

Regaining 551

Chapter 551: I am Nianhua's Boyfriend

On the fifteenth day of the first lunar month, with siblings Ban Chuan and Ban Lin joining, Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an decided to eat at a nearby restaurant to celebrate the Lantern Festival.

"Little sister, give Yicheng and Yining a call and invite them to join us. It would be perfect to celebrate the Lantern Festival together," Xu Nian'an thought of the days when he frequently bothered the siblings Pei Yicheng and Pei Yining, and even though he had sent many gifts, Xu Nian'an felt that a meal was still necessary.

"Nian'an, Xiaolin and I just need to grab a bun or a pancake to eat, you guys go ahead," Ban Chuan said, already feeling embarrassed for taking up Xu Nian'an's place today, and now with Xu Nian'an offering to buy them dinner, he and his sister felt even more uncomfortable.

"How can that be? It's the Lantern Festival today, we should eat together," Xu Nian'an adamantly didn't give Ban Chuan a chance to argue, saying, "Ban Chuan, don't act like a woman, hesitating like that."

Xu Nian'an directly decided on the matter just like that.

Ban Chuan and his sister Ban Lin exchanged a look and then conscientiously began to work.

Ban Lin had to remember what each item cost; the store had a wide variety of items, both large and small, packed full, and there were many things Ban Lin needed to remember.

Ban Chuan was busy sorting out the inventory in the attic.

Xu Nian'an said with a smile, "Ban Chuan, take a break, or maybe read a book. Otherwise, I'd feel like I'm taking advantage of you, having your sister work and getting an extra helper."

"It's okay, it won't take much longer," Ban Chuan said with a smile and continued to help around the store.

In the afternoon, quite a few students returned to school, and the business in the store picked up.

Xu Nianhua handled the cash and also explained the prices of various items to Ban Lin who had a good memory. She could remember everything clearly after being told once.

No wonder the second brother had gone so far to bring them here; they were indeed very good.

Xu Nianhua felt instantly relieved.

As night fell, Xu Nian'an had already reserved a table for dinner at a local restaurant. Even though school hadn't officially started, today's earnings were very good.

"Yicheng, we've been waiting for you," Xu Nian'an saw Pei Yicheng's figure and immediately said, "Little sister, Ban Chuan, Ban Lin, let's go eat."

"Eh, where's Yining?" Xu Nianhua asked when he saw Pei Yicheng alone.

Pei Yicheng had just submitted the final draft for the Xiyue Hotel and rushed over here. Pei Yining had called him asking if he wanted to return to the Pei family for the Lantern Festival, but Pei Yicheng had declined.

Returning to the Pei family was not as good as spending it with Nianhua and the others.

After all, that place was no longer his home.

Pei Yicheng collected his thoughts and replied, "Yining went back home for the Lantern Festival. I'm here alone. You guys don't mind, do you?"

"Welcome," Xu Nianhua raised a bright smile, her radiant smile dispersing the gloom in Pei Yicheng's heart, instantly brightening everything around. Pei Yicheng's affectionate gaze locked onto hers, and for a moment, it seemed like they were the only two people left in the world.

"Hey, hey, hey."

Xu Nian'an couldn't stand it anymore, feeling goosebumps all over. He said, "Yicheng, don't you lead my little sister astray."

Pei Yicheng: "..."

What the big cousin said was always right.

Pei Yicheng changed the subject and said, "Nian'an, these two are..."

"He's Ban Chuan, my classmate, and that's his sister Ban Lin. They'll be working in the store from now on," Xu Nian'an introduced. "This is Pei Yicheng, also a student at Beining University."

"Hello, I'm Nianhua's boyfriend," Pei Yicheng introduced himself.

Xu Nian'an glared at him fiercely. He really must have wanted everyone to know, right?

Chapter 552: What About That Woman?

Pei Family, in the dining room, on the marble dining table, there were chicken, duck, fish, and meat—everything that one could ask for—beautifully arranged on exquisite plates, the dishes fine and luxurious, steaming hot.

Pei Guozhong sat at the head, Wan Hongxing and his son Pei Yijian sat on the left, and Pei Yining sat on the right.

Pei Guozhong looked at the empty seat, and with a 'snap', he slapped his chopsticks down on the table.

"Today is the Lantern Festival, come on, this glutinous rice ball with black sesame filling is your favorite," Wan Hongxing said, scooping up a bowl of it and handing it to Pei Guozhong.

