

## As Agreed 281

### Chapter 281: Mrs. He's Worries

"Why? You've always celebrated your birthday at home! Are you too good for your parents now?" Mrs. He protested.

It was truly better to be child free. Her son wasn't even as considerate as Qiuqiu.

Oh, a quick introduction. Qiuqiu was Mrs. He's dog. He's a Pomeranian that looked like a snowball, hence the name Qiuqiu (a nickname based on the word for ball in Mandarin).

"Am I not home today to eat with you? Please calm down, my Empress

Dowager." He Ming sat his mother down on the sofa and massaged her back.

"You are not getting away with flattery. You must at least come home for some longevity noodles on that day!" Mrs. He ordered.

He Ming thought about it for a moment and said, "Alright then." He was only going out at night that day – a candlelight dinner with Xiaomeng followed by a romantic evening together. The thought alone excited him.

"That's more like it. A mother's advice is like water off a duck's back to adult children. You worry me more than Qiuqiu." Mrs. He treated Qiuqiu like her other son.

He Ming wanted to roll his eyes.

He Ming stayed with his mother at home for a while before he went out.

He was going to find Xiaomeng but she was busy. However, he had told her a

few days ago that his birthday was the day after tomorrow.

He wouldn't dare to expect any birthday surprises from Xiaomeng. He would be thankful if she could spend time with him on that day.

As soon as He Ming left, Hu Shanshan and her mother dropped by the He residence.

"Hello, Auntie." Hu Shanshan greeted Mrs. He politely.

"You are here. Please come in." Mrs. He said warmly.

After Hu Shanshan and her mother walked in, she looked around the house with slightly disappointed eyes.

Mrs. He knew why Hu Shanshan was disappointed but she didn't show it and just said casually, "You just missed Ming."

Hu Shanshan was extremely annoyed that she was just a minute too late.

After the other day, she had been wanting to ask him how things were going with the woman he fancied.

But she hadn't got the chance. She tried calling Brother He, but he always said he was busy and then hung up on her.

Therefore, when her mother told her that she was going to visit Auntie He today, she tagged along. Who knew that she would miss him again here?

"Has Brother He been very busy lately?" Hu Shanshan asked casually.

“He’s busy every day but I don’t know what he’s busy with. Xu Fang, you’re the luckier one because you have a daughter who’s willing to accompany you every day.” Mrs. He looked at Hu Shanshan’s mother and said with envy.

“What’s so good about that? My daughter is all grown now and has her own ideas. And I still have to worry about her getting married.” Mrs. Hu also had her worries.

“Mom...” Hu Shanshan said shyly.

“Shanshan is still young. Don’t worry. I’m more worried about Ming, who’ll be a year older the day after tomorrow. My hair is turning white from worrying.” Mrs. He poured out her grievances. At her age, she should be taking care of her grandchildren.

She liked Shanshan and knew her well, but He Ming had no feelings for her. She had no choice but to stop fixing her up with He Ming.

“Brother He’s birthday is the day after tomorrow?” Hu Shanshan caught the main point.

“Yeah, come over for lunch that day if you’re free. I told him to come home at noon on his birthday.” Mrs. He nodded and invited Hu Shanshan.

Hu Shanshan remembered it and knew what to do. “Sure.”

Mrs. Hu couldn’t help but shake her head with a smile when she heard her daughter’s quick answer. Indeed, grown daughters would eventually be married off...

Hu Shanshan thought about it after she got home. She would ask her best bestie out tomorrow to help her pick out a birthday present for Brother He.

She also needed to find the right time to tell Brother He about her feelings for him. She didn’t just want to be his sister..

## Chapter 282: A Birthday Present

The next day was a Saturday. Ye Xiaomeng woke up organically. She put on a dressing gown and looked out at the sun. Her mood inexplicably improved.

After washing up, she got her phone and called Shu Pan.

“Girl, are you free? Let’s meet up at noon and then shop around.”

Ye Xiaomeng thought carefully and realized that she had become unlike herself lately. She used to love eating, drinking, and shopping like crazy. But she behaved like a good little wife now. She mocked herself with a smile.

“Sure. Then I’ll see you at the usual place later.” Shu Pan agreed immediately as she was bored; Joy was going to childcare today.

After so much hard work and suffering in the recent years, she was finally back on her feet and on the path to success. It was time for her to relax occasionally.

