

RTAMM 311

Chapter 311: Secret Agreement

“Dad!”

“Old Qiao.”

Just as Wang Yang finished his words, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin’s voices could be heard from behind the main door.

As Wang Yang opened the door, Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan saw the happy and excited look on the faces of Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin. “Why are the two of you here?” Didn’t Nan Nan say that the Zhu family only invited Nan Nan and him?

“Uncle Qiao, what are you saying? It’s all thanks to Qiao Nan that Brother Baoguo changed so much. The relationship between the Zhu family and the Qiao family is so good. When we invite you for dinner, of course we’ll invite the whole family. We know that Auntie Ding stays in the quad, so I directly invited Auntie Ding and Sister Qiao Zijin to save you the trouble. Qiao Nan helped us so much. No matter what, I should ‘thank’ Qiao Nan on behalf of the Zhu family. Qiao Nan, don’t you think so? I heard that you all have not gotten together as a family for a long time. I’m so good to you, but don’t be too touched. This is my ‘repayment’ to you. I’ve always been reciprocal in my life. How is it? Are you happy?”

The smile on Wang Yang’s face looked pure, but his words made Qiao Nan lose all her appetite.

Qiao Dongliang only sensed that Wang Yang’s words were odd, but Qiao Nan had fully understood the meaning behind his words.

Wang Yang was most reluctant to see Zhu Baoguo changed for the better. Nevertheless, under Qiao Nan’s influence, Zhu Baoguo turned better day by day. From the annoying little bully in the quad, Zhu Baoguo had become one of the typical ‘other people’s child’. The Zhu family could now proudly flash his academic report during Lunar New Year and festive occasions.

Hence, Wang Yang said he was ‘repaying’ Qiao Nan.

When Wang Yang said that he valued reciprocity, he was telling Qiao Nan not to interfere in Zhu Baoguo's matters. If she agreed to do so, he would then not poke his nose into the matters of the Qiao family.

Wang Yang would not bother to spend his effort on small flies like Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin in the past.

However, if Qiao Nan continued to be at odds with him and change Zhu Baoguo for the better, given Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi's characters, he could easily make use of them to stand in Qiao Nan's way.

In other words, Wang Yang was making a deal with Qiao Nan in front of many others.

"You've put in great effort and care." Qiao Nan smiled. This smile was purer than that of Wang Yang, but the gaze beneath was colder.

"Don't mention it." Wang Yang leaned against the door and looked at Qiao Nan interestingly. "No wonder Elder Uncle and Grandpa always praised you for your intelligence and asked me to learn from you more. You're truly quite sharp, really different from other girls."

The girls that he knew only had a head on top of their bodies, but no brains.

Qiao Nan was certainly smart. However, he had always hated girls who were too smart!

"I've just chatted for a very, very long time with Sister Qiao Zijin. I discovered that Sister Qiao Zijin and I can get along extremely well. We've so much to talk about. Sister Qiao Zijin is really very interesting. She always strives for excellence. I quite like her."

"Wang Yang, I also wish to have a younger brother like you. Anyway, we're all staying in the quad. You can look for me to have fun when you have time." When she heard her name, Qiao Zijin moved forward and made her presence known.

Qiao Zijin had many failed attempts on Zhu Baoguo. This simply made her doubt her own drive and vigor.

She did not manage to gain any benefit from Zhu Baoguo. Don't even mention having a romantic relationship with him, Zhu Baoguo did not even spare any time to talk nicely to her.

If the male students at school had not continued to treat her well, Qiao Zijin would have held a mirror every day, doubting herself and suspecting if she had really become ugly.

It was only until today that Qiao Zijin regained her confidence through Wang Yang.

The status of the Wang family was not as high as the Zhu family, but these two families were relatives.

Although they stayed in the quad, Wang Yang was the real resident of the quad while Qiao Nan and she were not. They only occupied a small corner of the quad out of the goodwill of the Lee family. However, their status did not rise because of this address.

Qiao Zijin had been trying to make use of the fact that she stayed in the quad to get herself associated with someone truly of status, but she had unfortunately failed repeatedly. Wang Yang's appearance finally allowed Qiao Zijin to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

Qiao Zijin was like an understanding big sister who had known Wang Yang for a long time, as if they were childhood friends. She stood intimately beside Wang Yang. Even both their arms were side by side.

At the sight of such dangerously close distance, Qiao Nan knitted her brows immediately. Was Qiao Zijin acting dumb? Wasn't she afraid of being taken advantage and letting others misunderstand when she leaned so close to Wang Yang?

In her impression, Qiao Zijin was not even that intimate with her father.

"Of course I'm happy to have another elder sister to look after me. Qiao Nan, don't you think so?" Wang Yang did not reject Qiao Zijin's initiative to be close. He even cooperated by standing together with her as if the pair had a relationship as deep and close as childhood friends. However, he was staring at Qiao Nan with a deep and sinister look in his eyes, shimmering with ghostly green light akin to that of a venomous snake.

Qiao Nan turned her face and shut her eyes. She then took a deep breath.

Wang Yang was so scheming that she suspected whether he had the same experience as her—that both of them were fortunate enough to be given a second life.

After all, compared to Wang Yang, the ways she used to deal with Qiao Zijin and her mother was as childish as child's play in the kindergarten. It was not even one-tenth of Wang Yang's maliciousness.

Qiao Zijin was full of dishonest thoughts. She was willing to do anything for the sake of having a good life.

In the previous life, Qiao Zijin double-crossed Qiao Nan and snatched her future brother-in-law, Chen Jun, from the latter. In this life, the people she met were more prosperous than those in the previous life, but unfortunately, she was not their cup of tea.

Without thinking, Qiao Nan was certain that Qiao Zijin yearned more for success in this life than the previous one. She wished to live the life of the upper social class.

Seeing Qiao Zijin together with Wang Yang, the sight reflected the truth of the saying that birds of the same feather flock together.

Qiao Zijin was scheming, but Wang Yang was worse.

If the two of them turned against each other, Qiao Nan would write her name the other way round if Qiao Zijin could make Wang Yang suffer.

Clearly, Wang Yang staged such a full-scale drama today to threaten her not to continue to mix around with Zhu Baoguo. Otherwise, he would definitely make use of Qiao Zijin to deal with her and not let her lead a day of good life!

Probably, when that day truly came, not only Qiao Zijin but also her mother would become pawns held tightly in Wang Yang's hands to deal with her.

Qiao Nan did not need to soften her heart or approach when dealing with Wang Yang. However, when facing Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi, she might not soften her heart or stance, but her hands would be 'weaker' undoubtedly.

Wang Yang accurately got a hold of her weakness and used it against her.

At the sight of the changes in Qiao Nan's expression, Wang Yang smiled.

A smart woman was certainly annoying. Nevertheless, it was good that Qiao Nan's intelligence had some use and merits, just as what happened at this moment.

Chapter 312: As Long As You Are Happy

When speaking to smart people, one needed not to be too explicit in his words. It would suffice to make his point known.

"Qiao Nan, what do you think about this matter? If I wish to have another elder sister, will you allow it? After all, the elder sister is yours. If you don't agree, don't worry, I'll definitely not fight with you or be too close with Sister Qiao Zijin. I'm a good person and very nice to talk to."

Qiao Nan, your decision if you would.

Choose an outcome that would be good for you, me, and everyone. Or would you rather fight with me for the sake of an unrelated person?

When Qiao Zijin, who was smiling like a flower, heard this, her expression changed greatly and she stared at Qiao Nan with a look of warning. She was hinting to Qiao Nan to watch her words. She no longer hoped for Qiao Nan to have any conscience and help her at an appropriate time. Nevertheless, it would be best if Qiao Nan did not destroy the rare opportunity that she had. Otherwise, she would definitely not let her off!

"Yang Yang, what are you talking about? Nan Nan is not someone who's so petty. After all, everyone gets along well and can have fun together, including Baoguo. The more the merrier."

"Yes, that's right. When the four of you are together, you can look after one another. In the future, your studies will definitely improve by leaps and bounds." Ding Jiayi nervously stood out to put in some good words for Qiao Zijin. "Nan Nan, hurry and come into the house. It's so cold to stand outside. Come to Mom's side. Your dad and I have spent much effort on your sister's and your

studies. Your dad accompanies you near the school while I take care of your sister. It's been a long time. Come over and let Mom take a good look at you. Mom misses you so much."

To Qiao Nan, Ding Jiayi's words carried an unprecedented enthusiasm.

Ding Jiayi reached out her hands, her eyes full of enthusiasm. Before Qiao Nan could react, she pulled Qiao Nan into her arms tightly in one swift action. Not only that, Ding Jiayi even pouted her lips and gave Qiao Nan a few hard kisses on her hair while making some kissing sounds.