Wan Hongxing's gentle words and warm, approachable smile subdued the anger in Pei Guozhong's heart, and he turned to Pei Yining and asked, "Where is your brother?"

"Brother, he..." Pei Yining's eyes flickered as she said, "He's busy."

Busy spending the Lantern Festival with his girlfriend—she had not lied about that.

"The final design draft for Xiyue was already submitted by him, so what could he possibly be so busy with?"

"He is indeed a busy man, busier than me," Pei Guozhong said sarcastically. His own son, not at home for the New Year, let alone during the new moon visits, and now not even for the Lantern Festival. If he hadn't seen him at the construction institute, he would have really thought he didn't have this son.

"Dad, recently, brother has been extremely busy with matters concerning Xiyue Hotel," Pei Yining explained on behalf of her own brother.

Pei Yiguo glanced at her and said, "Indeed busy, these past few days, he's been going to the Medical University daily, and even driving people to Jilly Road?"

Pei Yining bowed her head and remained silent, muttering inwardly. Why doesn't brother want to come back? Don't you know why in your heart? Why must you force her to tell the truth?

"Go, call your brother and tell him to come back," Pei Guozhong ordered.

Pei Yining shook her head.

Today, her brother would definitely be spending it with Nianhua. If she called to find him, her brother would definitely not be pleased.

"Does your brother still care about this family, about his dad?" Pei Guozhong said, facing his favorite black sesame glutinous balls, losing his appetite.

"Dad, brother has never liked coming back, you know that," Pei Yining answered carefully, burying her head and quietly eating glutinous balls, drinking the chicken soup.

Pei Guozhong was so infuriated by her words that he sputtered and fumed. Before, Pei Yicheng had very little presence, especially after his leg got injured. Out of sight, out of mind.

But now, Pei Yicheng was in the architectural institute and had even taken on the shop design for Xiyue. Particularly, Pei Yicheng's Liunian hand cream was making a name for itself in Ningbei. The more accomplished Pei Yicheng became, the prouder and angrier he felt.

Such a son to be proud of, yet he seemed to be an enemy to him.

"Isn't this his home too?" Pei Guozhong, frustrated to the point of a headache, said, "Yining, you also talk to your brother, tell him not to get too close to that girl."

Pei Yining had intended to quietly continue eating, thinking why her father suddenly got angry, but upon hearing Pei Guozhong mention 'that girl', she immediately furrowed her brows and said, "What do you mean by 'that girl'?"

"The woman who saved you," Pei Guozhong continued without noticing the darkening expression on Pei Yining's face. "Yes, she saved you, and we have thanked her, but she shouldn't cling to your brother just because of that. Your brother needs to..."

Before Pei Guozhong could finish, Pei Yining placed her bowl down heavily on the table, pursed her lips, and said unhappily, "Dad, what are you talking about? How has Nianhua offended you? What do you mean by clinging to my brother? She saved me, had it not been for her, I would be lying in a hospital now. What do you mean by 'we thanked her'?"

Chapter 553: Go, Go, Go, Don't Come Back

"You siblings practically lived in the hospital, how can you say there's no gratitude there? And besides, I put a hundred thousand in the nutritional supplements I gave her. Isn't a hundred thousand worth a single expression of gratitude?" Pei Guozhong said sternly.

"What hundred thousand?"

Pei Yining seemed to recall something, she said, "Did you put it in that box of cookies?"

Pei Guozhong had just casually placed it there, probably in a large tin box.

"That cookie box is still at my house, I've been busy and pushed it into a corner, I totally forgot about it." Pei Yining truly hadn't noticed the money, and the next moment, she glared at Pei Guozhong even more angrily, "Dad, are you trying to insult someone with the money? How could you do that?"

Pei Yining took a deep breath, looking at her father in front of her, she felt as if she didn't recognize him anymore.

"Why can't I do that?"

Pei Guozhong frowned and said, "I meant it as a thank you."

"Guozhong, don't be mad." Wan Hongxing gently patted his shoulder, consoling him, "I also think what you did was wrong. The girl saved Yining because she has a good relationship with Yining. How can you just offer money to her outright?"

"Yining, your dad just meant to show his gratitude, nothing more," said Wan Hongxing, turning to Pei Yining. "You know what your dad is like, he always measures everything with money. Don't take it to heart, Yining."

"Aunt Wan, what dad did is really insulting. Besides, it wasn't her chasing after my brother. It's my brother who was chasing her. He's in love with her and wants to spend his life with her. Why should you disdain Nianhua?" Pei Yining had been resentful towards her father for years.

