

Regaining 341

Chapter 341: Don't Come Back If You Dare

He had saved up twenty himself, which made eighty in total. With this calculation, he was almost able to pay back the money he borrowed. Additionally, another classmate, Gu, had already agreed to help him with tutoring after school started.

"Ji Shuyuan!"

Deng Juan stomped her feet in anger, looking at Ji Shuyuan, who seemed to have planned this all along, she couldn't help but scold him, "You're capable now, aren't you? You've made it, haven't you? Who provides your living expenses? Who pays for your meals? Who buys your clothes?"

"Your mom hasn't even used a cent of your money, but you? You still borrowed money for your grandfather's medical treatment." Deng Juan deeply felt that raising this son was a waste.

"Mom, you're perfectly healthy, you aren't sick, Grandfather is ill and needs money, I'm just doing my part," Ji Shuyuan quietly responded.

He had grown up under his grandfather's care since he was a child, and he felt worse than anyone when his grandfather was sick.

His response made Deng Juan so angry she didn't even want to speak to him. While walking home, she stopped several times, pointing at Ji Shuyuan and said, "Ji Shuyuan, let me tell you, our family has already contributed three hundred for your grandfather's illness. You don't need to give any more money, just pay back what you borrowed."

"I won't," Ji Shuyuan stubbornly said, "I want to do my part for Grandfather."

"You ..."

Deng Juan kept silent all the way home since the street was not a suitable place to speak. As soon as they entered the room, Deng Juan started searching.

"Mom, the missing money isn't just one or two dollars, it's two thousand. You know Aunt's financial situation; it was hard for her to provide one thousand, and they still have to borrow another thousand. Why can't I contribute?"

Ji Shuyuan was trying to persuade, having already securely kept the money on himself, making it impossible for Deng Juan to find.

"I think your aunt has struck rich; she has money now. You don't need to worry about this anymore. If you want to contribute, don't ask me for your living expenses anymore," Deng Juan said coldly, her chest heaving violently. The family had struggled to save some money after having borrowed for the eldest son's wedding a few years ago. They had only just managed to scrape together three hundred for the old man's treatment, and now, Ji Shuyuan was borrowing more money.

Just thinking about the bit of secret savings gone, not to mention the debt, made her feel extremely uncomfortable.

The room instantly fell silent.

Ji Shuyuan didn't speak anymore; he just took a set of clothes from the room and turned to leave.

"Go on, leave, and don't come back if you dare!"

Deng Juan watched his stubborn silhouette, yelling at his back in anger.

However, her words only made Ji Shuyuan pause for a moment. In the next second, Ji Shuyuan strode away, disappearing from her sight.

"Ah..."

Deng Juan's rage was ineffectual; she held a teacup, intending to drink some water, yet, gripping the teacup, she felt an urge to smash it.

Thud.

The teacup was set down heavily on the table.

"Juanjuan, are you home? Hurry and get some money. I just spoke with your second uncle, and we will send the money to the hospital soon." Ji Shan had just phoned his brother Ji Lin and had run to Ji Feng's house, returning drenched in sweat.

Ji Shan drank a big gulp of water and, looking at Deng Juan who was sitting on the couch, belatedly realized her mood was upset. He sternly said, "Juanjuan, we had already agreed about Dad's medical expenses."

"Did I say I wouldn't give?" Deng Juan diverted her anger from her son towards Ji Shan, her eyes wide as she said, "Your son is really succeeding, isn't he? He silently borrowed one hundred and fifty yuan—that's one hundred fifty, not one yuan fifty!"

Chapter 342: Siblings Reunite

"Shuyuan did well on this matter." Ji Shan praised.

Ji Shan's praise only earned another eye roll from Deng Juan, her eyes reddening as she said, "Yes, yes, in our family, I'm the bad one, and you two are the good ones!"

Deng Juan repeated everything Ji Shuyuan had just said, especially about borrowing money and then paying it back, having thought everything through, it only clogged her heart even more.

Ji Shan remained silent.

After a long while.

"Juanjuan."

Ji Shan sat beside her, looking at her reddened eyes, and said, "Shuyuan has grown up by dad's side since he was little. When we first came to South City, Shuyuan and dad were at the countryside. Their bond is indeed closer than that of ordinary grandparents and grandchildren. Dad was ill, and Shuyuan was more anxious than anyone."

"Shuyuan is loyal and affectionate, you should feel happy about that."

