

Regaining 331

Chapter 331: I'm Going Too

The summer wind blew through, bringing with it threads of coolness.

Xu Nianhua was still bewildered even after Pei Yicheng had scaled the wall and left. What kind of trouble was she in?

He said he would help her?

Even if she did something bad, he would help?

Lost in wild thoughts, Xu Nianhua stared at the wall and couldn't help but whisper to herself, "Why climb over the wall instead of going through the gate? Sneaking around, was it just to show off his long legs?"

...

In Shuangzhu Village.

"We must go," Xu Qinghe declared at once upon hearing from Ji Ying that her father had fallen ill before the New Year and was asking if they planned to visit South City. Without a second thought, he said, "Yingzi, over the years, I haven't fulfilled my duties as a son-in-law. Now things are different from before. From now on, we should visit more often and look after the old man."

After finishing his words, Xu Qinghe began to pack, but after looking around, he realized there wasn't much they could bring from home.

"Qinghe, what about the factory?" Ji Ying asked, her heart lifted by the fact that Xu Qinghe valued her. In previous years when they were destitute, the money saved on travel expenses was always given to her father to buy some snacks and the like.

"Don't worry, I'll speak to Xiaosong. A couple of days should be no problem," he replied.

After saying this, Xu Qinghe stepped out and reminded her, "Just head to your family's place, I can go alone."

"Be careful."

As Ji Ying watched his retreating figure, she cautioned him and added, "Nianji, Xiaohe, if all of us go, only the two of you will be left at home. Especially, Xiaohe, with your baby bump, you need to be extra careful."

"Mom, don't worry, I can take care of myself. I'll go with Aunt Xiong and the others to the factory, and we'll come back together in the evening. Nothing will happen," Zhou He assured her, touching her swollen belly. Since getting pregnant, she had been regularly consuming bone broth and had even eaten two chickens. Her in-laws treated her exceptionally well, and her sister-in-law and brother-in-law were easy to get along with.

Zhou He felt she had married the right person.

"That won't do," Xu Nianji was the first to object. "Xiaohe, why don't you stay closer to town these next few days? That way, I can keep an eye on you."

"Yeah, Xiaohe, you can stay in Nianhua's room. Even if Xihua and Meixiang are very nice, what if something happens on the way? What would we do then?"

Ji Ying also agreed with Xu Nianji's suggestion. Normally, with her accompanying Xiaohe, she felt more at ease. But with her absence, she was worried.

It wasn't that she doubted Xiong Xihua and the others; it was that certain matters were difficult to entrust to anyone else.

"Nianhua and Nian'an had already discussed this with me. They're going to university soon and won't be at home as much. They had prepared a room for us a while ago. With you walking back and forth with such a big belly, I just can't rest easy," she said.

...

"Sister-in-law, I told you earlier, the room has been kept ready for you all along. You insist on not staying, but now, just settle in peacefully and stop worrying my brother," Xu Nianhua joined the persuasion team after learning the full story.

Xu Nianhua said jokingly, "Besides, if my brother stays in town, he could save at least an hour each day. This extra hour doesn't need to be wasted on the road; he could spend more time with my sister-in-law and the soon-to-arrive baby."

Zhou He, with her thin skin, blushed instantly at Xu Nianhua's teasing.

"Nian'an and I are going to Ningbei for university soon anyway, and having the room here empty is also a waste," Xu Nianhua added.

"Yeah, sister-in-law, why don't you stay in my room? There is less stuff in my room. Lately, I've been following my master at the medical clinic and often stay with Ling Dong, so I seldom come back to stay," Xu Nian'an chimed in, suggesting it's better to keep the room with more belongings untouched.

Chapter 332: What a Coincidence

"Nian'an, little sister, there's an extra room here, I can clean it up and it can be habitable," Xu Nianji began, the room for making bean sprouts had been a storeroom, which could be fixed up for living. Initially, there were only three rooms, apart from the two used by Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an, there was one alongside the storeroom, a bit small, but livable.

"That won't do," Xu Nian'an instinctively refused, saying, "We're going off to college, leaving two nice rooms empty, and you staying beside the storeroom, that's just too wasteful."

"Exactly, big brother, that storeroom side is for making bean sprouts, not to mention the smell, and because we often need to water them, it's also quite damp. You staying there is one thing, but big sister-in-law is pregnant, how can she live there?"

Xu Nianhua expressed his disagreement.

