

Switched Marriage: The Coddled Little Wife

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The tomatoes in the field were ready to be picked, so Mr. Qin and Brother Qin had already gone to the fields, while Mrs. Qin waited at home for Lin Chuxia to return before taking her to the tomato fields with her.

The whole plot was more than an acre; since it was past peak season, at most, only two baskets could be picked this round.

By the time they got to the field, Mr. Qin and Brother Qin had already picked half of it, and when Mrs. Qin and Lin Chuxia joined in, the four of them finished picking the entire field before noon.

The harvested tomatoes could be delivered to the county's vegetable station, or they could wait until the evening to sell them at the county's regular night market, where they could fetch an extra two cents per jin.

Lin Chuxia had no plans to set up a stall at the night market; two baskets of tomatoes weren't worth wasting time on.

She asked for directions to the vegetable station and planned to deliver the tomatoes straight there.

Mrs. Qin was worried, "Better let your big brother do it."

The two baskets of tomatoes weighed at least seventy to eighty jin; how could Lin Chuxia, so slender and frail, carry such heavy things?

Yet, Lin Chuxia was not planning to bother Brother Qin; since the family had already divided, it was not reasonable to keep troubling others.

Looking at the racks, she said to Qin Han, "Just give me a hand with setting them up."

A rack is made by connecting two woven baskets with two wooden poles as crossbeams, leaving just enough space in the middle to fit the width of a bike's rear rack. When mounted on the rear rack of the bicycle, it could carry more items while maintaining the balance of the bike.

In villages like Qin Family Village that mainly grow vegetables, almost every family has such baskets.

Qin Han also thought Lin Chuxia was too slender and frail to lift the racks and wanted to ask his father to help, but Lin Chuxia was already prepared on the side.

He couldn't say much more, and mentally prepared himself to give his sister-in-law a way out if she couldn't lift it.

But with a single command, the racks were steadily lifted and placed on the rear rack of the bicycle.

Lin Chuxia clapped her hands, said goodbye to them, and took the bicycle straight on the road.

Qin Han was practically dumbfounded by how deftly she handled it, he was certain that his sister-in-law was stronger than his own wife.

The expertise of professionals is evident as soon as they get to work, and both Mr. and Mrs. Qin, who were old hands in the field, could see that too.

"I was worried that Yangyang's wife wouldn't be able to handle our work, but it seems that I was overly concerned."

Mr. Qin also mentioned, "Didn't the mother-in-law say it before? Chuxia is competent."

In front of her eldest son, Mrs. Qin didn't contradict her husband, but she knew the truth in her heart.

What a competent second daughter; giving them the best was mostly because their eldest daughter probably looked down on their Qin Yang, who was rarely at home, and had a change of heart.

Remembering how a good girl like Lin Chuxia was scorned in her own family, Mrs. Qin decided that in the absence of her son, she should treat her daughter-in-law well.

Lin Chuxia was unaware that her actions had even aroused her mother-in-law's empathy.

She had been doing farm work at home since she was young.

Her older sister was favored, her younger brother was a boy, and only she was available at home, so she had built up her strength a long time ago.

She had been drinking spiritual spring water lately, and her strength had obviously increased.

She was not boasting of being a strongwoman, but at least she was no less than an ordinary man.

At the vegetable station, people looked at her as a woman, pushing and shoving but never giving her the chance to weigh in her share; Lin Chuxia found an opportunity, moved to the front to weigh her share, and directly lifted down the racks and placed them on the scale.

Even the couple who had already come over with their basket were staring agape, not daring to utter a single nasty word.

The one in charge of the weighing, Li Jian, couldn't help but swallow.

He had noticed this girl earlier and was thinking of helping her after finishing these two turns.

It's not easy for a young girl to sell vegetables by herself; if he didn't help, she probably couldn't get onto the scale all morning.

He hadn't even opened his mouth before the girl herself took care of things.

She pulled the steelyard, and including the basket, the tomatoes weighed 85 pounds.

"Girl, you're quite impatient. If you're not careful, you could hurt your back for life," he said as he wrote out the ticket.

"That's right, just say the word, girl, and who wouldn't help you out?" a sister-in-law nearby also chimed in.

Lin Chuxia took the ticket, checked the numbers, and then said, "I did speak up, but none of you heard me, right?" She had been lined up at the front but couldn't seize the scale. "I know everyone is eager to get back for lunch. Once people are hungry, they can't keep up their manners. Can't be helped, I had to rely on myself to be well-fed. However, I do have some feedback for your management station: When people are not conscientious, your staff still need to maintain order and ensure the most basic principle of first come, first served."

