

RTAMM 741

Chapter 741: Become the Scapegoat Again

“Isn’t it good that things have quieted down?” Tang Mengran asked, looking baffled.

“Of course it’s good. It’s just that it seems to have died down faster than expected.” Qiao Nan touched her chin. Unless Xu Tingting had been dealt with some blow, she would not have stopped so soon.

“I can’t be bothered. She’s sick in the mind if she wants to continue to stir up troubles. I heard that she is very close to a male student from another class and they have intentions to become a couple. She then requested the other party to help her photocopy your revision materials. Now, that student doesn’t seem to dare to bother about Xu Tingting anymore. In the future, she really won’t have any materials to study anymore. She deserves it!” At the mention of Xu Tingting, Tang Mengran was full of gloating in her tone. “Right. There’s a new rumor in the school. Have you heard of it?”

“New rumor?” It should have nothing to do with her. “What rumor?”

“Someone said that Xu Tingting’s family background is not as good as it appears to be. Her father works for Zhao Yu’s family. As for her mother, it’s rumored that she’s a loose woman who has messy romantic relationships outside. No wonder Xu Tingting’s temperament is like that. So, she took after her mother. In the past, she seemed so arrogant. I thought she came from a good family. It’s all her pretense.”

Upon hearing what Tang Mengran said, Qiao Nan could figure out roughly what had happened.

There was a problem with Xu Tingting’s mother. So, most likely, those pretty clothes worn by Xu Tingting were paid by her mother’s boyfriends.

Nevertheless, Qiao Nan never expected that Xu Tingting’s father was working at the factory that belonged to Zhao Yu’s family.

In their first year, Xu Tingting bullied Zhao Yu to the extent that the latter could not even stay in the dormitory, and Zhao Yu had wanted to transfer to Qiao Nan’s dormitory. At this moment, Qiao Nan was at a loss of what to say.

“I’m not clear about Xu Tingting’s family situation. I also don’t know if the rumors are true. However, I know that Xu Tingting seemed she couldn’t lift her head in the school recently. She has been avoiding everyone. Her situation is quite pitiful.” At the thought that Xu Tingting had fallen from grace after two years of arrogance, Tang Mengran felt proud and elated.

In the past, Xu Tingting looked down upon and bullied her. She had thought that Xu Tingting was very capable. In the end, she was just a fox in a tiger’s clothing, pretending to be fierce and powerful.

Qiao Nan closed her book and stopped writing. “Do you know where this rumor came from?”

It was no wonder Xu Tingting did not have time to deal with her. So, Xu Tingting had brought trouble upon herself and could not even take care of herself now.

Tang Mengran snorted. “Her temper has never been good. She has also offended many people. I’m not sure who’s making fun of her now. I can only say that it has nothing to do with me. If I had known about Xu Tingting’s family situation earlier, I wouldn’t have allowed her to be arrogant for so long. With her attitude, I had believed that she was a little princess at home.”

Qiao Nan laughed. “If you don’t know, so be it. What’s the point of saying so much?”

So, this disaster was brought upon Xu Tingting because she had really offended someone?

Qiao Nan was someone who was reborn. Her mental adaptability was certainly better than those of the ‘same age’ as her. She could withstand malicious gossip but that did not mean that Xu Tingting would be able to endure such stress.

“You sympathize with her?” Tang Mengran held her face and looked at Qiao Nan in disbelief. “She’s been so mean to you. She’s always at odds with you and even talked bad about you. Most likely, eighty to ninety percent of those adverse rumors about you were spread by her. The remaining ten or twenty percent were spread by Zhao Yu. Why do you pity this kind of person? They deserve it.”

“Sympathize? I don’t have so much excess sympathy.” Qiao Nan laughed. She opened her book again. Just like what Shi Qing said, if one repaid injustice with kindness, then what did one repay kindness with? Requite injustice with honesty and fairness and requite kindness with kindness.

This should be the right way.

“Then, why are you asking so much?” Tang Mengran expressed her doubtfulness. Nan Nan had always been so gentle. She had not seen her lose her temper or vent her frustration on anyone. It was as if she did not have any temper. “Nan Nan, let me advise you. Don’t sympathize with Xu Tingting just because she’s in a lot of trouble. If you’re in her shoes, she’d definitely stand aside and watch you become a laughingstock while she snacked on her melon seeds.”

“There’s only one reason why I have so many questions. Because like you, I’m a busybody. She has harmed me so many times. It’s rare that something has happened to her once, so shouldn’t I find out more?” Sympathize with Xu Tingting and soften her stance toward her?

She really did not intend to do so.

Otherwise, if anyone utilized the tactic of self-torture to gain pity on her, she would fall into the trap.

At the thought of Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin’s tricks, Qiao Nan had long dismissed all her excess feelings of sympathy since the day she was reborn.

“Alright, it’s time to study. We’ll be taking the college entrance examination soon. If we don’t study hard now, it’ll be a tragedy during the college entrance examination.” Qiao Nan stuffed the book in front of Tang Mengran and reminded her to study and that it was useless looking at her. She did not have any exam questions written on her face.

“Really going to study?” There was a loud sound of Qiao Nan writing furiously. Her speed was fast but the handwriting was still as beautiful as her usual one. Tang Mengran then felt more at ease. “Tsk, tsk, tsk, your reaction is too cold and quick. It’s over so soon.”

She had thought that Nan Nan would at least gloat over this news even if she did not sympathize with Xu Tingting. She did not expect that Nan Nan did not have any further reaction after questioning her.

There was no kick.

Ever since such a rumor appeared in Ping Cheng High School, Xu Tingting had changed a lot, becoming very aloof. When she was alone, she seemed extremely quiet.

However, each time she bumped into Qiao Nan accidentally at school, she would definitely disappear from Qiao Nan's sight at her fastest speed.

"Nan Nan. Xu Tingting is so frightened of you now that she has to hide from you." At the sight of this situation, Tang Mengran was overjoyed. It was as if Xu Tingting was avoiding her and not Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan was not pleased. She knitted her brows. "Why is she avoiding me?"

"What can it be? Most probably, she thinks that you were the one who spread those rumors in the school." Fang Fang wiped her glasses.

In the entire school, Nan Nan had the greatest enmity with Xu Tingting. When something happened to Nan Nan, Xu Tingting was most likely the one who did it. In the eyes of a typical person, if the situation was reversed, Nan Nan must be involved too if something happened to Xu Tingting.

"Uh..." Qiao Nan was dumbstruck as she opened her eyes wide in disbelief. "So, unknowingly, I've become the scapegoat again. Moreover, I don't even know whose scapegoat I have become."

"Very sorry to tell you this. Yes, Nan Nan, I send my condolences." Tao Zhenqin patted Qiao Nan's shoulder. This misunderstanding was irreparable. "Don't feel disheartened, and don't feel disappointed either. We will definitely believe you even if no one else does. This matter definitely has nothing to do with you."

Chapter 742: We Are Pure and Innocent

When Qiao Nan heard Tao Zhenqin's words, she felt quite happy. However, Tao Zhenqin's later words made Qiao Nan's face turned black. "If you're hard-hearted enough to be able to use such means, you would have dealt with Zhao Yu and Xu Tingting when you're in your first year. Do you still have to wait until today to do it? Those who think that way have overestimated you. Damn. Are they blind?"

Qiao Nan was speechless as she curled the corners of her mouth to express that she did not feel like saying anything. "I want to seek redress. I want to capsize the boat!"

“We have six passengers on this boat. Capsize the boat? With those little limbs of yours, unless you jump into the water yourself, tough.” Zheng Lingling laughed at Qiao Nan as she pinched the latter’s skinny arms. It was not so easy to capsize the boat.

“There’s no love anymore.” Qiao Nan wailed. These women from her dormitory almost became old-timers. They knew her so well that she did not have any ways to retort them anymore.

After joking with her dormitory mates, Qiao Nan felt more at ease.

However, Xu Tingting, who should have stayed away from them, had been watching her secretly. At the sight of Qiao Nan’s smile that was as pretty as a flower, Xu Tingting had a sinister look in her eyes. It was as if she was a poisonous snake ambushing in a dark area, reaching out that cold tongue of hers and watching her prey coldly. She was waiting for an appropriate time to give her enemy a deadly strike such that the latter would never get up again.

