

RTAMM 591

Chapter 591: Rage

“Since you find it troublesome, how about I make it up to you for taking the humanities course and causing you to lose the chance to surpass me? Why don’t we do this? I’ll help you pack your clothing and send you back home tomorrow?” Qiao Nan looked serious. Although she was used to some things, she had been forced to do so.

Shi Qing could tell that Qiao Nan was being serious. She lay on the bed and did not move.

“Hey...”

“Snore, snore, snore...” Shi Qing pulled the little blanket and covered her face. She expressed that she had fallen asleep and could not hear a thing.

“You’re good.” Qiao Nan tugged the corners of her lips. She switched off the lights and fell asleep.

Although Shi Qing was not prepared to return to her own house, she had many belongings in that ‘new’ house. The next day, Qiao Nan still accompanied Shi Qing for a trip there. Shi Qing took over some clothes, schoolbag, books and such.

When Shi Qing arrived at the house of the Qiao family, she was surprised to see another 1.2-meter bed in Qiao Nan’s bedroom. “Why are there two beds?”

“Nonsense. Don’t tell me you want to continue to squeeze with me in one bed!” Qiao Nan’s face turned pale and said unhappily, “I’m not used to sleeping with others. I’m used to sleeping alone. Do you know how bad I feel having to squeeze with someone? I really can’t imagine how I can tolerate you for half a month.”

It was really also because Shi Qing’s sleeping posture was fine. Otherwise, she definitely would have kicked Shi Qing out of the bed.

“Haha, no matter what you say, I’ve got my own bed.” Shi Qing really did not mind sleeping in the same bed as Qiao Nan. Nevertheless, as a young lady, having her own bed was certainly something to be happy about.

Qiao Nan passed the mattress cover to Shi Qing. “It has been washed. Put it on yourself. Don’t feel so happy. The money spent on these items is from your dad.” Fortunately, her bedroom was big enough and could accommodate two beds. Otherwise, it would be terrible.

Of course, fortunately, she had the help of her father, Qiao Dongliang, too.

Qiao Dongliang knew a little carpentry work. He bought a plank and custom-made a very long study table that was of an appropriate height for both Qiao Nan and Shi Qing.

The study table was leaning on both ends of the wall, from left to right. It was hinged right on the wall.

Although both Qiao Nan and Shi Qing were high school students and had many books, the two could stay in their own lane and mind their own business. Their belongings would not be mixed or messed up.

Besides the study table, there was also a small closet.

With a room size of slightly over twenty square-meters, excluding the study table and closet, it was not difficult to accommodate two beds. There was more than enough space to spare.

“You even separated it so well. Thanks much,” Shi Qing said sincerely. Although there was only a room, she had almost everything that Qiao Nan had and was not shortchanged.

Compared to that one-month stay in the house of the Qiu family, she felt really happy during this one-month stay in the house of the Qiao family.

“No need to thank me. You stay and look after the house. My dad was a little busy today and didn’t have time to go marketing.” At the sight that it was already four o’clock, Qiao Nan took some money and ran toward the market.

Shi Qing did not know how to do marketing. She could, at most, be a coolie and help carry the purchases.

A few days ago, Qiao Nan asked Shi Qing to help with that, but Qiao Dongliang, who took the money from the Shi family, did not feel good after knowing this. He simply gave Qiao Nan a scolding. Thereafter, to save the trouble, Qiao Nan did not bring Shi Qing along when she went marketing. Anyway, the items were not that heavy.

Ring, ring, ring...

“Hello?” Shi Qing, who was the only one at home, picked up the phone.

“Qing Qing, school is reopening tomorrow. Do you have enough money with you?”

“Dad! I have enough money.”

The excited voice of her daughter could be heard clearly from the other side of the phone. Shi Peng felt quite strange. It seemed that since she stayed with the Qiao family, her mood always sounded so good each time she picked up the phone call. She sounded even better than when she was staying at the house in Mo Du, let alone the house of the Qiu family. “You’re so happy to stay with the Qiao family? Is Qiao Nan that good?”

“Good!” Shi Qing said in a serious manner. “Dad, today, the Qiao family bought me a bed. It’s in Qiao Nan’s room. I have a new bed. There’s a very long study table in the bedroom that Qiao Nan and I sleep in. It’s connected from one end of the wall to the other. Qiao Nan and I take one side each. Uncle Qiao even prepared two table lamps for us. However, Qiao Nan chided Uncle Qiao. She said who would switch on the table lamps when the ceiling lights are so bright.”

“That’s your dad’s money.” When he heard that his daughter was so close to other people’s father, Shi Peng felt a little jealous.

Shi Qing rolled her eyes. “Forget it, Dad. We gave the Qiu family so many benefits, and Qi Minlan is even my auntie. Why didn’t she treat me better? During the month I was staying with the Qiu family, Qiu Chenxi’s bedroom was locked tightly. Each time I returned to my bedroom and passed by Qiu Chenxi’s room, someone would stare at me nervously. Crap, we are also wealthy. We don’t lack that little money. When did you not satisfy me whenever I wanted to buy something? Would I be so foolish and ignorant to want Qiu Chenxi’s stuff? What did they take me for?”

Shi Peng was silent for a while. “The people in the Qiao family are really quite honest.”

“Right, Dad. Didn’t I ask you to investigate the situation of the Qiao family? How did the investigations go?” Both of Qiao Nan’s parents were still alive. She also had a sister who was two years older than her. She had never seen these two people before.

She only briefly heard people mention them. They were quite pretentious and did not treat Qiao Nan well at all. That was the reason Uncle Qiao and Qiao Nan lived separately from Qiao Nan’s mother. The couple each took a child in hand respectively and continued with life.

“The information is with me. I’ll send them to your school tomorrow, so don’t forget to tell me your class when you report to school tomorrow.”

“I won’t forget. Dad, did Qiu Chenxi go to the army camp today?”

“Yes, she did.” Of course, she was held back at the entrance and could not enter.

“Wonderful. Dad, Qiao Nan went marketing. She’ll most likely be back soon. I won’t chat further.”

“Alright, if you meet with any matter, remember to give me a call.”

“Okay, bye, Dad.”

“Goodbye.”

After chatting, Shi Qing hung up the phone, feeling happy and satisfied. She did not know that just after she hung up the phone, her father’s phone rang again. “Hello, good day.”

“What’s so good? With a bad son like you around, how can your father be good? Your father asked you to retrieve that resignation letter, have you done so?” Although there was a phone separating the two of them, Shi Peng could still feel the rage in Old Master Shi’s heart from the tone of the latter’s voice.

“No, it’s been submitted. I can’t take it back. You can’t stop it either,” Shi Peng said without expressing much emotion.

In order to prevent his father from ‘hijacking’ his resignation letter, he had specially sought Zhai Yaohui’s help for the submission.

“Are you mad?! Everything the Shi family has is on your shoulders! A few years ago, you lost to Zhai Yaohui. We did not have fate with the chief position. Now, do you want to completely destroy the future of our Shi family?!” Old Master Shi was nearly driven mad by Shi Peng.

Chapter 592: The Frightening Stare

Shi Peng was clearly his biological son. He looked exactly like him when he was young.

He did not understand. As his son, why was his temperament so odd? He was not ambitious at all.

“Am I really the gate to the future of the Shi family? Why do I feel that the Shi family does not place the hope on me or Qing Qing but Chenxi? Dad, since you have your own plan, then nurture Qi Chenxi well. Qing Qing and I will not join in the fun. In the future, you can utilize all the resources of the Shi family on Chenxi. Qi Minlan and you have been blaming me for not willing to help Chenxi. This time, I’m being generous. I promise that I will not stop you from giving all of what the Shi family has to Chenxi. Although Qing Qing is a lady, her temper is strong. I believe she’ll be able to create a bright future for herself through her own efforts.”

Hence, he did not yearn for anything of the Shi family, and nor did Qing Qing.

“You, you’re resenting me for disliking the fact that Qing Qing is a granddaughter and not a grandson? Even if this is so, she’s also my biological granddaughter, right? Am I not good to her?” Old Master Shi was driven mad. How could a true man who did great things take issue with such trivial matters?

Didn’t he treat Chenxi well for the sake of the Shi family?

When Chenxi married Zhai Sheng and lent the Shi family a helping hand thereafter, would he, an old man who had one of his legs in the coffin, truly gain anything from this? From all perspectives, wasn't he doing it for the sake of his son, Shi Peng?

