

Switched M 271

Chapter 271: Selling the House

He felt that he must have prepared the bathwater too hot for his wife, otherwise, why would the entire bathroom be so hot?

And then, his wife must have been frightened by that damned rat, otherwise when has she ever been so bold?

Thinking back to when they first got married, she was still an innocent young girl.

Even though he had seduced her to do some things before marriage, on the night of their wedding, when he took off her dress, the young girl's nervous and shy demeanor...

After that, every night, she would ask him to turn off the lights, no matter how much he coaxed her, the young girl just couldn't let loose, and she would easily become too embarrassed to move.

But at this moment...

Su Wensong felt like he was holding a bomb in his hand, wanting to move but not daring to, his body tensed into a straight line.

He asked dryly, "Are you done?"

Sun Lanlan had opened her eyes. Usually, it was this stinky man teasing her, making her embarrassingly uncomfortable, but this was the first time she saw him looking like this.

Suddenly, it was as if she had a breakthrough realization, understanding why men are so keen on teasing.

She reached out and wrapped her arms around his neck, whispering, "It seems not yet."

If it wasn't for the fact that he was still rational and knew his pregnant wife shouldn't make big movements, Su Wensong would have almost leaped out.

His eyes wide with surprise as he looked at the little woman in his arms.

Was this his wife? Could she have been possessed by a fox spirit?

But he had to admit, his wife like this was even more charming, he was nearly losing control of himself.

Just as he was about to say something, the light dimmed, and something soft touched his lips, Su Wensong's breath hitched.

"Lanlan, you're still pregnant, the doctor said you can't..."

Sun Lanlan gently kissed him, from the corner of his lips to his cheek, "I know."

You know yet you still...

Su Wensong gave a wry smile; if his wife weren't pregnant, he would be over the moon with such behavior.

But now, with his wife carrying a child, and her being young and unaware, he couldn't neglect her health.

His large hand tightly gripped her waist to prevent her from slipping, allowing her to have her way, yet the sweat on his forehead was accumulating more and more.

Until that small hand began to undo his clothes, Su Wensong suddenly opened his eyes.

He saw the little woman in front of him flash him a sweet smile, "I really know what to do..."

This was the man she loved, her heart and eyes full of her man.

He could take care of everything about her, and so could she.

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"What, you're selling the house?"

Old Mrs. Jia turned around incredulously, only to see her son's expressionless face and even began to doubt if she had misheard the words just spoken.

Jia Liang nodded, "Mr. Lin values me and has entrusted me to manage the Bun Shop in the city. I'll be returning to Ancheng County less and less often. It's better to sell the house here. I'll take you to the city to enjoy life."

"I call bullshit on that."

Old Mrs. Jia didn't even bother to save face, cursed loudly, cleaned her hands of the dough swiftly, and turned back into the house.

Jia Liang glanced at the half-kneaded dough and reminded her, "Mom, didn't you say you were going to roll noodles for me?"

"Don't want to eat anymore. If the house is going to be sold, why bother with noodles? It'd be better to stand in the yard and drink the Northwest wind."

"But there's no Northwest wind to drink in this hot weather."

No sooner had Jia Liang finished speaking than a shoe came flying out from the inner room. Had he not anticipated it, it would have hit him.

He bent down to pick up the shoe and carried it into the house.

He saw his mom standing with her back to the door, sulking.

"Mom, I'm just discussing it with you. I'm your only son, and sooner or later, when I settle down in the city, you'll have to join me. Keeping the house is pointless."

"Pointless so you think of selling it, huh? This house has been passed down from our ancestors. When I married your dad, your great-grandparents and grandparents all lived in this courtyard. How come the house has to be sold when it gets to you? Aren't you afraid that when you go down below one day, and see your dad, he'll whip you?"

Jia Liang placed the shoe beside the kang bed and sat across from his mother, then spoke after a moment, "Dad has been dead for almost 20 years. I'm strong and healthy; I could live another 40 years at least. By then, Dad will have been gone for 60 years. Although he didn't enjoy much luxury in life and passed away young, he wasn't a great sinner. King of Hell can't detain him for 60 years. By the time I get down there, he will have likely been reborn already... probably won't be able to whip me."

Old Mrs. Jia, furious, raised her hand and slapped him twice.

"You damn boy, how can you speak like that? To think you'd banter with me..."

Seeing his serious demeanor, she thought he was going to discuss the house, but he ended up concocting stories about his dad.

"In 60 years, you won't see your dad, but what if I go down in a couple of years? How am I supposed to explain it to your dad?"

Jia Liang didn't dodge, letting his mother's slaps fall on his shoulders.

"Maybe Dad has been behaving well down there and has already been reborn?"

Old Mrs. Jia stopped hitting him; she knew her son's character all too well.

"Spit it out, why do you want to sell the house? Don't give me any of that filial piety crap. If you really wanted to be filial, you'd have listened to me and mended your ways years ago."

Jia Liang grabbed Old Mrs. Jia's hand, his face all smiles, "Mom, I truly want to be filial to you, and I've already mended my ways. You've seen it yourself, I now have a legitimate job, and I have a salary every month. It's time to be filial to you."

Old Mrs. Jia shook off his hand, annoyed, "If you really want to be filial to me, listen to me. We're not selling the house. Selling the house is something only prodigals and layabouts do. I don't need you to be filial with your monthly salary. Focus on your job, save the money to find a daughter-in-law. Marrying a daughter-in-law and giving me a grandson, that is being filial. Then, when the day comes, and I'm gone, I'll have something to tell your dad."

"Why do we keep talking about seeing Dad? Dad's been reborn already. Who knows, maybe one day I'll have a son, your grandson, and he'll be Dad reincarnated..."

"You... you scoundrel..."

Old Mrs. Jia again started slapping his shoulder, continuing until she got tired.

"You've just started working in the city, and you're already in such a rush to bring me over, what would your boss think? If you ask me, you should focus on doing the job the boss entrusted to you well. I'm used to living in Ancheng; I've known the neighbors for so many years and don't want to go to the city, blind as a bat. When one day you get married and have children in the city, then I'll come and help you take care of them. We won't sell the house then. No matter what, remember, this is your root."

Jia Liang snorted, "The neighbors around here have long been sick of your son being a thief and can't stand you anymore. Who would still want to associate with you? They'd be glad to see you gone far away. Didn't you also say you wanted to move, find a place where no one knows you? Now that the opportunity to move has come, why aren't you moving?"

Chapter 272: Come over, come over and I'll beat you to death

Old Mrs. Jia, "..."

Her son was born to be her nemesis. When he was up to no good, he would infuriate her to near death. Now that he's on the right path, he still manages to anger her to death.

Rather than being angered to death by him, she might as well beat him to death first.

Old Mrs. Jia looked around and picked up a broom to strike.

Jia Liang leaped far away in a split second, "Mom, can't you just talk? Why do you always have to resort to hitting?"

He wasn't afraid of a slap to the face, but a whack with a broomstick was a dark shadow from his childhood. It really hurt when hit with one.

Old Mrs. Jia raised the broomstick and pointed it at him, "Come here, come over so I can beat you to death."

Jia Liang stepped back again, "I'm not coming. If you kill me now, I'm sure to meet dad down there, and he's definitely going to give me another beating."

"So, if I don't beat you to death, you want me to just give you a beating?"

"Mom, I'm already 30 years old, you can't just hit or scold me whenever you want. How am I supposed to get a wife?"

It must be said that Jia Liang knew how to handle his mother; mentioning finding a wife would make Old Mrs. Jia lower her battle flag.

A moment later, Old Mrs. Jia sighed, "Go on, tell me what happened now. You say it's to let me enjoy life, but I'm not so blessed. Did you go out and owe someone money again?"

Jia Liang also fell silent.

His dad died early, and it wasn't easy for his mom to raise him alone. In the years he wasn't behaving, his mother had worried a lot for him.

They say a man matures after 30. Jia Liang didn't know if he was mature, but only after dealing with Lin Chuxia did he realize how scummy his past actions were, causing his mother so much worry.

Yet even then, he had never thought about selling the house.

Now, he earnestly wanted to make up for the guilt he felt towards his mother, to give her a comfortable life, but he had to sell the house.

Seeing that he wasn't speaking, Old Mrs. Jia knew that he really was in trouble.

"Is it for those so-called friends of yours again? Liangzi, Liangzi, I thought you had learned your lesson now that you have a proper job, but I didn't expect you to..."

