

Regaining 101

Chapter 101: Double Happiness Comes Knocking

"Am I, not dreaming?"

Xu Nianji looked at the money in her hands, and counted it again, but no matter how she counted, there were eleven yuan and forty cents.

"Big brother, you really didn't count wrong," Xu Nianhua said gleefully. She knew it, bean sprouts, such a common dish and so cheap, how could they not make money?

In one day, they earned nine yuan, and in thirty days a month, that would be two hundred and seventy yuan!

Selling bean sprouts was not like selling Mung Bean Jelly, for bean sprouts could be sold every day throughout all four seasons of the year.

Unfortunately, they only had one bean sprout bucket.

Thinking it over, Xu Nianhua felt they definitely needed to make a few more bean sprout buckets. That way, they could grow more bean sprouts and truly be able to sell them every day.

"How about we eat dumplings today?" Xu Nianhua craved it as she hadn't eaten a single meal of dumplings since she returned.

Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianji exchanged glances and said, "Agreed."

In the end, they bought two jin of dumplings and put twenty jin of soybeans in Grandma Cai's house. Watching the last of the bean sprouts sell out, Xu Nianhua immediately soaked the soybeans. When they came back the next day, they'd just need to change the water.

In the sweltering noon heat, fighting off drowsiness, Xu Nianhua diligently translated the contract.

Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianji, however, took the Mung Bean Jelly that was cooling over well water outside to sell. Since it was still hot outside, there were quite a few buyers for the jelly.

When they returned home in the evening, Xu Nianji felt like he was walking on clouds; they had earned fourteen yuan today from selling bean sprouts and Mung Bean Jelly, which was equivalent to half a month's salary for him.

"You're back?"

Ji Ying, seeing her three siblings return, couldn't wait to share the good news. She said, "Nianji, your marriage with the Zhou Family is settled, on the third day of the eighth month, Xiaohe will be brought into our family."

"Ah..."

Xu Nianji, who was already feeling dizzy, suddenly became even dizzier.

"Congratulations, big brother, you'll soon be bringing home your bride," Xu Nianhua said with a smile, her eyes crinkling with happiness as she looked at Xu Nianji.

Xu Nian'an said, "Big brother, I wish you and sister-in-law a lifetime of happiness and may you have children soon."

Xu Nianji, who was not yet married, blushed at Xu Nian'an's words.

After getting engaged to Zhou He, the most they'd done was hold hands, and now to suddenly talk about having children soon? How could his face not turn red?

"Today is a good day; we sold out all our bean sprouts, and big brother's marriage is almost here. This is really a double celebration. We bought pork belly; let's make dumplings to celebrate," Ji Ying and Xu Nianhua got right to work. Ji Ying worked the dough, Xu Nianhua chopped the meat filling, and Xu Nian'an and his brother harvested a batch of Chinese chives. The two cleaned them with exceptional speed.

As soon as Xu Qinghe, who was back from working outside, entered the yard, he smelled the aroma of dumplings. Knowing that they had sold the bean sprouts for eleven yuan and forty cents and that the date for the marriage with the Zhou Family had been set, Xu Qinghe couldn't stop smiling.

"Good, good."

Xu Qinghe felt increasingly hopeful about the future, saying, "Third of August isn't far off. I need to make them a new bed and a wardrobe."

"Dad, Mom, I'll give my room to big brother. I'll sleep next to second brother's room," Xu Nianhua said, remembering this. "Big brother's getting married; he can't still be squeezing in with second brother. My room should go to big brother and sister-in-law."

"Little sister," Xu Nianji thought, his little sister was always so understanding. He said, "Little sister, actually, the back room would do as well. It would be big enough for just the two of us."

"You two don't have to fight over it. There's an empty front room too. We'll clean it tomorrow and prepare it for their bridal chamber," Ji Ying said with a laugh. To see her children so united was probably the greatest joy for a parent.

Chapter 102: One Building Per Person Hereafter

"Mom, are you talking about the room you used to live in?" Xu Nianhua thought of the only remaining front room.

They were living in the main building's four-bay, three-room layout, with two front rooms and two back rooms; behind those were the kitchen, and one front room occupied by Xu Qinghe and his wife, while the other front room was occupied by Xu Nianhua.

Xu Nianji and Xu Nian'an were men, and they had given the best rooms to their only little sister.

The front room that Ji Ying was talking about was the one adjacent to her room, beside the main building's four-bay, three-room layout. There was also a small hall and a front room, which is where their family used to live.