As for Qing Qing...

As long as Chenxi was around, regardless of who Qing Qing was married to in the future, the other party would have second thoughts on bullying Qing Qing once he took her family status into account.

Qing Qing had been shortchanged a little now. Nevertheless, she would enjoy great happiness in the future. How was it possible that he would not be good to his son and granddaughter?

Was it meaningful to compete for temporary gains?

“Shi Peng, you've always been a smart child. I'm really very disappointed that you'll think in such a way!”

“My father, you're not the only one who's disappointed. Me, too. Since we're so disappointed with each other, let's not force each other then. When Qing Qing was five years old, you punished her and made her run until she fainted just because she snatched a doll from Qiu Chenxi. Do you know how bad my heart ached back then?”

The matter that was still fresh in Shi Qing's memory, her father, Shi Peng, had never forgotten it too.

“You, you still bear a grudge against me regarding this? This young brat, without your father, would you be born to this world? Is your father or your daughter more important? Moreover, nothing happened to Qing Qing, right? We're soldiers. Don't we already know that this will happen if we run too much at one go? We'll be fine after resting for a while, won't we?”

“Dad, if I was the one who snatched toys from Qi Minlan in the past and Qi Minlan cried, would you punish me and make me run until I fainted in order to appease Qi Minlan?” Shi Peng asked coldly.

“...”

On the other end of the phone, Old Master Shi was silent.

This was because he knew. He would not!

Hence, all being said, Old Master Shi still disliked Shi Qing for being a granddaughter and not a grandson. He chose to punish Shi Qing without hesitation for the sake of building a good relationship with Qiu Chenxi, and due to the relationship between Qiu Chenxi and Zhai Sheng. This was so that Qiu Chenxi would take a liking to her maternal grandfather.

“Dad, if there’s no other matter, I’m hanging up. I’ve submitted my resignation letter, but the leaders in the country have not agreed to it. Therefore, I’m still considered part of the army and have to handle the matters here. If I continue to be on the phone with you and someone happens to look for me, the calls will be placed on hold. It’s not good as this will delay the affairs of the country and the army. I’m hanging up.”

Beep...

When Old Master Shi heard the beeping tone, he was so furious that he simply smashed the phone.

“Regiment Commander, I can’t get through to Officer Shi’s phone line.” Zhou Jun put down the phone helplessly. “Why don’t I make a trip? I’ll waste at most five minutes.”

“No need.” Zhai Sheng was dressed in a camouflaged suit. “We have only destroyed a group of them. Most of them escaped. News of these people is hard to come by. We don’t have time to waste. Anyway, I’ve already mentioned this to the political commissar. Let’s go.”

“But regiment commander, the injury on your arms...” The scabs on the wound had not healed and fallen off. If Regiment Commander Zhai rushed to the front line, wouldn’t it be too dangerous?

Zhai Sheng looked undaunted as he glanced at his arms. “It’s just a minor injury. No issue.”

“Yes, Regiment Commander Zhai.” Zhou Jun knew that he could not stop Zhai Sheng. Last time, Regiment Commander Zhai was injured because of him. This time, he would definitely not commit such a lowly mistake and implicate Regiment Commander Zhai again. He even wanted to work

harder in this mission to make a great contribution so that he could make amends for his previous failure and humiliation.

After making the arrangements and ensuring that they were well-prepared, Zhai Sheng immediately brought a group of soldiers and left the army camp, heading toward that group of people.

“Nan Nan, it’s great. We’re in the same class again.” When school reopened in summer, the second-year senior high students first ran to the notice board to look at the class arrangements. Of course, when Tang Mengran saw that she was still in the same class as Qiao Nan, she was overjoyed.

Most importantly, the six dormitory mates were all in the same class. Moreover, they had also been arranged to stay in the same dormitory. “Oh my god, I’m so happy. This is happier than striking it big in the lottery!”

“...”

Zheng Lingling, Fang Fang, and the group looked at one another.

Given the grades of the six of them, it was, in fact, not surprising that they would all be in the first class of the humanities course upon the streaming.

Nevertheless, this phenomenon of the six of them still staying in the same dormitory was too good to be true.

“Do you believe that there’s something so coincidental in this world? That we happen to be those six lucky ones?” Fang Fang adjusted her glasses. There was a problem somewhere.

“Why do you care so much? It’s fine as long as the outcome is good. The six of us can be together again.” Tang Mengran hugged Fang Fang like a naive and silly girl. She was only concerned about the outcome and completely disregarded the process.

“Alright, don’t go overboard in your happiness. You’re drawing hate from others.” He Yun patted Tang Mengran’s shoulders and asked her to look at Shi Qing’s gaze, which was horribly frightening.

Tang Mengran jumped in shock. “What’s happening here? I didn’t offend her. Don’t tell me she bears a grudge because Nan Nan scored half a point mark higher than her in the previous final term

examination? And now that the two of them are in different classes, she will not have a chance to surpass Nan Nan?” If that was the case, shouldn’t Shi Qing be staring at Nan Nan and not the few of them?

“It could be this reason. But forget it. Don’t bother.” Tao Zhenqin brushed her hands. “There’s no need for Qiao Nan to pay the tuition fees, but we need to. Hurry, the places for paying tuition fees will definitely be crowded now. Go and queue early.”

“Right, right, right. The six of us will still live together but the dormitory has changed. We still have to clean it.” Tang Mengran, the head of the dormitory, started to feel anxious. “Nan Nan, why don’t you go and take a look at the condition of the dormitory first?”

Qiao Nan carried her schoolbag and replied swiftly without hesitation, “Alright. I’ll take a look at the dormitory while you all can go and pay the tuition fees.”

Chapter 593: Worried For Zhai Sheng

After Qiao Nan left, Tang Mengran leaned against Zheng Lingling and asked, “Zheng Lingling, don’t you think that the way Shi Qing looked at us was as if we had snatched something away from her? What did we snatch away from her?” She was sullen as she could not understand why.

Fang Fang adjusted her glasses. “If my eyes did not fail me, today, Shi Qing and Qiao Nan came to school together.”

“What do you mean?”

“What I mean is that the two of them have become friends.” Fang Fang smiled. “Disclaimer. That is, if my understanding is not wrong.”

“Impossible. Previously, wasn’t Qiao Nan her target? Didn’t she want to compete with Qiao Nan for the top scorer position? Nan Nan will be in a different class from her. If she’s angry, she should be targeting Nan Nan. Opponents turned friends. Is this an act from a drama script?” Tang Mengran did not believe it. During the last semester, although Shi Qing was only in the class for a month, she was fearsome and menacing.

Only one and a half months had passed and the two of them had turned from foes to friends. Why did she feel that this sounded very ridiculous?

“Don’t you feel ashamed saying this?” He Yun moved a step forward. “When the six of us first came together as dormitory mates, the five of us were also quite unfriendly toward Nan Nan. It’s so different from now. We’ve progressed to the second year and have been streamed to humanities and science classes, but the five of us still hope to be in the same class as Nan Nan. Tang Mengran, you have to admit that our dormitory group is now revolving around Nan Nan.” Nan Nan was the center party of their group.

“That was something that happened a year ago. Don’t bring it up anymore. Take it that I didn’t say anything.” Tang Mengran leaned on Tao Zhenqin’s back and pretended to be dead. She hoped to forget her once foolish self.

So what if Nan Nan came in top in the final term examination? There would always be differences between humans.

Even if she guarded against Nan Nan, it would not change the fact of Nan Nan hoarding the position of the top scorer in the cohort.

“I’m glad you know.” He Yun gave Tang Mengran a poke on the head with her finger. It was now their turn to pay the tuition fees.

To the second-year senior high school students, attending summer classes was no different from the commencement of the formal school term. After the ten days of summer classes, it would be Thursday afternoon. They would then take a break and report to school again in the afternoon of that weekend to commence the classes for the new semester.

“Qiao Nan, tell you something.”

Qiao Nan had just moved over her blanket and stuff to the new dormitory. Tang Mengran and the group had also paid the tuition fees and came over. “What’s the matter?”

“I can only say that everything is fated!” Tang Mengran laughed with extreme arrogance. Her laughter made Zheng Lingling and the rest feel like punching her.

It was fine to tell. Why did she have to imitate the strange laughter in the television shows? She was laughing like a witch.

