

Regaining 311

Chapter 311: Shitou

Heart-wrenching sobs, cries to the very extreme of sorrow, just listening made one feel the sadness.

At first, Xu Nianhua was startled, but hearing him cry like a child, she stepped forward, squatted by his side, and gently patted his back. She didn't speak, she simply comforted him by patting his back gently.

Passersby, upon hearing these cries, couldn't help but stop in their tracks. They saw a beautiful young girl comforting a dirty little boy, her eyes focused and tender, without the slightest hint of disdain for his griminess.

'Click'

Pei Yining, witnessing the scene, subconsciously took out her camera and snapped a photo.

"Little sister."

Xu Nian'an couldn't find Xu Nianhua in the clinic and, hearing the crying outside, thought something had happened to his little sister. He ran out quickly, but seeing that it wasn't his sister crying, but the person who had squatted by the door for days, his heart immediately felt relieved.

"Little sister, what happened?"

Xu Nian'an approached quickly, looked Xu Nianhua over to make sure she was alright, and then asked, "Why is he crying so sadly?"

Xu Nianhua silently shook her head to indicate she didn't know either.

Pei Yining stepped forward, put down her camera, and squatted in front of him. She pulled out a handkerchief from her pocket and stuffed it into his hand.

With the comfort provided by the three of them, his wailing eventually began to subside.

"I, why does he look so familiar?" Xu Nianhua looked at the person drying his tears, feeling as if she had seen him before.

Hearing his sister's comment, Xu Nian'an also stared, finding the face somewhat familiar but couldn't recall who it was.

"Shitou?"

Du Chang was returning from an early consultation when he noticed the commotion by the clinic. Seeing the dirty man crying his eyes out, he instantly recognized him and asked, "Shitou, has something happened to your grandmother?"

Shitou?

Xu Nianhua, who already found him familiar, combined with the mention of the name, instantly remembered. She had once encountered this pitiable person at Du Chang's home, relying solely on his grandmother, and at the time she felt very sorry for him.

"Dr. Du."

Shitou's hoarse voice was ragged, as grating as a broken gong. His eyes were swollen; with a choked voice, he said, "Grandma, my grandma she..."

Du Chang immediately understood, he sighed, squatted down, and patted his shoulder saying, "Death is irreversible, take care of yourself."

He sighed; the last time he had treated Shitou's grandmother, he knew that even if she were cured, she wouldn't last long.

"Shitou, is your grandmother's funeral taken care of?"

Du Chang asked again.

"Yes," Shitou sobbed. Since the beginning of spring, Granny Shi's health had grown increasingly frail, declining day by day. Later, they even called Dr. Xu for a visit, but Dr. Xu only said her body was just old.

Half a month ago, grandmother passed away. With the help of neighbors in the village, she was buried. After the seventh day following her death, Shitou found himself alone in the empty house, feeling as though the whole world had abandoned him.

Shitou, scared and uneasy, remembered his grandmother's last wish for him to find Dr. Xu, so he decisively went to seek out Dr. Xu.

Shitou felt terrible. Arriving at the clinic's doorstep, he couldn't muster the courage to find Dr. Xu and ended up squatting by the clinic for five days. Watching Dr. Xu go in and out of the clinic, he still hadn't summoned the courage, mainly because he didn't know what to say.

"Good child, don't think too much. If you're willing, come with me. I won't promise you much, but at least you'll have enough to eat and warm clothes to wear," Dr. Du patted his shoulder. When he was living with his grandmother, Dr. Du had suggested he come to the county to be with him, but Shitou was reluctant. Now, Shitou was alone, and Dr. Du repeated the offer.

Chapter 312: Congratulations President Pei

"Dr. Du!"

Upon hearing this, Shitou's unsettled heart seemed to settle down instantly.

Originally, he didn't understand why his grandmother had insisted on finding Dr. Du, but now he understood—without his grandmother, Dr. Du was like a kind relative.

"Dr. Du."

Shitou threw himself into Du Chang's arms, and the tears he had just stopped flowed like a dam had broken.

Since Du Chang was already crouching on the ground, he was instantaneously knocked over by Shitou.

Xu Nian'an, with quick reflexes, stepped forward and steadied Du Chang.