The sister-in-law's face froze. She and her husband had been behind Lin Chuxia in line. If Lin Chuxia hadn't moved the basket down herself, they would have taken her spot on the scale.

They hadn't thought much of it before; it was always like this when selling vegetables. But now, Lin Chuxia practically called them out by name, and their faces burned with embarrassment.

Li Jian's face was all smiles, looking at the well-behaved yet fiery girl, now giving them suggestions.

No one had given them feedback in all these years. It was a fresh experience indeed.

Before he could finish smiling, Lin Chuxia gave him a look, "Comrade, I'm supposed to deliver the tomatoes to Warehouse #3, right?"

Li Jian's smile remained, "Didn't you just say you should rely on yourself for a sense of achievement? Why are you asking me for help now?"

"You just mentioned how a fragile woman like me doing manual labor could hurt my back. Shouldn't I take advice to avoid suffering? I'm giving you a chance to demonstrate your good character," she finished with a wink.

Li Jian also saw the director approaching from afar, amused beyond measure.

Did this girl know that the leadership wouldn't care about this matter at all? The director was just passing by on his way to the cafeteria.

But he didn't want to let the girl lose face, so he put down the pen and helped her lift the frame onto the cart again.

Lin Chuxia exaggerated her thanks, "Thank you so much, comrade. I thought I couldn't handle this on my own, but it turns out there are still many good people in the world. The staff at An City Vegetable Station are so caring and attentive. Having public servants like you is a blessing for us farmers."

Li Jian couldn't help but want to cover his face: My goodness, just go, I'm too embarrassed to even listen to that.

Lin Chuxia didn't mind, and under the smirking looks of the crowd, she pushed her bike towards Warehouse #3.

Having delivered the tomatoes, she picked out what was left and, along with the frame, needed to go back for weighing and peeling. By then, another comrade had taken over the weighing.

She got a new ticket, took both tickets to the cashier's window to get paid.

8 cents per pound, after peeling, 62 pounds left, for a total of \$4.96.

Money in hand, Lin Chuxia leisurely headed to the back of the warehouse.

While delivering the tomatoes earlier, she had seen several carts there, with a few broken ones piled up in a corner.

The vegetable station was quiet during mealtime; those who could leave had gone to the canteen for food, and those who couldn't leave had switched to break for meals. Lin Chuxia circled around a few broken tricycles.

"Hey girl, why are you still here? Can't find Warehouse #3?"

Chapter 22: Chapter 22: Observing Faces

Li Jian returned from eating to see Lin Chuxia circling around a pile of scrap metal.

When Lin Chuxia saw him, her eyes lit up. "I've finished paying the bill, thanks to big brother. If it hadn't been for your help, I'd probably still be in line."

Li Jian really admired her way with words. Clearly, it was he who had used his strength to push to the front, but this obvious flattery somehow didn't annoy him.

Looking at Lin Chuxia again, though in a peasant woman's attire, her skin was fair, her features were delicate, especially her almond-shaped eyes which seemed to shine. She just didn't seem like an ordinary rural woman.

He thought, tradition had it right – when faced with a beautiful woman, one tends to be more accommodating.

"Okay, no need to be so polite. Next time you come to sell vegetables alone, just mention your Brother Li to the weighmaster, and you'll be looked after."

Lin Chuxia's smile grew even wider. "Then I'll thank Brother Li in advance. I knew it, just one look and anyone can tell Brother Li is a kind-hearted person."

Li Jian touched his nose, feeling a bit awkward. He wasn't really all that kind-hearted; it just happened that during lunch, he ran into the director, and for some reason, the director took this woman's words to heart and praised him in front of his colleagues.

This was a first, and people were now looking at him differently. Some who usually didn't talk much even came over to eat with him.

"It's getting late; you should hurry home for lunch," he said as he couldn't take any more praise.

Lin Chuxia showed no intention of leaving and pointed to a pile of broken flatbed carts in the corner. "Brother Li, I'd like to ask you about these carts. Who manages them? Of course, if Brother Li has the connections, I'd have the cheek to ask for your help. Could you see if I could buy one? I don't need a good one; those worn-out ones would be fine."

Li Jian laughed when he heard this. "Do you really think I'm easy to talk to, or do you think I'm so capable?"