The two of them were indeed besties. They arrived at the entrance of the mall at almost the same time, both dressed in white. They looked good in their own ways and grabbed the attention of many passersby.

“I just woke up and I’m famished. Let’s find something to eat first.” Ye Xiaomeng held Shu Pan’s arm and walked towards the restaurant street.

“Who asked you to be such a lazy pig?”

"I've been so busy lately. I could finally sleep in today. More importantly, the market is no good now and business development is difficult. Sigh. What to do when I'm earning peanuts but juggling a circus of responsibilities and walking a tightrope of risks?" Ye Xiaomeng pulled a long face.

"Don't you have He Ming now? Someone to rely on?" Shu Pan reminded her.

"It's better to rely on myself. Who knows what will happen in the future? I'm just going to let nature take its course." Ye Xiaomeng was walking on eggshells in relationships, afraid of being hurt again.

"Silly, there'll always something different. How would you know if you don't try?" Shu Pan encouraged her.

"Then why don't you take your own advice? The last time I saw Gu Shaoting, he really changed a lot, almost like a different person."

Although Ye Xiaomeng had once told Shu Pan not to forgive him easily, she respected Shu Pan's choice. After all, Shupan was still young and so was Joy. She only wished them happiness for the rest of their lives.

The two of them chose a noodle shop. The noodles there were handmade and very chewy. The restaurant was usually crowded but they got a table today. Ye Xiaomeng quickly pulled Shu Pan to sit down.

While waiting for their food, Shu Pan asked, "Why do you suddenly want to go shopping?"

"Don't remind me. Have you ever met someone who would keep reminding people of their birthday? He even asked me what gift I would get him!" Ye Xiaomeng said in exasperation.

She didn't know whether to laugh or cry at He Ming's behavior.

A few days ago, he said that he wanted to celebrate his birthday with her and asked her to set aside time, and she agreed.

After that, he was probably worried that she would forget, so he reminded her repeatedly and even asked her what gift she would get him. He even suggested that she wrapped herself up as a birthday gift to him, which made her blush like a tomato.

She had met thick-skinned people before, but she had never met anyone as thick-skinned as him.

“He Ming? Birthday?” Only then did Shu Pan realize what was going on.

“Yeah. Should I get him a shirt? Or a wallet? A leather belt?” Ye Xiaomeng listed her options.

She then muttered, “His wallet is still quite new. It will probably be a while before he needs a new one. Will a belt be misunderstood as me wanting to tie

him up?”

“Okay. I’ve decided to buy him a shirt. It can be worn on its own or with a suit. It’s more useful.” Ye Xiaomeng happily made her decision.

After their noodles arrived, they both dug in heartily, especially Ye Xiaomeng, who looked like she hadn’t eaten for days.

After lunch, the two of them walked into the largest shopping mall in Bin City..

Chapter 283: Too Much!

The mall never seemed to run out of customers. It was even more crowded on Saturdays. Everyone walked around with bags of shopping like things didn’t cost any money.

Ye Xiaomeng pulled Shu Pan into the DV boutique. This was an international brand that specialized in men's clothing. The cheapest item here would cost Ye Xiaomeng her an entire month's salary.

"Wow, Xiaomeng, are you a secret tycoon? He Ming would be so happy if he knew that you were willing to buy him such an expensive birthday gift." Shu Pan exclaimed.

"Come closer and listen to the sound of my heart bleeding." Ye Xiaomeng said like it was a real thing.

"I don't really have a choice. I secretly checked and found out that he wore only branded clothes, so my gift can't be too shabby."

"Hi, could you show me that pink and blue striped shirt, please?" Ye Xiaomeng pointed at a shirt in the display window.

"I would like to look at this." A beautiful woman beside her said at the same time, pointing at the same shirt.

Ye Xiaomeng looked up, curious to find out who had the same taste as her and picked the same shirt she asked about.

The woman in question had a small oval face, exquisite facial features, and skin as white as snow. Indeed, youth was the wind in one's sails. She was dressed in branded clothes and carried a small LV bag.

The friend with her asked, "Shanshan, are you sure you want to buy him a shirt? Why don't you look around? It's better to give him a belt. Tie him down." Her young friend said with a mischievous smile.

"Stop it. Didn't I vomit on him the other day? That's why I'm getting him a shirt." Hu Shanshan saw He Ming wearing this brand of clothes that night.

