

Regaining 241

Chapter 241: How Did I Offend Her

"Little Yining, you say we haven't seen each other in half a year, so don't be so sarcastic, okay? Have I offended you in any way?" Cheng Hao racked his brain but it seemed he hadn't done anything to offend the young lady.

Cheng Hao looked at Pei Yining with a beaming smile and said, "Little Yining, your arrival makes us feel like the sun is shining brighter, and it lifts our spirits. We're so happy to have you here!"

Cheng Hao clapped enthusiastically, and a round of applause echoed through the room.

Looking at his smile, Pei Yining found it as dazzling now as it used to seem pleasant. That day, when he was with that other woman, his laughter had been even happier, even more joyful.

Pei Yining forced a smile and said, "Cheng Hao, I am going back tomorrow."

Cheng Hao instantly felt awkward but, having a thick skin, he quickly replied, "Little Yining, since you've come all this way, why not stay a bit longer?"

"..."

Pei Yining looked down at her foreign language book and didn't answer Cheng Hao's question.

"Little Yining, have I offended you somehow?" Cheng Hao asked with a puzzled face. He had only just seen her; could it be because he didn't bring a gift?

Cheng Hao said cheerfully, "How about I take you to the city tomorrow for a stroll? Whatever you like, I'll buy it for you."

In response, Pei Yining stood up abruptly and turned to head back to her room.

"Hey..." Cheng Hao watched Pei Yining's retreating figure, baffled for a long time. How exactly had he managed to offend this girl?

When she was in a good mood, it was "Brother Cheng Hao" this and "Brother Cheng Hao" that. When she was not, it was just "Cheng Hao, Cheng Hao" all the time.

He was willing to buy her a gift, so why wasn't that making her happy?

"Ling Dong, what do you think is wrong with Little Yining? I don't think I've offended her, have I?" Cheng Hao grabbed Ling Dong, who had just entered the door, and asked him.

Ling Dong chuckled and said, "I don't know."

Even if he knew, he wouldn't tell you.

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On the tenth day of the first lunar month, Pei Yining took a car back to Ningbei, coincidentally Cheng Hao was delivering goods by driving there as well.

"Little Yining, how about I buy you a gift?" Cheng Hao felt utterly perplexed; he had somehow become the target of Little Yining's hostility.

"No need, my brother gave me quite a few things. I also have the smoked meat and sausages from Nianhua, along with some chili sauce and such. I'll take them home for Dad and Aunt Wan to try," said Pei Yining, sitting in the car and looking at the landscape receding behind her. She couldn't help but ask, "I heard you've found a music teacher?"

"You know about Yaru too?"

When Cheng Hao mentioned Zou Yaru, the corners of his mouth lifted slightly, his eyes filled with a dotting smile as he said, "Yaru is a music teacher, the most beautiful one I've ever seen. Meeting her has been really..." blissful.

He hadn't finished speaking when he turned and discovered that Pei Yining had fallen asleep with her eyes closed.

Cheng Hao swallowed all the praises he had for Zou Yaru; he and Yaru were in the sweetest phase of their relationship, wishing to declare their joy to the world, eager to share their happiness.

For the rest of the journey, Pei Yining didn't say a word until she boarded the train, and she didn't speak to Cheng Hao again.

"Little Yining, be careful on the train, okay?"

"The food is all in the bag; take whatever you want to eat."

"Let Xiaowu stick close to you, never leave your side, and don't go anywhere alone. Safety first."

Cheng Hao repeatedly reminded her and also instructed Xiaowu, who was escorting Pei Yining back, to take good care of her. The trains nowadays were not at all safe, especially for someone as beautiful and seemingly affluent as Pei Yining.

Xiaowu was skilled at defending; otherwise, he wouldn't have been sent by Uncle Pei to protect Pei Yining. But he would not skimp on warnings that needed to be given; after all, she was Cheng Hao's dear sister.

Chapter 242: Stall

Cheng Hao had seen Pei Yining onto the train, repeatedly reminding Xiaowu before, and only when the train clattered away did he quickly turn and leave. After delivering the goods, he planned to look for a gift for Yaru.

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"Our stall, it's been rented," Xu Nianji's face couldn't hide the smile, as he had waited for a long time to rent this stall for one person.

Previously, they had always sold right next to the door, but later, the guy who sold bean sprouts at the farmers market came over, and they had a conflict, which led to the decision to rent a stall.