Ji Ying also chimed in, and in the end, they decided to clear out Xu Nian'an's things, letting Xu Nianji and his wife Zhou He move in.

Once everything was arranged, Xu Qinghe also hurried over. When he saw him, Xu Nianhua got a bit alarmed; it was a busy time at the factory, and dad was going too?

"I'm going to see your grandfather, as long as he's in good health, I'll come back early," Xu Qinghe said with a smile.

"That's wonderful, our whole family is heading to South City, big brother, big sister-in-law, once the future little nephew or niece arrives, you can all go together," Xu Nian'an, looking around at his family, felt especially happy. Going abroad together, this was indeed an unprecedented experience.

Ji Shuyuan stood to one side, silently observing his aunt and uncle's family, envy evident in his eyes; their family, truly harmonious and blissful, was enviable.

"Uncle Xu, Aunt Ji, big brother Xu, big sister-in-law, second brother Xu." Pei Yining ran into the house joyfully, quickly greeting everyone in the courtyard, and finally, seeing Ji Shuyuan standing to one side, she waved at him saying, "Hello, brother Shuyuan."

"Hello." Ji Shuyuan nodded his head, having greeted her back.

"Yining, it's quite the coincidence, we're going to South City," Xu Nian'an thought Pei Yining might not know yet and reminded her.

Pei Yining tilted her head, looking at Xu Nian'an and said, "Who says it's coincidental? I'll also go to South City for a stroll. I've almost had enough of staying in this small town, it's about time to see what interesting places South City has."

Xu Nian'an: "..."

Since when was she also going to South City?

Xu Nianhua, eyes downcast, curved his lips into a slight smile.

"My brother's car is already parked at the door, and Cheng Hao has already loaded the goods. When are we going to South City?" Pei Yining, clinging to Xu Nianhua's arm, had been chirping nonstop since entering the house.

When the Xu family walked to the door, Pei Yicheng just stepped down from the vehicle, his tall and handsome face, eye-catching wherever he went.

"Uncle Xu, Aunt Ji, it so happens we also have something to do in South City, saves you the trouble of taking the bus," Pei Yicheng spoke modestly yet fittingly captured the essence of his goodwill.

"Yicheng, that really is quite fortunate, we are troubling you once again," Xu Qinghe looked at Pei Yicheng admiringly, warm-hearted and kind, truly a good person.

Pei Yicheng's lips curved slightly, saying, "Uncle Xu, don't mention the trouble, it's just that the truck isn't as comfortable as the bus."

Xu Qinghe waved his hand, saying, "You mustn't say that, sitting on the bus for long is really tiring, us big guys, having a vehicle to ride is good enough."

"Thanks, brother Cheng," Xu Nian'an took one look, and directly opted to ride in the truck.

Chapter 333: That's a Deal

"I'll also ride in the cargo truck." Ji Shuyuan was very self-aware as he asked, "Uncle, will you sit in the back or the front?"

"I'm sturdier than you guys, so I'll sit in the front, so I don't crowd you," Xu Qinghe said, looking toward the passenger seat next to Cheng Hao.

"It's not crowded with two people in the back," Ji Shuyuan reminded. "It's safer in the back."

"No worries, I trust Xiaohao." Xu Qinghe climbed into the passenger seat, saying, "Xiaohao, today I'm really thankful to you guys, for giving us a ride."

"Uncle Xu, don't say such distant words. It's an honor for my car to have you onboard," Cheng Hao said pleasingly. This was the future sister-in-law's father; he would need her help in the future, so naturally, he picked the nicest words to say.

In another Jeep, Ling Dong was driving, Pei Yicheng sat in the passenger seat, and the back seats were occupied by Ji Ying, Xu Nianhua, and Pei Yining.

"I last saw your grandfather during the New Year last year, and it's been over a year since I've seen him. I wonder if he will blame me," Ji Ying said, feeling guilty since she boarded the car. Since the latter half of last year, as her family's life gradually improved, she only managed to send some things and money to her dad and had not visited him.

Because Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an had to prepare for university, the furniture factory and the Chili Sauce Factory kept her busy, and Zhou He was pregnant, Ji Ying was held back again.

Now, having learned from Ji Shuyuan's mouth that her father's health had taken a major turn for the worse before the new year, her desire to see him had grown even stronger.

"Mom, no, grandpa would be too happy," Xu Nianhua's face carried a beaming smile as he said, "Besides, now that my brother and I have both gotten into university, grandpa will definitely be happy."