The main building was where their grandparents lived with their second uncle's family.

After returning to the old house, because there were only the five of them, the main building was sufficient for their needs, and they did not tidy up the rooms they used to live in.

"Right," Ji Ying said with a smile, "When we moved back, we had already planned that after Nianji gets married, we will let him and his wife live there. It will be convenient to raise kids with the additional small hall, and though it's not as big as the main hall, the living space is larger."

"Tomorrow, I'll bring people to make beds and cabinets. I've been working with them for over a decade. We'll have them help with the beds first, and later on we can pay them for their work." Xu Qinghe thought about the timber they had kept from before, which could now come in handy.

Xu Nianji, feeling moved by his parents' considerations but also feeling it inappropriate, looked towards Xu Nian'an, who was only three years younger than him.

"Big brother, you just settle in with peace of mind. It will be at least five or six years before I get married. By that time, we will have built new houses."

Xu Nian'an naturally knew what Xu Nianji was concerned about.

If they continued to live in the old house, the two rooms and one small hall currently occupied by Xu Nianji would mean he was at a considerable advantage.

"Exactly, big brother. In the future, we will build a row of houses, one for each person. Everyone will get a new house to live in. Mom and dad, if you want to live on your own, you can, or if you prefer living with big brother or second brother, you're free to choose," Nianhua thought about the row of houses, which should be unique in the village, right?

"Little sister, I support you."

Xu Nian'an thought it was a very good goal.

"Alright, then your father and I will just wait to enjoy the benefits," Ji Ying said cheerfully, exchanging a look with Xu Qinghe as if to say, "See, how filial our children are?"

Night.

Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an were up late translating the contract.

"Little sister, didn't you translate that too quickly?"

Xu Nian'an had not seen the contract during the afternoon when he was selling Mung Bean Jelly, but, in just a few hours, Xu Nianhua was almost done with the translation?

"Um, haven't I been translating this whole time?"

"Second brother, we need to hurry. After finishing the translation today, we have to proofread it. Tomorrow morning we must do the final review." Xu Nianhua reminded him, "Tomorrow, we have to hand the contract over to Pei Yicheng."

"Right."

Xu Nian'an instantly refocused, working on the translation of the contract until completion, his gaze shifting to Xu Nianhua, who was earnestly proofreading beside him.

Under the flickering lamp light, Xu Nianhua, to facilitate the translation work, had her hair tied back, including her bangs which usually covered her forehead, secured by a hair clip, revealing her smooth and radiant forehead.

Xu Nian'an had always known his little sister was beautiful. From childhood, she was kind-hearted but delicate, and he and his older brother had always been careful to protect her. When he was ten years old, and she was only nine, he had fallen into a well. Had it not been for her quick wits, throwing a thick rope into the well and securing the other end to a tree, he might have drowned.

Chapter 103: She's Here

"Don't worry, I can definitely handle selling the Mung Bean Jelly on my own."

Xu Nianji practically promised with a thump on her chest.

"Alright then, your sister and I will head over first."

Xu Nian'an accompanied Xu Nianhua to find Pei Yicheng.

By ten o'clock in the morning, they had translated the entire contract, and they didn't know how long it would take to discuss it, so the responsibility of selling the jelly noodles fell on Xu Nianji.

They had sold a whole bucket of bean sprouts yesterday; they wanted to sell bean sprouts, but they couldn't grow overnight.

Seeing that the bean sprouts sold well, besides the bean sprout bucket, they found clean pots today, planning to grow bean sprouts, and to count whatever they managed to grow.

At home, Xu Qinghe had already started working on making more bean sprout buckets, and since Xu Nianji was about to get married, it was time to start making the marital bed, which was urgent; Xu Qinghe had no choice but to shamelessly ask his fellow workmates for help to work overtime.

Ji Ying was cooking at home; they couldn't let the people helping out in the house work on an empty stomach.

"Brother Cheng, she won't fail to translate and stand us up, will she?" Ling Dong had reported to the Du Family at eight o'clock in the morning, stretching his neck and constantly looking outside, trying to spot Xu Nianhua among the passersby.

They had agreed to exchange the contracts today, but they hadn't set a specific time.

"She won't."

Pei Yicheng envisioned the girl who had fallen from a tree but didn't utter a sound, and the Xu Nianhua who spoke confidently in front of him. He believed she would definitely come, and moreover, she would bring him a pleasant surprise.

"Brother Cheng, you..." Ling Dong carefully observed Pei Yicheng, wondering if perhaps Brother Cheng had fallen for Xu Nianhua.

