the lesson based on her own abilities. During the lessons, there were many times when she came to a stop and did not know how to continue with it.

Two days ago, Shi Qing had just told Qiao Nan off for hampering students' progress. Today, she was shocked at how Qiu Chenxi conducted her lesson. She could not help but laugh.

But she still remembered her bet with Qiao Nan. Even though Qiu Chenxi's lesson was boring and not worth listening to, she still went to her class for three consecutive days, to the extent that she was sick and tired of it.

"I won't go anymore. Qiao Nan, tell me how many pairs of new underpants you want. I will buy them and send it to your house. It is sheer torture to listen to Qiu Chenxi's lesson." It was seven o'clock in the evening. Shi Qing refused to leave the dormitory or attend Qiu Chenxi's class.

Qiao Nan rolled her eyes. "I didn't tell you to go to Qiu Chenxi's class. You were the one who insisted on torturing yourself and attending her class. How was it? Three days have passed since. How many students did Qiu Chenxi have?"

"Twenty-five," Shi Qing said. "In the beginning, there seemed to be thirty-eight of them. On the next day it was thirty, and yesterday, it was twenty-five." According to this trend, in two more days, which was the time limit that she had set with Qiao Nan, Qiu Chenxi would have less than twenty students.

“It seemed like you have been counting the numbers.” It proved that Shi Qing was really bored at Qiu Chenxi’s class. “Let’s see. The number of students in Qiu Chenxi’s class will stay at twenty-five.”

“Why?” Shi Qing did not believe her. “You must know that Qiu Chenxi is very bad at teaching.”

Chapter 542: Let Me Sort Out My Thoughts

One would rather use the time to sleep than listen to Qiu Chenxi’s lesson. “Qiao Nan, are you teasing me?” Why did she feel that Qiao Nan’s words did not seem trustworthy?

“You’ll know the answer tonight.” Qiao Nan was not in a hurry to answer. She looked calm and confident of herself.

“It’s good that I don’t have to attend Qiu Chenxi’s class, but I refuse to believe in fate. I am sure that the number of students will be less than twenty tonight!” Shi Qing was bent on going against Qiao Nan.

The female counselor who sat beside them and was sorting through her documents was listening in on their conversation.

In no time, Zhai Yaohui and the higher-ups knew of what they had been talking about.

Lin Yuankang, who had his reading glasses on, was amused. “Shi Peng, your daughter may be smart but she is too naive. As for my little disciple, she is too mature for her age. There’s nothing that she doesn’t know. Who was the one who led her astray? Why would they teach her all these? Such a hooligan!”

While Lin Yuankang was saying this, his gaze was directed at Zhai Yaohui.

Zhai Sheng had a mission to complete, so he had to leave the army camp for a few days. Since the party concerned was not around, his father, Zhai Yaohui, had to deal with Lin Yuankang’s disdain.

Both Lin Yuankang and Zhai Yaohui were sure that it was Zhai Sheng who taught Qiao Nan the ways of the world.

Zhai Sheng had taught her well, but given that Qiao Nan was still young, it seemed to be too early to teach her all these.

Zhai Yaohui drank his tea to cover up his embarrassment. "I think it's good that Qiao Nan understands all these. It is necessary." He did not mind that Qiao Nan understood the ways of the world. In fact, he was worried that she did not know enough.

Zhai Sheng was very scheming to have taught her all these. Zhai Sheng was really bent on marrying Qiao Nan.

Fortunately, Qiao Nan had the aptitude and could barely pass his requirements to make it into the Zhai family.

"It's good to know, but it is fine not to know as well." Shi Peng tried to paper over it. He was pleased with Qiao Nan, but he was pleased with his daughter, Shi Qing, as well.

"Hey, this is equivalent to not saying anything." Lin Yuankang squinted at Shi Peng. "Your report has been submitted, but the organization leader has not agreed to it yet, so don't neglect your duties. The old man of your family is, indeed, unreasonable. He is determined to use you to his advantage. However, he should look at the situation that he is in right now."

One should cut one's coat according to one's cloth. Why must he torture his own son? Old Shi was such a ruthless father. "Alright, we must put Qiu Chenxi's behavior on record. This must not happen again. Shi Peng, if you do not submit your resignation letter, it will not be long before someone uses this against you. You must be mentally prepared."

Shi Peng had to bear the responsibility for mistakes that were committed by others.

"Don't worry, Elder Lin. I know very well in my heart." There was a flicker of sadness on Shi Peng's sickly complexion. He had already anticipated the selfish and cold-hearted nature of the field that they were in.

Zhai Yaohui sipped his tea and sneered. "It is not so easy to go against the people in our army. Whoever dares to act rashly, I will make sure they pay for it!"

Lin Yuankang shook his head. "I am old. I am too lazy to participate in this. But make sure that my little disciple will not be hurt. If anything happens to her, I will settle it with all of you, especially your son!" Lin Yuankang pointed his finger at Zhai Yaohui.

They should be ashamed that the little girl was dragged into the power struggle of the adults.

Qiao Nan knew nothing about the conversation between the three of them. She was focused on finishing the rest of her lessons so that she could leave the army and returned to Ping Cheng.

Shi Qing deliberately sat in the last row, in the seat that was closest to the door. Before the class ended, she sneaked a peek at the classroom next to them to count the number of students. "One, two, three... Twenty-five?" It was really a total of twenty-five students. When did Qiao Nan become a prophet? She was spot-on.

Impossible! Why was it twenty-five students today? The number of students should have decreased by two or three at least.

By the time everyone left, Shi Qing pulled at Qiao Nan's hand, refusing to let go. "Come and tell me how you managed to make a correct guess. How did you know that the number of students Qiu Chenxi had would stay at twenty-five? These people must be out of their mind to insist on going to Qiu Chenxi's lessons. It doesn't make sense!"

"Are you sure you want to know?"

"Of course!"

"Address me as your master!"

"Scram!" Shi Qing grabbed Qiao Nan's hand in a deadlock grip. "Do you take me for those average soldiers? You must be having a good time being Teacher Xiao Qiao. Have you forgotten my fighting prowess? Hurry, do you want to speak comfortably or have a taste of my fists?"

"Release, release your grip. You must respect the teacher." Qiao Nan pretended to shout twice in agony, but she looked calm and did not even knit her eyebrows. Shi Qing did not use any strength. She was just playing along.

“Will you tell me or not?”

“Yes, of course I will.”

“That’s better.” Shi Qing released her grip and sat down with a sullen expression on her face. “Why would those people go to Qiu Chenxi’s class? Did she spend money to make sure that they attended her class?” Other people might not do this, but Qiu Chenxi would definitely do that to maintain her dignity.

Qiu Chenxi had the money. It was easy for her to buy people over.

“It is indeed true that she buys people over, but not with money. It’s with her beauty.”

“Beauty?” Shi Qing was perplexed. “Stop going in circles. Go straight to the point.”

“I have already spelled it out plainly. People used to say that after years in the army, even the female pigs will look beautiful. These people have been in the army for many years and Qiu Chenxi is not ugly at all. No matter where she goes, she is the daughter of a respectable family. Besides, she is ravishing. Women will want to take another look at her, let alone men. Moreover, we are talking about people in the army.”

“Just, just for this?” Shi Qing was dealt a harsh blow. “Impossible! Are you lying to me? The soldiers are in their military uniforms. They have to be righteous and upright. How can they be so perverted? I don’t believe there are such people in the army. I don’t believe it!”

