

Regaining 231

Chapter 231: A Lifetime of Nianhua for You

A black and a red figure formed a stark contrast, as their eyes met, their affection was as deep as the ocean, as if they had endless things to say to each other.

The moment was frozen in time as her fingers continually pressed the shutter, capturing this beautiful scene.

Xu Nianhua heard the sound and was startled. She turned around and saw a beautiful young girl taking pictures with a camera.

She quickly stood up and took a step back, putting some distance between them.

"Xiaoning, when did you get here?"

Pei Yicheng was very surprised to see her.

"Brother, you don't come home for the New Year, and since dad couldn't leave, I had to come here to see you and grandpa."

Pei Yicheng put down his camera, revealing a round face— not the big plate kind but a baby face, with shoulder-length short hair that made her look youthful and pretty, like a girl of fifteen or sixteen.

She was dressed in a pure white cotton coat, the long coat reaching her ankles, with black leggings and black ankle boots. Wherever she stood, one could tell that this girl definitely came from no ordinary background.

Pei Yining, in three strides, turned two into two steps and ran up to Xu Nianhua, sizing her up. Nianhua was just the type she liked, appearing so gentle.

She smiled and said, "Happy New Year, my name is Pei Yining. I'm my brother's sister. What's your name?"

Pei Yining's smile was very friendly, without a hint of arrogance.

Xu Nianhua stretched out her hand to shake hands and introduced herself, "Happy New Year, my name is Xu Nianhua."

"Grant you a lifetime of splendor?" Pei Yining's eyes instantly lit up, feeling her name was exceptionally touching.

Xu Nianhua had never heard her name could be interpreted so beautifully.

Grant you a lifetime of splendor.

Pei Yicheng muttered to himself. As he raised his eyes, he saw two girls getting along famously. He thought the scene was very heartwarming.

Pei Yining and Pei Yicheng had contrasting personalities; Yining had been well protected and taken care of since childhood. She could have endless chats with someone she liked.

Though they had just met, Pei Yining and Xu Nianhua had a lot to talk about.

Both were high school seniors, planning to take their college entrance exams later this year. They had plenty in common.

Pei Yicheng was honorably left aside.

After taking Xu Nian'an to the doctor, Du Chang deliberately delayed their return until half-past eleven before they went back to the Xu family.

Du Chang was gleefully thinking that if Nianhua married Yicheng, their life would surely be wonderful.

However, as soon as he entered and reached the courtyard, he saw Pei Yicheng sitting there alone, basking in the sun and beside him, two girls chatting animatedly.

"Grandpa."

Upon seeing Du Chang, Pei Yining's body flitted towards him like a butterfly, and she began to say auspicious things, "Grandpa, Happy New Year, wishing you fortune as vast as the Eastern Sea and longevity as enduring as the Southern Mountains."

"Xiaoning, when did you get here? Why didn't you make a call in advance so I could have Ling Dong pick you up?" Du Chang was even happier when he saw his granddaughter.

"Grandpa, you and brother always say the same thing," Yining said, pouting unhappily. "Aren't you glad that I came to see you and brother?"

"Happy, very happy," Du Chang's smile nearly reached his ears.

Upon hearing this, Pei Yining immediately brightened up. She held out her hands to Du Chang and playfully said, "Grandpa, my New Year's money."

"You girl, who asks for it outright?" Du Chang, although chiding her with his words, pulled out a red envelope from his pocket and placed it in her hand. This was something Du Chang had prepared in advance for Pei Yining. He had heard before the New Year that she would be coming over but didn't know exactly when. Therefore, he had been carrying the red envelope in his pocket all month, ready to give it to her once he saw her.

Chapter 232: My future sister-in-law?

"Thank you, Grandpa, you're really great."

Pei Yining happily put the red envelope in her pocket and asked, "Grandpa, who is this..."

"He's my new apprentice, Xu Nian'an," Du Chang introduced. "This is my granddaughter, also Yicheng's sister, Pei Yining."

"Happy New Year." Pei Yining immediately asked, "Are you Nianhua's brother?"

Xu Nian'an, Xu Nianhua, their names alone suggested they were siblings.

"Yes." Xu Nian'an hung his head low, as if he dare not look directly at Pei Yining, who appeared to him like a young lady from a prestigious family.

