

Regaining 211

Chapter 211: Giving Leather Shoes

"Yicheng, how are you?"

Ling Dong noticed Pei Yicheng's unusual silence.

"I'm fine," Pei Yicheng answered, changing the subject, "Ling Dong, help me move the stuff down."

"Uncle Xu, Auntie Xu, you've taken me in and allowed me to make money, so I've bought some gifts. Please don't dismiss them," Pei Yicheng said, departing from his usual brevity.

What Du Chang brought were some pastries, liquor, and the like.

Pei Yicheng brought leather shoes.

A pair for each person, six boxes of shoes were arrayed in the living room, looking like a shoe seller's display.

"I know someone who opened a leather shoe factory, and the shoes he sells are not only of particularly good quality but also reasonably priced," Pei Yicheng said earnestly, with a humble posture, looking exactly like a junior offering a modest gift.

Cheng Hao couldn't help but twitch the corner of his mouth. He lowered his gaze, thinking to himself that Yicheng was talking nonsense. Knowing the owner of the shoe factory was true, but the price was truly not cheap—a pair of shoes cost thirty yuan, an average person's monthly salary.

Even those white leather shoes for Nianhua cost fifty yuan a pair.

"I got them at a wholesale price. Uncle Xu, Auntie Xu, please don't look down on them," Pei Yicheng continued earnestly while taking out the shining leather shoes, which looked particularly attractive.

"Yicheng, these leather shoes look really nice," Nian'an said, his eyes lighting up upon seeing the shoes.

Ling Dong glanced at the size and directly took out a pair for Nian'an, saying, "This pair is for you."

Nian'an immediately tried them on his feet and exclaimed in surprise, "These shoes even come with fur inside, they're warm and comfortable."

Walking in them, Nian'an felt as if he moved with the wind, with a sound at each step.

"Nian'an," Xu Qinghe glanced at Nian'an and said, "Yicheng, we can't accept these items, they're too valuable."

"Uncle Xu, Auntie Xu, the shoes are all in your sizes, I assure you they will fit. The Chili Sauce Factory has made so much money, and I am also very grateful to Auntie Xu. Without her skilful craft, the factory wouldn't have earned so much," Pei Yicheng said, pursing his lips: "If you don't accept them, we can't use these shoes; they would just go to waste."

"Yicheng, I know you want to help us. We have also made money with the chili sauce. These shoes..." Ji Ying felt like accepting so many shoes didn't seem quite right.

Nianhua whispered, "Mom, since he has already brought the gifts, if you really send them back, it might hurt people's feelings. How about we reciprocate with something else later on?"

"Don't be so polite, it's just a few pairs of leather shoes," Du Chang spoke up. "Qinghe, you and your wife shouldn't refuse. You've been so kind to Yicheng, and it's only right for him as the junior to give something in return."

In the end, the Xu family still accepted the six pairs of leather shoes, and truth be told, each pair fitted them perfectly.

Especially the pair of small white leather shoes for Nianhua, they looked exceptionally eye-catching.

"Yicheng, thank you," Ji Ying said sincerely. Even though the family had thanked him already, she still wanted to express her gratitude.

"I should be thanking you, actually. Your massage technique from last time, Grandpa Du said it was really good," Pei Yicheng's lips slightly lifted into a smile, feeling happy at the thought of Ji Ying caring about him.

He was determined that the next time he came to the Xu family's home, he would be able to stand up!

He didn't want to be carried in like this anymore.

"Grandpa Du, could you check on my sister-in-law for me?" Nianhua changed the subject.

Chapter 212: Taro Rice Pudding Gets Good Reviews

"What's wrong with Xiaohe?" Xu Nianji asked subconsciously, looking at Zhou He beside him with a face full of concern and worry.

"Doctor Du, I'm troubling you."

Ji Ying said this with a smile, giving no explanation to Xu Nianji.

Glancing at the shy Zhou He and considering they had been married for half a year, Doctor Du stood up to take Zhou He's pulse. His suspicions confirmed, he laughed and said, "Congratulations, you're going to be a father."

Xu Nianji was confused. Just a moment ago he had been concerned that Zhou He might be feeling unwell, but now he was hearing Doctor Du's words, and he felt like he couldn't understand them.

Going to be a father?

Did it mean what he thought it meant?

Excited joy shimmered in Zhou He's eyes. Previously, she had only guessed, but now, with the confirmation, she was going to be a mother. She felt nothing could be more thrilling or exciting.

