

## Switched M 541

### Chapter 541: The New Son-in-Law

"Juanzi has been obedient since she was a child, always listening to the family, but look at what kind of match the family found for her. Now that she has found someone she likes, we should support her. I'll say it first, whether you all want it or not, I think Juanzi and Jia Liang are quite good together, and I support it."

Mrs. Qin felt a pinch in her heart upon hearing this.

Her daughter had a difficult life, and earlier they were blind, causing her to suffer for so many years, it was the fault of them as parents.

But hearing Qin Han's latter words, she got so angry that she punched him.

"What nonsense are you saying? If Juanzi can find someone she likes, I couldn't be happier, how could I not agree? I just didn't expect her taste to be like this," also didn't expect her daughter to move on so quickly.

Thinking that the man must be truly good to her.

"Yangyang, you and your wife should help mom keep an eye on things here, see what the situation is with the man's family, their attitude, although your sister is marrying a second time, I will never let her be wronged because of that, and there's Ningning, we also have to consider the child, if they mind Ningning being a burden, we need to give it some more thought..."

"You don't have to worry about that, Jia Liang has long known that sister is bringing the child, Aunt Jia especially likes Ningning, this summer Ningning spent almost all her time at Aunt Jia's place."

Lin Chuxia explained Jia Liang's family situation to Mrs. Qin.

What she said reminded Mrs. Qin of when Qin Juan and her daughter came back when Yaoyao was a month old, and Ningning kept calling Grandma Jia.

If it's said like this, there really isn't much to worry about.

"Simple family is good, simple family, fewer issues, housing doesn't matter, that young man seems capable, as long as he works earnestly, what can't he earn?"

The more Mrs. Qin spoke, the happier she became, "Tell me, Juanzi, since this child has someone she likes, why didn't she tell me, you all knew, but your dad and I were left in the dark."

"Maybe sister doesn't know how to bring it up with the family yet? But don't worry, mom, even if sister keeps her composure, someone is more anxious than her, I guess by the end of the year, we'll have a new son-in-law visiting our home," Lin Chuxia said.

Mrs. Qin thought that's how things should be, after all, their Juanzi is the woman, this should wait for the man to propose.

"Then I'll patiently wait, Xiaxia, you are in contact with your sister more often, if there's anything, tell me, quietly, with your sister being so reserved, waiting for her to open up to me will suffocate me."

"Okay, mom, I will."

Mrs. Qin and Qin Han stayed at home for most of the day and left for home at dusk.

Mrs. Qin was truly happy this trip, seeing the pregnant younger daughter-in-law doing so well, and also seeing her daughter and beautiful granddaughter.

Sitting in the car, Mrs. Qin was still pondering, no wonder her daughter looked so vibrant, she lamented that ever since leaving the Zhang Family, her daughter's life had been getting better and better, she had become younger and more beautiful.

It turned out not only did she leave the Zhang Family, but she also met someone who cherished her.

"Eldest son, you said that Jia Liang guy, looks so big and burly, yet he's quite caring, I heard your sister-in-law say, Juanzi was taken care of by him when she was sick; thinking of all those years Juanzi was married to the Zhang Family, even her postpartum period was poorly tended to, now there's someone to care for her even if she gets a cold, how is it that this sounds like a dream to me? You think Jia Liang looks like that, can he really take care of someone well?"

Qin Han, driving, laughed out loud.

"Mom, does how someone looks have anything to do with their ability to take care of others? What's wrong with how Jia Liang looks? He's just a bit rough-looking, but I think he looks great, quite manly! A lot of women are into that."

"Really?"

"Why not? Stop overthinking. As long as Juanzi likes the way he is, I'm fine with it, as long as she's happy. Besides, Jia Liang manages the store so well, how can't he take good care of a woman?"

Mr. Qin nodded, realizing that made sense.

It was her first time meeting Jia Liang today, she didn't pay much attention to his appearance, just remembered broadly.

In any case, he looked completely different from Zhang Wenbin.

Zhang Wenbin wasn't tall, comparable to her daughter, and always skinny.

