

RTAMM 471

Chapter 471: It Is Only Right to Support Your Wife Financially

At the thought of Zhai Sheng's situation and family background, Qiao Dongliang felt that Zhai Sheng and Qiao Nan's relationship was too unreal. "Nan Nan, I heard from the neighbors that there's an occasion whereby a girl came to our house and created a fuss. She said that you've snatched her boyfriend. What happened?"

As it was nearing Qiao Nan's examination period previously, Qiao Dongliang endured and dared not question much despite knowing this matter. He was afraid that Qiao Nan would be distracted. Nevertheless, he no longer needed to have such consideration today.

"Dad, this matter is rather complicated. I can't explain to you clearly in such a short time. That woman was referring to Brother Zhai, but Brother Zhai was not related to her in any way. As for the fiancée and fiancé that she mentioned, they were also not true. That day, Chief Zhai and Auntie Miao also came here to clarify the matter with that woman. It has got nothing to do with me."

"I did hear a little about that." Otherwise, he would not have endured until today to ask about it. "Nan Nan, how do the other family members of the Zhai family feel about the matter between Zhai Sheng and you?"

"Auntie Miao does not know yet, but she seems to have some objections about someone like me."

"True enough..." It was his fault. As a father, he could not provide Nan Nan with a good life and this had affected her life. She had to be shunned by others when looking for a marriage partner.

"Chief Zhai knew about us. He was not pleased, but he did not comment too much about it." Chief Zhai was basically adopting a wait-and-see attitude.

Qiao Dongliang jumped in shock. "Chief Zhai knew about the two of you and didn't ask you to break up?" How could that be?!

"Nan Nan, don't sweet-talk me. I've long guessed that their family would disagree. I just didn't want you to be too hard on yourself. Hence, I didn't want you to be together with Zhai Sheng. Zhai Sheng is outstanding, too outstanding. Our family is not compatible with him."

“Dad, I really didn’t lie to you. Think about it yourself. If Chief Zhai really wants Brother Zhai and me to break up, he can come and look for you. It’s more direct and straightforward that way. Did he look for you?”

Chief Zhai did request for Qiao Nan to break up with Brother Zhai that day but Qiao Nan refused to. Thereafter, Chief Zhai did not make any further attempt to do so, let alone take any concrete action.

Qiao Dongliang first nodded and then shook his head. “You’re right. Yes, Chief Zhai did not look for me. Nan Nan, what do you think he meant by this?” Madam Zhai was not agreeable, but was Chief Zhai agreeable?

Qiao Nan replied honestly. “I don’t know. Dad, don’t think too much. We will let nature takes its own course. There will always be a way to settle this matter. Right, Dad, I’ll give Brother Zhai a call, in case he gets people to send us things again without giving us any prior notice.”

The refrigerator was a big appliance. In another two years’ time, air conditioner and computer would become prevalent.

If Brother Zhai bought all of these items one by one, Auntie Miao would be able to guess their relationship without the need for anyone to tell her.

“...” Qiao Dongliang felt a little embarrassed. “Make the call. I’ll go out and do some marketing.”

Once Qiao Dongliang left, Qiao Nan gave Zhai Sheng a call.

“Hello, Nan Nan, have you finished your exams?” As soon as he received the call, Zhai Sheng guessed that Nan Nan was the caller. “Five days later, I have ten days of leave. I’ll be able to come back.”

“Oh, you’re coming back. No wonder...” Realization dawned on Qiao Nan.

“No wonder what?” Nan Nan was implying something with her words.

Qiao Nan swallowed her saliva before saying, "I heard that Shi Qing is not from Ping Cheng. She could actually return home after taking the examinations and seek her Ping Cheng relatives' help to collect her academic results. However, I heard this morning that Shi Qing did not prepare to go back. She will be staying at Qiu Chenxi's house."

"You already knew about her relationship with Qiu Chenxi?"

"Could I not know? On the first day of my examination, Qiu Chenxi came to our school early in the morning and gave Shi Qing good publicity in front of my whole class. This Shi Qing is quite formidable. She could, in fact, skip a grade and study with the third-year students, yet she wanted to compete with me for the top place in the first-year cohort. As I was in a more relaxed state, Shi Qing shunned me for not being serious enough and said that I'm giving up on myself. Brother Zhai, Shi Qing said she wished to compete with me. Tell me, should I?"

"As long as you're happy."

"If I don't compete with her, can you accept it?" Could she really act according to her own wishes? Brother Zhai was really so generous this time?

Zhai Sheng relaxed his eyebrows. The three vertical lines on his forehead earlier disappeared. "Is it because you don't wish to, or is it because you don't like me?"

"Don't wish to compete."

"So, that means you like me?"

"Yes..." After Qiao Nan replied, she realized that she had fallen into Zhai Sheng's trap.

Zhai Sheng's deep and happy voice could be heard. "Similarly, I like you too. As long as you're happy, no matter what decision you make, I'll support you." He was not so anxious or childish to feel that Nan Nan needed to accept Shi Qing's challenge and work hard to guard her top place in the cohort to prove that she liked him. It did not mean that she did not like him or was giving him up if she did not compete.

"Nan Nan, you seem to have forgotten. I'm twenty-three, not thirteen years old this year."

Qiao Nan's ears turned red. She moved the phone receiver slightly further away from her ears. Using his voice to seduce others... He was flouting the rules!

After she suppressed her flustered feelings, Qiao Nan then placed the phone receiver back on her ears. "Brother Zhai, my dad asked me to tell you not to buy big appliances for my house anymore. After all, this house belongs to the school. Moreover, it's too easy for Auntie Miao to discover them. You made my dad accept your gifts suddenly, and he felt bad about it. This time, he accepted your fridge. In the future, he can still pay you back by working harder. But if you send us more gifts, my family's wealth can't compete with that of yours. If we can't repay you, my dad is afraid that he has to sell his daughter to repay the debts."

"Gifts blind the eyes. If Uncle Qiao can spare me the rod next time and decisively let me marry his daughter, then that will be the best." He did have the intention to ask them to repay the debts. In that way, he could save himself the need to pass the hurdle of the father-in-law.

It was not only the refrigerator. Zhai Sheng wanted to buy them everything that the Qiao family lacked.

He did not really want Qiao Dongliang to owe him anything. Zhai Sheng was just afraid that Qiao Nan did not live comfortably, and that it would be inconvenient for her not to have the necessities at home.

Qiao Nan did not know that Zhai Sheng was not only thinking of sending gifts to them, but he also nearly considered whether to take over paying all the electricity, water, and miscellaneous bills of the Qiao family.

Qiao Nan was the woman he loved. Moreover, she was someone he must marry and would be his children's mother.

He was supporting his own wife financially and buying a few things for her. Why couldn't he do that?

In short, anything that had to do with Qiao Nan, Zhai Sheng wanted to take them on himself.

"Brother Zhai, I'm serious. If you want to continue doing this, I don't know if I'll run away in fear, but my dad will definitely be frightened." Qiao Nan was both angry and helpless. She really could not tell that Brother Zhai had a tendency toward male chauvinism.

Chapter 472: Listen to Your Wife

“Shi Qing already knew about the matter between us. Fortunately, she has not told Qiu Chenxi. Otherwise, Qiu Chenxi will surely create a fuss and make the whole world know about it. At that time, how am I going to face Auntie Miao? Auntie Miao does have quite a good impression of me, but if this happens, what will she think of it? I’m not only concerned about my dad. I’m also afraid that Auntie Miao will realize it herself without anyone telling her. Brother Zhai, I know that you want to be good to me. There will be opportunities to do so in the future. But now, we can’t let our relationship go to light yet. Control, we have to be in control.”

There was a man who could not wait to bring all the good stuff in the world to her. No woman would dislike this kind of treatment.

However, for the sake of a longer and better future ahead, it was not appropriate to do so at this juncture.

After a round of scolding from Qiao Nan, Zhai Sheng, who usually only disciplined others instead of the other way round, was not angry. Instead, he smiled sullenly. “Right, we have a lot of time in the future. I have an entire lifetime to be good to you. Certainly, we should not be anxious about just one or two days. Nan Nan, you thought about this more thoroughly than me. Rest assured. I’ll also be more careful in the future to ensure that we can eventually be together. To enable the two of us to get married successfully and be together forever, I’ll give more consideration to what I do.”

Qiao Nan’s words did not mention anything about marriage, but the underlying meaning was to be with Zhai Sheng for life.

How could Zhai Sheng not feel pleased when he heard this?