Seeing Old Mrs. Jia so anxious she was on the brink of tears, Jia Liang hurriedly said, "It's not the same as before," but it wasn't true that it had nothing to do with those friends.

Wasn't Tian Jinzhu one of those old friends?

Jia Liang knelt down with a thud, and with difficulty spoke up, "Mom, it's indeed my fault this time. I really had no other choice. I just want to make up for my mistakes. Mom, don't worry, I will definitely work hard in the future, earn more money, and buy you a bigger house."

Old Mrs. Jia had only this one son, and the two of them depended on each other. Even though Jia Liang had done many scummy things in the past, she had never really resented her son.

Only blaming her own bad fortune, that Jia Liang lost his father's guidance at a young age and that she was helpless, which led her child to take the wrong path.

Now, seeing her son kneeling before her begging, her heart was breaking.

She quickly pulled her son to his feet, "How much money do you owe? Your mother has saved all the wages you earned before, just wait, I'll go get it for you."

"Mom," Jia Liang held Old Mrs. Jia back, "Don't get it, it's not enough."

If it had been enough, even if it was a few hundred short, he would have tried to find a way.

Old Mrs. Jia also fell silent looking at her son.

After a while, she spoke, "Liangzi, tell me, how exactly did you get into debt? Even if selling the house means I'll get a scolding from your dad down there, at least let me be an informed ghost."

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After explaining everything to his mom, Jia Liang went to the kitchen to deal with the dough. The house needed to be sold, but meals still had to be eaten.

He had just finished kneading the dough when a commotion was heard outside.

Hou Xiaobao entered with a bag of stuff from outside, cheerfully calling out to the old lady.

"Why are you here?"

Jia Liang asked while wiping his hands.

Hou Xiaobao first went inside to give the stuff to Old Mrs. Jia, and then cracked several jokes to make her happy.

He had been taken care of by the old lady a lot when he lived at the Jia Family's place.

After finishing the conversation with the old lady, he then pulled Jia Liang aside.

"I heard the Public Security Bureau took Tian Jinzhu away? They didn't implicate you guys, did they?"

Jia Liang was alert, "Who told you that?"

Hou Xiaobao let out a laugh, "Do I need to deliberately hear it from someone? It's all over the streets. I also heard that Mr. Lin and Factory Director Su even made a visit. That Tian Jinzhu really did a lot of harm. I was saying, we brothers used to call him to work with Mr. Lin back in the day, but he didn't want to for anything. Look at him now, figuring it out, but a dog can't change its appetite for shit."

Hou Xiaobao kept talking non-stop while Jia Liang did not engage in his topic.

The dough was almost ready, he grabbed the rolling pin to roll out the noodles.

Hou Xiaobao was never shy at Jia Family's, after all, he had lived there for several years before.

He immediately went to wash the tomatoes and prepare the tomato sauce.

The two of them casually conversed in the kitchen, mostly with Hou Xiaobao trying to draw information out of Jia Liang.

After all, Su Wensong had told him about Tian Jinzhu's issues. He couldn't outright say he already knew, nor did he want to hide things if his friend was in trouble.

It wasn't until he heard Jia Liang mention selling the house that Hou Xiaobao had the realization.

After Jia Liang washed his hands of the underworld, although he still dealt with those people, it was just a nod when they met, a matter of money for services, nothing more than a simple monetary transaction.

And that amount of money wasn't something ordinary people could come up with.

"Would the old lady agree?"

"I've talked to her. She did not agree at first, but when she learned it was because of the debt to Mr. Lin's project funds, she agreed. She told me no matter what, we can't owe Mr. Lin money."

After Jia Liang explained the situation to Old Mrs. Jia, other than berating Tian Jinzhu, she instructed Jia Liang not to let Mr. Lin down.

Hou Xiaobao nodded again.

Jia Liang suddenly asked, "How much money do you have on you?"

"Ah?" Hou Xiaobao looked up.

"I heard you were looking at houses recently, thinking of buying one?"

If he really intended to buy a house, might as well sell him this home.

Selling to someone he knew, his mother could still come back and visit from time to time, which would be a comfort to her. It was better than selling to a stranger, cutting off all ties forever.

Hou Xiaobao sheepishly scratched his head, "Where would I have that much money for a house? I just feel like we're not getting any younger, people my age already have kids. Now I have a decent job, the pay isn't bad, if there's a good match, finding someone to do laundry, cook, and care for me. Since I'm thinking of settling down, shouldn't I first have a place to call home?"

He couldn't go back to his own family home, nor did he care to endlessly argue with his brother and sister-in-law over those two rooms. Staying in a dormitory wasn't an option either.

Luckily, he could rent a place at the moment, planning to save enough to buy a couple of rooms in a couple of years.

Hou Xiaobao was still planning his bright future in his mind when a big hand stretched out in front of him.

"If you're not buying a house, then lend me the money first. I'm a little short after selling the house."

Hou Xiaobao: "..."

Chapter 273: Stabbed in the Back by Brothers

Su Wensong instructed Hou Xiaobao to keep an eye on Jia Liang's situation.

Selling a house is no small affair. Upon learning of it, the next day Hou Xiaobao informed Su Wensong, who in turn told Lin Chuxia.

"Do you know how much he owes?"

Su Wensong shook his head, "He didn't say, but Hou Xiaobao gave all his savings to Jia Liang, so it must be quite a sum."

Seeing Lin Chuxia remain silent, Su Wensong ventured to ask, "Does Mr. Lin intend to cover Jia Liang's debt? Or to give him an advance on his salary?"

Jia Liang had performed well during his year working with them, and it was clear Lin Chuxia intended to make good use of him.

Though salary advances come with risks, Jia Liang is sentimental and loyal; his character is trustworthy.

Lin Chuxia shook her head, "Since he hasn't approached the company about it, let's pretend we're unaware. Later, you arrange for someone to wait until there's news of Jia Liang's house being on the market, then send someone to buy it."

"Mr. Lin wants his house? What if Jia Liang finds out one day..."

Su Wensong knew Lin Chuxia was recently considering buying a house, and though transactions are a mutual willingness between buyer and seller, purchasing Jia Liang's house would be very different from buying any other property.

If Jia Liang ever found out, it was inevitable he would overthink things. Lin Chuxia was known to dislike complications.

Yet Lin Chuxia did not elaborate further, "Just do as I said. When it comes to the price, try to meet his needs. Tell me the amount later on. Although Jia Liang is a victim in this situation, he is not entirely innocent. He should have known what kind of person Tian Jinzhu is. Since he chose to trust Tian, leading to these consequences, he should be prepared mentally—every person must pay for their mistakes."

Regarding his decision to sell the house and accept the responsibility on his own, it impressed Lin Chuxia all the more.

Su Wensong nodded, "Alright, I understand, Mr. Lin."

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The matter was resolved quickly. The next day when Su Wensong met Lin Chuxia, he informed her that the house was bought for a total of 5,000 yuan.

Lin Chuxia pondered for a moment. Considering the rent and decoration costs of a house in the city, she had given Jia Liang a total of 10,000 yuan.

He really had spent most of his money on his brother, indeed a moment of folly.

She had always known that Jia Liang and Hou Xiaobao held highly to the codes of brotherhood, always ready to assist each other, even to the point of taking a blade for one another.

Now, after lending a helping hand, his brothers had turned their backs, stabbing him instead. Let's see if he would learn from this experience.

Lin Chuxia handed the money to Su Wensong and received the deed—the house was now hers.

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Jia's small courtyard

Today was the day Jia Liang and his family were moving out. Hou Xiaobao had taken the day off to help.

From the announcement of the sale of the house to the day of the move, it was just a three-day span, and Old Mrs. Jia still struggled to accept this reality.

But no matter the difficulty in acceptance, the house had been sold, the money received, and they had to move out.

There's a saying, "A broken family still holds wealth." Their family had lived here for generations, and although they had never been wealthy, they did have many belongings when gathered together.

Especially some antique items and belongings left by Jia Liang's father.

Old Mrs. Jia packed, tears streaming down her face uncontrollably.

"Mom, let's not take these things with us, they're not worth much. I'll buy you new ones later," Jia Liang said as more and more stuff piled up. He had only rented a small place on the other side and couldn't fit all these things, so he had to remind her.

Old Mrs. Jia ignored him, turning her back to him and continued packing.

Hou Xiaobao nudged Jia Liang, urging him to move things onto the 121.