“Hurry, I’ve been waiting for you for a long time.” Shi Qing, who had been leaning against the door for some time, said impatiently. “Does humanities course have so many classes? Why were you dismissed later than us?”

“If you’re so impatient, you can wait for me in the classroom. It’s not as though you don’t know the way.” Qiao Nan stopped running. She did not know what was wrong with Shi Qing. She would always wait for her at the entrance of the school instead of the classroom.

Could it be that the scenery and geomancy of the school’s entrance were better?

Shi Qing lifted her chin. “I won’t go.”

Whenever she went to Qiao Nan’s class, she would see Qiao Nan getting along very well with others of the same age as them.

On the contrary, when she was previously in Mo Du, she was alone all the time. When she came to Ping Cheng, it was rare that she had found a friend, Qiao Nan. However, they had to study in separate classes just after being one month of classmates.

At the sight of Qiao Nan getting along very well with her classmates, Shi Qing did not feel good.

She was not a child and she would not be possessive toward Qiao Nan and not let Qiao Nan make other friends. What somebody doesn't know can't hurt them. Hence, the best way was to avoid the situation and pretended that nothing happened.

"If you won't go, so be it. Right, can I ask you something about the rumors regarding Xu Tingting in the school? Do you know who spread those rumors?" Qiao Nan stared at Shi Qing. She kept having the feeling that although no one knew, Shi Qing should know.

It was obvious from the various clues that these rumors came from the science class.

If she was not wrong, Xu Tingting's matter must have been spread by either Zhu Baoguo or Shi Qing.

Shi Qing was momentarily stunned. She quietly moved her hands behind her back and placed them on her waist. She lifted her chest and chin. "How will I know? The exam papers for the science class are piling up like a mountain. The good thing is that I don't attempt every question. If I'm as conscientious as you, I think I won't get any sleep at all for the entire third year. I will have to fight with the exam papers and war with them till dawn every day."

"Then, what's happening with Zhu Baoguo recently?"

"Zhu Baoguo? What could be happening with him recently? I don't know what Uncle Zhu has been teaching him. He not only has to learn the science curriculum but also likes to read books such as 'The Art of War' and 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms'. He's not less busy than the people from the humanities class. Why? Are you suspecting that Zhu Baoguo and I have something to do with Xu Tingting's matter? You are overestimating us. How would Zhu Baoguo and I know the family situation of Xu Tingting? If we had known, Xu Tingting's scandals would have been exposed long ago."

Of course, if not for the fact that someone told Zhu Baoguo about that conversation between Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu, they would not have found out that there were so many problems in the Xu family.

"Don't be nervous. I'm just asking casually. Given those annoying things that Xu Tingting did previously, will I seek justice for her when she has encountered problems? I'm just asking." Qiao Nan smiled deeply. She did not continue further with this topic of conversation.

At the sight of the deep and unfathomable Qiao Nan, Shi Qing felt uncertain at heart. She was not sure if Qiao Nan had guessed it or not.

People of the same family had similar personalities and temper.

When did Nan Nan pick up the bad habits of Brother Zhai? She seemed to be keeping something from her. Shi Qing was like ants on fire.

However, Shi Qing was also afraid that she would say something wrong if she talked too much. Finally, Qiao Nan stopped asking. There was thus no need for her to continue with this topic. "Qiao Nan, what nice food do you think Uncle Qiao will prepare for us when we go home?"

"Chicken. Very nutritious old mother hen. To make soup," Qiao Nan said with certainty.

At the sight of the skinny Qiao Nan, Shi Qing understood. "That's right. We should nourish our bodies. If we don't, there won't be any more meat left on our bodies. Fortunately, I'm not fat. The old mother hen is very oily but it's okay. I'll accompany you and finish it. But then again, Qiao Nan, after one summer, your waist and legs have grown thinner. Your arms are like poles but why didn't your boobs shrink?!"

At the sight of Qiao Nan's tall and towering 'C' cup and the two little 'rabbits' bulging in front of her chest, and then staring down at her own chest that looked like an airport runway, Shi Qing was so depressed that she wished to vomit blood.

Qiao Nan used a slap to move away Shi Qing's eyes that were staring at her boobs. "Don't think that you can play rogue just because you're a girl. I can also shout having been molested. There should not be any physical contact between women too. Did you hear that?"

"I only know the saying that there should not be any physical contact between man and woman. You can have no physical contact with me but can you do so with Brother Zhai?" Shi Qing blurted in disdain. Brother Zhai could look at something that she could not. Most probably, Brother Zhai had even touched it. One that favored boyfriend over friend!

Shi Qing had a look of discrimination in her eyes. Qiao Nan suddenly gave Shi Qing's head a hard slap. "Don't make a guess without any grounds. Brother Zhai and I are chaste and innocent. He respects me very much. I'm still very young. It's not what you think."

“Really? You didn’t touch, hug, and kiss? Where did all the kisses go?” Shi Qing did not believe it.

In Mo Du, although people of Qiao Nan’s age were considered as being involved in a romantic relationship at an early age, there were still many who went to bed together.

Brother Zhai was already so ‘old’. Although Qiao Nan did not have much desire, could Brother Zhai, this ‘old man’, not touch Qiao Nan, such a big and juicy piece of fragrant meat?

Qiao Nan was bluffing her. How would she believe this nonsense?

“It was purely hugs, kisses on the face, and touching of the waist. Nothing more.” Qiao Nan was also honest. After Shi Qing queried, she simply confessed everything in order to prove that she and Brother Zhai were as pure and innocent as water.

Chapter 743 Dad, Seriously, Are You Praising Me?

Shi Qing stared at Qiao Nan, looking bizarre. “Are you serious?”

“Of course!”

“Woo! With this figure and face of yours, Brother Zhai could actually hold himself back. Is it because he can’t?”

“You’re the one who can’t!”

“Brother Zhai can, yet he has so little physical contact with you... I’m confused by the two of you.” Shi Qing flung her head. “Is Brother Zhai Liu Xiahui?[1] It can’t be. Each time he looks for you, his eyes are on fire. It is as if he can’t wait to open his mouth widely and devour you. Otherwise, he wouldn’t find me such an eyesore and try ways and means to make me stay away from the two of you. He shuns me being the light bulb.”

With the way Brother Zhai looked at Qiao Nan, she had been worried that the two would cause ‘a human life to be at stake’ before Qiao Nan’s college entrance examination if they were not careful. It would be so embarrassing if that were to happen.

“I think you wish to be slapped.” Qiao Nan, who felt the urge to slap someone, had wanted to place her hands on Shi Qing’s face. What kind of lousy description was that?

Shi Qing was unconvinced. “If you think I’m wrong, don’t blush!”

“You’re quarreling?” Qiao Dongliang, who heard the commotion, stopped cooking and ran out to take a look. True enough, it was Shi Qing and his daughter.

These two young ladies had been getting along very well with each other. It was as if they were biological sisters. This was the first time Qiao Dongliang saw the two of them bickering.

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“Uncle Qiao, don’t misunderstand. I was just discussing a math question with Qiao Nan. Our answers and thoughts about this question are different. There’s no teacher around and the two of us were just discussing between ourselves. We have our own views and couldn’t help debating a little. It may seem like we’re quarreling but we’re not. You have not seen it. When those scientists from the science centers debated and discussed with one another, all of them were flushed with excitement. They were fiercer than the typical people who were quarreling.”

Qiao Dongliang looked at Qiao Nan. “Was that the case?”

“Yes, that’s the case.” Qiao Nan nodded.

Qiao Dongliang felt assured. “Then, alright, a discussion is a discussion. Don’t be so loud. I have even misunderstood. Others must have felt the same. Even if you’re discussing a question, you should be more polite with each other. Both of you, sit down, drink some tea, and have some fruits. There’s still a while to go before you can have your meal. Right, Shi Qing, call your dad and ask him what time he is coming home for dinner.”

The foodstuff of both the Shi family and Qiao family were stored at the same place. For lunch, both Qiao Dongliang and Shi Peng would not eat at home.

Shi Peng often gave Qiao Dongliang money for the foodstuff. Initially, Qiao Dongliang declined but did not do so later on.

It was not just two more bowls of rice when two more people had meals with them.

Given Shi Peng and Shi Qing's health, Qiao Dongliang could not possibly prepare simple meals like he did in the past, or rather, he could not only change the menu during the two days that Qiao Nan was at home.