At that instant, Qiao Dongliang felt so cold that he had goosebumps all over him.

Qiao Nan, who was hugged and kissed by Ding Jiayi, was so scared that she nearly screamed and ran away.

It was rare to know how it felt like to be hugged tightly by a mother. However, Qiao Nan not only felt unhappy but also afraid. Her face turned as white as a sheet and there was a flash of horror in her eyes.

"What are you doing? You're scaring Nan Nan!" Qiao Dongliang stepped into the house in large strides and subdued Ding Jiayi with strength. He finally 'saved' Qiao Nan from Ding Jiayi's arms. "Nan Nan, are you alright?" Nan Nan's face was pale.

Although Qiao Dongliang dreamed of the day where Ding Jiayi would treat Qiao Nan like what she just did, he dreaded the day to truly come, not to mention Qiao Nan. Qiao Dongliang nearly wanted to separate Ding Jiayi away from Qiao Nan by giving her one big slap. It was too scary!

"I-I'm fine." She was just frightened.

"What's there to be afraid of? I'm Nan Nan's biological mother. Haven't I always been treating Nan Nan so well? Nan Nan, is that right?" Ding Jiayi's eyes were full of warning and fawning. She was implying to Qiao Nan to cooperate for Qiao Zijin's sake today and not spoil Qiao Zijin's plan. If she could do so, she promised to treat Qiao Nan extremely well in the future. She would not bully and give Qiao Nan a black face as she did in the past.

To put it bluntly, she just hoped that Zijin would have a good life in the future.

If Zijin could board a ‘big ship’ like the Wang family, then would there be a need for her to plot against Qiao Nan for such little benefit? That would be too tiring and not worth the reward.

“Hahaha...” Under the pressure of the trio Wang Yang, Qiao Zijin, and Ding Jiayi, Qiao Nan smiled. In front of them, her lips curled into an obvious superficial smile, her eyes full of sarcasm. In the end, she said coldly, “As long as you all are happy.”

Having that said, Qiao Nan’s eyes turned toward Wang Yang and Qiao Zijin. She then said with implied meaning in her words, “Congratulations, you have one more ‘good’ elder sister. Congratulations to you, too, for having a good ‘younger brother’ now. It’s really a ‘good’ day with double happiness. Wonderful!”

At this juncture, Wang Yang could not bring himself to smile. “Qiao Nan, have you really thought carefully about it?” This was the last chance he was giving Qiao Nan.

“Both of you want to formally acknowledge each other as sister and brother. It has got nothing to do with me. As long as you’ve thought carefully about it, then...” Qiao Nan raised her eyebrows. “It’s rare that you have fate with each other. I’ll feel ashamed to destroy it.”

“Yes, yes, yes, this is fate. It’s all fated to be.” It was rare that Qiao Nan was cooperative and did not wreck their plan. Ding Jiayi quietly heaved a sigh of relief. She hoped that she could take a loudspeaker and directly shout to all the people in the quad.

The grandson of the Wang family liked Zijin so much that he had acknowledged her as his elder sister. In the future, Zijin would have a god-sister relationship with the Wang family then.

“Nan Nan, Mom will look for you tomorrow and prepare some nice food for you. You love to eat spicy food, right? Actually, Mom knows how to cook Si Chuan dishes quite well. I’ll show you some of my skills.” With her wish granted, Ding Jiayi looked at Qiao Nan with satisfaction and kindness for the first time.

“Ha, hahaha.” Qiao Nan smiled dryly. Her mother’s reaction and words meant that she was extremely elated.

“Why are all of you standing here? Will you be full with the wind blowing at you? Wait, why did you come? Who let you come today!” Zhu Baoguo, who also came back from outside, saw Qiao Nan and the group at the entrance of his house just as he stepped in.

Zhu Baoguo was quite happy when he saw Qiao Nan. But before he could greet her, Zhu Baoguo saw Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin, the mother-daughter pair. Zhu Baoguo pulled a long face instantly. “Who asked you to come? This is the Zhu family, not the Qiao family. Where did you come from? Go back to where you came from!”

Was it not enough to bully Xiao Qiao at the house of the Qiao family? Were they going to bully Xiao Qiao again by coming to the house of the Zhu family?

“Baoguo, what are you doing? All visitors are guests. Don’t kick up a fuss. Aren’t you on good terms with Qiao Nan? By doing this, are you giving Qiao Nan face? Aren’t you afraid that Qiao Nan will be angry? Silly lad!” Elder Zhu was speechless. “Quickly come over. I’ve already said that you’re on good terms with Qiao Nan and treat her like your younger sister. But in some areas, you really have to learn from Yang Yang. You are not as thoughtful as Yang Yang.”

Through Wang Yang, Elder Zhu then knew that the Qiao family had lived separately for a long time to take better care of their two daughters. One took care of the elder daughter and the other the younger one.

He truly pitied the great devotion of the parents.

Only biological parents would do this for the sake of their children.

For the sake of studies, a fine family of four was split into two.

However, it was good that the Qiao family of four could finally reunite and have a reunion dinner today. It was such a good thing.

“Wang Yang, it must be you again. You’re ‘good’.” Zhu Baoguo’s face swelled in red. He nearly reverted to his former approach and spoke to Wang Yang with his punches directly.

At the thought of his promise with Elder Zhu, he took a few deep breaths. “I’ll listen to Grandpa today. Wang Yang, you have to cherish the chance. If you miss the chance today, I don’t know when it will come again.”

Chapter 313: Argued Directly

“Grandpa, tell me, should I spend this Lunar New Year and the coming winter vacation with you or maternal grandpa? He missed me quite a lot too.”

Zhu Baoguo lifted his chin at his grandfather’s ‘wavering mind’ and wished to have ‘the best of both worlds’. It was not that he did not have a choice.

His paternal grandfather liked his maternal grandson. His maternal grandfather also liked his maternal grandson.

“What is the fuss? It’s almost Lunar New Year. Your maternal grandpa has a grandson and you have me. Don’t kick up a fuss. Today, just today...” Elder Zhu had to succumb to this tactic.

He only had one paternal grandson, Zhu Baoguo. If Baoguo was snatched away by the Lee family, then he would not have any grandson he could be close to.

No matter how good the maternal grandson was, he would never be better than the paternal one.

“Then, how about Wang Yang?” Zhu Baoguo stood by his guns and purposely asked the question in front of Wang Yang.

Elder Zhu had no choice. “What about Yang Yang? Won’t your Grandpa Wang miss Yang Yang? It’s the Lunar New Year. Of course, the whole family has to reunite.”

“Okay, Grandpa. We’re one family. Wang Yang and his grandpa are also one family. Obviously, since it’s the Lunar New Year, we’ll have to spend time with our own family.” Baoguo was satisfied. He walked over to lock his arms with Elder Zhu. “Grandpa, what nice food did you prepare today? I’m hungry. Xiao Qiao, quickly come in. You won’t be full by taking in the air from the wind.”

As he saw the pale look on Wang Yang’s face from the corners of his eyes, Zhu Baoguo just walked passed him while holding Elder Zhu’s arms in an intimate manner.

He was his grandfather’s biological paternal grandson, but Wang Yang was only a maternal grandson. Yet, Wang Yang wished to fight with him and snatched from him everything that belonged to the Zhu family. Wishful thinking!

“Dad, let’s go in. You have not fully recovered. It’s not good to take in too much cold air.” Following Zhu Baoguo’s suit, Qiao Nan locked her arms around that of Qiao Dongliang and walked into the house.

Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were obviously stunned by what happened earlier. Ding Jiayi discreetly gave Qiao Zijin a push. Qiao Zijin immediately reacted and walked to Wang Yang’s side. “Yang Yang, what’s done was done. Let’s also go in and have dinner. Both paternal and maternal grandsons are close. Don’t think too much. Elder Zhu dotes on you so much.”

“Okay, let’s go over and have dinner.” Wang Yang smiled as he retracted his gloomy and depressed expression.

Was it really as close?

The difference between paternal and maternal grandsons as well as son and nephew was not just a little.

Zhu Baoguo dared to do that to him just now. He would take what Zhu Baoguo did today to heart!

When Zhu Chengqi reached home after work, he saw two unfamiliar ladies. He removed his coat that had some snow on it. “Why are there two more people?”

Elder Zhu smiled. “I’ve never worried about your performance in the army, but judging from today’s matter, in terms of interpersonal relationships, Baoguo is really your son and your closest kin. Both of you are very careless. Fortunately, Yang Yang reminded me. Otherwise, it would be such a big embarrassment for our Zhu family today.”