“What is fated?” Qiao Nan had finished putting on her mattress cover. She was wiping away the sweat on her face. A summer without an air conditioner was truly terrible. “Quickly turn on the fan. I feel like an ice cream that’s taken out from the refrigerator. I’m melting under the heat.”

The dormitories in the school were stuffier than those in the army. The wind was unlike the wind from the hills in the army, which was more cooling.

“I’ve turned it on.” Fang Fang turned on the fan with the sound of a click. “What a weather. Luckily, we don’t have to participate in military training anymore. Otherwise, we’ll die of heatstroke.”

The sound of the fan blowing could be heard as the blades circled. Qiao Nan then felt a little better. “What did you all want to tell me just now? What did you mean by everything is fated? Tang Mengran, do you have a boyfriend now?”

“Crap! Who dares to be involved in a romantic relationship at this juncture?” Tang Mengran was choking on her saliva. “I was not talking about myself. I was not referring to anyone who’s in puppy love either. It’s Zhu Baoguo and Shi Qing. I keep feeling that the two of them are at loggerheads with each other. Each time they meet each other, their eyes will form the shape of a triangle. Unexpectedly, they’re actually going to be in the same class this semester. Nan Nan, don’t you think this is fate?”

Tang Mengran laughed and slapped the bed. “I can fully imagine. When they are in the same class, and without Nan Nan looking over Zhu Baoguo, the two of them will definitely be cross-eyed.”

Given this situation, were Zhu Baoguo and Shi Qing still prepared to study properly?

Fang Fang was amused too. “Certainly. I can imagine how interesting it will be for them in the future.”

“I feel that our upcoming lives will be very interesting. Take a look at the timetable. It’s terrible.” Zheng Lingling lay on her bed. It was the second year of senior high school and the homework was really much more than that in the first year. It would really drive someone to the grave.

“Oh dear, isn’t that so...”

“Terrible.”

When the few ladies saw this semester’s timetable, all of them were frightened badly. They were crying and screaming to heaven.

Qiao Nan was the only one who seemed extraordinarily silent.

She was in her second year of senior high school studies. That meant Qiao Zijin was in her third year.

Before the college entrance examination ended, Qiao Zijin would definitely concentrate on her studies and not distract herself because of Qiao Nan.

In other words, she would have about a year left to study in peace.

When Qiao Zijin completed her college entrance examination and the grades were final, she would have to guard against Qiao Zijin’s numerous tricks. Qiao Nan would be in her third year of senior high school studies then.

The weather was so hot but the students could not have a break in their studies.

The cicada on the tree outside chirped continuously. The teachers at the stage podium taught enthusiastically. Some of the students conscientiously listened to the lectures while many nearly dozed off under the torture of such warm weather.

“Ah, I’m finally done with these ten days.” Tang Mengran stretched herself. “This won’t do. When I’m home, I have to ask my parents to give me some supplement. I wish to eat ice pops now.”

“Little Fat Tang, eat more and become Big Fat Tang two days later when you’re back.” Zheng Lingling glanced coldly at Tang Mengran’s tummy, which had obviously grown much during the summer vacation, and hinted without any reservation.

“You don’t hit a person in his face, and neither do you expose a person’s shortcomings. Zheng Lingling, you don’t have empathy and love for your classmates.” At the thought of her flabby tummy, Tang Mengran lost all her appetite. She did not eat much during the summer vacation. Why had she grown so fat? She was now fearful of the medical examination when school reopened and dared not stand on the weighing machine anymore.

“You won’t be fat if you eat less and exercise more. Alright, quickly go home.” Qiao Nan was not in a mood to chit chat.

She had been in school for ten days. In other words, this was the tenth day of Brother Zhai’s mission. She did not know about his situation this time and whether he was back.

It was not convenient in the school. Qiao Nan had to hide even when she was making phone calls.

In order to make herself focus, Qiao Nan endured these ten days and did not make any call to the army camp. Today, she really could not take it anymore. “I’ve something on and have to go back first. You all take your time to chat.”

Qiao Nan carried her schoolbag and dashed out of the school with a hundred-meter relay speed.

Shi Qing, who had been waiting at the entrance of the school, was amused when she saw this. She was already expecting it. “Why? You’re worried and scared now?”

Chapter 594: Qiao Nan Flares Up

She had really thought that Qiao Nan could let go so easily.

“Hurry, let’s go back.” Qiao Nan rolled her eyes at Shi Qing. Wasn’t she asking the obvious?

“Alright, let’s go back. After all, if Brother Zhai is not back yet and you really want to find out about his situation, don’t you still have to rely on me to call and ask my dad?” Qiao Nan could not leave her out of this matter. “Otherwise, do you want to try to call the Zhai family directly? Anyway, Auntie Miao, who doesn’t know a thing about it, treats you quite well. If you call, she’ll definitely let you know.”

“Don’t kid around.”

“Kid around on what?” Zhu Baoguo caught up with them in a few steps. “Xiao Qiao, you went off so quickly. I even went to your classroom to look for you. Wait, Xiao Qiao, why are you walking with this woman?”

Zhu Baoguo quickly pulled Qiao Nan away from Shi Qing to his side. “What do you want?”

“Do you think you can intervene if I want to do anything?” Shi Qing was amused. “Why? Have you forgotten how you were beaten up during the last semester? Don’t think that I’ll be scared of you just because you have got a tan.”

Having not seen him for more than a month, it seemed that Zhu Baoguo had gone through the second round of puberty. He had grown taller by a fair bit.

Qiao Nan looked at him and deduced that Zhu Baoguo’s height now was certainly not lower than that of Zhai Sheng by more than three centimeters.

Zhu Baoguo’s skin was considered quite fair in the past but he now looked very different.

When he was with a group of students, his skin was so tanned that it stood out among the crowd.

“Zhu Baoguo, where did you go during summer vacation? Did you go sun-tanning every day?” Shi Qing was very shocked. Now, Zhu Baoguo had become one of the black people?

“This is not the main point.” Zhu Baoguo stood firmly in front of Qiao Nan and looked at Shi Qing in disdain. “Your grades are so good. Don’t you know the saying about looking at a person with different light after they went away? In the past, I purposely gave in to you because you’re a woman. But now, after learning the teachings of China’s Confucius, I feel that there are two kinds of people that I shouldn’t give into. First, a villain. Second, women like you.”

“Are you trying to say that only women and small-minded men are hard to deal with in the world? ” Shi Qing’s expression turned stiff. She was most annoyed by those men who looked down on women.

“Yes!”

“You’re asking for a beating, aren’t you? You’re not happy that I gave in to you last time, so you’re knocking at my door and yearning for a fight?”

“It’s still uncertain who will be beaten.”

Both were from the army and were offspring of veteran revolutionaries. They had the same temperament—strong-willed, not to be trifled with, competitive, and fierce.

When Zhu Baoguo met Shi Qing, it was simply akin to a giant asteroid striking the earth. In less than a few words, the conversation between the two of them nearly turned into a fight.

Qiao Nan took a deep breath. She carried her schoolbag and could not be bothered about these two ‘warriors’. She then walked in the direction of her home.

“Ah, Xiao Qiao, I still have something to tell you!” Qiao Nan was leaving. Zhu Baoguo thus stopped picking a fight with Shi Qing. He caught up with Qiao Nan in quickened steps.

“Qiao Nan, wait for me.” Shi Qing also gave Zhu Baoguo a stare. She withdrew her fists and was not going to fight anymore.

“Aren’t the two of you going to fight? Remember to look for an isolated place in case someone sees you exchanging blows with each other. They may look for the teacher or call the police. At that time, the reputation of both the Zhu family and the Shi family won’t be too pleasant. Don’t worry. We’re all classmates. I won’t stop you and neither will I tell the teacher.”

Qiao Nan walked sullenly. Who said that she had to wait for Shi Qing to go back together and make a phone call?

She had the telephone number of Officer Shi’s office.

She did not believe that Officer Shi would refuse to tell her Brother Zhai’s situation if she called and asked him.

As for Zhu Baoguo and Shi Qing, they could fight as they wished if they liked it. She could not be bothered to persuade or stop them.

“On the account of giving you face, I won’t fight with her anymore. If I win, others will most likely say that there’s no honor to the victor in an unequal contest. I’m a grown-up man. If I win against a young lady in a fight, it’s nothing rare or to be proud of.”

