

## Regaining 181

### Chapter 181: Too Willing

"Eh, why is your mom so happy today?" Xu Qinghe returned after finishing his work and heard Ji Ying singing. He found it a bit strange.

"Dad, do you know how much money we made today? We sold out all the chili sauce."

Xu Nianji too was happy to share this news with his father, Xu Qinghe.

That evening, both Xu Qinghe and Xu Nianji were so pleased that they had a little drink. Xu Qinghe, because he had made that cabinet, was getting more work than before and was naturally earning more money.

Life was getting better day by day.

The next morning, Ji Ying and Zhou He went to the nearby Cai Family.

She wanted to find them yesterday, but it was too late, and Qinghe and Nianji had been drinking. So she held off on going until the evening had passed.

"Nianhua, you're here? Come in quickly. Haven't you been busy lately?" Cai Feng's mother warmly pulled Ji Ying into the house.

Ji Ying didn't go inside but grabbed Cai Feng's mother's arm and cut straight to the chase, "Would you like to work at the factory? Forty yuan a month."

"Yes, very much so." Cai Feng's mother didn't even think about it before she agreed, holding Ji Ying's hand with a grateful face, "I'm so happy you thought of me for such a good opportunity."

Cai Feng's mother didn't know what to say. Generally, when Ji Ying was bullied at the Xu Family, all she did was say a few words of justice. She never expected Ji Ying to remember so clearly and even think of her for such good fortune.

Cai Feng's mother felt ashamed. She thought if Liu Sanmei dared to bully Ji Ying's family again, she would definitely have to stand up for them.

"Then it's settled, shall we go tomorrow?"

Ji Ying inquired as she still had to find Mrs. Xu and Mrs. Yao.

"Can I go today?" asked Cai Feng's mother.

"You can go whenever you want, whenever you have time," Ji Ying said.

Without hesitation, Cai Feng's mother said, "Then what are we waiting for? Let's go now. The sooner we go, the sooner we make money."

"Alright." Ji Ying and Cai Feng's mother chatted all the way as they went to find Yao Gen's mother.

Zhou He had gone to the county with Xu Nian early in the morning.

As a result, Ji Ying started out with just two people but ended up with three, then four, as they all headed to the county town together.

Some people asked them what they were up to, and Cai Feng's mother simply replied, "We're going to the city."

Ji Ying led the three women straight to the Good Mom Food Factory. The factory wasn't new, but it was tidy. On the way, Ji Ying explained what their main tasks would be. She said, "Actually, the work is very simple, but it's just a bit monotonous."

"We're not afraid of monotony. As long as we can earn money, that's all that matters," Cai Feng's mother said with a smile.

"That's right, such simple things are nothing for us," said Xu Yuchun's wife, Xiong Xihua, with a laugh.

"As long as you're okay with it," replied Ji Ying happily, and after introducing Wu Meili, she started assigning tasks to the three women. Xiong Xihua worked with Cai Feng's mother, who is also Zhang Meixiang, handling the crushed chili in bamboo tubes.

Ji Ying was peeling garlic with Yao Gen's mother and Liu Xiaoxiu while Wu Meili was washing bottles. Everyone in the yard was talking and laughing; Xiong Xihua and the other two newcomers were so eager that they wished they had eight hands to do a better job. They wanted to impress so they would continue to be hired.

As noon approached, Ji Ying went to cook again. It's not that she didn't want Wu Meili to cook, but because she didn't know how much to pay her for it, Ji Ying decided to cook herself.

#### Chapter 182: The In-Laws Are Here

The people selling chili were exceptionally numerous, and the factory had already been purchasing chilies for a month. Therefore, folks in the neighboring villages, within a ten-mile radius, all knew about the county's Good Mom Food Factory that wanted to buy chilies—and at fair, conscience prices no less. They would take as many chilies as the people brought in.

Every day, aside from his duty as a watchman, Uncle Jiang would weigh these chilies. After having them weighed, he would distribute the money that Ji Ying left with him to those who came to sell their chilies.

One day, when all the chilies had been sold at the factory gate, Uncle Jiang spotted a woman still there. He took the initiative to ask, "Are you here to sell chilies?"

He glanced at the bag in the woman's hand, which appeared to be filled with chilies.

"Yes."

The woman quickly nodded and handed over the three pounds of dried chilies she had brought, saying, "These are my homemade chilies, exceptionally clean."

