

Switched M 181

Chapter 181: The Hardest Debt to Repay in This World Is The Debt of Gratitude

Before he could think more, his arm was grabbed by Lin Jiayi, who started pulling him toward the house.

The words, however, were directed at Mother Lin. "Mom, it's because you're too good-tempered that you let your own daughter shit on your head. I don't believe she really doesn't care about her reputation. A daughter who's unfilial to her own parents, how well can she treat her in-laws? Even if Qin Yang protects her, it's just Qin Yang alone. Lin Chuxia still has to live with the Qin Family."

This statement was meant for Mother Lin to hear, but also for Li Guangyuan.

Don't think she didn't notice Li Guangyuan's reaction when Mother Lin spoke those words.

It also made her feel an increasing sense of crisis.

The main reason she wanted Lin Chuxia's secret recipe for cooked food was because she had been finding life at the Li Family quite difficult lately.

She wasn't sure if it was her imagination, but ever since Old Mrs. Li made those unreasonable remarks, she kept feeling that Li Guangyuan also had opinions about her.

She feared Li Guangyuan would think the same, start to neglect her; she had enough of being neglected in her last life and didn't want to live like that again.

If they had the secret recipe for the cooked food, they could do bigger business, and Li Guangyuan would surely treat her well.

Who would have thought...

Every one of them...heartless wretches.

Mother Lin slapped her thigh and said, "What can I do? Did you not hear that damn girl's words? She wants the neighbors and the village chief to testify. The neighbors might be manageable, but the village chief, he's Sun Lanlan's father. Both his children work and earn salaries at the Qin Family. Could he possibly speak up for us? If we offend the village chief, can we still live in this village?"

Their eldest daughter was married off, and they cannot afford to be foolish.

Lin Jiayi felt a surge of annoyance internally, cursing them as good-for-nothings.

However, upon further thought, the Lunar New Year had passed and, according to what happened in her past life, once the first month of the lunar year was over, Qin Yang's illegitimate child would come knocking.

Thinking of this, Lin Jiayi's mood suddenly improved.

She wanted to see, once Qin Yang brought that bastard back, how Lin Chuxia could still be so arrogant.

Doesn't she think, why would Qin Yang, with such good prospects, still be single at twenty-five? If he's already caring for a son outside, how could he be looking for a partner?

She just waited to see Qin Yang bring back that illegitimate child, and if Lin Chuxia could still be so smug.

Elsewhere, Qin Yang and Lin Chuxia didn't stop walking until they were out of the village before he asked, "Are you okay?"

Lin Chuxia gave him a smile, "It's fine, I'm used to it."

Hearing her say "I'm used to it," Qin Yang felt an unpleasant feeling inside. Taking advantage of the fact that there were no others around, he grasped her hand for a moment, "If you don't like it, then lessen your visits. If they come looking for you again, just say it's my decision, that I won't allow you to visit your parental home."

That way he would bear any bad reputation.

Lin Chuxia knew Qin Yang meant well and didn't decline, "Okay."

But today's conversation should mean the Lin Family would settle down.

Although she didn't care about the Lin Family's antics, potential problems still had to be eradicated.

It really wasn't worth expending energy on these people.

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After the Spring Festival ended, it was time to get busy with all sorts of things.

The Bun Shop was set to open on the eighth day, and on the fifth day, after eating dumplings for the 'Po Wu' celebration, Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang sought out the village chief to discuss the launch of Xiyang Food Factory.

Since the factory was to be built in the village, these days construction work often involved help from the local community, and every village had artisans skilled in bricklaying and carpentry.

If they could get the village chief to take charge, it would certainly be twice the result with half the effort.

The village chief had been thinking about this matter for a while and, to be honest, he was even more anxious than Lin Chuxia.

Especially after hearing from his daughter that their food factory had a lot of work and she had earned so much salary at the end of the year.

If the food factory is built, it won't take long for the Qin Family Village to reach a comfortable living standard.

Then, as the village chief who leads the whole village towards a well-off life, won't he be remembered for generations to come?

These days, he has been dreaming of the food factory.

So when Lin Chuxia came to him with the proposal, the village chief immediately agreed.

"Leave it to me. Tell me what kind of factory buildings you want. Give me a rough idea, and if you're worried, you can let the Eldest Son of Qin Family follow me."

Lin Chuxia indeed cannot always be around to supervise the construction of the factory, and it wouldn't be entirely appropriate to ask Su Wensong to do so.

However, the family had discussed this before coming, and Mr. Qin had volunteered to watch over the construction site.

The old man is now in good health and has always wanted to help his children. He isn't able to help much with the shop, and finally, he found an opportunity.

So it was settled.

The village chief and Mr. Qin would take charge, with the assistance of Su Wensong.

"When the time comes, we will need more of your help. We'll pay the workers according to the going market rates," said Lin Chuxia politely.

The village chief waved his hand generously, "No need for all that. When anyone in the village builds a house, everyone else pitches in without expecting pay. We'll just provide meals and cigarettes, that's all."

However, Lin Chuxia did not agree with this arrangement. Everyone helping out is about mutual help, and in Lin Chuxia's case, it would only be everyone else coming to help her, whereas she wouldn't be able to return the favor when others are building their houses.

Moreover, building a factory is not the same as building a house. A normal family house can be erected in three to five days, but their factory, being much larger, would take at least half a month.

The hardest debt to repay in this world is one of gratitude.

If you owe someone a favor in this respect and can't return it equally, you'll find yourself at a disadvantage when they come to collect.

Lin Chuxia won't let herself be put in such a position. The best solution is still to pay wages.

After Lin Chuxia explained her situation, the village chief quickly realized this as well. After all, the Xiyang Food Factory will be employing workers from their Qin Family Village.

What if someone is not suitable for working in the factory and expects Lin Chuxia to repay a favor?

Fear seized him momentarily, but he grew even more admiring of Lin Chuxia. This young woman, though of tender years, was capable of thinking ahead and was cut out for great things.

"Alright, we will do as you suggest."

With the matter settled, Lin Chuxia left it to Mr. Qin to handle all negotiations with the village chief, and on the eighth day of the first month of the lunar year, the Bun Shop reopened.

Lin Chuxia had fireworks set off in front of the two shops to bring good luck.

With the fireworks, the nearby residents knew that the Bun Shop was open again, and many came over at the sound.

They were all regular customers; having not eaten these for some days, they really missed the taste.

As work got back on track, Lin Chuxia was busy with various things, and Qin Yang stuck to her like a little shadow.

He said he wanted to help her, but honestly, there wasn't much for him to do.

But these days didn't last long. On the tenth day, Qin Yang received a notice from his work that he was to return.

In previous years, Qin Yang would be back at work before the fifth day of the first month; now it was already the tenth, not to mention he had been at home for nearly a month before the New Year.

This was the longest holiday he had spent at home since he started working. But with Lin Chuxia's presence, Qin Yang felt the time had flown by too quickly, and he had not spent enough time with his wife before he had to go back to work again.

Lin Chuxia understood him too well and could tell what he was thinking just by looking at him.

She straightened his collar and joked half-seriously, "Why not resign and stay at home to concentrate on being a 'boss husband'? I'll support you."

Having said that, she playfully tilted her head, her bright, mischievous eyes sparkling.

Chapter 182: You Look Even Better

After being married for so long, Qin Yang still wasn't used to Lin Chuxia's teasing, especially when the words "boss's wife" slipped out, it made him shift his eyes uncomfortably.

"What do you mean you'll provide for me..."

After all, she was his wife, and it was only right that he should be the one to provide for her as her husband.

But now, Qin Yang couldn't boldly declare "I'll provide for you" anymore.

Nevertheless, he patiently explained, "Lin Chuxia, I know my salary doesn't mean much to you, but a person needs to leave something behind in this world. You have your career, and I have my dedication. This is a job I love. It might cause some inconvenience for us, but I don't have any regrets about choosing this path."

How could Lin Chuxia not understand him? She reached out to smooth the creases between his brows.

"I know, Qin Yang, you are my pride. You don't know how proud I am reading about your achievements in the newspaper—though they don't mention your name, I just know it must be you."

This was the first time Lin Chuxia spoke to him about reading such reports in the newspaper.

Qin Yang's eyes shone exceptionally bright, as nothing was more joyful than receiving the recognition of the one he loved.

He had always been worried that Lin Chuxia would get tired of their long-distance relationship and thus grow tired of his job.

Especially compared to the earnings from the Xiyang Food Factory and the Bun Shop, his salary was barely worth mentioning.

He had even considered what he would do if Lin Chuxia insisted he quit his job.

Without a doubt, it would be a painful decision to make.