They were selling bean sprouts outside, and many people would buy them on impulse, no longer going into the farmers market for them.

However, renting a stall wasn't easy either. When it wasn't the time to rent a stall, securing one was challenging. From before New Year to after New Year, and now, with the month almost over, they finally settled the matter of the stall, which made Xu Nianji incredibly happy inside.

With the stall rented, they could sell bean sprouts like before.

"That's great, big brother, now you have two jobs," Xu Nianhua said teasingly, "does sister-in-law especially feel pity for you at night?"

Early in the morning, Xu Nianji would go sell bean sprouts, staying there until noon before going home. In the afternoon, he would gather chili peppers from various towns, only returning home in the evening.

"Little sister."

Xu Nianji's face turned red, teased by his own younger sister. Thinking of how Zhou He would pity him at night, his heart still felt warm.

"She definitely does."

Xu Nianhua smiled broadly, having witnessed firsthand at home how Zhou He treated the older brother, with particular care and attention.

"Sister-in-law and big brother's love is profound, inseparable like weights on a scale, truly enviable," Xu Nian'an joked, but deep down, he was genuinely happy for his older brother. In the past, having gathered the strength of the whole family to bring sister-in-law home had indeed been the right move.

"Xu Nian'an, speak properly."

As Xu Nianji was being teased, his ears turned red. He sternly glared at Xu Nian'an and changed the subject. "Bean sprouts are selling better now. Little sister, how do you prepare the green bean sprouts you mentioned last time?"

"Just with raw mung beans, pretty much the same as raw soybean sprouts."

Xu Nianhua didn't continue teasing since her big brother was shy. If she went on, he would definitely feel embarrassed. She followed his conversational lead and said, "Mung bean sprouts clear heat and reduce fire. Add a bit of shredded ginger and plenty of soup, and the taste is still very good."

"Alright, I'll try it first."

Xu Nianji then asked if there was anything special to pay attention to and strode toward the house to start preparing the mung bean sprouts.

"Little sister, do you think my future little nephew will be good-looking?" Xu Nian'an thought about the child in his sister-in-law's belly, very excited about this future little nephew.

Xu Nianhua shot him a glance and said, "Big brother and sister-in-law are both good-looking; how could he not be good-looking? Besides, whether it's a little nephew or niece, they are our family."

She subtly reminded him, hoping he wouldn't foolishly share this thought in front of sister-in-law because if sister-in-law heard this, the pressure would surely be immense, and what if it turned out to be a niece?

No matter boy or girl, that child would be big brother's child.

Even though she knew her second brother had no ill intentions and was just speaking casually, sister-in-law was the child's mother; what if she overthought it?

"Little sister, I'm not silly." Xu Nian'an wasn't silly; in fact, he was quite smart. He said, "I'd only say this in front of you, and besides, whether it's a little nephew or niece, I'd love them all the same."

Chapter 243: I'm Not That Delicate

To successfully secure the stall rental, the Xu Family specifically bought flour and made dumplings to celebrate.

The flavors of the pork and cabbage dumplings and the pork and chive dumplings, with their enticing aroma, made it hard for anyone to resist smacking their lips.

"Big brother, when did you become so..." Xu Nianhua didn't finish her sentence, but the meaning was quite clear.

Xu Nian'an swallowed his saliva and said proudly, "Little sister, food is paramount to people, if I weren't interested in food, how much joy would life lose?"

Although he said so, Xu Nian'an's ears were slightly red. As a man, such an image of him drooling over dumplings, if spread, would be embarrassing!

"Big brother is right," Xu Nianhua raised both hands in support. In front of delicious food, she couldn't resist at all.

At night, steaming hot dumplings were served. The family sat together for dinner under the dim light of the kerosene lamp, which flickered but still clearly illuminated everyone's smiling faces.

"Mom, there's something I want to discuss with you."

After dinner, while the family was gathered around the stove chatting, Xu Nianji suddenly spoke up.

"We're family, just speak up," Ji Ying didn't like such formalities from her eldest son.

"It's like this, Xiaohe is pregnant, so I was thinking about the factory..." Xu Nianji hadn't finished his words when Zhou He interrupted, "Nianji."

Zhou He quickly gave Xu Nianji a look. She hadn't anticipated Nianji bringing up this matter suddenly.

If by chance the in-laws thought it was her idea to be lazy, that wouldn't be good.

"Xiaohe, I know you don't think that way, but I..." feel bad for you.