"Alright."

Uncle Jiang dumped the chilies into a basket, ensuring they were all of excellent quality before beginning to weigh them. The total came to three pounds and one ounce. Uncle Jiang handed her six yuan and twenty cents. As he saw her craning her neck to look inside, he asked guardedly, "Take the money. If you have more chilies next time, feel free to come back and sell them."

Having said that, Uncle Jiang was ready to close the door.

But the woman followed up to him, eager to look inside. However, she couldn't see much from the entrance. She asked, "Is Ji Ying working here at the Chili Factory?"

Ji Ying.

Uncle Jiang naturally knew who she was, but he just looked at the woman without speaking.

The woman became somewhat uneasy and said, "Ji Ying and I are relatives by marriage. My daughter married her son."

Uncle Jiang then understood. He asked, "What's your daughter's name?"

"Zhou He," the woman hurriedly replied.

After a moment's thought, Uncle Jiang said, "Wait here a bit."

After speaking, he closed the door and went into the yard to inform Ji Ying about the situation.

"Xiaohe's mom has come?" Ji Ying was just about to cook when she heard Uncle Jiang's words. She quickly called Zhou He over before heading to the factory gate.

"Mom, what are you doing here?"

Upon seeing her own mother, Zhou He hurriedly approached and asked, "How did you find this place?"

Zhou He's mom usually rarely ventured into the town even once a year, so Zhou He was quite surprised to see her.

"Relative-in-law, please come in and sit down." Ji Ying warmly invited her in. No matter what had happened in the past, with the connection of marriage, they had to get along well.

Zhou He's mom stepped into the factory, her eyes scanning around everywhere, her curiosity boundless.

Originally, she had no intention of coming, but Zhou's father kept urging her. He'd heard that her son-in-law, Xu Nianji, was selling bean sprouts at the market, and that her in-law was seen at the Good Mom Food Factory.

Thus, following Zhou's father's persistent encouragement, Zhou He's mom decided to visit.

She saw with her own eyes her son-in-law Xu Nianji selling bean sprouts at the market, and now she saw them in the factory too. Although she didn't know how much they earned each month, she assumed it wouldn't be too little.

She never expected that after Xiaohe married into the Xu family, the Xu family's days would get better and better.

Ji Ying was very considerate, giving Zhou He and her mother a chance to chat together.

"Xiaohe, can you tell mom how much Nianji makes selling bean sprouts every day? And about working here in the factory—you both must be earning a decent amount per month, right?" Zhou He's mom saw that it was just the two of them and spoke without any reservation.

"Mom," Zhou He said, sensing what her mother wanted to ask. Instead of answering, she asked back, "Did dad make you come here?"

### Chapter 183: Crying Poor

Zhou He's mom felt exposed and a bit uncomfortable. She said unhappily, "What, can't I come see you? On the day you visited after the wedding, you left in such a hurry after the meal, we barely had a few words."

"Mom, wasn't I busy with things?" Zhou He explained.

"So, how much money can you guys exactly make?" Zhou He's mom asked again.

"Not much." Zhou He was vague, reluctant to disclose how much money they made to anyone, even her own mother.

Besides, if her mother knew, her father would know too.

If her father found out, would there ever be a peaceful day again?

Zhou He had always harbored hard feelings about her father trying to marry her off to Old Luo, feeling utterly cold-hearted regarding the matter.

"Not much is how much, you ungrateful girl, I'm your mother." Zhou He's mom, who initially felt a bit embarrassed to ask, got angry seeing Zhou He's attitude and scolded as she tapped her on the head, "Can't I just ask?"

"Mom, although Nianji is selling bean sprouts, he doesn't make much in a month, about the same as someone in the brick factory, but it's a bit easier," Zhou He wasn't telling the truth.

Zhou He's mom kept probing, and Zhou He continued to dodge the questions. As for the matter of asking her mother-in-law, Zhou He directly rebutted, "Mom, she's my mother-in-law, how would I know how much money? "

"Then how much money do you have?" Zhou He's mom asked again.

Zhou He paused, then said, "Twenty dollars."

Twenty dollars was not eye-catching.

Her mother was so angry she was hopping mad, saying, "Your mother-in-law is taking advantage of you. The factory looks good; how could you possibly only earn twenty dollars? Did your mother-in-law hold back your money?"

