

## Regaining 141

### Chapter 141 Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law

Before, when she came to the vegetable field, she would just go through the motions, but Ji Ying worked at an incredibly fast pace, and without much effort on her part, the large family plot was almost completely tilled.

Ji Ying could finish fertilizing and watering the vegetables in just one evening.

But after the family division, Ji Ying no longer cared about the vegetables in their garden.

"Mom, my back hurts, and my hands are blistered."

Zhao Juxiang spread her hands, revealing blisters from hoeing the ground every day, which hurt at the slightest touch.

Liu Sanmei, seeing her delicate posture, was furious and said, "Juxiang, I'm older than you and do more work than you do, yet I never complain of pain."

"Mom, I'm getting it done too, it's just a bit slower," Zhao Juxiang said with a smile, then bowed her head and continued to till the land. She had finished planting the edamame and was now turning the soil to plant cabbage and radishes, which they would have to eat in winter.

Especially the cabbage, once the packed cabbage seedlings were ready to be transplanted, the extras could be eaten as seedling greens, which tasted pretty good.

Liu Sanmei kept nagging, but no matter how much she did, Zhao Juxiang kept doing the same thing as before: when tired, she would sit on the mud next to her and take a sip of water.

"Why are you sitting down again?" Liu Sanmei's eyes looked as if they might pop out of her head.

Zhao Juxiang replied lazily, "Mom, I'm tired. If I keep going, I'll be exhausted to death. If I die of exhaustion, there'll be no one to cook dinner."

Liu Sanmei: "..."

If she had known it would be like this, they might as well not have split up the household; she wouldn't have to work so hard on the housework, and she wouldn't even have to bother with the vegetable garden!

The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law returned home with darkened faces.

Liu Sanmei grabbed a handful of melon seeds and, after reminding Zhao Juxiang to cook, strolled out leisurely, planning to go outside and munch on the seeds.

Looking at the cold stove, Zhao Juxiang, already tired from a day's work and now having to cook, felt a surge of anger. At that moment, Xu Qingjiang came in, and Zhao Juxiang began to complain of pain, saying, "Xu Qingjiang, I'm nearly worked to death, and mom still wants me to cook."

"What will we eat if you don't cook? I'm starving," said Xu Qingjiang, who had been busy all day at school. He said, "Hurry up and cook."

Zhao Juxiang: "..."

"Look at the blisters on my hands!" Zhao Juxiang showed her palms again, saying, "Ah, if Zhihao knew his mom had gotten a hand full of blisters, he would be heartbroken."

Xu Qingjiang glanced at her hands and thought, they're just a few blisters, aren't they? Didn't they often get blisters when working on the mountain?

However, seeing Zhao Juxiang looking so pitifully tired, Xu Qingjiang said, "I can't cook either. If my mom isn't home and you don't cook, what is our family supposed to eat?"

Zhao Juxiang: "..."

Outside, Liu Sanmei, who was gossiping, heard that everyone was selling peppers to Ji Ying, and she almost thought she'd heard wrong. She spat out a mouthful of melon seed shells in disdain, saying, "Does Ji Ying have more money than she knows what to do with? Why is she buying so many peppers?"

Liu Sanmei thought of Ji Ying's capability and now regretted their division; if they had not split the household, she wouldn't have to exhaust herself like this.

"Don't you know? Ji Ying is collecting peppers for Dr. Du's grandson. Wet red peppers are three mao each, and dry ones can sell for two yuan a pound," someone said.

Old Lady Hu sighed and said, "Alas, it's a pity that my family only grows enough peppers for our own consumption each year, and we can only sell a few pounds of dry red peppers even if we wanted to sell."

She regretted it, thinking that if only she had known Ji Ying would be collecting peppers, she would have planted more this year.

Chapter 142: Can't Write the Character 'Xu' Twice in One Stroke

"This good?"

As soon as Liu Sanmei heard this, she couldn't sit still and quickly walked back home.

Watching her hurried departure, Auntie Hu chuckled to herself, saying, "Liu Sanmei, you always praise how accomplished your grandson is, but didn't Xu Zhihao just marry a city girl? What's so great about that? To be blunt, what's the difference between Xu Zhihao and a son-in-law who marries into the wife's family?"

"Humph, I think the Xu Qinghe family will have great prospects in the future."

Auntie Hu thought of this, and the smile on her lips grew wider. Liu Sanmei would definitely regret splitting from the Xu Qinghe family. The more she regretted it, the happier Auntie Hu would be!

