

Regaining 281

Chapter 281: Like Blowing Up a Balloon

"I am, too." Xu Nianhua wouldn't be outdone and responded in the same way.

She and her second brother would both surely get into university.

"Good, good, good." Ji Ying looked at her son and daughter with a face full of pride. In other families, having one college student was already quite an achievement, yet her family was about to have two.

She didn't say anything else, just, "Then our two university students, when you get your admission notices, your father and I will certainly throw a big banquet."

"Right."

Xu Qinghe, who was always quiet, rarely agreed, but the furniture factory's business was getting better and better. All he needed to do now was to keep his head down, complete the orders he received, and deliver them to clients. That was his mission accomplished.

He didn't need to run around like before, sometimes unable to return home. Now, Xu Qinghe felt particularly content with his life.

"Don't."

Xu Nianhua hurriedly objected, "Dad, Mom, even if we do get in, let's not throw a banquet, otherwise wouldn't that be too conspicuous?"

With Mom at the Chili Sauce Factory and Dad owning the furniture factory, they were already enough to make people envious. If they were to add university acceptance and a big banquet to that, wouldn't that be even more jealousy-inducing?

"We should just be happy amongst ourselves, why bother with others?" Xu Nian'an also agreed with his younger sister's view. He just wanted to share the joy with his family, as for the neighbors, they could do without.

"This is a good thing." Ji Ying actually still wanted to throw a big banquet. Her children's accomplishments brought her more joy than anything, and she was proud of them deep down in her heart.

Xu Nianhua glanced at Zhou He's belly and said, "Let's wait for my future nephew or niece to be born, then we can throw a big banquet."

"Sister-in-law, your belly seems to have gotten bigger." Xu Nianhua stared closely at Zhou He's belly, which appeared even more noticeable as the clothes got lighter and lighter.

"Indeed."

Whenever Zhou He talked about the child in her belly, it seemed she had endless things to say. She said, "At the beginning, it didn't seem to grow this fast."

"How long has it been since I last saw my sister-in-law? How come her belly has blown up like a balloon?" Xu Nianhua, having lived a whole lifetime in her past life without ever being married or pregnant, and with few close people around her, naturally hadn't seen what pregnancy was like.

"Pfft~"

At these words, Xu Nian'an couldn't help but laugh. Then, catching his elder brother's glance, he pursed his lips, but, he just couldn't hold back.

"Nianhua."

Ji Ying said half in displeasure, "The baby is due in less than three months. If it didn't grow, how could the child be healthy?"

"Oh." Xu Nianhua was just curious, and didn't mean anything else; she quickly explained.

Zhou He smiled to show it was okay and said, "I also feel like my belly is growing exceptionally fast."

"Ouch."

Suddenly, Zhou He's expression changed. Xu Nianhua looked at her worriedly, thinking she might have said something to upset her sister-in-law or that her sister-in-law might have been harmed in some way.

"The baby just kicked me again."

Zhou He regained her composure and seeing her worried expression, said, "I'm fine, it's just that the last kick was a bit painful."

"Can I... touch it?"

"Of course."

Zhou He answered without hesitation.

Xu Nianhua wanted to touch but was hesitant. In the end, it was Zhou He who took her hand and placed it on her belly. As soon as Xu Nianhua touched the belly, she felt the baby inside seems to have kicked her hand.

"It moved, it really moved!"

Xu Nianhua's voice rose with excitement, and it was only when she realized that everyone was staring at her that she became aware that perhaps her reaction had been a bit too much.

Chapter 282: Pei Yicheng is Back

She was really just curious, having never seen someone pregnant before, purely curious.

After starting anew, Xu Nianhua felt she was becoming more and more like a twenty-year-old girl, with her previous life feeling like a nightmare.

"The child is saying hello to Auntie."

Zhou He said with a beaming smile.

Because of the unborn child, the family gathered together, laughing and chatting, with none of the tension usually found before college entrance exams.

July 5, two days before the college entrance exam.

Ji Ying put aside her work at the Chili Factory and prepared delicious food daily for Xu Nianhua and her siblings, hoping to smooth their path during the exams. Meanwhile, nobody in the family mentioned anything about the exams to keep the pressure off them.

Especially Xu Nianhua, who missed her final foreign language exam last year due to eating a bun containing Badou.