"Xiaohe, we're going to have a baby."

Xu Nianji couldn't care less about the crowd, happily embracing Zhou He like a foolish boy, repeatedly exclaiming that he was going to be a father.

Inside the room, only Xu Nianji's excited laughter remained.

"Be careful, don't bump into the baby." Ji Ying was afraid Xu Nianji, with his roughness, might hurt the child in Zhou He's belly!

That was her first grandchild after all. Hmm, even if it was a granddaughter, she would be just as delighted.

"Mom, I'm so happy."

Xu Nianji's entire face beamed with a smile, his eyes also brimming with joyous laughter.

"We are happy too, but, you need to be careful," Ji Ying reminded him.

"That's great, I'm going to be an aunt."

Xu Nianhua said excitedly, "I'm going to serve the dishes now, can't let my nephew or niece go hungry."

Xu Nianhua walked with a spring in her step. Her elder brother and sister-in-law could finally be together in happiness, and soon they would have a token of their love. She felt overjoyed.

The dinner was exceptionally lavish, especially Xu Nianhua's taro rice pudding, which received rave reviews from everyone!

"This is delicious!" Cheng Hao devoured the rice pudding, digging into the dishes, each one home-cooked, yet tasting even better than restaurant food.

Ling Dong ate silently, but the speed with which he devoured his meal spoke volumes about how delicious it was.

"Nianhua made this rice pudding; we have quite a lot of it around here, and there are several ways to make it," Ji Ying explained, pride evident on her face. All three of her children made her immensely proud.

"If it's tasty, eat more; we made a lot of the rice pudding."

Ji Ying said with a laugh, scooping another bowl of chicken soup for Zhou He, urging her to eat more to nourish herself.

In the past, when money was tight, simply having a bowl of chicken soup was not easy, let alone eating fish and meat.

Nowadays, life was good, and Ji Ying made sure the New Year's meals were well-prepared and abundant.

"Brother Qinghe, your children are all so accomplished. I'm truly envious," said Du Chang, who had drunk quite a bit, now on familiar terms with Xu Qinghe.

Over the years, Du Chang had always been alone, deeply engrossed in medicine, and rarely interacted with neighbors.

Now that he was so close to the Xu family, Du Chang was also happy.

"Doctor Du, you have such an outstanding grandson in Yicheng. I'm the one who's envious," Xu Qinghe had also had his fair share to drink.

"Stop calling me Doctor Du; it feels so formal," Du Chang urged, drinking with Xu Qinghe. From brotherly addresses, they progressed until Du Chang suggested, "Brother Qinghe, if you don't mind, just call me Uncle Du."

He had originally wanted to be referred to as Elder Brother Du, to seem younger, but then he reconsidered. Seeing Xu Nianhua talking with Zhou He, he suddenly became clear-headed; he couldn't mess up the generational hierarchy.

"Uncle Du," Xu Qinghe called out with ease, completely unaware of Du Chang's intentions towards his daughter.

Chapter 213: Discussing Return Gifts

Du Chang eventually stumbled home drunk, endlessly praising Xu Qinghe for having such good children, especially Xu Nianhua, whom Du Chang practically extolled to the skies.

Xu Qinghe too was tipsy and couldn't stop smiling as he listened to Du Chang's flattering words.

Knowing that he was going to become a grandfather very soon made Xu Qinghe even happier deep down.

In the end, aside from Ling Dong who was driving and Pei Yicheng who had difficulty moving his legs, both Cheng Hao and Du Chang got drunk.

The three men of the Xu family also drank quite a lot, and Xu Nian'an, who didn't like drinking, just flushed a bit.

"Ling Dong, driving at night is tricky, be careful on the road," Xu Nianhua reminded him, aware that the roads were not as smooth as those in future times.

"Don't worry, we'll make sure to get home safe and sound," Ling Dong said, helping the drunken Du Chang and Cheng Hao into the car along with Xu Nian'an.

Xu Nianhua stood beside Pei Yicheng, and compared to the warmth of the room heated by a charcoal basin, it was especially cold outside, with the chilly wind howling.

"You should go inside. It's cold out here," Pei Yicheng remarked, his eyes resting on her reddened face.

"No worries, I'll wait until they come over, then I'll wheel you out," said Xu Nianhua with a smile. "Is that prescription I read about in the book really effective?"

"Yes," Pei Yicheng replied, looking into her joy-filled eyes. "My grandfather says that after the massages, my foot seems to be doing better than before."