"Okay, okay. You decide." The two of them kept whispering to each other, but they weren't whispering at all. Ye Xiaomeng, who was standing beside them, heard every word.

Ye Xiaomeng couldn't help but smile. This woman was probably buying the shirt for her boyfriend too.

Ye Xiaomeng suddenly found the beautiful woman familiar. She seemed to have met her before, but she couldn't remember when and where.

"Xiaomeng, have you decided?" Shu Pan walked over and asked.

This wasn't the kind of place she shopped at. Even when she was married to Gu Shaoting, she only bought him mid-range or sometimes premium clothes. She really couldn't bear to spend money on luxury clothing.

Since Gu Shaoting wore custom-made clothes to work and social functions, it didn't really matter if he dressed more ordinarily at home.

"How about this one?" Ye Xiaomeng picked up the shirt and showed it to Shu Pan. The price was almost a five-figure sum. How could a shirt that cost that much be bad?

Shu Pan felt her heart pound when she saw the price tag-

"Miss, I would like this shirt in XL, please." Ye Xiaomeng said.

"Miss, I would like one in XL." The beautiful woman beside her said at the same time.

"I'm sorry, ladies. There's only one XL for this shirt. We only have one in every size for each color. Our clothes are all limited editions."

The sales assistant looked at the two of them awkwardly, not knowing what to do.

"Miss, I saw this shirt first, so I think I should have it." Ye Xiaomeng said calmly to the beautiful woman next to her.



The beautiful woman was actually Hu Shanshan, who was also getting a birthday present for He Ming.

“Is your name written on the shirt? Have you checked the price? Don’t miss a

zero, okay?” Hu Shanshan said arrogantly to Ye Xiaomeng, with a hint of contempt.

“You...” Ye Xiaomeng was so angry that she wanted to stomp her feet.

“Miss, let me pay for it now.” With that, Hu Shanshan took out a black card from her LV wallet and gave it to the sales assistant..

#### Chapter 284: Trouble Over A Shirt

Seeing Hu Shanshan’s ostentatious behavior, the sales assistant didn’t want to offend her and said to Ye Xiaomeng, “I’m sorry, Miss. Why don’t you look at the same shirt in other colors?”

Shu Pan saw how everything unfolded. She had a similar experience before, and it was very embarrassing.

She patted Ye Xiaomeng on the shoulder and comforted her. “Xiaomeng, I think the pink one looks good too. It suits him better. It’s refined and matches his temperament.”

Indeed, He Ming was gentle and light colors suited him. If it was Gu Shaoting, a cold and mysterious color like black would be more suitable.

Shu Pan was stunned. Why was she thinking about Gu Shaoting?

Ye Xiaomeng just didn't want to take it lying down. She was actually debating earlier about what color shirt to get He Ming. He already had many light blue shirts and perhaps she should get him something in a different color.

Light colors complemented his temperament well.

She just couldn't take that woman's condescending behavior. She was too much!

If she had discussed it nicely with her, she would have let her have the shirt. But...

"Miss, you're not the only person with a bank card." With that, Ye Xiaomeng took out a few bank cards from her wallet.

She then continued in a fierce tone, 'Will you give it up if I'm able to pay for it?'

Hu Shanshan obviously did not expect Ye Xiaomeng to retaliate. She thought that Ye Xiaomeng was just a poor girl pretending to be rich, someone ignorant.

When she heard Ye Xiaomeng's words, she didn't dare to answer because if she really paid for the shirt, she didn't know what else to get Brother He for his birthday.

"Miss, here's your bank card. Please keep it well. And here's the shirt." The sales assistant returned the bank card with both hands to Hu Shanshan and then handed her the gift-wrapped shirt.

Hu Shanshan took the shirt smugly before she glanced disdainfully at Ye

Xiaomeng. Then, like a proud rooster, she strutted triumphantly out of the boutique with her friend.

Ye Xiaomeng was furious, but she considered the experience being bitten by a mad dog and said to the sales assistant, "Miss, please help me gift wrap the pink one in XL."

She wouldn't let the incident ruin her mood or allow herself to feel bad.

The sales assistant heaved a sigh of relief. The atmosphere was very tense just now.

This young lady actually saw the shirt first, but the other young lady insisted on snatching it. It was obvious that the other young lady was a spoiled child who did not care about others' feelings. Her words were also extremely mean and made people uncomfortable.

Fortunately, things had settled down. She was so worried that they would argue or even fight.