Ji Ying naturally wouldn't make the same mistake again.

After July, Ji Ying didn't even return to the village, fearing she might run into Zhao Juxiang, who could propose some unreasonable demands. She would definitely be displeased, and she still remembered last year's incidents, furthering her desire to avoid Zhao Juxiang and her family.

Xi Province.

Pei Yicheng walked from the hospital room to the doctor's office, stood in front of Doctor Hu, and bowed deeply, sincerely saying, "Thank you, Doctor Hu, for healing my leg. If there is anything you need in the future, please feel free to ask."

His words were firm and clear, filled with a calm strength, a promise to Doctor Hu.

"No need."

Doctor Hu waved his hand, saying, "I am a doctor, this is what I should do. Officially, you should stay in the hospital for another half a month, but going back home won't be a problem since your grandfather is also a doctor. For the next half month, you must strictly follow the rehabilitation plan, and not miss a day's medication."

"Rest assured, Doctor Hu, I will do exactly as you've instructed after I return home," Pei Yicheng's voice was steady and strong, imparting a sense of reliability.

When leaving, Pei Yicheng stood at the hospital entrance for a long time before saying, "Ling Dong, take some money and improve the road home for the doctor, make it wider."

He hadn't made money before, but his mother left him many valuable things. Since Doctor Hu healed his leg and refused to take money, he could only help the doctor in his own way.

Doctor Hu lived near the hospital, just that the road was a bit narrow.

"Yes," Ling Dong responded.

"Thank you."

Pei Yicheng said again in his heart, then turned and left.

On the way back, Pei Yicheng looked out the window at the swiftly passing scenery, the corners of his mouth slightly lifting.

"Brother Cheng, once we get back, let's celebrate properly."

Cheng Hao whistled while driving, seeming extremely happy. Initially, when they came to Xi Province, everyone was uneasy and apprehensive, fearing that the treatment might not work. But now, it was different, Brother Cheng's leg had finally been healed.

Moreover, his relationship with Zou Yaru was extremely sweet, making Cheng Hao feel particularly at ease.

"Right, Brother Cheng, should we stop somewhere and book a restaurant?" Ling Dong suggested, also feeling that it was time for a grand celebration.

"No need."

Compared to the visibly elated Ling Dong and Cheng Hao, Pei Yicheng was the calmest of them all.

The car slowly stopped outside Du Chang's clinic. Pei Yicheng walked into the clinic, stood before Du Chang, saw the joy and excitement in his eyes, and slightly lifted his lips, saying, "Grandfather, I am back."

Chapter 283: Meeting

"Alright."

Looking up at Pei Yicheng, who was taller than him by a head, Du Chang couldn't contain his excitement.

"Grandpa."

Pei Yicheng stepped forward, slightly bent down, and embraced him. In his most difficult times, it was his grandfather who had stood by his side, unwavering. Even when he was being hard on himself, his grandfather had never given up on him.

"I'm relieved to see your leg has healed," Du Chang said, wiping his eyes, tears born of joy streaming down.

"Grandpa, Yicheng, we should be happy."

Cheng Hao stepped forward and said, "Even the doctors said that Yicheng's leg could only be healed by a miracle. Now, Doctor Hu, who has the ability to bring the dying back to life, has cured Yicheng's leg. I think it's truly amazing. We should celebrate, celebrate properly."

"Right, a celebration is in order," Du Chang agreed, nodding. "We need to properly thank Doctor Hu. Without him, you wouldn't be standing."

"Grandpa, I've already had Ling Dong fix the road to Doctor Hu's house, and after I make some money, I will find more ways to express my gratitude," Pei Yicheng said, etching Doctor Hu's help deeply in his heart. For now, it was just fixing the road, but in the future, he would definitely find other ways to assist Doctor Hu.

"We should be very thankful," Du Chang remarked. "Let's celebrate properly tonight then."

"And let's invite the girl and her family too," Du Chang added.

"Then I'll go make a reservation at the restaurant."

Ling Dong immediately declared.

At Good Mom Food Factory, when Pei Yicheng appeared at the entrance, Uncle Jiang was the first to spot him.

Uncle Jiang's eyes bulged as he looked at Pei Yicheng. He pointed at Pei Yicheng, then at his leg, and finally, let out a shriek.

