

Regaining 201

Chapter 201: Don't Know Who Got Lucky

"But I heard about this unique massage technique, it's especially useful," Xu Nianhua spoke with conviction, and in fact, she wasn't lying.

It's just that she didn't read about it in a book, but had seen it with her own eyes.

"What book was that?" Xu Nian'an asked.

Xu Nianhua pressed harder with her hands, causing Xu Nian'an pain, and he said, "Little sister, be gentle, you're going to ruin my good leg."

"Nonsense, why don't you learn it first and try it on Yicheng tomorrow?" Xu Nianhua encouraged, saying, "Trying one more massage technique doesn't hurt, right? What if it really works? Yicheng has helped us so much, don't you want his leg to get better soon?"

"Of course, I hope so," Xu Nian'an replied without hesitation, and after thinking it over, he said, "Alright, I'll try it tomorrow."

The next day.

Xu Nian'an took the opportunity to find Pei Yicheng early while Ling Dong went to change his bandages.

"Yicheng, I'm here to massage your leg," Xu Nian'an got straight to the point as soon as he entered the room.

Pei Yicheng said, "It's not really necessary, missing one day won't make a difference."

"Doctor Du said you can't miss a day," Xu Nian'an seriously insisted, very determined on this matter, he wheeled Pei Yicheng into the room, and before starting the massage, he said, "Yicheng, my little sister taught me a massage technique yesterday, how about I try it on you today?"

"Sure."

Pei Yicheng didn't hesitate at all.

His leg had already lost feeling, and massaging was just to prevent the muscles from atrophying.

"Yicheng, I'll start now, if you feel anything uncomfortable, remember to tell me," Xu Nian'an had practiced many times on Xu Nianhua's legs yesterday, and after being reminded repeatedly by Xu Nianhua, he massaged quite smoothly, his hands exerting just the right amount of pressure.

"Does Nianhua also know medicine?" Pei Yicheng, observing his standard movements, couldn't feel his legs, but his technique looked good.

"She doesn't."

After Xu Nian'an finished his statement, he added, "She said she read about this massage technique in a book, and also mentioned that someone used it to make their legs stand up again."

"She has a good memory," Pei Yicheng praised.

"Isn't that the truth, when she was teaching me yesterday, anyone who didn't know better would have thought she was a professional teacher!" Xu Nian'an, speaking about the previous day when Xu Nianhua was instructing him, couldn't help but babble away, revealing his pride and admiration for his little sister without any attempt to hide it.

From his words, Pei Yicheng could imagine a scene in his mind: Xu Nianhua must have been earnestly directing Xu Nian'an on what to do.

Pei Yicheng's lips curved up slightly and he said, "Nian'an, thank you, and thanks to Nianhua, too."

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"How did it go?" Xu Nianhua had been waiting anxiously for Xu Nian'an's return, and she immediately asked about the situation the moment she saw him.

"Little sister, you're too anxious. If it could be fixed in one go, Yicheng's leg would have healed a long time ago," Xu Nian'an, seeing her concerned face, felt his little sister was very kind and comforted her, "Yicheng said it wasn't bad, but we have to wait for Doctor Du to come back to ask his professional opinion, to see if we can use this method."

"That's true," Xu Nianhua realized she might have been too anxious, she lifted her head, full of confidence, and said, "I believe this method will definitely work."

"Right, any method my little sister deems good must definitely be good," Xu Nian'an agreed, and noting her shining eyes, now that her bangs no longer covered them, were even more beautiful. "Such a kind and beautiful little sister, I wonder who will be lucky enough to have her in the

Chapter 202: Not Planning to Go to College?

"Then you go to the factory, and I'll continue memorizing the book."

Nian'an had recently been busy with memorizing his books, and besides his schoolwork, he spent all his time on this.

Herbal Properties Canon categorized 248 types of medicinal herbs into cold, hot, warm, and neutral categories, written in rhymed verse to facilitate memorization and smooth recitation. However, that was comparatively speaking.

Nianhua could manage to read it for a while, but going through the entire text, she felt fortunate she hadn't planned on becoming a doctor; she'd rather stick to studying her foreign languages.

The sound of Nian'an's clear reciting made Nianhua feel dizzy and unable to remember anything, so she decided to help out at the factory instead.