"Mom, what nonsense are you talking about? It's normal for a daughter-in-law to help out her mother-in-law. I'm quite satisfied with the twenty dollars she gave me," Zhou He truly regarded Ji Ying as even closer than her own mother and naturally didn't want to hear others speak ill of her.

"Zhou He, whose side are you on?"

Seeing Zhou He defend her mother-in-law like this, her mother was so upset it hurt.

"Mom, you're my mother, but so is my mother-in-law." Zhou He tried to explain, "Mom, here's five dollars, take it home and buy something nice to eat."

"Are you shooing me away like a beggar?" Zhou He's mom, though disdainful in her words, still took the money and said, "Xiaohe, listen to me, how can a mother-in-law compare with your own mother? The Xu Family wasn't even willing to give three hundred dollars before, but now they're doing business and making money. From what I see, the Xu Family doesn't really care about you."

"If it weren't for your love for Xu Nianji, I wouldn't have been willing to marry you into the Xu Family." Zhou He's mom sighed, seemingly concerned for Zhou He, "Xiaohe, your brother is about to get married, and the girl's side wants a bicycle. See if you can borrow some money?"

Even though it was clear that in her parents' eyes she would never match up to her brother, her mother's actions still hurt Zhou He to the core.

She hadn't received a single yuan of the two hundred dollars from the Xu Family. Apart from her bedding and some small household items as her dowry, she didn't get any money.

It was all for her brother's marriage. While she could understand her parents raising her, she had just married into the Xu Family and had no money to buy a bicycle to help her parents out.

Zhou He was silent, thinking to herself that Ji Ying, her mother-in-law, was in her heart a real mother too.

Whether her mother-in-law's kindness was genuine or fake, she knew it well, and she said, "Mom, we've just got married, and we're still in debt at home. Didn't the Hu Family previously agree on two hundred dollars? Why do they want to add a bicycle now?"

#### Chapter 184: Sand in the Eyes

"You have no idea, that old hag from the Hu Family is insisting on a bicycle, or else she won't let her daughter marry. Your little brother..." Zhou He's mother started, her head aching at the thought of her son. He seemed to be under some sort of spell, hell-bent on marrying the Hu Family's daughter, causing a huge fuss at home.

Sure enough, as soon as she heard about her son-in-law and the Xu Family's situation, Zhou He's father urged her to come over.

"Xiaohe, you have only one brother back at home, and if you are ever bullied in the Xu Family, it will have to be your brother who stands up for you. I really have no other option," Zhou He's mother said, her voice choked with sobs: "Nianji is making money, and so is your mother-in-law, and I heard that whenever people need a carpenter, they go looking for your father-in-law. Aren't they earning money?"

"Please help your mother, help your little brother."

Zhou He's mother pleaded through her tears.

Zhou He fell silent; it was clear her mother had come specifically to ask for money.

Not to mention whether the Hu Family really wanted a bicycle, Zhou He knew very well the financial situation at home. She had long wanted to buy a bicycle for her little brother, and should have saved enough for it. She and her sister had both gotten married, and the money from their dowries had been kept by their parents. How could it be possible that there was no money to buy a bicycle?

"Mom, I really don't have any money. The last fifteen dollars I had, I spent on new clothes for Nianji, so..."

Zhou He's message was clear; she was saying she didn't have any money either.

"Impossible, go ask Nianji to lend a hundred or even fifty would be fine," Zhou He's mother replied, giving Zhou He a big scare.

She had thought borrowing thirty dollars would be the limit, but to her astonishment, her mother started off asking for one hundred fifty!

Did she think money just flew in on the wind?

Had she ever considered how her in-laws would view her if she really made such a request?

Her dowry had already been modest enough, and her mother-in-law, Ji Ying, hadn't looked down on her; in fact, she had added quite a few things to Zhou He's room.

But what about her own mother?

Where did she place her?

"Mom, I really have no money," Zhou He reinforced her decision not to lend money, saying, "The little money that Nianji earns isn't even enough to pay off debts."

Seeing that Zhou He was adamantly refusing to lend money, her mother wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes and sighed, "A married daughter is like water that's been splashed out; she no longer cares about her family's wellbeing."

"Mom, if you were sick and needed money for treatment, I would borrow money if I had to and take you to the doctor, but I really can't do anything about my little brother's wedding," Zhou He seriously replied.