"Boss, your leg is healed!"

Uncle Jiang's voice, full of vigor, quickly alerted everyone in the factory.

Ji Ying had just been stewing pork rib soup when she heard the commotion and immediately stepped out of the kitchen. Seeing Pei Yicheng standing at the door, tall and slender, she thought that he was already handsome when sitting, but regrettable. Now, Ji Ying felt that Yicheng was truly outstanding.

"Boss Pei, that's great, your leg is healed!"

Everyone in the factory turned their gaze to Pei Yicheng's leg, offering congratulations one by one, creating a festive and lively atmosphere.

"Thank you all for your concern. Tonight, I'm inviting everyone to Friendship Hotel for dinner," Pei Yicheng said, making everyone even happier and more excited.

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"Mom, are you serious? He can really stand up?" Xu Nianhua knew that his leg was healing bit by bit, but having never seen him standing, it still felt a bit incredible.

"Of course it's true. Would I lie to you?"

Ji Ying said cheerfully, "Tonight, he's inviting everyone to the hotel for dinner. But you kids shouldn't go. You have exams the day after tomorrow and you need to rest well."

"We'll just take a quick look," Xu Nian'an said anxiously, wanting to see Pei Yicheng. After having dinner quickly with Xu Nianhua in the factory, they planned to stop by and see Pei Yicheng on their way back to school.

Xu Nian'an had left his notebook in the factory and ran back to get it, while Xu Nianhua walked slowly towards Du Chang's house.

It took less than twenty minutes to walk from the factory to Du Chang's house. Xu Nianhua followed the path, and just as he reached the entrance of the alley, he saw Pei Yicheng standing under the big persimmon tree, dressed in a white shirt, looking as if he had stepped out of a painting.

Chapter 284: The Radiance of Confidence

The sunlight filtered through the gaps between the leaves and fell upon Pei Yicheng, illuminating his pristine white shirt with a lustrous, silvery halo.

It was a simple white shirt with no adornment whatsoever, yet it appeared to have been tailored just for him. She had seen many people in white shirts, even in suits, but Pei Yicheng wore it best of all she had ever seen.

Thump, thump, thump.

Xu Nianhua felt as though she was seeing the male lead from an idol drama, oh her youthful heart!

No matter her age, her heart remained young, and she couldn't help but want to scream at the sight of a handsome man~

The corners of Pei Yicheng's lips turned up slightly. He strode forward and stopped in front of her. Seeing the admiration in her eyes deepened the smile on his lips. He bent his head, able to see her smooth forehead.

"You're so tall," she blurted out. Standing nearly 1.65 meters, she was quite tall among the girls, but next to Pei Yicheng, as she looked up, all she could see was his resolute chin.

"Mhm."

Pei Yicheng nodded and said, "The day after tomorrow is the exam. Relax, don't be nervous, just treat it as an ordinary test. I believe in you, you will definitely get into Beining University."

"I am not nervous at all," Xu Nianhua said, tilting her head up, her eyes sparkling with confidence. Standing before thousands of students, she never felt stage fright, and she felt the same about the college entrance exam.

She said, "I believe I will definitely get into Beining University."

Pei Yicheng's gaze traced the contours of her face. At such a close distance, he could see the fine fuzz on her face, which was incredibly cute. He had many things to say but in the end, only mustered a single word: "Fight on."

"Congratulations." Only then did Xu Nianhua realize their proximity and she took a step back, saying, "I always said, heaven is quite fair after all."

"You still believe in heaven?" Pei Yicheng raised an eyebrow.

Xu Nianhua nodded with conviction, "Of course, I believe that good is rewarded with good, and evil with evil, that good causes lead to good effects."

Pei Yicheng was somewhat surprised. She wasn't old, only twenty this year, but sometimes she seemed like an elder. Her black eyes often carried a depth that belied her age.

That evening, the Friendship Hotel was filled with a large, bustling table where everyone's eyes shone with joy.

The joy was twofold: firstly, because Pei Yicheng's leg had healed, and secondly, due to the grand feast laid out in front of them.

July 6th, the college entrance exam was the very next day. Today, the students familiarized themselves with the test venue. After getting to know the venue, those who boarded at school reviewed independently, while others went home to study with a day of rest, awaiting tomorrow's battle!