Jia Liang had borrowed the 121 from the factory, using it to transfer the goods and people in one go.

Once Jia Liang was gone, Hou Xiaobao moved closer to console, "Granny, don't be sad. In the future, if there's a chance and Brother Liang has money, maybe he can buy this courtyard back."

With tears in her eyes, Old Mrs. Jia looked around and nodded, though she knew well that once a house was sold, it would not be easy to buy it back.

Even if they could afford another house in the future, it wouldn't be the same courtyard.

But she felt powerless.

How could she blame her son, who valued loyalty and was naively deceived, and she couldn't allow Boss Lin, her son's benefactor, to lose money because of her son's mistake.

Boss Lin was her son's benefactor. Without Boss Lin, she would probably still be worrying about her son getting involved in shady dealings.

Now all she could do was pray to live a few more years, wait for her husband's reincarnation, and only then to report to the King of Hell to avoid grievances in the underworld.

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As the decoration of the Bun Shop in the city was completed, Lin Chuxia started visiting the city more frequently.

This time it was about employee recruitment. Jia Liang truly had high emotional intelligence; she never mentioned her preference for looks in recruitment.

Their An City Bun Shop, including Granny Sun, Jia Liang, Hou Xiaobao, and not to mention the majority of the employees who were acquainted, no one could tell that Lin Chuxia cared a lot about appearance.

Yet, the newly hired employees in the city, regardless of age, had proper facial features and friendly eyes, clearly handpicked carefully.

"These are the new hires I've recruited. All of them literate—some finished middle school, one is a high school student. They have clean backgrounds and are locals of the city."

They had already recruited several people to make buns and sent them to Ancheng County for training—these were to be shop attendants.

Lin Chuxia nodded, acknowledging their suitability.

In any service industry, looks represent the face of the business, and for catering, the appearance and demeanor of the service staff can certainly uplift the grade of the establishment.

"Is there any other issue here? I looked at the calendar, and I preliminarily set the opening for the sixth day of the lunar month, which is next Tuesday. If you think that's too soon, I can reevaluate when I get back."

At the mention of a set date, Jia Liang became somewhat excited.

"No problem, I'm all prepared here, just waiting for Mr. Lin's word."

"Okay, then it's settled. You arrange the opening ceremony, make sure it's grand enough."

Once everything was settled, Lin Chuxia asked casually, "I heard you brought your mom to the city?"

"I'm the only son my mother has. Since I'm working here, I wasn't comfortable leaving her at home alone."

Lin Chuxia nodded, "That's good. I've decided to leave the city shop in your charge, appointing you as the manager. I was concerned that you might be preoccupied with family matters, but now it seems you've addressed your concerns. However, if you encounter any difficulties in daily life, you should tell me. The company takes good care of its talents."

Jia Liang smiled along, although bringing his mother here was out of necessity, earning Mr. Lin's trust brought genuine joy.

He couldn't help but think of Tian Jinzhu. Though the matter was resolved and Mr. Lin did not place much blame, Jia Liang couldn't help feeling remorseful.

He felt he had let down Lin Chuxia's trust.

Chapter 274: The Weak Dwell on Dilemmas, the Strong Resolve Mistakes

"Mr. Lin, I am extremely sorry about the matter with Tian Jinzhu," after much hesitation, Jia Liang finally expressed his stance.

Lin Chuxia nodded, "I know."

"No, Mr. Lin, it was my negligence. I didn't think things through and was used by others. I let Mr. Lin down. I really didn't expect him to deceive me. When Houzi and I retired, he wasn't with us. I never complained; after all, with our backgrounds, quitting that life, we might not even have been able to scrape a living. This time when he came to find me, I was actually happy, but I didn't expect..."

There's nothing more painful than being betrayed by a trusted brother.

Moreover, this incident also nearly implicated the company.

"Actually, I've had my suspicions about Tian Jinzhu for a while now. Knowing what kind of person he is, we've known him long enough to understand. He's different from Houzi, never listens to anyone. When Houzi and I retired, he looked down on us. Houzi kindly tried to persuade him and even got scolded by him. Even so, when he came to me, I still chose to trust him, because he was a brother, and I wanted to see him change."

Jia Liang never thought of himself as a kind-hearted person, but towards his brothers, he thought highly of his influence—even felt he could reform them.

He was really foolish.

Lin Chuxia patted his shoulder, "This isn't your fault, but you shouldn't hold grudges without learning from them. Take this as a lesson, and it also helped you see a person clearly."

"Mr. Lin, rest assured, next time I will not act so impulsively out of loyalty. I will work hard and make the bun shop in the city as popular as ours in Ancheng County."

Jia Liang clenched his fist; he must not let down Mr. Lin's trust.

"I believe in your capability," Lin Chuxia looked at him, "Jia Liang, I've always had high hopes for you. Although you can't be said to be completely blameless this time, decisive handling could have kept the incident from affecting us. That's what showcases one's capabilities. Only the weak dwell on problems, while the strong correct them."

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The opening day of the bun shop in the city might not have been as grand as the opening day of Xiyang Food Factory, but it was still very lively and festive.

Lin Chuxia knew that Hou Xiaobao had asked for time off along with Su Wensong to attend the opening ceremony of the bun shop; he simply had them use the factory's 121 car, turning a private affair into official business.

For a new store's opening, having an experienced person in the kitchen is essential, and Lin Chuxia planned to have Zhang Guilan stationed there for a while.

It worked out that they would go together, so Hou Xiaobao drove them both.

Zhang Guilan, now experienced through involvement in prior events, was in charge of the back of the bun shop.

The ingredients were already prepared; kneading dough, preparing meat fillings, and chopping vegetables, the kitchen staff worked efficiently under her direction, and soon, the steamer trays filled with buns were on the stove.

As firecrackers sounded outside, her buns were just coming out of the steamer.

Lin Chuxia attended the opening ceremony, not intending to steal the spotlight but rather acting as a behind-the-scenes owner, leaving the limelight to Jia Liang.

Jia Liang was dressed appropriately in a white shirt and black trousers today.

He probably thought his bald head was unsightly and wore a chef's cap, standing at the entrance of the bun shop speaking courteously.

With this image, where was the trace of his past as a gang leader?

Lin Chuxia stood in the crowd, smiling broadly, and turned to see Old Mrs. Jia not far from Hou Xiaobao.

Old Mrs. Jia had been looking forward to this day. If she had been in An City earlier, she probably wouldn't have been able to come and see.

Now she and her son lived in the city, her son renting two rooms not far from the bun shop in the alley.

Though it wasn't as spacious as their old home, being with her son and seeing him accomplish something was comforting.

Now, seeing her son dressed so neatly and speaking with such precision, Old Mrs. Jia was tearful.

"Houzi, pinch your aunt a little, just like this, pinch hard."

She lifted her arm in front of Hou Xiaobao.

Hou Xiaobao looked confused, "Auntie, what are you doing? If I pinch you, Brother Liang won't let me off."

"It's okay, just pinch, I won't tell him. I just want to know if this is all a dream."

Over the past decades, whenever she couldn't sleep at night, she fantasized about her son getting back on the right track.

Whether working odd jobs or doing hard labor, as long as he wasn't mingling with unsavory people getting into trouble, Old Mrs. Jia felt she could endure anything in her life.

But from dusk till dawn, her son continued to do as he pleased, even getting annoyed with her nagging, sometimes not coming home for days.

Then suddenly one day, her wish came true. Not only had her son straightened out, but he had also become a big boss. Old Mrs. Jia feared it was all a dream, that she might wake up to darkness, with nothing left.

Hou Xiaobao, having always lived with the Jia family, knew exactly what Old Mrs. Jia was thinking.

He took her hand and squeezed it firmly, "Auntie, this isn't a dream. My Brother Liang is doing well now. Mr. Lin has made him the manager; now the whole bun shop listens to him. Look how imposing Brother Liang is today?"

Feeling the strength in his hand, Old Mrs. Jia's tears shimmered, but feeling it unlucky to cry on such a joyful day, she quickly wiped her eyes with her sleeve.

"Imposing, indeed imposing, your Brother Liang is imposing, and Houzi, you driving a car is also imposing."

"Yes, auntie, we won't go back to those old ways anymore. Now that we're following Mr. Lin, we've got prospects. You just stay close to Brother Liang and enjoy life comfortably. Don't worry about the house anymore. Look at how capable Brother Liang is now; it won't be long before he can buy you a big house."