But then he thought, if he really asked, wouldn't Brother Cheng smack him to death?

"Why do you trust her so much?"

Ling Dong asked instead.

Pei Yicheng's gaze swept over Ling Dong coolly, prompting Ling Dong to purse his lips and decide to not speak further.

It wasn't until after ten o'clock, when Xu Nianhua finally arrived, that Ling Dong said excitedly, "Brother Cheng, Brother Cheng, she's here, she's here."

Pei Yicheng's eyes brightened for a moment and then quickly returned to calm as he said, "Keep it together."

Ling Dong: "..."

He had thought Brother Cheng was sitting in the living room waiting for the girl who sold Mung Bean Jelly.

"I'm sorry for being late." Xu Nian'an apologized with a smile as she greeted Pei Yicheng and Ling Dong upon entering, saying, "Brother Pei, Brother Ling Dong, my little sister has already finished translating the contract."

Xu Nian'an handed over the contract, and Xu Nianhua, without a chance to say anything, just offered a shy smile.

"Not late at all, we just agreed on today, I thought you would come in the afternoon," Pei Yicheng replied.

Ling Dong received the contract and was immediately greeted by the elegant handwriting, which, like Xu Nianhua herself, was comforting to see.

Ling Dong, who didn't understand a foreign language, passed the contract straight to Pei Yicheng.

Pei Yicheng scrutinized the contract intently, his earnest manner causing Ling Dong to suspect whether Brother Cheng really understood all of it.

Xu Nian'an sat anxiously to the side. Although he thought his little sister's translation was excellent, this was a contract, and he couldn't help worrying whether there might be any issues, so he remained silent, leaving only the sound of Pei Yicheng flipping through the contract.

If he understood it, why did he hire someone to translate it?

Xu Nian'an mumbled to himself internally, feeling that something was off.

"Brother Cheng, the translator Mei is here," Ling Dong whispered.

Chapter 104: Mei's Translation

"Let him in," Pei Yicheng replied as he turned to the Xu siblings and said, "The translator I invited from Ningbei has arrived. When he looks it over, I... "

Pei Yicheng was thinking about how to explain.

Xu Nianhua nodded in understanding and said, "It should be proofread once more."

She was just a high school senior, so Pei Yicheng's agreement to let her translate the contract was already a surprise to her. Having a professional look it over was a perfectly normal procedure.

Xu Nian'an, who had always felt something was amiss, found Pei Yicheng's words to be reassuring.

Not long after, the translator Mei was brought in, a middle-aged man in his forties.

After having some tea, Translator Mei began to review the contract earnestly.

An hour later, Translator Mei praised, "The translation is very good; if it were me, it would have been much the same."

Xu Nianhua sat calmly in her chair, not at all surprised.

Xu Nian'an, who had been nervous the whole time, breathed a sigh of relief and quietly gave Xu Nianhua a thumbs-up, impressed by his little sister's skill.

"Ling Dong, take Translator Mei to the backyard for a break."

Having said this, Pei Yicheng let Ling Dong escort Translator Mei to the backyard to rest and have tea. Mei had been traveling without a break and had worked for an hour straight after only some tea, which was indeed exhausting.

"Alright, Translator Mei, this way, please," Ling Dong led Mei to the backyard.

Pei Yicheng handed over the hundred yuan that was already prepared, the neat ten-yuan notes passing into Xu Nian'an's hands.

"Little sister, here's your pay."

Xu Nian'an placed the money directly into Xu Nianhua's hands.

"Big brother, you hold on to it. What if I lose it?" Xu Nianhua felt sweet satisfaction upon receiving the hundred yuan for her translation. Their eldest brother was getting married, and they needed to organize a few banquet tables, but there wasn't much money at home. With this money, not only could they afford the banquet tables, but they could also buy some things for the brother's new house.

"Then I'll keep it safe for you."

With careful consideration, Xu Nian'an neatly tucked the money into his pocket.

"Thank you for giving me this opportunity,"

Xu Nianhua said earnestly. If it weren't for Pei Yicheng's trust in her, she may not have had the chance to earn this money.

"I should be the one thanking you for helping me," Pei Yicheng said sincerely.

Xu Nianhua grinned, showing her white and even teeth. Although it is said one should not show teeth when smiling, her smile turned her round, large eyes into crescent moons. Even without any makeup, she was very beautiful.

That smile was like a beam of sunlight in the winter.