But now Lin Chuxia not only recognized his work but also said he was her pride.

Qin Yang felt that meeting Lin Chuxia was the greatest fortune of his life.

Lin Chuxia didn't like clingy behavior. With Qin Yang about to leave and nothing else planned for the afternoon, Lin Chuxia suggested, "We haven't watched a movie together yet. I don't even know what's showing at the cinema today."

Qin Yang wasn't the romantic type. If Lin Chuxia hadn't brought it up, he wouldn't have even considered going to the movies with his wife.

But now he recalled that dating colleagues at his workplace would often go to the movies.

"Let's go and see what they're showing. Come on, let's go watch a movie."

Qin Yang held Lin Chuxia's hand as they walked out, only letting go after they had left the office.

In less than fifteen minutes, they arrived at the cinema entrance.

During this era, theaters didn't have many films to show; one movie could run in a loop for half a month.

Today, the movies showing were "Lushan Love" and "The Railway Guerrillas." Without any hesitation, they chose "Lushan Love."

Romantic movies were rare in this era, and "Lushan Love" was known as the first domestic romance film to feature a kissing scene.

The theater wasn't crowded; there were couples and groups of young lads and girls.

As the lights dimmed and the projector beam became more visible pointing at the screen, Lin Chuxia realized it had been decades since she had last watched such an old film in a theater. Compared to the movie itself, she enjoyed looking at Qin Yang more.

With such intense gaze, Qin Yang couldn't ignore it even if he wanted to.

With a slight turn, he could always catch her bright, sparkling eyes watching him.

"Isn't the movie interesting?" he asked in a lowered voice.

"You are more interesting."

Qin Yang: "..."

Suddenly, a low exclamation arose in the cinema—the climax of the movie was unfolding.

Initially, Qin Yang, flustered by Lin Chuxia's teasing, dared not meet her eyes and turned to look at the screen only to catch that scene.

Then, as if scorched, he quickly diverted his gaze.

People of this era were innocent—Qin Yang even more so. Even after being husband and wife for half a year, he still couldn't bear to watch such scenes directly.

But Lin Chuxia wanted to tease him, and while he awkwardly turned away, she leaned in like the heroine of the movie and gently kissed his cheek.

Even though they had been more intimate, this light touch made Qin Yang's body burn up like electricity, with all his blood rushing to one spot.

Thankfully, it was dark in the cinema, so others couldn't see his embarrassment.

Others might not see, but Lin Chuxia knew him well. Mischievously, she placed her hand on his thigh.

Qin Yang immediately sat up straight. To put it bluntly, even in this chilly weather, he was breaking out in a sweat.

This agony lasted until the end of the film when Lin Chuxia clapped her hands leisurely, "Let's go. The movie was good. We should watch another one together next time."

Looking at her smug expression, Qin Yang was almost grinding his teeth with irritation.

Thankfully, they were wearing heavy coats, and Qin Yang's calm and indifferent nature didn't betray his feelings to others.

It wasn't until that night that Lin Chuxia understood the saying, "If you don't make waves, you won't get into trouble."

"Qin Yang, I was wrong. I won't dare to do it again."

"Tomorrow you'll still have to go to work, so get some rest early tonight, and make sure you get enough sleep..."

"Qin Yang, could you keep it down a bit... Qin Yang, I really made a mistake..."

No matter what Lin Chuxia said, the man remained indifferent, and she didn't even remember how it all ended, with only one thought occupying her mind.

This man was finally going back to work tomorrow. If they continued like this, he might collapse from exhaustion, and Lin Chuxia felt she definitely would.

It was still dark outside when they got up early to catch the morning train.

When Lin Chuxia sat up, she couldn't help but hiss in pain, feeling as though she had run several thousand meters and done hundreds of squats.

Looking at her discomfort, Qin Yang finally experienced a prick of conscience, "You can continue to sleep; I can take the train by myself."

Watching him trying to hide his true feelings with pursed lips, Lin Chuxia could assert that if she agreed, the guy would surely be worried all the way there and couldn't concentrate even at his workplace.

"Go freshen up first, I'll rest a bit longer."

Seeing the smile on Qin Yang's face, Lin Chuxia couldn't help but feel helpless with him.

On the way, Qin Yang, riding the flatbed cart, never stopped talking. Lin Chuxia could feel his reluctance and remembered how the first time she sent him to the train station after getting married seemed just like yesterday.

A faint smile curled at the corners of her lips.

In two lifetimes, she didn't know what love was. She and Li Guangyuan entangled in love and resentment all her life, but she knew that she didn't love him.

Now, watching the man in front of her and listening to his chatter, Lin Chuxia felt her heart brim with emotion.

She thought this must be what it feels like to love someone.

You're always worried, constantly thinking about them, and you never run out of things to nag about.

Qin Yang indeed couldn't relax and was feeling even more reluctant to part.

He knew that with the current situation, Lin Chuxia was unlikely to follow him to his workplace, and his goal was to find a job closer to home.

He wouldn't carelessly share these unresolved plans, to avoid others getting their hopes up. All he could do was silently resolve to work even harder.

Finally, they arrived at the station. As usual, they bought a platform ticket, and Lin Chuxia sent him onto the train.

With dark eyes full of emotion, Qin Yang looked at her, "Don't you have anything to say to me?"

Chapter 183 Xiyang Food Factory Officially Listed

It seemed he was the one doing all the talking on this journey.

After some thought, Lin Chuxia earnestly advised, "Qin Yang, it's good to be kind and helpful, but don't overdo it."

Qin Yang immediately thought of Old Lady Liu and her daughter, a look of disgust flashing through his eyes, "I understand, wifey. Don't worry, this kind of thing won't happen again."

Seeing that he took her words to heart, Lin Chuxia wanted to remind him to take care of himself and to not get hurt again, until it was almost time for her to get off the train.

After seeing off Qin Yang, Lin Chuxia went to the train station's Bun Shop.

Today, she had arranged to meet with Sun Family's eldest and second brothers to discuss the business of the chicken farm.

By the time she reached the Bun Shop, the Sun Family's eldest and second brothers were already there.

Seeing Lin Chuxia, they both stood up, seeming somewhat awkward.

They were much older than Lin Chuxia, unlike Sun Lanlan and Sun Bingnan, who had grown up with her since childhood.

In the eyes of Sun Family's eldest and second brothers, Lin Chuxia, who could run such a big Bun Shop and was about to start a chicken farm, was someone to be respected, someone who even their father would hold in high regard.

Lin Chuxia, however, did not think much of it and greeted them, "Eldest brother, second brother, you've been here a while, please sit. Let me grab something to eat first."

She didn't have an appetite early in the morning, but now she was so hungry her stomach was growling.

"Eldest brother, second brother, have you eaten? Let's eat together."

Sun Bingwen and Sun Bingshan waved their hands repeatedly, "We've already eaten, you go ahead, we're not in a hurry."

Despite their words, Lin Chuxia, not wanting to stand on ceremony, picked up a few steamed buns and a bowl of porridge, and sat opposite them while eating and talking.

The main topics were about the management of the chicken farm and the compensation for both families.

Lin Chuxia knew that people in the village had experience with raising chickens and ducks, but to establish a large-scale chicken farm, it wasn't enough to just know how to raise them.

The county's Agricultural Bureau offered relevant training, and Lin Chuxia would also provide them with some breeding materials.

"My requirement is that once the chicken farm is established, it must supply me with at least 500 chickens every month in the initial stage. Later, we can increase the number according to our ability. I should have mentioned this to eldest brother and second brother through third brother before. We can handle compensation like wages. I will pay a fixed salary to eldest brother and sister-in-law and second brother and sister-in-law each month, plus ten cents for each chicken supplied. All costs of the chicken farm are covered by me, as well as the responsibility. Alternatively, eldest brother and second brother can set up their own chicken farms. We'll sign a contract, and the purchasing price will be consistent with the prices from other chicken farms."

Having heard this from Sun Bingnan before, Sun Bingwen and Sun Bingshan stated in unison after a long consideration, "We'll work with you and take the salary."

They knew that Sun Bingnan was earning a basic salary of 40 yuan a month at the Bun Shop, and Sun Lanlan, the manager, earned even more.

If they were to go by this salary, the couple would earn 80 yuan a month from raising chickens, plus the commission of ten cents per chicken. With wages over 100 yuan a month, it was an astronomical sum for them, what else could they ask for?

The most important thing was that starting their own chicken farm required a big investment and carried a high risk, something they lacked both experience and capital for, and even their father had told them to work together with Lin Chuxia.

Lin Chuxia was very satisfied with this response.