"Both," Lin Chuxia answered with a sincere face. "Brother Li has a kind face, and not to hide anything from you Brother Li, I can read faces. You've got the look of an official, I dare not say more, but at least with your face, you could become a bureau chief in the future. Leaving these broken carts here is just a way to fill up space for your unit; it'd be better to put them to some residual use."

Lin Chuxia wasn't just making things up. When they were weighing vegetables earlier, she had noticed Li Jian.

In her past life, they knew each other. Back then, Li Jian was the head of the city's market management bureau, and Lin Chuxia had a lot of dealings with him.

The corners of Li Jian's mouth twitched manically. "With your face-reading skills, didn't you see I'm just a guy doing the weighing work right now?"

Saying that, he turned and walked away, fearful that if he didn't leave, the girl might set him up again.

Lin Chuxia wasn't in a hurry. Things don't happen overnight, and her situation was already looking up – at least the next time she came to weigh the vegetables, she wouldn't need to scramble.

Qin Family Village is an urban village; it's distinct from the surrounding factory compounds and even more so from those of government agency compounds, given that non-agricultural commercial foodstuffs still have a considerable advantage these days.

On the way back, Lin Chuxia also took a trip around the vicinity.

When she got home, Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin had already eaten. They asked if Lin Chuxia had eaten and still had food warmed up for her.

Lin Chuxia had already eaten on her way back – she bought two buns and a bowl of porridge from a street stand, complete with the free pickles provided by the bun shop.

She spent half an hour eating and watching who came and went from the bun shop and what they ordered.

Memories from her past life were too distant, and she only had a vague idea. If she was going to do it, she aimed to do it the best she could.

After thanking Mrs. Qin, she went back to her room, first took a bath in her space – it's more convenient to take a bath in her space when Qin Yang isn't home.

When she took out some clean clothes, ten yuan fell out of them.

There's no need to ask, Lin Chuxia knew it was Qin Yang who had set off the firecrackers, recalling the man's reluctant departure, she smiled silently.

The Qin Yang she knew and the Qin Yang in Lin Jiayi's mouth were worlds apart.

She put together the 10 yuan with the money earned from selling tomatoes today, then took out the stack of money the Lin Family had obtained and counted it.

A total of 380 yuan.

Originally, she only wanted to take back the 300 yuan bridal money from the Qin Family, but unexpectedly there was a pleasant surprise.

Lin Chuxia didn't feel any guilt about taking money from home, this little amount was far less than one ten-thousandth of what the Lin Family took from her in her past life, not to mention her contributions to the Lin Family over these twenty years.

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Xiaoqingshan Village

Lin Jiayi, holding back her nausea, climbed out of the pigpen, the little leftover pig feed in the bucket was then used to feed the chickens, and suddenly her eyes brightened—there lay a brown egg in the nest.

Lin Jiayi glanced around to ensure no one was there and carefully stepped into the chicken coop to tuck the egg into her pocket.

Before she could leave the chicken coop, a deep voice sounded, "What are you doing? Picking up eggs?"

Lin Jiayi got such a shock that she accidentally stepped into chicken droppings.

Looking back at her mother-in-law's weather-beaten, dark face, she felt a twinge of guilt, "I was just feeding the chickens."

Old Mrs. Li reached out her hand, "Lin Guangyuan has been working in the fields all day; I'll cook him an egg to replenish his energy. You don't work in the fields, living comfortably at home, taking good care of yourself; you wouldn't fight Guangyuan over this one egg, right? After all, he is your man."

Lin Jiayi's teeth nearly cracked in anger; living comfortably indeed, she could barely say it out loud.

Apart from the day she married in, where she ate communal pot stew and two kinds of bread, leftovers from the wedding feast, it was all pickles, pancakes, steamed buns from the second day. Even the slightly better dishes were reserved for Li Guangyuan.

Despite her unhappiness, Lin Jiayi still took out the egg from her pocket.

Mrs. Li took the egg and, with a cold huff, went into the kitchen.

Lin Jiayi's eyes reddened with aggrievance. She didn't bother with the bucket of pig feed anymore and dived straight into her room.

Li Guangyuan, who had just come back from the fields and had a shower, was rummaging through the cabinet for clothes and finally chose a pair of patched trousers.

Seeing Lin Jiayi enter, he asked without turning his head, "Have you fed the pigs and chickens? Is the food ready? Mom is getting older, you should help out more at home. Also, there's so many dirty clothes, why haven't you washed them? I hardly have anything left to wear..."