Xu Nian'an and his sister declined Pei Yicheng's invitation to dine and left with the money. Their eldest brother was selling Mung Bean Jelly alone—could he manage it all by himself?

In the backyard.

"Translator Mei, how much longer will you need to finish translating the contract?" Ling Dong asked while pouring tea for Mei.

Translator Mei glanced at the contract and shook his head.

Ling Dong felt a jolt of anxiety and asked, "Does that mean the translated contract is completely unusable?"

Before Translator Mei had arrived, Pei Yicheng had already instructed that, regardless of whether Xu Nianhua's translation was good or bad, Mei should praise it.

Thus, Ling Dong posed this question.

"Mr. Ling, there's nothing wrong with the translation of this contract; there's no need for me to re-translate it," Translator Mei said after taking a sip of water, his curiosity piqued. "Did that tall, skinny boy translate this? He hasn't started university, has he?"

He looked young and was both tall and thin.

"No, it was his sister who did the translation," Ling Dong replied instinctively. However, Translator Mei's words echoed in his mind as if reverberating through a valley, swirling continuously in his thoughts.

Chapter 105: Buying Clothes

Is there any problem with the translation of the contract?

That young girl is only nineteen, right?

This is a contract, not an exam paper from school.

Ling Dong originally thought that Brother Cheng was giving her special treatment, could it be that she actually has real skills?

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"Second Brother." After leaving the Du Family's place, Xu Nianhua thought about the one hundred yuan and hesitated again and again, but didn't know how to bring it up.

"Little sister, this one hundred yuan was earned by you."

Xu Nian'an patted his pocket, saying, "When we get home, your second brother will give it to you."

"But this money was earned by us together, how can it be said that I earned it?"

Xu Nianhua subconsciously objected.

Xu Nian'an said, "It was you who ran into Ling Dong, it was you who got Pei Yicheng to give you the opportunity, and besides, when we were translating, I was just picking up a little bit of knowledge. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't understand anything, it'd all be gibberish to me, so don't refuse, the money was earned by you."

"Second Brother, the money was earned by us. I was thinking, Big Brother is about to get married soon, Mom and Dad owe quite a bit of debt, shouldn't we siblings add something to the room, just as a little gesture from us siblings? Second Brother, what do you think?"

"That's fine, but the money was earned by you." Xu Nian'an even felt ashamed, in front of his little sister, it was as though he was the one who needed protecting?

"Second Brother, do you really want to divide what's yours and what's mine? When we sell mung bean jelly every time, you exert more effort, doesn't that mean I haven't done anything?" Xu Nianhua pursed her lips, her large round eyes looking grievously at Xu Nian'an.

"Alright, what should we buy then?" Xu Nian'an didn't argue anymore about who earned the money. He would buy his little sister a few pretty dresses when he made more money in the future.

Right.

Speaking of pretty dresses, Xu Nian'an glanced at his little sister's clothes which were not at all presentable, having been worn for two summers now.

"Your clothes are old, let's buy you some new clothes first."

"Let's go, let's go buy clothes." Xu Nian'an intended to pull her to go buy clothes, but Xu Nianhua refused, saying, "Second Brother, we still have so much debt. If it was for Big Brother's wedding, that's another matter, but buying new clothes instead of paying debts, what would people think?"

Xu Nian'an's hand, which was pulling her arm, paused.

"Second Brother, I have clothes to wear, no rush to buy new ones. Let's save the money first and then think about what gifts to buy for Big Brother."

As Xu Nianhua arranged this, the siblings arrived at the rented house to find Xu Nianji had just sold out all the mung bean jelly, saying happily, "It's so hot today, I sold all the mung bean jelly."

"Big Brother, you're amazing!" Xu Nianhua praised him, and it was already nearing noon, so the three siblings had a bowl of noodles in the county and headed home early to help out.

They needed to make a bed, build a cupboard, there were many things to do at home.

"Dad, this cupboard can be built up to the ceiling. We can put the quilts for changing seasons on top and make several compartments below for clothes," Xu Nianhua suggested as she arrived home, just as Xu Qinghe was preparing to build a cupboard.

"A cupboard up to the ceiling? What do we have that much stuff to put in it?" Xu Qinghe pondered as he watched Xu Nianhua sketching; a whole wall of cupboards would require so much clothing.

"Dad, we may not have it now, but that doesn't mean we won't have it in the future." Xu Nianhua really loved the idea of a whole wall of wardrobes. They were poor at home now, and she made do with what they had, but she'd definitely like to buy clothes when they had money in the future.