"You're really lucky, my grandpa hasn't taken on apprentices in a long time," Pei Yining was very lively and cheerful.

With Pei Yining there, even lunch became much more lively; she was like a breath of fresh air.

Xu Nianhua had come to know Pei Yining, Yicheng's sister, and she was different from Pei Yicheng.

The two siblings, one was like a closed gourd, often going half a day without speaking.

The other was lively and cheerful, ever since she arrived, she hadn't stopped talking.

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"Second brother, you said Yicheng is sparing with his words, but this sister is really different."

Xu Nianhua liked Pei Yining's personality very much, always lively and cheerful with a constant smile on her face, it made one couldn't help but feel close to her.

"That's normal, it's good for a girl to be lively," Xu Nian'an glanced at her and said, "Little sister, sometimes you don't need to worry too much about others, focus more on yourself. The college entrance exam is coming up, we have to work hard and strive to get into college together."

"By the way, little sister, does Beining University have a medical school?" Xu Nian'an asked with concern.

"Beining University, isn't it known for its foreign languages?"

Xu Nianhua gave him a look and said, "The medical school in the Capital City is quite famous, isn't it? Why would you choose a university in Beining instead?"

"You're in Beining, so I want to go too, I can take care of you," Xu Nian'an said assertively. "Ningbei and the Capital City are a bit far apart, no, I'll do the same as you and I'll also apply for Beining."

"Second brother," Xu Nianhua stopped in her tracks and said earnestly, "I've grown up, I can take care of myself, you can't just go to Beining University because of me, your grades are good, you should go to a specialized medical college, you'll learn more there."

"No way," Xu Nian'an refused without hesitation: "You're a young lady on your own, going to university in Ningbei, I can't feel at ease."

"I'm going to university, not to do something bad?" Xu Nianhua tried to persuade Xu Nian'an, but he was very determined.

Second brother was usually easy to talk to, but sometimes he could be really stubborn, so she could only settle for the next best thing, thinking she'd persuade him once they had taken their exams.

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"Xiaoning, is there something on my face?" Pei Yicheng touched his face, feeling very strange under Pei Yining's fixed gaze.

Pei Yining rested her chin in her hands, looking at her brother who was still as handsome and spirited as before, and much better than when he first injured his leg; she asked, "Brother, be honest with me, is Nianhua going to be my future sister-in-law?"

Pei Yicheng, who was just about to take a sip of his tea, trembled, nearly spilling the cup.

"Bro, you can't fool me. You don't know how picturesque the scene was when I took your photo today. That deep gaze, the way you looked at each other, was such a pleasure to the eyes."

"You can't tell me you don't like her."

Pei Yining was only a year younger than Xu Nianhua, she understood all she needed to; she wasn't dim-witted and was very clever.

Chapter 233: Let's Talk About It After Passing the Exam

"Xiaoning, what you should be thinking about now is how to get into Beining University," Pei Yicheng avoided Pei Yining's words.

Pei Yining's eyes sparkled even brighter as she asked excitedly, "Brother, does that mean that Nianhua is really going to be my future sister-in-law? How did you meet her? Does she like it? Is she good to you?"

Knowing her own brother well, Pei Yining knew that his failure to deny her words meant he was giving his tacit approval!

Pei Yining bombarded him with a barrage of questions. Pei Yicheng pursed his lips, looked at her for a long while, and then said, "Xiaoning, didn't you come to see me?"

Pei Yicheng's hand rested on his legs, covered by a thin blanket.

"Of course I came to see you."

Pei Yining answered without a second thought, and as she followed his hand movements, her gaze also fell on his legs. Her mind was filled with worries about his legs not yet being healed, and her smiling face was instantly replaced by concern.

"Brother," Pei Yining began to speak but then stopped herself, unsure of how to proceed, even afraid to ask.

Seeing him still seated in the wheelchair, she knew his legs had not yet healed.

"Don't worry, your brother won't be unable to stand up forever," Pei Yicheng no longer avoided the topic as before but was filled with hope. He said, "After the Lantern Festival, I am going to Xi Province to see a doctor. That doctor has reviewed my medical records and believes there's a sixty percent chance."

"Really?"

"That's great!"