There's a big investment and risk in the early stages of starting a chicken farm, but the profits are indeed substantial.

The first batch of millionaires in the 1980s included many who raised chickens and pigs.

She wasn't renting mountain land and starting a chicken farm just to benefit others.

"So it's settled. Although it's still cold now, we can start preparing the preliminary work, and as for the training in breeding techniques, I remember that both elder and second brother have completed junior high, so we can't lag in scientific breeding."

"Mr. Lin, don't worry, my brother and I bought books just last year and have been studying at home," they assured.

Sun Bingnan also chimed in, "Sister, don't worry, we brothers are reliable."

Lin Chuxia smiled, "I'll leave my chicken farm in the hands of eldest brother and second brother. I'll have third brother discuss the later details with you."

Sun Bingnan had been in charge of procurement and had visited various chicken farms, so he had some experience.

Time passed, and it was almost noon. Lin Chuxia invited Sun Bingshan and Sun Bingwen to have lunch at the Bun Shop, only then noticing that Cai Jun had been absent for half the day.

"That kid is off today, who knows what got into him. He usually doesn't take his days off."

Each employee had their scheduled days off, but those who chose not to take them would receive two yuan as overtime pay.

Two yuan was not a small amount at the time, and most people would choose to stay and earn the extra money.

Lin Chuxia thought for a moment, "I'll hire another person here later on. Third brother, you help eldest brother and second brother with the chicken farm for a while."

Sun Bingnan nodded, "Alright."

With the Spring Festival over, fewer orders for cooked food meant more availability to reassign staff from the small courtyard.

All work proceeded in an orderly manner. After the first lunar month, the factory was completed and began hiring.

All the equipment in the factory was introduced under the direction of Xu Changping, which could be considered top-notch domestic food processing assembly lines.

The vacuum packaging machine for food was produced by the machinery plant where Xu Changping worked.

Thanks to the meat grinders and vacuum packaging machines, the machinery plant's performance not only did not decline but instead increased significantly last year.

Xu Changping was promoted to deputy chief of the machinery plant.

With Lin Chuxia needing help now, he was more than willing to offer full support.

The hiring was entrusted to the village chief and Su Wensong.

They had previously promised to allocate 20 positions to Qin Family Village, which the village chief was responsible for, while Su Wensong managed the public recruitment.

Of course, the people of Qin Family Village were not excluded from consideration.

In the end, a total of 50 people were hired, with more than 30 of them coming from Qin Family Village.

The training was conducted by the former team from the small courtyard.

Su Wensong was officially appointed as the manager of Xiyang Food Factory, fully in charge of the factory's operations.

Pang Yongli, Hou Xiaobao, Jia Liang, Ma Yingzi, including Sun Liangdong and Qin Yufeng, several employees who performed well, were all appointed to positions of varying importance.

The official opening day of the Xiyang Food Factory was marked by many invitations sent out by Lin Chuxia.

Village cadres, township officials, up to the county level officials, as well as the deputy chief of the machinery factory, the station chief of the vegetable station, and the chief of the meat joint factory, among others, were invited.

With Lin Chuxia leading the event and with strong support from the village chief and Secretary of Qin Family Village, Xiyang Food's opening ceremony was held with great fanfare and formality.

Village Chief Qin even managed to invite a reporter from An City County Daily, resulting in a newspaper report.

Lin Chuxia truly admired Village Chief Qin's enthusiastic spirit.

Lin Chuxia saved a copy of the newspaper, cut out the section about their food factory, placed it in an envelope, and sent it to Qin Yang along with a letter.

The opening of the food factory gave Lin Chuxia a sense of belonging.

In fact, she didn't have grand ambitions; cooking was her hobby, and having more people taste her food was her aim.

Chapter 184: The Husband Who Drove Sun Lanlan to Death in Her Previous Life

"In her previous life, she started out with a career in gourmet food. However, once her business expanded to a significant size, she was passively pushed along by its growth, which ultimately took a toll on her health.

This time around, she chose a career she enjoyed and did not plan to compromise her health for it.

That's why from the beginning she trained her subordinates and continuously delegated responsibilities.

Money is endless, and being able to help those she wanted to help during the process of making money was already enough to make her feel content.

Lin Chuxia sent the letter and a package she prepared in advance to the post office to be mailed to Qin Yang.

On her way back, she passed by the cinema and thoughts of the times they watched movies together brought a gentle gleam to her eyes.

It was then that a familiar figure flashed by.

Lin Chuxia paused slightly in surprise, and when she looked again, the person was gone, probably went into the cinema.

In March, the weather had started to warm up. Lin Chuxia saw a new arrival of women's jackets at the mall and bought two on the spot.

Upon arriving at the Bun Shop, she saw Sun Lanlan teaching two newcomers how to wrap buns.

After the establishment of Xiyang Food Factory, the staff were rearranged, and new people were added to the Bun Shop.

Puzzled, she asked, "Didn't you go watch a movie?"

Sun Lanlan smiled, "Why would I go watch a movie? There's so much work here at the Bun Shop."

It was afternoon, and there indeed was a lull in business at the bun shop.

However, as the manager, Sun Lanlan always felt there was an endless amount of chores to do.

Her elder brother wasn't around and the new workers were not yet skilled at making buns, how could she possibly leave?

Lin Chuxia frowned slightly, perhaps she had seen wrong earlier.

She tossed one of the jackets to Sun Lanlan, "This is for you."

Sun Lanlan immediately guessed what it was and laughed cheekily, "Xiaxia, I feel like I'm being pampered by you, truly blissful."

Ever since working at the Bun Shop, Lin Chuxia frequently gave her gifts, it was indeed blissful to have a wealthy friend!

"Stop chatting and try it on to see if it fits."

"It'll fit for sure, you have great taste," Sun Lanlan had immense faith in her sister's judgment.

Moreover, the two were of similar build, so Lin Chuxia's choice would definitely be right.

As they were talking, someone came through the door.

The man was slightly over 1.7 meters tall, with a dark complexion, and looked quite sturdy.

With a crew cut and almond-shaped eyes, he glanced around the Bun Shop, his gaze shifting among Lin Chuxia, Sun Lanlan, and their colleagues before finally settling on Sun Lanlan.

Sun Lanlan instantly put down what she was doing to greet the customer, "Please come in, what would you like to eat?"

Lin Chuxia's eyes widened upon spotting the newcomer, feeling a chill down her spine.

Liu Dahui, Sun Lanlan's husband from her past life who drove her to her death.

What was he doing here? Was this a coincidence?

Meanwhile, Liu Dahui was already smiling at Sun Lanlan, "You must be Sun Lanlan, right? I'm Liu Dahui, cousin of Er Shunzi's maternal aunt. My aunt often mentions you, and hearing that you work here, I thought I'd come to check on you. Just get me something to eat, are you having something as well? Let's eat together."

Sun Lanlan gave a polite smile, "No thanks, I'm fine. We still have pork buns and egg soup in the shop. How many would you like me to get?"

Upon hearing this, Sun Lanlan also remembered the match her family had suggested for her before.

"It was Mother of Er Shunzi who came to propose the marriage, and it seems the guy was called Liu Dahui.

But when she started working here at Lin Chuxia's, she had pushed away that marriage proposal and they had never even met face-to-face.

"Get me 5 meat buns and a bowl of egg soup," Liu Dahui smiled with a simple and honest face, his big teeth especially white against his dark skin.

Lin Chuxia had already followed him out, overhearing that there was nothing inappropriate said, she breathed a slight sigh of relief, yet still took the plate from Sun Lanlan, "You go prepare the buns, I'll deliver these to him."

Sun Lanlan also felt a bit awkward about Liu Dahui bringing it up out of nowhere, and didn't decline, handing over the food to Lin Chuxia and turned back to the kitchen.

Liu Dahui sat there eagerly looking at Sun Lanlan, only to see her go inside, and another young and pretty waitress brought him the buns and egg soup.

He even asked with a smile, "Is Sun Lanlan very busy? I am her fellow villager, just came to have a chat with her."

"Sorry, it's working hours now, staff cannot leave their post to chat with customers," Lin Chuxia directly blocked him with her words.

Liu Dahui was a bit disappointed, but he didn't insist further, and started to eat with his head down.

Until he finished his meal, Sun Lanlan didn't come out again, he paid the bill and left the Bun Shop.

Watching him walk away, Lin Chuxia secretly relaxed.

Whatever reason Liu Dahui had for coming to the Bun Shop, it was certain he and Sun Lanlan were never meant to be.

She knew Cai Jun had visited Sun Lanlan's home during the Spring Festival, although nothing explicit was said, it was clear they were being sized up by Sun Lanlan's parents.

