

Regaining 121

Chapter 121 Dreaming Back to the Top (3)

"Mom, I don't want to get married; I just want to stay by your side forever."

Xu Nianhua said coquettishly, "Let's talk to Big Brother again. Maybe, Big Brother would be willing to marry."

Ji Ying smiled but didn't speak further. She knew the son that came from her womb all too well. Nianji, he probably didn't want to get married in his whole life, always feeling that he owed Zhou He, that he was the cause of Zhou He's misfortune.

If he hadn't postponed the marriage, Zhou He would have entered the Xu Family's home long ago and that accident would never have occurred.

"Big Brother is coming back today; let's make dumplings," Ji Ying thought, recalling there was still a small amount of flour at home, and today Xu Nianhua had bought two pounds of pork back, which shouldn't go to waste.

"Okay."

Xu Nianhua and Ji Ying made dumplings together, chatting as they worked, and the atmosphere was just right.

The Gu Family chose that moment to visit. Whenever Ji Ying saw the Gu Family members, she always wondered, they didn't know such wealthy people, did they?

However, once the Gu Family explained their intentions, Ji Ying's complexion instantly changed. She subconsciously held Xu Nianhua's hand tightly, fearing that the daughter she had raised for over twenty years would suddenly belong to someone else.

"Mom, you're my mom, and you'll always be my real mom."

Xu Nianhua grasped Ji Ying's hand tightly, stood up, and said sternly, "Mr. Gu, our family is doing very well. We hope you won't disturb our peaceful life."

"But you are our daughter, how can we bear to see you suffer here?"

Gu Hai spoke with genuine emotion, while Fang Yue went straight to Ji Ying, broke down in tears, and said, "Thank you for raising Nianhua all these years, but Nianhua is my daughter, a part of me. You too are a mother, please understand our desire to reclaim our daughter."

Ji Ying was stunned.

She had found Xu Nianhua on the street, so how could her family now appear at her doorstep?

"It doesn't matter if Nianhua doesn't recognize me; she doesn't know I've searched for her for over twenty years, but you can't keep my daughter from me." Fang Yue spoke through sobs, her voice filled with tears, as if Ji Ying had stolen her daughter.

"I didn't steal your child; I found Nianhua on the street."

In that moment, Ji Ying's mind raced back to that year's events.

When she came across Xu Nianhua, it was the day after Ji Ying had lost her own child. She had been pregnant, but tragically, the child died soon after birth due to malnutrition. She barely caught a glimpse before Xu Qinghe took her to bury it.

Ji Ying couldn't bear the pain of losing her daughter and was reluctant to return to the village. She lingered in the county for several days before, under Xu Qinghe's persuasion, she had to accept the reality of her child's passing. That's when, on their way home, they found Xu Nianhua.

She was very small, even smaller than a normal child, all red and seemingly just born. Furthermore, there was no one in sight on the road. The couple guessed that Xu Nianhua must have been abandoned.

Ji Ying had just lost a daughter, and yet someone else had abandoned theirs. Ji Ying and Xu Qinghe discussed it and immediately decided to deceive all and raise the girl as if she were their own newly born child.

Because her child had been a premature birth due to overexertion and couldn't be born at home, they had gone to the county. Now, in just two days, the newborn Xu Nianhua was virtually indistinguishable from a two-day-old baby.

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Initially, Ji Ying and Xu Qinghe brought the child home and were afraid that the child's biological parents would come looking for them. Xu Qinghe even went to the county to inquire but heard no reports of a missing child.

Day after day, year after year, as they watched the child grow up slowly under their care in Shuangzhu Village, Xu Nianhua gradually grew up.

Ji Ying never imagined that, now that her daughter was twenty-two years old, Nianhua's biological parents would actually come looking for her.

"Twenty-two years ago, on September 23, when I was returning to my parents' home, I went into labor and gave birth at the hospital in Gaoliang County. The hospital still has the records of my childbirth," Fang Yue had done her homework thoroughly and even photocopied the records from back then, handing them to Ji Ying.

"I don't know who was so wicked to have stolen my child, causing my daughter and me to be separated for twenty-two years."

Fang Yue, even when scolding someone, looked ever so gentle in her affluent appearance.

"I, I really didn't steal your daughter." Ji Ying was afraid that Fang Yue misunderstood, she was almost ready to swear to heaven, saying, "I found Nianhua under a big tree."

