

Regaining 191

Chapter 191: Not Enough to Sell

"Ling Dong, I hope we have a pleasant cooperation in the future!" Ling Feng had bought the hot pepper sauce and, thinking about the good business at the department store, the smile on his face stretched all the way to his ears. He happily said, "From now on, don't call me Boss Ling anymore. I'm a bit older than you, you can call me Brother Feng."

"Alright, Brother Feng."

Ling Dong had sold the hot pepper sauce and naturally expressed his happiness in any way he felt like. So far, it seemed that Ling Feng, his business partner, was quite reliable.

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No sooner had Ling Feng left than Cheng Hao came back. In the ten days he was away, he had visited the neighboring market and secured quite a few orders for hot pepper sauce. He excitedly said, "Look, my trip wasn't in vain, I sold another eight hundred bottles."

Cheng Hao felt that he truly had a talent for selling hot pepper sauce. With his silver tongue, selling hot pepper sauce came naturally to him.

"By the way, I also took a trip to South City. The places where I had previously placed the hot pepper sauce all want to reorder. I did a count, and that's another thousand bottles!" Cheng Hao's face was both excited and proud as he awaited everyone's praise.

"Not bad." Pei Yicheng praised with a sentence.

Ling Dong said, "You're a step late, there's no stock in the warehouse."

"Ah..."

Cheng Hao said in disbelief, "Didn't I see over a thousand bottles just a few days ago?"

He had taken a few days off before heading to the neighboring market. On his return, he was ready to sell out all the hot pepper sauce from the warehouse. But now, Ling Dong was telling him there was none left.

"Aunt Ji, Ling Dong is pulling my leg, right?" Cheng Hao looked towards Ji Ying, who was standing there, petrified.

Ji Ying was very emotional. Just an hour ago, she was worried about what to do if they couldn't sell the mountain of hot pepper sauce in the warehouse.

Now, she was distressed about the same thing!

What distressed her was how to produce such a large quantity of sauce?

The next day, Ji Ying carefully picked out two more helpers from the village. With two extra sets of hands, they could make even more hot pepper sauce, right?

At the same time, relying solely on the peppers delivered to their door wasn't enough, Xu Nianji went around the villages posting notices that Good Mom Food Factory was buying dry hot peppers, and not only in their own county but also in the neighboring one. Xu Nianji made a special trip with Ling Dong as well.

Spending a day in each county, they received so many peppers that they couldn't fit them all in one truck. In the end, they had to call a tractor to transport them to the food factory.

Watching the business at the factory grow more and more popular, the Xu family members became even more enthusiastic in their work.

The days were growing colder, not only for Ji Ying but also for Xu Qinghe, who was receiving more work and earning more money. Consequently, Xu Nianhua had more pocket money as well.

Xu Nianhua had been thinking about what to offer as a return gift, and she had an idea.

A few days ago, Pei Yicheng had seen Xu Nian'an wearing a new sweater and seemed to really like it. So Xu Nianhua thought of giving him a sweater as a gift.

Xu Nianhua bought coffee-colored wool, then paired it with white wool.

Her knitting skills were learned from Ji Ying, and she was very good at contemplating and knitting patterns. As winter approached, Xu Nianhua knitted new sweaters for her parents and her second brother, all made during her evenings.

She was very fast, able to knit without even looking at the needles.

"What size does he wear, after all?" Xu Nianhua tilted her head and thought about it. Pei Yicheng was always in a wheelchair and seemed thin, but men have larger frames. After some thought, she decided to use Xu Nian'an's measurements and made it just a bit larger.

Chapter 192: Love at First Sight

Cheng Hao had never left Gaoliang County since he first arrived, constantly traveling between nearby cities. He managed to earn five to six hundred yuan a month by selling chili sauce, an income that inflated his wallet and kept him from even considering going back to Ningbei.

He had bought a new wristwatch and even his clothes were bought from the city, the particularly fashionable type.

That day, as he rode his bicycle, humming a tune along the way from the food factory back to Pei Yicheng's house, he was in excellent spirits.

"Ouch."

The moment Cheng Hao got distracted, he realized he had bumped into someone.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry," Cheng Hao quickly apologized, asking, "Did you hurt yourself when you fell?"

Upon realizing he had knocked down a girl, Cheng Hao hurriedly apologized while helping her pick up her books, saying, "If you hurt yourself, I'll take you to the hospital."