Last year, the Xu siblings went home; this year, everyone gathered in rented houses in the county.

"Dad, go back to the factory and don't worry about us; your hovering is making us all nervous," Xu Nianhua said to Xu Qinghe, who refused to leave for the factory, gently reminding him. She hadn't been nervous, but their constant presence made her surprisingly anxious.

"Yeah, don't worry, both my sister and I will do great on the exams," Xu Nian'an said, then turned to look at Ji Ying, "Mom, I want to eat braised pork today."

"That won't do, we're eating light today," Ji Ying glanced at him, "Your master has already given me a menu for these few days. It's hot now, so we're cooking according to his plan, which is best for your health."

Chapter 285: Xu Qinghu Visits

Night had descended, and Xu Qinghu called for a visit under the pretext of seeing Xu Nianhua and his siblings before their high school exams.

The door was opened by Ji Ying. As soon as Ji Ying saw Xu Qinghu, she didn't even let her in; she blocked her at the door and promptly closed it: "What are you here for?"

Ji Ying's tone was so distant it made strangers seem close in comparison.

"Sister-in-law."

As soon as Xu Qinghu began to speak, Ji Ying cut her off: "Don't, I can't be called your sister-in-law."

"Sister-in-law, what are you saying?" Xu Qinghu hated this internally, but still kept a smile on her face, saying, "I heard they have their exams tomorrow, so I specifically came to check on them, and I bought some nutritious malted milk."

While speaking, Xu Qinghu handed over the malted milk and fruit she had brought. These items had cost her quite a bit of her limited funds, especially since she had heard that Xu Qinghe had started a furniture factory at home that was quite profitable. Hence, Xu Qinghu thought, if her husband Fu Song could work at the factory, wouldn't he make at least thirty a month?

With a job, Fu Song could surely return to his old self, and their life could be as it was before.

Thus, Xu Qinghu had really invested in this visit, making a special trip before the exams.

"No need." Ji Ying's response was cold. She didn't let Xu Qinghu in and didn't even look at the gifts she brought. Xu Qinghu had never bought anything for the children growing up, and now, Ji Ying certainly wasn't going to start accepting them. She said, "They need to rest early for their exam tomorrow."

As Ji Ying moved to close the door and go inside, Xu Qinghu raised her voice, shouting, "Nian'an, Nianhua, your aunt is here to see you!"

Xu Qinghu's voice grew even louder.

Ji Ying was so anxious she wished she could cover Xu Qinghu's mouth, furiously saying, "Xu Qinghu, you know they need to rest early for their exam tomorrow. Are you trying to ruin their sleep tonight?"

Ji Ying pushed Xu Qinghu back outside.

Hearing the commotion, Xu Qinghe reassured, "Nian'an, Nianhua, rest well, don't mind it."

After his words, Xu Qinghe strode out. He grabbed Xu Qinghu and pulled her outside, only to burst out angrily once they were far enough away, "Xu Qinghu, if you were truly their aunt, you wouldn't have come to disturb them today."

"Brother, what are you saying? I specifically came to see them." Xu Qinghu's hand hurt from being dragged, she said, "I kindly bought gifts to see you all, and sister-in-law rudely sends me away. Brother, you're dragging me away, I'm truly aggrieved."

With a pout, Xu Qinghu adopted a look of grievance, saying, "Brother, I came bearing gifts, out of concern for them."

"Humph."

Xu Qinghe coldly snorted, his voice harsh as he interrogated, "Are you truly concerned about them?"

"Of course I am," Xu Qinghu said, without a trace of guilt, adding, "Look, I brought so many gifts."

She held up the gifts in her hand, thinking, how could she not be sincere after bringing so many?

"We appreciate your gifts, you can go back now," Xu Qinghe said, dismissing her forthrightly. It was already eight o'clock, and Nianhua and Nian'an needed to rest early.

"Don't go."

Xu Qinghu, not willing to leave without achieving her goal, clutched at Xu Qinghe's hand and said, "Brother, you have to help me."

"I've said before, I don't have a sister like you."

Xu Qinghe shook off her hand without a hint of softness. Back when Xu Qinghu was determined to push Nianhua into the fire pit, she never once considered that he had only one daughter.

