

## Switched M 361

Chapter 361: Catch the Thief and the Loot, Catch the Adulterer and the Partner

On the other side, Zhang Wenbin carried his bowl of rice and pushed open the bedroom door.

The room was dark without the lights on, and only with the help of the moonlight, the small figure on the bed could be vaguely seen.

"Why aren't the lights on?"

He casually turned on the light and the small figure on the bed shrunk noticeably.

Zhang Wenbin walked in to put the food on the table when he saw the little one trembling and about to cry.

He frowned involuntarily, "What are you afraid of? I'm your dad. Just behave yourself, and in a couple of days, I'll let you see your mom."

Ningning finally let the tears fall, the image of her mother being beaten by this man before her, as well as by her grandparents, filled her vision.

She wanted to help her mom but was pushed away by her dad with a single hand.

Her body hurt so much, and she knew her mom must be in even greater pain.

Zhang Wenbin grew more impatient, "Your mom wants to divorce me now. Do you even understand what divorce means? She wants to leave this family and abandon you. Crying now is useless. When you see your mom, cry in front of her and tell her you won't leave this home, and she'll stay."

Then, thinking about Qin Juan's resolute demeanor, he snorted coldly, "Utterly useless."

...

On a deep autumn night, the north wind howled, the withered leaves danced and whirled down, skimming through the dim glow of the streetlights, adding to the tranquil desolation.

Suddenly, two figures appeared on the desolate road, and a clever dog, hearing the commotion, barked a few times.

In the doghouse in the courtyard, Yuan Bao lifted his head sharply upon hearing the noise, his ears perked up like radar antennas, his gaze fixated on the distance.

Not until the sounds grew louder did Yuan Bao rush to the gate and started barking loudly.

Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang had already retired for the night, only to be awakened by the dog's barking.

Qin Yang rolled out of bed, grabbed his clothes, and headed outside.

"I'll go take a look first."

The courtyard door was knocked on, Yuan Bao jumped on his feet and barked wildly, calming down a little upon seeing Qin Yang emerge.

The person outside also spoke up, "Mr. Qin, it's me, Jia Liang. I'm here to see Mr. Lin."

By this time, Lin Chuxia also followed out, opening the door to let the two men into the yard.

Jia Liang got straight to the point, "Mr. Lin, the person we've been watching went there today and hasn't come out."

Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang exchanged looks.

They had been watching Zhang Wenbin for so many days just waiting for this moment.

As the saying goes, to catch a thief with stolen goods, to catch an adulterer with his accomplice.

Normally, even if they caught Zhang Wenbin and Li Wenhong together, they could easily tell lies.

Both of them were colleagues in the same company and could make up any excuse to get away with it.

Only in the dead of night, catching the two together could solidify the evidence of their improper relationship.

They had expected a long wait, but Zhang Wenbin turned out to be too impatient to stay low.

Qin Yang turned and headed back into the house, "I'll get you a thick coat. Let's go right away."

No time to lose, capturing Zhang Wenbin's wrongdoing a day earlier would free his older sister from misery a day sooner.

This time Jia Liang brought Lu Dafa again, and together with Qin Yang and Lin Chuxia, the four of them took advantage of the moonlight to head to Li Wenhong's house.

Zhang Wenbin was currently entangled in a cozy, tender embrace.

These days, if he wasn't busy with his parents' affairs, he was dealing with work or finding ways to make Qin Juan reconsider divorcing him.

Now with his work in jeopardy, he actually felt a sense of relief, as if the dust had settled, and this made him feel secure.

At worst, he would receive some disciplinary action and admit his mistake. With his network and achievements in the workplace, making a comeback would not be difficult.

He had not seen Li Wenhong recently, but today they were together, inevitably leading to an intimate reunion.

While they were in the thick of it, sudden noise came from outside.

Li Wenhong, concerned, asked, "Is it your daughter outside?"

Zhang Wenbin was in high spirits, "No worries, what would a little kid understand?"

No sooner had he spoken when the door was forcefully pushed open, and several figures rushed in.

The lighting was so intense it blinded them, and the sudden commotion scared Zhang Wenbin so much that he collapsed onto the floor.

Li Wenhong screamed in fright, "Who are you? How did you get into my house?"

Then a woman's voice came from outside, "Zhang Wenbin, you ungrateful wretch, no wonder my older sister married you and she managed the housework, honored the parents, and raised the children. She did so much for the Zhang Family yet you still beat her, and it turns out you've had someone else on the side all along. You're committing infidelity within marriage..."

Although it wasn't early at this point, the stillness of the night made the disturbance here all the more noticeable.

The woman's words carried far, and soon lights in the vicinity turned on, and people who were already up came out to see.

Although Li Wenhong did not live in their company's residential compound, it was one associated with their unit, surrounded by neighbors familiar with her.

As soon as Lin Chuxia entered the yard, she left the gate open, waiting for people to come over and watch the excitement.

Seeing people poking their heads around and coming over, Lin Chuxia raised her voice even more.

"Come and see, these shameless dogs, my sister was blind to marry such a man. If we had not been vigilant, who knows how long Zhang Wenbin would have deceived us..."

When Qin Yang came in with Jia Liang, to prevent Lin Chuxia from seeing anything too eye-watering, she was instructed to make a scene in the yard to make sure Zhang Wenbin's misconduct was pinned down, leaving him no chance to turn the situation around.

At this moment, Zhang Wenbin was already panicked inside the room. His initial anger changed into pleading after hearing Lin Chuxia's voice and seeing the people outside the house.

"Little brother, this is all a misunderstanding, let me explain," he begged.

Qin Yang looked indifferently at the man, wishing he could slap himself.

How could he have thought his sister would be happy marrying such a man?

"Misunderstanding? What kind of misunderstanding leads a married man into another woman's bed?" Qin Yang spoke coldly.

The onlookers had already entered the yard, and Jia Liang quickly pulled off the curtains.

With the room brightly lit, Li Wenhong, embarrassed, dove under the covers, and Zhang Wenbin also sought to hide underneath.

He was still clinging to some hope.

But before he could take action, Qin Yang stepped forward, dragged the man out, and hauled him all the way to the main room floor.

Zhang Wenbin yelled in anguish. He was still naked; being seen by outsiders like this was utterly shameful.

No matter how he struggled, he was no match for Qin Yang and was at his mercy.

Lin Chuxia brought the neighbors over to watch the excitement, and after surveying the area, she looked onto the dark room next door where there appeared to be a small head behind the door glass.

She went straight over, opened the door, and saw a tiny figure running back inside.

"Ningning!" Lin Chuxia called out softly.

The small figure stopped in its tracks.

She turned on the light to see Ningning's small face still bearing signs of shock. Upon recognizing Lin Chuxia, large eyes quickly filled with tears, yet she bravely held them back.

The tiny person stood with tightly pursed lips, looking at Lin Chuxia with a mix of wariness and anticipation.

Lin Chuxia's heart ached. She squatted down, clapped her hands, and opened her arms, "Come here, come to Auntie, I'll take you to your mom."

"Can I really go to mom?" Ningning's voice was soft and tentative.

Chapter 362: Everything is Ready, Just Waiting for the East Wind

"Of course, Mom is waiting for Ningning at Auntie's house right now."

Knowing what would happen today, Qin Yang did not let Qin Juan know about tonight's actions.

Knowing it would cause pain, why inflict another cut on her?

Hearing such words, Ningning's tears finally fell, and she threw herself into Lin Chuxia's arms, crying.

"Auntie, Grandma and the others beat Mom, I'm so scared, will they beat Mom to death? I don't want Mom to die, I want Mom..."

Lin Chuxia hugged the little one tight, her heart aching with mixed emotions.

While it is undeniable that divorce causes harm to children, if they live in such a family, getting a divorce and distancing from those who only bring negative energy to the children might not be such a bad thing after all.

"No, no, Mom is fine now, Auntie will take Ningning to see Mom right away."

Tomorrow, the news of Zhang Wenbin's affair with Li Wenhong will spread; staying here any longer is pointless.

Lin Chuxia took Ningning and left Li Wenhong's house directly. Seeing that she had found the child, Qin Yang also followed them out.

Jia Liang quickly thought, "Mr. Lin, you and Mr. Qin go ahead and take the child home. I'll handle things here."

Lin Chuxia nodded, took Ningning and Qin Yang, and went straight back to the family quarters.

Qin Juan had gone to bed early, but after hearing the commotion and seeing her younger brothers and sister-in-law leave, she had some guesses and did not sleep.

When she heard more noise, she saw Lin Chuxia and others returning with Ningning.

"Ningning!"

"Mommy..."

Mother and daughter embraced as if they had been lost and found again, holding each other tightly.

"Sister-in-law, thank you, I really appreciate everything..."

"Sister, let's not talk like this within the family, you should hurry and take Ningning back to rest."

After all this commotion, it was already late, and Ningning, tired from crying, was gradually falling asleep in Qin Juan's arms.