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After cleaning himself up and changing into Ling Dong's clothes, which made Shitou's frame seem even smaller, like a child wearing an adult's clothes, he cleaned his hair and wiped his face, revealing his tender, youthful face.

Shitou comfortably took a bath, his mood calmed down. Remembering his embarrassing outburst on the street, Shitou hung his head, his cheeks blushing up to his ears.

"Shitou, from now on, you'll live in this room."

Du Chang introduced Shitou to the room where he could settle down, being aware that he was only sixteen, and asked if he wanted to continue his schooling.

But Shitou shook his head and said, "No, Dr. Du, I don't want to study anymore. I'm not cut out for that. I want to follow you and learn something, can I? I can do odd jobs or sweep floors, as long as I have food to eat."

"This..."

Du Chang frowned and said, "My small clinic doesn't make much money."

"Dr. Du, don't worry, as long as I have food to eat, it's all right." Even though Shitou agreed to stay, he felt uneasy about living there without contributing.

Xu Nianhua, moved by the moment, was standing next to Pei Yicheng and leaned forward to whisper in his ear, "Brother Cheng, the Chili Sauce Factory also needs people."

The Chili Sauce Factory, with its growing scale, definitely needed more workers. Moreover, as Cheng Hao was the only one making deliveries, it was becoming increasingly hard for him. Each time he had to leave the factory, it was always Uncle Jiang and his older brother who helped load the goods.

If Shitou wasn't going to school, he should slowly grow through working.

Warm breath sounded near his ear, and he instantly tensed up completely, never expecting her to come so close to speak.

Pei Yicheng glanced sideways and saw her sparkling eyes. His lips slightly curved as he said, "Shitou, my grandfather's clinic is not short of people, would you like to come with me?"

"Yes." Shitou immediately agreed, saying, "I can do anything. I'm also strong."

Shitou raised his thin arms, and true enough, despite appearing frail, his muscles were particularly firm.

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"Would you like to go see the factory?" Pei Yicheng suggested.

Xu Nianhua nodded vehemently and said, "Yes, I would love to, but is your factory ready yet?"

"Almost." Pei Yicheng had spent most of the past half-month handling this, and the factory was roughly set up. He had even hired experts for the perfume-making business.

"Then great, let's visit your new factory." Xu Nianhua's face beamed with a smile as she said, "I wish you more and more success in your business in the future, President Pei."

"I'll take your good words."

Pei Yicheng's lips curled slightly, while Pei Yining, volunteering herself, said, "I want to go too."

She wasn't going to be just a third wheel—she wanted to see the company and factory her brother was running!

The next day, early morning, Xu Nianhua and Pei Yining followed Pei Yicheng to the new factory.

Chapter 313: Feeling Guilty

"You really take your camera everywhere, don't you?" Xu Nianhua hadn't left the house yet when she saw Pei Yining arriving with her camera slung over her shoulder.

"Of course, I'm going to study this major in the future."

Pei Yining hugged her camera like a treasure, loving taking photos wherever she went. She was particularly satisfied with several pictures she took yesterday, and once they were developed, they would definitely look great.

"Yining, when the photos are developed, save a copy for me," Xu Nianhua suggested, saying, "I'll pay for the developing, and next time, I'll buy you film."

In those days, film was still very expensive.

"Sure, but no need for the developing money, I have money." Pei Yining patted her pocket, her family was well-off, and she always had plenty of pocket money.

Pei Yining grinned, showing her white, even teeth, and said, "As for my film, I have plenty. You can take photos however you like."

Xu Nianhua didn't argue but asked, "By the way, when we first met, did you also take pictures? I've never seen them, where are they?"

Xu Nianhua was curious, and without mentioning the photos, she couldn't recall them.

Once mentioned, she remembered the first time she met Pei Yining; she was just helping Pei Yicheng get sand out of his eyes, and coincidentally, Pei Yining had captured it on camera. She also belatedly felt that their proximity was a bit awkward.

"Uh..."

As soon as Pei Yining mentioned the photo, she instantly felt guilty. She had sent the photo to her brother Pei Yicheng long ago, and it was still in his wallet to this day.

"What's wrong? It wasn't developed, was it?" Xu Nianhua pressed.

Pei Yining quickly explained, "Of course it was developed, but I left it at home, forgot to bring it."