"I hope so."

Ji Ying looked out the window at the quickly passing scenery, feeling unsettled.

Xu Nianhua changed the topic, saying, "I've never been to South City. I wonder if it's fun there."

Pei Yining, who had been quiet so far, finally found an opportunity to speak. "I've never been there either. After getting off the train in South City, every time, I rushed to the county as quickly as possible and never really explored."

"Nianhua, when we have some free time, how about we go shopping in South City together?" Pei Yining looked eagerly at Xu Nianhua, now that she had started talking, she couldn't stop, chattering like a bird all the way to South City.

It was a four-hour drive from Gaoliang County to South City. About halfway there, they stopped in a town for two hours or so, and Pei Yicheng took out some snacks from the back of the car, every variety you could think of.

"Yicheng clearly knows how to prepare for a long trip; he really thinks of everything," Ji Ying said as she tried a piece of salt ginger, the flavor surprisingly good.

"The salt ginger was a thank you gift from someone grateful to grandpa for a cure; grandpa didn't take a fee, so they sent this, and it's quite tasty," Pei Yicheng explained.

"Delicious."

Ji Ying, with ginger in her mouth, felt much better, the scent filling her nostrils.

They eventually arrived in South City, and Pei Yicheng directly took them to the street where Xu family's grandfather lived.

"Yicheng, thank you so much. When we get back to the county, I will cook something tasty to thank you properly," Ji Ying said, looking at the somewhat familiar yet strange street, praising in her heart that Pei Yicheng indeed was a good person.

"Auntie, that's a promise," Pei Yiding quickly joined the conversation.

Pei Yining poked her head out of the window and said, "Auntie, you can't forget me; I also want to eat the food you make."

"Sure, sure, I won't forget," Ji Ying promised with a smile.

Chapter 334: Aunt, I Want to Admit a Mistake

Grandfather Ji Xinghua lived with his youngest son Ji Shan in the dormitory provided by the food factory. It was on the first floor and had three rooms and a small living room, with a shared kitchen and bathroom.

To get there from this street, it took roughly fifteen minutes because it was all narrow lanes that cars couldn't enter.

"Let's go buy some fruit next door," Ji Ying suggested as she looked at the fruit stall beside the street.

Xu Qinghe had already gone to the fruit stand to buy apples and then bananas.

"That's settled."

Xu Qinghe glanced at the alcohol, a box of chili sauce, egg cakes, and fruit they brought; it was quite a respectable offering.

"Grandfather lives just inside there?"

Xu Nianhua surveyed the houses here, with their mixture of flats and multi-story buildings, which seemed to have seen many years.

"Right."

Ji Ying looked around, noting that not much had changed since her visit in the first half of last year.

"Nian'an, Nianhua, remember to speak sweetly when you meet your grandfather later," Ji Ying instructed. "He's getting on in years, so we need to be more filial to him in the future."

"Mom, I know," Xu Nianhua said, smiling as she walked down the unfamiliar street, thinking of her long-not-seen grandfather and feeling a tinge of anticipation.

"Mom, don't worry, it's not like Nianhua and I are the silent types," Xu Nian'an assured. This was his first trip back to the city, and he found everything fascinating.

Previously, he thought the county was quite large, but after entering the city today, Xu Nian'an realized he had been like a frog in a well.

"How much further, Brother Shuyuan?" Xu Nian'an asked, following closely behind Ji Shuyuan, looking around curiously as he inquired.

"Walk to the end of this alley, turn twice, and we'll be there," answered Ji Shuyuan, acknowledging people he knew with a smile as he greeted them, just before reaching the end of the alley, where he suddenly stopped.

"Brother Shuyuan, we haven't reached the place yet," said Xu Nian'an, puzzled as he looked toward Ji Shuyuan.

"Aunt, Uncle, I need to apologize for something," Ji Shuyuan suddenly turned around, stopping in front of Xu Qinghe and Ji Ying, and bowed deeply.

This unexpected gesture startled Xu Qinghe and his wife.

Ji Ying's complexion turned pale in fright; she staggered and nearly fell to one side, but Xu Qinghe caught her promptly and asked, "Shuyuan, what does this mean? What have you done wrong?"

Xu Qinghe's gaze was sharp as he stared at Ji Shuyuan, his mind drumming with worry. Perhaps something serious had befallen his father-in-law?

If anything had truly gone wrong...