Chapter 286: So Angry That His Voice Trembled

"Blood ties can never be severed; they can never be cast aside. I did it for Nianhua's good," Xu Qinghu explained, but her words only added fuel to the fire!

Xu Qinghe already disliked her and, upon hearing this, his disdain only grew. He said coldly, "You even have the nerve to mention that matter?"

"Big brother, I...I didn't know the Yue Family would run into trouble," Xu Qinghu felt utterly wronged. Such a good match for marriage, why was his brother angry?

The Yue Family was so rich, reportedly already possessing tens of thousands, and even wealthier—marrying into the Yue Family, how could it be a loss?

"Hmph."

Xu Qinghe sneered, clearly understanding that his sister had no idea what she did wrong; he didn't even feel like speaking. He said, "You should leave."

"That's not going to work."

Xu Qinghu hurriedly said, "Big brother, I heard you started a furniture factory. You see, hiring someone is hiring, why not take Fu Song under your wing, give him something to do?"

"As the saying goes, 'Why let the water in your own backyard flow into others' fields?'"

Xu Qinghu's voice was both urgent and fast, not giving anyone a chance to interject.

"The factory is fully staffed," Xu Qinghe rejected without a second thought.

"I heard your furniture factory is doing quite well? Why wouldn't it work to add Fu Song? Moreover, aren't there several people? Why not replace one of those people with my Fu Song?" Xu Qinghu reasoned it as a matter of course, saying, "Once Fu Song starts earning money, he definitely won't forget your great help, big brother."

Xu Qinghe remained silent, just looking at Xu Qinghu; under the moonlight, her true intentions were crystal clear.

Replace someone?

The factory workers were carefully selected by him and Xu Song, excellent prospects; what could Fu Song possibly contribute?

Previously at the brick factory, it was said that Fu Song was all talk, always messing things up.

Not to mention Nianhua's incident, even without it, Xu Qinghe would never agree to such a thing. The furniture factory wasn't his alone; he couldn't just watch Fu Song ruin it!

"No way."

Xu Qinghe's refusal was very clear. He said, "Every person in the factory is a chosen prospect, none can be replaced. Besides, your Fu Song just isn't cut out for this."

"Big brother, what you're saying—he's your brother-in-law," Xu Qinghu suddenly became upset. She wanted to say more, but Xu Qinghe didn't give her a chance, saying, "Xu Qinghu, I'll put it plainly today, Fu Song is not getting into the furniture factory!"

His words, one by one, were crystal clear.

His eyes glaringly round, he stared at Xu Qinghu and said, "The next three days are Nian'an and Nianhua's college entrance exam days. If you dare cause any trouble, don't blame me for letting slip the things you've done in the past."

"You!"

Xu Qinghu pointed at Xu Qinghe, trembling with anger under his icy gaze.

Ji Ying, who had been of no help, simply followed Xu Qinghe home, watching Xu Qinghu get so worked up, she felt utterly relieved!

"Hmph!"

Xu Qinghu stomped her foot, her eyes filled with viciousness and mockery. She said, "So much for treating me like a sister, pah!"

"Dad, Mom, are you alright?"

Xu Nian'an and his siblings looked worriedly at Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying, sizing them up, fearing they might start fighting with Xu Qinghu.

"It's nothing." Xu Qinghe didn't want to involve them with these upsetting matters. He said, "Just go to sleep peacefully. Get up early tomorrow morning to go to school."

"Right."

Ji Ying diverted the topic and asked, "Are all your pens and exam materials ready for tomorrow?"

Chapter 287: Our Lucky Star

Over the next three days, the tense college entrance exams went by smoothly and peacefully.

When the last foreign language exam was over, Xu Nianhua felt a weight lift off her shoulders. Looking up at the clear blue sky, she was seized with the urge to shout loudly, to release all her pent-up emotions.

The stressful college entrance exams were finally over, and she could start building her career!

Otherwise, whenever she wanted to do something, her mom would worry and urge her to focus on her studies. Now that the exams were over, that was no longer a concern.

"Little sister, the foreign language exam was really easy this time!"

Xu Nian'an approached her excitedly, feeling that this time, the foreign language test was much easier than before.

"Of course, with me teaching you, it would be strange if you still couldn't do it." Xu Nianhua said proudly. Over the past year, she had been teaching her older brother foreign languages using methods from previous training, and as he was not a slow learner, the exam naturally felt easy for him.