"They are in love, Dad, what right do you have to stop them from being together?"

The more Pei Yining thought about it, the angrier she became. Over the years, caught between her brother and father, she didn't know what to do.

But today, Pei Guozhong's actions deeply disappointed her. Having said that, she turned and walked away.

"Go ahead, go then! And don't come back," boomed Pei Guozhong's infuriated voice.

Wan Hongxing was so anxious, she didn't know what to do.

"Yining, don't leave," Wan Hongxing chased after her, grasping Pei Yining's hand. "Don't you know your dad by now? He's all about appearances and measures everything with money. Don't be angry with him; he misses your brother too but can't swallow his pride, that's why he is speaking without thinking."

"Aunt Wan, my dad just doesn't respect Nianhua. She stayed in the hospital for over half a month to save me, unable to walk properly for a month, and yet he just thinks about paying her off with money? How could he do this?" Pei Yining said angrily, tears wiping from her eyes.

"Yes, what your dad did was wrong," Wan Hongxing consoled her. "Are your brother and that girl really dating?"

"Hmm," Pei Yining nodded, then worriedly looked at Wan Hongxing.

Wan Hongxing pursed her lips in a smile and said, "I've met her; she's a good girl. Tell your brother to treat her well."

"You don't oppose it?" Pei Yining's eyes welled as she stared at her.

"As long as your brother is happy. I heard she's from Beining University; such an outstanding girl should be cherished by your brother," Wan Hongxing said understandingly.

"Aunt Wan, I wish dad was as sensible as you are," sighed Pei Yining. She then cautioned, "Aunt Wan, if Dad really tries to intervene in my brother and Nianhua's relationship, you have to let me know."

"Of course." Wan Hongxing pulled a tissue from her pocket to dry Pei Yining's eyes, saying, "I'll talk to your dad. It's really cold outside today, don't go back; stay at our house, Yijian has missed his sister too."

Chapter 554: You Dislike Me Too

"No, Auntie Wan, I'm starting school again tomorrow." Pei Yining declined and had the family driver take her home.

Wan Hongxing returned to the dining room where Pei Guozhong sat with a stern face, clearly angry, while Pei Yijian sat there uneasily, saying, "Mom, Dad and sister had a fight."

"It's alright, Yijian, be good. Dad and sister were just talking a bit loudly. Eat your meal, and later you can go watch TV," Wan Hongxing soothed Pei Yijian.

As soon as Pei Yijian heard he could watch TV, he started eating his meal in big bites.

"Guozhong, eat up. Don't let it go cold," Wan Hongxing sighed, "I've prepared a whole table of dishes, and none of you are eating. It's really in vain."

With her words that were part complaint, part reproach, Pei Guozhong's initial anger softened. He said, "We'll eat. Eating is most important; we can't waste Hongxing's kind intentions."

Pei Guozhong started eating heartily.

"I'm done," Pei Yijian stuffed the last bite of rice into his mouth and darted off to watch TV.

"Slow down, don't choke," Wan Hongxing watched Pei Yijian's rapidly retreating figure, a gentle reminder escaping her lips as her eyes filled with indulgence. She said, "This child, once there's TV, nothing else matters."

"Kids will be kids." Pei Guozhong had also begun to calm down.

Wan Hongxing didn't bring up the issue with Pei Yining. Instead, she started to clean up the dishes. Only after Pei Yijian was asleep and the couple had both retired to their room, did Wan Hongxing speak up, "Guozhong, why don't you like the girl Yicheng likes?"

"She can't help Yicheng," Pei Guozhong answered without even thinking.

Wan Hongxing, with a tone of dejection, said, "I can't help you either."

"Hongxing, that's different. I can rely on myself now, and for you, taking care of our home, looking after Yijian, and ensuring that when I come back each day, I'm coming back to warmth and joy—that's enough," Pei Guozhong said earnestly, wrapping his arm around Wan Hongxing's shoulder.

"How is it different?" Wan Hongxing shook off his hand and sat sideways on the bed's edge. The wall lamp in the room was dimmed, its light not bright but very soft. She pursed her lips and said, "You can rely on yourself, providing for me. Yicheng is your son. Why can't he?"

"By disapproving of the girl Yicheng likes, you're also disapproving of me," Wan Hongxing said, her eyes downcast as she raised her hand to rub them.

Pei Guozhong immediately said, "No, I haven't disapproved of you."