"Will do, Miss. I'm sorry that you've been wronged." The customer was God. The boutique staff were very sorry that a customer had such a terrible shopping experience, but there was nothing they could do. The only thing they could do was to apologize.

"It's okay. It's not your fault anyway." Ye Xiaomeng's anger had subsided a lot. She waved her hand nonchalantly and said magnanimously that she didn't mind. She wouldn't take her anger out on the boutique staff.

They just did their best given the situation because they couldn't offend any client.

Shortly after, Ye Xiaomeng paid the bill and took the gift-wrapped shirt from the sales assistant.

She then left the boutique with Shu Pan.

Shu Pan saw that Ye Xiaomeng was quiet and knew that she was still angry. She didn't want her to bottle things up inside, so she asked, "Xiaomeng, are you alright?"

"I'm fine. I was bitten by a dog today. I couldn't bite the dog back when a mad dog bit me, right?" Ye Xiaomeng figured that she would take a detour if she met this woman again. She was just a mad dog to her..

Chapter 285: Inviting Uncle Gu

“That’s good. Let’s shop some more. Isn’t it He Ming’s birthday? There will definitely be a candlelight dinner, followed by...” Shu Pan revealed a meaningful, evil smile.

“Girl, you’ve turned bad.” Ye Xiaomeng couldn’t help but feel relieved as she watched her friend joke. Shu Pan had become more cheerful, completely different from the Shu Pan who was tortured by the heavy burden of life.

“Let’s go. Buy a set of sexy lingerie and a sheer babydoll to wear in bed for He Ming. I guarantee that it’ll be the best birthday present he has ever received, not some branded shirt.”

Shu Pan pulled Ye Xiaomeng towards a lingerie store.

“Hello, are you serious?” Ye Xiaomeng stopped in her tracks and looked at Shu Pan in surprise.

“Yeah, let’s go. Just listen to me.” Ye Xiaomeng helplessly followed Shu Pan.

Her usually carefree self was suddenly shy.

In the end, under Shu Pan’s insistence, she bought some sexy underwear and a babydoll.

Ye Xiaomeng’s face flushed at the thought of wearing them.

The two of them walked around for a while more before they went home separately.

Shu Pan saw that it was almost time to pick Joy up, so she walked to her kindergarten that wasn’t far away.

When she arrived, Joy was already sitting on a stool wearing her backpack.

“Mommy, why are you here to pick me up today?” Joy ran out when she saw her mother.

“Don’t you like it when Mommy picks you up?” Shu Pan asked with feigned sadness. This little traitor Joy had been brainwashed by Gu Shaoting.

The two of them had gotten close because he had been picking her up from school lately.

“I like it. Why isn’t Uncle Gu here?” Joy asked with slight disappointment. Only a few seconds had passed yet she mentioned Uncle Gu again.

Shu Pan squatted down and told Joy seriously, “Joy, Uncle Gu is a very busy man. We can’t always trouble him. Do you understand?”

“But Uncle Gu said that he’s not an outsider and I can look for him whenever I miss him.” Joy argued eloquently.

“Those are just Uncle Gu’s pleasantries. You can’t take them too seriously.” Shu Pan felt a headache coming on.

“What are pleasantries? Why can’t they be taken seriously? Don’t tell me that everything that adults tell us is to coax children?” Joy had endless questions.

Now that Shu Pan hated Gu Shaoting, she had nothing to say to the child.

Gu Shaoting, who was at home, couldn’t help but sneeze a few times.

“No, what Uncle Gu said is true. But he also has to work and rest like everyone else. He can’t come and play with Joy every day, understand?” Shu Pan taught Joy patiently.

“Oh, I see.” Joy nodded her head like a little adult like she understood. “But if Uncle Gu isn’t here, how can I invite him to the zoo tomorrow?”

Joy felt troubled.

“Mommy just told you that Uncle Gu has to work. He may not have time.” Shu Pan wanted to dispel her thoughts.

“But Uncle Gu promised me last time. Besides, he has never seen animals like monkeys and elephants.” Joy replied seriously.

“Mommy, please call Uncle Gu and ask him.” Joy was insistent.

Shu Pan had no choice but to take out her phone and call Gu Shaoting. After the call was connected, Shu Pan passed her phone to Joy.

Joy held the phone in a dignified manner like a little adult. “Uncle Gu...” Gu Shaoting felt his heart melt when he heard Joy’s childish voice.

