

Rebirth: Regaining Joyful Moments

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Chapter 26: Chapter 026: Sending Meatballs

In the evening, they stewed pork bones with flat beans, and the aroma was so enticing it could almost make your mouth water.

Even the ordinary green beans tasted more delicious because of the meat added to it.

Having earned money from selling Mung Bean Jelly, everyone did not have to suffer after the separation. Around the dining table, framed by smiling faces, was the anticipation for a better life in the future.

Night.

Ji Ying quietly spoke to Xu Qinghe, "Dad, what do you think? We're keeping all this money, but the children..."

"We'll save this money for them, keep it for their future schooling," Xu Qinghe replied with a rare smile on his face. He had only expected to make good sales for one day, but to his surprise, they had sold about twenty yuan worth in just three days.

You must understand that the eldest son only made thirty yuan a month at the brick factory, and occasionally forty yuan on busier months. However, earning that forty yuan was ten times harder than making twenty yuan from the Mung Bean Jelly.

If only they could keep selling the Mung Bean Jelly like this.

Xu Qinghe harbored such hopes, but he was also well aware that Mung Bean Jelly was only profitable during the hot weather. Once the weather cooled, there would be few buyers.

However, the money from selling the Mung Bean Jelly greatly improved their living conditions at home.

The next day, Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an got busy early in the morning. After making the Mung Bean Jelly, they chilled it in the well. Xu Nian'an went up the mountain to gather firewood, and Xu Nianhua began to make meatballs.

After much thought, Xu Nianhua finally decided to add corn kernels to the meatballs because it would make them tastier and appear more plentiful.

Out of one jin of meat, aside from the portion sliced for cooking yesterday, Xu Nianhua used the rest to make meatballs. In the end, she made thirty slightly larger than usual meatballs.

The meatballs were braised in the most common way.

She wanted to fry the meatballs in oil to enhance the flavor, but there wasn't much oil left in the tank to sustain such an endeavor.

Out of the thirty meatballs, she kept eight and reserved the other twenty-two for her elder brother Xu Nian'an to eat.

To ensure the meatballs reached her brother before lunchtime, Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an set off without even eating their own lunch.

Each carried two sweet potatoes and two meatballs, just enough to fill their stomachs.

"Second brother, you deliver the Mung Bean Jelly to Granny Cai's house first, so it gets nice and cold. I'll go deliver the food to big brother," Xu Nianhua said, choosing a time-saving method out of concern that the meatballs might spoil.

"Are you sure you can find your way to the brick factory?" Xu Nian'an was not convinced. It was still a distance away from the factory, and he glanced at the time before saying, "We still have time. If we hurry, we can definitely make it before mealtime."

The siblings hustled to the brick factory, and, as luck would have it, arrived just as Xu Nianji and his team had finished preparing their meal and were about to eat.

"Big brother."

Xu Nian'an waved excitedly towards Xu Nianji.

"How did you two get here?"

Xu Nianji was somewhat surprised to see his younger sister and brother, as he was holding a bowl of rice topped with cooked spinach and winter melon.

Not to mention meat, not even a speck of oil could be seen.

"Big brother, look what delicious food we've brought for you," Xu Nian'an winked at Xu Nianji while pulling him towards the cool shade of a large tree.

Xu Nianji followed his brother and sister to the big tree, a distance away from the brick factory, which spared them the embarrassment of being seen by others.

Chapter 27: Chapter 027 Siblings

"Why have you come to town at this time? Have you eaten?" Xu Nianji asked as he walked.

Xu Nianji first wiped a rock under the big tree with his sleeve, and then the three siblings sat down together.

"We have eaten, my second brother and I ate before coming over."

Xu Nianhua said with a smile.

As soon as Xu Nian'an opened the lunch box, the delicious meatballs, braised meatballs, looked appetizing.

"Big brother, eat quickly."

Xu Nian'an came forward, smelling the scent of the meatballs. Even though he had already eaten two sweet potatoes and two meatballs, he couldn't help but salivate.

"You should have left it at home to eat, why did you bring it for me?" Xu Nianji glanced at the meatballs. Although he wanted to eat, thinking of his parents and younger siblings at home, he looked away.

"We have already eaten at home, these are specifically for you, big brother," Xu Nianhua said cheerfully. "Big brother, please eat, we walked here. If you don't eat now, it might spoil from the heat."