Ji Shan's words allowed Deng Juan to see from another angle, realizing she only focused on Shuyuan borrowing money and the difficulty in repaying it, forgetting that Shuyuan had always loved grandpa since he was young.

"In the past, dad contributed a lot of money to our family, even gave you a gold ring. Now that dad is ill, are we to just watch him suffer?"

Ji Shan's words were like a sharp arrow, piercing Deng Juan's heart. She knew very well that the old man had indeed contributed a lot of money living with them, which greatly helped them save, given their own salaries.

"I—I didn't say I wouldn't give money," Deng Juan said uneasily as she prepared to get up and go to the room to bring the money.

Ji Shan held her hand and said, "Juanjuan, let's contribute four hundred."

Deng Juan's eyes widened as she looked at him.

Ji Shan explained, "We were lacking too much before, so I didn't bring it up. But now, I want to contribute an extra hundred. We can't let all the burden fall on our little sister."

Ji Ying had a tough life before, and Ji Shan was well aware of it. Even though things had improved now, spending a thousand and borrowing another thousand was a significant amount.

Ji Shan thought about contributing an extra hundred. It would make their family's life a bit harder, but they would still manage to get by.

...

Evening.

"Ji Ying, how is dad doing? I heard from Ji Shan that you managed to gather the money for the surgery?" As soon as Ji Feng arrived at the hospital, he happened to run into Ji Ying filling water in the hospital corridor.

"Big brother, sister-in-law." When Ji Ying saw Ji Feng and his wife, she updated them on Ji Xinghua's situation, and also mentioned the borrowing.

"Ji Ying, dad has really adored you so much." As soon as Chen He finished speaking, Deng Juan and her husband also came over.

Chen He and Deng Juan exchanged glances before Chen He spoke, "Our family has gathered all our savings. Shuhong is still going to university. The thousand you borrowed..."

Chen He hadn't finished speaking when Deng Juan continued, "Ji Shan and I discussed it, we'll give four hundred. We can't afford to give any more than that."

Chen He's face changed instantly. Her family was already contributing less, and now, Deng Juan was going to give an additional hundred?

She looked at Deng Juan incredulously. Deng Juan's face was all smiles, showing a willingness to do anything for their father's treatment, which made Chen He extremely uncomfortable.

On ordinary days, Deng Juan lived with their father, which sounded nice as being filial to an elder, but who didn't know that Ji Xinghua had secretly contributed a lot of money?

Unfortunately, Ji Xinghua preferred to stay with Ji Shan, and she was helpless about it.

"Well..." Chen He said awkwardly, "I just remembered, Shuhong only needs living expenses for school. I'll also use the reserved tuition to pay for dad's treatment, right, Ji Feng?"

Chapter 343: Together with Yingzi in Returning

Ji Feng stood to one side, married to Chen He for so many years, he knew her character like the back of his hand. She didn't have any major faults; she just loved face, was a bit stingy, and reluctant to spend money. She usually enjoyed competing with Deng Juan.

However, whenever it came time to pay, she always wanted to give slightly less than Deng Juan, but not too much less. She spoke with seeming righteousness, saying, after all, Deng Juan and her family got quite a bit of money following their father. Chen He felt that it was only right for their family to pay a bit more.

"Right."

Ji Feng agreed, pondering that since Ji Shan's family added a hundred, he would add a hundred too. He said, "We will also add a hundred, get Shuhong's tuition fee together, we can squeeze it out."

"Second Brother, Third Brother, Dad has always been taken care of by you all. The thousand yuan that I borrowed, Qinghe and I will pay it back," Ji Ying wasn't foolish; she naturally understood what the two sisters-in-law meant by their words.

Seeing Ji Ying hadn't come back for a while, Xu Qinghe came out to look for her. He heard their entire phone conversation clearly, Xu Qinghe stood by Ji Ying's side and said, "No matter how much we owe, Yingzi and I will pay it back together."

...

"Little Yining, I'm really familiar with South City. Want me to show you around? I know where there are the most clothes," Cheng Hao, who had spent nearly half a year in South City over the past year, knew exactly where to find the best shopping spots and tasty eateries, having often bought gifts for Zou Yaru.

"You finished delivering goods and you're not going to meet your girlfriend?" Pei Yicheng pursed his lips, looking toward Pei Yining and saying, "Xiaoning, go take a shower. I'll take you out for some good food later."

"Alrighty."

