

## Regaining 91

Chapter 91: Do You Believe Me?

The image of Zhou He from before, has blurred.

This was the first time Xu Nianhua truly saw Zhou He clearly.

Zhou He's petite and slender body, and especially her round face, looked very adorable. When she smiled, she gave off an approachable vibe, suggesting a gentle nature at first glance.

"Zhou He," Xu Nianhua greeted with a smile, liking Zhou He from the very first moment.

One reason was Zhou He's naturally amiable presence, and the other was the shy yet eager look in her eyes when she looked at Xu Nianji; it was clear she had fallen deeply in love with him.

"Nianhua."

When Zhou He smiled, her eyes curved like crescent moons. She walked over to Xu Nianhua, a bit shyly, and said, "Nianhua, I came in a rush this time and didn't bring you anything special, but I embroidered a handkerchief myself. Take a look, do you like it?"

Zhou He pulled a handkerchief out of her pocket. It was embroidered with osmanthus flowers, which were fragrant during Xu Nianhua's birth month. She figured Nianhua would like osmanthus.

"Thank you, Sister Zhou He."

Xu Nianhua examined the handkerchief carefully. It was a plain cotton handkerchief, but in the corner, it had osmanthus flowers embroidered with golden threads against the vivid green leaves, lifelike in their detail.

"Sister Zhou He, your hands are really skilled, even prettier than the handkerchiefs sold in shops," Xu Nianhua praised, though she knew she could never embroider something as beautiful as this.

"This is all I can do."

Zhou He was a bit embarrassed by Xu Nianhua's praise.

Although Xu Nianji was reluctant to leave, Xu Nian'an was busy outside selling mung bean jelly on his own, scooping the jelly and collecting money, and couldn't keep up. After escorting Zhou He inside, Xu Nianji hurried back out to continue selling the jelly.

"Nianhua, whose house is this?" Zhou He looked around the room in amazement as she saw Xu Nianhua tidying up.

"This is a house we're renting."

Xu Nianhua explained, "Sister Zhou He, do you know who your father—the Uncle Zhou—wants you to marry?"

Zhou He's expression dimmed at the mention of this matter, "Nianhua, it's a bit embarrassing, but my father wants me to marry a widower, surnamed Luo, around forty years old, whose wife just passed away."

Xu Nianhua: "..."

She had thought Aunt Xu Qinghu was unreliable.

Now, she felt Zhou He's father was even less reliable. It was somewhat understandable for Aunt Xu Qinghu not to care for her niece, but Zhou He's father was her own father, and surely it must be hard for Sister Zhou He in her heart.

"Sister Zhou He, I'd like you to be my sister-in-law," Xu Nianhua's gaze was sincere as she spoke, "Sister Zhou He, do you want to be my sister-in-law? Do you mind that our family is poor?"

"I don't mind," Zhou He denied it hastily, afraid that a late denial would lead Xu Nianhua to think she despised the Xu family for being poor.

Zhou He lowered her eyes and said, "I've lived a hard life since I was young. I'm not afraid of being poor. I, I also want to marry Big Brother Xu, but my father..."

"No matter what, even if it kills me, I will not marry that man surnamed Luo," Zhou He's hands clenched quietly.

"Sister Zhou He."

Xu Nianhua took her hand, feeling her anger, and hurriedly comforted her, "There must be a way when we come to the mountain, there's always a solution to every problem. Sister Zhou He, do you believe me?"

Xu Nianhua's clear eyes met Zhou He's, and she believed that Zhou He would indeed reject the Luo family, even at the cost of her life, as she stated later.

Chapter 92: Waiting to Marry the Eldest Sister-in-law

Do you trust me?

Zhou He thought about how Xu Nianhua was even two years younger than her.

"Zhou He, do you trust me?" Xu Nianhua reiterated.

Her gaze was firm and confident; her bright eyes seemed to say, "Trust me, I can help you."

"I do."

Zhou He nodded, "Nianhua, I know you're smart. Can you, help me?"

"Of course." Xu Nianhua grinned broadly, feeling Zhou He's trust, she was very happy inside. She seriously inquired about where that man with the surname Luo was from, saying, "Zhou He, be careful at home. Never be alone. It won't be long before my eldest brother will marry you and bring you home."

Zhou He was not stupid. Hearing Xu Nianhua's words, she found it incredible. She said, "My dad, he..." wouldn't do that, would he?