Old Mrs. Jia shook her head, tears still in her eyes but her face smiling, "I'm just waiting to enjoy your blessings and to live in a big house."

Actually, since her second day in the city, she stopped fretting over the house.

As long as her son was on the right path, let alone making her live in a small house, she would even be happy living under a bridge.

When the day comes that she closes her eyes in death, she can proudly say that she raised her son well, that their son became worthwhile.

Even if her husband was upset about the house, ready to scold her, she could stand tall and proudly say that she sold the house to support her son's career, for the glory of their Old Jia Family.

Her son now truly brought glory to their Old Jia Family.

Lin Chuxia repeatedly emphasized that the opening of the bun shop had to be lively.

In this era, without the widespread internet or pervasive advertising, only a lively opening scene, unique and memorable, would make people remember and even spread the word.

Chapter 275: Big Cousin Sister

Firecrackers were set off for a full 20 minutes, attracting more and more people around.

Lin Chuxia once again acknowledged Jia Liang's organizational skills.

It was nearing noon, steamed buns were coming out of the steamer, and a small queue had formed at the takeout window. Inside, a few tables were occupied by groups of customers.

Their Bun Shop had just entered the city market, unlike when they opened in An City where they already had a reputation. Having this kind of turnout was already very impressive.

Lin Chuxia rolled up her sleeves and joined in the takeout service.

It had been more than half a year since she last sold buns herself, but it still felt good.

Through the crowd of onlookers, a frail figure was staring at the bun shop, unmoving for a long time.

Beside her, a little girl with a pointed face and large eyes whispered, "Mom, are you going to buy buns for me to eat?"

The woman finally snapped back to reality and gently touched the little girl's head, "Ningning, behave. We won't eat meat buns today; I'll buy you some candy later."

"Then do we need to buy vegetables too? We've been standing here for quite a while. Is this a vegetable market? It's really bustling."

"This isn't a vegetable market, there's just a shop opening here. I'll take Ningning to the vegetable market soon."

Having said that, the woman glanced once more at the distant Bun Shop and then withdrew her gaze, leading the little girl out of the crowd.

Zhang Guilan came out from the kitchen and saw Lin Chuxia personally selling buns at the window; she walked over too.

"This city is really more bustling than our county; it's my first time seeing so many tall buildings, and the clothes people wear also look nice," no wonder my sister-in-law likes to come here to shop.

As Lin Chuxia handed several meat buns to a customer and waved them off, she turned and said, "Sister-in-law, if you have time, you should visit the Department Store in the city, it's not far from our Bun Shop. Our staff dormitory is also nearby."

"That's great; it's actually my first time in the city, I really should take a good walk here."

Lin Chuxia had already explained when they were coming that she would probably stay for a week.

Although the Bun Shop had just opened and there were many tasks, she was here to supervise, and after three to five days once things were in order, there wouldn't be much for her to do.

"Juanzi is also in the city, and I don't know on which street they live. You know, your brother, it's still unclear even when I ask him. It would be nice if we had time to visit."

Lin Chuxia was also reminded then of Qin Juan and Zhang Wenbin's family living in the city, but...

"Haven't they visited your second sister's house?"

Even if they hadn't visited, they should at least know the address.

Zhang Guilan smiled embarrassingly, "Despite your brother's bluster, besides our own tiny plot of land, he doesn't really go anywhere else. Last time he came to the city to buy a tricycle from you was his first

time here, and once back, he boasted to me for a good while. Juanzi and her family haven't been living in the city for long, and when I previously asked for their address, she couldn't specify it either, just knew it's in Wenbin's residential compound. We met during Spring Festival and forgot to ask again. It's really something, isn't it? Not how one acts as a family. It's only because Juanzi didn't grow impatient with us due to her good nature."

Lin Chuxia smiled too, indeed it was a lack of concern from their side.

"Our Bun Shop has started up too, after some time when we come here more often, we'll ask around and definitely meet."

Zhang Guilan nodded, "Yes, even if we can't find them, our Qin's Bun Shop sign is here. As the shop stays open longer, even if she lives far, she might eventually hear about it."

"Exactly."

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"Mom, are you really going to buy me candy?"

On the other side, a little girl followed the woman out of the crowd, asking in a low and gentle voice.

The woman smiled and nodded, "I'll buy you some when we get to the front."

"That's so great, mom, you're really nice."

The little girl's eyes curved with joy, and the woman also curled her lips into a smile.

When they reached the supply and marketing cooperative up ahead, the woman bought the little girl two pieces of candy.

The little girl clenched them in her hand but couldn't bring herself to eat them, and the woman didn't say anything more; instead, she took her to the market up ahead.

The woman first bought two types of vegetables, and looking at the nearby meat stall, she pursed her lips but still went inside.

After a short while, she came out again, followed by the impatient voice of the meat stall-owner.

"Go on, scoot! If you have no money, then don't think about eating meat. You're really funny, my prices are clearly marked. I've been selling meat for so many years and I've never seen anyone buy meat like you do. I can't serve people like you..."

The little girl shivered, looking nervously at the woman, "Mom..."

The woman gave her a gentle smile and patted her head, "It's okay, let's go home, we won't eat meat today."

The little girl wanted to say that she didn't like eating meat and could go without it every day, rather than watch her mom get yelled at by that fearsome, angry butcher.

But she didn't have the courage to say so, and could only tightly clutch her mom's clothes, following her closely on the way home.

Just as they entered the house, an explosive roar came from inside.

"Where did you vanish to? I asked you to buy some vegetables, and only now you're back, look at the time! Have you two had your fill outside and don't care about the family at home anymore? Look around to our neighbors, see if anyone behaves like you?"

"What pretense is this? You're acting pitiful all day as if someone mistreated you. Just having you do housework and cooking, and you can't even manage that; what use is it for Wenbin to have married you?"

"What are you standing there for, aren't you going to cook? If it's too late, Sister Xu next door will start blabbering again, I can't afford to lose this face."

"Look at other men's wives, adept at handling both indoor and outdoor work, and her man just got promoted, it was all because his wife helped him find connections. Then look at you, Wenbin works so hard outside, and you can't even manage to cook meals without dawdling. I really don't know why he married you in the first place; our family Wenbin truly has bad luck, ending up with a jinx like you..."

The woman listened to her mother-in-law's endless abuse as if she was accustomed to it, carrying the vegetables into the kitchen.

The old lady followed her at once into the kitchen, seeing only two types of vegetables in the basket, she was more dissatisfied than ever.

"How could you only buy so little vegetables, where's the meat? I'm at such an old age, and you want me to eat this every day? Didn't you secretly send the money meant for vegetables to your parental home?"

"I always said we should find someone of equal social status. What can a country person know, never seen anything good in their life, marrying someone from the village is just inviting a family of vampires in. No one listened to me, see, isn't this just like inviting vampires, sneaking money back to their home through the gaps between their teeth..."

"Mom, I didn't send money to my natal home."

The woman couldn't bear it anymore; the mother-in-law could scold her, but she couldn't tolerate her talking about her parental home. That was her final bottom line.

Chapter 276: Not the Slightest Bit Useful

"Wenbin gives you all his salary every month, and you only give me 10 yuan for groceries. With this 10 yuan, I have to pinch pennies just to barely make it to the end of the month. How could we possibly eat meat every day?"

The woman tried to speak to her reasonably.

Mrs. Zhang suddenly became unhappy.

"Do you mean to say that I, as a mother-in-law, have mistreated you? Do you still have the nerve to say there isn't enough money? Don't you know exactly why the money's not enough? Others have double incomes and food rations, but look at our family, we married a country bumpkin like you, had a child who is registered as a rural resident, and every month we have to tighten our belts to subsidize your meals. And now it turns out that I'm the one who has wronged you? Do you even have a conscience?"

When it came to the household registration issue, the woman fell silent.

They lived in the city, where buying grain or rice was a necessity, and indeed, she and her child did not have the grain ration that city residents did.

Seeing her daughter-in-law fall silent, Mrs. Zhang's finger was almost poking the woman's forehead.

"What sin did our Zhang Family commit in a past life? To end up with a woman like you, we haven't even despised you, yet you turn around and find fault with us. If money is tight, go earn it. Nowadays, the streets are full of self-employed people. Who isn't making a living with their own hands? Only you still think you're some pampered princess, always expecting to be waited on hand and foot, waiting for others to serve you?"