It was impossible that these people attended Qiu Chenxi’s class solely for her beauty and looks. Impossible!

“There are all kinds of fish in the sea. I respect the soldiers very much, but as long as they are straight, as men, it is understandable that they love to look at beautiful women, and since there’s a chance to do so, they will make full use of it. It’s not as perverted as you think. Moreover, Shi Qing, I think you must correct your mindset. Who said that there are no bad guys among the soldiers? What about spies and undercovers? Among government officers or party groups, have you seen corrupt officers who have been detained and interrogated? Can you say that there are no bad guys among those who joined the party?”

Even though Qiao Nan had explained clearly to her, Shi Qing was still in shock. “You, you... Let me sort out my thoughts.”

Chapter 543: Qiao Nan Displayed Her Prowess Again

“I heard from my dad that the political commissar was not pleased with this and he would keep them under observation.” Could these people forsake their future for the sake of stealing a few more looks at Qiu Chenxi? Were they foolish?

Qiao Nan patted Shi Qing’s shoulder and comforted her. “Let’s walk while we talk. It’s understandable that you have such mentality, but as an ordinary person, I must let you know that is because you come from a respected family and you are the future generation of the revolutionary veterans. You once told me that Brother Zhai was able to be the regiment commander at his young age because of your father. Brother Zhai is indeed talented, but I am sure he is not the only talent in the army. In comparison, there are other people who have just as many achievements as Brother Zhai and are older and more experienced than him. But do you think they will be able to land a higher position than Brother Zhai?”

“I...”

“Don’t rush to deny. Think about it. Am I making sense? Think about it again. In the army, how many of them are just average soldiers and how many are tasked to lead and command? They may be in the army for many years, but not everyone will have the chance to be promoted. For this group of people, they will progress from new recruits to experienced artillery crew at most. Since some things are predestined, they do not harbor any thoughts of promotion and can only grab hold of whatever that is within their grasp. I can only say that they are clever to a certain aspect. Given Qiu Chenxi’s family background, it’s now or never. If they miss this chance, they will not have another opportunity to be able to stare at her for more than an hour.”

Shi Qing was dumbfounded. Whatever Shi Peng had taught her was positive and upright.

Shi Peng never mentioned about these dark and grey areas of the ways of the world. Shi Qing did not have any experience and she did not think far and deep as well.

Shi Qing did not know how to react to the large amount of information and the nature of the information that she learned from Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan touched Shi Qing lightly on the head. “Don’t behave as if it is a serious matter. It is very common. If you disregard the fact that the twenty-five of them are soldiers, you may find it easier to understand.”

“But they are soldiers. Once they put on their uniforms, they have to act like soldiers!”

“What if you simply treat them as men and not as soldiers?”

“No!” Unless these people left the army, she would never be able to understand.

“Young kid, you indeed have a one-track mind.” Qiao Nan was witless. She had spelled it out so plainly for Shi Qing, yet she still could not accept it. Officer Shi had been too protective of Shi Qing, or perhaps, to Shi Qing, the soldiers had an upright and righteous image, and she was not able to accept the grey areas. “Since you can’t accept it, I won’t insist on it. But now, you should be able to understand the reason behind this situation, right?”

“Yes.”

“It’s good that you understand. I have completed my task. Let’s hurry back to take a bath. There were too many students today. The classroom was particularly hot, and the level of carbon dioxide was way too high. I am all sweaty.” Qiao Nan pulled her collar uncomfortably and dragged Shi Qing all the way back to their dormitory.

Shi Qing, who was still in shock, was pulled along by Qiao Nan back to the dormitory to bathe and sleep. On the second day, she was still in a daze and had yet to come back to her senses.

She could not accept the fact that the righteous soldiers she was in awe with would sacrifice their future and learning opportunity for beauty and looks. How was that possible?

“Do you want to have the porridge? If not, I will have it.” Shi Qing had a bowl of porridge in her hand, but she was in a daze and did not have any of the porridge at all. Qiao Nan felt that it would be a waste of food, and since she still felt hungry, she was thinking of having another bowl of porridge.

Shi Qing blocked Qiao Nan with her hands and brought the bowl to her mouth. She did not have any side dishes but gulped down the porridge in one go. “Of course I will have it! Why shouldn’t I!”

“Qiao Nan, if I address you as my master, will you teach me the ways of the world in the future?” For the first time, Shi Qing discovered that even though she would always score full marks and rank first in the exams, it was nothing at all. She seemed to know too little about the world. She had a lot to learn.

They might be simple truths, but it was a fact that she was clueless.

Back then, she did not understand why her grandparents doted on Qiu Chenxi and were so strict with her. She did not know how she was different from Qiu Chenxi.

“Aren’t you going to get your dad to teach you?” She should not ask her to teach her all these.

“My dad has no intention of teaching me,” Shi Qing said sullenly. “I suppose it’s because I am his daughter, so he wants to protect me. But do you know that after I graduate from college, I intend to join the army?”

“You still want to look up to Brother Zhai?”

“I won’t hide it from you. Initially, it was under the influence of Brother Zhai, but then I realized that I really like to be in the army. I am doing it for myself.” If she did not learn more about and understand the ways of the world, she might be treated like an idiot when she graduated from college and entered the army.

Qiao Nan knocked her finger on the table. “In fact, you sounded too serious. If you really want to learn, it’s not difficult. Have you heard that the school is a small society? You will find life lessons everywhere. You are smart and your grades are good. You don’t bother to mix with others and feel that it is a waste of time. Moreover, you are the daughter of Officer Shi. You have a better starting point than the average person. You don’t have to worry about things that others have to worry about. Actually, I’ve always wanted to remind you. Don’t you think you were too aloof and detached in class?”

“Others can say this to me, but you can’t.” Qiao Nan was similar to her.

“Why can’t I? I have a good relationship with the five people in my dormitory. At least, I have my own small group. Perhaps I don’t get along well with others apart from my roommates, but I have

never missed whatever I should know about. I have been observing and learning. How about you? How much do you know about the situation in class?”

“Even if I don’t understand, how are they related?” Shi Qing asked with a depressed look on her face.

“Of course they are related. If you want to learn the ways of the world, you must first understand the mindset of others. Take the twenty-five soldiers in the army for example. They went to Qiu Chenxi’s lessons for the sake of her beauty. There are so many people in our class. Each and every one of them has a different agenda and thoughts. Their actions and words will reflect what they think. All of these can be studied and learned. These are the ways of the world. Only by mastering this will you know what to do and what is right and appropriate. If you really want to join the army in the future, you should not stay aloof and detached unless you want to be cannon fodder. If you want to look up to Brother Zhai, you must know about everything that I said just now. Not only must you know what’s on your comrades’ mind, but you must also be able to figure out the enemy’s mentality.”

Chapter 544: Including the Loved Ones

Shi Qing thought for a while. “Is this the so-called ‘Know yourself and know your enemy, and you will never be defeated’?”

“To be honest, I don’t have much to teach you about this. If you are really interested and have decided on your ambition, the only thing I can say is that you can read up on books related to psychology when you are free. It will definitely be good for you.” Qiao Nan was not a professional either. It was purely her intuition and it was beyond words.

If Shi Qing wanted to know more, it would be best to read up on related topics.

“Sure.” It was not difficult at all as Shi Qing loved reading. “But according to what you said, I have to be a psychologist as well?”

“Even if you aren’t an expert, you still must put in some time and effort to learn the knowledge in this area. Take your dad and the people in your field for example. Psychological ploys are often used when dealing with each other. You have to know all these to survive.” One would easily be bullied if they were not alert enough.