Ji Ying subconsciously looked towards Xu Nianhua, afraid that she wouldn't believe her.

"Mom, I believe you," Xu Nianhua snuggled next to Ji Ying and didn't avoid further, asking a few more questions, and everything regarding the time and place matched up.

Also, what she was wearing at that time and how she was wrapped up in a small blanket back then, all matched up.

Especially the blood type, she had had an accident as a child that caused her to bleed heavily, and after being taken to the hospital, the doctors said she had the rare "Panda Blood". They had advised her to be careful with her health and to be cautious, as it could be very dangerous if she bled too much.

Thus, when it was mentioned that Gu Mingzhu also had "Panda Blood," Xu Nianhua felt there must be no mistake.

After confirming their identities, Xu Qinghe and Xu Nianji both returned.

Xu Qinghe had been silent ever since he knew her biological parents had come looking for her.

Xu Nianhua strongly expressed she did not want to go to South City or to recognize the Gu Family as hers.

However, Gu Hai and Fang Yue, along with Gu Mingzhu, constantly persuaded her, expressing they were just happy knowing about Xu Nianhua, their daughter.

In the days that followed, the Gu Family would appear at the Xu Family from time to time. Each visit, they brought enough gifts that the whole village knew Xu Nianhua's biological parents had come for her, and they were particularly well-off.

Apart from Xu Nianhua's family, everyone else especially hoped that Xu Nianhua would maintain good relations with the Gu Family, especially Xu Zhong and his entire family, along with Xu's uncle and aunt, who had accepted benefits from the Gu Family and took turns advising Xu Qinghe and his wife.

They said that going to the Gu Family in South City would bring many benefits, and it would be good for Xu Nianhua's future, and even her romantic prospects would be people from the city!

Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying, genuinely wishing the best for Xu Nianhua, had heard all these persuasive words so often that, despite their reluctance, they also wanted to discuss this matter with Xu Nianhua.

"Dad, Mom, whether or not I am biologically related to you, in my heart, I am always your daughter."

Xu Nianhua said decisively, even though the Gu Family was very good and didn't mistreat her in material terms after finding her, her feelings towards them were very complicated.

Her intuition told her that, apart from Gu Hai's sincerity, Fang Yue and Gu Mingzhu seemed to want her back, but not just out of familial affection.

Xu Nianhua didn't know why, and so, she always kept a lukewarm relationship with the Gu

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Xu Nianhua was reluctant to follow the Gu Family to South City, but he couldn't withstand the persuasion of his brother and sister-in-law, Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying.

"Nianhua, we are happy that you remember us. The Gu Family sincerely wants to recognize you as their own. Even if you don't want to return to the Gu Family, it's only right to visit them. They've come to our village time and again all for your sake," they argued.

"The incident back then was just an accident. They lost you and have been searching for you all these years. You should go and see for yourself. Otherwise, people will say that we don't know how to raise children, that we want to use you to gain favors from the Gu Family."

The grave and earnest words from Ji Ying made Xu Nianhua feel a complex mix of emotions. His parents feared he might find himself in a difficult position and wanted him to have a better life. They had loved him all his life; he shouldn't make his mother worry.

Xu Nianhua suggested that he visit South City with his elder brother. His reasoning was simple: with his brother there, he would feel more at ease in South City. Besides, his brother had been dejected for two years due to Zhou He's affair, and a trip to South City could be a good distraction.

When the Gu Family saw that Xu Nianhua agreed to go to South City, and that Xu Nianji would accompany him, they had no objections.

It was only after Xu Nianhua and his siblings arrived in South City that they realized the wealth displayed by the Gu Family in their village was just the tip of the iceberg.

The Gu Family lived in a two-story western-style house and even had a car. They arranged two adjacent rooms for the siblings.

The Gu Family members took them around the bustling South City, shopping for clothes without restraint, even though Xu Nianhua and Xu Nianji repeatedly refused. The Gu Family insisted on buying, saying it was compensation for the lack of affection over the past twenty years.

During meals, they ate exotic delicacies. Having grown up on simple fare, they felt exceedingly uncomfortable sitting with the Gu Family. After two days, Xu Nianhua wanted to leave. However, at that moment, Xu Nianji had an accident.