"Mom, that's not what I meant," the woman admitted her fault and her tone softened, "The boss I found last time agreed to hire me, it's just that Ningning is still little, and the boss doesn't allow me to bring the child. Could you please consider letting Ningning stay at home with you?"

Mrs. Zhang's eyes widened in disbelief, pointing at the little girl beside her.

"You want me to take care of your child? She's just a little girl, and you have the face to ask? Not to mention one child, when I had a bunch of them, I did what needed to be done regardless. When Wenbin and the others were small, I just tied them up to the door frame. Is it because your child is a precious gem? Do I need to hire a nanny to serve her?"

The little girl shrank back behind her mother, frightened, but then mustered up her courage, stepping forward timidly, raising her thin little arms, trying as hard as she could to keep her voice from trembling.

"Grandma, don't be angry. If mom goes to earn money, I will behave at home. Grandma, I'll give you candy, please stop scolding my mom."

The little hand opened to reveal two pieces of candy.

Upon seeing this, Mrs. Zhang's anger erupted, and with a slap, she hit the little girl's hand, causing the two pieces of candy to fly away.

"There you go, always complaining that there is no money, no money for groceries we're told, but there's money for candy..."

The little girl burst into tears, "Grandma is so mean, my hand hurts, and the candy mom bought flew under the table."

It was candy she had not wanted to eat, saving it thinking it would make her grandmother happy, but it only made her grandmother even angrier.

The woman quickly took her child into her arms to comfort her, while Mrs. Zhang's accusations became even more unrestrained.

At this moment, the man came back from work, pushing his bicycle, and Mrs. Zhang suddenly had the backing she needed.

"Wenbin, you're finally back. I can't manage this home for even one day. You've picked a fine wife. What time is it, and dinner still isn't ready. When I point it out to her, she talks back at me, fussing about not having enough money. She doesn't buy decent food but has money for candy. If you don't take control, we can't live like this."

Zhang Wenbin glanced into the kitchen, saw the cold stove and the meager greens there, and felt his anger rising.

He grabbed the woman by the arm and started dragging her into the house.

The little girl looked on in terror, trying to pull at her mom, only to be halted by a stern look from Zhang Wenbin, the cry stuck in her throat.

Until she saw her mother being dragged into the room by her father, she burst into tears again.

Mrs. Zhang berated irritably, "What are you crying for? It's all because of you, the jinx, that our family can't have good days. Raising such a money-losing brat like you, you're going to be the end of the Zhang Family's lineage."

The little girl pursed her lips and shrank into the corner, too scared to make a sound, as her tears dropped one pair after another.

Every time her grandmother said these things, her gaze was so fierce, and she was so frightened.

Inside the room, Zhang Wenbin threw the woman onto the bed and pointed at her nose, "Qin Juan, what else do you want? Are we going to be able to live this life or not? My mother is already very old; do you have to make her worry and get angry? Don't you have any common decency?"

Qin Juan sat up and rubbed her wrist, "I didn't come back late today. Your mother rushed off to play mahjong and complained about me cooking dinner late. Besides, she has all the money, where would I get the money to buy meat?"

"So, everything is my mother's fault, huh? What's wrong with me earning money for my mother? My mother worked hard to raise me. You're still relying on us to support you in this household. If you can, you go out and earn money too. If you don't have the ability, then just take good care of my mother. What do you have to feel aggrieved about?"

"I also want to go out and earn money, but Ningning..."

"Okay, okay, don't bring up the child again. Is it that hard to admit when you don't have the skills? My mother raised several of us back in the day without affecting her job. Why are you being so melodramatic?"

"Your mother didn't affect her job, but don't forget how your little sister died. Wasn't it because no one at home was watching her, and she drowned in the basin?"

"That was an accident. How many accidents can there be?"

"How can you guarantee there won't be an accident?"

"Slap!"

Suddenly, the room fell silent.

Qin Juan kept her head down, her face burning hot.

Zhang Wenbin shook off his hand and looked at her with disdain, "You've really turned against me, daring to talk back. No wonder my mother always says you're trying to be the queen of this house. It seems you need a lesson to understand who really is the head of this household. Let me tell you, Qin Juan, don't think that just because I can't divorce you, it means you can rebel. Even if I can't divorce you, you'll never be able to sit on my head and shit—it's an old saying, 'spare the rod, spoil the child.' You're truly incorrigible."

Zhang Wenbin spat fiercely and turned to leave the room.

Mrs. Zhang had been guarding the doorway, and she took the opportunity to peek inside, "What's the matter? The Miss doesn't want to cook, does she expect me, an old lady, to wait on her?"

Zhang Wenbin immediately changed his demeanour, stepping forward to support Mrs. Zhang's arm, "Mother, what are you saying? Even if she doesn't understand, wouldn't your son know better? I just got paid today; how about I take us to the State-Owned Restaurant? Where's Dad?"

Mrs. Zhang pointed towards the inner room, "Sleeping. Wait here. I'll call him. It has to be said, having a son is having someone to rely on in old age, to show filial piety to his parents. Unlike having a daughter, no matter how much you dote on them, they'll end up belonging to someone else. Each one is a money-loser, being looked upon twice is already not bad."

Mrs. Zhang continued talking while going inside to call for her husband. Zhang Wenbin saw Zhang Ningning in the corner, looking disgusted.

He long knew that having daughters was a losing proposition, none of his sisters were helpful to him, and ironically, he ended up having a daughter himself.

His parents were lucky to have several children in better times, and now he could only have one.

He glared fiercely again at the person inside the room, utterly useless.

Chapter 277: Revealing Embarrassing Stories

Chuxia stayed at the Bun Shop until evening.

Today was the first day of business, and from the customer feedback, many issues could be identified.

However, everything was as she had anticipated; those who came for buns at noon spoke highly of their pork buns. There were even repeat customers in the evening.

The city is quite different from An City; the county is such a small place, and she has a pretty good grasp of the few bun shops there.

The larger the city, the more talent there is, and there are many capable people. It's more difficult for them to dominate a market.

But for now, it looks good. As long as they keep up with the service, with the taste of their pork buns, they'll surely be able to hold their ground here.

"Sister-in-law, I'm sorry that you'll have to stay here for a few more days. Don't worry about home and the kids."

Before leaving, Chuxia bid farewell to Gui Lan.

Gui Lan had managed to arrange everything at home before coming, so there was nothing to worry about.

Especially her son, who used to spend more time with his grandmother. Lately, Zhuangzhuang always clung to Chuxia, and she noticed her son had learned a lot.

From simple counting and addition-subtraction to reciting ancient poems, he had even been thumbing through and pronouncing the 'aoe' of pinyin letters these days, no need to ask, she knew it was Lin Chu who taught him.

She and her husband were both rough and uneducated, having not studied much. If she weren't working in the Bun Shop now requiring her to learn more, the little she learned before would have been wasted like eating bread into her stomach.

Who would have thought to teach the child?

She didn't even need Lin Chu to say anything, with the child left to the care of his grandmother and Lin Chu, she was a hundred percent at ease.

"What is there to feel sorry for? I was already sick of seeing my brother's face every day at home. It's nice to get away and enjoy some peace and quiet. Don't worry, Lin Chu, with your sister-in-law here to help you keep an eye on things, I'll make sure to straighten these guys out before I leave."

Chuxia nodded with a smile, exchanged a few words with Jia Liang, and then she and Hou Xiaobao got on bus 121.

On the bus, Chuxia asked, "Were the things sent over?"

"They were sent over, and when Aunt Jia knew it was you, Mr. Lin, who bought her the gifts, she was over the moon, and kept asking me to thank you."

In the afternoon, Chuxia asked Hou Xiaobao to buy some things and send them to Jia Liang's mother.

She could pretend to not know about the housing issue, but seeing Aunt Jia secretly wipe away tears during the opening, she still felt somewhat distressed.

"Is Aunt Jia alright?"

"She's fine, doing well," Hou Xiaobao replied while driving.

And that wasn't him trying to appease Chuxia. When he went there in the afternoon, Aunt Jia had already calmed down.

Not only that, but the old lady was humming a tune while cleaning the windows at home, telling him that her son was now the manager, who had a bit of status, and in case an employee came to visit him at home, she didn't want it to be shabby and bring shame upon him.

Her enthusiasm was nowhere near the dissatisfaction she showed when they just moved in. She even said that moving closer to her son was wonderful to watch him flourish like this.

Hearing this, Chuxia also felt relieved, "Both Jia Liang and you are doing good. As long as you work hard, there's hope for the future."