“Alright, I understand. I will borrow some books to read.” Indeed, her father would consider a lot of things. He worried too much while she was without any worry. “Qiao Nan, it’s not right.”

“Not right? What’s wrong?”

“We are of the same age. Why do you know the ways of the world? The gap between us is too huge.” She had never felt that she was worse off than anyone else. But in comparison to Qiao Nan, they seemed to be worlds apart. Their gap was definitely more than ‘half a point’ apart.

Qiao Nan turned to a side, avoiding Shi Qing’s gaze. “I may have a better understanding of the ways of the world than you, but there are more than forty classmates in our class. There will certainly be a lot of them who are better than you. You are still young and you come from a respectable family. There is nothing that you have to worry about.”

What Qiao Nan said was the truth.

“Am I that ignorant?” Shi Qing was not particularly happy to accept this fact. She had never been among the bottom few in the class.

“Alright, don’t fuss over it. This is entirely due to your living environment. But it is strange though. Qiu Chenxi is your relative and has a lot of tricks up her sleeves. I always feel that the people in your field are very complicated and crafty, full of schemes and plots. People like you, who are simple and pure, are already extinct.”

Aside from Qiu Chenxi, Wang Yang was the most typical example. He was only a junior high school student, yet he knew to do harm to somebody through the hands of another. He almost had Zhu Baoguo’s life.

Moreover, Wang Yang worked with Chen Jun to get Qiao Nan to fall in love with the latter so that Chen Jun could sow discord between Zhu Baoguo and her.

Qiao Nan was weary at all these countless plots and schemes.

“You are the one who is extinct.” Shi Qing felt gloomy.

“I am praising you!” It was rare that Shi Qing would be so pure and simple in such a field. She was one of a kind.

Shi Qing sneered. “I don’t need these compliments, thank you.”

“Shi Qing, what is it with your family? I remember that you are your father’s only daughter. They never taught you the ways of the world? Aren’t they worried that you will be on the losing end?” After all, the Shi family had all the resources to nurture Shi Qing and teach her well. If they did not do so, the Shi family had nobody else to rely on in the future.

“How will I know!” Shi Qing pulled a long face. “My dad must have wished that I will lead a simple and happy life, so he did not teach me any of these. As for my grandpa, it is hard to say.” She was sure that her grandpa might have other motives.

Qiao Nan clutched her head in exasperation. “Shi Qing, I’m not telling you this to scare you. Given your family situation, you must think for yourself. Otherwise, you will be on the losing end. Your first lesson is to go back and try to figure out what your family is thinking about. You’re the only younger generation of the Shi family. What is their motive for making such arrangements? What plans do they have for the future? You must be careful not to be forced into a dead corner by your family.”

What Qiao Nan said was, in fact, a reflection of what Shi Qing went through in the previous life.

In the previous life, Qiu Chenxi did not join the army based on her relationship with Shi Peng or commit stupid mistakes because of Qiao Nan.

Even though Zhai Sheng did not like her and was reluctant to marry her and put it off for years, they still ended up married to each other under the influence of Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing.

Shi Peng, who had bad health, had to shuffle between the army camp and the hospital.

Even though Shi Peng had thought of leaving the army, without Qiu Chenxi’s incident, he could not find a chance to leave the army. Till the day he was exhausted and died from his sickness, he still could not leave the army.

Without Shi Peng's protection and due to Mother Shi's incapability, Old Master Shi acted arbitrarily. He found a husband for Shi Qing on his own accord and arranged for the man to marry into the Shi family.

Shi Qing was deceived into going home. When her family made her change into a gown, she then realized that she was to be engaged to a stranger.

Shi Qing refused to bow to fate and paid a great price for it. She finally managed to run away from the wedding and joined the army to become a female soldier. She then dedicated her whole life to being an outstanding soldier, carving her mark in the army and rising through the ranks to become a 'female general'.

However, when Shi Qing won success and recognitions and was able to return home with honor, she suffered from grave disease worse than her father. Both of them did not live past fifty years old.

Shi Qing had no idea that she once had such a life.

However, she could not help but shiver at Qiao Nan's words. She felt that if she did not wake up to the harsh realities of life, she might face a terrible future.

Shi Qing shivered uncontrollably and her face turned pale. "Qiao Nan, you are right. My grandparents are biased toward Qiu Chenxi, and I have no idea what they are up to. I am merely a granddaughter. I know that my grandpa has always wanted a grandson. My mom doesn't care, while my dad strongly disagrees. He even responded to the national policy of raising healthier and better-educated children and had my mom go for the contraceptive procedure. It's true that I have to be wary of my grandpa."

Two days ago, her grandpa was willing to make her father leave the army for the sake of Qiu Chenxi.

There might be a day when her grandpa would ask her to sacrifice herself for Qiu Chenxi.

Shi Qing might not know, but Qiao Nan knew the truth since Zhai Sheng had told her.

Qiao Nan's heart ached for Shi Qing, who looked so vulnerable. "Shi Qing, here is a reminder for you. All the hustle and bustle in the world is only for money."

“Including the loved ones?”

“Including the loved ones!”

Chapter 545: Someone to Suffer with Her

The relationships between loved ones might not always be pure and simple.

The elders might have given the best resources to nurture their younger generation, but it could have been an investment, one that they were expecting returns from.

It was not to say that all family relations would be so cold-hearted, but undeniably, such situations did exist.

Shi Qing smiled reluctantly. “Qiao Nan, don’t you think that you’ve made it sound too horrifying?” She was just told that despite being in their uniforms, some of the soldiers in the army might not strive for excellence and there were grey areas that she did not know of in the past. Now, Qiao Nan was telling her that there was such an ugly side to the relationships between relatives. Like the soldiers in the army who just learned English, Shi Qing found it difficult to adapt.

“Horrifying?” Qiao Nan was amused. “I know you like to read. Let me introduce you to this author. You only have to read all of his books to know if I have been exaggerating.”

“Do you mean the books written by Lu Xun 1 ?”

“Yes, that’s right. You can look for them yourself.” The reading articles in their syllabus were too positive. Those articles that were thought-provoking were not in their reading lists, and they had to look for it by themselves.

Shi Qing was not someone who would procrastinate.

Qiao Nan had mentioned it to her that evening, and the next morning, Shi Qing went to look for Shi Peng. “Dad, do you have time? Can you find someone to buy me some books?”

“Books?” Shi Peng looked at Shi Qing with interest. “What books do you want? Humanities or science? One is marked by the company one keeps. In the past, you will not even do your homework during summer break, let alone reading books. It seems to be good for you to have made such a good friend.”

Actually, Shi Peng did not care if his daughter did her homework or not. He felt that what mattered was her attitude.

His daughter was smart. Since a young age, she was quick to learn new things and she had good results. As her father, Shi Peng was worried that having a smooth-sailing life might not be a good thing for her.

“I am interested in Lu Xun’s novels and psychology books related to social relations. Get more of those for me.”

“You want to read those books?”

“Yes!”

Shi Peng’s palm went cold. He placed it against the warm teacup. “Did Qiao Nan recommend you to read these books?”

“She gave me suggestions.” It was up to her to read or not.

Shi Peng had a serious look. “Are you sure you want to read these books?”

“Yes. Dad, I just realized that having good results does not mean everything in this world. Life is much more complicated than that.” Life was unlike doing problem sums, especially science topic that only had one correct answer. It was either correct or wrong. “Dad, I want to grow up. It’s time that I grow up.”

