

Switched M 441

Chapter 441: Ridiculous

Qin Juan thanked the teacher and took Ningning into her arms from the teacher's embrace, comforting her while apologizing.

It was her fault for not arriving on time, which led to the person frightening her daughter.

Only after Ningning's emotions were soothed did she shield her daughter behind her and scoffed, "Your mother cares for her child? From the day Ningning was born, she never gave her a proper look, despising her for being a girl. Zhang Wenbin, does it make any sense for you to say this? Didn't you find another woman to bear you a son? And now you're claiming you miss your child so much that you can't eat or sleep, isn't that laughable?"

"What are you saying? No matter what, I am Ningning's father, her blood flows in my veins, and I've raised her with affection. How could I not miss her? Even if there are some misunderstandings between us, you can't keep a child from seeing her father, can you?"

"Misunderstandings? Zhang Wenbin, you have the nerve to call it a misunderstanding?"

If it weren't for the presence of the child, Qin Juan really wished she could tear away his facade of decency.

He had been caught red-handed in bed by his own brother and still had the audacity to speak of misunderstandings.

Not wanting to argue further with this man, Qin Juan pulled Ningning and walked away.

This was Ningning's school, surrounded by her classmates.

She didn't want this incident to cause her classmates to judge Ningning, nor did she want Ningning to become a topic of gossip among others.

Naturally, Zhang Wenbin wouldn't give up so easily. This indeed wasn't the place for such a conversation.

Although Zhang Wenbin no longer lived in the city, he still cared about his reputation.

There were too many people around for him to face being scolded by Qin Juan in public.

Qin Juan walked a few steps with Ningning but stopped when she heard footsteps behind and saw her daughter looking back constantly, her small hand gripping hers tighter and tighter.

"Zhang Wenbin, why are you following us? We're already divorced, we no longer have any relationship. If you keep following us, I'll report you to the police."

Zhang Wenbin looked around, seeing fewer people nearby, and suddenly his expression turned affectionate, "Juanzi, don't be like this. You know how much you're hurting me inside? I know I was wrong. I came today to apologize to you and Ningning. I was blinded and fooled by another woman..."

"There's no need to tell me what you were like before," Qin Juan coldly interrupted before Zhang Wenbin could finish his affectionate speech, "No matter what, we have nothing to do with each other now."

"How can we have nothing to do with each other? Ningning is my daughter. Even if you don't want to deal with me, you can't stop me from seeing Ningning, can you? Juanzi, I know I wronged you before. I've thought about it these days. For Ningning's sake, can't you give me another chance? Ningning is so young; she can't grow up without a father. What will happen if she gets bullied at school?"

"No one is bullying me," a childish voice suddenly spoke up as Little Ningning puffed her cheeks and clenched her small fists, speaking earnestly, "My aunt told me that if anyone bullies me, she will take revenge for me. My aunt is very powerful, and so is Yuan Bao, they won't let Ningning be bullied."

Qin Juan followed with a scoff, "Do you hear that? We have people to back us up; we don't need your false concern. Zhang Wenbin, think about what your Zhang Family did to us mother and daughter. The time we were most bullied and mistreated was at Zhang Family's place. Every day away from the Zhang Family is a happy day. I will never return, and neither will Ningning. Just give up on that idea."

Having said that, Qin Juan walked away with Ningning.

Zhang Wenbin didn't expect Qin Juan to treat him with such an attitude, and even more surprisingly, his own daughter as well.

She was his biological daughter, and though he hadn't given much care to his daughter, he didn't feel he owed her anything over the years.

Suddenly, all his suppressed emotions lost patience, and he quickly stepped forward, blocking their way.

His earlier face, more affectionate than any dog, had changed.

"Qin Juan, did you plan this all along? Did you always want to get rid of me? I didn't know you were so scheming. It turns out that in all the years we were married, you were playing two faces at home. And now, you're going to turn the tables and blame everything on us. Qin Juan, you've played the game well."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Qin Juan didn't want to entangle with him and turned to walk in another direction.

Zhang Wenbin simply grabbed her arm, "You really don't know what I'm talking about? The Qin's Restaurant where you are working now is your family's, right? To have the restaurant right under my nose and me not even knowing about it, you still say you're not playing games? An City's Qin's Buns Shop, Xiyang Food Factory, who would have thought that your Qin Family would be so capable, becoming well-known local business owners. You never let on about it, what exactly are your intentions?"

If she had revealed even a little bit, they might not have ended up divorcing.

He knew his mother well enough; even if she didn't think much of Qin Juan, given that Qin Juan's family had some capabilities, she wouldn't have been too harsh on Qin Juan.

He knew this, didn't Qin Juan know as well?

Yet she deliberately concealed her family's situation, perhaps wanting to provoke his mother into acting up, so she could have a reason for divorce, right?

"You've wanted to divorce me all along, haven't you? Saying that I wronged you, but in reality, you had already betrayed me in your heart."

Zhang Wenbin looked ferocious, scaring Little Ningning into crying again.

Seeing her child frightened into tears, Qin Juan struggled to break free from his grip.

She then let go of Ningning's hand and slapped him across the face.

The sound of the crisp slap echoed, Zhang Wenbin's eyes widening in disbelief.

Over the years, it had always been him laying hands on Qin Juan, and after her one attempt at resistance, he punished her severely, intimidating her into never retaliating again. From that moment on, she never dared to lay a hand on him.

But now, divorced, she had the audacity to raise a hand against him, striking his face.

In that instant, all the mental preparation he had for this encounter was forgotten, and all his emotions turned into a challenge against him.

"You dare to hit me? Qin Juan, listen to me, you wronged me first, so this divorce doesn't count. Ningning should not be yours, she belongs to our Zhang Family, and should be with me. If you know what's good for you, come back with me, or else you'll never see your daughter again in this lifetime."

While speaking, Zhang Wenbin reached out to grab Ningning.

Ningning was Qin Juan's weakness; he was certain that once he had Ningning, he would make Qin Juan submit to him.

He would repay the humiliation of this slap, sooner or later.

Ningning's arm was grabbed, and she cried out in fear.

Qin Juan, frantic, wrapped her arms around Ningning and, in a moment of desperation, bit down hard on Zhang Wenbin's arm.

Chapter 442: Reality Strikes Again

She absolutely could not let Zhang Wenbin take Ningning away.

Zhang Wenbin drew in a painful breath, instinctively raising his hand to strike.

But before his hand could land on Qin Juan, it was forcefully seized by a large hand, almost breaking his bones, causing him such pain that he couldn't help but cry out in distress.

Turning his head, he met a pair of grim and piercing eyes, as well as that face covered in horizontal flesh that looked not to be trifled with.

"You..."

Before he could finish speaking, a fist the size of a sandbag met his face head-on. Zhang Wenbin hadn't even processed how to dodge when the fist struck him.

A searing pain radiated from his nasal bone, his entire head buzzing, as a warm stream flowed from his nostrils.

Zhang Wenbin quickly released Ningning to cover his own face, only to see his hands covered in blood.

Looking up again, Ningning had already been picked up by the man, who, along with Qin Juan, left him with nothing but their backs.

"Qin..."

Zhang Wenbin tried to call out Qin Juan's name, but as soon as he opened his mouth, his nasal bone throbbed with piercing pain.

On the other side, with Little Ningning in his arms, Jia Liang escorted Qin Juan all the way to their place before he reluctantly spoke.

"I'm sorry, Qin Juan. If it weren't for following me to collect debts today, you wouldn't have missed the time to pick up Ningning from school."

Today was the day for their shop to collect debts.

Previously, some units had run up a tab at the restaurant, but he had not taken it seriously.

In Jia Liang's eyes, he only ever owed others money, and there had never been a debt he couldn't collect.

Yet reality slapped him in the face once again.

These units saw them as sole proprietors and treated them like a game of kickball.

And the ways of the streets he used to rely on were completely futile against these units.

Only at that moment did he feel thankful for Qin Juan's meticulousness.

Had it not been for Qin Juan foreseeing such a situation, by the end of the year, he couldn't imagine how much money the shop would have had to advance, and how much would be uncollectible.

Now, they had agreed with those units to settle accounts quarterly. With shorter intervals, the amounts wouldn't be too large, and even if they tried to avoid payment, they could directly confront the signatory. Although it took some effort, they could still recover the money.

Even if there were staff changes, the short interval meant relationships hadn't cooled off yet.

Still, the process had been quite troublesome.

