

Switched M 131

Chapter 131: Feeling a Bout of Panic

Lin Chuxia took the newspaper, and indeed it reported on Qin Yang's work unit, which had made a major technological breakthrough in engineering for bridges, a field previously unexplored domestically.

The article was lengthy, covering almost the entire page, elaborating on the event, including some details of the breakthrough process, and even featuring an interview with Bai Xiaoming.

In the interview, he mentioned that his colleague had made significant contributions to the breakthrough, suggesting that the bold proposal originated from his colleague.

Lin Chuxia noticed with care that Bai Xiaoming mentioned the difficulties involved in implementing this technology; they had invested a lot, and some had even been injured.

For some reason, upon seeing the mention of injuries, Lin Chuxia suddenly felt a surge of anxiety.

She flipped through the newspaper further, but didn't see any other related reports.

"Big Brother, can you check if there are other news about this matter in different newspapers?"

Qin Han had bought a plethora of newspapers, not only local ones but seemingly all that the newsstand had, even including some outdated ones.

The newspaper they had been looking at was from a week ago.

"Here's another one," Qin Han brought out another newspaper, which was national.

Lin Chuxia took it and looked through it carefully, noting that it wasn't as detailed as the previous one.

Qin Han also confirmed that the newspaper articles reported about his brother's work unit.

"I wonder how the younger brother is doing now. Usually, with the cold weather, the project progresses would be halted. Although he'd still be at the unit during past winters, there wouldn't be much work, and he'd write home more often. But I haven't received a reply to the last letter I sent him; probably busy with this project."

Hearing this, Lin Chuxia turned to him, "Big Brother, you wrote to Qin Yang too? When?"

Her tone was somewhat anxious, and Qin Han was momentarily startled, "Just recently, when our branch opened and you asked me to be the manager. This was my first time in such a position, so I wrote to tell him about it, and it's been about half a month..."

He smiled naively, but Lin Chuxia's expression grew solemn.

Her letter had been sent nearly twenty days ago, and Big Brother's half a month ago. It's unlikely that both letters were lost without delivery.

Knowing Qin Yang's nature, he would surely have replied upon receiving their letters. Hence, they should have received responses by now.

Seeing Lin Chuxia silent for a long time, Qin Han asked, "Is something wrong, Sister-in-law?"

Lin Chuxia shook her head, just as their meal was ready, "It's nothing, Big Brother, let's eat."

Some things were only her suspicions, and there was no need to worry everyone until confirmed.

Besides, in her past life, she never heard of any serious incidents involving Qin Yang.

After finishing their meal, Lin Chuxia wanted to buy another copy of the newspaper, thinking Qin Han just wanted it for the collection of Qin Yang's related news, he directly handed it to her.

Both of them rode back to the delicatessen in a tricycle.

You can't say that men don't like vehicles; once the tricycle entered the yard, Jia Liang, Hou Xiaobao, Su Wensong, and Pang Yongli, everyone gathered around.

Had Ma Yingzi not been watching the pot, they might have forgot their tasks.

"Manager Qin, you really can ride, huh?" Hou Xiaobao said with admiration.

Jia Liang patted the seat, "What's so hard about this? I've ridden a motorbike before, it should be the same."

Su Wensong was examining the buttons on the handlebar, asking Qin Han occasionally.

Qin Han explained jovially, telling them what each button was for and when to use them.

Once their curiosity faded, Lin Chuxia told them, "Later on, you guys should get a driving license. Whoever wants to drive should try to obtain one. The shop will cover the expenses for the licenses."

Although no one checks on the road, there's still a certain risk in driving.

Whether for others' safety or their own, it's safer to have a driving license.

The mention of taking the test made some people wilt, but others, like Hou Xiaobao and Su Wensong, were even excited.

In those days, getting a license was different from future times. You had to learn to repair vehicles first, then hit the road, usually taking at least a year or two to get the license, but for those like Qin Han who already knew how, it was faster.

Now, without driving schools, it was all about masters guiding apprentices.

Lin Chuxia left this matter to Qin Han.

While they were arranging this, the outer gate of the yard was knocked.

They looked at each other; seldom did outsiders come to their small yard.

Hou Xiaobao already ran to open the door, outside stood an old man about fifty or sixty years old, looking straight at Su Wensong inside.

"Wensong, you better go back and check it out. Someone is causing trouble at your Bun Shop."

Since the Bun Shop's opening, Su Wensong and Lin Chuxia had been managing it, situated in Su Family's wing-room, and the surrounding neighbors considered it part of the Su Family.

The person bringing the message was one of Su Wensong's neighbors.

Everyone dropped what they were doing, letting Ma Yingzi watch the pot in the kitchen, and headed to the Bun Shop together.

At that moment, several men and women were inside the Bun Shop, all clutching their stomachs in pain.

The man leading them was arrogantly demanding compensation.

Sun Lanlan was unabashed, "You're just making things up. I don't even remember you eating at the Bun Shop. This is slander, throwing dirt on our business."

She looked towards the onlookers by the doorstep, some of whom were regulars at their shop.

"Ask anyone present, since our shop opened, have we ever caused anyone food poisoning? We buy fresh ingredients daily, everything is sold clean by the end of the day. Now you claim our buns made you sick, I'd say you are here to extort money."

"I'll tell you, our people have already gone to report to the police. Those who know better should leave quickly, otherwise, when the police arrive, they'll take you to the station, and you'll be sorry."

Hearing the mention of the police, a hint of coldness flashed in the man's eyes, he said to the others, "They just don't want to compensate. They made people sick and won't pay, now they're trying to blame us. Since they won't pay, they shouldn't expect to keep doing business. Let's smash it up, say no to harming people..."

Immediately, the several men who were clutching their stomachs stood up, grabbed bowls and dishes from the tables, and started smashing them.

Sun Bingnan and Cai Jun stepped in, "What are you doing? Is there no law and order under the broad daylight?"

"Law and order? You made people sick and won't pay, still talk about law? Smash it!"

Sun Bingnan and Cai Jun instantly grappled with a few men, as Sun Lanlan saw someone pick up a chair to smash, she clenched her teeth and also charged forward.

A woman, however, was no match for a man; she was swept aside by a wave of the hand and fell, her arm hitting heavily against a table.

Chapter 132: Bullying the Honest Person

She refused to give up and charged again, but her opponent lost patience, took up a vinegar bottle from the table, and smashed it toward Sun Lanlan's head.

Sun Lanlan protected the bowls and dishes on the table and turned around to see the vinegar bottle enlarging before her eyes; it was too late to dodge.

At the critical moment, a figure rushed forward and punched the opponent, causing them to stagger. The vinegar bottle fell to the ground with a 'smack' sound.

"Lanlan..."

"Sun Lanlan!"

Cai Jun rushed to Sun Lanlan's side with a look of concern, asking, "Are you alright? Are you injured?"

Lin Chuxia swallowed the words she was about to say, looking towards Su Wensong who was scuffling with the man.

She hadn't realized that Su Wensong could actually fight like this.

When she entered the door, she saw the scene that enraged her. If the vinegar bottle really hit Sun Lanlan's head, it would have been disastrous.

Just as she was about to rush in, Su Wensong had already knocked down the person before her.

Sun Lanlan shook her head and saw Su Wensong had already subdued the person on the ground, kicked them, and said, "You robbers, to be smashing the things in our shop..."

Su Wensong had wanted to ask if Sun Lanlan was injured, but seeing Cai Jun following her closely with concern, he pursed his lips and swallowed his words.

He silently pinned down the person, not giving them any chance to resist, just to prevent them from struggling and hurting the girl again.

Originally three men and two women came to the Bun Shop. Facing Sun Bingnan, Cai Jun, and Sun Lanlan, they were arrogant as could be.

Now subdued, they wept and sobbed more pitifully than anyone else.

"Oh Lord, is there no King's Law anymore, causing food poisoning and then beating people, it's just bullying us common folks."

"There's a beating, someone's life is at stake. Your Bun Shop caused food poisoning and still you beat people? Let us go..."

"Everyone come and see, this is what the Bun Shop has done, their buns have issues, they might be made from dead pig meat, caused food poisoning and then stop us from arguing, this is completely lawless..."

The men were even more shifty-eyed, struggling to break free from the restraint, "Let us go, if you dare, let us go. You rely on the majority to bully honest people, what kind of skill is that?"

