

RTAMM 561

Chapter 561: I Think That I'm a Good Uncle Too

For Qiu Chenxi to have such huge 'ambitions and goals' was a 'good' thing. "Good".

Given the fact that the Qiu family could have such a lady like Qiu Chenxi, he was definitely willing to believe that such a day would come for the Qiu family!

Before Qiu Chenxi left, she went to see Shi Peng. "Uncle, I'm going to leave the army today. Your health is not good. Previously, Qing Qing was by your side to take care of you, so my mom and I felt more assured. Now that Qing Qing is going back to school, and I'll be leaving the army too, what will happen to you in the future? At the thought that you have no one by your side to take care of you when you feel unwell, and that there won't be anyone to get you a cup of hot tea, I can't help being worried."

Qiu Chenxi wiped her tears and sniffed. She was staring at Shi Peng with watery eyes, hoping for Shi Peng to say something.

Shi Peng took a sip of tea to soothe his heart. He had a 'fright' when he heard Qiu Chenxi's words. "You can be assured about this matter. The people in the army are aware of my health condition. They have already arranged a male nurse to take care of me for the time being until I leave the army. Initially, I was reluctant to use so much of the army's resources for my personal matters. But the situation is different now. I have submitted my resignation letter. Sooner or later, I'll leave the army. Hence, I won't be able to utilize too much of these resources too. Chenxi, I'm glad that you're concerned about my health. Rest assured. There won't be any problem. When I leave the army, if you're sincere and wish to take care of me, there'll be opportunities to do so."

However, if Qiu Chenxi wished to use this as an excuse and ride on his reputation to stay in the army, he could only say that Qiu Chenxi was smart but it was too bad. Her strategy would not work.

"Uncle, we are all relatives. I'm really concerned about you and wish to take care of you. Are you really not going to fulfill this little wish of mine?" She met with obstacles at the political commissar's office. Now, she had to face the same situation with Shi Peng. Qiu Chenxi's expression was very ugly.

“Fulfill? Your filial thoughts are hard to come by. How can I not fulfill it? I’ve said that we’ll have a lot of time and opportunities in the future. There’s no need to be anxious now.”

Qiu Chenxi pursed her lips in a cold and menacing manner. “Uncle, I’m very disappointed in you. I thought that we’re close kin and you’d definitely help me. After all, this is not something difficult. It’s just a small matter.”

“...” Shi Peng looked at Qiu Chenxi in the face. “You said that we’re close kin. Then, as your elder, I’m only going to say this once. If something does not belong to you, regardless of what methods you use, you won’t get anything in the end. I think your mom’s situation already tells you everything. You’re still young and should not waste your time in this way. Work hard. You can only rely on yourself to have a truly good future.”

“Hahaha.” Qiu Chenxi completely could not heed Shi Peng’s kind advice. “I’ve just been a teacher for a few days, but it seems that uncle wants to be a teacher more than me. All these maxims... Uncle, you have to remember them well and say them again to Qing Qing.”

It was Shi Qing. She was clearly aware of her relationship with Brother Zhai, yet she stubbornly wanted to intervene. Uncle was also helping the wicked perpetrate evil deeds.

Shi Qing wanted to rob her things, robbing her happy and bright future.

The one who should rely on her own hard work to achieve everything was Shi Qing and not her. Her uncle had said those words to the wrong person.

“Qing Qing is doing very well.” Qing Qing did not need him to teach her. She already knew when to let go when needed. She knew that she would be the one getting hurt otherwise.

His own daughter did not even make him so worried but, unfortunately, Qiu Chenxi distorted his kind intentions to this extent.

If Qi Minlan was the one standing before him today, Shi Peng would not even say a word. As for Qiu Chenxi, even if he knew that she would not listen to it, as an elder, he had to try his best to persuade her.

“Alright, you should make your way home. Don’t arrive home too late, in case they worry about you.”

“Uncle, I must really thank you then, for being so thoughtful to our family.”

“Don’t mention it.”

“Uncle, I shall not disturb you any longer. Even if I can never come to the army again in the future, not long after, our family should be able to meet in Ping Cheng. At that time, I’ll definitely ask my mom to invite uncle to my house to have a meal, to take it as a way of saying thanks to uncle for your ‘care’ to me during this period.”

“Sure.”

That nonchalant demeanor of Shi Peng left Qiu Chenxi helpless with no alternatives.

It could be said that Shi Peng’s health situation was the last trump card that she had in order to stay in the army. She did not expect that Shi Peng refused to give any face in front of his biological niece. There was no room for negotiation at all.

“Right, uncle, the political commissar told me that expelling me from the army was a unanimous decision of all. Uncle, did you agree or object at that time?”

When he heard this question, Shi Peng smiled. “Agree.”

“Uncle, you’re truly my good uncle!”

“I think so too. I’m a good uncle.” Since he had told his father clearly and submitted his resignation letter, he was really not afraid of admitting this matter to Qiu Chenxi.

“Uncle, goodbye!”

“Bye.”

When Qiu Chenxi left, she slammed the door of Shi Peng’s office so hard that the sound of the door banging was deafening.

Shi Peng shook his head helplessly. Qiu Chenxi had been spoiled by the elders of the two families.

In the past, Qiu Chenxi and Zhai Sheng were 'childhood sweethearts, young and innocent playmates'. In addition, everyone agreed that she looked like a pretty doll. Hence, Qiu Chenxi was destined to be the future wife of the chief. It was only right to pamper her more.

Now, the role of the wife of the chief already had nothing to do with Qiu Chenxi. He hoped that the elders from the two families would still continue to pamper Qiu Chenxi like before and not let this child suffer a blow that was too great.

Anyway, he must have been paranoid. Qiu Chenxi and Qi Minlan had not given up. The elders of the two families would definitely still harbor some hope because of this. What was he worrying about?

"Comrade Qiu, hurry up. We've already waited five minutes for you. You're really... You're also a comrade in the army. Why don't you have any sense of time? If you're late by five minutes when the instructor asks you to gather, you'll be punished to run a thousand miles first!" The comrade who was going to Ping Cheng to purchase supplies was so anxious that his brows were on fire.

The food supplies that he would be getting were for the whole army to consume. If he was late, the good and fresh ones would have been taken. If the soldiers in the army were less nourished and their health was not good enough, who would take the blame?

"I..." Qiu Chenxi could not be bothered with these people of the lowest status. She only wanted to express her own dissatisfaction.

That was her thoughts but the other party did not give her any time for this. He grabbed her luggage and swiftly stuffed it into the boot. "It's done. Hurry up and get into the car. Otherwise, we really can't make it in time." Qiu Chenxi's slow demeanor made him want to simply drag her into the car!

Chapter 562: A 'Big' Surprise

The comrade looked as if he was about to drag Qiu Chenxi by the hand onto the car. There was a look of disgust on Qiu Chenxi's face. She would not let people like the comrade touch her clothes, let alone her hand. She quickly jumped onto the car and sat down.

“Okay, everyone is here. Let’s get going.” As soon as Qiu Chenxi got in the car, it started moving.

The dispatch delivery car of the camp could not be compared with the family car used by the Qiu family.

The car had a musty and pungent smell and the environment was not comfortable at all. Qiu Chenxi turned green from the bumpy ride home, but she could only keep these feelings to herself.

By the time Qiu Chenxi reached the Qiu family’s residence, her face had ashened, looking terrible. After taking her luggage from the trunk of the car, she had only taken a few steps before she leaned against a big tree and vomited.

“Miss, you are back.” Seeing that Qiu Chenxi was back, the helper from the Qiu family rushed over to take her luggage. “Miss, is there anything that you want to eat? Or should I prepare hot water for your bath?”

“Eat?” At the mention of food, Qiu Chenxi could not help but vomit again.

The helper was shocked. “Miss, are you suffering from motion sickness?”

“Say no more. Help me in and give me a glass of water to rinse my mouth!”

“Oh!” The helper helped Qiu Chenxi into the house. There was nobody at home around this time of the day.

When she finally rinsed off the bitter and pungent smell from her mouth, Qiu Chenxi leaned against the sofa, feeling weak and deprived of all her strength.

Qiu Chenxi knitted her eyebrows at the sound of rolling wheels. She took a glance in its direction and hollered, “Are you a pig? Pigs are smarter than you. The luggage is dirty and stinky. I don’t want it anymore. Take out everything from the luggage, wash, and disinfect them. Remember to throw this luggage away as far as possible!”