It was fine for one or two days, but in the long run, given the financial situation of the Qiao family, the Qiao family would have to spend all his earnings on three meals per day.

Hence, he could not choose not to accept the living allowances from Shi Peng.

With the sum of money from Shi Peng, Qiao Dongliang's finances had improved. Hence, he even prepared fresh fruits at home to let Shi Peng and the two children eat more.

"Fine, I'll call my dad and ask him." Shi Qing picked an apple and took a loud bite on it. The juice filled Shi Qing's mouth and livened up her mood: It was obvious that the apple was an imported good. It seemed like a welfare item from her father's office.

"Dad, I'm already home. When are you coming back? Uncle Qiao is almost done with preparing the food. You can't possibly let your precious daughter go hungry and wait for you to come home, right?" Shi Qing took another huge bite. "You know that I'm at my puberty stage and can't tolerate hunger. Dad, quickly come back."

When Shi Peng, who was at the other end of the phone, heard this, he did not know whether to laugh or cry. With the sound of Shi Qing gnawing on an apple, Shi Peng could not choose not to believe that Shi Qing was really hungry. "Okay, I know. I'll be back in about half an hour's time."

"Okay, we'll wait for you to come back." Upon receiving a reply, Shi Qing swiftly hung up the phone. With a few loud bites, she used the fastest speed to finish off the apple that was even bigger than the size of a grown-up man's fist until only the apple's core was left. She then threw it into the dustbin. It was a clean shot!

In Shi Peng's office, the secretary smiled when he saw Shi Qing packing up and leaving. "Shi Qing is back today?"

“Yes. My daughter gave orders for me to go home before she will have her meal. I can’t stay any longer.” Shi Peng revealed a proud yet burdened smile. He did not slow down on his packing. “Go home earlier as well today. Keep your wife and children company. Don’t work too much.”

“Okay, Director Shi.” There was no reason for the secretary to decline. He wished more than Shi Peng to go home earlier.

However, at the thought of what Shi Peng had just said, the secretary hesitated for a moment.

Having worked with Director Shi for a few months, he was aware that Director Shi had a spouse. However, it had been such a long time and he had never seen this person. Wouldn’t Director Shi need to keep his spouse company?

Nevertheless, he could not care too much either. It was rare that he could leave work earlier, just like today. Certainly, it was important to keep his wife and son company. As for other matters, he could think about it at work tomorrow.

When Shi Peng arrived home, he heard from Shi Qing about Xu Tingting’s situation. “Those abilities that I imparted to him last time, he’s so capable to use it on a female high school student. Nevertheless, the Zhai family is known for siding with the weaker ones. This student should feel lucky that she’s just a high school student. If not, this matter will not end as such.”

The Zhai family would not use detestable means to deliberately conjure something to destroy someone.

Nevertheless, if the objective truth was present, the Zhai family would not hesitate to spill the beans and use the truth to deal with and destroy the person.

No one is perfect. Hence, it was not difficult for the Zhai family to use the second method to finish off someone at all.

“Dad, don’t be angry. That student really deserved it. On one hand, she reaped benefits from Qiao Nan. On the other hand, she stirred up troubles for Qiao Nan after making use of the latter. This kind of person is sick in the mind. She doesn’t deserve our sympathy.” She even felt that Brother Zhai was not harsh enough. If Xu Tingting were to transfer to another school just like Qiao Zijin, it would be great as they would not have to see each other in the future.

“Why would I be angry? The two who were bullied are not my daughters. On the contrary, my daughter was the one that bullied. I’m not angry. I even feel pleased.” Qing Qing’s tendency to retaliate was much higher than that of Qiao Nan. In this society, females still needed to have a tough side at appropriate times.

“Dad, you made it sound as if I’m as fierce as a tigress.” Shi Qing did not feel the happiness of having received praises at all. On the contrary, she was pulling a long face.

Was her father praising her from his heart?

[1] Liu Xiahui was an ancient Chinese politician. He was a man of eminent virtue, and is said on one occasion to have held a lady in his lap without the slightest imputation on his moral character.

Chapter 744 Ideals and Reality

Why couldn’t she feel it at all?

“Of course I’m praising you.” Shi Peng was amused. “When you step out into society in the future, I would rather you bully others than the other way round.” One would dote on their own child. Shi Peng had never changed his perspective regarding this. “Right, you can learn from Qiao Nan about everything but this. If you really live in this way, I will have to grieve for you until I die.”

“Dad, don’t say that. Qiao Nan grew up in such an environment. With such a mother and sister, she wouldn’t be able to continue living without such a character. She’s considered not too bad. She knows how to retaliate to reduce bullying.” Shi Peng was commending Shi Qing, yet Shi Qiao Nan now felt embarrassed and started to put in good words for Qiao Nan.

“I’m glad you know.” Shi Peng smiled.

“Dad!” So, her father was not speaking from his heart earlier. He was trying to avoid making her feel unhappy about Qiao Nan out of a moment of spite. “Dad, am I really your daughter? Or is Qiao Nan your daughter?”

“Ideally, Qiao Nan is. But in reality, you are.”

“Dad, will you feel unwell if you don’t tease me for a day!!” Shi Qing was nearly jumping.

The stronger his daughter reacted, the wider the smile on Shi Peng's face was. "I won't feel unwell but I won't be able to sleep at night. I can only tease you once or twice in half a month's time. If I miss this week, I will have to wait for half a month again. It's an opportunity that can't be missed. Once it's gone, it's gone. Don't you know this?"

"I have a fake father." Shi Qing, who had been pierced in the heart, felt extremely sore. Was this really her biological father? He would feel so bad and suffer from sleepless nights if he did not chide or tease her every half a month. The one who was feeling depressed now was her!

"It's okay. I'm content with having a real daughter." Since he left the army, Shi Peng's mindset became increasingly younger. He was able to understand and follow what Shi Qing was referring to. There was no sense of a generation gap at all.

Shi Qing was furious. "It's Qiao Nan who has led you astray!" Where did Qiao Nan hide his father who was full of a sense of righteousness, justice, and military manners? Return him to her!

"There's still room to be more astray," Shi Peng said humorously. He was already a few decades old, yet instead of influencing his junior, he was influenced by her.

Three years ago, if anyone were to tell him that this day would come, Shi Peng would express that it was a joke. He would not believe any of it.

However, three years later, the reality was as such.

He was even feeling quite good about it. It was as if he had turned back in time, more than a decade at that. He felt wonderful.

"Alright. Hurry. Others are waiting for the two of us to have dinner. Let's wash our hands." After discussing the main topic, Shi Peng had not forgotten that they had not taken their dinner. The father-daughter of the Qiao family must have been sitting and waiting for them.

Shi Qing jumped. "It's all your fault. I've forgotten about it while chatting with you. Hurry. The summer vacation is over and Qiao Nan has lost quite a lot of weight. Uncle Qiao has been thinking about how to nourish Qiao Nan's health to make her put on weight. If Qiao Nan starves and becomes thinner, Uncle Qiao won't let us join them for meals then."

“The two of you can take your meal first. It’s rare that Qing Qing is back. We had a longer chat than usual. Please don’t mind us.” True enough, when Shi Peng and Shi Qing arrived, the table was already full of rice and dishes. Nevertheless, Qiao Nan and Qiao Dongliang had not touched any of them.

“It’s alright.” Qiao Dongliang looked a little embarrassed.

It was not because of other reasons. It was because he and Qiao Nan did not interact much when Shi Peng and Shi Qing were chatting so enthusiastically until they forgot about dinner. The television was switched on and they made comments about the show once in a while.

The more detailed interactions were limited. Qiao Dongliang asked a couple of times about how Qiao Nan was doing in her studies, whether she found it tiring or tough, or if she were getting along fine with her classmates.

He had been asking and chatting about the same thing all the time. As the frequency increased, Qiao Dongliang did not know what to say either.

At the thought that Shi Peng and Shi Qing were so close to each other, Qiao Dongliang felt very envious.

“Qiao Nan, quickly have your meal. I’m hungry too.” Shi Qing naturally sat beside Qiao Nan and pushed a bowl of rice before Qiao Nan. She then picked up the bowl and started to eat.