The chili sauce and fish chili sauce business was particularly good. Aside from Wu Meili, the factory had already hired six people, able to produce nearly a thousand bottles of chili sauce a day.

Every few days, a truck would deliver empty bottles and then take away the finished chili sauce.

Cheng Hao had reached out from South City and covered several nearby cities. His current task was to run around daily, checking if stocks needed replenishing. He even bought a small truck with his own money for deliveries.

At that time, Nianhua was truly shocked and didn't expect Cheng Hao to have such initiative.

She even clearly remembered how Cheng Hao looked when he said, "I trust Yicheng, even though the money we're earning now isn't enough to buy a truck, I believe that in time, it will be."

Cheng Hao's words carried his complete trust in Pei Yicheng, as well as his trust in Nianhua's family, and also, he saw the potential in the chili sauce business.

The faster the chili sauce sold, the more money they made. Even Ji Ying now felt able to occasionally buy meat to make delicious meals to strengthen the children.

"Where's Nian'an?" Ji Ying was washing glass bottles when she saw Nianhua but not Nian'an, and she asked curiously.

"Big brother is still memorizing his books," Nianhua replied, joining her to wash the bottles.

With the current sales volume, they specifically needed people just to wash bottles; otherwise, they feared no one would be able to keep up.

"Do your schools still require you to memorize medical books? Does he no longer wish to go to college?" Ji Ying had been busy these past few days. She saw Nian'an memorizing medical books yesterday but hadn't had the chance to ask.

"Going to college and becoming a doctor aren't mutually exclusive," An'an reassured, "Mom, don't worry. Big brother is smart. Even memorizing medical books won't hold him back."

"Becoming a doctor seems not too bad."

Ji Ying murmured quietly. Seeing her children succeed naturally made a mother happy. She smiled and said, "You and your brother should study hard and aim to add two more college students to our family next year."

In the past, Ji Ying would feel both joy and worry about her children going to college—joy for their success and worry about the finances at home.

But now, it was different.

Making chili sauce, the money earned, not only was it enough to pay for two kids to go to college, it was also enough to build a new house!

"Okay, Mom, we'll definitely make you proud next year," Nianhua, firm in her resolve to go to college, declared.

It was almost lunchtime, and Ji Ying went off to prepare the meal. After Nianhua helped set up the dishes, she went to inspect the finished products.

The Chili Sauce Factory today was not like it was initially. The place where the chili sauce was made was so clean it was nearly dust-free, and she had even made special light blue cotton clothes and hats, along with masks for everyone. Thus, the chili sauce produced was kept extra clean.

Chapter 203: Shitou

"Nianhua is here?" Xiong Xihua was filling bottles with the chili sauce she had made. When she saw Xu Nianhua, she praised her, "Nianhua is getting prettier and prettier. It's a shame I only have two smelly boys and no beautiful daughter like Nianhua."

Xiong Xihua meant every word. Having only two sons herself, she took special liking to other people's lovely daughters.

"Auntie, I saw Xiaojing just a few days ago. He's really grown strong and looks so good," Xu Nianhua said. Xiaojing, whom she mentioned, was Xiong Xihua's grandson, the son of her son Xu Song. He was just over a year old, and would be two after the New Year.

Chubby and adorable, he was at his cutest age.

"Jingfeng is too mischievous," Xiong Xihua spoke about her eldest grandson with a smile in her eyes, which couldn't be contained as they curved upward, especially since she'd been making money from working here and could afford to give the child even better nutrition. At just over a year old, Xu Jingfeng was already very sturdy.

"Boys should be a bit mischievous. My Xiaofeng isn't married yet. Who knows what kind of daughter-in-law he'll bring home in the future," said Zhang Meixiang as she thought about her unmarried son. Her eyes kept sizing up Xu Nianhua as she said, "If he could find someone half as good as Nianhua, I'd be satisfied."

If it had been before, Zhang Meixiang might have considered marrying off Xu Nianhua to her son, but now, she was well aware that Nianhua was bound for college, while her own son...

Of course, she thought her own son was the best, but seeing Xu Nianhua growing more and more graceful, she felt like her son just didn't seem quite good enough for such a girl.

Xu Nianhua was no naive nineteen-year-old girl and so wasn't bashful. She said with a smile, "Auntie Cai, Brother Cai Feng will surely marry someone even better than me in the future."