Lin Chuxia walked up to them and observed their faces, "Bullying honest people because we're the majority? When you guys ran over to my Bun Shop causing trouble, smashing things and hitting my staff, wasn't that bullying honest people?"

"What's wrong with coming over to argue? Who told you your buns have a problem causing people to get sick?"

"So you say my buns have a problem and they really have one? Where's the evidence? I sell so many buns every day and never had any quality issues, so why did only you get sick after eating them?"

Sun Lanlan shouted loudly from the side, "Mr. Lin, they didn't even buy buns from our shop, Granny Sun and I have never seen these people before."

Lin Chuxia scoffed, "Tell me, who sent you? Want to ruin the reputation of my Bun Shop or what other purpose do you have?"

The man's mind flashed with panic but he still stubbornly said, "No one sent us, we only got diarrhea from eating buns here. We just wanted to argue about it, but who knew you would be so unreasonable. Today is just our bad luck, let us go, we won't ask for compensation."

"Right, let us go, just take it as our bad luck."

"We ordinary folks can't afford to offend you, isn't it alright if we just accept the misfortune?"

Lin Chuxia let out a soft laugh, "You accept your misfortune? You've trashed my shop and now you want to just walk away, trying to make me take the loss? Let me tell you, it's not that easy. Today, regardless of who's right or wrong, we're going to clear things up before anyone leaves."

She already saw Granny Sun calling Officer Sun over, along with several other officers.

Granny Sun immediately pointed out the damaged items in the shop to her son, slapping her thigh in exasperation, "Look, look, it was them who caused trouble in the bun shop and smashed things."

Sun Hao wanted to side with his mother, but as routine, he had to ask, "What happened?"

The people being subdued completely panicked upon seeing the police, especially the two women, who started crying.

"We don't know what happened either. We were just eating here and got stomach aches. We wanted to come over and discuss it, but then they hit us..."

"Officer Sun, these people never ate at our store. They came in clutching their stomachs asking for compensation and even damaged the store's facilities. As for their claims of getting sick from our food, I think a hospital can provide a reasonable explanation."

A few people were energetic and lively, hardly looking like they had diarrhea.

Sun Hao nodded, "We will investigate this matter thoroughly. Now, everyone follows me to the police station."

Lin Chuxia had no objection; now that the police were involved, both parties naturally had to go to the station to give statements.

The other party's faces turned pale. They didn't want to go and even began apologizing to Lin Chuxia, asking her to let them go.

Sun Hao ignored them, waved his big hand, and took everyone to the police station.

On the way, Lin Chuxia quietly asked Jia Liang if he recognized the people.

At first, she suspected the food factory, but then thought if the factory was going to make a move, they'd more likely target bun shops in the county city.

Jia Liang shook his head, whispering so only the two of them could hear, "These people are not from the underworld."

Lin Chuxia couldn't think of who would be behind this.

Upon arriving at the police station, before they were even properly questioned, someone from the other party couldn't hold back and confessed.

"A man not very tall, around 30 years old, gave each of us 5 yuan to cause trouble in Qin's Steamed Bun Shop. After the job was done, he promised us another 5 yuan, and if we managed to shut down Qin's permanently, we would get another 10 yuan each. We were blinded by greed, we know we were wrong, please, Officer, let us go..."

They had scouted the bun shop for half a day and saw that there were only an elderly woman, a young woman, and a young man, so they thought causing some trouble wouldn't be difficult.

Little did they expect so many people to show up, let alone the police.

Now they were full of regret.

A man not very tall, around 30? Lin Chuxia and Su Wensong exchanged a glance, both thinking of the same person.

"Where did you meet this person?"

"By the machinery factory..."

After leaving the police station, Su Wensong headed in a different direction, and Lin Chuxia called out to him, "Where are you going?"

"I'm looking for Su Wenmao. If someone has an issue, come at me, what's the meaning of discrediting the Bun Shop," he had to have a word with him today.

"He might not admit it even if you confront him."

Those people stayed in custody, but the loss wasn't significant. They had already given Lin Chuxia the money they had on them as compensation, and they would be released after being detained for a few more days.

Even if those few people identified Su Wenmao as the mastermind, it wouldn't necessarily hold up without evidence.

Su Wenmao would definitely not admit to it.

"We can't just let this go," Su Wensong now spoke of Su Wenmao with a face full of disgust.

Chapter 133: Su Wenmao Gets Beaten

After scheming against him numerous times, stealing his job and even wanting his house, and later asking his grandmother to find jobs for their partners, now they wanted to destroy the reputation of Qin's Bun Shop as they saw no hope?

Such scumbags deserved a good lesson.

"Who said we're just going to let it go?" Lin Chuxia looked at Jia Liang and Hou Xiaobao, "Do you guys have any good ideas?"

Without a second thought, Jia Liang responded, "Fight fire with fire."

Lin Chuxia smiled slightly, "That's exactly what I was thinking."

Jia Liang immediately understood, "If Mr. Lin trusts me, leave this matter to me. I assure you that I'll handle it beautifully for Mr. Lin and Manager Su."

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The howling north wind gusts through, and the dry leaves on the trees sway with it, finally falling down under the burden.

As evening approaches, the occasional sound of a bicycle bell can be heard at the entrance of the alley.

Su Wenmao, wrapped in a military coat, sits on the rear seat of his bicycle, a cigarette dangling from his mouth, looking up at a 45-degree angle at the sunset, leisurely swinging his short legs to one side.

Timing it out, those people should be returning soon. Although it cost him over a month's salary, the thought of damaging the Bun Shop's reputation made it all seem worth it.

If the Bun Shop ends up being unable to continue business because of this, it wouldn't just be a month's worth of salary that's worth it, but even three months.

He just couldn't swallow this offense. A mere individual household dared to try to shit on his head. His father had swallowed his pride just to ask for a job, and yet they hesitated and made excuses.

The sound of messy footsteps came from behind, it should be those people returning.

Su Wenmao took the cigarette from his mouth, confidently turned his head around, but before he could see the people behind him, a bag was pulled over his head.

"Urgh... what are you..." doing

He didn't get to finish his words before he was pulled off the bicycle.

Stumbling forward a few steps, he received a kick to his backside and fell to the ground.

Then, a rain of punches and kicks fell upon him. Su Wenmao cried out in pain, screaming for help.

There were at least four or five attackers. By the time he bore the pain and struggled to pull the bag off his head, he was met with a kick, which caused stars to burst in front of his eyes and a warm flow to trickle down his nostrils...

In a daze, he only saw several figures running out of the alley.

From the moment the bag was put over his head to when the people left, it was less than two minutes. Those two minutes felt like he had died once.

Fists as big as sandbags, countless feet hitting him; he gasped in throes of pain, feeling like there wasn't a single unharmed spot on his body.

Especially that kick to his face, his cheek swelled up high, and his mouth was full of the taste of iron.

He sat up to look around; it had completely darkened, and not even spectators had passed by the entrance.

"Mom... Dad..."

Su Wenmao cried out in his heart, yet he didn't dare to stay there long. He forced himself up, limping home with his bicycle.

As soon as he entered the doorway and saw the lights inside, he couldn't hold it in anymore. He threw the bicycle aside and burst into tears.

"Dad... Mom..."

Su Dazhuang and his wife were making dumplings in the house when they heard the noise and quickly dropped what they were doing to run outside.

Seeing Su Wenmao's battered appearance, Mrs. Su slapped her thigh, "Good heavens, who the hell beat you up like this? Is there no King's Law anymore?"

Su Dazhuang also furrowed his brows fiercely; he knew what his son had gone out to do today. He glanced outside and signaled to Mrs. Su with his eyes, "Let's talk inside."

Mrs. Su stepped forward to help Su Wenmao, but as soon as she touched his arm, Su Wenmao winced and sucked in a breath of cold air, "It hurts, it hurts..."

Mrs. Su was heartbroken, "Who did this? Such a harsh attack."

Once inside, Su Dazhuang also began to inquire, "What happened? Su Wensong did this to you?"

As soon as she heard it was Su Wensong, Mrs. Su immediately became anxious, "I knew it was that little bastard. I'm going to find him right now, he's gotta be put behind bars at the police station, this is outrageous."

"It wasn't him," Su Wenmao's speech was garbled due to his swollen face; he could barely open his mouth.

"Then if not him, who was it?"

Su Wenmao shook his head, "I don't know. Suddenly a few people came up and started beating and kicking me. If it wasn't Su Wensong, it must have been someone he hired." Other than Su Wensong, he hadn't offended anyone else.