Pei Yining danced around excitedly, her exhilaration and happiness clearly written across her face.

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"Nianhua, will knitting a scarf delay your plans?" Pei Yining, having seen Pei Yicheng's scarf, knew that Xu Nianhua had knitted it, and instantly fell in love with the idea.

After finding out, Xu Nianhua planned to knit a scarf for Pei Yining.

"No, it won't. I can finish it in three days," Xu Nianhua smiled warmly, having not spent much time with her but already enjoying their interactions. She found her simple and straightforward.

"Nianhua, thank you."

Pei Yining strolled hand-in-hand with her on the streets. Despite the cold wind, the warm sunshine lifted her spirits. She somewhat regretted, "I should have brought my camera out. The scenery here is really beautiful."

"Do you like taking photos a lot?" Xu Nianhua asked.

"Yes, I love to take my camera and shoot everywhere. I've captured the sunrise at Qingyun Mountain, beautiful sunsets, the endless sea, and even seagulls catching fish. Those photos turned out really nice."

"Nianhua, when you go to Beining, I'll show you these photos."

Pei Yining's thinking was straightforward; she liked Xu Nianhua, her brother liked her, so she definitely wanted to foster a good relationship.

"Sure, I'll go to Beining University later."

"That's great, I'm also planning to apply to Beining University. In the future, we'll be alumni," Pei Yining said excitedly.

If Pei Yicheng were there, he would certainly say: If you don't work harder, you won't even get into Beining.

Pei Yining's grades were average, and she needed to work harder to get into Beining University.

"Cheng Hao."

Pei Yining, across the street, was downright shocked when she saw Cheng Hao, as she hadn't seen him yesterday and heard he might have gone out.

She hadn't expected to see him today.

But...

Pei Yining's excited eyes instantly dimmed.

"That must be Teacher Zou. I've heard Cheng Hao has been pursuing her, and by the looks of it, he's succeeded," she said.

Xu Nianhua followed her gaze to see Cheng Hao talking with a long-haired girl. Though they weren't particularly intimate, they gave off a close vibe, looking just like a couple.

Chapter 234: The Girl in the Painting

"He had more suitors in Ningbei than I could count on both hands," Pei Yining said with a sour tone.

Xu Nianhua snapped back to reality and instantly sensed the gloominess and loss in Pei Yining's eyes.

Xu Nianhua glanced again at Cheng Hao. Suave and debonair as he was, one could easily be deceived by his appearance.

Young girls experiencing their first flush of love could indeed be easily smitten by him.

"Yining, I'm going to go home to read and do some test papers this afternoon, so I won't be able to hang out with you," Xu Nianhua changed the subject, thinking that a girl's love comes swiftly and leaves just as quickly. If she could focus her attention elsewhere, by the time the exams were over and six months had passed, after entering university, perhaps this hazy affection would be put aside.

Even if it wasn't, by then she'd surely have matured and thought more comprehensively.

"Can I go to your house?" Pei Yining looked at her with hopeful eyes. She heard from her brother that her grades were especially good.

"Of course, you can, it's just that my home is a bit simple," Xu Nianhua glanced at her clothes. Her home was modest, and she feared Pei Yining might not fit in.

Pei Yining said nonchalantly, "If you can live there, Nianhua, so can I."

Only after arriving at the Xu family home did Pei Yining realize that Xu Nianhua hadn't exaggerated at all.

She thought the little flat where her grandfather lived was quite rundown, but compared with Xu Nianhua's place, it was almost luxurious!

"Why don't you come over to my place for dinner, and later my brother can drive you home?"

Before Xu Nianhua could finish speaking, Pei Yining quickly shook her head and said, "Nianhua, a house that can shield us from wind and rain is perfectly fine to live in."

"Happy New Year, Uncle and Auntie. I'm Pei Yicheng's sister, Pei Yining." Pei Yining looked like a young girl but was very polite. She even brought quite a few gifts with her, including local specialties from Ningbei and some she bought in the county.

"Happy New Year, you really are Yicheng's sister. You're very pretty, like a girl out of a painting," Ji Ying was utterly surprised since she hadn't expected Xu Nianhua to bring Pei Yining home, causing quite a shock.

"Thank you for the compliment, Auntie," said Pei Yining with a blush on her face, feeling sweet inside from Ji Ying's straightforward praise.