After arriving in South City, Pei Yining had taken a nap and woken up hungry, ready to head out when she ran into Cheng Hao offering to take her out.

After Pei Yining left, Pei Yicheng then opened his mouth to speak, "Xiaohao, Uncle Cheng asked about you."

Cheng Hao immediately looked at him nervously and said, "Yicheng, you didn't say anything, did you? What did my dad say?"

"He asked when you would return." Pei Yicheng lowered his gaze; if Uncle Cheng knew what Cheng Hao was doing... perhaps...

"Ignore him. When has he ever cared about whether I come back or not? He only cares about whether his factory is making money," Cheng Hao said indifferently. His dad had already been dissatisfied with his previous girlfriend and thought little of him. Calling him back home was hardly because his grandparents missed him, wasn't it?

Anyway, he had already visited his grandparents; he couldn't be bothered to go back just to see his dad's face.

His dad might look down on him, but he was determined to make something of himself, just to make his dad take notice.

"Sigh, Yaru seems to have gone out, and I can't get in touch with her," Cheng Hao, having finished his deliveries and eager to find Zou Yaru to take her out for a treat, waited at her house for a long time but didn't catch a glimpse of her.

"Then go buy a gift. Don't you like buying gifts?" Pei Yicheng said again.

Cheng Hao thought for a moment, then looked at Pei Yicheng with suspicion and said, "Yicheng, why do I feel like you're trying to send me away on purpose?"

Pei Yicheng, faced with his suspicious gaze, remained composed and said, "You're overthinking it."

Cheng Hao thought about it; indeed, Yicheng had no reason to send him away. He grinned and said, "Alright then, I'll go for a stroll. If you come out of the hotel and turn left, walk a thousand meters, there's a snack street that's really lively, you can take Little Yining there to eat."

"Hmm." Pei Yicheng nodded, asking him to come back early.

"Brother, what are you taking me to eat?" Pei Yining quickly took a shower, changed into a fresh set of clothes, and felt completely awake. Her stomach began singing the song of emptiness.

Chapter 344: Encounter

Hospital.

Ji Ying saw her second uncle and youngest uncle's entire families.

The second uncle's family included two daughters who were married off, and Ji Shuhong, who had just been admitted to university.

The eldest son of the youngest uncle's family, Ji Shuming's family.

She still remembered what they looked like as children. Since they had come to South City, contact had almost completely ceased, so their appearances had changed quite a bit. She also didn't enjoy chatting with people she wasn't familiar with; the only one she knew well was Ji Shuyuan.

It was Ji Shuyuan who was the most familiar among all her cousins, be it in the past or during the feast last year, up to now.

"Nian'an, can you do me a favor?" Ji Shuyuan quietly pulled Xu Nian'an aside.

Soon after, Xu Nian'an called Ji Ying out.

In the ward, everyone was crowded together, their faces oozing with joy and looking like a happy family reunion.

"Shuyuan, you specifically asked me to come out, what's going on?" Ji Ying looked puzzled as she turned to Ji Shuyuan.

Ji Shuyuan took out a handkerchief and unfurled it, revealing a stack of money inside, mostly in tens, some fives, and one fifty.

"This is..." Ji Ying looked at the money.

"I said I'd do my part for grandpa," Ji Shuyuan explained.

Ji Ying couldn't possibly accept it. She said, "Shuyuan, don't worry, we've already raised enough money. You should give this back to people. Just focus on your studies."

"No." Ji Shuyuan was very stubborn, not backing down until he had convinced Ji Ying to take the money.

...

"Wow, there's so much delicious food here."

Pei Yining looked at all the food. She tried a bit here, a bit there, until she was positively stuffed to the brim, and it wasn't until the last shop where she managed to eat half a bowl of fried rice noodles that she could not move anymore from being so full.

"I can't anymore, brother. I'm not moving. My belly is about to burst," she said.

Pei Yining, rubbing her rounded belly, leaned back against the chair without a care for her image, the very picture of someone who had overindulged.

Pei Yicheng frowned as he looked at the half bowl of leftover noodles and then at her belly. Since they had entered that street, she hadn't stopped eating, continuing right to the last shop where she still ate almost half a bowl of rice noodles. He hadn't expected his skinny little sister to be able to eat so much.

"Brother, I really ate enough," Pei Yining raised her hand as a gesture to show she did not waste food.

"Sit up," Pei Yicheng scolded, frowning.

Pei Yining said with a pleading face, "Brother, I ate too much, and this is the most comfortable position."

