

Switched M 111

Chapter 111: This Woman, Quite the Generous Giver

"Director Kang, it's not easy for us to run a small business. Renovation is also required when setting up the shop, which is a substantial investment. Can we possibly extend the lease to a few more years?"

Kang Yong was not impressed by the woman before him; young in years but slick-tongued, a true old hand in cunning.

Renting the house to her was solely due to the textile mill's poor performance. It was a waste to leave the property vacant. As long as it didn't harm the interests of the textile mill, it really made no difference who the tenant was.

The scheme Lin Chuxia proposed yesterday was indeed viable, which is why he had agreed to rent the house to her.

Unexpectedly, she now aggressively requested a three-year lease.

Renting such a big house to open a minor bun shop, he didn't comprehend her logic, nor did he know how much money her family had to allow her to squander it this way.

Squandering for a year wasn't enough, she wanted to squander for three?

He tapped his fingers on the desk as if to ponder, "Let's get this straight. If we change the contract to three years, you cannot back out if any unexpected issues arise. Contracts aren't to be taken lightly. Also, if we agree on three years, you'll have to give me an additional 300 yuan as a deposit, which won't be refunded if you do renege."

His words bore a hint of testing as his gaze lingered leisurely on Lin Chuxia.

Lin Chuxia smiled faintly, pulling out a red envelope from her bag and pushing it towards him.

Kang Yong's expression instantly changed, "What are you doing? Let me tell you, I, Kang Yong, always keep my word. Such things won't work on me."

"Director Kang has misunderstood, I just wanted to express my gratitude for your consideration. Honestly, I came today with only a 50% hope, as you made it very clear yesterday that you had no plans to rent the mill's property for a restaurant business. It's all thanks to your efforts that we could smoothly sign the contract today. I'm well aware of the favor."

Kang Yong's expression softened slightly; indeed, he had pulled some strings in this matter.

He had them come to sign the contract because he had reported to the mill manager yesterday afternoon.

Although he had certain authority, if the manager objected, the deal would not have happened, so he was tactful in his reporting.

Lin Chuxia was right to say that the contract was secured with his maneuvering.

Lin Chuxia watched Kang Yong's expression and timely added, "Now that we are renting from the textile mill, we'd only need more of Director Kang's consideration in the future. I hope you can understand the feelings of us, the small self-employed citizens, and seek your protection despite the presumption."

Listening to her frank words, Kang Yong chuckled inwardly at the girl's naivety, which matched her situation.

Renting from the textile mill, in a way, meant they were in his grasp.

"Rest assured, the factory handles things systematically. As long as you follow the contract, the textile mill will honor its commitment."

"With those words from you, I feel reassured. As for this contract..."

Kang Yong took the contract and immediately changed it from one year to three years.

No wonder people have high credibility now; a handwritten contract, with even amendments noted on it, as long as both parties sign and put their fingerprints, there is almost no room for denial.

Once Lin Chuxia saw the changes, she quickly signed her name and put her fingerprint down.

The façade building of the textile mill was now theirs to use for the next three years.

Upon leaving the textile mill, Su Wensong was still pondering over the red envelope.

In his view, even without Lin Chuxia's red envelope, the contract would be safe.

As for seeking protection, he believed that with the contract in hand, there was no need for anyone's protection. Even if the textile mill needed to take back the house midway, Kang Yong, as a director of the mill, would not go against the factory's decision over a red envelope.

Thinking this, he asked about it.

Lin Chuxia, with contract in tow and feeling lighter, saw that no one was around and explained to Su Wensong.

"Seeking protection was just a pretext. This red envelope can only be considered as a foot in the door," and to test Kang Yong's character.

She touched the small cloth bag on her back. "One day, an addition must be made to this contract."

When it came time to sell this building, she wanted the prerogative as the long-time lessee.

Meanwhile, Kang Yong, upon opening the red envelope and seeing it full of banknotes, counted a neat 10 bills.

His monthly salary was just over fifty now; this was equivalent to two months of his wage.

"This woman is indeed generous with her money."

Now, Kang Yong's only thought about Lin Chuxia was to see how she would continue to stir things up and whether her bun shop could earn the rent money.

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Lin Chuxia and Su Wensong went straight back to the Bun Shop.

With the property leased, it was time to prepare for renovation.

Lin Chuxia needed to devise a detailed renovation plan, and then task Su Wensong with it. In the following period, Su Wensong would not be able to attend to the small courtyard, which was just as well since Brother Su and his wife had arrived.

She planned to go back and discuss the division of labor, but as soon as she arrived at the Bun Shop, Zhang Guilan came out to meet her.

With an anxious look, she turned to Su Wensong, "Xiao Su, you'd better go have a look. There's someone at your place..."

Without specifying who it was or what the matter was, they already faintly heard the turmoil from inside the courtyard.

Su Wensong's face turned as he hurried over, with Lin Chuxia following.

In the yard, Sun Lanlan shielded Granny Su behind her, pointing at a man with a flushed face from anger, "If you dare, wait for Brother Su to come back. Bullying an elderly like Granny Su, what kind of skill is that? If you upset Granny Su, Brother Su won't let you off easily."

"I'm telling you, girl, protecting them like that, isn't it just because you fancy Su Wensong and want to be the boss's wife? Let me make it clear, you don't get a say here, forget about not marrying into Su Family yet; even if you did marry Su Wensong, you'd mean nothing to me."

"You..."

"Su Dazhuang, get lost! You dare to ruin the reputation of an innocent girl for no reason; do you think everyone is as lowly as you?"

Sun Lanlan was infuriated beyond words, and Granny Su trembled with anger.

Identifying the visitor, seeing the livid Granny Su, Su Wensong took strides over and grabbed the offender by the collar, "Su by surname, do you really think I'm too scared to lay a hand on you?"

Just yesterday, he was considerate of the impact on the store, but now, in the courtyard, he had no such concerns.

Su Dazhuang wasn't tall; Su Wensong nearly hoisted him off his feet.

Seeing Su Wensong, with eyes wide and shouting, "What are you doing? What do you want to do? I am your paternal uncle."

"Paternal uncle my foot! Harm my Granny, and it wouldn't matter even if the Jade Emperor himself arrived."

Su Dazhuang didn't expect that Su Wensong had grown so bold within such a short amount of time; it seemed wealth had indeed emboldened him.

Chapter 112: Returning Kindness with Enmity

Swatting at his hand, "Put me down, or I'll go to the police and report you. I'm your elder, and being disrespectful towards an elder, the people on the street won't let you off either."

Granny Su knew that Su Dazhuang had some connections on the street, otherwise, Su Wensong wouldn't have lost his job in the first place.

Hearing this, she became somewhat worried and pulled on Su Wensong's arm, "Wensong, don't dirty your hands with such people, Granny is fine."

Su Wensong didn't want Granny to worry, so he finally let go.

Su Dazhuang smoothed his clothes, looking at Su Wensong with dissatisfaction, "It's becoming more and more outrageous, daring to lay hands on your own uncle..."

Seeing Su Wensong about to step forward again, he quickly changed the topic, "I didn't come here to argue with you today, I came to discuss something with your granny..."

"I've already said, there's no need to discuss, I don't agree, you can leave now," Granny Su was adamant.

Su Dazhuang, seeing the two of them like this, knew that the matter wouldn't be easy to handle, but he didn't want to lose momentum, "You should think it through, if you miss out on this opportunity, there won't be another, I'm also thinking for your own good, old aunt, you're at such an advanced age now, the area around the train station is so chaotic, noisy every day, and you can't rest well, not to mention the Bun Shop, people coming and going all the time, I remember you like tranquility the most, my place is definitely quieter than here by a long shot..."

"That was the past, I now enjoy the bustle, Wensong, see the guest out," Granny Su no longer wanted to deal with this nephew and directly urged him to leave.

With an ugly expression on his face, Su Wensong took a step forward, Su Dazhuang, not daring to clash head-on with him, only said, "Think it over properly, I don't want to trouble the street over such a small matter."

Hearing the word "street," Su Wensong still couldn't help but grab his arm and dragged him directly outside, "Get out, if you dare, come try it again and see if you can still steal from us this time."

Su Dazhuang stumbled from being pushed, still wanting to threaten a bit more, but seeing Su Wensong's face, he moved his lips but finally closed his mouth, leaving in an embarrassed state.