Besides, the foreign language exams today are not as difficult as they will be in the future, so scoring high is still quite feasible.

"Nianhua, if I get into university, you'll be my lucky star," Zheng Jin ran up to Xu Nianhua and hugged her, saying excitedly.

"Whether I get into a university or not, Xu is still my lucky star," Chen Hu looked at Xu Nianhua with pure adoration in his eyes. He wanted to hide his feelings, but didn't realize that his thoughts could not be concealed at all.

Xu Nian'an slapped Chen Hu's shoulder and stood in front of him, creating a distance between them., "Chen Hu, it seems you did quite well in the exams too. You think you can make it into university this year?"

"I should be able to." Chen Hu missed the required marks by just a little last year and had improved a lot this year. Therefore, he felt confident about qualifying for university. He wanted to talk more with Xu Nianhua, but Xu Nian'an was always blocking his view, and Chen Hu felt too embarrassed to speak up.

"Me too."

The classmates were all discussing whether the foreign language exam had gotten easier, as they all managed to do it.

Unlike before, when just the sight of the foreign language paper would give them headaches, almost making them want to submit a blank sheet.

"Lucky stars or not, your good results are all due to your own efforts," Xu Nianhua said modestly. Even though she had done her best to help everyone with foreign languages and other subjects, she felt that it was inseparable from everyone's hard work.

"But you provided us with so much material and taught us so many study methods," Zheng Jin was truly grateful to Xu Nianhua. She had been planning to give up this year, but her dad insisted she continue studying. So, she had to study one more year and, fortunately, she met Xu Nianhua. Her performance had improved a lot, increasing her confidence in getting into university.

All she wanted was to get into a normal education college.

"Ah, it will be difficult to meet each other again in the future." The college entrance exams had just ended, and what awaited them were different paths; some would go to different places for university, and those who did not pass would give up schooling to find a job. Getting everyone together again in the future would not be easy.

"How about we all have a meal together today?"

At that suggestion, Zheng Jin's eyes suddenly lit up.

"Classmates, we just finished our college entrance exams today. How about we all get together for a celebratory meal?"

Zheng Jin's suggestion was well received by many classmates though some did not agree. Ultimately, twenty-three people, including Xu Zhiyuan, decided to go for the

Chapter 288: Do You Like My Second Brother?

At the Friendship Hotel, the twenty-three-year-old classmates quickly filled half the hall, chatting joyously about their expectations for the future.

In their class, everyone was retaking the year. The pressure of repeating a year was greater than that of their peers who were just in their senior year of high school. Over the past year, they dared not relax. Every day, the first thing they did upon opening their eyes was to think about that day's study schedule: the unfinishable test papers, unexplainable problems, unendable classes, and unmemorable texts.

Today, after the college entrance exam was over, everyone's pressure was suddenly gone. Even though they didn't know their scores yet, they started to let loose, and many students had some drinks.

Xu Nianhua was drinking soda, which tasted quite good. She was sitting next to Zheng Jin, who, despite her quiet-sounding name, was anything but quiet and liked to talk a lot.

"Nianhua, are you planning to apply to Beining University?" Zheng Jin had a close relationship with Xu Nianhua and was aware of her university aspirations. She sighed and said, "It's a pity, my scores are low, I'm afraid I won't be able to go to the same university as you."

"Where are you planning to go?" Xu Nianhua asked.

Turning her head, Zheng Jin replied, "If I can get in, I want to go to the Normal School in South City. Being a teacher afterwards doesn't sound too bad."

"Nianhua, what about your brother, where is he going?" Zheng Jin's gaze drifted to the table with the male classmates, where Xu Nian'an's distinguished appearance made him particularly conspicuous.

Xu Nianhua pursed her lips, knowing that Zheng Jin had a bit of a crush on her elder brother. She said, "Elder brother is going to Ningbei Medical College."

"Oh."

Although Zheng Jin had heard the news before, hearing it from Xu Nianhua still made her feel somewhat disappointed. Over the past year, she had tried hard to catch up, and her grades had improved a lot. Unfortunately, with her modest scores, it was not enough for universities outside the province. Getting into the Normal School in South City was already a blessing.