“There’s a price to pay for growing up.”

“But you can’t protect me forever.”

It was for the longest time before Shi Peng answered. “Well, in the afternoon, I will get people to send the books over. There’s no harm in reading more books.” In the end, Shi Peng relented.

Shi Qing’s eyes lit up. “Dad, thank you.” Thank you for caring and protecting her all this while, but she had to grow up.

“You have indeed grown up.” Shi Peng sighed. He knew that Qing Qing thanked him not only for the books but also for being protective of her.

To Shi Peng, it was simply because he wanted his daughter to have those that he did not have. He did not expect that his daughter was able to stand up for herself and did not need his protection. Perhaps this was his greatest blessing.

While Qiao Nan was working hard on her homework in the afternoon, Shi Qing dumped a stack of books onto the table that Qiao Nan was at. The pen that Qiao Nan left on the table bounced from the weight of the books.

“Hey, did your dad get you all the books from the library?” Qiao Nan curled the corners of her lips at the large pile of books on the table. “Even if you want to read up, you should take things slowly. With this stack of books, isn’t your dad worried that you may be frightened off by them?”

“That’s our style. People from the Shi family give their best efforts in whatever they do. Anyway, there’s still three-third of the summer break left. I have all the time to finish these books. I can definitely finish them.” After she finished reading these books, the first thing she wanted to figure out was none other than her family.

She wanted to understand why her grandpa sided with Qiu Chenxi.

“I will cheer you on.” Qiao Nan let go of the pen that had been bounced off.

Shi Qing placed a few of the books in front of Qiao Nan. “These are yours.”

Qiao Nan took a quick glance. They were sociology and psychology books. “I do not plan to read these books.”

“That will not do. We are good friends. We should share weals and woes.” These books were theory-based and were dull and dry. She had to get someone to read it with her. It was boring to read books by herself. But it would be different if she had company.

Qiao Nan shot Shi Qing a sideways glance. “When did we become friends? I have no idea at all.”

“Now you know.”

“Since we must share weals and woes and seeing that I have so much homework to be done, shouldn’t you help me with it?”

“Hey, you have done much more than me. When it comes to homework, I am so much behind you. If we are to share weals and woes, it’s you who have to help me with it.” Actually, she never did her summer break homework. She felt that it was a waste of time.

Qiao Nan felt like slapping Shi Qing. No matter what she said, Shi Qing would find ways to take advantage of her.

Qiao Nan picked a book and flipped through a few pages. The paper quality was particularly good. Some of the books were even imported. They were as good as the books that Zhu Chengqi gave her. It would be difficult to get these books on the market. “Are you able to understand these books?”

Shi Qing scored fairly well for her English, but having good results in high school did not mean that she would be able to understand these English books. Even for her, though she only flipped through a few pages, she would need a dictionary to be able to understand the contents.

“Oh yeah, this is for you.” Shi Qing pulled out a book from the stack. It was as thick as the wooden headrest in ancient times. She passed it to Qiao Nan. “Take your time to read it. It’s okay if I don’t understand. It is fine as long as you can understand them. By then, I can simply get you to tell me the contents of the books!”

“Oxford Dictionary?” Qiao Nan’s expression darkened. Did Shi Qing intend to treat her as a translation tool?

“That’s right. It is not that easy to get this dictionary now. It is the 1995 edition. You have to make good use of it.” Her father had taken this from his private collection.

“The 1995 edition of OALD?” Qiao Nan had heard of it.

“What’s OALD? I am not too sure. You can take a look at it yourself.” Shi Qing did not understand anything that was beyond their English syllabus in school. As for the edition of the Oxford dictionary, she was clueless. Shi Qing was in a slight panic when Qiao Nan mentioned OALD all of a sudden.

Chapter 546: Qiao Nan’s Professional Reply

Fortunately, Qiao Nan was the one who posed this question today. If it was someone else, it would be so embarrassing if she could not answer it.

It was only until this moment that Shi Qing finally understood. Although she was often the top scorer in the cohort, there was nothing great about it. Regardless of how strong one was, there would always be someone better than them. This saying was never a hoax.

At the sight of how knowledgeable Qiao Nan was, Shi Qing pursed her lips. She then made up her mind to study and learn well so that she could keep up with Qiao Nan.

As per what her father’s words, it was not unjustified at all that she had scored half a point mark less than Qiao Nan. In fact, it did not reflect the actual gap between Qiao Nan and her.

After flipping a few pages of the Oxford Dictionary, Qiao Nan felt much better.

Just as what Shi Qing said, it was not easy to buy the authentic Oxford Dictionary because it was comprehensive and thus extraordinarily thick. The English dictionary that the Zhu family bought for Qiao Nan previously was useful but not as comprehensive.

As an individual who would like to deepen the studies of English Language, of course, Qiao Nan needed the Oxford Dictionary.

It was just that the Zhu family bought all these for her previously. Qiao Nan would feel embarrassed to express what she needed. Anyway, those given by the Zhu family were usable too. When she started to earn money in the future, she could always find a way to buy it herself then.

“Thanks for the dictionary. I profited.” Qiao Nan smilingly accepted the dictionary without hesitation. “After this dictionary comes to my house, you can forget about having it back. There’s a price to pay for sharing each other’s weals and woes. I’ve suffered with you. You won’t be unwilling to let me benefit from this, right?” Qiao Nan sounded bold and righteous as she took advantage of Shi Qing.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk, are you a mythical beast? After it went into your pocket, I can forget about retrieving it?” Shi Qing laughed. “There’s a saying that gifts blind the eyes. Qiao Nan, you took my gift. Don’t regret it. From now onward, you’re mine.”

“...” Obviously, Shi Qing refused to suffer any loss.

Now, the situations of Qiao Nan and Qiu Chenxi’s classes were close to Qiao Nan’s prediction. The number of students in Qiu Chenxi’s class basically hovered at over twenty.

“Teacher Xiao Qiao, I’m quite interested in English. As such, I have a few questions that I would like to seek your advice on. I wonder if you are free at the moment.” This was unlike Qiu Chenxi’s class where everyone left immediately upon the end of it. At Qiao Nan’s end, this type of situation gradually occurred.

Upon the end of the class, there would always be a few people who would look for Qiao Nan at the stage to ask some questions.

“Sure, you may ask.” Qiao Nan was clearing up the table.

“That is... How do you usually improve your English language skills?”

“We generally classify English into two categories, oral and writing. Which aspect do you wish to improve on?” Qiao Nan put down her books and looked at the student seriously.

“Okay...” The soldier hesitated for a while. “Actually, I wish to improve my writing. I know a little of what you taught but I don’t know how to write them. It feels strange. I’m afraid I will forget them soon.”

“Writing...” Such strive for progress was hard to come by. “If you wish to improve your writing, I’ll give you three suggestions. First, if you can afford it, buy an English dictionary. The more comprehensive it is, the better. Memorize it every day. If you can memorize the English dictionary,

your writing will definitely not be poor. There will even be great progress in your grammar. Second, buy some novels to read. The best is those with Chinese on one side and English translations on the other. Third, find some foreign films to watch. Remember, those English films with both English and Chinese subtitles. The third method will not only help in your writing but also your oral skills.”

“So complicated?” The soldier was dumbfounded. He was just trying his luck when he asked these questions.

Given Qiao Nan’s age, coupled with the fact that she usually taught them English that was more practical for daily use and the common and simple English knowledge, the soldier was not confident if he would really receive an answer after he posed this question.