“Brother Zhai, can you stop joking and be more sincere? I’m talking to you about serious matters.” Qiao Nan stomped her feet in fury. It was completely different from the calm and nonchalant composure that she held when she met Shi Qing that morning.

“Aren’t I being serious with you? Aren’t you the one who talked about lifetime first?” Zhai Sheng drank a mouthful of water. Nevertheless, he had a greater belief in the hurried and sweet kiss that they had in the small alley that day.

That was both Qiao Nan's and Zhai Sheng's first kiss. It began so suddenly and the process was not very smooth. Regardless, the outcome was beautiful.

Thinking about his lackluster performance that day, Zhai Sheng drank another mouthful of water to moisten his dry throat. Next time. Next time, his performance would definitely not disappoint Nan Nan.

Qiao Nan's face was red. "Brother Zhai, do you believe that I will hang up on you?" Clearly, Brother Zhai had been so good to her previously. He accommodated and sided with her in everything. Why did Brother Zhai like to tease and bully her after they became boyfriend and girlfriend?

Qiao Nan, who did not have much experience about romantic relationships, did not know that when a man really loved a woman, that man would certainly only think of how to 'bully' that woman after being with her.

"I believe." Zhai Sheng adjusted his tone. "Since you've already said it, I'll definitely do accordingly. Wait for me to go back."

Once Zhai Sheng turned serious, that fire of anxiety in Qiao Nan's heart earlier vanished immediately. It was as if the fire was put out by a basin of cold water. "I'll wait for you to come back. Not chatting anymore. My dad should be back soon. Although my dad asked me to make this call, he'll feel uneasy if he really sees me calling you. Bye, Brother Zhai."

"Bye."

When he heard the beeping sound coming from the phone, Zhai Sheng put down the 'searing hot' phone in his hand.

Just as what Zhai Hua said, since he knew Nan Nan, he had been going home more often. The total number of times that he had gone back in the past few years was less than that of the past year.

However, he could not bring himself not to go back. His heart and lungs were there.

“Regiment Commander Zhai, did you just finish your call with Mrs. Regiment Commander?” Zhou Jun came in with a report.

“Yes.”

“Regiment Commander Zhai, you’re really going back to Ping Cheng again? After you’ve gone back, my leave won’t be approved anymore?” Zhou Jun was both happy and depressed. He was sad that his regiment commander was going back and could not approve of his leave. He was happy that his regiment commander found someone that he liked and that they would have Mrs. Regiment Commander very soon.

“What do you think?” Zhai Sheng lifted his eyes and gave Zhou Jun a glance.

“Regiment Commander Zhai, can I discuss it with you?” Zhou Jun laughed as an idea came to his mind.

Zhai Sheng asked Zhou Jun to take a seat. “Tell me.”

“Regiment Commander Zhai, for the sake of Mrs. Regiment Commander, you must put in more effort now. You don’t have to worry about the matters in the camp and just have to leave them to me. I’ll take care of them for you. When the matter between your wife and you is successful, can you help me when I’m wooing my wife then, Regiment Commander Zhai? I also wish to get out of singlehood and lead a life with wife and children.”

Nan Nan was still young and had to study for a few more years. She was busier than him. Even if he could spare the time to look for Nan Nan, Nan Nan would not have the time for him. She would be fully focused on her studies.

He might as well make use of this period to work hard for his career and fight for a better future for Nan Nan. In this way, he could also give Nan Nan ample time to complete her studies.

Zhou Jun had a great plan, but it was not better than that of Zhai Sheng.

A good wife would not wait. What was crucial was the ability to take action quickly, accurately, and mercilessly!

After hearing Zhou Jun's words, Zhai Sheng displayed a good attitude that was rare. "Yes." He was always concerned about the family situation of the soldiers under his wing. There was no reason for him to disagree.

When Nan Nan and his marriage report had been filed and approved, regardless of how difficult it would be in the future, he would find ways to arrange for Zhou Jun when he wanted to take leave then.

"Regiment Commander Zhai, I'm so fortunate to be under your wing!" The extremely foolish Zhou Jun did not realize that he would no longer have any fate left with Qiao Nan if he waited until the day he could be on leave.

He could not make it in time to woo the lady that he had his eyes on. That lady had already been confirmed by his 'evil' regiment commander to be Mrs. Regiment Commander. He even had to greet her when he met her in the future.

Would anything be worse than this in the whole world?

On the other hand, as she promised herself, Qiao Nan really gave herself five days of break. In those five days, Qiao Nan would only do a few things.

First of all, she would sleep. In the twenty-four hours a day, Qiao Nan would sleep for almost ten hours, more than eight hours at night and more than an hour in the afternoon.

Secondly, she would jog after waking up. The air in the morning was fresh and the weather was considered cool and comfortable. At this time of the day, jogging and perspiring would make one feel extremely good.

Thirdly, she would watch television and have meals.

Qiao Nan's life was considered carefree. The lives of Qiu Chenxi and Shi Qing, this pair of cousins, though, were not as happy.

In the house of the Qiu family, Qiu Chenxi and Shi Qing could not see eye to eye with each other. Qiu Chenxi was also quite smart. She graduated from a prominent university. Nevertheless, in terms of intelligence, Qiu Chenxi completely could not hold a candle to Shi Qing. Among the people that Qiu Chenxi knew, only Zhai Sheng was more outstanding than Shi Qing.

In other words, besides Zhai Sheng, Shi Qing was the most formidable person that Qiu Chenxi had ever seen.

Shi Qing had a similar background as Zhai Sheng. Her ancestors were also veteran revolutionaries. The Shi family became successful based on their own merits and hard work. They were completely different from the Qiu family who relied on others and pulled strings to attain what they had today.

Chapter 473: Inviting and Sending Off Someone

It was not just Shi Qing's family background. Her personal qualities were also shockingly outstanding. As such, Qiu Chenxi did not feel good about it.

If Qiu Chenxi had a choice, she would not have 'invited' Shi Qing to Ping Cheng to help her find the hidden vixen.

"Qing Qing, it's already the summer vacation. Are you really not going back to Mo Du or Beijing? You must know that your maternal, as well as paternal, grandpas and grandmas will definitely miss you." Someone had told her that Brother Zhai would be coming back from the army in four days' time. This time, Brother Zhai had ten days of leave.

On this occasion, she would find all ways and means to be by Brother Zhai's side at all times. Although she might not make Brother Zhai take a liking to her or even marry her during these ten days, she would definitely not give that vixen a chance to continue to seduce Brother Zhai.

Of course, prior to this, Qiu Chenxi had to cajole Shi Qing back to where the latter came from.

Qiu Chenxi was more fearful than Qiao Nan of Shi Qing being a threat. She was not willing to let Shi Qing continue to remain in Ping Cheng.

"I'm not going back." After Shi Qing finished attempting a mathematics sum, she turned to the next page. "My dad told me that Brother Zhai will be coming back in two days' time. He has ten days of leave. If I go back now, aren't I stupid? That being said, it's indeed already summer vacation. Aren't you going to Mo Du to visit my grandpa and grandma who are considered your maternal grandparents?"

“...” Qiu Chenxi paused for a while. She was stunned and did not reply.

Brother Zhai was coming back soon. How could she go to Mo Du to visit her maternal grandpa and grandma at this time? “Qing Qing, you’re unwilling to go back. Don’t tell me you’re afraid that you will lose out to Qiao Nan on your grades? If that’s the case, I can only say that you’ve been thinking too much. How is it possible that you will not score better than Qiao Nan? If you’re really concerned about your grades, then it’s no problem. When your results are out, or even when it’s still not out, I promise to help you make a call and find out about both Qiao Nan’s and your grades after the papers are marked. What do you think?”

Shi Qing put down her pen and stared at Qiu Chenxi straight in the eye. “Have I not been clear enough in my earlier words? No! Brother Zhai is coming back. I won’t leave. I transferred to Ping Cheng High School to study for the sake of Brother Zhai. Qiu Chenxi, I know what you’re thinking of. Don’t treat me as a fool who doesn’t know anything. I can choose not to pursue the reason that you looked for me, but don’t try your little tactics on me again. Be careful of outwitting yourself. It’s not a must that I have to stay at your house. If you’re not willing to see me, with one phone call, my dad will buy a house for me in Ping Cheng. At that time, your family has to think of how to explain to my grandpa and grandma.”

The maternal granddaughter was, of course, different from the paternal one. Qiu Chenxi had better consider this carefully before deciding on what to do.

