

Switched M 431

Chapter 431: I Don't Want to Marry Li Dongmei

Lin Chuxia shook her head; it wasn't that she was unwilling to spend money, but in that era, giving a longevity lock or a silver bracelet was already very precious. If she gave both, what would others think? How would the other party return the favor in the future?

Qin Yang knew Lin Chuxia's concerns and whispered in her ear, "Then let's choose the silver bracelet. If you like the other items, we can buy as many as you want when we have a baby."

Even though they had been married for so long, Lin Chuxia still blushed when discussing this topic outside.

She gave him a glance and then asked the salesperson to write up the bill.

Qin Yang was captivated by her shy and coy demeanor.

They had reunited after some time apart last night and naturally made love, but it was not as unrestrained as it would have been in their own home in the housing compound.

He really needed to take his wife back to the housing compound soon.

After purchasing the gifts, the pair left the Department Store.

In the car, Lin Chuxia continued to admire the pair of little bracelets.

"This year, there will be many more children around us—the Lanlans, The Xiaowus, my sister-in-law's... How about we give each child a pair of identical silver bracelets? Then we can see a bunch of little radish heads..."

She didn't finish her sentence when the car suddenly braked hard, jolting her body forward and interrupting her.

Qin Yang quickly checked on her, "Are you okay, Xiaxia? Did you hit anywhere?"

Lin Chuxia shook her head; she had the habit from her future life of always wearing a seatbelt whether driving or riding, so she only felt a slight pressure on her shoulder and it didn't hurt.

Her gaze then landed on the woman in front of the car.

It was this woman who had suddenly dashed onto the road from the side, and if it weren't for Qin Yang's timely braking, they would have hit her.

Now, the woman probably realized the danger too, her face paled for a moment from the scare. Seeing the car stopped, she had the audacity to curse, "How do you drive, blind or what?"

Knowing she was in the wrong, she quickly picked up her basket and ran away without even daring to take another look at the people in the car.

Qin Yang's attention was all on Lin Chuxia; once he saw she was fine, he felt relieved.

He frowned upon hearing the woman's curse, but considering basic decency, he let it go since she had already run off.

Lin Chuxia spoke indifferently, "Don't mind her. Are you okay?"

Qin Yang shook his head and started the car back on the road.

Meanwhile, Li Dongmei, carrying a basket full of vegetables, expertly turned through two alleys and stopped at the entrance of a house.

The door of the house wasn't completely shut, and one could easily see the elderly woman washing clothes in the courtyard.

"Elder lady, why are you washing clothes by yourself again?"

She called out and familiarly pushed open the door to enter.

The elderly woman doing the laundry looked up at Li Dongmei, her eyes lighting up with a smile. She shook the water off her hands and walked over to greet her, "Dongmei, you girl, every time you come, you bring so much food."

"Auntie, listen to you, my family may not have much, but we've got plenty of vegetables. Take these vegetables to eat, so you don't have to go out to buy any again."

Li Dongmei handed the vegetable basket to the old lady and sat down in front of the large basin to start washing the clothes the old woman had left half-finished.

Seeing her like this made the old woman even more satisfied, though she politely demurred.

"You don't need to wash these clothes, I can wash them later. It might take me longer, but I will get them done eventually."

"Auntie, please don't be so polite with me. These clothes are a quick job for me. At your age, you should be enjoying your life. My mom doesn't do these chores at home anymore. If it's not my sister-in-law doing them, it's me. My mom doesn't lift a finger when it comes to laundry or cooking."

"Oh dear, I don't have the good fortune like your mother, blessed with a sensible and hardworking daughter like you. All I hope for now is that my son Wenbin can find a diligent and pretty daughter-in-law like you. Then I'll be satisfied."

Li Dongmei's face turned red, "Auntie, what are you talking about? I don't understand."

Mrs. Zhang didn't spell it out, just smiled and watched her.

Li Dongmei washed a whole basin of clothes and helped Mrs. Zhang tidy up the yard. When Mrs. Zhang started cooking and the time was getting late, she reluctantly left the Zhang Family.

Not long after she left, Zhang Wenbin came back from outside and headed straight to his room.

Mrs. Zhang came out from the kitchen and stopped him, speaking earnestly, "Have you given any thought to what I mentioned to you a few days ago? Don't be too proud. That girl Li Dongmei, though she's from the countryside, is capable and diligent. We can't always rely on an old lady like me. Sooner or later you'll have to take a wife."

Hearing his mother bring this up again, Zhang Wenbin impatiently responded, "Please don't interfere with my business, I don't want to marry Li Dongmei."

"If you don't want to marry her, who do you want to marry?" Upon hearing his attitude, Mrs. Zhang instantly became anxious, "Do you plan to remain single for life, expecting me to cater to your eating and drinking at my old age? Or are you still thinking about that wench Li Wenhong? Let me tell you, no way—that wench took all the money from our house. If it weren't for her running away with it, would we be struggling for food like we are now..."

Mentioning Li Wenhong, Mrs. Zhang felt an intense hatred, even more than when Qin Juan had caused her son to lose his job.

That wench never acted like a daughter-in-law to them, always waiting to be fed and served, more pretentious than a princess.

She completely bewitched her son, and he even told her that Li Wenhong was different from Qin Juan, a new woman, and could not be treated the same way as Qin Juan had been.

But look where that got us—really a "new woman." She, as the mother-in-law, had waited on her hand and foot for so long, not a single egg had she produced, and then during the New Year, while everyone was out visiting relatives, she had run away with all their money.

Only then did she realize that wench had never legally married her son.

She probably had had no intention of staying with her son from the day he was dismissed from his job, taking the Zhang family for fools.

It was hard to believe that after all this time, her son was still hung up on her.

"I'll leave it at that today. Li Dongmei is a good girl, and I've taken a liking to her. If you still consider me your mother, you'd better marry her while you can. You're not young anymore. You should get married and have another son soon. You go to work, and she can sell vegetables. Life can go on. But if you keep thinking about that wench Li Wenhong, don't blame me for disowning you."

Seeing her son still appear indifferent, Mrs. Zhang took a step closer and lowered her voice a bit.

"I've already asked for you. After this New Year, Li Dongmei will only be 19, still a pure girl, not some second-hand goods like Li Wenhong. You're already 33, even if she is from the countryside, it's not demeaning for you."

Zhang Wenbin frowned, "Mom, can you stop saying 'countryside people' all the time? What's wrong with countryside people? Nowadays, they also live well."

Mrs. Zhang couldn't understand why her son suddenly couldn't stand to hear her talk about countryside people; after all, city folks like them always looked down on the rural folk, and it wasn't just her.

But thinking again about Li Dongmei, her spirits lifted; had her son had a change of heart?

Chapter 432: Everything Is Still Possible

"Fine, I'll stop talking. Now do you understand what rural people are like? Shall I find a matchmaker and propose to the Li Family for you?"

"I don't want to get married yet. Even if I don't look down on rural people, I still wouldn't choose someone like Li Dongmei," Zhang Wenbin dropped these words and turned to enter the house.

Mrs. Zhang was so angry she was stomping her feet, "If you don't want to get married now, then when? Can't you see that at my age I still have to do the laundry and cook every day? Do you want to work me to death? You unfilial son..."

Lying exhausted on the bed and staring at the ceiling, Zhang Wenbin listened to his mother's roaring and somehow couldn't remember what his old life had been like.

Back then, his mother was always kind and gentle, constantly worrying if he was full or warm, it was meticulous care.

She would prepare a table full of delicious food for his birthday, and when he was busy with work, she would bring him a bowl of chicken soup.

She would always greet him with a cheery smile every day and would secretly slip him a couple of pieces of candy.

Even at his current age, she would still slip him candy.

Back then, he felt that his mother was the best in the world, the person who loved him the most, and he must be filial to her.

However, thinking back on it now, his mother was able to be kind and gentle every day because she didn't have to worry about the household chores, and she would still have time to play cards with her old friends every day.

Her concern for him being full and warm was merely a greeting, and it was someone else who truly made sure he was fed and clothed warmly.

Even the good food on his birthday and the chicken soup when he was busy with work were prepared by someone else; his mother just served them to him.

Without that person, no one even remembered that a few days ago it was his birthday, not to mention a bowl of chicken soup when he was tired.

As for the candy that touched his heart...

Zhang Wenbin didn't continue to think further.

He used to think that person was useless, with no job, no capability of making money, spending all day at home looking after the children, being supported grudgingly by the family.

She was like a useless existence in this house.

Now he realized, without that person, the house didn't feel like a home, and the mother didn't seem like a mother.

