

Rebirth: Regaining Joyful Moments

Chapter 36: Chapter 036 How to Teach a Lesson

"The Gao Family agreeing to the marriage is already good enough." Xu Nian'an pursed his lips, wishing to stay by his younger sister's side 24 hours a day to prevent any more accidents from happening to her.

Luckily, luckily nothing happened.

Xu Nian'an had prayed countless times in his heart; his last visit was just in time.

"Big brother, when you marry a wife, it will definitely be a hundred times livelier than theirs." Xu Nianhua's face was full of smiles, wondering what kind of wife his brother would marry.

"If you want a sister-in-law, let's hurry up and make money. Once Zhou He marries into the family, you'll have your sister-in-law."

Xu Nian'an was now fond of sentimentality, but he had absolutely no thoughts about it, only wanting to make more mung bean jelly to earn more money.

These days, they could sell mung bean jelly for about six yuan daily, which wasn't much, but it had accumulated to forty yuan over time, aside from expenses.

Though it wasn't much, there was still one more month until September 1st, and they could still earn more.

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Gao Family.

Zhong Juan's wish was fulfilled as she married into the Gao Family, becoming their daughter-in-law. Although the manner of her entry was a bit disgraceful, she had her wish fulfilled.

The wedding was arranged hastily. The bruises on Gao Jianshe's face had almost healed, but a little was still visible.

Knowing Xu Nian'an was responsible for the bruises, Zhong Juan harbored intense hatred toward the Xu family and especially toward Xu Nian'an, gritting her teeth with resentment.

"Jianshe, if it wasn't for Xu Nianhua spilling our secret, we wouldn't have been discovered."

"Also, about that day Xu Nianhua fell into the lake; she fell by herself. What does that have to do with you? Why did Xu Nian'an have the right to hit you?"

Zhong Juan looked at Gao Jianshe with sympathy. She truly loved Gao Jianshe; although he wasn't the handsomest in the village, his family's financial condition was good and he was honest and completely submissive to her.

"That day we were indeed at fault."

"Besides, are you sure it was Xu Nianhua who told everyone?"

Gao Jianshe uncertainly looked at his newly married wife.

"Of course, I caught us in the back mountain that day, how could it not be her who told everyone?"

Zhong Juan bitterly voiced her discontent with the Xu family and Xu Nianhua, saying, "Jianshe, you're just too kind-hearted, too honest. Xu Nian'an just hit you for nothing, we can't let this go."

"Besides, Xu Nianhua is fine, why should you have taken that beating for nothing?"

Zhong Juan constantly defended Gao Jianshe. Initially, Gao Jianshe felt it wasn't a big deal, but influenced by Zhong Juan's exaggerated tone, he also felt Xu Nian'an had made a mountain out of a molehill, yet, Xu Nian'an had been known as a little tyrant in the village since childhood—he couldn't win against him!

"Jianshe, I think the blame lies with Xu Nianhua. Why don't we find a chance to teach Xu Nianhua a lesson?" Zhong Juan thought. If they didn't give Xu Nianhua a lesson, she couldn't ease the hatred in her heart!

When they were caught that day, when had Zhong Juan ever been so embarrassed?

And the instigator of it all was Xu Nianhua.

"How should we teach her a lesson?" Gao Jianshe dumbly asked Zhong Juan.

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"Yingzi."

In the still of the night, after making an extra bed with recent busyness, Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying finally started sleeping in the same room again.

Previously, it had always been Xu Qinghe and Xu Nian'an sleeping together, while Ji Ying slept with Xu Nianhua.

"What's wrong?"

Ji Ying asked groggily. From early morning until lying in bed, Ji Ying had been continuously busy and was now tired.

Chapter 37: Chapter 037 Dispel the Idea

"Dad wants us to go back to the Xu family." Xu Qinghe turned towards Ji Ying, whose eyes were too tired to open, and he felt wide awake.

Lately, Xu Qinghe had thought over and over about this matter.

"Oh."

Ji Ying responded casually, and the next moment, she opened her eyes, the sleepiness in her eyes completely vanished.

"What did you just say?" Ji Ying turned to face Xu Qinghe, and the moonlight coming through the window made it possible to see each other's faces clearly.

"I, Dad wants us to go back to the Xu family, what do you, what do you think?" Xu Qinghe said in a lowered voice.