Qin Juan also knew that everyone was tired from the ordeal and took the child back to the room.

A hand was laid on her shoulder, and Qin Yang drew her closer into his embrace, as though it still wasn't enough, and then he took one of her small hands in his own, "Chuxia, thank you for everything you've done for my sister."

Lin Chuxia smiled. Finding Ningning had put everyone's mind at ease. Now, it's time to help her sister-in-law with the divorce.

Divorce in this era is not an easy matter, and Lin Chuxia could very well understand Qin Juan's predicament.

Nowadays, people hold a conservative attitude towards divorce, seeing it as a disgraceful thing, especially for women.



Social opinion and family pressure force many women to endure even when they are unhappy, rather than leave.

That is also why the Zhang Family didn't see domestic violence as a big deal.

It's not just their family—many people think this way.

Women's tolerance has let men overstep their boundaries, and fighting has even become a commonplace occurrence.

Furthermore, the law at this time also had strict conditions and procedures for divorce.

For example, a divorce needed justified reasons, and merely incompatible temperaments did not count; even domestic violence was not considered a significant factor. One needed to consider the foundation of the marriage, post-marital relations, the reasons for divorce, as well as children's welfare and social influence, among other things.

Divorce also requires verification from one's workplace and thought work from leaders.

Divorce also involves issues like housing and residence registration. Without workplace certification and relocation procedures, divorce can become very difficult.

Qin Juan has been married to Zhang Wenbin for seven or eight years, with a daughter, and Zhang Wenbin has stable employment. If he insists on not agreeing to the divorce, Qin Juan truly cannot secure a divorce.

Fortunately, they have now caught Zhang Wenbin red-handed.

...

As Lin Chuxia had expected, the next day, rumors of Zhang Wenbin's indecent relationship with Li Wenhong were spread far and wide.

Chuxia Lin didn't rush Qin Juan into action; instead, she had her spend a couple of days resting at home with Ningning.

Ningning had been locked in a room by Li Wenhong, a little person on tenterhooks for several days, especially after witnessing the scene of her grandparents and father ganging up to beat her mother. Without proper companionship, it's very easy for a child to develop psychological trauma.

Fortunately, Qin Juan was now back to normal and had plans for divorce, which made her appear cheerful. The smiles on her face while spending time with Ningning were genuine.

The emotional state of adults can greatly influence children.

Seeing her mother happy, Ningning was no longer afraid.

Yuan Bao loved children; back in its hometown of An City, Zhuangzhuang was its good buddy.

Ever since coming to the city, being confined to a small yard, not to mention the few household members, it has been living the most monotonous life since birth.

Today, it discovered a new little friend had come to the house and joyfully circled around Ningning.

At first, Ningning was afraid of Yuan Bao, but Qin Juan, knowing that Yuan Bao is smart and doesn't bite randomly, took Ningning and played with Yuan Bao in the yard.

Before long, Ningning became friends with Yuan Bao, giggling at its playful antics, as if all her troubles were forgotten.

Two days passed like this, and Chuxia Lin brought back news.

Jia Liang not only gave Zhang Wenbin a severe lesson on that day, but he also hung his underwear on the gate of his workplace and put up a big-character poster.

When hearing this news, Chuxia Lin didn't quite know what to say.

Only one word came to her mind: Beautiful!

Such a result was immediate.

The leaders talked to Zhang Wenbin right away.

Zhang Wenbin wanted to argue his case, but the rumors about him and Li Wenhong were already widespread, and no one would believe him even if he claimed it was a false accusation.

His accepting bribes was already under investigation, and this incident led to Zhang Wenbin being suspended for investigation directly.

If it wasn't for the procedures required to dismiss someone, his leaders would have wanted to kick him out on the spot.

The impact was too bad.

"Big sister, now it's time for you to make your move. You need to go to Zhang Wenbin's leaders and act pitifully. However pitiful you can be, do it; you need to get the leaders on your side and demand a divorce from Zhang Wenbin. This is a medical certificate I've obtained from the hospital for you to show the leaders as well. I refuse to believe they won't let you divorce with this evidence."

Everything was ready except for the opportunity.

Chuxia Lin was genuinely worried that Qin Juan's soft personality could easily be dismissed by just a few words from the leaders.

Before leaving, she gave her a lot of advice, and afterward, Qin Juan looked at her differently.

"Sister-in-law, big sister understands, don't worry. If the leaders don't agree, I'll just sit in their office and refuse to leave."

God help me, how did her gentle sister-in-law come to understand so much, and who taught her all this?

She had to speak seriously with her younger brother later; he'd better not upset the sister-in-law.

Her brother is no match for the sister-in-law.

He can't handle it.

Chuxia Lin, unaware of Qin Juan's thoughts, urged her repeatedly as she sent Qin Juan out of the house, and then turned around to see Ningning's anxious little face, instantly revealing a big smile.

"Ningning, don't be afraid. Mommy is going to take care of some important matters, and she will be fine. Once Mommy has taken care of everything, Ningning can always be with Mommy, as well as live with your little uncle and aunt. Would you like to live with us?"

The big, grape-like eyes of Ningning immediately revealed a hint of joy, "Can I?"

Chuxia Lin nodded, "Of course, it's like these past few days. Are you happy here, Ningning?"

"Happy, little aunt, I'd like to live in your house."

"This is our home, and it will also be Ningning's home in the future. Let's go, your little aunt is going to take you to buy new clothes."

She didn't want anything from the Zhang Family's house.

Since she was going to start a new life with the child, everything had to be new.

### Chapter 363: Are You Trying to Kill Me with Anxiety?

Qin Juan's return was beyond Lin Chuxia's expectations. When she returned from shopping with Ningning, Qin Juan had already come back, bringing along a certification issued by Zhang Wenbin's workplace leaders.

"Big sister, you're amazing! I was thinking if it didn't work out today, we'd go back tomorrow. You could have Qin Yang go with you. It looks like there's no need for a prolonged battle. Didn't their leaders try to persuade you?"

Normally, regardless of the fuss Qin Juan made today, as workplace leaders, they wouldn't lightly agree to a divorce. There still should be some persuasive efforts.

Qin Juan, truly feeling relieved, even snorted at the mention.

"Their leaders now feel disgraced, having such a scandal in their unit. But after all, thanks to Jia Liang, this move was something no one anticipated," and it completely disgusted Zhang Wenbin's workplace leaders.

"Today, I also heard about the decisions regarding Zhang Wenbin: seems like they want to dismiss him from public service. The same goes for Li Wenhong. Now, both are like rats across the street, hiding at home, too ashamed to see anyone."

"Some people can't hide, even if they are ashamed. If I recall correctly, Old Master Zhang and Mrs. Zhang will be released in these next two days. Big sister, you and Ningning stay at home for a few days. Once things settle down, then go work at the Bun Shop."

She is not worried about big sister's susceptibility to influence but fearful that the Zhang Family might desperately try to drag others down with them.

Qin Juan understands Lin Chuxia's concerns and nods, saying, "I understand, sister-in-law, I'll listen to you."

With the certification from the workplace leaders, the rest should be easy. Qin Yang directly accompanied Qin Juan to file for divorce at the courthouse, regardless of Zhang Wenbin's unwillingness, this marriage had to end.

Soon, the court set a date for the session.

On the day of the hearing, Lin Chuxia arranged for Ningning to stay at the Bun Shop, asking Jia Liang and Gao Lele to help care for her, while the three of them went to the courthouse.

Arriving at the courthouse entrance, they saw from afar Qin Han's car, number 121, and the Qin Family standing beside it.

Qin Juan stopped in her tracks and unmistakably looked towards Qin Yang and Lin Chuxia.

Qin Yang said, "I called mom and dad here. Big sister, with such matters occurring, you should have talked to the family earlier."

Now that a divorce is imminent, should it still be kept from the family?

Qin Juan was still unsure how to speak to the family when Mrs. Qin, with tears in her eyes, came over.

Without a word, she clapped a hand on Qin Juan's shoulder, "Child, how could you not tell the family about such grievances? Are you trying to gouge out my heart? If your brother and his wife hadn't come to the city, how long were you planning to keep this from us?"

"Mom..."

Qin Juan, starting to speak, was already sobbing.

Mrs. Qin tightly embraced her, tears uncontrollably streaming down, "You've endured so much yet didn't tell me; do you want to drive me to death?"

"Sorry, mom..."

Mr. Qin, Qin Han, and Zhang Guilan also came over.

"Alright, no more crying. Today, no matter what, we're going to get you this divorce. Even if you remain unmarried for life and stay with mom and dad, I won't let you remain in that household."

"Yes, Juanzi, big brother will take care of you and Ningning."

Qin Juan kept nodding her head. Mother and daughter cried for a while before stopping their tears.

Mrs. Qin held Lin Chuxia, "Chuxia, Qin Yang told me everything about your elder sister, thanks to you."

If not for the attentive daughter-in-law, given her daughter's nature of bearing good news but not the bad, who knows how much the Zhang Family might have bullied them before they found out.