After Xu Nianhua introduced Pei Yining to the family, they went into her room.

Despite the dilapidated exterior, Xu Nianhua's room was very cozy. She had covered the wooden plank walls with white paper, making the room look very clean, and the red quilt with big flowers on the bed added a novel and festive touch to Pei Yining's eyes.

Next to the bed was a table made by Xu Qinghe himself. The table was spacious and the natural wood color added an attractive, neat appeal with books arranged orderly on it. Beside it was a small mirror with clam oil and elegant cream below.

At the foot of the bed was a wardrobe that, although old, was very clean.

"Your room is quite... different," Pei Yining said, visiting such a place for the first time and finding it an unexpected surprise.

"This quilt is quite festive," she said genuinely, maybe because it was spread so neatly, but it felt comfortable and substantial.

"My mom made it especially for me. There are only these kinds of flowers, but the cotton inside is all new," Xu Nianhua explained, and now that her family had some money, Ji Ying naturally wouldn't shortchange them.

The old quilts had been made into mattress pads, and the new ones, newly filled with cotton, were soft, warm, and comfy.

"Very soft," Pei Yining reached out to touch, feeling its softness, which was especially comfortable in hand.

Chapter 235: Sour and Spicy Fish

"Nianhua, you did so well on your exam."

Pei Yining had flipped through Xu Nianhua's papers, clean and neat, just like a model answer sheet, which was very eye-pleasing, especially with all the red check marks, making Pei Yining feel that her own homework paled in comparison.

Her desk was large, piled with many books, yet neatly organized and categorized, making it extremely convenient for Xu Nianhua to pick up anything she needed.

"I still made quite a few mistakes."

Over the past six months, Xu Nianhua had studied hard enough to pick up all the knowledge she had forgotten. It indeed wasn't easy.

"Oh, if I had your grades, I wouldn't have to worry about not getting into Beining University," Pei Yining sighed heavily.

Xu Nianhua encouraged, "Yining, you need to work hard to get into Beining University. I am going to the foreign languages department. You could choose any major you like, and then we could be schoolmates."

"I want to be schoolmates with you," Pei Yining said with a hopeful face. The idea of studying hard was even more entrenched in her heart, and her goal became even firmer.

"Then push yourself hard. Aren't you staying here for a week? If you don't mind, you can stay at my house, and we can study together." Xu Nianhua was grateful for the help Pei Yicheng had given them and naturally wanted to assist Pei Yining.

This was a case of repaying kindness with kindness.

Xu Nianhua, who had once run a training school, was best at teaching students.

Pei Yining's admiration for Xu Nianhua continued to grow.

Initially, it was just curiosity.

Curious about why her brother liked Xu Nianhua so much, but as Pei Yining got to know Xu Nianhua better, she found Xu Nianhua's personality great and her academic performance outstanding. Being around her was incredibly relaxing.

Even when Xu Nianhua taught her topics she didn't understand, she was very patient, and her methods were so effective that Pei Yining would understand immediately.

"Nianhua, Yining, dinner is ready," Ji Ying said with a smile, "Today you are in for a treat. Cai Feng caught some fish and gave us one. Tonight we have spicy sour fish."

Spicy sour fish, as the name suggests, was both sour and spicy.

Pei Yining, while fanning her mouth from the spice, still wanted to eat more of the fish as it tasted exceptionally good.

"Drink some water." Xu Nianhua handed her a glass of warm water. This dish was her mom's specialty, sour and spicy, delicious to the point where you'd want to drink even the soup.

"It's delicious. Auntie's cooking skills are so impressive."

Pei Yining praised and even after resting that evening, Pei Yining and Xu Nianhua still couldn't stop thinking about that fish.

And the stir-fried bamboo shoots with bacon was also incredibly tasty. The freshness of the bamboo shoots, coupled with the aroma of the bacon, made Pei Yining think that although the Xu family's house was a bit old and the food looked less refined than at her home, the flavors were truly memorable.

"Nianhua, I feel that your family interacts so warmly. It's really enviable," Pei Yining said as she lay in the soft bed, the bedding so plush and soft, which was a novel experience for her.

"We are a family, and families should live together harmoniously," Xu Nianhua said, her lips curving into a slight smile. She also loved the atmosphere at home.