“Zhu Baoguo, don’t just brag with your words. If you have it with you, let’s exchange pointers. You’re great with words. You are so capable.” Shi Qing was most unconvinced by such words. “Also, why do you keep following us? The house of the Zhu family is not located in this direction.”

“What do you mean by I keep following you? Aren’t you the one following us?” Zhu Baoguo’s face turned black. “Shi Qing, don’t implicate Xiao Qiao for the matter between us. Indeed, the house of the Zhu is not located in this direction, but neither is the house of the Qiu family, is it?”

“What Qiu family? I’ve long moved out of that place. Nevertheless, my new house is also not located in this direction.”

When Shi Qing saw a smile forming on Zhu Baoguo’s face when she said that, she raised her eyebrows and smiled. “But I bet you don’t know that I’ll be staying at the house of the Qiao family from the beginning of this semester, or do you? I’ll be eating, staying, and going to school with Qiao Nan.”

“You’re staying at the house of the Qiao family? Xiao Qiao, is this true?” Zhu Baoguo jumped in shock. “Xiao Qiao, aren’t you afraid that she’ll cause your death if you stay with her? She’s Qiu Chenxi’s relative and they bear the same family name. Most likely, their temperaments are similar. They’ll annoy you to death.”

Qiao Nan paused in her steps and let out a long sigh. “I’m going to be annoyed to death by the two of you. Zhu Baoguo, tell me, what did you gain in the army during the summer vacation? What do you wish to tell me?”

“I…” Zhu Baoguo was stunned for a moment. “I just wanted to tell you that my physical skills have improved. From today onward, you no longer need to be afraid of anyone. I’ll still protect you in school.” The ‘anyone’ in Zhu Baoguo’s words was purely targeted at Shi Qing.

“Really? First, congratulations to you on your great progress. Second, I’m a little busy today, Zhu Baoguo. Most likely, I don’t have time to entertain you. As for Shi Qing, she’s indeed staying at my

house now. She has fallen out with Qiu Chenxi because of helping me. At least, she's no longer my enemy, so you don't need to target her anymore. Understand?"

"Understood."

"Very good. Since you've understood, go home and keep your grandpa company. You've been away from home for the whole of the summer vacation. You're finally back but the school has also reopened. Elder Lee must have missed you very much. Make use of these two days and visit Elder Lee to keep him company."

"Okay." Zhu Baoguo nodded. His actions resembled that of a robot and he really started walking in the direction of the house of the Lee family.

When he was about a hundred meters away, Zhu Baoguo then wiped the sweat on his forehead.

"Xiao Qiao looked so scary just now. She exuded such a frightening aura. Where did Xiao Qiao go during the summer vacation? Did she go for training too?"

"Qiao Nan, you're really good. Just a few words and you coaxed Zhu Baoguo into leaving." After Zhu Baoguo left, Shi Qing felt more at ease. When the two of them were together, it was truly akin to the collision of water and fire. There was never peace.

"You still dare to laugh." Qiao Nan chided Shi Qing. "Zhu Baoguo doesn't know what I'm anxious about, but you do! Do you believe that I'll give a call to your dad to make you pack up and move out of my house immediately?"

Shi Qing's tiny mouth shriveled. Alright, Qiao Nan was truly angered. "I... Let's quickly go back and give my dad a call, alright?"

Chapter 595: There Is No News

"Hahaha." Qiao Nan sneered. She looked at Shi Qing from the corners of her eyes. Shi Qing was the same age as Zhu Baoguo. Both were only three years old this year!

When Qiao Nan arrived home, Qiao Dongliang was not back yet. Qiao Nan had planned the time such that she could give Zhai Sheng a call before Qiao Dongliang returned.

Unfortunately, after a few calls, Qiao Nan had to hang up when she heard the beeping tone from the other phone, which hinted that no one answered the phone. “No one answered the phone. Most likely, he’s not back yet.”

Qiao Nan felt so sad that she leaned against the sofa. There were also disadvantages after Zhu Chengqi installed the phone at her house.

In the past, even if she was worried about Brother Zhai, there was nothing she could do.

Now, there was a way to get in touch, but the situation such as today, not being able to get through, would only make one more worried. “Shi Qing, do you know about this kind of situation where Brother Zhai goes out to carry out a mission? Roughly, how long will it take for him to complete and return from it?”

“It’s hard to say as it depends on the difficulty of the mission. Whether it goes smoothly and some external factors are not within control. Fast ones will be very fast. As for slow ones, it’s possible that it will take one, two, or even six months.” Shi Qing’s voice turned increasingly softer. This was because she knew that although she was telling the truth, it was not helping Qiao Nan at all.

“Is that the case?” Qiao Nan gritted her teeth and dialed the number of Shi Peng’s office. “Hello, is this Officer Shi? Yes, Shi Qing is doing quite well at my house. Do you want to speak a few words with her?”

“No need. I know she should be doing quite well.” Shi Peng took off the glasses on his nose bridge and drank a mouthful of water. “You called because you wanted to know about Zhai Sheng’s situation, right?”

“Yes, Officer Shi. Has Brother Zhai returned? Did he contact the army?”

“No. The mission that Zhai Sheng is carrying out this time is a little cumbersome. It’s confidential and I can’t reveal much to you. But don’t worry. Zhai Sheng brought along all the elite soldiers in our army this time. Given his capability, he will be back safely. Why don’t we do this? Once I receive the news of Zhai Sheng’s safety, I’ll give you a call.”

Shi Peng could completely understand Qiao Nan’s mood.

When he was young and in good health, he was always at the front line as well so that he could fight for a good future.

At that time, Qing Qing's mother was always worried about him. She could not sleep every night whenever he was out on a mission. It was only after a few years of marriage that Qing Qing's mother gradually became used to it.

"Thanks so much, Officer Shi." After hanging up the phone, Qiao Nan looked pale. She looked very listless, like a frosted eggplant. "Shi Qing, no wonder I've heard people mention in the past that it's not easy to be a soldier's wife. It's true. My heart is suffering."

She was not yet the wife of a soldier. However, she was already in such a way before she was married to Brother Zhai.

Shi Qing brought over two cups of water and passed one of them to Qiao Nan. "Qiao Nan, cherish your fortune. Both of us know that given Brother Zhai's family background, he will not forever be at the front line to carry out this type of dangerous mission. When Brother Zhai accumulates enough experience and credits, sooner or later, he will take over the position of the chief from Chief Zhai."

Hence, amongst the many wives of the soldiers, Qiao Nan would certainly see the light at the end of the tunnel one day.

The other wives of the typical soldiers, most fearfully, would only be able to avoid this kind of fears and worries when their men retired from the army.

Qiao Nan held her forehead and smiled wryly. "Who asked me to choose Brother Zhai?"

"Alright, cheer up." Shi Qing patted Qiao Nan's shoulders. "Cheer up. This is not the first day that Brother Zhai became a soldier. He joined the army when he was eighteen years old. Counting from that, he already has seven years of experience. He has also carried out this type of dangerous missions in the past before. Didn't he do well until today and even assumed the role of a regiment commander? Nothing will happen. Don't scare yourself."

Qiao Nan took a deep breath. "I'll try hard not to."

"If you're really worried, I'll accompany you for a jog. When you perspire and feel tired after running, you won't feel anything," Shi Qing said like a loyal friend.

Qiao Nan sat up. "I decline. I'm not Zhu Baoguo and you. I'm not enthusiastic about this kind of training. Alright, I feel much better now after letting it out. As my dad doesn't agree to it, when I encountered any matter pertaining to Brother Zhai in the past, I had no one to talk to. Fortunately, now, I'm not always the tree hole. It's better to take turns as a tree hole."

Shi Qing finally had some practical use by staying at her house.

"Tree, tree hole?" Shi Qing sat beside Qiao Nan. "I always heard you mention a tree hole. What does 'tree hole' mean? It's definitely not as simple as its name, is it?"

"It's almost the same meaning," Qiao Nan said, feeling exhausted at heart. "When my dad comes back, you know what to do."

"I know." Not to bring up Brother Zhai in front of Uncle Qiao. She was aware of this. "Qiao Nan, do you have anything else to tell me?"

"What else should I tell you?" She did not wish to and did not feel like saying anything now.

"Will you regret being together with Brother Zhai because of this matter? Will Brother Zhai have to face the situation of losing his girlfriend when he comes back?" Shi Qing tested and asked the question. It was not that she had not seen such examples before.

