

## Regaining 371

### Chapter 371: The Ingrate

"Yes." Xu Nianji nodded affirmatively, confirming they hadn't misunderstood him when he said, "Uncle, we've discussed it. Xiaofeng is also working in the timber yard, isn't he? Though growing bean sprouts is tough, it's at least his own business, and the money is better than what the timber yard pays."

"But..." Xiong Xihua didn't quite understand. Such a good business, why weren't they keeping it to themselves? Why teach Xiaofeng?

Though they hadn't inquired meticulously, they knew that the sprout business was doing well. Earning money was certain; it was just a question of how much.

"I'm going to learn to drive. Soon I'll be delivering goods everywhere and I'm afraid I won't have time to sell bean sprouts." Xu Nianji didn't hide it.

After discussing it with Xu Yuchun, Xiong Xihua readily agreed, her words filled with gratitude toward Xu Nianji.

"The whole Qinghe family, they are all grateful people," Xiong Xihua remarked emotionally.

Xu Yuchun sighed and said, "Yes, if only my uncle had treated Qinghe and his family a bit better, things wouldn't have gotten so tense like they are now."

Initially, Xu Yuchun had only helped Xu Qinghe a few times, yet Xu Qinghe always kept him in mind, thinking of their family first whenever something good came up.

In his opinion, Uncle Zhong would definitely regret it in the future.

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In the village, news spread the fastest. Within a few days, the news that Xu Feng was learning to grow bean sprouts from Xu Nianji had spread.

When Xu Zhong heard this news, he sat in silence under the eaves, quietly smoking.

"Old man, tell me, would Xu Qinghe and his family really be such ingrates, thinking only of others with such a great opportunity and not their own family?" Liu Sanmei felt so regretful inside. Had she known this would happen, she would have never agreed to separate the families.

Xu Zhong took a puff on his cigarette, exhaled a smoke ring, and retorted, "Do you want Zhihao to sell bean sprouts, or would you like Zhiyuan to do it?"

"Of course it's..."

Liu Sanmei's words trailed off mid-sentence.

Zhihao was a workshop manager at a canning factory, and Zhiyuan was a college student. How could they possibly go and sell bean sprouts?

"Well, there are still my maternal relatives," Liu Sanmei's voice grew weaker. After all, she was just a stepmother, and her relationship with Xu Qinghe wasn't good.

Xu Zhong glanced at her, choosing not to twist the knife in her heart. Xu Qinghe, unless blind, knew exactly how she treated his family in the past. Since she hadn't treated Xu Qinghe well, why would his family return evil with good and consider Liu Sanmei's maternal relatives when something good came up?

How could she be so shameless?

"What's that look for?" Liu Sanmei, noticing Xu Zhong's expression, felt like all her unkind acts were being brought up again. She said unhappily, "I treated Qinghe that way with your consent, didn't I? And what's wrong with treating my own son well?"

"I at least raised Qinghe and even got him a wife," Liu Sanmei argued, feeling that her role as a stepmother wasn't too shabby.

"Ji Ying was someone Qinghe married on his own merits," Xu Zhong reminded her. Xu Qinghe, obviously older but got married later than his younger brother Xu Qingjiang. If it weren't for his son's own abilities, who knows, he might still be bachelor.

"Xu Zhong!"

Liu Sanmei, as if stepping on a sore spot, instantly stood up, pointing at Xu Zhong ready to start a quarrel.

"Zhiyuan is about to go to university soon, have you prepared the money?" Xu Zhong changed the subject, immediately deflating Liu Sanmei like a pin pricked balloon. She said irritably, "Of course, it's prepared."

Chapter 372: Work is Coming

"Brother, when we go to South City in the future, does that mean we won't need to take the bus anymore?" Xu Nian'an asked excitedly.

Coming back from South City last time had been quite an ordeal for Xu Nian'an; above all, the frequent stops of the shuttle bus and the smell of gasoline rushing in through the windows had made even someone who didn't usually get motion sick feel quite uncomfortable.

Moreover, the smell inside the bus during the hot summer was indeed quite foul.

Although riding in a truck was tough, it was still better than the shuttle bus that would constantly stop and go.

"Whenever I'm free, I'll definitely come to pick you up," Xu Nianji suddenly felt that learning to drive was truly exciting.

Driving!

In those times, if someone knew how to drive, it was really something!