Gu Mingzhu claimed it was to introduce them to her acquaintances, but Xu Nianji ended up drinking a lot. Eventually, he was found in bed with one of Gu Mingzhu's friends.

That friend insisted on accusing Xu Nianji of forcing himself on her. Clutching the only blanket, facing everyone's accusations, he felt helpless and desperate. If he were to be convicted, not only would his reputation be destroyed, but his parents would suffer because of him if the villagers found out about the incident.

Would his parents still be able to hold their heads up in the village?

Yet, he couldn't remember what had happened the day before.

Xu Nianhua was still unmarried. Her elder brother had been very upset the day before and had drunk too much, leading to an accident. Even though she believed in her brother, the evident marks on the girl's body, the bloodstains on the bed, and her crying words all sent Xu Nianhua into a panic.

Xu Nianji, upon learning that she was unmarried too, offered to take responsibility.

But the other party wasn't interested in Xu Nianji at all.

Just then, Gu Hai stepped in and resolved the matter, not only saving his elder brother's dignity but also facilitating a match.

Originally indifferent towards the Gu Family, Xu Nianhua, because of this incident, became very grateful and no longer felt the aversion she once had.

The scene shifted to Xu Nianji's body soaked and decaying, with Xu Nianhua crying heartbreakingly.

The dream woke.

Chapter 124: Who is he? Where is he?

Xu Nianhua suddenly opened her eyes to find darkness enveloping the room, her back ice cold and her heart in extreme discomfort. That suffocating, gripping pain forced Xu Nianhua to breathe deeply.

She rolled her eyes, taking a long while to come to her senses.

Forgetting even her shoes, Xu Nianhua ran straight into her second brother's room, and only upon seeing him asleep did she realize it had all been a dream, that reality had shifted.

In the bed, Xu Nian'an vaguely felt someone watching him. When he opened his eyes and saw a figure standing in his room, he was startled and jolted backwards.

"Second Brother, it's me."

Xu Nianhua hastened to identify herself.

Recognizing his little sister's voice, Xu Nian'an naturally knew her and, upon realizing it was her, he let out a sigh of relief. From outside the window, a breeze blew in, chilling his back.

"Little sister, why aren't you sleeping and instead running to my room in the middle of the night?"

Xu Nian'an looked out the window. It was barely lit up, probably a little past four in the morning.

"I had a nightmare," Xu Nianhua said as she sat at the edge of the bed, listening to his breathing and his voice, feeling extremely happy. She grinned and said, "Did I scare you, Second Brother?"

Xu Nianhua cocked her head and said, "So, it turns out Second Brother is such a scaredy-cat, afraid of ghosts, too."

Xu Nian'an: "Little sister, how about I give you a scare next time?"

Waking up in the middle of the night to see a figure standing by the bed would startle anyone.

"Don't, Second Brother, I'm the cowardly one, really scared of ghosts. You mustn't scare me," Xu Nianhua whispered in a teasing tone, obviously making fun of Xu Nian'an being a scaredy-cat.

Yawning and still not fully awake, Xu Nianhua assured herself she wasn't dreaming anymore. As sleepiness overtook her, she said, "It's not yet dawn, I'll go back to sleep."

Xu Nian'an: "..."

Watching her quietly leave, Xu Nian'an thought to himself: You really are my dear sister!

He heard Xu Nianhua softly return to her own room and, lying back in bed, found himself unable to fall asleep again. Every time he closed his eyes, he saw that dark figure by the bed.

Who am I?

Where am I?

What am I doing?

Xu Nian'an tossed and turned, unable to sleep. Lying in bed, he began to recite the Admonitions Scroll. He liked this text a lot—when he felt bad or unsettled like now, reciting it would quickly calm his mind.

Xu Nianhua returned to her room and slept soundly, dreamless until dawn, her lips curled up in a smile.

"What's the matter with Nian'an today? Why is he up so late?"

Ji Ying muttered. Zhou He had gotten up early to make breakfast, and Ji Ying wanted her to rest more, but Zhou He was shy and just quietly went about her work. Ji Ying, worried that saying too much would make Zhou He uncomfortable, let her be.

Usually, Nian'an and Nianhua would be up very early, but why weren't they up today?

Seeing Zhou He nearly done cooking the morning noodles and they still hadn't risen, Ji Ying went to call them.

"Nianhua, your sister-in-law has cooked the noodles," Ji Ying called out to Xu Nianhua softly.