"Guozhong, Yicheng has been without a mother from a young age, which is pitiful enough. For all these years, it's the first time he's fallen for a girl. Do you have the heart to break them apart?"

"And there's Yining. Yining is also very fond of her."

"The last time at the hospital, I met her, and I really took a liking to her too. A girl that Yicheng likes can't be that bad."

With a soft and gentle tone, Wan Hongxing said, "Guozhong, children have their own fortunes. In the future, that girl will live a lifetime with Yicheng. His happiness is what matters most. You and your son already have misunderstandings; do you really want to push him even further away by watching silently?"

"What misunderstandings? He sees me as an enemy!" Pei Guozhong became irritably annoyed even at the mention of it. What misunderstandings? In Pei Yicheng's eyes, he was less than a stranger, indeed an enemy.

"You are father and son, no matter what. If we approach him step by step, we can eventually clear up the misunderstandings one day," Wan Hongxing said, taking his hand. "If your father were still alive and he disapproved of our marriage, disapproved of me, would you be happy?"

Pei Guozhong pursed his lips, reflecting on Pei Yining's unusually intense reaction earlier, and fell silent.

Chapter 555: Got Hit

The streets during the Lantern Festival were livelier than usual, with all kinds of lanterns and riddles adding to the excitement.

After having dinner for the Lantern Festival together, everyone set out to stroll around in groups.

"Here, for you," Pei Yicheng handed a rabbit-shaped lantern to Xu Nianhua.

Xu Nianhua was getting ready to look at the riddles when she unexpectedly saw the rabbit-shaped lantern Pei Yicheng handed her. The cutely shaped lantern looked especially adorable, immediately bringing immense joy to Xu Nianhua. She asked with a hint of confusion, "But why did you choose a rabbit?"

Xu Nianhua's gaze rested upon the beautiful lanterns, full of curiosity.

"You like them," Pei Yicheng said, his eyes resting on her beautiful face. When she looked at him with those innocent and pure eyes, all he could think of were obedient and cute little white rabbits.

Hence, out of all the lanterns, Pei Yicheng picked out the rabbit instantly.

"Thank you."

Xu Nianhua held the lantern delightedly. She had never seen so many beautiful lanterns or such lively scenes before. She didn't know if South City's Lantern Festival had lanterns this pretty, but the most common feature there were the fireworks.

Seeing Xu Nianhua and Pei Yicheng having a blast, Xu Nian'an also found himself especially interested in the riddles.

Ban Chuan and Ban Lin, the siblings, stuck close to Xu Nian'an, joining in on the fun.

Suddenly, a CD vendor in the corner of the street caught Xu Nianhua's attention. He squatted there, peddling his goods, and Xu Nianhua felt he looked vaguely familiar.

"Second brother," Xu Nianhua called Xu Nian'an over, pointing out the CD vendor to him.

"Don't look at those; they're just a mess of CDs. Let's go solve some riddles," Xu Nian'an spoke, his face slightly red with embarrassment. He had seen those kinds of CDs in his dorm; they looked shiny and colorful on the outside, but their contents... were indeed colorful.

It was better to keep his little sister, so pure and innocent, unaware.

"Second brother, doesn't he look a bit familiar?" Xu Nianhua hadn't even glanced at the CDs; her focus was entirely on the man selling them.

With his sister's remark, Xu Nian'an turned his attention to the peddler's face. Before he could figure out who it might be, trouble struck.

A few shady-looking men surrounded the CD seller, scattering the discs all over the ground.

"Brother Niu, I'm just trying to make some money. Once I have it, I'll pay everything back," the man pleaded while looking at the CDs strewn on the ground, pain flashing across his face. He was counting on this batch of CDs to make some money. If they were damaged, what would he use to pay back the debt?

"I've been waiting for three days, where's the money you promised?" Brother Niu kicked him to the ground with his foot.

Shrill screams rose intermittently as Brother Niu dragged the man into a nearby alley.

With the bustling crowd around and the incident occurring in a corner, after the initial screams died away, there was no indication of what had just transpired, save for the CDs lying on the ground.

"Second brother," Xu Nianhua furrowed her brow and said, "I think he looks a bit like Uncle."

"Ji Shuqin," Xu Nian'an blurted out the name instantly. Although the man had changed quite a bit since they were young, with Xu Nianhua's reminder, he quickly realized this was indeed their uncle's son.

"They have more people, we should..."

Xu Nianhua was about to suggest calling the police when she noticed Pei Yicheng had already dashed over.