"Li Guangyuan, I didn't marry you to wash your clothes, cook, and feed the pigs and chickens."

Li Guangyuan turned around in surprise, only to see Lin Jiayi's face full of anger, "What now?" Isn't getting a wife exactly for the purpose of having someone to wash clothes and cook?

Seeing the man's face, and thinking about his future achievements, Lin Jiayi suppressed her grievances.

"Guangyuan, about the thing I mentioned to you before, when do you plan to do it?"

Li Guangyuan knew she was talking about starting a business again, but starting a business isn't something you just do is it? Their family has been farmers for generations, where's the knack for doing business?

"Jiayi, I think our current situation isn't bad. I work in the fields, you take care of the house. I've calculated, this year's grain harvest is enough for us to eat, we'll plant more wheat next year. Before long, we'll be able to live the days of eating white flour every day..."

Chapter 23: Chapter 23 They Stole My Cloth

"Eat, eat, eat, can't you think of something other than eating?"

Lin Jiayi interrupted him, and was it just for eating white flour bread to solve satiety that she married him?

In her previous life, even though it was the same, marrying into the Qin Family she would also eat white flour buns every day.

"At home, anyone can take care of it, but both younger sisters are old enough as well. They can do the laundry and cooking. You don't always have to keep an eye on the minor farming work. Guang Yuan, I know you're not satisfied with our current life. You're so smart, just think of any business idea, and it will make money. I am counting on you in this lifetime."

Li Guangyuan didn't understand why Lin Jiayi was so obsessed with doing business, but being trusted by his wife like that, he felt a sense of accomplishment deeper inside and instinctively comforted her, "Alright, don't worry, let me think about it a bit more."

Lin Jiayi kissed him happily, "I knew I didn't misjudge you."

"Wait a moment," she took out 200 yuan from a secret corner of the box to show him, "This is my dowry money, you don't have to worry about the capital. If it's not enough, I'll ask my parents for more. Guang Yuan, remember, your abilities are worth any effort."

Because of her affirmation, Li Guangyuan's confidence skyrocketed, "Wife, rest assured, I will definitely make you live a good life."

Lin Jiayi absolutely believed him, was about to ask him what business he planned to do, when she turned her head and saw two sister-in-laws walking in through the front door.

Each of them was wearing a floral coat, the brand-new fabric looked strikingly familiar.

Thinking of something, Lin Jiayi quickly ran to the box, rummaging through her own things, and finally screamed in despair, "My fabric is gone, they actually stole my fabric."

Li Guangyuan also saw the clothes on his two sisters, frowning slightly, but still comforted his wife first.

"My younger sister has been spoiled by mom, Jiayi, don't be angry, I'll mention this to mom in a bit, tell them to stop going through your things from now on."

"Just mentioning it, that's it? Li Guangyuan, don't you see they even took our wedding gift to make clothes? That was your gift to me, my own belongings."

Lin Jiayi went mad, she had planned to make a new cotton garment with that fabric, the cotton was already picked.

Li Guangyuan didn't understand why she was reacting so intensely, "What else can be done? The clothes are already made, even if you make them take off the clothes for you, you can't fit into their sizes either."

Lin Jiayi knew that too, so she was anxious, "If they can't return my fabric, then return the money. You go and talk to your mom, tell her how much the fabric is worth and to give me that amount."

Li Guangyuan stared at the money in her hand, "We're all family, it's just a piece of fabric, why make such a big deal out of it?"

He himself had so much money in hand, yet she wanted him to ask his mother for money. His mom struggled to raise the three of them and even got him a wife, which was already not easy.

Seeing that Li Guangyuan was reluctant, Lin Jiayi hid the money again and turned to leave, "If you won't speak, I will..."

Old Mrs. Li, contentedly watching her two daughters, heard Lin Jiayi's accusation and didn't even glance her way.

"Guangyuan's wife, since you've married into the Li family, you are part of the Li family. Don't distinguish between your things and mine, and besides, you don't even do any farming at home, what are you saving this fabric for? Hongmei and Dongmei are not young anymore; if they dress nicely and find good in-laws later, wouldn't you as their sister-in-law also benefit?"

"That was my wedding gift."

No wonder they gave her eight feet of fabric as a wedding gift, now looking at the clothes they're wearing, Lin Jiayi doubts that it was a calculated move by the Li Family.