Clearly, there were four people in the Qiao family, but the Zhu family only invited two of them. What type of logic was that?

“Wang Yang?” Zhu Chengqi held back the expression in his eyes. His eagle-like sharp eyes glanced at Wang Yang nonchalantly. Wang Yang was so scared. It was as if he was an herbivore who bumped into a carnivore. His body shrank and his muscles could not help stiffening.

“Elder Uncle, you’re back.” Wang Yang let out a breath and tried his best to make his expression more natural.

“I’m back. If I’m not back, how could I get to see this?”

As for what to see, of course, it was to come back to watch the show.

The reality had proven that Wang Yang was the offspring of the Wang family. He was very scheming and also daring. He had investigated the matter that happened clearly. He did not expect that Wang Yang dared to do that.

“...”

Wang Yang’s face turned pale. His head drooped and he did not know what to say.

Wang Yang dared to plot against Zhu Baoguo and fooled around with Elder Zhu, but he was extremely fearful of Zhu Chengqi.

“Nan Nan, I heard that you came in top in the cohort again. Congratulations. This is my gift to you. Take a look and see if you like it.” Zhu Chengqi did not come empty-handed. He actually brought Qiao Nan a gift.

Qiao Nan was pleasantly surprised by the attention. “Thank you, Uncle Zhu.”

The present from Zhu Chengqi was heavy, stiff, and square in shape. Qiao Nan’s eyes lit up. “It’s a book. Can I open it to take a look?”

“Since I’ve given it to you, it’s yours.” Zhu Chengqi sat down after washing his hands.

“What? Isn’t this book...” When Zhu Baoguo saw Qiao Nan opening the present, his eyes turned stiff and red. He shot a murderous look at Zhu Chenqi. “Dad, you lied to me. You’re too disappointing. How could you do that !!!”

“What’s the matter?” Elder Zhu was shocked and he held on to Zhu Baoguo. “Why are you talking to your dad like that? Isn’t it just a book? If you really like it, get your dad to help you buy it.

You're on such good terms with Qiao Nan. Aren't you afraid that Qiao Nan will laugh at your behavior?" Fighting for a book with a young lady... Baoguo's studies had improved, but his interpersonal skills seemed to have gone backward.

Judging by the situation, Zhu Baoguo was seemingly unhappy and furious at Zhu Chengqi's gift to Qiao Nan. He nearly quarreled with Zhu Chengqi.

Everyone, except for two people, had a look of worry on their faces. These two people, Wang Yang and Qiao Zijin, were suppressing their smiles, their heads drooping immediately at the sight of this.

When Wang Yang accidentally saw that Qiao Zijin had the same reaction as him, his lips could not help curling up again as he found it hard to suppress his smile.

The relationship between Zhu Baoguo and Qiao Nan was so superficial. They would quarrel just because of one book.

Making Zhu Baoguo and Qiao Nan fall out with each other was not as complicated as he had thought. A few books would do the trick.

Qiao Zijin did not think as deeply as Wang Yang. She only knew that although both Qiao Nan and she were daughters of the Qiao family, she did not receive any present while Qiao Nan did. It was as if she was inferior to Qiao Nan.

Zhu Baoguo and Qiao Nan fell out instantly because of a book.

If she could make use of this matter, she would not only have Wang Yang as his younger brother but she might also have Zhu Baoguo call her elder sister.

The brother and sister who had just 'reconciled' with each other had exactly the same thoughts at this moment: Zhu Baoguo should quarrel more harshly and lose his temper directly at Zhu Chengqi. Smashing the table and stool would be a bonus. In short, the uglier and messier the situation was, the better it was!

"Grandpa, you don't know. It's not just a simple book. Dad, I'm angry about this. You're too much." Zhu Baoguo's face stiffened. He looked like an angry little tiger, staring at Zhu Chengqi. It did not seem like he would simmer down anytime soon. Elder Zhu had just wasted his breath on him.

The flaring Zhu Baoguo totally did not care about what occasion it was or who was present at the moment. It nearly made Qiao Dongliang take the book away from Qiao Nan and return it to him.

However, when he saw the happy look on Qiao Nan's face as she held the book tightly, he constantly told himself that this was the family affairs of the Zhu family. It was not appropriate for him to interfere. Most probably, his persuasion would be useless.

At this juncture, Qiao Nan, who looked so calm as if nothing had happened, became the odd one out.

Chapter 314: Father-and-Son Competition for Affection

"Nan Nan?" Qiao Dongliang said softly as he glanced at Qiao Nan, hinting to her whether she should say anything. After all, Zhu Baoguo usually listened to her.

It was not only Qiao Dongliang. Even Elder Zhu looked at Qiao Nan with hopeful eyes.

Zhu Chengqi was aloof and Zhu Baoguo was stubborn. Both were father and son and had the same strong temper.

In the past, when this father-son pair was at odds with each other, Elder Zhu had no way to stop them.

Nevertheless, the situation was different now. His grandson and son were seemingly getting along much better than before. The grandson also seemed to have someone he cared for.

For this, at the time when Elder Zhu was at the end of his rope, the first person he thought of was Qiao Nan.

"Dad, don't worry. Let the two of them argue with each other. It's worse if they do not talk to each other. They will be closer after some bickering. At the same time, Zhu Baoguo could learn from Uncle Zhu about war strategy and plot," Qiao Nan said calmly. Her eyes were fixated on the book. She looked so obsessed. It was as if her eyes were going to jump out of their sockets and glue themselves onto the book.

This was a limited edition book. To a book lover like Qiao Nan, she was more pleased to receive this than gold, silver, or money.

In her previous life, Qiao Nan spent a lot of effort looking for this book. In the end, she found it. However, it was ridiculously expensive as the book was out-of-print and there was no updated version of it.

That was the first time that Qiao Nan wanted to buy an expensive item for herself. However, Ding Jiayi took away the money as soon as she had saved them up.

In this lifetime, although it was difficult to buy this book, it was not as difficult nor was it as expensive as it had been in her previous life.

“Nan Nan, don’t talk nonsense. It doesn’t make sense that arguing more will improve relationships.” Qiao Zijin said gently and softly, “Baoguo, don’t do that. You’re being impolite to Uncle Zhu. It’s just a book. If you really like it, then... Nan Nan, give the book to Baoguo. There’s always another chance next time. We’ll think of a way to buy it for you.”

The more Qiao Nan was not sensible, the more she wanted to show her thoughtfulness, generosity, kindness, and sensibleness.

Qiao Nan was so ineloquent. It was fine that Zhu Baoguo liked Qiao Nan. However, she did not understand why Uncle Zhu was so good to Qiao Nan but had never noticed her even once.

Qiao Zijin was very certain about one matter. When Zhu Chengqi came back to the house, he not only did not greet her by name but also did not look at her at all.

“Give this book to Zhu Baoguo? It’s too wasteful. He doesn’t know how to read it either.” Qiao Nan shook her head in despise. “Giving this book to him is like leaving bright pearls in the dust and not differentiating between good and bad stuff.” If she really gave it to Zhu Baoguo, she would feel the pinch.

“Certainly.” Although Qiao Nan made such a derogatory comment about Zhu Baoguo, Zhu Chengqi was not angry. Instead, he furiously nodded in agreement.

“Chengqi!” At this juncture, Elder Zhu was not pleased. Why did Chengqi say that about Baoguo? What’s wrong with Baoguo? When he flashed Baoguo’s academic results now, many of his old

comrades praised that he was fortunate that his only grandson would be successful soon. Clearly, great talent took time to mature.

“Xiao Qiao and my dad are not wrong. I really can’t understand this book. It’s a waste to give it to me.” The party concerned, Zhu Baoguo, was neither angry nor troubled. He frankly agreed to the words of the two.

“...”

“...”

Zhu Baoguo’s words stunned Wang Yang and Qiao Zijin, who were waiting to watch the show. Their faces turned pale.

Elder Zhu was both angry and amused. He felt like punching his grandson a few times. “You said it yourself that you can’t understand that book. Then, why did you get angry when your dad gave the book to Qiao Nan? You looked like you wanted to fight with him. Are you kidding us?” He had really thought that his grandson wanted that book but Zhu Chengqi gave it to Qiao Nan instead, leading to him losing his temper.