Xu Nianhua had a nightmare in the first half of the night and slept soundly in the second; it was still early, and she was in a drowsy state. Hearing Ji Ying's voice, she sleepily opened her eyes and sat on the bed, her brain slowly starting to function.

Seeing her daughter beginning to wake up, Ji Ying went to call Xu Nian'an. She wasn't as gentle with Xu Nian'an as with Xu Nianhua; Ji Ying simply flung back his quilt.

Chapter 125: A Warm Family

"Mom, let me sleep a bit more." Xu Nian'an had only slept for a short while since dawn, and he was really sleepy at the moment.

"It's your elder sister-in-law's first day in the house, and the noodles are ready. Are you sure you don't want to eat? Or do you have some complaints about your elder sister-in-law?" Ji Ying frowned, staring at his sleeping figure, and muttered, "Nian'an, isn't it time for you to find a wife too?"

The sleepiness in Xu Nian'an's mind was instantly swept away.

He opened his eyes and immediately knew from Ji Ying's expression that she had misunderstood. He hurriedly sat up and explained, "Mom, I wholeheartedly welcome my sister-in-law marrying my elder brother. Last night, our younger sister had a nightmare, so I couldn't sleep for a long time."

"Nianhua had a nightmare again?" Ji Ying's attention was instantly diverted. She recalled the last time Nianhua fell into the lake and had a fever, it seemed she had a nightmare then too. The pained and uncomfortable look on her made Ji Ying worry. Besides failing the college entrance exam, what could be so frightening for her daughter?

"Yes, yesterday she came to my room without even wearing shoes, which startled me." Xu Nian'an nodded. His little sister was the apple of their parents' eyes, a fact he was well aware of.

Upon hearing this, Ji Ying ran to Nianhua's room.

"Mom?" Xu Nianhua had just finished dressing and, seeing Ji Ying's worried face, thought something had happened.

"Nianhua, did you have another nightmare last night? How about, tonight, Mom sleeps with you?"

Ji Ying murmured, "Autumn is here, don't go walking around barefoot, the cold air is harsh."

"No need, Mom. Last night, I suddenly dreamt about our second brother, and then I went to see him," Xu Nianhua explained, swiftly changing the subject, "Mom, let's hurry outside. I want to taste what my sister-in-law has cooked. It must be delicious."

"You're always thinking with your stomach," Ji Ying noticed she was behaving as usual, so she did not think further and planned to sleep with Nianhua that night, so she wouldn't be scared and end up seeking her second brother in the middle of the night.

It was Zhou He's first day marrying into the Xu family. To make a good impression in front of her in-laws, she made egg noodles today.

The noodles and eggs were provided by Ji Ying. Initially, Zhou He thought that frying a couple of eggs for her in-laws or perhaps for her younger sister-in-law, Xu Nianhua, would suffice.

However, Ji Ying laid six eggs in front of Zhou He, saying, "We received a lot of eggs this time, one for each person can also help to nourish our bodies. Although our home is not wealthy, we can still afford a few eggs."

What Ji Ying left unsaid was that, on Zhou He's first day in the family, she ought to eat well to celebrate.

The aromatic egg noodles, sprinkled with a bit of green onion, smelled delicious.

"Sister-in-law, your cooking is really good."

Xu Nianhua complimented, even though she hadn't tasted it yet, the dish looked particularly appetizing.

Zhou He smiled shyly.

"Indeed, not bad at all," Ji Ying said with a smile.

Although Xu Qinghe didn't speak, his satisfied smile also put Zhou He at ease.

Xu Nian'an devoured his noodles, eating with great speed.

To Zhou He's surprise, the atmosphere in the Xu family was exceptionally welcoming. Her in-laws did not trouble her at all. After breakfast, when she wanted to wash the dishes, Ji Ying ushered her into the living room to rest, saying, "You made breakfast, let me wash the dishes. Nianhua has been talking about the handkerchief you made for her."

"I've embroidered several more," Zhou He immediately responded, glancing at the pile of dishes in the sink. Leaving so many dishes for her mother-in-law to wash seemed somewhat unfair.

Chapter 126: We Live at Home

"It's okay, you go ahead; whoever is free at home will do the dishes," Ji Ying said, noticing her worried look. She couldn't help but explain, as she feared Zhou He would feel burdened.