Xu Nianji didn't have the heart to finish those last few words. He looked at Ji Ying pleadingly and said, "Mom, this idea was my own, it has nothing to do with Xiaohe. I just think that being pregnant is very tough."

"I know, I know. My Nianji has grown to understand how to care for his wife," Ji Ying said with a face full of contentment. Seeing her son and daughter-in-law happy and in love was what they most hoped to see. Addressing Zhou He, who was anxiously explaining, she said, "Xiaohe, even if Nianji hadn't mentioned it, I would have thought of it. Being pregnant isn't like before when you were alone. From here to the food factory, it's a half-hour walk; indeed, it's quite tough. I remember the house Nian'an and Nianhua rented in the county, isn't there still one empty room?"

Originally, Grandma Cai's house had three rooms.

"Yes," Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an, brother and sister, nodded affirmatively, knowing what their mother meant. Xu Nianhua said, "Mom, the house is rented by our Xu family. It will be more convenient for sister-in-law to get to the factory if they live in the county, and big brother won't have to run back to the village every day either."

"Mom, don't listen to Nianji. I'm living well at home. Plus, I have company going to the factory with you every day. Besides, it's not far to walk there, and I'm not so delicate," Zhou He felt the caring intentions of Ji Ying and Xu Nianhua and was exceptionally happy. When she was with the Zhou Family, she always felt underestimated; never had she been so cherished by her family.

Because of this, Zhou He felt it was better for her to stay at home. She said, "Mom, back when others were pregnant, they still had to work in the fields. Just walking for me is not hard at all. I've heard it said, pregnant people should move around more, it makes the delivery easier later on."

With this, Zhou He felt a bit shy, her hand instinctively resting on her barely showing belly, her eyes and brows softened with a maternal tenderness.

This was her child, her and Nianji's child.

Chapter 244: Buy Land

In the end, everyone was persuaded by Zhou He. Walking was indeed easier and less tiring, and since Zhou He lived in the village, having her company on the way to the factory every morning was quite pleasant.

It wasn't just Ji Ying, Xiong Xihua and others were also going to the factory, they would look out for each other if anything happened on their way.

After this matter was settled, Xu Qinghe started to discuss the land purchase with everyone.

The atmosphere was warm as everyone voiced their opinions back and forth, making the scene feel cozy and fortunate.

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Shuangzhu Village.

A village close to the county town, where everyone knew about everyone else's business clearly.

One day, under the clear and sunny sky, a piece of news stirred up intense waves in the village.

The Xu Qinghe family was going to buy land.

And it wasn't just any land; they were purchasing three mu of land.

One mu of land could build over a dozen rooms, but the Xu Family went straight for three mu.

Even though the three mu of land were wasteland now, the Xu Family intended to use them to set up a factory.

Rumor had it that they were planning to open a furniture factory.

Since leaving the Xu Family, Xu Qinghe's life had really been getting better, to the point where they were now starting a furniture factory.

How much money had the Xu Family made after all?

Villagers gossiped and inquired among themselves, Xu Qinghe didn't keep it a secret, he only said that he and Xu Song planned to open a furniture factory to avoid having to pick up odd furniture-making jobs everywhere.

When this news reached Xu Zhong's family, Xu Zhong remained silent, not uttering a word. He just pinched a cigarette and began to smoke it silently, a luxury he seldom allowed himself, brought back from the county by Xu Zhihao.

"Impossible, where did you get this news?"

Liu Sanmei's eyes were wide with disbelief as she stared at Zhao Juxiang, questioning the veracity of her words. She said, "Juxiang, you can mess up eating, but you can't talk nonsense. Where would Qinghe's family get so much money? We know exactly how much he earns a month. Even if Ji Ying works in the factory, she could barely make two hundred at most. The money to buy land is not something you can get with just one or two hundred."

"That's what everyone in the village is saying, it can't all be false," Zhao Juxiang originally didn't believe it either, but with everyone spreading the news, she couldn't help but believe it. She added, "Also, Xiong Xihua's son, Xu Song, is also buying the land with them."

"Where did they get so much money?" mumbled Liu Sanmei, regretting that they had split from the family so soon.

Zhihao's venture didn't work out, and on top of that they had split off Xu Qinghe's branch, it was a huge loss indeed.

"I was also wondering, when we split the family assets, they begged pathetically more than anyone. Could it be that they've been hiding private savings over these years?"