Unexpectedly, Qiao Nan not only replied to him but also gave him three suggestions.

Qiao Nan’s teaching advice was professional but was not especially difficult to carry out.

“Thank you, Teacher Xiao Qiao. I will certainly do so. Then, Teacher Xiao Qiao, do you have any good recommendations?” The soldier asked another question.

To Qiao Nan, she felt that this question was difficult to answer. It would be making things difficult for the soldier. “As to what kind of good recommendations, that will depend on your needs and your current standard of English. As of now, it’d be better if you learn from the basics. Buy an ordinary dictionary will do. The dictionaries that are sold in our country are generally suitable for you. As for the second method, I’m not too sure what kinds of books are published nowadays. To avoid the situation of losing interest in reading, it’s best that you choose short or medium-length bilingual novels to buy. Please don’t buy long novels. As for the third method, you must pick the films with a genre that you like. For example, shootout or science fiction. It’s best not to try the topics that you’re not interested in.”

Qiao Nan could only recommend things that would only be available a few years or even a few decades later. If she stated those titles now, she would expose her secret.

“Thank you, Teacher Xiao Qiao. I know what to do now!” The soldier’s eyes lit up. Qiao Nan gave a very specific answer. After having some directions, of course, the soldier would know how to improve his English if he was eager to do so.

“Don’t mention it. Right, I nearly forgot. Maybe you can go and find these items.” Qiao Nan tore out a piece of paper and then wrote some English teaching materials. Those were English language

teaching materials used for the nine years of compulsory education. “You can read these few volumes of textbooks. The first volume teaches you the basic stuff. If you can afford it, you can also buy a tape recorder. This is because these teaching materials will normally come with a set of listening tapes. You will yield twice the results by doing half the work if you learn and listen at the same time.”

“But it’ll be hard to find these textbooks.” The soldier did not feel ashamed about reading the textbooks studied by children, but he felt that it was too difficult to find these books. He was not someone who was schooling.

“They are very easy to find. Now is the best time to do so. Actually, at the end of every semester, many parents will think that the textbooks are not useful anymore as their children have completed their studies, particularly those whose children have graduated. These parents will sell away all the textbooks. You can look for secondhand stores. There are many books and things there. They are also very cheap. You don’t need to spend much. It’s just that it may be more troublesome to search for the books. You have to take some time to do so. Those books that I introduced to you are the core ones. If you really go to that place to look for them, you can also get some practice materials at the same time.”

“Really?” The soldier’s eyes turned even brighter. He was so emotional that the veins on his neck looked like they were exploding.

Chapter 547: The Dictionary Maniac

However, besides having a passion for army life, most soldiers also joined the army because of their family situations. Hence, there were actually many who were not well-to-do.

Buying books—these two words that seemed simple was, in fact, terribly tough for people with poor family situations.

The soldier always had the desire to improve himself but was faced with financial constraints. He had thought that he would probably need about two to three years’ time to be able to buy all the books mentioned by Qiao Nan.

Nevertheless, if he went to secondhand stores, especially if the price was not expensive, the soldier expressed that if he tightened his belt, he would be able to buy all these books immediately!

What would be more economical and practical than this?

“It’s true. Go to these places more and you’ll find unexpected gains. You can even look for secondhand tape recorders while you’re at it. Secondhand items can be used after some repairing.” The secondhand stores had always been the heaven of keen learners with poor family situations!

“Teacher Xiao Qiao, thank you, thank you. Really, thank you so much.” A man does not shed his tears easily unless they are truly sad, but tears welled up in the corners of the soldier’s eyes. He stammered a little as he spoke. Nevertheless, his eyes were full of gratefulness and sincerity when he looked at Qiao Nan. “Teacher Xiao Qiao, I’m very grateful that you’re willing to come to our army and teach us. You taught us so many things and even gave me such useful suggestions. Rest assured, Teacher Xiao Qiao. I’ll definitely continue to work hard in the future. I will not disappoint you!”

He could study now. In this way, he could continue with his studies.

It was not just the English language, Chinese language, or mathematics. He would be able to continue his studies with any subject of his liking!

“Okay... You, you’re too polite.” Qiao Nan was stunned and confused by the soldier’s affectionate attitude. What had she done that made this soldier nearly cry?

At the sight of the back of the soldier who was leaving, before Qiao Nan could make sense of the situation, Lin Yuankang appeared to explain. She then understood what happened. “His surname is Song. Comrade Song has many siblings in his family. He loves to study since he’s a child but he’s the second one in the family. The elder one needed to front the family and marry a wife to pass down the family line. He needed a lot of money. As for his younger sisters, they’re still very young. Comrade Song had no choice but to join the army as a soldier. He sent his monthly salary back home to let his elder brother marry a wife and his younger sisters to study.”

Comrade Song wanted to study but his family situation did not allow him to do so.

In addition, he had to earn money to raise and support his family members.

An opportunity to study was very hard to come by. Although it was self-study, Comrade Song cherished this lost-and-found opportunity very much.

“I see.” Qiao Nan understood now. After all, she had personally encountered such an awkward situation two years ago.

Lin Yuankang gave a few knocks on Qiao Nan’s head. “How did you know so much about the secondhand stores?” If his little disciple did not mention this, he had not even thought of such a good way of self-studying for the numerous people in the world who wanted to learn but did not have the chance to do so.

This was certainly the most cost-effective way of learning. It was good!

Shi Qing nodded. “Yes, Qiao Nan, you know this too well. It’s as if you have picked up books from secondhand stores before.”

That did not seem to be the case.

She had been classmates with Qiao Nan for more than a month. Nevertheless, judging from the family situation of Qiao Nan, although it was not extraordinary good, it was not that bad either. Was Qiao Nan not Elder Lin’s disciple? Elder Lin would never let his disciple discontinue her studies, would he?

There was a flash in Qiao Nan’s eyes as she avoided the question. “Master, do you think there are a lot of people with similar situations as Comrade Song in the army?”

“Not very sure. There should be some,” Lin Yuankang replied. His thoughts had really been derailed by Qiao Nan.

“Master, what do you think about setting up a library in the army camp?” She was here for some time but there did not seem to be a library in the army camp.

“Library? A lot of money is needed to do this. Moreover, what kind of books do we put in the library? Nan Nan, have you thought about it?” Lin Yuankang knitted his brows. He felt that the idea was good but might not be feasible. If the books in the library were of inappropriate content, problems would arise very easily.

“Actually, if we put some school textbooks, there shouldn’t be any issues. Children are the future of our motherland. There certainly won’t be a problem with the contents in the school textbooks. Otherwise, we will be poisoning the buds of our motherland. Also, books related to science and

research in military affairs are not bad either. Nevertheless, it's quite easy to obtain funding for the prior. As for the latter, the estimated expenses will be larger. It's just a casual suggestion on my part. You don't need to take it to heart. As long as the method of buying books from the secondhand stores spreads to everyone, those who wish to learn can buy the books there on their own." Qiao Nan cracked a joke as she felt that she was being too serious.

She would be leaving after spending a few days and teaching a few classes of English during the summer vacation.

The organization and structure of the army was not something she could interfere in.

Lin Yuankang thought deeply for a while. He felt that what Qiao Nan said might be feasible.

The political commissar invited him here. Apparently, the country and the army already had the intentions. The quality of the soldiers in the army must be improved.

In the current times, there was less possibility of being illiterate but the cultural standards of the people were still lacking.