Hou Xiaobao agreed entirely with Mr. Lin's words.

He now earned 80 yuan a month in salary, with food and accommodation provided at the workplace. If he works hard, in three to five years, he could buy a house.

With a house comes a home, and then it'd be perfect to marry a wife.

As soon as Chuxia walked into her house, a little firecracker came rushing over, "Little auntie, little auntie, look at the homework I wrote!"

Zhuangzhuang held up the little notebook in his hand, tilting his little face to show her.

Surprisingly, Yuan Bao, who usually rushes to Lin Chuxia first, was even a step behind him this time.

Lin Chuxia took Zhuangzhuang's little notebook, flipping through it earnestly, "Wow, you've written so well today. These few letters were just taught to you by your little auntie yesterday. Zhuangzhuang is really so smart."

Zhuangzhuang proudly lifted his chubby little face, "I think I can write even better."

Lin Chuxia rubbed his little head, "Very good, not arrogant or impatient, and ambitious. How is our Zhuangzhuang so amazing?"

When it comes to children, Lin Chuxia never skimps on her praise. Before she could finish, a fluffy big head squeezed in between the two, and Lin Chuxia even saw Yuan Bao twist its waist to shove Little Zhuangzhuang to the side.

A pair of puppy eyes looked at her with a plaintive gaze, letting out a couple of pitiful whimpers.

These past few days as she was teaching Zhuangzhuang, Yuan Bao hadn't stopped causing mischief between them.

This guy hasn't learned any other tricks, but his ability to seek attention was unparalleled.

She comfortingly rubbed its doggy head, "Yuan Bao has also had a hard time keeping Zhuangzhuang company today."

It was only then that Yuan Bao happily wagged its tail and ran off.

At dinner time, Qin Han also came home, and the family naturally talked about the Bun Shop in the city.

Knowing that everything went smoothly, they all felt relieved.

After dinner, Mrs. Qin let Lin Chuxia rest while she cleaned up the dishes herself.

Little Zhuangzhuang took out his little notebook again and lay on the table, meticulously writing what Lin Chuxia had taught him.

Qin Han, seeing his son so diligent recently, couldn't help but beam with joy.

"Sister-in-law, look at this boy. He's got the spunk of his little uncle. Let me tell you, back then, that second brother of mine was just the same. After finishing his own homework, that wasn't enough; he'd grab my books and start scribbling away."

He burst into laughter as he recalled something.

"Oh boy, back then, just finishing my bit of homework was such a headache, but he treated it like it was fun. I sneakily asked him to help with mine, but he wouldn't, happy as could be. When I finally struggled to finish it, he had already written out all my answers. So, after comparing the answers, there I was, having done all my work for nothing. Annoying, wasn't he? It wasn't until we were on the same level that I didn't have to deal with his nonsense. When he wasn't looking, I'd still copy his homework."

"I didn't expect Qin Yang to be so mischievous."

Lin Chuxia knew that Qin Yang did well in school but never imagined the brothers had this side to them, and couldn't help but laugh until her tears almost came out.

"He's more than mischievous; he was practically bullying, what you'd call an IQ crush these days."

Qin Han mussed up his hair, glad to see his sister-in-law laugh so heartily. His own embarrassment was worth it.

After all, he had seen the effort his sister-in-law had put into his son and didn't know how to repay her.

"I was worried Zhuangzhuang might end up like me, but now it seems he does resemble his little uncle somewhat."

In the midst of it all, Zhuangzhuang lifted his little head and looked at his dad with disdain, "I'm not just a little like little uncle; I'm very much like him. Little auntie has said so, I'm little uncle's nephew, so little uncle's smarts will come to my head."

Qin Han twitched the corner of his mouth, if it wasn't for the fact that this was his own son, he would hardly be able to resist retorting.

You're just your little uncle's nephew, but you're my son.

Mrs. Qin had finished cleaning up by now and came back to join Lin Chuxia in watching the father and son's playful argument, laughing uncontrollably.

Lin Chuxia also brought up another matter...

Chapter 278: Slap in the Face with Strength

"Brother, Zhuangzhuang turns five this year, and these days I've noticed his smarts are quite adequate. The village elementary school is enrolling next month, I think we should let him attend the Yu Hong class this year, right?"

These days, kids going to school are quite free-spirited. Regardless of whether there are adults at home to watch over them, four or five-year-olds can run all over the village, and some can even help out with chores.

Unlike in the future, where several parents eyes glued on their child, counting the days until kindergarten, wishing they could send them off to kindergarten sooner to get a few days of relaxation.

Nowadays, these parents, when they think of schooling, they see their kids are already seven or eight years old.

Qin Han had clearly not considered this point, as he glanced at his son, who was writing at his desk, "Can he do it?"

Little Zhuangzhuang, hearing this, became unhappy again, "Little Auntie said I can, definitely. I can count up to 100 now, and I can even calculate $8+12$. Tie Dan can only count to 20 and doesn't know what $8+2$ is. If he can go to school, why can't I? Dad, I want to go to school, I want to win an award, I want to use my strength to swell Tie Dan's face."

This was all told to him by Little Auntie, that strength is the most effective strike at any time.

Isn't Tie Dan said to be smart? Isn't he said to be a genius? Still laughing at me because I can't count.

I will count more and faster than him, leaving him dumbfounded.

Qin Han laughed heartily, "Still wanting to use your strength to swell someone's face? Aren't you afraid of someone using their palm to swell your face?"

Zhuangzhuang, arms folded, puffed up his little face and glared at Qin Han, his eyes clearly spelling out the words: This dad is really not needed.

Qin Han, not taking it to heart, turned his head to ask Lin Chuxia, "Do you think he can keep up?"

Lin Chuxia nodded affirmatively, "Zhuangzhuang is smart, he definitely won't have a problem."

Mother Lin also added from the side, "Going to school is good, starting early to learn is good. Back then, you started late, which delayed you. You ended up being shorter than Yangyang."

Qin Han touched his nose, not wanting to admit it.

"Mom, I didn't start too late. It was my younger brother who kept jumping grades, jumping ahead of me."

Little Zhuangzhuang immediately perked up, "Grandma, I want to go to school, and I want to jump ahead too, I'll jump right onto my dad's head."

"You little rascal, now I'm going to let you get on my head."

With a large hand, Qin Han grabbed and lifted Zhuangzhuang's little arm, giving his little body a toss, swinging him onto his shoulders.

Little Zhuangzhuang, excitedly howling, filled the house with laughter and cheerfulness.

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On the town's main street, Lin Jiayi and Li Dongmei were surrounded by a crowd.

The leading man looked fierce and menacing, and the woman next to him was even more daunting with her glaring triangular eyes, not someone to mess with.

"Eating bad food and expecting to just walk away, where on earth can you get off so easily? You won't leave this village today without compensating."

"That's right, looking at you two, appearing decent but turned out to be rotten to the core, selling spoiled meat to everyone, don't think about leaving without clearing this up."

"I just bought a small piece of meat yesterday, ate it last night, and had vomiting and diarrhea. My whole family ended up in the health clinic, just the meds cost us 5 yuan."

"Our family too, I also spent three yuan."

"For treating the sickness at our house, we spent 10 yuan."

"Pay up."

"Yes, you have to compensate; don't even think about leaving without paying."

Lin Jiayi faced many ferocious-looking faces, wanting to explain that there was nothing wrong with her meat.

But none of these people would listen to her, each of them extending hands demanding compensation.

Someone even crowded close to her, pushing against her pregnant belly.

Li Dongmei was terrified by now, constantly hiding behind Lin Jiayi.

Lin Jiayi simultaneously cursed her sister-in-law for being useless while thinking of a way to extract herself.

In order to sell more cooked food, these days, they had always operated separately.

Li Guangyuan had his own stall, originally planning to have Li Dongmei, Li Hongmei, and her share one stall, but Li Hongmei refused to be with them and set up her own stall.

Lin Jiayi also didn't want to see her sister-in-law, always being with her younger sister-in-law these days, not expecting trouble today.

"Ladies and gentlemen, sirs and madams, our cooked food truly guarantees quality, there's absolutely no problem."

"Just because you say there's no problem, it's okay? So many of us got sick from eating it, and you still dare spout lies?"

What Lin Jiayi wanted to say was that they were the ones spouting lies. Although there were leftovers in their cooked food, they were always recooked the next day.

Lin Jiayi even secretly mixed the recooked leftovers into their household meals, letting Mrs. Li and Li Dongmei eat it, and they didn't have any problems.