Wouldn't Ji Ying grieve for a lifetime?

In a flash, a multitude of thoughts raced through Xu Qinghe's mind.

"It's..." Ji Shuyuan hesitated, unsure of how to begin.

"Ji Shuyuan, just spit it out. You're about to worry us to death," Xu Nian'an urged, no longer addressing him with the honorific 'brother' but by his name instead.

"Is Grandfather..." Ji Ying's voiced trembled as she bit her lip.

"Aunt, you've misunderstood," Ji Shuyuan felt their misunderstanding and quickly explained, "Grandfather is fine."

"You child, you almost scared me to death."

Ji Ying gripped Xu Qinghe's hand tightly, finally letting out a sigh of relief.

"Before New Year's, Grandfather fell ill," Ji Shuyuan continued, "but in fact, his health hasn't truly recovered."

His words instantly raised everyone's concerns again.

"Ah, Ji Shuyuan, can you not speak in half-truths?" Xu Nian'an wished he could delve into his cousin's mind to uncover what he really intended to say.

Chapter 335: Frail Grandpa

"That's how it is."

Ji Shuyuan looked at everyone, who were all very anxious, glanced around, and led them to stand under a large tree next to the alley. The tree shielded them from the sun, preventing them from becoming dizzy from the heat.

It was only then that Ji Shuyuan began to explain the causes and consequences of the situation.

Before the New Year, Grandpa Ji Xinghua had fallen and was admitted to the hospital. The doctor said that it was fortunate he was brought in on time; otherwise, he might have had a stroke and would have been confined to his bed.

After staying in the hospital for a few days, Ji Xinghua was discharged, but his condition was significantly worsened, and he had lost a lot of weight.

In the first half of the year, he was carefully recuperated during the spring, but on July 20, he was admitted to the hospital again due to stomach pain.

It was discovered then that Ji Xinghua had stones in his body. He suffered extreme pain daily and, fearing the waste of money, had kept it to himself, consuming a lot of medicine. However, there was no improvement, and during bouts of pain, Ji Xinghua couldn't help but cry out, often biting his own mouth to avoid bothering the neighbors because of the pain.

During a subsequent hospital visit, they stated that the stones were too large and that mere medication was ineffective; surgery was essential. But, due to the three thousand yuan needed for the surgery, it had been postponed until now.

Uncle Ji Lin, since getting married, had been living permanently with his mother-in-law in Ningbei, almost no different from having moved into his wife's family. At the end of each year, he could send two or three hundred yuan to honor the old man.

Second Uncle Ji Feng worked in a textile factory, although in South City, he seldom visited Grandpa.

Dad earned money in a food factory, and Mom also worked, but the family had been burdened with debts from my elder brother's marriage until only recently, when they were finally cleared. The family's earnings were meager, and they hardly managed to make ends meet, let alone save anything.

The three thousand yuan needed for the surgery weighed heavily on them like a giant stone. These days, they were trying to gather the amount, but without much success.

Ji Shuyuan also tried borrowing money everywhere, but in these times, who had spare cash to lend?

Ji Shuyuan had managed to scrape together only a small amount, but unable to bear seeing his grandfather suffer so much, he had returned to South City to see his aunt.

He thought, if his aunt's family was poor, he would just visit her.

If his aunt's family was getting by alright, he would borrow a hundred or two hundred yuan, not minding if it was less.

"Shuyuan, you're a good boy, thank you for telling your aunt about this," Ji Ying's eyes were red. Even without seeing him, just hearing Ji Shuyuan's words made Ji Ying feel heartbroken.

During her father's illness, she, as a daughter, could not share any of his burden.

"Aunt, I..." Ji Shuyuan hung his head and said, "I'm sorry, I was truly out of options. Grandpa is in too much pain, and I just thought, any amount I could gather would help."

"Shuyuan, you did nothing wrong."

Ji Ying wiped the tears from the corner of her eyes and grasped Ji Shuyuan's hand, saying, "You did the right thing; you should tell your aunt. Whether or not your aunt has money, your grandpa is her father. If she can give money, she will; if not, she will help in other ways."

"Let's go quickly; let's see your grandpa." Ji Ying urged, eager to see her father.

Ji Ying quickened her pace, and Ji Shuyuan hurried after her; Xu Qinghe and his family exchanged glances and quickly followed suit.

Ji Xinghua lived in the smallest room on the first floor of the dormitory. In the dim room, he was in pain again, his frail body curled up, a towel bitten between his teeth, and his emaciated hands, reduced to skin and bones, visibly veined.