Zhou He's mother was so angry she felt like spitting blood and raised her hand to slap Zhou He, saying, "Are you really my daughter? Is there a daughter who curses her own mother like this?"

"Mom, I'm just telling the truth," Zhou He said, after being slapped. She sat up straight, as calm as one could possibly be.

In the end, Zhou He's mother left in a huff.

Ji Ying had wanted to ask Zhou He's mother if she would like to eat, but Zhou He's mother had stormed off. As soon as Ji Ying entered the room, she saw the palm print on Zhou He's face and her reddened eyes, sighed, and gently asked, "Xiaohe, is there some trouble in your family?"

"It's nothing." Zhou He, who had nearly held back her tears, couldn't help it anymore upon hearing Ji Ying's words. She quickly turned away, wiping her eyes, and said, "There's something in my eye."

"Then hurry up and wipe it away. Remember, if there's anything wrong, just speak up. We are a family," Ji Ying reminded her, quite satisfied with her daughter-in-law.

"Thank you, Mom. If I'm really in trouble, I will speak up. It's just that I had a little argument with my mom."

Zhou He explained, her eyes red.

Chapter 185: From Now On, I Will Cherish You

In the evening, Ji Ying quietly found a moment to tell her son, Xu Nianji, about her in-law's visit to Zhou He. She said, "You and Xiaohe should inquire if there is any difficulty on the in-law's side. If they're indeed facing hardships and we can help, let's lend a hand."

"Thank you, Mom." Xu Nianji looked at Ji Ying with appreciation. While other families worried about mother-in-law and daughter-in-law issues, in his family, these concerns were completely unnecessary.

"I thank you on behalf of Xiaohe."

Seizing the opportunity, Xu Nianji spoke well of Xiaohe and said, "No wonder Xiaohe always says that you treat her especially well."

"Enough now," Ji Ying said, "you don't have to flatter me." Although she said this, the smile in the corner of her eyes was brimming.

"Mom, I'm telling the truth, not flattering you at all. Xiaohe always says that you've been extremely kind to her."

Xu Nianji said this earnestly—indeed, Xiaohe had said it many times.

"Alright, alright, go and pamper your wife," Ji Ying said, laughing as she sent Xu Nianji back to his room. When she returned to her own room, Xu Qinghe, noticing her beaming smile, asked, "What's happened to make you so happy? Found treasure?"

"Indeed," responded Ji Ying excitedly, sharing Xu Nianji's earlier words. "Our family is living in harmony; I feel these days truly have something to look forward to."

"Yingzi, I'm sorry for the hardships you endured in the past." Xu Qinghe immediately said, remembering that Ji Ying's previous days in the Xu family were not as cheerful as now—her face shone like she was carrying a light.

Glancing at him, Ji Ying said, "It's good that you're aware, but now that our days have improved, let's forget about the past."

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"Xiaohe."

When Xu Nianji returned to the room, he saw Zhou He applying a hot towel on her face, which was somewhat flushed. He took over the towel and carefully continued to apply it for her, his face full of concern.

"It's okay, it looks scarier than it feels. It doesn't hurt," Zhou He said with a smile, looking at the distress in his eyes, which made her feel no pain at all despite her face aching.

They had been busy during the day, with no good opportunity to speak.

"Did Mom visit you for a reason?" Xu Nianji asked. "Why did she hit you?"

Zhou He hesitated somewhat.

"Is there a problem at home? We're husband and wife, Xiaohe. If you don't tell me, I'll go and confront Mom about why she hit you tomorrow."

Xu Nianji pursed his lips, serious.

Zhou He panicked at once, hastening to say, "Don't go, it was just an accident."

Zhou He thought about revealing the family's humiliating circumstances to Xu Nianji, and a hint of inferiority crept into her heart, but then she worried what she would do if her mother came to borrow money from Xu Nianji the next day.

"Nianji, actually, it was just my mom looking to borrow money from me," Zhou He said, cutting him off as he was about to speak. "Neither I nor my older sister took our dowry when we got married. Before I

got married, my mom said she would buy my brother a bicycle. Now, his fiancée is insisting on a bicycle, so she came to borrow the money from me."

"I refused because my parents should have money, so for this, I refused." Zhou He bit her lip and looking up, said somewhat difficultly, "Nianji, if my parents come to you in the future, just tell them we still have debts at home and no money to lend."