Zhao Juxiang was in the kitchen, cooking with an unhappy expression. Hearing the noise of her mother-in-law Liu Sanmei's return, she thought she had heard wrongly. She came out to see and found Liu Sanmei rummaging through things.

"Mom, what are you in such a hurry to find?"

Zhao Juxiang asked curiously.

"Where did we put the dried chili peppers?" Liu Sanmei only remembered that they had quite a few dried chili peppers at home.

Ji Ying was very diligent; every year, they could save a lot of dried chilies at home.

Zhao Juxiang asked, "Do we still have dried chili peppers? What do you need those for?"

"To sell for money. Haven't you heard? Ji Ying is helping others collect chili peppers, and she didn't even give us a heads up about such a good opportunity."

When Liu Sanmei thought about how she had heard the news from the Hu Family instead, she felt suppressively annoyed.

Ji Ying always called her "mom"; how could she not have thought of her on such a good occasion?

"Collecting chili peppers? Can it really make money?" Zhao Juxiang immediately thought of this point.

"Of course," Liu Sanmei said. "Wet red chili peppers are three cents a pound, but dried red chili peppers can sell for two Yuan a pound."

Liu Sanmei tried hard to recall where exactly they had put the dried red chili peppers.

Hearing about money, Zhao Juxiang's eyes instantly lit up. As if she had just remembered, she said, "I think they're hanging underneath the roof beam."

"Right."

Liu Sanmei recalled that, indeed, to preserve dried chili peppers, it wasn't easy; they needed to be in a dry and ventilated place without getting rained on.

When not in use, they were hung up, which kept them dry and well ventilated; they would take some down when needed for cooking.

"I'll go get the wet red chili peppers," Zhao Juxiang said, and she took a large basket to fill with red chili peppers. She didn't care about picking only the best; as long as it had some red or was tinged with red, she stuffed it into the basket. Each bright red chili pepper transformed into money in Zhao Juxiang's eyes.

"Aren't you cooking?" Liu Sanmei watched her actions and said, "Let Qingjiang do it. You go cook; I'm starving to death."

"I can do this." Xu Qingjiang, who was originally sitting in the yard enjoying the cool air, volunteered to take over Liu Sanmei's task after hearing her words.

Zhao Juxiang: "..."

She didn't want to cook.

...

After dinner, Liu Sanmei and Zhao Juxiang, carrying the chili peppers, went upstairs to see them.

The Ji Ying family had just finished dinner, and people were already delivering chili peppers.

Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an, the siblings, weren't around because of the busy affairs, which didn't seem to bother them.

Xu Qinghe was making a bean sprout bucket on the side.

Xu Nianji, Zhou He, and Ji Ying were all sorting the chili peppers. If they were dirty, they would wipe them down and place them on bamboo drying trays.

When the sun was hot the next day, they would just take them out to dry.

The chili peppers were freshly picked and had not been treated with pesticides; they were fundamentally clean.

Liu Sanmei and her group arrived just at the right moment. She placed the chili peppers in front of them, including the dried and wet ones, and with a pointed remark, she said, "Qinghe, even if we're separated, one stroke can't make two Xu characters."

#### Chapter 143: Good Connections

"Mom, we were too busy and didn't get a chance to tell you," Ji Ying didn't want to argue over such a trivial matter.

And besides, who cares whose chilies we buy?

My eldest son just got married, my younger son is still going to university, and my daughter is also looking to get married. We initially split the household because we couldn't bear it any longer.

But now, to argue with my mother-in-law over a little nothing — if word got out, it would sound terrible.

Ji Ying, smiling beamingly, had brought in a daughter-in-law after splitting from the family. Although they were in debt, selling bean sprouts every day could make them a few bucks, and saving up over a month, a hundred or so dollars was not a problem at all.

Also, with the Chili Sauce Factory they had recently set up, she wanted to improve the factory and, in the future, not to mention making a few thousand, at least making a hundred or so dollars should be achievable, right?

Thinking this way, the days ahead seemed particularly hopeful.

Therefore, Ji Ying was exceptionally happy and didn't mind Liu Sanmei's subtle insinuations.

"Grandma, Second Aunt."

As the newly introduced daughter-in-law, Zhou He was also very courteous, poured two cups of water for Liu Sanmei, and at the same time, took the initiative to take over some of Ji Ying's tasks, helping with things like weighing chilies.

Ji Ying glanced at the chilies, which were dried from last year. Judging by the amount, it seemed like all the dried chilies were delivered, right?