“Grandpa, you don’t understand. Xiao Qiao has been yearning for that book for a long time. I’ve known Xiao Qiao for so long. When did Xiao Qiao ever ask me for help? It’s rare, and when she did, it’s for this book. I’ve asked Dad to help look for this book. He’s been telling me that he couldn’t find it. But he found it, didn’t he now? The worse thing is... Dad actually gave this book to Xiao Qiao in his name. Clearly, I was the one who found the book!” Toward the end of his speech, Zhu Baoguo’s words were incoherent. In short, he was furious with the shameless behavior of his biological father.

He was clearly robbing him of his merits. Didn’t he see that Xiao Qiao’s eyes were glued on the book as soon as she saw it?

Xiao Qiao’s gratitude belonged to him. Xiao Qiao’s liking should be his as well.

“You found it? Did you have anyone help you find the book? Did you have enough money to buy it? You have to know your limits as a person.” Having that said, Zhu Chengqi’s eyes turned unknowingly at Wang Yang. This made Wang Yang, who was gloating earlier, quickly buried his face into the bowl of rice. He was full of hatred.

Damn, he was fooled by Zhu Chengqi and Zhu Baoguo, this moronic pair of father and son.

In the past, he suspected why an idiot like Zhu Baoguo was the son of a formidable character such as his Elder Uncle, Zhu Chengqi. They could have taken the wrong baby in the hospital. However, at this juncture, Wang Yang no longer suspected this.

They spent so much effort to give that book to Qiao Nan. The father and son even argued because of this. Were they retarded?

“What book is so rare? Is it very expensive?” Qiao Zijin did not understand much except the value of the book.

Zhu Baoguo even gave Qiao Nan something as expensive as a Discman. What kind of book in the world could not be afforded by Zhu Baoguo?

“The price of the book is not important. Most importantly, we have to see who it goes to and how they use it thereafter.” Zhu Chengqi did not sound concerned about the price of the book. Regardless of its price, it was a book after all. Of course, Zhu Chengqi would not take to heart this small sum of money.

“Thank you, Uncle Zhu.” Qiao Nan, who received a great bargain, did not seem to mind. She was also unwilling to spend time and effort to bother about the scheming against one another and the sparks that flew across the table earlier.

She could only say that those few people who wished to see her embarrassed had to be disappointed today.

“So this is the truth of the matter,” Elder Zhu said. He was dumbfounded by his son and grandson. After arguing for so long, it was not because his grandson wanted the book. It was because he wanted to give the book to Qiao Nan, but his son had taken the opportunity to...

Elder Zhu smiled. Why did he have the illusion that his son and grandson were fighting for the affection of Qiao Nan, a young lady?

He must have drunk too much tea during the day that he was drunk now.

Truly, it was not the tea that made him drunk but the individual himself.

With the misunderstanding cleared, the dinner was considered a harmonious occasion.

“Qiao Nan, I’ll get the chauffeur to send you back. As for your dad’s bicycle, leave it at my house first. You can take it back when you have time.” After dinner, Zhu Chengqi made arrangements for Qiao Nan and Qiao Dongliang. When the sun was up, the path was not conducive to travel on, not to mention that it was already dark and the weather had turned cold. The road was slippery.

When Zhu Chengqi said this, Ding Jiayi’s face turned black.

Chapter 315: Wrecking the Little Brain

The night was dark and the wind strong. The road was slippery, not conducive for traveling.

If Qiao Dongliang insisted to leave with Qiao Nan in the night, it would not only be difficult but also dangerous.

Ding Jiayi was thinking that if it was not convenient for Qiao Dongliang to bring Qiao Nan back to the rented apartment, they could just go back to the Qiao family’s residence in the quad. If the family of four could stay under the same roof, she believed that they could resolve their prior conflict regardless of how big it was.

Ding Jiayi wanted to take this opportunity to mend the relationship between Qiao Dongliang and her. However, when Zhu Chengqi offered to give Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan a ride home, all the thoughts and plans that Ding Jiayi had earlier were ruined.

“That’s fine too.” Qiao Dongliang felt embarrassed to trouble the Zhu family initially. However, when he saw Ding Jiayi’s expression, he immediately agreed. “Sorry to trouble you.”

“No problem.” There was a rare smile on Zhu Chengqi’s serious face. “I like Nan Nan, this child. In the future, feel free to let Nan Nan come to our house to have fun.”

“Sure,” Qiao Dongliang replied weakly. He only treated what Zhu Chengqi said as words of politeness. “You don’t need to send us off. Bye.”

“Be careful on the road.”

With the help of the Zhu family’s chauffeur, Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan saved much effort and reached home just after a little nap in the car.

When Qiao Dongliang and Qiao Nan got into the car, Ding Jiayi and Qiao Zijin were still at the house of the Zhu family.

Ding Jiayi hid the pale look on her face. Zhu Chengqi’s face turned serious. “Do you need me to ask someone to send the two of you back?”

“No need for the trouble, Uncle Zhu. My mom and I can go back on our own.” Qiao Zijin knew what was good for her. Both were the daughters of the Qiao family and had dinner on the same table. However, Qiao Nan had a gift and she didn’t.

From this matter alone, Qiao Zijin was certain that Zhu Chengqi treated Qiao Nan and her differently.

It did not matter that Qiao Nan had someone to send her off. If she were shameless and think that she would receive the same treatment, then that would be too annoying to others.

In front of a character like Zhu Chengqi, Qiao Zijin was very conscious. When she knew that she would annoy the other party by doing that, she would not do it. “Uncle Zhu, it’s late. I’ll go back with my mom first. Thank you for your warm hospitality today. Next time, I hope that Uncle Zhu will give us face and come to our house for a meal. We don’t have much but there are still simple dishes at home. Bye, Uncle Zhu.”

Seeing that Ding Jiayi had no reaction, Qiao Zijin gave Ding Jiayi a pull. Ding Jiayi then reacted. She moved her stiff mouth and said with a forced and weak smile, “Bye.”

“Wait...” Ding Jiayi thought of something before she opened the door of the Zhu family’s house. “Why don’t we do this? I’ll push Old Qiao’s bicycle back first. Leaving it here will be a trouble for you.”

Once she had pushed the bicycle back, Old Qiao would have to make a trip back home when he wanted to get the bicycle.

Now, Ding Jiayi dared not think about Qiao Dongliang's money. Her greatest wish was for Qiao Dongliang to return home soon.

The problem was when Qiao Dongliang moved for the second time, although Ding Jiayi eventually found out about the new address, Ding Jiayi dared not step into the small quad provided by Ping Cheng High School at all.

As for Qiao Dongliang, he would definitely not go back to the small quad of the Qiao family if there was not a need.

Even if he had to come for something, he would not stay for long. He would leave as soon as he settled his matter. Ding Jiayi could not even hold him back.

At the thought that there were already many rumors of divorce between Qiao Dongliang and her spreading between the familiar neighbors in the quad, Ding Jiayi panicked terribly.

When she was a lady in the past, she could not find someone better than Old Qiao. Now that she was already of this age, she would have nothing left if she really left Old Qiao. So, she would never divorce Old Qiao. She also had to think of a way to mend the relationship with Old Qiao and let people in the quad know that she, Ding Jiayi, was having a blissful life.

"No need." Zhu Chengqi saw through Ding Jiayi's mind immediately. "Our house is big. One bicycle will not take up too much space. Furthermore, when the two of you go back, you have to be careful on the road. It's probably more inconvenient to push the bicycle along. Don't need to feel embarrassed about this. My Zhu family certainly has a place to spare for your bicycle."

"R-really? Then, thank you very much. It's truly not quite convenient tonight. That model '28' bicycle of my family's Old Qiao is heavy. Coupled with the weather, it'll be tiring to push it. In this case, we'll forget about it tonight. I'll come over tomorrow for it. It's decided, then. Zijin, let's go back."

Without giving Zhu Chengqi a chance to reject, Ding Jiayi pulled Qiao Zijin and left the house immediately.

“Mom, why were you so anxious?” Qiao Zijin was a little unhappy. She had not bid farewell to Yang Yang.

Ding Jiayi looked at Qiao Zijin unhappily. “Don’t you wish that your dad will bring Qiao Nan home earlier? Why did your brains go rusty at this critical juncture? Your dad is now unwilling to step into our house. Many people are waiting to see our family turn into a joke. We only have one model ’28’ bicycle and your dad will definitely need it. If we push it back home first, won’t your dad have to look for us? We have to catch every opportunity to be with your dad and work hard at mending our relationship with him. That way, your dad will come home sooner.”

“Still, you didn’t need to be so anxious. I’ve not even said goodbye to Yang Yang.” It was not easy for her to ‘acknowledge’ a ‘younger brother’.

Ding Jiayi patted Qiao Zijin’s head. “Is an outsider or your dad more important?”

“Dad.” However, Wang Yang could give her a beautiful future while her father could not give her anything.