While applying eye medicine, Zhao Juxiang said, "Dad, Mom, the money that Qingjiang and I earn, we contribute every last cent. Big brother and sister-in-law look so honest, who knows how much they have hidden over the years. We're still a family after all; how could they do such a thing."

If Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying were there, they would surely be hopping mad, cursing Zhao Juxiang for speaking falsehoods.

If anyone was hiding private savings, it was certainly Zhao Juxiang and her husband, but Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying, they were genuinely upright and had not saved a dime, which made their family life quite difficult right after the division of the family assets.

The Xu Family.

Xu Qinghe and Xu Yuchun, the brothers, were pleased. They had acquired the land for about the price they had anticipated. They were planning to properly celebrate and also to plan out the furniture factory in detail.

They had bought the land, and it had cost a substantial amount of money. It was a considerable investment—if they failed to make the money back, it would be a serious blow to the family!

Chapter 245: Definitely Hiding Private Money

"Three acres of land is not small, and not to mention building a house, even just making a perimeter wall will cost quite a bit of money..."

Ji Ying had not anticipated that with this purchase, they would end up with three acres of land; originally, they had only planned to buy one acre. However, the village on that side said that if one acre was sold, the rest wouldn't have much use and they'd have to sell it all together.

After Xu Yuchun and Xu Qinghe, the brothers, discussed it, they felt they had to buy the land. Otherwise, where would they set up the furniture factory?

They gritted their teeth and completed the purchase. After that, the initial plan was no longer feasible, as they now had even more land than before.

"It's not economical to fence it all in," Xu Qinghe shook his head too. They had already spent more than double the money on the land, and if they were to build houses as well, they would have to pour their entire fortune into it and would only be able to build the structures. Three acres of land could fit dozens of rooms. But what would he do with those dozens of rooms if he couldn't eat them?

In addition to constructing the buildings, they had to buy machinery and lumber, and also varnish and such. When all was calculated, just how much would the initial costs amount to?

"Dad, I think we should go ahead as we originally planned, build and fence the place, but we should set aside the remaining two acres. Later, when the furniture factory starts making money, we can think about expanding it, which would be great," suggested Xu Nian'an. The plan they had agreed upon with the other family could be directly implemented, and the extra two acres they had bought could simply be left unused for now. They could even store lumber there to prevent others from coveting it, saying they were occupying the village commune's space.

"I agree with what second brother said," Xu Nianhua extended his hand in support.

The shy Xu Song also said, "Dad, I also agree with Nian'an. We should just set the extra land aside. We've bought it, so even if we don't build anything on it, we can't let it become someone else's property."

He felt that Dad and Uncle Qinghe were overthinking it; buying extra land didn't conflict with their original plans.

Xu Yuchun and Xu Qinghe exchanged glances, and their initial worries instantly turned into joy.

Seeing that they were already discussing how to build the building and where to buy bricks for the perimeter wall, Ji Ying felt relieved. She believed that once the furniture factory was up and running, it would surely make money.

She got up to go back to her room, took some clam oil, and rubbed it on her hands. The days seemed colder than last winter, and her hands were painfully cracked.

After applying the clam oil, she went to help in the kitchen. She might not be able to help with chopping or stir-frying vegetables, but she was still capable of tending the fire.

As the two families celebrated the successful land purchase, Xiong Xihua also brought over several dishes and even a chicken that weighed nearly two pounds as a gift for Zhou He to replenish her health.

"Nianhua, you go keep Xiaosong's wife company. Don't stay here," Ji Ying, concerned about her daughter's hands, chased Xu Nianhua out of the kitchen.

"Big sister-in-law is there, I'll just stay here and tend the fire."

Xu Nianhua watched everyone busy in the kitchen. Aunt Xiong Xihua was preparing the vegetables, Ji Ying was stir-frying, and she also had to watch the soup on the stove. Helping to tend the fire was definitely very useful.

At noon, everyone joyously prepared to eat, and while all were in high spirits, there always seemed to be someone who deliberately came to spoil the good mood.

"Ji Ying, did your family really buy land?" Zhao Juxiang couldn't make sense of it at home—how she found the situation too fantastical.

This Xu Qinghe's family had split from the Xu Family less than half a year ago, so how could they have made so much money already to afford land purchases?

They must have hoarded some secret savings.

With such thoughts, Zhao Juxiang came over to the Xu Family.

Ji Ying, looking at Zhao Juxiang and hearing her question, didn't know how to respond. No matter what she said, nothing good would come out of Zhao Juxiang's mouth.