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Before leaving, Pei Yining quietly said to Pei Yicheng, "Brother, Nianhua asked about the photo. It's still in your wallet; what should I give to Nianhua?"

"Why don't you develop another print?" Pei Yicheng thought about that photo and his lips curved into a tender smile, saying, "From now on, take more photos. I'll cover the cost of the film."

"Really?" Pei Yining's eyes immediately lit up, she grabbed his arm and said, "Brother, you said it, no backing out."

Pei Yicheng raised an eyebrow, asking, "When have I ever gone back on my word?"

"True." Pei Yining's smile deepened, she happily said, "Brother, while you're at it, could you also cover the cost of developing the photos?"

"Sure."

Pei Yicheng's brief response delighted Pei Yining even more. Although she had plenty of pocket money, who would ever complain about having too much money?

"Brother, you're the best."

Pei Yicheng laughed joyfully, turning to Xu Nianhua who was sightseeing nearby and said, "Nianhua, let's go see the factory."

Pei Yining led Xu Nianhua around; although the factory had just been renovated and was still without machinery, it looked imposing and sizable.

"This will be the warehouse, where all goods from raw materials to finished products will be stocked, and there's a back door that won't interfere with the factory's normal operations."

"This side is the workshop; the machines will be shipped back in half a month." Pei Yicheng spoke eloquently, detailing the layout of the factory and the plans for the next few years. His handsome face was brimming with confidence as he walked under the shady trees, the dappled sunlight casting even more charm on his features.

What he didn't say was how much effort and how many connections it had taken to set up this factory and transport the machinery.

Chapter 314: The Notice Has Arrived

After visiting Pei Yicheng's factory, Xu Nianhua only had one impression: Pei Yicheng was really a clever man, and he was very steady in his actions, taking one step at a time. His plans for the factory were also very sensible.

"Your brother is really impressive."

On the way back, Xu Nianhua couldn't help but remark, feeling bold because she knew the future — it was this trend; as long as one dared to think and act, success was achievable.

But what about Pei Yicheng?

It was all on his own.

"Of course, my brother is amazing. Look, even without relying on the Pei Family, my brother made a lot of money selling medicinal herbs before, and he often gave me spending money."

Pei Yining couldn't wait to make Xu Nianhua understand all of her brother's good traits. Once the topic came up, she couldn't stop praising him, continuing, "Also, whatever my brother does, he has never failed. Now with this factory, I feel that it will only get better and better in the future."

"Hmm." Xu Nianhua nodded in agreement. Indeed, whether it was hand cream or perfume, each was a money-maker.

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"Bro Cheng, am I not following you to work?"

Shitou looked at the stack of books and the registration form, dumbfounded.

"You're only sixteen. Even if you follow me to work, you can only do manual labor," Pei Yicheng explained.

Cheeks flushing, Shitou thought Pei Yicheng was looking down on him, and he hurriedly said, "Bro Cheng, I am very strong. I can do any dirty or tiring work."

"Shitou."

Pei Yicheng patted his shoulder, saying, "There are many who can do dirty and tiring work, but they don't lack one more person. I need someone who can assist me, Shitou."

Pei Yicheng looked at him earnestly, asking, "My grandfather and I both believe in you. Once you've learned enough, would you like to help me?"

"Of course." Shitou answered without hesitation, then hesitantly added, "But Bro Cheng, I have a poor background; can I actually learn?"

"You can, as long as you are willing to learn."

Pei Yicheng turned to look at Cheng Hao.

Cheng Hao immediately said, "Shitou, doing dirty and tiring work won't help much with Bro Cheng's affairs; it could at most protect the factory. But with education, it's different. You can use what you learn to help manage the factory. You're a trusted person. We can feel reassured with you."

"Shitou, you don't need to feel the pressure either. Wait until you earn money later, then you can repay Bro Cheng for your schooling," Cheng Hao said, not wanting to talk about money, yet aware that Shitou was quite sensitive about it.

Cheng Hao continued, "Your tuition fees are really not a big deal to Bro Cheng. Just focus on your studies, and helping Bro Cheng more in the future will suffice."

Du Chang also spoke up, "Listen to your Bro Cheng."