Qiao Nan held her head as she turned her body and looked at Shi Qing. "If I say yes, then what will you do?"

"What will I do?" Shi Qing jumped. "I'll die a horrible death!!!"

"Hahaha." Qiao Nan laughed. This was because she could completely imagine it. "Do you know what question Brother Zhai most often asked me about after I'm together with him is?"

"I don't know."

"He often asked me if I regretted it." Regretted being with him, and that she had to endure a different kind of stress despite being so young.

“Brother Zhai also asked this question before, and he did so very often? Didn’t it mean that Brother Zhai was quite lacking in confidence before you?” Shi Qing was truly taken aback this time.

Qiao Nan rubbed her face. “Yes, Brother Zhai, who has so many good qualities, is actually not confident in front of me. He’s not confident because he cares. I’m a little too young but Brother Zhai and you seem to think that I have no ability to handle stress at all. Like what you said, if I’m together with Brother Zhai, we will see the light at the end of the tunnel sooner or later. There are so many wives of the soldiers who won’t.”

In comparison, she was very fortunate.

“Don’t talk about this anymore. Brother Zhai is so capable. He will definitely complete his mission successfully and come back safely. The two of us are being paranoid. Women can’t have too much spare time. We will think astray when we do.” Shi Qing’s brains were nearly entangled. She felt that life would truly be at stake if they continued with the topic. Of course, there would not be a problem with other people’s lives. Her life would be at stake.

“Uncle Qiao will be back soon. Hold on. Hold on.” For the sake of her life, she could not continue to chat further.

Chapter 596: Dangerous Mission

“Oh.” Qiao Nan cleared her mind lest her father noticed anything amiss.

Fortunately, there was Shi Qing with her.

Even though Qiao Nan seemed absent-minded, Shi Qing could help cover up for her in front of Qiao Dongliang.

In the meantime, Zhai Sheng and the group that was with him were carrying out their missions near China border. They did not have an easy time. They had intended to intercept a group that was hiding at the border, but they seemed to have vanished. Zhai Sheng tried many other means, including working with the border guards, but they could not be found.

“Regiment commander, we just received news that some bodies were found in the forest to the east. It is highly likely that the bodies are the mercenaries that we are looking for,” Song Yin said hurriedly. These mercenaries were highly skilled. They were as good as the soldiers. They had obviously been through the strictest training that was in no way inferior to the training in the camp.

They had been after them for days, but they were not able to take them down. It was to their surprise that the group of people would vanish suddenly and it turned out that they were killed. “Regiment Commander Zhai, do you think they may have been silenced?” In other words, there were another group of people apart from these mercenaries.

“We could be certain about that.” Without the second group of people, these mercenaries would not have died. “But we have to wait until we see the bodies before we can make any judgments.”

Zhai Sheng and the soldiers followed the clues and found the bodies.

Zhai Sheng had fought with these people twice. He could tell straight away that they were the mercenaries they were looking for.

There were not many wounds on the bodies, but their carotid arteries seemed to have been severed, causing them to die due to excessive blood loss. “Search around carefully and see if there are any other clues on them.”

Even though the chances were slim, Zhai Sheng would not want to miss any clues.

Many people searched the bodies for clues, but nothing could be found.

As such, Zhai Sheng and the soldiers had no idea who the mastermind behind the mercenaries was and what illegal activities they intended to carry out in China. “Alright, let’s go back to discuss. Someone will be in charge here.”

“Yes, Regiment Commander Zhai!”

Zhai Sheng and the soldiers returned to the temporary rest area after a vain attempt to discuss what they should do next.

Zhai Sheng had to know the motive and significance of these mercenaries and he must find the people who killed the mercenaries. Otherwise, it would cause trouble in the future.

“Regiment Commander Zhai, it’s getting late. Should I buy meals for us?” Song Yin noticed that it was getting late and all the comrades were hungry.

“Sure,” Zhai Sheng replied without looking up. He did not have any appetite, but he could not ask his comrades to go hungry with him.

Song Yin took the money and bought their meals at a restaurant.

Since they were at the border, there were a lot of foreigners. Some of the shops were, in fact, managed by foreigners. At times, they had to converse in simple English.

Among the people who carried out the mission with Zhai Sheng, apart from Zhai Sheng, who was fluent in English, Song Yin was the only person who knew simple English. Hence, he was usually tasked with buying meals for them.

After packing the meals, Song Yin pushed the trolley back to their rest area.

In order to make it back to the rest area as fast as possible, Song Yin took a side road and turned into an alley.

Song Yin did not slow at the turn, and he accidentally bumped into someone who turned into the alley from the other side.

Song Yin, who was sturdy, could not help but frown. He could feel something hard when they bumped into each other. The person seemed to be hiding something on him. He was painful from the collision. “SORRY.”

Song Yin apologized out of courtesy. The other party who had a deep frown and a ferocious look on his face relaxed as soon as Song Yin said ‘SORRY’. The murderous look in his eyes vanished instantly.

If he was just a normal passerby, he might not have caught the gleam of ferocity in the other party’s eyes, but Song Yin was a soldier. He was extremely sensitive to this.

The person pulled at his jacket and continued on his path without another word.

The three paths were linked to one another. The person happened to be heading in the direction that Song Yin was going as well.

Song Yin came to a stop and used his hand to imitate the hard object that he felt when the person knocked into him just now. The hard object felt very familiar to Song Yin. "It's a gun!"

Song Yin suddenly shivered. He pushed the trolley to a quiet place and hurried to follow the man just now.

Song Yin knew intuitively not to stay too close to the man lest he was discovered.

Song Yin noticed that the footsteps of the man had disappeared. He seemed to have stopped. Song Yin hid in a corner, listening intently for any sounds.

The man seemed to be whispering. Most importantly, he was conversing in English. Song Yin had just started to learn English. He was not able to understand every word the man said.

Even so, Song Yin was able to catch a few keywords.

Song Yin found something very weird about the situation. In China, people who were not police or special personnel should not be equipped with guns. More importantly, no guns were sold in the China market, so the average people would not be able to own guns.

The fact that he had a gun was enough for him to be sentenced to prison for years.

There was no time to lose. Song Yin took the trolley and returned to their resting place at his fastest speed. "Regiment Commander Zhai, there is something that I have to report to you."

"What is the matter?"

"While I was buying meals, I bumped into a foreigner."

"Song Yin, don't joke around. We're at the border. One will run into many foreigners here. It's perfectly normal." Someone was amused, thinking that Song Yin was kicking up a big fuss. Of

course, when they first arrived, they were not used to seeing foreigners. But now, they had gotten used to it.

“The problem is that when I bumped into the person, I could feel that he had a gun with him!”

“Are you sure?” Zhai Sheng’s countenance changed. If the foreigners illegally possessed firearms, this would jeopardize the safety of the Chinese people. They had to be dealt with!

“I’m sure, and I overheard his conversation with his companion. They spoke in English, and they were in whispers, so I couldn’t really tell what exactly they were talking about. However, I heard the mention of ‘gun’.” In order to make sure that everyone understood the meaning of the English word, Song Yin imitated the move of taking out a gun. He then said a sentence in English. “Regiment Commander Zhai, what does this mean? They had a long conversation. I couldn’t follow and remember everything. This is the last sentence they said.” He could only remember this sentence that they said.

Zhai Sheng’s face darkened. “Arms trade!” Zhai Sheng was reminded of the mercenaries who were dead. He made a bold guess, trying to find the link between the two incidents. “Hurry, bring me the map of this place!”

Chapter 597: A Bizarre Letter of Commendation

“Here’s the map.” Everyone was nervous as they noticed the change in Zhai Sheng’s expression. Could it be that what Song Yin heard was an important piece of information?

Song Yin’s pronunciation was not only strange but out of tune. Besides the few keywords, Zhai Sheng could only guess what he was saying. He then tried to determine the location based on the terrain displayed on the map. “This is the coordinate. We will set off now. Inform the border guards and tell them to wear bulletproof vests. We are dealing with a bunch of vicious guys.”

“Yes, Regiment Commander Zhai.”

Everyone was ready to go. They looked serious and solemn.

Someone could not help but approach Song Yin. “Song Yin, are you sure you didn’t get it wrong?” It was the arms trade and it could be a serious case. But the problem was that Regiment Commander Zhai made a guess based on what Song Yin said.