"That's wonderful! Then you must keep it up. Let my second brother massage your leg every day, and as for the doctors, I heard from my second brother that your grandfather has connected you with quite a few of them. I believe miracles will surely happen, and your leg will definitely be cured." Xu Nianhua spoke with burgeoning certitude, believing that his leg would surely heal.

"I also believe that my leg will definitely get better."

He would stand by her side, dignified and upright.

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After the Du family left, Xu Nianhua and Ji Ying together started to clean up the dishes and chopsticks. Zhou He wanted to help, but Ji Ying and Xu Nianhua disagreed, and the mother-daughter pair discussed the matter of returning the favor while washing dishes.

"The cured meat and sausages were already thought of in advance, but we can add something else," Xu Nianhua couldn't immediately think of what else to add.

"Nianhua, and to think, those few pairs of leather shoes are really nice," Ji Ying commented after trying on a pair of the leather shoes which were warm and stylish, particularly Xu Nianhua's white pair, which looked even more attractive.

"They're probably not cheap either." Xu Nianhua thought about the white shoes, and for a moment, grew distracted. She had never worn white shoes before. After being acknowledged by the Gu family, aside from going to school, she was either hiding at home or yearning to return to the Xu family.

Now that she thought about it, had the Gu family ever truly treated her like a daughter? If so, why hadn't she ever felt their love after being acknowledged by them?

She remembered wearing clothes that Gu Mingzhu didn't want; her shoe size was a thirty-six, one size smaller than Gu Mingzhu's. Except for a few pairs purchased right after returning to the Gu family, she had never bought shoes again until later when she started earning money and could buy shoes for herself.

"Nianhua?" Ji Ying looked at Xu Nianhua, who had become lost in thought, and suddenly felt that her daughter might be unhappy. She said, "Mom will buy you more leather shoes in the future. How about we go to the county in a couple of days and buy you a new outfit?"

"Before, the family was poor, and you hardly ever got to wear nice clothes." Ji Ying felt she had let her daughter down, as many of her clothes were alterations made by Xu Nianji and Xu Nian'an, and new clothes were a rarity all year round.

Chapter 214: Why Hasn't Your Wife Returned?

"Mom, I have enough clothes, but you guys should buy some," Xu Nianhua said with a sweet smile, brushing aside her previous thoughts. "Mom, you are already so good to us siblings. I think you and Dad are the best mom and dad in the world."

Xu Nianhua, with her sweet words, made Ji Ying extremely happy. She said, "Mom, I'll go to the county tomorrow and buy some cashmere to make clothes for my future little nephews and nieces."

"I also need to get some cotton fabric to make some clothes for the kids myself."

"And we need to get some padded quilts too. They have to be made with new cotton to be warm."

"We need more diapers so we can change them frequently."

Thinking about seeing her grandsons or granddaughters in nine months filled Ji Ying with immense joy.

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"Mom, how about we buy a sewing machine?" Xu Nianhua suggested as they looked at the fabrics they had bought. It seemed a bit inconvenient to borrow one from someone else's home.

Besides making clothes for the child, Ji Ying also wanted to make two pairs of trousers for Xu Qinghe.

"A sewing machine?"

Almost instantly, Ji Ying was tempted.

Mother and daughter agreed quickly, and they brought the sewing machine home.

When the sewing machine was carried home, everyone in the village was extremely envious.

A sewing machine cost a good amount of money. Everyone speculated that the Xu family's financial situation had truly changed from before—it was becoming more prosperous day by day.

Xu Family.

When Liu Sanmei heard that Ji Ying had bought a sewing machine, she couldn't help but sneer, saying disdainfully, "It's just a sewing machine. What's so great about it?"

She had completely forgotten that when she first brought home a sewing machine, she couldn't wait to tell the whole world.

She locked the sewing machine in her room, unwilling to let her daughters-in-law touch it.

In the end, seeing that Ji Ying was quite skilled, the task of sewing and mending clothes and trousers in the family fell to Ji Ying.

"Grandma," Xu Zhihao's voice rang out.

Liu Sanmei's eyes instantly lit up, and she said happily, "Has my Zhihao come back?"

"Grandma, I'm back," Xu Zhihao, dressed in a suit and wearing leather shoes, said as he carried liquor and snacks that Liu Sanmei loved.

Xu Zhihao took the items off his bike, his face red from the cold.

"Why didn't your wife come back with you?"

Liu Sanmei, seeing Xu Zhihao come back alone, was immediately displeased.