She never imagined what kind of man her daughter would like, but if she indeed likes someone like Jia Liang, then marrying her off to Zhang Wenbin back then meant she had suffered a lot.

Mrs. Qin felt another pain in her heart, but was relieved her daughter divorced Zhang Wenbin.

The two rushed home and arrived just as it was getting dark.

As the car drove into the yard, the headlights shone on a person coming out from the yard.

Qin Han hadn't seen who it was clearly before the person turned around and jogged away.

Mrs. Qin furrowed her brows, "I think I saw Da Wen."

Qin Han had already seen clearly by then and his face darkened, "It's him; he's carrying a basket of something."

Qin Han said, opening the car door to get out.

Just as Mr. Qin was about to enter the house, he heard the sound of their car and knew it was the two of them returning, so he stood in the yard waiting for them.

Qin Han directly questioned, "Dad, what did Qin Wen come here for again? I saw him carrying a basket of stuff when he left, did you pick strawberries for him?"

Whatever Qin Wen came for, most likely what's in the basket was strawberries.

Before Mr. Qin could respond, Zhang Guilan came out from the house.

"Yelling right when you get home, what's all the shouting for? If you don't mind the cold outside, your parents do."

Today Mrs. Qin went to Yan City to see the younger daughter-in-law, Zhang Guilan didn't go to the shop, staying home to look after the children.

Qin Han stormed into the house angrily.

No need to ask now, looking at his wife's attitude, Qin Wen must have been carrying strawberries in that basket.

"I've told you, I, Qin Han, have no such brother, if his wife wants to eat strawberries during her pregnancy, she can get them elsewhere, my strawberries will rot in the fields before giving them to him."

Zhang Guilan sighed, "Ma Suyun's pregnancy is not going well, I heard she bled today..."

"Let her bleed as much as she wants, this baby can't stay and falls, that's him getting his comeuppance, it's because of all the bad things he did, heaven's eyes are open, what's it got to do with me? Just have a kind heart, did you forget how they treated us back then? If it weren't for the village chief being on good terms with us and giving us a heads-up, we'd have lost Yaoyao back then, how long has it been, and you've already forgotten all that..."

"Eldest son!"

Seeing Qin Han getting more agitated, Mr. Qin called to him.

"The strawberries were picked by me, it has nothing to do with your wife."

Zhang Guilan didn't respond to Mr. Qin's words, looking at Qin Han with calm indifference, "It was indeed dad who picked them, but it was me who asked him to do it."

Seeing Qin Han about to lose his temper again, Zhang Guilan glared at him, "Are you gonna let anyone else talk? No matter how right you are, you should at least let others argue their point, right?"

Chapter 542: Yielding Is Not a Sign of Cowardice

Qin Han immediately stopped talking, slumped into a chair, and sulked with his head tilted.

"Go ahead, I'm listening. Even if you spin a nice tale, I'll never reconcile with him."

Zhang Guilan's tone also softened, "Who said you need to love him? I still remember him reporting us back then."

"Then why are you still..."

He cut himself off mid-sentence, caught Zhang Guilan's eye, and let the rest go.

Zhang Guilan poured him a glass of water, then continued slowly.

"Today, Aunt came by again and mentioned that Ma Suyun kept talking about strawberries, unaware that they caused the problem with her unborn child."

"How could your aunt be so unaware," grumbled Mrs. Qin nearby.

"Mom, it's not that Aunt's unaware. Ma Suyun is carrying her grandson; what can she do? She came to apologize today, but I know she really wants the strawberries. If they want them that badly, let's just give them to her. As my sister-in-law wisely said, 'If you don't stand high enough, all you see is problems; with a narrow mind, you'll fuss over trivialities.' The fact that they hold such a grudge over a few strawberries shows their short-sightedness and dark intentions. There's no need for us to argue over such trivial matters. If their child ends up being born with complications because of us..."

"Could he really blame us? I'm not scared of him," Qin Han scoffed.

"You may not be scared, but I am, Zhuangzhuang is, and Yaoyao too," Zhang Guilan stated bluntly.