"Big brother, you're so kind!" Xu Nian'an's face lit up with happiness.

Xu Nianji glanced at him and said, "You and your little sister are both studying in Ningbei; you are the second brother and should take extra care of her."

"Of course," Xu Nian'an answered without hesitation.

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"Brother Cheng, what is this?" Ji Ying asked, looking at a pile of documents in front of her, bewildered by the variety of documents present.

"Work."

Pei Yicheng explained, "You're good at foreign languages, right? I know quite a few people who need document translations. In five days, bring the translated documents to South City."

"Brother Cheng, you're giving me a job opportunity!" Ji Ying had been thinking about how to make some money when Pei Yicheng presented her with this great opportunity.

Pei Yicheng raised an eyebrow and said, "I thought you would complain about the tight five-day deadline."

Ji Ying browsed through the documents and said, "It's not too bad, I can manage to translate them in time."

"Thank you, Brother Cheng," Ji Ying said gratefully. The Brother Cheng who helped her find work was truly a good person.

Ji Ying was ready to take the documents and start working when Pei Yicheng stopped her, asking, "Aren't you going to ask how much money the translation will earn?"

Ji Ying paused and said, "Brother Cheng, you are a good person, I trust you."

Her eyes were sincere, filled with absolute trust.

Ji Ying smiled wryly, her beautiful eyes glittering as if filled with starlight.

The feeling of being trusted was nice, and being trusted by Ji Ying felt even better.

A good person?

Pei Yicheng's lips curled slightly. He didn't want to be just a good person in her eyes!

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"Ji Ying, it's time for dinner." Ji Ying had just finished cooking and called Ji Ying, only to find her holed up in her room at the desk, pen in hand, a dictionary beside her, giving her the illusion that Ji Ying was still in high school.

"Ji Ying, you've graduated from high school, and university hasn't started yet; what are you doing?" Ji Ying felt that her daughter was so diligently unusual; other kids would be out playing every day during the holidays.

But Ji Ying?

She had helped her, then went to help at Qinghe's factory, and even took care of her sick grandfather in South City voluntarily. Now that she was back, she had started studying in her room again.

"Mom, I'm making money," Ji Ying said after writing down the meaning of a word. She tidied up her materials before leaving her room and facing Ji Ying's puzzled look, she explained, "Brother Cheng helped me get a translation job. Once I translate those documents into a foreign language, I'll also get a translation fee."

"You should just rest for a few days, we're not lacking money at home now," Ji Ying felt her daughter deserved to dress up prettily.

In the past, there was no chance, but now that they had money, Ji Ying wished even more that her daughter wouldn't have to work too hard.

### Chapter 373: You Should Worry About Others

"Mom, if I don't do something, just wandering around all day, I feel so restless." Xu Nianhua patted her chest and added, "Besides, translating is also a way of learning."

Xu Nianhua spoke eloquently, "Mom, this is a win-win situation. I earn money and solidify my knowledge, how great is that?"

"Alright, alright, I can never win against you." Ji Ying looked helplessly at Xu Nianhua, her eyes filled with indulgence, she said, "Go wash your hands and come to eat, don't just stay in the room, it's not good for your eyes."

Ji Ying was really worried that Nianhua would get sulked up.

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Ever since Xu Feng followed Xu Nianji in growing and selling bean sprouts, many villagers said Xu Feng was lucky.

Xu Nianhua was waiting, waiting for Liu Sanmei to hear about this and come start trouble.

With Liu Sanmei's personality, and Zhao Juxiang's unwillingness to be outdone, knowing about this, how could they possibly not come looking for trouble?

But, having waited and waited, Liu Sanmei and the others showed no reaction at all. Instead, it was said that Zhao Juxiang and Liu Sanmei had managed to get several people from the village jobs at the canning factory, including Ma Xiuhong who had previously approached Zhao Juxiang.

Xu Nianhua thought, could it be that those two were trying to prove through such actions that their sons (grandsons) were the capable ones?

It must be said, Xu Nianhua hit the nail on the head.

Liu Sanmei and Zhao Juxiang of course wanted to cause trouble for Xu Qinghe's family because they felt humiliated behind closed doors—that good things should not be missing from their own kin's reach.

In the eyes of Xu Qinghe's family, Xu Yuchun's family seemed even more like Xu Qinghe's kin.

Although Liu Sanmei was not his biological mother, she had raised Xu Qinghe.