“Yes, yes, Miss, simmer down. I will dispose of it right away.” The helper who was being hollered at had a big fright. Without another word, she emptied the contents and threw the luggage away. Afterward, she washed and disinfected the clothes that she took out of the luggage.

Nothing went well for Qiu Chenxi. Qiao Nan, who left the camp slightly earlier than her, was not any better either.

Lin Yuankang sent Qiao Nan back home. She just got off the car when she heard women voices coming from her house.

Qiao Nan’s countenance changed in an instant. She had an uneasy feeling.

There was no other woman in her house. Could it be that her father made new ‘friends’ while she was not around?

Ding Jiayi might not be good to her, but she still knew what she should do and what she should not do.

Unless her father divorced Ding Jiayi and they had ended their marriage, it was tantamount to having an affair if her father was on close terms with other women while he was still married.

But when Qiao Nan listened carefully, she realized the voice was somewhat familiar.

Qiao Nan took out the key and opened the door. When she saw the unexpected ‘woman’ in her house, there was not much expression on her solemn face. But it was obvious that she was not in a good mood.

“Nan Nan, you are back,” Qiao Zijin said with a soft smile. “Previously, I kept asking Dad when you would be back. We are all in school and the school is very far away. Apart from the summer break, I have no chance to come back to visit Dad and you. Now that it’s summer break and I had the chance to make the trip, it turned out that you’re not at home. Nan Nan, I heard that you have a master now. Is he good to you? What did he teach you? You have to remember that you must take things slowly. Don’t be too anxious, and the most important thing is to be happy. It’s such a hot day. Come in now. I will pour you a glass of water.”

Not waiting for Qiao Nan to react, Qiao Zijin poured a glass of water for Qiao Nan. It was lukewarm, so Qiao Nan could drink it right away.

“If not, do you want to wipe off your sweat first?” Seeing that Qiao Nan did not drink the water but held the glass of water in her hand, Qiao Zijin was not angry. Instead, she was unbelievably patient. She passed a towel that had been rinsed with the well water to Qiao Nan. “I just rinsed it with well water. It’s cool and comforting. You can wipe your sweat with it. Don’t let the sweat get into your eyes. Your eyes will sting.”

“Yes, wipe your sweat with it.” Qiao Dongliang looked awkward as he was the only man at home.

During the summer break when Qiao Dongliang saw Qiao Zijin for the first time since she left a few months ago, she also felt somewhat distant and foreign to him.

They had been apart for two to three months. Qiao Dongliang noticed that Qiao Zijin had changed a lot. She was no longer so dainty as before, and she had become more considerate and sensible. During the few days that they lived together, Qiao Zijin was not picky with her food and she was concerned and considerate of Qiao Dongliang’s eating preferences.

What surprised Qiao Dongliang the most was that during these few days, Qiao Zijin even made a meal for him. This was something he had never thought of in the past.

As a father, Qiao Dongliang was glad that his daughter had changed for the better.

Qiao Dongliang was more than welcome that Qiao Zijin wanted to stay for a few days and spend time with him. But now that Qiao Nan was back, the situation was different.

Qiao Dongliang understood that as long as Qiao Zijin had turned over a new leaf, as her father, he would accept her without any reservations. But it was a different case for Qiao Nan. Qiao Nan would not be able to accept her sister right away and he did not expect her to do so as well.

Previously, Qiao Dongliang had thought that since Zijin was in her second year in high school and she had to sit for the college entrance examination next year, the summer break that she had would not be too long. He thought that when Nan Nan, who went out with her master, was back, Zijin might have already left.

In this way, he would be able to spend some time with his elder daughter, and Nan Nan would not be unhappy.

He did not expect that Qiao Nan would return before Qiao Zijin left.

“Nan Nan, was it tough on you during the half a month that you were away?” Qiao Dongliang was apologetic regarding the current situation. Hence, he tried to use a gentler tone when he spoke to Nan Nan.

“That’s right, Nan Nan. What have you learned from your master in the past half a month? Nan Nan, you are very blessed to have such a capable master,” Qiao Zijin said warmly and gently. She did not sound jealous at the fact that Qiao Nan had a capable master. “Nan Nan, why not I boil some water and you can take a bath first? After all, you just took a ride back. It must be very tiring. You will feel better after taking a shower. Moreover, although it is summer now and is very hot, you are a lady. It’s better to bathe in hot water. Cold water will harm the body. Do you understand?”

“I understand.” Qiao Nan put down her luggage. “It’s rare that sister is so nice to me. Alright, I also feel like taking a shower first. It’s true that I feel quite tired.”

“Sure, wait for me while I boil the water. It will not take long since it is summer now.” Qiao Zijin stood up immediately and went to the kitchen to boil water for Qiao Nan.

As soon as Qiao Zijin left, Qiao Dongliang whispered, “Nan Nan, are you angry that your sister is back?”

Chapter 563: Qiao Dongliang’s Anger

“Angry?” Qiao Nan leaned back and drank the water that Qiao Zijin poured for her.

Qiao Nan sneered while drinking the water. In her two lifetimes, she had never thought that there would be a day when she could drink the water that Qiao Zijin poured for her and use the hot water that she boiled to bathe. “Perhaps I feel angry and wronged. Why was I always the one who was abandoned?”

They had only been apart for a short while. Now that Qiao Zijin came back for a short stay and pretended to be a good daughter, it seemed that her father was all ready to welcome her with wide arms.

It seemed that when she finished college entrance examination and went to college in other cities, she did not need to bring her father with her. Fine, it was all good in the end. She could lead a carefree life by herself!

Since her family abandoned her, she had no need for them as well.

“No, absolutely not.” Qiao Dongliang was anxious. Nan Nan was indeed angry. “Don’t misunderstand. Your sister is my daughter, and you are my daughter as well. How can I abandon you? Nan Nan, don’t let your thoughts wander. Your sister visited without any notice and she didn’t create any trouble. I couldn’t possibly forbid her from entering the house. In fact, your sister will go back in two days’ time. I did not expect that you would be back so soon. I thought that both of you would not bump into each other and you wouldn’t be upset. I didn’t expect...”

He really had no intention of upsetting Nan Nan because of Zijin.

This had been the case since ancient times. Even for brothers, after they married and had their own families, they would have their own houses and had their meals separately. It was the same for sisters.

If they were close, they would keep in touch. Otherwise, they would not keep close contact with each other.

During this period of time, Qiao Dongliang had already sorted out his thoughts.

“Nan Nan, if your sister really changes for the better and both of you grow close to each other, as your father, I am happy for you. But rest assured that if both of you are not as close, I will not insist on it. Everyone has their own path to take. I am not capable of making everything go according to my wishes, so you don’t have to worry. It’s up to you how you intend to get along with your sister. I will not interfere or influence you. You can go along with your own wishes.”

Qiao Nan looked at Qiao Dongliang. She knew that Qiao Dongliang had actually intended for Qiao Nan to patch up with Qiao Zijin, but she showed her displeasure when she came back today. Hence, he kept silent.

Qiao Nan could only sigh at the current situation. Compared with the past, this was already a big improvement.

At least, her father was considerate of her feelings. He did not add fuel to the flames and insisted that she did what she hated the most, especially when she was feeling vexed.

However, Qiao Nan also learned a lesson from this. One must not be too mild-tempered. The more easygoing and gentle one was, people would not take their thoughts and feelings into consideration.

Qiao Dongliang was softhearted, and so was Qiao Nan. She had no other choice since he was her father. "Okay, don't worry."

"You are not angry anymore?"

"Angry at you? Then, I would be as insensible as my sister in the past and you would be bitterly disappointed at me. Isn't that too easy on my sister? Mom is on her side. If you are on her side as well, I will be left with nobody. I am not that stupid," Qiao Nan said jokingly, but at the same time, she made known her feelings.

She would not take the initiative to push her father toward Qiao Zijin, but if her father wanted to stand on her side, she would not do anything about it. However, once he made his decision, she would not be as close to him as before.

For Qiao Zijin and her, they were not destined to be sisters. If they could not be father and daughter, she would not be able to do anything about it as well.

"It's good that you are not angry. Take a rest. Let me check if the water is boiled. I will bring the water to the bathroom." Qiao Dongliang breathed a sigh of relief and ran to the kitchen.

Qiao Nan, who finally had some peace to herself, brought her luggage back into her room. She folded her clothes and placed them into her wardrobe.