There were also plenty of fresh chilies. She said, "Mom, if we sell all these dried chilies and don't keep any of the fresh ones either, will this last us till next year?"

"It's okay if we have fewer chilies," Liu Sanmei didn't care about the chilies. The fields would yield more, and if it really wasn't enough, they would figure something out later.

Eating less wouldn't hurt.

Seeing that they didn't care, Ji Ying didn't bother to remind them anymore. After calculating the price by quantity, she directly handed the money to Liu Sanmei.

Zhao Juxiang did want some, but why would Liu Sanmei give the money to Zhao Juxiang?

Liu Sanmei unapologetically took the money into her hands; although it wasn't much, it was still an income.

Liu Sanmei inquired, "You're buying so many chilies, how much do you earn per pound?"

"Doctor Du's grandson and Nianji get along well, and they trusted us with this task," Ji Ying answered with a smile; it seemed like an answer, but she actually didn't say anything substantial.

"What kind of factory is he running? Why does he need so many chilies?" Liu Sanmei asked again.

Ji Ying shook her head, a look of confusion on her face, "I don't know; he probably has his uses for them."

Liu Sanmei: ...

Isn't that obvious?

What would he do with so many chilies if they weren't useful, spending all that money?

Liu Sanmei couldn't find out anything, so she didn't bother staying any longer.

The next day, not long after Ji Ying got up, an aunt from the Liu family came to deliver eggs.

The words of Liu Auntie sounded as if the two of them were very acquainted.

"Auntie, we really can't accept these eggs," Ji Ying said, laughing as she declined.

Liu Auntie thought that Doctor Du's grandson had said something, so she was even more resolved to give away the eggs. She said, "Ji Ying, Yingzi, I've watched you marry into Shuangzhu Village, and you know my character. Could you also buy my chilies?"

Liu Auntie revealed her intention.

Ji Ying was amused yet bewildered, thinking Liu Auntie had other intentions. She said, "I'll take your chilies, but not the eggs."

"Yingzi, these eggs are just right for nourishing your daughter-in-law's body, hopefully bringing you a big, fat grandson next year." Liu Auntie, hearing that her chilies would be bought, naturally delighted, but thinking about the factory possibly needing people to work, she insisted on giving the eggs to Ji Ying.

#### Chapter 144: Wrapping Books

Zhou He had just come out of the house when she overheard the words of Auntie Liu.

Her chubby grandson.

The newly married Zhou He was expressing great shyness.

As she had just stepped out, was it still possible to take her foot back?

"Each thing in its own right, I'll take the chili peppers, but I really can't accept the eggs,"

Ji Ying said decisively. To be indebted for food eaten and favors received made her uncomfortable. On this account, she had her principles.

"Mom, our chicks at home are still too young to lay eggs. It just so happens we've bought Auntie Liu's eggs, which can help Nianhua nourish his body since he is working so hard at school," Zhou He came forward, standing behind Ji Ying and suggested softly.

Seeing that Auntie Liu was insistent on leaving the eggs, why not just buy them instead? That way, Auntie Liu's intentions would be fulfilled, and the mother-in-law wouldn't have to feel uncomfortable about accepting eggs for nothing.

"That sounds good." Ji Ying agreed immediately and dropped the subject. They didn't have eggs at home, and buying ten eggs to nourish the family seemed like a good idea.

Auntie Liu herself felt slightly embarrassed—it felt as if she was forcing the sale of the eggs.

Zhou He weighed the chilies for Auntie Liu, Ji Ying paid the money, including the cost of the eggs.

"How can I accept this?" Auntie Liu looked at the money in her hands and finally accepted it after Ji Ying insisted several times.

She would have to think of some other way in the future.

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In the county, at Gaoliang County No. 1 High School.

Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an were both repeating a year, and everyone was placed in the same class; most students in their class had not been admitted to university previously.

With nine classes in the senior year, getting forty to fifty students admitted to university was considered quite good.

There was only one class for those who were repeating the year, and although many wanted to, repeating meant spending more money, which many families could not afford.

Xu Zhiyuan was also in the same class, but he pretended not to know them, blending in with the other students while Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua naturally acted as if they hadn't seen him.

Sitting at her desk, Xu Nianhua often felt as if she was in a different world, gazing at the youthful faces around her, as if she was dreaming.

How many years had it been since she had last attended school?

She hadn't felt it while at home, but sitting in the classroom, Xu Nianhua realized she was not used to it.

In the past, she might as well have been an old woman, and sitting here now, looking at those youthful faces, she couldn't help but lament, "Youth is wonderful."