"Why aren't you watching where you're going?"

Zou Yaru furrowed her brows; all her books had dropped to the ground, forcing her to bend over and pick them up one by one.

"I'm sorry, it wasn't intentional." Cheng Hao handed back the books he picked up to Zou Yaru, and the moment she looked up at him, Cheng Hao felt as if his heart, dormant for so long, had revived.

Having arrived in Gaoliang County over two months ago, Cheng Hao had been too busy to even think about dating.

Zou Yaru took the books back and stepped back a few steps, hastily saying, "Let's forget it."

Zou Yaru, clutching her books, turned and ran off. It was only after she ran quite far away that she murmured with a flushed face, "That man was so impolite, just staring at her like that!"

"Hey..."

Cheng Hao belatedly realized he hadn't asked her name yet.

But as Zou Yaru walked further away, even if he wanted to ask, he couldn't catch up.

"Sigh."

Cheng Hao sighed.

"Cheng Hao, you're not heartbroken, are you?" Ling Dong teased, having seen Cheng Hao's flirtatious ways before.

"I wish I were in love, but I don't even know the girl's name!"

Cheng Hao pursed his lips, thinking that next time he'd wait there, perhaps he could see her again.

"Oh, which unfortunate girl caught your eye?" Ling Dong asked with a gossipy face.

"Go away." Cheng Hao replied irritably: "Can't you speak properly? If you can't, then just shut up, Ling Dong. Following Yicheng around, how come you're getting worse?"

"Not really, I'm getting smarter." Ling Dong answered seriously: "Come on, use your charm on Yicheng and cheer him up."

Cheng Hao's face darkened, and he subdued his previous joking demeanor, saying, "Is it not working again this time?"

Ling Dong shook his head, saying, "Nope."

This was already the fourth doctor they had consulted, and all their opinions were more or less the same, either saying they were too late or that it was incurable.

Pei Yicheng seemed fine on the surface, but Ling Dong felt that Yicheng had become more silent than before, even reducing his visits to the food factory. He spent most of his days reading, not only university books but also books on architecture.

"I'll go check on him." Cheng Hao walked heavily towards the room.

Pei Yicheng, as if sensing his entrance, said, "I'm fine, don't listen to Ling Dong's nonsense."

"Yicheng, if you're feeling bad, just let it out, don't keep it bottled up inside," Cheng Hao squatted in front of Pei Yicheng, looking up at him.

"It's nothing."

Pei Yicheng's dark eyes were utterly calm.

Chapter 193: I Am Sincere

However, the calmer he remained, the more Cheng Hao felt distressed—why couldn't Brother Yicheng, being such a good person, have his legs healed?

Cheng Hao couldn't figure it out; suddenly, his eyes lit up as he mentioned meeting a beautiful girl just recently and exaggeratedly claimed that she had shunned him like a snake avoids a scorpion.

"Deserved."

Pei Yicheng could imagine that scene all too well—Haozi's gaze, almost devouring the girl alive; it was no wonder she hadn't been scared off, that would have been truly surprising.

"Brother Yicheng, how can you say that? I genuinely wanted to know her name and was sincerely interested in dating her," Cheng Hao felt aggrieved, he truly found the girl to his liking.

Oh no, rather, she moved his heart.

"The girls you've dated before, you've said the same about each one."

The words of Pei Yicheng were like sharp knives, stabbing him in the heart.

Cheng Hao pursed his lips and said, "I'm serious, who knew, midway through dating, I would feel like they were only interested in my money."

Pei Yicheng: "..."

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On the weekend, Xu Nianhua finished knitting a sweater, planning to have Xu Nian'an deliver it to Pei Yicheng.

"Let's go deliver it together," Xu Nian'an thought, considering how Pei Yicheng couldn't walk. Therefore, Xu Nian'an didn't think too deeply about it, especially regarding the likes of Chen Hu at school, against whom Xu Nian'an was always on guard.

"It's so cold." Xu Nianhua tightened her coat around her, covering her icy face, actually just feeling embarrassed.

While knitting the sweater, she hadn't felt anything amiss, but now that it was time to deliver it, Xu Nianhua felt somewhat uneasy.

"Giving a gift should be done with sincerity. He has helped us so much, one, we go to deliver the sweater, and two, we go to see how his legs are doing," thought Xu Nian'an, who hadn't visited the factory in a long while and heard that Pei Yicheng had recently sought treatment again, regrettably, it was still unsuccessful.