“How will that happen? Our house is so big and I was the one who invited you to Ping Cheng. How can I let you stay outside? Besides our family, you don’t have any other relatives in Ping Cheng. Even if uncle buys you a house, I’m also fearful for your safety if you stay alone outside. Qing Qing, don’t be angry. Aren’t I just concerned about you? I’m not worried about other matters. In the past, Brother Zhai likes to stay in the army. He used to come home not more than three times per year, but it is different now. I’m just afraid that you’ll feel sad if Brother Zhai comes back for the purpose of seeing the vixen.”

“Sad?” Shi Qing put down her pen. “In the past, when I started liking Brother Zhai, you told me that he’s your fiancé. You’re not scared that I’d be sad at that time. Now, Brother Zhai is only having a relationship with someone, what should I be sad about? Cousin, you’re thinking too much.”

Qiu Chenxi could hardly laugh. This was a lie made by Qiu Chenxi to Shi Qing when they were young.

At that time, the Qiu family and Zhai Sheng had not agreed with each other, but Qi Minlan had been telling Qiu Chenxi that she would definitely marry Zhai Sheng when she grew up. Hence, when she knew that Shi Qing liked Zhai Sheng as well, out of boastfulness and fear, Qiu Chenxi simply told Shi Qing that Zhai Sheng was his fiancé, Shi Qing's future cousin-in-law.

“Cousin, be rest assured. You've lost. I'll win it back for you. I gave up Brother Zhai in the past because of you. Now, there's no reason for me to do so. You just have to wait to call Brother Zhai your cousin-in-law.” These words, ‘cousin-in-law’, of Shi Qing were certainly targeted at the ‘cousin-in-law’ that Qiu Chenxi told her many years ago.

“Oh, really?” Qiu Chenxi almost lost her temper and quarreled with Shi Qing. “Then, read your book. I won't disturb you.” If they continued, she was afraid that she would not be able to control herself.

“Mom, the thing that I'm most afraid of is probably going to happen.” After coming out of Shi Qing's bedroom, Qiu Chenxi ran over to look for Qi Minlan. “My uncle is so capable. Mom, it's not that you don't know. I already knew that Brother Zhai is coming back and has ten days of leave. Could Shi Qing not know about it? She refused to go back to Mo Du or Beijing. This... What do you think we should do?”

“What's the hurry? It's easy to deal with Shi Qing. The outsider is the difficult one. Your uncle is capable. But because of this, Shi Qing was taught to be one kind. She's inflexible and doesn't know at all that she needs to fight for her own happiness. If your grandpa and uncle had used stronger tactics and made use of the relationship between the Shi family and the Zhai family, I would have married your Uncle Zhai in the past. After Shi Qing chases that woman away for you, you just have to be quicker than Shi Qing. She will definitely back out from the relationship on her own. If it's another woman, this may not be the case. It's fine that Shi Qing is not willing to leave now. Anyway, Zhai Sheng won't like her. What are you worried about?”

Qi Minlan was not anxious at all. She understood her niece's character very well.

If she was not sure of this, Qi Minlan would not allow her daughter to specially invite Shi Qing to Ping Cheng despite knowing that Shi Qing liked Zhai Sheng as well.

“It may be easier to invite someone to come rather than to ask her to leave.” Qiu Chenxi could not feel at ease. Zhai Sheng was too outstanding. In the past, Zhai Sheng ignored everyone. She was quite assured and felt that no one would be her opponent.

Now, she found out that Zhai Sheng actually knew how to love someone. Furthermore, he already had someone he liked. She thus felt threatened by each and every woman. Qiu Chenxi began to miss the Zhai Sheng in the past and his tendency to ignore everyone.

“Rest assured.” Qi Minlan laughed. “Right, Qing Qing has been here for about a month. Did she find out anything?”

“Forget it. She still bears a grudge against me. Most probably, she won’t tell me even if she finds anything.”

“That’s even better.” Qi Minlan was pleased. She extended her fingers, bright red polish painting her nails. “Since she didn’t tell you, it means she’s prepared to deal with that woman. That’s great. You can just sit and enjoy the fruits of her labor without doing anything. After Qing Qing chases that woman away, you can steadily marry Zhai Sheng. You just have to wait comfortably to be the chief’s wife.”

Chapter 474: No Longer Close after Adoption

Qiu Chenxi hesitated for a moment. “Will this matter be so easily resolved? Will Shi Qing be so good?” She did not need to do anything and just wait for Shi Qing to settle that woman. She would pick up the ‘ready-made’ success thereafter?

“Shi Qing aside, there’s still your uncle. I don’t know if Qing Qing is good, but we can work hard to create this outcome. That’s enough.” Qi Minlan patted Qiu Chenxi’s head. “Chenxi, Mom did so much for you. You must not disappoint Mom in the future. When you encounter a problem, first, don’t panic. Don’t be like Mom in the past. Clearly, there’re room and opportunity for me to work hard, but I gave up and lost everything just because I was stubborn and angry. There’s no use being angry. There’s nothing more important than your own future. Understand?”

Speaking of this matter, Qi Minlan felt regretful.

Many years ago, Old Master Zhai suddenly brought Miao Jing back and insisted Zhai Yaohui to marry her.

At that time, Miao Jing was staying in the Zhai family. Zhai Yaohui did not vent his anger on Miao Jing on the account of giving Old Master Zhai face. His attitude toward Miao Jing was considered quite good, like that of an elder brother.

Qi Minlan had a one-sided wish that Zhai Yaohui would take actions for her sake. She hoped that Zhai Yaohui would target and scold Miao Jing to chase her away in order to protect Qi Minlan's place in the Zhai family.

Who would have known Zhai Yaohui would say that Miao Jing was innocent and he was thus unwilling to bully Miao Jing? He only wanted to convince Old Master Zhai in a peaceful manner.

Qi Minlan was infuriated and felt that she was not important to Zhai Yaohui, that Zhai Yaohui did not love her enough. Otherwise, she would not have given him such suggestions. Zhai Yaohui himself should have been the one who came up with them and took action.

To anger Zhai Yaohui, Qi Minlan simply initiated a breakup with Zhai Yaohui. She told him that they needed not to see each other anymore and Zhai Yaohui could be an obedient son. He could listen to Old Master Zhai and marry Miao Jing. Wouldn't that be a happy ending for all?

Qi Minlan, who lost her temper, felt that Zhai Yaohui would definitely look for her thereafter and explain himself. He would then agree to take actions against and force Miao Jing to leave.

Unexpectedly, having not met for a month, the Zhai family simply sent wedding invitations to all their relatives and friends, stating that Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing would be getting married in two months' time.

Zhai Yaohui was a soldier. He had to file a marriage report before the official marriage.

Anyway, when Qi Minlan received the news, the wedding invitation of Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing had already been given out. Moreover, the marriage report had been filed and approved.

As such, the marriage between Zhai Yaohui and Miao Jing was cast in stone.

Next, Qi Minlan did the second thing that she would regret for life.

Zhai Yaohui wanted to marry Miao Jing. It was easy for Zhai Yaohui to marry a woman, but similarly, it was not difficult for her to get married to a man. She simply requested Old Master Shi to find a partner for her, who turned out to be the Qiu Qin now.

Zhai Yaohui was quick to marry Miao Jing, but Qi Minlan took about half a year to be married to Qiu Qin.

It was only now, when she was much older and her temperament had changed, that Qi Minlan regretted her impulsiveness in the past.

If she did not initiate the breakup and persisted, if she cried out her grief to Zhai Yaohui instead of forcing him, Zhai Yaohui might not have married Miao Jing so quickly. They even gave birth to Zhai Hua.

Zhai Yaohui was so good to Zhai Hua. Similarly, she could also give birth to a daughter for Zhai Yaohui. On what grounds could Miao Jing, who came from the village, become the wife of the chief?!

“Mom, don’t worry. I understand what you are saying. I definitely won’t be willful. Zhai Sheng’s character is aloof and tends to ignore others. It’s been so many years. See, I didn’t lose my temper and continue to be devoted to him, right? But Mom, if the matter is going to turn out this way, will grandpa and uncle...”

They invited Shi Qing here to deal with the woman that Zhai Sheng liked. After the matter was resolved, she would then snatch Zhai Sheng away.

Grandpa and uncle were both smart people. They might see through the ploy. At that time, would the two families’ kinship be negatively affected because of this matter?