"Grandma, Qiuyun is pregnant, and it's cold outside. She wanted to come, but I didn't let her," Xu Zhihao explained with a smile. "What if she fell on the way? That would involve your great-grandson."

In fact, Shen Qiuyun didn't want to come back to the Xu family at all, so Xu Zhihao could only explain it this way.

"That's true, she's pregnant and does need to be careful."

Liu Sanmei happily pulled Xu Zhihao back into the house, eagerly asking how his wife's pregnancy was going and if she was eating well.

"Great, it's going really well. Grandpa, Grandma, this time Qiuyun also sent some liquor and snacks that you love, and she even bought clothes for all of you from South City. They are really nice."

Xu Zhihao began taking out the items one by one.

"Brother, is this my dress? It's so pretty!" Xu Jiaojiao immediately spotted a pink cotton-padded jacket with lace, and her eyes lit up instantly. The pink jacket with lace looked particularly beautiful.

Chapter 215: Shortage of Houses

"Pretty." Xu Zhihao glanced at Xu Jiaojiao, her pink cotton-padded coat really made her delicate face bloom like a flower.

Those more than ten yuan were well spent.

In his heart, Xu Zhihao thought that this time he returned, he had indeed spent a substantial amount of money.

"Qiuyun is about to give birth, and there'll be many expenses in the future, so don't be extravagant in your spending," Zhao Juxiang was concerned about her son's finances. It was enough to buy for her and his dad, but even the in-laws, as well as Zhiyuan and Jiaojiao, got new clothes—which must have cost a lot, right?

"Mom, this is a token of filial piety from me and Qiuyun," Xu Zhihao's words were as sweet as honey, and they sounded exceptionally pleasant.

"Grandma knew I didn't love you in vain." Liu Sanmei smiled with her eyes squinting. She was fully aware of Zhao Juxiang's thoughts, but even though she understood them, she didn't agree with the little schemes Zhao Juxiang had in her heart.

Both Zhihao and Zhiyuan had been doted on by her, their grandmother, since childhood. Zhiyuan was still in school, not to mention, but Zhihao was earning his own money now—what was wrong with buying a set of clothes for her, his grandmother, and his grandfather?

That was Zhihao's filial piety.

Liu Sanmei affectionately took Xu Zhihao's hand and said, "Qiuyun is giving birth in the first month of next year, right? See what's missing and tell Grandma."

"Grandma, actually, we're not lacking anything," Xu Zhihao replied politely.

Liu Sanmei said with a stern face, "Zhihao, you are my grandson, and Grandma isn't too old to be incapacitated yet—you don't need to be so polite with me."

"That's right, Zhihao, your grandparents have always adored you since you were little," Zhao Juxiang chimed in from the side.

Xu Zhihao seemed somewhat embarrassed and after a long while, under the encouraging gaze of his grandparents, he said, "Qiuyun's parents want to buy us a house, it's just, we're a bit short on money."

A house?

"Yes, in the company, don't they offer employee housing? Qiuyun's dad got us a set, it's just that we're currently a bit short of money." Xu Zhihao explained, looking as if he was afraid of being misunderstood by his grandparents, and said, "Dad, Mom, if it weren't for Qiuyun's dad, I would never have gotten this quota for the employee housing."

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"Five hundred yuan can buy a house?" Ji Ying, upon hearing Xiong Xihua's words, subconsciously found it hard to believe.

Xiong Xihua looked at her helplessly and said, "Are you focusing on the wrong thing?"

Ji Ying pursed her lips and said, "My in-laws are biased, you know that. This sort of thing is quite common."

When the family split up, Xu Zhong and Liu Sanmei only gave thirty yuan.

Ji Ying knew all too well that it was impossible for the family not to have a hundred or two hundred yuan to spare, but Xu Zhong and his wife were unwilling to give it, and for the sake of separating the household, she couldn't force them to contribute the money.

"Sigh."

Xiong Xihua let out a sigh. They were connected to Xu Zhong's family, by marriage, and according to the family hierarchy, she still had to call him "Uncle."

As the saying goes, when there's a stepmother, there comes a stepfather. Xu Qinghe had grown up under such biased treatment. To marry a good daughter-in-law like Ji Ying was like burning incense for eight lifetimes—otherwise, with Liu Sanmei's character, she definitely wouldn't have allowed Xu Qinghe to marry Ji Ying.