"Dad, you have to stand up for me, make sure you teach that little bastard a lesson. It hurts like hell."

Su Dazhuang narrowed his eyes, "What about the task you were supposed to do today? Did those people not get it done?"

"How would I know? I was waiting for them in the alley; I hadn't even seen them return when I got jumped by these bandits."

Mrs. Su fetched a towel to wipe Su Wenmao's face, growing more alarmed by the minute, "We should report this to the police, isn't there any King's Law left?"

"What's the use of reporting to the police? No one saw them beating me. Even if we report it, it would be pointless," Su Wenmao said, aggrieved.

To keep the transaction with those few people secret, he had deliberately chosen a secluded alley. Those people moved fast, and after beating him up for a while, there wasn't a single passerby at the entrance of the alley.

"We can't just let this go. Let's find Su Wensong. If he doesn't give us an explanation, it's not over. He's got to compensate for hurting Wenmao like this, or at least give us his courtyard house."

When Su Wenmao heard this, his eyes lit up. If that were the case, then this beating wouldn't have been in vain.

Su Dazhuang said irritably, "Why look for him? Even if we do, would he admit it? It could just provoke him to have Wenmao beaten up again. Can't you see? Su Wensong has changed from before."

And he had inquired about it; Qin's Buns Shop was indeed renting a house from Su Wensong's family. Even if they switched courtyards, they wouldn't necessarily have Qin's Buns Shop under their thumb; they could only hope to charge a bit more rent.

Su Wenmao was anxious, he didn't want to get beaten, but...

"What should we do then? Are we just going to let this go? What about Cuicui's job? If we keep delaying, they'll look for another suitor."

"We'll find someone else then. If she finds someone else, can't we also find another? Mom will ask the matchmaker to find you another girl soon. The year-end evaluations are coming up; once you move from an apprentice to a Level 1 worker, will you still be afraid of not finding a match?"

Mrs. Su had long been displeased with the way the other family took advantage of her son.

They didn't even have a job and still criticized her son for being short.

Her son had a formal job at the machinery factory. After moving up to a Level 1 worker at the end of the year, his salary would be more than thirty yuan. Let them regret it then.

Su Wenmao was not satisfied, "But I like Cuicui."

Seeing her son like this, Mrs. Su felt frustrated with his lack of initiative, "If you like her, why don't you think of something? If you can get Cuicui settled, will they dare to take advantage of you?"

"How should I settle it?"

"You're so foolish; how did I give birth to such a fool? If you could get Cuicui pregnant, her family would be begging you to marry her. Would we still need to worry about jobs and rank advancements then?"

Chapter 134: Help Me Get Something Else

At night, when he returned home, Qin Yang's parents hadn't rested yet, and Qin Han took the newspaper to show Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin.

Although there wasn't a single word mentioning Qin Yang in it, Qin Han still shared the news about Qin Yang's unit with Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin.

Lin Chuxia went straight back to her room, took out the newspaper with the most detailed report to read it again, and then took out the stationery to start writing a letter.

She didn't mention seeing the report in the newspaper; as usual, she wrote about the daily happenings in the shop, such as buying a three-wheeled motorcycle. That was just the start—if they had more money, she would also buy a small truck, a sedan; they were all part of her future aspirations.

Then she asked about Qin Yang's recent situation, whether his unit was busy, whether it had snowed over there, and if the construction could still continue.

She didn't even mention the fact that she had written letters to him before and hadn't received any replies.

She wrote more than a page, and as before, then she put it into the envelope.

The next morning, she went to the post office to mail the letter, then went to the bun shop at the train station.

Everything was normal in the bun shop; they only broke a few dishes during the fight, but after cleaning up, it hadn't affected the shop's work.

As for the impact of people fighting and causing trouble? Completely non-existent.

Most of the onlookers at that time were residents from the surrounding area. Qin's Buns Shop had been open for so long here and had already secured a portion of loyal customers.

Those who said that eating buns from Qin's Buns Shop made their stomach upset, some people countered them on the spot.

After returning from the police station, people specifically came over to ask Sun Lanlan what happened.

Sun Lanlan explained on the spot that those people were just jealous of their bun shop's good business and deliberately came to cause trouble.

Human nature is such that people lack laughter but hold on to hatred.

It's normal for Qin's Buns Shop's good business to provoke jealousy.

Seeing Lin Chuxia come in, many regular customers greeted her warmly, "Boss Lin, we all believe in you, we have been eating Qin's buns for so long, and there has never been a problem."

"Exactly, they're just jealous that your bun shop is doing good business. Let them be jealous; I just love eating buns from your shop."

"Don't let those people off easily, is there no King's Law anymore? The market is open, right? Fair competition, I don't know which bun shop they are from if they use such despicable methods. If I knew, I definitely wouldn't go buy buns from them."

"Uncle Qi, you still go to other bun shops to buy buns? I'm only used to buns from Qin's now; buns from other places somehow taste odd, always like there's a scent of raw meat."

The person addressed as Uncle Qi also waved his hand, "I was just saying. I don't even eat the buns from the State-Owned Restaurant anymore; I only recognize the Lin Family's now. It's not just my family that recognizes you, but I also do the promotion for you. To think that some people are so jealous that they come to your shop to cause trouble, Qin's Steamed Bun must be delicious, right?"

"That's the reasoning..."

Lin Chuxia had gotten acquainted with the people from the streets when she was running her stand, so she had a chat with them and sincerely thanked them for their support.

"Lanlan, today let's give back to our regulars, buy five buns get one free."

"Okay."

Sun Lanlan replied with a smile and wrote on the small blackboard at the shop's entrance: Special thanks to our new and old customers today, buy five buns get one free.

This small blackboard was something Lin Chuxia had prepared; new products and special offers in the shop were usually announced on it, and the regulars had gotten used to checking the blackboard whenever they came in.

Lin Chuxia spent a while in the shop, but since there were no other matters, she went to the backyard.

She worried that Granny Su might have been alarmed by the commotion in the shop yesterday.

Turns out, Granny Su was the one who started feeling apologetic when she saw her.

The disturbance in the shop yesterday indeed unsettled Granny Su.

At the time of the trouble, she didn't know what to do; knowing she couldn't help and would only add to the chaos, she could only watch anxiously through the glass.

Only until Lin Chuxia came with others and sent everyone off to the police station.

After Su Wensong came back, Granny Su asked him about the situation.

Su Wensong didn't hide anything and shared his speculation with Granny Su, which made her both angry and riddled with guilt.

Lin Chuxia didn't link the incident to Granny Su at all.

"Granny Su, it's all Wensong's speculation. Those people might just be henchmen sent by our competitors. It has nothing to do with the Su Family."

Granny Su waved her hand, "You don't need to comfort me. I know what kind of people they are. Su Dazhuang and Su Wenmao will not stop until they achieve their goals. They did the same when they took Wensong's job. Lin Chu, if they come again, you just call the police directly; I will testify for you. We need to have a good talk with the police."

"Okay, Granny Su, I'll listen to you."

Uncertain how Jia Liang and Hou Xiaobao had dealt with Su Wenmao, with those two stepping in, the other side probably wouldn't dare to come again.

Seeing that it was still early, Lin Chuxia went straight to the machinery factory.

For the matter of the meat grinder, she had already approached Xu Changping once before, and later when she opened the new shop, she had taken two meat grinders from Xu Changping as well.

It's not that she couldn't get them elsewhere; ever since the machinery factory started mass production of meat grinders, these kinds of small grinders became available at the hardware company's retail department and some department stores, and apparently, the sales weren't bad.

Her directly taking them from Xu Changping was more about mutual favors.

Sometimes owing someone a favor is also a way to maintain a relationship; as long as one manages the extent correctly, even unequal relationships can carry on.

The gatekeeper at the machinery factory still remembered Lin Chuxia and let her in right away, and Lin Chuxia left him a box of cigarettes in return.

Xu Changping showed a hint of enthusiasm upon Lin Chuxia's arrival.

"You're quite a busy person now, how come you have time to visit me? Do you want to take another meat grinder?"

Ancheng County isn't that big, and since Lin Chuxia was engaged in a business vital to everyday life, Xu Changping would pass by her newly opened Bun Shop on his way to work and naturally knew how good her business was.

Even the recent situation where a food factory approached her wanting to buy her cooked food recipes, he had heard a bit about it.

"We don't need another meat grinder for now. This time, I came to ask Director Xu for help with another item."