Seeing the person leave, Sun Lanlan showed a face full of guilt, "I'm sorry, I originally wanted to help Granny Su, but in the end, I was unable to assist and even caused..."

She knew that Chuxia and Granny Su were close. Seeing someone yell at Granny Su, and with both Su Wensong and Chuxia absent, she had come out to intervene.

She didn't expect that the other party would claim her and Su Wensong...

"Good child, it's not your fault, Granny thanks you for your help, otherwise my old bones would have really been angered to death by them, don't take what that person said to heart, he's just a scoundrel, just think of him as farting."

Granny Su was holding Sun Lanlan's hand, her eyes full of affection.

This girl is indeed a good friend of Miss Lin, both are similar, with good hearts and likable, well-behaved appearances.

Before, she hadn't ruled out the possibility of pairing her with her grandson, but having watched for so long, her grandson seems like a wooden block, and this girl doesn't seem to fancy him either. At the previous apprenticeship banquet, she did seem to take a fancy to the Sun Family boy.

Now that Su Dazhuang was spreading rumors, they couldn't let her bear any emotional burden; wouldn't that be repaying kindness with ingratitude?

"What's going on?" It was only now that Lin Chuxia had the chance to ask.

Granny Su sighed, "That's Wensong's uncle. Today, I don't know what got into him, he came to exchange houses with us. I didn't agree, and then he tried to forcibly take the deed from me. Luckily, Lanlan came to help me."

Hearing Granny Su's words, Su Wensong's face turned dark. He really should have taught that man a lesson just now, daring to lay hands on Granny.

Upon hearing this, Lin Chuxia immediately understood - are the Su Family father and son bullying Su Wensong by force of habit? After snatching his job, now that they see the Bun Shop doing well, they've come to snatch the house.

She could imagine what kind of calculation the father and son were making: grabbing the house first and then taking over the Bun Shop to become the bosses themselves.

What a flight of fancy.

Sun Lanlan thought of this too and asked with concern, "What should we do then? Will the street side with them?"

Su Dazhuang spoke with seeming confidence, as if he had a strong backing.

Granny Su also worried a bit, Su Dazhuang was a schemer; to curry favor with the higher-ups, he personally reported his own uncle, gaining merits and shining brightly for a while through their downfall.

Later, as policies changed, those people also began to keep a low profile.

But human nature doesn't change; after stealing the grandson's job, now they have their sights on their house, who knows what other tricks they have up their sleeve.

Su Wensong, however, snorted coldly, "I hadn't even returned from the countryside when he made his move and took the job. Now that I'm here, if he wants to pull this trick, I'll see if he's really got what it takes."

In the few months he had been with Lin Chuxia, he also learned quite a bit about how to deal with people, and he knew that retreating incessantly is never the fundamental solution.

The job issue couldn't be reversed, but this time, he was determined not to let his uncle's family get any benefits from him.

Lin Chuxia, seeing that he had a plan in mind, said no more.

But these last few days served as a wake-up call for her.

Having no men in the store just wouldn't do, even if Su Wensong was busy with other things, and the workload in the small courtyard was overwhelming. The staff still needed to be spread out, leaving a man in the store was necessary.

"Let's go have a look at the small courtyard later, and after everything is taken care of, everyone should come to the store for a meeting," Lin Chuxia said.

Sun Lanlan volunteered, "You guys just got back, rest for a while; I'll make the trip."

Before long, everyone from the small courtyard came over.

These last two days, Qin Han had been following Sun Bingnan around, doing whatever he did.

Now that Sun Bingnan was fully familiar with the store's operations and knew that Qin Han was Lin Chuxia's uncle, he intentionally mentored him.

One taught seriously, and the other learned diligently, Qin Han picked up a lot during these two days, getting a handle on almost every aspect of the store's operations.

Lin Chuxia was quite satisfied when she found out; now, even distributing personnel wouldn't affect the normal progress of work.

The meeting content was straightforward: she briefly mentioned the renting of the new store space. Regarding upcoming tasks, Su Wensong would go to the new store, Sun Bingnan would handle the

procurement of cooked food materials and assist Pang Yongli and Ma Yingzi with preparing the cooked foods, while Qin Han stayed at the Bun Shop in charge of its procurement and some daily tasks.

This was Lin Chuxia's way of training him; when the new store was renovated and officially open, she planned to appoint Qin Han as the store manager.

The rest of the staff would continue their usual tasks.

At the end, Lin Chuxia put the purchased cooked foods on the table, inviting everyone to taste and share their opinions.

Granny Sun took a bite of the smoked chicken and grimaced, "This is not as tender as ours, and the flavor is off."

Sun Lanlan and Zhang Guilan nodded in agreement, particularly Zhang Guilan who had also bought cooked foods from the food factory in the past.

"I used to think the cooked foods from their place tasted good, but ever since I've had our sister-in-law's, I always feel like something's missing from their flavors."

Chapter 113: I Want to Introduce Someone as Well

"Their cooked food still has a bit of a gamey taste, but our cooked food is all meaty and flavorful," Su Wensong, who was in charge of the cooked foods section, said pointedly.

Lin Chuxia tasted a bit of each and felt the difference. Indeed, both the texture and flavor were slightly worse than those of Qin's Cooked Food, which bolstered her confidence in the new store.

After the meeting ended, everyone went back to their respective places, but Ma Yingzi stayed behind.

"Boss, does our new store still need people for the opening? You see, I have a neighbor who asked me to inquire if they could work at our bun shop."

This request wasn't surprising. With so many idle people and few jobs around, it's natural for others to envy those who are making money.

"What's the situation with your neighbor? Does she know what working at the bun shop entails?" Lin Chuxia didn't oppose referrals, as long as the person was suitable, it didn't matter who it was.

Seeing that Lin Chuxia was easy to talk to, Ma Yingzi's nervous expression relaxed a bit and she nodded, "She knows. After I started working here, she would often come over for a chat and found out about what I do here. She thinks she can handle it too. She's two years older than I am, 32 this year, with her child already in school."

"Alright, have her come by tomorrow for me to take a look at."

Lin Chuxia readily agreed and then said to the others, "If you all know someone suitable, feel free to refer them. But let me be blunt upfront: you can make the referral, but whether we hire them depends on if they fit the work at our bun shop. When it comes to work, I won't consider personal favors. I made this clear when Brother Pang and Sister Ma joined, and it will be the same going forward."

"Got it, boss," the others responded.

Although the boss's words were not pleasant to hear, they knew that the boss was actually offering them a favor.

These days, who doesn't have a few relatives or friends looking for jobs? As long as they refer them, they've done a favor. Whether or not the person can stay on the job depends on their own capabilities.

Of course, having said that, considering how well the boss treated them, they also couldn't just refer anybody and end up causing trouble for the boss.

Moreover, the boss was strict about work and never cared about personal faces. If they recommended someone incompetent, in the end, it would only backfire on themselves.

Sun Bingnan saw Sun Lanlan busy in the kitchen and sneakily came over to Lin Chuxia, "Boss, I also want to refer someone here."

Lin Chuxia saw him glancing toward the kitchen with a sly look and asked doubtfully, "Who are you referring to? You're not thinking of bringing your girlfriend over, are you?"

Sun Bingnan was still looking at the kitchen when he heard this and grimaced, "Do you see me as that kind of person?"

"No problem, Third Brother. Even if you are that kind of person, I don't mind. It would be good for you to refer her over, so Lanlan and I can help you take a closer look."

Sun Bingnan waved his hands, "I'm talking about serious stuff. I want to refer Cai Jun over, the one who was my classmate in middle school from Cai Ying's place. We have a good relationship, and he's a lively person. I was thinking of taking the next step and having him as my brother-in-law," he said with a note of seriousness, "I'm only telling you this. I haven't mentioned it to Lanlan and Cai Jun. Lanlan is my sister, and I want her to find someone she likes. If a spark ignites between them, then it's all good. If Lanlan doesn't feel anything for him, then let it be, consider it helping a buddy find a job."

Lin Chuxia couldn't help but look at Sun Bingnan with new respect, giving him a thumbs up, "Lanlan is fortunate to have you as a third brother."

She remembered that Sun Bingnan had opposed Sun Lanlan's marriage arrangement with Liu Dahui.

Embarrassed by the praise, Sun Bingnan said, "In this life, we should find someone we like. It's better to live alone than to settle for someone out of convenience."