Being straightforward and hot-tempered, it was only because Qin Juan accompanied him today that the situation concluded satisfactorily.

They not only collected the money but also avoided harming future business with the clients.

However, this had caused a delay in picking up Ningning, nearly allowing that man to exploit the gap.

Qin Juan had calmed down on the way home, "It's not your fault. What about you, why did you come back? Did you forget something earlier?"

Jia Liang's face turned bright red all at once, stammering without knowing how to start.

Qin Juan gave a slight smile, "No worries, after all, the restaurant still belongs to my younger siblings. Even if you're not the manager, if the shop is in trouble, as long as I can help, I definitely will."

Only then did Jia Liang scratch the back of his head, "The foreign trade accounts haven't been settled yet. I've visited them once before, and didn't get any definitive answers. I'm thinking of trying again tomorrow, and I want you to come with me. You know, I'm not good with words. They talk circles around me, and I don't know how to respond."

Qin Juan nodded immediately, "Okay, I'll go with you tomorrow. Isn't there still work in the shop? We've arrived home, so if you have things to do, go ahead. Thank you so much for today."

If Jia Liang hadn't shown up in time, Qin Juan truly didn't know what might have happened.

She was genuinely grateful to him.

Having gotten the go-ahead, Jia Liang was very happy, "I'll go back to the store and keep busy for a bit. You shouldn't go out today. I see Ningning was also frightened. Keep her company. Later, I'll have my mom go to the market to buy some extra groceries and send some over to you guys."

"There's no need for Aunt Jia to go to all that trouble..."

Qin Juan was about to politely decline, but Jia Liang had already gone to push his own door open, "It's no trouble at all. You guys should hurry inside."

Watching Qin Juan enter the yard, Jia Liang's expression also darkened.

Aunt Jia came out of the house after hearing the noise at the door, saw Jia Liang, and glanced at the setting sun in the west, "Why are you home so early today? Why do you look so upset? If someone didn't know better, they'd think someone made you wear a green hat."

Jia Liang pushed Aunt Jia into the house, "Mom, what are you saying, what green hat or not. If I'm to wear a green hat, it'd be because you gave it to me. Didn't you buy me an army-green cotton hat this winter?"

Aunt Jia slapped him on the back, "Grown up and still not acting properly."

Jia Liang smiled, then spoke, "Later when you go to the market, buy some extra groceries and send some over to the neighbors. Also, visit them for a while if you have time."

"What's the matter?"

The mention of the neighbors let Aunt Jia know it was about Qin Juan.

Her son might be getting on in years, but he can't hide his little schemes from her — his mother.

Neighbor Qin Juan is good-looking and has a gentle nature. Although she has a daughter, the girl is quite lovable too.

Old Mrs. Jia wouldn't think that Qin Juan, being a divorcee, isn't worthy of her son.

After all, any way you put it, she's a decent family's daughter; their own son has been in a holding cell.

As for the divorce, that's on the other party's lack of discernment.

Especially after hearing from Jia Liang about how Qin Juan's previous in-laws treated her, Aunt Jia could only feel sympathy for her.

It's unfortunate — a good wife has not met a good man.

If her son could marry Qin Juan and bring her home, then their Old Jia Family would truly be fortunate.

Seeing her son saying this, Aunt Jia became quite agitated.

Jia Liang didn't keep anything from her and told Aunt Jia about the incident of Zhang Wenbin going to the school to snatch the child today.

Aunt Jia's face darkened upon hearing this, feeling a mix of pity for Qin Juan and the child, and anger at those people's shamelessness.

"How can they have the audacity to show their faces at the school? Don't worry son, I'll handle this. After I've bought the groceries, I'll stay over at the neighbors'. If that man dares to come again, I'll make sure he enters standing up and leaves lying down."

Jia Liang: He didn't even dare to make such a bold statement.

But he trusted his mother's capabilities. Having said that, he then took out this month's salary.

Aunt Jia saw the money and frowned, "Look at you, money comes in every month and you're earning more and more. You should also make an effort to find someone. When you bring someone back to our yard, I won't need to keep your money safe anymore."

"I know, Mom. I will. Be careful with your spending, I still need to rely on this money to get married."

"Hey, you little rascal..."

Before Aunt Jia could scold him, Jia Liang had already darted out the door.

When he passed by the tightly closed yard doors next door, the smile on his lips had not yet faded, and there was even a touch of tenderness in his eyes that he himself hadn't noticed.

Having his mother visit next door more often was also good for building a stronger relationship.

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Leaving home, Jia Liang didn't rush to the store but instead took a detour and walked back the way he came.

He stopped only when he saw a figure in the distance...

Chapter 443: Hit You Every Time I See You

Zhang Wenbin was beaten up by Jia Liang but didn't give up. He took a while to recover on the spot before he could finally catch his breath.

Just thinking about how he had finally found Qin Juan and the child, only to have that man ruin everything, Zhang Wenbin's eyes darkened with sinister intent.

He had come to the city these days not only to look for the child but also to gather some information about Qin Yang and his wife, including the affairs of Qin's Restaurant.

Naturally, he knew that the man worked at Qin's Restaurant.

He really couldn't understand what kind of taste Qin Yang's wife had, daring to employ any Tom, Dick, or Harry.

He had heard that the guy was a petty thief, a brawler, just a street thug.

Such trash was also treasured by Qin Yang's wife, even appointed as the restaurant manager, giving him face.

In Zhang Wenbin's eyes, the man was nothing but dirt.

Zhang Wenbin was beside himself with anger and reached out to touch his nose, feeling a piercing pain.

He couldn't help but curse under his breath, and just as he raised his head, the curse that came out of his mouth abruptly stopped.

He saw, at the mouth of an alley not far away, a few guys leaning against the wall, arms crossed, watching his sorry state with great interest.

Seeing him look over, the guys straightened up and confidently walked over step by step.

Zhang Wenbin's face turned ghastly pale as he glanced behind him, only to see an empty space with not even a passerby.

Earlier, when he wanted to speak to Qin Juan, he had been worried about being mistaken for a human trafficker like at the school gate, so he had chosen a quiet stretch of road.

But Zhang Wenbin wasn't a fool. A wise man does not fight when the odds are against him, and without thinking further, he turned and ran.

The sound of chaotic footsteps came from behind, and with an inward curse, Zhang Wenbin realized something was amiss. Before he could react, an intense pain shot through his back and a forceful kick sent him tumbling to the ground.

His hands subconsciously reached out to break his fall, but due to momentum, he slid a full two meters before coming to a stop.

His innards churned, and both hands were scraped raw, stinging fiercely.

Hearing the approaching footsteps, Zhang Wenbin turned in terror and looked at the group with a trembling voice.

"What do you want... Don't come any closer, what are you planning to do... I don't know you, you've got the wrong person?"

Instead of answering, what greeted him was a flurry of punches like a storm.

The punch from Jia Liang earlier had already taken him a long time to recover from, and now, fists large as sandbags rained down mercilessly. Zhang Wenbin didn't even have a chance to cry for help; he could only hug his head and wail in pain.

It wasn't until his whole body hurt so much that he even thought he was going to be beaten to death, that the assailants finally stopped.

A pair of glossy, dark leather shoes appeared before his eyes, and the voice that came from above was even chillier than ice.

"Remember this, Zhang, get lost immediately. If we see you in the city again, you'll be beaten every single time."

When Zhang Wenbin heard his surname accurately spoken by the other party, his body stiffened.

Lifting his head with difficulty, "Who are you? Who sent you? Qin Yang?"

But the other party didn't even give him a glance, and one of them even spitefully spat out a mouthful of saliva.

Zhang Wenbin clenched his fists, his eyes filled with humiliation and resentment.

Elsewhere, after a few men turned a corner, they saw a man waiting under a big tree.

"Brother Liang, the job's done, but you really underestimate us, don't you? That piece of trash, he wouldn't even dare to fight back after a slap. I alone could have handled him, there was no need for a few of us brothers."

Jia Liang took out a pack of cigarettes and distributed them, without continuing the topic, "Thanks for the hard work today, everyone. Come over to my place for a meal when you have time."

One man took the cigarette and spoke with a grin, "Brother Liang, if we're going to have a meal, we won't have to pay, right?"

Jia Liang just gave a nonchalant glance, and the guy immediately corrected himself, "Here you go, definitely! It's not easy for Brother Liang to be a manager. We brothers have to support you."

Jia Liang nodded in satisfaction, "Don't worry, when the time comes, I'll give the brothers a discount."

"That's settled then, as long as we have Brother Liang's word."