"Mom, I'd better wash the dishes before I look for Nianhua," Zhou He replied, still feeling it wasn't right to leave Ji Ying with the dishes.

"No need," Ji Ying tried to stop her, but Zhou He moved quickly. As she washed, she said, "Mom, it's really quick, I'll have the dishes done in no time."

Ji Ying watched Zhou He helplessly and helped rinse the dishes once more.

After cleaning the kitchen spotlessly, Zhou He went to find Xu Nianhua.

Ji Ying called Xu Nianji over and said, "Nianji, have a good talk with Xiaohe. It's not our family's practice to have the new daughter-in-law do all the housework. Just give me a plump grandson early, and I'll be happy."

Xu Nianji's face turned red.

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In the room, Zhou He handed the handkerchiefs she had just embroidered to Xu Nianhua, saying, "I know you like osmanthus, so I embroidered osmanthus on all of them, just with different designs."

Xu Nianhua looked over the handkerchiefs, each one embroidered beautifully. In these times, unlike the future where you could use paper tissues anytime you wanted, having several handkerchiefs to switch between was very convenient.

"Big sister, thank you," Xu Nianhua said happily, "I really like them."

She carefully folded the handkerchiefs and placed them in the wardrobe.

"As long as you like them," Zhou He said, relieved to see Xu Nianhua truly liked them.

Yesterday, they had a banquet, and there was no leftover food, especially meat. They had eaten everything, not leaving a trace on the plates.

Today, all they had to do was tidy up the yard, sort out the dishes and cutlery, and return the tables and chairs to their respective owners.

Xu Qinghe, leading Xu Nianji and Xu Nian'an, efficiently took care of the physical labor.

Xu Nianhua and the three of them tidied up the cluttered yard.

After tidying up most of the day, they nearly finished organizing the house. After lunch, Xu Nianji and Xu Nian'an went to their rented place in town.

They hadn't checked on the bean sprouts all day yesterday and didn't know if they had spoiled?

Bean sprouts, for them, were money!

Luckily, the bean sprouts were well cared for, had not spoiled, and had grown even stronger.

The Xu brothers sold the grown bean sprouts, and after selling them, they soaked the soybeans and rushed home.

"Big brother, after school starts, my sister and I probably won't have much time. How about you and big sister-in-law live in town?" Xu Nian'an suggested.

"No need," Xu Nianji replied. "My wife, Xiaohe, and I will live at home. You and sister will stay in town. That way, you don't have to stay in a dormitory, and we can save some money. Plus, my sister will be safer at home." Xu Nianji was wary of the Yue Family's intentions. What if they harbored ill will? At school, with Nian'an looking after her, things would be fine, but what about back at the dorm?

The girls' dormitories were separate from the boys'.

"Let's go home and discuss it. Oh, have you talked to big sister-in-law about selling the bean sprouts?" Xu Nian'an suddenly asked.

Xu Nianji paused, saying, "I haven't had a chance to tell her yet."

They had only spoken briefly last night, and afterward...

Xu Nianji's ears turned slightly red. Clearing his throat, he quickened his pace and said, "I'll tell her when I get home."

"Big brother, why are you walking so fast? Big sister-in-law won't run away from home," Xu Nian'an mused, suddenly noticing Xu Nianji speeding up and couldn't help but mutter.

Chapter 127: Trouble at the Yue Family

Xu Nianji walked even faster upon hearing this.

Today's earnings from selling bean sprouts were handed over to Ji Ying by Xu Nianji.

Looking at the ten yuan in her hand, Ji Ying couldn't help but say, "Weren't you busy these past two days? The bean sprouts still grew?"

"They did," Xu Nianji nodded, adding, "Dad, when you have time, make a few more bean sprout buckets."

"At least four."

Xu Nianhua chimed in, "That way, we'll have bean sprouts to sell every day."

Xu Nian'an then brought up that school was about to start, and they should let Xu Nianji handle the bean sprout business, also suggesting that the young couple should live in that house.

Ji Ying explained further, "The house was rented by the siblings for selling bean sprouts. You've just gotten married; you shouldn't live apart."

Seeing that Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua were of the same mind, she didn't specifically clarify that it was the brother and sister.

Zhou He was taken aback and asked, "How did you sell bean sprouts before?"

She was actually quite confused, thinking, a day's bean sprout sales make ten yuan?