"How is everyone doing with the work here? My mom sent me to check on you all," Xu Nianhua surveyed the other aunts. In addition to Auntie Cai, Auntie Xu, and Auntie Yao, the remaining three were also from the village.

"We're doing very well here," they all chorused, conveying happiness with their work.

Every day they felt like they had endless energy. Forty yuan a month and two days of rest; where else could they find such a good deal?

Even in some units, the salaries were as low as thirty yuan.

They were so motivated doing work at the factory that paid forty yuan a month, and at the same time, they wished they could do even more so that the factory wouldn't let them go.

This job significantly relieved their families' economic pressures.

"That's good to hear," Xu Nianhua could tell they were happy just by looking at their smiling faces.

As long as they were happy with their work, it meant they could do even better at their jobs.

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"Grandpa, how is Grandma Shitou doing?" As soon as Pei Yicheng saw his grandpa Du Chang return, he immediately asked about Grandma Shitou.

"Her condition has stabilized, but living in the mountains is just not convenient. I've been persuading Shitou to move out, but he hasn't agreed yet."

With a sigh, Du Chang reflected that Shitou was only seventeen or eighteen, an age when he should be carefree, but instead, he was carrying the weight of a household for the sake of Grandma Shitou.

"If Shitou is willing, we can surely help him out. He's still young; we could have Shitou come work at the factory," Pei Yicheng suggested.

Letting out a sigh, Du Chang said, "I've already talked to Shitou about it. Now it's up to him to decide."

He had already said what needed to be said. If Shitou couldn't come to terms with it himself, Du Chang couldn't force him to make a decision.

"Brother Cheng, I'm here to massage your legs." After dinner, Xu Nian'an hurried over to massage Pei Yicheng's legs.

For dinner, Ling Dong had informed him earlier that he wouldn't be dining at the factory.

"Nian'an." Hearing Xu Nian'an's arrival, Du Chang remembered what Pei Yicheng said in the afternoon, and he spoke, "I heard that Nianhua taught you a set of massage techniques? Come on, show me."

Pei Yicheng had just washed his feet in preparation for the evening massage, and he had taken off his trousers long ago. He was now lying on the bed, with a charcoal fire warming the room.

"Grandfather Du, you won't be angry, will you? My little sister said that this technique is especially good." Xu Nian'an felt somewhat guilty, but because of his trust in his little sister, he still explained where Xu Nianhua learned it from.

"No problem, if there's a better technique, we should definitely try it." Du Chang looked at Xu Nian'an with a smile.

He sat to one side, observing Xu Nian'an's massage techniques closely.

Wherever Xu Nian'an pressed, Du Chang would spout a series of professional terms. Xu Nian'an had also heard them from Xu Nianhua, and naturally remembered them clearly. After one round of massage, Du Chang said, "Your technique is indeed good. From now on, we'll use your method."

Upon closer consideration, Du Chang realized that this massage method was all beneficial and no harm, and his own method had been used for over half a year without much effect, so why not try Nianhua's technique.

"Nian'an, how's your progress with memorizing the book?" Du Chang asked.

Xu Nian'an had just finished massaging Pei Yicheng and his hands were a bit sore. Hearing Du Chang's question, he reflexively replied, "I've memorized it all. Grandfather Du, do you want me to recite it for you now?"

"Sure," Du Chang said.

A hint of surprise flickered in Du Chang's eyes—it was only the sixth day!

There was still time before a week had passed.

And by the looks of it, Xu Nian'an clearly had not been prepared to recite that day.

Xu Nian'an took a sip of water to moisten his throat, gathered his emotions, and began to recite. His voice was loud and clear, with proper intonation and rhythm. His recitation was smooth and without a single error.

The more Du Chang listened, the brighter his eyes became because Xu Nian'an was consistently stable from start to finish, without any signs of forgetting or stumbling.

Putting aside the relationship between the Xu Family and theirs, just based on this, Du Chang felt that Xu Nian'an was indeed talented.

Moreover, Xu Nian'an's technique in massaging Pei Yicheng was very precise, and this was just after having learned it.

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"Little sister, Grandfather Du has decided to take me on as his apprentice!" Xu Nian'an felt thrilled, even though he was going to medical school, following Du Chang would surely allow him to learn a lot.