What his mother had referred to as trivial household matters had now become the top priority for their family and the main culprit in exhausting his mother.

Just now, for a moment, he even impulsively wanted to ask his mother whether she had ever considered exhausting Qin Juan when she used to take care of all domestic affairs while also looking after the children.

As he thought this, the door was forced open, and Mrs. Zhang stormed in, a fury.

"Wenbin, I've just realized something. If you find this unacceptable and that unsuitable, could it be that you're still hung up on that wretched Qin Juan?"

The more she thought about it, the more it seemed off. She knew her son; Li Wenhong took his money and left without a word, she could've run off with another man—her son would definitely not still be pining for her.

If it wasn't her he was pining for, then it must be that he was still thinking of another woman and that was why he looked down on Li Dongmei.

"Wenbin, don't forget, who caused you to end up like this? After she's hurt you so much, why are you still hung up on her? Do you really think she would come back?"

Seeing that his mother had guessed correctly, Zhang Wenbin didn't intend to hide it anymore.

After all, he had made up his mind about the matter. If he and Qin Juan were to remarry, they would still have to live together.

He might as well clear things up with Mrs. Zhang.

"Mom, stop talking. Initially, you were indeed a bit too hard on Qin Juan, I don't want to dwell on the past. What I want now is to give Ningning a complete family. Ningning is, after all, my daughter, and I know Qin Juan's temperament, she will remarry me for Ningning's sake."

Most importantly, Qin Juan had a job now.

"No way," Mrs. Zhang swiftly rebuffed without a second thought, "I will not agree to that woman entering our household. That's all there is after she's hurt us so badly? If she wants to enter the Zhang family home again, she'll have to get your job back first."

Zhang Wenbin knew his mother's temperament and knew it would be easy to get her to accept Qin Juan.

"Mom, you know about Qin's Buns Shop, right? That belongs to the Qin Family, and so does the Xiyang Food Factory in our county. The Qin Family is nothing like it used to be."

Ever since he found out that Qin's Buns Shop was owned by the Qin Family, he had been inquiring about their affairs.

But it's a pity how tightly that woman keeps things under wraps.

If he had known the Qin Family was not the same as before, how could he have...

But there's still time; he still has Ningning.

"As long as I remarry Qin Juan, it's not just a job we're talking about – why couldn't I manage the Xiyang Food Factory? I've inquired; right now, outsiders are running it, and Qin Yang wouldn't give up his job. Qin Han certainly isn't capable..."

With his many years' experience of working in governmental agencies, managing a small food factory would be a piece of cake.

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Li Dongmei was in high spirits on her way back to the stall.

Their vegetable stall was now just selling some winter-stored vegetables; business wasn't great, but it was just enough to get by.

She couldn't help much here, but she liked coming to the county with her older brother to set up a stall, where she could meet city people and found their conversations interesting.

"Where did you go just now?"

Li Guangyuan's voice came through; Li Dongmei guiltily put down the basket and nonchalantly fiddled with the vegetables on the stand.

"I didn't do much, just walked around."

But Li Guangyuan saw right through her, saying directly, "A girl like you shouldn't be considering marrying a divorcee. You're not allowed to go over there anymore."

Li Dongmei's face turned pale, "Big brother, what are you talking about? What do you mean, 'divorcee'? I don't understand."

"Whether you understand or not, you know in your heart. I would never agree to you marrying a divorcee," he turned to look at Li Dongmei, "and neither would Mom."

Li Dongmei didn't take it to heart; after all, even if people say so, he is from the city. If she marries a city man, why wouldn't her mom agree?

Her older sister was right; her brother and sister-in-law just couldn't stand to see them do well. Waiting for them to find her a match would probably end up just like her older sister.

Rather than toiling and suffering in the countryside for a lifetime, she'd rather marry a divorced city man.

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Originally, Lin Chuxia was going to return to the city with Qin Yang today, but then Wang Cheng showed up.

She needed to discuss some matters with the village chief, Wang Cheng, tomorrow when he was at work. Having no choice, she could only let Qin Yang go back first; he had to go to work on Monday.

Upon hearing Lin Chuxia's arrangements, Qin Han cheerfully draped his arm over his brother's shoulder.

"If my sister-in-law doesn't have time, I'll drive you back. You should also try out the new truck I bought, the one in the yard, for the agricultural supply store. I was always borrowing the tractor from my uncle's house, which sister-in-law thought was embarrassing, so she bought a truck for the agricultural station. You know, having your own vehicle does give you presence..."

Qin Han said this, but he was well aware of everything in his heart.

His sister-in-law just couldn't stand to see family members asking others for help.

Qin Yang looked at his smug expression, somewhat contemptuously pushing him away, "No need for you to bother, I have my own car."

His wife bought him a motorcycle first, so in her eyes, he still comes first.

Moreover, even if he did take him, what about his wife? Isn't her jeep far better than his truck?

Just look at him showing off.

Chapter 433: Return to the City

On the second day, Wang Cheng arrived at the Qin Family Village agricultural shop on time early in the morning. Lin Chuxia did a double-take, almost not recognizing him.

Yesterday, he was a greasy mechanic, but today he's tidied up, even shaved his beard and combed his hair.

Though his skin was rough from being battered by wind and sun, his spirit was clearly different from the day before.

"Brother Wang, you are looking sharp."

Lin Chuxia couldn't help teasing him.

Wang Cheng chuckled, "Of course, starting a job can't be the same as setting up a stall on the roadside."

Besides, he was a recruit brought over to the Qin Family Village by Lin Chuxia. Today was his first time meeting the village cadres and the folks of the Qin Family Village, and he certainly didn't want to let Lin Chuxia down.

Lin Chuxia knew Wang Cheng was reliable. She took him to meet with the village chief and some others in charge of the vegetable greenhouses, including four technicians.

After that, all the people except the technicians held a small meeting, mainly to arrange for future vegetable sales.

Some people at the meeting knew Wang Cheng as the in-charge of the vegetable distribution station and held him in high regard.

With that foundation, the rest of the proceedings became much easier.

At the meeting, Wang Cheng learned about the current vegetable output and sales channels of the Qin Family Village greenhouses. Considering the current situation, he also offered some suggestions of his own.

Lin Chuxia did not intervene in this part. The vegetable greenhouses of the Qin Family Village had to be managed and vitalized by the villagers themselves.

With the finance, technicians, and even the sales handled by Wang Cheng already in place, the path was laid out. The next steps had to be taken by them.

After the meeting, both the villagers of the Qin Family Village and Wang Cheng were full of confidence in the future.

Wang Cheng, suppressing his excitement, said to Lin Chuxia, "I heard from the village chief that a truckload of vegetables is going out this afternoon; I'd like to tag along and check on the situation."

"Brother Wang, feel free to dive in. If there's any issue, just give me a call. I might have to head back to the city in a couple of days, so I'm counting on you for the vegetable sales of the Qin Family Village."

Wang Cheng didn't expect Lin Chuxia to leave so soon, trusting him to handle everything?

But then, with a face full of resolve, "Mr. Lin, rest assured, I, Wang Cheng, will put my skills to the test and make sure to sell out all of the Qin Family Village's vegetables."

He couldn't let Lin Chuxia think he had misjudged him.

Of course, Lin Chuxia believed in him. She trusted Wang Cheng's character and even more in his ability to handle money.

On one hand, there was a vegetable station that might not pay wages, and on the other, there was Qin Family Village with a high salary and commissions. As long as Wang Cheng didn't want to go back to roadside bicycle repair, he would do his utmost in this activity.

Who would want to repair bicycles in the Northwest wind on the roadside?

"Brother Wang, if you need more staff on your end, just let me know," the staff at the vegetable station were all experienced workers waiting hungrily for a new job.

Wang Cheng smiled knowingly, "Don't worry, Mr. Lin, I'll consider this."

After sorting out the matters of the Qin Family Village, Lin Chuxia hurried back to the city without delay.

Just as she arrived at the entrance of the residential compound, she ran into Sister-in-law Fu coming back from buying groceries.

It had been a while since they had seen each other, and Sister-in-law Fu greeted Lin Chuxia with warm enthusiasm, "Lin, you've finally come back. While you weren't home these days, I saw Mr. Qin going to the cafeteria every day, standing at the door and gazing out like he's turning into the 'Wife Waiting Rock'."

Sister-in-law Fu, knowing about Lin Chuxia and Qin Yang's close relationship, was making a joke in jest.