"I don't want to go back," Ji Ying replied without hesitation, "Even though we live in an old house that's draughty and the roof leaks, our family of five is together, and we are free."

Freedom, yes, no in-laws above us, no scheming sisters-in-law either.

Although it's not as comfortable as a new house, it's heartwarming to live here.

"Qinghe, do you, do you want to go back to the Xu family?" Ji Ying looked at Xu Qinghe worriedly, she really didn't want to go back to the Xu family at all.

Xu Qinghe was silent.

Ji Ying said, "Even if we don't go back to the Xu family, if we start making money, we can still honor Dad. Except for not living in the Xu family home, if Dad gets ill, as his daughter-in-law, I will surely contribute money and effort when needed."

"Ji Ying." Xu Qinghe took her hand, sensing her anxiety, he sighed and said, "You have suffered over these years."

"Then you..." you still want to make me suffer?

Ji Ying's personality was not a dominating one; of the sort that prefers to keep grievances inside.

"I won't make you suffer anymore."

Xu Qinghe said with conviction, "Just as you said, we do not need to go back to the Xu family to show our respect to Dad and Mom."

"Really?" Ji Ying looked at Xu Qinghe with a smile that lit up her eyes, "You won't be swayed again and go back, right?"

"..."

Xu Qinghe, feeling somewhat embarrassed by his wife's words, hesitated for a while before saying, "No."

A few days ago, Xu Zhong had talked to him about going back, and these days, he had been considering it and subtly inquiring about what their three children thought. Therefore, Xu Qinghe felt that since they had split from the family, they should not go back.

Moreover, Nian'an and Nianhua were still selling Mung Bean Jelly. If they went back, how could they continue their business?

Although he was not very smart, he was aware that if their stepmother knew about the jelly selling, it wouldn't include any share for the siblings.

Also, the eldest, Nianji, had already been delayed a year because of Zhihao's wedding. It couldn't be put off any longer.

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"That's great. I was really worried Dad would be swayed and go back to the Xu family," Nianhua sighed with relief when he knew Xu Qinghe had decided not to return.

It's good to be filial, but blind filial piety is not.

Moreover, if step-grandma Liu Sanmei and Zhao Juxiang knew about them making money from selling Mung Bean Jelly, how much of that money would end up in their hands?

In the future, as they earn more and more money, not splitting from the family would definitely be problematic.

"I'm worried too." Nian'an also didn't want to return to the Xu family. Now their family of four, no, their family of five, even if their house was a bit shabby, it was still comfortable.

"Elder brother, after we finish selling the Mung Bean Jelly today, shall we go see our older brother? I miss him, and I want to make him some meatballs."

Chapter 38: Chapter 038 Xu Nianji's Biological Sister

"Sure."

Xu Nian'an replied without thinking, "Make more meatballs; big brother must have not had meat in a long time."

Now, with the money Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua had earned, most of it they saved, but buying a meaty bone or some meat once a week greatly improved their lives.

With the experience from last time, Xu Nianhua easily made the meatballs, leaving most for their elder brother and the small remainder to be shared among the four family members, with each getting two.

At home, it was possible to have bone soup and meat occasionally, but for the big brother at the brickyard, if the family didn't send any, he might go a month without a single meat meal.

Upon reaching the county, they first dropped Mung Bean Jelly at Grandma Cai's, then the siblings went to look for their brother at the brickyard.

It was just before lunch, likely the most exhausting time.

"Big brother." Xu Nianhua had just arrived at the brickyard when she saw a tractor pulling bricks, and Xu Nianji was busy arranging them on the tractor.

Under the scorching sun, even with several people around, Xu Nianhua recognized her eldest brother Xu Nianji instantly.

The dark and thin Xu Nianji looked particularly tall, his gray shirt already soaked with sweat, and a gray-white towel hung around his neck like a scarf, convenient for wiping the sweat from his forehead.

Xu Nianji wiped his forehead with the towel and, seeing Xu Nianhua wearing a straw hat, smiled and said, "Little sister, what brings you here?"

"I came to see you."

With a lunchbox in her hand, Xu Nianhua stood by sympathetically and asked, "Big brother, how much longer do you have to work?"