Chapter 246: Don't Say It Was Picked Up on the Road

"It was bought jointly by our family and Ji Ying's family,"

Xiong Xihua hurried out, fearing that if she arrived too late, Ji Ying would be bullied by Zhao Juxiang.

She knew Ji Ying's temperament well, always kind and gentle, hardly ever saying harsh words, which made it easy for others to bully her.

"What, did we borrow money from you to buy the land, or is it bothering you?" Xiong Xihua's personality was explosive like firecrackers, she lashed out at Zhao Juxiang, saying, "It's already mealtime, why aren't you hurrying back home? Could it be that you want to freeload a meal?"

"However, your son works in a city cooperative, surely bringing in a good sum every month, and Qingjiang is a teacher, it's impossible for you to resort to freeloading."

These words from Xiong Xihua directly blocked any thoughts Zhao Juxiang had of coming over for a meal.

"Who, who wants to freeload a meal!" Zhao Juxiang turned pale and reddish in anger, stomping her foot, "I'm speaking with Ji Ying, this is a matter between sisters-in-law, Sister Xihua should not interfere, people who don't know would think this is Sister Xihua's home."

Zhao Juxiang sarcastically taunted Xiong Xihua.

Xiong Xihua instantly felt so angry she wished she could slap Zhao Juxiang.

Ji Ying hurried forward, saying, "Sister Xihua is helping me. If you have questions, Sister Xihua has already answered them. To be precise, the land was bought jointly by my family, Qinghe, and Xu Song."

"Impossible."

Zhao Juxiang immediately denied it, retorting, "At the time of the family division, you still played the victim, saying you were broke. It's only been half a year, and now a new daughter-in-law has been brought into your family, and you still have so much money to buy land? Do you think this money was blown in by the wind, or fell from the sky?"

"Don't tell me you found money on the road."

"Ji Ying, you always seem honest and upright, but it turns out you're actually quite cunning, even having a secret stash of money."

The more Zhao Juxiang spoke, the angrier she became, thinking she had secured a huge advantage, yet unknowingly, she had been at a loss.

"Zhao Juxiang, you should really check your conscience,"

Ji Ying felt sick to her stomach from anger. When she was in the Xu Family's home, only her own family suffered, even delaying Nianji's wedding for a year because of Xu Zhihao's wedding.

Had it not been for her daughter's clever idea of selling Mung Bean Jelly, her family would still be destitute, let alone affording to bring in a daughter-in-law!

They nearly lost the daughter-in-law to another family. Every time she thought about it, Ji Ying felt terrified. If she had truly been unable to bring someone into the family, how would she face Nianji as a mother?

"What do you mean by no conscience? You can't tell me you've earned so much money in just half a year," Zhao Juxiang argued vehemently.

Ji Ying, her heart pounding with anger, was about to speak when Xu Nianhua, who had been watching, pulled her back, only to hear Ji Ying burst out, "All these years, I've married into the Xu family and never kept a dime for myself. When Nianhua was three years old, because she couldn't get proper medical attention due to lack of money, her fever spiked to 39 degrees. We nearly lost her. If I had really hoarded any private money, wouldn't I have used it to treat my daughter?"

"Not to mention the recent dilemma, you insisted on Zhihao's marriage to a woman from the city, demanding that my son Nianji delay his wedding for a year. If I really had money, would I let my own son suffer?"

Ji Ying, so enraged that she felt like exposing everything, realized that the grievances she had endured over the past twenty years couldn't possibly be explained in just a few words.

Chapter 247: Which Brick Factory

Ji Ying, who had transformed from her previously frail self, had directly confronted Zhao Juxiang.

Xu Nianhua quietly praised Ji Ying, feeling that Mom had improved a lot and was no longer like before, thinking she had to endure endlessly.

"Ji Ying, what you did just now was very good, it should have been like this earlier. People, kindness is good, but too much kindness, isn't that an invitation for everyone to bully you?" Xiong Xihua was very affirming of Ji Ying's actions today, then she said, "Even if you don't mind being bullied, but you have to think about the children."

"Sister-in-law, you are right, I have come to understand," Ji Ying felt extremely relieved after confronting Zhao Juxiang just now, and she said, "Sister-in-law, it's cold outside, let's talk inside the house, don't let the food get cold."

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Zhao Juxiang returned home, so angered that she felt pain in her chest. How had Ji Ying, whom she had suppressed for over twenty years, suddenly changed?

How much money could Ji Ying possibly make in a month at the food factory?