“Right, have your meal, everyone.” Qiao Dongliang was holding on to his bowl of rice and looking at Qiao Nan from the corners of his eyes. He did not feel good in his heart.

He had thought that he was on quite good terms with Nan Nan, but it was not really so. Director Shi and Shi Qing were the ones who truly had a close relationship.

After dinner, while clearing up the table, Qiao Nan reminded Shi Qing. “Watch your behavior with your dad. Your father is in a younger mindset nowadays whereas my dad is feeling more sensitive. Don’t deliberately show off your deep father-daughter relationship in front of us. It’s too much.”

Qiao Nan was so sharp. When Qiao Dongliang moved his eyes, she could guess his thoughts.

“Too much?” Shi Qing refused to admit.

“Do you want to cause another family dispute in my family?” Qiao Nan rolled her eyes hard. Humans were always like that. Clearly, they had not done well enough but they still wished that they could receive similar or better treatment than others.

Shi Peng only had Shi Qing as his daughter. He treated Shi Qing as his precious treasure as he doted on, pampered, and protected her.

She was different. It had been two lifetimes. If she did not fight for it herself, her father’s love and protection for her were only so much.

When compared to her mother, her father was considered better. However, in comparison to other fathers, his performance was, at most, below average.

He was clearly below average as a father, yet he wished to receive a treatment that belonged to an excellent father. Qiao Nan sighed. It was also difficult for her.

Shi Qing patted Qiao Nan’s shoulders smilingly. “Don’t mind it too much. At most, my dad and I will pay more attention in the future. We will restrain ourselves a little. Will that do? I really can’t tell that Uncle Qiao has this kind of mindset as if he’s a king.” In the past, she did not really understand what Qiao Nan meant when she said that.

However, when she saw Uncle Qiao’s behavior today, she finally understood. He really had the mindset of a ‘little king’.

“Since you know now, pay more attention in the future.” After Qiao Nan dried the utensils, she put them away in the cupboard.

At the sight of Qiao Nan’s actions, which were even swifter than that of her housekeeper, Shi Qing said with empathy, “Qiao Nan, it must have been quite tough on you in the past, right?”

“...” Qiao Nan paused what she was doing. “The past is not important. The present and future are more important.”

“That’s right. Brother Zhai sides with and protects you so much. I don’t need to worry about your present and future.” No wonder Brother Zhai did not want Qiao Nan to know about Xu Tingting. So, it was because of this.

With Brother Zhai, Xu Tingting could not bully Qiao Nan. It would also be impossible for others to bully Qiao Nan.

At the thought of this, Shi Qing could not understand why some people wanted to test their own limits even though they knew that they could not do certain things? The problem was, what if they succeeded eventually?

Chapter 745 The Affectionate Parents of Her Students

It was the end of spring in March. The scenery was exuberant with lush greeneries and flying nightingales.

Having gone through two years of life without Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin, Qiao Nan only felt that life was unbelievably peaceful.

Qiao Zijin had completed her college entrance examination. Her grades were not good and she was only admitted to diploma studies. The problem was that the expenses for diploma studies were not little.

This was already the second semester of Qiao Zijin’s diploma studies. Qiao Nan was very surprised that Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi had refrained from appearing during the Moon Cake Festival and the Spring Festival last year.

“Qiao Nan, you seem to be in a good mood recently.” Shi Qing nudged Qiao Nan’s shoulder.

Qiao Nan put away the passbook in her hands. “Of course I’m happy. I’ve already earned most of the tuition fees for my first year of college studies.” Qiao Nan did not expect that she had really managed to save up enough money for her first year of college studies just from relying on her own efforts.

Shi Qing’s jaws dropped. “So fast?” The college tuition fees were not cheap and Qiao Nan managed to save them up. She was amazing. “It seems that you earned quite a lot when you provided tuition to others during the vacation.”

It was true. There were times when Qiao Nan rejected those batches of students. She did not see her have any spare time during that period.

“Yes, and your family also paid for the meal expenses at home. Early this year, we couldn’t even finish the foodstuff given by the parents. This saved us a lot of expenses. Hence, my small gold chest has been accumulating.”

In short, expenses had reduced and earnings had increased for the Qiao family. Qiao Nan had also saved up all her earnings and Qiao Dongliang’s salaries.

Having worked hard for one and a half years, of course, the numbers on the passbook had increased.

Shi Qing was happy for Qiao Nan too. “In this case, you just have to work hard for your examinations to get satisfactory grades and fight for the opportunity to receive various scholarships. You don’t have to bother about other matters anymore.”

Initially, the situation of Qiao Nan’s tuition fees was critical. Besides studying, she still had to worry about the fees. Shi Qing intended to have the Shi family sponsor Qiao Nan for her college education since her family did not lack money.

If Qiao Nan found it inappropriate, the Shi family could also lend her money for her studies. When Qiao Nan stepped out into society and earned money in the future, she could then pay them back. It would be the same.

Furthermore, in Shi Qing’s views, even if Qiao Nan did not ask the Shi family for money, Zhai Sheng would not sit and do nothing, letting Qiao Nan, who was so good in her studies, lose the opportunity to study because of money.

Besides the Shi family and the Zhai family, the one that would be most willing to help Qiao Nan was her master, Lin Yuankang.

However, Qiao Nan expressed subsequently that help should be rendered in times of urgency and not poverty. Moreover, she felt that she would be able to save up the college tuition fees if she and her father were to try hard enough.

If it was still insufficient, she would not decline others’ help. Nevertheless, prior to that, she had to give it a try with her own efforts.

“Yes, cheers! Work hard! During the last winter vacation, I’ve already told my students’ parents clearly that I’m not taking in any students during the May Day holiday.” Qiao Nan was also in a difficult position when she faced those enthusiastic parents.

When Qiao Nan was giving the students’ tuition, everyone’s performance was average during the tuition period. Besides not skipping classes and not feeling annoyed about attending tuition classes during vacation, most parents did not feel that there was much difference.

Nevertheless, examinations were often a very good channel to test the learning and effort put in by the students during a certain period.

Since Qiao Nan had provided tuition for these children last summer, those who had attended her classes improved tremendously in their grades.

It might be a coincidence if there were just a couple of cases. With three or four cases, almost everyone who had attended Qiao Nan’s classes showed improvements in their grades. Hence, ‘coincidence’ was certainly not the word to describe this situation.

In particular, during the final term examination last winter, one of the students who had attended Qiao Nan’s classes came in top in the class and eighth in the cohort in that examination.

One must know that this student’s best results thus far were top eight in the class and top hundred in the cohort.

The student’s parents had never dared to imagine their child getting into the high ranks of top in the class and eighth in the cohort.

The thing was that his grades had been skyrocketing since he started learning from Qiao Nan.

This student was a third-year junior high school student. Qiao Nan was going to take the college entrance examination and he was going to take the middle school examination. The grades in his third year were thus very critical to this male student.

The son had achieved such groundbreaking grades. During the Lunar New Year, his family had celebrated with the lighting up of many firecrackers.

Besides setting off firecrackers, the other thing that they did was to gift a lot of stuff to the Qiao family. Qiao Dongliang wanted to decline but the parents simply ran off after leaving the stuff behind.

It was not only the parents of this student. Those of a few other students whose studies had improved significantly also did the same.

It was also a coincidence that those few batches of students that Qiao Nan taught were all students who were about to take the middle school examination. The students could improve their grades in such a critical year. This was something that could not be achieved even with lots of money.

Looking at their children improving gradually each time, as parents, the happiness they felt was indescribable.

The parents who had signed up for Qiao Nan's classes were very glad. They were very certain that the decision they had made one year ago was absolutely right. Their money was well spent.

How much money could the tuition fees be?

However, if the child were to flunk the examination and miss one or two marks from the admission score, the money that was needed to admit the child to a better high school could even buy a house.

Those who were admitted to a good school were happy while those who did not would be furious.

Until now, Qiao Nan's reputation as a tutor had risen. Even the colleagues and friends from Qiao Dongliang's factory pleaded with him to persuade Qiao Nan to take in another child, saying that it was a child of their relatives who were in their third year of junior high school. Hence, their studies could not be neglected.

Each time this happened, Qiao Dongliang was both proud and troubled. So what if the child was in their third year of junior high school? His Nan Nan was in her third year of senior high school and had to participate in the college entrance examination this year. Would he ruin Nan Nan's studies for the sake of this meager sum of money?