This was indeed very much like Sun Bingnan. In his previous life, he was still unmarried well into his thirties, which turned his parents' hair white with worry.

"Alright, let me know when you can bring him over for me to take a look," Lin Chuxia was also very accommodating.

With everything arranged, Lin Chuxia returned to the small courtyard's office. The new place was larger and required careful planning.

Upon entering the small courtyard, Yuan Bao came wagging his tail, circling around her.

When Lin Chuxia crouched down to rub his head, he naturally followed her into the office.

Lin Chuxia gave him half a bowl of spiritual spring water. His dog food was a pancake specially made for him by Zhang Guilan.

After all, it seemed like a sin to feed a dog with meat buns.

Lin Chuxia didn't refuse. Nowadays, it indeed didn't seem right to feed a dog with meat buns, and Yuan Bao wasn't picky, happily munching down the pancakes.

She kept busy until it got dark. The bun shop finished for the day, and Sun Lanlan had returned to the small courtyard as well.

Qin Han and Zhang Guilan knew that Lin Chuxia hadn't gone home yet, so they came over to wait and walk home with her.

Lin Chuxia simply packed up her half-finished work and decided to continue at home.

On the other side, Su Wensong also finished his day's work and went home, where Granny Su had dinner ready, waiting for them to eat together.

While eating, they talked about the day's events and even took out the property deed for Su Wensong to keep safe.

Su Wensong didn't refuse. It made his granny anxious to keep the deed herself; it was better for him to hold onto it.

At the end of the conversation, they brought up Sun Lanlan again.

"She's a good girl, straightforward, with a clear sense of gratitude and grudges. We have her to thank for today..."

Granny Su spoke while observing her grandson's expression and finally added, "When you get a chance, thank her for me."

Su Wensong recalled Sun Lanlan's support for him the previous day and nodded, "Alright."

Satisfied with her grandson's enthusiastic response, Granny Su smiled.

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Lin Chuxia first went through the accounts when she got back. She planned to renovate the new shop well, not skimping on the investment.

She had spent most of her money on buying and renovating the small courtyard, but now with the cooked food business, the bun shop was earning nearly a hundred in profits daily. Even after spending quite a bit in the Northwest, she still had almost three thousand yuan left, in addition to the more than five hundred that Qin Yang had given her.

She used eight hundred for the new rental's rent, deposit, and red packets; Lin Chuxia planned to invest two thousand yuan in the renovation and hardware of the new shop front, which gave her a lot of room to maneuver.

With that considered, she only had a few hundred yuan left for turnover.

Lin Chuxia thought of Li Jian, feeling grateful for the three thousand yuan loan he had helped arrange; otherwise, she really wouldn't have been able to open the new shop.

She'll need to visit this "good friend" when she has the time.

Over the course of two days, Lin Chuxia visited the new store to survey it again before completing the design plans.

Although it was a 2-story building, the initial focus was still on the first floor.

Taking advantage of these days, Su Wensong also found a good tiler and carpenter. With the design drawings in hand, the renovation work officially began.

The person Ma Yingzi referred was named Chen Chunhua, who looked quite clean and was chattier than Ma Yingzi, and seemed quite observant.

After discussing the job duties and salary, with both parties having no objections, Chen Chunhua was kept on.

Chapter 114: They Can't Support Your Ambition

Cai Jun arrived two days later, a young man of respectable height, looking vibrant, with fairer skin than most people.

In their countryside, it's hard to find someone with such fair skin, especially a man.

The saying goes, 'a fair complexion hides faults,' and his clear skin added charm to his appearance, making him look less like a countryman and more like an intellectual.

It's no wonder Sun Bingnan spoils his sister; Lin Chuxia remembered that Sun Lanlan always liked refined men.

He stayed on, working directly at the Bun Shop, arranged by Qin Han.

During this period, Zhang Guilan also approached her once, as Qin Wu, the son of a cousin of Qin Yang, and his wife wanted to work at the Bun Shop. Since he was unfamiliar with Lin Chuxia, he approached Zhang Guilan.

Qin Yang's father had three siblings; Mr. Qin was the second eldest.

In the eldest uncle of the Qin family's home, there were three brothers; the eldest, Qin Liang, was also the eldest brother among all the cousins, and he's already past 40. His eldest son, Qin Jianjun, is nearly 20 now.

The second, Qin Jiang, father of Qin Jianye, whose wife Xu Yun teaches at the village elementary school.

The youngest, Qin Wen, was the second most successful among the brothers, apart from Qin Yang. He now works at the counter in the county Hardware Company, earning a salary.

The uncle only had one son, Qin Wu.

Lin Chuxia had a deep impression of him; he was the tractor driver when she married Qin Yang, who always affectionately called him Xiao Wu.

It was said that they were of the same age, and among all the cousins, Qin Yang and Qin Wu got along best.

He's also Niuniu's father.

Considering the staffing, more recruitment was necessary for the new branch opening, so she made provisions to include them.

The work at the branch continued methodically, and Qin Yang, far away in the Northwest, faced a challenge.

"Mr. Qin, don't you think your views are a bit radical? At present, this level of technical difficulty is almost insurmountable for us, and you know our decisions affect the workers' safety. Even a minor error could lead to irrevocable damage; this doesn't seem like your style."

Fresh out of the meeting, Bai Xiaoming couldn't help but raise his concerns.

It was the first time in their five-year partnership he had questioned Qin Yang's judgment.

Bai Xiaoming felt his plan was too perilous, unsafe for the workers, and unwise for his old friend's career.

Qin Yang stopped walking, looking toward the distant construction site.

The weather was turning colder, which would usually slow their progress soon.

His calm gaze carried a touch of determination, "You said it yourself, our current technology doesn't allow it. Aren't we in this field to tackle just such technical challenges?"

"Even so, we need to be realistic. Weren't things good the way they were? Steady and substantial, each step solid. Since when did you start caring about the intangible?"

Qin Yang glanced sideways, "There's nothing intangible, as long as we overcome it, it becomes tangible. If we don't, someone else will, and technology never stands still."

"Then let someone else do it; can't you see? Our team isn't capable of such things; they can't support your ambition."

Bai Xiaoming really couldn't understand; wasn't everything good as it was? Everything they did was verifiable, all achievements were tangible, and their whole technical team in the project department was even recognized.

In his view, Qin Yang's actions were digging his own grave.

Seeing Qin Yang silently looking at him, Bai Xiaoming softened his tone, "If you want your sister-in-law by your side, I can help you. I've told you before, I can manage to get a spot; you can't just ignore people's lives because of personal feelings, can you?"

He thought that this workaholic, once married and with a family, might have calmed down a bit. Instead, after the sister-in-law visited for two days, he went even crazier than before, treating his work even more fervently as his beloved.

Was he pouring all his longing for his wife into his work?

Honestly, he wanted to file a report right now to apply for a familial support spot, to get her here sooner to divert this guy's focus.

Qin Yang silently retracted his gaze, "How do we know something won't work without trying it? Xiaoming, you're getting old; I'm not."

He did indeed do everything for Lin Chuxia, to be transferred closer to her, but it was also for his beliefs.

For years he and his colleagues had been overly cautious, lacking the explorative spirit of technicians.

This time he wanted to grow stronger, break through technological barriers, and surpass himself.

It can be said Lin Chuxia gave him the courage and motivation.

Bai Xiaoming, left behind, was perplexed: ???

He's old?

He's only thirty; he thinks he's old?

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After half a month of renovations, the new store was finally ready to open.

The weather was great on that day, and Lin Chuxia had the staff up early for preparations.

Qin Han, Su Wensong, Qin Wu, and Sun Bingnan, the men, were busy hanging red paper, installing plaques, decorations, and preparing fireworks...

Though it was a branch, both its location and scale were significantly better than the original, and the opening needed to be grand.

That was the impact Lin Chuxia wanted.

When the train station bun shop opened, she had no foundation or experience, but now, whether it's Qin's buns or Qin's Cooked Food, both had made a name for themselves in Ancheng County.

The new store's opening needed to leverage everything to reach a new level.

Everything outside was ready, and inside the bun shop was completely new, cleaned thoroughly again that morning.

Dozens of steamer baskets filled with buns, steaming hot, and the ready-to-eat dishes looked very appetizing.

The staff in the shop wore uniform white aprons, white sleeves, and white sanitary hats, emphasizing neatness, cleanliness, and hygiene.