Liu Sanmei certainly was not convinced, but Xu Zhong's argument was also valid. There were no men in their family who could go and sell bean sprouts; they couldn't possibly ask Xu Zhong to do it at his age, right?

Therefore, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law had switched tactics, showing off their grandson and son, who were now capable and competent.

"Oh, Aihong, would you like me to have my Zhihao find some work for your Shengzi? Or perhaps for your daughter-in-law?" Liu Sanmei, cracking sunflower seeds, looked at Hu Aihong mockingly.

She always had issues with Hu Aihong and said proudly, "In my opinion, my Zhihao being a workshop director at the canning factory is no small feat. Look at Xiuhong and the rest working there, they make twenty-five yuan a month."

"How about, I ask around for you, to save your daughter-in-law from nagging at you all day at home?"

Liu Sanmei, though phrasing it that way, was mocking Hu Aihong with every sentence.

"Enough, Auntie Liu, better mind other's business, we don't need your concern for Shengzi and our daughter-in-law." Hu Aihong, unlike her usual quarrelsome demeanor, had a smile plastered over her face, saying, "My Shengzi, oh, he's got work, he doesn't lack for work."

"Is that so?" Liu Sanmei looked at Hu Aihong skeptically, always feeling she was just putting on a brave face. Her son Zou Sheng was known to be honest, only doing tedious chores like fetching firewood and farming.

"Of course."

Seeing her disbelief, Hu Aihong immediately felt uncomfortable. What's wrong with her son being a bit honest?

"Qinghe came over the day before yesterday looking for Shengzi, wanted him to work at the furniture factory, and today, after finishing the field work, he went to the factory." Hu Aihong's face was brimming with pride.

Chapter 374: What's Wrong Today?

Who dares to say her son lacks prospects?

If Shengzi really settles down in the furniture factory, Hu Aihong feels that his future is bound to be limitless.

In the past year, watching Xu Qinghe's family live a prosperous life, Hu Aihong always felt that if Shengzi could be associated with Xu Qinghe's family, his future would also be prosperous.

Liu Sanmei left unhappy, but Hu Aihong didn't care that much. In the evening, she made several lavish dishes, including a bowl of stir-fried pork with chili peppers, and kept adding food to Zou Sheng's plate, startling him with the favor.

When Hu Aihong gave birth to Zou Sheng, she was physically injured and had only this one son. Being a person of pride who commanded with absolute authority at home, she was strict with the child. Instead of raising Zou Sheng to be fearless, she raised him to be especially honest.

Hu Aihong wanted to correct this, but as the child grew older, it was not so easy to change an established nature.

"Mom, I have enough; you should eat too," Zou Sheng said, looking at the piled-up meat in his bowl, feeling that Hu Aihong's smiles today were somewhat eerie.

"Eat more."

Today, having managed to anger Liu Sanmei, Hu Aihong couldn't be more pleased. She said, "Son, follow your Uncle Qinghe and work hard. Make sure you don't let him fire you."

Zou Sheng: "..."

He wasn't a head of cabbage, was he? What was this about being wanted or not?

He tried hard to remember the day at the furniture factory; he had worked quite well. What was going on with his mother today?

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In the county, Xu Nianhua did not wait for Liu Sanmei and her family; instead, Zhou He's mother and her brother Zhou Qiang came.

With Zhou He's pregnancy advanced, her large belly was a cause for concern. Therefore, under the strong opposition from her family, she stayed at home. This was convenient as Xu Nianhua was also translating documents. Zhou He knit at home and listened to the radio, leading a pleasant life.

The radio was bought the day before yesterday when Xu Nianji accompanied Ling Dong to deliver goods to South City to help Zhou He pass the time.

When Zhou He received the radio, her heart fluttered, fearing her mother-in-law might think they were wasting money.

But Ji Ying was very open-minded, insisting that they should have bought the radio sooner and assuring Zhou He to accept it without worry.

"Mom, how come you're here?" Zhou He was surprised to see her own mother and brother, putting down her knitting to stand up.

Just as the door opened, Xu Nianhua hurriedly said, "Sister-in-law, please stay seated, I'll pour some water."

"Aunt, please come in and take a seat," Xu Nianhua efficiently entertained Zhou He's family. She brought two cups of water, and also took out the sunflower seeds, peanuts, and biscuits that had been bought for hosting guests.