Before she could finish speaking, Zhou He tasted bitterness. If her father really cared about her happiness, how could the current situation have arisen?

"Nianhua, you're right to remind me. It's necessary to guard against others. Don't worry, I'll be careful," Zhou He said. She only wanted to wait quietly to be married and start a small family with Xu Nianji. Even if they were poor, even if life was hard, she wasn't afraid. No matter how poor or tough, it would be better than her current days.

"Little sister."

Xu Nianji only had a few words with Zhou He. When she left, he was busy and didn't get to greet her.

"Elder brother, are you thinking about Zhou He?"

"Do you want to have a private word with Zhou He?"

Xu Nianhua teased him, smiling.

Xu Nianji's face turned red in an instant, blushing to the tips of his ears, he stammered in explanation, "I, I just wanted to ask if she's doing well at home."

"Oh, so you don't miss Zhou He," Xu Nianhua drew out her words, teasing with a smile that was not quite a smile, "Then next time I'll tell Zhou He that you don't miss her at all."

"Don't."

Xu Nianji, his face still flushed, didn't know what to do as Xu Nianhua teased him.

"Hahaha~"

Xu Nianhua couldn't stop laughing, and even Xu Nian'an beside her couldn't help but feel amused. Was this really his elder brother?

When had his elder brother become so awkward?

It was clear that his little sister was just teasing him.

"Elder brother, once you marry your wife, you'll be able to see her every day and night; it's just a bit of time," Xu Nian'an said.

Xu Nianhua composed herself and said seriously, "Zhou He's father wants three hundred yuan and a bicycle. Given our current situation, we definitely can't afford that, but we can think of a way. If that man surnamed Luo is unwilling to marry Zhou He, Zhou He's father will certainly become anxious about proceeding with the marriage to my big brother."

"How could that man surnamed Luo possibly agree not to marry her?" Xu Nianji furrowed his brow; although he hadn't seen that man surnamed Luo yesterday, he could tell from Father Zhou's words that the man was determined to have her.

"Then we'll just have to find a way," Xu Nianhua replied without hesitation, "We can start by gathering intelligence about the enemy. As the saying goes, 'know thyself, know thy enemy,' and perhaps we'll be able to dig up something useful, right?"

"There's no time to lose; let's gather information right now." Xu Nianhua shared the information she got from Zhou He: forty years old, surname Luo, recently lost his wife. With this, the range of possibilities narrowed significantly.

The county town isn't too big nor too small. When it comes to finding someone, it's not impossible.

"Little sister, let me take care of investigating. We absolutely can't let Xu Nianhua get involved," Xu Nian'an volunteered. This was something Xu Nianhua should not be handling personally.

"That's right, Nian'an and I will handle the investigation. You, just stay at home and behave," Xu Nianji and Xu Nian'an reminded her repeatedly. Taking advantage of the early hour, the brothers left the house.

No sooner had they stepped out the door than Xu Nianhua followed suit.

Chapter 93: Translation is Hard to Find

Her elder and second brother had gone out to gather information, and as their sister, she also wanted to help by doing something.

Just dealing with bean sprouts and Mung Bean Jelly wasn't enough. If she could find another job to earn money, it would greatly solve the current financial difficulties.

Her best skill was foreign languages, but unfortunately, in this barely-subsistent era, not many people could afford to pay for lessons.

She wanted to visit the county town—who knows, she might discover a business opportunity?

The county town at that time wasn't as prosperous as in later years. In some places, Xu Nianhua still had to make several comparisons to determine where she was.

What else could she do?

Walking on the lively yet somewhat unfamiliar street, a trace of bewilderment flashed in Xu Nianhua's eyes.

"Oh dear."

Suddenly, Xu Nianhua bumped into someone, and at the same time, she scattered their belongings all over the ground.

"I'm sorry."

Xu Nianhua's first reaction was to apologize, and she immediately squatted down to help pick up the items—a pile of foreign language documents appeared before her, and she knew from the familiar languages that they must be something like contracts.

"It's alright, young lady. You need to be more careful when walking, take care not to bump into anyone."

A stranger's voice rang out, and suddenly, he exclaimed with surprise as he looked at Xu Nianhua, "Aren't you the girl who sells Mung Bean Jelly?"