“Joy, what’s up?” Gu Shaoting asked softly, as if he was afraid of scaring Joy.

“Uncle Gu, Mommy and I are going to the zoo tomorrow. Do you want to come?” Joy invited him.

“Of course. I’ll prepare a delicious picnic for us tomorrow and pick you up.” Gu Shaoting replied happily. Excellent, he had another opportunity to spend time with them..

Chapter 286 - 286: Visiting The Zoo

“Okay, see you tomorrow.” Joy was also very happy. She knew that Uncle Gu would agree.

After hanging up the phone, Joy said smugly to Shu Pan, “Mommy, Uncle Gu will pick us up tomorrow.”

Joy seemed to be telling her that she wasn’t lying. Uncle Gu was very glad that she invited him to go with her to the zoo.

Shu Pan pinched Joy’s tiny nose and said with a smile, “Mommy got it. Let’s go buy some snacks for tomorrow.”

“Yay!” The little fellow spun around excitedly before she skipped and hopped forward.

The next day, Joy got up early because she was excited about going to the zoo. After breakfast, the two of them changed and went downstairs.

Gu Shaoting also woke up early. It was his first outing with them, so he was a little nervous.

When he was approaching Shu Pan’s building, he saw the mother and daughter waiting for him downstairs from afar.

The mother and daughter were dressed in matching outfits. White t-shirt with a teddy bear print, denim shorts, white sneakers, pink sun hat and a small backpack. The parent looked youthful while the child looked really adorable.

Gu Shaoting’s heart was filled with contentment. He couldn’t bear to look away as he thought about how wonderful it would be if they were his wife and child...

Well, they used to be, but he messed everything up. Shu Pan’s current lukewarm attitude towards him really put him at a loss.

While simmering in his depression, he pulled up in front of Shu Pan and her daughter.

Gu Shaoting got out of the car, his eyes gently staring at Shu Pan and Joy. He then squatted down, hugged Joy and gave her a kiss. “Good morning, my little princess.”

Joy laughed as Gu Shaoting strapped her into the car seat in the back.

He then opened the door to the front passenger seat and gestured for Shu Pan to get in. When everything was ready, Gu Shaoting said, "And so the adventure begins."

They drove steadily toward the zoo.

Throughout the journey, Joy was like a little sparrow chattering non-stop. Gu Shaoting did not find it annoying and answered her every question.

Shu Pan rolled down the car window slightly and felt the refreshing breeze against her face. Looking at the scenery that kept moving backward, she felt deep reflections within herself.

The image of such family outings had appeared so many times in her mind when she was pregnant.

But she knew back then that it was just a fantasy that would never come true.

She didn't expect it to come true today. However, her wounded heart was already a little numb; she couldn't find the feeling she experienced back when she was imagining it.

Gu Shaoting looked at Shu Pan, who was sitting next to him, in deep thought and immersed in her own little world.

"What's wrong?" Gu Shaoting asked twice before Shu Pan turned her head.

She asked with confusion, "What's the matter?" Shu Pan didn't hear what Gu Shaoting said.

"Oh, nothing. I just saw that you were in a daze. Did something happen?" Gu Shaoting asked with concern.



"I'm fine. You didn't have to come if you're busy. Joy is quite willful now. You don't have to give in to her every request." Shu Pan was worried that they were in the way of his work.

After all, he was no ordinary office worker. It wasn't difficult to imagine how much work it was to run a large corporation.

"I'm not busy today." In Gu Shaoting's mind, nothing was more important than family outings like this. He had already missed the years from Joy's birth until recently. He didn't want to miss out on her development anymore..

### Chapter 287 - 287: A Happy Family Of Three

Shu Pan nodded when she heard that.

As the zoo was in the outskirts of Bin City, the drive there took about 40 minutes.

When they arrived, Gu Shaoting parked the car and Shu Pan held Joy's hand after she got her out of the car seat.

Strong sunlight cascaded through the tree canopy, creating dancing dappled patterns on the ground in tandem with the breeze.

There weren't too many visitors at the zoo. Joy looked a little tired after they walked around for a short while.

Gu Shaoting's heart ache when he saw that. He picked Joy up and piggybacked her on his shoulders. Shu Pan looked on with worry and tried to stop him.

"Put Joy down. It's too dangerous."

"It's okay. I am holding her very firmly." Gu Shaoting walked steadily without any feeling of burden at all.