"Did you eat too?" Xu Nianji suspiciously sized up Xu Nian'an, then turned to Xu Nianhua. Seeing them both nodding in unison, he still felt a bit doubtful.

He knew they were poor at home.

"We even had bone stewed with flat beans yesterday. If it wasn't likely to spoil, we would definitely have saved a bowl for you," Xu Nian'an added. "We really have eaten, these are left for you."

"You eat first, otherwise, I won't eat."

Xu Nianji still felt unsure.

Eventually, Xu Nianhua ate another one, and Xu Nian'an ate two.

"Big brother."

Xu Nian'an cautiously looked around, ensuring no one was nearby and that no one was coming. Then he lowered his voice, "My little sister and I have been selling Mung Bean Jelly in town. In three days, we've made more than twenty-four yuan."

"What?"

As Xu Nianji was tasting a meatball, which was very tasty, he was startled by Xu Nian'an's words, his eyes widened in disbelief.

Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua shared how they had been selling Mung Bean Jelly these past few days. Xu Nianji, after a long silence, praised, "You have both grown up, and you did very well."

"Big brother, selling Mung Bean Jelly is just a temporary thing. If, if my second brother and I can find more stable jobs, you shouldn't go to the brick factory anymore."

Seeing the look in Xu Nianji's eyes, clearly skinnier and darker than even Xu Nian'an, who was only two years younger, Xu Nianhua's heart ached. Seeing the food he ate today, Xu Nianhua felt even more pity. Such terrible food, and yet such hard labor.

"Yeah, big brother, I think doing business is quite profitable. It would be great to have a long-term business," Xu Nian'an, tasting the sweetness of success, was eager to find a long-standing business opportunity.

"Alright, as long as there's a suitable opportunity, I will definitely quit the brick factory."

Xu Nianji felt motivated, his younger siblings were so sensible, and he, as the eldest, could not lag behind.

"By the way, who made these meatballs? They're delicious." Xu Nianji felt especially pleased with this meal.

He finished every last bit of the meatballs and rice, finally feeling full for once.

"I did."

Xu Nianhua stood up happily and said, "Big brother, if you like them, I'll make them for you again next time."

Although making meatballs was a bit of a hassle, it was quite convenient to bring them for Xu Nianji to eat.

"No need to go through such trouble, I have food and lodging here, you don't need to worry about me. Instead, you two be careful on your way back and forth. It's very hot now, don't get heatstroke."

Chapter 28: Chapter 028 The Incident

"You all better hurry up and go, the earlier you leave, the sooner you'll be back. It's way too hot outside." Xu Nianji glanced at the sun overhead, the scorching sun seemed almost ready to cook people alive.

"Okay."

Xu Nian'an reluctantly reminded, "Big brother, you also need to be careful."

This wasn't Xu Nian'an's first time visiting Xu Nianji, but it was Xu Nianhua's first time.

Xu Nianhua thought to herself that she must find a way soon to get her big brother to stop working at the brick factory; the conditions were really too poor, and moreover, it was too hard on him.

A small sedan suddenly drove by.

Xu Nian'an, holding Xu Nianhua to the side, waved goodbye to Xu Nianji, and then the siblings hurried off to Grandma Cai's house to prepare for selling mung bean jelly.

"Hey, who's that?"

The man in the sedan took a glance at Xu Nianhua; although his bangs covered his eyes, the small face that showed was youthful and radiant, especially the smile at the corners of her mouth—it was beautiful.

"Must be that lad's relatives. Should I go and ask around?"

"Yeah."

The man responded.

Before long, he found out that they were Xu Nianji's sister and brother.

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"Alas, we sold less today than yesterday, only six dollars." Xu Nian'an counted three times, and it was still six dollars.

"Little sister, you say, with more and more people selling mung bean jelly, what if we can't sell even a dollar?"

Xu Nian'an was getting worried. They had made nine dollars yesterday, and he was so happy, but today they made three dollars less—it felt like someone was slicing off his flesh!

"Big brother, be content," Xu Nian'an replied, blinking. She was quite philosophical about it; selling mung bean jelly was always going to be a temporary business. If they could save up a hundred and eighty dollars, she would be very satisfied.

Now, making six dollars a day, although it was less than at the start, if they could keep earning that for a month, it would add up to a good amount.