Today, only Sun Lanlan, Granny Sun, and Cai Jun stayed at the old shop, the rest were at the new store to boost sales for the opening day.

Before the auspicious hour, nearly a hundred people had already gathered outside the shop, knowing it was the opening of Qin's Bun Shop's new branch and that there would be a 10% discount on the opening day, eager to try the buns and dishes.

Lin Chuxia today was clad in a wine-red sweater with a white shirt collar visible at the round neckline, a beige jacket, black trousers, and low-heeled leather shoes. Her hair was styled into a five-strand scorpion braid, making her look neat and efficient.

She was also wandering inside and outside the shop, checking for any shortages and having them replenished promptly.

Finally, when she walked out to check her watch, there were less than twenty minutes to the auspicious time, and nearly a hundred people were gathered outside the shop.

Indeed, the clientele in the city was better than at the train station.

Her gaze shifted, and she spotted two familiar figures in the crowd, truly distinguished by their shiny bald heads...

Chapter 115: Branch Opening

The other party had clearly seen her as well, looking like they wanted to approach but were somewhat embarrassed to do so. Just as Lin Chuxia was about to step forward, a clear, surprised voice rang out from behind her, "Sister?"

Lin Chuxia turned around and saw the teenager amidst the crowd.

Wang Tianyu couldn't believe he was seeing the big sister who had helped him before, and only two steps after squeezing out of the crowd did he realize that Lin Chuxia seemed to have an unusual status today, attracting many glances. The boy's face instantly flushed red.

But he didn't back down and gathered his courage to say, "Sister, is this your shop? I wish you a roaring business and abundant wealth."

Lin Chuxia had already recognized him as the young boy from the public bus in the city that day and smiled and nodded in thanks.

Wang Tianyu knew this wasn't the right time for a chat, scratched his head, and finally said, "Sister, my name is Wang Tianyu, I forgot to tell you last time. Today's a weekend, my mom asked me to buy some stuff. Sister, from now on, for buns and ready-to-eat food, I'll only patronize your shop."

Having said that, with his little face all red, he turned and disappeared back into the crowd.

Lin Chuxia smiled helplessly, this child, she had merely lent a hand easily, yet he kept it in his heart.

She glanced at the time once more and said to Qin Han behind her, "Big brother, get ready..."

Before she could finish her sentence, a few people had pushed through the crowd and came over with an intimidating presence.

"Excuse me, excuse me..."

"Disperse, disperse, what are you all crowding around here for?"

Three or four men, either tall or with a ruffian look on their face, walked in with a swaggering gait, sizing up the Bun Shop and the woman in front of them.

Seeing the newcomers, Qin Han, Qin Wu, and the others quickly stepped forward, shielding Lin Chuxia behind them.

Especially Qin Han and Qin Wu, one to the left and one to the right, shielded Lin Chuxia tightly.

"What are you trying to do?"

The lead man had the ruffian look of a man with medium-length hair, a cigarette dangling from his mouth.

He ignored Qin Han, his gaze peering through the gap between their shoulders to fall on Lin Chuxia.

"We don't mean to do anything in particular, just heard there's a shop opening here and came to have a toast for congratulations. Just not sure if Boss Lin is willing to let the brothers give it a boost."

Qin Wu, dissatisfied, retorted, "Is this how you boost a place? Making people leave as soon as you get here?"

They had made such a fuss for the opening of their Bun Shop to attract a crowd. These people, without saying a word, started shooing others away. Clearly, they weren't here to celebrate, but to cause trouble.

"Is this gentleman trying to teach us brothers how to handle things?" The lead man coldly looked towards Qin Wu, and the few people behind him instantly took a step forward.

Qin Wu clenched his fists tightly, and Qin Han also prepared for an attack.

Alongside them, Sun Wensong and Sun Bingnan also had serious expressions.

Lin Chuxia patted Qin Wu's shoulder, indicating for him to step aside a little.

In the Qin Family, it was the two brothers, Qin Yang and Qin Wu who were tall, they shielded her so well she couldn't see anything.

Qin Wu hesitated a bit, but Qin Han had already made room.

"Guests are coming, of course we welcome them, but I'm afraid these brothers aren't just here to celebrate our shop's opening, right?"

The lead man saw Lin Chuxia and a flicker of amazement passed through his eyes. He smiled meaningfully, "I didn't expect it to be a female boss. I like dealing with smart women. It's nothing really, the brothers are just worried the boss's shop might not do well after its opening and want to offer you some protection. Wonder if the boss would honor us with that privilege?"

Lin Chuxia nodded in understanding, "Big brother here means you want some protection money?"

The man burst out laughing, "Boss, you're joking. We're law-abiding citizens. We're taking care of your business out of kindness. No offense, but selling buns here isn't a very good idea; cutting off someone's income is like killing their parents. We're just trying to help you make big issues small and settle things amicably. After all, money comes from peace. I believe you're a smart person, boss."

Qin Han frowned upon hearing this and looked at Lin Chuxia.

Lin Chuxia just smiled slightly, "Oh? I'm not aware of whose income I'm blocking. If you say so, I might just visit and apologize."

"No need to apologize. You just need to make up for it monthly."

Lin Chuxia glanced around at the crowd that had formed. Some people had taken several steps back to stay far away due to the arrival of these men, while others had come closer to watch the excitement.

Her voice cold and unrippled, "What if I'm not willing?"

The leading man sneered, "Not willing? Do you really think your store can stay open with us brothers around? You haven't asked who's in charge of this street."

After his words, the man gestured with his hand, and several people behind him immediately stepped forward.

Lin Chuxia was ready to kick off her heels and have a serious discussion with them when a lazy, deep voice suddenly came, "Sixth, haven't seen you for a few days, and you're all grown up?"

The man called Sixth stiffened and turned to the newcomer, immediately putting on a smile, "Lord Liang, what brings you here?"

"You're in charge of this street?" Jia Liang asked, lifting eyelids.

"No... No, it's you who's in charge."

Jia Liang waved his hand, "I'm looking after this store. Go do what you have to, and if I hear you're scheming against them again, don't say I didn't warn you."

"Yes, yes..."

Without another word, Sixth gestured and led his men away from the Bun Shop.

This turnaround was quite sudden; both the onlookers and the people in the shop were confused.

Even Lin Chuxia and Qin Han were slow to catch on.

Being watched by several people, particularly by Lin Chuxia's gaze, Jia Liang embarrassingly brushed his bald head.

Lin Chuxia came to her senses and smiled, "I didn't expect Lord Liang to have such prestige around here."

Jia Liang grew even more embarrassed, "Boss Lin, you jest. They're just small fry, trying to scare people to make a living. Is it about time?"

Lin Chuxia checked her watch, the auspicious time was almost upon them, so she had no time to chat with Jia Liang. She called everyone to set off firecrackers and hang up the signboard.

The lively sound of firecrackers made everyone forget the earlier scuffle, and they lined up to buy buns.

There were separate lines for cooked food and buns, and soon both lines were very long.

Only then did Lin Chuxia invite Jia Liang into the house to sit, and with the hospitality hard to decline, Jia Liang accepted and entered graciously.

On the other side, after Sixth and his men left, there were still some who were discontent.

"Brother Liu, why are you afraid of him? I heard Jia Liang has already retired. Look at him now, all washed up. We don't even need to lift a finger, Brother Liu, we can take care of it ourselves."

Sixth slapped the man across the face, "Take care of your mother, will you? Do you think Jia Liang will simply stop just because he says so? Even if he did quit, those who used to be under him are not to be messed with."

"He's retired. Who cares about him anymore?"

"You know nothing. Even Sun Wensong is in jail, and his people are still sticking together, do we even get a say?"

After Sixth finished speaking, he noticed a person standing in the middle of the road ahead, and the people behind also stopped.

Hou Xiaobao, with one hand in his pocket, approached, "Don't be nervous, I just want to ask some questions."

Chapter 116: Even More Worrisome

"So, you guys have been looking for jobs for so many days and haven't found any?"

In the Bun Shop, Lin Chuxia asked after hearing what Jia Liang had to say.

Jia Liang scratched his Bald head, "Sort of. You know how it is, jobs are hard to find. So many of the youths who have returned to the countryside still can't get settled, and we don't even dare to dream

about a government bowl of rice. Private businesses don't have that many vacancies either. Houzi's a bit better off, but with my looks, people shoo me away the moment they see me."