Among them, Song Yin’s had a better grasp of the English language. However, Song Yin was not fluent in English. Besides, they had a long conversation in English, and Song Yin merely repeated the last sentence of their conversation. What if it was interpreted out of context?

“I find it strange. It’s the arms trade we are talking about. This is... This is a very serious matter. Why would the two foreigners discuss such important and secretive matters in broad daylight and in an alley instead of a place where there’s nobody else? They could not be so foolish. I just feel that it may not be true.”

Song Yin had an awkward look on his face. He could only understand simple English. He had no idea of the meaning behind the sentence he memorized.

If he had not heeded Teacher Xiao Qiao’s advice to listen to English tapes, he would not have been able to remember roughly the pronunciation of the sentence.

Song Yin, who was quite confident in what he said, stiffened and lost his confidence under everyone’s doubts and suspicions.

What if he did not remember the exact wording and gave the wrong information to Regiment Commander Zhai, putting everyone in great risk? What should he do?

“All of you don’t have to doubt what Song Yin said. According to what he relayed to me, the other party has a sudden change of mind and wants to complete the trade immediately.” It happened so suddenly. Hence, the group had no time to find a quiet and safe place to discuss it over. They could only pass the information at the fastest speed when they met.

“Is that what it means?” The group of people kept staring at Song Yin, making him turn red in embarrassment.

Song Yin waved his hands awkwardly. “Don’t look at me. I have already said that I merely repeated what they said. I could barely remember the pronunciation. I don’t understand what they were talking about!” If Regiment Commander Zhai had not mentioned it, he would not have known the meaning of the sentence that he repeated to them.

“Have you informed the border guards?”

“Reporting to the Regiment Commander Zhai, we have informed them.”

“Okay, let’s set off now!”

“Yes, Regiment Commander Zhai!”

That night, Qiao Nan did not know that Zhai Sheng was carrying out a dangerous mission. She used to read about ways to describe ‘fierce battle’ in her textbooks, but she did not know that right then, Zhai Sheng and his comrades were braving the storm of shots and shells.

The new semester had started at Ping Cheng High School. Qiao Nan and her batch of students had advanced to the second year, and there was another new batch of first-year students. They had turned from juniors to someone’s seniors.

Ping Cheng High School was bustling with activities right now.

It was at this time that Ping Cheng High School received a special honor that came from the army. It was a letter of gratitude and commendation, in which Qiao Nan was specifically praised and commended.

The letter of commendation did not go into details as it involved country secrets, so it was inconvenient for the army to disclose it to the public.

However, the army recognized Qiao Nan’s contribution and assistance to the camp, as well as her efforts. They commended Qiao Nan for assisting the soldiers in completing the mission of defending the country.

This alone was the utmost praise that anyone could have received!

“What a great achievement, Qiao Nan! When did you assist the soldiers in completing the mission of defending the country? Did I hear wrongly?” Tang Mengran dug her ears.

Fang Fang could not stand it. She pulled at Tang Mengran's hands. "Stop doing that. If you continue to do so, your ears will bleed. By then, you won't be able to hear anything."

"But why does it feel so surreal? Nan Nan is a high school student!" How was it possible for her to accomplish such difficult, arduous, and sacred task?

"I, I don't know." Qiao Nan was caught unaware as well. "Since school reopened, we have been seeing each other every day. All of you should know what I have been doing."

Could it be that the army had got the wrong person?

She had not done anything.

No matter what, this was not a small matter. The school management held a commendation ceremony on the same day, and Qiao Nan was the center of attention.

Qiao Nan felt terribly flustered seeing her name printed in bold and in extremely large fonts. If it turned out to be a mistake, she would be totally embarrassed.

"Teacher Xiao Qiao!"

Just when Qiao Nan was feeling uneasy, someone called her 'Teacher Xiao Qiao'. It had been a long time since someone addressed her in this manner and she seemed to have returned to the days when she was at the army camp during the summer break. "You, you are?" She felt embarrassed as she had no memory of who the soldier was.

"Teacher Xiao Qiao, it's me. My surname is Song. I am Song Yin!" Song Yin looked exhilarated. On his green military uniform, a red flower that signified glory was pinned right in front of his chest. "Teacher Xiao Qiao, thank you, thank you very much. I, I don't know what to say. Teacher Xiao Qiao, thank you. Without you, I would not be where I am today. Teacher Xiao Qiao, you, you have given me a new lease of life. Teacher Xiao Qiao, thank you so much."

Song Yin was too emotional. He did not know what else he should say. He kept repeating his words of gratitude.

Qiao Nan's hand was caught in a tight grip by Song Yin. She grimaced at the pain. "Is the army thankful toward me, or is it you who are thankful toward me?"

"We are all thankful to you!" Song Yin said affirmatively. "Teacher Xiao Qiao, I was awarded the third-class merit in the recent mission that I carried out with Regiment Commander Zhai!" Very soon, he would be promoted to the platoon leader!

"Third-class merit? C-congratulations to you." Despite everything, she still had no idea why the school held a commendation ceremony.

Since the letter of commendation did not go into details, the school called Qiao Nan to the principal's office in order to understand the situation. Qiao Nan gave her honest reply. "Back then, I learned English from an old gentleman. During the summer break, I went to the army camp for a half-month internship as an English teacher. It's that simple."

She merely taught a few shoddy, inauthentic, and unsystematic English that was not according to the usual standard. She had not done anything significant.

Could it be that Brother Zhai came up with this idea to award her so that Auntie Miao would accept her?

Not to this extent!

Brother Zhai had always been scrupulous in separating public from private interests. Furthermore, the whole school knew about it. It seemed to be getting out of hand. "Principal, will what happened today be an added bonus in the college entrance examination?"

Chapter 598: Confirmation

"Yes, of course! I have already contacted the Department of Education. They assured me that not only can points be added, but a total of ten points can be added!" The principal was so excited that his eyes turned red.

Qiao Nan was a top student. She had good potential.

Originally, he had pinned high hopes on Qiao Nan, counting on her to be the top humanities student in the college entrance examination and do Ping Cheng High School proud.

With an extra ten points, she had a higher chance of being the top humanities student!

“Qiao Nan, you are a very outstanding student in Ping Cheng High School. Our teachers have great hopes on you and your performance has been remarkable. As the principal of this school, I am proud to have you as our student,” President Meng said in excitement. “Qiao Nan, you have to work hard and bring glory to Ping Cheng High School!”

A year ago, because of the ruckus that Qiao Nan’s mother created at the school, he had regretted accepting such a troublesome student like Qiao Nan.

Right now, President Meng was embarrassed by his thinking back then. It was his blessing as the principal to have students like Qiao Nan!!

The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China could never dream of this glory for years to come.

Qiao Nan went to the army camp to teach, and the soldier who sent the letter of commendation to the school also addressed her as Teacher Xiao Qiao. Students at The High School Affiliated to Renmin University of China would never have such achievements!

Regardless of how well she taught the soldiers in the army camp, the letter of commendation was proof of her achievements.

Fortunately, Teacher Liu Neng insisted on making Qiao Nan stay in Ping Cheng High School back then. Otherwise, he would have missed such a good student like her.

“I, I will.” Qiao Nan was even more confused by the principal’s attitude. “Principal, if there’s nothing else, I will go back to the classroom. I have a lot of homework today. If I don’t start doing them, I will not be able to hand them in tomorrow.” Qiao Nan almost ended up crying.

Why was there so much homework in the humanities class?

Exam-oriented education should be more suitable for the science class.

“Is that so? Sure, you can go back now. Remember to work hard. Next year, no, the year after next, we will have to count on you.” President Meng looked at Qiao Nan affectionately as if she was his daughter.

“Nan Nan, is everything okay?” He Yun came over to her seat.

Qiao Nan shook her head. “Don’t worry, the principal just asked a few casual questions. There is nothing to worry about.” Of course, she did not mention that she could add ten points in her college entrance examination.

“Nan Nan, what exactly is going on?” Tao Zhenqin looked at Qiao Nan, feeling puzzled.

Qiao Nan bent over the table. “I have explained multiple times. I really don’t know what is going on. I am worried that the letter of commendation may be retracted in the next minute.”

Tang Mengran looked around. “Luckily, Xu Tingting is no longer in the same class as us. If she overheard what you said, she would definitely make it known to everyone. Nan Nan, don’t talk nonsense. The army is such a disciplined and serious place, so how could they make a mistake? Maybe you have done something good albeit unaware of it.”