"That's wonderful."

Xu Nianhua said with a beaming smile, "Congratulations, second brother! Should we tell our parents, and shouldn't we prepare the ritual gift for becoming an apprentice?"

"Right, we must prepare one." Xu Nian'an couldn't stop grinning. His dream of becoming a doctor was coming true.

"Second brother, don't get too excited just yet. For the coming half a year, you will have to work harder than others." Xu Nianhua couldn't help but pour cold water on his excitement to remind him. Being taken in as an apprentice was good, but it also meant that Xu Nian'an's duties would be even greater.

"Don't worry, little sister, I will definitely not delay college entrance exams," Xu Nian'an said with full confidence. He hadn't made it this year because he deliberately left many questions unanswered.

"Second brother, your foreign language score needs to improve to at least ninety."

Before Xu Nianhua finished speaking, an incredulous voice from Xu Nian'an was heard.

Chapter 205: Formal Apprenticeship

The next morning, while his father Xu Qinghe had not yet left for work, Xu Nian'an hurried home to discuss his apprenticeship.

"This is great news!" Xu Qinghe was beaming with pride; his own son was going to become a doctor.

"Then let's bring the apprenticeship gifts today."

Xu Qinghe couldn't wait. His son was making something of himself. Now that he had found a teacher and would later pass the medical college entrance exams, he would be a real doctor. And doctors not only heal the sick and save lives but can also earn good money.

"Dad, don't rush. I still have classes today. I was thinking of going this Sunday when I'm free," Xu Nian'an explained and then turned to Ji Ying, "Mom, I already made arrangements with Grandpa Du, my future master, that I would pay a formal visit to apprentice with him this Sunday."

"Agreed." Ji Ying naturally wouldn't object. She had inquired about Xu Nian'an's aspirations earlier and knew he wanted to become a doctor. As his mother, she naturally wouldn't object. She looked a bit worriedly at Xu Qinghe and asked, "Qinghe, what do you think we should give as the apprenticeship gift?"

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The Du Family.

Du Chang was also worried about what to give as a gift for meeting his disciple.

"Yicheng, what do you think I should give as a gift?" Du Chang was at a loss. He couldn't just give a few medical books as a meeting gift, could he?

Pei Yicheng pondered for a moment, then suggested, "He's about to sit for the college entrance exams, why not a fountain pen?"

He remembered that he had bought many fountain pens for his grandfather who also liked collecting them. Their house was filled with fine pens.

A fountain pen!

Du Chang's eyes lit up instantly, and he praised, "You always think fast."

Giving a fountain pen was a good omen, wishing him academic progress and success. Whether it was for becoming his disciple or for the upcoming college entrance exams, the fountain pen was indispensable.

At the same time, it also conveyed Du Chang's earnest expectations for his future disciple – hoping Xu Nian'an would write with integrity and live honorably, living up to the profession of a doctor.

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A week flew by in the blink of an eye.

Early on the weekend.

Xu Qinghe specially took the day off from work, and with the apprenticeship gifts in hand, the whole family arrived at the Du's early.

The Xu family mobilized all its members and arrived early at Du Chang's place.

Unsure about what to buy for the apprenticeship gift, since no one had been through the apprenticeship experience and didn't know what presents to give, they finally brought together everyone's suggestions: a bottle of fine liquor, two pounds of meat, biscuits and canned goods for eating, and they even specially bought a suit of clothes tailored for Du Chang's size.

It was a Sun Yat-sen suit, which Du Chang liked to wear on regular days.

Seeing their full sincerity, Du Chang wondered if the pen set he had prepared was good enough.

After the apprenticeship ceremony, Xu Nian'an affectionately called him "master" time and again.

Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying exchanged looks and felt very relieved.

Both families enjoyed a lively lunch together, with Xu Nianhua, Ji Ying, and Zhou He cooking up a sumptuous feast that everyone praised endlessly.

After the apprenticeship was complete, Xu Nian'an suddenly found his daily tasks multiplying.

In addition to the intense revision for senior year of high school, he also had to learn medical knowledge from Du Chang, who threw various medical books at Xu Nian'an to study.

Xu Nian'an wished there were forty-eight hours in his day, or that he could split himself in two.