"Dad, what did Nan Nan say?" As soon as Qiao Dongliang entered the kitchen, Qiao Zijin pretended to ask about her sister casually.

"What do you mean?" Qiao Dongliang pretended not to understand.

"Dad, you understand what I mean!" Qiao Zijin pouted while stomping her feet. "It's been so long. I have told you that I have realized my mistake. Nan Nan is my one and only sister. I was

muddleheaded in the past. That's why I lost my temper at her. I have figured it out now. I want to ask Nan Nan for forgiveness. Dad, are you really not going to help me?"

"I won't help!" Qiao Dongliang said firmly and sternly. "Zijin, I can help you with anything but this. Not only will I not help you, but I will not help your mom as well. Look at what you did in the past. You have hurt Nan Nan. Nobody's heart is made of stones, but both of you were too hard-hearted and only knew to protect your own interests, completely ignoring Nan Nan's well-being. Isn't Nan Nan your family? Your mom gave birth to her as well. In these past few months, whenever I thought about what both of you did, I couldn't help but doubt whether both of you were heartless!"

Qiao Dongliang expected better from his daughter. He had no idea why she turned out to be like this.

She framed her sister, was full of lies, cheated in the exams, and copied her sister's essay to...

As a student, Zijin had done everything that a student was not supposed to do.

She had such behavior when she was young. What would she be like when she grew up?

What she did now was merely going against the rules. Qiao Dongliang was worried that when Qiao Zijin grew up and had the means, she might go against the law.

At the thought that Qiao Zijin might harm the interests of the people and the party in the future, Qiao Dongliang had the impulse to do something to her right now before she had the chance to do anything illegal.

As a soldier, he could never tolerate the fact that his children would do things that were detrimental to national interests.

"Dad, has Nan Nan said anything? Why do you stare at me with such expression? You give me a fright." Qiao Dongliang's gaze was similar to that of a hungry tiger who had found his prey. Qiao Zijin was shocked.

Since a young age, this was the first time she saw such a ferocious look on her father's face. Did Qiao Nan badmouth her and sow discord between her and her father?

“Look at you. You told me that you wanted to change, but I don’t see any changes. Whenever there’s a problem, you will suspect that it’s Nan Nan who is behind it. Why don’t you do some self-reflection? The problem lies with you.” Qiao Dongliang was exasperated. “Nan Nan did not say anything!”

If Nan Nan badmouthed Zijin in front of him, he would be able to find an excuse for them that both of his daughters were still young, that they had some bad habits and flaws in their character, but they would change eventually.

Chapter 564: Be a Good Elder Sister

However, Qiao Nan did not have the flaws and shortcomings that Qiao Zijin had. This made Qiao Dongliang understand that it had nothing to do with age or being insensible. It was Qiao Zijin’s character flaws.

“Dad, don’t be angry. That’s because I was insensible in the past and did a lot of things that hurt Nan Nan, so I am very worried that Nan Nan will be unhappy when she sees me. Yes, I should not project my shortcomings on Nan Nan. I want to change, but you have to give me time. I am worried that Nan Nan, who has just come back, has yet to see that I am sincere to change for the better and will have misgivings toward me. Dad, you can rest assured that I will not ask you to help me. As long as I change, I believe that if I treat Nan Nan well, she will forgive me and patch up with me. If I need your help with this, then it proves that I have not reflected on my mistakes and it’s understandable that Nan Nan refuses to forgive me.” Qiao Zijin reassured her father time and again that she did not need his help and would solve it by herself.

“Really?” Qiao Dongliang asked in disbelief. “Nan Nan has been hurt terribly by you. It’s not easy for her to forgive you.”

“I have to do it no matter how difficult it is!” Qiao Zijin clenched her fists. “It goes to show that I have done terrible things to her in the past. Since I am in the wrong, I have to make up to her by myself until she forgives me. Dad, don’t worry about this. I will work hard to show Nan Nan that I am sincere and she will accept me eventually.”

“Do you really understand?” Qiao Dongliang hesitated. Qiao Zijin sounded very sincere and eager, and she did not ask for his help.

“I understand, I totally understand. Dad, don’t worry. In the future, I will show you my sincerity and determination. I will definitely not put you in a difficult position because of what happened between Nan Nan and me. Since I have made mistakes, I will make up for it by myself. Dad, don’t help me. If you help me, I will be angry at you. You always said that I am insensible and haven’t grown up. I have to deal with this by myself in order to learn. Mom and you can’t possibly stay with me forever and help me with everything in my life.” Qiao Zijin sounded very sincere and resolute. Qiao Dongliang was dumbfounded.

But Qiao Dongliang felt comforted that his daughter had grown up. “I am relieved that you feel that way. Zijin, you have to remember what you said.”

“Dad, that’s for sure. I will prove it to you. Actions speak louder than words. When Nan Nan sees the change in me, I believe we will be able to reconcile with each other.”

“Oh, okay.”

It was rare that Qiao Zijin was determined to change. As the father, Qiao Dongliang was happy for her. “Would you like me to help?”

“No.” Qiao Zijin shook her head. “These past few months, I have learned to do household chores while living with Mom. Dad, watch me if you don’t believe me.”

Qiao Zijin stretched out her hands.

Back then in the Qiao family’s residence, Qiao Zijin had no need to do any household chores. She led a sheltered life like a young lady from a respectable family in ancient times. Her fingers were fair and tender.

But right now, Qiao Dongliang could feel that Qiao Zijin’s hands had become rough and the complexion had darkened.

“How come there are scars on your hands?” This was what Qiao Dongliang was most puzzled about.

“I had to learn to cook and use a knife. In the beginning, I was unfamiliar with the chores and I cut my hands. That’s why there are scars. But I am used to it now. I will no longer cut my hands

accidentally again.” Qiao Zijin held her hands. Although she had cuts and scars on her hands, they were but small injuries. At most, her hands were not as pretty as before.

“Compared to the past when everything was provided for me, I feel much more at ease with my current life. The food I prepare myself tastes the best. Dad, I am no longer a picky eater. Have I made huge progress?”

“Yes. Zijin, you have indeed grown up.” Qiao Dongliang looked happy. “It’s good that you want to do these household chores. I won’t stop you. You used to do terrible things to Nan Nan in the past, so it’s right of you to do these for her. Alright, in order for Nan Nan to feel your sincerity, I will not help you. You can do it by yourself. Are you up to it?”

“Yes!”

“Okay, then I will go back to the living room.” Qiao Dongliang finally set his heart at ease.

He firmly believed that as long as Zijin was repentant, sooner or later, Zijin and Nan Nan would definitely reconcile.

Ding Jiayi would only listen to what Zijin said. If Zijin had changed for the better and was close to Nan Nan, even though Ding Jiayi might be unwilling, under Zijin’s influence, she would change her attitude toward Nan Nan.

At the thought that there would be a day when the family of four would be able to have happy days together, Qiao Dongliang was full of energy and felt upbeat toward life.

“Okay,” Qiao Zijin said with a smile and watched Qiao Dongliang leave the kitchen.

When she was certain that Qiao Dongliang had left and would not be able to know what was going on in the kitchen, Qiao Zijin’s face sunk. Gone was her bright and sunny expression. In replace, there was a sullen and sinister look on her face.

If Qiao Dongliang was here, he would not be able to smile at Qiao Zijin who looked dark and sinister.

In another three minutes, the water in the pot would be boiled. Seconds ago, Qiao Zijin had a sinister look, but she instantly reverted back to the bright and sunny look. She curled her lips into a faint smile.

Qiao Zijin looked into the glass window in the kitchen to check that her smile was natural and bright, like how she used to practice, and that one would feel good looking at her. Then, Qiao Zijin scooped the water and brought them to the bathroom personally for Qiao Nan. “Nan Nan, the water is boiled. You can have your shower.”

Qiao Nan, who was resting in the living room, stared at Qiao Zijin.

Qiao Zijin looked disheveled.

It was a hot summer. It was beyond words to be in the kitchen checking on the hot boiling water for twenty minutes.

Qiao Zijin looked as if she just came out from the water. She was sticky and wet. Her clothes were drenched in perspiration and they were plastered to her body. Her hair was stuck on her face as if they were little worms.

Qiao Zijin felt worse than Qiao Nan who had just come back home. She was soaked in sweat.