Several people were talking when three figures approached from a distance.

Leading them was Zhang Wenbin, who seemed to have aged several years in just a few days. Although his hair looked deliberately groomed and his beard was freshly shaved, the numb look in his eyes and his wrinkled clothes gave him away.

Behind Zhang Wenbin were Mrs. Zhang and Old Master Zhang, both of whom had drastically changed.

Lin Chuxia knew they had been released from the police station just a couple of days ago. It was evident from their appearances that their days at the station were rough; both had lost a lot of weight and had more white hair than before.

Seeing these three, Lin Chuxia and Qin Juan couldn't help but feel immensely satisfied.

However, Qin Han and Qin's parents didn't feel the same way; they hadn't avenged Qin Juan themselves, so no matter what the Zhang Family looked like, it wasn't satisfying in their eyes.

Qin Han rushed forward, grabbed Zhang Wenbin, and was about to throw a punch.

Zhang Wenbin, already used to being beaten these days, panicked at the sight of Qin Han's fury, and instinctively yelled, "You can't hit me; we are in front of the courthouse, careful or I'll sue you for intentional injury."

Mrs. Zhang and Old Master Zhang hurriedly intervened, "Ah, dear relatives, this is just a misunderstanding, please, no hitting, Wenbin has already acknowledged his mistakes."

Gui Lan also stopped her husband; Qin Juan was about to divorce Zhang Wenbin, and if he was injured now, it could delay the divorce, causing a loss for Qin Juan.

Qin Han furiously let go of Zhang Wenbin, "Our family must have been blind."

Zhang Wenbin staggered then straightened up and adjusted his collar, his gaze landing on Qin Juan.

Not seeing her for a few days, Qin Juan looked healthier, seemingly even gaining some weight compared to before.

Seemingly having a rough time, while Qin Juan had been living comfortably, eating and drinking well at Qin Yang's house.

Suppressing the anger in his heart, Zhang Wenbin spoke up.

"Qin Juan, we've been married for so many years, don't you care about our past at all? Think about how I treated you when we first got married. Have you forgotten all my kindness?"



Mrs. Zhang also chimed in, "That's right, that's right, which household doesn't have its ups and downs? We can't just think of divorce at every turn. Think about Ningning, she's still so young; she can't be without a mother."

After finishing, she also addressed Mrs. Qin, "Dear mother-in-law, Wenbin truly knows his mistake. He has been regretting these past days, telling us he wants to bring Juanzi back. Actually, these two kids' relationship isn't bad. I've watched them over the years, they've always been loving and peaceful. If you don't believe me, go to the family courtyard and ask around, everyone says Wenbin and Juanzi are a model couple. This incident is really a misunderstanding. I don't know who's been stirring things up, making her hostile toward us. Just look at my head, it was Juanzi who pushed and injured me. You know what kind of temper your daughter has, would she do such a thing to her mother-in-law unless provoked? I think we should sit down and talk calmly. As Wenbin said, Ningning can't be without a mom."

Mrs. Zhang glanced at Lin Chuxia while speaking, the implication couldn't be clearer.

Mrs. Qin snorted, "I raised my own daughter, I know her temperament well; if she wasn't pushed to the edge, she definitely wouldn't have struck. First, think about how you all bullied my daughter."

"Oh dear, mother-in-law, saying that really wrongs me to death. Let Juanzi tell you how I bullied her."

Mrs. Zhang had lived with Qin Juan for so many years, she knew Qin Juan's temperament well—she was the least likely to complain.

Not just to her own mother, even when she occasionally did something overboard, Qin Juan wouldn't dare make a sound.

#### Chapter 364: No Conscience

Lin Chuxia was worried that Qin Juan was constantly bullied by the Zhang Family and dared not tell the truth in front of everyone. Just as she was about to speak up for her, Qin Juan stopped her.

She stepped forward, straightened her back, dignified and unassuming, first looking at Zhang Wenbin, "You speak of past sentiment, and you even mention the time when we just got married. Zhang Wenbin, don't you feel hypocritical when you mention these things? In your eyes, there is no affection, only interest and benefits. You treated me well when we just got married because I was of use to you. Now

you bring up past sentiment here, isn't it just to salvage your reputation and keep your job? Let me tell you, your hopes are misplaced today. The divorce, I am definitely going through with it..."

She paused here, her gaze sweeping over the faces of the Zhang Family one by one, finally stating resoundingly, "Ningning will not be without her mother."

"How dare you, Ningning is our Zhang Family's child, don't even think about taking her away."

Mrs. Zhang didn't expect Qin Juan to be so ruthless.

These past days, she suffered day and night in the police station, holding her breath, thinking she must give Qin Juan a good talking-to once she's out.

She also planned to assert her authority as a mother-in-law.

Wasn't she the one who sent her to the police station to suffer?

Having been through suffering and even injuries, she would need to take good care of herself once she went out.

Let Qin Juan serve her well so she wouldn't dare to make trouble anymore.

However, after coming out, not only did she fail to assert her status, but she also found her home in total disarray, waiting to be cleaned up.

Her son even told her that Qin Juan wanted a divorce, had already taken the proof from his workplace, and even ruined his job.

At that moment, Mrs. Zhang almost hated Qin Juan to death.

The more this happened, the less she could allow that wretch to divorce.

She wanted to leave after causing them such harm? No way.

When they came, the three of them had already decided: resolutely not to divorce, and moreover, to definitely keep Ningning's custody in their hands; controlling Ningning meant controlling Qin Juan.

Even if Qin Juan truly got a divorce, with Ningning in their hands, she wouldn't be able to live in peace.

"Where is Ningning? Where did you hide my granddaughter? She is our Zhang Family's child, hand over my granddaughter."

Zhang Wenbin also noticed at this moment that Ningning was not there.

"Qin Juan, you have such a vicious heart, to actually prevent Ningning from seeing her father..."

Qin Juan no longer paid attention to the Zhang Family, she turned and said to her family, "It's about time, let's go inside."

The Qin Family were all very satisfied with Qin Juan's attitude, especially Mrs. Qin – how much trauma does a divorce cause a woman?

Seeing her daughter has indeed overcome it, she felt relieved.

Seeing the Qin Family enter the courthouse in full force, leaving no room for negotiation, Zhang Wenbin's face turned particularly gloomy.

"Qin Juan, you will regret this. After getting a divorce, you'll be second-hand goods, who else would want you? Sooner or later you will regret this."

Mrs. Zhang, even more so, cursed fiercely, "You heartless little wretch, you had no job, it was our family who provided for you, and now you've messed up my son's job and even want a divorce from him, do you have any conscience at all? This marriage cannot end, we will not consent..."

Her son is now without a job, with a ruined reputation; after the divorce who would marry her son?

She had been pampered over the years and didn't want to go back to cooking and looking after the father and son again.

Mrs. Qin suddenly turned around, "The ones without conscience is your family, right? What did your family say when they came to our house? They would treat my daughter well, and now you dislike my daughter for not having a job, what were you doing before? A bunch of cold-blooded creatures, even if my daughter gets a divorce, she is still the precious treasure of our Qin Family, and if anyone will regret, it will be you. No, you won't regret it, because you are heartless."

Mrs. Qin, who had been suppressing her anger all the way, gave them a piece of her mind, finally feeling satisfied seeing Mrs. Zhang's face turning pale.

She then spoke to her whole family, "Let's go, don't stay here and listen to dogs barking, we'd better hurry up and get the divorce, to get further away from these cold-hearted creatures."

"Mom is right, sister, after the divorce, we'll all have better days ahead," Lin Chuxia also added.

Gui Lan and Qin Han also chimed in, "As soon as we get the divorce certificate, I need to buy a couple strings of firecrackers to celebrate properly."

Seeing the Qin Family chatting and laughing, the Zhang Family was so angry they were practically fuming.

Although the divorce procedures were complicated, Qin Juan was well prepared, and the court quickly ruled in favor of the divorce.

When it came to the issue of property, Zhang Wenbin had been dismissed from his job, and their family housing would also be reclaimed by his employer. Qin Juan didn't want any of the furniture or clothing, but neither did she want to give it to Zhang Wenbin for nothing, so she donated it all.

Next was the matter of Ningning's custody. Zhang Wenbin firmly refused to budge; he had lost his job, and so had Qin Juan.

He had studied the case beforehand, knowing that under similar circumstances, if both parties wanted custody, traditionally, the court would favor the father.

Zhang Wenbin gave Qin Juan a cold look, intent on winning.

At that moment, Qin Juan spoke up. She had proof of employment, as well as proof from Qin's Buns Shop and Xiyang Food Company.

After these evidences were presented to the judge, there was no further dispute, and the custody of Ningning was awarded to Qin Juan.

Qin Juan and Zhang Wenbin's 8-year marriage was officially over.

The moment she received the divorce certificate, Qin Juan's eyes teared up with emotion.

Lin Chuxia said, "Congratulations, big sister. Today is a good day; we really should celebrate properly."