Xu Changping immediately became interested, "What is it? Tell me about it."

The girl in front of him had an exceptional mind; the meat grinder idea she came up with had significantly boosted the factory's performance this year.

Lin Chuxia this time wanted Xu Changping's help to produce a plastic sealing machine.

Initially, when he heard she wanted a plastic sealing machine that small workshops could use, Xu Changping was a bit disappointed, but upon hearing it was for vacuum packaging, his eyes lit up again.

Talking about the plastic sealing packaging machines, there were already quite a few on the market, mostly used by factories, but you could buy models of all sizes, large, medium, and small.

However, a food vacuum packaging machine was indeed not available on the market yet.

Lin Chuxia had drawn up blueprints again; the machine she wanted was even smaller than the smallest plastic sealing packaging machine currently available on the market.

Chapter 135: Do You Know This Person?

Xu Changping had no doubts about Lin Chuxia's capabilities as he looked over the blueprint.

"This is a bit more complex than a meat grinder; give us at least half a month. As for the payment for this blueprint..."

Xu Changping didn't say it outright but looked towards Lin Chuxia.

Lin Chuxia smiled and locked eyes with Xu Changping for a few seconds, not mentioning her own price expectation, still leaving the initiative to Xu Changping.

"Director Xu, you see fit to handle it. Initially, I need at least two vacuum sealing packaging machines."

Xu Changping responded with a knowing smile, "Okay, I'll take on this task for now. I can't specify the exact reward right now. Our technical staff will evaluate it, and then we'll give you a concrete response after holding a factory meeting."

This time was different from the meat grinder situation; previously Lin Chuxia had come to him with the blueprint, seeking his help. If he didn't make an offer, even the best blueprint would be just a piece of waste paper, so he could directly offer three meat grinders as payment.

Now, with the precedent of the meat grinder that showed tangible benefits for their factory, if he again offered two or three machines as payment, it would mean taking advantage of the other party, and they wouldn't get such an opportunity again in the future.

Lin Chuxia received a satisfactory reply and was not in a hurry to leave. She glanced at her wristwatch; it was lunchtime and she invited Director Xu to have lunch together.

Director Xu didn't refuse and after clarifying the location, asked her to go ahead and arrange it.

Lin Chuxia understood instantly and left the office with Director Xu.

On the boulevard, they needed to go in opposite directions when Lin Chuxia spotted a familiar face.

Su Wenmao, face bruised and swollen, was carrying a food tray towards the cafeteria. Perhaps embarrassed to meet a leader like Xu Changping in such a state, he quickened his pace with averted eyes and ran off without even greeting.

He limped as he ran.

Xu Changping noticed Lin Chuxia's gaze, "Do you know this person?"

"Sort of," Lin Chuxia replied nonchalantly, "He's Su Wensong's cousin. Originally, Su Wensong was arranged a job at your machinery factory when he returned from being sent down to the countryside, but this cousin took it from him."

"There's such a thing?"

Xu Changping handled technology and was less familiar with personnel affairs, but he knew Su Wensong.

He had interacted with him several times, a competent and articulate person known as Lin Chuxia's most capable assistant.

Lin Chuxia nodded, scornfully lifting her chin, "Looking at him like this, even though he snatched Su Wensong's job, he doesn't seem to be doing well at the machinery factory."

Seeing her disdainful and contemptuous expression, Xu Changping took another deep look at the distant Su Wenmao.

Lin Chuxia knew that Xu Changping asking her to go ahead and prepare was to introduce her to other people from the machinery factory.

However, she didn't expect that he would bring a technical department director and a deputy factory director responsible for this area.

The meat grinder matter had been mentioned by Xu Changping to them, and it was obtained through an unexpected blueprint.

This time, both knew that the meat grinder blueprint came from Lin Chuxia, and now she had brought a blueprint for a vacuum packaging machine, hence they were somewhat more courteous towards Lin Chuxia.

After the market liberalization, it was like a bloom of competing flowers.

Especially in the first developed several special zones in the south, there was even foreign capital involvement.

If they continued to rely on old methods, they would be eliminated by the market one day, something everyone present understood.

The machinery factory was also actively looking for a new direction, researching new products as the best way out.

The meat grinder had given them a good idea; previously, they had focused on large machinery, but after the market opened up, with the increase of individual households, small family workshops sprang up like bamboo after the rain. Small machinery suitable for individual or family workshops thus had a large market.

This was also the direction Lin Chuxia had suggested for them, hence the meal was quite harmonious.

Director Yu and Vice Factory Director Shen also had a good impression of Lin Chuxia.

Even Director Yu had a technical exchange with Lin Chuxia about the vacuum packaging machine production and was very confident, agreeing to communicate as needed if any issues arose.

Coming out from the State-Owned Restaurant at over two in the afternoon, Lin Chuxia and several people from the machinery factory split up, and she then went to the bun shop at the train station.

It was past mealtime, and the shop had no customers. Granny Sun and Sun Bingnan were looking after the shop, and neither Sun Lanlan nor Cai Junren were seen.

She pulled Sun Bingnan aside, "Third brother, I heard that the mountains behind Daqing Mountain Village are looking to be leased out. Do you know what's going on?"

Sun Bingnan's father was the village chief.

Sun Bingnan indeed knew this, as his father was quite anxious and uptight about it, mentioning it just a few days ago when he went back.

"The village wants to repair a road leading out of the village. You know, our village is one of the largest nearby, and there were thoughts of making our village into a commune back then, although it didn't happen. The production brigades back then were like this..."

He gave a thumbs up and continued.

"Now that it's opened up, land has been distributed to the farmers, losing the previous advantages. The brigade was thinking, by constructing this road, as the saying goes, 'to get rich, build a road,' but building roads requires money. There are no industries in the village, so they thought of exploiting those mountaintops, selling the trees first, then leasing the mountaintops, to generate some income. The trees have sold, but no one wants to rent the mountaintops; my dad has been losing sleep over this. If they can't lease it out and have to replant trees on the mountain, that's another expense, and still not enough for the road construction."

"Altogether how many mountaintops are there, none got leased at all?"

"You know, our village's few mountaintops are accessible. Further than that, even if given away for free, no one would dare to enter. There are three they want to lease, and now none has been leased out."

Sun Bingnan said a lot, then realized something, "Are you thinking of renting those mountaintops?"

Lin Chuxia nodded, "Indeed, I have such plans. Do you know specifically how the leasing works?"

Sun Bingnan shook his head, "I really don't know, but I can ask when I go back. Tell me how you want to lease first. If you really lease it, it'd also solve a big issue for the village, but I don't know if the brigade will accept your status as an out-married woman."

Lin Chuxia was aware that her household registration had already been moved to Qin Family Village. Renting a mountaintop going back there would certainly be problematic, even if Sun Bingnan's dad could compromise, the villagers might not agree.

This matter was such; even if no one rented the mountaintops and they lay fallow, they wouldn't allow an outsider to lease them.

But she didn't plan to rent under her own name; after some thought, she said, "I plan to lease two mountaintops under your name, is that okay with you?"

"That would be no problem at all, it means sister you trust your third brother," Sun Bingnan said, patting his chest.

Chapter 136: Renting the Mountain Peak

"Alright, go back and talk to Uncle Sun for me. I can pay the lease yearly for the hills, with a contract starting from at least ten years minimum. Of course, the longer the better. Third Brother, you decide how to handle it. If there's any request from the village, we can discuss it as well."

"Okay, no problem," Sun Bingnan agreed without hesitation, believing his father would be happy to hear this. "Sis, what do you want to rent two hills for? I'm telling you, all the mature trees on the hill were chopped down and sold by the village. What's left are just small trees. You should know that you can't grow crops on our hills."

Their family did have a hill planted with fruit trees though.

"That's the second thing I wanted to discuss with you, Third Brother. I'm planning to raise chickens on the hill. Next year, I want to expand our ready-to-eat food business. It would be best if we could use our own chickens for the raw materials. I remember your eldest and second brothers are both at home. See if they're willing to raise chickens with me. I'll pay them a monthly salary."

Sun Bingnan sat up straight when he heard this, "They'll be willing, definitely willing."

Lin Chuxia laughed, "You haven't even asked them yet. How do you know they'd be willing?"

Sun Bingnan didn't mince his words when talking to Lin Chuxia.