With the way Mrs. Li and Li Dongmei hungrily devoured the meat each time, they didn't get sick. How could others be more delicate than them?

"Miss, you look unfamiliar. Are you sure the meat was bought from my stall?"

With that comment from Lin Jiayi, Li Dongmei also noticed something.

"I don't remember this lady ever buying meat from us. And this madam here, you're not targeting us because we seem easy to bully, trying to swindle us, are you? Let me warn you, there's a police station nearby, we won't hesitate to report you."

"Hey, you little girl, you want to report me? Go ahead. I bought the meat from your stall, I remember it clearly, you sold it to me."

Li Dongmei was certain she had not sold the meat to this madam, and she had never seen this madam before.

Even though they interacted with many people daily, this madam had a mole on her face, such a noticeable mark; it was impossible for her not to have made an impression.

"Don't falsely accuse good people. My sister-in-law and I sell the meat together; I always help her, so it's even less possible that I sold it to you."

Lin Jiayi also caught onto a handle; she too thought some of the people in the crowd looked unfamiliar. Moreover, as Li Dongmei said, she was worried Li Dongmei might secretly stash away some money while selling the meat; she only let her attract customers while she personally handled all the transactions.

Clearly, the old lady was lying, these people could likely be trying to extort money seeing their business doing well.

Before Lin Jiayi could retort, several people in the crowd started accusing Li Dongmei.

"I say, young lady, how can you boldly lie like this? Li Auntie and I bought cooked food from your stall yesterday, ate it together, and both got sick. Even if we go to the police, we have witnesses."

"Yes, we bought it from your stall too. It was only you at the stall yesterday, and now you have a pregnant woman with you and think you can deny it? No way."

"That's right, no way, fellow villagers, if they don't compensate, let's smash their meat stall, better to prevent them from harming others."

"Right, smash their meat stall, don't ever let them set up shop here again..."

The crowd surged forward to smash the stall, with some even trying to grab Lin Jiayi's money pouch.

Chapter 279: Not Even Fit for Dogs to Eat

Lin Jiayi panicked all of a sudden, the accusations of the last few people gave her a bad premonition.

Li Hongmei was someone who sold cooked meat, and the sisters Li Hongmei and Li Dongmei looked very alike.

Which is to say that the cooked meat wasn't bought from them, it was very likely bought from Li Hongmei.

"Big brother, aunty, you've recognized the wrong person, please take another look. We're really not the people who sold you the cooked meat. Isn't the person older than her?"

She pulled Li Dongmei over for everyone to see, afraid that they would mistake them for Li Hongmei and beat them up.

These people, however, were not buying her story, "Even if it isn't her, you're still not off the hook. Don't think I don't know that you're all from the same family. Maybe you deliberately had her sell spoiled meat yesterday, and today you let her hide and switch people to sell, deceiving us common folk. Villagers, don't listen to her nonsense, if we don't get compensated today, we're taking action..."

"That's right, I've seen it, their goods are all the same."

"Not only are their goods the same, I also know they're from Xiaoqingshan Village."

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Seeing their covers blown, they couldn't hide anything anymore, Lin Jiayi in desperation covered her belly and cried out in pain, "Ouch".

Li Dongmei, struck by a moment of inspiration, immediately supported Lin Jiayi, speaking anxiously, "Sister-in-law, what's wrong with you? Are you having an upset pregnancy? What should we do? You're so far along, such upset won't cause complications, right?"

After all, faced with a pregnant woman, these people, although wanting compensation for medical expenses, didn't want to cause a fatality.

Seeing Lin Jiayi holding her belly and crying out incessantly, the more timid ones had already begun sneaking away, fearing a delay might implicate themselves.

Even the few who were leading the crowd didn't dare to act recklessly, they eventually left some harsh words and took everyone away.

Lin Jiayi waited until all was quiet before looking around.

Li Dongmei cautiously asked, "Sister-in-law, what should we do now? Should we continue to sell?"

"Sell what? Let's pack up and go home."

Li Dongmei now heeded her sister-in-law's words very much, precisely to say, after Li Hongmei married Ma Dazhuang, she recognized reality.

In this family, no matter how much her mother dotes on her, her mother is getting old, and cannot be relied upon at crucial moments.

If her sister-in-law had the intention to trick her, her mother would be powerless to help.

Especially regarding marriage matters, she doesn't want to follow her big sister's old path.

Therefore, in the family, even if she looked down on this sister-in-law, she dared not oppose her like before.

After the family started the cooked meat business, she saw her sister-in-law in a new light.

Lin Chuxia became prosperous, and even Sun Lanlan who was good friends with her managed to marry a city man.

If her brother and sister-in-law became prosperous, wanting to marry a city man would be a piece of cake for her, right?

Li Dongmei obediently packed up the stall, shouldered the carrying pole, and walked home with Lin Jiayi.

By the time Lin Jiayi and Li Dongmei got home, Li Hongmei had already returned.

The carrying pole used for the meat was under the big tree in the yard.

Lin Jiayi quickly stepped forward and lifted the cover cloth, only to see that the basket was still half full of meat, which seemed to be emitting a faint stench.

Lin Jiayi's face immediately darkened, and she went inside to confront Li Hongmei.

"How come you returned with so much unsold goods? And leaving it in the yard, with the weather so hot outside, won't that spoil all the meat?"

So much meat in the basket, worth so much money, Lin Jiayi felt distressed just looking at it.

"I said from the beginning that you should sell with us, but you insisted on selling by yourself. This is the result of your own selling? I bet you took the goods somewhere to slack off, right?"

Li Hongmei rubbed her sore shoulders with disdain, "How is this my fault? Don't you know what smell your cooked meats give off? Even dogs wouldn't eat them."

"You're full of shit..."

"Enough, stop arguing," Old Mrs. Li came into the room and interrupted Lin Jiayi before she could say more, "Hongmei, if you can't sell things properly why don't you learn from your brother and sister-in-law? Don't be so disrespectful."

Li Hongmei is her daughter, and she knew her the best.

She had never done any manual work since she was little, let alone sell anything. She's never been able to save face.

Yet because she had promised her that the money from the meat sales would be hers, that was why she took on so much stock.

Li Hongmei fell silent; she had indeed suffered a lot these past few days.

Standing there like an idiot, she simply had no idea how to start a conversation.

After great difficulty, she sold a few items, and today someone even came to complain saying the meat she sold gave them an upset stomach.

If she didn't run fast, she would have been beaten.

But to have her admit she was wrong to the person she disdained the most was even harder for her to utter.

Old Mrs. Li just gave her a way out.

She kept silent, but Lin Jiayi couldn't let it go.

"I told her before to sell with us for a few days, but she insisted she could do it alone, and took so much stock. Doesn't she know that the meat will go bad in such hot weather if it doesn't sell?"

"What are you yelling for? Is it my problem if it goes bad? It's just you guys don't have the ability."

Li Hongmei was already displeased inside, and now being scolded by Lin Jiayi, whom she disliked the most, made her lose her temper.

Lin Jiayi was infuriated, her chest heaved, "We don't have the ability? If we don't have the ability, then why do you stick around? The meat from the day before yesterday was reheated today; you said you didn't have leftovers, yet you took a lot yesterday and claimed you sold it all. Today you took new stock again. You say you sold out every day, but why is there still so much left in the basket? The meat is almost spoiled and you still sell it to others, are you happy only after ruining the family business?"

The prospect of damaging the business worried Old Mrs. Li too.

Although she doted on her daughter, she also wanted to live a good life.

Since they began selling cooked food, life at home was noticeably better, and she could eat meat every day.

She hadn't had enough of the good life yet.

"What's going on here? Hongmei, why aren't your meats selling? Are they really spoiled as your sister-in-law said?"

"No..." Before she could say anything else, Lin Jiayi pointed at Li Dongmei, "You tell her."

Old Mrs. Li wouldn't believe anything she said; she wanted to hear it from her own daughter.

Li Dongmei, of course, did not want to lose the good life they had, and she wanted to marry a city man just like Sun Lanlan.

She immediately said, "Just now when my sister-in-law and I were selling meat, someone said they got a stomachache from our meat. It must have been the meat my sister sold."

"You're talking nonsense, how can you say it was me who sold it? I'm saying it's you guys who sold it, it was my brother who sold it," Li Hongmei immediately refused to accept that accusation.