"Xiaohe."

Xu Nianji held Zhou He in his arms and kissed her forehead affectionately, saying, "Xiaohe, from now on, let me take care of you."

Chapter 186: Spittle Stars

Zhou He had always known about the kind of days she faced back at home in the Xu family.

Apparently, her mother-in-law truly didn't hold Zhou He in her heart, nor did she care if Zhou He was despised by her in-laws.

They had just gotten married, and the mother-in-law was already hitting Xiaohe, what kind of days did Xiaohe endure at the Zhou family before marriage?

When her own mother hit her, Zhou He did not shed a tear, but a single "I care about you" from Xu Nianji made the tears in Zhou He's eyes burst forth.

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The next day, Zhou He's mother went early to the market to find Xu Nianji, who was selling bean sprouts. Seeing his mother-in-law, his eyes darkened as he thought of Xiaohe, who had cried for most of the previous night, her delicate face still red, thinking of all the wrongs Xiaohe had endured over the years.

Xu Nianji kept his pity for Xiaohe deep in his heart, and busily packed up two kilos of bean sprouts before saying, "Mom, Xiaohe and I have been married just over a month, and we still owe more than two hundred dollars in debt, we really don't have any money now."

"Next time, don't hit Xiaohe; hit me instead, I have thick skin and can take a beating."

Xu Nianji looked pleadingly at Zhou He's mother, every word he spoke ached with pity for his wife, saying, "I know that Xiaoqiang's wedding needs three hundred dollars, and a bicycle to boot, but Xiaohe is your own daughter too."

The message that Xu Nianji conveyed in these few sentences was quite profound. Indeed, Xu Nianji had been selling bean sprouts here for some time now, and many people had seen his new bride, who was quite pretty and looked virtuous. The couple standing together, even without any excessive displays of affection, still had an atmosphere of newlyweds about them.

Is this person standing before him really his wife's mother?

To ask for a loan for her son's marriage from a son-in-law who had been married less than a month?

And she hit her daughter, too?

"What kind of girl needs three hundred dollars and a bicycle for a dowry?"

"Even city girls don't ask for that much dowry, right?"

"Exactly, I've never seen it, borrowing money for a son's wedding from a newly wed daughter."

"And they don't have money to lend, so she hits her daughter? Is this really her mother?"

"Definitely not, what kind of mother does this?"

"This daughter must have been picked up, right?"

Some were women buying bean sprouts, others were aunties selling vegetables and eggs nearby; everyone chattered and verbally spat at Zhou He's mother.

"I, I just wanted to borrow a hundred dollars from my son-in-law, what's wrong with that?" Zhou He's mother, always fierce in the village, retorted instinctively upon hearing the women's comments, "You all should mind your own business."

"What you're doing isn't right; the Xu family are good people. If it had been another family, how would your daughter hope to have a good life with her in-laws? You're just tearing apart a good home."

The speaker was an old lady selling eggs nearby.

This young man from the Xu family is a good one; he had even offered her some bean sprouts to try once, and his wife, having seen her tender and gently smiling, was quite charming.

"Exactly, a real mother couldn't do this," another old lady commented in agreement.

"Thanks for your kindness, ladies and aunties, I am grateful on behalf of Xiaohe, but, my mother-in-law is just a bit biased," Xu Nianji's words were like adding fuel to the fire.

"Xu family's young man, we are not in those old times anymore, men and women should be treated equally; how can she be so biased? Children are all the same," said Old Lady Liu, rebuking Zhou He's mother for her highly improper actions.

Chapter 187: Worse Than a Stranger

Zhou He's mother left meekly, probably never daring to seek out Xu Nianji at the market again.

Xu Nianji sincerely thanked everyone and spoke kindly on behalf of Zhou He's mother, but with the previous comments, everyone felt that Zhou He's mother was too biased and even hit her daughter, something a real mother wouldn't do.

It's a new era now, everyone says, boys and girls are the same, how could she do such a thing?

As the crowd at the bean sprout stall grew, Xu Nianji went back to selling bean sprouts and thought, bullying Xiaohe this way served as a small punishment.

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"Sister Liu, I really envy you."

Aunt Hu was cracking sunflower seeds while sitting under a tree, chatting. Though she said that, there was not a trace of envy in her eyes, clearly being sarcastic.