If they sold every day, an entire month would bring in three hundred yuan, wouldn't it?

And all this, her in-laws, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law, seemed to have no intention of keeping any of it from her, which made Zhou He feel incredibly warm inside.

"Before, I just sold bean sprouts during the day and came back in the evening. It's not far from the county," Xu Nianji explained.

Zhou He said, "Dad, Mom, let's just go back to the family home and keep things the way they were. Nian'an and Nianhua are about to start school, and it's perfect for them to live in the house."

What Zhou He thought was that moving in with Xu Nianji in the county, just after getting married, didn't seem quite proper.

After discussing it as a family, they all thought that this plan wasn't bad. Xu Nianji would be out early and back late every day, which was fine, and since the vegetable garden was newly cultivated, Ji Ying alone couldn't handle it all. It was perfect for Zhou He to help too.

Then there was the chili sauce; it was peak harvest season for chili peppers, and there were just too many of them. Aside from drying the peppers, the rest could be turned into chili sauce, which could make two bowls of rice disappear when there was no other food to eat.

Moreover, chili sauce could be preserved for a long time.

The day to start school was getting closer and closer.

That day, Xu Nianji heard about the Yue family's troubles. Unaware until he inquired, he was shocked to discover that the brick factory wasn't owned by a single individual. The Yue family was just overseeing it, but who knew they had secretly sold a significant number of red bricks.

The sale was discovered by others, and it was immediately reported to another owner. This situation couldn't stand; the other owner, along with his partners, demanded the Yue family return the profits, or they would face legal action.

But who would have guessed that the Yue family took off with the month's earnings from the brick factory?

If it weren't for the factory's policy to settle accounts every month, the Yue family might have taken all the money and left.

The incident caused quite a stir, and the brick factory had been shut down for several days.

"That's great, now we don't have to worry about the Yue family seeking revenge," Xu Nianji delightedly shared the news with Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua.

Xu Nian'an too breathed a sigh of relief. Otherwise, the Yue family would have been like a knife hanging over their heads, ready to fall at any moment.

With the Yue family issue resolved, they felt much more at ease.

After hearing about it, Xu Nianhua didn't take it to heart; the Yue family was bound to fall sooner or later.

Xu Nianhua continued preparing for school, but soon her movements paused as she gathered her things.

She had a feeling that something was off.

Closing her eyes, she remembered that her second brother hadn't been working at the brick factory for more than two months before the trouble started, which was suspiciously strange.

Chapter 128: Who Has This Blessing?

Yue Family, selling red bricks secretly?

Xu Nianhua's eyelids suddenly twitched as she felt like she had stumbled upon some grave truth.

Yet, it was all in the past, and even if she wanted to verify it, there was no way to do so.

But Xu Nianhua felt that what she had speculated must be the truth, otherwise, how could her second brother have died so mysteriously?

At that time, Mr. Yue even compensated the Xu Family with a sum of money for this issue.

She sighed as at that time her whole family was grieving over her second brother's accidental death, the Yue Family was very domineering, and more than a dozen people testified that it was an accidental death.

Now thinking about it, what Xu Nianhua was left with was just relief, thankful that she had come back and avoided the past tragedies.

Xu Nianhua fell silent, always feeling that she considered herself to be very smart, but when it came to scheming and tactics, she was utterly untalented.

"Nianhua, what are you daydreaming about? This chili sauce was just made, you guys bring it tomorrow to give to Doctor Du," Ji Ying said placing two large jars of freshly made chili sauce in front of Xu Nianhua, which not only included peppers but also garlic and fermented bean paste.

Not to mention its appealing color, it was very appetizing.

"Oh, okay," Xu Nianhua came back to her senses, looking at the two large jars of sauce, she said, "Mom, isn't this too much? What if they don't like it, wouldn't that be a waste?"

Looking at Doctor Du and Pei Yicheng's attire and the fact they could afford a sedan, they didn't seem like people who were short of money.

Would they like to eat this?

"This goes best with meals, how could it not be good?" Ji Ying, with pursed lips, said, "Although it's homemade and not expensive, Doctor Du is not that kind of person, he will surely like it."

Really?

Xu Nianhua was somewhat skeptical, always feeling that Doctor Du was just trying to please her mom that day.

"If I tell you to deliver it, just deliver it. They even contributed ten yuan as token money, how embarrassing! Didn't they help you before?" Seeing her reluctant expression, Ji Ying earnestly continued, "Doctor Du and his family are good people, we can't let them down, can we?"