"Right, let's celebrate when we get home."

Qin Yang patted his older sister's shoulder, offering comfort.

The whole family was happy and bustling onto bus 121.

Zhang Wenbin came out looking somber, only to see the Qin Family not only leaving, but doing so in a car driven by Qin Han.

"Son, how do they have a car?"

Before this, Mrs. Zhang had already been envious of Qin Yang riding a large motorcycle.

"How would I know? Maybe they borrowed it."

Though Zhang Wenbin said this, he knew well enough that borrowing a car like 121 wasn't easy.

Qin Han drove it so skillfully, it was obvious that he was used to driving.

Mrs. Zhang then asked, "Son, is the divorce just going to be like this?"

She had been hoping her daughter-in-law would take care of her.

The two men at home didn't know how to do any household chores; without a daughter-in-law, she would have to do the laundry and cooking.

"The court has ruled; what else can we do if not divorce?"

Zhang Wenbin knew what his mother was worrying about and reassured her, "Don't worry, your son isn't so hopeless as to not be able to find a woman. In a few days, I'm going to register for marriage with Wenhong."

Upon hearing that he was going to marry Li Wenhong, Mrs. Zhang hesitated, "I heard she was also dismissed from her civil position. Are you really going to marry an unemployed woman? In my opinion, it would be better to choose someone else. I remember Xiao Zhang from your unit is still unmarried—his dad is a deputy director..."

Zhang Wenbin ignored his mother and headed out.

His mother really dared to dream. Given his current situation, it was already good that Li Wenhong was willing to marry him.

Now that he was dismissed from his civil position, and their family housing was about to be taken back, they would all have to move back to An City.

Would the daughter of a deputy director be blind to marry him?

It was because his mother held such unrealistic fantasies and kept nagging him about Qin Juan's faults that his attitude towards Qin Juan had changed.

Zhang Wenbin looked at the divorce certificate in his hand, feeling profoundly irritable.

Chapter 365: Blinding Its Dog Eyes

Today is Qin Juan's divorce day, and also Qin Yang's birthday.

These years he has been away from home, and like Mrs. Qin, even he often forgets his own birthday, yet now his wife remembers it clearly.

Lin Chuxia originally wanted to hold a celebration at the State-Owned Restaurant, but Mrs. Qin wanted to see their little home and felt that it was more grounded for the family to cook a nice meal together at home.

With many people in the family, there are also many who can cook; Zhang Guilan was already showing a little, so neither Qin Juan nor Lin Chuxia let her do any work; just the two of them, plus Mrs. Qin who insisted on helping, quickly prepared a big table full of dishes.

Ningning was also brought back, and she was exceptionally happy today.

Although she doesn't know that her dad and mom are already divorced, being with mom, seeing her happy, and having so many people who love her makes Little Ningning very happy.

"Juanzi, tidy up a bit later and come back home with us. Ningning and Zhuangzhuang can go to school together; it's good for them to have each other's company."

At the dinner table, Qin Han said to Qin Juan.

Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin also looked over.

Their daughter getting divorced means she should come home. Even though their younger son's place is also a home, they felt that wasn't appropriate. With parents still alive, it's not proper to live with a sibling.

"Mom, I won't go back," Qin Juan said.

Zhang Guilan, with concern, interjected, "Juanzi, are you not going back because you're afraid of village gossip? Don't worry. Our daughter is a member of our family, whether divorced or not. If our own family doesn't mind, outsiders have no right to gossip. The more they talk, the more harmoniously our family will live, just to spite them."

Mrs. Qin also looked at her daughter with heartache.

She knew all too well about the tongues in the village, and the number of things they could say about a divorced daughter returning home.

Her daughter had a hard time at the Zhang Family, and going back she would have to listen to all that idle chatter. What had her good daughter done wrong to deserve this?

Yet Qin Juan smiled, "I know, with you backing me, I'm not afraid of anything. I'm not going back because I've already found work here; I want to work at my brother's and sister-in-law's bun shop."

"You can work at your brother's and sister-in-law's bun shop and still come back to An City. There are two bun shops in An City, with your big brother and me to look after you, everything will be convenient."

Zhang Guilan still wanted her to go back; she felt it wasn't home because it was too far from their place.



Moreover, everything here was not beautiful for Qin Juan, better to leave this sad place sooner.

But Qin Juan insisted, "I think it's quite nice here, I've gotten used to life here. Dad, Mom, I want to stay here."

This time, Qin Yang spoke up, "Let big sister stay here, Xiaxia and I will take care of them."

If nothing goes awry, Zhang Wenbin will return to An City after a while. Since there's Ningning between big sister and Zhang Wenbin, living far from that man and in different places is the most direct solution.

Lin Chuxia also thought of this. Moreover, staying here, big sister could avoid the village gossip and enjoy some peace.

After weighing it up, it was decided that Qin Juan and Ningning would stay in the city to live.

With Qin Juan's matter settled, the family began to talk about Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang's little home again.

Qin Han, looking envious, began discussing with Zhang Guilan about when to build a new house. When the time comes, they would splurge on new furniture and buy a big color TV.

Zhang Guilan, unable to stop smiling, told him to work hard, earn money, and then they could splurge.

Mr. Qin and Mrs. Qin need not mention their pleasure, seeing their children's lives getting better is all they need for happiness.

Though the matter of Qin Juan getting divorced made her stay awake all night, today, seeing her daughter's spirits better than before, and her smile broader, they understood that divorce was not a matter of heartbreak for their daughter, but a release.

With the younger son and daughter-in-law looking after her, Mrs. Qin truly had no worries.

Qin Yang doesn't even need to mention, today is his birthday, his wife made his favorite dishes for him, his mother prepared longevity noodles for him, and he also received a gift from his wife – a camera.

"Today is a day worth commemorating, let's take a family photo," Lin Chuxia suggested.

Qin Han was the first to respond, "I think it's a great idea, I haven't taken many photos growing up, and today everyone is here, let's take a family portrait."

Far away in An City, Little Zhuangzhuang, who was boasting with Niuniu, suddenly felt a chill on the back of his neck.

Mr. and Mrs. Qin sat in the middle, holding Little Ningning in their arms.

Qin Juan stood behind the elders, with Lin Chuxia and Zhang Guilan next to her on each side, and then Qin Yang and Qin Han on the outer sides.

The camera was set to the timer shooting function.

The moment the shutter button was pressed, Qin Yang quickly stood next to Lin Chuxia and rested his hand on her shoulder.

The little indicator light on the camera blinked three times, and Yuan Bao ran over, curiously staring with its dog eyes.

"Click," the flash went off.

Blinding its dog eyes.

With the matter of the older sister resolved, Lin Chuxia also began to get busy with the restaurant.

The decoration of the restaurant was already completed, and the tables and seats could be arranged in the next two days.

The two chefs selected by Jia Liang had been confirmed, just waiting for Lin Chuxia to join the taste testing.

One of them, Sun Changda, was the chef Jia Liang had previously introduced to Lin Chuxia, from the State-Owned Restaurant.

Although only in his early forties, he had already been in the business for over 20 years.

Lin Chuxia had a good first impression of Sun Changda; at this age, a person's character could often be discerned from their facial expressions.

The other chef, Kong Jian, was introduced by Sun Changda, around twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, practically Sun Changda's half-apprentice.

After apprenticeship, he coincidentally encountered the State-Owned Restaurant's downturn, and after working as a temp for two years without making much money, he went back to farming.

In the village, for any big or small event, they would ask Kong Jian to take charge of the kitchen. Although he was not as professional as Sun Changda, his cooking skills were said to be quite decent.

Knowing his master had found him a job, and worried that Jia Liang might not approve of him, he frequented the Bun Shop in this period, even specifically cooked a tableful of dishes for Jia Liang.

Jia Liang really appreciated Kong Jian's cleverness; with his drive, even if the skills were lacking a bit, with Sun Changda's further guidance, there shouldn't be any problems.

As it turned out, the dishes he made tasted quite good.

However, no matter what, Lin Chuxia still had the final say in the end.

Once Lin Chuxia heard about the relationship between the two men, she had half the mind to retain both of them.

This kind of relationship was not prone to conflict during work, and the two chefs could clearly define who was in charge and who was the deputy.

After both chefs had cooked the dishes once, Lin Chuxia merely looked at the color of the dishes and had an idea, and after tasting them, she confirmed the hiring of both.

"Have the salaries been discussed with Master Sun and Master Kong?"

Jia Liang nodded, "It's been discussed; they are both very happy with the salaries."

"That's good! Let's set the official opening day for this weekend. Let's set off some firecrackers; it's not just about increasing business, we also need to make some noise."

Chapter 366: Take You to a Place

"Ah, yes, Mr. Lin, rest assured."

Jia Liang had already mastered the skills needed in the Bun Shop, and Lin Chuxia indeed felt quite relieved.

"Where's my elder sister?"

Lin Chuxia looked around but didn't see Qin Juan.