Once the few of them left, Jia Liang glanced again in Zhang Wenbin's direction.

It had been a long time since he had contacted these brothers, and with someone like Zhang Wenbin, there's no room for martial morality.

Don't think he didn't see it earlier, Zhang Wenbin was about to lay hands on Qin Juan again.

If he was half a step later, that punch would have been on Qin Juan's body.

He was only giving them a taste of their own medicine, at least they hit men, not women, and only scumbags at that.

The reason he called these brothers over was simply to distract Zhang Wenbin from his thoughts.

Jia Liang knew exactly what kind of thing a coward like him was afraid of.

Otherwise, he would have beaten that scumbag to a point where he'd be begging for mercy.

Now that he'd done everything he wanted to, he felt spirited and refreshed.

Almost light-footed, he made his way back to the restaurant.

As the weather warmed up and with the supply of fresh vegetables from Qin Family Village's greenhouses bolstering them, Qin's Restaurant's evening clientele was growing.

When there were no private bookings, almost all the customers dined in the ground-floor lobby, which was now quite lively.

Upon entering, Jia Liang immediately spotted Qin Jianjun busily moving about and unexpectedly called him over, "Hey kid, how come you didn't go to class today? Aren't you running out of time?"

Qin Jianjun chuckled, "Manager, there were no classes today, so I decided to help out a bit more in the restaurant."

"You're a conscientious one, keep up the good work, and I'll give you a bonus at the end of the month."

Qin Jianjun was hard-working; he worked in the restaurant during the day and attended school at night, never once neglecting his duties.

While others had several days off every month, Qin Jianjun hardly ever rested.

Even though the restaurant belonged to the Qin family, in Jia Liang's eyes, everyone was an employee all the same and those who work more deserve rewards.

He patted Qin Jianjun on the shoulder and sent him back to his duties, then turned around to see Gao Lele at the reception desk looking over this way, so he walked over.

"Is there something you need?"

He had been running about for the last few days, and today, he hadn't been in the restaurant all day.

Gao Lele snapped back to reality upon realizing the manager was talking to her and quickly shook her head, "No... there's nothing."

Jia Liang frowned slightly at her demeanor and reminded her, "Then make sure you're doing your work properly."

Just now, although Gao Lele seemed to be looking at him, her mind was obviously elsewhere. What would she do if a customer came over?

Wait for the customer to greet you first?

Gao Lele quickly nodded, "Got it, Manager. I will."

After Jia Liang walked away, Gao Lele finally let out a sigh of relief.

Liu Na leaned over and whispered to her, "What's wrong with you? The manager has been here for a while now, why are you still distracted? Are you not feeling well? If you want, you can ask the manager for a leave, I'll cover for you for a bit."

Gao Lele shook her head again, her face drooping, she pouted and glanced again at the distant Qin Jianjun.

Suddenly, an idea popped into her head, and she turned to ask, "Nana, do you have time after work? Let's go watch a movie together."

It seemed like she'd thought of a brilliant plan and without waiting for Liu Na to respond, she continued, "I heard the cinema has several new movies, we could go watch one after work, and invite a few others like Qin Jianjun; with more of us, it'll be lively..."

Chapter 444: Kneel Down Before Her

"Lele," even though she didn't have the heart to dampen Gao Lele's excitement, Liu Na still spoke up, "You all go ahead and watch, I won't be joining. I have some things to deal with at home and need to head back early."

"At this hour, what could possibly be going on at home? The weather's warming up now, it's really the perfect time..."

She cut herself off mid-sentence as something occurred to her and quickly changed the topic, "Well... then you should head back early. When we have time, let's go shopping together."

Liu Na nodded, giving her a comforting smile, "Sure, we'll go shopping together when we have some time off."

Ever since the incident with Feng Jun, Liu Na had developed an aversion to movie theaters; usually, she wouldn't even walk past the entrance of one.

She knew the issue was her own, but every time she saw a movie theater, she thought of that man and those unbearable memories.

After Liu Na left, Gao Lele's eyes scanned the entire lobby. Spotting that silhouette, her eyes instantly sparkled with excitement.

Her earlier idea had given her tremendous courage.

She waited until Qin Jianjun weaved through the lobby to near the front desk, then smiled and waved at him.

Qin Jianjun served dishes to the customers before coming over with his tray, "What's up, Lele?"

"Jianjun, want to go see a movie together after work? I've invited quite a few people; it'll be fun with a larger group."

She was indeed clever, inviting several people so that inviting Qin Jianjun as well wouldn't make her feel embarrassed.

Qin Jianjun replied with a faint smile, "You guys go ahead; I'll pass. I'd like to go home and do some reading."

"Reading can be done anytime, just take a break for today. There's that saying, right? 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' You're always reading; aren't you afraid of turning into a bookworm?"

Gao Lele playfully teased, her bright, sparkling eyes filled with anticipation.

Qin Jianjun still smiled, "I actually really wish I could become a bookworm. I'm a bit slow, so I need to read and memorize things repeatedly. You guys enjoy your time; don't worry about me."

Qin Jianjun saw someone waving from across the room and slightly nodded his head, "Someone's calling for me over there, I'm going to check it out."

"Ah..."

Gao Lele had more to say, but Qin Jianjun was already making his way quickly toward that customer.

Her bright and cheerful face instantly fell.

If he wasn't going, what was the point of inviting those other people?

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Zhang Wenbin didn't remember how he got back to his dwelling, only recalling the strange looks the owner of the small hotel gave him when he returned.

Lying in bed, Zhang Wenbin felt pain all over his body, and that pain only added to his growing resentment.

He already guessed that those people must have been sent by Qin Yang; his young brother-in-law had a formal job and wouldn't dare to confront him openly, resorting instead to these sneaky tactics.

But it didn't matter, the root of all his problems was with Qin Juan.

As long as he and Qin Juan made up, he would still be the son-in-law of the Qin Family.

He couldn't just return like this, if he did, what would all his suffering amount to?

Thinking of Qin's Restaurant, Qin's Buns Shop, Xiyang Food Factory, even Qin Yang's connections in the city...

Even if he couldn't return to his original job, with the status of a Qin Family son-in-law, things wouldn't be as difficult as they were now.

And then... Zhang Wenbin touched his nose.

That Bald man would have to act according to his mood.

First thing he'd do then would be to get that man fired.

No, he'd say that he embezzled from the restaurant. Prison is where that kind of person belonged.

Thinking of this, Zhang Wenbin felt a surge of fervor, lessening the pain of his sleep, and the next day he woke up early, waiting on the path Ningning took to school.

He knew Qin Juan was soft-hearted.

Yesterday, in a moment of impatience, he used the wrong method. Now, looking the way he did, he could win her sympathy.

If it came down to it, he would shed his pride, kneel before her, and beg for her forgiveness.

Thinking this, he limped towards the school, but before he got far, Zhang Wenbin abruptly stopped in his tracks.

"Comrade Zhang, where are you headed?" Jia Liang gestured behind him, "The bus station is in that direction."

Although Zhang Wenbin didn't understand how he had run into Jia Liang here again, he knew no good ever came from this man.

"I have things to do, it's none of your business."

"None of my business?" Jia Liang stepped in front of Zhang Wenbin, speaking earnestly, "I remember warning Comrade Zhang yesterday that if I saw you in the city, I'd hit you every time. Seems like you didn't hear clearly, or didn't take it seriously, or perhaps, you are still delusional?"

Zhang Wenbin sharply raised his head, "It was you?"

"Yes, it was me."

Jia Liang stepped forward, nodding in admission.

There was none of the steady composure of Qin's Restaurant's manager about him now.

A slight furrow of his brow perfectly portrayed the image of a thug, enough to make anyone's blood run cold.

"If I remember correctly, isn't the school in that direction? What is Comrade Zhang planning to do there?"

The injuries on Zhang Wenbin's body still hurt, and he couldn't help but take a step back.

He looked around and thankfully, he was on the main road, which gave him some confidence.

"What are you going to do? I'm telling you, this is a society governed by law, assaulting people is a crime..."

Jia Liang didn't want to talk much with him, but on hearing his words, swore outright.

"You fucking know assaulting people is a crime? Did you consider the law when you were hitting a woman?"

"I'm telling you, I have fewer qualms beating a scumbag like you."

He suddenly leaned in closer, lowering his voice, "Haven't you already experienced it? If I want to, not just beating you, even killing you could be done silently and without a trace."

Hearing this, Zhang Wenbin abruptly raised his head, memories flooding back.