He looked at Pei Yicheng with admiration, having wanted to help Shitou for a long time. But Shitou's strong pride had always prevented it. If it hadn't been for Shitou's grandmother's sudden demise, Shitou might never have come to him.

Now that he had come, he naturally hoped Shitou would study well, which would be very beneficial for his future.

"Bro Cheng, thank you, Dr. Du, thank you!"

Shitou, his face moved and eyes reddening, bowed deeply to them, burying his deep gratitude in his heart. In the future, he must study well and repay Bro Cheng and Dr. Du.

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Shuangzhu Village became lively because the mail carrier with the green cloth bag had arrived.

"Do we have any mail?" Zhao Juxiang had been watching out, and seeing the mail carrier, she ran over with a big smile, startling the mail carrier — last year's quarrel seemed still vivid in his memory.

Chapter 315: South City Normal University

"Is there an acceptance letter for my son Zhiyuan?"

"Did my Zhiyuan get into college?"

As Zhao Juxiang watched the postman step back, she couldn't help but step forward, saying excitedly, "Comrade postman, please say something."

Seeing him remain silent, Zhao Juxiang kept urging him.

"Yes."

As the postman reached into his green bag for the acceptance letter, he said, "There is a letter."

To avoid what happened last year, the postman quickly took out the acceptance letter.

"You got in, Zhiyuan! You've been admitted to college!"

Zhao Juxiang had waited day and night and finally received the long-awaited acceptance letter.

"That's wonderful, my Zhiyuan is really accomplished."

Zhao Juxiang's voice was shrill, and when she shouted, the nearby neighbors could all hear her.

"Mom, did I really get in?" Xu Zhiyuan had been napping; startled by Zhao Juxiang's shout, he jumped up immediately.

"Of course it's true, look, here's the admission letter."

Zhao Juxiang carefully handed the admission letter to Xu Zhiyuan. Seeing him tear it open eagerly, she hurriedly said, "Be careful, slowly, don't rip it!"

"South City Normal University!"

Xu Zhiyuan held the admission letter, dancing with joy, tears of excitement falling.

"I knew it, my Zhiyuan was bound to get in."

As Zhao Juxiang watched the neighbors gather around, she proudly boasted about her son getting into college. She was ready to throw back the mockery she had received the previous year in their faces.

Getting into college was an incredibly honorable and prestigious affair.

Zhao Juxiang reveled in the envious glances of everyone, her smile almost reaching her ears. As she saw the postman about to leave, she quickly grabbed his hand and asked, "Comrade, how many from Shuangzhu Village got into college? Is it just my Zhiyuan who made it?"

"Not just him." The postman shook his head and said, "Your village is quite remarkable this year, four students were admitted to college!"

When the postman mentioned this, he gave them a thumbs-up, praising, "Your village is really impressive!"

In the past years, there were times when the village didn't even have one student get into college, but this year suddenly four had made it.

"Who else got in?"

"Did Xu Nianhua and his siblings get in too?"

"And Xiao Gang, his results were good too."

The villagers were all talking at once; only a few had good grades and had taken the college entrance exam.

Zhao Juxiang was just feeling happy, but upon hearing that the Xu siblings had also been admitted, the joy on her face faded slightly; her own son should be the most outstanding.

The postman soon found the Xu family home.

"Uncle Qinghe, the mail delivery with the acceptance letters has arrived." The villagers had run early to Qingsong Furniture Factory to inform him.

Xu Qinghe came out just as the postman arrived. The moment he received the letter, his eyes turned red with emotion, and he said excitedly, "Comrade, thank you for your hard work."

"It's what I should do." After delivering the letter there, the postman went on to deliver the acceptance letter to the Xiao Family.

"Uncle Qinghe, which universities did Nian'an and Nianhua get into?" Xu Song asked curiously, craning his neck to peek at what was in his hand.

"Let me check."

Xu Qinghe had been too overwhelmed with excitement to take a close look; now, he picked up the letters.

Chapter 316: Everyone's Here

"Beining University!"

"And Ningbei Medical University as well."

Xu Song said with an admiring face, "Nian'an and his sister are really amazing."

Getting admitted to universities in other provinces, although he had never heard of these two universities, just looking at the names of the schools, he felt they were very prestigious.

The Xu Family was overjoyed. Xu Qinghe, holding the admission notices, happily headed to the county to share the great news with his son and daughter at the earliest.