Jia Liang pointed to the kitchen, "She should be in the kitchen making buns. Our elder sister is very talented and skillful. Though she has only been here for a few days, her skills in making buns are already comparable to a master's, and even faster than those of the old masters."

Lin Chuxia smiled and nodded.

Her elder sister was indeed great, gentle, efficient, and fond of cleanliness.

During the time she lived at home, she kept it inside and out spotlessly clean.

Sometimes Lin Chuxia felt sorry for her working hard all day and told her not to overdo it.

But as said, Qin Juan still had tasks to complete.

Lin Chuxia was also aware that living with them made her sister uncomfortable.

Especially since she knew there were dormitories available at the Bun Shop, she had even proposed to take Ningning and live in the dorms.

But with Ningning being so young, how could living in a dorm be convenient?

Lin Chuxia went straight to the kitchen to look for Qin Juan and indeed saw her making buns with a few waitstaff, chatting and laughing while they worked.

"Mr. Lin."

"Hello, Mr. Lin!"

The staff greeted Lin Chuxia as she approached, and Qin Juan also turned around to look.

"Sister, I need to talk to you about something. Let's finish work a bit early today."

"Okay, I'll come now."

Qin Juan quickly wrapped up the bun she was making, washed her hands, and took off her apron.

"I'll just let the manager know."

Lin Chuxia nodded and waited for her at the entrance of the Bun Shop.

After a little while, Qin Juan came out, holding her little cloth bag.

"Sister-in-law, what's the matter?"

"Sister, I'm taking you to a place."

Lin Chuxia had not ridden her bicycle, and she walked with Qin Juan while chatting.

"I heard that the Zhang family has already returned to An City. Since it's far from Ningning's school here, I asked Qin Yang to help get Ningning enrolled in the Second Primary School. She can start from next Monday, and it will be convenient for picking up and dropping off Ningning."

The Second Primary School was only a few hundred meters away from their Bun Shop. Once Ningning grew a bit older, she wouldn't need to be picked up, and she could go to school on her own.

Ningning had not been attending school these days, partly because the school was far and also because the Zhang family hadn't left town yet; they always had to be cautious.

Now that she has moved to a new school, it would not be easy for Zhang Wenbin to target Ningning again.

Qin Juan couldn't utter the words of thanks anymore; how could she trivially express her gratitude with mere words given the thoughtfulness of her sister-in-law?

Unbeknownst to her, there was an even more touching gesture to come, as Lin Chuxia took her to a courtyard.

Qin Juan knew this place, their Bun Shop's staff quarters were just in this alley.

Lin Chuxia directly handed her the keys, "From now on, you and Ningning will live here, and if anything arises, you must tell me and Qin Yang. It can't be like before anymore; we are your family."

Qin Juan, holding the keys, her eyes slightly red, responded, "I understand, sister-in-law."

"Alright, sister, let's see the house. It's close to the staff quarters, so having you and Ningning here will also give us peace of mind knowing you're looked after."

Qin Juan opened the courtyard gate to see two rooms, neatly arranged.

"Sister-in-law, how about the rent? You helped me rent this place; you absolutely cannot continue to cover the rent for me."

Close as siblings yet clear in accounts, despite having money, Qin Juan didn't want to be a parasite, relying on her brother and sister-in-law for life.

The two rooms had been recently purchased by Lin Chuxia. She understood Qin Juan's insistence and replied smiling, "Five yuan per month. I've paid the rent for six months; you can pay me back once you get your salary."

Qin Juan smiled slightly and agreed, "Okay."

She now earns 40 yuan a month, with a bonus if she does well. The Bun Shop provides three meals a day and with a rent of 5 yuan a month, she and Ningning can easily afford it.

Thinking about before the divorce, she and Ningning couldn't even spend the household's 5 yuan in a month, she felt quite content and relaxed with such a life.

The two of them looked around inside and outside again and tidied up a bit where needed.

The room had a bed and a wardrobe, they could move in once they brought their luggage.

The kitchen still needed some more utensils, which Qin Juan could handle by herself.

Even the closest people need to maintain boundaries, so at this point, Qin Juan and her daughter's life had stabilized, and Lin Chuxia didn't need to get overly involved in their lives anymore.

Today was still early, Qin Juan planned to go back and cook a good meal, moving tomorrow, considering it the last meal before parting and also a way to express thanks to her brother and sister-in-law, Lin Chuxia didn't object.

As the two of them just came out, a person walked out from the neighboring yard, seeing Lin Chuxia and Qin Juan, the person excitedly said, "Boss Lin, what are you doing here?"

Lin Chuxia was also surprised to see Aunt Jia here, "Aunt, you live here?"

"Yes, Liangzi and we rented a house here, are you here to see Liangzi?"

After asking, Aunt Jia felt she asked something unnecessary and laughed, pushing open the gate, "Come and sit in the yard for a while."

"No, thank you, Aunt."

To think that Jia Liang and Aunt Jia lived next door, this made Lin Chuxia feel even more relieved, turning to introduce them.

"This is my older cousin sister, she'll be living next door."



Qin Juan, hearing Aunt Jia's words, already knew this was the manager's mother.

Qin Juan also felt grateful towards Jia Liang.

Back then, when she was tormented by Zhang Family to the point of losing her vitality, vaguely remembering, it was Jia Liang who carried her to the hospital.

Later, it was also Jia Liang who helped her find evidence against Zhang Wenbin which not only led to her divorce but also helped her gain the custody of Ningning.

In the Bun Shop, Jia Liang always looked after her.

While she knew these might be for the sake of his sister, Qin Juan was a grateful person. No matter the reason behind Jia Liang's actions, he truly helped her, and she was thankful.

"Aunt, my name is Qin Juan, if you need any help in the future, just let me know."

Qin Juan showed extra warmth towards Aunt Jia.

Aunt Jia first heard from Lin Chuxia that this was her cousin sister, then saw that this woman was tall and slim, pretty and delicate.

She looked like someone with a good temperament.

"Ah, sure, you also let Aunt know if you need anything in the future, we neighbors should look out for each other."

After bidding farewell to Aunt Jia, the two headed to the market first.

They bought fish and meat, seeing large bones, Qin Juan specifically bought some.

Lin Chuxia liked the bone soup made by Qin Juan, and also enjoyed eating noodle soup with bones, the bones could also be used for Yuan Bao to gnaw on.

But this time, it was obvious Qin Juan bought the bones purely for Yuan Bao's food.

"Yuan Bao will definitely be happy this time."

Qin Juan also smiled, "Yuan Bao is really smart, spending every day with it, Ningning has become more cheerful."

This was the biggest change since her divorce, and also the most comforting.

Because she was a girl, Ningning was disliked by her mother-in-law from a young age.

Although Zhang Wenbin had never said anything, his behavior... being so sensitive, how could a child not feel it.

Moreover, with Zhang Wenbin's volatile temper, either arguing with her or getting physical, Ningning grew up in that household walking on eggshells, afraid of upsetting her dad and grandparents.

Qin Juan always thought that as long as she protected her daughter well and gave her enough love, she could heal her emotional wounds.

She was wrong.

A father could be a support, but also the mountain that oppressed her.

Now that they have left that mountain, their lives have finally brightened up.

"Yuan Bao also likes kids, make sure to come visit it often after you move out."

"I will."

#### Chapter 367: In Our Neighboring Location?

The night breeze was gentle, Jia Liang closed up the shop and made his way home in the moonlight.

Old Mrs. Jia had not gone to bed yet, still working under the light, stitching together shoe soles.

It was about to get cold, and she had only made one pair of cotton shoes for her son.

Her son was quite capable these days, running around all the time, wearing out his shoes quickly.

He was also a team leader now and couldn't just wear old cotton shoes; those fancy leather shoes he bought didn't seem as warm as the ones she made.

Seeing his mother doing this again, Jia Liang frowned slightly and reminded her, "Mom, don't bother making them for me, I have plenty to wear. Working at this time of night is bad for your eyes."

Old Mrs. Jia didn't even lift her head, "It's fine, I'm used to this work, I could stitch them even without looking...ouch..."

Before she could finish her sentence, she raised her finger as if it was shocked by electricity, and a drop of blood had already formed at the fingertip.

"You child, always such a drama queen."

Jia Liang: "..."

Is she really blaming him for this?

"I'm going back to my room to sleep, you should go to bed early too."

If he couldn't reason with her, he could at least avoid her.

Old Mrs. Jia spoke again, "Liangzi, what happened to your boss's cousin? I remember you mentioning a while back that the cousin, a woman named Qin Juan, was going through a divorce with her husband, right?"

"Why do you ask about that?" Jia Liang had only mentioned it to Old Mrs. Jia briefly.

Old Mrs. Jia put down her work and leaned forward, "I saw your Boss Lin today, with her cousin. It was right next to our house. Is she divorced now?"

Jia Liang was surprised, "Next to our house? Has she moved in?"

He remembered the two rooms next to their house had been empty for a while.