"If you ask me, Uncle Xu will surely regret it in the future," Xiong Xihua sighed and said, knowing well the nature of Zhao Juxiang and her husband. Talking about Xu Zhihao, even though he had married a wife from the city and worked in the city's supply and marketing cooperative, looking brilliant and radiant, Shen Qiuyun had not spent a single night in the countryside since their marriage!

Chapter 216: If Only She Was Omniscient

Shen Qiuyun clearly looked down on her husband's family, and as the Shen Family had only one daughter, Shen Qiuyun, it was almost certain that Xu Zhihao would eventually end up having no distinction from someone who married into the Shen family.

Zhiyuan and Jiaojiao also had high pride, and if Uncle Xu's family really had an issue, they would definitely run faster than rabbits.

"Sister-in-law, let's not talk about this anymore."

Ji Ying changed the subject and talked about the Xu Family's affairs, from initially being angry, she had now come to terms with it.

"I heard that your daughter Xiaohe is pregnant?" Xiong Xihua said with a smile, "Next autumn, you'll be able to hold a grandson."

"A grandson or a granddaughter, all are good."

Ji Ying, bringing up this matter, had the corners of her eyes crinkle with joy. She didn't believe in the preference for boys over girls; she loved them equally, whether Nianji's child was a boy or a girl.

"I wish my daughter-in-law would give me another granddaughter," Xiong Xihua reminisced about her elder grandson and started yearning for a granddaughter. She said, "Ah, I shouldn't keep you any longer, I need to head home. I made lion's head meatballs today, I'll have Xiaosong bring some over for you tonight."

"Sister-in-law, please don't bother, you've already given enough with the bacon and sausages, I feel embarrassed to accept more," Ji Ying looked at Xiong Xihua's homemade bacon and sausages, smelling their aromatic scent, and felt embarrassed to accept.

"It's just a bit of food, it's not worth much."

Xiong Xihua smiled and left. If it wasn't for Ji Ying taking her to work at the factory, how could she earn forty dollars a month?

This year during the New Year, she felt happier than in previous years.

No sooner had Xiong Xihua left, Zhang Meixiang and Liu Xiaoxiu, who were Cai Feng's mother and Yao Gen's mother, respectively, came over together, as if they had planned it. Zhang Meixiang brought canned fruit, and Yao Gen's mother brought malted milk.

"Just in time to nourish your daughter Xiaohe's body, next year she can give you a big, chubby grandson," Yao Gen's mother said laughingly as she handed over the items to Ji Ying.

Ji Ying said she wouldn't accept them, but they looked almost offended.

Besides them, others from the factory, where they had worked previously, all brought some gifts, which included snacks and fruits.

This kindness left Ji Ying quite moved.

"Mom, just accept it peacefully, it's not something too valuable. If you don't accept, they might worry," Xu Nianhua said smilingly. In the past six months, she had clearly noticed Ji Ying looking younger than before, because she no longer needed to do heavy labor, and also having something to look forward to made her life much more comfortable and naturally made her feel younger.

"Even if they hadn't brought these gifts, as long as they work well, I wouldn't stop them from working," Ji Ying was very satisfied with the current workforce at the factory: they were neat and agile, hardworking, and not troublesome — such good employees were more than satisfactory for Ji Ying.

"Mom, let's not dwell on this. Look at the fabric we bought, how should we make the clothes?"

Xu Nianhua looked at the newly bought sewing machine and fabrics, eager to make several clothes, but she was helpless.

She admitted to knowing quite a lot, but making clothes was still something she hadn't mastered.

Previously, in the Xu family, Liu Sanmei would never let a child like her touch a sewing machine, and it was even less likely in the Gu family.

"Ah, I wish I knew how to make clothes," Xu Nianhua sighed, thinking about the many time-travel and rebirth novels she had read. Why were those characters all capable of everything and yet she couldn't make clothes?

Especially that book, "Rebirth in the Eighties: Sweet Wife Entices", the heroine's sewing skills were simply amazing!

Chapter 217: You Can't Have It

"Aren't you the one who finds it troublesome and doesn't want to learn?" Ji Ying said with a laugh, her words flowing without restraint, "Nianhua, it's impossible for a person to learn everything."

From childhood to adulthood, Xu Nianhua had no talent in household chores or making clothes.

Ji Ying had once thought about teaching Xu Nianhua to sew, but Nianhua ended up with her fingers full of needle pricks, so Ji Ying eventually gave up on that idea.