Money can be earned, but a warm and harmonious family is priceless.

When Pei Yining thought of her own family, she felt downhearted. Her father and brother would argue every time they met, nothing like the peaceful relationship between Uncle Xu and Xu Nianhua's brothers.

Perhaps the sun could rise from the west, but her brother and father getting along might still be impossible?

Chapter 236: Where Did the Watch Come From

They nestled together under the blanket, leaning against the bed as they chatted.

"You two get along well too. I see you and your brother interact nicely," Xu Nianhua said, noticing the sadness in her eyes and trying to comfort her.

"But my dad and my brother start fighting as soon as they meet," Pei Yining blurted out, then quickly added, "My dad and my brother have a little misunderstanding about my mom's matter, so they don't get along well. You know how my brother is, he can't stand even a speck of sand in his eye."

"My brother is very good to me. If anyone dares to bully me, he would be the first to disagree," Pei Yining spoke of Pei Yicheng with heartfelt warmth, explaining, "My brother doesn't talk much usually, but his legs were injured while saving someone."

Pei Yining said these things because she wanted Xu Nianhua to have a better impression of her brother.

"I heard from Cheng Hao, don't worry, I believe your brother's legs can definitely be healed."

Xu Nianhua comforted her, chatting with Pei Yining about everything under the sun as the candlelight flickered, bringing the two closer.

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"Yaru, why did you change your watch?"

Luo Yufeng noticed the pink watch on her daughter's wrist, which was clearly different from the previous one.

"Mom," Zou Yaru instinctively tried to hide her hand behind her back.

Luo Yufeng stood up and scrutinized her, suspiciously asking, "Who were you just with?"

"It was just Yashi," Zou Yaru, not good at lying, said this and immediately appeared guilty, nervously clasping her hands together.

"Really?"

Luo Yufeng drew out her words, knowing her daughter's lying habits well, she sat down and said sternly, "Then I'll ask Yashi tomorrow why she asked you out tonight."

"Mom, we just had dinner together," Zou Yaru said, which was true—they had indeed started dinner together, but Zou Yashi had to leave halfway through, and then she had met Cheng Hao.

"What about the watch then?"

Luo Yufeng stared intensely at her, saying, "Yaru, you're not young anymore, not some naive girl. You should know that one should not take what cannot be reciprocated."

"Mom," Zou Yaru replied, feeling both ashamed and angry, "Am I that kind of person?"

Being accused like that by her own mother, Zou Yaru felt so embarrassed she could hardly show her face, stammering an explanation about Cheng Hao and the watch, which she had planned to return the next day.

But the watch was truly beautiful and unavailable in South City, which tempted her to wear it for a while.

"Zou Yaru!"

Luo Yufeng, furious and in pain, had only suspected, but hearing Zou Yaru admit to the relationship with Cheng Hao outraged her even more. She yelled her full name, declaring, "Zou Yaru, whoever Cheng Hao or Li Hao may be, you are not permitted to be with him."

Zou Yaru was stunned by the scolding.

"Yaru, do you remember Gu Junhe? Your cousin? He really likes you. Think about it, if you could marry him, our future would be much improved," Luo Yufeng, frustrated, looked at Zou Yaru wishing she could delve into her mind to see what was there.

Could Cheng Hao or Li Hao be better than Gu Junhe?

"Mom, he's just my cousin, and we're not even that close. Plus, I don't like him," Zou Yaru said, her brow furrowing instantly at the mention of Gu Junhe, a playboy whose gaze always made her uncomfortable.

Chapter 237: What's Wrong with Him?

"That too is through connections, if it were someone else, they wouldn't even get a meeting." Luo Yufeng looked at Zou Yaru with frustration and said, "Do you know how much money that jewelry store owned by the Gu Family makes in a year? And the house the Gu Family lives in, can our kind of building compare to that? It's so grand!"

"If you could marry Gu Junhe, would you ever have to worry about not having good days ahead?" Luo Yufeng's heart ached with anger, she was considering her daughter's future, but why couldn't her daughter understand her at all?

"Mom, are you trying to marry me off, or sell me off?"

Zou Yaru didn't like Luo Yufeng's attitude, she pursed her lips and said, "I like Cheng Hao, I've already decided that I want to be with him."