He wasn't thinking about the beating he received yesterday, but the time before that, when he was inexplicably attacked by strangers.

Back then, he suspected it was an adversary from his workplace or someone he had offended there, even considering the possibility of the Qin brothers' involvement.

So it was him all along...

Was this man standing up for Qin Juan even then?

Suddenly, Zhang Wenbin sneered with a realization, "Now I understand, no wonder you've been picking on me time and again. You couldn't be coveting Qin Juan, that used goods, right? It must be true that you two are involved..."

With a "bang," Zhang Wenbin's words were cut short by a fierce punch to his face.

Jia Liang watched his battered appearance with leisure as Zhang Wenbin steadied himself, then spoke word by word.

"I am unmarried, Qin Juan is unmarried; what does it matter if I like her? Unlike you, a scumbag man, eating from your bowl while eyeing what's in the pot, unfaithful to your marriage. After divorcing Qin Juan, you still shamelessly crawl back to her. Even now, you can't bear to leave? Do you think acting like this will win more of Qin Juan's sympathy?"

He reached out and patted Zhang Wenbin's face, hitting the wound on the corner of his mouth, causing Zhang Wenbin to involuntarily suck in a breath of cold air.

Moreover, the insulting nature of this gesture made Zhang Wenbin clench his fists even tighter.

Chapter 445: Scared Urine

Jia Liang seemed to notice something, lowering his head to glance at his fist and sneering mockingly, "What's it going to be, you wanna fight back? Come on, hit me, Grandpa's telling you to hit. If you don't, you're not a man. Daring to hit a woman but too chicken to hit a man, you're nothing but a coward."

Zhang Wenbin knew even if he made a move, he wouldn't stand a chance against the opponent, and he wouldn't even be able to touch his clothes; instead, he'd just get beaten up even more.

Suppressing the humiliation in his heart, he spoke in a low voice, "What exactly do you want? Qin Juan is my wife, what does it have to do with you?"

"You're wrong, Qin Juan isn't your wife anymore, she's your ex-wife," Jia Liang corrected, "And she won't have anything to do with you in the future."

He sized up Zhang Wenbin from head to toe, his eyes filled with undisguised contempt, "I really don't understand, Mr. Zhang, how you still have the face to seek out Qin Juan, even hoping to garner her sympathy. Have you forgotten what you and your family did to her before?"

Before Zhang Wenbin could reply, Jia Liang punched him, "You might forget, but I won't."

Caught off guard, Zhang Wenbin staggered back several steps and ended up sitting on the ground.

Jia Liang advanced another step and kicked him over, then stomped directly on his face with his big foot.

"Still not giving up, are you? Getting beaten and still not giving up? How come I didn't see this deep love before? Or did you not realize how 'loving' you were? Or now that Qin Juan's life has improved, and you can't find anyone else to slave away for your family, you suddenly remember her? Mr. Zhang, you're

really a disgrace to us men. Just thinking that our male population includes a scumbag like you makes me sick to my stomach. What do you think Qin Juan would feel seeing you like this now?"

He wanted to say these words yesterday, but looking one more second at this scum made him feel disgusted.

Despite being beaten, he still shamelessly came crawling back.

"If I were you, I wouldn't even show my face around her, let alone think about remarrying her. And what about that old religious fanatic at your house? Planning to let her be tormented by those two old hags again? You're really not a human being. Since you don't want to behave like a human, I'll help you out."

With that, he stepped harder, and Zhang Wenbin felt his face grind painfully as if his skin was about to peel off, and his eyes were about to pop out.

He tried to speak desperately, but could only manage a hoarse voice, "You... you dare, murder is illegal, you'll get in trouble if you kill me..."

Pressing his foot down even harder, "Threatening me? I've never been afraid, and you should ask around An City who doesn't know me, Jia Dalang. Even if it means taking a bullet, in eighteen years I'll be back as a hero. Killing a piece of trash like you, I'd be ridding the people of a menace..."

That chillingly stern voice with the accompanying pain terrified Zhang Wenbin finally, "Don't... don't..."

His body twitched, struggling to speak, his words intermittent as he begged for mercy.

"I... I was wrong, I'll leave... I'll go far away..."

"Go far away? Just that and it's settled? Didn't you fucking come back to An City? Came running back here, so should I break your legs to keep you honest?"

Zhang Wenbin felt like his brain was about to get crushed out, even his breathing became difficult.

He was finally scared, more scared than when he was beaten by a group of men yesterday.

Yesterday he knew those people wouldn't beat him to death, at most they'd cause him some flesh wounds to scare him.

But today he wasn't so sure.

He felt this man really wanted to kill him.

The desire to survive made him plead again, "I won't look for Qin... Juan anymore, I don't want... Ningning either... Please... please let me go..."

Jia Liang looked down at the person under his foot, suddenly smelling a stench of urine, realizing that Zhang Wenbin had wet himself.

Pissed himself in fear.

"What a fucking loser."

Spitting disdainfully, Jia Liang lifted his foot and warned, "Remember what you said. If I ever see you bothering Qin Juan again, I swear I'll kill you. I've been to prison before, I'm not afraid of it."

Suddenly able to breathe freely, Zhang Wenbin took deep breaths of fresh air and came back to life.

Seeing Jia Liang still glaring at him angrily, he forced himself to endure the pain and crawled up, then scrambled and ran away.

He was truly scared this time.

He coveted the riches of the Qin Family, but feared even more for his own life.

If Qin Juan really got involved with that kind of man, seeking her out again would undoubtedly lead him to a dead end.

Even if Qin Juan was favored by that man, even if she had thoughts of remarrying him, he would be silenced by that man.

This Qin Juan, truly a disaster.

Seeing his disheveled appearance, Jia Liang viciously spat again.

Truly a disgrace to all men.

He turned to go back to the store and saw a woman not far away.

"Qin Juan..."

Jia Liang's face slightly changed, and he subconsciously turned to look behind him.

Fortunately, that man had already walked far away, but he didn't know how long Qin Juan had been there and how much of the earlier scene she had seen.

But from the look of Qin Juan, it was obvious she had seen what had happened.

"That..."

Right now, Jia Liang incredibly hated his own inarticulateness, unsure how to explain to her.

After all, that man was Ningning's father, and he really had murderous intentions just now.

Would Qin Juan be scared seeing him like that? Or would she find him brutal and ruthless?

But before he could think of what to say next, Qin Juan already spoke, "Thank you!"

"Ah?"

Jia Liang suddenly looked up, only to see Qin Juan's utterly serious expression, "Jia Liang, thank you. I saw everything just now, thank you for teaching that man a lesson for me."

She had just dropped Ningning off at school, and after yesterday's incident, it was impossible not to be scared.

All the way she was thinking, what if she ran into Zhang Wenbin again? What if that man came again to pick Ningning up from school in the evening?

After she safely delivered Ningning to school, she hadn't walked far when she saw this scene.

She clearly saw Jia Liang's ferocity, which scared Zhang Wenbin enough to make him flee desperately, swearing never to harass them again.

It was the first time Qin Juan saw Zhang Wenbin like that, although she knew her brothers had taught Zhang Wenbin a lesson before, but it was always behind her back.

It must be said, seeing this scene was really satisfying.

Yesterday Zhang Wenbin came to snatch Ningning, shamelessly mentioned remarrying her, giving Ningning a complete family, which really disgusted her.

At that moment when he tried to snatch Ningning, she wished he would just die.

Jia Liang did today what she had long wanted to do, but could not achieve herself.

Finally, Jia Liang clearly heard Qin Juan's words, and seeing her expression, which was neither scared nor distressed, he then chuckled.

"I was thinking that with this man's character, he definitely wouldn't give up easily. I was worried he would come to harass you and your daughter again, but you can rest assured, after today's incident, I guess he wouldn't dare to come again. If he does, I really will break his legs."

Chapter 446: I Want to Protect You

Qin Juan looked at him and smiled helplessly, "You really are... it's not worth losing your life for such scum."

Jia Liang was dazzled by her smile, and his own smile broadened naively, "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. I was just trying to scare him; I didn't expect him to be so easily frightened, even wetting himself."

Qin Juan looked down at the puddle of urine with disgust and quickly stepped over it.

Jia Liang saw her heading toward the Bun Shop and followed her along the road.

The early spring sunshine was always exceptionally bright, as tree branches had already burst into tender green buds. Bathed in the sunlight, they seemed full of vitality.

Everywhere was thriving, reflecting Jia Liang's current mood.