Probably before long, matchmakers would officially visit and good news would likely be announced about them.

With Cai Jun as a comparison, even if Sun Lanlan were blind, she wouldn't choose Liu Dahui now.

"Is he gone?" Sun Lanlan came out and asked.

Lin Chuxia nodded.

Sun Lanlan shrugged, "What can I say, I don't know if it's because I'm working in the Bun Shop and my standards have gotten higher seeing city folk, but like Liu Dahui, half a year ago under my mom's pressure, I might have considered it, but now... it's good to have friends, if I really married someone like him, I think I might regret it."

Sun Lanlan always liked refined and educated people.

Like Cai Jun, although not highly educated, he had fair skin and a sort of creamy idol look.

Rough and tough guys like Liu Dahui, although common in the countryside, Sun Lanlan really didn't like them.

Hearing this, Lin Chuxia thoroughly put her mind at ease, "That's why, marrying someone must be someone you like, it's a lifetime matter, can't just marry anyone casually. Speaking of which, where's Cai Jun?"

"He's out, said he would be back soon."

As they were speaking, Cai Jun walked in briskly from outside, seeing Lin Chuxia he first greeted, "Mr. Lin."

Lin Chuxia nodded, with Cai Jun back, she had even less to worry about.

Now that the food factory was established, the small courtyard was left idle, completely becoming Lin Chuxia's office area and staff dormitories.

Yuan Bao, after getting nourished by a spring festival's supply of bones, had grown two sizes larger, now he was a half-grown dog.

Seeing Lin Chuxia enter, he wagged his tail and circled around her.

Lin Chuxia rubbed his head and then went back to the office to sort out the recent accounts.

Meanwhile, Sun Lanlan, who thought that Liu Dahui was just a spontaneous visitor, hadn't walked far after work when she saw Liu Dahui coming out of the alley.

It was getting late, though there were street lights, the streets were still sparsely populated due to the cold weather.

"What are you doing?" she asked, frowning.

Liu Dahui still wore that simple and honest look, "Don't misunderstand, I know you can't just chat with customers during work hours, so I've been waiting here for you to finish work, I... I came to ask why you didn't agree to the previous proposal."

Chapter 185: Where is Cai Jun?

Watching his stammering and somewhat shy demeanor, Sun Lanlan thought this guy must be sick.

The previous matter was merely the matchmaking of two people.

This had been initiated by Er Shunzi's mother, and although her mother did not reject it outright, she pushed it away the next day without the two even meeting.

Besides, it had already been half a year.

"My mom feels it's inappropriate, she wants me to marry someone closer," Sun Lanlan directly brought her mother into the argument.

Liu Dahui was slightly startled, not expecting this to be the reason.

His second aunt had clearly said it was because Sun Lanlan found a job in the city and looked down on country folks like them.

"It's just over ten miles, not that far, Sun Lanlan, don't you..."

"Sorry, this is my mom's decision, and I listen to my mom in these matters," Sun Lanlan directly interrupted Liu Dahui.

"Sun Lanlan, I..."

Liu Dahui was about to say something when he was interrupted by a voice.

"Lanlan, why haven't you gone back yet? Who is this..."

Su Wensong directly stood between the two, shielding Sun Lanlan behind him.

"A customer," Sun Lanlan really couldn't explain her relationship with Liu Dahui to Su Wensong.

They weren't really related, and explaining would only make things murkier.

Su Wensong gave Liu Dahui a look, then said to Sun Lanlan, "I'll walk you back."

Sun Lanlan did not refuse.

The two of them walked ahead, leaving Liu Dahui behind.

After walking away a bit, Su Wensong then asked, "Where's Cai Jun?"

After it got cold last year, Cai Jun also applied to stay in the dormitory, sharing a room with Sun Bingnan.

Previously, several people would commute together, but in this period Sun Bingnan has been busy with the chicken farm and staying at home, only Cai Jun and Sun Lanlan commuted together.

"There were some leftover cooked dishes at the store today; he took them to the food factory," Sun Lanlan said.

Cooked dishes can't be kept overnight, any remaining cooked foods need to be taken back to the factory for reprocessing.

This ensures the hygiene of such cooked dishes; the repeated cooking results in tender meat, which customers also like.

However, for the store, cooked dishes that are returned to be recooked several times end up costing more, significantly increasing the costs.

So, every day the amount of cooked dishes prepared by each shop is fixed, trying to control it just enough to sell out, though there are special circumstances.

Su Wensong naturally knew this; previously, processed cooked dishes were just taken back to the small courtyard after work, but now they had to be sent to the food factory.

"I'll talk to Cai Jun tomorrow; the cooked dishes can be sent later, I'll drop you off first."

Sun Lanlan, being a young girl, although the distance was not far, encountering a situation like today was still very dangerous.

Sun Lanlan looked at Su Wensong gratefully, she had to admit, she was somewhat scared just now.

"Thank you, Brother Su."

"You don't have to be so formal with me."

Su Wensong walked Sun Lanlan to the courtyard gate, watched her enter, then turned back.

Sun Lanlan entered the courtyard, where two girls were washing up.

With more company staff, those who find it inconvenient to go home can apply for dormitory accommodation.

The food factory was established, and after the cooked food processing was moved there, the other rooms were also renovated into several employee dormitories.

Upon seeing Sun Lanlan enter, the two people greeted her.

Sun Lanlan responded, glanced at Cai Jun's dormitory where the lights were still off, knowing he hadn't returned yet, and went directly to her own dormitory.

Lin Chuxia gave her preferential treatment; even though other employees had arrived, she still had a room to herself.

"Mr. Lin, this is Xiyang's operating situation and financial statement for this past month. From what we can see, our food factory is still doing quite well."

In the office, Su Wensong handed a document to Lin Chuxia.

It had been a month since Xiyang Food Factory officially began operations. During this month, not only did the workers work on time and punctually, the marketing department staff also expanded markets in several cities, steadily increasing their sales volume.

Lin Chuxia took the report, looked at it, and was very pleased.

"Qin Wu and Jia Liang, these two guys did a great job, capturing two major markets."

The sales department was established at Xiyang Food Factory, and the first few people who went out to bring in business became the main force of the sales department.

"For this month's salary, remember to add the performance part for them and give a bonus of an additional twenty percent. This is in recognition of outstanding employees. Also, for the employees of the factory, those who perform well also get bonuses. You control this matter, as there are many people from Qin Family Village in our factory, and inevitably there are those who are close, have good relationships, or even related, giving rewards is a good thing, but if it is exploited by those with ulterior motives, the backlash generated could far outweigh the significance of the rewards themselves."

Not receiving rewards for good work, while slackers get bonuses, would lead to loss of morale.

Su Wensong clearly understood the stakes involved.

"Don't worry, Mr. Lin, I will personally oversee this matter."

"By the way," Lin Chuxia took out a document, "I approved your application material, but you know the situation with our company, for now, we can only buy a used vehicle."

After Xiyang Food Factory was established, two more three-wheeled motorcycles were added to the factory. These vehicles, though agile, could not meet the growing needs of the food factory.

Su Wensong suggested acquiring a truck, and this proposal exactly matched Lin Chuxia's thoughts.

A vehicle is a must for the factory, it's just that currently, funds are limited.

Su Wensong smiled and took the document, "Having an old one to use is already very good."

In the current market, new vehicles are in short supply, and very few individuals purchase cars. Even getting a used vehicle requires connections.

"Leave this to me, I'll try to find you the best and cheapest one."

Lin Chuxia raised an eyebrow, "Factory Director Su's connections are getting wider, aren't they?"

Su Wensong sighed with a smile, "This is perhaps what they mean by 'no one inquires in a bustling city when you are poor, but distant relatives appear when you are wealthy in the mountains'. This is also thanks to Mr. Lin."

Originally, his family situation was poor, and as a youth sent to the countryside, others avoided him.

Even after returning to the city, as someone who lost his job, he didn't even know where his future lay, let alone others.

Now, Lin Chuxia appointed him as the director of Xiyang Food Factory, and he emerged as an individual business owner; some previous connections gradually started to reconnect.

Su Wensong never felt there was anything wrong with people acting this way.

After interacting with Lin Chuxia, especially seeing how she conducted herself, Su Wensong increasingly understood a truth.

Interactions between people are essentially exchanges of benefits. Without sufficient capital, why should you care about others' benefits, hoping that others will provide you with advantages?

When your own capital is sufficient to attract others' attention, your path will become increasingly broader and smoother.

After leaving Lin Chuxia's office, Su Wensong went back home first.

Passing by the Bun Shop, he saw a familiar figure inside.