What he didn't mention was that they had indeed found a job not long ago, but within a couple of days, their boss, as wary of them as one would be of a thief, found some excuse to fire them.

Someone had recognized them and secretly informed the boss. Since then, it became even harder for them to find work.

Today they were just wandering the streets and when they heard that a sizable Bun Shop had opened in the area, they thought they'd try their luck. To their surprise, the owner of the Bun Shop was Lin Chuxia.

While the two were talking, Houzi came back.

Seeing Lin Chuxia, where was the attitude he had when facing Sixth just now? He first smiled politely at Lin Chuxia, and then said to Jia Liang, "I got it all clear. Sixth did have someone summon him over; it's the sesame cake shop right diagonally across from us. They're somewhat related to one of Sixth's underlings. They wanted to bring some guys over to scare Boss Lin and mess with their business, hoping it wouldn't be able to open at all."

There were quite a few people running their own businesses on this street, and Lin Chuxia was also aware of that sesame cake shop.

She initially thought that the food factory's deli was their biggest competitor, but unexpectedly, a sesame cake shop which didn't exactly compete with their business, was trying to cause trouble.

But that's not quite right, it couldn't be said to be completely unrelated.

With the opening of their Bun Shop, surely some of the people from this street who come for breakfast would choose them, which indeed would impact the sesame cake shop.

Lin Chuxia didn't care about this matter anymore and turned to Jia Liang and Houzi instead, "Would you two be willing to work with me?"

Jia Liang and Houzi were both stunned. They looked at each other, still somewhat uncertain, "Do you really want us to work here? You know what we used to do."

Lin Chuxia nodded, "I know. Since you guys are willing to take my advice and turn over a new leaf, I'm also willing to give you a helping hand and provide you with a job opportunity."

Jia Liang smiled, "We brothers have never done this work, so don't be mad at us if we're slow and clumsy."

"Eating is one bite at a time, work is done one step at a time. As long as you're willing, I believe there is nothing you can't do."

"Alright, then we'll work with Boss Lin."

Jia Liang hammered out the decision, and Houzi was a bit excited.

They had a job now, a proper one.

"You're called Jia Liang, and you're called Hou..."

"Hou Xiaobao," Houzi added, "Boss, you can call me Houzi or Xiaobao, either is fine."

Lin Chuxia couldn't help but laugh and called over Su Wensong, "Brother Su, these two are our new staff members, Jia Liang and Hou Xiaobao. Starting today, they'll follow you. You see what sort of work fits them, and assign some tasks so they can get the hang of things."

Su Wensong had recognized Hou Xiaobao from outside just now. It had been him and Lin Chuxia who had chased this kid down.

Seeing Jia Liang's attitude towards those people, he also guessed the origins of the two.

He didn't know why the boss wanted to keep these two to work in the shop, but he didn't ask further, just took the two away with a single response.

Qin Han had been wiping the counter not far away, almost rubbing the paint off the counter.

Finally, after Su Wensong took the people away, he hurried over, "Little sister-in-law, are you really planning to let those two work in our shop? They don't look like good people to me."

Oh, what a sin, little sister-in-law hiring some young and handsome guys makes people worry, hiring these misfits makes people worry even more.

If his second brother knew that he was standing by, watching his little sister-in-law deal with these kinds of people, he would sever brotherly ties with him.

Lin Chuxia reassured, "It's okay, Brother. I met them before, and we've had a few interactions. Although they've done some disreputable things before, these two now want to follow the right path, and we can't generalize about them. Besides, they just helped us out."

From the last time she saw them, their clothes were the same, no longer flashy like before, and even a bit shabby.

The most important thing was Jia Liang; he seemed to have lost some weight.

The fact that they didn't revert to their old ways even after not finding jobs for so long showed they really wanted to reform.

Seeing Qin Han still looking conflicted, Lin Chuxia lowered her voice a bit and said, "Brother, didn't you notice that those people just now showed a lot of respect to them? You can think of me hiring these two to hold down the fort."

Qin Han's eyes brightened. Oh yes, if those people knew that these two were working in the shop, they would surely not dare to trouble the shop so easily.

He had been concerned that after driving those people away today, they might come back to make trouble later.

His little sister-in-law was indeed farsighted.

During the meal rush, the Bun Shop was even busier with customers. The dining hall was almost full.

Qin Wu and Zhou Hongmei, a couple, were at the takeout window taking care of selling buns and deli items.

The rest were all serving the diners in the hall.

Qin Han was busy behind the counter handling cash and issuing tickets, Zhang Guilan and Sun Bingnan were in charge of serving customers, while Chen Chunhua took care of clearing up the bowls and utensils after customers had finished.

The staff all had their own tasks and everything was running smoothly despite the crowd.

Zhang Guilan noticed that the cold dishes were almost sold out, so she said to Sun Bingnan, "I'll go and prepare some more; Xiao Sun, you take care of the customers here."

In her half month at the old shop, she had learned to make buns and prepare cold dishes, and even the deli procedures she and her husband were perfectly clear on.

The employees each had their own duties, but only they, as a couple, understood all the tasks, showing that little sister-in-law really didn't consider them outsiders.

The more Zhang Guilan knew, the more she wanted to do her job well. The longer she stayed at the shop, the more she admired her little sister-in-law.

Take today's Bun Shop opening, for instance. They made three times the usual amount of deli items, and she was dizzy looking at the quantity.

Even though the weather was cooler, repeatedly boiling deli items affects the taste and, if left for too long, also affects the shop's reputation, which is what little sister-in-law often told them.

As a result, by just past noon, most of the deli items were sold, and both the smoked chicken and the pig's head meat were sold out.

If it were like usual days, how much money would they have lost? No wonder little sister-in-law was insightful.

Lin Chuxia took a round and also took in the results for the day.

Especially with the deli section, they offered a 10% discount on the opening day, and many customers who were accustomed to buying deli from the food factory turned to their place instead.

She believed that after tasting the deli from their shop, it would definitely attract some customers.

Just then, a figure walked in from the door. Li Jian looked at her with a beaming smile, "Business for Boss Lin is getting bigger and bigger. If I hadn't seen the sign outside, I wouldn't have known that you've opened a branch in the city."

Chapter 117: A Lifetime of Experience

Lin Chuxia greeted him enthusiastically, "Brother Li, please come in. How come you're passing by here today?"

She led him to a quiet corner off to the side, wiped the table and chairs again, and then waved for Chen Chunhua to bring over some food.

"Don't fuss over me, I've already eaten. I saw that the store had just opened, so I came in to check it out."

Hearing this, Lin Chuxia asked Chen Chunhua to bring over a pot of tea.

The new store opened today, and she hadn't revealed the news to anyone.

In life, there's no need to overly connect with too many people. You can know a lot of people, but it's best to keep the relationships "semi-acquainted."

The most comfortable relationships between people are those where you simply know each other, appreciate each other, and maintain a distance.

Brother Li was someone she had actively approached in the past, and he was an important person on her path forward. The more that was the case, the less she could afford to overuse their relationship.

Of course, it was another matter if he took the initiative to come.

Li Jian looked around the store and admired the woman from the bottom of his heart, "I really didn't expect you to open another store like this so quickly. I see the store across from the food factory is losing business to you. You've got guts to compete with the food factory."

Lin Chuxia poured him a glass of water, "Brother Li, you're making fun of me again. I don't have that capability. It's just that I happened to fancy this storefront, and it happened to be near the food factory's store."

Li Jian accepted the water with a smile, but said nothing. He just listened to her words.

"I see the business in the store isn't bad. To have so many people on the opening day, the customers won't be few in the future."

"Then I'll take that as Brother Li's blessing," Lin Chuxia courteously replied, "How have you been lately, Brother Li? The vegetable station isn't busy now, is it?"

Now that it was early winter, there wasn't much left in the fields except cabbage and radishes.

"It's been okay. This year, the vegetable station has stored a large batch of winter reserve cabbages, and now we're waiting to ship these out before the Spring Festival. Previous sales were good, and I hope it won't let me down this time. I really admire you, though; you act immediately without hesitation, unlike me who looks before leaping."

"My situation is different from Brother Li's. My store has nothing; if it fails, I'll just lose some money. But for Brother Li, it's the hope of the whole vegetable station," and his own future.

Lin Chuxia didn't explicitly state the latter part of the sentence; those who understood would understand.