“I know what you’re worried about. If it’s not successful, then don’t do it. Don’t forget that my surname is Qi and not Shi. This society is like that. A daughter is not as worthy as a son. I’ve been adopted since young. Your grandpa owes it to me. I’ll ask him to repay me using Shi Qing. What’s wrong with that? Shi Qing’s thinking is as inflexible as your grandpa and uncle. Such a good man like Zhai Sheng, she will not be able to keep him for a lifetime even if she manages to snatch him over temporarily.”

Qi Minlan did not feel guilty at all to scheme against her biological niece.

Qi Minlan was initially a child of the Shi family. Her surname was Qi, and not Shi, because Old Master Shi let one of his former comrades cum sworn friends of life and death adopt her.

At that time, during a war, the former comrade not only saved Old Master Shi but also became seriously injured as a result. He became an abnormal man since.

Because of his injury, the former comrade's health had not been good. He was not a normal man anymore and was unwilling to be a burden to a woman. Even when there was peace in the country, he did not marry anyone and had been living alone.

Qi Minlan was very adorable when she was young. She was raised by the Shi family then and was fair and chubby.

There was no man who would not want a child in this world.

Seeing that Old Master Zhai had both son and daughter and he had nothing, the former comrade felt dejected and depressed.

When he saw his former comrade in such a state, Old Master Shi simply suggested him to adopt his son. His former comrade wished to have a child but was too embarrassed to take someone else's son. To fulfill his wish to be a father, he requested to adopt Qi Minlan as his daughter in the end.

Since Old Master Shi was even willing to give his son, of course, he would not decline this request. Hence, Shi Minlan became Qi Minlan.

After the former comrade had Qi Minlan, this daughter, he was happy for a period of time.

However, he had accumulated too many severe and lingering illnesses during the wartime. As such, he passed away just after a few years of peace.

Hence, it could be said that even though Qi Minlan's surname was Qi, and not Shi, she had grown up in the Shi family. She lived with the Old Master Shi couple and grew up with her brother, Shi Peng.

However, Qi Minlan was the only one who knew whether it felt the same.

“Mom, I’ll listen to you. I’ll certainly guard whatever is mine tightly in my hands and not let anyone snatch it away.” Qiu Chenxi nodded. Now, she could not even take care of herself, let alone Shi Qing.

With the situation of the Shi family, and as Shi Qing was her uncle’s only daughter, there was no worry that Shi Qing would not be able to find a good man in the future.

Even if the man that Shi Qing found did not have a good family background, as long as her uncle was willing to nurture him and pass over his connections and position in the Shi family entirely to him, Shi Qing’s boyfriend would not have a low status in the future.

However, in her case, she only had Brother Zhai. Therefore, she must not lose Brother Zhai and could only make use of Shi Qing.

“Principal Meng, we’ve finished marking the papers and collating the scores for the first-year cohort. Would you like to take a look? This year, the results are really...”

Chapter 475: A Step Late

The teacher passed the results of the first-year students to Principal Meng.

“Pssh...” At the sight of the ranking on the list, Principal Meng could not help but hold his breath. “Could you all have made a mistake?”

“No, we’ve checked a number of times.” The teacher shook his head. This year, a mistake was possible for the results of any other cohort but definitely not for that of the first year.

“Teacher Liu must be elated,” Principal Meng removed his glasses and said smilingly.

“They are students of Ping Cheng High School. Principal Meng, just wait to bask in glory in two years’ time!” This year, first-year students were really excellent. They were better than what he had

heard. Two years later, the high schools in and around Ping Cheng would have to see Ping Cheng High School take the lead and glory!

Within a short period of three days, Ping Cheng High School had completed collating the results of the first-year cohort.

Qiao Nan, who was completely unaware of this, continued to eat, drink, and sleep merrily at home.

“Xiao Qiao, you’re still not prepared to go out and have fun? Do you intend to shut yourself at home for the entire summer vacation?” Zhu Baoguo had long regained his senses. He called Qiao Nan with a happy mood.

Qiao Nan picked up the phone as she was watching the television. “I’m not going out. I’ve been so tired for the whole semester. Can’t I rest for a few days? Besides, don’t forget that you’re also someone who is not so free. I heard that Shi Qing did not intend to transfer out of our school. This summer vacation, you’ll be very tied up.”

The little bully, Zhu Baoguo, was actually beaten down by the young lady, Shi Qing.

If Zhu Baoguo did not train his body well and defeat Shi Qing, given Zhu Baoguo’s character, he most likely would not have the heart to focus on his studies in the future.

“Xiao Qiao, can you not be such a spoilsport and anger me with those words of yours? Don’t talk about that violent transformer lady. She’s so fierce! Certainly, no man will dare to marry her in the future. Who dares to marry her will be beaten and sprawled below the bed!”

In terms of physical strength, most likely, not many men in this world could win against Shi Qing.

Shi Qing was clearly quite petite, but that strength of hers was horribly strong during a fight. Zhu Baoguo’s face turned black instantly when he thought of it.

Xiao Qiao was right. As a man, he was beaten down by a woman. How was he going to face anyone in the future?!

“You’re still dawdling? If you stay at home every day, when are you going to win against Shi Qing in a fight? Can I still walk with confidence in front of Shi Qing next time?” It was rare that Qiao Nan started to stir up trouble between Zhu Baoguo and Shi Qing.

There was no other choice. Zhu Baoguo was a stubborn child with an abundance of energy.

If he were not given some pressure and goals, this stubborn child could be very annoying.

Two years ago, the elders of the Zhu family and the Lee family would bring Zhu Baoguo overseas every winter vacation. They could not do so during the summer vacation this year. The elders in the two families were already old. How could they still accompany Zhu Baoguo to travel everywhere as he wished?

Zhu Baoguo was not that close with the relatives of the Lee family. As for the relatives in the Zhu family, he was vexed with them and was unwilling to be close to his auntie, Zhu Qin.

As such, Zhu Baoguo had so much spare time that he could only look for Qiao Nan to have fun.

“But we have not collected the results, have we? I intend to collect the results slip before going to my dad’s camp for two months.” He did not believe that he would not be Shi Qing’s opponent after two months.

“Are you kidding me? We’ve already finished the exams and you’re anxious to collect the results? We can’t change the grades anyway. You can do whatever you wish. It’s just collecting the results, not applying for something. You don’t need to do so in person. Don’t waste your time. What do you think Shi Qing is doing now?”

“Are you trying to say that Shi Qing is so perverted that she will go to the camp to train with a bunch of guys despite already being so strong?”

“Are there more guys or ladies in the camp? Given Shi Qing’s ability, her opponents are most probably not ladies. Shi Qing’s father is quite a formidable character, right? During the period of the Republic of China, Shi Qing was considered the daughter of a warlord. She’s good. Do you think she’s better in fighting or archery? Zhu Baoguo, it’s not ugly to lose in your studies, but if you don’t work harder and lose out to the young lady physically... Haha, Zhu Baoguo, what will your dad think if he finds out about this?”

“Don’t tell my dad!” If he could not even win against a young lady, he would lose all of his face in front of his father.

“Whether I tell him is not important. Anyway, Shi Qing is too strong. Your dad will eventually hear about it from someone. Zhu Baoguo, you have to put in more effort. Don’t let your father say that his son can’t compete with other people’s daughter.”

“Xiao Qiao, which side are you on? Why are you helping Shi Qing in every word that you say? Don’t forget that Shi Qing is at odds with you. I fought with her for your sake.” Zhu Baoguo was not pleased. He had been dealt a blow by Qiao Nan’s words.

Qiao Nan tugged the corners of her lips. What she heard was that Shi Qing looked for Zhu Baoguo and not the other way round.

“You’re sure that you want to continue to bicker with me? I’m competing with Shi Qing on brainpower. You’ll decide what to do yourself.”

“...” Zhu Baoguo was silent for a while. “I’ll go to my dad’s camp in the afternoon.”

“That’s fine. There’s not much time left. Quickly pack up. You have to leave after your meal. Cheers, cheers, cheers! I have confidence in you. You’ll definitely be stronger than Shi Qing when you’re back.”

“That has to be!” Zhu Baoguo, who was cajoled into submission by Qiao Nan, hung up the phone in an energetic and high-spirited manner. Without a word, he went to his bedroom, packed a few clothes, and called Zhu Chengqi. “Dad, quickly send someone to pick me up.”

“Not fetching you. Come yourself.” Zhu Chengqi retorted without any reservation. “You’re not a three-year-old child and you still need someone to lead the way?”