"You also know that it was your dowry, where did your dowry come from?" It was from the Li family after all.

Li Guangyuan's eldest sister, Li Hongmei, also chimed in, "Exactly, big sister-in-law, plus, with so many new clothes yourself, you surely don't need this fabric. Consider it a gift for us two, isn't it proper for a sister-in-law to make clothes for her sisters-in-law?"

"Exactly, I heard when Zhang Chunlan's sister-in-law got married over here, they bought her ready-made clothes; we're just asking for a piece of fabric from you and haven't even started complaining about you being stingy," Li Guangyuan's second sister, Li Dongmei, also expressed her dissatisfaction.

Lin Jiayi trembled with anger, spinning around to face Li Guangyuan behind her.

Li Guangyuan, worried his wife might offend his mother, came over, but upon meeting Lin Jiayi's gaze, he instinctively wanted to retreat inside the house.

There are several women in the household he can't afford to offend.

He must show filial respect to his mother, his two sisters have been spoiled rotten by their mom since childhood, his wife... seems like she shouldn't be angered either.

Lin Jiayi didn't let him off, quickly following and tugging him to help speak for her, "Guangyuan, look at them."

If it were her previous life, she would never have clung to Qin Yang asking him to speak up for her, but Li Guangyuan was different.

These days since their marriage, she felt his consideration and thought he would stand by her.

But before Li Guangyuan could even speak, Old Mrs. Li sighed deeply first, "Really, I am old and useless, nobody understands my hardships, I only have this one son, they say one can't succeed alone, hoping my daughters might have good marriages supporting the family a bit, but nobody understands, as if I really care about those trivial things."

"It's our fault that our Li family is poor, this old lady failed, all I could manage for my son's wedding was a dowry and a feast, it's also unlucky Guangyuan's father passed away early, why didn't you take me too, left me to raise three children by myself, now because of a piece of fabric someone's pointing fingers at our backbone..."

"Guangyuan's wife, don't blame Hongmei and Dongmei, blame me instead, I didn't raise them well, can the mother-in-law apologizing on their behalf not suffice?"

Lin Jiayi, watching the old woman in front of her, nearly couldn't catch her breath and turned to look at Li Guangyuan, only to see his eyes red and face full of guilt.

"It's not like that at all, Guangyuan, it's wrong for them to secretly take my things."

"I've already said, my old self is apologizing on their behalf," Old Mrs. Li sat at the edge of the brick bed looking heartbroken.

Lin Jiayi widened her eyes, "This isn't about apologizing..."

"Enough, mom already apologized, what more do you want?" Li Guangyuan interrupted Lin Jiayi and without further words, pulled her out.

Lin Jiayi hadn't even realized how things had turned out this way; even Qin Family's big sister-in-law's deep calculations were plainly visible.

With nowhere to vent her feelings of injustice, Li Guangyuan even scolded her, Lin Jiayi's tears fell unchecked.

Li Guangyuan pulled her into their room, and upon turning around to see Lin Jiayi crying, he immediately panicked, "Don't cry..."

Lin Jiayi shook off his hand and ignored him, climbing onto the brick bed to tidy up her clothes.

She had never been wronged or aggrieved like this in her life; she wanted to return to her parents' home.

Chapter 24: Chapter 24 will definitely treat you well.

Li Guangyuan immediately understood what she wanted to do and hurriedly comforted her, "I know it's their fault, but my mom has already apologized to you at her old age, what else can she do? You know our family's situation, we spent all our savings on my wedding, even if you cut my elder and second sisters now, the cloth won't return, right?"

"Is that their attitude of admitting mistakes?" What's even more infuriating was that Li Guangyuan didn't even speak up for her.

"No no, let me apologize to you then, don't worry, once I have money, the first thing I'll do is buy you cloth and new clothes, lots of new clothes. You wanted me to do business, right? We'll do business, make big money, and then I'll buy you all the new clothes you want, isn't that alright?"

Lin Jiayi finally calmed down after hearing him say this, turning to look at him, "Alright, let's agree on that, we must find a business to do soon."

Li Guangyuan nodded, "Okay, I'll look into what business we can do later."

While talking, his gaze fell on her package.

Lin Jiayi knew what he was thinking, and without fuss, she took out the two hundred yuan she had just put back and handed it over to him directly.

"You manage this seed money, do whatever you want with it, I know you can handle it."

Li Guangyuan stared at the stack of money in his hand, his fingers trembling a bit.