Ji Ying bought these snacks especially for her, afraid she'd be bored at home.

"You must be Nianji's sister, right? I heard you're a university student, and you really are beautiful," Zhou He's mother looked Xu Nianhua up and down. Even though the Xu family hadn't held a banquet, many people knew that the Xu siblings had gone to university.

Especially since the Zhou Family and Xu Family were related by marriage, this was even well known.

"Thank you for the compliment, Aunt," Xu Nianhua replied with an embarrassed but polite smile. She got up and said, "Aunt, why don't you stay for dinner? I'll go call my mom back."

With that, Xu Nianhua walked outside to find Ji Ying.

Although she didn't like the maternal relatives of Zhou He, finding them too mercenary, when they came to visit, they had to be entertained.

#### Chapter 375: No Prospects

As soon as Xu Nianhua left, only Zhou He and her family remained in the house.

Zhou's mother got straight to the point, "Xiaohe, I heard that Nianji no longer sells bean sprouts? Has he found a young man from your village to sell them instead?"

"If Nianji isn't selling bean sprouts, what is he going to do?"

In front of her daughter, Zhou's mother didn't beat around the bush. She stared at Zhou He and asked, "Such a big matter, and you didn't think to send word?"

"Mom, it's just about letting Xu Feng learn to do the bean sprouts," Zhou He replied.

Zhou's mother instantly slammed the table and pointed at Zhou He, "Zhou He, are you still my daughter?"

Zhou He, accused by her mother, remained silent, not saying a word.

"Sis, are you really my sister? Such a good opportunity, why didn't you tell me?" Zhou Qiang only knew that his brother-in-law's bean sprout business was very good. Since his brother-in-law had always handled it, he had no other thoughts.

But now that someone else was selling the bean sprouts, and that person was his brother-in-law's cousin, he was unhappy.

He was his brother-in-law's brother-in-law, after all.

"Good fortune should not flow to strangers' fields. Such a good opportunity, why didn't you think of your brother or your maternal family?"

"Have you considered that, even though the Xu family values you highly now that you're married, in the future, you're still going to rely on your maternal family?" Zhou's mother thought she was giving sage advice. She said, "Look at your brother-in-law and sister-in-law, both college graduates. When they get married, won't they overshadow you in every way?"

"Let's not talk about your sister-in-law, as she's going to marry out anyway. But when your brother gets married, being a college graduate will make a difference!" Zhou's mother said, pretending to have Zhou He's best interests at heart. "If you don't help your maternal family now, once your brother's wife enters the family, will the Xu family still pay attention to you, the eldest daughter-in-law?"

"Exactly, sis. If you ever get bullied, you would still need me to support you," Zhou Qiang said, implying that if she didn't help him, he wouldn't support her in the future.

Hearing so much criticism from her mother and brother, with them taking turns scolding her, Zhou He felt a headache coming on, her ears buzzing.

She rubbed her temples and turned to Zhou Qiang, "Xiaoqiang, do you know how to make bean sprouts?"

"I don't know."

Zhou Qiang looked at Zhou He as if she were an idiot. If he knew how to do it, wouldn't he just do it himself rather than asking for her help?

"At four in the morning, your brother-in-law gets up to water the bean sprouts, fetching well water back and forth, not knowing how many pairs of shoes he has worn through, even breaking a shoulder pole," Zhou He explained.

"By five thirty, your brother-in-law is already carrying the bean sprouts to the farmers' market to sell them. He sells them all morning, and there's no rest in the afternoon. He keeps busy until eleven at night before he goes to sleep. Do you think you could endure such hardships?" Zhou He's words conveyed deep sympathy for Xu Nianji. Making bean sprouts was not easy, let alone that Xu Nianji also helped delivering chili sauce. Every day, as soon as he hit the bed, he would fall into a deep sleep.

If he weren't extremely exhausted, how could he fall asleep so quickly?

Selling bean sprouts did make more money than factory work, but it was also much harder.

Upon hearing that he could only sleep a few hours, Zhou Qiang immediately gave up, saying, "Mom, let's not do the bean sprouts. It's just too hard."

Zhou's mother immediately glared at him.

Zhou Qiang wasn't afraid; he said discontentedly, "It's true that it's hard. Waking me up at four in the morning might as well kill me."