"You don't know, Sis. My eldest and second brothers are so envious of Lanlan and I working in the city and earning wages. They've always been looking for opportunities to be introduced to work. My sisters-in-law though, they can't bear to leave their homes and children. If we really let my eldest and second brothers come out to work, they worry they might become too wild. They've even fought over this issue. If they can earn salaries at home, only fools wouldn't do it."

"Alright, then we'll tentatively settle on this. You go back and ask about the hill lease and also hint about the chicken raising to your eldest and second brothers. But remember, you're the one renting the hill and raising the chickens for Qin's Bun Shop."

Sun Bingnan understood instantly, "Don't worry, Sis. You can trust me with this job. I definitely won't let those people from the Lin Family cause trouble for you."

Just as they finished their conversation, Sun Lanlan and Cai Jun came back from outside.

Sun Lanlan was wearing a smoke-colored cold-proof jacket, but it was the red scarf around her neck that added a splash of bright color, making her small face look cute and charming.

Cai Jun was dressed in a jacket that made him look very spirited.

The two of them walked into the Bun Shop one after another, chatting and laughing.

Lin Chuxia and Sun Bingnan saw both of them at the same time, and Sun Bingnan winked at Lin Chuxia.

Lin Chuxia asked in a low voice, "What's the situation with these two now?"

Before Sun Bingnan could reply, Sun Lanlan had already raised her voice, "Chuxia, how come you have time to hang around here today? If I'd known you were going to be at the shop, I wouldn't have gone out."

"Why did you go out?"

"A few days ago, some people broke some plates and bowls, and we didn't have enough in the shop. I told Third Brother to go buy them, but he insisted on having Cai Jun and me go instead, saying we should get out and breathe some fresh air after being in the shop all the time. I say he's just trying to be lazy. You have to dock his bonus."

After saying that, she even made a face at Sun Bingnan.

"Third Brother, I'm dead tired; you go help Cai Jun with unloading."

Sun Bingnan smiled and nudged her, joking that she was being overly delicate.

Cai Jun, upon seeing Lin Chu, greeted, "Mr. Lin," then signaled for Sun Bingnan to help with unloading.

Still with the same cheerful demeanor.

Lin Chuxia commented casually, "Cai Jun has a good temper, always cheerful whenever I see him."

Sun Lanlan nodded in agreement, "He's just a nice guy. I have to say, my Third Brother actually did a good thing for the shop this time. Someone like Cai Jun is really suited to be a shop assistant; he fits the recruitment criteria for our shop perfectly."

"He does meet the shop's criteria. What do you think about him?"

"I think he's fine. He's quick and earnest at work. I plan to give him a little bonus this month as an encouragement. Right, Mr. Lin, what do you think?"

Lin Chuxia: "..."

Is this girl genuinely naive or just pretending to be? Does she think I'm asking about Cai Jun's work situation?

"Manager Sun, you handle it as you see fit. Managers do have this kind of authority."

I can't monitor every employee's performance all the time. The authority to issue bonuses has long been delegated to each manager, who report on employee performance at the end of the month for me to review.

"Why did you buy such a color for your cold-proof clothing? It makes you look like an old lady," Lin Chuxia shifted the topic.

Sun Lanlan looked down, "Isn't it dirt-resistant? This one piece is my one month's salary. I can't afford to wash it frequently, otherwise it won't be warm anymore."

"The scarf looks nice, not like your usual taste," let's see what you say this time.

Sun Lanlan noticed Lin Chuxia's teasing glance, and following her gaze to Cai Jun, her face turned red, "What are you thinking? This was given to me by Granny Su. She thanked me for protecting her before. I've been wearing it for more than half a month now, and you only noticed it now?"

Lin Chuxia: "..."

I really did overthink it. Turns out this girl is genuinely naive.

But seeing her reddish and flushed face, she probably isn't without thoughts about Cai Jun.

Let nature take its course, after all with Cai Jun working here in the shop, and with Sun Bingnan, the third brother around, it's only a matter of time before these two develop a relationship.

.....

Sun Bingnan returned to the village that day, and after a couple of days, Lin Chuxia received a letter.

"My dad said that the village committee has discussed it, they can lease the mountaintop to us for a maximum of twenty years. As for after twenty years, it depends on the situation. If we want to extend the lease, we can have priority."

Lin Chuxia thought for a moment; twenty years was indeed quite long. These twenty years of reform and opening up had been a time of rapid development.

"How much is the rent?"

"My dad's original words were, he planned to charge one hundred and twenty yuan per mountaintop per year. For a long-term lease, it would be one hundred yuan per year. The village is in urgent need of money, so could we possibly pay the rent for five years upfront?"

Sun Bingnan needed to consult Lin Chuxia about this since he could not decide on his own.

The annual rent for a mountaintop was one hundred yuan, so five years' rent would amount to one thousand yuan.

Worried that Lin Chuxia might have objections—after all, the bare mountaintops didn't seem to hold much promise—he further explained.

"Miss, my dad told me to tell you not to think the rent is too high. The village really needs the money. Think of it as making a contribution to the village. If you're really tight on funds, you can pay three years' rent first."

To outsiders, the mountaintop was being rented by Sun Bingnan, but Mr. Sun was aware of the real situation.

"No need, just pay for five years upfront," one thousand yuan to rent a mountaintop for five years, and the contract itself was for twenty, she was already making a major gain.

Sun Bingnan thought that Lin Chuxia was considering the village's interests and was greatly touched. He also spoke highly of the village, "My dad said, these few mountaintops being leased to us, we can use them with confidence. Whether we're planting fruit trees or whatever, we're in charge for these twenty years. No one in the village will interfere."

Lin Chuxia beamed, "Then please thank Uncle Sun for me. Next year, when raising chickens, I will indeed need the village's support."

"Don't worry, when I go back and talk to my eldest and second brothers, they'll be willing to work with you. You know the status of us Sun Brothers in the village, with my elder brothers watching over the mountaintops, no one will dare cause trouble."

This was also the reason Lin Chuxia was willing to rope in the eldest and second brothers of the Sun Family.

Chapter 137: 1000 Yuan Design Fee

Sun Lanlan's father was the head of the production brigade in the village, and after the household responsibility system was implemented, he became the village chief, commanding immense prestige in the village.

The Sun Brothers were numerous, yet they weren't the sort to throw their weight around; instead, they were well-liked in the village.

Such people were suitable not only for finding help but also for keeping things in order.

"Make sure to discuss with your oldest and second brothers to plan out next year's farm work well. Raising chickens will more or less affect the fieldwork, so try to plant something simpler. As for wages, I will talk to them in person. It's just that with the current cold weather, we'll have to wait until spring next year to bring in the first batch of chicks."

"I understand, my oldest and second brothers know all this."

Since everything was settled, Lin Chuxia asked Sun Bingnan to go back to the village to sign the contract.

Originally, renting mountains and land in the village did not require a lease contract, but just to be safe, Lin Chuxia still drafted one which at least specified the rent, lease term, and their absolute right of first refusal upon lease expiration.

The contract was handwritten in two copies. After finishing the contract, Lin Chuxia handed 1,000 yuan to Sun Bingnan.

This 1,000 yuan was what she had received yesterday.

The mechanical factory had ultimately approved the design proposal she submitted.

This time, in addition to providing her with two finished vacuum-sealed packaging machines as a reward, they also gave her 1,000 yuan as a design fee.

They hoped that if Lin Chuxia had more designs in the future, she would prioritize working with their mechanical factory.

With her affairs concluded here, Lin Chuxia went to the prepared food courtyard.

If the vacuum packaging machines were produced, it would be a turning point for their prepared food industry - and especially since the Spring Festival was approaching, she needed to plan the next steps with Su Wensong.

As soon as she entered the courtyard, the two people standing around the meat stewing pot stood up to greet her.

"Mr. Lin!"

"Manager Lin!"

Lin Chuxia nodded slightly, looking at Chen Chunhua somewhat unexpectedly.

Chen Chunhua quickly explained, "Manager Lin, it's my day off from the Bun Shop today, and I didn't have anything to do at home. I thought I'd come and keep Yingzi company for a while. I didn't hold her up from her work, just watching from the side..."

"It's okay, you two chat."

She was just surprised to see Chen Chunhua here, but she wasn't that unsociable.

Chen Chunhua had been introduced by Ma Yingzi, and they seemed to have a good private relationship.

She walked past them and called Su Wensong, then returned to the office.