“Wow, Mommy, I’m taller than you.” Joy shouted happily while sitting on Gu Shaoting’s shoulders.

Shu Pan looked at the backs of the two people in front of her, and felt an unknown feeling spread in her heart.

They saw elephants, peacocks, Joy’s favorite monkeys, and other animals. It was almost noon when Shu Pan felt like her legs no longer belong to her.

She dragged her tired body to a pavilion to rest. Gu Shaoting had good stamina and brought the energetic Joy to see other animals.

“Your husband is so nice to visit the zoo on a weekend with you and your daughter.” Another mother who was resting in the pavilion said. Her daughter was sitting beside her.

“Actually, he isn’t...” Shu Pan was about to explain when she realized that if she told people that they were divorced and no longer husband and wife, what would people think?

Never mind, she’d just let this woman misunderstand. They were strangers

anyway.

Shu Pan smiled awkwardly and said, “Oh, he happened to be free.”

“Sigh, men nowadays think that it’s enough if they just go out and earn money. They don’t care about anything at home. Like my husband, who’s still sleeping at home. Our daughter has asked him several times to come but he refused with an annoyed look on his face.” The mother said angrily.

“He’s probably busy. It’s a lot of pressure to support a family nowadays.” Shu Pan didn’t know how she should comfort this woman.

“Look at your husband. He’s handsome and has a distinguished demeanor. You can just tell that he’s a successful person, but he still loves his wife and daughter so much.” The mother said enviously.

Shu Pan was so embarrassed that she didn’t know what to say, so she forced a smile.

“You are such a happy family of three. You’re so lucky.” The mother went on and on. Fortunately, Gu Shaoting and Joy were back.

“Mommy, it’s a pity that you didn’t see the giraffe. Its neck is so long.” Joy said as she gestured with her hands.

Shu Pan took out a handkerchief and wiped the sweat off her forehead.

“Are you very tired?” Gu Shaoting looked at Shu Pan’s worried face and asked. “Yes. Let’s go. I think we’ve seen enough.” Shu Pan got up and said goodbye to the other mother.

On their way home, Shu Pan kept thinking about the other mother’s words. Marriage was indeed a woman’s second reincarnation. If she married a bad husband, the rest of her life would be ruined.

They ate outside before they went home. When they arrived downstairs of her apartment, Gu Shaoting carried the sleeping Joy upstairs.

When he came out to the living room, Shu Pan called out, “Actually, you don’t have to do this. After all, it’s all in the past. I have no other desire than to live a quiet life with Joy.”

The other mother’s words today reminded her that if they went out like this, people would think that they were a happy family..

Chapter 288: Provoked

But they weren't getting back together. It wasn't that Shu Pan was overreacting but the hurt she had suffered was still very raw in her heart.

Moreover, she had survived all these years raising their daughter on her own.

Gu Shaoting looked nervous. He didn't understand what provoked Shu Pan today that she would say such words.

"Panpan, I'm serious about you and Joy. Give me a chance, okay?" Gu Shaoting said sincerely.

"I'm sorry but this is not something I'm interested in at the moment but I'm very grateful for your care and concern for Joy." Shu Pan rejected him.

Gu Shaoting felt like the losing rooster in a cockfight. This was the tenacious Shu Pan he knew. It was very difficult for her to change her mind once she had made her decision.

"It's okay. I can wait." Gu Shaoting was not discouraged.

Gu Shaoting didn't want to hear Shu Pan say anything meaner, so he quickly bade her farewell.

Back in his car, Gu Shaoting slumped over the steering wheel to calm himself down.

He thought that Shu Pan would be a little moved, but she still rejected him very directly.

He then took out his phone and called He Ming.

"Ming, what are you doing?"

"I'm on my way home now. I'm having a candlelight dinner with Xiaomeng tonight.'

Must He Ming provoke him? Gu Shaoting regretted making the call now.

“What occasion is it?” Gu Shaoting thought hard to figure out if he had missed a major festival.

“It’s my birthday.” He Ming said happily.

“You’re a grown man. Why are you celebrating your birthday?” Gu Shaoting couldn’t help but say.

“When I was single, I didn’t even remember my own birthday. But things are different now. I have a girlfriend, so I must constantly find reasons to be lovey-dovey with my girlfriend.” He Ming’s boastful tone was slightly annoying.

“Where are you now? Let’s go for a drink first.” Gu Shaoting felt depressed and wanted to have a drink with He Ming.