He glanced at the woman walking a step away from him, squeezed his fist again and again, then took a deep breath before he finally spoke.

"Qin Juan, if you ever need anything in the future, just tell me. I... I want to protect you."

Qin Juan paused briefly in her steps, then continued walking.

"Let's hurry back, there's still a lot to deal with at the shop. The accounts from the foreign trade side shouldn't be difficult to settle. I won't accompany you. I haven't been at the shop these last few days and left the front desk work to Lele, she has enough on her plate."

Jia Liang's Adam's apple bobbed, and he eventually agreed, "Alright, let's do that."

.....

The news that Zhang Wenbin came to the city still reached Lin Chuxia's ears.

In the afternoon, after school, Lin Chuxia personally drove her jeep to the school gate to pick up Ningning.

Seeing Lin Chuxia arrive, Qin Juan knew that she was aware of the issue with Zhang Wenbin.

"It's not a big deal. Jia Liang arrived in time and gave him a beating. I heard that the guy has already left. I know Zhang Wenbin too well; he only acts tough inside his own hole. Actually, he's quite cowardly."

Qin Juan spoke lightly, but Lin Chuxia had learnt about the whole situation from Jia Liang earlier.

It had been almost half a year since the divorce, and Zhang Wenbin had not paid any attention to the child. His effort to show up now clearly meant no good.

Even from Jia Liang's brief words, she could sense the danger of the situation.

But now that Qin Juan seemed emotionally stable, Lin Chuxia was also relieved.

She picked up the mother and daughter and got them into the car.

The shop had received some fresh and juicy chives today. Lin Chuxia took some home, planning to make pork and chive dumplings for dinner.

Eating pork and chive dumplings at this time of year was truly delightful.

Back home, Ningning happily saw Yuan Bao and began running around in the yard with the pet, chattering away.

Qin Juan couldn't help but feel a wave of gratitude inside. This time, they really owed Jia Liang.

Yesterday, Ningning was frightened and even had nightmares at night. If that man had insisted on causing trouble, who knows how they would have coped in the future.

Lin Chuxia picked up Ningning today also out of fear that the child might have been traumatized. Now, seeing her playing happily with Yuan Bao in the yard, she was finally able to relax.

She then noticed Qin Juan's wistful expression.

There was something she had suspected before, and after meeting with Jia Liang today, she felt even more sure about it.

While making dumplings, taking advantage of no one else being around, Lin Chuxia brought it up.

"Sister, actually I think Jia Liang..."

"Sister-in-law," Lin Chuxia hadn't finished speaking when Qin Juan interrupted her.

She knew what her sister-in-law wanted to say.

"Jia Liang is very good, I'm very grateful to him, but that's all it is—gratitude. Ningning and I are doing fine now, and I don't want to change our current situation."

"But you're still so young, you have the right to pursue your own happiness and enjoy romance."

Lin Chuxia, although she doesn't feel that a man is essential for a perfect life, nor does she think that happiness can only come from a man, still believes her elder sister, who's just thirty and in the prime of her life, has the right to enjoy love.

Even if she doesn't remarry, having a relationship, or even a one-night stand should satisfy her needs, both emotionally and physically.

However, given Qin Juan's personality, she might not accept such ideas.

But Lin Chuxia doesn't want her to end up like a woman from feudal times, rigidly adhering to old ways for a lifetime.

Of course, Qin Juan could never imagine Lin Chuxia's ideas were so radical; she simply said with a weary heart, "What's so good about romance? I am already very happy with Ningning as it is."

"Alright, if you think it's good, then it's good. No matter what kind of life you desire, we will support you."

She also silently lit a candle for Jia Liang in her heart.

When Jia Liang spoke to her about Zhang Wenbin this morning, that guy did not hide his little schemes at all.

He even hinted in front of her that Zhang Wenbin's persistent desires were because Qin Juan was still single.

Lin Chuxia naturally also thinks that Jia Liang is a decent person, and if Jia Liang is there to protect Qin Juan and her daughter, Zhang Wenbin won't stand a chance.

Jia Liang's family is simple, and Aunt Jia's character is impeccable.

Sigh, it seems that Jia Liang's pursuit of marriage will be a long journey.

It's also a good test; her elder sister is such a good person that anyone who marries her again must wholeheartedly cherish and love her.

...

In the blink of an eye, May arrived, and the vegetable greenhouses in Qin Family Village had achieved gratifying results.

Most of the vegetable greenhouses had stable output, and every day tractors from the village were continuously transporting fresh vegetables to the market.

During this period, Wang Cheng gave her a call to report the progress of the greenhouse vegetable sales and to consult her for further ideas.

Though the sales aspect involved support from fellow villagers in Qin Family Village, there were many aspects that were still unfamiliar to the villagers.

Moreover, almost every household had their own greenhouse, so when things got busy, it was hard to spare any hands.

He contacted some former colleagues from the vegetable market, aiming to systemize the sales of greenhouse vegetables.

Lin Chuxia naturally didn't object; after all, she had sought Wang Cheng with this intention in mind and readily agreed over the phone.

Following that, good news also came from Sun Bingnan.

The saplings he brought back from the Northwest this time not only filled her two hills but the Sun family's own hill as well.

Additionally, several families in Daqing Mountain Village who had good relationships with the Sun family, envying the Sun family's profitable chicken farm, also followed suit and planted yellow peach trees.

After two months of care, the survival rate of the saplings reached 90%.

During this time, some saplings even blossomed.

Although she knew that even if the first year brought peach blossoms, it didn't necessarily mean peaches would grow, it was still a good sign.

Moreover, Sun Lanlan also gave birth, to a chubby little boy, making Granny Su and the Sun family ecstatic.

Hearing all the good news from various fronts, Lin Chuxia planned to head back to An City for a visit.

Before leaving, on a whim, she went to a salon and turned her long, straight black hair into big waves.

To match her new wavy hair, she went on a shopping spree at the mall.

Her destination was still the City Department Store.

It's undeniable that the Department Store's enduring success is inseparably linked to its procurement department.

Chapter 447: Beauty with a Kind of Aggressiveness

These past two years, coastal cities in the south have been rapidly developing, with fashion styles changing day by day, and the Department Store keeping up with the times. Even the trendy outfits from Hong Kong are available there.

This is also the age where people have limited living standards and lack high consumption power.

If people had a bit more money, she wondered whether the Department Store would bring in foreign luxury goods to sell.

It wasn't until her hands could carry no more that she headed home fully loaded.

By the time she got home, Qin Yang had already returned and was cooking lunch in the kitchen.

Seeing Lin Chuxia's new style, he froze for a moment.

Lin Chuxia flipped her hair at him, "What do you think? Do I look good?"

To be honest, Qin Yang was somewhat unaccustomed to this kind of look in his wife.

The Lin Chuxia with long black hair looked elegant and graceful.

Now, his wife, with her hair in big waves, bright eyes, and bright red lips, looked aggressively beautiful.

He first nodded, "You look good," then his gaze fell on her lips, "Why is your lipstick so thick today?"

Lin Chuxia laughed heartily.

Her lipstick used to be light-colored, but today, to match her hairstyle, she specifically bought bright red lipstick.

This man, he couldn't think that the more lipstick applied, the deeper the color, could he?

She walked up to him, stood on her tiptoes, and kissed his handsome face.

"It's not too much, it's my new lipstick. Looks good, right?"

Qin Yang looked up, and through the window behind Lin Chuxia, clearly saw a lipstick mark on his own face.

This appearance...

He smiled indulgently, "It looks good too."

...

Qin Yang, who said she looked good, didn't truly understand what 'looking good' or 'aggressively beautiful' meant until the afternoon.

Lin Chuxia wore black trousers, a goose yellow silk shirt, and a khaki coat over it.

She wore high heels, her hair half-tied up, with blazing red lips...

Qin Yang hurriedly searched his briefcase, pulling out a stack of banknotes to give her, "Wife, this is the salary I got this morning, take it all to buy new clothes."

Lin Chuxia took the money from his gleaming eyes without any hesitation.

She already had money, quite a lot in fact, and never lacked money to spend.

But Qin Yang always made sure to hand over his salary upon receiving it.

However, this time his target in handing over the money was clearer than ever.

Lin Chuxia smiled warmly, "Thank you, husband."

She was not short of money, what she lacked was Qin Yang's endlessly indulgent and permissive heart towards her.

...

In the afternoon, they arrived at Qin Family Village, and unusually Mrs. Qin wasn't at home.