"Girl, we barely have enough time for the next few days as it is, where do we find the time to build a cupboard that goes all the way to the ceiling? And, would a whole wall as a cupboard even look good?" Xu Qinghe curiously looked at Xu Nianhua and asked, "How come your mind thinks of so many strange and bizarre things?"

Chapter 106: I Borrowed

"Dad, you don't make much money from carpentry, do you?"

Xu Nianhua didn't answer but countered. However, he understood Xu Qinghe's point, as time was pressing. Just managing to finish the cabinet was already good enough. He thought about the future need to build houses and didn't argue further. Otherwise, how would they move the wardrobe when constructing a house later?

"There are many carpenters around, and we don't get a lot of work each month." Xu Qinghe sighed; there were many carpenters, and they didn't get much work.

A month's earnings were only around thirty to fifty dollars, and that was if they had a lot of work. Sometimes, when there was less work, even making twenty dollars was good.

Of course, during the New Year, they earned more as there were also more weddings.

"Yes, everyone's carpentry work, the cabinets, they all look the same. Naturally, it doesn't matter who they hire. But Dad, what if your cabinets were prettier than others'?" Xu Nianhua wasn't skilled in interior design or furniture making, but he had seen a lot!

Thinking of the wardrobes from future generations, which came in all sorts of designs, she thought for a moment, then went back to her room to grab some paper and a pen. As she drew, she said, "Dad, look, wouldn't a wardrobe like this look better?"

A whole wall of clothes; although her drawing wasn't very good, the segmentation was very clear, quite different from the currently popular three-door wardrobes, especially the large cabinet at the very top, which looked very spacious.

"Girl, is this part specifically for quilts?" Xu Qinghe inquired, not quite following what Xu Nianhua had said earlier, but he got a rough idea once she drew it out.

"Yes."

Xu Nianhua nodded affirmatively, saying, "Our family doesn't have that many clothes to store, but others might, you see. We can stash seasonal quilts and clothes up there, plus, our wardrobes can have more divisions, like adding another drawer or something."

"Dad, I think those traditional dressers, we can make them prettier too. Like various sizes that can be assembled and arranged, this way the homeowner has more options. Who knows, maybe people will seek you out specifically for these?"

Xu Nianhua's words broadened Xu Qinghe's horizons considerably. He was hardworking but not unimaginative; he said, "I'll try that next time."

After all, it was just a matter of one more suggestion. What if someone liked what Xu Nianhua had proposed?

"Girl, your education wasn't wasted." Xu Qinghe praised her, looking at her proudly. From the tiny bundle he had first brought home to the graceful young woman she had become.

"Dad, supporting our education wasn't easy; we ought to learn as much as possible."

Xu Nianhua said happily, thinking that if her father stopped doing carpentry and started making furniture full-time, maybe they could even open a furniture factory one day?

Furniture, and what other styles of furniture looked good?

Xu Nianhua thought, determined to think more and inspire her father further.

In the evening.

Xu Nianhua handed the hundred dollars they had earned from translating a contract to Ji Ying, saying, "Mom, big brother definitely needs money for his wedding."

"Big brother's wedding is important." Xu Nian'an said, agreeing to hand over the money.

Ji Ying looked at the money and said, "I know, you siblings share a close bond, but this is the money you earned."

Xu Nianhua said, "Mom, we're a family, no need to split these things."

Xu Nian'an nodded in agreement.

"This money, I'm borrowing from you." Xu Nianji was touched by his family's gesture, feeling moved, he said, "This kindness, I'll remember it in my heart, and I'll pay you back once I've earned some money."

Chapter 107: Run to the Ends of the Earth

"Big Brother, when Second Brother gets married, you can help him out more just the same," Xu Nianhua didn't want to see the family be so strictly divided. Brothers settling accounts with each other was fine, but sometimes drawing lines too clearly could hurt the harmony.

"Big Brother, right now, except for school, Little Sister and I don't need any other money. You should focus on bringing your bride into the family—that's the priority," Xu Nian'an said with pursed lips, "As for borrowing or not, if you really talk like that, then you're treating us like outsiders."

Xu Qinghe looked at his siblings with a face full of contentment. Siblings getting along and helping each other, that's what family is all about.

Ji Ying said with a smile, "Alright, no more arguing. We really are short on money. Besides the two hundred yuan for the bride price, hosting the banquet costs money too. We'll hold on to the money for now, and when the smuggling business has more flexibility, Nianji, you wouldn't let your brother and sister down, right?"