"Hu Aihong, what do you mean by that?"

Liu Sanmei looked annoyed at Aunt Hu, who everyone called so because her name was Hu Aihong.

"No particular meaning, just envying how outstanding the Xu family's children are." Hu Aihong said gossipy, "Xu Nianji sells bean sprouts in the county, he must make three to five yuan a day, right?"

With bean sprouts only costing twenty cents a pound, she didn't dare guess higher. She added, "And I heard, Xiong Xihua, Zhang Meixiang, and Liu Xiaoxiu have followed Ji Ying to the factory to work, who knows how much they make a month, but, since it's factory work, there must be about twenty yuan, right?"

Xiong Xihu, along with three other people, agreed together not to disclose the exact wage to anyone except their own spouses.

By not revealing their actual wages, they wouldn't burden Ji Ying, not to mention burden Liu Sanmei, Ji Ying's mother-in-law.

Moreover, they cherished this opportunity to work greatly, wishing others to think they made no money so they could quietly earn their own.

The principle of making a silent fortune was something these three understood well.

"When did this happen?" Liu Sanmei wondered, recalling these days, they seemed to be running to the city every day. She said, daily activities wouldn't bring them to the city so often, why now every day?

So, there was this happening.

Going to work in the factory meant making money, no matter the amount.

A household should keep its benefits within, why would Ji Ying favor others over her own family?

The more Hu Aihong spoke, the longer Liu Sanmei's face grew, spurring Hu Aihong on to say, "I find Ji Ying's daughter-in-law quite nice, speaking so softly and gently."

She had met Zhou He previously when selling dried chili peppers, she had a very sweet way about her, always calling her Aunt Hu and her words were soft, suggesting she was easy to get along with.

"No matter how nice, she's not yours," Liu Sanmei said irritably, well aware of the discord between Hu Aihong and her daughter-in-law, a fact known by everyone in the village.

Hu Aihong had just been gloating, but suddenly, she stood up as if stepping on a cat's tail, retorted irritably, "Since Ji Ying and her family moved out, their life is getting better and better."

Liu Sanmei and Hu Aihong glared at each other and started arguing; in the end, neither got the upper hand.

When Liu Sanmei returned home, still in a huff, she saw Zhao Juxiang sitting in the courtyard cracking sunflower seeds and immediately felt displeased, asking, "The factory where Ji Ying works is hiring, did you not know that? You say we are sisters-in-law, but I feel strangers are closer than us."

## Chapter 188: Thousand-Layer Sole Cloth Shoes

"Which factory is recruiting?"

Zhao Juxiang furrowed her brows after being scolded by her mother-in-law in a passive-aggressive way, not understanding what was wrong this time.

Ever since Ji Ying had moved out after the family split, her mother-in-law had found fault with everything she did. She'd had to do even more chores around the house, and she had been grumbling inwardly for a while now, thinking it would have been better if they hadn't split the family in the first place!

As for Zhihao, he neither found work nor got paid!

It was a huge loss.

"Isn't Ji Ying working in that factory owned by some doctor's grandson? I heard that Yuchun's wife has gone there too, as well as people from the Yao Family and the Cai Family." Liu Sanmei didn't get along with these families and, paradoxically, the very people from the families she didn't get along with had all gone there.

"What, are they still hiring at the factory?" Zhao Juxiang stood up immediately at the possibility. Working in a factory meant there was money to earn.

"Who knows."

Liu Sanmei had argued with Hu Aihong and was feeling uncomfortable all over.

Zhao Juxiang figured that working in the factory might mean, at best, thirty yuan. She would probably have to watch Ji Ying's face, but with a shift of her eyes, she said, "Mom, don't be angry. We don't care about getting a job at the factory. Even if Ji Ying doesn't tell us, we don't need it."

Liu Sanmei gave her a sidelong glare that seemed to say, "But it's money!"

"Zhihao's father-in-law works at the supply and sales cooperative, a formal institution. If us mothers and grandmothers go work in a factory, wouldn't that be embarrassing for Zhihao?" Zhao Juxiang said, smiling. She added, "By the way, a couple of days ago, Zhihao brought back some fabric, saying it was a gift for grandma."

"Really?" Liu Sanmei was skeptical.

If it truly was Zhihao who brought it when he came back, why had it taken several days for it to come out?