From her childhood, she had always been pampered; the more Luo Yufeng opposed, the more she felt that Cheng Hao was good.

Although they had known each other for only a short time, Cheng Hao treated her sincerely, his fondness was obvious in his eyes, but it didn't make her feel disgusted.

"Zou Yaru!"

Luo Yufeng called her name out in full, preaching to Zou Yaru for half an hour, but Zou Yaru didn't seem to take any of it in, she said, "Come with me to South City tomorrow."

"I won't go," Zou Yaru refused, "Mom, you're going to South City for business, you might not come back even during the Lantern Festival, I still have classes, I'm not going."

"Then you must not go see that man." Luo Yufeng urgently warned, she used to be most confident about her daughter, but now, looking at her daughter's pretty face, she felt insecure again, a good girl fears a persistent suitor, who knew what that man might resort to?

"Mom, I have a lot to deal with."

Zou Yaru didn't directly answer Luo Yufeng, she only said, "Just go to South City at ease, I promise I won't do anything to disgrace you."

"That's more like it." Thinking of how Zou Yaru had been obedient and well-behaved since childhood, Luo Yufeng felt assured that she wouldn't do anything embarrassing, but she still repeatedly reminded Zou Yaru not to go see that Cheng Hao or Li Hao.

The next day, Luo Yufeng brought Zou Yashi over, repeatedly telling Zou Yashi to keep a close eye on Zou Yaru, to not let her be deceived by any man.

"Auntie, don't worry, I'll move in today." Zou Yashi was now working at an organization, and she lived alone in the county, this was just right, staying with Yaru.

"Yashi, I trust you the most."

Luo Yufeng thought that with Zou Yashi around, the two cousins together, with Zou Yashi watching out, nothing unexpected would happen, so she went to South City with peace of mind.

Yaru's father was in South City, and hadn't come back for years; if it weren't for returning to tend to his seriously ill wife, she wouldn't be able to stay in the county either. Now, with her mother's health

improving, Luo Yufeng's heart flew off to South City; she had to keep an eye on Yaru's dad, in case some vixen took an interest in him, she wouldn't even have time to cry.

"Yaru, do you really want to be with Cheng Hao? Isn't it too soon?" Zou Yashi still found it hard to believe, the time they had been together was so short, how could they have decided to be together just after the new year?

Zou Yaru smiled and said, "Sister Yashi, what's wrong with him? Why shouldn't I be with him? Do you remember the incident before the new year when my bag was stolen? He helped me get it back, plus, his personality is also very good, he's sincere and generous to people, and he currently has a stable job driving and delivering goods for Good Mom Food Factory, I think it's really good."

Chapter 238 I Really Envy Nianhua

"But it's only been a few days," Zou Yashi felt her cousin was blinded by love, otherwise, she wouldn't have decided to be together so impulsively. She said, "All things considered, they've only known each other for half a month. I think it's too soon. They haven't spent enough time together; who knows what kind of person he is?"

"I heard he is from Ningbei, which is not close to here. If you really get married, are you going to follow him to Ningbei?" Zou Yashi advised, "I think it's better to think this through more thoroughly, there's no rush."

"Yashi, we've just started dating, we haven't thought about things that far ahead," Zou Yaru's face was flushed with shyness, and her eyes contained a hint of timidity, clearly smitten by love.

Zou Yashi wondered: Could love really have such immense power?

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"Nianhua, your hands are truly skilled."

Pei Yining held the bright red scarf, unable to let it go. In just three evenings, she had watched it transform from yarn into a beautiful scarf, a process that felt simply magical.

The scarf Xu Nianhua knitted looked even better than those available in the market.

"Actually, it's very easy, you can learn it too," Xu Nianhua said, seeing how much she cherished it, feeling that the effort she had put in over the past few nights was worthwhile.

"No, touching that small, long needle, I just can't use it."

Pei Yining felt she probably lacked the talent for it.

"Nianhua, you should teach me foreign languages instead. I feel like my foreign language skills have improved a lot with you," Pei Yining previously had particularly poor skills in foreign languages, she was fine with other subjects, but with languages, she likely had no natural talent for it, even though its importance was not as significant now, it still held her back.