"Of course not," Xu Nianji affirmed. He thought, if in the future Nian'an and Little Sister needed anything from him, he would certainly go through a sea of fire and a mountain of knives for them.

"Qinghe, we need to hurry up with making the bed and the cabinets, there aren't many days left."

Previously, Ji Ying and Xu Qinghe were scraping by, but now with this hundred yuan, Ji Ying thought that they couldn't let their eldest son's wedding be too shabby.

For the wedding feast, just a few tables would do, and time was tight. These past few days, Ji Ying had been busy with the banquet preparations.

On July 28th, after the bride price was sent to the Zhou family, the Xu family became even busier.

The Xu siblings still sold mung bean jelly and bean sprouts. Every day during daylight hours, Xu Nianhua and the others would take care of growing the bean sprouts. They soaked beans every day, so one batch after another was ready, ensuring there were bean sprouts to sell every day.

Even if the amount wasn't much, making an extra yuan or two was still good.

Today, they returned home early. Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianji, the two brothers, went up the mountain to gather firewood. The banquet was approaching, and they were still short on firewood at home, so they had to make time to come back and gather more whenever they could.

The two brothers each carried a load of firewood home. On the way, Xu Nian'an saw Gao Jianshe bathing in the cold river water and his eyes lit up. He set down his load and said, "Big Brother, wait up."

"What is it?"

Xu Nianji, watching his brother Xu Nian'an run towards Gao Jianshe, thought something had happened. He wiped the sweat from his forehead and put his bundle of wood by the roadside before following him over.

"Gao Jianshe, I thought you'd be in hiding for a lifetime!"

Xu Nian'an didn't bother taking off his clothes, and he jumped directly into the water.

Gao Jianshe, startled by Xu Nian'an's voice, quickly swam to the opposite bank as he saw him chasing after.

Gao Jianshe thought, why was his luck so bad!

He had just returned today, thinking the Xu family would be too busy and might have already forgotten about past issues after such a long time, unlikely to pin anything on him.

But seeing Xu Nian'an's pursuit, Gao Jianshe didn't dare to hold any hope of luck. He summoned all his strength to swim, with the sole thought of getting to the shore.

"I made it!"

The moment Gao Jianshe climbed onto the bank, his heart soared with joy. Despite Xu Nian'an's swift chase, it seemed, now, he wouldn't be caught.

However, Gao Jianshe's smile hadn't even faded from his face when he felt his foot being grabbed.

"Gao Jianshe, why don't you run? If you're so capable, run to the ends of the earth," Xu Nian'an emerged from the water, shaking his head and sprinkling water droplets onto Gao Jianshe, as cold and piercing as his heart.

Chapter 108: Warning

"Xu Nian'an, no, Brother Xu, what are you, why are you chasing me? I was just taking a cold bath in the river," Gao Jianshe said with an ingratiating smile, the obsequiousness of his expression exceedingly servile.

Xu Nian'an didn't say a word. He grabbed Gao's foot and leaped out of the water. After getting onto the bank, he directly tore Gao Jianshe's shirt open to reveal a conspicuous wound on his right abdomen, which appeared to have only recently healed.

"Stop."

Seeing Xu Nian'an looking at his wound, Gao Jianshe stuttered an explanation, "I accidentally knocked it."

"Ah..."

No sooner had Gao Jianshe's words fallen than Xu Nian'an's fist had already come down, and Gao felt a pain in his abdomen so intense it seemed as if everything inside was about to be expelled.

Just then, Xu Nianji, who was hurrying over, twitched at the sight and quickly swam closer.

Xu Nian'an grabbed his collar and pushed him straight back into the water next to them.

"Xu Nian'an, what are you doing?"

Gao Jianshe only felt a chill run through him as he met Xu Nian'an's gaze. Without understanding what Xu Nian'an was about to do, he suddenly felt the world spin around him, and the next moment, his entire head was pushed under the water.

"Gao Jianshe, I warned you last time not to bully my little sister, and not only did you do just that, you even thought about dishonoring her?"

After seeing Gao's wound, Xu Nian'an confirmed that Gao Jianshe had indeed harmed Xu Nianhua.

It took many days for the last wound on little sister's arm to heal. Had it not been for her quick thinking to climb the persimmon tree and make it to Pei Yicheng's house, who knows what else Gao Jianshe would have done?

Gao Jianshe struggled, finding it excruciatingly difficult to breathe.

"Nian'an."