He turned around and directly entered the Bun Shop.

Sun Lanlan was busy at the front desk; it had just passed mealtime, and there weren't many people in the shop.

Su Wensong first looked at the person, then after confirming, he approached Sun Lanlan, "Does that person often come to the Bun Shop?"

Chapter 186: A Toad Wants to Eat Swan Meat?

Sun Lanlan glanced at Liu Dahui, who was eating in the distance, unsure of what to say.

These past few days, Liu Dahui had been showing up at the Bun Shop almost daily, always right after lunchtime when there were fewer customers.

If Sun Lanlan was in the lobby, he would even greet her.

If she wasn't around, he would leave shortly after finishing his meal without lingering.

It seemed like he really just came to eat buns, but Sun Lanlan felt a bit irritated whenever she saw him.

As a business, they couldn't shoo away a customer who had come to eat.

Su Wensong watched her slightly irritated expression and pursed his lips, seeing Cai Jun cleaning tables nearby, he walked over.

"Is Factory Director Su here for a meal?" Cai Jun asked.

Su Wensong pointed directly at the distant man and said, "Do you know what's the deal with him?"

Cai Jun glanced at Liu Dahui and nodded, "He's pretty much a regular at our Bun Shop, coming in every day recently."

Hearing his matter-of-fact tone, Su Wensong furrowed his brow.

He heard that Cai Jun visited the Sun Family over the Spring Festival; does that mean their relationship is out in the open now?

Seeing the man every day, hasn't he noticed Liu Dahui's covetous looks towards Sun Lanlan?

It's not that he was being nosy, but the situation that day seemed quite dangerous, leading him to check up on this Liu Dahui.

It turned out that there was some history between Liu Dahui and Sun Lanlan, and now he's visiting the Bun Shop every day, seemingly harboring old feelings, planning to pursue Sun Lanlan?

He wondered if Cai Jun was genuinely naive or pretending to be, with a rival in love practically at his doorstep, yet acting as if it was none of his business.

"Don't you think his purpose for coming here is not purely innocent? I heard he's from Mazhuang Town below, nearly twenty kilometers from the county. He travels this far just for buns?"

Worried about Sun Lanlan's safety, Su Wensong still decided to give a warning.

Cai Jun looked baffled, "If he's not here for buns, what else would he come to the Bun Shop for?"

Su Wensong's sharp gaze lingered on Cai Jun for a moment before turning back to Liu Dahui.

Liu Dahui was staring at Sun Lanlan, his gaze almost clinging to her, which darkened Su Wensong's face even more.

Following his line of sight, Cai Jun finally realized, "He... he couldn't be interested in..."

Su Wensong gave him a cold glare, and Cai Jun quickly lowered his voice, "Could he be interested in Sun Lanlan? As if that toad could eat swan meat?"

Hearing his tone, Su Wensong frowned even more.

What kind of attitude was that?

Su Wensong had given his reminder and said no more.

He figured Cai Jun, knowing Liu Dahui's intentions, would be more cautious.

If needed, he would make time to come back a few more times over the next few days.

.....

They say that spring rain is as precious as oil, but spring snow is not so welcome to the common folk.

It's already the middle of March, yet heaven decided to let a spring snowfall happen, causing the recently rising temperatures to drop again.

Fortunately, the snowfall didn't last long, only leaving a layer overnight. By dawn, the skies had cleared, and when the sun rose high at noon, the snow on the roads and the eaves had already started dripping away.

Lin Chuxia stepped on the damp ground as she arrived at the Bun Shop, and to her surprise, she saw a long line of customers waiting in front of the shop. Subconsciously, she glanced at the cooked food store across the street, which had only a scattering of people.

Stomping her feet, she walked into the shop and went straight to Qin Han, "What's going on outside?"

Qin Han chuckled, "I was planning to tell you after work. Since yesterday, our shop has seen a significant increase in cooked food customers. It turns out Director Gao from the Old Food Factory has been transferred away – well, actually, he was dismissed. During the time they were cutting prices on cooked food, they sold a lot but made no profit. The employees there overworked without getting their pay increased, causing widespread complaints. In the end, everything was blamed on Director Gao."

Lin Chuxia's lips curled into a smile. She knew that price wars were never a sustainable strategy.

A tactic that harms the enemy a thousand and self eight hundred, sooner or later, one would pay the price themselves.

Gao Hui thought their Xiyang Food Factory, being large in size and business, could drag down their Bun Shop but forgot that the bigger the family business, the more mouths there are to feed.

Dropping prices by thirty percent to sell at virtually no profit margin, the more they sold, the greater the cost.

Their Bun Shop, despite its small storefront and fewer staff, mainly focused on selling meat buns, and the idea of dragging them down was a pipe dream.

"Did you increase the amount of cooked food today? With so many customers, try not to let anyone leave empty-handed."

"Don't worry, as soon as we got busy with customers yesterday, I touched base with Wensong. Today we've prepared three times the amount of yesterday's."

Lin Chuxia nodded; Qin Han had become well-acquainted with the business. She hardly needed to worry about the Bun Shop with him managing.

Looking around the Bun Shop, she didn't see Qin Lihua, "Where's Lihua?"

"She's off this afternoon; she's not in the store. Is there something you need?"

"Not really, I was thinking about promoting Jianjun to full-time ahead of schedule, but I can't find the kid and thought I might ask Lihua to tell him at home."

Lin Chuxia mentioned Qin Jianjun, and she couldn't help but smile.

Initially, Qin Lihua came to work at the Bun Shop at the behest of Mrs. Qin, approached by Brother Qin.

Back then, Qin Jianjun was envious but thought since his sister couldn't handle farm work, he didn't compete with her.

This year, with the establishment of Xiyang Food Factory and its public recruitment drive, especially since the village chief had 20 quotas for Qin Family Village, Qin Jianjun had signed up immediately.

However, during the interview, the village chief ruled him out.

The reason was that he was Lin Chuxia's nephew, and if he wanted a job, he should speak to his aunt, not waste the village's quota.

He went home wanting his parents to speak to Lin Chuxia on his behalf, but Brother Qin and his sister-in-law felt that Lin Chuxia had already given them face back in the day and didn't find it appropriate to repeatedly ask such favors.

Thus, Qin Jianjun felt like an unloved and abandoned pitiful soul, spurned by society.

With nowhere to turn, he brooded at home for three days before mustering the courage to approach Lin Chuxia.

Without beating around the bush, he shared his predicament with Lin Chuxia and simply asked if she still needed workers, declaring he could do anything.

Lin Chuxia hadn't expected the boy to have faced such a setback.

In fact, she had a lasting impression of him. Among the bridal party during her wedding, Qin Jianjun was the only youngster and the most energetic. Moreover, he seemed to greatly admire Qin Yang.

She didn't send Qin Jianjun to the food factory to work on the assembly line. With his lively nature and good appearance, Lin Chuxia placed him under Qin Wu's wing to learn social interaction and business connections.

Assembly line work was something anyone could do, but what she desperately needed were core team members.

Her judgment proved correct. According to Qin Wu's feedback, Qin Jianjun was quick-witted, observant, eager to learn, and had even secured a deal on his own a few days earlier.

She liked people who sought improvement and naturally wanted to encourage them.

Knowing his younger relative better, Qin Han agreed with Lin Chuxia, "Jianjun has been smart since he was a child. If it wasn't for Brother Qin's family having many children and Jianjun putting others before himself by giving up his chance for education to his younger siblings, he might have even been a college student by now."

Chapter 187: How Much Was Lost?

Qin Liang had three children, the eldest Qin Jianjun, the second Qin Lihua, and the youngest son Qin Jianshe was also 15.

In the year Qin Jianjun was due to enter his final year of high school, Qin Lihua got admitted to high school, and Qin Jianshe to junior high.

Educational expenses for children were a significant outlay those days.

Even the nine years of compulsory education weren't free, with three kids in school, especially in junior high and high school, tuition and textbook fees could consume an entire rural family's income.

Smashing pots to sell iron for education wasn't just an idle expression.

Feeling nostalgic, Qin Han sighed at the memory of days gone by and marveled at the good days they were living now, days he never even dreamt were possible.

While they were talking, Sun Bingnan came in from outside.

During this period, Sun Bingnan had been back in his hometown, overseeing his older and second brother with the construction of the chicken farm, and only occasionally came back to report the progress to Lin Chuxia.

He said last time that the chicken farm was built, and they planned to bring in the chicks soon.

Thinking of yesterday's weather, Lin Chuxia felt a surge of worry, "Why has Third Brother come over at this time? Is there some issue with the chicken farm?"