“Nan Nan, why are you in a daze? Hurry up and have a shower. You will feel much better after a shower. It’s good to go for a trip, but you will realize that home is the best place when the novelty wears off. After taking a shower, you can take a short nap. I will wake you up when dinner is ready.” Qiao Zijin acted like how a proper elder sister would.

Chapter 565: Asked for Her Opinion

She acted like the elder daughter of the family. She was sensible, considerate, kind, and she took great care of her younger brothers and sisters.

Right at this moment, Qiao Zijin was simply the representative of the model elder sister in China!

She was so perfect that one could not find any shortcomings with her.

“What’s wrong? Shocked? Perhaps you don’t recognize me as we have been apart for such a long time. Alright, we are sisters. When we have cleared up the misunderstanding, we still have many years ahead of us. By then, I am afraid that you may be sick and tired of me. We can take things slowly.” Qiao Zijin used the towel that she gave to Qiao Nan to wipe her sweat previously to give herself a wipe on the face.

Her face was wet with perspiration. She felt very uncomfortable!

“You have indeed changed,” Qiao Nan said lightly after a long while.

Qiao Zijin smiled warmly. “We have to change and grow. We have to pay for the things that we have done.”

“I see.” Qiao Nan did not deny.

“Alright, enough of the talk. I will only leave two days later. If you want to chat with me, we can do so after you have a good rest.” Qiao Zijin pulled Qiao Nan from the sofa gently. “You may be tired and don’t feel like doing anything once you are back at home. Take a shower, change your clothes, and go to sleep. It will be more comfortable that way. Go along now.”

Qiao Dongliang, who was observing the sisters secretly from his room, saw this scene and smiled.

Qiao Nan did not shrug Qiao Zijin’s hands away. Qiao Zijin, who walked in front of her, sensed that Qiao Nan did not reject her kindness. She curled her lips and smiled.

Qiao Zijin stopped when she reached the bathroom. “You can go in to shower. I will help you get your clothes.”

“No need. I have already put the clothes in the bathroom.” Qiao Nan slanted her head in mischief, but she also seemed to be sizing up Qiao Zijin. “Sister, I have a question. Of course, it’s up to you whether to answer or not.”

“Go ahead.” As long as Qiao Nan was willing to ask, she would definitely give her a satisfactory answer!

“The place that I went with my master was quite far away, and we witnessed something ridiculous. When I left, this matter has yet to be solved. Sister, tell me what you think. There is a family with two sons. The family was not well-to-do. They provided for the elder son to go to school, while the younger son worked to pay for his brother’s tuition fees. When they grew up, the elder son used the money earned by his brother to marry and had a son. The younger brother who had to earn the money ended up penniless and without a family. He remained a bachelor. Later, the elder brother was diagnosed with kidney failure and had to go for kidney transplant. He hoped that his younger brother would donate his kidney to him but he refused. The elder brother collaborated with his mom and they finally managed to get a kidney from his younger brother and did the operation.”

“Oh my god, the society is ruled by law. This is acting with utter disregard for human life. How is this possible?!” Qiao Zijin disapproved of such behavior, saying that justice must be done. “They should report to the police. What kind of parents and elder brother are they? They are simply devils who eat human flesh and suck human blood!”

“The problem is that their parents said that since the elder brother had kidney failure, he would die if he did not do the transplant. The younger brother was in good health, and he would not die if he gave his brother a kidney. In this case, both sons would get to live.” There was a glint of cold in Qiao Nan’s eyes. Yes, they were inhumane. They were devils who fed on human flesh and blood and sucked people dry!

“But still, they should not do that. Even if the parents felt that way, they could talk it over nicely or come up with other solutions. How could they use trickery and force? The younger brother is too pitiful.” It did not occur to Qiao Zijin, who acted with a sense of justice, to apply the case to herself.

In the past few years in this life, Qiao Nan did not quit her school to work and provide for her. Qiao Zijin also did not take a single cent from her. Qiao Zijin did not marry and have kids. More importantly, she was in good health, so there was no way that she would have kidney failure and need to go for a kidney transplant in order to survive.

Qiao Zijin was certain that the story had nothing to do with her, thus she was able to act as if she was very righteous and say nice words to please Qiao Nan.

“Many years later, after the elder brother underwent the kidney transplant, he survived, and so did his younger brother. However, the younger brother was heartbroken because of what happened. He went somewhere far away and did not have any contact with his family. The younger brother no longer needed to give his family his hard-earned money, and he began to lead a better life. He even had some savings. At this time, the elder brother apologized to his brother and admitted that he and

their parents were in the wrong. He sought the younger brother's forgiveness. Sister, in such a case, if you were the younger brother, what would you do?"

Qiao Zijin hesitated. Was Qiao Nan trying to trick her by asking this question?

"Sister, if it were you, would you forgive such an elder brother?" There was a strange flicker in Qiao Nan's eyes. It was as if she had evil intentions by asking that question. "I just want to hear your opinion so that I will be able to tell how our relationship will be in the future. Since a young age, you have never pampered or protected me."

Qiao Zijin's heart shuddered. Did Qiao Nan mean that like what happened in the story, she wanted to treat her in the way the elder brother treated the younger brother?

That was impossible!

She would take Qiao Nan's life if she wanted her kidney!

"If I were the younger brother, I would definitely not agree. One should never intend to harm others, but should always guard against the harm others might do to them. The younger brother gave all his hard-money to his brother. He had done more than enough for the family. What's more, he was without one kidney. It took him great effort to be able to lead a good life. If he relented, he might regret it. If I bump into the brothers, I will definitely support that younger brother. At least, the younger brother must keep a distance from his brother." Regardless of whether it was a trick question, this should be a safe answer.

They would not sever ties, but neither would they reconcile. One could attack or retreat in either way.

They had only been apart for half a year. Qiao Nan, that wretched girl, was so sly with her words!

Qiao Zijin could sense that Qiao Nan had set dozens of traps around her.

"Dad, what do you think?" Seeing that Qiao Dongliang's door was opened, Qiao Nan raised her voice.

Qiao Dongliang, who was discovered, was embarrassed and smiled as he walked out. "I agree with Zijin. The Chinese people place importance on 'filial piety', but one can't practice unquestioning filial piety. Everyone has only one chance at life, so we have to cherish it. Besides, what that family did is too much. If things really come to such a situation, it's impossible for one who is bitterly disappointed to be able to forgive and forget."

Qiao Dongliang said earnestly. He cast a sideways glance at Qiao Zijin, hoping that she was serious about changing for the better and not ending up in a similar situation as that of the brothers.

Chapter 566: For Once, They Think Alike

"One should never intend to do harm to others, but should always guard against the harm others might do to him?" Qiao Nan laughed. "Sister, it's such a coincidence. I think alike, too. Alright, Dad, watch the television show with sister. It's rare that sister prepared water for me to bathe. I can't waste it."

"Yes, Nan Nan, go and bathe first. I'll go and sit outside with Dad. Dad bought a lot of ingredients and he intends to prepare spicy dishes. You'll definitely love them."

His daughter was going to bathe. Of course, there was no point for Qiao Dongliang to remain behind. He even stepped out a little faster than Qiao Zijin.

Qiao Nan had learned the habit of bathing quickly while she was in the army camp. Within ten minutes, she had finished cleaning herself from head to toe.

She was full of thoughts when she looked in the mirror. Her hair was all wet and there seemed to be a layer of mist before her eyes. There were also tiny drops of water on her eyelashes.

Qiao Nan wiped her face with the towel. Whether Qiao Zijin had changed for the better upon her return this time, it had nothing to do with her.

An individual such as Qiao Zijin could not be a relative. Moreover, she could not be a friend. She could only be an ordinary stranger.

“Dad, the story Qiao Nan just told us... What do you think it meant?” Qiao Zijin sat down and stared at the television distractedly. She felt very uneasy as she peeped sideways at the door of the bathroom. Qiao Nan would not casually ask such a question without a reason. She must have a purpose in doing it.

It was just that Qiao Zijin could not decipher the purpose even after thinking about it for a long time. Hence, she could only seek help from Qiao Dongliang.

Qiao Dongliang was taking out a plate of watermelon that was cut into slices. “What meaning could there be? Wasn’t it just a situation that she heard from someone?”

“So, Nan Nan was just talking casually?” She did not believe it.

“Otherwise, what could it be?” Qiao Dongliang passed a slice of watermelon to Qiao Zijin. Qiao Zijin frowned in disdain. If it was just a slice of watermelon, she would rather not have it. She liked the feeling of holding half a whole watermelon and eating it with a spoon.