Regarding this, Qiao Dongliang balanced it very well. It was useless to plead with him. They could seek Qiao Nan's agreement and if Qiao Nan did not agree, he would never plead for them on their behalf.

Nevertheless, occasionally, Qiao Nan would also give Qiao Dongliang some face. Based on Qiao Dongliang's information, Qiao Nan would pick one or two children to join her class midway as 'new students'.

It could be said that most of the tuition fees for Qiao Nan's entire first year in college were earned by her alone.

"Hahaha. Are these parents going to tear down the house of your Qiao family?" At the thought of the crowd at the entrance of the house of the Qiao family during each vacation, Shi Qing felt so amused.

The most exaggerated time was when Qiao Nan hid at the house of the Shi family as she could not go home.

Chapter 746 Bad News and Good News

Later, Qiao Dongliang came up with a lie, saying that Qiao Nan had something on and was not at home.

The parents of the students blocked the entrance of the Qiao family's residence for two days. After confirming that Qiao Nan had not been back, they finally decided to go home.

There were a total of seven days of holiday. Now that two days had passed, they felt that their children could not learn much in the remaining five days. Compared to their usual classes, they felt that they were shortchanged.

"By the way, I heard that Sister Zhai Hua intends to bring Wei De back to the Zhai family's residence during the holiday. What do you think is the situation over there?" It had been half a year. It was weird that Sister Zhai Hua had not noticed that Wei De was problematic.

"Sister Zhai Hua intends to bring Wei De to the Zhai family's residence?" Qiao Nan widened her eyes in shock. "There is no news more shocking than this." But she had to hand it to Wei De to be able to come to this stage.

Wei De might have planned everything during his mission in the second half of last year. What he did not expect was that Sister Zhai Hua alone was not able to cover up for what had happened to the platoon leader.

When Wei De felt slightly better and the doctor had said that he could be discharged, the army sent an expulsion notice that Wei De was expelled from the army.

However, Qiao Nan heard that the notice was not delivered directly to Wei De. Instead, it was with Zhai Hua.

After Wei De was discharged from the hospital and returned to the army to recuperate, he noticed that his comrades cast him strange glances and looks of contempt. Wei De felt that something was wrong. "Hua Hua, why do I feel that those people cast strange looks at

me?!

If everything went according to his plan, he should be promoted to platoon leader, and all of his comrades would be under his supervision.

His comrades should be sucking up to him, congratulating him. Their attitude was weird.

Zhai Hua stiffened and sighed. "Wei De, there is something that I have been keeping from you. You must not get worked up when you see it later." It was impossible for her to put it off any longer.

Zhai Hua knew that she could no longer keep it from Wei De when the doctor said that he could be discharged today.

She could have kept it from him, but once he returned to the army, the soldiers would tell him the truth.

Wei De was no longer a soldier in the army. He no longer had the right to stay in the army.

After collecting his belongings, Wei De had to leave the army right away. He could not stay for a minute longer. This was the hard rule in the camp.

Until now, Zhai Hua was perplexed at Wei De's actions. Since he knew that there were tight rules to follow in the army, why would he commit such a mistake accidentally and implicate the platoon leader, breaking his leg, such that he could only leave the army to run a small shop for a living?

Wei De was delighted. He thought that it was regarding his promotion. He tried to contain his smile, not noticing that Zhai Hua did not seem to be happy. In fact, she looked downcast. "What is the matter? You can tell me directly. Don't worry about my injuries. You should know that I only sustain some external injuries. Since the doctor allowed me to be discharged, it means that I am fine."

He was recovering well. It was impossible for him to faint out of happiness over such a small piece of news that he was promoted to platoon leader.

Hua Hua must have taken him as an elderly in his seventies or eighties.

Zhai Hua lifted the corners of her lips. "Forget it. You can look at it yourself."

Wei De had dreamed of being promoted to platoon leader, but the army sent him a notice that he was expelled from the army instead. Zhai Hua did not have the courage to read him the notice.

"Alright, give it to me." Wei De nodded quickly and took the notice from Zhai Hua, who had a stiff expression. His smile froze on his face when he read the notice. "E-expelled?"

"Yes, take a look for yourself."

"What's there to look at? I won't read it!" Wei De hurled the notice to a side. "This is definitely not for me. Hua Hua, did you give me someone else's notice?"

Hua Hua was too careless to have given him someone else's expulsion notice. He was almost given a big shock. "Hua Hua, don't joke around. Give me my notice. I have been in the army for so many years. My parents' only hope is that I can do well in the army. I am not a filial son. I am already at this age, yet I took such a long time to make them proud. I believe if my parents, particularly my mom, know that I have been promoted to platoon leader, they will be happy. She will have a good appetite and will be able to have two bowls of rice. Her illness will definitely get better. Hua Hua, you should understand that I am so eager to be promoted to platoon leader and then company commander so as to do my mom proud and that the two of us can have a bright future. I am not doing all these for myself."

Zhai Hua's eyes turned red at Wei De's words. "Wei De, I am sorry. The notice is really for you. I have tried very hard, but you should know my dad's temper. He always goes by the books. He didn't budge even when I begged him to help me. Besides, what happened has been blown up and it is known by quite a lot of people in the army. Some of them reported it to the political commissar. The political commissar had no choice but to tell my dad. But something good did come out of this. My dad knows about our relationship and he doesn't object to it."

"Report?" Who was so against him that they reported him?

"The platoon leader who broke his leg because of a small mistake of yours is quite well-liked by the soldiers in the army. They heard that he broke his leg and has to leave the army, and the army did not give any further explanation. Therefore, they..."

Speaking of which, Zhai Hua was flustered.

When she used her authority and money to force others to do according to her wishes, she did not feel that she was in the wrong. But when she calmed down and reflected on her actions, she knew that she was guilty of overpowering the soldiers with her money and power.

Although she was unwilling to exert her influence as a member of the Zhai family, if any soldiers who worked under her encountered such incidents, she would be willing to make use of her father's authority to get back at the person.

People in the Zhai family had the authority and money to retaliate.

"Wei De, there is no room for discussion. The notice was issued half a month ago. You have to accept reality." Zhai Hua picked up the notice and handed it to Wei De.

Wei De pulled a long face. This time, he did not intend to throw the notice away. Instead, he wanted to tear it apart and throw it away so that it would not be an eyesore. "Does the chief know about it?"

Wei De spoke the words through gritted teeth.

Those soldiers who reported the matter to the chief must have deep animosity for him!

Did he murder their father or sexually assault their mother in his previous life? If not, why would they take revenge on him and ruin his future?!

“He knows about it. But you don’t have to worry. As I have said, my dad does not object to our relationship. Like the case of Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan, he has given us his implied consent.”

Chapter 747 Seek Another Way Out

Zhai Hua could not possibly lie to Wei De that her father was happy about their relationship.

When Wei De’s incident had been escalated to Zhai Yaohui, Zhai Hua got a foreboding that it was the end of her relationship with Wei De. She thought that her father would never agree to their relationship. He might even get Old Master Zhai to come to Ping Cheng, and the two of them would heartily criticize her and force her to leave Wei De and never to see Wei De again.

Zhai Hua had even come up with ways to defend her love for Wei De and to withstand the pressure that her family gave her.

Therefore, Zhai Hua was full of gratitude that Zhai Yaohui only ordered Zhai Sheng to expel Wei De from the army. He did not force Zhai Hua to leave Wei De. Though he did not agree to their relationship, he did not object to them as well.

Therefore, Zhai Hua could not lie to Wei De that Zhai Yaohui agreed to their relationship

“Similar to the case of Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan?”

It was definitely far off!

Wei De had a creepy smile. He knew that Chief Zhai did not really approve of Qiao Nan as well.

If Qiao Nan performed badly, even if Regiment Commander Zhai liked Qiao Nan, she would stand no chance as well.

Right now, he had committed such a grave mistake. Even if Hua Hua could not tell that he had planned it in advance and was taken in by him, Chief Zhai could tell through his lies right away.

Chief Zhai had such a bad impression of him, so how could he possibly agree to allow his precious daughter to marry him?

Wei De knew very well that although Zhai Yaohui did not stop them from being together, Zhai Yaohui was more likely to agree to Zhai Sheng marrying Qiao Nan, than him marrying Zhai Hua.