“It’s fine if you’re not fetching me. I’ll go on my own!” Zhu Baoguo slammed the phone. After lunch, he said goodbye to Elder Zhu and ran off to the army with his small hand-carry luggage bag.

Within half an hour after Zhu Baoguo went out, Zhu Qin happily brought Wang Yang to the house of the Zhu family. “Baoguo, auntie is here. Hurry, pack some clothes and bring along your passport. Auntie decided to bring Yang Yang and you to Hong Kong to have fun.”

Wang Yang clenched his fists excitedly. Although Hong Kong was returned to China, he heard that Hong Kong was prosperous but a little unsafe. There were cases of hooligan fights.

If they brought Zhu Baoguo to Hong Kong, then they were not to blame if Zhu Baoguo lost his way and met with an accident!

Elder Zhu was carrying his teapot as he curled his lips with least expressions. "Alright, stop shouting. Baoguo is not at home."

"Not at home? Did he go to the house of the Qiao family to look for Qiao Nan again?"

Chapter 476: Already Agreed Upon

"What do you mean by play? Baoguo went looking for Qiao Nan to study. Didn't you notice that Baoguo's results are getting better recently?" Old Master Zhu rebutted in anger. It was no wonder that Baoguo could not accept Zhu Qin and Yang Yang. As his Auntie, Zhu Qin made Baoguo seem as if he only liked to play and fool around with young ladies and that he was a good-for-nothing.

Nobody would like an auntie who made inappropriate remarks.

"Yes, I shouldn't have said that. Baoguo and Qiao Nan are studying hard. I will fetch Baoguo back. It's the school holiday, time to relax. People from the Zhu family can't be nerds. Baoguo is a boy. He should not be cooped up at home. He should go out to have some fresh air. What if he gets sick from being cooped up at home?" Qiao Nan was just a young lady. She was one year younger than Zhu Baoguo.

Both of them would not have much learning to do.

In general, when boys entered high school, they would do better than female students. Qiao Nan could not take all the credit for Zhu Baoguo's good results. She was upset that Qiao Nan stood to gain from it.

"There's no need to fetch him."

“Is Baoguo going to come back by himself at this time?”

Old Master Zhu drank some tea before saying, “You are too anxious. I don’t even have the chance to complete my sentences. You don’t have to pick Baoguo up. He is not at the Qiao family’s residence. He has gone to look for Chengqi. He is with your brother.”

Old Master Zhu might not approve of everything that Baoguo did, but he was very supportive of Zhu Baoguo’s decision to stay in the army to train and toughen himself.

The men of the Zhu family had to undergo tough training and suffer hardships in the army to be able to call themselves worthy members of the Zhu family. They were not allowed to ride on their father’s success and enjoy the fruits of others without having toiled!

“With my brother? What are they doing?” Zhu Qin was dumbfounded. Why would Zhu Baoguo go to the army at such an early time of the year? “When will he be back?”

Wang Yang, who was uptight, relaxed. Zhu Baoguo would not be able to suffer the hardships. He certainly would not be able to stay in the army for long. Like what happened in the past, he would be back in a few days.

At most, they would postpone the trip to Hong Kong for a few days. There were a total of sixty-two days in the summer break. He had the time to wait.

In fact, Wang Yang ended up using the whole of the summer break, which was sixty-two days, to wait for Zhu Baoguo.

When he finally saw Zhu Baoguo back at home sixty-two days later, he was so tanned that he looked like a piece of charcoal.

“I have no idea when he will be back.”

“Alright, Dad, why don’t we do it this way? When Baoguo is back, can you give me a call? I will bring Baoguo and Yang Yang to Hong Kong for the holiday. What do you think?” Zhu Qin remained calm.

Zhu Chengqi seldom stayed at home. Zhu Baoguo rarely got the chance to see his father. He would only see him a few times in a year.

Now that Zhu Baoguo finally had a break, it was perfectly normal for the son to visit his father.

“Sure. When he is back, I will call you.” Old Master Zhu agreed.

Wang Yang took a deep breath and sat down next to Old Master Zhu. “Grandpa, since brother is not at home, why don’t I stay here for a period of time to accompany you?” In that case, if Zhu Baoguo returned, he would be the first to know.

“No need.” Elder Zhu put down the teapot. “I will be out visiting my former comrades for a few days.”

“That’s even better. Grandpa, I can accompany you. I don’t feel assured that you go by yourself.” The former comrades of his grandpa were of similar status to his grandpa. It would be good for him to know more about these people.

“Yes, Dad, let Yang Yang accompany you. If you go out by yourself, we will be worried.” Zhu Qin agreed. Zhu Baoguo was not the only one who was filial. Yang Yang was even more filial to his grandpa.

It was a pity that Yang Yang was after all the maternal grandson of Elder Zhu.

“No, we have already agreed that it will be a catch-up between us only this time. Nobody is allowed to bring anyone with them. I am no exception. Do you really think that I can’t take care of myself? Don’t worry. I won’t lose my way. I will be back in a few days.” Elder Zhu refused. He did not do it on purpose. The few of them had already agreed not to bring others with them.

They were former comrades and artillery troops. Some conversations and memories that they shared were not suitable for children to listen in.

Wang Yang forced a smile on his face. “Grandpa, are you really not going to bring me with you? Brother has gone to the army, and you refused to bring me with you. The summer break is so long. Who can I play with? Grandpa, can you bear to leave me behind?”

Elder Zhu hesitated for a short while. “Yang Yang, this won’t do. You are a young man. How can you be afraid of being by yourself? How is it possible that you have no friends? If not, you can give a call to your uncle and go to the army as well. Yang Yang, you are too thin and weak, just like your dad. As a man, you must have a strong and healthy body. You must exercise and train so that you can grow taller and stronger. Boys should not be feeble-looking. You will not be able to get a good wife in the future.”

Back then, Elder Zhu did not like Wang Qinglin as his son-in-law as he looked too feeble and weak, completely different from the men in the Zhu family. However, Zhu Qin liked Wang Qinglin for his scholarly mannerism and insisted on marrying him.

But Elder Zhu would not allow Wang Yang to grow up to be like Wang Qinglin.

Zhu Qin waved her hand continuously. “Dad, you must be too busy that you have forgotten that since a young age, Yang Yang is weaker than Baoguo. How can he withstand the tough training in the army? Since a young age, you would always leave my brother and me in the army. Now that I think about it, I can’t help but shudder. It was too terrifying. Don’t lead Yang Yang astray. Yang Yang, let’s go home now. When your brother returns, I will take both of you to Hong Kong to have fun.”

Elder Zhu was a soldier. Zhu Chengqi was a soldier as well. Since a young age, Zhu Qin had spent a lot of her time in the army. The first person she saw when she woke up and the last person she saw before she went to bed was the soldiers in the army. The sounds of their training, ‘one, two, three’, worked as her alarm to wake up and acted as her lullaby to sleep at night.

Because of the environment that she grew up in, Zhu Qin did not develop a love for the soldiers. Instead, she was very averse to them.

It was for this reason that she chose Wang Qinglin who was very different from the soldiers as her husband.

When things reached an extreme, they could only move in the opposite direction.

“Grandpa, I will go back with Mom first. When you return home, I will visit you again.” Wang Yang left with Zhu Qin in a hurry. He did not like the army and felt that life in the army was too tough.

He only needed to be clever enough to survive in the world. There was no need to be athletic. What was the use of being physically strong?

Zhu Baoguo was the best choice to train and exercise in the army.

As soon as Zhu Baoguo arrived at the army, Zhu Chengqi gave a call to Qiao Nan. "Yes, he's here."

"Good. Uncle Zhu, you must not allow Zhu Baoguo to go back home during these two months. You must put him through tough training. You must not do what you did in the past, worrying about tiring him out. Because of this, he has ended up being pampered and sheltered."

Chapter 477: A Girl Would Doll Herself Up for Him Who Loved Her

"Not this time." Zhu Chengqi's expression darkened. He had not expected that his son would be so weak that he would lose to a young lady like Shi Qing. Back then, he and Shi Qing's father joined the army at the same time.

At that time, it was Shi Peng who lost to him. But every dog has his day. Ten years later, he had a son, while Shi Peng had a daughter!

His son had an advantage over Shi Qing because of his gender, but he still lost to her. This time, even without Qiao Nan's reminder, Zhu Chengqi had already decided to make Zhu Baoguo go through hardcore training. He was such a disgrace to him.

"Alright, that's about all. Uncle Zhu, you must take care of yourself. Goodbye." After settling Zhu Baoguo's affair, Qiao Nan had nothing else to say to Zhu Chengqi.