“That’s right. Listen to Mom for today’s matter. It won’t be wrong. That kid called Wang Yang seems to like you very much. Therefore, he definitely won’t refuse to acknowledge you as a sister just because of a goodbye.”

“That’s true.” Qiao Zijin lifted her chin. “Yang Yang has a better sense of judgment than Zhu Baoguo. He knows how to decipher people and also knows who is more outstanding between Qiao Nan and me.”

“A good sense of judgment is useless. Wang Yang’s status is lower than that of Zhu Baoguo. In the Zhu family, Zhu Baoguo is number one. Wang Yang...” Zhu Chengqi did not seem to be treating his nephew, Wang Yang, as well as what she heard from the rumors. Zhu Chengqi definitely did not treat Wang Yang like he did his own son.

When Zhu Chengqi came back today, he did not seem extremely close to Zhu Baoguo, but there were interactions between the father and son. They had quite a lively chat. On the contrary, Zhu Chengqi rarely bothered about Wang Yang.

It was different from what she heard.

“Mom, I’m tired. Let’s go back quickly.” There was a flash in Qiao Zijin’s eyes as she interrupted the topic.

Wang Yang was not better than Zhu Baoguo now. However, she believed that Wang Yang would not stay the same. One day, he would surpass Zhu Baoguo.

Chapter 316: Wolfish Years

Just like she and Qiao Nan, Qiao Nan might seem to have the upper hand, but it would not last long. She would be the one who had the last laugh.

“Let’s hurry back. Wrap your clothes tightly around you. You don’t want to catch a cold.” Ding Jiayi put the topic of Wang Yang aside. Anyway, Wang Yang was not her son. It did not matter to her whether he was successful or not.

When they finally went back to the Qiao family’s residence at the quad, the first thing Ding Jiayi did was to boil hot water for Qiao Zijin’s foot bath so that she could warm her body.

While Ding Jiayi was busy boiling the water, Qiao Zijin went back to her room quietly. She took out a book and a pen, and wrote down a few English words on the book.

If Qiao Nan was there, she would realize that the few words that Qiao Zijin memorized were none other than the title of the book that Zhu Chengqi gave her at the dining table.

After checking through several times to make sure that she did not spell it wrong, she closed the book and decided to ask around when school reopened next year. She wanted to know what book that was, and why was Qiao Nan so interested in the book that she asked a favor of Uncle Zhu and Zhu Baoguo to find it for her.

If it was just an ordinary book, it meant that what Qiao Nan did at the dining table today was deliberate, and her purpose was to embarrass her.

Qiao Zijin only had a few chances to look at the book, but in such a short period of time, she managed to memorize the title of the book correctly. It showed that Qiao Zijin was smart, but she never used her intelligence in the right places.

“What are you doing? Come and soak your feet before going to bed. If you want to read, do it tomorrow.” Ding Jiayi could not help but sigh when she thought of Qiao Nan’s transcript that recorded her good results and Qiao Zijin’s transcript that paled in comparison.

Since a young age, Qiao Zijin was smarter than Qiao Nan. Why was it that Qiao Nan would always surpass her in terms of studies?

When she was pregnant with Zijin, Old Qiao always said that he hoped for a son who was smart and had good academic performance. Besides not being a boy, Qiao Nan matched Old Qiao’s description of a perfect son.

If only Qiao Zijin’s results were as good as Qiao Nan’s, then it would be good.

That way, even if she had any conflicts with Old Qiao, Old Qiao would give in to her and treat her well on account that Qiao Zijin was closer to her mother.

Qiao Nan, that wretched girl, did not see her as her mother at all. Now that Old Qiao had moved out with Qiao Nan, Qiao Nan might be happy that there was one less person to keep a check on her.

“Mom, why do you keep sighing?” Qiao Zijin pulled a long face. When she was at the Zhu family’s residence, she was not that unhappy as compared to now. “Why did you have that expression and use that tone on me when you brought up the topic of me reading a book?”

“I didn’t mean anything by it. I just feel that you are too hard on yourself. Don’t tire yourself out. In the past six months, I can tell that you have put in a lot of effort. Look at you, your face is getting smaller. Zijin, as long as you have done your best, you shouldn’t be too hard on yourself.”

Actually, Ding Jiayi felt very depressed. For the past half a year, she could tell that Qiao Zijin had studied very hard. But in the end, her results did not show much improvement.

Qiao Nan scored so well even though she was never seen studying at home. Why was it that when Qiao Zijin put her efforts into her studies, she still ended up with average results?

If Qiao Zijin was not as hardworking, then Ding Jiayi could comfort herself that Qiao Zijin was actually smarter than Qiao Nan. It was just that she did not put in any effort. But right now, Ding

Jiayi felt frustrated that the daughter she had always doted on was, in fact, not as smart as Qiao Nan, that wretched girl.

When they were young, Qiao Zijin was clever and bright. She was well-liked by everyone. On the other hand, Qiao Nan was slow and dull. She did not even know to greet people.

She had always believed that Qiao Nan was foolish and slow. Hence, two years ago, she went into a serious argument with Old Qiao, insisting that Qiao Nan quit school and worked so that she could help finance Qiao Zijin through college. She felt that since Qiao Nan was not good in her studies, she should not waste time or money on it. It would be better for her to work in the factory and start contributing to the family.

However, it turned out that Ding Jiayi was wrong. In terms of studies, Qiao Nan fared much better than Qiao Zijin.

Now that Qiao Dongliang was angry with Ding Jiayi, she could no longer use the excuse that what she did was for the family.

“Really?” Qiao Zijin did not believe it.

“Of course. My little master, now that your feet are warm and comfortable, you should go to bed.”

“Mom, get me a hot water bag as well. I am afraid that I will feel cold later.” Qiao Zijin was afraid of the cold. Her limbs, in particular, would feel very cold during wintertime.

“I have prepared it for you. Get under the blanket now. I will bring it to you.” Ding Jiayi made loud sounds as she walked around with her shoes. She returned to Qiao Zijin’s room with the hot water bag in her hands and stuffed it under Qiao Zijin’s blanket.

Qiao Zijin sighed in comfort. She laid snug in her bed, pulled the blanket over her body, and fell asleep in no time.

Compared with Qiao Zijin who fell asleep right away, Ding Jiayi tossed and turned throughout the night. She could not fall asleep as she was thinking of Qiao Dongliang. People said that women in their thirties to forties would have a high libido, and Ding Jiayi was at that age now.

Ever since Qiao Dongliang quarreled with Ding Jiayi, they no longer shared the same bed.

After Qiao Dongliang moved out with Qiao Nan, Qiao Dongliang had zero contact with Ding Jiayi.

Qiao Dongliang was occupied with finding ways to finance both of his daughters through college. He was busy earning more money and had no time for that. On the other hand, Ding Jiayi was unemployed and could only stay at home to do handiwork to earn some money. Ding Jiayi had too much time on her hand that her thoughts wandered.

It was almost dawn when Ding Jiayi finally fell asleep.

“Mom, the sun is up. It’s time to get up. I’m hungry.” Ding Jiayi had just fallen asleep not too long ago and she was already awakened by Qiao Zijin. “Mom, don’t forget to make a trip to the Zhu family’s residence to get Dad’s bicycle back.”

“Yes, I almost forgot about it. It is already nine o’clock?!” Ding Jiayi quickly got up from the bed and hurried to prepare breakfast for Qiao Zijin. After that, she ran with all her might to the Zhu family’s residence for fear that she would be late and Qiao Dongliang would have brought the model ’28’ bicycle back home.

As soon as Ding Jiayi arrived at the Zhu family’s residence, Ding Jiayi gasped and asked. “H-have you seen Old Qiao?”

The people at the Zhu family’s residence smiled and said, “No, it’s still so early in the morning.”

Chapter 317: Dumb and Dumber

“That’s good.” Ding Jiayi slightly relaxed. “I had to trouble you yesterday. Today, I will bring back Old Qiao’s bicycle.”

“No need.” The people at the Zhu family’s residence waved their hands.

“No need? What do you mean by that?”

“What I mean is that although Qiao Dongliang has not been here today, the bicycle has already been returned to him.” The bicycle was no longer at the Zhu family’s residence. Ding Jiayi had nothing to bring back except for the Zhu family’s belongings.

“Didn’t you say that Old Qiao hasn’t been here yet? So why isn’t the bicycle here? Why is it back at Old Qiao’s house?!” Ding Jiayi asked anxiously.

“Baoguo went looking for Qiao Nan early in the morning with his holiday homework. He said that he wanted to exercise, so he rode that bicycle to Qiao Nan’s house.”