"Your brother's name is Xu Nian'an, right?"

Ling Dong was somewhat astonished when he saw Xu Nianhua.

"You are..."

Xu Nianhua studied Ling Dong carefully. The man's face seemed somewhat unfamiliar yet familiar; she must have seen him before.

"Hospital, Yicheng, Pei Yicheng."

Ling Dong reminded her, showing no displeasure at Xu Nianhua's failure to recognize him. His appearance was very average, the kind people easily forget after one meeting.

At his reminder, Xu Nianhua immediately stood up and said, "Oh, I remember now, that day you were pushing Pei Yicheng."

Ling Dong gave a 'hehe' laugh and asked concernedly, "I saw you looking distracted just now, did something happen?"

"It's nothing, I just, forgot the way." Xu Nianhua said somewhat embarrassed. Although the county was old, the road she was now on was one she wasn't familiar with.

Now that she had met someone she knew, it was naturally time for Xu Nianhua to ask for directions.

Ling Dong's expression froze for a moment, and then he said, "The county has recently repaired several roads, where are you heading now? I can take you there."

"Would that be a trouble for you?" Xu Nianhua glanced at the documents in his hand.

Ling Dong shook his head indicating it was not a bother; he escorted Xu Nianhua all the way back, secretly thinking that Yicheng cared a lot about her.

Considering the documents in his hand, Xu Nianhua asked, "Do you still do business with foreigners?"

"Yes, Yicheng sells medicinal materials, and the business is extensive, but this is the first time doing business with foreigners," said Ling Dong. Whenever he mentioned that Angel, he thought about how hard it was to find a translator and sighed, "I just came from the First Middle School, and none of the teachers there can translate, ah, if only we were in Ningbei, surely someone would be able to translate."

Xu Nianhua's eyes immediately lit up—seeking everywhere for what was nowhere in sight but obtained without any effort!

Xu Nianhua was beautiful, and those bright and communicative eyes seemed as if they could speak, but at this moment, being stared at with such gleaming eyes made Ling Dong feel a little creeped out.

Chapter 94: I believe you

"Xu Miss, why are you looking at me like that?"

Ling Dong imperceptibly took a step back.

"Ahem."

Nianhua suddenly realized that she might have been overly excited, cleared her throat, and asked, "Well, if you're looking for a translator, how much does the job pay?"

"One hundred."

As soon as Ling Dong finished answering, he realized something was amiss. He looked at Xu Nianhua, pondering if her preparedness for college entailed proficiency sufficient for the professional jargon laden throughout his contracts. Even the teachers at her school who had attempted translations seemed doubtful in accuracy.

Xu Nianhua.

So young, could she handle translations?

It wasn't that Ling Dong underestimated Nianhua, but scoring well in a foreign language did not necessarily equate to the ability to translate specialized documents.

"May I give it a try?"

Nianhua was keenly aware of Ling Dong's concerns and self-recommended, "I realize that translating contracts is different from general translation. It requires precision in word choice and meticulousness. The slightest deviation in translation could lead to irreversible damages. Outside of my studies, I've also explored this field. How about I give it a go?"

"And if it doesn't work out, I won't charge."

Nianhua didn't want to miss this opportunity. Historically, she was innately talented in translation, focusing specifically on written translation. She had experience with contract translation and had a well-

researched understanding of legal matters. Thus, she felt fully capable of undertaking this translation job.

Completing the translation for a hundred yuan seemed like a worthwhile endeavor to Nianhua.

Ling Dong considered it briefly and suggested, "Why don't you discuss it with Brother Cheng?"

The boss wasn't him after all; he wasn't in a position to decide.

"Sure."

Nianhua readily nodded her head. Since Ling Dong was employed by Pei Yicheng, this matter naturally required Yicheng's approval.

Du Family.

Nianhua spoke confidently about her desire to translate the contracts, articulating her thoughts as if she weren't a student but a professional translator, her eyes sparkling with confidence.

Pei Yicheng didn't ponder excessively. He said, "That's fine. As long as you do a good job translating the contract, the salary originally meant for the translator will be yours."

"Thank you," Nianhua said, somewhat surprised by Yicheng's prompt agreement. After receiving the contract, she looked at Pei Yicheng with a complex expression and asked, "Aren't you afraid I might leak the contract or mistranslate something? Couldn't that delay your work?"