Chapter 336: Sorry, I'm Late

"Dad."

When Ji Ying saw this scene, her tears instantly breached their dams.

"Dad, I'm sorry for coming to see you so late," Ji Ying said with a choked voice, half-kneeling at the bedside, she asked tearfully, "Dad, where do you feel unwell? Let's go to the hospital, we'll go to the hospital right now."

In his pain, Ji Xinghua opened his eyes, but large beads of sweat had blurred his vision, he looked dimly at the person before his eyes, always thinking he was seeing things.

"Dad."

Ji Ying, in a state of panic and not knowing what to do, watched Ji Xinghua, her guilt and self-reproach reaching a peak.

Ji Xinghua managed to open the cloth at the corner of his mouth, his lips moved slightly.

"Yingying?" Ji Xinghua felt the pain in his body recede, he blinked and looked at the person in front of him, wondering if he was hallucinating from the pain.

"It's me, Dad, I'm sorry for being late," she said.

Ji Ying looked at Ji Xinghua with eyes full of concern.

"Dad." Xu Qinghe arrived late and followed the voice into the room as well.

"Grandpa."

"Grandpa."

Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an squeezed into the cramped room, standing silently to one side, they looked at their grandfather, who seemed so different from the smiling figure in their memories. Now he was thinner, his white hair revealing his old age.

"You all, came late," Ji Xinghua said, forcing a smile that looked more painful than crying due to his discomfort; he grinned at them, lifting his head to look past Xu Qinghe toward Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua. He opened his mouth to speak but ultimately just weakly lifted his head, gesturing towards them with a wave of his hand.

"Grandpa."

Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua, the brothers and sisters, knelt neatly in front of the sickbed.

"Grandpa, both of us got into university, and after graduation, big brother will be a doctor," Xu Nianhua said, forcing a sweet smile and pushing back the tears in her eyes. She spoke with a cheery tone, "Big brother has found a master, an old practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine, and his medical skills are really good."

"Yeah, Grandpa, I'm going to be a doctor," Xu Nian'an chimed in, following Xu Nianhua's lead. "And Nianhua is also amazing; she got full marks in a foreign language. It's said there's only a handful of full scores in the whole country."

Ji Xinghua said nothing, but the satisfaction and amusement in his eyes were quite evident; he gave them a thumbs-up.

"Who's there?"

Deng Juan was cooking in the communal kitchen when she heard from neighbors that there were visitors at home. Wiping her hands on her apron, she walked towards the house. When she saw Ji Shuyuan at the door, she was surprised and said, "Shuyuan, weren't you at a classmate's home these past few days? When did you come back? I didn't cook your meal."

"Where did all these things come from?"

Deng Juan knew every single item at home very well, but now the table was cluttered with things definitely not of her own.

A case of chili sauce, which she usually bought bottle by bottle, had suddenly appeared by the case.

There were also egg cakes, seemingly in abundance.

Apples and bananas, and even white liquor were there.

"Shuyuan, where did these come from?" Deng Juan looked over these items and, suddenly hearing the noise inside the house, walked in suspiciously. When she saw Xu Qinghe standing in the doorway, it took her a long time to recognize him.

"You are..." Deng Juan looked at Xu Qinghe, feeling she had seen him before.

"Sister-in-law."

Once Xu Qinghe spoke up, Deng Juan recognized him—calling her sister-in-law, who else could it be but the young bride married off to her little sister's family in the village?

Chapter 337: Has Your Aunt's Family Struck It Rich?

"Xu Qinghe, it's you, why have you come?" Deng Juan called out his name immediately, even though he rarely visited. But Ji Shan continually reminded her of how hard their family had it and insisted on helping them, so it was difficult for Deng Juan to forget even if she wanted to.

"Third sister-in-law, we've come to see Dad," Xu Qinghe also noticed that the place was too crowded, so he stood in the living room.

It wasn't until Deng Juan entered the room that she saw Ji Ying kneeling beside the bed, crying as if she were made of tears, with her son and daughter squatting beside her.

"Ji Ying, you've come; Dad will be so happy," Deng Juan said with a smile on her face, enthusiastically adding, "I'm cooking right now. You all can have a meal in a while."

As she spoke, Deng Juan turned around and walked out, dragging Ji Shuyuan with her, her face beaming with joy, she asked, "All these things, did your aunt bring them?"