"Alright, you've worked hard today. Quickly go back and rest. Right, you're always staying in the dormitory. I don't see you coming out for other activities. Why?" Since Zhai Sheng left the army to take on a mission, his little disciple was simply 'working' behind closed doors.

"She's memorizing the Oxford Dictionary." Shi Qing said as she gritted her teeth. "Elder Lin, you don't know. Qiao Nan is too perverted. How is it possible that someone will have the spare time to memorize the dictionary!!!"

Lin Yuankang raised his eyebrows. "Where did you get the Oxford Dictionary from?"

"It's from my dad," Shi Qing continued.

Lin Yuankang smiled. "Qing Qing, don't be angry. You conned your dad an Oxford Dictionary. Soon, in six months' time, the Oxford Dictionary that I've bought will arrive. I'll give it to you then. You can also memorize it and drive Nan Nan mad."

“No.” Shi Qing crossed her arms. “I don’t want to become a maniac like Qiao Nan. Memorizing the dictionary? Is this something a human does? It’s crazy!” If she had wanted to memorize a dictionary, she could have done so long ago. That dictionary of her father had been in the house for about three or four years.

It was only because she wanted to learn now that her father searched out that dictionary. She did not even remember the existence of such a dictionary in the house.

“If you want to master the English language, memorizing this dictionary is the best way.” Qiao Nan was not pleased. Why was she called a pervert because of this? In what way was she abnormal? Shi Qing was exaggerating about something that she was ignorant of. One must know that there were many people who memorized the Oxford Dictionary to master English language.

“Haha, don’t argue, don’t argue. Nan Nan’s method is certainly quite practical.”

Chapter 548: Following the Good Example of Qiao Nan

“Qing Qing, if you don’t want the dictionary, I’ll give it to Nan Nan then.”

Shi Qing simply snorted. “Elder Lin, you’re appeasing me as if I’m a three-year-old child. Most probably, you bought that dictionary for Qiao Nan. Give it to her then. I don’t yearn for it. If I want, I’ll ask my dad to get it for me. Easy.”

“Yes, Shi Peng’s daughter is so great. Alright, the two young ladies, it’s already so late. Quickly go back and rest.” The more Lin Yuankang interacted with Qiao Nan, this disciple, the more pleased he was with her.

He did not have many opportunities to teach Qiao Nan. Nevertheless, Qiao Nan had never disappointed him.

He was most surprised that his little disciple had already gotten an Oxford Dictionary to memorize on her own when he had just bought her an Oxford Dictionary. He intended to get her to memorize it as well.

With this attitude, no matter what, Nan Nan would never be a disgrace to Lin Yuankang in the future.

“That’s right. Qiao Nan, let’s go back. I’m so tired that I’m dying.” Shi Qing pulled Qiao Nan to make their way back to the dormitory.

When Qiao Nan came back after bathing, only Shi Qing was in the dormitory while the female counselor was not. Sitting on her own bed and wiping her hair dry, Qiao Nan sat down without a word. “Qiao Nan, you have not replied to me. Why do you know the situation of the secondhand stores so well?”

“Why do you want to know?” Qiao Nan stopped wiping her hair for a while before continuing again.

“Hmm... I don’t feel good. I just wish to know.” Otherwise, she would keep having an odd feeling about it. She could only confirm that she had been overthinking after clarifying with Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan put down her towel and looked at Shi Qing. “It’s what you have been thinking.”

“How do you know what I’m thinking of?” Shi Qing refused to admit.

“Fine, then why are you asking me?” If Shi Qing did not have this bit of intelligence, how did she always clinch the top place in the exams in the past?

“Then, you have really encountered such a situation? It didn’t seem so. I heard that your dad is very good to you.” Shi Qing sullenly expressed that she could not understand.

“You heard about my dad, but have you heard about my mom?” She did not blame Shi Qing for not knowing. Shi Qing had only been here for a little more than a month. At that time, everyone was busy preparing for the examinations. Who would be interested in gossiping then? “Alright. If you treat me as a friend, don’t add salt to my injury. What happened in the past is the past. Anyway, I truly cherish the learning opportunity that I have now. It’s hard to come by.”

Shi Qing leaned backward, looking dejected. She lay on Qiao Nan’s bed directly. “No wonder you told me that every family has its hardships. At that time, I only thought that you were referring to the situation in my family.”

“Get up. My hair is almost dry. I’m going to sleep soon. Besides, you have not bathed and you dare to lie on my bed. Don’t tell me that since this is not your bed, so you don’t care?” Qiao Nan smiled as she gave Shi Qing a kick. “Don’t pull such a long face. I don’t even feel sad. What are you unhappy about? My life now is so good. Your sadness came too late.”

“...” Shi Qing rolled her eyes. She could not bring herself to feel sad now. “I will go and bathe then. Do you think I like to lie on your bed?”

“This is not the first time you’re lying on it and you still said you don’t like to? If you’re willing, is this bed going to become yours?” Qiao Nan pulled Shi Qing up at one go. “Quickly go and bathe. It’s almost time for lights-off. When the female counselor is back, it’ll be too late if you want to bathe.” In their dormitory, the female counselor was the one who switched off the lights most of the time.

“That’s true. I need to hurry.” Shi Qing jumped up from the bed. She took her clothes and ran toward the shower room and did a combat bath at her fastest speed. She then hurried back to the bed before the female counselor came back. “Qiao Nan, where do you think the female counselor went? She’s not back yet at this time.”

Qiao Nan yawned and covered her face with a towel. “I’m not sure. Most probably, she has something to tell the political commissar.”

“Oh, then goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

When the female counselor was back, both Qiao Nian and Shi Qing had fallen asleep.

At the sight of this, the female counselor switched off the lights immediately. She then turned on the torchlight and flipped to the page of the Oxford Dictionary that Qiao Nan placed her bookmark at. Finally, she switched off the torchlight and returned to her bed to sleep.

The next day, news about Teacher Xiao Qiao memorizing the dictionary was widespread in the army.

When Comrade Song, who sought advice from Qiao Nan, heard this, he felt even more emotional. “So, Teacher Xiao Qiao also learned it this way. Memorizing the dictionary, memorizing the dictionary!”

Anyone knew that a dictionary was not an ordinary book. It was an extremely thick and boring book. Memorizing the dictionary was something that only a typical person would do.

This serious learning attitude of Qiao Nan was worth the emulation and praise of everyone.

“Nan Nan, this child, she’s really... She’s too conscientious.” Miao Jing was proud of Qiao Nan but her heart ached for her as well. “Look at that Qiu Chenxi. Zhai Yaohui, why is your sense of judgment in character so poor? Qiu Chenxi can’t even be compared to a strand of Nan Nan’s hair. If she is not from the Qiu family, ability-wise, Nan Nan will definitely surpass her in the future. It’s a pity that such a good child like Nan Nan has bad luck in reincarnation.”

Miao Jing’s words were referring to the poor family situation of the Qiao family, and most importantly, Ding Jiayi, this ‘excellent’ mother.

“It’s not a pity,” Zhai Yaohui said indifferently. If Miao Jing was observant, she would, in fact, discover the sullenness in Zhai Yaohui’s tone.

Qiao Nan’s ability after reincarnation was a little poor but her ability to pick a man was not bad. Her future choice perfectly complemented the inadequacy in the past.

Most importantly, Qiao Nan was certainly very diligent. Given her relationship with Elder Lin alone, Qiao Nan’s future would not be too bad even without the Zhai family.

Of course, only then was she qualified to be his daughter-in-law.