In Qiao Zijin’s mind, she was thinking that Qiao Dongliang knew Qiao Nan’s likes and dislikes so well but did not even remember such a small habit of hers. Qiao Zijin restrained her expression and did say a word.

“What’s wrong with you again?” Qiao Zijin was silent. Qiao Dongliang thus turned to look at her instead of the television. “Why do I feel that you have become strange again, just like in the past? Nan Nan didn’t say much. Why do you have so many questions? Aren’t you being too petty? Be assured. As long as you truly change for the better, Nan Nan will definitely forgive you if she feels your sincerity. Nan Nan is softhearted. We’re all one family. Don’t think too much and give yourself so much pressure. If you think too much, you may distort Nan Nan’s intentions. You, you’re just overthinking.”

There was nothing bad about being a simple person. If Zijin did not like to think or do too much, she would not have caused the situation between Nan Nan and her today.

“Dad, I was just asking an unintentional question. What are you talking about? When Nan Nan comes out later, you must not say all these in front of her. Nan Nan has not forgiven me. If you bring this up and Nan Nan recalls what happened in the past, then Nan Nan and I will have to delay our reconciliation for a long time.” Qiao Zijin was so nervous that she did not wish to eat the watermelon now.

Qiao Dongliang handed the watermelon back to Qiao Zijin. "I'm your dad. Can I not know this? I'm advising you precisely because Nan Nan is not around, just in case you do something wrong before Nan Nan again. Zijin, you were in the wrong in the past. You have to genuinely realize that you're in the wrong and sincerely wish to change for the better. Zijin, you're not just appeasing Nan Nan and me, are you?"

Qiao Zijin sneered as she ate the watermelon. "Appease you all? To say something without a conscience, what do you have now? If you're not my biological father, would I gain anything if I appeased you? Nan Nan is younger than me. She'll be in her second year of senior high school next year. You've cut off all means of living of Mom and me. I won't gain anything if I please you. Will I gain something if I please Nan Nan?"

Qiao Dongliang thought about it. That was true. The Qiao family did not have anything now. Besides a small courtyard, they did not even have a little cash to spare.

In this way, even if Qiao Zijin could please Qiao Dongliang, the latter could not give Qiao Zijin anything.

Without anything to gain, there was no need to appease him.

"Don't feel angry. You must know that you're not qualified to be angry. You can only blame yourself for having so many prior records." Qiao Dongliang threw the watermelon skin into the dustbin. "Your mom and I only have two children, Nan Nan and you. You know my situation best. Because I don't have any siblings, I couldn't even find anyone to help when things happened at home these past few years. You're different. When you encounter any difficulties, if your relationship with Nan Nan is normal, you can seek Nan Nan's help. Nan Nan can also look for you to help her. One must know that it's difficult to survive alone in this society. When your mom and I are gone, both of you sisters will become each other's only support. Given the current situation..."

Nan Nan was so good in her studies. It was hard for Zijin to come in eighth in class and it was because she cheated and copied others.

Although academic results did not represent everything, and good grades did not guarantee a good job and high pay, Qiao Dongliang still felt that Qiao Nan's future would definitely be much brighter than Qiao Zijin's.

To put it in a selfish way, this was not mutual support.

When that time truly came, Nan Nan would be the one helping Zijin, this elder sister. On the other hand, Zijin, this elder sister, could only bask in the glory of her younger sister. Furthermore, Nan Nan was together with Zhai Sheng now.

Whether she was relying on a man or herself, Nan Nan's future was definitely going to be multiple times better than that of Zijin's.

Qiao Dongliang was well aware that he was helping Qiao Zijin create a future contingency plan when he spoke up that day. At the same time, he saved Qiao Zijin some face.

If he had been too blunt and said that Zijin would need to seek Nan Nan's help in the future, even if Zijin's temperament had improved, she would certainly lose her temper. She would then make a mess out of the whole matter again.

As a parent, he was clearly giving well-intended advice but had to consider his children's feelings, in case the advice made the child turn worse. Qiao Dongliang felt disheartened that he had to be such a father.

It was no wonder that the old had a saying that children were debts owed by their parents in the previous life. The debts had to be repaid in this lifetime.

At the very least, he must have owed Zijin a lot in his previous life such that he had to work and worry so much for her in this life.

Qiao Zijin could not feel Qiao Dongliang's good intentions at all. She could only feel her biological father looking down on her.

Before the vacation, she visited the house of one of her new classmates. Her new classmate was also a lady and the eldest in the family.

She heard from her own ears what the parents of the new classmate's parents told the classmate: You're the eldest in the family. You're the elder sister of all your younger siblings. You must study well, work hard to find a good job, and take good care of your brother and sister.

Chapter 567: Bringing Up 'Old' Scores

At that time, although Qiao Zijin did not agree with what the classmate's parents said, those words made it sound as if the eldest child had to be a slave to the younger siblings.

Nevertheless, from a different perspective, was this not a form of acknowledgment of the ability of the elder son or daughter by the parents?

Her father looked down on her and felt that she was not capable. In the future, she would definitely have to seek help from Qiao Nan in some areas. That was the reason he asked Qiao Nan and her to support each other.

Qiao Nan was so capable. Fine. It was not necessary for them to support each other then. Would it not do if Qiao Nan just gave her one-sided support without the need for her to reciprocate?

“Zijin, did you hear that?”

Qiao Zijin threw away the watermelon skin and used the towel to wipe her hands that were stained with watermelon juice. “Rest assured, Dad. I've heard all of it. I only have Nan Nan as my sister. If I don't be good to her, who else can I be good to? Dad, is it because you don't have confidence in me that you don't believe that I've truly changed for the better?”

“No, no such thing.” Qiao Dongliang looked evasive as he avoided Qiao Zijin's eyes.

“It seems like it'll take great effort and a long time for me to reconcile with Nan Nan. Even you don't have confidence in and don't trust me, let alone Nan Nan. That's right, though. Just as what you said, I've had too many prior bad records. I have to take this kind of matter a step at a time. I'm not anxious.” Qiao Zijin was not angry. At the very least, she could not get angry at this moment even if she wished to.

“It's good that you could understand.” Qiao Dongliang breathed a sigh of relief. “Alright, let's not talk about this anymore. Nan Nan will feel unhappy if she hears it.”

“What should I feel unhappy with?” Qiao Nan was drying her hair as she walked out. “Ah, there's watermelon to eat.”

“Right, I bought it today. It’s very fresh. The boss said that it’s home-grown. All those on sale today were freshly picked from the farm. I’ve seen them. The stem and leaves were so green and juices were oozing from them. It’s definitely not bad.” Qiao Dongliang asked Qiao Nan to eat more. “I’ve also soaked this watermelon in the well. It’s extremely cool and delicious. A watermelon that feels rough inside is crispy and nice.”

Qiao Nan took a bite. Yummy, it was really sweet and the taste was wonderful. It was unlike the watermelon many decades later that was grown with chemicals. They looked fine on the outside and tasted alright.

However, soon after eating those watermelons, there would be an uncomfortable and sour aftertaste. “Dad, sister doesn’t like to eat it slice by slice. She likes to hold half a whole watermelon alone and eat it. You’re not making that for her?”

Qiao Dongliang’s face turned stiff. “Only your mom indulges her bad habit. There are four people in the family, but there’s only one watermelon bought each time. There’s no reason for one person to occupy half of the watermelon. It’s enjoyable and nice to hold half a watermelon and eat with a spoon. Who doesn’t wish to enjoy themselves? But this method is not good.”

“Nan Nan, please don’t laugh at me now. I know I was a little bossy in the past. I’ve changed for the better now. Eating small slices of watermelon one by one is convenient and fast. There’s nothing bad about it.” For the sake of making Qiao Nan believe her words, Qiao Zijin immediately took two slices of watermelon and started chewing them.

“Oh.” Qiao Zijin even changed such a small habit of hers. Qiao Nan’s eyes turned gloomy. She not only did not feel more at ease but also felt more guarded against Qiao Zijin. “Right, what were the two of you chatting about earlier? Why would I be unhappy? Did someone do something that would make me feel unhappy?”

“No, we’re just chatting casually. We’re saying that you should have been happy with your latest trip, but since you mentioned about your encounter thereafter instead, Zijin and I guessed that you were not very happy.”