"I..."

Xu Nianhua wanted to refuse, but Xu Nian'an promptly dragged her along.

Xu Nian'an completely missed his little sister's discomfort, thinking that Brother Yicheng was a good person who was not in a great mood; having his little sister there would allow them to chat.

His sister was better at talking than he was, and could provide some additional comfort.

At the Du Family's.

Du Chang was massaging Pei Yicheng's legs in the room. Although his legs couldn't be healed temporarily, Du Chang still insisted on massaging them daily to prevent the muscles from atrophying.

However, Du Chang was aging, involved in many activities at the medical facility, and massaging Pei Yicheng's legs every day was physically demanding.

"Grandfather, maybe you should rest today." Pei Yicheng, seeing his grandfather's exhausted demeanor, couldn't bear it.

His grandfather, at such an old age, was still taking care of his matters, bustling about busily.

"No worries."

Du Chang chuckled, "This little matter is nothing for your grandfather. Yicheng, I know these few treatments have made you feel very downhearted, but you must believe, as long as you persist tirelessly, there will come a day when you will stand up again."

Du Chang encouraged his grandson, fearing that Pei Yicheng would revert to his previous negative state.

He thought about exploring more options, and planned to first take Pei Yicheng's medical records to outsiders for review. If everything checked out, he would bring Pei Yicheng along, thus preventing his grandson from going with hopes high and returning utterly disappointed!

"Grandfather, I know," said Pei Yicheng in a deep voice, yet without any negativity. He looked up and said, "I may not be able to stand on my legs, but there are many others in the world more unfortunate than I am. I won't give up."

Chapter 194: The Old Kid Who Craves Cake

"Yes, if you think like that, you're absolutely right," Du Chang praised.

"Brother Cheng, Nian'an and younger sister Xu are here," Ling Dong reported eagerly upon seeing the Xu siblings arriving.

Just after Du Chang had finished massaging his leg, Pei Yicheng quickly pulled over the blanket to cover his legs and said, "Ask them to wait outside for a while."

"I'll go take a look, not sure if Nianhua girl has brought something delicious," Du Chang was particularly craving the braised pork Nianhua had made before, which was fatty but not greasy and irresistibly delectable.

"Grandpa, you should eat less braised pork,"

Pei Yicheng quickly cautioned, aware that while braised pork was delicious, it was also quite greasy.

"Nianhua girl," Du Chang's eyes sparkled as he looked toward Xu Nianhua, who sometimes brought over a dish and sometimes some pastries.

"Du Grandpa, I made some cake myself, would you like to try it?" Xu Nianhua placed the cake on the table.

She had divided it into four portions, clearly one for each of the four of them.

"Sure," Du Chang said as he started unpacking it, "Everything Nianhua girl makes is tasty."

"Du Grandpa, that's right, my little sister's cooking is truly delicious. You have no idea, when I watched her make this cake, it seemed so magical," Xu Nian'an chimed in eagerly.

Yesterday, Xu Nianhua had been busy making cake, which wasn't easy to do without modern mixers, whipping eggs by hand was quite the strenuous task.

However, the unanimous praise from the family made her feel that all the effort was worthwhile.

The cakes she brought today were specially saved for the Du family.

"Delicious."

Du Chang took a bite, finding it soft and fragrant, with a delightful egg flavor; there was only one flaw—it was gone too quickly.

"Du Grandpa, next time, I'll make dumplings for you," Xu Nianhua changed the subject.

"Grandpa, let me try too," Cheng Hao, worried his portion might be gone, quickly grabbed it.

"Okay, you said so," Du Chang said happily.

"It's delicious, particularly delicious."

Cheng Hao felt the days in Gaoliang County were almost heavenly.

He had even met a beautiful girl and earned some money; his parents and grandfather would definitely be happy.

When Ling Dong wheeled Pei Yicheng out, as soon as they entered the living room, they were greeted with the aroma of the cake.

"Yicheng, let's talk about this, give me that piece," Du Chang eyed the two pieces of cake, wishing he could eat them both.

"See, Grandpa just massaged you, and you said I worked hard, right?"

Du Chang smacked his lips like a child craving sweets.

Pei Yicheng picked up the cake, and even without tasting it, the aroma was tantalizing. He broke it in half for Du Chang, saying, "Grandpa has worked hard."