"Stand up."

Pei Yicheng stood up, paid for the meal, and then led Pei Yining away to walk off the food.

"I don't want to walk," she complained.

Pei Yining, touching her overfed belly, remembered the delicious taste and hadn't noticed how full she was while eating.

Pei Yicheng slowed his pace, strolling back to the hotel. The evening streetlights cast a yellowish glow, stretching the shadows of the two of them. It seemed like a long time since he had taken a walk like this with his sister.

"Brother, next time, let's bring Nianhua along to eat," Pei Yining suggested.

Her suggestion earned a roll of the eyes from Pei Yicheng, his gaze falling on her belly as if to say: You're already uncomfortably full, and you're still thinking about coming to eat again next time?

"Ahem."

Pei Yining felt a bit embarrassed, puffing her cheeks as she said, "I overate because it was so tasty."

Suddenly, Pei Yicheng stopped in his tracks, prompting Pei Yining to bump straight into him.

"Ouch."

Pei Yining, touching her sore nose, looked up to see Pei Yicheng intently watching a certain spot. She followed his gaze and under the dim yellow streetlight, the woman there looked very familiar.

Chapter 345: Are You That Pretty Boy?

"That, that person is..." Pei Yining stared at the woman, unable to resist rubbing her eyes for fear that she was seeing things, but, after several glances, she still felt she hadn't mistaken, she said, "That's Zou Yaru, right? Who is that man?"

The man pulled on Zou Yaru, and the two seemed to be arguing about something. The man also tried to embrace Zou Yaru, but she struggled free.

This relationship, it didn't look like a family relation, did it?

"Zou Yaru."

Pei Yining cupped her hands around her mouth, shouting towards Zou Yaru across the street.

Zou Yaru, who was arguing with Gu Junhe, suddenly heard a female voice, thinking it was sister Yashi, but soon, she realized it wasn't.

Pei Yicheng?

Zou Yaru's heart immediately became flustered.

Was Cheng Hao here as well?

Zou Yaru looked around, and other than the Pei Yicheng siblings, there was no one else; she quietly breathed a sigh of relief, but the next moment she tensed up again.

"Is he that pretty boy?"

Gu Junhe strode towards the other side of the street.

Zou Yaru hadn't reacted yet, and Gu Junhe was already halfway across the road.

"He does have the look of a pretty boy, but take a look at yourself, a poor bloke who drives a truck, what makes you think you can be with Yaru?"

Gu Junhe raised his hand and straightened his white shirt, deliberately showing off the watch on his wrist, which was an imported one. The silver watch glittered on his wrist, worth several years of someone's salary in just a glance.

Gu Junhe was slightly shorter than Pei Yicheng. He tilted his head up, looking down at Pei Yicheng with disdain, a plain white shirt and trousers, quite common looking, but his features really were not too shabby.

"Why don't you take a good look at yourself in the mirror."

Gu Junhe looked down on Pei Yicheng contemptuously and said, "The toad wants to eat swan meat, don't get ahead of yourself."

"Watch your mouth." Pei Yining felt her blood boil upon hearing this, wondering where this man had come from, looking down on her brother right from the start.

"Gu Junhe, you've misunderstood," Zou Yaru said as she pulled Gu Junhe back, while apologizing to Pei Yicheng.

"Zou Yaru."

Gu Junhe held her hand, his gaze fixed on her as he interrogated, "You just fancy his face, don't you? What good is just having a handsome face? Is he richer than me? Can he help your dad?"

"Gu Junhe."

Exposed so bluntly by Gu Junhe, Zou Yaru's face turned pale and then flushed. She knew Pei Yicheng was still looking at her. She took a deep breath and said, "Our issues, let's not involve others, let's talk properly if there's a problem."

"Fine, let's talk about when our wedding will be," Gu Junhe said with his arms crossed, looking at her critically. He hadn't had many girlfriends; the pure and innocent looking Zou Yaru wasn't his type, but marrying Zou Yaru did have its benefits.

Besides, it was always him, Gu Junhe, who disdained others, since when was it the other way around?

"What wedding? I haven't agreed to anything," Zou Yaru quickly glanced at Pei Yicheng beside her and denied it.

"You will agree," Gu Junhe said, full of confidence in his eyes.

Suddenly, Gu Junhe leaned forward, closing in on Zou Yaru's face, his warm breath spraying on her cheek.

Zou Yaru turned her face away, but her hand was tightly grasped; she couldn't move at all.