“That’s right.” Qiao Zijin continued immediately. She was determined not to bring up the contents of her chat with Qiao Dongliang. “Nan Nan, come and sit down. Let’s rest for a while and watch television. After half an hour, I’ll help Dad prepare dinner. If you feel tired, why don’t you return to the bedroom now and sleep for half an hour?”

Qiao Nan gave a big yawn. “If you didn’t mention it, I didn’t feel it. Now that you’ve mentioned it, I feel so tired that I can’t even open my eyes. Dad, I’ll go and nap for a while first. You watch the television with sister.”

If she was around, it would be inconvenient for Qiao Zijin to speak to her father, right?

Qiao Nan stretched herself and opened her sleepy eyes. Since Qiao Zijin had this wish, she would fulfill it and let Qiao Zijin have the opportunity.

When Qiao Zijin was overly sensible and obedient, she felt more worried.

If Qiao Zijin could let the cat out of the bag just a little in front of her father, then she would not have any ulterior motive.

However, as long as she was present, Qiao Zijin would be very cautious and pretentious. So, it would be more effective if she excused herself.

Qiao Nan was, in fact, exhausted. Even if Qiao Zijin did not come back with an ulterior motive, it was not possible for Qiao Nan to reveal her fox’s tail or take any action within a short time. Qiao Nan might as well sleep daringly. She slept for half an hour this time.

“What are you doing?” Qiao Dongliang was taking the cooked rice and dishes to the living room when he saw Qiao Zijin pacing back and forth in front of Qiao Nan’s bedroom.

Qiao Zijin took a step back. “Dad, it’s been half an hour. Is Qiao Nan awake? It’s already time for dinner. I don’t know if I should let Nan Nan sleep a while more or quickly wake her up. What if she can’t sleep at night if she sleeps too much during the day?”

“So it’s about this.” Qiao Dongliang’s expression relaxed a little. “Indeed, Nan Nan has slept for quite long. It’s better to wake her up. Even if she’s tired, she can decide what to do later after she finishes dinner. Don’t let the health suffer due to hunger. Last time, your mom was too much. Two years ago, I brought Nan Nan to the hospital. Whenever I thought of what the doctor said to me, I feel so ashamed that I can’t lift up my head. The doctor told me that Nan Nan was malnourished. What kind of era are we living in now? Nan Nan was actually malnourished!”

At the mention of this matter, Qiao Dongliang was angry at Ding Jiayi for being so heartless.

To actually starve the daughter until she was malnourished! It would most probably be very difficult to find this kind of mother in the world.

Qiao Zijin had wanted to say that her mother also regretted it but Qiao Dongliang continued talking and even chided her. “Zijin, I have to chide you regarding this. You’re Nan Nan’s elder sister. The three of you, mother and daughters, spent more time with each other at home. How could you not know anything about how your mom treated Nan Nan? If you knew about your mom’s doing, why didn’t you persuade her? Your mom didn’t listen to any other people but would she not listen to you? Zijin, you just allowed your mom to bully Nan Nan in that way. Didn’t your heart ache when you saw that happening?”

Qiao Dongliang really did not know that Ding Jiayi was heartless enough to let Qiao Nan take the meat in front of him, and then placed it back into the pot behind his back.

Although he was unaware of this matter, he did not believe that Qiao Zijin did not know about it.

Qiao Dongliang was most concerned that although Qiao Zijin knew about it, she had never intervened in this matter. Although Ding Jiayi was the elder one and Qiao Zijin the younger one, if she did not persuade Ding Jiayi, Qiao Zijin could always have told him, her father, and let him communicate with Ding Jiayi.

That attitude of Qiao Zijin, adopting a passive onlooker stance, made Qiao Dongliang feel extremely anxious and uneasy.

Chapter 568: There Was a Shooting Star

Qiao Zijin’s face turned stiff. “Dad, you’re thinking of settling old scores with me?” Qiao Nan suffered a lot. But didn’t she suffer too? Why didn’t her father help her ask Qiao Nan to pay it back?

When Qiao Nan was in her mother’s womb for ten months, had she consumed any good stuff? Had she not experienced hunger then?

She remembered very clearly. When her mother was four months’ pregnant, she had the habit of kicking off her blanket in the middle of the night so she would feel cooler. Her mother said that her

younger brother was in her womb. If she slept with her, she was afraid that Qiao Zijin would move at night and kick the younger brother. Hence, her mother prepared a tiny bed for her.

As she was not used to sleeping alone, she could not remember the numerous times she fell off the bed.

One night, she kicked away the blanket and no one discovered it. The next day, she had a fever and a cold.

Qiao Zijin did not know why. Clearly, these were memories when she was just three years old. Why did she remember it so deeply and vividly? She knew that she was in a very serious condition due to the cold and she felt unwell all over. Just as she needed someone to take care of and comfort her, her mother treated her like someone with plague. Not only did she not hug or coax her, she even took a cup, threw it at her, and asked her to scram so that she would not spread the illness to her younger brother in the womb!

Yes, she was the one who made Qiao Nan fall ill during the summer vacation two years ago.

But so what? She had already been through the suffering Qiao Nan went through when she was three years old!

In comparison to her, what was that little bit of hardship that Qiao Nan experienced? It was nothing!

In that one year, had she not been starved until she was skinny? Had she not been starved until she was malnourished?

If not for the fact that the child in the womb was a girl, Qiao Nan, it was most fearful that she would have to continue with that kind of differential treatment.

She thought of all the hardships that she suffered that year. Up until now, she had never mentioned this to anyone. Ding Jiayi only knew how to tell her how much she was doted on and asked her to be filial in the future. As for Qiao Dongliang, this father, he most likely did not have any recollection of what happened during that period of time.

Qiao Nan had already grown up and only suffered little grievance, yet she had Qiao Dongliang seek justice for that little suffering of hers.

What about her? Three years old. She was only three years old back then!

If she had not pulled through the fever on that occasion, she would have long turned into a ghost. Who would feel sad for her? Who would seek justice for her?!

Many years had passed. Although Qiao Nan was never a son, similar to her, she was just a money-losing daughter. In the end, her father still chose Qiao Nan instead of her!

Both of them were daughters. On what grounds must she always be the one that was given up?!

“It’s not that I wish to settle old scores with you. I just want to remind you. Zijin, until today, you’ve never felt that you did something wrong at that time, right?” Qiao Dongliang was having a headache too. He could not understand why his elder daughter thought otherwise so easily.

Settling old scores?

There was nothing to settle between family members.

He had brought up the past as he hoped that Zijin truly knew where she was wrong. When she encountered the same situation next time, at the very least, she would not make the wrong decision like she did in the past, harming others as well as herself.

Why couldn’t Zijin feel his good intentions? It was such a simple thought.

“Dad, I’ll go and call Nan Nan to come over for dinner.” Qiao Zijin avoided the question and did not reply. She did not feel that she had done anything wrong. What wrong had she done? She was just returning all the suffering that she had endured in the past to Qiao Nan. Furthermore, her mother did many of these on her own. She did not spur her on. At most, she only watched on like a passive onlooker. What had she done wrong?

“You...” Upon seeing that Qiao Zijin did not want to reply and was obviously still stubborn about it, Qiao Dongliang was both angry and anxious. Even if Qiao Zijin really felt that she was wrong in the past, it was certain that her understanding of what she had done wrong was not deep enough. Otherwise, her reaction would not be as such.

Nan Nan was a smart child. It was impossible that Nan Nan would be taken in by this attitude of Zijin.

Zijin wished to reconcile with Nan Nan and make the latter accept her as the elder sister. Tough!

Nevertheless, it was fine. Zijin would not change if she was not taught some lesson.

He was really prepared to wash his hands off this matter. He believed that given Nan Nan's temperament, Nan Nan would definitely not take issue with Zijin if Zijin really knew that she was wrong and changed for the better. If Nan Nan did not forgive Zijin, that meant there was a problem with the latter.

After confirming this point, Qiao Dongliang made up his mind that he would not interfere anymore in the matter between his two daughters.

"Nan Nan, eat more. They are all your favorites." Qiao Dongliang picked up dishes with clean chopsticks and filled Qiao Nan's bowl. He then picked up a dish that was not spicy and gave it to Qiao Zijin.

Qiao Zijin smiled as she accepted the food. She then used her chopsticks and took some spicy food. Both Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan were surprised. "You don't eat spicy food, do you?" Spicy food would cause pimples to grow.