"I trust you."

The brevity of Pei Yicheng's response made the contract in Nianhua's hands feel significantly heavier.

She must translate the contract to perfection!

After receiving the contract, Nianhua agreed to return it to Yicheng two days later. However, Yicheng told her not to rush, three days would suffice.

Upon hearing this, Nianhua was even more convinced that Yicheng was genuinely kind.

"Brother Cheng."

Ling Dong looked at Pei Yicheng, hesitated, wanting to remind him that Nianhua was just a student!

"Translators coming from Ningbei need at least two days to arrive. By then, if their translation is not finished in time, they can still manage to proofread. Giving Nianhua the contract is a necessity due to lack of better options, and I trust her." Pei Yicheng's firm statement revealed his rationale: there was no better alternative, and he believed in her.

Although she was still a student, Xu Nianhua's confident articulation made him willing to offer her this chance.

Perhaps Nianhua might create a miracle?

Chapter 95: Luo Bao

Xu Nianhua held the contract and headed home, a path she had walked countless times and knew well. Clutching the contract tightly, she felt excited at the thought of earning one hundred yuan if the translation succeeded.

After the excitement, Xu Nianhua felt somewhat ashamed of herself.

In her past life, she had seen grand occasions and translated contracts that were priced per thousand words, and people had invited her politely. Who, like her, would proactively beg out of fear of not being trusted?

However, she was just a high school senior now, and the fact that Pei Yicheng agreed to let her translate the contract had already surprised her. She was determined to do a good job.

She quickly returned home. Her eldest and second brothers had not yet come back. She grabbed a chair and started to read the contract first.

She needed to translate the contract both accurately and rigorously. It wasn't like an exam paper where she only had to convey the meaning; she had to fully understand the content to translate it effectively.

Xu Nianhua read attentively, and time slipped away without her noticing.

"Great news, huge news!"

Xu Nianji walked into the house excitedly, eager to share the news with Xu Nianhua. As he entered the yard, he said, "That man surnamed Luo, Luo Yougen, his wife died last year, and then his son Luo Bao had a fight with him and went back to his grandmother's house."

"Luo Bao has no idea that Luo Yougen wants to marry Xiaohe, or that he wants to spend so much money," Xu Nianji said, unable to contain his excitement at the information he had gathered.

"That's good news."

Xu Nianhua immediately grasped the crux of the matter and asked, "Why did Luo Yougen and his son argue?"

"Not too sure, I think it was about Luo Bao's mother?" Xu Nianji and Xu Nian'an had easily found Luo Yougen when they went to inquire.

Forty years old, having just lost his wife, and with Zhou He providing a rough direction, the brothers easily gathered the information.

"We just need to inform Luo Bao, and Luo Yougen won't think of targeting Xiaohe."

Xu Nianji was delighted. When they went to inquire, no one knew Luo Yougen actually planned to spend so much money to marry again, considering Luo Bao hadn't even married yet.

Xu Nian'an took the opportunity to spread the news without implicating the Zhou Family, simply stating that Luo Yougen wanted to remarry and was willing to spend a lot of money.

He believed that once Luo Bao learned about this, there would definitely be trouble between him and Luo Yougen.

"It won't implicate Zhou He, right?" Xu Nianhua was worried about this point.

Xu Nian'an chuckled, "Little sister, you don't need to worry. Before anything is settled, Luo Yougen wouldn't dare make a fuss. He'd rather marry the woman quietly, turn the raw rice into cooked rice, and then reveal it. Besides, that Luo Bao isn't easy to deal with."

Xu Nian'an described vividly, "If Luo Bao finds out Luo Yougen has money for his own marriage but won't pay for his, he will definitely cause trouble."

Xu Nianhua thought it over. With the mess that was the Luo Family, it was impossible for Luo Yougen to take out money again. It was strange enough that the father and son were like enemies; as long as it didn't implicate Zhou He, it was fine.

"Little sister, what are you holding?" Xu Nianji was still excited when he noticed what Xu Nianhua was holding, a mix of surprise and curiosity on his face.

Chapter 96: Put Your Heart at Ease

"This..."

Xu Nianhua hadn't figured out how to bring up the translation contract yet when Xu Nian'an frowned and said, "Is this a contract?"