"You're only nineteen, why do you sound so old and cranky?" Xu Nian'an tapped her head gently with his notebook and said, "Didn't you use to love covering books? The books have been issued, why haven't you covered them yet?"

As he spoke, Xu Nian'an took her new books, brought out the prepared calendar paper, and began to cover her books, then wrote on the pristine white cover in hollow lettering details such as the subject, class, and her name.

"How's that? Not bad handwriting from your brother, right?" Xu Nian'an handed her the wrapped book, expecting praise, which made Xu Nianhua unable to help but laugh.

Sitting in the classroom, Xu Nianhua felt herself to be a nineteen-year-old girl. She had adapted quite well since returning, and that momentary nostalgia seemed non-existent. She glanced at his writing and conceded, "It's okay."

"The wrapping looks really nice, and so does the handwriting. Xu Nian'an, can you wrap mine too?" A girl with pigtails turned around, handing over her new books and calendar paper.

In those years, having a book meant taking good care of it. Without the variety of book covers available in future generations, people used calendar paper, which saw the most use at the beginning of a school term. Those without calendar paper would resort to newspaper wrappings.

However, books wrapped in newspaper clearly did not have the same status as those covered with pure white calendar paper.

#### Chapter 145: A Look of Disgust

"No way." Xu Nian'an was smiling just a moment ago, but his expression hardened the instant he saw that girl.

The girl with the braided pigtailed looked unhappy and glared at Xu Nian'an, saying, "Stingy, Nianhua, can you help me instead?"

She immediately placed the book in front of Xu Nianhua.

Xu Nianhua looked at the new book and then back at the girl, completely clueless about who she was.

The memory was too distant. She could still somewhat remember her relatives, but classmates and such, she just couldn't recall.

"Zheng Jin, you should wrap your own books. Why always ask others?" Xu Nian'an pushed the book back to her, and Xu Nianhua's silence made him think she didn't want to help.

"Did you also wrap hers?" Zheng Jin asked with wide eyes staring at Xu Nian'an.

Her eyes seemed to question why she couldn't ask others to wrap her book if her book was wrapped by him.

"I'm her brother," Xu Nian'an replied without a second thought.

Zheng Jin: "..."

So frustrating, is this because she doesn't have a brother?

"Zheng Jin, it's okay, wrapping books is really simple." Knowing her name as Zheng Jin, Xu Nianhua smiled warmly, took a piece of calendar paper, and started wrapping the book with Zheng Jin.

Zheng Jin wasn't incapable of wrapping; she just wanted Xu Nian'an's help with it. Unfortunately, Xu Nian'an was too lazy to even wrap his own books, always having Xu Nianhua do it.

In the end, Xu Nianhua insisted on wrapping Xu Nian'an's books as well.

Xu Nianhua asked, "Second brother, how do you write this 'hollowed-out character'? Teach me."

Xu Nianhua was very interested in these hollowed-out characters. Not only were Xu Nian'an's wrapped books tidy, but the characters he wrote also carried a kind of beauty.

"I thought you didn't like studying?" Xu Nian'an gave her a sidelong glance, remembering how uninterested she had been when he tried to teach her before. Unexpectedly, she was interested now.

On the first day of school, besides the first lesson, issuing books, and breaks, classes started right away.

After a full day of classes, Xu Nianhua sadly discovered that except for foreign languages, which she understood without any issue, she could follow Chinese but, when it came to reciting poetry, she was utterly lost.

After so much time, how could she remember any of the ancient poems she had memorized?

And then, all the various formulas in math and science were completely baffling to her too?

"What's wrong with you?" Zheng Jin initially wanted to find out where Xu Nianhua was living now, since they no longer boarded at school, but seeing Xu Nianhua's despondent look, she couldn't help but ask with concern.

Xu Nian'an, who was engrossed in doing problems, glanced at Xu Nianhua beside him. Nothing upsetting had happened today, had it?

"I..." Xu Nianhua started to say she couldn't remember anything, then thought better of it. Forgetting everything over a summer break seemed unlikely, and who would believe that?

Xu Nianhua changed the subject, saying, "It's nothing, I'm just thinking—I'm a bit hungry. I wonder what's for dinner in the cafeteria."

Although they didn't live at school, they still ate their meals there, and there were evening self-study sessions too.

"On the first day, there's definitely going to be braised pork!" Zheng Jin answered without hesitation. She said, "But we better go early, or else only the fatty pieces might be left."