Sun Bingnan poured himself a glass of water and took a couple of sips before replying, "Yeah, there's a bit of an issue. I've had some bad luck; just the day before yesterday, I had arranged for 2000 chicken chicks, and then yesterday a heavy snow hit. Can you believe it? It's like the heavens are deliberately opposing me."

Chicks need a certain temperature to grow, too cold and they could actually freeze to death.

Not like future times where heating facilities were well-equipped, many people couldn't even afford to burn coal briquettes in winter, relying on heated kang beds.

That's also why Lin Chuxia wanted to build the chicken farm early but was waiting until spring.

"What's the situation now? How much was lost?"

Natural disasters and accidents are normal, you can only hope that the losses are small.

Sun Bingnan finished his glass of water and waved his hand dismissively.

Qin Han's face grew more troubled, "All gone?"

Lin Chuxia's heart also skipped, 2000 chicken chicks wasn't a small number.

Never mind the financial loss, for the Sun Family's eldest and second brother to face such a setback right at the beginning of the chicken farm, any similar future endeavors would carry significant pressure.

Sun Bingnan finished his water, set down his cup, and then continued, "No losses. My sisters-in-law said the chicks are afraid of the cold, so they kept a coal stove burning in the coop, and laid thick straw mats down. The past couple of days they've been sleeping in the coop, even taking meals in turns, my mom even had blankets laid out for the chicks."

Lin Chuxia: "..."

She could all but see the scene in her mind.

But with Brother Sun and Second Brother Sun showing such spirit, she really didn't need to worry about her chicks.

As dinner time approached, Lin Chuxia invited Sun Bingnan to eat together at the Bun Shop, and informed Su Wensong as well.

Sun Bingnan had been busy with the chicken farm back home recently, and now that it was largely settled, Lin Chuxia was considering placing him at the Xiyang Food Factory, mainly to oversee the procurement channels and quality control of raw materials.

After dining together, they exchanged updates about the bun shop, food factory, and chicken farm.

After dinner, as the Bun Shop was about to close, Lin Chuxia planned to head home with Qin Han when she heard Su Wensong and Sun Bingnan bring up Liu Dahui.

Since Sun Bingnan had been in his hometown these past few days, he considered, "Yeah, I know of such a person. There was a matchmaker who suggested a suitor for my sister, his name seemed to be Liu Dahui. What of him? Why bring him up out of the blue? Liu Dahui isn't a good match for my sister, I was against it from the start when the matchmaker mentioned him. It was fortunate Mr. Lin got us a job here, so I had my mom decline the proposal directly."

He was unaware of the recent events.

Lin Chuxia knew that Liu Dahui had approached Sun Lanlan, and with Su Wensong mentioning it now, she became extra cautious.

She stopped and asked, "Has Liu Dahui been to the Bun Shop recently?"

Su Wensong nodded, "I heard he's been coming to the bun shop to eat buns every day recently, but he hasn't done anything inappropriate. It's just... him coming all this way just to eat buns..."

"I can't, I have to go check on Lanlan."

Lin Chuxia and her husband Qin Han excused themselves and told them to head back first.

If it had been anyone else it might have been okay, but Liu Dahui was Sun Lanlan's ex-husband from a previous life. Just the thought of Sun Lanlan's eventual fate made Lin Chuxia lose her composure.

Sun Bingnan frowned slightly, not knowing the situation now, but knowing that Lin Chuxia and Sun Lanlan were close, he felt that Lin Chuxia was the more appropriate one to speak.

"Brother Qin, you guys go back first, I'll take Mr. Lin home later."

The five of them split up at the entrance of the bun shop, with Su Wensong silently following behind Sun Bingnan and Lin Chuxia.

At this time, the bun shop near the train station had also closed, and the three of them headed straight towards the staff dormitory courtyard.

Not far from the courtyard, next to a factory area, Lin Chuxia suddenly heard a sharp scream.

Although the scream was shrill, it was still familiar.

Lin Chuxia's face suddenly changed, and she took off running, but someone else was faster than her.

Su Wensong and Sun Bingnan both ran towards the source of the sound.

As they reached the entrance of the alley, they heard sleazy voices inside.

"Pretty girl, don't be scared, we just want to talk to you."

"Yeah, why scream so loudly? Even if you scream louder, nobody around here will probably hear."

"How lonely it must be for you to be alone at night, let us take you to the movies."

Then came Sun Lanlan's voice, containing a hint of a sob, "Please let me go, I can give you money, all the money on me..."

"I want the money, but I also want you, what should I do? Pretty girl, don't cry, I'll be gentle with you... Ah..."

"Fuck your grandpa!"

With Sun Bingnan's angry curse, a man let out a scream of pain.

Su Wensong didn't fall behind either, throwing punches at another man.

As soon as the two men saw others coming, they turned to run, but neither Sun Bingnan nor Su Wensong gave them the chance.

The four of them immediately got into a scuffle.

Lin Chuxia had run up to Sun Lanlan, who, upon seeing a familiar face, clung to Lin Chuxia and burst into tears.

"Xi Xia, how did you come? You scared me to death..."

She thought she couldn't escape today.

"It's okay now, it's all okay," Lin Chuxia comforted her, "Where's Cai Jun? Why didn't he leave work with you?"

Sun Lanlan was crying so hard she could barely catch her breath, and it took her a while to calm down, "He had a shift off this afternoon..."

Lin Chuxia wanted to say more but suddenly turned to look behind a distant tree, "Wait for me for a moment..."

Without saying much more, she ran over there directly.

The person behind the big tree, realizing they'd been spotted, turned and ran.

Lin Chuxia took a run-up, leapt forward and kicked, "Aiyo", the man fell forward flat on his face.

The man tried to run again, but Lin Chuxia directly blocked his path.

Chapter 188: New Hatred and Old Resentments All Surge to My Heart

In the darkness, the man realized he couldn't run away anymore, turned his head to look behind him, where the other two men had already been subdued. Gritting his teeth, he picked up a brick from the corner of the wall and charged forward.

Lin Chuxia noticed his movement and casually pulled out a baseball bat from her space, which she had prepared especially for self-defense.

With a handy weapon in her hand, Lin Chuxia was not afraid at all, even though her opponent was a man.

As he raised the brick high above, Lin Chuxia swung her baseball bat squarely onto his arm. Accompanied by a dull thud and the man's scream, the brick fell to the ground.

Lin Chuxia had a clear view of the man's face; it was Liu Dahui, Sun Lanlan's man from her past life.

The man's presence here now was undoubtedly related to tonight's events; combined with the memories of her past life, old and new hatred surged in her heart.

Ignoring the man's screams, Lin Chuxia swung the baseball bat at him relentlessly.

Su Wensong and Sun Bingnan had already subdued the other two men. Seeing the situation over at Lin Chuxia's side, they pressed down the two men and came over to help.

Instead, they saw Lin Chuxia wielding a big bat, while the man on the ground was rolling around in pain, begging for mercy, which involuntarily made the corners of their lips twitch.

The other two unfortunate men, realizing their luck, felt relieved that they didn't end up in this woman's hands.

"Chuxia, that's enough, you're about to beat him to death," Sun Bingnan said as the screams from the man on the ground softened, reminding her to stop.

Sun Lanlan, also afraid of a fatality, walked over and hugged her arm, "Xiaxia, stop beating him."

Lin Chuxia's pent-up anger was nearly vented, and with one last vicious kick at Liu Dahui, she spat, "You scum, don't think this is over."

She turned to Sun Bingnan and the others and said, "We need to take them to the police station."

"Right, to the police, let them rot in their cells."

Sun Bingnan had no intention of letting these men off easy. A beating was too lenient for them.

If it weren't for their timely arrival, who knows what might have happened.

Hearing they were about to be taken to the police station, the men Su Wensong and Sun Bingnan were holding panicked.

"We... we didn't have bad intentions, we just wanted to scare this female comrade."

They shouldn't have mentioned it; before they could finish, Su Wensong punched one of the men in the stomach, "You call this no bad intentions? I could beat you to death right now and still not have bad intentions, believe it or not?"

"We really weren't... really weren't..."

The men stuttered; there had been a crackdown recently, and being sent to the police station would be the end of them.

At the least, they would be imprisoned; at worst, they could end up facing bullets.

Thinking of that possibility, cold sweat poured down their faces. They pointed at Liu Dahui, whose face was beaten beyond recognition, and said,

"It was him who told us to scare this female comrade. It was just a scare; after that, he would pretend to be a hero to save her. It was just a joke with this female comrade; we wouldn't have done anything bad."

Sun Bingnan, who was still wondering why Liu Dahui was there, grew furious upon hearing that it was Liu Dahui's setup, and kicked him a few more times.