Xu Nian'an was also a senior high school student. His academic performance was quite good, and although English education wasn't great at the time, Xu Nian'an was highly capable of comprehension and self-study. He could barely make out that these foreign language documents were contracts, but beyond that, he was clueless.

"Yes."

Xu Nianhua explained, "This is a contract. I'm trying to translate it for someone. If I do it well, I can earn a hundred yuan."

"A hundred yuan?"

Xu Nianji couldn't help but widen her eyes, realizing that indeed knowledge was power.

"Little sister, if you translate the contract wrong, you could end up losing money, and besides, it's different from the knowledge in our textbooks." Xu Nian'an was afraid that Xu Nianhua, in her eagerness to earn money, had taken on the task of translating the contract, so he explained, "Contracts are different from other things. If it's something else, a slight deviation in the translation doesn't matter much, but contracts are different."

"Big brother, don't worry, I'm sure I can translate it well. Why don't we translate it together?" Xu Nianhua suggested, a gleam in her eye, "Besides, I'm just trying it out. Surely they'll have professionals check it later. If we don't do well, then we won't get paid."

Xu Nianhua's words did reassure Xu Nian'an, who then asked, "Are you translating this for Pei Yicheng?"

The contract had Pei Yicheng's name on it.

"Right." Xu Nianhua recounted her encounter with Ling Dong today, adding, "Remember when we went to the hospital last time and bumped into Pei Yicheng and Ling Dong? The very ordinary-looking man."

"I remember. Let's translate it together when we get home."

Xu Nian'an thought they might as well try translating it; if they did well, they could make money too!

By the time they arrived in Dazhu Village, it was already dark. Ji Ying had prepared dinner and was waiting for their return.

"What happened? Why were you delayed so long today?" Ji Ying was relieved to see her three children return safe and sound, but she also inquired whether they had been held up by something.

"Mom, let's eat first. We'll talk over dinner."

Xu Nianji walked into the house happily. During the meal, as they discussed their inquiries about the Luo Family, the smile never left his lips.

Without the Luo Family in the picture, the Zhou Family wouldn't marry Zhou He off to anyone else.

"That's good." Hearing this, Ji Ying was quite relieved and discussed with Xu Qinghe whether they should speed up the process of bringing Zhou He into their family, afraid of unforeseen complications.

"Mom and Dad, the Zhou Family will surely come over in a few days."

Xu Nianhua said with a comforting smile, "Now that things with the Luo Family didn't work out, the Zhou Family will definitely want to marry off their daughter."

Zhou's father was such that, knowing the Luo Family had reneged, he would probably want to marry off his daughter immediately.

"Really?" Ji Ying found it hard to believe.

When the Zhou Family came over a few days ago, they were so arrogant, giving off the impression that their daughter wouldn't marry into the Xu Family.

"Just put your heart back in your belly."

Xu Nianhua smiled and refrained from further explanation. When it came to reassurance, facts were more effective than words.

After dinner, Xu Nianhua washed the dishes and then lit the kerosene lamp in the house. The siblings sat under the lamp, translating the contract.

When Xu Nianhua first took the contract, her main thought was to make money, but now, she felt that not only could they earn money, but it also allowed her big brother to work on translating the contract. Even though many of the professional terms were unfamiliar, looking them up in the English dictionary was a learning process and a form of advancement.

Two birds with one stone!

Chapter 97: How about, You Call Me Sister

"Can this word be translated like this?"

Xu Nian'an followed along and felt that the gap between him and his little sister was not just slight, there were many professional words he had never seen, yet Xu Nian'an could translate them.

Before, he only thought his little sister was smart and had especially good academic performance, but now, Xu Nian'an felt that he had underestimated his little sister before.

Xu Nianhua touched her nose, faced Xu Nian'an's scrutinizing gaze, cleared her throat, and said, "Big brother, maybe it's because I used to not like going anywhere else, just liked looking at dictionaries, so I know more words."

"So that's how it is." Xu Nian'an didn't doubt it, nor did he think of anything else, he said, "No wonder you used to always like to go to the library, I used to say, there aren't many books in the library and yet you were always holding a dictionary."

"It's quiet there."

Xu Nianhua quietly sighed with relief, she was thankful that she indeed used to like going to the library to read books, liking dictionaries, otherwise she wouldn't know how to explain now.

"What was your favorite book to read in the library?" Xu Nian'an felt that Xu Nianhua was doing very well, not only versed in book knowledge, but also in other knowledge.