"Grandpa, I'll also share half with you,"

Ling Dong gave half to Du Chang too.

Du Chang was immediately content, nibbling slowly, afraid the taste would disappear before he savored it.

"Next time, I'll make more," Xu Nianhua said with a smile, her eyes landing on Pei Yicheng's leg. Thinking about the ancestral massage technique she had learned, she wondered how she could offer him a massage.

Beyond being mindful of the differences between men and women, how could she even begin to explain the technique?

Xu Nianhua felt troubled; suddenly, her eyes lit up and she asked, "Du Grandpa, did you massage Brother Cheng's leg to prevent muscle atrophy?"

"That's right," nodded Du Chang, adding in praise, "Nianhua girl knows quite a bit."

Chapter 195: Can I?

"It's all from the books," Xu Nianhua answered, thinking about how to steer the conversation toward Pei Yicheng.

Suddenly, Du Chang said, "Girl, how about you learn medicine with me? I see you're smart, you could definitely learn well from me."

"Grandfather Du."

Xu Nianhua was also very surprised, having not expected Du Chang to make such a suggestion.

With an excited expression, Du Chang said, "Why not take a medical book and memorize it? I'll take you as my apprentice. Yicheng is unwilling to learn medicine, neither does Ling Dong have the talent, and Cheng Hao is even less interested. It's a pity, my medical skills could go unlearned!"

Over the years, Du Chang had been considering taking an apprentice, but he hadn't come across a good candidate. He wasn't overly concerned about it, but seeing Xu Nianhua take the initiative to ask, Du Chang thought, if Xu Nianhua were to learn medicine from him, wouldn't their relationship become even closer?

"I... I might not be cut out for studying medicine, I'm afraid I might disappoint you," Xu Nianhua said awkwardly, touching her nose. She hadn't even figured out how to bring up the topic of massaging Pei Yicheng, and the conversation had jumped to the matter of apprenticeship.

She truly hadn't planned on changing her career.

She hadn't considered learning medicine either, aware of her limitations; she simply wasn't cut out for it.

"You, really not interested?" Du Chang asked, his face full of regret.

Sitting quietly to the side, Xu Nian'an suddenly asked, "Grandfather Du, are you really planning to take an apprentice?"

"Yes, as long as I encounter a good candidate, I definitely want to take a disciple, to pass on my medical skills," Du Chang confirmed, admitting that while he couldn't cure his grandson's leg, he considered himself top-notch in other aspects.

"Would I... be suitable?" Xu Nian'an's words, one by one, were clear to all who heard, but together, they briefly stunned everyone.

Slightly belatedly, Du Chang evaluated Xu Nian'an, who was indeed good-looking, although not as strikingly handsome as his own grandson. But he was handsome and, after all, the older brother of Nianhua.

"I have here a copy of 'Herbal Properties Canon.' If you can memorize it within a week, I'll take you as my disciple," Du Chang said as he took a book from the shelf next to him and tossed it to Xu Nian'an.

He thought, as long as Xu Nian'an's talent wasn't abysmally poor, he would take him as a disciple.

"Doctor Du."

A person rushed in, looking frantic.

"Shitou, what's the matter?" Du Chang, seeing Shitou, asked with concern, "What happened?"

"My grandma, my grandma has fallen. She's lying in bed and has bled a lot," Shitou said, his clothes dirty and stained with dark red.

Du Chang reassured him, "Don't panic, I'll go back with you right now."

"Ling Dong, take good care of Yicheng. I might not be able to return for a few days," he said, grabbing his medical kit and heading out the door with a vigour that belied his sixty years.

"I hope Shitou's grandma is safe and unharmed," Pei Yicheng remarked, having met Shitou's grandmother before. The last time Shitou had carried his grandmother to seek medical help, it was because they couldn't afford it, and she nearly lost her life. Eventually, they sought help from Grandfather.

With a soft heart, Grandfather intervened and saved Shitou's grandmother. It was then discovered that Shitou and his grandmother lived deep in the mountains, depending solely on each other. Shitou's parents had been hunters and both lost their lives in an accident, leaving little Shitou to be raised by his grandmother alone.

Shitou, conscientious as he was, had always stayed by his grandmother's side. Last time, his grandmother's prolonged cold had almost cost her her life.