After paying their school fees, they might even save up enough for big brother's marriage expenses!

Zhou Family's sister.

Xu Nianhua thought to herself that she must visit Zhou Family's sister when she got the chance.

"Hey, has something happened in the village?"

Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an felt something was off in the village. It was only four-thirty in the afternoon; for summer, it was quite early, and the scorching sun was still baking the earth.

"Little sister, I'm going to chop some more firewood in the mountains." Xu Nian'an put down the pole and took up the wood-chopping axe to head to the mountains.

"Okay." Xu Nianhua did not object.

The nearby fruit jelly had all been picked clean, Xu Nianhua took the opportunity to prepare dinner and tidy up the house. The house was empty, with nothing much left—if only they could earn a bit more money.

After dinner, Ji Ying quietly pulled Xu Nianhua aside and said, "Nianhua, you mustn't turn out like Zhong Juan."

"What happened to her?" Xu Nianhua's heart skipped a beat.

"She..." Ji Ying initially didn't want to say too much, considering her daughter was still young, but then she thought, Xu Nianhua was already nineteen, there were some things she should know. Keeping secrets might end up being harmful to her.

Ji Ying then lowered her voice and said, "Zhong Juan and Gao Jianshe did something shameful, and many people saw it. Nianhua, you're nineteen now, I wouldn't oppose

you dating, but you must never be like Zhong Juan; not married, yet getting too close to a man..."

Chapter 29: Chapter 029 Regretted

Ji Ying was afraid her words might startle Xu Nianhua, so she spoke in a veiled manner.

However, Xu Nianhua understood her perfectly and nodded, "Mom, rest assured, I definitely won't be with anyone else..." before we're married.

The part she left unsaid, which was too shocking, was hastily amended by Xu Nianhua to, "I won't get too close to men."

"That's good," Ji Ying praised, "My Nianhua is so sensible."

"Mom, don't worry. I will absolutely not do anything that would bring shame to you and dad."

Xu Nianhua smiled pridefully, her goal was to make her parents proud of her.

"Mom." Xu Qinghe suddenly noticed that stepmother Liu Sanmei had arrived.

"The old house is really nice, so peaceful to live in." Liu Sanmei looked around the house; Ji Ying was diligent—the grass in the courtyard had been thoroughly hoed, none could be seen, and the old house was cleaned everywhere, tidy, apart from being a bit old, but as always clean and orderly.

Since there was no electricity at that moment, Xu Qinghe and Xu Nian'an were enjoying the cool in the yard.

"Grandma, please have a seat." Xu Nian'an stood up and offered a stool.

Even though Xu Nian'an knew that his step-grandmother would never truly care for his father and was biased towards his uncle's family, Xu Nian'an understood that he must not dispense with the necessary politeness.

"Auntie, please have a seat."

Xu Nian'an brought out two more stools.

Xu Nianhua came out with two cups of tea, which were actually just boiled water.

Under the bright moonlight, Liu Sanmei explained her reason for coming, mainly about how the division of the family had been too hasty, and how the old man had been in a foul temper these days. Basically, she implied that it would be better if the family hadn't split.

"Mom, even though the family is divided, I will still show you the utmost filial piety," Xu Qinghe said firmly. Regardless of anything, the grace of raising him owed to Xu Zhong; and though Liu Sanmei had her prejudices, she after all had ensured his safe upbringing.

Liu Sanmei kept repeating her case, but Xu Qinghe thought that since the family had split, there was absolutely no reason to go back. Now, everyone in the village knew they had separated, and the proof for the old house was in their hands, besides, after the division, Xu Qinghe found living there more peaceful.

The old house might have been a little worn, but it was certainly tranquil.

By his side, Xu Nianhua quietly lowered her head without speaking, until Liu Sanmei and the others left. Xu Qinghe sighed and said, "Dad might just not be used to being separated from the rest of the family."

In the past, he always joined his dad for a drink.

"Dad, being more filial to Grandpa and Grandma is the same," Xu Nianhua said with a smile. "If dad misses Grandpa, we can go see him tomorrow, we live close by."

"Right," Xu Qinghe nodded, showing no intention of returning to the Xu Family. He said, "Nian'an, walk your grandma and auntie home."

It was pitch dark outside, and even with the moonlight, it wasn't very clear.