Xu Nianji, not knowing what had happened, but seeing Xu Nian'an holding someone under the water, his heart skipped a beat, fearing that something terrible had occurred, and he swam even faster.

"Be careful not to drown him..."

Xu Nianji reached the edge of the water and looked around. It was dusk, not quite dark, and there was no one else in sight.

"Big brother, don't worry, I know when to stop," Xu Nian'an reassured him. He tossed Gao Jianshe around in the water a few times before warning, "If you think about hurting my little sister again, I will not let you off next time."

"Consider this a warning for today. Also, don't even dream of telling anyone else about this. Remember what you did last time? If I really reported you, do you think you'd avoid prison?"

Xu Nianhua cautioned, right up against Gao Jianshe's ear.

"Cough..."

Gao Jianshe coughed awkwardly, the sensation of choking on water was just too unbearable. Xu Nian'an had timed it well, pulling him out just when he felt he could no longer breathe. Gao Jianshe did not want to experience that discomfort a second time.

"I, I won't dare anymore," Gao Jianshe coughed out water as he insisted he wouldn't dare do it again.

If he had known that coming back would lead to Xu Nian'an discovering him, he would never have returned, no matter what. He would have waited until his injuries were fully healed at the very least.

"He bullied little sister?" Upon learning that Gao Jianshe had bullied little sister, and knowing that the previous injury on her arm was caused by Gao Jianshe, Xu Nianji couldn't contain his anger. He was eager to shove Gao Jianshe back under the water again!

Xu Nianji chose spots where others couldn't see to hit him and after beating him, warned Gao Jianshe, "If you dare think about laying a hand on my little sister again, hmph..."

Though Xu Nianji only hummed coldly, the implication was crystal clear.

Chapter 109: If Not For You, Could I Be Bullied?

Gao Jianshe had already regretted why he had listened to Zhong Juan and targeted Xu Nianhua.

"Not anymore, not anymore." Gao Jianshe hurriedly expressed that he would not do it again as he ran off, stumbling and tumbling.

"Wait, won't he blab about us beating him up?" Xu Nianji furrowed his brow in thought.

Xu Nian'an said indifferently, "No, if he dares to talk, I dare to sue him."

Gao Jianshe was almost scared to pee just now, as long as he wasn't stupid, he would definitely not trouble the little sister again.

"Right, you say, why hasn't the Yue Family made any moves?"

As Xu Nianji followed Xu Nian'an home, he kept worrying that the Yue Family would retaliate, but there was no sign from them at all.

"Could it be that the Yue Family took it out on Xu Qinghu?" Xu Nian'an said unsurely.

He had been following Xu Nianhua closely these days, also worried for their family's safety, but during this time, the Yue Family had been unusually quiet.

"Then, let's inquire more tomorrow, just in case..." Xu Nianji worried, what if the Yue Family had some intentions?

Night.

The arrival of Xu Qinghu made Xu Nianji feel his worries were unnecessary. Aunt Xu Qinghu came seeking leniency, mentioning that her husband had lost his job and was asking for their help.

"This mess, you brought it upon yourself; it has nothing to do with us. We don't have a job for Fu Song either." Xu Qinghe said bitterly as he faced Xu Qinghu, a look of utter disappointment on his face.

Being the eldest, whether it was brother Xu Qingjiang or sister Xu Qinghu, Xu Qinghe believed he had fulfilled all duties expected of an older brother well.

What Xu Qinghu had done when trying to find suitors for the servant girls completely disheartened Xu Qinghe.

No matter what Xu Qinghu said, Xu Qinghe ignored her and focused intently on making a new bed in the room.

At mealtime, Ji Ying was busy in the kitchen and did not even keep Xu Qinghu, who had to leave dejectedly as no one paid her any attention.

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Gao Family.

Gao Jianshe's back was cold with fright; the places where Xu Nian'an and his brother had beaten him hurt terribly. As soon as he arrived home, he went straight to his room, and once inside, he collapsed to the floor.

"Jianshe, what happened to you?" Pregnant Zhong Juan had gained some weight; she had just taken a shower and came back to find Gao Jianshe fallen on the floor, thinking something bad had happened.

"Haven't you gone for a cold shower?"

Zhong Juan looked at Gao Jianshe and couldn't shake the feeling he looked terrified, as if someone had bullied him.

"It's nothing."

Gao Jianshe, not wanting such an embarrassing incident to be known by Zhong Juan, said impatiently, "I'm just tired, needs to sit a while."

He had indeed been truly frightened, repeatedly being pushed underwater; even now, he still felt residual horror.