The Zhu family had a car and a chauffeur. Why did Zhu Baoguo mess around and claim that he wanted to exercise? Why did he ride the bicycle away? Ding Jiayi took a deep breath. “Since Zhu Baoguo rode the bicycle to look for Qiao Nan in the morning, will he ride it back when he comes back home?”

If this was the case, there was still a chance.

At most, she would go to the Zhu family’s residence again in the evening. She might even get to know the people from the Zhu family.

“Sister Ding, I am being very polite by addressing you as ‘sister’. There’s no need for Baoguo to ride the bicycle back. Our chauffeur will fetch him back.” If Baoguo wanted to ride the bicycle, given the Zhu family’s ability, they could buy him a bicycle that was suited for his height. There was no need for him to ride that model ‘28’ bicycle.

Ding Jiayi was green with anger and lost for words.

Since the Zhu family had a car to fetch Zhu Baoguo, why did they not drive him to Qiao Nan’s house in the morning? Why must he ride the bicycle? Was he going against her?

Ding Jiayi did not know that her guess was correct.

“Xiao Qiao, I’ve got your bicycle back. By the way, your mom seems to be quite stupid, but there are times when she is quite smart. Yesterday, when the both of you had just left, she suggested bringing your dad’s bicycle back to the Qiao family’s residence in the quad. Luckily, she was stopped by my dad. Otherwise...”

Zhu Baoguo shot a look at Qiao Dongliang who had his back to them and was busy with chores in the kitchen. He lowered his voice and said, “Otherwise, when your dad enters the Qiao family’s residence, it’s hard to say when he will come out. If one is not careful, there may be a chance that you will have another sibling.”

“What are you talking about?” Qiao Nan stiffened and shot a sideways glance at Zhu Baoguo.

Zhu Baoguo was so audacious as to make such obscene comments!

“I’m not joking with you. Your mom has that strange look in her eyes when she looked at your dad yesterday. Those women who are dying to become my stepmother had the same expressions when they gazed at my dad,” Zhu Baoguo said with no hint of embarrassment.

In this aspect, boys were more mature than girls. Moreover, Zhu Baoguo used to hang out with people outside the school back then. If not for the fact that he was still young, Zhu Baoguo might have already had a lot of experience with women.

“Don’t bring this up in my dad’s face. Besides, if you have a high level of male hormones, don’t come to my house and act crazy. Settle it before you come.” Zhu Baoguo might have been mature for his age, but Qiao Nan was, in fact, a mature adult. Although she had no experience in these matters, she knew what was going on.

“Xiao Qiao, do you really understand what I am talking about?”

“Of course.”

“Who spewed nonsense in front of you, Xiao Qiao?” Zhu Baoguo widened his eyes and rolled up his sleeves. “Is this what boys should say to the girls? He made such obscene comments. He’s clearly taking advantage of you!”

How could someone dare to spout nonsense and lead Xiao Qiao astray behind his back! He must be tired of living.

Qiao Nan twitched her lips. “You are one of them.”

“Who are you talking about? What’s wrong? Baoguo, what are you doing with your sleeves rolled up? Isn’t it cold?” Qiao Dongliang, who brought out the breakfast, witnessed the scene between the both of them. After putting down the breakfast, he rolled down the sleeves for Zhu Baoguo. “What are the both of you talking about that you ended up in anger?”

“Nothing much.”

“Uncle Qiao, we didn’t say anything. This porridge smells really nice. I am famished.” Zhu Baoguo blushed in embarrassment at Qiao Nan’s words. When he saw Qiao Dongliang, Zhu Baoguo somehow felt as if he had done something wrong. His face turned a shade redder.

“Have more of the porridge and eat to your heart’s content.” Qiao Dongliang smiled. He did not have a son, so when he saw someone else’s son, he could not help but take a few more glances. “Both of you were having a good chat, but why did you start scolding people? Who were you angry at?”

“We were referring to those girls who bullied Xiao Qiao at school. They are downright shameless!” Zhu Baoguo yelled.

“Someone bullied Nan Nan? Nan Nan, why didn’t you tell me?” Qiao Dongliang was anxious, and so he did not notice Zhu Baoguo’s guilty look.

“Uncle Qiao, you don’t have to worry. With me around, nobody dares to bully Qiao Nan. I will certainly deal with them. We were referring to these annoying people just now.” After being beaten, Xu Tingting and Zhao Yu did not dare to complain. For the subsequent month, they dared not even raise their voices in front of Xiao Qiao.

Qiao Dongliang breathed a sigh of relief. “That’s good. Baoguo, when you are at school, Uncle Qiao will have to ask you to take good care of Nan Nan. You can’t let anyone bully Nan Nan.”

Zhu Baoguo’s eyes lit up. “Uncle Qiao, rest assured that I will take good care of Xiao Qiao. I will ensure her safety and place her well-being before my own. I will not let anyone hurt Xiao Qiao. I won’t do anything to harm Xiao Qiao either.”

“Well...” There was something odd about Zhu Baoguo’s words, but Qiao Dongliang could not point out what exactly was inappropriate about what he had just said. “Since you have said so, you must make sure you honor your promise.”

Since he could not pinpoint what exactly was wrong, Qiao Dongliang did not bother to think about it anymore. Anyway, it was good that his daughter was taken care of at school. She would not be bullied by others, then.

Qiao Nan looked up and rolled her eyes. The two men in front of her were practically dumb and dumber.

Her father did not realize that Zhu Baoguo's words were what a son-in-law would say to the father-in-law, and Zhu Baoguo was so muddle-headed that he spouted nonsense. The dumb and dumber did not realize what was wrong in their conversation.

They were living treasures.

Qiao Nan found what Zhu Baoguo said to Qiao Dongliang to be very familiar. In fact, this was her second time hearing these words.

When Qiao Nan brought Chen Jun back home for the first time, Chen Jun had also said the same words to Qiao Dongliang—that he would take good care of Qiao Nan and treat Qiao Nan as someone more important than himself.

In this life, Qiao Dongliang had not had the experience of being a father-in-law, thus he did not understand and did not find it inappropriate for Zhu Baoguo to say all those words.

Chapter 318: In What Capacity Did You Say This

As for Zhu Baoguo, Qiao Nan suspected that Zhu Baoguo had been watching too many television dramas recently. He must have felt that this dialogue was so good that he used it when talking to her father.

“Today, both of you must work hard to do your homework. Nan Nan, Dad has some errands to run.”

“Dad, Lunar New Year is coming, what else do you have to settle?” Qiao Nan asked out of concern.

“It’s just some accounts that I have been working on previously. I am done with the accounts and I need to send it back to them before the Lunar New Year so that they can pay their workers.” Qiao Dongliang held a thick stack of papers in his hands. He tied them to the back seat of the bicycle and covered it with a bag so that the papers would not be blown away by the wind.

“Dad, be careful on the road. Also, stop taking on these jobs. You are not thinking of working overtime through the Lunar New Year, are you?” Qiao Nan sighed. Her father had to push himself to the limits in order to earn more money.

“No, I know what I’m doing. You should do your homework with Baoguo at home.” After making sure that the papers were tied securely to the bicycle, Qiao Dongliang pedaled the bicycle and left the small quad.

“Xiao Qiao, I have something to discuss with you.” Zhu Baoguo waited until Qiao Dongliang left before broaching the topic. “Actually, it was my father who brought this up. It has nothing to do with me. My dad said that Qiao Zijin and you are only one level apart. If both of you are to go to college, it is absolutely impossible for Uncle Qiao to provide for both of you at the same time. What my dad meant to say was that he will pay for your college fees first, and when you start to work and earn money in the future, you can pay him back if you want. In this way, Uncle Qiao will have an easier time. There will be no need for him to be so hard on himself, and you don’t have to worry anymore.”

The most important thing was that Xiao Qiao and Qiao Zijin could not possibly go to college at the same time. The Qiao family did not have enough money.

If that happened, given Ding Jiayi’s usual behavior, she would definitely deprive Xiao Qiao of the opportunity to continue her studies so as to provide for Qiao Zijin.

By that time, nobody knew what Ding Jiayi would do to plot against Xiao Qiao.

“I have to think about it.” Qiao Nan did not dare to agree right away to something that was beneficial to her.

“What’s there to consider? Why don’t you agree to it? My dad may be working for the government, but he has a lot of money. It will be foolish not to spend them. Do you know that there are a lot of women who are eyeing my dad’s fortune? They think that everyone is a fool and they are the only one who is smart.”