"Yes," nodded Ji Shuyuan.

Deng Juan's smile deepened, her curiosity piqued as she asked, "Has your aunt's family struck it rich?"

She hadn't looked closely at the things they had brought just now, but even a rough estimate put their value at nearly seventy or eighty yuan, including a whole box of chili sauce that wasn't cheap!

Previously, it was one thing for Ji Ying to visit alone, bringing humble offerings each time and secretly giving money to the old man, but Deng Juan was well aware—whenever Ji Ying returned home, didn't the old man always slyly slip some money back to her?

Moreover, this time with the old man being sick and borrowing money from everywhere, neither the old man nor Ji Shan wanted to tell Ji Ying, claiming her life was tough enough already.

This had long been a sore point for Deng Juan, who felt that she didn't benefit at all from the old man living with them, and now they were turning to her to foot the bill!

The few hundred yuan she had managed to save was about to be gone—why should an in-law, the younger aunt, act as if oblivious?

Was Ji Ying's life difficult, as if their own life was a bed of roses?

"Uh..." Ji Shuyuan hesitated for a moment.

Watching him stand there foolishly, Deng Juan gave Ji Shuyuan five yuan and instructed, "Go buy a pound of meat, some peanuts, and a few more vegetables."

"Okay," Ji Shuyuan took the money and went out to shop for groceries.

Convinced that Ji Ying's family must have made a fair amount of money, Deng Juan was pleased and went to cook some more food.

"Wait a second."

Deng Juan, watching Ji Shuyuan's retreating figure, suddenly stopped him.

Ji Shuyuan paused, turned back to look at Deng Juan, and though silent, his eyes seemed to ask, "Is there something else?"

"Call your father back," Deng Juan instructed.

"Oh."

Ji Shuyuan said, then paused again.

"Why are you still standing there, not hurrying up to go?" Deng Juan glared at Ji Shuyuan.

Ji Shuyuan silently walked outside.

In the room.

Ji Ying's emotions gradually calmed down; Ji Xinghua felt better, his stomach no longer hurting, and leaning against a pillow, half-sitting on the bed, he took a sip of water and managed to speak a few words, saying, "Yingying, why has the whole family come? I'm fine, just an old ailment, nothing serious."

"Dad, I've heard everything from Shuyuan. Let's go through with the surgery so you won't have to endure the pain anymore," Ji Ying said, her heart aching sharply at the thought of his half a month of suffering.

"Don't listen to Shuyuan's nonsense, what surgery," Ji Xinghua said sternly, "I am old. Why bother with all that? Do you want to see me die in the hospital?"

"Tsk tsk tsk," at the mention of the word "die", Ji Ying felt her heart tremble uncontrollably.

Chapter 338: I Am Rich

"Grandpa, you, you need to live a long and healthy life, and enjoy your good fortune," Ji Ying's voice was naturally soft and tender, and when she deliberately softened it further, it became sweet and soft, just like a coquettish protest, yet not the kind that's cloyingly sweet and gives one goosebumps.

"That's right, Grandpa, you haven't even seen me get a wife and have children yet."

Xu Nian'an immediately joined the conversation, his eyes lighting up, as he said, "Right, it's been many years since you saw Big Brother, hasn't it?"

"Big Brother couldn't come to see you because his wife is pregnant and about to give birth," Xu Nian'an said cheerfully, coaxing Ji Xinghua, "Grandpa, you have to stay healthy to see your great-grandchild be born."

"Good, good, good."

Ji Xinghua's face broke into a smile, "I must see this great-grandchild of mine."

"Dad, let me tell you some good news. Qinghe has started a furniture factory at home with his apprentice. Although it's just beginning, it will surely make money in the future."

"And I'm working at the Chili Factory in the county, I can make a good amount of money each month, even more than they make working in a factory."

Ji Ying rattled on, picking out only the pleasant things to say, "As for your eldest grandson, he's doing really well now, just got married, and is also selling sprouts; he can make quite a lot each month."

"That impressive?"

Pride and admiration filled Ji Xinghua's eyes.

"Yes, Dad, you always worried about us in the past, but now, you don't have to worry. Our days will get better and better." Ji Ying felt she had been too careless. How could she have neglected to visit her father just because her brothers said he was in good health?

Even though the household was busy, no matter how busy, they should not have neglected Dad.