Two hundred yuan, that's not a small amount, he had never held so much money in his life.

His wife giving it to him was a sign of her trust.

"Jiayi, don't worry, once I have money, I will definitely treat you well, and won't let you suffer even a bit of grievance."

Lin Jiayi leaned into his arms, a face full of happiness, "Remember what you said just now."

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After the last experience, Chuxia didn't ask her elder brother for help in picking tomatoes again, having already split the family's responsibilities, she couldn't always rely on others.

Instead, her in-laws got up early in the morning to help her pick tomatoes in the field.

Chuxia got up early, steamed a pot of buns stuffed with minced meat and green beans, placed mung beans at the bottom of the pot, and cooked mung bean soup. When heading to the field, she took both the buns and mung bean soup with her.

Mrs. Qin still felt a bit embarrassed, "I was thinking of cooking some meals and bringing them over once we were done picking."

"Mom, there's no need for that hassle, I had everything ready since I woke up early."

"Then next time you don't need to rush to the field, your father and I can start working early, and you can come over after cooking at home. You don't need to get up so early, young people like you don't sleep as much as us old folks and lacking sleep should be uncomfortable."

Chuxia wanted to say that she was the earliest riser in her family regardless of the season, but she swallowed her words.

"Okay, I'll listen to Mom."

While speaking, she served a bowl of mung bean soup for both Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin.

She had added Spiritual Spring water to this mung bean soup, and although she didn't know if it could cure Mr. Qin's illness, it could at least strengthen the couple's health somewhat.

Perhaps because Qin Yang was not at home, and she was the newly wed daughter-in-law, the old couple treated her chores as their own responsibilities these days, giving selflessly without asking for anything in return.

Caring for her even more diligently than her own parents, she had never been taken care of like this by elders in her entire life.

Genuine care exchanged for genuine care, she was also willing to show filial respect to her in-laws, irrelevant of Qin Yang's instructions.

Before noon, she picked all the tomatoes and similarly rode her bicycle with the rack to the vegetable station.

This was the time for delivering vegetables, and there were queues in front of every scale.

Chuxia glanced around, didn't see Li Jian, and chose a queue with fewer people to stand behind.

Just a few steps ahead, someone called out to her, "Young lady, why are you queueing here? Come with me," it was Li Jian.

Lin Chuxia did not refuse and followed Li Jian, pushing her bicycle forward.

Only after getting past the crowd did Li Jian ask her, "Didn't I ask you to pick me up? Why did you go queue up again?"

"People weren't many, just queuing for a while. Mainly because I have to save Brother Li's kindness for when it's really needed," she replied with a half-serious, half-joking smile.

She was mainly worried that if asking Li Jian for help didn't work out, not only would the person weighing the produce give her the cold shoulder, but the queuing farmers might spit at her too.

Li Jian, looking at her bright and sly eyes, didn't expose her, and whispered, "Finish up and come pick a cart later. I'll go ahead and wait for you over there."

Lin Chuxia's eyes lit up, this was truly an unexpected delight, "Then I thank Brother Li in advance."

Although she didn't know how this pie suddenly fell from the sky, Lin Chuxia quickly finished her portioning, handled the tomatoes, and without settling the account went to the spot where the broken carts were stored.

Seeing Li Jian standing there talking and smoking with someone, she silently breathed a sigh of relief.

"This is the young lady from our home I told you about. It's inconvenient for her to deliver vegetables by herself on a bike. Look through this pile of junk and pick out one that can still be fixed for her."

After speaking to that man, Li Jian turned to Lin Chuxia saying, "This is Brother Wang. He knows about your situation. You can pick out one of the carts here, 50 yuan, you see..."

"Okay, okay, thank you so much, Brother Wang," Lin Chuxia quickly expressed her gratitude.

These days, buying a bicycle wasn't easy. A Phoenix brand bicycle cost 168 yuan, not to mention needing coupons, let alone a cart which was impossible to buy even if one had money.

These carts at the vegetable station were all uniformly equipped during the People's Commune period to distribute vegetables conveniently.

Nowadays, with the household contract responsibility system and the open markets, the role of vegetable stations is diminishing and many carts were languishing unused here.

As public property, even though they were unwanted, these couldn't be disposed of randomly. In fact, many of the carts had no real issues - 50 yuan each was a real bargain.

Lin Chuxia didn't carry that much money with her. She looked at Li Jian pleasingly, "Brother, I don't have that much money on me right now. Could you front it for me? I'll bring you the money once I've delivered the cart back home."