Lin Chuxia smiled and exchanged pleasantries with Sister-in-law Fu, knowing that she had come back especially for Li Wei's son's one-month celebration. Chuxia continued with a smile, "Li Wei's family has that chubby little boy who's been well nurtured by his wife. He's so white and plump, you have no idea

how adorable he is. Wait until you see him, you'll definitely want to have a chubby little boy of your own as soon as possible."

Chuxia was somewhat embarrassed by her teasing but replied earnestly, "Hearing Sister-in-law say that, I can hardly wait. I'll go have a look after lunch."

"Go ahead, I should also get back to making lunch."

Lin Chuxia opened the courtyard gate, and Yuan Bao couldn't wait any longer, jumping up and down in excitement.

First, Chuxia calmed her old companion, then she went to the kitchen to prepare lunch.

Having just heard from Sister-in-law Fu that Qin Yang had been eating at the cafeteria lately, Chuxia felt genuinely distressed; she knew that Qin Yang didn't like to eat there.

But that guy could cook himself, yet he'd rather eat at the cafeteria than lift a finger.

This time, she had brought back plenty of fresh vegetables from the Qin Family Village greenhouses. Before she returned, Mrs. Qin had Mr. Qin slaughter two old hens for her to take and eat at her leisure. Also, the local pig farm had sent off some fat pigs, and the village chief had given her some ribs and pork.

Chuxia knew that she didn't lack for food and drink, but it was their way of showing care.

So much so that the trunk of Chuxia's Jeep was completely filled.

Lin Chuxia placed the pork and ribs into the storage space, stewed one of the old hens, stir-fried two green vegetables, and before the rice was even done, Qin Yang had come home from work.

Hearing the noise behind her, Chuxia spoke with a smile, "I thought you'd still be eating at the cafeteria today. I didn't say I was coming back today. Did you follow the scent home like a dog with a keen nose?"

Qin Yang immediately embraced her from behind, kissing her small face contentedly before smelling the scent on her and replying.

"Even if it's by scent, it's the fragrance of my wife."

Tomorrow was Li Wei's son's full-month party. His wife and Li Wei's wife got along well, so surely she would come back to attend.

Qin Yang thought it would be either today or tomorrow that his wife would definitely return.

He didn't expect her to arrive this morning, and contemplating cafeteria food at noon had made him lose his appetite. Missing his wife's cooking, he decided to head home, only to find the Jeep parked at the front door from afar.

Chuxia turned and kissed him, "Go wash your hands and serve the rice; it's almost ready. I stewed chicken soup to make up for what you've missed these days. Sister-in-law Fu told me you've been eating at the cafeteria every day."

"You are not at home, and I'm too lazy to cook," Qin Yang responded frankly.

He wasn't picky about food; as long as it filled his stomach, it was fine.

It was just the difference between having a wife at home and not. Even with her absent, he missed her terribly.

Lin Chuxia saw right through Qin Yang's thoughts.

When she was home, she never noticed him being too lazy to cook. He often made breakfast, and when she came home late, he would also prepare the meals.

Thinking of this, Chuxia felt even more guilty.

"From now on, I'll try not to be away from home for so long. I didn't think this through this time."

"Me too. Even on business trips, I will try to finish the work quickly and come back to be with you."

The couple had a delightful lunch together.

Qin Yang's recent work had been anything but easy, or else he wouldn't have been able to take a break to go to his old home and pick up Lin Chuxia only once a month.

After a short rest, he went back to work.

Chuxia cleaned the room and took some green vegetables and ribs to Jiang Hong's house.

Chapter 434: Waiting for When There's Time

Just as they arrived at the entrance, they saw the small quilts and diapers hung out to dry in the courtyard, and an elderly woman was still washing something there.

Lin Chuxia guessed the woman's identity and called out, "Auntie, I've come to visit Jiang Hong."

The lady looked up and saw a beautiful woman standing at the entrance. She quickly stood up to meet her.

"Jiang Hong is inside, come in quickly."

By this time, Jiang Hong had already seen Lin Chuxia and called out through the glass, "Chuxia, come here quickly."

Lin Chuxia quickened her pace and said, "Keep your voice down, don't you scare the baby."

Jiang Hong smiled sheepishly, "I can't help it, I'm just so happy to see you."

The auntie added from behind, "It's fine, the baby won't get spoiled by noise. If they're always in quiet, they get used to it too much. Then the slightest noise will have them crying endlessly."

Jiang Hong nodded incessantly, "My mom's right, this makes the baby easier to take care of."

She then introduced to Lin Chuxia, "This is my mother-in-law, she came especially to take care of me during my confinement period. Mom, this is Chuxia, my very best friend. When my water broke that day and no one was home, it was Chuxia who took me to the hospital."

Aunt Li had long heard about what happened, and she had been apprehensive about coming too early, worried about causing trouble for the young couple. She intended to wait until after their daughter-in-law had given birth to come over, but their little grandson was such a rascal, couldn't stay put in the belly, and came out more than ten days early.

When she arrived and heard about the situation at the time, it gave Aunt Li quite a fright, and she had wanted to invite Lin Chuxia over to thank her properly, but recently the latter wasn't at home.

Today, having finally met, Aunt Li was extremely grateful.

"Auntie, no need to be so polite. Living in the same place, if I hadn't been there, someone else would have helped," Lin Chuxia said.

She handed over the pork ribs and vegetables she had brought.

Jiang Hong's eyes lit up at the sight of the fresh green vegetables, "Where did you get these greens, ah, and cucumbers..."

They were quite rare this season.

"Have you forgotten? Our Qin Family Village is a community of vegetable farmers; this is what's grown in the village."

"Your village is really impressive."

Jiang Hong picked up a cucumber and was about to take a bite, but Aunt Li blocked her immediately.

"Oh my ancestor, you're still in confinement; you must avoid raw and cold foods."

"Mom, let me have just one, I've been craving it so much."

Seeing her daughter-in-law's pitiful look, Aunt Li compromised and gave her the top of a cucumber, "You can only have a taste to satisfy the craving. Wait another ten or half a month, then you can eat as much as you want. Eating now and spoiling your stomach is something you'll regret for a lifetime. I'll make you some cucumber and egg soup to eat while it's warm."

"Alright."

Watching Aunt Li carry things outside, Lin Chuxia remarked, "It seems you're having a very comfortable confinement."

Lin Chuxia thought that Aunt Li took the cucumber from Jiang Hong because eating it would affect the breast milk or something like that. She didn't expect it was just to prevent Jiang Hong from hurting her stomach; moreover, she was going to make something warm for her to eat.

Jiang Hong contentedly nibbled on the cucumber and nodded, "How could I not be comfortable? I'm gaining weight so quickly, my mother-in-law wants me to eat seven or eight eggs a day, plus brown sugar water, chicken soup, fish soup. It's just that there are no vegetables, now the sight of cabbage stewed with tofu makes my eyes shine."

Lin Chuxia couldn't help but laugh.

In the beliefs of the older generation, a woman in confinement should eat various nutritious foods, with meat and eggs being the top picks.

Being able to eat these foods every day showed just how considerate Aunt Li was of her daughter-in-law.

These days, not many women get the full confinement period, but from what Aunt Li said, she intended to let Jiang Hong complete the full 40 days.

Besides, there really weren't many vegetables on the market at the moment.

The two were chatting when Lin Chuxia noticed the little one on the bed moved, rolling his large eyes around.

"Did our talking wake him up?"

Lin Chuxia had wanted to see the baby for a while, but since he was asleep before, she didn't want to disturb him.

"How can he be so good? He doesn't cry or make noise when he wakes up."

Chuxia propped herself up above him and saw the little one had completely changed from the day he was born.

The once reddish skin had turned fair and soft, his little cheeks all chubby, and those eyes, like black grapes, extraordinarily spirited.

When he saw her, he would open his toothless mouth and let out a silent laugh.

Chuxia's heart was about to melt.

"Can I hold him?"

"Of course, you can. Wait a moment, he probably needs a diaper change, I'll change him first."

Jiang Hong deftly changed the diaper and handed the baby directly to Chuxia.

It was Chuxia's first time holding such a small child, soft and yet so weighty. Looking at the tiny bundle, her whole being couldn't help but soften.

"Chuxia, you and Mr. Qin have been married for over two years now, right?"

"Mm," Chuxia's eyes remained fixed on the little one, the corners of her lips slightly upturned.

Seeing her like that, Jiang Hong smirked, "Since you like kids so much, why not have one of your own? Money is never enough, and with your family's condition, you outshine us by a mile—still reluctant to have kids?"

She knew that Chuxia was in business, even though she did not know the extent of it, their family's clothing, food, housing, and transportation all spoke for themselves.

In Jiang Hong's eyes, this was the proverbial millionaire, a well-off family.