"When you go tomorrow, buy another two kilograms of meat to take along," Ji Ying said, still feeling it wasn't enough.

"Mom, if you send more, they might not accept it," Xu Nianhua reminded her. "In exchanges of gifts, when Doctor Du's family hosts a drinking party, we can also give more gifts. Besides, his grandson isn't married yet, he's about the same age as our eldest brother. When he gets married, I'll also contribute more to the gift money, and that will repay this favor."

"That's true."

Ji Ying changed her mind, thinking that if she bought a lot of things to send over today, it would seem too distant and could hurt their feelings. Whenever they had something good at home in the future, it would be the same if they sent it to Doctor Du's family.

With that thought, Ji Ying said, "Then let it be just these."

"Speaking of which, Doctor Du's grandson, he really has a good appearance, I've never seen a man that handsome," Ji Ying, recalling Pei Yicheng's handsome and distinguished face, expressed her regret, "It's a pity he injured his leg and can't stand up. I don't know if it can be cured."

"But, it should be curable; Doctor Du is also a doctor, though healing a leg injury is not easy."

"Considering his family background and that he's a sensible kid, who knows who will be lucky enough to marry him."

Ji Ying muttered to herself.

Xu Nianhua: "..."

Mom, aren't you thinking too far ahead?

No matter who marries him, it has nothing to do with them, right?

Chapter 129: Little Sister Xu

School was about to start, and Xu Nian'an and his siblings were busy using every bit of time to sell bean sprouts.

The fruit jelly had already been used up; by now, even if they wanted to make mung bean jelly, there was no way to do it.

Today, they had made a large bucket of bean sprouts, so they arrived in town at six in the morning.

They had set out for the town at five-thirty a.m.

By doing so, they would set up at the edge of the marketplace, just in time to catch the early morning crowd shopping for vegetables.

Otherwise, the several dozen pounds of bean sprouts would have been impossible to sell out.

Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianji had grown accustomed to selling bean sprouts outside the marketplace, and likewise, customers who bought bean sprouts knew there was a place here to buy them.

Xu Nianhua, carrying two big jars of chili sauce and her homemade pickled ginger, headed to the medical clinic.

She had walked the route from the market to the clinic many times and remembered it well.

Just as she arrived at the clinic, she found her timing to be quite unfortunate.

Doctor Du had gone out on a call.

Xu Nianhua thought that since Doctor Du was not in, she should still deliver the items to his home, otherwise leaving them at the clinic wouldn't be good with people coming and going.

Just down the alley next to the clinic was Doctor Du's house.

"Yicheng, the Yue Family's finished," Ling Dong, seeking praise, looked at Pei Yicheng and said, "Yicheng, these past years, the Yue Family has made no small amount of money by selling red bricks illegally, and moreover, those two wives of Yue Hongliang died under such wrongful circumstances!"

"Yue Hongliang is not a real man, hitting even his own wives. It's lucky Nianhua didn't marry into that family, otherwise, it would have been a tragedy."

Excited, Ling Dong said, "I just leaked the information about the Yue Family secretly selling red bricks, and sure enough, they were caught red-handed. The Yue Family has even fled with the money, and now they must live a fugitive's life. Even if they have money, every day will be spent in constant fear."

"The Yue Family even thought about secretly dealing with the Xu Family, but our people discovered it just in time."

Ling Dong, in his excitement, completely failed to notice Pei Yicheng's increasingly cold demeanor.

"Hey, why does it feel colder and colder?"

Ling Dong shivered involuntarily; it was early autumn after all!

"Are you very familiar with her?" Pei Yicheng asked coolly, glancing at him.

Her?

Who was Yicheng talking about?

Suddenly, Ling Dong had an epiphany and quickly changed his tune, "Yicheng, I'm not familiar with her, not at all."

Ling Dong said this while shaking his head to clearly indicate that he was really not familiar with Xu Nianhua at all.

"The Yue Family got what they deserved; such people should face the consequences of the law," Pei Yicheng's gaze narrowed slightly.

Ling Dong nodded vigorously, cautiously saying, "Yicheng, then what should I call her? Xu Nianhua? Miss Xu?"

Pei Yicheng remained silent, his dark eyes scanning him.