"Almost done," Xu Nianji said. "Nian'an, take little sister to rest over there for a bit, I'll be finished soon."

"Big brother, let me help you." Xu Nian'an stepped forward.

Xu Nianji refused, "No need, don't get your clothes dirty. Your hands need to stay clean for writing."

"In ten minutes, we'll have finished all this work."

Xu Nianji glanced at the tractor already half-loaded with bricks, knowing that once this load was finished, it would be time for a break and lunch.

Ten minutes passed quickly, but under such scorching weather, it felt unbearably hot. Xu Nianhua said, "Second brother, when will we be able to save enough money to start our own business?"

"We should have enough in another month," Xu Nian'an felt nothing but anticipation for the future.

In the past, all he wanted was for his little sister to go to school, but their family was too poor.

But now, Xu Nian'an also wanted to go back to school so that after graduating from college, he wouldn't just have a job waiting for him, but he'd also be able to earn even more money.

"Nian'an, little sister, are mom and dad doing well? How's the Mung Bean Jelly selling?"

Xu Nianji took out the lunch, which consisted of pumpkin and chili fried eggplant—the vegetables that were cheap and in season.

"Big brother, we made something tasty for you."

Xu Nianhua opened the lunchbox, and the fragrant meatballs immediately made one's stomach rumble.

"Mom and dad are fine, and the Mung Bean Jelly sells well."

Xu Nian'an whispered to Xu Nianji, careful not to be overheard by others.

It was noon, and the food Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua brought was in lunchboxes wrapped in cloth bags. The three siblings sat under the shade of a tree to dine together. She even made a special dish of chili pickled vegetables, a tangy and spicy delight from their mother, perfect for eating with rice.

Even from a distance, it was clear that the bond among the three siblings was strong.

"So that's Xu Nianji's little sister?" Having heard that Xu Nianji's little sister had come, Yue Hongliang took the opportunity to stand in a shady corner under the sun and watch her, as he had only gotten a quick glimpse the last time.

Chapter 39: Chapter 039: Meeting Under the Big Locust Tree

"Yes," another person confirmed, "I heard her sister is going to college."

"She's good-looking and smart enough to go to college," Yue Hongliang said, his gaze fixed unwaveringly on the beautiful face under the shade of the tree. Even dressed in a very ordinary floral shirt and black pants, with her hair in the simplest of braids, Yue Hongliang found her a pleasure to look at.

Especially those eyes, bright and gleaming, as if they could speak.

Yue Hongliang stroked his chin, his small eyes glowing with intense interest.

"Next time, keep it for yourselves; don't bring any for me."

Xu Nianji was eating delicious meatballs. They tasted wonderful, but it had only been half a month, and this was already the second time. He wondered if his younger siblings had any at home.

"Don't worry, big brother, we had some at home too,"

Xu Nianhua said with a cheerful grin.

Their time together was incredibly brief. Xu Nianji went back to work, while Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an reluctantly left to sell mung bean jelly.

After selling the mung bean jelly, the siblings split up to do different tasks.

"Little sis, you go buy some needles and thread; I'll go find a blacksmith shop,"

Xu Nian'an said. The family's kitchen knife, received during the division of household items long ago, had become nicked and ineffective even after sharpening. This time, Xu Nian'an specifically brought the kitchen knife with him, planning to have the blacksmith reforge it.

"Okay," Xu Nianhua agreed swiftly.

"Then be careful and pay attention to safety. After buying the needles and thread, wait for me under the Big Locust Tree," Xu Nian'an instructed repeatedly, concerned about her getting lost as the county was not small.

"Second brother, don't worry, I won't get lost,"

Xu Nianhua replied, a bit annoyed by Xu Nian'an's incessant worrying. "I've attended school in the county too!"

"Then, just be careful."

Xu Nian'an thought it over and decided to insist she be safe, looking back repeatedly as if his little sister might disappear any moment.

"Why don't we go together?" Xu Nian'an suggested, walking a few steps then coming back with an empty bucket.

Xu Nianhua: "..."

How worried could he be about her?

"Remember, meet under the Big Locust Tree." Xu Nian'an still went to the blacksmith shop alone. It wasn't clear how long reforging the knife would take, and it was faster if they split up to handle things.

"Alright, under the Big Locust Tree."