After a few months of cramming ancient poetry and formulas, Xu Nianhua's marks had slowly caught up, and her foreign language skills were gradually improving, from eighty to eighty-five, and then to ninety, until later on, she scored above ninety in every exam. She became the student with the best foreign language results in Gaoliang County No. 1 High School.

Chapter 206: Building a House

The winter in Gaoliang County this year is exceptionally cold.

Ji Ying bought two new cotton-padded clothes for both Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua, and also got Nianhua new trousers and shoes.

Now that the household is doing better, Ji Ying is so eager to let the children eat well and dress well, she wants to make up for all that they lacked before.

Of course, having provided for her youngest son and daughter, Ji Ying also didn't neglect her eldest son and daughter-in-law.

Zhou He is able to bring home a salary of fifty yuan every month, and Xu Nianji, who goes around buying chili peppers, has also made some money, on top of selling bean sprouts.

The cold January has passed, and February has arrived.

February 15th is New Year's Eve, and the food factory has decided to take a holiday.

After being busy for several months, the capital Pei Yicheng initially invested has all been doubled and earned back.

Taking a half-month holiday in advance was something both families agreed upon.

When they first purchased the factory, the building was only simplified. Now, as the factory's profits are getting better, there's naturally a plan to renovate it thoroughly, especially the floor. They intend to replace the dusty cement floor with polished surfaces so that using a mop would keep the floor clean.

Another thing is to make the functions within the factory better differentiated.

The operation room is right in the central warehouse, and another warehouse has been built specifically to store the finished chili sauce.

Beyond the internal area of the factory, they also plan to make the outside yard's cement smoother.

There is not much inventory of chili sauce in the warehouse, and they plan to deliver another batch before the New Year's Eve to clear out the warehouse.

Pei Yicheng and the Xu family have not slighted the workers at the factory. In addition to their deserved wages, each person was given a box of chili sauce, containing ten bottles: five of regular chili sauce and five of fish chili sauce.

Just this box of chili sauce alone is worth nearly two months' salary, not to mention that each person was also given two kilograms of meat.

Xiong Xihua and the others carried their items home in high spirits, heads held high and chests puffed out, proud to work at the factory.

Though they weren't in office jobs, their salaries and benefits were beyond reproach.

February 10th is Little New Year's Eve.

Xu Nianhua's school has also started their holiday, and the family happily gathered around the table for a reunion dinner, filled with joy.

Especially since the family made money this year, unlike last year when the Xu Family couldn't even scrape together two hundred yuan.

Smiles adorned everyone's faces.

"Dad, Mom, let's build a house next year," Xu Nianhua had been thinking about this for a while, she wanted the villagers to see that their life has been getting better since leaving the Xu family.

"Yeah, let's do it," Xu Nian'an was the first to agree.

Now that the family was earning money, Nian'an too hoped they could build a new house.

In the current house, if you sit in the living room and don't close the door, even with a fire warming you, you'll still feel a cold draft on your back.

The gaps in the door panels are two fingers wide.

That's just during winter when it's only a bit chilly; come springtime, the rainy season, he really fears leaks everywhere.

Xu Qinghe had once patched up a leak, but with the family cat climbing on the roof and the old tiles failing, it's really time for them to "retire."

"I agree with building a new house, too," Xu Nianji chimed in, he hadn't been slack in earning money over the past six months either.

"Regarding building a house, I think there is no need to rush," Xu Qinghe, who had been silent, suddenly spoke up.

Chapter 207: Want to Start a Factory

Xu Nianhua and his two siblings looked towards Xu Qinghe in unison.

Zhou He and Ji Ying, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, were also very surprised as they turned their gazes toward Xu Qinghe.

Xu Qinghe cleared his throat and said, "In the past six months, I've done more work than I used to do in a whole year, especially in the period before the New Year. I've been busy every single day, and I've earned more money than before, so..."

Xu Qinghe looked at the eyes of his family members. He paused for a moment and then continued, "I think... I want to start a furniture factory, specialize in making furniture, and then sell it to others."

"Many people have asked me if I have any ready-made furniture for sale. Some want tables, some cabinets, and others beds." Xu Qinghe had been pondering this idea for a very long time in his mind.