Xu Nianhua blinked and said, "Foreign classics, reading more classics can also improve our sense of language and expand our vocabulary."

"Then, can you understand them?" Xu Nian'an furrowed his brow, he could barely make sense of what the teacher taught, let alone read foreign classics.

"Big brother, learning a foreign language is not only about reading but also about listening and reading more; that way, our foreign language grades can improve," Xu Nianhua completely shifted the topic, and by the time she circled back to the contract, Xu Nian'an had completely stopped continuing that discussion about why she knew more languages than him.

The siblings were translating together, Xu Nianhua consciously wanted to train Xu Nian'an, therefore many times, even though she already knew in her heart how to translate, she still asked Xu Nian'an.

"Nian'an, it's very late, time to sleep."

Xu Nianji was yawning, now there was no electricity, they usually used kerosene lamps at night, and if there was nothing else, they just sat in the dark in the yard. At night there weren't many activities, the family would sit together and chat, and when they felt sleepy, they went back to their rooms to sleep early.

"Right away."

Xu Nian'an replied loudly, rubbing his aching neck, and looking at the small section they had translated, he couldn't help saying, "Little sister, why do I feel like you're the older one and I'm the younger one?"

There were many things he didn't understand, but Xu Nianhua seemed calm and even had a teacher-like demeanor.

"How about you call me 'older sister' once?" Xu Nianhua joked, in her past life, she had been a training teacher for many years and was a pioneer in translation.

This contract, if she translated it seriously, she could finish it in one day and spend another day proofreading to ensure there were no mistakes.

But now that big brother was with her, Xu Nianhua naturally wanted to give him a hand.

"Wishful thinking!"

Xu Nian'an raised his hand and knocked on her forehead, glaring at her, he said, "I'm your big brother, you just be the little sister obediently. Once big brother makes money, I'll buy you candy."

Xu Nian'an spoke as if he was pacifying a three-year-old child, Xu Nianhua covered her forehead, the corners of her mouth involuntarily twitching.

She had long passed the age of eating candy, had she not?

"Let's pick this up tomorrow, don't look at it anymore today, it's bad for your eyes."

Xu Nian'an carefully put away the contract, fearing that Xu Nianhua would be unwilling to sleep, only thinking about translating the contract, and worried that she would get up too early tomorrow.

Chapter 98: Selling Bean Sprouts

"No, I won't look at it today, I'll do it tomorrow. Just leave it on the desk," Ji Ying still intended to get up early the next day to translate, but Xu Nian'an took it away. Where was she supposed to translate now?

"I'll give it to you tomorrow."

Xu Nian'an, with the contract in hand, left without giving Ji Ying a chance to refuse. As he reached the doorway, he turned back, flashed a bright smile exposing his white teeth, and said, "Little sis, go to sleep early."

On the words "little sis," Xu Nian'an emphasized the pronunciation, still remembering how Ji Ying had just tried to act like an older sister.

"Petty."

Ji Ying muttered with disdain, "You go to sleep yourself."

Although her words were disdainful, the smile on her lips was very pleasing to the eye.

The room quieted down once again. She could hear her parents chatting as they went back to their room to rest, and the voices of Xu Nian'an and Xu Nianji, the brothers, talking. She extinguished the oil lamp, lay in bed, and with the corners of her mouth uncontrollably lifted high, she thought about the bright future ahead.

Even though times were tough at home at the moment, she believed that as long as the family lived in peace, they would surely have better days ahead.

The next day, Ji Ying had wanted to rise early and start translating the contract, but she had gone to bed a little late and it was particularly cold in the morning, making it very cozy to sleep. Thus, she overslept.

When she awoke, daylight had already filled the skies, and Nianji had cooked the morning porridge.

Her second brother, Xu Nian'an, was sitting in the courtyard already translating the contract.

"Big bro, you woke up so early?"

Ji Ying rubbed her eyes and saw that Xu Nian'an had already translated quite a bit.

"I got up as soon as I woke up. Why didn't you sleep more?" Xu Nian'an glanced at her messy hair and said, "Mom made some porridge, go have some. There are a few parts here I don't know how to translate properly."

When it came to the law, Xu Nian'an only knew the basics. To rely on this scant knowledge to translate a legal contract seemed inadequate.