"No ambition!" Zhou's mother looked at Zhou Qiang unhappily. Today, she had intended to convince Zhou He, but not even Xu Nianji had shown up, and Zhou Qiang had already backed out.

Chapter 376: What's the reward?

"Mom, even if I lack success, I'm still the one you gave birth to."

Zhou Qiang sat down next to her and grabbed a handful of sunflower seeds to crack open. His speed of cracking seeds matched the pace of his speech as he said, "Anyway, I'm not doing it, sis. Fortunately, brother-in-law didn't make me do it."

"Your brother-in-law cares about you too," Zhou He took the opportunity to chime in.

Their mother shivered with anger, shooting Zhou Qiang a look of profound disappointment, then turned her displeased face towards Zhou He and said, "Xiaohe, are you still Xiaoqiang's sister? Or have you lost your mind? What kind of caring is this? I see it as them not treating you like a daughter-in-law at all; otherwise, what's wrong with helping out your little brother?"

"But I am helping him. It's better than him starting something and not being able to finish, right?" Zhou He replied, her face the picture of innocence. Changing the subject, she said, "Mom, did you come to see me today? I'll be giving birth in two months, and soon you'll be a grandma."

"Just becoming a grandma? I've been one long ago." Her mother said with indifference, glancing at her belly before adding, "Your belly is pointed; it might well be a boy. Has your mother-in-law mentioned any reward for having a son?"

Zhou He: "..."

The child to be born was her own flesh and blood. Why would she need a reward from someone else?

Besides, whether a son or a daughter, they would still be a piece of her own flesh, and she could never care enough for them.

"Mom, have some cookies, these are specially good."

Zhou He attempted to divert the conversation once more.

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"Mom, sister-in-law's mother and brother have come; I asked them to stay for lunch," Xu Nianhua ran all the way to the factory, drenched in sweat.

"What?"

Upon hearing this, Ji Ying immediately set down what she was doing and hurried back home.

"Mom, aren't we going to buy groceries?" Xu Nianhua hurriedly asked.

Ji Ying stuffed ten yuan into Xu Nianhua's hand and said, "You go buy the groceries, I'll head home first."

Previously, when Zhou He's mother visited, she had even hit Zhou He, causing Ji Ying to worry.

The daughter-in-law was heavily pregnant.

"Mom..."

Xu Nianhua looked bewilderedly at Ji Ying's retreating back, stunned. What was mother doing? Even if she was in a hurry to get back, there was no need to be this anxious.

Xu Nianhua murmured to herself, then took a different path to the farmers' market to buy groceries.

"Mom, you're back?" Zhou He was at a loss about how to talk to her own mother, feeling like every sentence they exchanged left her grasping for a response.

"Your in-laws have arrived."

Ji Ying spoke with a beaming smile, adding, "Xiaohe, please take a seat. It was my lack of attentiveness not knowing that your in-laws were visiting. I didn't prepare anything in advance at home."

The politeness from Ji Ying made Zhou He's mother feel valued as she sat there and smilingly said, "In-Law, I didn't know you weren't home either. My Xiaohe is carrying the Xu family's grandchild; what if something happens? Who would take care of her then?"

"Mom," Zhou He quickly interjected, "Nianhua is here too."

Zhou He's mother glanced at her sideways and said, "What does a young girl know? In-Law, if something were to suddenly happen to my Xiaohe and there's no adult around, think how worried I would be as a mother."

"The in-law makes a good point," Ji Ying entered the house and poured herself a glass of tea. After drinking the water, she finally felt like she could catch her breath. With a meaningful tone, she said,

"Everyone in the family is busy, so the task of looking after Xiaohe has been handed to Nianhua. Nianhua might not be married yet, but she's a grown woman of twenty. I trust she will take good care of her sister-in-law."

Chapter 377: Not Here to Urge the Birth

"Xiaohe is taking great care of herself; the doctor said that as long as she doesn't get angry, she'll definitely be able to give birth smoothly," Ji Ying said.

This remark was actually a hint to Zhou He's mother not to upset her.

Sometimes, Ji Ying felt sorry for Zhou He. Although she was her own daughter, in her mother's eyes, she barely mattered compared to her son.

Now that Zhou He was pregnant, was there anything that couldn't be discussed calmly?

If Zhou He was upset badly, would her mother actually benefit from it?

"Mother-in-law, what do you mean by that?" Zhou He's mother immediately took offense when she heard this. "I came to see Xiaohe, and I haven't upset her, have I?"