Why did Tang Mengran’s words sound foreboding?

“Forget it. Just let it be. Anyway, I don’t think it will do me any harm. Thankfully, today is Thursday. I can go home tomorrow. When I reach home, I will make a phone call to ask around.”

“Who will you call to check?” Fang Fang asked sensitively.

“Of course it has to be people who know.” Song Yin was among the soldiers who went with Brother Zhai to carry out the mission. Since Song Yin was back, Brother Zhai must be back as well.

At the thought that Zhai Sheng had returned safely, Qiao Nan, who had been on tenterhooks for days, was finally at ease.

“Ask the person who knows? Who is the person who knows?” The foolish Tang Mengran did not understand the conversation that was going on between Qiao Nan and Fang Fang.

Fang Fang gave Tang Mengran a sideways glance. She liked to hear about gossip, but she was always slow to catch on.

Of course, since the letter was from the army, Qiao Nan had to ask the people in the army for clarifications. Among the people that Qiao Nan knew, Instructor Zhou and Instructor Zhai were the two people who would be privy to the details.

For those who addressed Nan Nan as Teacher Xiao Qiao, they either had no idea or could not reveal the details.

Qiao Nan was looking forward to Friday. It was only one more day to Friday, but time seemed to pass by very slowly for her.

She finally waited until it was Friday. As soon as the school bell rang and lessons were over, Qiao Nan dashed out of the classroom, unlike her usual self. She did not go back to the dormitory but went straight home.

“Hey, in a hurry?” Whenever it was time for the students to go back home, Shi Qing would always be waiting at the school gate for Qiao Nan to show up.

“Do you have to be faster than me all the time?” Qiao Nan jumped at the sight of Shi Qing. “You should know very well what I want to do the most right now. Hurry, don’t waste my time. By the way, after what happened yesterday, why didn’t Zhu Baoguo come and ask me about it?”

This was unlike Zhu Baoguo.

“Crap, if not for me, you would have been pestered by Zhu Baoguo. You have to thank me, got it?” She had taken care of Zhu Baoguo for Qiao Nan’s sake. Zhu Baoguo was such a disgrace. He was a man, yet he behaved like a child that still needed his milk, wishing to be involved in everything that concerned Qiao Nan. “Qiao Nan, you are too protective of Zhu Baoguo. He treats you like his mother.”

“Well, in fact, I treat him as my son,” Qiao Nan replied.

“Crap, the two of you are bizarre.” Shi Qing widened her eyes. “But there is still a problem. He is concerned about you as if you are his mother, but as for his feelings toward you... Qiao Nan, I think you should pay more attention to it.”

“He treats me as his younger sister. He always says that he wants to protect me.”

“Younger sister? Are you sure?”

“Yes, he said so.”

“Oh...” Shi Qing drawled. She had thought that Zhu Baoguo’s behavior was bizarre. Now, he seemed like a fool. He could not tell a younger sister apart from a crush.

As soon as she reached home, Qiao Nan put down her schoolbag, picked up the phone, and dialed the phone number to Zhai Sheng’s office in the army. Qiao Nan could remember the number by heart.

The phone rang a few times before it was picked up. “Hello...”

“A-auntie Miao?” Qiao Nan was about to call for Brother Zhai when she heard a female voice on the other end of the phone. Luckily, she stopped herself in time.

“Oh, it’s Nan Nan. You must have known that Zhai Sheng is back, so you’re calling to ask about his condition.” Miao Jing sounded very happy. Her son had accomplished a great feat and returned unscathed. As his mother, she was naturally exhilarated.

“Yes,” Qiao Nan said reluctantly. “In addition, when I was at school yesterday, I received a letter of commendation from the army. I want to ask why there’s a letter of commendation. Could it be that the army has made a mistake?”

Was Brother Zhai not at his office? If so, why was Auntie Miao at his office?

Chapter 599: Miao Jing’s Birthday

“Mistake? How could there be a mistake? The army will definitely not be wrong. As for what exactly happened, I am not too sure. I will ask Zhai Sheng about it once he is finished with his work, or I will get him to return your call.” Miao Jing seemed to be in an extremely good mood. There was a sense of excitement in her tone.

Qiao Nan did not think too much of it. She had thought that Miao Jing was in a good mood as Zhai Sheng had returned safely from his mission. “Oh, okay, Auntie Miao, I will not disturb you. Goodbye.”

“What’s wrong? You didn’t manage to get an answer?” Shi Qing sat next to Qiao Nan, listening to the phone call without any reservation. “Isn’t Brother Zhai back? Why is it Auntie Miao who answered the phone?”

“I am not too sure. Maybe because Brother Zhai is back, so Auntie Miao went to the army to see him.” Qiao Nan frowned and put down the phone. “Forget it. I will wait for his call.”

“Alright, stop being so gloomy. If Uncle Qiao comes back and sees you like this, he will be worried.” Shi Qing reminded her. “Now that you know that Brother Zhai is back safely, you can set your heart at rest. Don’t be so melancholic and absent-minded like before.”

“You are right. I am getting confused.” Qiao Nan took a deep breath and rubbed her face.

She had told herself more than once that the most important thing for her right now was to do well in her exams and take charge of her own future. However, she seemed to deviate from her goals. True enough, it was not good to start a relationship while she was still studying.

While Qiao Nan was focused on her studies, something happened over at Zhai Sheng’s side.

After completing the mission, Zhai Sheng had wanted to find a quiet place to make a phone call to Qiao Nan. If possible, he would like to go back to Ping Cheng to see Qiao Nan.

He had only returned to the camp and his mother turned up right then. She was exhilarated that he completed his mission and returned safely to the camp, and so she asked her chauffeur to send her to the camp.

“Zhai Sheng, have you changed your clothes?” Miao Jing kept urging Zhai Sheng to change his clothes.

Zhai Sheng looked unhappy at the formal clothing he wore. “Mom, you should know that I don’t like to wear this kind of clothing. I feel uncomfortable.”

“But today is my birthday. Surely, you will do that for me and accompany me to have a meal?” It was Miao Jing’s turn to be unhappy. Miao Jing wore a cheongsam with a distinct Chinese design. Her long hair was styled into a bun at the back of her head. She looked very elegant and sophisticated.

“I don’t mind having a meal with you on your birthday, but why do I have to wear this set of clothes? I am a soldier. Wearing a military uniform is the greatest respect for you.” There was a glitter in Zhai Sheng’s eyes. “Mom, why do I sense that you are not behaving like yourself today?”

“Not behaving like myself? I don’t think so. You think too much. Alright, since you have changed your clothes, let’s get to Ping Cheng Hotel to have our meal. I have already ordered a cake.” Miao Jing had finally coaxed her son to put on the formal clothing. She did not want to waste this good opportunity.

Miao Jing knew that Zhai Sheng only had military uniforms and camouflaged suits in the army. He did not have any casual clothing, let alone formal clothes.

Therefore, Miao Jing came prepared. She brought a set of formal clothing that was Zhai Sheng’s size to the army.

“Wait a minute.” Zhai Sheng opened the door to his room quickly, went in, and closed it shut.

“Hey, what are you doing? Time is almost up. We will be late if we don’t set off now.” Miao Jing knocked on the door anxiously.

“I will change my clothes.”

“There’s no need to change. The clothing you’re wearing looks very good on you. Don’t change them.” If he were to change, he would be in his military uniform.

Unfortunately, no matter how Miao Jing knocked on the door, by the time Zhai Sheng came out of the room, he had changed back to the camouflaged suits that he usually wore in the army. “This is more comfortable.”

“No, today is my birthday, so you have to obey me. Go and change to the formal clothing from just now.” Miao Jing was displeased. Zhai Sheng looked dashing in the formal clothing. All the girls would fall for him.

“Are we going or not? Mom, it’s your birthday. It doesn’t matter where we celebrate. What’s important is who is celebrating with you. I will make a phone call right now and get Dad to come to the camp. Dad and I will celebrate your birthday with you. Dad and I are soldiers. It is quite meaningful for you to spend your birthday in the army camp.”

If they had the meal outside, he would have to change into the formal clothing. But if they stayed in the army camp, he supposed he would not need to change into the formal clothing.

“Don’t!” Miao Jing was upset. When her son was young and could be cajoled, she was not by his side. When she wanted her son to listen to her, he would not be easily coaxed. “Alright, you can wear whatever you like. You are the one who matters. We have to get going. I have already made a reservation. It’s about time. If we don’t go now, we will really be late. Let’s go.”