"Yaru, no matter how good-looking a pretty boy is, it's not as reliable as money, right?" Gu Junhe let go of her hand, looking triumphantly towards Pei Yicheng and said, "People should be self-aware, after all, face is important."

Chapter 346: Brain Tonic

"Pah."

Pei Yining watched this scene, her hands trembling with anger as she pointed at Gu Junhe and said, "I think you're the one who should take a piss and look at yourself, and see just how shameless you look right now. You know full well that someone has a boyfriend, and yet you still try to mess with them, you'll get your karma!"

"The melon that's twisted off the vine isn't sweet, you think you're something special just because you're rich?"

"Does having money mean you can insult people at will?"

"Do you really think money can buy everything?"

Pei Yining cursed him out thoroughly, and only then did she feel relieved.

"Where did this wild girl come from?" Gu Junhe looked at Pei Yining, who was quite cute, and didn't take it to heart; he gave a grin and said, "Can't help it, who told me to be rich, you wish you had money like mine."

Gu Junhe shrugged his shoulders, with an 'I'm rich, don't be envious' look.

"Who cares."

Pei Yining tugged at the corner of her mouth, unsure exactly how rich Gu Junhe's family was. But the Cheng Family in Ningbei, they're quite rich as well, right?

How come they were being looked down upon by the Gu Family and the Zou Family?

Although Cheng Hao was out delivering goods, the air about him didn't seem like that of a poor boy, and the watch on his wrist was also worth a few hundred dollars. He didn't look like a poor boy at all.

"I advise you to buy a whale to eat," Pei Yicheng's sudden comment stunned Gu Junhe for a moment, who asked subconsciously, "Why?"

Can you eat whales?

What kind of fish is that?

Gu Junhe looked at Pei Yicheng with a bewildered expression.

"To boost your brainpower."

As soon as Pei Yicheng finished speaking, Pei Yining almost burst into tears from laughing. She laughed while saying, "A newly born baby whale weighs several tons already, I'm afraid only a full-grown whale would be enough to supplement his brain."

Gu Junhe's face turned instantly as black as the bottom of a pot.

Gu Junhe reached out to hit someone, but Pei Yicheng pulled Pei Yining to the side to dodge; Gu Junhe hadn't noticed a small step in front and, coupled with Pei Yicheng's sudden sidestep, he didn't even come close to touching the hem of his garment and directly fell to the ground.

"You..."

Gu Junhe got up, his nose bleeding. He covered his nose and left in a huff.

Zou Yaru watched his retreating figure with worry. He wouldn't be hurt, would he?

"He won't die."

Pei Yicheng's cool voice rose from the side.

"Brother Cheng."

Zou Yaru suddenly realized the current situation, looking at Pei Yicheng with a pleading face.

"Explain it to him yourself."

Pei Yicheng said with a cold face, pulling Pei Yining as they walked towards the hotel.

"It's a misunderstanding, it's really a misunderstanding." Zou Yaru hurriedly followed, explaining, "Brother Cheng, I have nothing to do with him."

Zou Yaru kept explaining to Pei Yicheng, but he radiated a chill that clearly showed he had no intention of listening.

Upon reaching the hotel entrance, Cheng Hao, who was bored from strolling around, happened to come back. When he saw Pei Yicheng, he quickly waved, saying, "Brother Cheng, what a coincidence."

"Yaru!"

When Cheng Hao saw the girl beside him, his eyes shone with surprise.

"Huh, how did you two bump into each other?"

"Are you here to find me?"

"How did you know I came to South City?"

"Yaru, it seems we really do have a telepathic connection." Cheng Hao happily blurted out a series of excited exclamations, his face expressing his joy and excitement.

"Cheng Hao."

Zou Yaru, seeing his happy face, stiffened her own face, and pulled at the corner of her mouth, replying casually, "Yeah."

Zou Yaru looked at Pei Yicheng and Pei Yining with a pleading face, hoping they wouldn't reveal what just happened.

Chapter 347: The Blind Date Candidate

"Cheng Hao, bro, I can't keep this from you—it's just that the other party went too far, even calling my brother a 'kept man' and looking down on him."

Pei Yining couldn't care less about all that. She could tolerate insults towards herself, but not towards her brother.

"You don't know, at that time..."

Pei Yining rattled off the events that had just occurred, without any personal bias or exaggeration.