Zhou He's mother gave her a look.

Zhou He had no choice but to explain, "Mom, my mother is just here to check on me."

"Mother-in-law, please don't be angry. I was just saying that Xiaohe shouldn't get angry; I wasn't talking about you," Ji Ying clarified and added, "Or did mother-in-law upset Xiaohe?"

Zhou He's mother: "..."

Well, that was both kind and harsh words spoken by her. Initially, when the engagement was arranged, Ji Ying was thought to be gentle and easy to talk to, but now, it seems that wasn't the case, seeing how she managed the situation.

"Mother-in-law, Nianhua will be back with groceries soon. Today, let's all eat together at home," Ji Ying said cheerfully. "Xiaohe's about to give birth, and as her mother-in-law, it's about time you came to offer your support."

"Speaking of which, about offering support ..." Ji Ying glanced at Zhou He's mother, but didn't see any of the traditional items used to encourage delivery around the house?

In the month the daughter is due, her family usually comes to encourage labor, bringing baby clothes and some nutritious foods for the pregnant woman, sometimes even a chicken to help strengthen her body.

Of course, some families are wealthy and bring lots of things; others might not bring as much, but clothes for the baby and a few pounds of brown sugar can still be managed.

"Encouraging labor..."

Zhou He's mother also remembered this responsibility. After hearing that Xu Nianji hadn't sold the bean sprouts but instead hired others to learn how to sell them, she was so annoyed and focused on arguing that she completely forgot about the labor encouragement.

Having been reminded by Ji Ying, Zhou He's mother felt extremely embarrassed, but quickly denied, "She isn't due for another two months. I wasn't here to encourage the labor today."

Ji Ying gave a smile but didn't expose her, instead she changed the subject and began to cook.

Xu Nianhua arrived with the groceries and glanced around the living room; the atmosphere seemed fine.

"Mom, is the amount of food I bought enough?" Xu Nianhua laid out the groceries, a mix of meat and vegetables.

"It's enough."

Ji Ying praised, "Go keep your sister-in-law company."

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How could such a gentle person have such an unreasonable mother?

Xu Nianhua watched Zhou He's mother leave and could only sigh; his own mother was indeed better.

"Mom, why were you in such a hurry just now? Were you afraid that sister-in-law and the others would argue?" Xu Nianhua quietly asked Ji Ying.

Ji Ying looked at him, wanting to change the subject, but then considered that her daughter would get married someday, and having a mother-in-law herself, it was better not to hide certain things. She recounted a past incident.

Xu Nianhua didn't even know what expression to use. Was that really his mother?

"Mom, we need to treat sister-in-law even better going forward," Xu Nianhua said, taking her hand. He thought about all the tales of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law conflicts, but in his eyes, his mother was the best in the world, the ideal mother-in-law.

Seeing how his mother and sister-in-law got along, some might even believe they were biological mother and daughter.

Meanwhile, his sister-in-law's actual mother seemed more like the wicked mother-in-law from the stories.

Chapter 378: More Diligent Than When I Was in School

In the evening, Xu Nianji came back with Ling Dong and learned that his mother-in-law had arrived.

"Xiaohe, are you okay?" Xu Nianji instinctively sized up Zhou He, fearing that her mother was giving her a hard time again.

"It's fine, my mom isn't a tiger." Zhou He laughed at his gesture, saying, "My mom came today just to ask about the bean sprout business. Everything's sorted out now, there's nothing to worry about. How about you? Is learning to drive tiring, or is it difficult?"

"With Dongge teaching me, it's not tiring at all." Every time Xu Nianji returned home and saw Zhou He's sweet smile, and his family gathered together, he felt happy and not the least bit tired.

Xu Nianji talked about learning to drive and his delivery work. After a few days, he had started to get the hang of it.

However...

"Little sister, could you teach me?" Xu Nianji asked with some embarrassment as he handed a book on mechanical principles to Xu Nianhua.

He had wanted to ask Xu Nian'an, but Xu Nian'an had been staying with Du Chang these days, learning with him from morning till night, so even if he wanted to find Xu Nian'an, it was impossible.

"What's up?"

Xu Nianhua took the book and saw that it was filled with technical terminology and professional jargon.

"There are so many words I don't know." In terms of studying, Xu Nianji really lacked talent. Although he had finished middle school, there were still many characters he didn't recognize.