These days, he had constantly been making wardrobes for one family and beds for another. Some young people preferred something more stylish, and sometimes when their wedding dates were close, they wanted to buy ready-made furniture.

He felt that if he really did this, there would definitely be buyers.

Actually, he was also inspired by Ji Ying and their factory. He thought he could do it too. He had even chosen the location: the vacant lot behind their house. The lot was overgrown with weeds and uneven, studded with stones, and Ji Ying had not used it to plant vegetables.

If he set up a structure and enclosed the area, leveled the ground a bit, he could make furniture there.

Getting furniture from here to the county for sale would also be very convenient and easy.

"Dad, when did you come up with this idea?" Xu Nianhua's eyes brightened. She had no doubts about her father Xu Qinghe's abilities, but she just hadn't expected that her father would suddenly consider starting a factory.

She knew that her father had always worked as a carpenter for others, and even after she started earning her own money, she had the desire to let her father sell his own furniture, but he had always disagreed, thinking it would lead to loss.

"Dad, I support you. Making and selling our own furniture would save us from running around to different villages, towns, and the county," Xu Nian'an said, raising both hands in agreement.

Xu Nianji also said, "Dad, I support you too. The furniture you make is good. There will definitely be lots of people who want to buy it."

Xu Qinghe had been somewhat nervous, but seeing his children's faces of approval, he felt extremely heartened.

"Xiaohe, what do you think?" Ji Ying looked at Zhou He. They had planned to build a house next spring, but if they were to start a factory, the house-building would certainly need more deliberation.

For a moment, everyone's eyes were focused on Zhou He.

Zhou He was still considering whether she had caught a cold recently, as she had been feeling nauseous. When she heard that her father-in-law was going to start a factory and that they wouldn't build a new house next year, she didn't have any particular thoughts. She had just married into the Xu Family, and she thought it best not to interfere in this matter.

But before she knew it, everyone was looking at Zhou He.

"I'll follow Nianji's decision," Zhou He said, looking at Xu Nianji subconsciously.

Her round face showed her complete dependence on Xu Nianji.

Xu Nianji happily held Zhou He's hand with a contented face.

Zhou He's face turned red instantly, and she struggled to pull her hand away, but Xu Nianji held it tightly, not giving her the chance to escape.

"Dad, we have no problem. Besides, we can live in our current house for now. Next year, after you've made money from the factory, we can build a new house just the same," Xu Nianji said with full confidence and anticipation for Xu Qinghe.

Chapter 208: Partnership

"Dad, where will our factory be built?" Xu Nian'an asked.

"I think building it in the village is pretty good. I remember Xu Song apprenticed with Dad, right? It'll be convenient in the village."

Xu Song is the son of Uncle Xu Yuchun.

Xu Nianhua's gaze, much like Xu Qinghe's, settled on the open space next to their house.

Although their old house was a bit old and off-center, it had its advantages—for example, the space was vast!

There was open space next to the old house, and not far from there were their fields. Although the fields weren't very fertile, at least they were close.

"Exactly, let's build it in the village. The village is so close to the county, it will be convenient to deliver furniture later on," Xu Nianji also agreed enthusiastically.

The family chatted excitedly. Even though they temporarily couldn't build a new house next year, which was a bit disappointing, if the furniture factory really made money, wouldn't they have plenty for building a house later on?

"By the way, Dad, are you planning to run the factory alone, or are you thinking of finding a partner?" Xu Nianhua suddenly asked.

Xu Qinghe was taken aback for a moment. He had not thought that far ahead. After pondering, he said, "Xiaosong has been by my side for several years now, and of all the people who apprenticed with me, none are as close as Xiaosong."

"Partnering up..." Xu Qinghe honestly didn't really want to get involved with others. He preferred doing his own thing.

"Dad, Uncle is the village accountant, right?" Xu Nian'an suddenly spoke up.

Xu Yuchun had been the village accountant for many years and had a very good reputation in the village.

With their family already standing out—with their father and sister-in-law working in the factory, and the eldest brother selling bean sprouts—if they really set up a furniture factory in the village, it would certainly turn more people green with envy.

If Xiaosong was brought into the picture, saying he and Dad were partnering in the factory, that would make a difference.

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"What, start a furniture factory together?" Xu Song was about the same age as Xu Nianji but with a baby face which made him look particularly young.