After hanging up the phone, Qiao Nan sighed. Because of Chen Jun, she did not wish to keep in touch with the Zhu family if possible, particularly Zhu Chengqi.

In this life, Zhu Baoguo was still alive, but Zhu Chengqi had the intention to take her in as his goddaughter nonetheless. In the previous life, Zhu Baoguo had passed away. If it was according to what Zhu Chengqi said, that she resembled the daughter he and Zhu Baoguo's mother had wanted to have, then it was highly possible that Zhu Chengqi had wanted to take her in as his goddaughter in the previous life.

Even though she could only be Zhu Chengqi's goddaughter, given her status as his goddaughter, Wang Yang, who was the nephew, could never compare to her.

So, in fact, she could say that it was because of the Zhu family that Wang Yang targeted her and saw her as an eyesore.

Sometimes, when Qiao Nan thought about it, she felt that in a few lifetimes back, not only had she owed her mother and Qiao Zijin, but she might also have owed the Zhu family and Zhu Baoguo.

Two days later, after Qiao Nan had her breakfast, she hummed a rhyme and carried the schoolbag on her back, getting ready to go to school. She was in an especially good mood.

The school would be giving out the report cards, loads of summer break homework, and exam papers for practice to the students today. But it did not affect Qiao Nan's good mood.

"Nan Nan, you're in a skirt today!" Nan Nan never wore skirts to school. She would always wear pants to school. Qiao Dongliang was used to seeing her in pants. Today, he was surprised when she came out in a skirt.

"Yes, I'm wearing a skirt today." Qiao Nan nodded happily. She was in high spirits.

"Is this okay? Ever since you went to high school, I have never seen you in a skirt. Didn't you say that the girls in your school don't usually wear skirts?" At the sight of his beloved daughter in a skirt, Qiao Dongliang could not help but find the skirt too short. "Nan Nan, have you grown taller? This skirt is quite short. If you like skirts, I will give you money to buy a new skirt tomorrow. You must make sure to buy a skirt that is long enough."

"Dad, don't waste the money. I seldom wear skirts. I just feel like wearing it today." Qiao Nan looked at her skirt. It was not short. In fact, compared to miniskirts that would be in fashion decades later, it was considered quite long.

"Dad, I couldn't talk to you any longer as I have to go to school. Dad, if I end up with the second place in the level, you must not be disappointed. I have already preempted you. Don't think that I was being modest. I have already told you about the past results of the person who has the highest possibility of ranking first in the level."

“Yes, I know. I’m not muddleheaded. I understand. It is good enough to achieve second place. Don’t think too much about it.” Qiao Dongliang did not know whether to cry or laugh. He was not that concerned whether Nan Nan ranked first or not.

Besides, if Nan Nan ranked second, it was not that she had lagged behind. It was that she had a formidable opponent.

“Alright, Dad, I will go to school now. I am already quite pleased if I could rank second. I may even be selected as the top-three model students.” Qiao Nan put on her white gymnastics shoes and ran toward Ping Cheng High School.

Qiao Dongliang smiled as he watched his daughter left for school. When she had left for quite some time, it suddenly dawned on Qiao Dongliang that Qiao Nan must have a reason for wearing a skirt. “Could it be that since Zhai Sheng is coming back today, Nan Nan decided to wear a skirt?!”

“Crap, Nan Nan, you’re wearing a skirt! A skirt!” Tang Mengran cupped her face and shouted at the top of her lungs. “Why would you come to school in a skirt? Xu Tingting doesn’t even dare to wear a skirt to school. You are too much. You should have told me, so I could join you and wear a skirt.”

Tang Mengran would wear a skirt when she was at home. However, when she was at school, she would always wear pants.

Actually, the school did not have any rule that forbade female students from wearing skirts, but everyone seemed to have a tacit understanding and only wore pants to school. Even though they wanted to look pretty, they dared not be the oddballs.

Even though they were only there to get their report cards, it was still at the school. Why would Nan Nan be so daring to come in a skirt? “Nan Nan, are you thinking that since you can’t win against Shi Qing in your grades, you will beat her with looks? It’s a great idea! Nan Nan, I support you!”

One could not show others their weakness. It was just a few points apart in the exams, not too far apart.

“Shameless.” Xu Tingting ground her teeth. Who was Qiao Nan thinking of seducing with her skirt and exposed legs?

“Oh my god! Shi Qing is in a skirt as well! Did both of you agree to wear skirts today beforehand?” Shi Qing walked into the classroom in a lotus pink long skirt. Everyone in the first-year class one was dumbfounded.

Shi Qing said nothing when she noticed that Qiao Nan was in a white skirt.

“We didn’t.” It was just that she and Shi Qing had the same mentality. Knowing that Brother Zhai would be back today, they wore skirts. After all, a girl would doll herself up for him who loved her.

“I will return to my seat, lest Zhu Baoguo sees me and wants to drive me away.” Tang Mengran felt gloomy. She wanted to wear a skirt as well.

“There’s no need to return to your seat. Zhu Baoguo will not come to school today. The school will probably send his report card to the Zhu family’s residence.”

“Really? Then, I will not leave and sit next to you.” Tang Mengran decided not to leave. “Nan Nan, you seem to be in a good mood today.” Tang Mengran had nothing to do, so she propped her head with her hand and looked at Qiao Nan.

“Nothing. It’s just that the person who ‘reads books’ with me has come back. Of course, I am happy.” Qiao Nan thought of how the students in Ping Cheng High School would use ‘reading in the library’ as a cover for dating and made an inference to it.

However, nobody realized what she was referring to.

“Come on, it’s just reading books. Nan Nan, if you continue to be like this, you will turn into a nerd.” They needed to read a lot of books and revise when they were in school. There were twelve months in a year, and she had spent at least nine months on reading. She would like to have a break during the holiday.

“Qiao Nan.” Shi Qing, who sat behind Qiao Nan, snorted all of a sudden and gave Tang Mengran a scare.

“What is it?” Qiao Nan calmed Tang Mengran down and turned to look at Shi Qing.

“Qiu Chenxi went to the army yesterday.”

“It is useless.” What she did would not work.

“Are you sure?” Brother Zhai seemed to like girls like Qiu Chenxi. Yesterday, Qiu Chenxi went out in a new skirt.

Chapter 478: First Place in the Level

Shi Qing generally did not like to wear a skirt, but at the thought of Qiu Chenxi’s usual way of dressing and that Zhai Sheng would be back today, she took a long time before she finally decided to wear this skirt.

Initially, Shi Qing was uncertain if she would be able to gain Zhai Sheng’s affection with what she did, but when she entered the classroom and saw that Qiao Nan was dressed in almost the same way, Shi Qing felt relieved.

As expected, after spending so many years with him, Qiu Chenxi knew Brother Zhai’s preferences and tastes.

“If it’s useful, would she have to wait till today?” Qiao Nan smiled. Brother Zhai did not choose Qiu Chenxi, not because she did not try hard enough, but it was useless to follow him wherever he went. In fact, in the one year that she had known Brother Zhai, they seldom saw each other.

If following him around was useful, Brother Zhai would already have done according to Chief Zhai’s wishes and married Qiu Chenxi.

“Good.” Shi Qing nodded with satisfaction. “I hope that you are right. Otherwise, I will be very angry.”

“You’re unhappy at the Qiu family’s residence?” Qiao Nan turned around and looked at Shi Qing curiously.

“Well, I have asked my dad to find a house for me. I will be able to move in two days’ time.” Shi Qing did not hide it from Qiao Nan and admitted it right away. “My auntie keeps a close watch on me. I feel as if I am in jail, especially yesterday.”

Her auntie tried to prevent her from going to the army with Qiu Chenxi. As for today, she did not want her to run into Brother Zhai.

Shi Qing was clever. There was no way that Qi Minlan and Qiu Chenxi could hide their plans from her.

Shi Qing could not be bothered to be angry at Qi Minlan and Qiu Chenxi. She felt that it was beneath her dignity to do what the two of them did. She watched as Qiu Chenxi sneaked out of the house like a thief, and Qi Minlan acted like a clown to 'chat' with her so as to make sure that she did not go elsewhere.

"You have a tragic life." Shi Qing was unlucky to have such relatives. When they found her to be useful to them, they would drag her into what they did. When she was of no use, they would kick her aside. They were very ruthless. "But your surname is Shi. I remember that Qiu Chenxi's mom's surname is Qi."

"Adopted by a relative." Not only was her auntie adopted by a relative, but her heart was also no longer with them as well.