Could it really be possible to earn so much money in just a few months? Enough to buy land?

Zhao Juxiang grumbled in her heart, feeling deeply unsettled.

"Mom, you're back. Brother sent a message saying that sister-in-law has gone into labor and is going to have the baby," Xu Jiaojiao rushed over hastily, pulling Zhao Juxiang to leave immediately, terrified by the news.

"What? Isn't it still a few days away?"

Upon hearing this, Zhao Juxiang immediately forgot her anger and hurried back with Xu Jiaojiao to pack their things and rushed to the county town.

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Xu Qinghe, along with Xu Song, Xu Nianhua, and Xu Nian'an went to the county.

Xu Qinghe and Xu Song were planning to buy bricks.

Nian'an was going to see his master, and Nianhua was going to clean the house in the county, which had not been lived in for a while, airing out things like the bedding.

"Nian'an, why didn't the girl come with you?" Du Chang felt slightly disappointed upon seeing Nian'an alone.

Nian'an's attention was all on the things he brought and did not notice the disappointment in his master's eyes. He put the things on the table and said, "This is the crispy meat fried yesterday, my mom asked me to bring some over."

Ji Ying was particularly good at frying crispy meat, making it both crispy and delicious.

It was not only Pei Yicheng who loved it, but Du Chang also enjoyed it. With older age and weaker teeth, Du Chang would steam the crispy meat over and over until it became soft and mushy, sprinkled with some green onions, a flavor he particularly loved.

"Thank my mom for me," Du Chang said, looking at the two catties of crispy meat, feeling that having such a disciple was extremely fortunate and delightful, as he was brought treats every so often.

Before the New Year's cured meats and smoked rabbit, flavored with chili peppers, tasted really good.

"Nian'an, I just saw your dad on the street," Ling Dong said as he returned from buying groceries and spotted Xu Nian'an.

"My dad did come to the county, we need to build a fence for the furniture factory, so he's here to buy bricks," Nian'an replied.

The moment Nian'an's words were out, Ling Dong immediately said, "You don't need to look further, just go straight to Yicheng."

"Oh..."

Nian'an looked puzzledly towards Ling Dong.

Ling Dong hurriedly explained, "Last fall, Yicheng bought a brick factory. Though he didn't buy it entirely, Yicheng has a lot of say there."

"Really?" Nian'an felt like his thoughts were being overturned again. He had thought Pei Yicheng must be wealthy, but now this seemed beyond just being ordinarily rich.

A brick factory was not just a small shop after all.

"By the way, which brick factory is it?" suddenly asked Nian'an.

Chapter 248: Are There Disciples Who Are Close and Not Close?

"It's that brick factory in the Western Suburbs, the one your elder brother used to work at." Ling Dong's eyes shifted as he specifically mentioned, "Hadn't the Yue Family been caught secretly selling bricks before? The factory was in chaos, and Yicheng seized the opportunity to invest a bit of money."

"The Yue Family?" Xu Nian'an's face darkened as soon as the Yue Family was mentioned, his own sister had almost been pushed into a dire situation.

"Yes, that Yue Family."

Purposely, Ling Dong said, "Speaking of which, it was Yicheng who initially discovered the unscrupulous acts of the Yue Family."

"How did Yicheng come to know about this?" Xu Nian'an asked, his interest piqued.

"It seems someone Yicheng knew discovered it and then told him. Yicheng, being extremely upright, couldn't tolerate such things and immediately exposed the incident." Ling Dong was always eager to boost Yicheng's image.

If he could gain the future uncle's, Xu Nian'an's, approval now, it would smoothen Yicheng's path in marrying in the future.

"Then Yicheng truly did us a huge favor."

Xu Nian'an was visibly excited.

Pretending to be oblivious, Ling Dong asked, "What's with the Yue Family? Do you have a feud with them?"

"You don't know?" Xu Nian'an immediately recounted the Yue Family's deeds and mentioned their concerns about potential retaliation. Hearing later that the Yue Family ran into trouble did reassure them significantly.

"That's quite a coincidence, perhaps it's fate after all."

Smiling, Ling Dong looked at Xu Nian'an, thinking to himself how much effort Yicheng had indeed put into finding faults with the Yue Family.

"Exactly, it truly is fate."

Xu Nian'an nodded in agreement.

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Ling Dong took Xu Nian'an to see Pei Yicheng specifically about the brick issue. Pei Yicheng immediately declared that if they were to buy bricks, they could have a 30% discount on profits.