Xu Nianhua taught him all the words he didn't know, including some that were learned from the book, explaining them in detail.

"So that's how it is."

Xu Nianji marked the pronunciation for all the words he didn't recognize.

"Big brother, you're even more diligent than when we were in school!" said Xu Nianhua, teasingly watching him study so earnestly.

Back in school, the sight of a book would give big brother a headache.

"Ah, these words know me, but I don't know them!"

Xu Nianji looked frustrated. He felt confident that he could learn to drive, but mechanical repair seemed to be a bit more difficult.

"Don't lose heart. I believe you can do it."

Xu Nianhua encouraged him. With nothing else pressing, she sat with Xu Nianji, reading the book, and taught him all the words he might not know, adding pinyin as well.

"Nianhua, I wish my brain was half as good as yours," Xu Nianji couldn't help but lament, his head aching after a whole evening of reading.

Xu Nianhua: "..."

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Shuangzhu Village.

One piece of furniture after another was carried out and loaded onto the truck. Xu Qinghe personally followed the truck to the customer's home, installing the furniture perfectly, and when he received the final payment, he felt that all his long-term efforts were finally paying off.

"Xiaosong, this is today's money!"

Xu Qinghe showed the final payment to Xu Song with a face full of joy, finding this far better than the jobs he used to take on before.

Taking on jobs meant confirming countless times with customers, sometimes having to make changes midway if the customer wasn't satisfied. Moreover, each customer lived in a different place, which meant they had to run all over the place.

But after setting up a factory, it was clearly different. They made sample furniture, the customer placed an order, and they finished it in the factory. They then delivered it to the customer's home, assembled it there, and saved a great deal of their time, avoiding a lot of unnecessary travel.

"Uncle Qinghe, I'm not dreaming, am I?"

These days, Xu Song had been walking on air, the deposits alone nearly equaling what he used to earn in a year.

Chapter 379: I Only Have Two Hands

"I'm not dreaming, this is all real!" Xu Qinghe counted the money in his hand several times, then firmly said, "This is the first final payment. Once we finish making all the furniture we've taken deposits for, we'll earn even more!"

"If we work hard, we'll eventually build new houses."

Dreaming of a bright future, Xu Qinghe had originally planned to build a new house. But he had postponed it because he wanted to start a factory. Xu Qinghe had always thought to himself, he must build the new house and not disappoint his family.

During the past six months, Xu Qinghe had never mentioned this matter, but he was always secretly accumulating strength in his heart.

Now, the money for building the house was no longer an unattainable dream, and Xu Qinghe felt full of motivation.

August 29th.

School was about to start, and Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua, the siblings, were also starting to prepare for school.

The whole family was immersed in the mood of farewell, and even the busy Xu Qinghe came to the county every day just to see his son and daughter.

Once they moved to Ningbei, they would not see each other again until the New Year.

"Mom, I can't carry any more things."

Xu Nianhua looked at Ji Ying packing her bags full and felt a headache. After they took a bus to South City, they still had to catch a train to Ningbei. The journey would definitely be long and rough, How could she manage to carry so much stuff onto the train?

The green-skin trains nowadays were not like those in later generations.

"Your elder brother will carry it." Ji Ying said without turning back.

"..."

Xu Nian'an glanced at the luggage Ji Ying had packed – three large bags and two small ones. Even if they couldn't be carried, they couldn't be hauled. He only had two hands; what was he supposed to do, grow a couple more?

"Mom, what did you pack in these?"

Xu Nian'an couldn't help but ask.

"This bag contains Nianhua's short-sleeve shirts, long-sleeve shirts, and cotton-padded jackets. You won't be coming back until the New Year, so you must not bring too few clothes,"

Ji Ying answered.

Xu Nian'an pursed his lips, then asked, "So, the clothes in this bag are mine, what about the remaining one?"

He could understand bringing extra clothes, but what about the remaining one large bag and two small bags?

"The big bag is filled with food for you guys. Our own dried green beans, bamboo shoots, sour jiapin, and vinegar and ginger are hard to carry, so I brought you salted ginger."

"I also brought you bed sheets," Ji Ying added.

"The two small bags are filled with lunch boxes, soap, and nivea cream among other things."

Ji Ying had thought of everything very thoroughly. Even though such items were available in Ningbei, it was better to bring them from home, saving the trouble of having to look for them in an unfamiliar place.