"Damn you, are you trying to ruin my sister's reputation?"

Liu Dahui didn't want to go to the police station either. Hearing that the other man was Sun Lanlan's brother, he could only accept his bad luck and confessed everything.

"I just wanted to be friends with Lanlan, really, I admit my methods may have been wrong, but I really didn't mean any harm to Lanlan; I genuinely like her."

He wanted to be friends with Sun Lanlan, and then date her, but she gave him no chance.

He thought his sincere heart might touch her, even going so far as to run twenty kilometers to her Bun Shop every day.

But what happened?

This flirtatious woman, surrounded by several men, simply didn't notice him.

Liu Dahui was not content. His aunt had said that the Sun Family had intended to marry Sun Lanlan to him, but it fell through because she started working.

Why should she look down on him just because she had a job?

Hearing that she earned forty to fifty yuan a month, Liu Dahui grew all the more eager to get his hands on Sun Lanlan.

Whether people or money, it should all have been his.

And, Sun Lanlan never made an impression on him before, but that day when he came to the Bun Shop, he recognized her from among several women at a glance. Liu Dahui had an intuition that Sun Lanlan was supposed to be his wife.

As long as he tarnished her reputation, the men circling her would care, and then he'd have his aunt propose marriage again. A woman with a ruined reputation would be at his mercy.

Lin Chuxia had guessed Liu Dahui's intentions; this scum truly wasn't fit to be human in either life.

"Make friends? Who do you think you are? Is this how you make friends? Third brother, don't waste words with them; take them all to the police station."

Since there were three of them, Lin Chuxia and Sun Lanlan also followed Su Wensong and Sun Bingnan to the police station.

As it turned out, Sun Hao was on duty.

At first glance, he thought Lin Chuxia had been robbed again.

He thought these small-time thieves had no eyes; he had seen Lin Chuxia's skills.

But when he heard it was about harassing a woman, he took it seriously.

Sending small thieves to the police station is common, but harassing women is different in nature.

Such people who endangered social stability must be severely punished.

After the statements were recorded, with both the victims and witnesses present, and the perpetrators confessing their actions almost immediately—even if their statements matched those of Lin Chuxia's group—their behavior was nonetheless vile.

Before leaving, Su Wensong added, "Earlier, this Liu Dahui had attempted to intercept Sun Lanlan on the road, and then he came to the Bun Shop every day. Comrade Sun, doesn't this count as premeditated?"

Hearing this, Sun Hao turned to the recording officer, "Make sure to note this as well. Such behavior is utterly despicable; it's clearly premeditated and planned."

At this, Liu Dahui struggled to stand up. "Police comrade, I didn't plan this, he's talking nonsense; I knew Sun Lanlan before, I really just wanted to be friends with her. It's him, he's slandering me, he has ulterior motives; police comrades, you can't just listen to one side of the story..."

"Whether it's one-sided or not, it's been clear from what was said earlier," Sun Hao glanced at Liu Dahui, "Take them down and lock them up for now, we'll interrogate them tomorrow."

Coming out of the police station, Sun Lanlan's fingers were still trembling, Lin Chuxia knew she was frightened, and stayed with her.

"This should give you some peace of mind; the police comrades will not let them off."

For the crime of hooliganism, they'd be sentenced to several years at least, and with this incident, Sun Lanlan would surely not marry Liu Dahui. Lin Chuxia felt much more relieved.

Sun Bingnan spat viciously, "Truly bad luck; what is Liu Dahui? Why does he think my sister would marry him?"

During the testimony, Liu Dahui said he liked Sun Lanlan and that the Sun Family had also intended to marry her to him, which is why he acted this way.

He didn't intend to harm Sun Lanlan, he just used the wrong way.

Chapter 189 We Are In A Free Love Relationship

He only told one side of the story. At that moment, there were police present, otherwise, Sun Bingnan would have slapped him twice more.

If today's matter settles, even if his sister marries Liu Dahui, at Liu Family and in front of this husband, she will never be able to hold her head up for her whole life, he can't even imagine what kind of life she could have.

"I heard that after the family rejected the matchmaker, Er Shunzi's mom suggested several other partners to Liu Dahui, one of them even from our village, but none worked out. Now, is he pretending to be deeply in love again? Can't he find anyone else and now remembers my sister?"

Sun Lanlan helplessly exclaimed, "Brother, is it really good to speak like that?"

It sounded like she couldn't find anyone else.

Sun Bingnan was also annoyed, "Isn't that me just criticizing Liu Dahui? I didn't say anything bad about you."

At this time, Sun Bingnan was walking ahead, Lin Chuxia and Sun Lanlan were in the middle, Su Wensong was walking half a step behind them, watching Sun Lanlan's back.

"Didn't Cai Jun leave work with you again today?"

I clearly warned him before, to make sure to see Sun Lanlan back to the dorm before he delivers the cooked food.

Is this person really that unreliable?

Sun Bingnan also looked puzzledly at Sun Lanlan.

Sun Lanlan explained again, "These days we always leave work together, but today he had a day off and left in the afternoon."

"When did he start acting like this? What does a grown man need to rest for so much?"

Sun Bingnan complained.

Lin Chuxia gave good benefits; not taking a day off meant two yuan extra, even half a day off still earned one yuan.

One yuan isn't a small amount in their village; it can buy a pound of pork, several pounds of white flour, even around twenty eggs.

Sun Lanlan also felt Cai Jun took days off a bit too frequently recently, almost every time he had the option to.

But that was his right, even as a manager she couldn't really say much.

At the fork in the road, Sun Bingnan wanted Su Wensong to escort Lin Chuxia home directly.

Lin Chuxia was worried about Sun Lanlan and planned to stay with her in the dorm tonight.

Su Wensong also said he wanted to check on other staff at the dorm.

So they all headed back to the staff dormitory together.

The courtyard was quiet, with a significant temperature drop from early spring days to night, it was quite cold in the evening, and people went back to their rooms to rest early.

Sun Bingnan saw that his house still had lights on, and he was furious.

He had arranged for Cai Jun to be near his sister, hoping to bring them together.

Seeing that Cai Jun also seemed interested, if he wanted to be part of the family, he should take good care of her.

Even if it was his day off, he should have gone to the Bun Shop to pick her up after work, not let her go home alone.

Before, when he was at the Bun Shop, this guy seemed reliable. It hadn't even been many days since he left, and already such a big issue had arisen.

If his sister really married Cai Jun in the future, he as an elder brother couldn't always be by her side watching. What kind of life would his sister have?

If not for considering that the dormitory door was company property, Sun Bingnan just wanted to kick the door open.

Even so, he still angrily pushed open the dormitory door, "I'm telling you, Cai Jun..."

When he saw the scene inside, Sun Bingnan's words stuck in his throat.

The room was dimly lit, a man and a woman were sitting on the edge of the bed, very close, the man even holding the woman.

The people inside quickly realized, and the woman screamed, pulling away from Cai Jun.

"I... you... I fucking... Cai Jun, you bastard..."

Sun Bingnan stuttered, unable to utter a complete sentence.

Fuming, he aggressively grabbed Cai Jun by the collar.

The wide-open door allowed those outside to clearly see the situation inside.

Upon seeing Qin Lihua snuggled up with Cai Jun, Lin Chuxia's mind also jammed for a moment.

She then looked at Sun Lanlan and Su Wensong by her side, both of whom were also visibly shocked.

Fortunately, it wasn't her eyes that were the problem.

Cai Jun forcibly took a couple of punches while Qin Lihua, terrified, shrank to the side, and finally moved closer to Lin Chuxia, stammering out, "Aunt Si..."

"Let's talk, what exactly is going on here? While it's true that dating is now free, I think it's necessary to lay things out today."

In the office, everyone cooled down, and Lin Chuxia was the first to speak.

Cai Jun had received a couple of punches, his mouth corner was blue and swollen.

Sun Bingnan looked utterly infuriated.

Sun Lanlan showed an indifferent face, without revealing any additional emotions.

Qin Lihua still had the scared and pitiful little look, glancing around from one to another.

Su Wensong, standing farthest away and closest to Sun Lanlan, looked profoundly at the few people in the room.

Cai Jun glanced in Qin Lihua's direction, showing an air of a bold and responsible man.

"I don't think there's much to say. Hasn't everyone already seen? Lihua and I are dating. We are in a free relationship..."

"I'll fucking..."

Sun Bingnan, about to attack again, was held back by Sun Lanlan.

She took a slight step forward, looking directly at Cai Jun, "You and Qin Lihua are freely dating, then why did you still go to my house during the Spring Festival?"