Gaoliang County.

Pei Yining just received the joyous phone call, informing her that she got into Beining University. Pei Yining's face was filled with happiness, and she said with pride, "I just knew it, I was sure I would get in."

Pei Yining's eyes sparkled as she grabbed Xu Nianhua with excitement and said, "Thank you."

"You got in on your own merit. The person you should thank is yourself, for your hard work."

Xu Nianhua was genuinely happy for her and said, "We will be alumni in the future."

"Nianhua, are you that confident?" asked Pei Yining as she looked Xu Nianhua up and down, seeing the confident light shimmering in her eyes. That sureness was so captivating that it was hard to look away.

"Of course."

After Xu Nianhua had finished her exams, she never once thought she wouldn't get in.

Unless Beining University didn't admit a single student, there would be a spot for her.

"Impressive."

Pei Yining gave her a thumbs up. She thought that Nianhua's confidence looked good no matter how you looked at it. Didn't you see how even brother was stunned?

Pei Yining silently said to herself and then changed the subject, "Nianhua, how come your admission notice hasn't arrived yet?"

"It should be here in the next few days."

Xu Nianhua said uncertainly.

'Knock knock knock'

There was a knocking sound at the door.

"Could it be that they're delivering the admission notice?" Pei Yining said excitedly.

"Definitely not, we gave them our home address."

Xu Nian'an started to speak and walked to the door, ready to open it.

"Nianhua, are you there?" Zheng Jin's voice was heard as she knocked and asked.

"It's Zheng Jin."

Xu Nianhua quickly stepped forward, and Xu Nian'an moved aside, no longer insisting on opening the door herself.

As soon as the door opened, Zheng Jin threw herself into Xu Nianhua's arms and said excitedly, "Nianhua, I made it, I made it."

"I got into South City's Teacher's College!"

After receiving her admission notice and the initial excitement, Zheng Jin immediately went to find Xu Nianhua. Without Xu Nianhua, she simply couldn't have gotten into university.

"Congratulations."

Xu Nianhua was pushed back a few steps by Zheng Jin's enthusiastic embrace.

"It's you I should thank."

Zheng Jin said eagerly, "My grades were so bad, without the methods you taught me, how could I have gotten in? Especially in foreign languages, I scored pretty well!"

"Nianhua, I got in too," Chen Hu also ran over from outside, bringing along with him Teacher Lin from the school.

"Teacher Lin?"

Xu Nian'an was somewhat surprised, why had Teacher Lin come as well?

"Nian'an, Nianhua." Teacher Lin was beaming with joy!

Initially, when he was assigned to teach the repeat class, he wasn't particularly willing, as the performance compared to the students who had just advanced to their third year of high school was indeed quite poor. But as it turned out, Teacher Lin felt that in his half career as a teacher, this class was the brightest and most memorable one he had ever taught.

Out of the forty-two students in the class, thirty-two were admitted to universities, a miracle never seen before at Gaoliang County No. 1 Middle School!

Since the school was founded, the number of students from County No. 1 Middle School that got into universities could be counted on one's fingers.

Chapter 317: Celebration

"Mr. Lin." Xu Nianhua saw Mr. Lin and felt very happy, especially seeing Mr. Lin's face beaming with pride and delight, which made her feel a bit surprised.

Mr. Lin was always good at hiding his emotions; even when he was very happy, at most, his eyebrows would lift up to the sky, but now, he was smiling... almost like a silly uncle.

"Nianhua, Nian'an, you are both good children."

Mr. Lin said joyfully, "If it weren't for your study methods, motivating your classmates to study hard, we wouldn't have today."

"Do you know how many people from our class got into university this year?" Mr. Lin's voice trembled with excitement, and even now, his heart couldn't help but thrill whenever he thought of this.

"How many?"

Xu Nianhua was somewhat curious.

Xu Nian'an was momentarily shocked and said uncertainly, "Surely not everyone got in, right?"

Mr. Lin's joyful face stiffened for a moment, and he glared at him, saying, "What kind of pipe dream are you having? Everyone got in? Do you think getting into university is like entering your family's vegetable garden, where anyone who wishes can just come in?"

"Hehe." Xu Nian'an scratched his head, feeling somewhat embarrassed; he was just taking a wild guess.