"Don't eat spicy food?" Qiao Zijin stuffed a mouthful of spicy vegetables into her mouth. "That's a thing of the past. Chili is really a good thing, especially during wintertime. It will make one appreciate its goodness. I've already changed the habit of not eating spicy food. It's fine even if I get pimples, as long as I don't go and touch them. After eating spicy food, my body feels warmer. I can then sleep during wintertime."

Upon Qiao Zijin's words, Qiao Dongliang did not feel good while he was having his food.

Qiao Dongliang did not have much impression of the most turbulent times in China, but he had often heard his father talked about the story of the Red Army's 25,000 mile-long march. When the soldiers crossed over the tall and huge snow mountains, chili was such a precious item to them.

It was with these tiny chilies that the Red Army endured and pulled through that period of cold and freezing weather.

In other words, Qiao Zijin had this feeling and realization because Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin had definitely suffered in the cold during wintertime last year.

Qiao Dongliang very much wanted to ask Qiao Zijin where the mother-daughter pair had been to after leaving Ping Cheng, what their source of finances was, and how their daily life was.

However, he was more afraid that he would hear something bad if he did that.

If that happened, should he follow his heart and bring Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin back home and disrupted the current peaceful situation that was hard-earned, or hardheartedly refused to interfere although he clearly heard about the situation?

Regarding this matter, Qiao Dongliang realized that the final outcome would be wrong no matter what he did.

In the end, it was as if Qiao Dongliang was chewing wax as he quietly ate the food in his bowl. After he had finished that bowl, he did not continue to take more food.

Qiao Nan peeped at Qiao Zijin, who looked extremely happy while having her meal. She silently cheered for Qiao Zijin. Qiao Zijin acted very well in this ruse of deceiving her through self-torture.

When the night fell and it was sleeping time, Qiao Nan lay on her bed and looked at the grey and misty sky outside the windows. All the stars seemed to have been blocked by a layer of black crepes. It made one feel extremely uneasy. She sighed continuously in her heart. True enough, she still could not accept Qiao Zijin.

Could Qiao Zijin leave as soon as possible?

Just as Qiao Nan was thinking of this, a shooting star suddenly appeared in the sky!

Chapter 569: Forced Marriage

For a moment, Qiao Nan was in a trance. There was a shooting star. Did it mean that there was a chance that her wish would be fulfilled?

After a while, Qiao Nan smiled bitterly. If there was truth in the saying of the shooting star, then people would not sleep and would just stare at the sky every night. Moreover, if the shooting star could really help humans fulfill their wishes, she should not have wished that Qiao Zijin would leave as soon as possible. She should wish that her mother and Qiao Zijin would stay further away from her and not come back again, that they would not interact with each other for the rest of their lives. Was that not better?

Qiao Nan took a piece of towel and covered her face. She continued to sleep.

Qiao Nan, who had fallen asleep, completely did not expect that her dreams would come true when she woke up the next morning. Of course, the shooting star was not the one that helped her realize her wish.

As she had overslept, it was already eight o'clock when Qiao Nan woke up. Her head felt heavy from too much sleeping.

With messy hair, Qiao Nan yawned as she made her way to the toilet to wash up. When she came out, she discovered that Qiao Zijin was not around. "Dad, where's sister? It's still so early. Did she go marketing?"

Eight o'clock. At eight o'clock during the end of July, the sun hanging high up in the sky was so scorching hot that it could kill someone with the heat.

It was surprising enough that Qiao Zijin could now eat spicy food. If she even went marketing under such a hot sun, then that would be unbelievable.

"No, your sister went back to your mom's place," Qiao Dongliang said, sounding a little sullen.

"She has gone back?" Qiao Nan blinked. She suspected that she was still sleeping and dreaming of what she thought about in the day. Before she fell asleep, she had been thinking about how good it would be if Qiao Zijin left soon. She then dreamed about it soon after. "Dad, am I still sleeping and not awake?"

Qiao Dongliang was both angry and amused. He stuffed a slice of the iced watermelon into Qiao Nan's hands. "Does it feel cold?"

"Cold!"

"Then you're not dreaming. Your sister has really gone back."

"That's fast. I clearly remember that she said she would like to stay for a few days and 'reminisce about the past' with me." Before this was done, she had left. Would such a good thing happen?

Qiao Dongliang sat down and helped Qiao Nan turn on the television. "Alright, stop being muddled. Your sister really left. She said something cropped up at the eleventh hour. She also missed your mom and couldn't bear to let your mom stay alone in the house for too long. Thus, she left at around half past seven today."

Qiao Dongliang did not blame this attitude of Qiao Nan.

Qiao Zijin did mention that she wanted to change. However, having been in contact for less than half a day, Qiao Nan did not have any opportunity to see the Qiao Zijin's sincerity at all. If Qiao Nan changed her attitude toward Qiao Zijin, Qiao Dongliang would actually feel odd.

Qiao Nan glanced at the clock on the wall which stated that the time was 8:10 AM. "Why didn't you wake me up?"

"Your sister wouldn't let me," Qiao Dongliang said objectively. "Your sister said that you hardly come home. It's been tough on you. We're all a family and there's no need to be so polite to one another, and we should let you sleep. It's not as if there won't be any chance to meet again in the future." Qiao Dongliang also thought that Qiao Nan was certainly tired. He thus did not wake Qiao Nan up as well.

In the end, of course, Qiao Dongliang sent Qiao Zijin off.

Just five minutes before Qiao Nan woke up, Qiao Dongliang was back from sending Qiao Zijin off. "How is it? Have you slept enough? Are you still tired?"

“Tired? Not tired. I don’t feel tired at all. I’m in such good spirits that I can kill a tiger now!” Qiao Zijin was not here anymore. She felt as alive and energetic as a tiger. It was impossible that she would feel tired.

“You...” Qiao Dongliang smiled wryly. “Alright, both of you have grown up and are adults. In the future, you will decide for yourself whichever path you choose and the people that you want to be in contact with. I won’t interfere. So, Nan Nan, you don’t need to feel nervous. I can lord over you for one or two years, but can I lord over you forever? The relationship between the two of you won’t work just with my intervention alone.”

Both of his daughters had a strong temperament and their own way of thinking. He was unable to interfere in any of them. As such, he might as well not do so.

“Dad, there’s only one child in other families. You raised two daughters. It’s been hard on you. I’m in senior high school now. Actually, I’ll graduate in the blink of an eye. When I earn money after I graduate and work, I’ll definitely be filial to you. Dad, it’s also time that you enjoy life.” Her father just had to enjoy life. As for the matter between Qiao Zijin and her, he basically needed not to interfere too much.

“Alright. Look at how happy you are. It’s good that you’re up. I’m going to work.”

“Dad, you’re only going to work now. Won’t you be late?”

“No. As I sent your sister back today, I’ve already applied for two-hour time-off from the factory and told them that I’ll be there later. If I leave now, I’ll, at most, reach in an hour’s time. You’ll be alone at home. Don’t keep reading books for the entire day. Take care of your eyesight and don’t tire yourself out, okay?” Qiao Dongliang took his document bag, pushed his bicycle, and quickly headed to the factory.

Just as Qiao Nan stepped out of the door, the phone in the house rang.

At the sight of the caller ID displayed, Qiao Nan felt happy as she picked it up. “Brother Zhai, you have completed your mission and are back in the army?”

Listening to how happy Qiao Nan sounded, Zhai Sheng, who was at the other end of the phone, could not help smiling. “I’m not the only one who came back. There’s also your Brother Zhou.”

“...” Qiao Nan rolled her eyes. What a petty man. She just mentioned to Brother Zhai once about why Brother Zhou was not around during the period she was in the army camp. Brother Zhai actually remembered it until today. “Brother Zhou also came back. What a coincidence. Why don’t you call Brother Zhou here and let me chat with him for a while?”

There was a flash of guilt in Zhai Sheng’s eyes. “Are you sure? If you’re sure, then I’ll call him over?”

Qiao Nan raised her eyebrows. “You’re so generous? Is it true or false?”

“Of course it’s true. He just arrived at the camp and heard that the English teacher in the army camp previously was Teacher Xiao Qiao, whose name was Qiao Nan. He still feels very bad now. Coincidentally, we can use this opportunity to let him know the relationship between us. After all, he’ll fully recover from this after some time.” After he knew that Nan Nan was Mrs. Regiment Commander, given Zhou Jun’s character, Zhou Jun would not dare to think of Nan Nan anymore. This would solve the problem once and for all.