He tried his best to be promoted to company commander as soon as possible so that he could have the confidence to hold his head high in front of the Zhai family.

His position in the army might be lower than that of Zhai Hua, and he came from a humble family, but he had the talent and abilities.

As long as he was given the time, he would prove to the Zhai family that Zhai Hua had made the right choice. His capabilities would make him a good match with Zhai Hua. The Zhai family would be proud of a son-in-law like him.

Now that this had happened, it would not be easy to get the Zhai family's approval to marry Zhai Hua.

"Wei De?" Zhai Hua panicked when she saw that Wei De sat by the side, smiling without a word. "Are you angry? I have tried my best, and to tell you the truth, Wei De, you were indeed in the wrong."

Since he was in the wrong, he should be punished instead of being promoted.

Zhai Hua could tell right from wrong, but Wei De was her boyfriend, someone whom she wanted to get married to. Therefore, she would side with him and help him solve his problems to the best of her ability so that everything would go well for him.

Wei De, who was already in a bad mood, grew even more annoyed when Zhai Hua reprimanded him and told him off, saying that he was in the wrong.

However, he suppressed his anger at the sight of the expulsion notice. "Hua Hua, I am not angry with you. I am angry with myself. I know that you have tried your best to negotiate with Regiment Commander Zhai so that I could participate in the mission this time. I was too anxious. My only focus is to attain military achievement so that I can marry you. I have neglected that there are discipline and strict rules in the army. I implicated the comrade, causing him to break his leg.

Although I am expelled, in comparison to the comrade who broke his leg, my punishment seems very light. Hua Hua, I have let you down, and I have disappointed my parents as well.”

“No, Wei De, don’t say this. I am not disappointed. After listening to your words, I am very proud of you.” Zhai Hua was relieved and moved by his words. She knew that Wei De was a good man. In fact, she did not mind that Wei De did not have much military achievement. What was important to her was that he treated her well and that he had good virtues.

Wei De smiled bitterly. “Hua Hua, you are good to me, so you are touched by my words. However, Chief Zhai and Regiment Commander Zhai must not have a good impression of me. I have to be promoted to company commander in order to have the confidence to ask for your hand. But I am no longer a soldier now. How can I hold my head high and ask for your hand in the future? You may not mind, but I do. Other people will take issue as well. I don’t want to marry you when I have not achieved anything in life. Don’t tell me that you will support the family after we get married and I will stay at home to take care of the children. If so, am I still a man? Hua Hua, I have my pride and self-esteem.”

Zhai Hua sighed. She knew that Wei De was telling the truth. “Things have already come to this stage and you have to leave the army today. I have already packed your belongings for you. Then, what do you intend to do next? What should we do next?”

Wei De frowned, deep in thought. “I heard that the world is changing and technology is developing rapidly. Shall I start a business? In fact, compared with being a soldier, I may be able to do well in business if I am lucky, and I will be able to marry you soon.”

“Run a business?”

“Do you object to it?”

“Not really.” Previously, she had some money with her. She could use the money to support Wei De in his business.

She did not mind if Wei De was a soldier or a businessman. She liked him as a person.

However, she had given all her savings to the platoon leader. She had no more money to support Wei De in his business.

As far as she knew, Wei De had sent most of his meager salary to his hometown. He did not have much savings with him.

Even if Wei De wanted to start a business, he did not have the capital. His hometown would not have money to support his business as well.

Without a start-up fund, it would not be easy for Wei De to start a business. It was not something that could be done easily.

“What is the problem?” Wei De looked at Zhai Hua. Could it be that Zhai Hua stopped liking him as he was no longer a soldier?

Zhai Hua smiled reluctantly. “It is good that you want to start a business. Have you thought of what kind of business you want to do? Different businesses would require a different amount of start-up funds.”

Zhai Hua tried to give Wei De a tactful reminder that one would need money in order to start a business and different businesses would require a different amount of start-up funds.

However, as far as Wei De’s situation was concerned, he did not even have a small amount of savings. How could he start a business?

Wei De pulled a long face. True enough, he did not have the authority and the money. There was no way that he could start a business.

“Wei De, don’t worry. I am sure we can come up with something. If we put our heads together, there will definitely be a solution. Among those people who grew up with me in the quad, many of them joined the army like Zhai Sheng and me, but there are also many of them who did not join the army.”

Chapter 748 Makes Lots of Money

“I heard that many of them are running their own businesses, doing very well. Perhaps I can seek help from them. It will not be difficult.”

Zhai Hua sighed. This was indeed a good idea.

In this way, Wei De would have his start-up fund and he would have the business networks and connections that he needed to start a business.

“Hua Hua, I know that you are the one who knows me the best. You will definitely support me!” Wei De looked thrilled as he grabbed Zhai Hua’s hands in excitement.

According to what Zhai Hua said, she would be asking help from her friends and they would help her on account of her family. He would have the money for his business and the business networks and contacts at no cost.

In other words, apart from putting in effort for the business, he did not need to think about money or connections. It was similar to carrying out missions with Zhai Sheng and to be credited military achievements while not making any contributions.

This was the ideal situation for Wei De. Now that Zhai Hua brought it up, he was all the more delighted at her suggestion.

Therefore, Wei De left the army and started a business half a year ago.

As Wei De had just started a business and was very busy with his business, it had been a long while since Qiao Nan last heard about Wei De from Zhai Sheng or Shi Qing. To her surprise, Shi Qing told her today that Wei De was going to the Zhai family’s residence with Zhai Hua.

“Why is Sister Zhai Hua bringing Wei De to the Zhai family’s residence? Didn’t Wei De used to say that he would visit the Zhai family and ask for Sister Zhai Hua’s hand in marriage only when he was a company commander in the army?” Since he was expelled from the army, there was no way that he could be a company commander in this life.

“I heard that Zhai Hua introduced a lot of friends whom she grew up with in the quad to Wei De. She borrowed the funds and made use of their contacts and network to help run Wei De’s business. It has only been half a year and Wei De has the confidence to visit the Zhai family.” Shi Qing was part of that social circle. Hence, although Qiao Nan was in a relationship with Zhai Sheng, Shi Qing was privy to what was going on in her social circle. She would learn of new developments faster than Qiao Nan.

Qiao Nan gulped a mouthful of water. “Is his business making money? True, there is a saying in the ancient times that having a friend at court who has the status and power helps an official do well. At times, businessmen and officials are closely connected.”

The Zhai family would be privy to the national policies that the government would be implementing. Sister Zhai Hua only needed to ask around and she would have an idea of the future plans and projects that the government had in mind.

With Sister Zhai Hua as his external support, Wei De had an easier time doing business. It was as if he was the god of gamblers. All the stocks that he invested in would do well in the stock market, and all the businesses that he invested in would have good profits as well.

As such, there was no way that Wei De would be doing badly in his business.

Shi Qing could not refute Qiao Nan's words. In fact, Shi Qing knew more insider information than what Qiao Nan had said. "Let's see. When Brother Zhai is annoyed by Wei De's behavior, he will come looking for you."

Shi Qing was spot on this time, and Zhai Sheng was not the only one who came looking for her. Miao Jing came with him as well.

"Brother Zhai, Auntie Miao, all of you are here?" Qiao Nan had a shock when she opened the door to the pair of mother and son. "What is wrong?" The pair of mother and son seemed as if they escaped to her house.

"It is too vulgar." Miao Jing shot a disdainful look at Qiao Nan. She was fuming mad. At the moment, she did not have the grace of the wife of the chief. "When I just came to the city from the countryside, I might have been a country bumpkin who did not know what it was like to have lots of money, but I have never done such stuff. Forget it, don't mention it anymore. The mention of it brings me heartache."

Hua Hua might not be very young, but no matter what, she should not have such a man as her boyfriend!

Hua Hua was good in all aspects. If Hua Hua was willing, she would arrange for her to meet young and promising talents tomorrow. Why did she have to be with an unbearably vulgar and mercenary man?

Zhai Sheng seemed to be much composed. When he knew that Zhai Hua was going to bring Wei De home, he knew that this would happen. “Nan Nan, prepare some food for us.” He and his mother left the house with an empty stomach.