Chapter 196: Diamond Pattern Sweater

Now, Grandma Shi has fallen and injured herself again, and it's uncertain if she can get through this ordeal...

"Good people are rewarded with good." Xu Nianhua's crisp voice rang out, truly believing in the principle: good deeds beget good outcomes, and good people are rewarded. Sometimes the wicked haven't been punished yet, simply because their time hasn't come.

"That's right," Xu Nian'an chimed in, handing over the sweater Xu Nianhua had knitted, "This is a sweater knitted by my little sister herself; it's really pretty and you can't find one like it outside. You've always been helping us out in the past. Although a sweater might not be worth much money, it is our way of showing our appreciation."

Xu Nian'an handed over the sweater, and because of Pei Yicheng's injury and his appearance as someone obviously from a wealthy family—like some noble young master from ancient times—Xu Nian'an didn't think too much of it, feeling that the gift was both meaningful and practical.

Xu Nianhua, who had lived most of her previous life and mentally considered herself an old lady, saw Pei Yicheng as a pitiful younger person and didn't overthink it either.

"For me?" Pei Yicheng sounded pleasantly surprised. Some days earlier, upon seeing Xu Nian'an wearing a sweater, he truly felt envious and thought how happy it would be to wear a sweater knitted by Xu Nianhua himself.

The dream suddenly became reality, and touching the soft yet thick sweater, Pei Yicheng had a feeling as if he were dreaming.

"Of course, it's for you," Xu Nian'an said, "The past papers you bought for us, we've done them all, and they really taught us a lot, and we've improved a great deal."

A gesture of thanks.

Pei Yicheng recalled that every time he gave something to the Xu family, they returned gifts of nearly equal value. His initial joy suddenly transformed into a faint sense of loss. Precisely because he was an outsider, it was on these terms that they kept accounts so precisely.

"Big bro Cheng, let us have a look—," before he could finish the word 'sister-in-law', Cheng Hao also belatedly realized and said, "Let me see Nianhua's handiwork too, this sweater is really nice. How come there's white yarn woven into it as well?"

"I used white yarn to knit in diamond-shaped patterns. Although white gets dirty easily, I didn't use much of it, so it won't get dirty," Xu Nianhua explained with a smile.

Pei Yicheng spread out the sweater; the dark cyan color of the sweater contrasted sharply with the white diamond patterns, and the turtleneck looked so warm just by sight.

"It's beautiful, even better than the sweaters sold outside!" Cheng Hao exclaimed with envy, "I really want one just like it."

Pei Yicheng's gaze, which felt almost tangible, instantly swept towards Cheng Hao.

Cheng Hao touched his nose and thought: Big bro Cheng is too stingy.

Clearing his throat, he said, "I'll go check out the sweaters in the city someday; there's not a shortage of them."

Xu Nianhua was about to say that she didn't have much time and knitting another sweater would take a long time.

The deep voice of Pei Yicheng sounded, "Haozi, when have you ever worn a sweater? Didn't you always disdain them for not looking good?"

Cheng Hao: "..."

It was the ones sold that he found unattractive, but the ones knitted by 'sister-in-law' looked good!

Grumbling inwardly, yet not daring to directly ask Xu Nianhua to knit him a sweater, he could only say, "Big bro Cheng, I was just talking casually."

"I really like the sweater, thank you," said Pei Yicheng, holding the warm sweater in his hands, and within, he felt even warmer.

"As long as you don't disdain it, that's good." Xu Nianhua actually wanted to suggest that he try it on, but then thought better of it—considering the weather was still very cold, and it wouldn't be good if he caught a cold.

Chapter 197: When Did You Have This Idea?

"Second Brother, when did you start wanting to become a doctor?"

On the way back, Xu Nianhua looked at Xu Nian'an with curious eyes. Earlier at the Du Family's, Xu Nian'an had volunteered himself, which really startled her. She truly had no idea that Second Brother aspired to be a doctor.

"Being a doctor is pretty good," Xu Nian'an said, his eyes cast downward. The last time he saw his younger sister unconscious and burning with fever, it really scared him.

Beyond feeling helpless, there was nothing he could do.

At that moment, Xu Nian'an thought about becoming a doctor in the future.

But later, as he started doing business with his younger sister, he also felt that doing business was quite good. As long as one was willing to work hard, money was surely to be made.

The words of Doctor Du today suddenly made Xu Nian'an want to give it a try. If he really had the talent for being a doctor, then he would become one. If not, then he would just go to college with peace of mind and then earn money through business.