What other goals could there be when one's family has reached such a level of comfort?

Chuxia looked up, smiled, and said, "We'll have kids when we find the time."

She thought about the children she would have with Qin Yang; they would surely be just as adorable.

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In those times, children's full-month celebrations were mostly held at home.

Li Wei's position was not high, and since he was newly transferred, the child's full-month celebratory banquet was not grand.

He only invited a few familiar colleagues from the office, as well as Qin Yang and others who had been transferred with him from the Northwest.

On the day of the full-month celebration, Chuxia came early to Li Wei's house to help Aunt Li with the cooking arrangements.

In total, there were about ten people, so planning for men and women to sit at the same table was sufficient.

Jiang Hong wanted to help out but was sent back to the room by Aunt Li.

Aunt Li herself was quite adept, having stewed some of the tougher dishes the day before; today, they just needed to be warmed up.

The remaining dishes to be stir-fried or served cold were all convenient and straightforward options.

Even with Chuxia there, she didn't manage to help much.

The main course was the steamed fluffy white buns personally made by Aunt Li.

As evening approached and office hours ended, guests for the full-month celebration began to arrive.

Qin Yang returned home with Li Wei, and with them came Feng Dajun and his family.

Sister-in-law Feng, seeing Chuxia already at Li Family's home, seemed a bit uncomfortable.

"When did you come over from Mr. Qin's house? You didn't even call me. I was saying we could come over together to help out, afraid that we might show up at the wrong time and cause a mess for others."

Aunt Li, known for her good temperament, quickly waved her hand, "Oh no, no need for that, Lin's help is enough. Please come in and have some water."

Just as they were ushered into the house, two other colleagues from Li Wei's office arrived.

One brought their spouse, while the other came alone.

They all brought congratulatory gifts, either small blankets or little clothes, and Sister-in-law Feng brought out a piece of floral cotton cloth.

"I thought it over, bringing a blanket or clothes but not knowing if they're the right fit or even useful to you, so I bought a piece of cotton cloth instead. Later on, you can make whatever you like out of it. I got this cloth from the department store, it was several dimes per foot..."

Chapter 435: The Guy Who Chooses Romance Over Friendship

Feng Dajun was talking with a few people nearby.

He is now Li Wei's boss, and aside from Qin Yang, everyone present was under his command. Although Qin Yang holds a position slightly higher than Feng Dajun, a local officer has more immediate authority. Therefore, people were much warmer towards Feng Dajun.

Just then, hearing what Sister-in-law Feng was saying, he couldn't help but turn his head and remind her, "Why mention those things?"

Sister-in-law Feng, now aware of her husband's displeasure, awkwardly chuckled.

Jiang Hong, wanting to save face for Feng Dajun, gave Sister-in-law Feng a way out, "This fabric is quite nice, thank you, Sister-in-law."

If Sister-in-law Feng had taken this chance to back off, it would have shown tact, especially since even if she criticized others for picking up small blankets and clothes as useless, the man who picked them up was still Feng Dajun's subordinate and wouldn't openly show any displeasure.

But Sister-in-law Feng was the type who blossoms with a bit of sunshine. Hearing Jiang Hong compliment her fabric, her spirits lifted again.

"Right? I spent a long time choosing it," she said, then turned to Lin Chuxia, "What did Mr. Qin's family pick up? I was thinking of calling you to go to the department store that day, but you weren't home. Your dog was barking fiercely. I mean, we live in the housing complex, all colleagues know each other, there's really no need to keep a big dog at home. Everyone knows you like dogs, but others might think you're guarding against someone."

Her words made the faces of several women present somewhat uncomfortable.

Especially the wife of Li Wei's colleague.

Their status in the housing complex depended on their husbands' positions.

Both Feng Dajun's and Mr. Qin's positions are not low, so this Sister-in-law Feng and Mr. Lin are people she wouldn't want to offend.

She could only try to minimize her presence, regretting coming along with her husband.

She had hoped to bond with Engineer Feng's family to make her husband's future work life smoother.

But she hadn't expected Engineer Feng's family to have such a personality.

Jiang Hong, frowning with displeasure – after all, it was her son's full-month celebration, and visitors were guests, didn't want to embarrass Sister-in-law Feng, but also couldn't bear to hear her belittle Lin Chuxia.

Just as he was about to say something, Lin Chuxia spoke up first.

She smiled slightly, "Sister-in-law, I don't quite understand your words. Yuan Bao is like a family member to us. You said yourself I like dogs; who would I need to guard against with it? Only those with a guilty conscience would feel scared seeing Yuan Bao at my house. Others can't even if they wanted to."

Jiang Hong nodded in agreement, "Indeed, I really like your Yuan Bao. It's so smart, I heard that it even helped the police solve a case back in your hometown, and was praised by the local police, right?"

Lin Chuxia generously admitted, "Yes, that happened."

Her Yuan Bao was smart enough to help the police solve cases and naturally wouldn't bite people indiscriminately.

Seeing Sister-in-law Feng looking embarrassed, Lin Chuxia took out a small box from her pocket.

"This is a gift for your son, see if he likes it."

Jiang Hong opened the small box in front of everyone, and inside were a pair of silver bracelets.

"Oh my, this is too valuable, he's just a child..."

"It's specifically for children. You couldn't wear it even if you wanted to."

Lin Chuxia cut off Jiang Hong's words and personally put the silver bracelets on the little baby.

Now, Sister-in-law Feng's expression looked even better.

Even the spouse who brought quails felt incredibly relieved.

Although she was subtly mocked by Sister-in-law Feng earlier, listening to Sister-in-law Feng being openly contradicted now felt much more satisfying.

After chatting for a while, Aunt Li had finished preparing the meal and called everyone to the table.

When everyone had sat down, she called Jiang Hong, "Go accompany everyone for the meal, I'll take care of the baby."

Jiang Hong refused, "Mom, I'm not hungry yet. You've been busy all day, you eat first."

Aunt Li directly pushed her outside, "You young folks have things to talk about, I'm old and digest slowly, not hungry yet. Just go eat, right now all I want is to spend time with my dear grandson, I need to hold him properly."

This remark made everyone present laugh, exchanging blessings and good luck wishes, Aunt Li was beaming with happiness.

Sister-in-law Feng silently watched the scene, then picked up a large chicken leg for herself.

Aunt Li's cooking skills were good, and she invested heavily in the baby's full moon celebration, with plenty of chicken, fish, and meat, making everyone quite satisfied.

After giving gifts and eating, the full moon celebration was considered successfully concluded.

Everyone also didn't stay long; they understood the etiquette of guests taking leave soon after the meal, and started saying goodbye after sitting for a little while.

Lin Chuxia planned to help Jiang Hong and Aunt Li clean up the tables before leaving.

It was still cold in the evening, and it was inconvenient for Jiang Hong to go outside, and Aunt Li, being of advanced age, was also tired from preparing such a large meal.

Qin Yang was waiting for his wife, and as he waited, someone nearby nudged him, then he saw Li Wei carrying his "bomb."

He grinned foolishly and happily.

"Hey, look at my son."

Qin Yang looked at his face with disdain, but was stunned when he looked down.

The little baby in Li Wei's arms was clean and chubby, staring at him with big eyes.

Those eyes were dark and shiny; he didn't expect the child's eyes to be so black.

Perhaps realizing he was being watched, the baby even started smiling, revealing a reddish gumline.

Was this the wrinkled, red and swollen-eyed child?

As his wife had said, it really does get better as they grow.

He looked quite cute.

"Mr. Qin, do you want to hold him?"

Seeing Qin Yang staring intently at the child, Li Wei lifted the baby up a bit.

Qin Yang immediately shook his head, "No, I won't hold him."

"Come on, hold him. I trust you enough to let you practice with my son. Later, when you have your own child, you won't be as clueless as I was about holding a baby."

Qin Yang was somewhat tempted by his words.

When Xiaxia has a baby, he wanted to be the first to hold it, but certainly not like Li Wei did outside the delivery room, holding it like a ticking bomb.

"I might not have held one before, but I wouldn't be as clumsy as you."

As Qin Yang criticized, he reached out to take the baby.

Just to hold him for a moment, to show Li Wei how it's done.

But just as he reached out, Lin Chuxia called from outside, "Qin Yang, let's go."

"Alright, let's go."

Qin Yang immediately withdrew his hand and turned to leave swiftly.

Li Wei, who was halfway through handing over the child, staggered almost throwing the baby out, but luckily managed to catch him quickly and held him tightly.

He glared resentfully at Qin Yang.