But from the entrance of the village, they already noticed the changes in Qin Family Village.

Next to their family's agricultural shop, a row of new houses had been built.

The houses looked simple, without windows and doors, more like temporary shacks.

However, they surrounded a courtyard, with the entrance bustling, and many villagers with bicycles and vegetable baskets coming and going.

Lin Chuxia already guessed what that place was.

Lin Chuxia didn't stay at home, changing into a pair of flat shoes before going out.

Qin Yang followed behind with hope in his eyes, his face holding a look of grievance as he watched the back of his wife's head.

She just changed her shoes and left the house, not even giving him a glance before leaving.

She probably forgot about him once she entered the village.

But it doesn't matter if his wife forgot him, as long as he catches up with her.

Hearing movement behind her, Lin Chuxia turned around, a look of surprise on her face, "Qin Yang, why did you come out too?"

Qin Yang: "..."

He just knew it, he wasn't wrong.

Lin Chuxia suddenly realized and smiled, reaching out to pull his hand, "I was just teasing you. I knew you wouldn't feel comfortable with me going out alone. Let's go, it's a good time to see the changes in the village. Our Qin Family Village changes every day."

The warmth of her fingertips lingered on Qin Yang's, and even though he knew she was coaxing him, his lips curled into a smile.

"The changes in Qin Family Village also have your contribution."

Lin Chuxia turned her head, "Yours too, you give me great support."

The couple first went to the agricultural supply store, and sure enough, Mrs. Qin was also busy there.

She couldn't read, but she recognized simple numbers and had a good memory. Even if she couldn't sell anything, when people came to haul fertilizers, she could lend a hand.

These days, the vegetables in the greenhouse were in prime time; applying extra fertilizer, spraying pesticides, setting up trellises... The store was bustling with people every day.

At that moment, Mrs. Qin was watching people hauling fertilizers. When she saw them entering the courtyard, she smiled and said, "I just heard your second uncle say he saw your car, and I was just thinking about checking on you after finishing up here."

Her gaze fell on Lin Chuxia, her eyes curving into a smile, "Chuxia, you look really beautiful today."

Lin Chuxia stepped forward and linked arms with Mrs. Qin, "Do I? I bought you new clothes too, let's try them on when we get back home."

Mrs. Qin sternly said, "Oh dear, I told you, there's no need to spend money on me. I have enough clothes, and I haven't even worn the fabric you bought me last time."

Though her face was stern, her eyes were filled with mirth.

"Auntie, Mr. Lin is not short on money, just accept the clothes. Who else has your fortune?"

A young man buying fertilizer was talking to Qin Yang, suddenly turned around and said with a smile.

Mrs. Qin immediately laughed so hard her eyes disappeared.

Indeed, who in Qin Family Village wouldn't envy her good fortune now?

Lin Chuxia looked around the agricultural supply store, and from the operation of the store, she could also see the development of the vegetable greenhouses in Qin Family Village.

The situation almost exceeded her expectations.

As she listened to the bustling next door, she knew it was indeed their Qin Family Village's vegetable stand. After greeting Mr. and Mrs. Qin, she went over to have a look.

Qin Yang wanted to follow, but Mrs. Qin kept him back.

Their son and daughter-in-law were back; she had to cook something nice tonight.

She told Qin Yang to help Mr. Qin with the shop while the old lady took out some money from the counter to buy meat and vegetables.

Her small feet nearly caught the wind as she walked.

Lin Chuxia squeezed her eyes at Qin Yang and cheerfully went to the vegetable stand next door.

The villagers handing over vegetables at the entrance warmly greeted her.

"Mr. Lin is back!"

"Mr. Lin!"

"Mr. Lin, have some beans, they're freshly picked from our greenhouse, the first batch is the most uniform and they haven't been sprayed yet."

"Mr. Lin, try our cucumbers, the tips are tender and spiky."

"Mr. Lin, take some greens home to cook."

"Little Lin looks really beautiful today, she really looks like a boss. You boys, with all these vegetables, how is Little Lin supposed to carry them? She'll get her clothes dirty, here, auntie will get you a basket."

Her comment elicited a burst of laughter, "Aunt Li, if Mr. Lin can't carry the vegetables, have you thought about how she would carry the basket?"

The woman's face froze slightly, then she laughed again, "Hey, that's simple, you boys put the veggies in the basket and I'll carry them home for Little Lin."

As soon as she finished speaking, one person handed over a handful of beans, another a couple of cucumbers, and in no time the basket was full.

Chapter 448: The Beggar Is the Grandson, the Begged Is the Master

Chuxia repeatedly expressed her gratitude, while insisting it was unnecessary, but the people paid her no heed, leaving her with no choice but to continue thanking them.

"I was wondering why it was so bustling here. Mr. Lin, your presence has even disrupted the order of our vegetable station,"

Wang Cheng came over with a big smile.

Seeing the person in charge come by, the villagers also composed themselves and lined up to deliver their vegetables.

Only then did Chuxia walk aside with Wang Cheng.

"How's it going? I heard that the greenhouses have been thriving these past few days. Any problems with the sales channels? Can all the vegetables be sold on the same day?"

Vegetables are perishable goods and fear accumulation—they not only reduce in weight but also deteriorate in appearance, ultimately affecting the price.

Wang Cheng responded with a confident smile, "No problem at all. Not to mention our current output, we could handle even thirty to forty percent more without any issue."

As Qin Family Village's greenhouses gained fame, they no longer needed to go door-to-door to deliver their vegetables.

Ever since they had their own wholesale point at the vegetable station, buyers from various organizations would come to purchase produce early in the morning just as the sky began to brighten.

There were also small vendors who would wholesale vegetables from Qin Family Village and retail them at the market.

He pointed to a few individuals nearby, "You should recognize those two—they used to manage the wholesale at the vegetable station, Hu Jun and Tian Youping, and now they are in charge of this area for Qin Family Village as well. Plus, there's another piece of news..."

With a face brimming with joy, Wang Cheng said, "Back when the vegetable station was in a slump, Li Jian was in charge of the market and had formed relationships outside of Ancheng County. Recently, they've heard about our village's vegetables and sorted out these connections and handed them to me. In the past few days, two spots have already sent trucks over to get our produce directly. If it wasn't for ensuring we supply Ancheng County's market first, our vegetables would have been sold out by now—there's truly more demand than supply."

Ever since responsibilities were distributed to individual households, Wang Cheng witnessed a decline at his vegetable station day by day, having not felt this content for a long time.

Having finished discussing with his team, Hu Jun approached Chuxia.

"Mr. Lin!"

"Brother Hu!"

With Chuxia calling out to him, Hu Jun was both honored and surprised.

"I'm not worthy, not worthy," he chuckled as he pointed towards a distant vehicle, "That's a truck from Qing County coming to pick up vegetables. They've been turning up reliably every afternoon, and today they negotiated with us to take an extra truckload of vegetables each day. I haven't given them an answer yet..."

"Taking an extra truckload is out of the question," Wang Cheng interjected, "I forgot to tell you earlier. I took a call from Baoshan, who heard we provided early spring vegetables, and they requested us to send some their way. I've agreed to let them come and collect."

When you ask for help, you're the underdog, but when you're asked, you're in charge. There's no way we'll deliver.

"This year, let's stick to this policy: supply each of the external markets with, at most, one truckload per day. Let's cast a wider net and then reassess next year."

Chuxia nodded her head in agreement with Wang Cheng's approach.

Managing vegetable greenhouses is challenging, but nothing is absolute.

Now that the market is open and everyone is their own boss, seeing the profit Qin Family Village greenhouses have made, there's no guarantee others won't follow suit next year.

Clothing, food, shelter, and transportation—it's a massive market.

Qin Family Village's greenhouses are a long-term project, and they welcome neighboring villagers who want to get involved.

From the very beginning of this vegetable station, Wang Cheng and Chuxia had a common understanding.

The station served not only Qin Family Village but also all the farmers who brought produce there.

Well aware of this, Hu Jun couldn't resist sharing his thoughts in front of Chuxia.

"To be honest, I think there's no need for us to build this warehouse. When it comes to warehouses, there's none bigger than the vegetable station's. The vegetable station's warehouses have been largely unoccupied for the past couple of years, and especially now they're all vacant. Given our brotherhood, it would be no trouble at all to rent a few warehouses from the station chief. Moreover, the vegetable station has been running for many years and the local villagers within ten miles know the place well. On the other hand, our location here in Qin Family Village is somewhat off the beaten path."