"Be careful," Xu Nianhua called out, watching his retreating figure, while Xu Nian'an followed suit. Ban Chuan cautioned, "Xiaolin, just stay with Xu Nianhua. Don't come over."

As soon as he finished speaking, Ban Chuan immediately followed suit. How could he miss out on a fight?

Chapter 556: Is Your Dad Named Ji Lin?

"What do we do?" Ban Lin looked anxiously at Xu Nianhua; she had never encountered such a situation before and felt scared.

"It's okay."

Xu Nianhua reassured her and was about to call the police, but the next moment, seeing a pile of CDs on the ground, she stopped in her tracks. She picked up a nearby bag and packed all the CDs into it. She hadn't paid much attention before, but now inspecting them closely, how could Xu Nianhua not know what Ji Shuqin was selling?

Xu Nianhua quickly packed all the discs and, along with Ban Lin, started walking towards the alley. Before they reached it, they saw the men who were previously arrogantly fighting running with swollen noses and bruised faces.

"Yicheng, you're really incredible!"

Xu Nian'an praised as just moments ago, he hadn't even had a chance to act; Pei Yicheng had swiftly brought down those menacing-looking men.

Ban Chuan, who had arrived a step too late, witnessed Pei Yicheng's moves under the dim alley light and the bright moonlight; it was like watching a blockbuster scene on TV, which stunned him.

So impressive.

Ban Chuan thought to himself.

"Are you okay?" Pei Yicheng asked, looking at the man timidly hiding in the corner.

If Pei Yicheng hadn't heard that it was Nianhua's cousin, he would have been too lazy to deal with these issues.

"I'm fine, I'm fine, thank you, you guys are really good people," Ji Shuqin said excitedly, thinking he was about to get beaten up again today, not expecting someone would come to his rescue.

"Oh no, my CDs."

Ji Shuqin said as he started walking out.

"Don't go." Xu Nian'an called out as he watched him walking away, "Ji Shuqin, are you Ji Shuqin? Is your dad Ji Lin?"

"Who are you?"

Ji Shuqin looked defensively at Xu Nian'an and Pei Yicheng, silently edging toward the corner, wondering if he had just left the wolf's den to enter a tiger's lair.

"Ji Lin is my uncle," Xu Nian'an said, seeing his defensive posture, knowing he had misunderstood, "My mother is Ji Ying."

"You're my aunt's son?" Ji Shuqin looked uncertainly at Xu Nian'an and asked, "Are you Xu Nian'an? Studying in Ningbei?"

Although he didn't go to South City during the new year, he later heard from his parents that his aunt's family was doing increasingly well, and both Xu Nianhua and Xu Nian'an had been admitted to Ningbei University.

"Yes," Xu Nian'an nodded affirmatively, saying, "How did they end up... beating you?"

"Well..." Ji Shuqin looked awkwardly at Xu Nian'an.

"Second Brother, are you guys okay?" Xu Nianhua and Ban Lin walked into the dim alley and she called out.

"Little sister, we're fine, don't come in," Xu Nian'an was about to quickly walk out when

Pei Yicheng already stepped ahead to meet Xu Nianhua, his deep voice sounding, "It's dark, watch your step."

"Are you all right?" Xu Nianhua surveyed Pei Yicheng and others, seeing them all unharmed standing there, she finally breathed a sigh of relief. In the dim alley, Pei Yicheng's figure appeared even taller, calming her anxious heart instantly.

"We're fine," Pei Yicheng stood beside Xu Nianhua, side by side, looking remarkably compatible, giving a feeling of a match made in heaven.

"Is that your sister? Xu Nianhua?" Ji Shuqin inquired.

The one Xu Nian'an called little sister could only be Xu Nianhua, who had been admitted to Ningbei University with him.

Chapter 557: Surface Light

"Right, my sister, Xu Nianhua." Xu Nian'an introduced as follows, "This is my classmate Ban Chuan, this is his sister Ban Lin, and he is... Nianhua's boyfriend, Pei Yicheng."

Xu Nian'an didn't want to introduce Pei Yicheng that way, but he was worried that if Pei Yicheng said again that he was Nianhua's boyfriend, it would be better to just say it outright.

Pei Yicheng looked at Xu Nian'an with an approving face.

After everyone got acquainted, Pei Yicheng specifically found a late-night snack bar, picked a small private room where everyone could eat and chat, and, most importantly, avoid standing in the pitch-dark alley freezing.

Ban Chuan and his sister took the initiative to say they still wanted to stroll outside, so they didn't stay in the private room.