"Thirty-two."

Mr. Lin, gesticulating and speaking, was so worked up that he didn't even know what to say.

Thirty-two?

Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an exchanged a glance subconsciously, realizing this made up more than half the total number and was indeed quite impressive.

Without looking too far back, just look at last year—only ten got in then.

This year, just from their repeat class, thirty-two had been admitted, which was truly commendable.

"Nian'an, Nianhua, Mr. Lin, you're all here?"

When Xu Qinghe arrived with the admission letters, he happened to see everyone gathered in the yard, greeted them joyfully, and then solemnly placed the letters in the hands of the siblings, saying, "Look, both of you got in, both to universities in Beijing."

The small courtyard erupted with warm applause.

"Nianhua, we really are schoolmates now." Pei Yining dashed over, looking at the admission letter in her hand with pride, saying, "All the hard work was worth it; I finally get to be schoolmates with Nianhua."

"She is..." Zheng Jin stood next to Xu Nianhua, her gaze falling on Pei Yining, that pretty doll-like face looking even younger than them. Could it be she also got into Beining University?

Sigh, she wished she could go to Beining, but with her grades, getting into a university in South City was already quite good.

"This is Pei Yining, from Ningbei, a student who just took the college entrance exam like me, and, like me, was admitted to Beining University." Xu Nianhua introduced her, feeling genuinely excited at that moment when she held the admission letter in her hand.

For the first time in her two lifetimes, she had received an admission letter; she had finally gotten into a university.

What followed was a celebration for everyone, led by Mr. Lin, all the students from their class who got into university gathered together, no exception. Unlike the farewell dinner after the exams when everyone was filled with uncertainty about the future, now it was different; now, everyone was filled with anticipation for college life.

Throughout the toasts, there was nothing but joy.

"Brother, I'm so happy today." Pei Yining, though not one of their classmates, insisted on going to dinner with Xu Nianhua as a fellow candidate, even contributing money voluntarily, so she also joined in this celebration. Through the other students, she learned about another side of Xu Nianhua—the selfless way she helped classmates, and they had nothing but praise for her.

Chapter 318: Unified Vision

"Bro, you have no idea how much I admire Nianhua," Ji Ying said, slurring her words, with most of her body leaning on Pei Yicheng. "How can she be so wonderful, always helping her classmates?"

Pei Yining, drunk and bleary-eyed, stumbled along as she spoke: "You don't know, none of our classmates are as great as Nianhua. Whenever they get a good test paper, they'd rather hide it for their own use than let anyone else take a glance, let alone teach others how to use better study methods."

"I like Nianhua, I really really like Nianhua."

Pei Yining looked at him with hazy, drunken eyes.

"Alright, alright, you like her," Pei Yicheng responded, going along with her as he steadied Pei Yining, afraid she might fall at any moment.

He added, "Next time, don't drink so much, okay? It's not good for girls to drink too much."

Pei Yicheng, smelling the alcohol on her, couldn't help but frown. From now on, he'd strictly forbid her from drinking; once she started, she couldn't even tell people apart when she was drunk.

"Bro, I didn't drink much, I'm not drunk," Pei Yining protested as she staggered, shaking off the hand that was holding her, trying to prove she was not drunk. Yet, even though she thought she was standing steady, why did the world seem to spin?

Just as she was about to fall, Pei Yicheng strode forward and caught her, saying, "Okay, okay, you're not drunk. Are you happy now? Let's go home and rest."

Pei Yicheng felt that reasoning with a drunkard was truly a waste of breath.

"Bro, Nianhua is so great, you need to pursue her more aggressively!" Pei Yining clung to Pei Yicheng's clothes, mumbling incessantly, "That Chen whatever-his-name-was, he looks at Nianhua differently. She's going to be my sister-in-law."

"You'd better hurry up and win your sister-in-law over, or someone else might take her away. I'm telling you, I only acknowledge Nianhua as my sister-in-law."

After mumbling to herself, Pei Yining nestled into Pei Yicheng's arm and fell asleep.

Pei Yicheng: "..."

He grabbed her hand and hoisted her onto his back.

"Sister-in-law, my sister-in-law."

"I only recognize Nianhua as my sister-in-law."