Even though he knew Xu Nian'an would absolutely not take his life, his heart could not stop the incessant fear and dread.

"Jianshe, what exactly happened, who did you run into?" As soon as Zhong Juan spoke, she suddenly recalled Xu Nian'an. She said, "Was it Xu Nian'an? Did he hit you again? How could he be so excessive?"

Thinking of how Xu Nian'an had beaten up Xu Jianshe previously, anger churned within her.

"Shut up!"

Now, whenever Gao Jianshe mentioned Xu Nian'an, he felt a chill through his body. Listening to Zhong Juan's endless chatter, he couldn't help but say, "If it wasn't for you asking me to target Xu Nianhua, would I have been bullied by him?"

He was too embarrassed to mention the uncomfortable experience of being held underwater, only resentfully looking at Zhong Juan. If it weren't for her, would he have needed to hide at Zhong Juan's grandmother's house these past days?

In the end, it was all Zhong Juan's fault.

Chapter 110 The Quantity is Too Small

"How, how could this be my fault?" Zhong Juan felt wronged too. Wasn't it just because she felt sorry for Gao Jianshe being beaten for no reason that she thought of a way to teach Xu Nianhua a lesson in the county, without anyone noticing?

It was his own fault for getting caught. How could she be blamed for that?

Suddenly, Zhong Juan sized up Gao Jianshe and asked, "Did you really teach her a lesson with your face covered?"

Gao Jianshe felt a pang of alarm in his heart, but he wasn't going to admit that he had wanted to bully her and even try to taste her that day.

"Of course."

Gao Jianshe answered without hesitation, and with Zhong Juan's interruption, the fear in his heart faded a lot, turning into a trace of guilt.

Especially under Zhong Juan's aggressive gaze, Gao Jianshe suddenly stood up and said, "I'm going to take a shower."

"No, Gao Jianshe, you need to make things clear to me." Zhong Juan had known him for more than a day or two; the more he avoided talking about it and the louder he spoke, the more it indicated that what he said could be false.

"You didn't really harbor any thoughts towards Xu Nianhua, did you?" Zhong Juan grabbed Gao Jianshe, determined to get to the bottom of this issue.

Already feeling guilty, Gao Jianshe was pressed by her relentless questioning, which made him even more uncomfortable. He shook her hand off irritably and said, "What thoughts? Don't talk nonsense."

"Ah..."

Zhong Juan, shaken off by him and in her anger, lost her balance and fell to the side.

She instinctively covered her stomach.

"Be careful."

Gao Jianshe heard something wrong in her voice, and as he turned around, Zhong Juan was falling backward. Luckily, there was a bed beside her, which she barely managed to grab, preventing her from falling to the ground.

"I, I didn't do it on purpose." Gao Jianshe reached out to help, but Zhong Juan coldly pushed his hand away. Protecting her stomach and feeling that the child inside was alright, she angrily interrogated him, "Gao Jianshe, I'm carrying your child, yet you're thinking about another woman. Can you justify yourself to me?"

Zhong Juan's accusations rang out, each one suggesting Gao Jianshe had done something unconscionable.

"What are you babbling about? When have I thought about another woman?" Gao Jianshe's previous worries instantly turned to anger. He didn't like being aggressively accused by Zhong Juan and said irritably, "If you're pregnant, just stay at home and stop overthinking things."

"And if you want my mother to know, go ahead and shout about it."

Gao Jianshe looked at Zhong Juan, who seemed ready to argue, and spoke with impatience. Before they got married, seeing each other sporadically was sweet and affectionate, barely enough to express their love. He thought she was perfect in every way.

But after the marriage, Zhong Juan constantly nagged and always liked to control him.

"Gao Jianshe!"

Zhong Juan watched his retreating figure furiously, wanting to shout, but when she thought of her strict and fierce mother-in-law, she couldn't say anything more.

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"There are too few bean sprouts; it would be great if we could sell forty or fifty pounds of them every day."

Xu Nianji had sold all the bean sprouts early on. The little mung bean jelly that was left was also quickly sold out, and on the way back, he lamented that there were too few bean sprouts.

"Big brother, once dad gets your wedding stuff sorted out, he'll make a few more bean sprout buckets, and then you'll have to sell bean sprouts every day," said Xu Nian'an contentedly, finding their current situation to be a significant improvement from before.

Without bean sprout buckets, they were like skilled cooks without rice. Once his big brother got married and their dad made a few more bean sprout buckets, they would have bean sprouts to sell at any time.