“I’m almost home. I promised my mom that I’ll go home for a bowl of longevity noodles.” He Ming didn’t dare to disobey his empress dowager’s decree, or he would be in deep trouble.

Gu Shaoting could only go home feeling awkward.

When He Ming walked into the living room, he saw that his home seemed to be buzzing. They had guests.

His mother was in the kitchen talking with somebody.

“Brother He, you’re home.” Hu Shanshan suddenly came out of the kitchen.

He Ming was shocked. He did not expect Hu Shanshan to be here today, or he wouldn’t have come home.

He still remembered the experience at the hotel last time. He had no desire to be in trouble again.

“Hi, Shanshan.” She was still a guest, so He Ming couldn’t say anything. He figured he would just eat the noodles and leave.

“Brother He, happy birthday. This is my gift for you.” Hu Shanshan handed the beautifully wrapped shirt to He Ming.

“You shouldn’t have.” He Ming didn’t accept the gift.

“You helped me out when I was drunk last time. I haven’t thanked you properly yet.” Hu Shanshan found an excuse.

“Oh, that’s nothing. Don’t take it to heart.” He Ming said.

“Brother He, this is a little token of appreciation from your younger sister.” Since Hu Shanshan said it like that, He Ming had no choice but to accept the gift.

“Thank you.” He Ming turned around and put the gift on a chair before he went into the kitchen to find Mrs. He.

“Mom, is your longevity noodles ready?” He Ming saw that his mother was busy and quickly went up to help.

“Almost. You go outside first. It’s smoky and oily in the kitchen. Go talk to Shanshan. That girl is so thoughtful.” Mrs. He winked at him.

He Ming was really defeated by his mother’s desire to fix him up with Hu Shanshan again.

He Ming decided then to bring Xiaomeng home to meet his parents after his birthday..

Chapter 289: Eating Longevity Noodles

He Ming left the kitchen obediently. He looked at the time and wondered what Xiaomeng was doing now.

At the thought of that, he immediately took out his phone and made a call, which was picked up.

“What are you doing?” He Ming asked.

“I was about to take a nap and you woke me up.” Ye Xiaomeng snapped from the other end of the call.

“Babe, I’m sorry. Have a good afternoon nap. See you tonight.” He Ming smiled foolishly for a while before he hung up.

Hu Shanshan wanted to chat with He Ming when she saw him come out of the kitchen but he went out to the balcony instead to make a call.

Her interest was piqued. It was the weekend, so it shouldn’t be about work.

So, when He Ming was standing on the balcony with his back to her, she stood by the floor to ceiling windows and pretended to look outside.

She vaguely heard He Ming say words like “babe” and “see you tonight”. When she saw He Ming hang up, she quickly returned to the sofa and pretended to watch TV.

It turned out that the incident at the hotel didn’t break them up. They seemed to have become even closer.

What went wrong? That woman had clearly misunderstood He Ming...

"Ming, come and eat your noodles." Mrs. He walked out of the kitchen with a big bowl of noodles.

"Shanshan, come over quickly and eat. You must be hungry." Mrs. He said. What an obedient girl.

"Alright." Hu Shanshan sat beside He Ming.

But He Ming regarded her as a fierce tiger.

He was afraid after the unfortunate incident with her.

He Ming lowered his head and wolfed down his noodles.

"Shanshan, don't look at your Brother He. Hurry up and eat. Eat more." Mrs. He invited her warmly.

"Auntie, you too." Hu Shanshan felt a little embarrassed when she heard Mrs.

He say that.

After finishing his noodles, He Ming looked at the time. It was getting late.

He got up and said goodbye to Mrs. He.

"Sigh, Ming. Why are you leaving so quickly?" Mrs. He frowned, obviously unhappy with his behavior.

"I still have something to do, Mom. I'll be back in two days and I'll bring you a surprise." He Ming said mysteriously.

"You're trying to trick me again. What surprises can you bring me? Other than a daughter-in-law, nothing else is a surprise to me." Mrs. He sighed. She was obsessed about getting a daughter-in-law.



"You'll know then. Bye now." He Ming patted Mrs. He's shoulder.

"Brother He, I need to go home to do something too. Can I hitch a ride with you?" Hu Shanshan put down her chopsticks, stood up, and looked at He Ming.

He Ming felt a dull pain in his temples. He was reluctant after the last incident. His front passenger seat was reserved exclusively for Xiaomeng. He didn't want any other woman to sit in it.