Upon hearing this, Xu Nian'an quickly shook his head and said, "Yicheng, that won't do. Whatever others pay, we should pay the same. The factory isn't just yours; we shouldn't make you incur losses."

"Don't worry, if it's any relative of the factory owners buying bricks, they all get this price."

Pei Yicheng's emphatic statement somewhat made Xu Nian'an believe him.

He hesitated and said, "But we aren't relatives, at most friends."

Clearing his throat, Pei Yicheng responded, "You are the apprentice of my grandfather, a close apprentice."

Looking bewilderedly at Pei Yicheng, Xu Nian'an thought, an apprentice, and there are close ones and not?

Next, with Ling Dong leading the way, Xu Nian'an went to buy bricks and also specifically sought out Xu Qinghe and Xu Song, both of whom had not yet purchased bricks. Hearing that Pei Yicheng was also one of the co-owners and they could save some money, Xu Qinghe and Xu Song's first reaction was to wonder whether this would damage the harmony among the factory owners.

Thinking to himself that the Xu family members were all of good character, and even Xu Qinghe's demeanor was honest, Ling Dong smiled and explained the situation again, taking them to buy bricks where they saved quite a bit of money compared to asking for prices on their own.

Xu Qinghe and Xu Song were overjoyed, the money they saved could fund many other things.

"Uncle Qinghe, I think we owe Pei Yicheng a thank you," Xu Song took the initiative to suggest. He knew that Pei Yicheng was the owner of the food factory but didn't expect he owned a brick factory too. With the help provided and his own mother Xiong Xihua working in the factory, Xu Song felt they definitely should thank him.

"Agreed!"

Xu Qinghe wholeheartedly approved, and the two men bought a bunch of stuff and delivered it to Pei Yicheng.

Chapter 249: Asking for a prescription

"Uncle Xu, you are too kind."

Pei Yicheng looked at the gifts and thought to himself that Uncle Xu was really too formal. He just wanted to help them out and hadn't expected them to return the favor with these gifts.

"Yicheng, Uncle knows you're a good kid. This is just a little something from us. Please don't look down on it."

Xu Qinghe's face was filled with a smile, a genuinely happy smile. These bricks would probably save a lot of money when taken back.

After Xu Qinghe and Xu Song finished expressing their thanks, they went to buy other things. If they were going to build a wall, just having bricks wasn't enough; they also needed cement and such.

"Brother Cheng, thank you."

Nian'an thought to himself that Pei Yicheng was really generous.

"Actually, I didn't do much." Pei Yicheng looked at his hand, puzzling Nian'an, who raised his hand and looked carefully, but didn't see anything unusual or wrong with it.

Pei Yicheng cleared his throat and asked, "I heard from Xiaoning that Nianhua's hands got frostbitten?"

"Exactly, she just played too much. Just before the New Year it was really warm, and then suddenly it got cold again, and she got frostbite," Nian'an said, and added, "But after applying clam oil, it's already much better."

"That's good." Pei Yicheng, seeing Nian'an's confusion, quickly changed the subject.

After Nian'an left, Pei Yicheng asked Du Chang for the recipe.

"Aren't her hands almost healed with the clam oil?" Du Chang raised his eyebrows, his little mustache almost curling up. Was his grandson finally coming to his senses?

"A girl's hands need to be cared for, Grandpa. I remember you know this person."

Pei Yicheng ignored Du Chang's excited demeanor and said, "Nianhua's family has also helped us a lot, especially the Chili Sauce Factory; they've helped me make a lot of money. I ought to help them too."

"Is that so?"

Du Chang elongated his tone, clearly not believing Pei Yicheng's words. Did he think he was a three-year-old?

Du Chang knew his own grandson's temperament well.

If he hadn't taken a special interest in her, would he care this much?

It seemed that his great-grandson had settled on someone.

Just thinking about it made Du Chang happy. One day, down below, he would have an explanation for his daughter, but then there was this leg...

Du Chang's gaze fell on Pei Yicheng's leg, thinking that this trip to Xi Province would definitely cure it.

"Grandpa."

Pei Yicheng looked at his grandfather's silly smile and then at his leg, and couldn't help but say, "Grandpa, do you really have such a recipe?"

"Of course, I do."

Du Chang stroked his little mustache and proudly said, "Our Du family ancestors were imperial physicians. The secret recipe passed down through generations is something others couldn't get if they wanted."