"It's my dad. He wants to make furniture and then sell it to others. So, I wanted to ask if you'd like to join my dad in this venture?" Xu Nianji explained carefully and asked.

Xiong Xihua's eyes lit up, and without a second thought, she said, "Xiaosong has been with Qinghe for several years now. It would be great if you could involve Xiaosong in setting up the factory. But how much money is needed to start it up?"

Xiong Xihua, who had been working in the factory with Ji Ying, had tasted success. She had a hunch that Ji Ying must be doing more than just overseeing things, and as for the chili sauce—they had made so much of it, Xiong Xihua didn't believe they weren't making a profit.

"We're planning to build a simple house and enclose it with a wall right on that empty land next to our house. Basically, something to keep out the wind and rain will do. Plus, for the lumber, if we were making a few pieces of furniture, we could just chop wood from the mountain. But for a furniture factory, we'd need a lot of wood; if we chop it all down from the mountain, people will definitely have objections," Xu Nianji said.

These things were all discussed with Xu Qinghe beforehand, so Xu Nianji explained them very clearly now.

After Xu Song understood, he and his mother quickly agreed.

When Xu Yuchun found out, he bulged his eyes and said, "I must have heard wrong, right?"

Such a big matter as setting up a factory with Xu Qinghe was decided, and he was the last to know?

"You didn't hear wrong. I think that partnering with Xu Qinghe's family will definitely make money," Xiong Xihua was ready with a basketful of arguments to present to Xu Yuchun when he said, "I know it can make money, but clearly, Qinghe wants to give us a leg up."

Chapter 209: Wen Threw Up

Because Xu Song and Xu Qinghe were planning to start a furniture factory, the already close relationship between the two families seemed to become even closer.

The families discussed purchasing the vacant lot next door. It wasn't far from Xu Qinghe's home, but there was a vegetable garden in between, at the foot of the mountain. Because the area was remote and the land poor for growing vegetables, it had remained fallow.

After buying the vacant land, there would still be the matter of constructing the factory buildings. Xu Qinghe had originally intended to start a small factory and build the most basic of structures, but Xu

Yuchun had a more long-term vision. He felt that if they were going to do it, they should do it better, so that later on, even if the factory did well, they wouldn't be hampered by a lack of space.

After discussing it, the two families decided to double the size of the originally planned buildings.

"Dad, I think Uncle Xu is really far-sighted," Xu Nianhua exclaimed in admiration upon learning about the expansion of the factory building. "It was indeed wise to bring Xiaosong into the partnership in the first place."

Xu Yuchun brought up many points they hadn't considered. With the factory building expanded twofold, they wouldn't have to worry about space issues if the furniture sold well in the future.

That piece of vacant land would surely be worth the investment.

Furthermore, as the families discussed how much to invest, the Xu Xiaosong family truly stood apart.

Having worked alongside Xu Qinghe for several years, Xu Xiaosong had achieved modest success. Yet when it came to investing the same amount of money, Xu Xiaosong's family was willing to take just a 40% share.

When Xu Qinghe heard this, he felt it wouldn't do. Since they were investing the same amount, the profit-share shouldn't leave Xu Xiaosong's family at a disadvantage, especially given that the success of the factory venture was still uncertain.

After discussing with his family, Xu Qinghe decided on an equal split, fifty-fifty. To this end, the two families sat down specially to negotiate this matter. Xu Nian'an said, "Uncle, Xiaosong is young and strong. My dad's getting older, and Xiaosong will surely have to put in a lot of effort in the future. We two families mustn't let money come between us."

They had already become more estranged with Grandfather Xu Zhong's family than with strangers.

Uncle Xu Yuchun had helped them in the past, and they had been willing to lend money when his elder brother got married. Naturally, they hoped the affection between the two families would continue without being damaged by financial profit.

Otherwise, it would betray the original intention.

In the end, it was determined to be an evenly split profit-sharing arrangement.

When Xu Song's family returned home, Xu Yuchun said, "Xiaosong, work hard with your Uncle Qinghe. His family, they are all good people."

"Dad, don't worry, I will definitely work hard with Uncle. He's been really good to me," Xu Song said gratefully. From an apprentice to now being pulled into starting a factory together, Xu Qinghe had helped him in so many ways.