"Not telling your dad?"

"Do I need to do it myself?"

"***." Shi Qing had powerful backing. The Shi family must be a respected family as well. Otherwise, back then, Qi Minlan would not have almost married Chief Zhai. Since the Shi family was aware of Qi Minlan's situation, she would not have so much to worry about.

The only thing that Qiao Nan was worried about was that the Shi family would side with their relatives and refuse to see reason, and thus making life difficult for her.

"What are the both of you talking about? I don't understand a single word." Tang Mengran was confused. "Nan Nan, since when are you so close with Shi Qing? Moreover, what do you mean by what you said just now? What do you mean by adopted by a relative? What is it about telling your dad? What's there to say? Whose dad is it?"

The conversation between Qiao Nan and Shi Qing was so brief that Tang Mengran could not understand. She had thought that they were conversing in alien languages. She could understand each and every word they said, but when they were put together in sentences and used in conversations, she did not know what they were talking about.

“Teacher Liu is here.” Qiao Nan turned back to her seat and pulled Tang Mengran back to her seat, hinting at Tang Mengran to take a look at Xu Tingting’s expression.

There was a look of blankness on Tang Mengran’s face. Xu Tingting had a similar look on her face as well. Tang Mengran was comforted that Xu Tingting was just as confused as her. “Nan Nan, you are the best. I feel much better now. It seems like Xu Tingting was hoping that Shi Qing and you would end up in a fight. She was waiting to watch a good show. She must be disappointed now!”

“Teacher Liu is really here.” Qiao Nan rolled her eyes. It was not her actual intention to comfort Tang Mengran. She was truly telling her that the teacher was here.

When Teacher Liu entered the classroom, he gave Qiao Nan a glance.

In the past, whenever Teacher Liu looked at Qiao Nan out of habit, all the students in the class would know that Qiao Nan must have ranked first in the level. Since Shi Qing sat right behind Qiao Nan now, they could not know for sure which one of them was Teacher Liu looking at.

“I have a piece of good news to share with all of you. As usual, the first place in the level is from our class.”

“Oh.”

“Not bad.”

“Hope this is not the last time.” In the second half of the year after the streaming, the students would be allocated to different classes. One never knew if they could still stay in the class that always had the highest average score or not.

“There’s another piece of good news. All of the top three students in the level are from our class.”

“The top three in this level?”

“There’s nothing to be surprised about.”

Previously, the first and second place, or the first and third place in the level, were from their class. This time around, it was all of the top-three students. After all, it was just one more student in the top three coming from their class.

They were more curious about who ranked first, second, and third.

There might be some changes in the first and second places. As for the third place...

Everyone in the class looked toward Xu Tingting. There was no doubt that Xu Tingting ranked third. There would not be any uncertainty.

Xu Tingting’s face turned red and hung her head. She was so embarrassed that she could not lift her head. To her, it was a shame that everyone had their attention focused on her. It was not a glorious moment. Why were they certain that she ranked third? Besides, even if she indeed ranked third, such a commendable achievement, why did she have the feeling that she ranked third-to-last in the level?

“The most gratifying thing is that there is only a tiny difference of half a point between the first place and second place. The competition is very fierce.”

“Nan Nan, you are so brilliant. The difference is only half a point!” One was already qualified to advance to the third year in the next semester and was recommended admission to a first-tier university, whereas Nan Nan advanced level by level like the rest and would only start her second year next semester.

Both of them only had a difference of half a point. Nan Nan was a genius!!

Qiao Nan raised her eyebrow. She was surprised that the difference was only half a point. She felt honored though defeated. She thought that she would be about five points behind Shi Qing.

Qiao Nan was not the only one who was surprised. Shi Qing was in a bigger shock. Since a young age, nobody came so close to beating her in exams. In other words, as long as she made a mistake in the punctuation for the Chinese exams, they would have the same score.

If she missed out punctuation in her mathematics problem sum, Qiao Nan would have beaten her in the exams.

The punctuation was ever so important!

“First, let’s congratulate Qiao Nan...” Teacher Liu’s eyes were sparkling. Among all the students that he taught, Qiao Nan was indeed the smartest and most hardworking student. It was a pity that she would not be his student next semester. “Congratulations to her for still being the first in the class and the level. Among all the subjects, only one mark was deducted from her Chinese papers. Let’s give her a round of applause!”

Chapter 479: Improved Beyond Imagination

The classroom turned silent at Teacher Liu’s words. Many of the students widened their eyes and were stunned.

“Teacher Liu, who did you say came in the first place?” Tang Mengran dug her own ears and asked again in disbelief.

“Qiao Nan is the top student,” Teacher Liu answered with a smile. He was particularly patient.

When Shi Qing transferred to their school, the semester was over. After sitting for the exams, the students would go for a summer break. No matter how good Shi Qing performed, it had nothing to do with him. Qiao Nan was different. He had taught Qiao Nan in the past one year.

This was not only a reflection of Qiao Nan’s performance, but it was also an indication of his achievement as well!

“Oh my god! Nan Nan, you’re so incredulous. First place! The first place in the level!!” Tang Mengran hugged Qiao Nan tightly. Her face was full of excitement, looking as if she was the one who ranked first. “Nan Nan, you are awesome! It’s the first place in the level!”

“Teacher Liu, did you make a mistake? You must not confuse Qiao Nan’s and Shi Qing’s results.” She admitted that she lost to Qiao Nan, but Shi Qing was the gifted student who was supposed to be

recommended for admission to a first-tier key university. How could she lose to Qiao Nan by half a point?

Xu Tingting was shocked and displeased when she heard that the difference between the first and second place was only by half a point.

Finally, there was someone who could beat Qiao Nan. She could not wait for Shi Qing to widen the gap between Qiao Nan and her so that Qiao Nan would finally be able to understand her feelings when she lost to her.

She did not expect that it would be such a fierce competition. It was a difference of half a point only. It was such an important and significant half a point.

Xu Tingting's face darkened when it was confirmed that Qiao Nan really came in the first place while Shi Qing was the second place. "Teacher Liu, do you think that the exam papers might have been marked incorrectly? Is there a need to look at the papers again?" She did not believe that Shi Qing, who was so outstanding, would lose to Qiao Nan.

She did not believe that nobody in this world could defeat Qiao Nan.

"Xu Tingting, as a teacher, I can understand that you are very concerned about the results. However, there is no mistake about the results and the ranking. Because of the extremely good results, as teachers, we were worried that we might have made any mistakes, hence we have already gone through the exam papers thrice and confirmed that there is no mistake."

Of course, when Teacher Liu said that the results were extremely good, he was referring to Qiao Nan and Shi Qing.

It was now in high school. It was unlike the elementary school where one could easily score full marks.

The results of Qiao Nan and Shi Qing were unbelievable.

In high school, scoring ninety or even ninety-five marks and above for every subject was considered very good. Like Qiao Nan and Shi Qing, who scored full marks for most of the subjects except for a deduction of one or two marks, were exceptional.

To be honest, during his teaching career, this was the first time Teacher Liu encountered such exceptional students.

Back then, no matter how outstanding the students were, they were not as good as Qiao Nan and Shi Qing.

“Oh my god.”

“There are two ‘perverted’ students in our class.” In the past, there was Qiao Nan. Now, Shi Qing came along as well. The most upsetting thing was that under Shi Qing’s influence, Qiao Nan had improved beyond imagination.

Qiao Nan gave a silly smile. “Did I really come in the first place?” Her score was higher than Shi Qing by half a point?

“Yes, Qiao Nan. You are really very outstanding. But remember that as a student, you must not be proud and have to keep up the good work.” Teacher Liu sighed. Unfortunately, this was his last semester teaching such an excellent student. What a pity.

His specialty was not in humanities. Otherwise, for the sake of such good student like Qiao Nan, he would have the impulse of changing subjects to teach Chinese.

“Thank you, Teacher Liu. I will,” Qiao Nan replied faintly. After knowing the background of Shi Qing, she never thought that she could continue to remain in the first place in the level and score her personal best score.

“I don’t care. Nan Nan, since you are the top student, you have to treat us!” She felt happy telling everyone that the first place in the level was her roommate and close friend.

“Stop it.” Qiao Nan gave Tang Mengran a gentle pat on her head and smiled. “Even if I am going to treat you, it will have to wait until we start school. Aren’t you going home today? Besides, I have something very important to do today.”