"Not yet, seems like she came to look at the house. Looks like she will move in these next days. I saw that the girl looks good and has a pleasant face; what kind of family would get such a good daughter-in-law and still not be satisfied?"

Mentioning Qin Juan, the scene of her, bound hand and foot, being dragged out from under the bed, the look of utter despair, surfaced in Jia Liang's mind.

It was a scene so shocking that even though he was used to street fights, he never hit women.

Such a weak woman, beaten black and blue, also tied up and gagged, in fear she might call out for help.

Jia Liang couldn't imagine what Qin Juan would've endured if they hadn't intervened.

He couldn't help but share with his mother Qin Juan's ordeal, including her husband's affair and domestic abuse.

Listening, Old Mrs. Jia clenched her fists, "That's just outrageous, how could they lay a hand on such a nice girl."

"The kind are taken advantage of, and the gentle are ridden roughshod. Qin Juan is too mild-mannered and weak, so her in-laws took advantage of her."

These days Qin Juan was working at the Bun Shop, and Jia Liang got to know more about her.

She was incredibly nice.

Always smiling and in good spirits when dealing with colleagues and customers.

Once, a customer waiting in line outside lost patience and lashed out at their staff; the young girl selling the buns cried from being scolded, but without a word, Qin Juan took her place and continued the sale, calming the customer while doing so.

As if she had not a hint of temper.

Jia Liang was a hothead, especially when he was younger, always ready to fight if he didn't agree with something.

But it has been these recent years working with Lin Chuxia that he gradually reined in his temper.

Even so, he often lost his temper over upsetting matters, and there was not a single employee in their shop who wasn't afraid of him. If they made a mistake, he would really scold them.

That's why Qin Juan's good temper was beyond Jia Liang's comprehension, yet he also found it admirable.

"Mom, with Qin Juan living next door in the future, take extra care of her. It's not easy for a woman to live alone with a child. Help her out whenever you can."

With him looking after the shop and everyone knowing she is the boss's aunt, she wouldn't suffer any grievances.

The neighborhood residents here are a diverse bunch, and his mother has a quick temper.

"You don't need to tell me that. I'd have to help out just considering Boss Lin's face anyway."

What Jia Liang meant wasn't about considering Lin Chuxia's face, but that he simply felt sympathy for this woman's situation.

However, he didn't object to his mother's words, after all, being more attentive is the right thing to do.

With the elder sister moving out, Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang returned to their two-person world and daily routine.

The weather was getting colder by the day. Lin Chuxia, who disliked the cold, found herself even more reluctant to go outside.

The voice of Sister-in-law Fu came from outside, "Chuxia, this afternoon the unit is bringing in cabbages, and they will also send a truckload over here for the families. Remember to have someone at home to stock up on cabbages."

"Alright, got it, thank you, sister-in-law."

Lin Chuxia stuck her head out from the house and shouted back to the neighboring house.

There were quite a few people living in the family housing, and Qin Yang's unit took care to look after them all.

Recently, when the unit brought in coal, they also delivered a couple of extra trucks here.

Most people now use honeycomb coal briquettes, and since coal chunks for boilers are generally unaffordable, many wouldn't use them.

However, there are still a few households that keep some coal chunks. Crushed into smaller pieces, they could also make their own honeycomb coal.

Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang discussed keeping two tons of coal. She didn't really like burning honeycomb coal because of its strong smell, and if handled incorrectly, there was a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The couple considered installing radiators and getting a small household boiler which could heat water and also the radiators, making the house warmer.

When Qin Yang returned at midday, the two of them discussed the matter again while eating.

Master Zhang from their unit, skilled at installing radiators, had installed them for several households in the residential area.

Lin Chuxia handed a slice of fatty meat to Qin Yang from her bowl, "These state-owned enterprises really have an outdated sales concept. After selling stoves and radiators, can't they offer an installation service for free? It's no wonder that these units can't keep running. They have no ambition. If you lag behind, you will get beaten. This slogan has been chanted for so many years, to no avail."

Qin Yang glanced at his little wife and joked, "They sell you things and still need to install them? Should they also deliver them to your home?"

Lin Chuxia nodded as if it were only natural, "Exactly, one-stop service."

Qin Yang just laughed, knowing that his little wife had some insights on doing business but also found the idea somewhat fanciful.

One-stop service?

Even if you pick an extra item when shopping, the sales assistants in department stores can give you such disdainful looks, and reluctant to assist you, let alone deliver goods?

Lin Chuxia knew he didn't believe her and huffed, "Just wait and see, it will happen one day."

Some ideas are indeed deeply ingrained and hard to change, even for Qin Yang.

Lin Chuxia reflected that the reform and opening up had been happening for less than 10 years. The country really started to develop rapidly after joining the WTO in 2000.

Even she occasionally felt an illusion that certain things should naturally be so, but it was only in this era that she realized history's wheels didn't turn as quickly as she imagined, including people's ideologies at the time, which were still in a conservative and outdated state.

Right after finishing the meal, Master Zhang from the unit arrived.

Chapter 368: Not Indulging

Qin Yang tidied up and went out with him.

The radiators were easy to buy, all made of cast iron without many options to choose from, but it was necessary to pick a good stove, and I heard Master Zhang was an expert in this area.

Qin Yang was responsible for making payments.

In less than an hour, they returned with two carts following them, loaded with stoves and radiators.

Lin Chuxia had already tidied up the house as much as possible; the remaining tables and cabinets required some lifting and moving, so they would have to wait for Qin Yang.



Master Zhang was in his forties, slightly chubby, and looked very sturdy.

He easily lifted the half-meter-tall cast iron stove off the cart by himself.

Qin Yang helped him from behind, and Lin Chuxia didn't interfere anymore.

Hearing the noisy commotion outside, she knew that the cabbage delivery truck had arrived at the residential compound.

In the Northwest, storing cabbage for the winter is essential. Lin Chuxia informed Qin Yang and then stepped outside.

Just as she left the main door, she ran into Sister-in-law Fu from next door.

"I was about to call you, the cabbage seller is here. Are you guys going back to your hometown for the New Year? If not, you should store more. If you don't buy now, you'll have to go to the market yourself later."

She added in a whisper, "The cabbages provided by the unit are cheaper than those in the market."

"I know, sister," Lin Chuxia said with a smile, her eyes curving into crescents.

The tractor carrying the cabbages was already on the main road of the residential compound, surrounded by quite a crowd.

Everyone was busy moving cabbages from the truck, setting them aside first; they would only start moving them home after the seller had weighed and they had paid.

Seeing the crowd, Sister-in-law Fu hurriedly pulled Lin Chuxia, "Hurry, or we won't get any," and then she trotted towards the tractor.

Lin Chuxia was indifferent; she hadn't planned to store too many cabbages, but she hadn't experienced such an atmosphere in many years.

At the front of the tractor, some quick movers were already weighing their cabbages.

They placed the cabbages in sacks made from tarpaulin, each with four corners suspended from the hooks of the large scale.

A rough wooden stick with an iron shovel passed through the scale's lifting rope, with both the seller and buyer holding one end each.

The cabbage swayed as it was lifted, and the seller quickly adjusted the scale until the scale's arm nearly balanced.

The buyers would seize the moment to instruct, "Weigh a little more, move it inward."

At such times, the seller would usually adjust the scale a few notches inward.

The thick scale arm then tilted upwards significantly.

"82 jin and 3, quite high."

The buyer also beamed with joy.

Lin Chuxia spotted Jiang Hong in the crowd, struggling to move cabbages from the truck with a pregnant belly.

"Why are you still moving cabbages yourself?"

Lin Chuxia took the cabbage from her hands, disapprovingly.

Her belly was already rather large, around five or six months along.

Jiang Hong was nonchalant, "This bit of work is nothing. Back in my hometown, I'd still be carrying water."

"Still, you should be careful. You watch, and I'll do the lifting."

Jiang Hong thought, given Lin Chuxia's delicate appearance, clearly not accustomed to farm work, she might not even perform as well as she did.

Yet she saw that woman effortlessly picking up two cabbages to put in front, then two more to stack on top, effortlessly grabbing four cabbages at once.

Jiang Hong: "..."

Mr. Qin's wife, looking so dainty, seemed stronger than women who had done farm work.

Handling these big green cabbages, each weighing over ten jin, she moved four at once.

She herself, not pregnant, wouldn't dare to lift them like that.

While others moved cabbages one or two at a time, Lin Chuxia handled four at a time, swiftly piling two heaps in front of Jiang Hong.

The big pile is Jiang Hong's; they're not planning to go back to their hometown this Spring Festival.

Jiang Hong is pregnant, and by then it'll be nearly time for her to give birth, going back and forth would be inconvenient.

The smaller pile is Lin Chuxia's, just about a dozen or so.

A tractor full of Chinese cabbages was divided up in no time, and what remained was waiting for the vegetable seller to weigh them before everyone carried them home using various methods.

At that moment, Sister-in-law Feng arrived late, dragging Feng Jingjing with her.