Qin Wen is a scoundrel; if anything really happens to Ma Suyun's child, there's no telling what he'll do.

They have a loving family and good fortunes ahead.

It's said that those with nothing to lose don't fear those who do, and Zhang Guilan is indeed afraid of someone like Qin Wen who has nothing to lose.

Living in the same village, there would be too many opportunities to be targeted.

It's just a few strawberries, consider them fed to dogs.

If Lin Chuxia knew Zhang Guilan's thoughts, she would completely agree with her actions.

This is the principle of the happiness retreating.

Conceding isn't a sign of weakness, it's a form of self-protection.

Mrs. Qin also realized this, "Guilan is right, Da Wen was misled by your aunt and uncle, and this child with Ma Suyun didn't come easily. We should avoid trouble if we can."

Qin Han clenched his fists angrily but said nothing more.

He knew his wife and mom were right. It's not stealing itself that's scary; it's being targeted that's terrifying.

Qin Wen wouldn't dare attack him, but if he targeted his kids, he couldn't handle it, whatever the outcome.

"This is fucking humiliating," Qin Han cursed angrily, "Letting him take strawberries like that? Did you ask for money?"

"Yes, how could I not? Even among brothers, clear accounts are needed," Zhang Guilan said, "I charged him the same as apples."

"The same price as apples? My strawberries are much more precious; it was too cheap for him."

Zhang Guilan widened her eyes at her husband.

Those little strawberries, priced the same as apples, and he still thought it was too cheap?

Even if growing them wasn't easy, big apples are much more precious, and who would buy his expensive little strawberries?

Even if priced like apples, she believed people would only buy apples and not his little strawberries.

Qin Han saw her expression and knew what she was thinking.

"Don't underestimate my strawberries. Believe it or not, I'll make them sell for a high price soon. Just because our acquaintances won't buy them doesn't mean others won't. Just wait and see; no one else sells strawberries on the market, and I'll sell them for two yuan per kilo and open your eyes."

Zhang Guilan turned to Mrs. Qin, "Mom, did something happen while you were out? Why is he talking nonsense?"

Two yuan per kilo—it's beyond dreaming.

Pork costs how much per kilo, wouldn't it be tastier to spend that money on meat?

Mrs. Qin chuckled.

In the afternoon, when her son and younger daughter-in-law spoke, she didn't understand; she only knew that if her daughter-in-law said it was possible, then it was.

She knew how hard it was for her son to grow those strawberries, and the whole village was laughing at him.

She hoped her son would sell the strawberries at a good price and show those eager to watch a good laugh.



No matter how his wife made fun of him, Qin Han had faith anyway.

"When Qin Wen comes back for more strawberries, I'll charge him two yuan per kilo, not a cent less. If he wants them, fine; if not, he can fuck off. He can't say I won't sell them to him."

That's how it'll be.

Zhang Guilan said nothing more about her husband's attitude.

Selling strawberries to Qin Wen made her husband uncomfortable, but he needed peace of mind.

At that moment, she saw what Mrs. Qin held in her hand, something pink and tender.

"Mom, what are you holding?"

Mrs. Qin smiled, "Your sister-in-law made little clothes for Yaoyao, said she made them while she had nothing to do over these days, told me to bring them back to you. I looked at them, they're really pretty."

Zhang Guilan took them and opened, "Oh my God, did my sister-in-law make this? I think it looks better than store-bought clothes. Look at this little pocket, and there are even little lace trims."

"I said the same, you can't find this style in stores."

"Sister-in-law is well-informed; these little clothes are just right for Yaoyao to wear during the holiday."

The mother and daughter-in-law chatted while watching the children, while elsewhere, Qin Wen brought the strawberries back home.

Ma Suyun, finally able to eat strawberries, felt beyond comforted.

Bite after bite, a face full of contentment.

"You can't deny it; strawberries taste best in winter, you can't find this flavor in summer."

She looked at Qin Wen, "I heard your second aunt went to Yan City with Qin Han today?"

Qin Wen nodded, "Seems like it. They weren't home when I went over, otherwise, with Qin Han's temper, he would've never sold me strawberries."