Du Chang immediately wrote down the recipe and tossed it in front of Pei Yicheng, saying, "Yicheng, we can't just give this recipe away for nothing, right?"

"Grandpa, I'm your own grandson. Do I really have to pay?"

Pei Yicheng's lips twitched, at a loss for words with his grandfather's antics, but at the same time, he felt warmth in his heart.

This past year, he understood the love and care his grandfather had for him.

"Why not charge? Grandpa is getting on in years; how could I not keep some money by my side?" Du Chang said righteously, puffing out his chest and glaring as he demanded, "No money, no recipe."

"One thousand."

Pei Yicheng had Ling Dong pay up, and Du Chang, smiling from ear to ear, accepted the money, planning to save it carefully for his grandson.

Chapter 250: Surnamed Xu or Shen

Bricks and timber were continuously piled up on the land purchased by the Xu Qinghe family, and the fourteenth day of the first month was a good day for Qingsong Furniture Factory to start construction.

In the village, many were envious and jealous, but upon hearing that Qingsong Furniture Factory was recruiting apprentices, everyone rushed forward, hoping to make an impression in front of the Xu Qinghe and Xu Song families and be selected as an apprentice.

Cai Feng and Yao Gen had unanimously earned the approval of Xu Qinghe and Xu Song. Not to mention how they had treated Xu Nianji initially at the brick factory, they were the ones who carried Xu Nianji back when he was beaten.

The Cai Family and the Yao Family had good relations with their families.

Cai Feng and Yao Gen were more than willing and volunteered to help automatically.

Building walls and houses definitely couldn't be done by one or two people alone, so Xu Qinghe and Xu Song invited many young and strong men from the village to help.

*

The county city, hospital.

Zhao Juxiang was overjoyed at the sight of her chubby grandson, but when it came to naming him, there arose a disagreement between the Xu family and the Shen family.

Since the Shen family had only one daughter, Shen Qiuyun, they proposed that their first son should take the Shen surname.

Why should my grandson take someone else's surname?

Not just Zhao Juxiang disapproved; even Xu Qingjiang disagreed. If his father knew that his great-grandson had taken another surname, he would definitely be unhappy.

The joy of the child's arrival had also lessened the tension between the two families.

"Mother-in-law, the child was born to Qiuyun, and they will have more children in the future. The children to come can still bear the Xu surname," Shen's mother said with an air of superiority. "Even if the child bears the Shen surname, he is still your grandson, your own grandson."

"Is that the same?" Zhao Juxiang, not one to be outdone, said with a smile, "Mother-in-law, I know your family is well-off, you people are from the city with a city household registration. However, the child is a root of our Xu family and naturally should bear the Xu surname, even if he does, he's still your grandchild from outside the family."

Zhao Juxiang thought to herself that she would not have liked this pampered daughter-in-law if not for the good condition of the Shen family.

"Zhihao." Shen's mother, frustrated by Zhao Juxiang's comeback yet unable to argue, turned directly to Zhihao.

Swiftly, everyone's attention converged on Xu Zhihao.

Xu Zhihao hung his head, the joy of becoming a father now replaced by a headache.

No one knows a child better than their mother, and seeing Xu Zhihao's guilty and headache-ridden expression, Zhao Juxiang became so angry that her blood pressure soared, almost wanting to throttle her son. At this moment, wasn't he supposed to support his mother? Did he really intend to let his son take the Shen surname?

...

"Xu Zhihao, let me tell you, the child must not bear the Shen surname!" Zhao Juxiang stormed out of the ward angrily, reprimanding Xu Zhihao, "Don't say your grandparents wouldn't agree, neither would your father and I."

"Mom, don't be angry."

Xu Zhihao tried to soothe her, saying, "Mom, whether the child bears the Shen or Xu surname, he's still my son."

"Nonsense! How can that be the same?"

Zhao Juxiang glared at Xu Zhihao, halted in her tracks, and stared intently at him without blinking as she asked, "Xu Zhihao, have you promised her something?"

"I..."

Xu Zhihao guiltily stepped backward.

Zhao Juxiang sternly demanded, "Speak."

"Mom, Shen's mother said that if the first child bears the Shen surname, the cannery would be handed over to me to manage," Xu Zhihao revealed, feeling that this wasn't so difficult to say after all. He analyzed, "Mom, whether the son bears the Shen surname or the Xu surname, he is still my son, Xu Zhihao's son, but the cannery, think about it, if I go there, I could make a lot of money."