Seeing that all the vegetables on the cart had been moved, she was frantic, scratching her head in desperation.

She asked the vegetable seller if they could bring another cart.

The vegetable seller, being straightforward, immediately asked, "You want a whole cart?"

Of course, Sister-in-law Feng couldn't take an entire cart.

Hearing she only wanted about one to two hundred pounds, he flatly said, "None left."

Sister-in-law Feng was out of options, but she wasn't ready to give up; her eyes darted around, finally settling on Lin Chuxia and Jiang Hong.

The moment she appeared, Lin Chuxia knew this woman was up to no good again.

She would look at the sky, the ground, talk to Jiang Hong, all but avoiding looking at her.

Jiang Hong did the same.

But regardless of their disregard, Sister-in-law Feng didn't plan to let them off the hook.

"Li Wei's family, you bought so much cabbage?"

Picking on the soft ones, Sister-in-law Feng had hit many snags with Lin Chuxia before and didn't dare to provoke Lin Chuxia this time.

Jiang Hong nodded, "We aren't going back to our hometown for Spring Festival, so we stored a little more to eat over the winter."

In those times, there weren't off-season vegetables. In winter, cabbages and tofu ruled.

"That's quite a lot of vegetables! It's just the two of you at home; you can't finish it all daily, can you? Storing too much cabbage, it'll spoil over time—that would be a waste of money. How about this, hand over a few to me, it'll save you the inconvenience of moving them around with your big belly. Later, my daughter and I can help you carry them."

Jiang Hong had long disliked Sister-in-law Feng. It's just that her husband, Li Wei, didn't have as high a position as Feng Dajun, and she dared not offend people easily.

Knowing Feng Dajun had also been transferred here, Jiang Hong had been avoiding Sister-in-law Feng.

Now that the matter had come to this, Jiang Hong wanted to decline but feared losing face for Sister-in-law Feng in front of neighbors, which might lead Feng Dajun to make things difficult for her own husband.

Caught in a dilemma, she then heard Lin Chuxia speak up from nearby, "Sister-in-law Feng, you even brought your child with you, how could we let you help? We've already discussed this, I'll help her later."

Sister-in-law Feng hadn't expected Lin Chuxia to speak up for Jiang Hong; she chuckled awkwardly, "Is that so? Well then... that's good, that's good."

Watching the mother-daughter pair walk away dejected, Jiang Hong breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thank you so much for today; I really didn't know how to refuse her."

Back in the Northwest, Li Wei was under Qin Yang and had no connection with Feng Dajun.

Now that he had been transferred here, Li Wei was feeling overwhelmed, and Feng Dajun wasn't someone easy to offend.

"It's okay. If she troubles you next time, just have your husband let Feng Dajun know, or make a bigger issue out of it. Everyone lives in the same residential compound, who doesn't know who? She can't continue being shameless while you just tolerate her bullying."

Lin Chuxia wouldn't tolerate her.

Initially, she might have given Sister-in-law Feng some face because of Feng Dajun, but now, Feng Dajun's favor had run out.

Soon it was their turn to weigh their goods, and after paying, they could carry them home.

Sister-in-law Fu had a small cart; Lin Chuxia hadn't bought much, so she and Sister-in-law Fu managed to cart it back in one trip.

After carrying her own, she borrowed Sister-in-law Fu's small cart again to help Jiang Hong with hers.

Jiang Hongyuan had planned to transport them slowly herself, and if really needed, wait for Li Wei to come back to help. Now with everything sorted out, she thanked Lin Chuxia profusely.

"No need to be polite, it's just lending a hand."

After unloading the last cabbage, Lin Chuxia dusted off her hands.

"If you really want to thank me, come to my house early this weekend. We plan to host a meal for everyone; you can come over and give me a hand."

She and Qin Yang had finally decided to host a meal for everyone.

#### Chapter 369: Hosting a Dinner

Since Qin Yang transferred here, the leadership and several colleagues have taken great care of him. His position isn't considered high nor low, and according to tradition, a meal invitation to everyone is customary.

They didn't plan to make any exceptions, simply that there were more transfers this time, and nobody wanted to be the first to step up.

Recently, with the bustle of the elder sister's affairs, there were rumors that a few of the new transferees had begun to plan meals for everyone, so they followed suit.

"Sure thing, I'll definitely come early," Jiang Hong readily agreed.

In no time, the weekend arrived, and Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang went to the market early to buy chicken, fish, and meat without skimping on anything.

These days, people preferred to serve plenty of meat and fish when hosting meals.

In the afternoon, Jiang Hong also came early. Just after she arrived, Sister-in-law Fu from next door came over to help.

Today, Qin Yang invited his superiors, Minister Wei Bingchang and his wife, the Hu Qing'an family, another colleague from the office, Fu Shouquan and his family, and finally, Li Wei and his wife.

Minister Wei Bingchang was a few years older than Hu Qing'an, nearly hitting 50, his wife Gong Shuling was also close to retirement age, and they had two sons: one working and another studying at a university out of town.

Qin Yang had said that besides his own will, Minister Wei had also greatly helped his transfer here; one could say he was specially requested by Minister Wei to come.

There were quite a few guests today, and Lin Chuxia bought a lot of ingredients, enough to set two tables—one for men and one for women—making it a lively scene.

Men clinked glasses and toasted at the table, while women chatted away.

Especially regarding Lin Chuxia's cooking skills, the praises were endless.

Gong Shuling picked up a piece of fish and sincerely complimented, "I haven't eaten so much in a long time. Every time Old Wei encourages me to eat more, I know it's good for my health, but I just can't manage to eat much. It turns out, it's not a problem with my appetite; Old Wei's cooking just doesn't cut it."

From the moment Gong Shuling walked through the door, Lin Chuxia could tell that the woman was not in good health, exhibiting a frail thinness.

Including her complexion, there was an obvious lack of vitality.

Coming in with Minister Wei, although in this era men usually take precedence in public, Minister Wei took care of his wife every step of the way.

Now, listening to the conversation, Lin Chuxia could also tell that Minister Wei was very caring toward his wife, who was not in good health.

Sister-in-law Fu, who has been around for many years, knew even more.

Hearing this, she smiled and spoke up, "That's easy to say. I've been wanting to learn the secrets too. Later, we should get Lin to teach us how to make these delicious fish and meat dishes so well. Next time, we can invite Minister Wei to join the class."



"I think that's a great idea," Gong Shuling commented with a smile, looking at Lin Chuxia, "I just don't know if Lin would be willing to teach."

"Of course, I'll teach," Lin Chuxia said generously, "If I get to teach a minister, I must hold this class."

"Then I'll be there too, becoming classmates with the minister," Sister-in-law Fu raised her hand on the side.

Minister Wei was known in the compound for being exceptionally good to his wife and for his pleasant temperament.

Even among these colleagues' families, they grew bolder in his presence.

The conversation on this side was lively, and the volume had risen a few notches.

Minister Wei probably heard someone discussing him and looked to his wife, asking, "What classmates?"

Gong Shuling eyed him with a chuckle, "Drink your wine, it's none of your business."

Minister Wei gave a chuckle, lifted his glass towards Qin Yang and the others, and said, "Look at how excited they are talking, and they won't even let us chime in. Come on, let's drink. They'll have their fun, and we'll have our drinks."

Not far away, in the residential building, The Feng family was also having dinner.

Sister-in-law Feng passed a white flatbread to Feng Dajun, then naturally tore another bread in half, keeping one part for herself and handing the other half to Feng Jingjing sitting beside her.

Feng Jingjing took the bread and bit into it, also picking up some pickled vegetables from the table.

Feng Dajun frowned slightly, "Haven't I told you before? My salary is not low now, there's no need to make two different meals, we can afford to eat all white flour dishes."

Sister-in-law Feng gnawed at her flatbread and pickles, not taking his words seriously at all.

"Eating more doesn't mean we should spend your whole salary, right? With your little pay every month, we still have to send 10 yuan back to the countryside. Plus our food and drink, the children's education, if we don't save a little, when will we be able to afford a TV?"

"If you want to save, we should all save. What does it look like sharing two different meals at one table?"

Feng Dajun pushed the stir-fried vegetables in front of him towards Feng Jingjing and also grabbed a flatbread for himself.

Faced with the stir-fried vegetables, Feng Jingjing glanced at her mother first, then timidly said, "Dad, I don't like this. I prefer pickled vegetables."

Sister-in-law Feng was pleased with her daughter's response and pushed the vegetables towards her husband, "You eat yours, don't worry about us. You work so hard at your job, you have to eat something good. You need to look plump and healthy, so when you step outside, no one looks down on you."

Seeing Feng Dajun frowning impatiently, Sister-in-law Feng preemptively cautioned, "Don't be offended by what I say, I'm telling the truth. You don't see what it's like at the office all day. People in this housing complex look down on others. A few days ago, when they were selling cabbages in the courtyard, the neighbors around us also went shopping. Would it have killed them to notify us too? They went to buy cabbages in groups, without even acknowledging us. I've said it before, those city folks are snobbish. Mr. Qin was transferred here with you, and Mrs. Qin came just a few days after me, yet people notified her. Isn't it just because she's from the city and dresses nicely?"