Zou Yaru's lips moved slightly, wanting to explain. Pei Yining countered, "Did I say anything wrong, even a single word or character?"

Zou Yaru looked at Cheng Hao, then back at Pei Yining. Facing her questioning, she couldn't utter a 'no.' Everything Pei Yining had said was the truth, the plain facts.

"Yicheng, I'm sorry."

Cheng Hao apologized to Pei Yicheng immediately.

"You two should talk it out." Pei Yicheng patted his shoulder and, pulling Pei Yining, who was still curious about what would happen next, left with her.

After Pei Yicheng and Pei Yining had left, only he and Zou Yaru remained.

The wind blew, cold and chilly, just like his heart.

"Yaru, that man..." who is he?

Cheng Hao looked at Zou Yaru with difficulty. Just thinking about Yicheng being misunderstood because of him, and being insulted as a 'kept man' and 'ugly toad lusting after a swan's flesh'—he felt uncomfortable even hearing those derogatory words.

"He's the blind date my mother arranged for me."

Zou Yaru said with her head lowered. At this point, there was nothing left to hide.

During the summer break, when Zou's mother urged Zou Yaru to come to South City, she said, to put it nicely, that she missed her daughter, but frankly, it was because she wanted her to go on arranged dates.

Zou Yaru disagreed, yet her mother insisted she meet the man.

Initially, Gu Junhe was indifferent and uninterested in her, which made it seem like there was no need to worry about the whole affair.

Yet, not long after, Zou's mother once again set her sights on this, even pressing Zou Yaru about whether she had a boyfriend back in the county. Naturally, Zou Yaru refused to admit it, but her mother insisted she pair up with Gu Junhe.

Zou Yaru thought Gu Junhe was uninterested too, but somehow, Gu Junhe started showing up in front of her frequently.

During that period, Zou Yaru wanted nothing more than to hide back in the county, but her mother watched her closely. The rare times she managed to sneak back, she would be brought back again.

As chance would have it, there was an accident at the small coal mine in Ping City, which belonged to Zou's father, requiring a large sum of money, and he was detained. The Gu Family just happened to have connections in that area, as well as money. Gu Junhe used this as leverage, asking Zou Yaru to marry him.

Zou Yaru, panicked and worried for her father, had been avoiding Cheng Hao lately.

Today, she and Gu Junhe went out because of her father's situation. Gu Junhe had drunk a bit and tried to take advantage of her. She was unwilling, and a quarrel ensued between them on the street, which just so happened to be witnessed by Pei Yicheng.

"How is your uncle now? That accident wasn't his fault, how much money is needed?" Cheng Hao immediately asked.

"Cheng Hao, it's not just a small amount of money." Zou Yaru, facing his worried gaze, couldn't help but feel tears welling up in her eyes. Her father had doted on her since childhood. Because she loved music and cherished the small county town, he had bought her an apartment there, so she could teach music and live a comfortable life.

She couldn't bear to see her father in trouble, but she also couldn't bear to part with Cheng Hao.

"Come back with me to Ningbei, I can save your father." Cheng Hao had barely finished speaking when he stepped forward, wanting to take her hand, but Zou Yaru avoided him.

Chapter 348: It's Not Time to Mess Around

Cheng Hao stared blankly at the hand that was avoided, his eyes filled with disbelief as he looked toward Zou Yaru.

"Cheng Hao, now is not the time for this."

Zou Yaru lowered her head, wiping away the tears at the corner of her eyes.

"Yaru, I'm not messing around, believe me, I will definitely find a solution. Come back to Ningbei with me, my family has money, my dad, he..." would certainly help his future daughter-in-law.

Cheng Hao didn't finish his sentence, but Zou Yaru interrupted him already, "What's the use of going back to Ningbei with you? Do you know how much money is needed?"

"Two hundred thousand." Zou Yaru's voice choked up as she cut in, her face that was originally pure and flawless became even more pitiful as she cried silently, but her eyes exuded determination.

Cheng Hao paused for a moment, then said, "I can think of a way."

"Cheng Hao, I'm a bit tired, I'm going home for the day," said Zou Yaru as she turned and ran off.

Cheng Hao quickly chased after her, grabbing her hand and said, "Yaru, don't go, I'm serious, I can really think of a solution. Besides, we can still negotiate a resolution, there must be a way to solve this."

"No matter what, I am willing to be by your side."

Cheng Hao clearly expressed his own stance.

Zou Yaru was out of breath from running, and upon hearing his words, she turned around and threw herself into his arms, sobbing and crying.