"That's true, I have my strengths too." Xu Nianhua thought about her ability to earn money and felt a surge of pride. She said, "Mom, in the future, I'll earn a lot of money and let you and Dad enjoy a comfortable life!"

"Oh, did my Nianhua eat honey today?" Ji Ying's smile was nearly reaching her ears.

"Mom, I really mean it!"

Xu Nianhua blinked as she looked at Ji Ying and, clutching Ji Ying's hand, she said, "It wasn't easy for you and Dad to raise us. When you get old, my brothers and I will definitely take good care of you and make sure you live well."

"Very good, very good, it's enough that you all have this intention. All your Dad and I hope for is that you three siblings have smooth sailing ahead. If you're happy, your Dad and I are happy too," Ji Ying, holding her hand, said, "The most important thing for a girl is to marry into a good family. Nianhua, Mom knows you're definitely going to college in the future, but, there is something I still want to say to you."

"Choosing a husband, you must not just listen to his sweet words, but rather watch what he does. Sweet nothings are easy to say, just a move of the lips, but if his actions do not treat you well, you must never settle for such a man!"

Ji Ying said these earnest and heartfelt words, which she had wanted to say to Xu Nianhua for a while, especially since Nianhua was still in high school. Just a few days ago, Zhong Juan had a miscarriage, and Gao Jianshe even blamed her for not being able to keep the baby.

When Ji Ying heard about it, she felt that Zhong Juan had married the wrong person. Initially, when Zhong Juan foolishly followed Gao Jianshe, their relationship became known to everyone, and when she married into the Gao Family, she was looked down upon by her in-laws.

She worried about her daughter, so beautiful. If a boy were to pursue her, she'd have to keep her eyes wide open and not be foolishly deceived.

"Cough, Mom, I'm still young." Xu Nianhua hadn't expected Ji Ying to talk about this; she cleared her throat and said, "I don't want to get married; I just want to stay by your side."

What's so good about getting married? Staying by her parents' side, looking after nieces and nephews in the future—wouldn't that be a wonderful life?

"Which girl doesn't get married?"

Ji Ying thought Xu Nianhua was just shy and didn't realize that Nianhua was serious; she had never even thought about getting married.

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"Yicheng, if you keep pursuing a girl like this, how long will it take before she realizes you like her?" Cheng Hao felt almost desperate.

Just the other day, Pei Yicheng gave shoes as a gift and didn't say much else. Now, with the New Year approaching, he hadn't thought about giving another gift as a New Year's present, nor had he shown any interest in seeing her.

Sometimes, Cheng Hao wondered if Pei Yicheng even knew what liking someone meant.

"Yicheng, you need to tell her if you like her, how will she know otherwise?" Cheng Hao sounded like a love expert.

Pei Yicheng glanced at him and said, "You have time to worry about my affairs, you might as well try your luck outside. You might just run into the girl who makes your heart skip a beat."

"Ah, don't even mention it, Gaoliang County is not that big; finding one person is really too difficult."

When Cheng Hao thought about that Little Fairy he encountered last time, he felt it was extremely hard to find someone, especially since he didn't even know her name.

Chapter 218: I'll Be the Host

"It's almost New Year's, everyone likes to stroll on the streets, who knows, maybe you'll bump into her tomorrow." Pei Yicheng's words filled Cheng Hao's mind and eyes with the image of the long-haired Little Fairy.

Cheng Hao stopped babbling nonstop, trying to extract love advice from Pei Yicheng.

Pei Yicheng's ears were finally at peace.

Ling Dong massaged Pei Yicheng's leg the way Xu Nian'an had taught him, thinking to himself that Cheng Hao's girls couldn't hold a candle to the future Mrs. Cheng.

Besides, did someone as smart as Brother Cheng even need Cheng Hao's teachings?

Early the next morning, Cheng Hao wandered the streets, wondering if he would bump into Little Fairy and how long he would have to search since he still hadn't found her.

In Gaoliang County, everywhere you could see red couplets, the character "Fu" in red, and other festive New Year's items.

The roadside was lined with all sorts of snacks, with hawkers' cries constant and endless.

Small as the county was, the atmosphere was filled with the spirit of the New Year.

Could she be not a local?

That's why he had been searching for so long and still hadn't found her?

Lost in thought, Cheng Hao aimlessly roamed the streets. Suddenly, he caught a glimpse of a figure.

She wore a red coat and her black hair cascaded down her back. She seemed to be talking with someone. When she turned her head, that beautiful face appeared before his eyes, the oval-shaped with large eyes and dimples when smiling.