Xu Nianhua waved off Xu Nian'an. The Big Locust Tree he mentioned was on the route from the county city back to Shuangzhu Village, a massive tree that one adult could not fully embrace.

Xu Nianhua bought the needles and thread, completely unaware that she was about to encounter someone familiar.

These days are different from the future, where we discard clothes simply because they are old rather than worn out. One wouldn't wear clothes until they are threadbare.

Nowadays, clothes last three new years and three old years, and with some mending, they can be worn for another three years.

Let alone her older brothers, whose work clothes are all patched up. Although she's a girl, her parents always doted on her, not many new clothes, but at least she had some.

The Xu Family wouldn't split such small items as needles and thread.

"Xu Nianhua!"

Suddenly, a strange male voice interrupted. Just after buying the needles and thread and about to head to the Big Locust Tree to wait for her second brother, Xu Nianhua

was startled. Turning around, a masked man grabbed her mouth and dragged her into a deserted alley.

Chapter 40: Chapter 040: Falling from a Tree

Kidnapping?

Impossible, she had no money, her family was poverty-stricken.

Assault for lust?

In broad daylight, besides, she was dressed so plainly, what allure could she possibly have?

Seeking revenge?

She hadn't made enemies with anyone.

Xu Nianhua was dragged into a deserted alley, her mind racing with countless thoughts. She clenched the cloth bag in her hand tightly; it contained the needles and scissors she had bought, as well as two jin of brown sugar.

"Mmph!"

While struggling, Xu Nianhua's hand quietly reached into the cloth bag, accurately grasping the scissors!

"Don't scream." The man's voice was very panicky, as if it was his first time committing such an act.

Xu Nianhua surveyed her surroundings. It was a dead end, with only a few back doors; not a soul was in sight. The only thing there was an old persimmon tree, lush and leafy, its branches spread out like a giant umbrella.

The man held Xu Nianhua tightly, his hand trying to inch upwards in an irregular way.

Juanzi had said to teach Xu Nianhua a lesson, to ruin her innocence, but he thought, why let someone else have such a good opportunity?

Assault for lust!

This thought flashed through Xu Nianhua's mind, and she made a split-second decision, pulling out the scissors from the cloth bag and stabbing fiercely behind her.

"Ahh..."

The man's scream echoed, seemingly caught completely off guard that Xu Nianhua was carrying a weapon that could cause injury.

Xu Nianhua took the opportunity to struggle, trying to break free from the man's grasp.

The man, clutching his bleeding waist, felt a surge of rage from within, and pulled out a fruit knife from his pocket, intending to use it to threaten her.

"Don't move." The man barked harshly.

Xu Nianhua didn't care; her target was the large persimmon tree. If she could climb it and get over the wall, she would surely encounter people.

'Ssshhh'

Xu Nianhua only heard the sound of the fruit knife slicing through fabric. She lifted her foot and stomped on him hard, then agilely sprinted toward the large persimmon tree.

Climbing trees wasn't her forte, but, in a life-or-death situation, people often unleash incredible potential.

The man tried to follow, but Xu Nianhua was already as high as the surrounding wall.

Stepping onto the wall, Xu Nianhua was no longer panicked. She looked back at the masked man and, for some reason, found his figure slightly familiar. Those eyes, filled with ferocity and panic, also seemed familiar.

"Who are you?" Xu Nianhua stood on the wall, ready to leap back into someone's yard at any moment, but she still wanted to know who was so intent on making her life difficult.

"I..."

As the man saw he couldn't catch Xu Nianhua, he dove his wounded abdomen and hurried away in disarray.

The tension that Xu Nianhua had been holding tight, relaxed.

Looking down, there appeared to be someone beneath the large persimmon tree.

She slipped, and her whole body fell backward.

Xu Nianhua frowned, her gaze landing on black trouser legs and a pair of shiny black leather shoes. She lifted her head and saw a face that was handsome and dignified, such a pity, the good-looking man had a problem with his legs.

As she got up from the ground, she said, "Sorry for bothering you."

Her voice was very calm, nothing like someone who had nearly met with disaster.

"Doesn't it hurt?" The man's cool voice sounded.

Xu Nianhua looked down to find that her arm had just been wounded by that man, blood dripping profusely.

"I'll clean it up." Xu Nianhua covered her injured arm as if the injury wasn't hers.