Looking up with her eyes red and swollen from crying, Ji Ying held his hand, thin to the bone, and said, "Dad, we'll go to the hospital for treatment right after this."

"No."

As soon as Ji Xinghua heard that, he immediately shook his head. Three thousand yuan, even though his daughter's family was now doing well, the whole family had expenses, and the grandson's wife was about to give birth, there would be many more expenses in the future; they could not spend so much money because of an old man's illness.

"Dad, listen to me." Ji Ying rarely took a strong stance, her gaze intense as she looked at him and said, "Dad, you must go to the hospital for treatment. I don't want to see you suffering from pain again and again."

Ji Xinghua's lips quivered, but before he could speak, Ji Ying, with full confidence, said, "Dad, rest assured, I have money."

In that moment, Ji Ying felt that her hard work getting up early and staying up late was worth it.

If she were still her former self, she couldn't possibly say with such confidence at this moment: I have money.

"Yingying." Ji Xinghua's eyes instantly reddened.

In the past half-month, during times when Ji Xinghua was in unbearable pain, he even thought about ending his life, but the thought of his daughter, whom he had not seen for a long time, made him endure it time and again.

His youngest son and the other two had discussed his treatment; he knew all too well. The three brothers had managed to gather only a thousand yuan; Shuyuan had scraped together a bit over a hundred, and as for the rest...

Ji Xinghua was clear in his heart; gathering three thousand was not easy.

His son came home late every night, and his daughter-in-law worked too, both returning late each day as if they were deliberately avoiding him. He understood that the surgery couldn't happen.

But he blamed no one, the children had their own burdens, and he couldn't selfishly drag them down because of his illness.

Even Ji Xinghua had prepared for the long haul, waiting until he could no longer bear it, and then he would have them call Ji Ying back to see him one last time.

Chapter 339: Still Short of Two Thousand

Ji Shuyuan left the day before yesterday in the early morning, and in terms of Shuyuan's personality, he knew best, he wouldn't bring up this matter the moment he arrived at Ji Ying's home. It must have been

yesterday that he mentioned it to Ji Ying, but by noon today, Ji Ying's whole family had come over, which means they came as soon as they heard the news.

Ji Xinghua was happy in his heart. No matter what, having such a daughter who cared, it really warmed his heart.

...

After lunch, Ji Ying went straight to the point, saying, "Third brother, I know why you didn't tell me, but I am also Dad's daughter. If Dad is sick, even if I have no money, I should at least help out as much as I can."

"Sigh," Ji Shan let out a sigh. He still remembered that when they went to a wedding last year, Dad was in good health, but since he fell ill before the New Year, his condition had gradually weakened.

"Third brother, I won't talk about that now. I want to ask you, what is the situation with Dad's illness?" Ji Ying asked about the most important thing.

Ji Shan explained, knowing clearer than Ji Shuyuan, that in addition to the three thousand yuan needed for the surgery, because Ji Xinghua was also getting older, he would need to be well taken care of post-surgery, and that would all require money.

"How much money have you and the oldest and second brothers put together?" Ji Ying asked again.

"One, one thousand," Ji Shan said with some embarrassment in his eyes.

Deng Juan was quick to add, "Ji Ying, you don't know, but we also spent over a hundred yuan when he became ill over the New Year's."

"The oldest brother sent five hundred from Ningbei, the second brother was the stingiest, only contributing two hundred, and our family put together three hundred," Deng Juan said, giving off the impression that she had treated her father-in-law very well.

Ji Shuyuan said, "I also borrowed one hundred and fifty from a classmate."

"Shuyuan, it's good you're filial, but you need to go to school as well, where will you get the money to pay back?" Deng Juan immediately counteracted Ji Shuyuan's words, giving him a warning look, surprised to discover that Ji Shuyuan had quietly borrowed so much money!

One hundred and fifty!

Together with what they contributed, that would make four hundred and fifty!

Spending this money hurt, and Deng Juan naturally didn't want to part with it.

"Mom," Ji Shuyuan disagreed, "treating Grandpa's illness is the most important thing."

Deng Juan glared at him fiercely.

"We'll not count Shuyuan's money, so we are still short two thousand," Ji Ying quickly calculated in her mind.

Xu Nianhua, who was close to Ji Ying, spoke up at the right moment, "Mom, we can also put together some money for Grandpa's treatment, but we'll still need to borrow some. Whatever it may be, let's first gather enough money to treat Grandpa's illness."