"Mom, I only have two hands." Xu Nian'an wanted Ji Ying to pack lighter, but she insisted, "This must be brought, and that must be brought also."

After such a conversation, Xu Nian'an realized that none of this luggage could be left behind.

The next day, early morning, August 30th, Xu Nian'an discovered dishearteningly that in addition to the five big and small bags, Ji Ying had also prepared another full bag of food, including scallion pancakes, eggs, water, several bags of instant noodles, and two large enamel cups.

"Elder brother, I'll carry these two bags," Xu Nianhua volunteered, picking two bags she could manage. Any more would have been too much for her.

"I'll tie them up with a rope." Xu Nian'an thought about how to secure everything for easier carrying.

"Ling Dong, you're here? I really have to trouble you today to give us a ride." Xu Qinghe had been waiting at the door for Ling Dong's car and immediately went up to greet him, his words full of gratitude.

Chapter 380: Farewell

"Uncle Xu, no need for formalities, we're all family here, and I'm heading to South City anyway; it's fate," Ling Dong said with a chuckle.

Xu Qinghe said, "You haven't had breakfast yet, have you? I'll prepare a bowl of egg noodles for you; they're still packing up."

"No need, Uncle Xu, let me help instead," Ling Dong felt the warmth of the Xu family and wondered if they would still be so enthusiastic if they knew about Yicheng's feelings for Ji Ying.

Of course, they would, Yicheng is so outstanding.

"No, just sit and have a bowl of noodles. Once they're done packing, we can just load the car," Xu Qinghe said, asking Xu Nianji to keep him company on the side.

"Ling Dong, just relax and eat," Xu Nianji urged as he came out with a bowl of egg noodles, joining Ling Dong for the meal. "No matter what, we still have to thank you and Yicheng."

"Don't mention it, Yicheng loves to help people," Ling Dong said as he savored the fragrant egg noodles, feeling utterly content.

Xu Qinghe and Xu Nian'an, father and son, were moving things to the car, and Ling Dong, after finishing his meal, also helped.

A few large bags were a bit troublesome for two people to handle, but with more hands, the burden was quickly shared.

"Nian'an, when you get to Ningbei, make sure you first drop Ji Ying at the school and sort out her accommodation before you go register," Xu Qinghe instructed.

"Remember to call home."

"And, see your sister once a week, no, once every two weeks."

"Whether on the road or at school, keep this money safe, and call us if it's not enough," Ji Ying instructed ceaselessly, feeling truly sad as the two kids were going so far away for school for the first time.

"Mom, don't worry, I will definitely take good care of my sister," Xu Nian'an responded, almost as if he was pledging with his hand on his chest. After all, who else would look after his own sister if not him?

"Ji Ying, you..." Ji Ying grasped Xu Nian'an's hand, but barely started speaking before her eyes welled up with tears.

Xu Nian'an didn't say anything but just hugged Ji Ying and playfully said, "Mom, when I come home for the New Year, I want to eat your smoked pork and sausages."

"Sure."

The sorrow of parting was instantly lessened by her words.

"Dad, Mom, don't worry about us. My brother and I will take care of ourselves in Ningbei. And Dad, don't overwork yourself; money isn't everything," Ji Ying said worriedly. "And Mom, sometimes you have back pain, and there are enough people hired at the factory now, so don't overexert yourself."

"Ah."

Xu Qinghe responded but couldn't bear to look at Ji Ying.

Ji Ying held Ji Ying's hand, reluctant to let go.

...

"Little sister, we'll be back for the New Year," Xu Nian'an said, unable to comprehend the depth of his parents' and sister's emotions, as he was merely looking forward to university life.

Though it was hard to part with his parents, Xu Nian'an knew he would be back in half a year.

"Mmm."

Ji Ying looked out the window at the swiftly receding scenery, feeling a bit downhearted.

It wasn't until they picked up Pei Yicheng that Ji Ying felt something off and asked, "Yicheng, Ling Dong, aren't you guys delivering goods this time?"

"No."

Pei Yicheng answered, his lips curving slightly as he said, "This trip to South City is for official business."

Oh.

Ji Ying nodded, not probing further, and continued to see them off to the train. Ling Dong and Pei Yicheng showed no signs of leaving, and while Xu Nian'an went to buy tickets, Ling Dong had already purchased them.