“You are the only person who will say that of your dad. If Uncle Zhu is here, he will definitely give you a beating,” Qiao Nan said. “I know Uncle Zhu has my best interests, but he does not really understand the situation in the Qiao family.” He did not know her mother well enough.

“What do you mean? Tell me about it. I will be able to understand, and I will definitely let my dad know.”

“It’s a long story. Anyway, just tell Uncle Zhu what I said just now. He will understand.” Her mother was someone who could not lead a peaceful life. She would create a fuss whenever possible, regardless of whether she would bring harm to herself or others.

After they moved for the second time, the days whereby her mother behaved herself was much longer as compared to the first time they moved.

Qiao Zijin was already in her second year this year. She would be in the third year in the coming year, and in a blink of an eye, she would enter the college. What her mother hoped, for now, was that her father would earn enough money for Qiao Zijin’s college tuition fees. Because of this, her mother behaved herself and did not create any trouble. She was worried that if she did anything wrong, her father might be so angry that he decided not to provide for Qiao Zijin anymore.

After all, there were two daughters in the family who wanted to study in the college, and her grades were much better than that of Qiao Zijin.

Therefore, if her father had to make a choice, it was reasonable for him to choose to let her go to college, and in turn, let Qiao Zijin give up her studies. Even if her mother tried all means and ways, she would not be able to change her father’s decision.

On the other hand, if her mother knew that the Zhu family would provide for her tuition fees in the future, she would revert to her old ways, being fearless and unreasonable. Since the Zhu family already provided for her and her father could afford to pay for Qiao Zijin’s tuition fees, it did not make sense if her father refused to finance Qiao Zijin through college.

Therefore, in the Qiao family, it would be good to have tight finances.

“So troublesome?” Zhu Baoguo had a headache.

“Nan Nan, are you at home?”

“Brother Zhai?” Qiao Nan’s eyes lit up. She went to open the door without telling Zhu Baoguo who was at the door. “Brother Zhai, what brings you here? Where’s Sister Zhai Hua? Didn’t both of you come together?” Qiao Nan felt a tinge of disappointment when she did not see Sister Zhai Hua at the door.

“She has something on, so she can’t come today.” She did not dare to come either. “Is there a guest at home?” Zhai Sheng pursed his lips and looked around. He took the initiative to close the door as if he was the owner. Qiao Nan then walked by his side into the house.

“Yes, my classmate, Zhu Baoguo, came to do homework with me.” Qiao Nan had always been well-behaved in front of Zhai Sheng. “Zhu Baoguo, Brother Zhai is here. You two should know each other, I guess?”

Zhai Sheng walked into the house and came face-to-face with Zhu Baoguo. The atmosphere was tense between them. It was as if sparks were flying. They seemed to be sizing each other up and guarding what was theirs.

“I have met him before,” Zhai Sheng said politely. To him, Zhu Baoguo was a stupid fool who was difficult to deal with.

Zhu Baoguo snorted. To him, Zhai Sheng was a hypocrite who was good at putting up pretenses, pretending to be a good person.

Qiao Nan arched her eyebrows, feeling perplexed. “Why are both of you behaving strangely? It’s as if both of you can’t stand the sight of each other.”

“No.”

“How could that be possible.”

Qiao Nan smiled at their denials. “Brother Zhai, have a seat. I will pour you a cup of hot water. Zhu Baoguo, Brother Zhai is very smart. If you have any problem with your homework, you can ask Brother Zhai. There’s no need to wait for me.”

Then, Qiao Nan sneaked into the kitchen, leaving the living room to them.

As soon as Qiao Nan left, Zhu Baoguo turned sullen, whereas Zhai Sheng had a cool expression on his face, giving Zhu Baoguo an unfriendly glance.

Zhu Baoguo broke the silence. "I must thank you for taking care of Xiao Qiao." Zhu Baoguo felt uncomfortable when he was reminded that before Qiao Nan got to know him, she would go to the Zhai family's residence to read her books. He could not help but feel that he had missed an important opportunity.

"In what capacity are you saying this to me?" Zhai Sheng was not angry that Zhu Baoguo had taken the lead, but his sharp question made Zhu Baoguo turn red in frustration. He could not give a reply after a long while.

Yes, in what capacity did he say that?

If it was in the capacity as her classmate, then he had thought too highly of himself. As a classmate, he had no right to thank Zhai Sheng on behalf of Xiao Qiao. He would be too thick-skinned to have said that.

Chapter 319: I Accept This Reason

If it was not in the capacity as a classmate, then in what capacity could he be when he thanked Zhai Sheng on Xiao Qiao's behalf? And how could he put some distance between Zhai Sheng and Xiao Qiao?

Zhu Baoguo, who could not figure out at once, became anxious. He seemed to want to confirm something but could not bring himself to say the words.

"Well?" Since Zhu Baoguo kept his silence, Zhai Sheng asked him again. He seemed as if he had all the time in the world while he waited for Zhu Baoguo's reply. Zhu Baoguo panicked at his prompting.

"A-as her brother! Yes, you may not know, but I am actually one year older than Xiao Qiao. Although Xiao Qiao is in the same grade as me, in fact, she is younger than me. I have always treated Xiao Qiao as my sister. I want to protect her. Of course, you are very good to Xiao Qiao. As her brother, naturally, I want to thank you on her behalf." Yes, that was it.

Long ago, he had said that Xiao Qiao was his younger sister and that he would take good care of Xiao Qiao. He would not let others bully Xiao Qiao.

He would retaliate against those people who bullied Xiao Qiao. As for the people who helped Xiao Qiao, it was appropriate for him to express his gratitude.

With this new identity that he assumed, Zhu Baoguo straightened his back. He was no longer as uncertain and guilty as before. He was confident of himself.

Zhai Sheng gave an uncanny smile. "I will accept your reason and your gratitude."

Zhu Chengqi was very capable, but his son was not as smart as him. He was already eighteen years old, but he was still like a young bashful boy. Zhu Baoguo did not know to use any strategy or tactics. He merely gave it a try and Zhu Baoguo was forced to leave no way of retreat for himself by saying that he treated Qiao Nan as her younger sister. In this way, he had made it such that there was no way they would have any other developments.

Zhu Baoguo was too young to know that he had lost something precious with what he said just now. When Zhu Baoguo matured in the future, he would be full of regrets for what he said now.

In fact, Zhai Sheng felt that he was giving Zhu Baoguo a lesson so that he would learn and grow.

Zhu Baoguo would have to blame it on his father, Zhu Chengqi, for not teaching him well, and that he was too stupid to be plotted against by Wang Yang. At this age, he had not learned his ways and brought this upon himself.

Zhu Baoguo tensed up. Previously, Zhai Sheng seemed as if he wanted to pick a fight with him, but he softened his tone in the next second. What did he mean by that?

The Zhai Sheng he knew was definitely not someone who would compromise easily. Did he have other ways to deal with him?

"Both of you seem to have a good chat. What did you talk about?" Qiao Nan felt that they should have more than enough time with each other. Hence, she came out with two cups of hot water and handed them to Zhai Sheng and Zhu Baoguo.

“Nothing important. It’s just casual talk.”

“Stop busying around and sit down.” Unlike Zhu Baoguo who had a guilty conscience, Zhai Sheng behaved as if nothing had happened. But in actual fact, he had nipped the feelings that Zhu Baoguo had for Qiao Nan in the bud.

Zhai Sheng had received news that the Zhu family asked the Qiao family over for dinner as soon as they extended the invitation.

At that time, Zhai Hua made a dig at Zhai Sheng. “You have to work harder. Otherwise, Nan Nan may be abducted. I heard that the boy from the Zhu family is only one year older than Nan Nan. Speaking of which, they are much more suitable in terms of age. Moreover, they are junior high school classmates. They could be considered as childhood sweethearts. They must be very close with each other. If they enter the same college, they will be with each other for ten years. That’s three years of junior high school, three years of high school, and four years of college. By then, won’t Nan Nan take the surname Zhu?”

“Look, since the Zhu family invited the Qiao family to their house for dinner, obviously, the Zhu family does not look down on the Qiao family, and they can accept them. Given this alone, Zhu Baoguo has an advantage over you. Zhai Sheng, your relationship with Nan Nan may not come to fruition. Since Zhu Baoguo and Qiao Nan always spend their time together, they may grow to like each other. By then, you will be out of the picture.”

Zhai Hua spoke such harsh words to Zhai Sheng as if they were not related at all. She wanted to know if Zhai Sheng would be antagonized and go straight to the Zhu family’s residence to take Qiao Nan away.

Unfortunately, Zhai Sheng did not fall for her trap.

