

Middle Age 62

Chapter 62: Children's Welfare Institute

The gates of the welfare institute are two iron doors, sparsely barred and rusted, half ajar.

The pillars on either side of the door were originally painted, but now most of the paint has peeled off, exposing the mottled concrete underneath.

Star Children's Welfare Institute, its large characters are so blurred they are almost unrecognizable.

Entering the yard of the welfare institute, the old concrete ground is pitted everywhere, a few willow trees appear wilting, with sparse and slightly yellowed leaves.

The main building is a three-story old-style building, the exterior paint has peeled off so much that it reveals patches of red brick underneath, like patches.

Some of the window glasses have already shattered and are roughly patched with plastic sheets, trembling in the wind.

The railings on the balcony are also broken in places, hanging crookedly, as if they could fall off at any moment.

Qi Yun took a deep breath and walked towards the interior of the building.

In the corridor, a section of the mottled wall looks different from other places; it's framed by a large piece of glass, tied with ribbons around it.

Through the glass, rows of smiling photographs are neatly arranged; the children in the photos, despite their simple and even somewhat worn clothes, have incredibly bright smiles and eyes full of innocence.

Qi Yun's gaze swept over these photos and finally settled on a familiar figure.

The person in the photo is wearing a white dress, with long flowing hair, helping the adorable children shave their heads.

"Dad, is this Sister Zhao Qing?" Suddenly, Nuannuan in his arms looked up at Qi Yun and asked.

Qi Yun glanced again at the familiar figure in the photo, carefully examining it.

The appearance is quite similar, but the person in the photo and the Zhao Qing you meet in daily life, their aura, is completely different.

"Dad doesn't know either..."

"Oh, who are you looking for?" Just then, an elderly lady with white hair and thick glasses walked towards them.

Qi Yun turned around, wearing a gentle smile, and spoke, "Hello, madam. I am looking for the person in charge of this welfare institute."

The old lady looked Qi Yun up and down, then glanced at Nuannuan in his arms, and displayed a kindly smile: "I am the director of this welfare institute. You can tell me whatever you need."

Qi Yun was slightly taken aback, as this director was dressed very simply and appeared to be well past retirement age.

He stepped forward a couple of steps and explained his purpose.

Upon hearing that he wanted to buy that batch of old furniture, the director enthusiastically led Qi Yun towards the back.

Through this three-story old building, behind it were rows of low bungalows, with parts of the window frames fallen off, covered with a layer of film outside.

The director pushed open the door of one of the rooms, and a musty yet dry mixed smell hit them.

The room was dimly lit, with only weak lights penetrating through the film layer, barely allowing visibility of the interior.

In the corner, various old-style furniture was piled up: cupboards, dressers, wardrobes, all similar to the furniture back in the rural homes during childhood.

However, some were missing legs, and others had pitted surfaces...

The only item of potential value was the black-painted wooden bed in the corner.

Although the furniture appeared quite mediocre, there wasn't a speck of dust on it, indicating someone had carefully wiped it.

Qi Yun's gaze kept searching through these old pieces, finally locating the faintly glowing medical kit on a four-cornered stool.

"Achoo~!" The daughter in his arms seemed a bit overwhelmed by the musty room scent, wrinkling her little nose slightly.

The director saw this and quickly suggested: "Why not discuss it in my office? I had someone photograph these pieces of furniture the other day. You can make your selections from there, and I'll have someone bring them over."

Qi Yun nodded in agreement, carrying his daughter, and followed the director into an equally old yet slightly tidier office.

In the office, there was a peeling-paint desk piled with documents and account books, along with two worn-out chairs with split leather seats exposing the yellowing sponge inside.

"Sorry for our humble conditions here," the director said while inviting Qi Yun to sit down and taking out two disposable paper cups, filling them with hot water from a thermos.

Qi Yun quickly waved his hand, indicating not to bother.

The director placed the two cups of hot water in front of Qi Yun, sighing slightly, with a touch of helplessness on his face: "Frankly, our welfare institute is now facing severe struggles.

I know those old pieces of furniture aren't worth much, but even if they could bring a little more money, the children could have an extra bite to eat..."

"I understand, rest assured, whatever I can make use of, I'll buy it," Qi Yun nodded, indicating comprehension.

This welfare institute, as the director mentioned, indeed wasn't in a good state.

"May I know your name?" The director adjusted her heavy glasses, lowered her head, and pulled out a stack of photos from the drawer, handing them over, "These are the photos of those old pieces."

Qi Yun stood up to receive the photos, politely replying, "My surname is Qi, you can call me Qi Yun."

"Alright, Qi Yun, take your time to choose, and if there are any you can use, pay as you see fit and take them."

"Knock, knock, knock!" Just as the words fell, a knock sounded from outside the door.

A girl, looking about thirteen or fourteen, peeked halfway into the room, her eyes flickering upon noticing a stranger, hesitant to speak.

The director glanced over her glasses, recognized the visitor, and kindly said, "Xiaoyu, come in."

The child named Xiaoyu approached, head lowered, with her hands behind her back.

"What's the matter, Xiaoyu?"

Xiaoyu looked conflicted, hesitated, and said, "Grandma Luo, someone from the supermarket... they came to urge payment again."

Upon hearing this, the director sighed, "Tell them to wait a bit, I have a guest now, I'll see them as soon as I'm finished."

"Okay, Grandma Luo." Xiaoyu nodded obediently and withdrew from the office.

"Qi Yun, no rush, take your time to choose." The director squeezed out a slight smile, with a hint of exhaustion in her tone.

Qi Yun briefly perused the photos, then placed them back on the desk and asked, "How much were you planning to sell for all these pieces, Director?"

The director froze upon hearing this, showing a dubious expression, "You want all these pieces?"

Qi Yun nodded, smiling, "Yes, I want them all."

"Will you..." The director gave Qi Yun a long look, hesitated for a moment, then furrowed her brows and asked, "Can you use all of them?"

"Yes, I plan to open a traditional-style guesthouse, and these old pieces are just what I need." Qi Yun found an excuse.

The director looked at him, nodded, then picked up an account book on the desk, flipped to the page recording "Jufu Supermarket Debt," with a figure of 8322 at the bottom.

"If you want them all, eight thousand yuan in total, is that okay?"

Her tone carried some helplessness, even with a hint of... pleading...

PS: Everyone, it's the beginning of the month, please throw your monthly votes here!

Also, thank you all for following and reading daily, this book has surprisingly made it to the Sanjiang list, once again, heartfelt thanks to all of you!