“The two of you have not eaten?!” It was already half-past one in the afternoon. It seemed like Brother Zhai and Auntie Miao had not had their lunch. Qiao Nan prepared sugar drinks for the two of them before she hurried into the kitchen to make fried rice with fresh meat and vegetables for them. “Just make do with it.”

“Alright, it is better than going hungry.” Miao Jing’s stomach started to grumble when Qiao Nan came out with the fried rice.

Qiao Nan prepared preserved vegetables fried rice. She also fried some fresh vegetables and eggs. It was fragrant.

Zhai Sheng and Miao Jing were starved. Although they were people of a certain social status and the preserved vegetables fried rice was only an ordinary home-cooked meal, they enjoyed the meal and ate to their hearts’ content. Miao Jing had more than half a bowl of rice before she stopped to have a drink.

Qiao Nan curled the corners of her lips. “Auntie Miao, you are...” Was there a famine at the Zhai family?

Auntie Miao seemed as if she had not had meals for a long while, but in fact, she only skipped her lunch.

“Don’t bring it up.” Miao Jing had calmed down slightly after her meal. “When Hua Hua called to say that she would bring the man to the house, I was fuming in anger and had not had any meals since then.”

“...” That explained her behavior.

Qiao Nan looked toward Zhai Sheng. It could not be that Brother Zhai did not have any meals because of Wei De as well?

Zhai Sheng took his time to finish a bowl of rice before scooping another bowl of rice for himself.

He had already expected that this would happen. He could not possibly starve himself like his mother, but as a soldier who had to go through tremendous exercises, he had a fast metabolism, and therefore, he had a huge appetite.

“I will bring some fruits for you.” Qiao Nan stood up and washed some fruits in the kitchen. These fruits were given by the parents of the students. They had given them a lot of fruits. Thankfully, they were still fresh. Hence, Qiao Nan had fruits to serve them.

Miao Jing had strong willpower. Though she was starving, she stopped herself from having too much food at one go. She stopped eating after she was around half-full. She drank some tea and ate fruits. “Nan Nan, you seem to be leading a good life. How are the tuition classes going?”

Since Qiao Nan had tuition classes, Miao Jing could not come over to her house as frequently as she wanted to.

“Looking at the parents’ responses, it should be considered pretty good,” Qiao Nan said modestly. “Is Chief Zhai the only one who is at home right now?”

“Yes.” Miao Jing did not feel guilty at all. “He has to stay at home. That is his precious daughter!”

Zhai Yaohui had to bear the responsibility that Hua Hua had such a man as her boyfriend.

Zhai Sheng, sitting by Qiao Nan’s side, remained silent. But his silence implied that he agreed with Miao Jing.

When Zhai Hua and he were young, their parents never disciplined them. One must reap what one sowed.

His parents did not discipline Zhai Hua when she was young. As a result, she ended up being so stubborn and refused to listen to reason when she grew up. His father had to compensate for his mistakes in the past.

He could not possibly want to repay his debts in his next life, right?

Chapter 749 Full of Admiration for Herself

Qiao Nan took a breath. It seemed as if Miao Jing and Zhai Sheng had decided that Chief Zhai had to settle the problem by himself. She silently mourned for him. "Will you be going back at night?"

In other words, would Wei De be having dinner at the Zhai family's residence tonight?

Since Zhai Sheng and Miao Jing were not at home, Chief Zhai was the only one left at home. Even if she was to take into account Old Master Zhai, half of the people in the Zhai family were not at home.

It was obvious how the Zhai family viewed Wei De.

Under normal circumstances, people who encountered such a situation would either beat a retreat in the face of difficulties or leave out of humiliation. But since it was Wei De, Qiao Nan could not tell for sure what would happen at dinner later.

"There's nothing to be worried about. I can just make a call to check. Since today is Saturday, not Sunday, I will go back with Zhai Sheng if they have left. If they are still there, I will have a sleepover at your house. I remember you have one more bed in your room." Miao Jing had it all planned out.

"What about Brother Zhai?" Auntie Miao did not mention where Brother Zhai was going to sleep tonight.

"You have a big living room. You can just make a makeshift bed and he can sleep for a night. It will not be a problem, right?" Miao Jing turned to look at Zhai Sheng.

Zhai Sheng curled the corners of his lips and nodded right away. "Yes."

Qiao Nan who sat by the side was speechless at Miao Jing and Zhai Sheng, who had already decided for themselves where they would be sleeping for the night. Qiao Dongliang, who just came back, pulled a long face at their conversation.

Should not be a problem?

It was a big problem!!!

Zhai Sheng was a man, so it was fine to sleep in the living room. But Nan Nan was a girl. It was a big problem!

He believed that Madam Zhai would not be so nonchalant if a man slept over at her living room while Zhai Hua was at home.

She must be kidding!

Qiao Nan was silent. She stood up to pour a cup of water for Qiao Dongliang, who just entered the house, trying to calm him down.

It was indeed a coincidence. If she was not in a relationship with Zhai Sheng, she would never agree to letting someone that she was not familiar with to sleep in the living room.

Since the Shi family's residence was right next door, if Brother Zhai insisted on staying for the night at her house, she and her father could stay at the Shi family's residence.

Qiao Dongliang had mixed emotions as he drank the water poured by his daughter. He wanted to follow his heart to send Zhai Sheng, the black wolf who was out to get his daughter away. But on the other hand, Miao Jing was clueless about everything, so he could not expose their relationship right in front of her.

He might be unhappy, but Qiao Nan was happy in this relationship.

Unless Zhai Sheng went overboard or the two of them broke up for some other reasons, even though Qiao Dongliang did not like it, he could not do anything to break them up as it would only upset Qiao Nan.

Since Miao Jing was kept in the dark, Qiao Dongliang could not be a hindrance to Qiao Nan. He had to help his daughter hide it from Miao Jing

Qiao Dongliang glared at Zhai Sheng unhappily. If he intended to stay for the night, he had better behave himself.

Zhai Sheng nodded at Qiao Dongliang. His mother wanted to share a room with Nan Nan. There was no way that he could misbehave.

“Dad, why did you knock off at such an early time today?” It was only three o’clock now. Qiao Nan was surprised that her father was back at this time.

“Well, we rushed to finish a batch of work recently. Today, I was able to knock off two hours earlier than usual.” He had intended to make use of the two hours to spend some time with Nan Nan so that they could grow closer to each other. He was envious of the close relationship that Director Shi had with Shi Qing

Qiao Dongliang knew that it was impossible when he saw Zhai Sheng and Miao Jing at his house.

“Dad, you must be tired. Sit down and rest.” As long as Brother Zhai was around, her dad would behave like a kid. She had to coax him, lest he quarreled with Brother Zhai. “Dad, is Shi Qing at home? Usually, she will come over to my house at this time. It’s unusual.”

In the past, Shi Qing would come over to her house at around one o’clock in the afternoon.

“I have no idea. I did not see her at the doorway. Shall I check next door?” Instead of being with Zhai Sheng, Qiao Dongliang preferred Shi Qing and Qiao Nan spending more time together.

Shi Qing and Qiao Nan were both girls and of a similar age. They had good results as well. They could be best friends!

“Sure.” Qiao Nan nodded. She would have gone next door to check if not for Auntie Miao and Brother Zhai who were at her house. It would not be good to leave them by themselves.

Miao Jing raised her eyebrows. She did not really welcome Shi Qing.

Qiao Dongliang came back with Shi Qing after a short while.

Shi Qing, who followed right behind Qiao Dongliang, looked reluctant. She seemed as if she was dying to leave right away. “A-auntie Miao, Brother Zhai, how are you? Qiao Nan, I am here...”

Qiao Nan covered her face. Her reply sounded very strained. She seemed as if she was going to break out in tears.

When Shi Qing walked over to sit down beside Qiao Nan, Qiao Nan lowered her voice. "Have you seen it?"

"Of course!"

Shi Qing slept a little longer for her afternoon nap today. It was later than usual when she woke up.

She had just come out from her house and closed her door when she saw Auntie Miao and Brother Zhai enter the Qiao family's residence.

She turned right back into her house and shut the door.

If Uncle Qiao had not asked her to come over, she would not have stepped into the Qiao family's residence when Auntie Miao and Brother Zhai were still there.

Shi Qing and Qiao Nan might be whispering, but Zhai Sheng could hear them clearly.