After hearing Lin Chuxia's plan, Su Wensong nodded in agreement, "Right now we've just entered the winter month, and our prepared food business is already in high demand. I was just about to talk to you about this; the supply of chickens from the poultry farm is already at its limit, and we indeed need to add another poultry farm."

Pork was easy to resolve; their county had a meat processing plant that could meet any demand they had.

It was the fresh chickens that were the issue – these were raised by individual poultry farmers, of varying scales, mostly centered around families, and not many met their standards.

"Hand this matter over to you then. As always, while you can negotiate on price, we cannot be negligent with food hygiene standards."

"I know."

In terms of work, Su Wensong and Lin Chuxia had already developed a significant tacit understanding.

Everything was resolved, and Lin Chuxia sat in front of her desk looking at the letter paper on the table.

Calculating the time, Qin Yang should have received the letter by now. It would take a few more days to wait for his reply. For some reason, Lin Chuxia suddenly felt anxious.

She drank a cup of water but still couldn't sit still and decided to go to the bun shop to ask Qin Han whether Qin Yang had been injured at work before, and if there really was such a situation, would he hide it from the family.

At this time, it was the peak dining hour at the bun shop, and there was a long line at the window—one queue for buns and another for cooked foods.

The main hall was almost full of customers; Zhang Guilan was so busy she barely touched the ground, and customers were calling out for things now and then.

Seeing the situation, Lin Chuxia, without saying a word, donned an apron and started helping Zhang Guilan.

"Sister-in-law, is Lihua not here either?"

She already knew that Chen Chunlan was off today. If Qin Lihua was also absent, it would be inappropriate for both of them to be off.

Zhang Guilan picked up a tray of buns and lifted her chin slightly, "Lihua is over there. Ma Suyun came over just now, I don't know what she's been pulling Lihua aside for, they've been talking for quite a while now. I've called her once, and she didn't budge."

Lin Chuxia also saw the person next to the wall, Ma Suyun was the wife of Qin Wen, who was the third cousin from Qin Yang's eldest uncle's family.

It is said that the three brothers in the eldest uncle's family dote on this eldest son, Qin Wen, the most.

Qin Wen also lived up to expectations. After graduating from high school, he was admitted as a sales clerk at the county hardware company and is still working at the hardware company's counter.

In the past, being a sales clerk was a job envied by everyone. Even up to now, the couple Qin Wen and Ma Suyun still have a certain sense of superiority among the several brothers.

Lin Chuxia had recognized the couple when she got married and had a deep impression on them.

Not to mention Qin Wen, Ma Suyun even carried herself more than Xu Yun, who was an elementary school teacher.

To the uninformed, they might think she was a miss from some high-status family or a daughter of a major leader.

It's just that the sisters-in-law usually didn't see each other much, and Lin Chuxia had even less contact with her.

After the rush was over, Lin Chuxia went straight to Ma Suyun's table.

Ma Suyun saw Lin Chuxia coming over first, and Qin Lihua, following her gaze, saw that it was Lin Chuxia and subconsciously got up, only to be pulled back by Ma Suyun.

She greeted Lin Chuxia with a smile, "I've long heard that fourth sister-in-law opened a bun shop. I didn't have the time to come over and have a look until today. Now that I see it, it's quite impressive. This must be the one and only bun shop of this size in Quan'an County, right?"

Qin Lihua greeted with a nod, "Fourth auntie."

Ma Suyun gave her a glance and said with a smile, "Oh, are you afraid that your fourth aunt will see you not working and blame you? I am telling you, Lihua, you are being distant. We're all family. Even if you don't do anything today and just sit here chatting with your sixth auntie, your fourth auntie won't criticize you."

Then she looked at Lin Chuxia, "Isn't that right, fourth sister-in-law?"

Qin Wen was two years younger than Qin Yang, but he married early. Ma Suyun had been part of the family for two years, but they still had no children.

Lin Chuxia responded to her remarks, "Of course, did sister-in-law specially come here today?"

"Not really, I was just strolling around in the city. Now, since Qin Wen got his salary, he asked me to buy a new piece of clothing. With the twelfth lunar month approaching and the end of the year nearing, if you wait any longer to buy, not only will it be crowded and hard to get the goods, but many styles will probably be out of stock."

"Did sister-in-law buy anything?" Lin Chuxia noticed her empty bag.

Ma Suyun waved her hand, "Not yet. I left home late, so I thought I'd check out your bun shop first and then head to the department store."

"Okay then. Lihua, there isn't much happening at the shop this afternoon, why don't you go shopping with your sixth aunt? I think your sixth aunt may miss you, so spend more time with her."

After Lin Chuxia finished speaking, Ma Suyun's expression clearly stiffened, "Oh, there's no need. I'll just go shopping by myself. Lihua is still working, isn't she? If she accompanies me, wouldn't her wages be docked?"

Chapter 138: Complaint

"Sister-in-law, look at you, Lihua is going shopping with you because I've allowed it. How could I deduct her pay? Lihua, just enjoy yourself with your sixth aunt. Have a good time, and your salary will be paid as usual," Lin Chuxia looked at her, smiling even more tenderly.

A flash of joy sparkled in Qin Lihua's eyes. The opportunity to go out and still get paid was one nobody would pass up.

And accompanying the sixth aunt shopping, would she just watch her buy clothes? The sixth uncle is her dad's own brother.

"Thank you, fourth aunt."

"What for? You should thank your sixth aunt for taking you out."

Ma Suyun raised her bowl and took a sip of porridge, her words muffled, "I... I need to wait a bit longer before I can go, I haven't finished eating yet. Fourth sister-in-law, your shop seems pretty busy too, so just focus on your work and don't worry about me. Lihua as well, get back to work quickly. Don't let me hold up the business."

However, Lin Chuxia said, "Then I'll get busy first. Lihua, stay with your sixth aunt a little longer; it's rare for her to visit the shop."

Qin Lihua nodded brightly, "I understand, fourth aunt."

Lin Chuxia stopped fussing over the two of them and went off to work with Zhang Guilan.

Seeing her coming back alone, Zhang Guilan asked, "What's going on? Isn't Lihua coming?"

"It's okay, let her stay there. The shop will be less busy soon. I'll help you out."

Zhang Guilan guessed something from Lin Chuxia's comment, "Did Ma Suyun say something?"

"She wants Lihua to chat with her for a bit, so I just gave Lihua half a day off to accompany her to the city."

Zhang Guilan caught the slyness in Lin Chuxia's eyes and chuckled softly, "I think that's good, given she's come all this way, Lihua should really spend some good time with her sixth aunt."

There weren't many new customers in the shop at the moment, and Qin Han was busy with cash and buns, he didn't really need their help, so Zhang Guilan and Lin Chuxia whispered to each other.

"I don't know what wind brought her here. You might not know since you've just entered the door; among the men of our Old Qin Family, except for our second brother, it's Qin Wen from our eldest uncle's family who is the most accomplished. We won't talk about the second brother, but Qin Wen got a job at the counter of a Hardware Company, which is quite good. But I don't know when, he always starts comparing himself with our second brother."

Zhang Guilan might have felt it was inappropriate to say these things among relatives, so she added an explanation to Lin Chuxia, "I'm not trying to stir up trouble between the brothers, just letting you in on what's going on so you're aware."

"Sister, I know, I can feel it too, Ma Suyun seems to have a bit of that towards me."

"More than just a bit. When you and the second brother set your marriage, Ma Suyun had plenty of cold things to say, especially about your eldest sister, and then it was changed to you. Normally, this isn't a big deal, marriage talks aren't set just because someone has mentioned it once, but Ma Suyun made a fuss about it. Perhaps it was because she felt that on the matter of marriage, her Qin Wen finally had the upper hand over the second brother. Without any doubt, they were probably waiting to see our Qin Family become a laughing stock when you two just got married."

Lin Chuxia chuckled. Such things were too common, even blood brothers competed, let alone cousins.

Qin Wen was less than two years younger than Qin Yang. The two used to go to school together, but when Qin Yang skipped a grade, the gap between them widened, and perhaps that caused some psychological harm to Qin Wen.

Ma Suyun was Qin Wen's wife, so naturally, she would be influenced by him.

"The more she wants to laugh at us, the less we'll let her."