Ma Suyun popped another strawberry into her mouth, "Hmm, looks like the old lady is anxious. After all, Qin Yang and Lin Chuxia have been married for years with no news. How can they not worry? They wanted to make fun of us before; now I'll wait to see them embarrassed. Once my son is born, I'll show him off around the village, make them envious."

Qin Wen agreed wholeheartedly, "Exactly, what's the point of making money when you're childless? In the end, all that money is left for others, no matter how successful Qin Yang is; he'll still be beneath me at the end."

The thought of such a scene made him feel ecstatic.

"How are you feeling? Does your stomach still hurt? You must take care of it for me."

Ma Suyun rubbed her belly and pouted, "It doesn't hurt now. If it weren't for Qin Han and them giving us a hard time, nothing would've happened. I think they did it on purpose, can't stand to see us doing well."

She paused, suddenly remembering, "Hey, did you say the strawberries were sold to you? They charged you for those few strawberries?"

Chapter 543: True to Their Name

"Don't even mention it, Zhang Guilan insisted that their strawberries were for sale, and actually asked for fifty cents a pound."

"Fifty cents a pound," Ma Suyun almost dropped the strawberries in her hand, "how much are apples per pound? Is she out of her mind?"

Qin Wen snorted coldly, "Isn't she just crazy? I can see it clearly now; in their eyes, they only recognize money. My mom went over and didn't even get any face. My mom is Qin Han's real aunt. How can you ask for money from your aunt for eating a few strawberries? Aren't they afraid of being laughed at if this gets out?"

"Did you give it to her when she asked?"

These strawberries must weigh nearly two pounds, and that's one yuan?

"What else could I do if I didn't give it? Didn't you insist on eating strawberries?" Qin Wen also felt the pain of spending money, "You're the one; what's wrong with eating something else? You insisted on eating those few lousy strawberries, making me have to beg around. I don't want to see them one bit."

"It's not me who wanted to eat; it was your son who wanted it. What could I do?" Ma Suyun stroked her still unchanged belly, looking tender, "My son is obviously smart, knowing that winter strawberries are the best even while still in the womb."

Hearing the word 'smart' about their son, Qin Wen looked hopeful.

"It's just a few cents; I don't intend to owe them. When my son succeeds in the future, will there be a shortage of opportunities to turn things around? Qin Han's family, Zhuangzhuang, lives up to his name, just like Qin Han, dull as can be. Qin Yang is even more hopeless. Look at our house. Big brother Jianjun, Construction, second brother Jianye. And in the future, there's our family's..."

"Congcong," Ma Suyun interjected, "I've decided; our son's name will be Congcong, clever and smart."

The name suits the person; her son must be very smart too.

Qin Wen nodded, "Yes, Congcong, Qin Jiancong. We have four boys in this house. If they don't cozy up to us in the future, we won't play with them and will embarrass them when need arises."

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As the sunset fades, the howling north wind blows, with the afterglow swaying through the gaps between trees and dancing on the ground.

A few leaves couldn't withstand the ordeal of the fierce wind and finally left the branches, leaving behind thin twigs stretching their posture.

A group of youths walked against the wind, slumping their shoulders and tucking their necks despite the thick cotton clothes.

The sound of quick footsteps ran up from behind, quickly catching up with the youth pushing a bicycle in front.

"Hey, Lin Jiadong, wait for me."

Lin Jiadong stopped and looked at Li Youmin who caught up.

Li Youmin stopped to catch his breath once he reached Lin Jiadong, walked beside him, "Are you still going back to your sister's place? Why not come to the guesthouse with me tonight? We can share a bed; it's enough for the two of us. Otherwise, it's quite awkward to leave me with Teacher Tian all the time."

"No, my second sister is still at home waiting for me to have dinner. If I don't go back, she'll get worried," Lin Jiadong blandly replied, then thought for a moment and added, "It's not a bad thing to be with Teacher Tian. You can take the opportunity to ask him about the problems you don't understand."