Therefore, only Xu Nian'an and his sister, Pei Yicheng, and Ji Shuqin were left in the private room.

Xu Nian'an asked again the question he asked earlier, "Why were you beaten by them?"

"This is yours." Xu Nianhua handed over the bag containing the CD.

Ji Shuqin awkwardly hugged the bag in his arms and, looking at Xu Nianhua sitting next to him, felt too embarrassed to speak.

"Well, it's just, I owed some money, so, that's why they beat me." Ji Shuqin, a thirty-year-old man, felt embarrassed admitting this in front of his cousins, but after today's events, with Brother Niu having been driven off, he would surely be doomed next time.

"It was Brother Niu who beat me today; I owed him some money," Ji Shuqin said, still seething over it, "I clearly borrowed two hundred bucks, and just in a few days, he claimed I owed a thousand. It's basically robbery. I don't have that much money to pay him back, so..."

Ji Shuqin tugged at the bag in front of him, feeling hopeless. He heard that selling these CDs could be profitable, which is why he took the risk. Little did he expect that, just starting out, he would hardly make any money and almost got severely beaten by Brother Niu.

"You've been scammed," Xu Nian'an's mouth twitched, realizing Ji Shuqin had borrowed money at high interest. He asked, "Doesn't your uncle run a factory? Why do you still need to borrow money?"

Xu Nian'an couldn't help recalling the time his aunt came back to South City during the New Year, wearing a red fur coat that looked especially affluent. Why then did Ji Shuqin have to rely on borrowing money?

"Sigh."

Ji Shuqin helplessly chuckled and said, "The factory my parents ran went under."

"What?" Xu Nian'an's eyes widened in shock.

Xu Nianhua was also shocked. Last summer, their uncle had still sent five hundred bucks for their grandfather's surgery.

"It happened last winter." Ji Shuqin didn't want to talk about it, but he had no choice now, as he needed money.

The money from Brother Niu had to be paid back eventually.

Ji Shuqin slowly explained the situation. Nowadays, the Ji family's days were not as good as before. The factory had run at a loss, and after paying the workers' salaries, the factory had been repossessed, and they even lost their previous house.

Ji Lin and Cai Jianhong were now working at a paper mill.

The place they lived in was not the previous two-story house but a welfare apartment allocated by the factory, crammed together.

His younger brother, Cai Shuxue, was living in the dormitory at the factory.

As for himself, he was temporarily living in his father-in-law's house with his two daughters; fortunately, his in-laws had returned to the countryside, leaving the urban house for their family to live in. The two rooms were small, but at least there was a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom.

After hearing everything, Xu Nianhua couldn't help but remark, "Mud smeared on the wall, looks smooth on the surface yet falls apart easily!"

Chapter 558: What Did You Do with Those Two Hundred Dollars?

"Nian'an, I, I really have no other way, if I don't pay back the money, Brother Niu is going to kill me. I still have two daughters to support, please, can you help me?" Ji Shuqin pleaded earnestly to Xu Nian'an.

If it were before, Ji Shuqin would definitely not have asked, but since his parents came back from South City saying that his aunt's family was doing well, even affording to send two kids to school in Ningbei and considering the beautiful new clothes Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianhua were wearing, they certainly didn't look poor.

Moreover, Xu Nianhua's partner didn't seem like an ordinary person just by looking at his presence.

Xu Nian'an didn't rush to answer, he exchanged a glance with Xu Nianhua before asking, "What did you borrow those two hundred bucks for?"

"For business." Ji Shuqin sighed as he mentioned it, "I previously met a friend who brought several radios from Yangcheng, claiming they sell incredibly well there. He said each could be bought for fifty and sold for eighty-one, so think about it. I could buy four units with two hundred bucks, make thirty on each, and just like that, earn a hundred and twenty bucks!"

Ji Shuqin was truly tempted then, enticed by the easy money.

Who would have known that he would buy the radios, but couldn't sell them!

Forget selling them for eighty-one, he couldn't even sell them for fifty-one each; everyone thought they were too expensive.

When he thought to find that friend again, the guy had vanished without a trace, leaving him with those four hundred unsold radios.

"Didn't you check the market before buying those radios from someone?" Xu Nian'an, hearing about this, couldn't help but be astonished; just based on someone's word, you went to borrow two hundred bucks to buy radios?

Ji Shuqin chuckled sheepishly, scratching his short hair and confessed rather abashed, "Well, I thought it was a profitable venture, and I got excited, so I, I just..."