"But Brother Li needn't worry too much. The market is just transforming, and everyone is crossing the river by feeling the stones. Even if we fail, the sky won't fall. We fear stagnation due to hesitation more than failure, right? Besides, even if we make a mistake, it's still an experience. We eat our fill with the last bite, but it's definitely not just because of that last bite."

Li Jian suddenly understood, and it seemed as if the heavy stones weighing on his heart these past days were instantly lifted.

Heaven knows how much psychological pressure the storage of hundreds of thousands of pounds of cabbage at the vegetable station had put on him.

Picking up his teacup, he clinked it with Lin Chuxia's, "I still have to say, young lady, sitting down and chatting with you really clears my mind."

Lin Chuxia picked up her tea and drank it in one go, "That's because Brother Li respects me."

Broad-mindedness and vision are but the experiences of her lifetime.

In anything, if you do it with the possibility of failure in mind, you may succeed. If you don't do it out of fear, then you're left with nothing.

.....

A busy day, and even with ample preparation for the opening, the Bun Shop sold out and closed early.

Lin Chuxia gathered the staff in the new shop; today the new shop officially opened, and their own store had officially divided the work.

Sun Lanlan was appointed as the manager of the Bun Shop's main branch.

Although she had been in charge at the main store, she never had the title of store manager.

The main store's staff allocation: Granny Sun, Cai Jun, Sun Bingnan.

Qin Han takes on the role of the new store's manager, with staff assigned: Zhang Guilan, Qin Wu, Zhou Hongmei, Chen Chunhua.

Su Wensong is in charge of the cooked food department, holding a position equivalent to the store manager, with assigned employees: Pang Yongli, Ma Yingzi, Jia Liang, Hou Xiaobao.

Lin Chuxia oversees all the stores as the general manager.

With these titles and formal allocations, their stores have also gotten on the right track.

Everyone clapped excitedly, especially the longstanding employees who watched the shop grow step by step, their faces filled with smiles and hope.

Chen Chunhua and Ma Yingzi sat together, applauding and whispering, "Yingzi, why do you think the boss wouldn't let me join your team? I was referred by you, I thought I'd be working with you."

Underneath Lin Chuxia's inspiring speech, Ma Yingzi replied nonchalantly, "The boss... oh, I mean, the manager must have her reasons for this arrangement, and besides, the work at my place is dirty; it's nicer to work in the bun shop."

"I wouldn't mind the dirt and the hard work if it meant I could work with you. Look at the people in this bun shop—either they're the manager's brother and sister-in-law, or her little uncle's siblings. I'm the only outsider. Working here, I'll probably end up being bullied to death."

Ma Yingzi finally glanced at her and disagreed, "Why would you think that? The manager and the Qin Family are easy to get along with, how could they possibly bully an outsider like you? Just focus on your work and don't worry too much."

During this time, Yingzi often interacted with Qin Han and his wife, who were both pleasant and easy to speak with.

Chen Chunhua pouted her lips but said no more.

The meeting was short. After Lin Chuxia assigned everyone their tasks and offered some words of encouragement, she let everyone leave work.

After Jia Liang, Hou Xiaobao, and others had left, they came over.

"Manager!"

They spent the day with Su Wensong, first loading up at the chicken farm, then visiting the butcher shop, and finally joining everyone in the courtyard to prepare the cooked food.

Even though it was a hectic day, it was fulfilling, a complete change from their previous street loitering.

Su Wensong had told them that their salary for this month was 30 yuan, and it would rise to 40 yuan once they became permanent employees next month; if they did well, there would even be a bonus, which was more than the average worker's wage.

The private business they used to work for only paid them 25 yuan.

It really mattered who you worked for.

Lin Chuxia noticed the change in their spirit from that morning to now and could tell they were quite satisfied with their current jobs.

"What is it?" she asked.

Hou Xiaobao sheepishly began, "We were working in the courtyard today and heard there's staff housing available. I was wondering if I could stay there?"

He knew that it was currently Sun Bingnan and Sun Lanlan, siblings who were staying there, and that one room in the dormitory could house up to four people.

Lin Chuxia nodded in understanding.

That morning Jia Liang had mentioned that Hou Xiaobao was the youngest at home. After his parents passed away when he was young, his brothers kicked him out of the house under the pretext that he was up to no good, when in reality they just wanted to keep his share of the family estate to themselves.

He didn't want to burn bridges with his brothers, and besides, it didn't make much difference to him where he lived alone. Over the years, he had been hoboing around, sleeping one night here, another there, with Jia Liang or other friends.

Now that they had given up that lifestyle, he stuck with Jia Liang.

It's never too comfortable to always live in someone else's home, Lin Chuxia pondered for a moment, "Staying there might not be quite possible..."

Chapter 118: Uncle Comes Again

Hou Xiaobao's face stiffened, like a withered blade of grass, his head drooping down as he gave a sheepish smile, "Then... never mind, I was just asking..."

"How about this," Lin Chuxia continued, "I was originally planning to have a few male employees take turns working night shifts at the Bun Shop. If you're willing, I can arrange a room for you upstairs to stay in. You'll live here and I won't let you do night shifts for nothing; you'll get fifty cents for a night's work. Can you handle that?"

Since those folks dared to send someone to make trouble at the sesame cake stand today, they might have further tricks up their sleeves. Not to mention, our Bun Shop is so big here; obviously, we can't just lock up at night.

If it's Hou Xiaobao or Jia Liang taking the night shifts, that would be ideal.

Lin Chuxia didn't know how capable they were on the streets, but based on today's events, those guys seemed to show them a lot of respect.

The wilted grass instantly perked up, and his voice rose an octave, "Yes, boss, no problem! I'll definitely take good care of the shop. No need for the night shift fee, just the salary is fine."

Lin Chuxia waved her hand, "We will do it the way it should be done. The more you give, the more you get; that's my principle."

Hou Xiaobao looked at Jia Liang, his thin and dry face blossomed into a chrysanthemum with the smile.

A salary of thirty to forty, plus another ten or so for night shifts, he would have over fifty yuan this month.

It's said that a level-four worker at the machinery factory earns just over fifty yuan, and those are the veteran workers there.

Jia Liang was happy for him too. Although he didn't mind Houzi staying at his place, his mother disliked the work they did before, constantly complaining, and sometimes her discontent would rub off on Houzi.

It's better to live here, more comfortable.

If it weren't for the fact that he still has his mother at home to consider, he would like to stay here himself.

Lin Chuxia planned to ask Qin Han to make the arrangements, find an empty room upstairs tomorrow, get a bed and a desk, and then have Hou Xiaobao move in.

But Hou Xiaobao didn't care at all, "Boss, I'll stay here tonight. Just in case some blind rascals come, I'll be able to teach them a lesson. You don't have to worry about the bed and desk, I can handle it myself."

As long as he had a place to stay, he'd be willing even to sleep on the floor.

Su Wensong had guessed what was on their minds in the afternoon when they asked about the dormitory, and now hearing Lin Chuxia make the arrangements, he left the Bun Shop feeling relieved.

"Brother Su," Sun Lanlan was still waiting at the door.

"Something wrong?"

Sun Lanlan nodded, "Today, that uncle of yours came to our house again, but don't worry, he didn't make things difficult for Granny Su," she quickly soothed Su Wensong seeing his complexion change at the mention of Su Dazhuang visiting home.

Hearing her say that, Su Wensong felt slightly relieved, but didn't delay any longer, thanked Sun Lanlan, and quickly rode his bike home.

It wasn't until he got home and saw Granny Su had already prepared dinner, sitting under the lamp sewing his torn clothes with an unsettled expression, that his hanging heart finally settled.

Taking off his coat and hanging it on the rack, "Granny, I heard Su Dazhuang came by the house again today?"

Ever since Su Dazhuang and his son took away his job, he was unwilling to even call him uncle.

After taking his job, they even wanted to take their house; such relatives are expendable.

Granny Su spoke cheerfully, "Here we go, just as he arrived, Xiao Sun immediately called the newly arrived Xiao Cai over to hold the fort for me. Your uncle might have seemed all excited before, but that's just him being a bully backed by others; he's actually a coward when facing tough characters. This time he didn't mention swapping his house; he wants us to arrange a job for Wenmao's partner."

"Did you agree?" Seeing how cheerful Granny Su looked, Sun Wensong frowned.