Thinking of the cafeteria's braised pork, Xu Nianhua didn't like the large chunks of fat.

After dinner.

"Little sister, what's wrong? Did something happen? You seem unhappy today," Xu Nian'an asked with concern, noticing that his little sister wasn't as cheerful as usual.

Chapter 146: Fell into the Lake and Water Got In?

Xu Nianhua looked at him with a complex expression and said, "Second brother, would you believe me if I told you that I have forgotten all the ancient poems and even the formulas for physics and chemistry?"

"Pfft~"

Xu Nian'an burst into laughter instantly.

As they were walking back to the classroom from the cafeteria, there were quite a few people around, and Xu Nian'an's laughter caught everyone's attention.

Xu Nian'an cleared his throat and explained, "I was just telling a joke with my little sister."

After explaining, Xu Nian'an pulled Xu Nianhua under a tree to the side and said, "Little sister, that joke wasn't funny at all."

Xu Nianhua pursed her lips and said nothing, her clear eyes seriously looking at Xu Nian'an.

Suddenly, Xu Nian'an felt that what she had just said might not have been a joke.

"Xu Nianhua, you weren't joking, were you?" Xu Nian'an couldn't help but call out her full name, incredulously asking her, "It's only been one summer, how could you forget everything so completely?"

"Really, I don't know why, I just can't remember," Xu Nianhua said anxiously, truly unable to recall a thing.

Xu Nian'an always felt something was off, and a thought flashed through his mind. He said, "Wait a minute, aren't you very good at foreign languages?"

"I know foreign languages, but the academic stuff, I've forgotten," Xu Nianhua said a bit guiltily, lowering her head and not daring to meet Xu Nian'an's eyes, as the memory had faded over time.

But she couldn't tell her elder brother about her rebirth, otherwise he would think she was crazy.

"How could you forget all this so quickly? What else have you forgotten? Is there anything wrong with your body?" Xu Nian'an asked worriedly, grabbing Xu Nianhua's hand and examining her closely, fearing she had any discomfort.

"No, no."

Xu Nianhua hastily said, "Aside from forgetting these things, I remember everything else, including the times you wet the bed when you were a kid."

Xu Nian'an's face darkened instantly.

"Never mind," Xu Nianhua quickly covered her mouth, covering most of her face, leaving only her bright, sparkling eyes visible.

"Are you going to tease me about this for the rest of my life?" Xu Nian'an sighed helplessly. He hated it when people brought up that subject. Although it was a childhood incident, being reminded of it still felt embarrassing.

But this person was his beloved younger sister, and Xu Nian'an could only sigh helplessly.

"Hehe, why worry? Who hasn't wet the bed as a child?" Xu Nianhua winked playfully, seeing her elder brother look like he wanted to get angry but hold it back, and she comforted him, "Don't worry, second brother, I won't laugh at you."

"You should think about your formulas," Xu Nian'an glanced at her and said, "Tell me the truth, how could you just forget all this? Could it be..."

He remembered Xu Nianhua falling into the lake and coming down with a high fever. He muttered, "Oh no, could it be that the fall into the lake caused water to get into your brain, making you forget all this knowledge?"

Xu Nianhua: "..."

Second brother, you really are my own brother!!!

If falling into a lake meant getting water in her brain, would she still be alive?

She might believe it burned her brain a bit with the fever.

She wanted to return this second brother she had; was it too late?

"Hmph."

Xu Nianhua huffed and turned to walk away, not wanting to deal with him anymore.

The semester had just started; there was still so much time before the college entrance exams. She could still learn and memorize.

"Little sister," Xu Nian'an belatedly realized that Xu Nianhua was upset, and he quickly followed her. However, Xu Nianhua picked up her pace and ran straight into the classroom.

Chapter 147: Did Your Brother Make You Angry?

"Nianhua, is there a ghost chasing you or something?" Zheng Jin teased Xu Nianhua with a giggle, as she ran so fast. The next moment, seeing Xu Nian'an approaching with a worried look on his face, Zheng Jin's eyes widened, and she leaned in to whisper, "Did your brother make you mad?"

Although Zheng Jin said that, she couldn't really believe it. Xu Nian'an had always been very protective of his little sister. How could he possibly bully her and make her angry?

"It's nothing." Xu Nianhua pursed her lips and started to work on her exercises. She didn't believe that the things she knew before couldn't be picked up again now.

"Little sister, I, I really didn't mean to scold you," Xu Nian'an said in a low voice.