“Not a pity? Are you still thinking of Qiu Chenxi? Let me tell you. Given Zhai Sheng’s attitude, that’s impossible. Don’t make Zhai Sheng so unhappy such that he’s not willing to see you as his father.” Miao Jing assumed that Zhai Yaohui said that because he looked down on Qiao Nan’s family background and did not feel for her.

Seemingly in deep thoughts, Zhai Yaohui looked up at Miao Jing until Miao Jing felt uneasy all over. “I’ve already said. I’ll not interfere in Zhai Sheng and Qiu Chenxi’s matter anymore. You don’t need to test my attitude with such words. Miao Miao, we’re husband and wife. We should be

frank and sincere to each other. You can speak your mind if you have something to say. I will let you know.”

They had quarreled for so long. Miao Miao’s anger should have subsided, right?

After all, the marriage between Zhai Sheng and Qiu Chenxi was already canceled. He also had an agreement with Qiu Qin. This should no longer be an issue.

“It’s very late. I’m going to sleep. You go to Zhai Sheng’s place to sleep.” Miao Jing hid her face and was unwilling to look at Zhai Yaohui. As long as Qiu Chenxi was alive, the prick in her heart would remain. Most critically, she could not forget the ‘hug’ between Zhai Yaohui and Qi Minlan that she saw with her own eyes during her previous trip to the army camp.

Chapter 549: Help Has Arrived

When he heard Miao Jing’s words, Zhai Yaohui did not move initially and remained seated.

Miao Jing gave Zhai Yaohui a look. Without a word, she stood up. If Zhai Yaohui was not leaving, she would leave then. She could sleep at her son’s place.

Zhai Yaohui’s legs, which looked extraordinarily straight in the army pants that he was wearing, moved. He stood up and walked over to Miao Jing. Just as Miao Jing smiled complacently as she waited for Zhai Yaohui to leave, unexpectedly, Zhai Yaohui carried her up in one swift move as soon as he reached her side.

What was different from a few months back was that, this time, Zhai Yaohui not only carried Miao Jing to the bed but also did not leave the room himself.

This was his wife and the bedroom was his. This bed was also his. Why couldn’t he sleep there? Why did he have to leave?

“What are you doing?!” Miao Jing was pushing Zhai Yaohui away with her hands. “Don’t forget that you’re in army attire. Don’t forget that you’re a soldier. Are you behaving like a hooligan and taking the lead to bully the ordinary citizens? Get off! Get off!”

“Reporting, Comrade Miao Jing, I’m the people’s liberation army personnel in other people’s eyes, but at home, I’m my father’s son. I’m also Zhai Sheng and Zhai Hua’s father, as well as your husband. In what way did I play rogue? We have collected our marriage certificate. This is legitimate.” Zhai Yaohui simply ‘locked’ Miao Jing up with his long limbs to prevent her from moving about.

“Damn! So now you know that you’re my husband and that I’m your wife? Why didn’t you realize this when you stared at other people’s wife every day? When you made your son suffer because of other people’s daughter, why didn’t you say whose husband you are, and whose father you are? Zhai Yaohui, get off! Don’t make me angry!” Miao Jing was unable to move at all. She was red with anger.

These words of Zhai Yaohui sounded so good and touching. However, Miao Jing’s heart had been hurt for so many years. Would Zhai Yaohui be able to appease her with just a few words?

Snore. Snore.

In response to Miao Jing was Zhai Yaohui’s snoring sound, as if he had fallen into a deep sleep. His limbs were still locked tightly around Miao Jing and the latter could not escape.

Having been married for many years, in Miao Jing’s impression, this was one of the very few times that she lay in Zhai Yaohui’s arms.

One year ago, if she could receive such a hug, she would definitely be overjoyed.

However, Miao Jing felt sadder instead of happy at the moment.

If Zhai Yaohui was not guilty, would he act so abnormally?

Zhai Yaohui wanted to make her shut up, so he used this trick to coax her. Was such a hug meaningful?

It was clearly summer and very warm for two adults to hug each other. However, Miao Jing, who felt bitterly disappointed, did not perspire at all. In the end, she fell asleep with tears in her eyes.

Sensing that Miao Jing had fallen asleep and calmed down, Zhai Yaohui, who was pretending to be asleep, opened his eyes and sighed. He then reached out his hands to wipe away the tears in the corners of Miao Jing's eyes. "Sigh, it's been so many years. We've been husband and wife for so long. Why are you still behaving in the way you did when you were young? Your temper comes with no warning."

Zhai Yaohui was aware of the matter regarding Qi Minlan. However, he was used to it as time passed. All of a sudden, Zhai Yaohui did not know how to speak about this to Miao Jing.

He initially believed that having been a couple for many years, Miao Jing would understand him as long as he had done enough and was apparent in his actions.

Never did he expect that the more that he did, the more Miao Jing seemed to be heading for the dead end and refused to come out. Zhai Yaohui was at a loss of what to do as well.

One night had passed. In the morning, as usual, Qiao Nan was carrying an Oxford Dictionary with her as she memorized it. Shi Qing, who took over the female counselor's job to get porridge, came back looking secretive. "Qiao Nan, do you know who came to the army camp today?"

"Who?" Qiao Nan did not even lift her head. She asked without care.

"Hey, you won't die if you memorize one word less, but if you don't listen properly to my following words, you'll be down in luck. In that case, a huge problem will arise." Shi Qing grabbed the dictionary in Qiao Nan's hands and put it on the table. That anxious look on her face made Qiao Nan feel ridiculous.

"What exactly happened? Who came?" Which important figure had arrived that could make Shi Qing look as if the sky was crumbling?

"That auntie of mine is here!" Shi Qing was having a headache. "I'm not sure how much you know about my auntie. I'll tell you honestly. In the past, if Old Master Zhai did not think that Madam Zhai was good, the one who married Chief Zhai and became Brother Zhai's mother would be my auntie. Do you know why Qiu Chenxi could take advantage and nearly became Brother Zhai's fiancée? It's because she's the daughter of my auntie! Therefore, Zhai Yaohui treated her differently. Chief Zhai behaved in this way because he gave my auntie face. Tell me, if auntie is here today and she pleads for Qiu Chenxi, maybe Qiu Chenxi doesn't need to leave the army anymore. As to whether any more scary matters will occur, who knows."

Shi Qing knitted her brows. “Anyway, I heard that Chief Zhai doesn’t know his limits in front of my auntie. If Chief Zhai agrees to everything that my auntie requests for, don’t come crying to me because I can’t help you too.”

Her auntie was not only doted upon after she was married. She was doted on when she was a young lady before marriage as well. The family doted on her, and even outsiders doted on her. She was so blessed.

“On the contrary, I think we don’t need to be so worried.” Qiao Nan poured a cup of tea for Shi Qing. There was a flash of ease in her eyes. “I’ve heard a little about the Zhai family. Do you know how Brother Zhai and Qiu Chenxi’s engagement was canceled?”

“How?” She only knew the outcome but not the process.

“Chief Zhai was the one who personally looked for Qiu Chenxi’s father to discuss it. The two heads of the families reached a consensus and agreement. Qiu Chenxi then did not have anything to do with Brother Zhai anymore.”

“Is it true?” Chief Zhai was the one who did that?

“It’s true.” Brother Zhai would only tell her the truth.

Shi Qing heaved a huge sigh of relief. “If that’s really the case, then I can feel assured now. Chief Zhai has already initiated to draw the line with the Qiu family. It’s not possible for him to go back on his words. In that case, my auntie will be making a wasted trip then?”