Chuxia didn't deny it, "The vegetable station's warehouses are indeed good, but I think the patch allocated to you by the village chief is still a bit too small."

This first year, many fellow villagers teamed up to build a single greenhouse.

The fear is all the effort might go to waste.

With the success achieved this year, next year people won't just be teaming up for a single greenhouse—some families might even run two or three by themselves.

The people of Qin Family Village are the most hardworking and resilient when it comes to farming.

By then, this warehouse transfer station will be far from adequate.

Upon hearing Chuxia's words, Hu Jun's eyes lit up, "Right? That's what I told Old Wang, but the guy wouldn't agree, claiming it's inconvenient. What's inconvenient about this short distance?"

Chuxia glanced at Wang Cheng, her knowing smile slight, "It is inconvenient."

It wasn't a matter of the distance.

Wang Cheng knew Chuxia understood his point and his smile revealed all of his white teeth.

Leaning in, he whispered to Chuxia, "I reckon it's just a matter of a year or two. If Mr. Lin is interested in the vegetable station, it won't be too late to take it over then."

Chuxia nodded, "Indeed, we'll go with Brother Wang's approach for now. Keep an eye on it—the space for those two warehouses is indeed a bit small."

"No problem."

Lost in their exchange, Hu Jun was completely baffled.

They seemed to agree with him just a moment ago, so why did they suddenly agree to follow Old Wang's lead?

"Hey, what kind of riddle are you guys playing at?"

Both Chuxia and Wang Cheng laughed.

Wang Cheng patted Hu Jun's shoulder, "Old Hu, I've got my eye on the vegetable station's warehouse too, but we can't let our project get entangled with the station's operations. Do you still want to go back and continue being the small group leader, letting them boss you around up top?"

Hu Jun's eyes widened in realization.

Watching Wang Cheng walk away, he slapped his thigh, "Well done, Old Wang, you really do have the shrewdest mind. Of course, I don't want to stay as a small group leader."

Wang Cheng waved his hand, "This isn't being shrewd, it's having foresight."

What exactly does renting the vegetable station's warehouse entail right now?

Though they've stepped out to look for work and the station chief has no objections—after all, the station has been unable to pay salaries for several months, and it can't just let everyone starve—if they go and rent warehouse space while still acting independently, that would be unacceptable.

In his view, the current vegetable station won't last more than two years, and taking it over then would be joyful indeed.

Now it seems Chuxia has the same idea, truly a wise woman.

.....

Upon hearing that the couple had returned, Qin Han left the fields early to come back home.

Mrs. Qin glanced behind him, "Why didn't Technician He come back with you?"

While Qin Han washed the mud from his hands, he said, "The crops in the Li Family's greenhouse caught a disease, so Technician He went there. I came back first. Aren't they at home?"

The moment Qin Han finished speaking, Chuxia stepped out of the house, freshly changed.

Chapter 449: Why Aren't I Pregnant Yet?

Walking and rolling up her sleeves, she intended to help Mrs. Qin in the kitchen for a while, but seeing Qin Han's look, it seemed he had something to talk to her about.

Knowing her son best, Mrs. Qin saw him like this and shooed him away with disdain, "Your younger brother and sister just got back, let them catch their breath at home. Go pick up your wife, it's getting late, and the road will be hard to navigate when it gets dark."

Qin Han saw Lin Chuxia nod and greet her before he agreed to Mrs. Qin's request to fetch Zhang Guilan.

Lin Chuxia took the spatula to help Mrs. Qin with cooking, chatting with her.

"Sister-in-law's pregnancy is quite far along, isn't it? Can't she handle the shop's busyness? She should rest at this stage."

"It's almost eight months now. A while back, when Xiao Wu's wife finished her maternity leave and wanted to go back to work, your sister-in-law said no, telling her to rest a bit longer. Now that Xiao Wu's wife has been a mother for two months, I guess in a little while she can replace your eldest sister-in-law."

Back then, Lin Chuxia and her eldest brother and sister-in-law had indeed agreed on this arrangement, but now she felt a bit guilty as a boss.

One pregnant, one postpartum.

When the eldest sister-in-law returned, she'd have to seriously discuss it with her and see if there were capable hands in the shop.

It wasn't long before Qin Han had brought Zhang Guilan back. Knowing that Lin Chuxia had returned, Zhang Guilan also brought back some meat buns and cooked dishes from the shop.

At the dinner table, Lin Chuxia actually broached the topic of the Bun Shop's situation with Zhang Guilan.

Zhang Guilan nonchalantly waved her hand, "Don't worry, sister-in-law, I have nothing much to do. I'm clear about my own health. At the shop, I just handle the money and keep an eye on things. If it really comes down to it, your elder brother can help me."

After Yang Guilan's words fell, Mrs. Qin snorted, "You still count on him? These days, we hardly ever see him at the farm supply shop."

"Mom," Qin Han protested, "With sister-in-law here, can't you say two nice words about me?"

He had entrusted the farm supply shop to his sister-in-law, who trusted him so much. He couldn't let his sister-in-law think he wasn't serious about it.

Besides, he had only been away from the shop for a couple of days, but everything was still under his control.

Worried Lin Chuxia would have the wrong impression, Qin Han quickly explained, "These days, Technician He and I have been planting some new stuff in our greenhouse. Vegetables are a staple for the people; off-season vegetables can sell for a good price, so we thought maybe off-season fruits might fetch a nice sum in the greenhouses."

Lin Chuxia's eyes lit up at this, "What did you plant?"

Could it be what she was thinking?

Sure enough, the next moment Qin Han uttered two words, "Strawberries. They've already bloomed recently, and it won't be long before they bear fruit."

Lin Chuxia showed surprise, "That's really great. When the strawberries come in, brother, you must remember to call me."

She loved strawberries the most.

Originally, she had planned to propose planting strawberries in the greenhouses next year and wanted to focus on getting the vegetables right this year. She didn't expect that Technician He and her brother had already taken the first step.

Qin Han readily agreed, "Sure, not only strawberries but Qin Liang's greenhouse also has several ridges of watermelons. Qin Liang takes care of them every day like they're gold, but we don't know yet if they'll succeed."

"There shouldn't be any issues. I believe in Qin Liang's skills in farming."

Lin Chuxia hadn't expected that, in the matter of the vegetable greenhouses, she'd only taken a small step forward, yet they had already blazed the trail behind her.

She could already imagine how prosperous the vegetable greenhouses in Qin Family Village would be next year.

In a few more years, the prosperity of Qin Family Village will definitely not be just an empty promise.

They just took advantage of the weekend to come back for a visit, and the next day after breakfast, Lin Chuxia went to the Su Family to see Sun Lanlan.

Sun Lanlan had not finished her postpartum month, and seeing Lin Chuxia enter the yard, she almost wanted to jump through the glass to greet her.

Lin Chuxia also bought a silver bracelet for the baby, promising to come back for the baby's one-month celebration.

Seeing both the mother and child in good health, rosy and plump under Granny Su's care, Lin Chuxia felt at ease.

However, upon leaving the Su Family, Lin Chuxia suddenly felt a tinge of melancholy.

After Jiang Hong gave birth, she and Qin Yang had been planning to have children. For the past two months, they hadn't taken any preventive measures, but she still hadn't become pregnant.

She had been drinking spiritual spring water to maintain her health, and her physical condition was very good; she hardly fell ill during the winter.

She could feel that this body was completely different from her previous one, which had suffered from chronic ailments after saving someone.

Why wasn't she pregnant yet?

Could it be that she really wasn't destined to have children?

With this thought, Lin Chuxia felt frustrated. When she looked up and saw two people not far away, she thought her eyes were playing tricks on her.

Rubbing her eyes for a closer look confirmed she was not mistaken.

In front, Li Dongmei was riding a bicycle with Zhang Wenbin sitting on the rear seat.

Zhang Wenbin's arm was still in a sling around his neck; it was unclear if it was still from the injury caused by Jia Liang or if he had been hurt again.

What Lin Chuxia was more interested in was how these two ended up together. Their relationship seemed to be quite close.

Thinking back to how Wenbin had visited the city to attempt reconciliation with his ex-wife not long ago, Lin Chuxia felt so nauseated that she almost threw up her last meal.

At that moment, on the other side, Li Dongmei, with Zhang Wenbin, made their way back to the Zhang Family.

Mrs. Zhang was basking in the courtyard sun when she saw the two return and quickly went to greet them.

"Today we really owe it to Dongmei. Wenbin's arm has been inconvenient since he fell, and without such a helpful person, I wouldn't know what to do."