Xu Nianhua moved aside and continued to write her homework seriously, completely ignoring Xu Nian'an.

Xu Nian'an wanted to say something, but with the teacher occasionally glancing in his direction, he had no choice but to keep quiet, thinking that on the way back, he would surely cheer up his sister.

It took roughly fifteen minutes to walk from the school to their rented house. If one walked fast, it might take only ten minutes. The route was along a main road with street lights. Right after class, Zheng Jin followed Xu Nianhua, claiming she wanted to see where they lived so that it would be convenient to visit in the future.

Zheng Jin and Xu Nianhua chatted the whole way, leaving Xu Nian'an no chance to speak with his little sister.

"Little sister, I said the wrong thing. If you're upset, just scold me," Xu Nian'an said, admitting his mistake with a good attitude.

As soon as he entered the house, he apologized to Xu Nianhua.

"Second brother, you didn't say anything wrong. It's just that I fell into the lake and got a high fever, right?" Xu Nianhua had actually stopped being angry a while ago, but seeing how worried Xu Nian'an was made her feel sweet inside.

"Little sister is smart, indeed. Even if you got a fever, that doesn't affect your cleverness," Xu Nian'an praised her generously, his words gushing out like they cost nothing.

Seeing that she seemed no longer angry, he suggested, "How about tomorrow morning, we recite classical poetry together?"

"Okay," Xu Nianhua agreed immediately, and they divvied up the tasks: one watched the bean sprouts, and the other boiled water for a bath.

By the time they had finished bathing, it was already past eleven o'clock, and Xu Nianhua fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow.

"Little sister, it's time to get up," Xu Nian'an called out to wake Xu Nianhua early in the morning.

He had already poured out the bean sprouts they needed to sell for the day and soaked a new batch of soybeans.

"What time is it?"

Groggy, Xu Nianhua opened her eyes. It was light outside, and as she sat up, she noticed that their older brother had arrived.

She yawned as she got out of bed.

"Big brother, how is everything at home? Did you get the chili peppers?" Xu Nianhua asked as she washed her face with cold water, inquiring about the chili peppers.

"The villagers practically want to give us all the chili peppers they have; how could we not get enough?" Xu Nianji recounted the events from the previous night. "Second Aunt and Grandma gave up all the peppers they had. I reckon they'll still want to buy peppers later on to eat."

"Don't they leave any peppers to eat at home?" Xu Nianhua couldn't help but feel speechless. Selling chili peppers was profitable now, but later, when they ran out at home, wouldn't they have to spend money to buy them?

It would be better to keep the peppers they needed to eat and just sell the surplus.

"They just couldn't bear to pass up the money," Xu Nianji explained, then changed the subject, "I washed most of the bottles yesterday, but did you finish the label you mentioned?"

"I finished it."

Xu Nianhua was fairly good at drawing, and there was no problem with simple sketches.

She had drawn a profile of a smiling mother, which made people think of their own moms as soon as they saw it. She also designed the words "good mom" in an artistic font.

Chapter 148: It Really Is My Second Brother

"When did you paint this?"

Xu Nian'an leaned in to look, the tag was very nice.

"Last night." Xu Nianhua had painted it when she had nothing else to do.

"Then I'll give this to Pei Yicheng." Xu Nianji took the tag paper and headed for Dr. Du's house.

"Nianji's here."

Dr. Du was an early riser, and greeted Xu Nianji with a warm smile upon seeing her; he was even thinking about Yicheng marrying their sister, which would make him Yicheng's uncle by marriage, so Dr. Du naturally wanted to foster a closer relationship.

"Good morning, Dr. Du. I'm here to see Pei Yicheng, is he up yet?"

Xu Nianji belatedly realized that he might have come a bit early.

However, because he needed to sell bean sprouts later and wouldn't return until noon, he had to come over early in the morning to get the tag done sooner.

"He's up," Dr. Du replied cheerily. "He's in the backyard."

"Pei Yicheng, my little sister finished the tag, take a look, can you use it?" Xu Nianji presented the well-painted tag; the long strip-shaped tag showed the Good Mother logo prominently on the front, along with a simple sketch that was especially appealing.

On the back was the formula list, storage methods, place of production, and so on, all clearly written.

The material of the tag was also specified by Xu Nianhua, including how large the letters should be and what font should be used—she noted everything down.

"It's good, nothing needs to be changed," Pei Yicheng praised. "Your little sister really is talented, not only can she translate contracts, but she's also quite good at drawing."

"She enjoys it, but she's still far from professional," Xu Nianji said modestly, yet his eyes were filled with pride.