“That, I’m not sure. I’m not sure why your auntie came to the army and what she is requesting Chief Zhai for.” Qiao Nan held her chin and placed the dictionary on her knee. “However, as the chief of our country, shouldn’t we have more confidence in him? He won’t be in the clutches of a woman, right?”

If Chief Zhai did whatever Qi Minlan asked him to, or listened to whatever she said, then, she could only say that Chief Zhai got his position all because of luck. Or most probably, he depended on the protection and blessing from his ancestors?

“I hope that’ll be the case.” Although she could no longer be with Brother Zhai, she did not wish to see Qiao Nan end up in the same pitiful state as her where things would not work out between Brother Zhai and her.

In comparison to Qiu Chenxi, she respected Qiao Nan. Thus, she would rather Brother Zhai be a pair with Qiao Nan than Qiu Chenxi.

Chapter 550: Rejection

“Should I go and help you find out more?”

“Don’t use me as an excuse. You’re the one who wishes to be a busybody and eavesdrop. Do whatever you want. I can’t be bothered about it.” Qiao Nan raised both her hands and ‘surrendered’. She expressed that she did not have any intention to get Shi Qing to eavesdrop at all. If Shi Qing did that, she should not blame it on her. She was innocent.

Shi Qing lifted her chin. “Do I still need to blame it on you? Don’t forget that my dad is also in the army camp. If anything really happens, my dad will protect me. I don’t need your help. Alright, you can continue hugging your dictionary and memorizing it. I’ll help you keep a lookout. I’ll definitely not let Brother Zhai slip away from your hands.”

That affectionate look of Shi Qing gave Qiao Nan a shock. Just a few days ago, this was someone who had been so deeply in love with Brother Zhai. Clearly, this was a tough lady but she secretly cried because of Brother Zhai.

If she had not seen Shi Qing cry with her own eyes because of Brother Zhai, she would really have suspected if Shi Qing was lying when the latter said she liked Brother Zhai.

Sitting in the office of Zhai Yaohui, this was the first time Qi Minlan felt uneasy when she faced him. “Brother Zhai, I heard from Chenxi that someone in the army is targeting her. Most likely, she’ll be forced to leave the army. Is this true or false?”

“...” Zhai Yaohui put down the cup of tea in his hand. “It’s true that she will be leaving the army. As to whether anyone is targeting at or framing her, it’s false.”

“No, that’s impossible. Brother Zhai, you’ve watched Chenxi grow up since she was a child. You should know clearly this child’s character. Since she was small, Chenxi has a straightforward personality. She’s very frank and can’t tolerate some minor matters. Moreover, given her birth

status, she is inevitably strong-tempered. Sometimes, she has good intentions but ends up offending others. Unfortunately, she doesn't realize it. Brother Zhai, I only have one daughter. You have to help me. You can't let those outsiders harm Chenxi. She's too simple and naive and doesn't know how to bend around. In the current society that is swarmed with many complex characters, I think Chenxi's personality is actually quite good. I've always been protecting her. Brother Zhai, you will definitely help me protect Chenxi too, right?"

"You don't want Chenxi to leave the army? Or are you hoping that Chenxi can make use of the times in the army to get close to Zhai Sheng, making him change his mind, like Chenxi again, and marry her?" Zhai Yaohui's eyes looked a little sullen. He did not mince his words and his question was to the point.

Qi Minlan wanted to deny, but in the end, she wisely replied, "Both reasons."

Qi Minlan repeatedly used the word 'straightforward' to describe Qiu Chenxi because she knew that Zhai Yaohui admired people with such 'straightforward' trait most.

If she were to deny it straight, she would appear to be someone who was not 'straightforward'. Zhai Yaohui would certainly not like it.

"Chenxi grew up with Zhai Sheng. She has been following Zhai Sheng around and talking about him since then. They are childhood sweethearts and have always been on good terms. Haven't our two families been hoping that the two of them can be together? I don't know what happened along the way which made you tell Qiu Qin that their marriage is off, but when Zhai Sheng was a child, I've already treated him as one of my own. I see him as my own son. Zhai Sheng is a good child, and so is our family's Chenxi. As a mother, I naturally hope that the most outstanding man in the world will be with my daughter and become my son-in-law. I hope that my daughter can receive the happiness that I've lost in the past. Brother Zhai, are you able to understand?"

"Brother Zhai, you will help me fulfill this little wish, right?"

For a short moment, Zhai Yaohui seemed to have wavered. He then said, "The adults' wishes are ultimately that of the adults. The children's thoughts are the most important now. I respect their choices and decisions."

If Zhai Sheng changed his mind and wished to marry Qiu Chenxi, he would definitely not object to it.

However, if Zhai Sheng did not intend to do so, whether as a husband or a father, he also could not force his son to marry a woman that he did not like.

Furthermore, the Qiao Nan whom Zhai Sheng had taken a liking to currently did not have any other shortcomings besides her family background.

In comparison, besides family background, Qiu Chenxi did not seem to be more competent than Qiao Nan in any area. Of course, this did not include age as a factor.

“Brother Zhai, does that mean you don’t wish to help Chenxi and me?” Qi Minlan felt disappointed at heart. No, how was it possible that Brother Zhai would not help her? One must know that Brother Zhai had treated Chenxi as his daughter since a long time ago. “Brother Zhai, you... Do you know who Zhai Sheng has been close to recently?”

Could it be that the young lady that Zhai Sheng was with had a family background that was better than Chenxi? Was that why there was such a great change in Brother Zhai’s attitude?

However, Chenxi clearly told her that the one Zhai Sheng was with currently had a very ordinary family background. Moreover, she was the type that he could not bring out to major occasions.

“The child has grown up. The parents can’t always control them,” Zhai Yaohui said with double meaning in his words.

“Brother Zhai, you are aware of what’s the greatest wish and regret in my life. I just don’t want Chenxi to follow in my footsteps and experience the pain that I went through. Brother Zhai, you have a daughter too. You should understand my thoughts. Chenxi has her heart fixed on Zhai Sheng. Brother Zhai, you have to help me and Chenxi. If we want to be a family, what will be a better option than finding out the bottom of the matter?”

Qi Minlan refused to give up. “In the past, if Sister Miao did not appear and if Uncle Zhai did not interfere, today, I should be family with you. I can’t attain Uncle Zhai’s liking and am forced to break up with you. But, Brother Zhai, haven’t you always liked Chenxi? Brother Zhai, can you take it as fulfilling my wish? Let’s quickly pick a date for them to be engaged, okay? I believe Zhai Sheng was just momentarily lost and delirious. He has known Chenxi and been friends with her for so long. It’s impossible that someone else will surpass his relationship with Chenxi. The two of us missed a lifetime of happiness. We can’t allow them to be like us and let happiness slip by.”

Zhai Yaohui restrained the look in his eyes. “Initially, I was not willing to bring up the past. After all, I’m already married, and so are Qiu Qin and you. All of us have our respective families. Since you brought this matter up today, then that’s good too. Let’s clear this up all at once. Regardless of why I married Miao Miao many years ago, nothing physical happened between us before. We were in a romantic relationship on our own accord. In the end, we were not together. It may sound as sour as little grapes, but we’re not fated to be. Nevertheless, between you and me, it has got nothing to do with who let the other down, or who owes who. Qi Minlan, do you understand?”

“Is it true that no one let the other down? Clearly, you’re the one who abandoned me!”