Zhao Juxiang awkwardly explained, "Mom, I've been busy lately and just forgot about it. Mom, come and choose some, the fabrics are quite nice."

Seeing the fabric Xu Zhihao brought back, Liu Sanmei was immediately pleased, boasting, "My grandson really knows how to care for his grandma."

Zhao Juxiang smiled affectionately. She had planned to make several outfits for herself, but now it seemed she would have to make one less. Oh well, compared to working at Ji Ying's factory, she felt it was better to dote on herself.

Her husband worked at a school, and his monthly salary wasn't small. Zhihao was promising; worried that his mother might need money, he often gave her some. The tuition for Zhiyuan and Jiaojiao was covered by their grandparents, so her own money was enough for herself and to buy pretty clothes for Jiaojiao. She even had some savings set aside.

Zhao Juxiang wasn't worried about money and didn't want to work in the factory.

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In the county.

Taking advantage of a class-free weekend afternoon, Xu Nianhua planned to buy a pair of shoes for her second brother using her allowance and the money he had given her.

Her second brother was still wearing a pair of liberation shoes, which had been patched up twice. With the weather getting cooler, it was time for a change.

Liberation shoes cost five yuan a pair, whereas layered cloth shoes with better designs cost six yuan. Xu Nianhua decisively bought a pair of the latter, feeling their softness in her hand and taking care to buy the right size for her brother.

When she left, Ji Ying thought her daughter wanted to buy clothes, so she gave her twenty yuan.

Now that she was earning money, her daughter had translated contracts and made a hundred yuan, in addition to selling mung bean jelly and bean sprouts; it had certainly been hard work.

Chapter 189: It's Nice to Have a Younger Sister

"Nianhua, is this for second brother?" Xu Nian'an caressed the soft layered-cloth shoes in his hand, his heart sweet as if he had eaten honey!

A few days ago, he had used his pocket money to buy candy for his little sister, little did he know he would be buying a pair of layered cloth shoes so soon.

These shoes cost six yuan a pair.

His little sister had also contributed some of her own pocket money.

"Yes, second brother, it's time you changed your shoes," Ji Ying said with a smile, "I even added some of my pocket money."

"Little sister, you're so kind!"

Xu Nian'an was profoundly moved, thinking he needed to treat his little sister even better in the future.

"Of course, when you marry your second sister-in-law, you can't forget about me, your sister," Ji Ying said playfully. Although she was holding twenty yuan, Ji Ying was not in a hurry to spend it because firstly, she wanted to buy so many things that twenty yuan was not enough.

Secondly, she was worried her sister-in-law might think too much about it.

"Little sister, even if I get married, I will remember that you are my sister," Xu Nian'an seriously replied.

Ji Ying smiled and then bent down to do her homework. She was thinking about what kind of gift to give back to Pei Yicheng, who had bought them quite a few test papers.

"How about, like last time, making braised pork?" Xu Nian'an suggested.

Ji Ying pursed her lips and said, "Isn't that too perfunctory? Making braised pork every time?"

"Then what else..." Xu Nian'an opened his mouth but didn't know what to say next; he also didn't know what kind of gift to give in return.

The test papers were exactly what they needed now. They couldn't go to the city, and Pei Yicheng kindly brought them, so they couldn't refuse them either.

Ji Ying and her brother were racking their brains thinking about what gift to give that would show their gratitude properly.

...

On the same night, Pei Yicheng was also racking his brains about how to make Ji Ying's talents bring in money.

His prior collaboration with Angel was just an accident because there happened to be a batch of herbs he wanted to sell and Angel happened to need them.

However, that kind of cooperation was a one-time thing.

His herbs were mostly sold to herbal material suppliers and even if he wanted to, he couldn't change that.

Forget it, she is still studying. She should focus on her studies for now.

Pei Yicheng remembered his last visit to Shuangzhu Village and seeing the Xu Family's house, he thought: If the Chili Sauce Factory were bigger, it would earn more money, then building a new house wouldn't be an issue, right?

The next day, Pei Yicheng began detailed planning for the factory's space, understanding that to do good work, one must first sharpen one's tools.

"Yicheng, the factory is already big enough, isn't it too excessive to clear out that remaining space?" Ji Ying heard that Pei Yicheng wanted to clean up the unused part of the factory and immediately felt it was making a big deal out of a small issue.