Nobody at the Zhai family could tell that Zhai Sheng was concerned about the fact that Qiao Nan was invited to the Zhu family’s residence for dinner. When Qiao Nan and Qiao Dongliang were safely sent back to the small quad by the Zhu family, he also did not reveal any displeasure. It was only when he was playing chess with Elder Zhu did he reveal a slight hint of what he was feeling.

Recalling what Zhai Hua said yesterday, Zhai Sheng stretched out his arm to take the drink that Qiao Nan prepared for him. He took a sip and smiled.

There was no way that Nan Nan would fancy Zhu Baoguo. It was no use that they were suitable.

“Nan Nan, the Lunar New Year is coming. Have you forgotten about something?” After drinking a mouthful of water, Zhai Sheng reminded Qiao Nan of his purpose here today.

“Yes, I remember, but Elder Lin must be very busy recently. I wanted to go last time, but his house was full of people, so I was scared away.” Qiao Nan knew that Zhai Sheng was referring to Lin Yuankang who took her in as his last pupil half a year ago.

When Qiao Nan first went to the Lin family’s residence, she had seen it for herself the crowd at the residence. However, she did not expect that the situation would be the same when she went there for the second time. In fact, it was much more crowded than before. She did not understand why there would be so many people waiting at the doorway and refusing to leave.

“It is all because of you that your master has to put up with all these troubles. As long as nobody knows of your identity as his last pupil, they will not give up and want to try their luck. Your master has suffered a lot for your sake.” Zhai Sheng locked his gaze on Qiao Nan, but he sounded very calm.

“In that case, master will have to endure all the trouble in the future,” Qiao Nan said hurriedly. If her identity was exposed, would others be mad at her for taking away the position that they had longed for?

Zhu Baoguo had no idea what Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan were talking about. They talked to each other as if nobody was around. He felt like an outsider to them. He could not help but turn sullen.

Something was not right with him today. He used to hate the sight of Zhai Sheng, but he never disliked him as much as today. He could not wait for him to get away from Xiao Qiao’s side.

Zhu Baoguo really wanted to know about the ‘master’ that Qiao Nan and Zhai Sheng were talking about, but he was too proud to ask them.

“Nan Nan, are you around? I am here to see you.”

“Oh my god! Just what day is this?! Even she has come over for a visit as well?!”

Chapter 320: I Apologized to You

Qiao Nan was not the only one who could tell who was at the door. Zhu Baoguo could tell as well. “What is Qiao Zijin doing here?”

“I don’t know.” Qiao Nan shook her head. Since Qiao Zijin was here, she had to open the door for her. She was now on winter break. There was nowhere she could be except at home. She could not hide or pretend that she was not at home either. “Sister, why are you... here with Wang Yang?”

Qiao Nan was about to ask why Qiao Zijin was here when she saw Wang Yang with Qiao Zijin.

“I came with Yang Yang.” Qiao Zijin smiled. She pushed the door open and squeezed in. “Yang Yang, come in quickly. The wind is very strong outside. Be sure not to catch a cold. Treat this as your own house. If you need anything, just tell me.”

Qiao Nan knitted her eyebrows and did not say anything.

Wang Yang curled the corners of his lips and walked past Qiao Nan. He had a provocative and mockery look in his eyes.

“What a crowd.” When she entered the room, Qiao Zijin noticed that not only Zhu Baoguo was there, but the ‘Brother Zhai’ she met at the hospital was there as well. Her smile became strained at seeing all of them. One of them was a young and promising boy, while the other was an outstanding man. Both were giants among men. Sooner or later, they would have big achievements.

However, these two excellent young men always mixed with Qiao Nan. Qiao Zijin gritted her teeth. They must be blind. She was so much better and beautiful than Qiao Nan.

In comparison, why would they choose to be with Qiao Nan but ignore her?

“Yang Yang, have a seat. I will give you a cup of hot water.” Fortunately, although Zhu Baoguo and Zhai Sheng did not know how to appreciate her, there were others who could tell that she was better than Qiao Nan.

“Okay.” Wang Yang sat down cautiously at one side. He was not as at ease as he was before. He had already received news that Zhu Baoguo came to look for Qiao Nan, but he did not expect that Zhai Sheng would be there as well.

Wang Yang might be fearless, but he had a guilty conscience with Zhai Sheng around. He did not dare to be as arrogant as he used to be.

He could scheme against Zhu Baoguo, but there was no way that he could win over Zhai Sheng.

“Nan Nan, where is the teacup?” Qiao Zijin wanted to play the host to Wang Yang, but unfortunately, Qiao Zijin and Ding Jiayi had never been in this house, so she did not know where Qiao Nan kept her cutlery. “Nan Nan, come over and help me. You are not a guest, so why are you sitting with the guests? Come here.”

Qiao Nan smiled but she refused to help Qiao Zijin. “This is not your house. Since you want to play host, do as you like. Why would you ask me where the cutlery are and want me to help you?”

“Nan Nan, is this how you should behave?” Qiao Zijin pulled a long face. How dared Qiao Nan disgrace her in front of these outsiders! “I am your sister!”

“Yes, you are merely my sister.” Qiao Zijin could not be thinking that since she was tolerant of their mother, she would treat her sister in the same manner, could she? Where did Qiao Zijin get the idea from?

Ding Jiayi was her mother, while Qiao Zijin was only her sister. If Qiao Zijin expected the same treatment as their mother, she had been thinking too much.

“You!” Qiao Zijin flushed. “You should look at the situation before you throw a tantrum. You will be eighteen years old in another year. You will be an adult by then. Don’t you find it embarrassing to throw a tantrum in front of the guests?”

“Embarrassing?” Qiao Nan chuckled. “Wang Yang has waited a long time for that cup of water. Are you sure you want to continue to bicker with me and make Wang Yang goes without water?”

Qiao Zijin looked at Wang Yang and knew that she could not do anything about Qiao Nan. She had to prepare the drink by herself.

Initially, Qiao Zijin wanted to make Qiao Nan look bad in front of the three guests. She did not expect that she would be bringing shame to herself and that Qiao Nan would be so domineering.

Without Ding Jiayi's help, it was not easy for Qiao Zijin to order Qiao Nan around.

Qiao Zijin dared not try anything funny after she was taught a lesson by Qiao Nan. "Yang Yang, here's your tea."

"Thank you." It seemed that Qiao Zijin was defenseless against Qiao Nan. Wang Yang thought to himself whether he had chosen the wrong person. If Qiao Zijin was only capable of such feats, he was not willing to waste his time and effort on her.

"I intend to study with Zhu Baoguo. Are both of you here to join us?" After the two of them sat down, Qiao Nan lifted her chin, pointed to the homework on the table, and asked bluntly.

"This is a good idea. Tomorrow, Yang Yang and I will bring our homework with us. How about the four of us do our homework together? Today is too rushed. I have forgotten to bring my homework," Qiao Zijin said with a smile.

"Since you are not here to study, what are you doing here today?" Zhu Baoguo put down his pen and stared at Wang Yang coolly. Wang Yang must be here to make trouble.

Looking at Zhu Baoguo, Wang Yang put on a smile, playing out the image of a well-behaved boy. "I get along very well with Sister Zijin yesterday and I wanted to know more about her. Brother, it's been a long time since we last sat down and chatted. Since all of us are about the same age, we must have a lot of topics to talk about. If there were any misunderstandings or unhappiness in the past, we should just talk about it and clear up the misunderstandings. Brother, we are one family. Sister Zijin and Qiao Nan are one family as well. Since we are one family, we must not stay angry with each other. Yes, I ended up doing the wrong things even though my intentions were good. You have the right to be angry with me. Brother, I solemnly apologize to you. Please forgive me."

Wang Yang's apology was said so lightly. There was no sincerity in his words at all.

Regarding what happened to Zhu Baoguo during the middle school examination, anyone who had the wits about them could have guessed that Wang Yang definitely did not have good intentions toward Zhu Baoguo.

However, since they were relatives and had not severed ties or cut off contact with each other, they allowed some latitude by not spelling everything out lest they might feel awkward.

Wang Yang made use of this and refused to admit that he harbored evil intentions toward Zhu Baoguo. He tried to understate his actions by saying that he had good intentions.

“Brother, I was wrong. A mere apology will definitely not be enough. How about I give you something that you desire the most? With this, you should accept my apology. Brother, I know my mistakes. I really didn’t mean it. Brother, as you are magnanimous, you must not be angry with me.”

Zhu Baoguo put down his pen, crossed his arms about his chest, and looked at Wang Yang cautiously. “You want to give me something as an apology? What do you want to give me?”

“Since I want to make an apology, of course I have to give you whatever it is that you most desire.”