Ling Dong swallowed hard. As a knock sounded at the door, Ling Dong looked as if he saw a lifesaver. He had to thank the person knocking; otherwise, being stared at by Yicheng, he felt a chill run down his spine.

As he opened the door, there stood Xu Nianhua, looking dainty and pretty.

"Big Brother Ling." When Xu Nianhua saw Ling Dong, she let out a sigh of relief in her heart, afraid that if her timing was off and both Pei Yicheng and Ling Dong weren't there, she would have to carry everything back with her, which really would've exhausted her.

After the last incident with the translation contract, they had become somewhat more familiar with each other.

"Xu..." Ling Dong began but then remembered the recent discussion about how to address her; he quickly improvised, "Little Sister Xu, did you come to see Yicheng? He's at home."

While leading Xu Nianhua inside, Ling Dong loudly announced, "Yicheng, Little Sister Xu is here."

Chapter 130: Delivering Chili Sauce Door to Door

Xu Mei.

Xu Nianhua's lips couldn't help but twitch. What kind of nickname was this?

Her surname was Xu, and since her second older brother called her Mei, they all called her Xu Mei?

Xu Nianhua walked inside with her belongings, finding the nickname quite awkward.

Pei Yicheng had just opened a book, but he instantly closed it. His eyes brightened slightly, his hand rested on the wheelchair, ready to push it outside. The next moment, Pei Yicheng opened the book again, lowered his head as if reading, but his peripheral vision was fixed outside.

"Cheng Bro." Ling Dong saw Pei Yicheng reading and was not surprised. Cheng Bro always liked to read; whenever he had time, he liked to embrace a book. Ling Dong didn't know how many times he had seen this scene.

"Pei Big Bro." When Xu Nianhua entered the yard, she saw Pei Yicheng sitting under a tree looking at it. A cup of tea was on the table next to him, probably just brewed, as the aroma of tea was pervasive. Standing there, she could even smell the faint fragrance of the tea.

Great tea.

"Sit." Pei Yicheng kept a straight face, his gaze falling on the heavy cloth bag in Xu Nianhua's hands, seeming to wonder what she was holding.

Pei Yicheng glanced at Ling Dong beside him.

Ling Dong immediately said, "Xu Mei, what is this?"

Ling Dong took the items from Xu Nianhua and placed them on the table.

The table, made of marble, was very sturdy.

"Ling Big Bro, you can call me Xu Nianhua, or Nianhua is fine. Xu Mei just sounds so awkward," Xu Nianhua said with a smile. She explained, "This is chili sauce and pickled ginger made by my mom."

"The chilies and the canning jars have been thoroughly cleaned," Xu Nianhua added.

The cloth bag was opened, revealing fresh red chili sauce in the meticulously cleaned canning jars, which now lacked labels.

One glance at the red chilies with intermittent black fermented beans and white garlic cloves arranged together was especially pleasing to the eye.

Even without tasting it, just looking at the jar and smelling the aroma of the chilies made one's mouth water, inducing a craving to eat it.

Next to it was a jar of pickled ginger. The fresh ginger, after having its skin scraped off and dried, was directly immersed in vinegar with some rock sugar. The pickled ginger had a sweet and sour taste with a hint of spiciness. Ji Ying always selected the tenderest ginger, which made it especially delicious.

"Auntie is really skillful." Pei Yicheng praised, having rarely eaten these homemade items.

"Yes, my mom really knows how to make chili sauce, it tastes better than what others make. Why don't you try some?" Xu Nianhua suggested. The chili sauce Ji Ying made had been sitting for a while and was ready to eat.

Ling Dong immediately went to get a bowl.

"Chili sauce with rice is also very tasty, especially when there are no pickled vegetables; just adding a little bit of chili sauce makes the flavor come alive. Also, when eating noodles in the morning, adding a bit of chili sauce really enhances the taste."

As soon as Xu Nianhua spoke of the things Ji Ying made, her face was full of pride. She had tasted many chili sauces, but only her mom's chili sauce was particularly delicious!

Not to mention the pickled vegetables. Once stir-fried with chili, the tangy and spicy flavor was absolutely amazing!

"You can try this pickled ginger as well."

Xu Nianhua, sounding like a salesperson energetically promoting products, finished speaking then shyly looked at Pei Yicheng and said, "Well, these are from my mom to you guys. I think, you will probably... like them."