Their current factory space could hold three to five thousand bottles of chili sauce without any problem, wouldn't clearing out the other half of the factory be a waste?

"Aunt Ji, it's not a waste at all; in the future, our chili sauce will definitely see increasing sales. By that time, this bit of space will definitely not be enough," Pei Yicheng had a premonition that their chili sauce would sell very well.

He had already ordered a lot of fish from the dam owner, at of course the most favorable prices.

"Will it really?" Ji Ying felt that now with additional manpower, they were able to produce two to three hundred bottles a day, which was already a lot more than before.

"Of course, Aunt Ji, cleaning up the other half of the factory is absolutely necessary," Pei Yicheng directly instructed Ling Dong to start cleaning up with the team.

## Chapter 190: Fear of Not Being Able to Sell

"What if the chili sauce previously made doesn't sell? What are we going to do?"

Ji Ying worried deeply. Were all of those two thousand bottles of chili sauce really sold?

Ever since Xiong Xihua, Liu Xiaoying, and Zhang Meixiang started working at the factory, they had been producing over two hundred bottles of chili sauce daily. As days went by, the stacks of chili sauce in the warehouse kept growing higher, filling Ji Ying with increasing concern.

South City.

Ling Feng had just introduced the chili sauce, placing it in the most prominent position and even opening a bottle for everyone to try.

Customers entering the department store were immediately greeted by the aroma of the chili sauce.

With the staff's recommendation, they naturally wanted to give it a try.

Little did they know, once they tried it, they were in for a shock—the chili sauce tasted extraordinarily good. Eight out of ten customers who tried it ended up buying it.

The chili sauce was delicious and reasonably priced. Word spread from one to ten, ten to a hundred, and more and more people came to Ling Feng's department store.

In just ten days, a thousand bottles of chili sauce were nearly sold out.

Desperate, Ling Feng hurriedly contacted Wang Youcai, trying to buy more chili sauce from Ling Dong.

"You sold out a thousand bottles of chili sauce already?" Wang Youcai was taken aback by Ling Feng's request to buy more. It had only been how long?

Ten days!

"Almost. Youcai, you must quickly help me contact Boss Ling. I need to buy more chili sauce," Ling Feng thought he must not let the chili sauce go out of stock.

"I don't have the contact information,"

Wang Youcai looked troubled; in those days, having a telephone was a luxury. They had only one in the factory, and their modest chili sauce factory didn't have a phone.

"Then, you do know the place, right?" Ling Feng asked further.

Wang Youcai nodded affirmatively, "I know, of course, I know."

Wang Youcai called over the person who had previously delivered bottles to Gaoliang County, then had him take Ling Feng to the Chili Sauce Factory. At the same time, it was a good opportunity to deliver the telegram and the remittance notice Ling Dong had sent the previous day, asking Wang Youcai to continue shipping glass bottles.

Just like that, Ling Feng was brought along.

"Boss Ling," once Ling Feng arrived at the factory, he spotted Ling Dong immediately, his excitement akin to seeing a savior.

"Boss Ling, this is Brother Cheng, the real boss," Ling Dong quickly humbled himself, still quite unaccustomed to being called a boss.

"Pei Yicheng."

Pei Yicheng introduced himself directly, showing no signs of inferiority even though he was in a wheelchair.

Having been in business for so long, Ling Feng, shrewd as he was, recognized at once from Pei Yicheng's demeanor that this was the real power behind the scenes.

"Pei Yicheng, I am Ling Feng, the owner of Xinxin Department Store. I previously ordered a thousand bottles of chili sauce from you," Ling Feng got straight to the point, stating his purpose, "This time, I would like to order two thousand bottles."

Having just come out of the warehouse, Ji Ying heard this and her eyes widened instantly—just a moment ago she had worried about not being able to sell, and now, the chili sauce in the warehouse was about to sell out?

"Boss Ling's business is really good," Pei Yicheng complimented, saying directly, "We have chili sauce in the warehouse, just talk to Ling Dong later about whether you want regular chili sauce or fish chili sauce."

Ling Dong immediately took over, attending to Ling Feng.

Ji Ying felt dizzy with relief. Soon after the deal was settled, Ling Feng began directing the workers who had just moved the bottles to load the finished chili sauce onto the truck. Watching the chili sauce being loaded, Ling Feng was as thrilled as if he were seeing money itself.