Thinking about the quick profit of one hundred and twenty bucks, Ji Shuqin believed that the business was viable. Thus, without inquiring further into the market situation and being pushed by his friend not to miss out on such a lucrative opportunity, Ji Shuqin was preoccupied with the money he thought he would earn and was swayed without much consideration.

"If there really was a profit of one hundred and twenty bucks and it could be earned in just a few days, is your friend a fool then, not keeping it to make the money himself?" Xu Nianhua, sizing up Ji Shuqin, who was fair and handsome and not particularly uneducated, couldn't believe that he had been foolish enough to think of selling radios.

But Ji Shuqin had recklessly invested in four radios without even knowing where to sell them; wasn't the stock now stuck on him?

From two hundred to a thousand, earning money is really that easy.

"My sister is straightforward, don't take it personally." Xu Nian'an discreetly gave his little sister a look, noticing that Ji Shuqin was nearly in tears.

Better not to twist the knife in his heart any further.

Xu Nian'an asked, "Where are those four radios now?"

At my place," Ji Shuqin said with a drooping face, "but I took them to sell, and nobody wanted them."

"Where did you try to sell them?" Xu Nian'an asked curiously.

Ji Shuqin replied, "The farmers' market, where there are lots of people, but still, no one wanted them."

Xu Nianhua: "..."

Xu Nian'an almost burst out laughing but held back as he saw Ji Shuqin wasn't looking too cheerful. He lowered his head to hide his smile, then contained his laughter before saying, "A radio for eighty bucks, that's more than two months' wages for some people. Do you really think someone at the farmers' market would buy it?"

Those frequenting the market to buy groceries were mostly elderly ladies and daughters-in-law, there to buy vegetables. If Ji Shuqin had been selling food or something, it could have been different, but radios? No wonder they thought he was a scammer.

Chapter 559: The Table's

"Nobody's buying them, not for eighty, not even for fifty," Ji Shuqin lamented at the thought of those four brand-new radios, his heart bleeding for them.

"Don't worry, give them to me, I'll try to sell them for you," Xu Nian'an offered as he looked at Ji Shuqin, his cousin. How could he refuse to help?

If Ji Ying knew about this and he didn't help, she'd probably twist his ear and lecture him for three days straight.

"What about that thousand yuan?" Although Xu Nian'an could help sell the radios, he needed to repay the thousand yuan he borrowed.

"Borrow two hundred, repay two hundred," Xu Nianhua reminded him, adding, "Charging interest like that is illegal."

"Brother Niu's guys are many, and they're not afraid to beat people up," Ji Shuqin spoke up weakly, recalling the time he had witnessed Brother Niu and his crew beating someone up – a scene he would never forget.

Xu Nianhua was speechless. "You knew you'd get beaten up, and you still borrowed money from him?"

"It was because I had no money. A hundred and twenty yuan is quite the sum. If I had earned that, I wouldn't have to work for several months," Ji Shuqin answered with conviction. If he had the money, would he need to borrow at all?

Wasn't it his friend who told him it was a good opportunity to make money quickly and get his investment back?

Who knew it would end up like this – if he paid on time, he could at least make a profit of a hundred yuan.

"Nian'an, do you think you could help me out?" Ji Shuqin was truly out of options. If this had been before the factory closed, he would never have needed to borrow the two hundred yuan. But since the factory had closed, his family had become increasingly poor and he could no longer afford to be idle.

Yet for all these years, he hadn't been able to stick with any job. When his family faced trouble, he finally resolved to endure hardship and joined his parents working at the paper mill. However, the wages were too low, and for a family of four, they were relying on that petty income. After the New Year, when his friend mentioned this opportunity, he took a few days off, only to find himself in this mess.

Ji Shuqin now didn't even dare to face his parents, knowing he'd be scolded to death.

"Tomorrow, I..." Xu Nian'an was about to say that he'd accompany him to see Brother Niu when he was cut mid-sentence.

Pei Yicheng chimed in, "I know quite a few people in Beining. Tomorrow, I'll have Ling Dong accompany you on a visit."

"I have things to take care of at Xiyue Hotel tomorrow." Pei Yicheng explained in Xu Nianhua's ear.

"That's great, you're from Beining," Xu Nian'an said immediately, then added, "Shuqin, bring the radios to me tomorrow, and I'll give you the money first."

"Nian'an, you're really like my own brother," Ji Shuqin was overjoyed, grabbing Xu Nian'an's hand, his gratitude pouring out.