“How important can it be? It’s the summer break. You must give yourself some time to rest. You shouldn’t be reading every day.” Tang Mengran did not agree with what Qiao Nan said. “If you tell me that you have a boyfriend and that you’re going to see him, I may let you go.”

Qiao Nan kicked Tang Mengran gently and looked at Teacher Liu.

The form teacher was still in the classroom. How could Tang Mengran spout nonsense!

Tang Mengran, who came to her senses, cowered and stuck out her tongue, begging Qiao Nan to forgive her. She did not do it on purpose. She was too happy that she forgot that Teacher Liu was still in the classroom.

Actually, Teacher Liu had overheard the conversation between the two girls, but he pretended not to hear it.

He had been Qiao Nan’s teacher for a year. He had never seen her being distracted or was close to any of the boys.

Teacher Liu had heard too much of the rumors regarding Qiao Nan that he was already immune to it.

“Alright, when I call your name, come up to collect your report card. The duration of the summer break, the date that school reopens, and a few things to take note of were written on the report card. Please read them carefully. The summer break is two months’ long. All of you had better not indulge in fun and forget to report back to school. After two months, I have no idea how many of you will still be in my class.”

Teacher Liu called the students’ names one by one and gave them their report cards.

The first name that Teacher Liu called was none other than Qiao Nan.

Some of the students were envious while some were jealous when they saw that Qiao Nan was the first student to collect the report card.

Shi Qing was the second student to collect the report card. She felt bitter to be walking behind Qiao Nan.

Anyone who was used to being the 'first' in everything would feel bitter at being in second place.

Before the exam, she still reprimanded Qiao Nan for not caring about the exams and giving up on herself. She was so arrogant to lend Qiao Nan her class notes. She felt embarrassed at the thought of this.

Qiao Nan did not give up on herself. In fact, she was confident and clear about her own abilities.

Their results were only half a point apart. Shi Qing felt suffocated. It was as if a rock was pressing down on her.

As for the third student to be called upon to go to the podium to collect the report card, Xu Tingting was so angry that she felt like vomiting blood.

Teacher Liu had made it very clear that among all the subjects, Qiao Nan only had one point deducted from her.

Xu Tingting looked at the total score on her report card and compared it to Qiao Nan's results. She slapped her report card close instantaneously.

Chapter 480: Brooding Over Being the Second Place

Xu Tingting had no wish to take a second look at her report card as it was too upsetting. On the contrary, Qiao Nan's roommates were quite happy at receiving their report cards, satisfied with their results.

Before the exams, Qiao Nan had helped her roommates identify the topics that would be in the exams. Although their scores were lower than Xu Tingting's score, they were not too far apart.

Apart from Tang Mengran who scored an average score, the rest of Qiao Nan's roommates were ranked after Xu Tingting. They were in the top ten in the class.

“Enough is enough. I think I can enjoy myself in the next two months.” Tang Mengran breathed a sigh of relief. “Nan Nan, I really can’t live without you. It will not do for you to not be by my side, not even for a day!”

Without Nan Nan, nobody would tell her which were the important topics, and her results would definitely fall behind.

It was a real blessing to have a roommate who ranked first in the level and who was kind enough to help her identify the topics that would come out in the exams. Others would not be able to know the blessing of being roommates with Qiao Nan. “Nan Nan, we must stay in the same class in the next semester. We must stay in the same dormitory. Don’t leave me behind.”

Exams were always the joy of some, the sorrow of others.

Tang Mengran was extremely happy and she thought of buying fireworks to celebrate. On the other hand, those students who did not do well felt bitter inside.

It was indeed good if they had a roommate who ranked first in the level.

They would also love to have someone help them identify the topics that would be tested on in exams so as to improve their scores.

In the past year, those who did not seize the opportunity to be on close terms with Qiao Nan regretted it very much. Qiao Nan’s standard was so high that they could never catch up with her. They should get along well with students like her and ask her for help when they came upon difficulties in their studies. She was their teacher who was available twenty-four hours a day and free of charge.

They were too foolish in the past to have believed in the rumors and in Xu Tingting who sowed discord. They did not make use of the opportunity of being Qiao Nan’s classmates.

On the other hand, Xu Tingting, who was third in the level, never taught them when they met with any difficulties in their studies. When they asked her for help, she would refuse, let alone identify the topics that might be tested on.

Many students only realized now that not only was Qiao Nan good in her studies, but she was also a better person than Xu Tingting. In the past, they were too foolish and could not tell who was good to them. They had wasted a year's time to be on closer terms with Qiao Nan.

Just like what Teacher Liu said, it was fate that they could be classmates in the past one year.

They had no idea who would be their classmates in the next semester.

After Teacher Liu informed them of the things to take note of, Ping Cheng High School's first-year class one was officially on summer break.

Zheng Lingling put away her report card. Shi Qing was half a point apart from Nan Nan. She did fairly well and was only one point behind Xu Tingting. When she just entered high school, her results were fifteen points behind Xu Tingting's results. Zheng Lingling felt happy at her improvement. "Nan Nan, don't listen to Tang Mengran's nonsense. We will treat you to a meal next semester."

"Yes, we will treat you." He Yun nodded in agreement. Without Nan Nan, they would not be able to do so well.

Tang Mengran was too thick-skinned to ask Nan Nan for a meal. It was no wonder that Nan Nan would occasionally address Tang Mengran as a silly girl.

Fang Fang's face was flushed. She adjusted her glasses and there was a sparkle in her eyes. "I have a hunch that we will definitely be classmates and roommates in the next semester. In the next two years, we have to get along well."

"Really?" Tao Zhenqin said with amazement. "If this is the case, then it's great. Otherwise, I really can't bear to part with all of you, especially Nan Nan."

"I suppose only the last part of the sentence is your heartfelt words." Tang Mengran rolled her eyes. "Nan Nan, I will treat you to good food next semester. I am not stingy. I am just too happy for you for being the first in the level."

"Hahaha, I also hope that the six of us can continue to be roommates and classmates." Qiao Nan smiled happily. She did not like changes. She preferred sticking to the old and familiar. If she had

new roommates, she had to get used to them again and it would take a while to adapt. "It's getting late. Your parents are still waiting for your results at home. See you next semester."

"See you next semester."

"Nan Nan, goodbye."

"Nan Nan, in the next two months, you must remember to think of me."

The six young ladies parted ways happily.

Qiao Nan carried her schoolbag on her back and walked home with light footsteps.

"Qiao Nan." Qiao Nan only walked a few steps before she was stopped by someone.

Qiao Nan turned and realized that it was none other than Shi Qing. "Is anything the matter?"

Shi Qing let out a long breath. "I apologize for what I said to you in the woods. You are a formidable opponent. However, you should not be too happy. I have always ranked first in the exams. You are the first person that made me lose the top spot and become second in place. We still have four semesters in the next two years to fight to be in the first place. I will make sure that I get the spot back!"

She would definitely get back her top spot as well as Brother Zhai, her missed chance at happiness!

"Is that so?" Qiao Nan grinned and gave a meaningful smile. "Then, see you next semester."

Would Shi Qing regain the position of first place in the level?

She believed she would!

But why?

Because she would be in humanities course whereas Shi Qing would be in science course starting next semester. Without Shi Qing, she would be able to rank first in the level. As for Shi Qing, without her, there was no doubt that the top spot would be hers.

In the future, she and Shi Qing would not be in the same class, and they would not study the same course. They would not need to compete for first place in the level.

It was easy for Shi Qing to regain the top spot, but to defeat her...

Hopefully, when Shi Qing found out the truth the next semester, she would be as cheerful and confident as she was now.

Looking at Qiao Nan's bright smile, Shi Qing stomped her foot in anger. She should have known that Brother Zhai was such an outstanding man. He would never like a wimp who gave up easily. Qiao Nan was only pretending to give up. She lulled her into a false sense of security, and she fell for her trap stupidly.

However, she was not in a hurry. Since she had come to Ping Cheng, she would not go back unless she gained Brother Zhai's affection.

One must climb up from where one was thrown down. As long as she could defeat Qiao Nan, she would become Brother Zhai's girlfriend sooner or later.

"Hello, Dad?" Back at the Qiu family, Shi Qing received a phone call from Qiu Peng not long after she reached. "The house is ready? Alright, I will move in today. No, I feel uncomfortable staying at someone else's house. Auntie... Dad, what do you say? I don't need any helpers. I only have a few pieces of clothes with me. I can move them by myself. Anyway, just get the keys ready. I will pack my clothes now and go to my own house. Dad... This time, I ranked second in the exam. The second place!!!"