"Yuchun, you can rest assured. Our Xiaosong is also competent. We all keep in mind the kindness Xu Qinghe's family has shown us," Xiong Xihua expressed genuine gratitude to Xu Qinghe's family. Whether it was her working at the factory or now starting the factory, she felt that Xu Qinghe's family was truly honest and responsible.

They had only helped out a little in the past, and the Xu family had always kept it in mind.

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At the Xu family, Zhou He was cooking fish soup. Today they had invited Du Chang and his family over for dinner.

The fish soup, simmering to a creamy white richness, would normally be something Zhou He found delicious.

But as the savory aroma of the fish soup wafted to her nose, Zhou He struggled to hold back, and ultimately, unable to keep her stomach in check, she ran outside the kitchen and began to vomit.

Chapter 210: Zhou He is Pregnant

"Sister-in-law, what's wrong?" Xu Nianhua was making taro rice cakes, made with taro and sweet potato flour, each the size of a ping pong ball. They tasted delicious with the fragrance of taro.

She was caught off guard by the sound of Zhou He vomiting and thought something might be wrong. She hurriedly put down what she was doing and, while grabbing some tissues, asked, "Sister-in-law, do you feel unwell? Caught a cold?"

"Don't know, maybe it's the cold weather recently, feeling a bit like a cold, always nauseous."

Zhou He felt as if her stomach had emptied from the vomiting.

"Xiaohe, when did you last have your period?" Ji Ying asked with concern.

Zhou He paused, her heart unable to help but skip a beat.

She thought and answered, "The first of last month?" Her periods often got delayed.

"But now it's the twelfth!" Ji Ying's eyes suddenly sparkled with hope.

Could it be that the grandson she had been longing for was coming?

"Sister-in-law, you're pregnant." Xu Nianhua finally realized, her gaze instinctively falling on Zhou He's abdomen. It was still flat but was now nurturing a new life.

"I..." Zhou He's hand lightly rested on her abdomen, uncertain.

Following that, Zhou He was made to sit by the fire to warm up and rest; the kitchen duties were taken over by Ji Ying and her daughter Xu Nianhua. Even if uncertain, Zhou He was after all not feeling well.

Xu Nianji had gone to sell bean sprouts, even as the New Year approached, since they would still sell bit by bit.

Xu Qinghe, Xu Nian'an, and Xu Song, on the other hand, were in the county inquiring about building a house.

In the evening.

Xu Qinghe and his two sons returned, having bought plenty of fruit to entertain guests with.

No sooner had they arrived home than Du Chang and his party drove in.

The moment the small car entered the village, it stirred up excitement among the villagers, especially upon knowing that Du Chang's grandson had opened a food factory. Seeing that Ji Ying's family had clearly made money, everyone wanted to work at the factory.

Therefore, as soon as they parked the car, there was a crowd of villagers gathering around.

Pei Yicheng, with his bad leg, observed the crowd of onlookers. Before he could speak, Cheng Hao stepped up and cleared a way through the crowd. The last six months' experience was precious for Cheng Hao; he had been dealing with those who sold chili sauce.

Cheng Hao now had quite the gift of the gab, and in no time, he had sent those villagers on their way.

Pei Yicheng praised him, "Haozi, you're getting better at talking."

Just now, he had managed to dissuade those villagers who wanted to work at the factory with just a few words, and they had left willingly.

"Absolutely, Ge, do I look like a little boss now?" Cheng Hao straightened his suit and slicked back his hair, looking proud.

These past six months had been his most fulfilling.

He was busy every day, exhausted as a dog, but his wallet was thicker, and the money was earned with his own hands, which gave Cheng Hao a great sense of accomplishment.

"Cheng Hao, little bosses don't need to do any manual labor," Ling Dong said as he helped Pei Yicheng settle into the wheelchair.

Cheng Hao: "..."

What's wrong with doing the work himself, earning his own money, and being his own boss?

"Xiaohao, help carry some stuff." Du Chang spoke up, which promptly ended Cheng Hao's retort, happily picking up things to carry.

Xu Qinghe's family rushed out to help, and together with Ling Dong and Xu Nian'an, they carried Pei Yicheng into the house.

Pei Yicheng thought: This was the second time he was being carried into the Xu family's house.