While the latter just gave him a cool back view.

Li Wei: "..."

This guy, all charm and no humanity, and he worried so much.

Outside, Lin Chuxia was standing in the yard waiting for him.

The couple said goodbye to the Li Family, and walked out shoulder to shoulder.

Chapter 436: Wanting a Baby That Belongs to You and Me

Once they left the Li Family's courtyard, the surroundings quieted down too. It was getting late, and many houses had turned off their lights for the night.

Qin Yang held Lin Chuxia's hand, his fingertips gently caressing the back of her hand, "Xiaxia!"

"Hmm?"

"What do you think of Li Wei's son?"

Lin Chuxia turned her head, glimpsing his serious and handsome face in the moonlight, and nodded, "He's adorable, isn't he? Didn't I tell you yesterday already? Li Wei's son is so chubby and round, just like a New Year picture doll."

"Well..." Qin Yang hesitated, swallowing before continuing in a raspy voice, "Would you like to have such a cute baby too?"

Lin Chuxia finally understood what he was getting at.

Over the past two-plus years, because they started living in different places and later she focused on her career, they had never discussed having children.

She thought he was the same as her, not in a hurry to have babies, especially since Qin Yang was even more career-focused than her.

But it turned out he was anxious about it too.

"Sure," Lin Chuxia agreed without hesitation.

She indeed had this in mind; seeing the little baby at Li Wei's house yesterday suddenly made her look forward to having a child with Qin Yang.

After Lin Chuxia finished speaking, Qin Yang stepped forward and hugged her tightly, then hurriedly let go before she could fully react.

Lin Chuxia suppressed a laugh—men of this era really were chaste, and her Qin Yang was especially reserved and controlled.

If it hadn't been so late and dark, he wouldn't have made such a move.

Before she could say anything, he pulled her quickly towards their home.

"Hey, slow down!"

Lin Chuxia softly called out to him.

They were already at their small courtyard, Qin Yang quickly opened the gate, pulled her in, then locked the gate behind them and lifted her up horizontally.

Lin Chuxia yelped and instinctively wrapped her arms around his neck, "What are you doing?"

Qin Yang didn't respond, Yuan Bao, seeing their activities, excitedly circled around them.

Once inside the house, Qin Yang with a kick shut Yuan Bao outside, and his kiss followed immediately.

He pressed against her, his voice low and husky, "Making a baby, Xiaxia, we need to have a baby that belongs to both you and me..."

Lin Chuxia's heart softened, she kissed him back, "Okay!"

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Meanwhile, at the family building.

As soon as they left Li Wei's doorstep, Feng Dajun wore a grim look that lasted all the way home, and only after closing the door did he finally speak.

"Why did you say those words? Didn't I tell you when we went there? We are colleagues from the same department. Is there any point in comparing who brings what?"

Besides Qin Yang, the rest of them hold lower positions and are essentially his subordinates, so even if they brought something slightly more expensive, it would be justified.

He would be embarrassed if he brought the same as them.

He initially thought his wife had gotten rid of her petty mindset and did something to make them proud.

But unexpectedly, she even spoke about it and complained that the gifts from others were not as good as theirs.

Sister-in-law Feng didn't take it seriously, "I wasn't comparing, am I not speaking the truth? Such a small child, how much can they even use clothes and quilts? It's better to buy them fabric and let them make it themselves over time. I chose the gift with so much thought, who am I doing this for?"

Feng Dajun felt that they were not on the same page anymore and found it increasingly difficult to communicate with his wife.

But remembering that they still have to live in the family housing, he patiently explained, "But saying it like that, won't it offend people? You meant well, but does it mean others who brought clothes and quilts didn't mean well?"

"They are all your subordinates, aren't they? Why are you still afraid of offending them?"

"It's not about fear, forget it, let's wash our feet and go to sleep," he felt that no matter what he said, it was in vain.

Sister-in-law Feng snorted, not feeling there was any issue on her part, just that her husband was too cautious.

He had checked, apart from Li Wei and his wife, the other two also came from rural areas, none were nobler than others, they were still his subordinates, what was there to fear?

Sister-in-law Feng took a large kettle outside to boil water, noticing that the neighbors hadn't gone to bed yet, she greeted Sister-in-law Feng.

Knowing that Sister-in-law Feng attended Li Wei's son's one-month celebration today, they also cheerfully spoke, "That Li Wei's wife is truly fortunate. This afternoon, I saw her from afar, and just as she stepped outside, her mother-in-law called her back, saying she might catch a cold. She has just completed her 'sitting-the-month,' why fear the wind? When I had my child back in my hometown, I hadn't even finished sitting the month before I started cooking and washing clothes for the whole family."

Sister-in-law Feng thought of Jiang Hong and Jiang Hong's mother-in-law, indeed jealousy-inducing.

"Jiang Hong has a good life, her mother-in-law takes care of everything so thoroughly, must have amassed good fortune over many lifetimes."

"You can tell, I saw Jiang Hong gained quite some weight during her 'sitting-the-month', obviously no worries on her part."

After chatting briefly, they each carried their water back to their homes.

Sister-in-law Feng, carrying the water back, prepared the foot-wash water for her husband while still thinking about their earlier conversation.

Thinking about the scenes witnessed tonight, her envy was uncontrollable, and thinking about herself, she couldn't help but sigh.

"Jiang Hong really has a good life, just gave birth to a son. Look how happy Li Wei is, and her mother-in-law, I've never seen any mother-in-law that speaks so kindly to her daughter-in-law. And Jiang Hong just keeps sweetly calling her 'mom'."

As she placed the water next to her husband, she suddenly asked, "What if Jiang Hong had a girl, would Li Wei's mom still treat her this well?"

Feng Dajun frowned, "What are you rambling about now? Can't you stand it if someone's mother-in-law treats their daughter-in-law well? Li Wei's mother's temperament is naturally gentle..."

"So, my mother's temper is bad, which is why she's always causing trouble for no reason, not because I gave birth to a girl and it threatens your Feng family's continuation that she treats me this way?"

Before Feng Dajun could finish, Sister-in-law Feng coldly cut him off.

Feng Dajun's frown deepened, "What has my mother done to you? Can you please stop being unreasonable? Back in our hometown, you always complained about my mother; now that you've come out here with me, you still look down on her. If she really favored boys over girls, why would she dote on Lili from my older brother's family so much? Lili grew up under her care."

"You admit she favors your brother's Lili and looks down on our Jingjing? When I said this before, you accused me of making trouble. Of course, she likes Lili; that's her first grandchild, and soon after, your brother had a son. Why wouldn't she like them? As for us, we just have Jingjing, a girl, and you are a permanent worker not allowed a second child. I suspect she wishes our whole family would just serve your brother so that his son inherits everything, our lands are practically theirs now, will there even be a place for you in this village in a few years?"

Chapter 437: Straight Man

"You're being unreasonable. It was you who didn't want to stay at home. We can't just leave the land unattended, and they didn't just plant it for nothing—they even paid the grain tax for us."

"Is that little grain tax even worth mentioning?"

"You... you really are..."

Feng Dajun was so angry he was at a loss for words. Unable to argue with her, he simply left the house.

Sister-in-law Feng realized that she had angered him away late at night and only then did she regret the words she had said earlier.

It was just that she couldn't accept it—why could others easily have a son while it was so difficult for her to want one?

Why didn't heaven have eyes, specifically letting her give birth to a daughter?

Her Da Jun is so promising, yet she couldn't even provide him this most basic thing.

"What are you looking at?" Sister-in-law Feng turned her head and saw Feng Jingjing next to her, and her anger flared yet again.

Jingjing seemed to have anticipated this, and upon hearing those words, she quickly lowered her head, ready to go back to her room.

But Sister-in-law Feng followed her in one step, "Dare to run? Growing wings, are we? Not letting me speak a word now? Who do you think you are?"

"Can't I even speak out against others now, can't I speak about you? Don't forget, you crawled out of my womb..."

"Still dare to hide? I'll let you hide, let you hide..."

...

The spring sun was bright and warm, playfully jumping onto the large bed through the window.

Lin Chuxia groggily opened her eyes—it was already broad daylight, and the man beside her was nowhere to be seen... Ah, he must have gone to work.

She glanced at the wall clock; it was almost ten o'clock, indeed not early anymore.

Moving her sore body, Lin Chuxia knew this man's determination to have a child.

All night long, pleading had been of no use.

This man, it seemed like he never had enough.

Lin Chuxia touched her small belly. He had worked so hard last night; she wondered if it was successful.

The thought that a little life might already be residing inside her made the corners of Lin Chuxia's lips curl up involuntarily. Lying on the big bed, her face was full of tenderness.