Zhai Sheng crossed his legs. He was glad that Shi Qing knew how to behave appropriately in different situations.

"Shi Qing, you seem to have a good relationship with Nan Nan?" Miao Jing was slightly surprised. "Have you been... in touch with Qiu Chenxi recently?"

Shi Qing smiled cautiously. "Auntie Miao, the Shi family no longer keeps in contact with the Qiu family ever since they moved away. They may be busy after moving to a new place." Was Auntie Miao suspecting that she would be targeting Qiao Nan because of what happened to the Qiu family?

Did she need to do that?

Qiu Chenxi was crazy. She did not know of Qiao Nan's relationship with Brother Zhai, but she would make trouble for Qiao Nan. As for her, she knew of their relationship, but she had never made troubles for Qiao Nan.

"I see." Miao Jing nodded. "You are more sensible than Qiu Chenxi." She would not create a fuss. She was not such an eyesore as compared to Qiu Chenxi.

"You are in the science class whereas Nan Nan is in the humanities class? Congratulations to you." There was one less person to compete with her for the first place in the level.

"..." Shi Qing was exasperated. She did not know how she should react.

In fact, Auntie Miao had always treated her with this ambiguous attitude. She was full of admiration for her former fearless self who conducted herself well in front of Auntie Miao. In the past, she was able to do so as she liked Brother Zhai.

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Right now, she could no longer do it. When Auntie Miao used such an attitude on her, not only did she want to hide, but she had goosebumps all over her as well.

Shi Qing looked at Qiao Nan with admiration. How did she get along with Auntie Miao? She was so courageous and capable!

Qiao Nan stuffed a piece of fruit into Shi Qing's mouth. It was better to talk less and to eat more so as not to make any mistakes.

Back when Qiao Nan first saw Auntie Miao, her attitude was worse than how she was to Shi Qing right now.

Shi Qing was conscious of the awkward atmosphere and could not find any topic to talk about. It was just nice that Qiao Nan gave her a piece of fruit. She lowered her head and focused on eating her fruit.

"Nan Nan, have you been getting along well with Shi Qing recently?" Did Nan Nan know Shi Qing well enough? Was she sure that she would not be another Qiu Chenxi? If not, it would spell trouble.

Zhai Sheng would come over to the Qiao family's residence occasionally because of the Zhai family's relationship with the Qiao family.

Did Shi Qing have an ulterior motive by being good friends with Nan Nan? Was she planning to drop by the Qiao family's residence often so that she would have more chances of seeing Zhai Sheng?

Qiao Nan and Shi Qing did not know whether to laugh or cry at Miao Jing's words.

Shi Qing felt gloomy and inched closer to Qiao Nan, widening the gap between Zhai Sheng and her. She wanted to prove to Miao Jing through her actions that she was not interested in Zhai Sheng.

However, the harder Shi Qing tried to show that she was over Zhai Sheng, the more Miao Jing felt that Shi Qing was trying to hide her feelings but had made matters worse. She was on the guard against Shi Qing.

She had to find a chance to remind Nan Nan.

Nan Nan was inexperienced and soft-hearted. She would believe other people easily and would be made use of by them.

Qiao Nan was treated as if she was the innocent kids in the ivory tower. She clasped her head in exasperation. Now that Auntie Miao was at her house, there might not be peace here.

"Auntie Miao, I... I will give my dad a call." Shi Qing felt uncomfortable under Miao Jing's stare. She turned her back to her and made a phone call to Shi Peng's office. "Hello, Dad. Today, Auntie Miao and Brother Zhai are at the Qiao family's residence. Perhaps you can buy dishes back with you, just in case..."

In case Auntie Miao and Brother Zhai were staying over for the night and she might suffer indigestion from dinner.

Auntie Miao was the future mother-in-law of Qiao Nan. As a good friend of Qiao Nan, she had to have Qiao Nan's best interests at heart and help her show due respect to Auntie Miao, lest Auntie Miao made it difficult for Qiao Nan in the future.

“Foolish child.” Miao Jing stared at Shi Qing intently. She seemed to be a hen that was guarding her chicks. Qiao Nan silently mourned for Shi Qing.

Auntie Miao was already wary of Shi Qing. Shi Qing’s original intention might be to show due respect for her, but to Auntie Miao, Shi Qing had not given up her feelings for Brother Zhai and prepared a sumptuous meal as gifts would blind the eyes.

Shi Qing, who had done herself in unknowingly, was puzzled that the atmosphere seemed to have become more awkward than before.

Miao Jing shot a glance at Zhai Sheng, hinting for him not to be too close to Shi Qing. “Shi Qing, I am going to have a chat with Nan Nan in her room. Do you mind if you sit here and watch the television?”

“No, I don’t mind. I don’t mind at all. The two of you can have a good chat.” Shi Qing almost wanted to stand up to send the pair of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law into Qiao Nan’s room to have a good chat.

Miao Jing curved the corners of her lips. She might not be able to discipline someone else’s daughter, but she could still take her son in hand.

She shot a few warning glances at Zhai Sheng before she held Qiao Nan’s hand and went into her room. “Nan Nan, I have a lot to tell you. It is such a good chance today for us to have a good chat.”

“Well... sure.” Qiao Nan felt slightly uncomfortable and awkward that Miao Jing held on to her hand.

After Miao Jing and Qiao Nan entered the room, Shi Qing sat upright as if she was a soldier who had committed a mistake and stole furtive glances at Zhai Sheng.

Zhai Sheng rested his feet on the floor. He straightened his face and looked serious. This was the Qiao family’s residence, but Shi Qing felt as if she was in Zhai Sheng’s office at the army camp. She was so nervous that she had sweaty palms. “Is everything okay at Ping Cheng High School recently?”

“Everything is fine. Xu Tingting has been behaving herself recently. She no longer dares to provoke Qiao Nan. Without Qiao Nan’s revision materials, if Xu Tingting wants to do well in the college

entrance examination with her own efforts and the revision outline provided by the teachers, she will need to put in double the effort.” In other words, Xu Tingting was too busy to scheme against Qiao Nan.

“What about Zhao Yu?”

“Zhao Yu is more well-behaved than Xu Tingting. After she apologized to Qiao Nan last year, she was not up to any cheap tricks. Previously, I overheard her conversation with Xu Tingting. It turned out that Xu Tingting wanted to work with Zhao Yu to spread rumors about Qiao Nan. Zhao Yu refused and tried to stop Xu Tingting from doing it. No matter whether there is Xu Tingting or not, Zhao Yu will not make any trouble for Qiao Nan in the future.”

If her observations were correct, ever since school reopened this semester, whenever Zhao Yu met Qiao Nan at school, she would blush as if she was a shy young lady.

If she was not one hundred percent certain that Qiao Nan was a girl, she would suspect that Qiao Nan was a boy and Zhao Yu was interested in Qiao Nan.

Zhai Sheng nodded in satisfaction at Shi Qing’s detailed report of Qiao Nan’s situation at school. “You have done a good job. In your opinion, Zhao Yu is no longer a threat. How about Xu Tingting...”

“Brother Zhai, you can rest assured that I will not allow Xu Tingting to create any trouble for Qiao Nan when she sits for her college entrance examination. If she dares to scheme against Qiao Nan, I will make sure to throw her out of Ping Cheng High School. She will never be able to sit for the college entrance examination this year!” Shi Qing stood up right away. She stood at attention and saluted Zhai Sheng.

Zhai Sheng nodded. “Well, I will entrust you with the task of taking care of Qiao Nan. If you fail to complete this mission, you should know that punishment awaits you.”

“I will definitely complete the mission!” Was Brother Zhai treating her as soldiers under his command?

Qiao Dongliang, who came out from the kitchen with a plate of stir-fried dishes, was stunned momentarily at the scene that he witnessed. He lifted the corners of his mouth. He knew that Zhai Sheng was the regiment commander, but when did Shi Qing become soldiers under his command?

“Uncle Qiao, I... I will help you with the dishes.” Shi Qing blushed. She jogged over to take the dish from Qiao Dongliang and brought it out to the living room.

This was a cold vegetable dish. It was alright to bring it out before dinner started.

“Thank you.” Qiao Dongliang was about to head back into the kitchen when Shi Qing followed right behind him. “Uncle Qiao, I... I will help you.” She felt nervous when she was around Auntie Miao and Brother Zhai.