"I've found her!"

Cheng Hao shouted in his heart. As the crowd thickened, the figure was on the verge of disappearing. He hurriedly chased after her, stretching his neck, pushing through the crowd as if she'd vanish if he was late.

"Hey."

"Wait a minute."

Cheng Hao ran fast, calling out as he moved. Just as he reached the red-clad girl, he happily reached out his hand. Suddenly, someone tripped him from below.

"Ah..."

A scream went up, and Cheng Hao felt a pang in his foot, his hand clutching something reflexively.

There was chaos in the crowd. Zou Yaru felt a strong tug on her clothes, and the next moment, the force pulled her to the ground.

"Are you okay?" Cheng Hao, seeing her fall in front of him, asked with concern.

His gaze was filled with worry and urgency.

"Who are you? Can't you walk properly?" Zou Yaru was stunned, and on the side, Zou Yaqing immediately shouted, "If you fell, that's on you, why did you grab my cousin's clothes?"

"Yaru, how are you? I hope you didn't hurt yourself," Zou Yaqing said as she helped Zou Yaru stand up, "There are all sorts of people around these days. In broad daylight, they even dare to pull at someone's clothes."

Cheng Hao's handsome face turned beet red. He had never been scolded like this before. Ignoring his pain, he quickly got to his feet and explained, "I didn't mean to grab your clothes. I just got tripped by someone, and accidentally, you got dragged into it too."

"Who knows if you did it on purpose?"

Zou Yaqing was protective of Zou Yaru like a mother hen with her chick. Even though they were just cousins, their bond was deeper than that of sisters.

"My name is Cheng Hao, I'm twenty-two years old, my family lives in Ningbei Province. I'm here driving deliveries. The last time, on the bicycle, it was also me who... accidentally scared you. Do you remember me?"

In a stream of words, Cheng Hao voiced his apology, saying, "I'm really sorry, today's incident was just an accident. It scared you, how about I invite you both to a meal as an apology?"

Chapter 219: Yaru

"Who wants your dinner invitation?" Zou Yaqing glared at him, guarding Zou Yaru behind her, and said, "Do you think we can't afford our own meals? I see, you're not really inviting us to dinner, you're after my sister, aren't you?"

Zou Yaqing's words were straightforward without any disguise.

Zou Yaru's face turned red, and seeing quite a few people around watching them, she quietly tugged at Zou Yaqing's sleeve and said, "Sister Yaqing."

"Yaru, it's okay, in broad daylight, he can't do anything." Zou Yaqing's name was very elegant, but her personality was like that of a boy.

"You're mistaken, I am a decent person, not some riff-raff. I sincerely want to invite you for a meal," Cheng Hao unconsciously straightened his back. He was wearing a black jacket that day which highlighted his tall figure, a silver watch on his wrist, along with his handsome face, indeed made him quite persuasive.

"Do you remember me? Last time on Dufar Road, I was riding a bicycle, you were wearing a long white dress, and I accidentally knocked over your books," Cheng Hao, not giving up, continued to speak, reminding her of that day to make her recall clearer.

"I remember now."

Zou Yaru, sharply reminded by him, instantly remembered what had happened. That day, she remembered, he had been chasing after her, which frightened her into hiding.

But upon closer inspection now, Cheng Hao in front of her did not seem like the thug from that day.

He looked better, was dressed better, and even the watch on his wrist was something she had never seen before; it looked expensive.

"See? I told you, I am a good person," Cheng Hao walked forward with a look of surprise.

Zou Yaqing stood in front of Cheng Hao, her piercing gaze seemingly reminding him to maintain his distance.

"I'm Cheng Hao. What's your name?" Cheng Hao grinned, showing a row of neat, white teeth, completely ignoring Zou Yaqing. His gaze stayed fixed on Zou Yaru.

Unlike everyone he had met before, she had an artistic aura about her, her face delicately beautiful, he liked her more the more he looked.

"I've really never seen anyone who admits they're a bad person," Zou Yaqing curled her lips, seeing that Zou Yaru seemed to actually recognize him, she didn't say much.

"My name is Zou Yaru, this is my cousin, Zou Yaqing. She's a good person, just very protective of me," Zou Yaru replied with a gentle smile, revealing the dimples on her cheeks, her voice chiming like silver bells.

"Zou Yaru." Cheng Hao repeated her name softly, then praised, "Your uncle and aunt really knew how to choose a name, as charming as the person."