Until her stomach started rumbling, Lin Chuxia's expression tightened—she really was hungry.

After washing up, she went to the kitchen. There was still food left for her, but it was all cold. She simply cooked herself a bowl of scallion oil noodles, blanched some green veggies, and fried a sunny-side-up egg.

Feeling full and refreshed, Lin Chuxia felt revitalized and started digging two vegetable patches in the yard.

She planned to plant some flowers in the yard, and also a pomegranate tree.

Pomegranates symbolize having many sons and blessings.

Not digging for long, Qin Yang came back from work and saw her fussing around in the yard. Setting aside the groceries he had brought back by chance, he came over to help.

"These chores can wait for me to come back. How deep do you want to dig? This looks like it's for planting a tree."

Lin Chuxia wanted to plant flowers, he knew that, but the pit in front of him was clearly meant for a tree.

Lin Chuxia nodded, "I'll go to the market this afternoon to see if there are any pomegranate trees for sale. I want to plant a pomegranate tree."

Qin Yang looked up at her, naturally also thinking of the symbolic meaning of the pomegranate tree, and gently reminded her, "The country practices family planning, a family can only have one child. Given my identity, I must respond to the call of the nation, your wish might not come true."

Having blessings is possible, but having many sons is not.

Chuxia rolled her eyes at him, "Mr. Qin, can't you stop being such a straight man at times like this?"

This man, call him romantic, but there are times when he really spoils the mood.

Qin Yang, feeling guilty for killing his wife's vibe, innocently touched his nose and quickly apologized, "Sorry, I misspoke. How about I put in more effort tonight, and we aim for a house full of kids and happiness?"

Chuxia pinched his arm and glared at him with a feigned complaint.

Put in more effort? Any more effort would be the end of her.

Qin Yang, looking at his petite wife's charming demeanor, couldn't help but chuckle softly.

He finished digging the tree hole with just a few strokes of the shovel and was about to prepare the plot for planting flowers. "What are you planning to plant?"

"Radishes," Chuxia promptly blurted out two words.

Qin Yang looked up in confusion, wasn't she planning to plant flowers?

Chuxia stared at him and said word by word, "A radish for each hole, I think our family is more suited to growing radishes."

Another round of pleasant laughter followed.

After lunch, Chuxia and Qin Yang left the house together.

Qin Yang was off to work, and Chuxia planned to visit Qin's Restaurant and, by the way, buy a pomegranate tree.

The restaurant wasn't very busy at the moment. Just as Chuxia arrived at the entrance, Qin Jianjun spotted her.

"Auntie Four!"

He hadn't seen his Auntie Four for some time. He had heard that the greenhouses at home were doing well. Recently, his parents had a bit of trouble. He wanted to go back and check on them, but they insisted he should focus on his work and studies and not be distracted by coming back.

Now that he finally saw Chuxia, he could also ask about his parents' situation.

"I wanted to go back. My parents said I'm making a big deal out of a small matter, but I don't quite trust what they say."

Chuxia knew Qin Jianjun was a responsible and filial child, so she comforted him, "Don't worry. That day really gave everyone a scare, but after the hospital check-up, it turned out to be nothing serious. The weather is getting warmer, and we don't need the furnace in the greenhouse anymore; it's been out for some time."

Hearing Chuxia's reassurances, Qin Jianjun's worries finally eased.

Jia Liang heard the news and came downstairs from the upper floor, greeting Chuxia with a smile.

After Qin Jianjun finished talking with Chuxia, Jia Liang started, "Mr. Lin, a woman came to the restaurant a few days ago, specifically asking for you. I told her you were temporarily not in town. I asked her if she needed any help or if I should relay a message, but she shook her head. After standing in the restaurant for a while without eating anything, she left."

"What did that person look like?"

This question stumped Jia Liang; upon reflection, he really couldn't remember what the woman looked like.

He scratched his head, feeling embarrassed, "I... I really didn't notice. Right, Qin Juan should remember; she was there at the time. I'll go call her over."

Jia Liang turned to go upstairs to find Qin Juan, and Chuxia raised an eyebrow upon hearing his address.

If she remembered correctly, Jia Liang had always called Qin Juan "big sister." Although there wasn't much age difference between them, the sudden change in address felt different to Chuxia.

As she was pondering, Qin Juan had already followed Jia Liang downstairs.

Knowing Chuxia wanted to ask about the woman from the other day, Qin Juan got straight to the point, "She should be a bit younger than me, around twenty-five or twenty-six, tall and slim. Oh, right, and she was holding a baby. The baby seemed to be about five or six months old."

Chuxia confirmed who the visitor was and nodded, "I see, big sister. If she comes again and I'm not at the restaurant, you can give her my home address and ask her to find me there."

Qin Juan recalled the woman's appearance and expressed her concern, "Does she need something from you? She seemed worried that day. Is she someone you know?"

Although Qin Juan was part of the Qin Family, she wasn't familiar with Chuxia's relatives.

Woman's intuition being what it is, Qin Juan felt that the woman was going through some hardship.

She even sensed a feeling from that woman that she had experienced herself in the past.

Chapter 438: If One Can Be a Decent Person, Who Would Choose the Wrong Path?

Lin Chuxia just smiled, "He's just a common friend, big sister, you can rest assured."

Qin Juan felt relieved and said, "All right, when she comes to the shop again, I'll tell her to go find you at home."

"Okay, big sister, later when you pick up Ningning, come over to my place in the evening. I've brought some chicken from home, and I am craving the chicken and mushroom stew you make. And Jianjun, I remember you don't have classes today, come over after work too."

Lin Chuxia stopped Qin Jianjun, who was just about to pass by, and gave him the instructions.

Whenever their family was in the city with no pressing matters, they would all get together.

During the time she was away from home, Qin Yang told her that big sister had wanted to come over to cook for him to improve his life, but he had refused.

Everyone was quite busy with work; there was no need to go out of their way to cause further trouble.

Hearing him say that, Lin Chuxia finally saw a trace of that cold and indifferent demeanor he was known for in her past life.

Having conveyed the message clearly and with nothing urgent at the shop, Lin Chuxia, who was thinking of her pomegranate tree, decided to leave first.

She found out that there was a small market next to the lumber market where saplings were sold.

As she was driving there, she mused over Wang Tianxue's matter.

The person described by big sister was obviously Wang Tianxue; Chuxia indeed had given her the Bun Shop's address, just that Lin Chuxia didn't expect that after so long, she would finally come looking.

It seemed she wanted to resolve her marital problems in her own way.

Undoubtedly, the outcome was not something she could accept.

It had been the same in her past life, Chuxia had only heard bits and pieces, and it seemed like the process was very distressing.

Wang Tianxue was a strong-willed woman; she absolutely could not tolerate her husband's betrayal.

Even if the husband had regrets, she was the kind who'd rather be a shattered piece of porcelain than a whole tile.

Only because the matter involved her child, did this woman show a weakness.

However, Lin Chuxia knew that as long as there was a glimmer of hope, Wang Tianxue would definitely not give up on her principles.

It's just unknown how far she has come now.

For her to seek out Chuxia, a stranger she'd only met once, she probably really had run out of options.

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At the Bun Shop, Jia Liang knew that Qin Juan was going to Lin Chuxia's place that evening, and Qin Jianjun was going too; he was quite envious.

"Though there are many siblings in the Qin Family, you all get along really well. When I was in An City, I spent some time with Qin Han and Qin Wu. I heard that Qin Wu isn't your blood brother, and that kid Jianjun is actually your cousin from another branch."

Qin Juan didn't deny this and nodded with a smile, "People in our village are all honest. Whether it's big issues or small affairs, we always help each other out. Our village grows vegetables, and after the land was divided, each family ended up with quite a bit. During the planting season in spring, I would help you today, and you would help me tomorrow. Plus, sister-in-law has a good temper; since she came into our family, she has really brought everyone closer together."

As for Qin Wen, Qin Juan no longer regarded him as part of the Qin Family.

Anyone who opposed sister-in-law, in her eyes, had an issue with their character; even if they had no grievances against Qin Juan, they became enemies.

Jia Liang was even more envious upon hearing this, "I won't lie to you, my brother and I are the only ones in our family. Since I was little, I've been envious of those households with many brothers and sisters. It feels like no matter what, there's always someone to lend a hand. My dad passed away early. Although I also had a few uncles, not all relatives are the same. After my dad passed, they coveted our house. No matter what, my mom is a woman, and I was only fourteen years old at the time. It was only after I took a knife and cut my uncle that we managed to keep our house. Since then, I have had no other relatives."