"Okay."

Xu Nianhua would naturally not refuse. She had encountered various types of students, and Pei Yining had merely not found the right method of learning, plus she always believed she couldn't learn foreign languages, which made it even harder for her to actually do so.

She planned to teach Pei Yining the method she had created for learning foreign languages, which could still lead to improvements if Yining studied diligently over half a semester.

"Nian'an, do you think Nianhua might lead someone astray by teaching like this?" Ji Ying, looking worried, asked as she watched both of them.

Xu Nian'an glanced over and said, "Mom, don't worry, my younger sister's foreign language skills are better than mine, even better than what the teachers taught."

In his words, there was a sense of pride, not just him, but even at school, Nianhua's teaching methods had significantly improved her classmates' foreign language scores.

Since she could teach her classmates effectively, teaching Pei Yining would surely be no issue.

"Really?" Ji Ying's face was filled with smiles as she praised, "My Nianhua is so clever."

He was clever too, wasn't he? His performance had improved significantly. Previously his chance of getting into college was seventy percent, but now, it was a full one hundred percent!

Furthermore, his master Du Chang had even complimented his talent.

Xu Nian'an waited and waited, hoping Ji Ying would praise him, but Ji Ying turned and went into the kitchen to make something delicious.

Xu Nian'an: "..."

Mapo Tofu, Meicai Kourou, cured sausage, and Stir-Fried Baby Bok Choy, Stir-Fried Rabbit—the array of dishes spread across the table was immensely appetizing.

"Aunt Ji, I am truly envious of Nianhua, being able to eat the food you make every day."

Every meal at the Xu family, Pei Yining ate two bowls of rice, the food at the Xu family was just too delicious!

Chapter 239: Hooking Fingers

"Nianhua, I can't bear to leave."

Pei Yining hugged Xu Nianhua, her face full of reluctance.

Having stayed at the Xu family's home for a week, Pei Yining truly couldn't bear to leave.

The atmosphere at the Xu family's was truly wonderful; Aunt Ji was gentle and kind, and cooked delicious meals. Uncle Xu, though not a man of many words, knew she liked Nianhua's desk and specially made her a large desk set, which she could simply bring home and assemble herself. The eldest Xu brother and his wife were honest and treated the sister-in-law with particular care.

There was also the second Xu brother, who, like his elder brother, cherished his little sister equally.

"In six months, we'll meet at Beining University," Xu Nianhua comforted her, feeling a bit awkward being hugged like this by Pei Yining.

Pei Yining, holding her hand firmly, declared, "I will definitely get into Beining University!"

If previously Pei Yining had thought about just getting into any university, her obsession with Beining University had been because her elder brother attended there. She thought she might as well try hard, and if it didn't work out, switching to another university wouldn't be bad, especially since there are many universities in Ningbei Province.

But now, Pei Yining had only one goal: Beining University. She wouldn't consider any other universities.

"Okay, it's a promise," Xu Nianhua said with a smile, a sense of accomplishment rising within her as she saw the determination in Pei Yining's eyes. She felt happy too; after all, one should always strive their best!

"Pinky promise."

Pei Yining hooked her little finger with Xu Nianhua's. Having grown up in the village under the pampered care of her parents and two elder brothers, who wouldn't let her do any heavy or tedious chores, Xu Nianhua had only ever done light tasks that didn't harm her hands. Thus, her hands were beautiful—fair and slender, with neatly trimmed nails.

"We're all grown up now," Xu Nianhua always thought this gesture was too childish, like something a small child would do.

But Pei Yining took it seriously, and Xu Nianhua couldn't bring herself to reject it. Pei Yining earnestly said, "Pinky promise, hang by the neck, not allowed to change for a hundred years."

After speaking, Pei Yining whispered in her ear, "Nianhua, I really liked the scarf you gave me. When I get back to Ningbei, I'll send you a gift, and you must not refuse it, or I'll be really upset."

"Your address, I've kept it all safe, the village address, and the addresses for your school and the food factory; I remember them well. Make sure you don't forget mine, and write to me," Pei Yining reminded her multiple times, afraid Xu Nianhua would forget as soon as she turned around.

"I remember," Xu Nianhua repeated Pei Yining's address, impressing Pei Yining with her memory.