As long as he was there, it was fine if he refused to change his clothing.

There was no point if he refused to go.

“Is Dad waiting for us in the hotel?” Since it was his mother’s birthday, his father had to be present as well.

“Your, your dad, he, he is a little unwell today, so he is staying at home and will not be joining us. Are you not willing to be the only person who celebrates my birthday with me?” Miao Jing looked guilty. She straightened her back and pulled a long face deliberately. “You should know about my relationship with your dad. I want to spend my birthday happily. I only want to see the people who make me happy. Why should I invite those who anger me? Are you not going to celebrate my birthday with me since your dad is not going?”

“Dad is not going?” Zhai Sheng thought hard about it. “Alright, of course not. It seems like, besides me, there are other people who can make you happy and will celebrate your birthday with you today.”

Miao Jing's countenance changed and she looked guilty. Did Zhai Sheng suspect anything?

She quickly remembered that she was the mother while Zhai Sheng was her son. She composed herself and held her head high.

So what if she was up to something? As a mother, it was natural for her to be worried about her son's future.

"Mom, who are those people who can make you happy?" Zhai Sheng looked at Miao Jing coldly. Since when did his mother start to play these tricks?

"You will know when you arrive. You spend all the time in the army and there isn't a chance for you to get to know someone else. Humans are sociable beings. When the time is appropriate, it can uplift one's mood. Getting to know a few new friends can be helpful to one's career." Miao Jing believed that what she did was justified and right.

Zhai Sheng shut his eyes to rest. He did not expose her lies, but the atmosphere in the car turned stiff instantly.

Chapter 600: It Turned Out to Be a Blind Date

As soon as Zhai Sheng grew quiet, Miao Jing became uneasy. "Zhai Sheng, you must not make things difficult for me later. I am your mom. I won't harm you. I did everything for you. You may not understand my efforts, but when you are a parent in the future, you will understand my feelings."

Zhai Yaohui said that Zhai Sheng had completed the mission successfully and had cracked a big case. He helped rid of hidden perils for the country and the people.

Given his accomplishments this time, the time Zhai Sheng had to spend at the front line would decrease by five years.

Zhai Sheng was blessed with good fortune for this mission. He was able to complete the mission successfully without sustaining any injuries. He cracked a huge case and was awarded the first-class merit.

If not for Zhai Yaohui, who tried to tone it down, Zhai Sheng might have been awarded the special-class merit.

As such, Zhai Sheng would be able to have a smooth-sailing career.

But apart from being happy, Miao Jing was worried.

She had no idea who the girlfriend of her son was. She only knew that she did not come from a good family background.

Now that Zhai Sheng was so outstanding and had great achievements in the army, the lady would not be willing to break up with such a good catch unless she was insensible, stupid, or timid. She would certainly think of ways to marry Zhai Sheng and become the daughter-in-law of the Zhai family.

Her son was already twenty-five years old. It was the age when he was being most impulsive.

If the lady tempted Zhai Sheng and he fell for her tricks...

Miao Jing's biggest worry was that there would be a day when an unfamiliar lady would come to their house, heavy with a child, claiming that she was looking for the father to her unborn child.

If Zhai Sheng was in a relationship with Qiu Chenxi, Miao Jing would not be worried at all.

Because Miao Jing knew that Zhai Sheng was not interested in Qiu Chenxi. Her son was not decadent. Since he did not like Qiu Chenxi, he would not take the initiative. Even if it was Qiu Chenxi who took the initiative, her son might not be willing to cooperate.

But the situation was different with Zhai Sheng's unknown girlfriend. At the very least, Zhai Sheng liked the girl.

Since both parties were willing, it would not be a surprise if anything happened between them.

Miao Jing had been through this. Otherwise, she and Zhai Yaohui would not have been able to have two children in three years' time.

The more Miao Jing thought about it, the more she felt that she had to do something to prevent that from happening.

After making up her mind, Miao Jing composed herself. Since Zhai Sheng closed his eyes to rest, she would follow suit, lest the cat would get out of the bag if they continued with their conversation.

The chauffeur observed the situation between the mother and son from the rearview mirror. The atmosphere was so awkward that he dared not take a second look.

When he reached the designated location, the chauffeur opened the door for Miao Jing to alight. He then parked the car at a side, waiting for them to finish their meal before sending them back to the Zhai family's residence.

"Madam Miao, you are here. Have a seat." As soon as Miao Jing and Zhai Sheng arrived, a middle-aged man in a suit, with hair that glittered due to hair wax, smiled at them and welcomed their arrival.

Miao Jing returned the smile. "Secretary Qian, I am sorry to make you wait for us. We are late."

"You're not late. The time is just right. We are just early. This must be Regiment Commander Zhai. You are a talent indeed, young and promising." Secretary Qian sized up Zhai Sheng. Zhai Sheng had a good family background. There was nothing he could pick on. What surprised Secretary Qian was that Zhai Sheng's looks was as outstanding as his family background.

Secretary Qian looked at Zhai Sheng as if he was looking at his son-in-law. His face showed that he was very satisfied with him. "Let's go in and have a seat while we talk."

"You're right." Miao Jing smiled proudly. Her son was so outstanding. She had never felt that there would be anyone in the world who was dissatisfied with her son.

The three of them entered the VIP bamboo room. A young fair lady with long fluttering hair, who wore a long lacy skirt, was already in the room, sitting by the table. “Auntie Miao, we are meeting for the first time. I am Qian Mufang. I heard that it’s auntie’s birthday today. I have picked a gift for you. I hope you will like it.”

“Thank you.” Miao Jing accepted the gift happily. It did not matter what Qian Mufang gave her as the present. “Bathed in perfume made from herbs and dressed in richly colored outfits’ 1 . Qian Mufang 2 , it’s a good name, just like God of Clouds 3 who was well-liked by people. Mufang is really beautiful and has a good temperament.”

“Auntie Miao, you are too flattering.” Qian Mufang blushed. She kept looking shyly at Zhai Sheng.

When she first saw Zhai Sheng, Qian Mufang had been filled with admiration for him. Thinking of the main purpose of the meal today, Qian Mufang blushed in embarrassment. She was particularly nervous and worried that she would fail to put up a good performance and leave a bad impression on the other party.

Since Miao Jing was Zhai Sheng’s mother, Qian Mufang did everything to please her. She hoped that after getting Miao Jing’s approval, she would be able to get in Zhai Sheng’s good books. “Auntie Miao, this is Pu’er tea. It is nourishing for the stomach.”

“Oh, good.” Miao Jing pushed her teacup forward while Qian Mufang poured the tea for her carefully.

Miao Jing gave Zhai Sheng a slight push. Zhai Sheng, who was silent all the while, went according to her wishes and pushed his teacup forward as well so that Qian Mufang could pour him tea.

Seeing that Zhai Sheng was highly cooperative, the three of them who were present were elated. It seemed like Zhai Sheng had a good first impression of Qian Mufang.

Miao Jing could tell what was on Qian Mufang’s mind. Though they had different considerations, they had the same goal. It did not take them very long to be chatting happily with each other.

Miao Jing had been inquiring about Qian Mufang’s personal information, like her education level, her life experiences, hobbies, and the like.

Qian Mufang was being very cooperative. At times, she did not wait for Miao Jing to ask her and took the initiative to portray the best side of her to show Zhai Sheng that she was very outstanding, hoping that he would accept her.

Regardless of the Zhai family's background or Zhai Sheng himself, Qian Mufang was determined to get what she wanted.

Initially, Secretary Qian had wanted to help, but he noticed that his daughter was having a good chat with Miao Jing, so he simply watched by the side while keeping silent like Zhai Sheng.

“Women just like to chat. Look, fifteen minutes have passed. I am quite thirsty from the chat. Oh, the tea that Mufang recommended to us is very fragrant. Mufang, we can come out more often to chat in the future.” Miao Jing picked up the teacup awkwardly in a bid to stop her conversation with Qian Mufang, or rather, to stop her from talking continuously.

The chat was going well at the beginning. It was indeed a chat between the two of them. Miao Jing would ask a question, and Qian Mufang would reply and give some elaboration. The atmosphere was considered good.

But as the conversation continued, Qian Mufang was very sociable. She addressed Miao Jing affectionately as ‘Auntie Miao’ and kept sharing anecdotes about her school life.