“Hahaha.” Qiao Nan took her hat off Zhai Sheng. “You’re good. I can’t win. But, why do you have to report to Brother Zhou about our relationship? Did he have anything to do with this? I address him as Brother Zhou because of his age. Don’t tell me that we still need him to give us a red packet when we get married in the future?”

“Nan Nan, this is not a popular practice in the army. There’s suspicion of bribery in receiving red packets. However, you’re still qualified to drink a cup of what he toasts to you. Nan Nan, when are you prepared to drink this toast?” When he heard the word ‘get married’, Zhai Sheng felt extremely soothing and sweet in his heart. It was as if he had taken some ice-cream.

“Brother Zhai, as a soldier, can you be more self-disciplined? I have not reached the legal age of marriage. Regiment commander, as a soldier of the country, do you wish to violate the law despite knowing it?” Getting married? At the very least, there were a few more years to go.

Chapter 570: Zhai Sheng Was Injured

“Right, Brother Zhai, I want to tell you something. Qiao Zijin is back.” Brother Zhai told her before that it was impossible that Qiao Zijin and her mother would return to Ping Cheng before Qiao Zijin sat for her college entrance examination. Why did Qiao Zijin come back without an apparent reason?

“I’m aware.”

“You’re aware... Was that why Qiao Zijin left in a hurry yesterday?” Qiao Zijin had clearly wanted to stay for a few days but she actually left this morning at around half-past seven. At the thought of this, Qiao Nan then had this realization.

If Qiao Zijin had wanted to leave, how could she have left at around half-past seven or six o’clock? That was too early. The heat from the sun at that time was unbearable.

Hence, Qiao Zijin must have suddenly changed her mind and left.

“Yes,” Zhai Sheng replied and indirectly admitted that he was, in fact, the one who arranged Qiao Zijin’s sudden departure. He did not expect Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi to be so recalcitrant. It had only been six months and they had to create trouble again by returning to Ping Cheng to provoke Qiao Nan.

Zhai Sheng had been away to carry out a mission. Thus, he did not have the time to understand the situation.

When Zhai Sheng returned to the army and knew about this, it was already about seven o’clock in the morning today.

That one phone call of Zhai Sheng made Qiao Zijin leave Ping Cheng abidingly.

This time, regardless of why Qiao Zijin came back, Zhai Sheng did not bother to find out. He only needed to ensure that Qiao Nan had peace. “She didn’t provoke you, did she?”

“Provoked me? This time, she has ‘sorted out’ her thoughts. She knew that she was wrong in the past. Therefore, she wished to bring out her best to get my forgiveness.” Qiao Nan switched off the television, in case she could not hear Zhai Sheng’s voice clearly.

“Do you believe her?”

“Believe her? Unless I’m stupid. Once bitten, twice shy. Would I not be afraid?” Qiao Nan laughed at herself. Qiao Zijin had said it herself that one should never intend to harm others, but should always guard against the harm others might do to them.

She did not care if Qiao Zijin would change for the better, and neither did she want to know. Nevertheless, she would never believe it!

“Did my mom send you back yesterday? Or did Elder Lin send you back?” It was good that Qiao Nan did not believe her.

“Master sent me back. Auntie Miao had wanted me to take your family car. I didn’t agree. Brother Zhai, you won’t be angry, right?”

“Not angry. What you did is right.” Before he and Nan Nan announced their relationship publicly, it was best for Nan Nan to minimize her contact with the Zhai family to avoid the gossip of others.

Given the status and power of the Zhai family, of course, the Zhai family would not be the target of gossip. As such, the one who would suffer was Qiao Nan, this young lady who came from an ordinary family.

“Brother Zhai, did you find someone to keep a watch on my mom and Qiao Zijin?”

“Not considered keeping a watch.” At the very most, it was just keeping vigilant.

“Do you know who she had been in contact with recently? This time, after Qiao Zijin came back, she showed great improvements. She boiled water for me to bathe and even cooked for me. She used many self-torture ruses to try to win my trust. My dad was nearly taken in. She was completely the opposite of the aggressive and overbearing one in the past. She was as sorry and pitiful as the little white cabbage planted next door. Qiao Zijin also knew how to pretend to be sensible last time, but that could not be compared to her acts this time. It was as though a wise man had given her pointers. I don’t feel at ease.”

Fortunately, her father had changed for the better. If her father was still like before, it would not take long for him to be completely coaxed by Qiao Zijin on the very first day.

Qiao Zijin had called him father for twenty years. She had not even once helped him wash the dishes, let alone accommodating him or preparing a meal for him.

This time, Qiao Zijin helped her boil water for bathing. Her father must have received the same treatment too.

Qiao Zijin, who never did household chores, was adopting the strategy of enduring hardships without complaining. The impact of this tactic could not be underestimated.

“Okay, I’ll pay more attention to it,” Zhai Sheng replied. “Study well at home. Fight for the opportunity to shorten the period of studies in high school, just like Shi Qing, and enroll into college earlier.”

Qiao Nan gritted her teeth. “Even if I have the ability to skip a grade, can my age shoot up? Or does my respected Regiment Commander Zhai wish to falsify my age so that we can get married earlier?”

Was Brother Zhai the reincarnation of a marriage maniac? Why couldn’t he leave this topic alone?

Although he felt Qiao Nan’s disdain, Zhai Sheng was not angry. On the contrary, he said sincerely, “Nan Nan, I’m not young anymore. I’m twenty-three years old this year. When you take your college entrance examination, I’ll be twenty-five years old, not young anymore. My family’s old master is looking forward to having four generations under one roof. We have to work hard to fulfill this wish of his.”

In other words, when Qiao Nan reached the legal age for marriage, Zhai Sheng was already a twenty-seven-year-old ‘old’ man.

“Is it enough to have four generations under one roof? Should we have a gathering of five generations?”

“If we can, that’ll be good. If we have a son, I’ll ask him to complete this mission the organization gave him.”

“Does it have to be a son? Can’t it be a daughter?” Qiao Nan was a little angry. Don’t tell her that Brother Zhai favored male over female too?

“Of course, it’s good to have a daughter. I’ll take in a son-in-law for her. If the child we give birth to is a girl, we most likely can’t bear to let her marry too early. Hence, we can forget about the gathering of five generations.” A son was different from a daughter. It was better if the son got married earlier. If he had a daughter, he would like to let her stay home for a longer period of time. If any young lad wished to kidnap his daughter, he would break his leg!

“Not chatting with you anymore. You’re derailing from the topic.” Qiao Nan smiled at last. She had suffered due to the favoritism of the male over the female. Of course, she did not wish for her future daughter to suffer the same mishap.

However, just with Zhai Sheng’s words alone, Qiao Nan did not know that in the Zhai family, the phenomenon of favoring the male over the female might not appear. However, there would certainly be a phenomenon of favoring the female over the male.

“Brother Zhai, someone is knocking on my door. I’ll go and see who came. We’ll talk again. You have just returned to the camp. Remember to rest well. Don’t tire yourself out and let your health suffer.”

“Okay, bye.” After Zhai Sheng hung up the phone, he rubbed his forehead listlessly.

In fact, the instant he arrived at the army, Zhai Sheng was so exhausted that he could not wait to lie down on the bed to rest. He did not know why, but he had to make this call. It was as if unless he made the call and heard Qiao Nan’s voice, he would feel something was amiss.

Nevertheless, with this, Zhai Sheng felt thoroughly at ease now. He could finally sleep.

“Regiment commander, can I come in?” The voice of a young lady could be heard from outside the door.

“Come in.” Zhai Sheng’s face turned stiff. He looked very serious.

“Regiment Commander Zhai, Doctor Wang said that you refused to visit the clinic, so she asked me to bring the medicine and bandage here. Can I help you manage your wound?” Seeing that the clothing on Zhai Sheng’s arms was all drenched and red, there were flashes of heartache and admiration in the eyes of the young nurse.

He had suffered such a serious injury and bled so much. Yet, Regiment Commander Zhai did not mutter a sound of pain. She heard that he had injured himself while saving other comrades. Regiment Commander Zhai was so capable!

“Sure.” Zhai Sheng lifted his arms. “But I hope you can be quicker. I’m exhausted and want to rest.”

“Regiment Commander Zhai, why don’t you lie on the bed first?”