"Meeting each other in the future won't be easy then," Zheng Jin sighed.

Leaning in close, Xu Nianhua whispered in her ear, "Xiaojin, you like my elder brother."

Her statement was not a question but a declaration.

There were many classmates in school, but she and Zheng Jin had the closest relationship, as Zheng Jin was straightforward and genuinely likable due to her simplicity and candor.

She thought that if her elder brother and Zheng Jin could end up together, that would be nice.

"Nianhua, what are you talking about?" Zheng Jin quickly glanced around, her eyes flickering to Xu Nian'an at the neighboring table. Her heart pounded inside her chest, and she lowered her head, unwilling to meet Xu Nianhua's gaze again for fear of revealing her feelings.

Changing the subject, Zheng Jin said, "I think I did quite well on the exams. Who knows, I might really get into the Normal School. If I do, my dad would be absolutely thrilled."

Her attempt to dodge the topic made Xu Nianhua smile and not pursue their earlier conversation. She responded, "As long as your uncle is happy, from now on, you'll be his pride."

"Right." The thought of her dad's joy if she got into the Normal School made Zheng Jin feel proud. She said, "Nianhua, thank you."

She spoke earnestly. Even though she had said many words of thanks before, today, at this moment, she still felt compelled to express her gratitude. Without Xu Nianhua, she might not have even had a chance with the Normal School.

After finishing the exams, it was time to look for a job and consider doing something else. Who would dare to dream of getting into a university?

"We are classmates, we are friends." Xu Nianhua's eyes curved, and her gentle smile shone as bright and warm as the sunlight.

Chapter 289: Xu Tongxue, I Like You

"Just friends."

Zheng Jin corrected.

Xu Nianhua smiled and nodded, responding, "Right, just friends."

Zheng Jin happily linked arms with Xu Nianhua, saying, "Then from now on, we can't lose touch with each other."

"Sure."

Xu Nianhua smiled and agreed, as a classmate nearby came up to her with soda pop to chat, and their whispering conversation thus came to an end.

At first, the girls all drank soda, but as time went on, more and more began to try beer. Once a few started, the number of beer drinkers steadily increased.

"This isn't bad, why not give it a try?" Zheng Jin had also tried a beer, and in the scorching summer heat, it must have been chilled in well water— the ice-cold beer was especially refreshing.

Xu Nianhua glanced at it and laughed while declining, "No need."

She couldn't handle her liquor; one drink and she'd be done for.

There were still so many classmates around; it was better not to make a fool of herself.

"Then I'll drink."

Zheng Jin was finally letting loose and naturally wanted to savor the moment.

Xu Nianhua sat in a corner, occasionally chatting with people who approached her, so she wasn't bored at all. She kept an eye on her second brother, Xu Nian'an, from across the table. Well, it turned out the second brother could hold his liquor; she watched as he downed several bottles of beer, his face growing redder but not seeming drunk.

However...

Xu Nianhua's eyes twinkled. If she wasn't mistaken, several girls had taken the opportunity to strike up conversations with Xu Nian'an while he was away at the restroom.

Second brother is quite popular, huh.

Xu Nianhua sat by the window, in a cozy corner where a gentle breeze blew in, bringing a touch of coolness that dispelled the heat inside her. Looking out at the night scene, she felt extremely content.

"Xu Student."

A male voice sounded, prompting Xu Nianhua to instinctively look away from the window. She turned and saw Chen Hu with a flushed face, and couldn't help asking, "Are you, drunk?"

"Not drunk."

Chen Hu shook his head, having mustered up the courage to approach her while Xu Nian'an was away in the restroom, seizing the moment to find her alone by the window, enjoying the breeze.

Xu Nianhua laughed softly, not contradicting him. With an air full of alcohol, surely a drunk person would never admit to being drunk.

"Xu Student, I..." Chen Hu gathered his courage, but just as he started to speak, looking into Xu Nianhua's deep and bright eyes, he swallowed his words back down.

"I wish you success in getting into college!"

Xu Nianhua, holding her soda, initiated the toast.

Chen Hu clinked glasses with her, tilted his head back, and finished off his beer. He said, word by word, "Xu Student, I like you."

No sooner had the words left his mouth than Chen Hu didn't dare to look at her, turning to leave straight away.