"Yeah, okay, we'll talk about it later."

Ji Ying yawned, scooped up some clear water to wash her face, and finally felt more awake.

After breakfast, the siblings began to work earnestly on translating the contract.

Once Nianji had made the porridge, she started making mung bean jelly since her siblings were busy, and she had nothing else to do.

Xu Qinghe went to work, and Xu Nianji left to chop wood up in the mountains. The family, each with their tasks, was all striving for a better future.

By eight in the morning, the siblings had translated much of the contract, and Ji Ying got up to check on her bean sprouts.

"Wow, our bean sprouts have succeeded, and they look really good."

Ji Ying looked at the bean sprouts she grew, then compared them to the ones her big and second brothers had grown; all had sprouted.

"Did they really succeed?"

As Xu Nianji carried wood into the house, he heard Ji Ying's voice, set down the wood in excitement, and rushed over. Seeing the white bean sprouts, he asked in disbelief, "Did I really grow these bean sprouts?"

"More real than solid gold."

Ji Ying said with a cheery smile. The three siblings loaded up the mung bean jelly and bean sprouts, borrowing a flatbed cart for the task; otherwise, they couldn't have taken the bean sprout buckets with them.

When they ran into villagers, they simply said their father had made a bathtub for someone and was now delivering it to the county.

The villagers didn't think much of it.

No sooner had the three siblings stepped out of the house than the Zhou Family arrived at their doorstep.

Chapter 99: The Marriage is Set

He did a complete 180 from his last visit.

Mr. Zhou nodded and bowed, calling Ji Ying 'in-law mother' repeatedly when he saw her.

Even though Xu Nianhua had mentioned in advance that Mr. Zhou would certainly come back to propose anew, actually seeing Mr. Zhou's ingratiating manner, so different from his adamant refusal to marry his daughter into the Xu family that day, was like night and day.

"In-law mother, are the in-laws not at home?" Mr. Zhou asked with a beaming smile.

Ji Ying responded coolly, "I can't really accept you calling me 'in-law mother.' Last time, you were the one who said you wouldn't marry your girl into our Xu family."

The embarrassment on Mr. Zhou's face vanished in a flash, and then he said, "There must have been a mistake. Our two families had already agreed on the marriage, how could I not marry my daughter to your Xu family?"

"But, 300 yuan and a bicycle, even if we spent our last penny, we couldn't afford that," Ji Ying lamented, "You've seen it yourself. After the division of the family property, all we got was this old house. It's fine to live in, but if we wanted to sell it, I'm afraid it wouldn't fetch much."

Mr. Zhou thought about the Luo family reneging and not mentioning the prior arrangement. Moreover, old Luo was now preoccupied with his own issues; his son had a childhood sweetheart whom he wanted to marry, and all of old Luo's money had been taken by his son.

Forget about the previously promised 300 yuan and a bicycle; they weren't giving a single penny now.

"In-law mother, it doesn't matter if there's no bicycle, but this 300 yuan..."

Mr. Zhou's gentle words immediately reminded Ji Ying of her daughter's advice; it was Mr. Zhou who was in a hurry now.

Besides, rather than giving an extra hundred yuan to Mr. Zhou, it would be better to save that hundred for the future to help Zhou He's sister, which would essentially be the same as giving it to her eldest brother's family.

With this thought in mind, Ji Ying maintained the same worried expression as before, "It's embarrassing to say, but we had to borrow even that 200 yuan. If we have to provide more, we'd have to sell everything we have, and we still wouldn't manage."

Mr. Zhou's face took on a slightly ugly look, yet the marriage between the Zhou and Xu families had long been decided. 200 yuan, though not a vast sum, was considered a medium amount in the surrounding ten miles or so.

Some poorer families could only offer 100 yuan or even 50 yuan.

After Mr. Zhou had poured out a litany of nice words, Ji Ying declared, "It's true we like Xiaohe, but we can't starve our whole family just to bring her into our home, can we?"

The implication was, that was all the money they could offer.

Mr. Zhou hesitated. Zhou He's appearance wasn't bad; otherwise, the Xu family wouldn't have agreed to provide 200 yuan from the start, even though it had taken a year, but at least they were willing to give it.

But...

Mr. Zhou still wanted to ask for more money.