"Doctors do earn a lot of money and, moreover, saving lives and helping the injured is being a guardian of life, which is worthy of respect." Xu Nianhua had immense respect for doctors. If it had not been for those kind-hearted doctors who had pulled her back from the brink, where would her brilliant life have come from?

Originally, Xu Nian'an only wanted to give it a try, but upon hearing Xu Nianhua's words, he instantly felt that the profession carried a very serious responsibility, and he began to yearn for it even more.

"Little Sister, if, if I really have the talent, I will become a doctor in the future." A doctor who cures diseases and saves people.

He didn't want to feel as powerless as before, being completely unable to do anything when a family member was ill, apart from feeling helpless.

"Second Brother, I support you," Xu Nianhua said with a smile, then immediately thought that becoming a doctor wouldn't be so easy and added, "Even if you don't get into medical school, it doesn't matter. We can start our own business and earn a lot of money just the same."

"Aren't you afraid we'll lose money in our business?" Xu Nian'an was somewhat speechless at his little sister's consolation.

She had just been fully confident in supporting him in becoming a doctor.

And in the blink of an eye, she was worried he might not get into medical school and had already thought of a backup plan.

"When have you ever seen us lose money in business?" Xu Nianhua straightened her back, speaking confidently, her eyes sparkling.

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"Eh, Nianhua, where's the sweater you were knitting the other day?" Ji Ying was folding clothes in Xu Nianhua's room when she realized the sweater that Xu Nianhua had secretly been knitting seemed to be gone.

"I gave it away," Xu Nianhua responded, pulling her jacket closer. Today's weather was good; she planned to take an early shower and then go to school for the evening classes.

"To whom?"

Ji Ying muttered to herself, not noticing Xu Qinghe showing it off.

"To Brother Cheng, Pei Yicheng," Xu Nianhua answered without overthinking. "Remember, he gave us quite a few exam papers and books last time? I saw that he really liked the sweater I made for Second Brother, so I knitted one for him, too."

"You..." Ji Ying's lips moved as if to say something but, seeing Xu Nianhua's oblivious demeanor, she felt her concern was superfluous.

"What's wrong? Can't I give it away?" Xu Nianhua belatedly realized there might be an issue.

Ji Ying pulled Xu Nianhua to sit on the bed and cautiously spoke, "It's not that you can't give it, but usually, sweaters are given to family members, you understand?"

"But, I think of him as..." a pitiful young man.

Xu Nianhua hesitated, then said, "Just like Big Brother and Second Brother. Moreover, he has helped us so much, a sweater might not be expensive, but it's filled with sincerity. Most importantly, it's warm and practical, so I didn't think too much about

Chapter 198: Ling Dong Injured His Hand

"You know," Ji Ying said as she took her hand and smoothed her bangs, "my daughter has grown up so much."

Her bangs had long been combed up, revealing a clear and bright forehead. Beneath that, a pair of lively eyes sparkled. From the tiny, frail baby she once was, she had transformed into a graceful young lady in the blink of an eye.

At nineteen, she was unlike any other girl in the village—kind and sensible, yet never causing trouble, endearingly so.

Zhong Juan was only a year older than Nianhua and seemed decent enough daily, but she did some embarrassing things in private with Gao Jianshe.

But Nianhua, in this regard, seemed like a blank sheet of paper.

"I know you want to thank Yicheng, and it's good to be grateful, but there are things a girl ought to be careful about when it comes to her reputation," she said.

Ji Ying had not wanted to speak of these matters, but seeing her daughter in this situation, Ji Ying feared she might give Yicheng something again or, out of naivete, be taken advantage of. It was with some embarrassment that she spoke these words to her daughter.

But thinking that Nianhua might suffer for her ignorance in the future, Ji Ying cleared her throat and said, "A girl can only have intimate relations after marriage. Before you're married, you mustn't let a man get close to you, Nianhua, do you understand?"

Xu Nianhua, who had lived a long life though never married, had never been intimate with a man, but she still understood what Ji Ying meant.

She hadn't eaten pork, but she had seen pigs run.

Xu Nianhua's face turned bright red. She looked down and said, "Mom, what are you thinking? I'm still young and have no plans to marry."

In her previous life, she had lived alone, raising an adopted child, constantly earning money to help other children in need. Apart from missing her family, there was nothing regrettable about her life.