From the initial soft sobs to finally crying out loud.

"Don't cry anymore, let's calm down, there surely is a way," Cheng Hao was already thinking about how to swallow his pride and ask his father for help.

...

"Yining, he's not suitable for you."

Pei Yicheng brought Pei Yining back to her room and sat her down directly on the sofa.

Pei Yining was still upset about what had just happened and, caught off guard by Pei Yicheng's words, took a while to come to her senses.

"Xiaohao." Pei Yicheng reminded her, admitting to himself that as a brother, he had been so busy with his heavy course load that he hadn't shown enough concern for his little sister, especially after the accident with his leg, when he completely cut off contact with the Pei family. Now that Yining had come over, he acutely realized what was on Pei Yining's mind.

"Brother."

Discussing matters of the heart with her brother made Pei Yining blush, her face turning red in an instant. She hurriedly explained, "It's nothing. I don't have any other thoughts."

Even if she once had feelings, she had let them go now.

Pei Yicheng looked at her with obvious skepticism, his eyes seeming to say: If you really had no feelings, why were you so angry upon seeing Zou Yaru with another man earlier? You, who rarely swear, were even cursing out of anger?

"Bro, that was for you," Pei Yining said assertively, "He insulted you, I couldn't just take it."

Pei Yicheng looked at her: "..."

Without saying a word, he exerted tremendous pressure on Pei Yining.

Pei Yining cleared her throat and said, "Well, a third of it was also because I felt it was unfair to Cheng Hao. We've all seen how much he has done for Zou Yaru, how could she squander Cheng Hao's good intentions like that?"

"Really, I swear." Pei Yining raised her hand, the gesture indicating she spoke the truth.

Pei Yicheng frowned and said, "As the saying goes, 'Only the drinker knows if the water is cold or warm.' No matter what, that is Xiaohao's own choice. You've already told Xiaohao the facts; choosing what to do next is his own business."

"But..."

Pei Yining wanted to say something more, but Pei Yicheng's stern look stopped her mid-sentence. She found an excuse to go home to sleep.

Chapter 349: Don't Want to Leave Any Regrets

After locking the door, Pei Yicheng returned to the room he shared with Cheng Hao and sat on the couch waiting.

"Brother Cheng," as soon as Cheng Hao opened the door and saw Pei Yicheng, he hung his head in a guilty manner and said, "Brother Cheng, I'm sorry, I've dragged you into this."

"Xiaohao, you haven't wronged me; you should really think about yourself." Pei Yicheng thought about how Gu Junhe had cursed without regarding Cheng Hao at all, that contemptuous look in his eyes. Luckily it was him, because if it had been Cheng Hao, with his impulsive nature, who knew what he would have done.

"That Gu Junhe likes Yaru, and I definitely won't give up." Cheng Hao said with determination, "Brother Cheng, you were right before, respect from others has to be earned by oneself. Only when you are strong can you protect what you want."

Cheng Hao somewhat regretted the frivolous years he had squandered, wasting away his prime years.

"It's not too late now."

Pei Yicheng lowered his eyes, unable to agree with Cheng Hao's choice, but, he respected it.

Cheng Hao quietly told him about Zou Yaru's family situation, and after a long while, he said.

"Brother Cheng, I want to go back to Ningbei and ask my dad for money." Cheng Hao had been thinking about this issue on the way back but was afraid his thoughts weren't thoroughly considered.

Pei Yicheng raised an eyebrow and asked, "Are you sure?"

Cheng Hao was silent for a long time, the room so quiet that even the drop of a pin could be heard.

"Sure." Cheng Hao said, lifting his head with persistence, "Before, I thought all women were the same, that when it was time, I'd just pick one that I found agreeable and marry her."

Cheng Hao grabbed a bottle of beer and took a gulp before continuing, "But after I met Yaru, I realized how wrong my previous thinking was. I want to spend my life with her, want to protect her for a lifetime, I..."

Pei Yicheng patted his shoulder, walked back into the room, took out a passbook, and handed it to him, saying, "I have some savings on hand, take these first."

"Brother Cheng."

Cheng Hao looked at the passbook, and his eyes instantly reddened. Making this decision, he had thought long and hard, and considered it for a long while.

"Have you considered that, even after giving all this money, she might still not choose you?" Pei Yicheng asked, sitting in front of him.

Cheng Hao was silent; although he didn't speak, his expression told Pei Yicheng that he had considered it.