"Ah..."

As Chen Hu turned around, he bumped into a stranger at the corner. He jumped in fright, feeling a chill all over. He didn't pay it much mind, only wanting to leave quickly.

He had finally spoken his heart out!

"Hey, Chen Student."

Xu Nianhua watched his hasty retreat and muttered to herself, "Isn't one supposed to wait for an answer after confessing?"

"You wanted to accept?" Another male voice asked.

Without thinking, Xu Nianhua replied, "Of course not."

She didn't want to waste time dating. She looked up and her words faded away as she instinctively stood up, her heart fluttering even though she hadn't had a drop of alcohol.

"He's not worthy of you." Pei Yicheng sat down opposite her, taking in both her and the scenery behind her in a single glance.

Chapter 290: I'm Not Drunk

"Uh..."

Xu Nianhua felt somewhat embarrassed, this was the first time someone had confessed to her in both her lifetimes, and someone had witnessed it, too.

"How come you're here?"

Xu Nianhua changed the subject. Today was their class reunion, so why had Pei Yicheng showed up?

"I came to pick you guys up," Pei Yicheng said as he sized her up, explaining, "Auntie was worried about you guys. She was afraid you'd drink too much."

"Oh, mom really... we're all adults now, can we still get lost?"

Xu Nianhua muttered, while thanking Pei Yicheng, saying, "Yicheng, thanks for coming. I'm not worried about Nian'an getting drunk, I only drank soda."

She explained with a smile. From initially struggling to say it, now calling him 'Yicheng' felt very natural and habitual to her. She said, "I'm holding you up from your matters, we can get back on our own."

"It's no trouble."

Pei Yicheng took over the conversation, saying, "Nian'an seems to have gotten drunk."

"Really? He wasn't drunk just now."

Xu Nianhua said and hurried to get up to check on Xu Nian'an. If he really was drunk, it would be better to take him home sooner rather than later.

When she returned, she indeed found Xu Nian'an drunk. His glazed eyes and flushed face were clear signs of intoxication, and he was insisting on not being drunk, wanting to keep drinking with others.

"Nian'an, you're drunk. Let's go home." Xu Nianhua glanced at the time and saw that it was about right. People were starting to leave, so she hurried over to support Xu Nian'an, carefully steadying his wobbly body to prevent him from falling over.

"I'm not drunk."

Xu Nian'an shrugged off her hand, trying to stand upright and said, "Little sis, I'm happy today. I'm not drunk at all!"

Xu Nianhua: "..."

Nian'an, I'm right here!

She watched Xu Nian'an speak to another girl and felt like covering her eyes. She hadn't expected Nian'an to get so drunk that he couldn't recognize people anymore. As Xu Nian'an was about to grab the female classmate, she quickly pulled him back, saying, "Nian'an, I'm here, you've got the wrong person."

"No mistake, you are my little sis." Xu Nianhua got even more dizzy from the pulling. He shook his head and squinted at Xu Nianhua before stating after a moment, "You are my little sis, my little sister is the prettiest."

Xu Nianhua awkwardly looked at the other classmates and explained, "My brother is drunk, he's only speaking nonsense."

On normal days, she was quite vain, and compliments from her own brother were common. However, in front of so many classmates, Xu Nianhua felt that her face was quite thin.

"I'm not drunk. My little sister is pretty, the prettiest," Xu Nian'an grinned, his body reeking of alcohol. He tried to put his arm around Xu Nianhua's shoulder, but stumbled. About to fall on top of her, Xu Nianhua, with her slight frame, looked as though she was going to be crushed.

Xu Nianhua staggered, and suddenly, she felt a steady force take hold of her hand, a tall figure taking Xu Nian'an over. Xu Nianhua immediately felt relief on her shoulders and expressed her gratitude when she saw it was Pei Yicheng, "Yicheng, thank you. You were right, Nian'an really is drunk."

"Hmm," Pei Yicheng said, supporting Xu Nian'an. Xu Nianhua hurried off to greet her classmates and leave.

Once outside the restaurant, Ling Dong saw Pei Yicheng holding up Xu Nian'an and hurried over to take Xu Nian'an, saying, "Did Nian'an get drunk?"

"Not drunk."

The moment Xu Nian'an heard someone say he was drunk, he wanted to argue.