"Well, that's for sure," Zhang Guilan said with a smile about this, "Ma Suyun always thought that among the brothers, they were the couple who had the best life. In the three brothers of the Qin Family, their big room was the most outstanding. Qin Wen is a sales clerk at the Hardware Company, and Qin Jiang's wife is an elementary school teacher. Our room only has the second son, but he works out in another place, and our eldest is not young yet hasn't married a wife. Now that you've opened the Bun Shop, and your big brother and I have come to work, it really brings honor to our second branch. Even Xiao Wu and Hongmei from Uncle's place are doing better than them."

Zhang Guilan glanced at Qin Han next to her when she reached this point, and the topic turned back, "But speaking of which, among the Qin Family's brothers, aside from Qin Wen and his wife being a bit petty, the others are all good. You married into the family relatively late, so you don't know about those times at the production team. It was also thanks to the brothers sticking together that we never suffered any losses in the village."

"I know, sister-in-law, I can see that the Qin Family people all value relationships and loyalty."

Not to mention Qin Wen and Ma Suyun, Qin Liang, Qin Jiang, and Qin Wu are all very nice people, and the sisters-in-law are also very kind to her.

The two chatted for a while, but then customers came into the shop, so they went to get busy. After a while, Qin Lihua also came over to help.

Seeing her coming over, Zhang Guilan looked at the dining table in the distance, no longer seeing Ma Suyun's figure.

"Didn't your fourth aunt give you a day off? What about your sixth aunt?"

Qin Lihua was obviously a bit disappointed, "The sixth aunt said she had other things to do. It's inconvenient for a child like me to be with her, so she told me to work hard in the shop and not slack off just because we're family."

Zhang Guilan scoffed inwardly, but it wasn't appropriate to show it in front of the younger generation, "Has your sixth aunt settled the bill?"

When Ma Suyun came to the shop, she asked for steamed buns, cooked food, and cold dishes, not missing a single kind.

Qin Lihua shook her head, "I was calculating the bill for the sixth aunt, but she said there's no need to be so clear-cut about it since we're family."

Zhang Guilan could barely suppress her scoff, looking at Qin Lihua, she finally couldn't hold it back.

"Lihua, your sixth aunt is right, we can't violate the shop's rules and regulations just because we're relatives. In the future, no matter who comes, we can't let visitors affect our work. If there were no customers in the shop it would be fine, but just now when the shop was full of people, you were still chatting with your sixth aunt, making customers wait, isn't that a bit inappropriate?"

Qin Lihua bit her lip, explaining softly, "I wanted to go help, but the sixth aunt said she rarely gets to come, and it's been a long time since she's seen me, she wanted to talk to me. She held onto me to talk, and I couldn't just leave."

At this moment, she was genuinely blaming Ma Suyun in her heart.

She wanted to work when she wasn't allowed, her fourth aunt had given her a day off, yet she didn't take her with her, and then she spoke of not slacking off. Wasn't her slacking off caused by her?

Seeing Qin Lihua looking so pitiful, Zhang Guilan found it hard to be harsh,

"All right, go ahead and work. Remember this for next time."

Qin Lihua nodded, "I got it, second aunt."

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A few days later, Su Wensong found a suitable chicken farm to partner with, but Lin Chuxia had yet to receive a reply from Qin Yang, and now she started getting anxious as well.

Qin Han, knowing she had sent two letters without receiving any reply, also began to worry. Including his own, the family had sent three letters without any response, which was previously unheard of.

It's impossible that all three letters would get lost in the mail, even if one did.

Chapter 139: This man truly loves and cherishes her

"Sister-in-law, you go ahead with peace of mind, I'll take care of both the store and the home."

The elder Qin Family didn't know the reason, but they were very happy to hear that Lin Chuxia was going to visit Qin Yang in the Northwest again.

They were now looking forward to their son's good relationship with his daughter-in-law, given the couple lived apart. It was nice to see her travel back and forth like this.

Maybe while traveling back and forth, a grandson could suddenly arrive.

On the third day of the Lunar December, Lin Chuxia made proper arrangements for the shop and boarded the train to the Northwest.

The journey went smoothly until she reached the Northwest, which was quite different from her last visit.

Last time was at the end of fall; although it was windy and there was a lot of sand, it didn't affect travel. This time, however, the Northwest had just experienced a heavy snowfall when Lin Chuxia arrived.

Stepping off the train, Lin Chuxia stayed at a guest house like last time, venturing to the bus station the next day, wading through the snow with varying depths.

Fortunately, despite the challenging roads, the buses were still running as usual; it was just freezing cold to ride the bus in such weather.

She was wearing a long cold-resistant coat, with cotton pants made by Mrs. Qin underneath, and cotton shoes made by Mrs. Qin on her feet.

But these cotton shoes were not suited for snow; by the time she walked from the guest house to the bus station and got on the bus, half of the snow on her shoes had melted and soaked into the cotton.

Now, her toes were feeling the damp and aching with cold.

What was normally less than an hour's journey took over two hours this time, but luckily she safely reached Qin Yang's workplace.

The moment Lin Chuxia got off the bus, it seemed the snow here was even deeper than before. The area around the unit was sparsely populated, with a thick layer of snow covering everything in a blanket of white.

She put on her coat's hood and wrapped her scarf around her neck several times, leaving only her eyes uncovered, and picked up her suitcase, once again wading through the snow towards the unit.

The guard at the unit's entrance recognized Lin Chuxia and was about to go inform Qin Yang of her arrival, but Lin Chuxia stopped him.

"Thank you, I can go see him myself," she said. It was really too cold today and since she had to go in any case, there was no need to trouble someone else to go there.

"Is Qin Yang doing well?"

Hearing that Qin Yang was in the unit, Lin Chuxia's heart settled down a lot.

On her way over, all sorts of wild thoughts had tortured her, fearing that upon reaching the unit, the gatekeeper would tell her that Qin Yang was not there but in the hospital or some other place.

The guard nodded, "He's doing fine. If Mr. Qin knew sister-in-law was coming, he'd be really happy."

Lin Chuxia thanked him again and headed straight to Qin Yang's dormitory with her suitcase.

But once she arrived at the dormitory, she found the door locked.

Suddenly, all sorts of chaotic thoughts surged within her.

Could it be that the guard didn't know about Qin Yang's situation?

Indeed, Qin Yang was a technical staff member and rarely left the unit, how could the guard be fully aware of the movements of everyone in the unit?

That article had mentioned Bai Xiaoming but not Qin Yang, and Qin Yang was the leader of their team. Could it be hiding something intentionally?

For a moment, the various disturbances nearly caused Lin Chuxia to drop her suitcase; she trembled slightly, unsure whether it was from cold or something else, but her heart felt painfully wrenched.

She never knew she could worry about someone this much.

Just then, a familiar voice came from behind her, "Lin Chuxia?"

She turned abruptly to see Qin Yang not far off, staring incredulously as he held a food tray.

Then she noticed his right arm in a sling beneath his coat.

Qin Yang had never imagined he would see Lin Chuxia at his dormitory door, just by going to the canteen to grab a meal.

From a distance, the figure he saw made him think he was hallucinating, mistaking any woman for his daughter-in-law.

Even as he approached and confirmed it was her, his voice still carried disbelief.

The scarf she wrapped around herself was covered in a thick layer of frost, and the wisps of hair on her forehead were all frosty.

Qin Yang strode forward, wanting to grasp her hand, with a food container still in his own.

He hurriedly placed the container on the windowsill, taking out his keys to open the dormitory door.

"Why did you come? Get inside quickly."

His fingers trembled, and accidentally, the key fell to the ground.

Qin Yang bent down to pick up the key and continued fumbling, only to hear a soft chuckle behind him.

He turned his head and softly called out, "Wife..."

Lin Chuxia didn't respond to him, waiting for him to unlock the door, then stepped inside the dormitory with her suitcase ahead of him.

Qin Yang brought the food container in and followed her.

The dorm was cozy, with centralized heating. Upon entering the room, all the frost in her hair melted and clung damply to her forehead.

Qin Yang put the food container on the table, took off his coat haphazardly, and threw it over a nearby chair, his voice still quavering as he spoke.

"Why did you come? It's so cold, you must be frozen."

He tried to reach out to help her take off the scarf, suddenly realizing a grave issue—his right arm was in a sling across his chest, and, feeling guilty, he withdrew his hand.

Lin Chuxia had already reined in the smile on her face, calmly removing her scarf, "Don't you know why I'm here? You didn't reply to several letters I sent, how would I know if you can't come back or just don't want to?"

Her gaze fell upon Qin Yang's sling, and he felt even guiltier.