That entire Su Dazhuang's family weren't good people, and even though Wenmao's partner hadn't officially joined their family, he wanted nothing to do with them just because they were related.

If Su Dazhuang wanted them to arrange a job, he definitely aimed for Wenmao's partner to work at the Bun Shop.

No matter the character or temperament of the person, he would not agree.

Granny Su gave him a look, "Eh, why would I agree to that? Su Dazhuang only demanded this condition for Wenmao's partner, hoping the Su Family could find her a job. He also said I should have the heart to see his nephew unable to find a bride. How ridiculous is that? I haven't even seen a shadow of a daughter-in-law yet, why should I be bothered whether his family has one?"

Sun Wensong met Granny Su's teasing eyes with a somewhat evasive gaze, making Granny Su even happier inside.

"That's why I say Xiao Sun is truly a good girl. The couple of times you weren't home, we really owed it to her for looking after this old lady. I told you to buy her something nice to show our gratitude, did you manage to buy anything?"

Su Wenmao coughed, "I've been quite busy lately, as you know, with the new Bun Shop opening, I have to oversee everything there. Manager Lin has placed his trust in me, and I can't take it lightly."

Granny Su nodded, "What Manager Lin tasked you with must indeed be done well. Manager Lin is our family's benefactor; our current life is all thanks to him. Now that the Bun Shop has opened, will you have more time on your hands?"

"I should... Granny, let's eat. The food will get cold in a bit," Sun Wensong awkwardly changed the subject.

But Granny Su wasn't going to let it slide, "Since you'll have time, then get on with it. Take some time in the next few days to visit a department store. Buy some things that girls like and send them to Xiao Sun, just say this old lady wants to express her thanks."

Sun Wensong nodded hastily, "I understand."

Granny Su saw her grandson's ears turning red and cursed under her breath at him for being such a blockhead. Had it not been for Su Dazhuang's interference, she wouldn't have noticed her grandson's feelings.

The good girl was right there, yet he doesn't know to hurry and pull her into his own nest. What a fool.

The next day, after Sun Wensong finished his tasks in the small courtyard and settled the accounts at the meat shop, he passed by the department store. Remembering what Granny Su had said, he changed direction and entered the department store.

He rarely visited the department store; after returning to the city, he was tight on money, and being a man, he didn't have much need to shop.

Once he earned some money, because he was often out and about, and seeing that Lin Chuxia always dressed decently, to not embarrass the Bun Shop, he spent his first month's salary on decent clothes for himself and bought two pieces of cloth for Granny Su.

Facing the dazzling array of wares, Sun Wensong didn't know where to stop. He had no experience in buying things for girls.

When Pang Yongli was courting Ma Yingzi, he bought her a Floral Headscarf. Sun Wensong immediately dismissed the thought from his mind.

Back then, Pang Yongli and Ma Yingzi were sweet on each other, but his relationship with Sun Lanlan...

He was grateful to Sun Lanlan for protecting Granny Su; how could he have such dirty thoughts?

He walked along the counter, his gaze suddenly fell on a lady's watch.

The style of the watch was similar to the one on Lin Chuxia's wrist; he'd seen many people wear watches, but none looked as nice as the way Lin Chuxia wore hers.

Although Sun Lanlan wasn't as pale as Lin Chuxia, she was fairer than the average woman, especially her eyes, which seemed to speak.

"Comrade, are you looking to buy a watch?"

Chapter 119: What do you think of the two of them?

The sales clerk saw him lingering and greeted him enthusiastically.

"This lady's watch is the newest arrival at the department store, it's the most popular model right now. Whether it's bought as a dowry or as a betrothal gift, it's the best choice."

These days, not many people have spare money to buy watches for themselves; they are usually purchased during marriage as either a dowry or a betrothal gift.

Seeing a young man looking at women's watches, he must be buying it for his significant other or as a dowry for his sister. Even if he wanted to gift it to his wife, there was nothing wrong with her previous comment.

But the words she thought were harmless, at this moment sounded like fire in Su Wensong's ears.

"I... I was just looking, just casually looking..."

He stuttered an explanation and quickly left the counter, feeling his face and neck burning hot.

In the end, Su Wensong still bought a red scarf. There weren't many options suitable for gifting girls; winter had already set in, and since it was chilly every early morning, buying a scarf for warmth seemed practical.

Thinking this, Su Wensong nervously went to the Bun Shop with the scarf in his bag.

All the way there, he thought about how to give her the scarf—should he give it to her directly or ask Granny Sun to pass it on?

Having Granny Sun pass it on didn't seem quite right; she was quite a gossip, and it might lead to misunderstandings.

Besides, thanking in person seemed more sincere.

"Comrade Sun, this is a scarf I'm giving you, thanks for helping my granny out!"

"Comrade Sun, thank you for looking after my granny these past few days, please accept this scarf?"

"Comrade Sun, this is a scarf my granny asked me to give you, thank you for taking care of her these past few days..."

While Su Wensong was muttering to himself, he walked to the Bun Shop, and for some reason, his heart seemed to beat faster as he saw it.

He took a deep breath, repeated the prepared speech in his head, and then stepped boldly into the Bun Shop.

"Sun..."

He couldn't finish his sentence, as he saw Sun Lanlan inside busy tallying up accounts behind the counter, with the new guy Cai Jun leaning on the counter, apparently saying something that made the girl laugh nonstop.

She looked at Cai Jun with curved eyes and smile; Cai Jun assured her, laughing, "Really, I'm not fooling you, ask your brother if you don't believe me, whoever lies is a puppy."

"Forget it, my brother is just like you."

Cai Jun also laughed.

Just then, Sun Bingnan came over and said to Su Wensong, "Brother Su, were you calling me?"

He had heard Brother Su enter and call out 'Sun' something.

Seeing Su Wensong somewhat dazed, following his gaze and understanding the situation, he spoke softly, "Brother Su, what do you think of them?"

"What... what do I think?" Su Wensong asked dryly.

Sun Bingnan wasn't planning to disclose this matter, but seeing his sister and Cai Jun getting along harmoniously these days, even though it wasn't openly acknowledged, sooner or later they would take a liking to each other.

Moreover, since Su Wensong was not an outsider, he revealed, "I won't hide it from Brother Su, I plan to have Cai Jun as my brother-in-law. Cai Jun is my classmate, his character is reliable. Originally when I introduced him to work here, it was to let him foster feelings with my sister. I was worried they might not spark, but looking at them now, they seem quite compatible, what do you think?"

Su Wensong pressed the school bag he was carrying, looking at the two people not far away, one talking and the other laughing, "Pretty, good..."

Sun Bingnan also smiled contentedly, "I knew it, my judgment can't be wrong. I've known my sister's preferences since she was little. Just wait, it might not be long before we can invite Brother Su to drink at the wedding celebration. But Brother Su, keep this a secret for now. I only have this one sister and I don't want her to feel pressure about marriage. When she agrees to it herself, that's when it'll truly be settled."

"Okay," Su Wensong replied.

Sun Bingnan then remembered the urgent matter, "Brother Su, did you call me here because you had something?"

Su Wensong shifted his gaze, "No, just came to check how the cooked food at this store is doing. Is the quantity we prepare each day sufficient?"

Sun Bingnan thought for a moment, "It's okay. The sales volume has indeed dropped a bit from before, but it's still manageable."

After Qin's Cooked Food built its reputation, many customers from the city used to come here. Now that there's a branch in the city, they go there instead.

"I'll tell them to deliver a little less here tomorrow. The manager said to try to avoid leftovers."

Sun Bingnan nodded, "Alright, we don't have to reduce everything. Just a few fewer smoked chickens will do."

After finishing the discussion, Su Wensong went straight back to his own courtyard, and Granny Su saw him through the glass.

When he entered the house, Granny Su asked, "Why are you back so early? Did you come especially to thank Xiao Sun?"

Su Wensong primarily worked in the courtyard, and recently, he was seldom seen returning during the day.

Su Wensong took out a scarf from his bag and handed it to Granny Su.

Granny Su looked at the bright red scarf and her eyes crinkled with joy, "This is really pretty, young girls are sure to like it. Are you going to give it to her, or do you want Granny to invite her over?"

His son was shy, and as his grandmother, she could help him out.

Su Wensong responded indifferently, "Granny, it's better for you to give this to Sun. It wouldn't be appropriate for me to give it."