Li Jian smiled and remained silent. Lin Chuxia moved closer and whispered, "Isn't my bicycle as a pledge enough? I see Brother Wang is quite busy, let's not bother him anymore."

Li Jian thought to himself, are you afraid of troubling them again? Or are you afraid we might renege on selling you the cart?

Well, who asked him to care about her business.

Taking out 50 yuan from his pocket and paying Wang Cheng, Lin Chuxia had already picked out a cart.

The frame and wheels were still good, only weathered by the sun, rain, and a bit rusty, parts of the wooden boards of the cart were broken, and all three tyres were flat, but this was already considered pretty good.

After thanking Brother Wang again, Lin Chuxia handed her bicycle to Li Jian and pushed the cart home herself.

Mrs. Qin was cooking when she saw Lin Chuxia push back a cart and quickly came out of the kitchen; Qin Han also walked around the cart a couple of times.

"Sister-in-law, where did you borrow this cart from?"

"It's not borrowed, I bought it. Let's not tell elder brother yet, I need to deliver the money to them."

"You bought it?" Qin Han was genuinely startled, buying a cart wasn't easy.

Seeing her eager to head out, he quickly added, "Okay, then hurry over. Do you have enough money? If not, let me help you break some down."

"It's enough."

Lin Chuxia went back to her room, took out 80 yuan, worried Li Jian might be waiting anxiously, and practically jogged back to the vegetable station.

Chapter 25: Chapter 25: Forgive Her for Forgetting Qin Yang

Li Jian was just about to grab his food tray for the canteen when he saw the person and raised an eyebrow, "Are you afraid I will ride off with your bicycle?"

It was a scorching hot day and he was sweating profusely, not afraid of getting a heat stroke.

Lin Chuxia wiped the sweat from her forehead and tucked her damp hair behind her ears, "No, Brother Li is not that kind of person. I just thought about having a meal with Brother Li. It's been a long time, and the canteen probably doesn't have good food anymore. Let's go, let's go to the State-Owned Restaurant instead."

Li Jian didn't know why, but he found this girl quite interesting the first time he interacted with her.

He worked at the vegetable station every day and had seen all sorts of young women and wives, but a girl like Lin Chuxia, who had her little schemes yet wasn't annoying and was straightforward, was really rare.

Thinking about how his mother nagged him about daughters-in-law all day long, nearly nagging his ears off, Li Jian took another look at Lin Chuxia.

Tall and slim, though her clothes were old, they were clean, and her rolled-up sleeves revealed a chunk of her fair arm.

An oval face, willow brows, almond eyes, a high nose bridge, lips that were neither too big nor too small, with a hint of red – a very compelling appearance that was pleasant to behold.

Especially her aura; if he hadn't seen her delivering vegetables, he would never have guessed she was a rural girl.

"Let's go then."

Li Jian set the food tray aside on a windowsill and stepped out of the vegetable station with Lin Chuxia.

There weren't many people at the State-Owned Restaurant at that moment. Lin Chuxia chose a seat by the side and went to the window to order dishes.

Braised pork, three-vegetable dish, sweet and sour pork ribs, and she also ordered a serving of cold dish with mashed garlic and green beans, opting for two bowls of white rice as the main dish.

The service attendant at the State-Owned Restaurant was as indifferent as always, placing all the dishes at the window to be picked up personally.

This was precisely why the business at the State-Owned Restaurant had been declining.

Many people would rather run to a small food stall outside and snack on a couple of pancakes than put up with the service at the State-Owned Restaurant.

Seeing these dishes, Li Jian felt a bit embarrassed, "You're spending too much."

He had only intended to have a casual meal with this girl and had not expected her to order several of the restaurant's top dishes today.

Lin Chuxia smiled and passed him a pair of chopsticks, "What expense? If it weren't for Brother Li's help today, how could I have bought that cart?"

"It's nothing."

Li Jian didn't mention that he had just been promoted the day before yesterday, now managing a small team of about a dozen people.

On the surface, he didn't show much, but upon privately inquiring, he understood that recently upper management had been focusing on service issues in their field.

Coincidentally, Director overheard Lin Chuxia's comments that day, resulting him to be cited as an example.

You could say he had a stroke of luck or that he was fortunate because of Lin Chuxia's favor, which is why he proactively helped her get a cart.