"It's just a minor injury; it's almost healed. I planned to write back to you once I was better, I didn't expect..."

He didn't expect that just because he hadn't replied, she would travel thousands of miles in the harsh cold to find him.

Qin Yang was indescribably moved; he thought Lin Chuxia wouldn't care about this.

During the two times they spent together, Qin Yang felt that she was exceptionally mature and rational.

If he had known, he would have replied to her no matter what.

Seeing her drenched shoes, Qin Yang tugged her to sit on the bed, "Hurry and take off your shoes. It's bad to wear wet cotton shoes, they could give you frostbite. Are your feet cold?"

Lin Chuxia felt suddenly aggrieved, "I'm frozen, almost didn't know anything anymore."

She wasn't here to reproach him; she felt relieved seeing he was safe, even with one arm in a sling.

Qin Yang crouched down and helped her off with her cotton shoes; her socks were already wet. He pulled off the socks, revealing two little feet, red from the cold.

Lin Chuxia's skin was naturally delicate and fair, leaving marks from a gentle pinch; now they were a bright red, and to the touch still chilly.

Especially the little toe, translucent red, looking almost frostbitten, Qin Yang's eyes filled with distress, and his guilt intensified.

Without saying another word, he sat next to her, lifting his clothes to tuck her feet into his embrace.

"Hey... no, it's too cold, it will freeze you."

Lin Chuxia still cared about him, but it wasn't so easy to retract her feet.

The man held them tightly, "It's okay, there are layers in between, don't move, it will be warm in a moment."

Lin Chuxia saw the anxious and worried look in his eyes, gave up struggling, and her heart throbbed fiercely.

This man truly cared for her, and—he loved her.

The word 'love' surfaced in her mind, and Lin Chuxia also paused.

In two lifetimes, she went through two marriages, yet she knew, she had never loved anyone.

Chapter 140: This is Your Punishment

In her past life, the relationship between her and Li Guangyuan was more about benefits and scheming; she didn't love Li Guangyuan, nor did he love her.

Even in those early years when he professed his love with sweet nothings, his eyes were filled with nothing but calculations.

Calculating how much she could contribute to the Li Family, squeezing out whatever else he could get from her.

Qin Yang, on the other hand, never thought about what he could gain from her. Instead, he always felt that what he gave her was never enough, wishing he could lay the whole world at her feet.

In her past life, she never knew the indifference and heartlessness that Lin Jiayi spoke of; she only saw a man who sincerely cared for her, holding her dear to his heart.

Lin Chuxia felt warmth in her eyes. What merit or virtue did she possess to, after being reborn with a mind full of schemes, encounter this man who was so genuinely and passionately emotional?

"Qin Yang..."

"Hmm?"

Qin Yang, worried he hadn't covered her snugly enough, was fixing the clothes over her feet. Hearing her voice, he looked up, "What's wrong?"

Lin Chuxia had subconsciously wanted to call out to him, and in the instant he looked back, she regained her composure to hide the emotion in the depths of her eyes.

Her gaze fell on his suspended arm, "What exactly happened? You're someone who wields a pen; how did you injure your right hand?"

Qin Yang knew he had to explain things clearly, as Lin Chuxia was not someone to be easily fooled.

"The situation was a bit urgent at that time. The project was proceeding according to our design, and that particular node was a technical challenge. Our department's staff were all on-site to offer guidance. We didn't expect an accident to happen..."

Qin Yang spoke calmly, but Lin Chuxia heard the harrowing fright of that moment.

By his lone efforts, he saved the entire project and the lives of two workers, a feat nearly impossible, yet he accomplished it.

A slight miscalculation and it wouldn't have been just the loss of his arm; he would have likely lost his life there as well.

"You promised me you wouldn't put yourself in danger; you broke your promise," thinking she had almost lost this man, Lin Chuxia's heart felt terribly heavy.

Seeing her eyes redden, Qin Yang became flustered, "At that time, I didn't think much. It was almost a reflex. I'm sorry. I did have some confidence that nothing major would happen. Believe me..."

Seeing Lin Chuxia ignoring him, just looking at him with tearful eyes, Qin Yang's explanations became disjointed.

Finally, at a loss for words, he leaned down and kissed her.

The kiss was delicate and lingering, eventually prying open her lips to weave a passionate intertwinement.

The long days of longing and worry spilled out in this instant as they expressed each other's concerns.

Not just Qin Yang, but Lin Chuxia as well.

After what felt like an eternity, they finally ended the intimate kiss. Qin Yang rested his forehead against Lin Chuxia's, his voice a bit hoarse.

"Wife, I was wrong. Forgive me this time, alright? I will be more careful next time. It really was just an accident."

Lin Chuxia did not speak but reached out to embrace his neck, holding him tight.

Resting her chin on his shoulder, inhaling his unique scent, she eventually let out a faint tone through her nose, "Hmm."

Joy erupted across Qin Yang's face. He was really worried that his wife would come from a thousand miles away to berate him. He didn't want her to worry, nor did he want her to feel that her words didn't weigh on him.

His wife had forgiven him, she could understand him.

"Lin Chuxia..."

He joyfully looked over at her delicate face, which he had been too timid to look at squarely since her arrival.

Just as he remembered, even when angry, his wife was still so beautiful.

He couldn't resist and leaned down to kiss her again.

Ever since he learned to kiss the last time, he became somewhat addicted to it.

His wife's lips were soft and tender, smooth and sweet...

I never understood the act of kissing before, the gnawing at each other, exchanging saliva—it was revolting to think about.

Even when the brothers spoke crudely about the topic, he was disdainful.

Marriage and consummation were for procreation, a part of fulfilling one's duty as a human being.

So, was kissing just for the sake of disgusting each other?

It wasn't until after marrying Lin Chuxia that he understood; marriage and consummation weren't just about procreation, and kissing was also an outpouring of emotion.

He wanted to mark every part of her with his seal, just to prove... she was his.

Lin Chuxia also noticed this man's overly eager affection for kissing until her mouth felt almost sore.

Finally getting a chance to talk, she reminded him, "Qin Yang, I'm hungry."

After sitting on a bus for nearly three hours, and walking that far, her stomach was growling.

Qin Yang looked down at her, emotions trickling from the depth of his eyes as he murmured hoarsely, "I'm hungry too..."

His idle hand also began to wander.

Lin Chuxia: "..."

Why not just hang both hands up?

She pinned the mischievous hand down, her little face stern, "I mean I'm hungry, you should behave, you need to heal properly before doing anything out of order."

Qin Yang froze in shock, as if struck by lightning.

How did it become something "out of order"?

They had been apart for over a month.

He had never thought about needing a woman by his side, but after marrying her, he couldn't just look without indulging.

"Wife, my injury is almost healed, rest assured, even with one hand, I can satisfy you."

"I won't be satisfied, that's your punishment," Lin Chuxia smiled like a little devil.

Her feet were already warm, and seizing the moment while Qin Yang was still stunned, she slipped her feet out and randomly grabbed a pair of shoes that Qin Yang had under his bed to search through her suitcase for clean socks.

It took Qin Yang a good while to come to his senses before he begged, "This punishment is too much... Wife, let's change it, how about I wash your feet instead?"

"No way, you're injured, so I should be the one washing for you. Qin Yang, rest assured, I'll take good care of you for the next few days, you won't have to lift a finger."

Lin Chuxia looked up at him with a meaningful smile.

Qin Yang felt a shiver down his spine, feeling wronged, "Wife, since you want to take care of me, why not take care of every aspect..."

"Pfft, keep dreaming!"

.....

All said and done, meals still need to be eaten.

Lin Chuxia took out a pair of leather boots from her suitcase, lined within with soft lambswool, they looked so cozy.

She bought them at the department store, but before she had a chance to wear them, Mrs. Qin had already made her a thick pair of cotton shoes, so she casually threw the leather boots into her space.

It wasn't that the cotton shoes were warmer than the leather boots, she valued more the affection Mrs. Qin showed her.

Her own mother had never made her a pair of new cotton shoes; every winter she wore the hand-me-downs from her older sister.

Speaking of which, it was somewhat sad—the pair made by Mrs. Qin was the first pair of new cotton shoes she had ever received in her two lifetimes, handmade just for her.

The cotton shoes were thick and looked clumsy, but she adored them inexplicably, wearing them consistently that she even forgot to change into waterproof ones when she got off the train and saw the snow.

However, seeing Qin Yang's concerned demeanor made the wet cotton shoes worth wearing.