That one knife secured the house, but it also severed all his blood ties.

However, Jia Liang had no regrets.

This was the first time Qin Juan heard him speak about these things. Considering Jia Liang's past criminal activities, and even his stints as a gang leader, when linked to his past experiences, she could somewhat understand his predicament.

Who would choose to go astray if they could be decent people?

"Such kin are better off discarded. Some relatives, you treat them as family, but they only use the relationship to stab you in the back."

Jia Liang suddenly looked up at Qin Juan, her face filled with indignation, and an unusual feeling welled up inside him.

He thought she would feel contempt and disgust upon hearing this, considering she lived in such a happy and harmonious family, wrapped in kinship.

Whereas the people around him were no better than pigs and dogs.

After Qin Juan finished speaking, she glanced at the time, "I won't talk anymore, I need to go check on the accounts, I won't be coming back after picking up Ningning."

In the past, when the shop was busy, she sometimes brought Little Ningning back to the shop to help out for a while after picking her up.

Her sister-in-law wanted to eat her chicken mushroom stew today, it tastes better cooked longer, so she had to go early.

Jia Liang nodded, "Okay."

Watching Qin Juan's retreating figure, Jia Liang felt a warmth in his chest.

He used to hear his brothers say that one should marry a beautiful wife, but his mother told him to find someone understanding. He did not take it seriously.

Isn't marrying a wife all about doing laundry, cooking, raising kids, and such? Can understanding fill one's stomach? Can it be more appealing than a beautiful woman?

Ever since he met Qin Juan, he seemed to understand his mother's words more and more.

Moreover, Qin Juan was not only understanding but also beautiful.

And had such good relatives.

At this moment, Jia Liang even wondered if he would ever have the chance to attend a family banquet at Mr. Lin's.

If he had that chance, he would be willing to do anything.

Elsewhere, Gao Lele greeted Qin Jianjun with a bright, cheerful smile, "Jianjun, you don't have class tonight, do you? How about we go watch a movie? I heard there's a new release in the cinema, it's supposed to be really good."

Qin Jianjun shook his head, "You go watch it with someone else; I have to visit my aunt tonight."

Gao Lele's face stiffened slightly, and she responded sullenly, "Oh."

When she looked up again, Qin Jianjun had already nonchalantly gone to ask others to help him move things.

In the evening, Qin Juan waited punctually at the school gate for Little Ningning to finish school.

Right on time, the children burst out of the school gates like little swallows.

Most children did not need to be picked up; they would head home in groups of three or pairs of two.

Qin Juan spotted Little Ningning among the crowd, waved to her, and then led the little one in the opposite direction of home, explaining, "We're going to uncle's house for dinner tonight; your aunt has returned."

Ningning then blinked her large eyes and nodded vigorously, "Hmm."

She then quietly followed beside Qin Juan.

After walking a considerable distance, Qin Juan increasingly felt that something was off.

Usually, Ningning loved visiting her uncle's house, and in recent times, she had asked several times when her auntie would return.

Now that Lin Chuxia was back, according to her usual temperament, she would have been chattering and laughing by now.

The biggest change after the divorce was with her daughter; when the Qin Family was mentioned, she had endless things to say.

But now, her demeanor seemed to have reverted to that of the silent daughter from before.

Chapter 439: With Sugar, The Pain Goes Away

"What's wrong with Ningning? Is someone at school bullying you? Or did something happen?"

Ningning raised her small head, looking at her mom, not knowing how to explain.

Qin Juan patiently led the conversation, "No matter what it is, Ningning has to share it with mom, right? Even if Ningning can't solve the problem, maybe mom can help. I know something must have upset Ningning today."

Ningning looked at her toes and finally began to speak after a while, "Mom, today when I went to the restroom, I accidentally bumped into another kid. I just lightly bumped her, and she started crying, holding her arm in pain. I apologized, but she said it wasn't my fault."

"Uh-huh, what happened then?" Qin Juan knew her daughter and prompted further.

Ningning pouted, "I feel like it was my fault. She cried, so she must have been hurt by the bump. Later, I followed her secretly and saw her checking her arm when no one was around. Her arm was covered in bruises, like she had been beaten. Mom, I guess it must have been her dad who hit her. She's so pitiful..."

Her own dad used to hit people and would leave mom looking like that too.

Qin Juan also thought of this.

Although she tried her best to protect the child when she was with Zhang Wenbin, that kind of living environment still left a shadow on her young soul.

As for the child who was beaten...

"If Ningning thinks she's pitiful, then next time you see her, can you give her some of your candy?"

She didn't have the power to save anyone; she had been in that environment and understood their mentality better.

If one couldn't deliver a fatal blow and cut off their means, meaningless resistance would only provoke the offender to become even more vicious.

How many people have the capability to strike a fatal blow?

If she didn't have a strong maternal family, she might have had to struggle in such a family for her whole life.

Divorce is too hard for women.

Going forward, Qin Juan's mood also became heavy.

Ningning's mood improved, though. She hadn't yet had the heart to eat the candy her mom bought her. The next time she saw that kid, she would give her one... no, two pieces.

With candy to eat, it wouldn't hurt as much.

It wasn't until they arrived at Lin Chuxia's family courtyard that Qin Juan's mood suddenly lifted.

Seeing her sister-in-law, she was clear on how she achieved her good life today.

"Sister-in-law, didn't you want to eat the dish with chicken and mushrooms? I bought some wild mushrooms on the way, and they'll taste best stewed with the old hen from home."

Qin Juan went straight to the kitchen with the mushrooms.

As soon as Yuan Bao saw Ningning arrive, he started hopping around excitedly.

Little Ningning adored Yuan Bao the most; she giggled when licked by him, filling the courtyard with her cheerful laughter.

"Auntie, Yuan Bao must have missed me. Can I give him my candy? I want to give him some."

Lin Chuxia knew Yuan Bao loved children the most, with Zhuangzhuang and Ningning being his best pals.

"Of course, Yuan Bao looks forward to Ningning's visits every day."

With permission granted, Ningning dug into her pocket and pulled out a piece of fruit candy. She peeled it and tossed it into the air, "Yuan Bao, catch!"

Yuan Bao, knowing he was being offered a treat, leapt up and caught the candy in one go.

"Wow, Yuan Bao, you're amazing! Auntie, Yuan Bao is really incredible."

"Ningning is quite impressive too."

...

The cheerful voice could be heard from afar, and on the walkway to the family residential building not far away, a little girl stopped in her tracks and looked towards the direction of the laughter.

The gate of the courtyard there was open, and she could also see the small figure inside the courtyard.

Looking at her joyous appearance, the corners of her lips involuntarily curved into a smile.

Suddenly, a voice came from behind her.

"You little wretch, I was wondering why you haven't come back yet, turns out you're playing on the way home, did you do it on purpose? Just waiting for your dad to finish work and see that you haven't come back so that he would think I mistreated you, not picking you up from school?"

Feng Jingjing saw her mother storming over from a distance, her face changed dramatically, and she quickly shook her head, "No, Mom, I wasn't playing on the way home, I had duty today."

Seeing her obedient demeanor, Sister-in-law Feng's anger subsided a bit.

"Come back earlier next time, don't wander outside aimlessly, what's so great about wandering on the streets, all those kids are from the city, they won't play with you anyway..."

Sister-in-law Feng muttered as she walked ahead, Feng Jingjing turned her head for another glance in the direction of the courtyard, her eyes filled with loss...

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Lin Chuxia had been staying at home during this period; she hadn't heard any news about Wang Tianxue going to the Bun Shop again, but she wasn't in a hurry to do anything either.

Instead, she had planted all the flowers and plants in the courtyard.

She had also planted the pomegranate tree in front of the window, and today, to her delight, she discovered tender new shoots on the branches.

"Xiaxia," Qin Yang came back from work, his eyes brimming with mirth, "Just now, a call from the old home came to my office, guess who called?"

Lin Chuxia tilted her head and asked, "Who is it? Not the eldest brother?"

Calls from the old home to Qin Yang's office were usually made by Qin Han.

And the village chief and people from the factory would usually call Qin's Restaurant when looking for her.

Qin Yang shook his head, "Not the eldest brother, it was Xiao Wu who called. His wife gave birth, to a boy, calling to share the good news with us."

Among the brothers of the Qin family, it was Qin Wu, the third uncle, who had the best relationship with Qin Yang, and it was evident that Qin Yang was also happy for him.

Lin Chuxia also felt pleased upon hearing the news, "Ah, now he has a daughter and a son, a perfect good-fortune phrase completed."