She just wanted to clarify this point.

She thought Cai Jun came to her house for her, her third brother said so, and she naively believed it.

Even starting to look forward to the Cai family proposing to her family, and since returning to work post the Spring Festival, she felt differently about Cai Jun.

Especially when Liu Dahui approached her, the first thing she thought about was what Cai Jun would think.

But it turned out Cai Jun was indifferent towards Liu Dahui.

She thought Cai Jun was professional, but actually, he didn't care.

But why did he visit her house during the Spring Festival if he didn't care?

Cai Jun's expression stiffened for a moment, he glanced at Qin Lihua and then looked away.

But that gaze dared not meet Sun Lanlan's eyes, "I am classmates with your third brother. What's wrong with going to your house to find him?"

This time, Sun Bingnan couldn't hold back anymore, and threw another punch.

"You've been my classmate for so many years, why didn't I see you visiting my house? Cai Jun, what kind of game are you playing? I introduced you here to work to cultivate a relationship with my sister, but instead you're leading her on while cozying up with another woman, have you respected me at all?"

Sun Lanlan held back Sun Bingnan, feeling embarrassed, "Third brother, don't fight anymore, just consider me blind."

After saying that, she turned and left the office.

Sun Bingnan let go of Cai Jun, pointing at his nose, his eyes wide and round, "Cai Jun, we're done between us, not only is my sister blind, I am blind too."

Seeing that Sun Bingnan had left, Su Wensong looked around at the few people left in the office, nodded at Lin Chuxia, and also left.

The office quieted down again.

Lin Chuxia looked at Qin Lihua who had been silent the whole time, her expression complex.

"When did this start?"

Chapter 190: A Chill Running Down the Spine

Qin Lihua bit her lip, keeping silent.

Cai Jun wiped the corner of his mouth, "After the Spring Festival, then."

He couldn't clearly say when it began.

He had just told a lie; before the Spring Festival, he did indeed have a good impression of Sun Lanlan, and he knew what Sun Bingnan intended. When his parents brought up his marriage during the festival, he went to the Sun Family, thinking that if their parents had no objections, he'd let his own parents send a matchmaker to propose.

Who knew that before he could break this layer of paper window, he met Qin Lihua.

She was different from the other women he had met before; Qin Lihua was both beautiful and passionate.

He and Sun Lanlan had worked together for half a year; they could laugh and chat, but there was never a moment that made his heart pound.

But being with Qin Lihua, seeing her admiring, worshipful glances always left him exceptionally satisfied.

Especially that time in the cinema, when they watched "Lushan Love" together, at the moment when the female lead went to kiss the male lead, Qin Lihua also kissed him.

At that moment, Cai Jun felt like an arrow had pierced his heart.

In the days that followed, whenever they had time, they would meet up, and Cai Jun found himself increasingly unable to extricate himself.

He felt guilty, several times thinking of coming clean to Sun Lanlan.

But after all, that paper window between them was never pierced; if he actively approached her, it felt like he'd unduly ruin the reputation of the girl.

It would be better for them to simply remain colleagues.

Lin Chuxia felt like she had seen enough of the world to judge people accurately, yet this happened right under her nose.

She looked again at Qin Lihua, "Do your parents know?"

"Auntie..."

Qin Lihua called out and then silently lowered her head.

What else did Lin Chuxia not understand? She sighed.

"Cai Jun, I'm giving you a day off tomorrow, these days go back and have the matchmaker propose, although now it's free love, a girl's reputation is worth more than anything, what you two did today was crossing the line."

A lone man and a lone woman in a male dormitory, and so late at night, wouldn't outsiders start spreading rumors?

"Yes, Mr. Lin, I understand."

"Mhm, go back then."

Cai Jun hesitated for a moment, "Mr. Lin, could I... change to another dorm?"

Lin Chuxia looked up, "Why? Are you afraid Third Brother Sun will hit you again? Go back, Third Brother Sun isn't that kind of person. If he wanted to vent, he would've done so earlier."

Only then did Cai Jun leave the office.

Now, in the office, only Qin Lihua and Lin Chuxia were left. Qin Lihua became even more nervous, "Auntie, I'll also go back now."

"Wait a moment, I'll go back with you."

It was so late, and Qin Lihua was working under her, so she had to take responsibility for her safety.

Lin Chuxia went to Sun Lanlan's dormitory first.

Sun Lanlan smiled nonchalantly upon seeing her, "Was it a bit exciting tonight? Seeing Cai Jun like that, it really relieved the tension from before; otherwise, I would be too disgusted by Liu Dahui to sleep. Now it's good, two negatives make a positive. Looking at Cai Jun like this, I'll be able to sleep well tonight. You can go back, I don't need your company, you being here would disturb my sleep instead."

"Alright, no need to act tough with me, we sisters may not have much, but my shoulder is still here for you to lean on," Lin Chuxia patted her own shoulder.

Sun Lanlan pushed her, "I would never be sad over that kind of person."

She sighed heavily, her voice much calmer.

"Xiaxia, I actually feel quite lucky. Before, when my family mentioned Liu Dahui, it was you who stopped me from meeting him. I've noticed these past few days, Liu Dahui really isn't someone to marry. How should I put it, even without tonight's incident, I could tell he was somewhat extreme."

Tonight's events further confirmed her view.

Such people are mostly chauvinists, not allowing others to contradict their ideas, and if you defy them, the consequences are either hitting or scolding.

There are plenty of such men in the village; I've seen them beat their wives, almost to death.

Just thinking about that kind of life sends chills down Sun Lanlan's back.

"And then there's Cai Jun. It's true I had some feelings for him, mostly from working together for a long time, and I didn't find it disagreeable to be with him. But then... that just goes to show, he feels just so-so towards me. If that's the case, better to just let him go."

Especially after seeing the relationship between Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang, she's grown even more skeptical about that kind of tepid love.

To love someone is to have eyes and heart only for that person, not to think this one is alright, and when another beckons, to feel the next one isn't bad either.

Lin Chuxia sounded a bit resentful, "I was going to comfort you, but you've already come to terms with it yourself. Don't I even get a chance to help?"

Sun Lanlan was somewhat smug, "Well, I'm a manager now. If I can't stand a little bit of trouble, how can I manage the shop properly? Don't worry about me, I'm fine."

Sun Lanlan knew that Qin Lihua was still outside, so she hurried Lin Chuxia to get home.

To make sure she was safe walking at night, she asked her Third Brother to escort her.

Sun Bingnan was still angry; after Cai Jun came back, he ignored him and didn't get physical again.

Cai Jun felt guilty, packed some things, and left for his hometown overnight.

Having him send Lin Chuxia was fine, but seeing Qin Lihua, he felt somewhat irked, although he could prioritize and agreed to go get the bicycle.

Su Wensong had been in the yard all along, watching as everyone went their separate ways peacefully. He glanced one more time at Sun Lanlan's dormitory before he too left the courtyard.

A night full of shocks just passed like that.

The next morning as soon as work started, Lin Chuxia first stopped by the Bun Shop at the train station.

Seeing Sun Lanlan looking like usual, without the haggardness of sleep deprivation, she felt somewhat relieved.

"Is Third Brother at the Bun Shop today?"

It had already been arranged for her to report to the Xiyang Food Factory today, but with Cai Jun gone for a couple of days, it was suitable for Sun Bingnan to be here.

Sun Lanlan gave Lin Chuxia a glance, "What's with all of you, treating me like I'm malleable clay, I've already said I'm fine, be at ease."

For a man who is barely in the picture, Sun Lanlan felt she could let it go.

Lin Chuxia stroked her chin, pondering over the matter, "Although my sister is generous, what Cai Jun did was quite disgraceful, and we shouldn't let it slide. Think about it, should I fire him, or do you want to dismiss him directly? You're the manager, you have the authority."

Sun Lanlan set down what she was working on and paused for a moment, "Honestly, Xiaxia, I did have that thought at the time, but after one night, it didn't seem necessary. The more I do it, the more it looks like I care about him, making it more embarrassing for myself. Do I actually care about him? I think I care more about money, and I've come to realize that making money is more important than men."

"Well said!"

Lin Chuxia gave her a thumbs up, increasingly finding Sun Lanlan to be more enlightened than her.

How did such an astute and clear-headed Sun Lanlan end up being driven to suicide by Liu Dahui in her last life?

Fortunately, in this life, it's absolutely impossible with Liu Dahui.

Even so, Lin Chuxia didn't intend to let Cai Jun continue working at the Bun Shop at the train station, and that afternoon, she found Su Wensong and transferred two employees from the food factory to take over the jobs of Cai Jun and Sun Bingnan.