The words Pei Yining mumbled were unclear and gradually faded, except for the word 'sister-in-law,' which remained audible. Pei Yicheng glanced sideways, felt her steady breathing, and shook his head helplessly as he looked up at the stars that shined like eyes in the night, twinkling. His lips curved into a slight smile as he said, "True to form as my little sister, we have the same taste."

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In Shuangzhu Village, the Xu family became the main topic of conversation.

Whether it was Xu Zhong's Xu Family or Xu Qinghe's family, everyone in the village considered them to be very successful.

Xu Zhihao had married a wife from the county and had now become the director of a cannery.

Xu Zhiyuan had been admitted to university and his future was bound to be bright.

Not to mention Xu Qinghe's family, Xu Qinghe himself had opened a furniture factory. They didn't know exactly how much money he was making, but there was certainly a lot of traffic to and fro.

Ji Ying took several women from the village to work in the factory, and seeing their own lives getting better and better, they knew they were earning money.

Xu Nianji, the eldest of the Xu family, was selling bean sprouts and had gotten married; he was about to become a father, which promised a good future.

The second and youngest sons of the Xu family had both been admitted to university, and it was a university in Beining, no less. How impressive was that?

The villagers didn't understand the specifics, but they knew that getting into university was not easy, let alone getting admitted to a good one outside the province. It was incredibly difficult. With the lengthy time it took to prepare for college entrance, how could their futures not be promising?

Many people had already started asking around discreetly, wanting to know how they managed to get into university. Even more so, several villagers came knocking, hoping to hire Nianhua to tutor their children.

Chapter 319: Honor in the Future?

At first, Xu Nianhua thought about how she could lend a helping hand to them, but in the end, as more and more people sought her out, Xu Nianhua felt it was too frightening; she even dared not visit her own family home in the county and instead hid away at Du Chang's residence with Pei Yining.

"Hahaha~"

Pei Yining's laughter was uncontrollable; observing Xu Nianhua's expressions, how could she find them so amusing?

Maybe, Heaven was also helping her brother create opportunities.

"Yining, are you really a friend? Taking pleasure in my disaster." Xu Nianhua pursed her lips and puffed her cheeks, staring unblinkingly at Pei Yining. These days, due to her academic results and the study methods she had shared before, countless people sought her out through various connections.

Although Xu Nianhua was generous with her teaching, the sheer number of people had become quite terrifying, and moreover, she didn't know any of them. They all came to her, regardless of their children's individual circumstances.

This put a great deal of pressure on Xu Nianhua, who in the end credited all her success to Teacher Lin.

Finally, she managed to divert those people to seek out Teacher Lin, and Xu Nianhua breathed a sigh of relief, but she dared not stay at home any longer.

"Nianhua, everyone recognizes you, admires you, and believes in you—that's a good thing." Pei Yining clapped her hands and praised, "You scored full marks in the foreign language exam. I heard that you're the only one in the whole country with a perfect score in foreign language."

"What a great honor." With one hand propping up her chin, Pei Yining felt extremely comfortable living in the county post-exam, spending every day happily.

"Forget it."

Xu Nianhua sighed and swiftly started to prepare the vegetables. Since she was staying at the Du family's home, she did not want to just sit around and expected to be fed, and decided to show off her cooking skills.

The braised pork was shiny with oil, making anyone's mouth water just from the aroma.

Stir-fried pork with green and red peppers, spicy beef, tomato scrambled eggs, sautéed green beans, and pork ribs stewed with lotus roots filled the table, along with a special cucumber smash and cold mixed okra, presenting an array of dishes that were a feast for the senses.

"We are really fortunate today," Du Chang said contentedly, looking at the dishes that included both meat and vegetables, soup, and cold dishes, some spicy and some not, appetizing just at a glance.

"Indeed, Nianhua's hands must be enchanted," Pei Yining's eyes sparkled as she looked at the array of ordinary but exceptionally pleasing dishes made by Xu Nianhua. She couldn't help swallowing her saliva and said, "Otherwise, how could Nianhua be so good at exams and also make such delicious dishes?"

Uh-huh, this sister-in-law must definitely be from her family.

"Hey, it seems I've arrived just in time," Cheng Hao said as he entered the house with two bottles of wine, already smelling the aroma.

"Xiaohao, your timing is perfect."