"Eh, you silly boy, why wouldn't it be appropriate for you? Just say it's you helping Granny to thank her," she already found an excuse for him.

"That still wouldn't be appropriate," Su Wensong insisted, "Granny, Sun might already have someone she likes. Let's not set them up arbitrarily, to avoid ruining the girl's reputation."

Leaving that remark behind, Su Wensong immediately exited the house.

Granny Su wanted to ask more, but he was already far away.

"Eh, why does this child speak only half his mind?"

But if Xiao Sun indeed had someone she liked, it really wouldn't be right to have her grandson give her this gift; it would truly be returning kindness with ingratitude.

Granny Su sighed, "Why does she already have someone she likes..."

Su Wensong went straight back to the Qin's Cooked Food courtyard. People inside were busy with their tasks, orderly and efficiently, a large pot bubbled with steaming stewed meat.

Seeing that there might be someone in Lin Chuxia's office, he asked, "Is the manager in the office?"

Jia Liang, who was deboning pig head meat, looked up and replied, "Yes, she's been here for a while."

Su Wensong nodded and directly went to the office.

He knocked on the door and heard a woman's voice say to enter before he pushed the door, Yuan Bao inside gave a symbolic grunt or two.

Lin Chuxia was writing a letter and looked up, "What is it?"

"I just went around to both stores; we need to adjust the cooked food distribution. The store in the city is doing well, today there were fewer customers than yesterday, but the sales volume seems unchanged. When I was there just now, some items were nearly sold out. Can we increase the stock a bit more tomorrow?"

Chapter 120: Really Petty

The area near the food factory's cooked food store is close, although selling there means competition, it also brings a portion of potential customers. Once you win the competition, these customers will be yours.

"Okay, you handle it as you see fit."

After Su Wensong left, Lin Chuxia continued writing her letter.

This was a letter to Qin Yang, and before she knew it, she had been back for over half a month. Now with the new store opened, her eldest brother, sister-in-law, and Xiao Wu with his wife were all working there; she wanted to chat with him about all these things.

Sometime along the way, Lin Chuxia had gotten used to sharing these daily happenings with him.

She wrote about all these things across two pages, and by the time she was done, she found it somewhat incredible.

Initially, even filling one page for him felt forced.

The corners of her lips couldn't help but lift into a slight smile, wondering what he might be busy with now. It was about to start freezing soon, and many of their tasks couldn't proceed anymore.

Her mother-in-law said that he should be able to come back before the New Year, though it wasn't clear exactly when he could return.

If he comes back, she would definitely let him see their bun shop.

Lin Chuxia didn't rush to mail the completed letter. That night, she went home and asked Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin if they had anything to say to Qin Yang. If so, she would write it in the letter and send everything together.

Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin were not literate. Mr. Qin attended a literacy class when he was younger, but as he aged, he forgot many of the characters, and his eyesight wasn't good either.

Mrs. Qin smiled and waved her hand, "No, as long as you all are doing well, your father and I have no concerns. Just let him work peacefully over there. If his unit has no issues, he should come home early for the New Year."

She now eagerly wished for the two children to be together.

Her daughter-in-law had been back for over half a month already, and she didn't know whether she was pregnant this time.

If not, she might need to urge her son to try harder during the New Year.

Unaware of her mother-in-law's thoughts, Lin Chuxia simply responded, "Okay, I'll mention that in the letter a bit later."

Mrs. Qin hesitated to speak, prompting Lin Chuxia to ask, "Mom, is there anything else?"

"There is something," she hesitated a bit, "Today Dalang, your eldest uncle's son, came to talk to your dad and me. Seeing that Xiao Wu and his wife both went to work at your place, he's wondering if you're still short of people. His wife, Lihua, has been staying at home and also wants to find work."

Before Lin Chuxia could respond, Qin Han slightly furrowed his brows, "Mom, what exactly did big brother say to you?"

"Your big brother didn't say much, just brought up the topic. Your dad and I thought to consult you both before saying anything. Xiao Wu and his wife are already working at the Bun Shop, and it would be hard to refuse your big brother if he wants Lihua to go as well. We decided to ask Chuxia first before responding to him."

Qin Han looked at Lin Chuxia, "Sister, don't feel pressured about this. If you think it's appropriate, take her on, if not, feel free to refuse. You don't have to do it; I'll talk to big brother."

Blaming himself for setting this precedent initially, Xiao Wu and his wife asked him, and to give him face, the sister allowed Xiao Wu and his wife to work at the Bun Shop.

What if today it's his eldest uncle's son, tomorrow his second or third brother? Everyone has multiple relatives; how can she manage the Bun Shop if this keeps up?

Doing well is one thing, but doing poorly means neither keeping nor letting go is suitable, then everyone is unhappy.

Lin Chuxia knew the children from Qin Liang's family, the eldest son, Qin Jianjun, was there when bonds were initially made. She hadn't interacted with the daughter, only met her once during the bonding process, a girl of about seventeen or eighteen, quite demure looking.

"No worries, Mom. If Dalang brother comes to ask you again, just agree. Since Xiao Wu is already working at my place, it wouldn't be appropriate to not let Lihua join. You don't have to be too definitive with your words, let her come and see if she can handle the job, let the sister-in-law and Wu's wife guide her for a few days."

"If you can bring her out, just do it; if not, we'll talk about it later. At least we have to keep up appearances now."

Mrs. Qin breathed a sigh of relief upon hearing this, "Okay," she was just afraid of these kinds of issues, as long as it didn't trouble the daughter-in-law.

The next day, Qin Lihua was brought to the Bun Shop personally by Qin Liang.

Lin Chuxia was not there, Qin Han greeted them, she didn't involve herself in their conversation, anyway, their brothers' conversations were more casual than hers, who had not been married into the family for half a year.

When she saw Qin Lihua, the young girl was making buns with Zhang Guilan and Zhou Hongmei.

Seeing her coming over, she somewhat timidly greeted, "Auntie Four."

Qin Yang was ranked fourth in their large family.

Lin Chuxia smiled and nodded, glanced at the buns she was making – not bad, quite decent-looking, she probably could get the hang of it in a couple of days.

"How is it? Are you adapting well?"

"I can adapt, Auntie Four. I cook at home too, just that the buns I make aren't as good as Auntie Two's or Auntie Five's."

"I was also learning on the spot when I came here. Your buns are much better than mine back then," Zhou Hongmei said with a smile.

Qin Lihua felt a bit embarrassed, Lin Chuxia also said, "Take it slow."

At that moment, a customer came in shouting, "Waiter, bring me eight meat buns and two bowls of millet porridge."

Chen Chunhua was already greeting customers outside, but Lin Chuxia recognized the voice as somewhat familiar. Through the glass separating the kitchen and the front hall, she saw Li Hongmei and Li Dongmei, the sisters, sitting in the lobby.

The two were waiting for their buns while looking around. Li Hongmei mentioned to Li Dongmei, "I've heard long ago that this Bun Shop has delicious buns. We should eat more and also take some back for Mom."

Li Dongmei nodded, "If it weren't for our older brother being stingy, we would have eaten here sooner. Also, I heard their cooked food is tasty too, look, there's a queue outside."

"Don't even think about the cooked food, and speaking of which, it's not that our older brother is stingy. He always pampers us, it's all because of his wife controlling him. I think we shouldn't have let him marry Lin Jiayi."

"But if he didn't marry Lin Jiayi, they would have demanded 300 yuan of bride price from our family. Where could we have gotten so much money? If we really had borrowed it, we might still be suffering from famine now."

"So what? It's still better than marrying a home-wrecker. I see Lin Jiayi as a home-wrecker. The other day, she even wanted to find a match for me behind Mom's back, which really pissed me off."

...

While they were talking, their orders were served one by one.

Li Hongmei saw a plate of pickles at the table next to them and pointed, "You guys sell pickles too?"

Chen Chunhua explained with a smile, "The pickles are complimentary, available over there. Take as much as you like."

Both Li Hongmei and Li Dongmei's eyes lit up, "Free?"

"Yes," Chen Chunhua said with a smile on her face but disdain in her eyes.

"Wait a moment, I'll get some," Li Hongmei and Li Dongmei said and went over to the serving table, took a small bowl, and filled it with a full bowl of pickles.

Chen Chunhua reminded, "Although it's free, please try not to waste."

"We know, it's just some pickles, so stingy."