He paused for a moment, then tilted his head back and drank all the beer.

The beer bottle landed on the table with a clang.

What had happened today was too unexpected. Even though he had his suspicions, he had not anticipated things to turn out this way. He took a deep breath and said, "No matter what the outcome is, I want to put in the effort, to give it my all, and not leave any regrets for my future self."

...

"Yaru, are you okay?" Zou Yashi returned from night school and saw Zou Yaru crying, covered up with a blanket.

"Sister Yashi."

Zou Yaru had been crying since she got back, and now she seemed unable to cry anymore; her eyes were swollen as she held onto Zou Yashi's hand and said, "I feel awful, just awful."

"Sigh."

Zou Yashi sighed, gently patting her back and comforted her by saying, "I never had high hopes for you and him from the start, and now..."

She paused for a moment and asked, "What do you plan to do now?"

"I don't know." Zou Yaru's mind was a mess, and her heart was in turmoil as well.

"How is the situation with Uncle now?" Zou Yashi changed the subject, since Zou Yaru was distressed, it was always good to shift her attention a bit.

Chapter 350: Let's Break Up

"Cheng Hao."

A crisp voice rang out.

Having just finished a call to his family, Cheng Hao, to no surprise, was thoroughly scolded by his father.

After being thoroughly berated, for the first time, he made no rebuttal. Cheng Hao just held the phone, taking the tirade for nearly half an hour, even the waiter gave him several looks.

Nowadays, a phone call is frighteningly expensive, and so is the call charge—the waiter really hadn't seen anyone so extravagant as to make such a costly call!

If it weren't for Cheng Hao not looking like someone who couldn't afford the phone bill, the waiter would have snatched the phone away long ago.

That clear voice made Cheng Hao, who had been silent for a long time, brighten up instantly, and he excitedly said, "Yaru, I've thought of a way, there will be a turnaround in a few days."

Zou Yaru looked at his smiling face, her lips moving slightly.

"Yaru, believe in me, I've said it, I'm not worse than anyone else, definitely not worse than that Gu Junhe." Cheng Hao looked at her silence, and those calm eyes, and he always felt like he was about to lose something.

Zou Yaru took a deep breath and asked, seeing that there were quite a few people around, "Where is your room?"

"Come with me."

Cheng Hao led Zou Yaru to his room, both remaining silent the whole way.

Cheng Hao poured her a glass of hot water and placed it in front of her.

"Yaru." Cheng Hao had just started to speak but was interrupted by Zou Yaru, "Let's break up."

Cheng Hao hadn't even settled into his seat yet when he heard her words, and his motion to sit down froze instantly.

"Why?"

Cheng Hao straightened up, and although she was sitting right in front of him, less than a meter away, it felt as though she was so far away.

"Because of your father's situation? I've said it, the money problem can be solved." Cheng Hao said somewhat agitatedly, his hands clenching his pants tightly. He took a quick step forward, squatting in front of Zou Yaru, took her hands, and said, "Haven't we been very happy these past six months? We agreed to plant lots of wisteria flowers in the yard and build a flower swing for our kids to play on."

"Does all that mean nothing now?"

Cheng Hao had never imagined that one day he would be so lowly.

"It means nothing now."

Tears fell from Zou Yaru's eyes like pearls after talking with Zou Yashi yesterday. Zou's mother came to her, said a lot, a lot, and she understood clearly that she couldn't selfishly sacrifice her father for her own love.

"Here is the watch you gave me, now, I'm giving it back to you." Zou Yaru freed her hand from his, taking off the watch that she had always treasured from her wrist.

Cheng Hao didn't take it, just staring at her intensely.

Zou Yaru placed the watch on the nearby table, stood up, turned around quickly, and dared not look at Cheng Hao's expression anymore.

"Were our feelings for the past half-year all fake?"

"Why, won't you believe in me?"

Cheng Hao's voice sounded like a low murmur from behind her. Zou Yaru took a deep breath and said, "Cheng Hao, you don't understand, you just don't understand. Our love was a beautiful memory, and now, let's not meet again, I... "

She looked up slightly towards the ceiling, tears spilling out rapidly, and said, "My fiancé won't be happy."

"Yaru, you are truly heartless."

Cheng Hao watched her leaving back. He slowly rose to his feet, his coat brushing against the watch on the table, sending it crashing to the floor where it shattered on impact. The hands stopped moving, just like the sentiment between them, ended.