Du Chang beckoned Cheng Hao, and as everyone took their seats, he tactfully saved Pei Yicheng's seat next to Xu Nianhua during the moment Pei Yicheng went to wash his hands.

"Let's eat, everyone, please enjoy; don't waste Nianhua's great culinary talent," Du Chang said with a smile, and he started by trying a piece of the smashed cucumber. It was a simple cucumber, but after Xu Nianhua's touch, the taste was indeed quite good.

"Good."

Du Chang picked up another piece.

A series of compliments arose from the dining table, and even with Xu Nianhua's thick skin, she was embarrassed by the praise.

"I wonder if I'll have the honor of tasting your cooking in the future?"

A warm breath brushed past Xu Nianhua's ear suddenly, and her already stiff face from the compliments tensed up even more.

Chapter 320: Drowning Sorrows in Alcohol

"Nianhua?" Pei Yicheng glanced sideways, his voice ringing in her ear once again.

Xu Nianhua stiffened, feeling as if she couldn't even hold her chopsticks anymore. Her heart pounded like a drum, as if she had encountered something thrilling. She took a deep breath and said, "Of course, you can."

"Really?" Pei Yicheng's eyes seemed to sparkle with a sudden brightness.

The brightness was as if it was going to engulf her. Xu Nianhua quickly shifted her gaze and nodded, saying, "Of course it's true. Whenever you want to eat, just let me know."

It's just cooking a meal. Wasn't that an exaggeration?

"It's a promise." Pei Yicheng's smiled, picking up a piece of braised beef. The stir-fried beef was spicy and tasty, without any gamey smell, exactly to his taste.

Uh.

It was just a meal, and yet it was a promise?

Xu Nianhua thought it over and felt that Pei Yicheng was making too much of a fuss.

Sitting on the other side of Pei Yicheng, Pei Yining watched this scene and secretly laughed. She decided that she would stop calling her brother a blockhead, as he was not a blockhead at all.

At the dinner table, the atmosphere was very pleasant.

Contrarily, Cheng Hao, who usually chattered, was uncharacteristically silent. Except for toasting with everyone at the beginning, he spent the entire meal drinking and eating the braised pork that was just in front of him.

A bite of braised pork followed by a sip of liquor, he poured his own drink, as if he was intentionally trying to drink himself into oblivion.

"You're going to get drunk if you keep drinking," Ling Dong said as he saw him nearly finish an entire bottle. He grabbed the liquor from his hands, saying, "Aren't you sweetly in love? Why are you drinking so much?"

"I want to drink. What's it to you?"

Cheng Hao glared at him and said, "It's my own liquor. Can't I drink it?"

"Drink, drink, drink, just be careful not to fall under the table," Ling Dong examined Cheng Hao from head to toe and asked, "You guys didn't break up, did you?"

"Nonsense."

Cheng Hao slammed his cup down on the table, causing the plates and cups to shake. He said, "Ling Dong, are we still brothers, or are you cursing me? Do you just want to see me miserable?"

"We're good. It's just that she always goes to South City, and I'm just miserable alone," Cheng Hao slowly realized he might have dampened the mood. He apologized, saying, "Grandpa, Yicheng, I... I drank too much, my hand wasn't steady. You don't need to worry about me; I'm fine. I just felt like drinking today."

Pei Yicheng looked at him deeply and didn't say much, just scooped up a bowl of hot soup and handed it to him saying, "Then don't just eat one dish. We have plenty of food and drink, eat as much as you want."

"Yicheng, you're really considerate."

Cheng Hao smiled broadly while sipping the soup, his inner discomfort filled with concern.

He subdued the expression in his eyes. During his last trip to South City, he happened to encounter Zou Yaru on a blind date. He saw that Mr. Gu and wished he could rush forward and tear him apart, but Yaru's mother was there, and he couldn't be rash.

Seeing Yaru's elder, he couldn't afford to present himself in such a disgraceful manner; he was obliged to show his best side in front of the Zou family.

Cheng Hao slowly calmed down, especially after he discovered that Yaru wasn't showing any fondness to Mr. Gu and that it wasn't voluntary, his heart steadied even more.

Cheng Hao couldn't wait to tell Yaru about his identity, but then he thought it might not be right. After all, why must one consider family background when falling in love or getting married?