Xu Nianhua smiled and then added, "Oh, and when you get your period, remember to keep track of the dates, and before it starts, make sure not to touch cold water, not to eat too spicy food, get plenty of rest, and always wash your hands with warm water. Don't touch cold water."

"Also, don't wash your hair when you have your period, to avoid headaches later,"

Xu Nianhua kept giving her advice non-stop, and Pei Yining, glancing around and seeing it was just the two of them, still felt a bit embarrassed, yet when Xu Nianhua mentioned periods, her matter-of-fact attitude made it less embarrassing for Pei Yining. She said, "Nianhua, let's not talk about this, you sound just like Aunt Wan. I'll be careful."

Pei Yining had gotten her period yesterday, and she had washed her hair yesterday afternoon, a topic that Xu Nianhua had nagged about for a long time, giving Pei Yining a feeling of dealing with Aunt Wan.

Chapter 240: I like Nianhua

"Bro, I like Nianhua."

That was the first sentence Pei Yining said when she returned to her grandfather's house. She sat beside Pei Yicheng, looked at him seriously, and declared, "Bro, you have to marry Nianhua and bring her back as my sister-in-law. She's so amazing, Aunt Ji's cooking is delicious too, and Nianhua's Meicai Kourou is especially tasty."

"Nianhua also taught me how to study, especially foreign languages. I feel like I've improved so much, I'm definitely going to get into Beining University."

"Nianhua even takes care of me like a sister. I think, with such a wonderful girl, it would be such a waste if you let her slip by, right?"

Pei Yining's lips never stopped moving, mentioning Nianhua with every sentence she spoke, the affection unmistakable as she placed her above everyone else.

"Are you sure you're not harming her?" Pei Yicheng looked at her critically, his sister might be proud and aloof. Despite her lively and open demeanor, good at interacting with others, getting on well with Pei Yining was one thing, but winning her approval was entirely another matter.

In the past, there had been those who tried to get to know him through Pei Yining, but she directly rejected them, leaving them snubbed. Even if that person behaved extremely well, to Pei Yining's liking, she just didn't take to them.

According to Pei Yining, no matter how well they concealed it, their eyes were insincere.

"How am I harming her?"

Upon hearing this, Pei Yining immediately protested. She defended with righteous indignation, "My brother is so wonderful, and so is Nianhua. If you two got together, I think that would make life blissful and complete. Besides, even though Bro doesn't talk much, he still cares for people. With such a fantastic brother, I think he's perfect for Nianhua."

Pei Yicheng's hand rested on his leg.

His eyes seemed to say: If his legs remained unable to stand, then it would indeed be harming her.

"Bro, didn't the doctors in Xi Province say they can cure it? I believe your legs can definitely be treated," Pei Yining hurriedly said, unable to accept the fact that her excellent brother might be unable to stand for the rest of his life.

Pei Yining refused to believe this reality.

Pei Yining consoled him, saying, "Bro, you absolutely must not give up."

"..."

Pei Yicheng looked at his sister's anxious consoling expression and couldn't help but smile slightly. He said, "I'm going to my room to read."

Although he had taken time off from school, he hadn't given up on his academic knowledge in the slightest.

I wish you a lifetime of Nianhua.

This reminded Pei Yicheng of the interpretation Pei Yining had given him that day. As he held the pen, he found himself writing down that sentence involuntarily, and when he finished, he stared at the line on the paper, suddenly feeling a bit lost.

*

"Little Yining, Yicheng said you were here, and I didn't believe him. So you actually came?" Cheng Hao had been spending his days sweetly with Zou Yaru, coming and going early and late, completely missing Pei Yining's presence. Moreover, since Yicheng mentioned she had gone to the Xu Family's place, Cheng Hao felt awkward about going there to look for her.

Consequently, Cheng Hao thought Yicheng was teasing him.

Today, when Zou Yaru had to go to school, Cheng Hao came back early. The moment he saw Pei Yining in the living room, he thought he was seeing things.

"Cheng Hao, I heard from uncle that you're enjoying life here so much that you're reluctant to go back. With your life being so lush, how could you remember me?" Pei Yining was in the middle of memorizing foreign language vocabulary as Nianhua had taught her when she was suddenly taken aback by Cheng Hao's familiar voice.