Even if she did sell it, she couldn't admit it; those people would still want compensation.

Lin Jiayi knew she wouldn't admit it, "It doesn't matter if you don't admit it, you shouldn't try to sell the meat anymore, I can't afford to keep you. Also, that basket outside smells so bad it can't be sold, you have to compensate me for the cost of that meat."

Since they started selling cooked food, Lin Jiayi became more assertive.

After living together for so long, couldn't she see her little sister-in-law's intentions?

She was just taking more stock to make sure when it's sold, she gets her cut.

The more she took, the more she skimmed off the top, and there were always excuses ready at Old Mrs. Li's.

In that case, it's better not to employ her.

Just like Lin Chuxia's shop, why not hire a few employees and be the boss rather than rely on these two sister-in-laws who couldn't be instructed?

Chapter 280: Kneel Down to Me

Li Hongmei immediately looked at Old Mrs. Li upon hearing this. Although she hadn't sold much these past few days, she had tasted the sweetness of making money.

She hadn't made a substantial amount yet; what could she do if Lin Jiayi really wouldn't let her sell anymore?

Old Mrs. Li gave her a reassuring look, speaking in a faint voice, "What kind of talk is that? Hongmei has heard that you're too busy with the business, so she traveled all the way back to help you. She can learn if you teach her patiently; this is what you should be doing as her brother and sister-in-law. What is it about shouting and yelling that shows your competence? It's just some leftover meat. At worst, we'll eat it ourselves. We've been selling meat at home for so long, and we've hardly had a taste ourselves."

"Eat it ourselves?" Lin Jiayi stepped forward and lifted the covered cloth, "How can we eat this much meat? Right now, all our family's money is tied up in this. If we eat it, what will we use to buy goods tomorrow?"

Inside the basket, there was pig intestine, heart, liver, lungs, head meat—a half-basket full of various cooked foods; it was impossible to finish eating it all.

Besides, there really was a strange smell emanating from the meat, noticeably different from what they usually ate.

Thinking about how all their money was invested in this stock, Old Mrs. Li felt even more distressed, she secretly glared at her eldest daughter before speaking.

"I think the meat is just undercooked a bit. When Guang Yuan comes back later, let him recook it. Add more seasoning to mask the smell; we can still sell it tomorrow."

Lin Jiayi actually thought the same. Although those people came aggressively today, nothing serious happened in the end.

They could just sell in a different place for the next few days. They didn't own a shop, so they could just sell wherever they walked.

She just didn't want to make it easy for Li Hongmei.

Old Mrs. Li, seeing that Lin Jiayi remained unyielding, gave her eldest daughter a meaningful look, "Didn't you just say you'd give your sister-in-law the meat-selling money? Your sister-in-law is right here; it's a good opportunity for her to see how hard you've worked these past few days."

Li Hongmei opened her eyes wide in disbelief, her mother was actually asking her to give that wretched woman money?

Seeing Old Mrs. Li persistently giving signals, she reluctantly took out five yuan.

"I gave the money I made before to my brother. This is from today's sale, sister-in-law, here you go."

Lin Jiayi frowned—only five yuan from the sale?

But of course, she wouldn't let that five yuan slip by; it was all her money after all.

Lin Jiayi took the money and turned to leave. Li Dongmei, afraid her older sister would settle scores with her, also scurried away in a hurry.

Li Hongmei could only fiercely glare at her retreating figure, then turned her head to see Old Mrs. Li started speaking in dissatisfaction.

"Mother, look at her, she's practically climbing onto my neck and you're still siding with her."

Old Mrs. Li glanced out the window, "Are you foolish? No matter what, you still need to rely on her cooked food secret recipe to make money."

"What secret recipe for cooked food; I think she's just fooling you all. I've tasted it; Qin's Cooked Food doesn't taste like this at all."

"You care whether it does? Given her relationship with Lin Chuxia, even if it's not the same flavor, it will be. How many have actually tasted Qin's Cooked Food?"

Li Hongmei didn't argue; she too had used the Qin Family's name while selling her goods.

"Didn't you tell me to keep the money made from selling cooked food for myself? Why are you going back on your word and making me pay out?"

Old Mrs. Li felt frustrated, as if trying to forge iron that wouldn't harden, "I did say you could keep it for yourself, but I didn't let you ruin our family business. Look how much meat is left in that basket?"

Li Hongmei was indignant, "I also didn't know how much it would sell. What if it wasn't enough? Wouldn't that mean I'd earn a lot less?"

"Foolish," Old Mrs. Li knew her daughter was sharp but greedy, so she could only patiently advise, "If you sell a little each day, you will have leftovers every day. How could there not be enough stock? If you ruin the business, where will you earn this money?"

Li Hongmei certainly knew the rationale Old Mrs. Li was talking about, but she was also clear in her heart that the money from selling the meat belonging to her was only her mother's idea, and if Lin Jiayi that wench found out, there's no telling she would make a fuss about it.

Before, whenever they had a conflict, their mother would definitely take her side, but now that Lin Jiayi had the secret recipe in hand, she really couldn't be sure whose side her mother would take—hadn't she seen her own sister not taking her side?

As the two of them were speaking inside the room, a cry of alarm came from outside.

"Guang Yuan, what happened to you? Who beat you into this state?"

They then saw Li Guangyuan come in embarrassingly from outside, with a piece of his forehead cut open, a bruise on the corner of his mouth, and his clothes covered in dirt.

Li Guangyuan, seeing Lin Jiayi, silently heaved a sigh of relief, then his gaze darkened when he noticed Old Mrs. Li and Li Hongmei emerging from the room.

"Someone claimed that the meat we sell had quality issues and made people sick. Today, a bunch of people surrounded me demanding compensation for medical expenses. I tried reasoning with them, but without a word, they started beating me up."

Old Mrs. Li glanced at Li Hongmei, a flicker of guilt flashing in her eyes, before angrily speaking out, "Where did these troublemakers come from? I think they're just jealous of our good business. Is there no King's Law anymore? Didn't you go find the police?"

"Mother, if I truly went to the police, would you be willing to turn in elder sister?"

Old Mrs. Li suddenly fell silent.

Li Guangyuan took off his ripped coat and threw it on the ground, then walked to the side where the meat basket was placed, and with one glance, he knew what had happened.

He was now utterly exhausted by this family; every time he wanted to accomplish something in his business, these people would always hold him back.

There's no way all this meat in elder sister's basket was taken in just one day. Anyone with a bit of sense would know that cooked food spoils if left out in the summer for two days, yet she still sold the spoiled meat.

"You hoard so much meat that can't be sold—do you want to harm the whole family just to be satisfied?"

Li Guangyuan suddenly roared in anger—an outburst he had never allowed himself in all these years, which left several women in the courtyard stunned.

But soon, someone regained their composure.

The first one to rush up was Li Hongmei, "How am I to blame for harming the family? Isn't she the jinx? She's the one who took initiative to sell the cooked food. Now that there's an issue with the cooked food you all prepared, you're accusing me. I traveled all this way back to help you, and not only do you not appreciate it, you're trying to pin the blame on me. Where's your conscience?"

"Did I ask for your help? You're married now, you should just stay in your marital home, supporting your husband and teaching your children, instead of always coming back to your parents' house and causing trouble. Can you not bear to see your family have good days?"

Lin Jiayi, seeing Li Guangyuan voicing the very words she dared not say, felt extremely delighted in her heart.

She didn't even mind that Li Hongmei almost messed up their business.

Yes, rebuke this sister-in-law harshly, make sure she never returns to her family home.

For the first time, Li Hongmei was scolded by Li Guangyuan, pointing fingers at her nose. She stomped her feet in retort, "You're the ones who can't stand to see me have good days. I could have married someone from the city, but you made me marry Ma Dazhuang, ruining my life. What right do you have to talk about me?"

"What's wrong with Ma Dazhuang? In my opinion, he's more than good enough for you. You, with your lofty ignorance, not knowing how to live properly, lacking brains but still trying to act clever, have someone who wants you and yet you don't treasure your fortune. You—"

"Slap!"

A fierce slap landed on Li Guangyuan's face; Old Mrs. Li was angry, her visage turning a steel blue.

"Kneel down for me."

Li Guangyuan looked at Old Mrs. Li's face; the shadow of strict discipline from his parents since childhood made him quiver, and with a thump, he knelt on the ground.

Old Mrs. Li picked up a fire poker beside her and began striking Li Guangyuan with it, clearly using her full strength with each blow.