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"Big bro, what are you doing?" Xu Nianhua finally finished her homework and when she looked up, she saw Xu Nian'an continually writing something and blocking her view so she couldn't see it.

"Doing homework."

Xu Nian'an replied without looking up.

Xu Nianhua: "..."

Was he blocking her so she wouldn't copy?

Xu Nianhua stretched lazily, having sat for a long time, and decided to take a short break.

That evening.

Xu Nian'an tossed a notebook to her.

"What's this?"

Xu Nianhua opened the notebook, puzzled, and found that it was filled with all the math formulas.

A whole notebook of them.

"Big bro, you really are my dear big brother," Xu Nianhua was so happy she nearly jumped for joy. She needed this right now!

"Of course." Xu Nian'an's hand was sore from copying, but seeing Xu Nianhua's smile, he felt it was all worth it. Tomorrow he planned to copy down the chemistry and physics ones as well.

"Thank you, big bro."

Xu Nianhua, clutching the notebook, couldn't contain her joy. She thought about how Xu Nian'an didn't let her see what he was doing during the day, was he secretly copying this to surprise her?

"So, how will you thank me?" Xu Nian'an looked expectantly at Xu Nianhua.

Xu Nianhua paused for a moment, then suggested, "How about, I cook you a delicious meal?"

Xu Nian'an: "..."

"Then, what do you want?" Xu Nianhua blinked.

This question stumped Xu Nian'an; he had just asked casually. After hearing Xu Nianhua's offer, he thought for a moment and said, "Let's keep it pending, and in the future, you help me."

"Deal," Xu Nianhua agreed without hesitation, her sweet smile suggesting she felt like she got the better end of the bargain!

Even if it wasn't for this favor, if her big bro needed help with something, she would certainly not ignore it.

So, this promise was practically the same as no promise at all!

Watching her sweet smile, Xu Nian'an couldn't help but feel... he might have done something rather foolish.

Chapter 149: Cheng Hao

Xu Nian'an finished his bath and lay in bed, thinking for a long while before he finally realized what felt odd.

Even if he didn't ask for anything, if he really needed his little sister's help, wouldn't she still assist him?

Xu Nian'an turned over in bed and stopped thinking about it; as long as his little sister was happy, that was all that mattered. After all, he wasn't copying those formulas for her gratitude.

With that thought, Xu Nian'an put the matter out of his mind. There would be heavy coursework to tackle tomorrow, and he needed to finish copying the chemistry and physics formulas for his little sister early.

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From that day on, Xu Nian'an began reciting texts article by article with Xu Nianhua every morning, with Xu Nianhua reciting and Xu Nian'an acting like a strict teacher.

Even during their little break times, when they went to the factory, Xu Nian'an would always spot-check which texts Xu Nianhua had memorized.

To fulfill his promise, Pei Yicheng didn't go to the factory daily, letting Ling Dong take over most of the time.

However, every time Xu Nianhua had holidays, Pei Yicheng always managed to see them.

Over time, Pei Yicheng noticed that Xu Nianhua was either reciting ancient poems or memorizing science formulas.

After returning, Pei Yicheng made a phone call to Ningbei.

"Who is it?" On the other end of the line, Cheng Hao spoke casually as he lounged in the print shop's office, languidly passing his days with his legs crossed.

"Haozi, it seems like you're quite bored at the print shop as well," observed Pei Yicheng, recognizing the familiar voice, remembering how he used to follow him around calling, 'Cheng Ge, Cheng Ge.' After he

had hurt his leg, Cheng Hao had spent a long time with him; unfortunately, he was unable to come to terms with it then.

He left to find his grandfather, Du Chang, without telling anyone.

"Cheng Ge?"

Cheng Hao instinctively straightened up, correcting his posture for the call, his tone eager as he asked, "Is that you, Cheng Ge?"

"What, you can't recognize my voice after half a year?" Pei Yicheng's voice was deep, yet distinctly personal.

"Cheng Ge, where have you been? I asked Uncle Pei, and he only said you went to clear your mind and didn't take me along!" Cheng Hao had a lot to say; he particularly wanted to ask if his leg had healed, but he hesitated, swallowing his words back down.

If Cheng Ge's leg had really healed, he would definitely have shared the good news by now. Since he hadn't mentioned it, it obviously hadn't improved.

"I'm at my grandfather's house; sorry, I left in a hurry and didn't get a chance to say goodbye," Pei Yicheng said, his words filled with regret as he listened to his concerned tone.