Living her life over, Xu Nianhua had not considered marriage at all.

"Mom, it's just a sweater, nothing serious, not like it's underwear or something. You're thinking too much. Next time, I'll be more careful," Xu Nianhua finally said, no longer the nervous nineteen-year-old after a moment's embarrassment.

Xu Nianhua changed the subject, "Mom, when will my sister-in-law give me a little nephew?"

"They've just gotten married," Ji Ying quickly shifted her attention. It had been half a year since Xu Nianji and Zhou He got married, and there had been no news of a pregnancy, which worried her somewhat, though she didn't show it.

"Next year, we'll definitely have a little nephew," Xu Nianhua said, full of hope. "Wonder if it will be a niece or a nephew? Like my big brother or like my sister-in-law?"

"A boy or a girl, it's all good, your brother and sister-in-law are both good-looking," she replied.

Ji Ying wasn't one to favor sons over daughters; she just wanted her children to be safe and healthy.

"Mom, make a bit more food for lunch. Ling Dong hurt his hand, and Cheng Hao can't cook," Nian'an said just after returning from the factory, seeing Ling Dong's hand tightly wrapped.

"How did he hurt himself?" Ji Ying asked anxiously.

"Cough, Mom, don't tell anyone, but I overheard Cheng Hao saying he accidentally slipped on a banana peel. Now he's hiding in the room, embarrassed to meet anyone," Nian'an whispered. He had been stunned himself when he first heard it from Cheng Hao.

Ling Dong seemed so agile, yet somehow he had been so unlucky.

Chapter 199: Not a Day to Fall Behind

"This, you can't laugh at others." Ji Ying said the words, but the smile she couldn't suppress on her face couldn't be hidden at all.

Ling Dong slipped on a banana peel, fell, and even injured his hand. This was completely incongruous with his tall and strong appearance.

"Mom, it's true that when someone's luck is bad, even cold water gets stuck between their teeth." Xu Nian'an cleared his throat. Although he wanted to laugh too, he had already laughed enough when he first heard about it and was now completely able to hold it in.

"Could it be because of his unlucky year, Liunian working against him?" Xu Nian'an said uncertainly.

"Did Grandpa Du come back?"

Xu Nianhua asked.

"No, he came back yesterday, but then Grandma Shitou's condition worsened, so he went there again today." Xu Nian'an answered—today just happened to be New Year's Day, and they had already been off since yesterday afternoon.

"Then, who's giving Yicheng massages for his leg?" Xu Nianhua asked again.

Xu Nian'an: "..."

Reminded by Xu Nianhua, Xu Nian'an did recall that last time when Shitou was here, Doctor Du seemed to have instructed Ling Dong to massage Xu Nianhua's leg daily.

"What massage?" Ji Ying looked at her children with a puzzled face.

Xu Nianhua explained, "Mom, his leg needs to be massaged daily to prevent the muscles from atrophying, so he can continue to seek treatment from doctors."

"Oh." Ji Ying didn't understand much about this and said, "Then I'll go to the factory to cook. Remember to come and eat later."

No sooner had Ji Ying left than Xu Nian'an looked suspiciously at Xu Nianhua and asked, "You seem really concerned about Yicheng."

"Of course, he's a benefactor to our family!" Xu Nianhua replied without blinking, an open expression on his face.

"Then let's go check on him."

Xu Nian'an said and started walking; Xu Nianhua quickly followed.

At the Du Family.

Ling Dong emotionlessly turned over the fresh medicinal herbs in the yard. Cheng Hao, just back from the factory, couldn't wait to narrate how Ling Dong felt the moment he saw Xu Nianhua.

The schadenfreude from Cheng Hao and the emotionless expression of Ling Dong created a stark contrast.

"Haozi." Pei Yicheng's deep voice sounded.

Cheng Hao's laughter came to an abrupt halt.

"Yicheng, you're partial. He's bullied me so many times, and it's rare to see him in trouble." Cheng Hao's voice carried a hint of grievance.

"How has he bullied you?" Pei Yicheng watched him sternly.

Cheng Hao was hesitant. Ling Dong dragged him to spar and to run long distances, exhausting him but improving his physical health significantly.

Really counting, Ling Dong hadn't actually bullied him.