"That's not necessarily the case. Those living in the courtyard generally have better access to news than those of us living in the residential building," Feng Dajun said to soothe her.

"What are you talking about? If it was just that, I wouldn't be this upset. Mrs. Qin and Li Wei's wife got such a big pile of cabbages. When I arrived late and asked for a few heads of cabbage, Li Wei's wife hadn't said anything yet, but Mrs. Qin's mouth went on and on, as if I was taking advantage of them. I didn't even want it for free; I was offering to pay and even help Li Wei's wife carry her cabbages."

Feng Dajun thought for a moment; he had some recollection of Qin Yang's wife.

She was a very beautiful woman.

"It can't be that bad, could it? Maybe you misunderstood."

"What's there to misunderstand? I've seen it from the start, she just looks down on us because we're from the countryside."

Sister-in-law Feng continued, pointing outside.

"Did you hear about their party today? I've asked around. They invited Li Wei and his wife but not you, even though you're from the same place and at the same level. What do they mean by that?"

Feng Dajun pursed his lips, "Now that you mention it, we've been here for a while; we should probably host a dinner for everyone too."

Sister-in-law Feng's eyes suddenly widened, "You want to invite everyone for dinner? How would you do it? I tell you, Mr. Qin and the rest have no good intentions. You are at the same level, but he's causing such a fuss; doesn't it make others look bad? I bet he's doing it intentionally to outdo

#### Chapter 370: Blushing with Embarrassment

"Then let's try our best to prepare something nice. It is just a meal after all, and I can afford this much money. Let's make sure it's not inferior to what they have."

"You make it sound so easy. Who are they, and who are we? Don't be fooled by that Lin, always saying she's from the countryside. Have you ever seen a villager like her? As soon as she arrived, she had a

whole set of new furniture, a TV, and a radio. Which of our farmers is as rich as them? We are the genuine, old peasants; even if we did have something, we couldn't compare with them."

"If this won't do and that won't do, what exactly do you want?"

Feng Dajun ran out of patience, threw his chopsticks on the table, and frowned deeply.

Sister-in-law Feng was ultimately afraid of Feng Dajun. Seeing him truly angry, she spoke in a timid and compliant manner, "I don't have any particular thoughts, I'm just saying Mr. Qin is not as simple as you think. You should be more careful when you go to work, don't let others take advantage. As for hosting guests, let's forget about it. They look down on us after all. If you invite a bunch of people and no one shows up, wouldn't that be like putting your face on the ground for others to step on..."

.....

The bustling atmosphere continued until after nine o'clock in the evening.

At this time, people had little nightlife, and not every household had a TV, with most already asleep by nine o'clock.

Minister Wei patted his belly contentedly, "Ah, I'm really full and satisfied today. Xiao Qin, you are indeed very blessed. The cooking skills of your family outshine even the State-Owned Restaurant. Little Lin has worked hard today, thank you both for your hospitality. It's getting late, we should call it a day, so you can also get some rest."

With the minister's words, the meal officially came to an end.

Minister Wei and Sister-in-law Gong went home first.

Fu Shouquan with his wife and child hurried home as well, now that their little girl was nodding off tiredly.

Jiang Hong wanted to help clean up, but was chased away by Sister-in-law Fu.

In the end, it was just Lin Chuxia and Sister-in-law Fu left to clean up the table.

Qin Yang did want to help, but Hu Qing'an, who was quite drunk today, kept holding him in conversation.

Lin Chuxia gave him a look, indicating that in this situation it was better to entertain the guest. Besides, with Sister-in-law Fu helping, it wasn't quite appropriate for Qin Yang to butt in.

There were a lot of dishes used today, and some of them were even borrowed from Sister-in-law Fu's house.

The two chatted idly while washing dishes, and eventually their conversation turned to Minister Wei and Sister-in-law Gong.

"Sister-in-law Gong is also quite lucky. Back when she was pregnant and giving birth, it coincided with a natural disaster. Not having enough food or drink during pregnancy was one thing, but then she had a difficult labor and nearly bled dry. Surviving that left her with barely any breath in her. I heard at that time the couple was living separately, and when Minister Wei heard about the situation, he rode his bicycle all night long to her, feeding her the food he had saved from his unit, mouthful by mouthful. And just like that, her life was saved, though her health wasn't fully restored. Later, Minister Wei managed to arrange for both of their jobs to be in the same place. Over the years, he took good care of her, and that's why she's recovered to this point. People in the courtyard always say that a woman who finds a man like Minister Wei is lucky for life. Without him, Sister-in-law Gong's breath wouldn't have lasted long."

Lin Chuxia could imagine the peril at that time and it was clear to see that the couple shared a strong bond.

.....

Hou Xiaobao came to the city to celebrate the new business addition to Jia Liang's Bun Shop and brought a piece of news for Lin Chuxia.

The county was going to hold the annual summary conference for various enterprises, and County Magistrate Bai specifically requested Lin Chuxia to attend.

In her past life, Lin Chuxia had also attended such meetings. It was the late 1980s by then, and private enterprises were sprouting up like bamboo shoots after rain; she was just one among many emerging shoots.

The current situation was entirely different. Although a few individual businesses had emerged, they mostly received recognition at the town and village level.

Even though her Xiyang Food Factory had grown to some extent, Lin Chuxia didn't think she qualified to sit with the big shots from these state-owned enterprises.

Yet it was County Magistrate Bai who had personally named her.

"Alright, I got it. I'll make sure to go on time."

Lin Chuxia promised to attend first, no matter what, it would be discussed after going there.

She hadn't been back to her hometown for quite a long time, and she hadn't visited her master either. She had sent him some things and written a letter last time, but there had been no reply. She wondered if the old man had returned yet.

At dinner, Lin Chuxia mentioned this to Qin Yang, who also wanted to accompany her back. Lin Chuxia refused.

As the end of the year approached, Qin Yang's work was also mounting, and the affairs back in his ancestral home couldn't be settled in just a day or two.

Qin Yang pursed his lips. Before, when they lived in different places, he hadn't felt much, but now that he was used to their cozy life together, he surprisingly felt reluctant at the mention of his wife leaving.

"Then come back when you are done, and if it's the weekend, give me a call; I'll come to pick you up."

Qin Yang repeated his instructions several times, and Lin Chuxia agreed to them all, thinking that this man was becoming more and more childish.

The next morning, Lin Chuxia went to the department store to buy some things before taking the bus back to An City.

After an unsteady ride of less than two hours, she arrived in An City. Lin Chuxia first went to her master's place.

She saw the gate was locked, and the weed that had grown after autumn and turned yellow - a sign that the master had not returned.

"Where has this old man gone to play now? Is he too happy to think of home?"

Muttering to herself, Lin Chuxia didn't enter the yard and went directly back to the Qin Family home.

Mrs. Qin was overjoyed to see Lin Chuxia's return, and immediately told Mr. Qin to go weigh some meat.

Lin Chuxia stopped her, "Mom, there's no need to hurry, I've brought some spareribs back home. Let's stew spareribs for lunch today."

Lin Chuxia was carrying a lot of bags—with spareribs, delicious pastries, and clothes bought for Mr. Qin, Mrs. Qin, and Little Zhuangzhuang.

"We aren't lacking anything at home, and it's tiring for you to bring so much stuff from afar. You can't buy so much next time."

Despite saying so, the old lady was smiling so much her eyes squinted shut.

Lin Chuxia took out a fashionable padded jacket from the big bag, "Mom, try this on and see if it fits. This one is for Dad; let's see if he likes it."

Mr. Qin did not expect to have something for himself, but even before seeing it, he was nodding his head repeatedly, "I like it, I like it!"

Mrs. Qin quickly wiped her hands and put on the padded jacket, fondly touching here and there, then with a bit of embarrassment looked at Lin Chuxia, "Is this too flamboyant for me?"

The date-red padded jacket was not at all garish. Mrs. Qin was just a bit over fifty years old.

It's just that people of their generation often wore plain clothes early on, either black or gray.

In the past, the clothes Mrs. Qin made for herself were traditional Chinese styles with big buttons and even some women of her age had bound feet.

"Mom, it looks good, you should wear it like this from now on," Lin Chuxia complimented.

Mrs. Qin then looked to Mr. Qin, who also smiled and said, "City clothes look nice, and you look good in them too."

Clearly expecting her husband's praise, when Mr. Qin said it so bluntly, Mrs. Qin felt embarrassed.

Especially in front of her daughter-in-law.

Normally, Mrs. Qin would have glared at Mr. Qin irritably, but seeing Mr. Qin wearing the navy-blue padded jacket, he looked more than a decade younger.

Suddenly, she felt that it was quite nice to compliment someone like her daughter-in-law does.



"You also look good in this, very spirited," she said, and her old face turned red with shyness.