Li Dongmei glanced at Zhang Wenbin before responding to Mrs. Zhang with a smile, "Granny, why are you being so polite with me? You should have called me over the day Brother Zhang got injured."

"That's true. Men just can't take care of themselves. He gets hurt going to and from work; you should stay for a bit, Granny bought some meat, let's all make dumplings together later. You can help me roll out the dough."

Li Dongmei looked at Zhang Wenbin again, and seeing no objection from him, she cheerfully agreed with a loud, "Alright."

"Then you go to the kitchen and help Granny chop the meat for the filling. I'll go buy some chives; I heard there's some for sale in the market. It's a bit expensive, but that's okay. You don't often get to eat at Granny's, and I'm happy, so I'm willing to spend more to make you pork and chives-filled dumplings."

Upon hearing this, Li Dongmei immediately stopped Mrs. Zhang, "Granny, there's no need to buy chives. Just wait, I'll go to my brother's stall and bring back two pounds."

Mrs. Zhang quickly waved her hands, "Oh, that won't do. I should buy it. It's not good to always eat vegetables from your family."

Li Dongmei was already pushing the bike out, "What's the fuss? It's all vegetables from our own family; Granny, don't be polite with me. Just wait here; I'll be right back with the bicycle. I'll chop the meat when I return, it won't delay us at all."

Chapter 450: He Was Terribly Harmed by This Family

Mrs. Zhang watched Li Dongmei ride her bicycle away until she was out of sight, then slowly her smile faded.

Turning to look at her son's coffin-like face, she spoke softly to persuade him, "Look how good this girl is? Not only is she filial and sensible, but her family also sells vegetables. Once you're married to her, we won't even need to buy our own veggies."

Zhang Wenbin still felt somewhat dissatisfied and retorted immediately, "Qin Juan's family are vegetable farmers too. Remember when she first married into the family? The Qin Family also provided us with grain and vegetables. Have you forgotten what you said then?"

His mother disdained Qin Juan for being from an agricultural household, thinking it was only right for the Qin Family to give them grain and vegetables.

Mrs. Zhang's face stiffened, obviously recalling the circumstances at that time, and said with a displeased expression, "Are you still hung up on that little wretch? We can discuss this when the time comes. If it wasn't for that little wretch, would our family be in this state?"

She looked at her son covered in injuries and spoke with heartfelt concern, "Wenbin, it's time to wake up. She's a heartless and ungrateful woman. She caused you to lose your job, and now she's living a good life. If she had even a shred of affection for you, she wouldn't have let you be beaten to this state. I think you're right, that woman probably had an affair long ago. We've been utterly deceived by the Qin Family."

"Dongmei is a good girl, would Mom harm you? Look how carefully she's taken care of you these past days. Listen to Mom and marry Dongmei soon, maybe by next year I'll be able to hold a grandchild."

...

Li Dongmei hurried back to the night market and parked her bicycle in front of Li Guangyuan's vegetable stall. She grabbed a handful of chives and after thinking for a moment, picked up a few cucumbers as well.

Li Guangyuan was selling vegetables next to her. He caught sight of her actions from the corner of his eye and frowned, "What are you taking vegetables for again?" And you're taking chives and cucumbers; do you know how much they cost per pound right now?

"I need them for something, brother, just have dinner by yourself later, don't worry about me."

Li Dongmei placed the vegetables in her basket and turned to leave.

Li Guangyuan grabbed her bike, "Explain to me clearly, where are you going? Li Dongmei, I'm telling you, if you want to find a partner, let your sister-in-law set you up with a matchmaker. Stop messing around outside."

Once Lin Jiayi was mentioned, Li Dongmei let out a cold laugh, "Have my sister-in-law act as a matchmaker? Didn't she already push my elder sister into the fire pit? Do you want her to push me in there too?"

"Well, how about Mom then, will you rest easy if Mom screens the guy for you?"

Li Dongmei held her chin up slightly, "Mom already knows about this bit of business I'm dealing with. You don't believe me? Go home and ask her. She even approves of me dating him."

Hearing that Old Mrs. Li was aware, Li Guangyuan's brows furrowed even deeper, "Even so, you can't just keep running off to that man's place, it's unseemly. If mom agrees, bring the guy home to meet us."

If it's time to get engaged, get engaged. If it's time to get married, get married. What does it look like, a young lady like you constantly visiting a man's home?"

"I get it, I get it, you're so naggy," Li Dongmei brushed Li Guangyuan's hand away impatiently and left without looking back.

After she left, Li Guangyuan slapped his thigh.

He got so caught up talking about Li Dongmei's matters that he forgot to make her leave the vegetables behind.

He used to turn a blind eye when she took some cabbage or potatoes, but these chives and cucumbers were expensive greenhouse vegetables he had acquired from Qin Family Village with difficulty.

...

Li Dongmei originally thought it was impossible for Zhang Wenbin to come to the Li Family for a visit, but after she revealed her heart to Mrs. Zhang, she actually helped make it happen.

Li Dongmei's gratitude toward Mrs. Zhang deepened, feeling that her efforts to please her lately had not been in vain.

Zhang Wenbin's arm was still not fully healed, but in order to visit the Li Family, he removed the hanging bandage that day, only his arm movement was still inconvenient.

Li Dongmei, feeling sorry for Zhang Wenbin, showed her thoughtfulness as she personally rode a bike to pick him up from the Zhang Family.

Even when buying gifts at the supply and marketing co-op, it was Li Dongmei who paid for them.

Of course, Li Dongmei didn't have much money in her hands either, and what's more, in the end, these things would enter her mouth anyway, so she casually bought two packs of snacks before heading to Xiaoqingshan Village.

Zhang Wenbin only knew that Li Dongmei was from the countryside, but he didn't know which village she lived in.

When passing through Qin Family Village, the numerous greenhouses surrounding the village were particularly conspicuous.

At the entrance of Qin Family Village, on one side was the Xiyang Food Factory, and on the other side was the Qin Family Village agricultural supplies store.

Next to the store were villagers, lining up with carts and baskets, transporting vegetables there.

While riding her bicycle, Li Dongmei introduced the place, "That's the Qin Family Village vegetable station. The Qin Family Village has set up these vegetable greenhouses, harvesting much of the produce early. Most of the vegetables my brothers sell come from that station, but those vegetables are quite pricey. I heard that setting up each of these greenhouses costs several hundred yuan. The whole village has built so many; Qin Family Village truly deserves to be called a model village."

Last year, when the county was evaluating for model status, Qin Family Village was recognized as a model village.

With so many greenhouses this year, Qin Family Village will probably remain the model village.

Li Dongmei looked over there with some envy; there were still people in Xiaoqingshan Village struggling with basic food and clothing, while everyone in Qin Family Village was striving for a better life.

However, after thinking about it, she would soon marry Zhang Wenbin and become a city dweller, and no matter how wealthy Qin Family Village was, it would still be composed of old peasants.

Yet Zhang Wenbin's gaze fell on the agricultural supplies store next door.

There stood an elderly person, warmly greeting villagers.

That villager had just come from the vegetable station and handed a wad of cash to the elderly person.

He had previously inquired about the agricultural supplies store in Qin Family Village, which belonged to Qin Juan's family, and the elderly person at the store entrance was Qin Juan's mother, his former mother-in-law.

Zhang Wenbin's eyes darkened considerably.

He had been badly cheated by that family.

Suddenly, the elderly person raised her head and glanced off into the distance, startling Zhang Wenbin into hurriedly turning away.

Because of his abrupt motion, Li Dongmei, who was riding the bicycle, suddenly lost her balance.

The road from the county town had long since turned into a dirt path.

Previously, Li Dongmei, not wanting to jostle Zhang Wenbin too much, had always sought out the smoothest parts of the road, which were usually on the very sides.

In losing her balance, the handlebars twisted several times before the bike plunged directly into the ditch beside the road.

"Uh-uh-uh... Ah..."

Li Dongmei grunted for a while but eventually let out a cry and fell into the roadside ditch.

Meanwhile, Zhang Wenbin, who had been continuously avoiding the direction of Qin Family Village, tumbled down awkwardly, sprawling in all directions.

One of his arms was already injured, and with this fall, he landed on it again, his pain so intense that he gasped for air without any regard for his image.

Hearing the noise, Li Dongmei quickly climbed up and asked with concern, "How are you, Brother Bin? Did you fall on your arm again? Is it really hurt? Do you need me to take you to the clinic to have a look?"