"Um... It's not really on the way." He Ming said tactfully.

"Shanshan, did you have enough? You didn't eat much." Mrs. He asked hurriedly when she heard that Hu Shanshan was leaving.

"Yes, Auntie. I wanted to take Brother He's home but it seems that I'm not on the way..." Hu Shanshan said in disappointment.

"You are on the way, always on the way. When there's a will, there's a way. The city is so well-connected. Is there any place that's out of the way?" Mrs. He replied.

Mrs. He then glared at He Ming. "Ming, Shanshan is our guest. How can you treat her like that? You have a car, so send her home."

Mrs. He ordered before He Ming could refuse.

He Ming felt helpless. His empress dowager had spoken, so he could only obey.

He hoped that there wouldn't be any more trouble.

His Xiaomeng was still the best: innocent and less scheming..

## Chapter 290: Rejection

Even if He Ming was obtuse, he could tell that Hu Shanshan had an ulterior motive when she asked him for a ride. But she was the daughter of his mother's friend and he also treated her like a sister, so he couldn't do much.

He could only avoid her as much as possible.

"Let's go. I'll send you home." He Ming went to open the front door after he said that.

"Thank you, Brother He." Hu Shanshan picked up her bag and said shyly.

After bidding farewell to Mrs. He, Hu Shanshan quickly followed He Ming out.

Mrs. He only came back to her senses after they walked far away and started tidying up.

Suddenly, she saw the exquisite gift box on the chair and guessed that it was Hu Shanshan's gift for He Ming.

She thought that Ming was too careless to leave Hu Shanshan's gift for him at home again.

But she remembered that her son was a grown man who didn't pay attention to such things, so she casually unwrapped the gift.

It turned out to be a shirt. She praised Shanshan for being so meticulous and bought the color that He Ming often wore.

Mrs. He didn't know fashion brands but she recognized this luxury brand. It was expensive because the cut, fabric, and workmanship of the shirt were all first-rate.

She carefully unfolded the shirt and hung it on a hanger.

In the car, Hu Shanshan felt a little nervous when she saw He Ming's cold face.

"Brother He, I'm sorry. I know that you're busy, yet Auntie asked you to send me home." Hu Shanshan said apologetically.

"It's fine. It won't take too much time." He Ming replied plainly but he was complaining in his heart why she didn't say no if she knew that he was busy.

Although He Ming was reluctant, he was still a gentleman. He didn't show his displeasure. After all, girls were generally thin-skinned.

Hu Shanshan felt better when she heard him say that.

Did she do something wrong and annoyed her Brother He?

He Ming was busy thinking about his date tonight as he drove.

However, he couldn't ignore the fact that there was a young woman in his car because the smell of her perfume kept attacking his nose. It was very sweet and hard to ignore.

He found the smell pungent and wanted to sneeze.

Luckily, her house wasn't too far away. When they arrived, Hu Shanshan said goodbye to He Ming before she left reluctantly.

Hu Shanshan wasn't calm either during the ride. She kept thinking about He Ming's date with that woman tonight.

Did she have no chance at all?

No, she had a chance as long as they weren't married. Hu Shanshan was not discouraged.

Because her family was rich, there was nothing she couldn't get.

Anyway, this matter still required some detailed planning.

After Hu Shanshan left, He Ming quickly rolled down all the car windows to let the wind take away the overpowering fragrance in his car.

He Ming looked at the time. It was still the afternoon. Since Xiaomeng was taking a nap, he didn't want to disturb her, so he turned his car around and went to Gu Shaoting's house.

What He Ming told Mrs. He earlier was just an excuse.

Shaoting sounded upset when he called him earlier. He should go and check on his friend.

He guessed that Gu Shaoting would be at home. He was right. When Gu Shaoting came to the front door, He Ming could smell the alcohol on him. That was a sure sign that Gu Shaoting was upset.

"Ming, sit." Gu Shaoting felt very envious when he saw He Ming's happy and excited face.

"What happened?" He Ming asked in confusion. Wasn't everything fine recently? There wasn't any trouble at the company too...

"Trying to understand a woman is like trying to read a book written in a language you don't speak." Gu Shaoting said cryptically. But when He Ming heard him mention woman, he knew that Gu Shaoting was upset about Shu

pan.

Sigh, he really didn't know how to help his friend with matters of the heart....