"Yicheng, with Ling Dong's hand injured, how will your leg get massaged?" Xu Nian'an bluntly shifted the conversation; Ling Dong's face had turned completely black from drying medicinal herbs.

"Grandpa will come back at the latest, finally," Pei Yicheng had not expected them to remember this matter.

"Yicheng, you can't forget about this."

Originally drying the herbs, Ling Dong voiced out at this moment, "Grandpa said, the massaging on your leg, shouldn't skip a single day."

Ling Dong glanced at his bandaged hand, knowing that massaging was out of the question. His gaze fell on Cheng Hao.

Cheng Hao volunteered enthusiastically, and soon, was utterly rejected for his ineptitude.

"Are your hands clumsier than your feet?" Ling Dong contemptuously berated, none of the massage moves taught by him were performed correctly by Cheng Hao.

Cheng Hao: "..."

Ling Dong was definitely retaliating—it was absolute revenge!

"How about, I give it a try?" Xu Nian'an looked at the demonstration Ling Dong was managing with one hand, and it did not appear difficult.

Chapter 200: The Massage Better than Hao Zi's

"Sure," Ling Dong agreed very readily.

Cheng Hao voluntarily stepped aside, admitting that in this regard, his hands just seemed to have a mind of their own.

With Ling Dong's guidance, Xu Nian'an performed vastly better than Cheng Hao.

"Yicheng, how does it feel?" Xu Nian'an was quite pleased with himself, even though it required some strength to massage, it was hardly anything to him.

Pei Yicheng: "..."

He couldn't feel his legs, how could he feel anything?

"Not bad," Pei Yicheng praised him despite the seriousness of his endeavor, "Much better than Haozi."

Cheng Hao had a look of utter dejection.

Why had he been disliked? His massage wasn't really...

Okay, compared with Xu Nian'an's standard movements, his weren't as professional, but his heart was in the right place!

Night.

"Second Brother, how do you give a massage?" Xu Nianhua asked quietly.

"I just followed what Ling Dong told me," Xu Nian'an replied while holding the Herbal Properties Canon. Doctor Du had asked him to memorize it within a week, and several days had already passed.

"Just 'like that' is which way?"

Xu Nianhua was eager to know, since it was improper for her to go into Pei Yicheng's room during the day, being a girl.

She didn't mind, but Xu Nian'an had directly ushered her into the living room and didn't let her enter his room at all.

After thinking for a moment, Xu Nian'an replied, "I can't really explain."

"Then show me," Xu Nianhua insisted, grabbing Xu Nian'an to stand up, and directly stretched her leg out flat on the bed, saying, "Second Brother, just try it out on me to see how it's done."

"Little sister, why do you insist on knowing how to do it?" Xu Nian'an asked, not understanding and assuming her curiosity had merely piqued. He recalled how Ling Dong had taught him that day through his trousers.

After Xu Nianhua earnestly learned how to do it, she realized it was a very common massage technique. She had heard that someone had used this method to gradually revitalize legs that had lost sensation, and eventually, they were able to stand up again.

She felt that massaging like this couldn't hurt, especially since Pei Yicheng's several consultations with doctors had failed. Even though Pei Yicheng didn't show it, she thought that anyone in his place must feel disappointed, right?

"Second Brother, look at mine," Xu Nianhua suggested as she stood up, pulled Xu Nian'an to sit on the bed, and forcefully lifted his leg, gently saying, "Second Brother, I've also read about another massage technique in a book."

Xu Nian'an was confusedly pulled by Xu Nianhua until her fingers pressed with just the right amount of weight on the foot; only then did he snap back to reality.

"Second Brother, remember this," Xu Nianhua reminded him, and began to tell him the essence of this massage technique, her voice crisp yet gentle.

Xu Nian'an watched earnestly, feeling a good deal more comfortable after being massaged, and asked in amazement, "Little sister, when did you read such a book?"

"I just did," Xu Nianhua lowered her eyes and asked, "Second Brother, did you remember it?"

"I've remembered it," Xu Nian'an nodded, and belatedly looked closely at Xu Nianhua.

"Tomorrow, Second Brother, you use this technique to give Yicheng a massage," Xu Nianhua's declaration completely petrified Xu Nian'an.

"Little sister, I'm not a doctor. Besides, wasn't Doctor Du's massage quite good before?" Xu Nian'an scratched his short hair, not understanding why his little sister suddenly wanted to try this massage technique on Pei Yicheng.