"If you're willing, we can give you this 200 yuan immediately and get Xiaohe married over," Ji Ying knew what Mr. Zhou was thinking, and she said, "The third day of the eighth month is a good date."

Now it was the 20th of July, so the third day of the eighth month wasn't far off.

Mr. Zhou pondered, if things really fell through with the Xu family, would anyone be willing to offer a higher bride price for a woman who had a called-off engagement?

...

After sending off Mr. Zhou, Ji Ying was all smiles; the marriage was finally fixed, and she had fulfilled her duty to her son.

Ji Ying promised to pick a good day within the next few days to send over the bride price.

In the county town.

This was Xu Nianji's first time selling bean sprouts. Even though he had previously accompanied Xu Nian'an selling Mung Bean Jelly and was able to shout out loud, Xu Nianji had rehearsed countless times in his heart.

Chapter 100: Once Alive

But, as easy as it looks, doing it—really, it's too hard!

Xu Nianji watched the passing crowd, lips moving, but couldn't muster the courage to shout out for half a day.

"Big brother, just shout once, and you'll be bold enough to speak up," Xu Nianhua said encouragingly.

Xu Nianji's face turned red with embarrassment and still, he couldn't find the courage to shout.

Xu Nianhua cleared her throat and said with a smile, "Big brother, watch me."

"Bean sprouts for sale, thirty cents a pound, fresh bean sprouts, don't miss out as you pass by."

Xu Nianhua's voice was clear and, coupled with her sweet smile, attracted the attention of many. Their bean sprouts were clean and well-presented, priced the same as the market.

"Brothers and sisters, buy a pound of bean sprouts to take home. They're delicious and affordable—a whole plateful for a pound."

"Our bean sprouts are homegrown, and they're delicious when stir-fried."

Xu Nianhua recommended them diligently.

"I'll take a pound," a woman said, impressed with the quality of the sprouts.

"Right, auntie, I'll weigh a pound for you."

Xu Nianhua handled the scale deftly, weighing out the full amount for the woman, even adding a small handful more, which delighted her immensely.

In the past, when buying bean sprouts inside, the vendor would barely give a full pound, but Xu Nianhua was generous enough to add a bit extra.

Though this small handful might have been just enough to press the scale down further, a sense of getting a bargain sprang up spontaneously.

"Young girl, next time, I'll come back to buy bean sprouts from you," the woman said cheerfully as she left with her purchase.

With such a positive start, more people came to buy their bean sprouts.

Xu Nianhua specifically took on the task of calling out, while Xu Nian'an weighed the sprouts, and Xu Nianji managed the money.

They had brought a large bucket of bean sprouts, several dozen pounds, and Xu Nianhua had talked until her mouth was dry.

Xu Nianji said, "Little sister, go get some water and rest. I'll take over."

At first Xu Nianji was shy, but seeing his little sister's dry mouth and rapid speech, he felt it was time for him to speak up.

"Auntie, how many bean sprouts would you like?" Xu Nianji's voice was quiet, and the auntie, seeing his bashful demeanor, said, "That young girl is your sister, right? She's really pretty and sweet-talking."

"Yes, my little sister has always been sweet-talking," Xu Nianji said with pride in his sister.

Once they had a beginning, the rest came easily.

Xu Nianhua, watching their busy figures, didn't delay and brought water back for them to drink.

As noon approached, the sun blazed hotter, as if trying to bake everyone alive. Xu Nianhua glanced at the dwindling supply of bean sprouts and suggested, "Why don't we take the rest home?"

"This much, how can we finish it?" Xu Nianji looked at the remaining five or six pounds in the bucket.

"We can give it away if we can't finish it."

Xu Nianhua said, "We've borrowed money from the Cai Family, the Yao Family, and Uncle Xu. Let's give them a pound of bean sprouts each. It's not much, but it's enough to add a dish."

"That works."

Xu Nianji and the others, faced with the searing heat outside, moved their belongings back into the courtyard.

Xu Nianhua went to the kitchen to cook lunch—a stir-fried bean sprouts dish with their brought chili sauce, enough for an afternoon meal.

After lunch, the three siblings started counting the money they earned from selling bean sprouts. Most of it was in dimes and twenty-cent pieces, with some half-dollar coins too. They were taken aback once they tallied it up.

Eleven dollars and forty cents.

Minus the less than two-dollar cost, that meant today, just from bean sprouts, they had earned nine dollars.