Deng Juan's eyes lit up instantly, asking, "Ji Ying, you guys are earning good money at your job now, right?"

Two thousand yuan, and they didn't even blink?

"It's all right, we're making enough to have meals," Ji Ying replied, understanding her daughter's intention and continued, "Nian'an and Nianhua were both accepted to university in Ningbei, and although they don't have to pay tuition fees, there are still costs for travel, accommodation, and food, and it's always more expensive living outside than at home."

"Money can be earned again, but Dad's health is more important." Xu Qinghe supported Ji Ying with practical actions, saying, "Third brother, we can contribute one thousand, and we'll borrow the remaining one thousand from someone else, aiming to pay it as soon as possible."

"Good, good."

Ji Shan never expected his sister, who once was too poor to even afford a bus fare, could now so easily say she could contribute one thousand.

The next moment, Ji Shan felt a bit ashamed.

"This afternoon, we will take Dad to the hospital and arrange the surgery after paying," Xu Qinghe said. "Ying Zi, you go with the third brother to take Dad for treatment, and I will go borrow the money."

Chapter 340: What Can You, a Student, Repay With?

In South City Hospital, after a busy round of tests, Ji Ying met with the attending physician, Dr. Li.

Dr. Li used many professional terms that she didn't understand, so Xu Nian'an took the initiative to explain them in simpler words.

"Young man, not bad," Dr. Li praised. Xu Nian'an appeared to have some medical knowledge.

Proud that her own son was receiving praise, Ji Ying felt delighted as she explained, "My son has just been admitted to the Medical University in Ningbei. He's currently learning some basics with a doctor in our county."

Dr. Li looked at Xu Nian'an with surprise. Barely in his twenties, the doctor hadn't expected that he was a fresh college student who had completed the entrance exams, and not only that, he'd been accepted into a Medical University outside the province – the one in Ningbei.

It was well known that Ningbei's Medical University was prestigious among medical universities nationwide. His admission there meant his future was bound to be promising.

"The young man has potential," Dr. Li said approvingly, looking at Xu Nian'an. Clever and hardworking, studying the basics during the summer break, the doctor didn't dwell on this subject and instead brought the conversation back to the matter of surgery, informing them of the risks involved as well.

Just hearing about the potential risks of surgery made Ji Ying's heart beat like a drum.

"Mom, grandpa is old, so there will definitely be risks with the surgery, but doctors tend to overstate these risks. You need to trust them—if they weren't reasonably confident, they wouldn't recommend the surgery," Xu Nian'an said, holding Ji Ying's hand for comfort.

On her other side, Xu Nianhua added his reassurance, "Elder brother is right. What we need to do now is go and make the payment as soon as possible and then set the date for the surgery. Grandpa must be in a lot of pain when it flares up. Getting the surgery done sooner will help him recover faster, and we'll all feel more at ease, right?"

"Right," Ji Ying, who had been flustered and anxious, now felt gradually calmer with her children comforting her. Then she said to Ji Shan, "Third brother, we must get dad the surgery, or he could literally be in so much pain that he dies."

"Shouldn't we wait for Qinghe to come back?" Ji Shan hesitated a bit; what if Xu Qinghe was unable to borrow the thousand yuan they needed?

What would they use to fill this thousand-yuan gap?

"No need to wait, I have faith in Qinghe," Ji Ying said, only adding, "Dad needs surgery; should we inform our eldest brother and second brother?"

"Of course," Ji Shan replied, instructing, "You two just wait here, I will go make a phone call to our eldest brother, and then speak with the second brother."

Deng Juan used the excuse of needing to go back home and left, taking Ji Shuyuan with her.

"Mom, I'm fine; I want to stay here with grandpa," Ji Shuyuan said, pressing his lips together, looking displeased at Deng Juan.

"Are you stupid?"

Deng Juan prodded Ji Shuyuan's head with her finger, angrily saying, "You're still a student, and now you've learned how to borrow money!"

Back at home, Deng Juan had held back, but now, with no one else around, she said directly, "Tell me, how are you, a student, supposed to repay the money you borrowed?"

"Mom, I've thought it all through. Doesn't your factory often hire movers? I'm young; I have the strength; I can do the work during vacation," Ji Shuyuan had already planned out his approach when he borrowed the money. It was the beginning of August, and there was nearly a month left before school started, during which he could earn money by moving goods.

He had inquired about it: a mover could earn two yuan a day!

If he worked for a month, he could make sixty yuan.