

Rebirth: Regaining Joyful Moments

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Chapter 11: Chapter 011 The Eldest Brother

"Big brother."

In the darkness, Xu Nianhua felt her way outside, where the tall figure under the moonlight was none other than Xu Nianji.

Xu Nianhua was extremely excited, almost wanting to pounce on him, yet, she stopped in her tracks.

"What's wrong, haven't seen your big brother for so long that you don't recognize him anymore?"

Xu Nianji spread his arms and said, "Let big brother see, have you gained weight?"

"Big brother."

Xu Nianhua couldn't hold back anymore and plunged into his arms, tears involuntarily falling, pitter-patter. She didn't know why, but since coming back, her tears seemed to cost nothing, easily flowing at the slightest provocation.

"Alright, stop crying, your eyes will swell up and won't look pretty," Xu Nianji gently wiped away the tears at the corners of her eyes and comforted her, "It's okay if you didn't get admitted this year, our little sister is smart and capable, you'll definitely get in next year."

"Why are you so hot?"

Xu Nianji frowned, raising his hand to her forehead; it was frighteningly hot.

"It's nothing, maybe it's just too warm," Xu Nianhua said casually.

"Big brother, let's go inside," Xu Nian'an said, the night outside was nice, but it was too quiet here, unsettlingly so for Xu Nian'an.

Once inside, everyone gathered in the room, sitting on the bed, moving stools to sit around together, a family of five, finally reunited.

Xu Qinghe briefly explained the situation with the family's separation, and Xu Nian'an added details. Though Xu Nianji was not present at the time, he knew that they had split from the grandparents, and besides the old house and thirty yuan, they had nothing else.

"It's because I'm useless, I had promised that this winter, the girl from the Zhou Family would become your bride," Xu Qinghe felt guilty thinking about his eldest son.

"Dad."

Xu Nianji interrupted firmly, "I'm not that old this year, there's no hurry. Besides, even though we didn't get much now, we have able hands and feet and can surely provide for our family."

"I think, it doesn't matter if our family is poor, but Nian'an and our little sister must go to school," Xu Nianji said.

Working at the brick factory, Xu Nianji clearly understood that for them, education was the only way out!

"Big brother is right, we have able hands and feet. There's almost two months left until school starts, and I believe we will definitely be able to earn the money," said Xu Nianhua, who was feverish but was holding up because the family was together. However, she couldn't hold up for much longer and after she spoke, she felt particularly weak.

Soon after, Xu Nianhua lay on the bed and fell into a drowsy sleep amongst the chatter of her parents, big brother, and second brother.

When Xu Nianhua opened her eyes again, she saw the old ceiling and the empty room, sunlight streaming in through finger-width gaps in the wooden walls.

There was no luxurious bed, no posh room, and no doctors incessantly nagging at her ear.

The events of yesterday made Xu Nianhua sit up in bed for a long time before she realized that she hadn't just survived; she had returned to the past.

"How wonderful."

Xu Nianhua smiled sweetly; today she didn't feel dizzy, nor did she feel hot, and even the blazing sunlight outside seemed beautiful to her.

"Mom."

Xu Nianhua stepped out of the room and saw Ji Ying weeding in the yard; she happily walked toward her mother, her face beaming with a sweet smile.

Chapter 12: Chapter 012 Zhong Juan Visits

"It looks like your fever has completely subsided. How are you feeling, any discomfort left?"

Ji Ying watched her daughter Tiantian's smiling face, and the tiredness from rising before dawn to hoe the weeds instantly vanished without a trace.

"All better, it's all better now."

Xu Nianhua took the initiative to help out, prompting Ji Ying to repeatedly remind her that since she had just recovered, she needed to rest.

"Mom, it's precisely because I've just recovered that I should do some work and break a sweat. That way, I'll be invincible against hundreds of illnesses," Xu Nianhua didn't want to be confined to bed anymore. She followed Ji Ying around, piling all the weeds in a corner of the yard, and asked, "Where are Dad, Big Brother, and Second Brother?"

"They've gone to work in the fields. Even though we've split from the family, we still have a share of this year's rice," Ji Ying quietly observed Xu Nianhua, and seeing that she truly seemed to be fine, finally felt at ease.

She couldn't tell if it was her imagination, but Xu Nianhua seemed to have become livelier after her illness, not as quiet as before.

The mother and daughter working together sped up the task considerably; before long, the yard, once overgrown with weeds, was now clean and tidy.

Worried about the fields, Ji Ying steamed a few sweet potatoes and carried a pot of porridge out to the fields. Before leaving, she repeatedly urged Xu Nianhua to rest more.

Xu Nianhua orally agreed to rest, but she wasn't willing to at all. Looking at the old house, she knew that if it was to be lived in again, it needed to be thoroughly cleaned from the inside out.

"Xu Nianhua?"

An unfamiliar voice rang out.

Having just finished clearing out a room, Xu Nianhua walked out to see a person in the courtyard she recognized but couldn't quite name. Her skin was somewhat dark, and she wore two braids, Xu Nianhua, without betraying her emotions, asked, "What's up?"

"What, haven't seen me in a while and you don't recognize me anymore?" Zhong Juan approached with a smile and said, "When you were little, you always followed me around, calling me 'Sister Juan'."

Sister Juan.

Xu Nianhua remembered—wasn't this the daughter of the Zhong Family from the village, seemingly named Zhong Juan?

"How could I forget? I was just a bit curious why you've come looking for me," Xu Nianhua said with a smile, returning the question.

After all these years, apart from those closest to her, she indeed had trouble remembering others.

"The news about your family's division hasn't been out for half a day, and there's no one in the village who doesn't know about it," Zhong Juan was quite the talker, never stopping once she entered the yard.

"If you ask me, old man Xu from the Xu Family really didn't do right by you. In the division, he didn't give you anything," said Zhong Juan.

Regarding the Xu Family's division, there was no one in the village who had a good word to say about Xu Zhong. Xu Zhong and his new wife, Liu Sanmei, were notorious for their favoritism in the village.

Xu Nianhua smiled and remained noncommittal to Zhong Juan's comments. No matter how wrong Xu Zhong was, he was still her grandfather, and if she agreed with Zhong Juan, by afternoon the village would be buzzing with gossip that she, Xu Nianhua, had no respect for her elders.

Zhong Juan talked nonstop until she finally asked, "Nianhua, I heard you fell into the lake on the back mountain yesterday?"

Xu Nianhua's expression flickered, knowing full well this was Zhong Juan's real purpose for coming.

She lowered her gaze and said, "Sister Juan sure is well-informed. But how did you know I went to the lake on the back mountain?"

"Everyone in the village is talking about it, saying that you were distressed because you didn't do well on your exams," Zhong Juan looked slightly uncomfortable as she said, "Nianhua, it's not a big deal if you didn't get into university. It's rare for our village to produce college students every year."