"Today is a fortunate day, and I sincerely invite you to dinner as my apology."

"These past days, I've been thinking that if I met you, I would definitely need to apologize; otherwise, I would be restless night and day."

Cheng Hao's words were sincere, his eyes filled with hope, as if asking, "Will you accept my apology?"

Zou Yaqing's lips twitched, intent on refusing, but noticing Cheng Hao's gaze almost glued to Yaru, she realized he was completely ignoring her.

"Right at the Qianjin Grand Hotel ahead," Cheng Hao pointed ahead to where people came and went to Qianjin Grand Hotel, saying, "Yaru, among friends, it's quite normal to invite someone for a meal, right?"

Cheng Hao smiled, showing his white, even teeth.

Zou Yaru nodded slightly, and the smile on the corners of Cheng Hao's mouth deepened.

Chapter 220: That's Quite a Coincidence

"Oh, got yourself a new love interest?" Ling Dong teased as he looked at Cheng Hao, who exhibited the same signs every time he fell for someone: humming tunes as he walked and with brows raised in a delighted disposition.

"Not yet," Cheng Hao happily shared that he had found that Little Fairy.

Ling Dong eyed him skeptically.

Gaoliang County wasn't particularly large, but it wasn't that small either. Could Cheng Hao really have bumped into that girl again so coincidentally?

"I'm telling the truth—I even know her name, Zou Yaru. Sounds lovely, doesn't it?" Cheng Hao boasted with a look of pride: "Yaru is a music teacher at a primary school. Her voice is as gentle and refreshing as the spring breeze when she speaks. I'm definitely going to win her over!"

Cheng Hao's face was full of determination. After he spoke with Ling Dong, he went to look for Pei Yicheng, chattering non-stop about his encounter with Zou Yaru that day.

Pei Yicheng held a book in his hands and hadn't turned a page for a long time, waiting until Cheng Hao had finished talking before he said, "Haozi, you still have to go back to Ningbei."

"That doesn't conflict with me pursuing her," Cheng Hao suddenly leaned in, grinning, "Cheng Ge, what do you say? If I bring Yaru back home, my parents would be happy, right?"

Cheng Hao's earnest face made it difficult for Pei Yicheng to burst his bubble.

Pei Yicheng closed the book and asked, "Which of your relationships has lasted three months?"

Cheng Hao: "..."

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On the twenty-seventh day of the last lunar month.

Xu Nianhua specially delivered the scarf he had knitted to Pei Yicheng.

"The wind is strong outside. Keeping this on will keep you warm. Next year, I think the Chili Sauce Factory could expand beyond chili sauce and fish chili sauce and also make fermented bean chili sauce and chicken chunk chili sauce. We can enlarge the factory a bit; that way, we can make more money."

Xu Nianhua had high hopes. Earning more at the factory ultimately meant repaying Pei Yicheng's kindness.

"Thank you."

Pei Yicheng held the warm scarf, a thick and cozy black number matching the sweater he was wearing, which fit him perfectly and kept him very warm.

He said, "No rush, next year you have your college entrance exams. You should focus more on your studies. Which university are you planning to apply to?"

"Beining University," Xu Nianhua had long decided, so he didn't have to ponder.

Beining University.

Wasn't that in Ningbei Province?

Pei Yicheng's eyes lit up in an instant, and his lips curved upward, saying, "My family is from Ningbei."

"What a coincidence," Xu Nianhua mused, head tilted to the side. He was from Ningbei Province as well, wasn't he?

"So, if you need help with anything in the future, you won't turn it down, right?" Xu Nianhua chimed in right away.

Pei Yicheng replied, "Of course not."

"Are you still using that method to massage your leg? How is it now? Does it feel better? Did Grandfather Du arrange a doctor for you?" Xu Nianhua bombarded him with questions, leaving Pei Yicheng momentarily taken aback.

She cared about him.

Pei Yicheng answered each question, mentioning he was planning to visit Xi Province to see a doctor after the New Year, as Grandfather had heard about a highly reputed traditional Chinese medicine practitioner there.

"That's good. Since the doctor is so renowned, I think your leg will definitely get better," Xu Nianhua said with overflowing confidence, her smile seemingly infectious, brightening the mood.

"It's especially cold these days; make sure to wear extra clothes and don't catch a cold."

Xu Nianhua's non-stop attention gave Pei Yicheng a peculiar feeling, akin to being fussed over by Grandfather.

But, how old was Xu Nianhua really?