Looking at the girl opposite him who ate heartily but not rudely, and reminded of her ability to read faces, whether true or not,

"I see you came back so quickly, your family is from Qin Family Village?"

The closest village to their vegetable station, mainly of vegetable farmers, was indeed Qin Family Village.

"Yes, my in-laws are from Qin Family Village."

Li Jian paused slightly, "You're married? Where is your husband? Why are you here selling vegetables alone?"

"My husband works out of town."

Lin Chuxia did not hide anything, since she would inevitably have to deal with Li Jian frequently in the future, and someone intent on finding out could easily do so, thus there was no need for secrecy.

Li Jian: "..."

It sounds like something shattered.

After lunch, Lin Chuxia bought Li Jian two more packs of cigarettes.

Fenghuang brand cigarettes, 0.46 yuan per pack, 10 packs per carton, two cartons for 9.2 yuan.

During the meal, she saw that Li Jian smoked Daqianmen, which cost 0.35 yuan per pack, but required cigarette tickets, which she didn't have.

Nowadays, that's how the market is. Although it has gradually opened up, some goods are still in short supply and continue to be bought through a ticketing system.

Daqianmen is a popular brand that many people like to smoke. Fenghuang cigarettes, slightly more expensive and with a strong fragrance, are not as accustomed by many people, hence fewer buyers.

Thus, both being cigarettes, Daqianmen requires cigarette tickets, but Fenghuang does not.

However, when it comes to giving gifts, no one dislikes something more expensive.

Lin Chuxia could see that Li Jian was very pleased with the cigarettes, and he mentioned that she could reach out to him if needed.

This time, Lin Chuxia did not take it as just a polite remark.

After saying goodbye to Li Jian, she rode her bicycle home.

It was noon, neither Mr. Qin nor Brother Qin had taken their nap. They were fiddling with a flatbed cart under the big tree in the yard.

Seeing Lin Chuxia return, Mr. Qin said, "The cart isn't too damaged. I oiled the chain and patched the tires, it's still usable, but the wooden board on top is in bad shape. Let your brother make a new board and fit it in the next few days."

Brother Qin also said, "Yes, it'd be more convenient for you to sell vegetables with this cart. Three wheels are more stable than two."

(Eighties flatbed cart)

They all thought Lin Chuxia bought the cart just for convenience in delivering vegetables. Lin Chuxia parked her bicycle, pulled out a pack of Hongqi cigarettes from her pocket, and handed it to Brother Qin, "Then I'll trouble you to spare some time in the next few days to make a board for me."

Mr. Qin's health wasn't good, he couldn't smoke, and Qin Han rarely did too. When he craved a smoke, he would go for Hongqi, which was weaker and cheaper.

Seeing the cigarettes, Qin Han was a bit surprised but accepted them without hesitation, "It's no trouble at all. There's not much to do in the fields recently. I'll get some wood tomorrow, and in a couple of days, you'll be able to use the cart for your deliveries."

Lin Chuxia said, "I didn't buy this flatbed cart just for delivering vegetables. Dad, brother, I want to start a business."

"Start a business?"

Mrs. Qin, hearing Lin Chuxia's voice, came out just in time to catch this sentence.

With everyone present, Lin Chuxia shared her thoughts.

"I'm not cut out for farming. I was thinking of starting a small business. The national policies are relaxed now, as long as one is hardworking, one wouldn't starve."

Mr. Qin nodded, "What business are you planning to do?"

"I'm planning to sell food. People have to eat, and as long as it tastes good, selling food shouldn't lead to losses. I'll start with meat buns, then slowly expand depending on the situation."

At this point, she looked towards Qin Han, "Brother, sister-in-law, do you have any plans to start a business? I looked around the county these past few days, and there's a

market for it. Our Qin Family Village's geographical location is so advantageous, it would be a waste not to do business."

Qin Han was slightly stunned, then his eyes lit up with enthusiasm, "This..." He glanced towards his house, "Your sister-in-law is putting Zhuangzhuang to sleep right now."

"No rush, discuss it with sister-in-law. If you're willing, we can further discuss what to do next."

"Alright, I'll talk to her in a bit," Qin Han responded, energized at the prospect of doing business.

Mrs. Qin, worried, said, "Chuxia, have you discussed this business idea with Yangyang? Our family has been vegetable farmers for generations. Apart from farming, we know nothing about doing business. I'm not even sure how to go about it."

Lin Chuxia: "..."

Forgive her for forgetting about Qin Yang for a moment.