Though she herself did not favor sons over daughters, and Qin Wu and his wife loved Niuniu dearly, in the rural areas, especially during that era, there was still a strong desire for a male child.

Apart from the traditional value of carrying on the family name, at that time the countryside hadn't achieved mechanization yet, most tasks were manual labor, and men did have more advantages.

Like in Qin Liang's family, Qin Jianjun, a lad of seventeen or eighteen, could already handle manure in the pig pen.

Shoveling out the manure from the pig pen pit, that was no small feat.

"Uh-huh, he sounded really happy," Qin Yang said, his gaze then fell upon Lin Chuxia's belly.

Lin Chuxia understood in an instant, caressing her belly with a look of complaint, "Dream on, Aunt Flo came this morning," the seed didn't take root.

Qin Yang indifferently stroked her head, "It's okay, I'll work harder next month."

Lin Chuxia: (°˘°˘)

With Lin Chuxia not feeling well, Qin Yang certainly wouldn't let her do any work.

For lunch, Qin Yang cooked the meal himself and even specially stewed a pot of chicken soup for her.

After taking a sip of the warm chicken soup, Lin Chuxia didn't skimp on her praises, "Your culinary skills are really getting better and better, you're truly a man who's fit for both the hall and the kitchen."

Qin Yang didn't think so; if anybody was fit for both the hall and the kitchen, it was his wife. Still, seeing her enjoying the soup made him happy.

"Are you going to return to the old home during this period?"

A few days ago, Lin Chuxia mentioned that the vegetable greenhouses in Qin Family Village had reached the production phase, and it was clear that she was still concerned about the matters there.

Chapter 440: Daddy

Wu's wife has given birth now, and it seems Su Wensong's wife's due date isn't far off from Wu's wife's.

Sun Lanlan is Lin Chuxia's only close friend. He worried that Lin Chuxia would return to keep her friend company during this time.

But to his surprise, Lin Chuxia shook her head, "I won't go back for now. Everything over there is being taken care of by someone else, they don't need me."

Upon hearing this, Qin Yang secretly breathed a sigh of relief. It's good that she's not going back. He's been too busy with work recently to have the time to chase after his wife back to her hometown.

.....

"Ding... Ding... Ding..."

In the schoolyard, the headmaster rang the bell signaling the end of class, and soon after, the children slung their olive-green backpacks over their shoulders and hopped out of the classroom in excitement.

Ningning packed her floral backpack and followed the crowd out. At the school gate, she didn't see her mother, so she stood to one side and waited.

Her mother had told her that if she didn't come to pick her up on time after school, Ningning must wait at the gate for a while and not run around aimlessly; otherwise, her mother would be unable to find her and get anxious.

"Ningning!"

A man's voice came from not far away, Ningning hadn't even seen who it was yet, but upon hearing the voice, her small body began to tremble slightly.

The man didn't notice Ningning's peculiar reaction and, seeing her, rushed over joyfully, "Ningning, daddy has finally found you."

Ningning turned around and saw the familiar figure, her little face turning pale with fright as tears quickly filled her eyes.

She wanted to run, but her legs shook uncontrollably.

Zhang Wenbin saw it was indeed Ningning and was overjoyed.

He had wandered around nearby primary schools these past few days and finally, hard work paid off – he found his daughter.

What excited him the most was that Ningning was waiting at the school alone.

He knew that if he went directly to Qin Juan, she might not listen to anything he said.

But getting to Ningning first was different; he was, after all, Ningning's father. By establishing a good relationship with his daughter first, even if Qin Juan didn't want to deal with him, she would give him a chance to talk for Ningning's sake.

As long as he could talk to Qin Juan, he was confident he could persuade her.

Even if he stepped back and looked at the bigger picture, by establishing a good relationship with Ningning, he believed that for the sake of giving Ningning a complete family, Qin Juan would compromise and agree to remarry him.

With that thought in mind, Zhang Wenbin quickly approached, smiling and saying, "Ningning, daddy's sweetheart, daddy has missed you so much these days, have you missed daddy? Let's go, daddy will take you to eat something delicious."

Little Ningning stared at Zhang Wenbin in terror, retreating continuously as if facing an overwhelming calamity, tears streaming down her face until she finally burst out crying.

Her cries immediately drew the attention of people nearby, especially the parents of younger students who had come to pick up their children.

Seeing how scared the child was, a concerned parent said, "What's going on with this man? Is he a kidnapper?"

"Exactly, whose child is this? This is why children need to be picked up by their parents."

"Where are the teachers? Are there any teachers coming over?"

A teacher passing by after work quickly came over upon noticing the situation, first shielding little Ningning behind her before turning to face Zhang Wenbin with a wary expression, "Comrade, what is the matter with you?"

Zhang Wenbin hadn't expected that after just a few months without seeing each other, his daughter would not recognize him.

Hiding his displeasure, he smiled and explained to the teacher, "Teacher, it's all a misunderstanding. I am her father; I came to pick her up after school."

Though the teacher wasn't Ningning's homeroom teacher, she was still one of Ningning's subject teachers. Hearing his words, she frowned even more, "A misunderstanding? She's that scared to see you; can you really be her father?"

What kind of child has that reaction upon seeing her father? Even if he is the real father, he's not a good one.

And she often sees Ningning's mother come to pick her up, a very gentle woman, and had never heard about Ningning's father.

"The child cannot leave with you. It's usually her mother who comes to pick her up. We must be responsible for the child."

The teacher decisively held Ningning in her arms, preventing Zhang Wenbin from touching him.

Upon hearing that he was not allowed to take the child, Zhang Wenbin became anxious.

Given his understanding of Qin Juan, even if she was late at the moment, she would surely come to pick up the child before long.

"Teacher, I am his real father."

Zhang Wenbin explained anxiously.

Truly, if he had to wait for Qin Juan to arrive, not only would he be unable to contact the child, he probably wouldn't even be able to speak with her.

"You can ask her, Ningning, quickly tell the teacher, I am your dad, don't cry, daddy will take you to eat something delicious soon, to buy new clothes..."

The more he said so, the more the teacher doubted his intentions.

Little Ningning, upon seeing Zhang Wenbin's warning gaze, cried even more intensely.

"You child, stop only crying, quickly tell the teacher, I am your dad, speak up, will you?"

Zhang Wenbin took another step forward, reaching to pull the child.

How could the teacher possibly let him touch the child?

Just at that moment, a figure rushed into the crowd.

Qin Juan directly blocked between Zhang Wenbin and Ningning, nearly roaring out, "Zhang Wenbin, what are you trying to do? Ningning has already been awarded to me, are you trying to snatch the child at school?"

She looked at her still crying daughter, her body also trembling uncontrollably.

She hadn't expected Zhang Wenbin to find their way to the school.

Ever since the divorce, she had cut off all contact with Zhang Wenbin.

Although the court also ruled that Zhang Wenbin was to pay child support, the Zhang family had never brought up this money, nor had anyone proactively provided it.

Qin Juan didn't care about that bit of child support, in her eyes, as long as Zhang Wenbin didn't disturb their mother and daughter's life, it didn't matter if there was no child support.

She would treat this man as if he were dead.

Yet unexpectedly, he could find the school, and from the looks of it just now, he obviously wanted to take Ningning away.

What did he want to do?

Zhang Wenbin looked at Qin Juan in front of him and almost didn't recognize her.

In his memory, Qin Juan only had an insatiable stomach, always eating and drinking well, yet never gaining weight, as though he was neglecting her.

Not to mention when it came to intimate matters, holding her in his arms was uncomfortable.

Had it not been for that, he wouldn't have sought other women.

The Qin Juan before him now had a rosy and full-faced complexion, looking several years younger than before when she was thin and sallow.

Her back was straight, wearing a well-tailored Dacron coat, with a wool sweater inside.

Even through the clothes, it was obvious that she had put on a good amount of weight.

Gone was her previously sickly appearance; she was now like a white poplar sprouting in spring, tall and resolute, full of life's ferocity.

He suddenly remembered the first time he saw Qin Juan, she seemed just like she did now, so beautiful that one couldn't look away.

But it wasn't entirely the same; when they first met, she didn't have the imposing aura she had now.

In the end, it was still the age getting up there, lacking some of the shyness of a young girl.

Although there was a tinge of regret in his heart, Zhang Wenbin still spoke pleasantly.

"Juanzi, look at you, yelling and scaring the child. I came today especially to see the child. Although we are divorced, I am still Ningning's father. I have not seen her these days, I miss her so much that I can't taste my food, and I can't sleep well. Mom is the same, missing the child to the point of falling sick."