"Big brother, I'll come too."

Xu Nianhua followed along.

As the siblings walked quickly, getting closer, they overheard Liu Sanmei and Auntie Zhao Juxiang apparently arguing about something. The siblings exchanged glances and instinctively lightened their footsteps.

"Mom, Uncle Xu doesn't want to return to the Xu Family, does he?" Zhao Juxiang sounded troubled!

If Xu Qinghe and his family didn't return to the Xu Family, who would farm their land? Who would tend to the vegetable garden? Who would wash the dishes? Who would clean the chicken coop, duck pen, and rabbit hutch?

Even the chicken feces in the yard—and there was a lot of it—would be left for her to clean.

And then there were three meals a day!

These past few days, Zhao Juxiang had been so exhausted her whole body ached!

Chapter 30: Chapter 030: Delivering Mung Bean Jelly

Initially, because Zhihao was supposed to join the supply and marketing cooperative as an accountant, she and her mother-in-law, Liu Sanmei, decided to split Xu Qinghe's family from theirs, ensuring that they wouldn't benefit from Zhihao's eventual gains!

Zhihao's father-in-law had intended for him to be an accountant, but somehow, things went awry, and Zhihao failed to secure the position, dashing all hopes they had pinned on it.

Just today, Zhihao came back. Although he didn't become an accountant, he still got a job at the supply and marketing cooperative. His salary, though temporarily only thirty yuan, suggested more expenses in the future. So, Liu Sanmei felt it might be better for Xu Qinghe's family to come back.

"Wasn't it you who wanted to split the family in the first place?" Liu Sanmei said irritably. These days, either she or Zhao Juxiang was stuck working in the vegetable garden and the house, no longer able to casually snack on sunflower seeds like before!

"Mom, I did want to split the family, but that was for your sake. Your eldest grandson is so accomplished, and your second grandson is about to be a college student. Wouldn't everyone say how blessed you are?" Zhao Juxiang knew exactly what Liu Sanmei liked to hear.

Sure enough, Liu Sanmei humphed softly, adding, "Alright, my grandsons are naturally talented. Even if he hasn't become an accountant now, with my eldest grandson's abilities, he will surely make big money in the future."

"If the eldest doesn't want to come back, let him be." Liu Sanmei wasn't exactly keen on having Xu Qinghe's family return; it was only because recently, Xu Zhong had been somewhat downhearted, and Liu Sanmei, considering Zhihao's failed ventures, started thinking about bringing Xu Qinghe's family back.

It would be better if Xu Qinghe didn't return; otherwise, there wouldn't be enough room in the house.

"What do you think, why do they suddenly want us back?" Xu Nian'an quietly whispered to Xu Nianhua, "Grandma doesn't like us, does she?"

"Could it be that there's no one else to do the household work?"

Xu Nian'an muttered under his breath, their voices low and far enough from Liu Sanmei that they didn't need to worry about being overheard.

"Definitely. Think about it, without mom here, who else would do all this work if not Auntie and Grandma?" Xu Nianhua guessed, figuring the real reason was Zhihao's job opportunity falling through, prompting them to consider bringing their dad back.

"No way, our family isn't going back!" Xu Nian'an was content with their current life, away from their grandparents' critical eyes and Xu Zhiyuan's condescending demeanor.

"Yeah."

On this matter, Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an were in complete agreement.

As they walked, the siblings discussed getting their dad to visit their grandparents tomorrow. By doing so, even if they had split from the family, they could still show filial respect, and the matter of returning to the Xu family could be forgotten.

The next day.

Xu Nianhua and his sister made some mung bean jelly, which they handed to Xu Qinghe, saying, "Dad, please take these two bowls of mung bean jelly to Grandpa and Grandma to try."

"You kids are so thoughtful." Xu Qinghe clearly understood the siblings' intentions and, without hesitation, took the bowls of mung bean jelly to Xu Zhong.

"Dad, please don't mention that we're selling mung bean jelly," Xu Nianhua suddenly caught Xu Qinghe as he was about to leave, reminding him.

Xu Qinghe was startled momentarily, then said, "Wouldn't the people in the village find out sooner or later?"

"Dad, just say these were made for eating." Xu Nianhua smiled faintly, knowing that the villagers would eventually learn about it, but such things could be postponed till later.