Xu Nian'an reminded him, "Cousin."

"Ah?" Ji Shuqin was just considering that once the radios were dealt with tomorrow, he would finally be able to get a good night's sleep.

"Tomorrow morning, find me at the Beautiful Boutique in front of Ningbei Medical University," Xu Nian'an said, not bothering to correct him about the difference between a brother and a cousin.

"You got into Medical University? You must be really smart!" Ji Shuqin looked at Xu Nian'an with admiration. To get into Medical University, even locals from the province found it challenging, let alone people from other provinces.

Ji Shuqin turned to Xu Nianhua, "Which university did you get into, Nianhua? It's not Medical University as well, is it?"

"No, it's Beining University, the Foreign Language Department."

Stunned by Xu Nianhua's response, Ji Shuqin gave a thumbs up to the siblings and said, "You guys are impressive."

"Nianhua, you're just twenty and you're already dating?" After resolving the big issue, Ji Shuqin started to indulge in gossip. He looked at Pei Yicheng, who exuded a perfect outer appearance and demeanor. Among the people he knew, none had an aura quite like Pei Yicheng.

Chapter 560: Are You Sure?

Ji Shuqin glanced again at Xu Nianhua standing nearby. The Xu Nianhua she had seen as a child didn't seem this beautiful. Indeed, women change as they grow; it had been many years, and the young girl had turned into a striking beauty.

Xu Nian'an touched his nose and glared at Pei Yicheng, wishing that his little sister wouldn't start dating so soon either.

"I suppose it's fate." Having decided to give it a try, Xu Nianhua was naturally serious about it. She talked about this matter gracefully and straightforwardly, without a hint of affectation.

"However, you two look exceptionally well-matched, just like it's written in the books, a match made in heaven," Ji Shuqin thought, relying on Pei Yicheng for tomorrow's matters, so he kept giving one compliment after another.

But he wasn't lying; they indeed looked like a perfect match.

Night.

Xu Nianhua, Xu Nian'an, and Pei Yicheng returned to their house on Jilly Road, only to see lights on in the house. Xu Nianhua's eyes immediately lit up as she said, "Yining is home."

Xu Nianhua carried the tiger lantern she had bought for Pei Yining, a cute tiger lantern that Pei Yining would surely love.

"Yining."

Xu Nianhua's voice echoed in the hallway.

Pei Yining quickly hid the box of biscuits. She patted her cheeks and wiped her eyes to make sure she looked alright before calling out, "Nianhua, you're back? Where did my brother take you today? It seems he only thinks about taking you out now, forgetting his own sister."

Pei Yining's words, as usual, were teasing yet playful.

Under the lamp, Xu Nianhua truly didn't notice anything amiss with Pei Yining. Happily, she presented the tiger lantern, saying, "Ta-da! What do you think, do you like it?"

"Little tiger!"

Pei Yining, holding the little tiger lantern and not wanting to let go, finally smiled again after a night of sadness, joyfully saying, "I guess you haven't forgotten your friends after all."

Xu Nianhua: "..."

After chatting for a while, Xu Nianhua, yawning, went back to her room. Pei Yining, holding the biscuit box, went to find Pei Yicheng and paused upon seeing Xu Nian'an.

"The attic in my store is now occupied by my classmate's sister, who thought she was helping me out by watching the store. So, I can only trouble you for one more day," Xu Nian'an explained.

Understanding, Pei Yining then went to find Pei Yicheng.

"What's up? Bringing me biscuits?" Pei Yicheng, fresh out of the shower, saw Pei Yining holding an iron biscuit box.

"Here."

Pei Yining set the box down in front of Pei Yicheng, adding flatly, "These are the nutritional supplements Dad got for Nianhua, but since there's a lot, we forgot them at home."

"Then you should give them to Nianhua," Pei Yicheng glanced at the biscuit box, knowing that these foreign-bought biscuits were not cheap, but he figured one box wasn't a big deal to accept.

"Are you sure?"

Pei Yining raised an eyebrow. "Aren't you going to open it and see?"

Pei Yicheng paused while drying his hair, weighed the biscuit box in his hand, and sensed what might be inside. The next moment, he opened the box, which was filled entirely with crisp hundred-yuan bills.

"Heh."

Pei Yicheng scoffed and closed the lid, saying, "This is just like his style, thinking he can solve anything with money."

"Luckily Nianhua didn't see this or else my sister-in-law would have lost it." Pei Yining was genuinely upset today and said, "These are yours now. I'm tired."