"It's okay, it's okay, I was just worried about you. Knowing you're safe puts my mind at ease." Cheng Hao asked, "Cheng Ge, did you call because you're coming back to Ningbei?"

"I don't visit the temple for no reason; I remember, your factory has self-study books for physics, chemistry, and mathematics, right?" Pei Yicheng got straight to the point.

"Yes," Cheng Hao replied without hesitation, knowing that even if the factory didn't have them, they would definitely be available somewhere in Ningbei.

"Send me two sets of those self-study books, and also some test papers needed by high school seniors."

Pei Yicheng's request left Cheng Hao puzzled as he asked, "Cheng Ge, what do you need these for?"

Cheng Ge had attended half a year of college before taking a leave of absence due to his leg injury.

Even if he wanted to study by himself, why would he need books and test papers for the college entrance exam?

He had last seen Pei Yining in school; it probably wasn't for her.

"They're useful." Pei Yicheng didn't know how to bring up the Xu family, so he left it unmentioned.

Chapter 150: The First Batch of Hot Sauce

"Okay, Brother Cheng, after I get them for you, how should I deliver them to you?" Cheng Hao asked.

After receiving Pei Yicheng's address and contact information, Cheng Hao went to find self-study books and test papers on math, physics, and chemistry, picking two copies of each kind of paper.

Finally, Cheng Hao glanced at the papers he had chosen and felt that the number was insufficient. He carefully selected another pile, then, after lying to his dad about where he was going, took these items and headed straight for Gaoliang County in South City.

Good Mom Food Factory.

Ji Ying came to the factory with Zhou He in the morning, cleaned the bottles, and at the same time, they both set to work chopping up the dried chilies they had sun-dried.

A long bamboo tub, plus a stick with a small knife at the end—this was a very primitive method of chopping chilies.

After half a month of busyness and accumulating a lot of chilies, Ji Ying began to prepare to make chili sauce.

Ji Ying mixed half hot and half mild dry chilies together, so that the flavor would satisfy most people. Plenty of garlic and cooking oil, as well as firewood, were all things Xu Nianji had brought from home.

Every day she brought a little, taking the chopped chilies bit by bit to the factory, she indeed brought quite a lot of stuff over.

"Mom, I'll help you make the fire," Zhou He volunteered. Before she was married, she did all the chores at home and was even scolded and sometimes went hungry.

But in the Xu Family, everyone was very kind, and they never kept her in the dark about the family business matters.

Xu Nianji was very fond of her, especially her mother-in-law. Zhou He had heard many stories about awful mothers-in-law, but in the Xu Family, Ji Ying, her mother-in-law, was even more caring than her own mother.

Zhou He felt that life had more purpose and wanted to take good care of them.

"Okay."

Ji Ying had mixed the chilies well and even tasted them for saltiness. It was only then that she got ready to start heating the oil.

This was the first batch Ji Ying made, and she didn't dare to make too much, just one basinful.

The garlic and dried chilies in the basin looked good just from their color alone.

The scalding hot oil poured over them, causing the contents of the basin to bubble up immediately.

Ji Ying, with a spatula in hand, kept stirring the chilies continuously.

Zhou He helped pour in the remaining oil, and the fragrant aroma of the chili sauce wafted out.

"That's enough oil."

Ji Ying estimated that the oil in the chili sauce was almost enough and told Zhou He to stop pouring. She continued mixing to make sure all the chilies were blended evenly.

"It smells so good," Zhou He inhaled deeply, even just the scent made her want to drool and take a bite.

"I wonder if it tastes as good as it smells."

Ji Ying, looking at the chili sauce that had just come off the stove, was also relieved. It seemed that after all these years, she still had the skill of making chili sauce.

"It must taste good," Zhou He said. She now looked at her mother-in-law as if she were her own mother, especially since Ji Ying's chili sauce had completely won her over.

Evening.

Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an, brother and sister, took the opportunity to visit the factory during dinner time.

Pei Yicheng, having heard that the chili sauce was ready, had Ling Dong push him to the factory as well.

Upon entering the factory, the aroma of the chili sauce lingered for a long time.

"Come, try it and see how it tastes," Ji Ying washed several bowls, giving each of them a bit to taste, making sure it was good before bottling it.

The chili sauce had been made in the morning, and by the afternoon, it had completely cooled down.

"It's delicious."

"It's particularly tasty."

The chili sauce received unanimous praise from everyone, and the anxiety Ji Ying had been carrying finally loosened.