"You say it like it's easy; I dare not ask him. Last time I asked him a question, I almost didn't sleep half the night. If you think it's good, come to the guesthouse with me. By the way, you have questions you don't understand, right? You can just ask Teacher Tian."

"I'll go back and think about it slowly first; if I don't figure it out, I'll find Teacher tomorrow."

While they were talking, a bicycle passed by. Li Youmin tugged at Lin Jiadong's clothes and looked at the figure, asking, "Hey, how do you know that female classmate? You've got some secrets you're hiding from me, haven't you? That's really not fair; I've always considered you a brother."

Lin Jiadong glanced at the distant Hu Yaping and directly responded, "I don't know her."

Li Youmin clearly didn't believe him, "If you don't know her, why does she keep asking you questions? You're not the top scorer, I've checked, the first place is at City No.1 Middle School, she leaves aside asking her school's top scorer but asks you, the second who came from the countryside. It makes no sense."

Recently, they've been busy with practice sessions. Today, they finally had a bit of free time.

It was shocking when they saw the province's third place, whom everyone kept at a distance, approach Lin Jiadong for questions. Li Youmin almost dropped his jaw.

Everyone knew that in private, topics about the few girls in class came up most often.

The other two were okay; after becoming familiar, they'd say hello.

But this third place in the province, the prettiest and the most aloof, others didn't dare to try approaching her. Privately, they called her the ice queen.

It's said that she's from the city, with exceptionally good family conditions, and her father is an official too.

Lin Jiadong frowned upon hearing this.

"Li Youmin, if you want others to respect you, first respect yourself. You always say 'countryside' and 'countryside,' but actually, people don't care if you're from the city or the countryside. What matters is whether your grades can be their competition. If you can't understand this, I really don't know what you're doing here."

He had long wanted to say these words.

Ever since they came to the city for the competition, Li Youmin has always been bringing up his identity in his words.

He really didn't understand what was worth mentioning.

Their identity is as students, and the primary goal is learning.

So what if you're from the countryside? Does being a country person make you inferior? Does it affect your grades?

If you think so, then more reason to study hard and strive to escape this circle.

After Lin Jiadong finished speaking, he no longer paid attention to Li Youmin and rode away on his bicycle.

Li Youmin stood there, finally curling his lips.

A hand draped over his shoulder; Xu Cheng caught up, "So, did you find out anything? What's the deal with your classmate and that girl?"

"No, he even lectured me," Li Youmin shrugged.

"What did he lecture you about?"

Speaking of it made Li Youmin almost laugh from anger, "You couldn't guess. He lectured me not to look down on myself, saying city and countryside are the same. Are they the same? You tell me, are they the same? Everyone knows city folks look down on us country people. Look at Lin Zhi, he's just from a small county and looks down on us farmer kids. Lin Jiadong talking like this is merely because he has an official brother-in-law."

Xu Cheng also chuckled; these days, they'd formed circles of their own.

Even Lin Zhi, who they initially knew, no longer played with them.

"Your classmate is a bit aloof, but they indeed have the ability. I overheard the teacher today say that among our students, the ones most likely to get a rank include your classmate. If in this national math competition they get ranked, they're really on a different level than us. It's said this national math competition offers university admission slots."

"Are you serious?" Li Youmin widened his eyes.

Wouldn't that mean doing well would make them a college student?

Chapter 544: Turns Out Women Have Never Just Held Up Half the Sky

"Why would I lie about this? If you don't believe me, ask your team leader. I heard the teachers didn't mention this to us because they were afraid we'd feel too much pressure. If you ask, they'll definitely tell you."

Li Youmin looked towards Lin Jiadong, who had already ridden his bicycle far away...

Xu Cheng nudged him, "What are you staring at? Let's go, let's head back together. It's terribly cold, probably going to snow."

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When Lin Jiadong got home, his second sister and brother-in-law were there, busy in the kitchen making dumplings.

These days, he stayed at his second sister's house and could see that his brother-in-law was truly good to his sister.

He wouldn't even let his sister do much household work.

In their village, they hadn't seen a man in the kitchen; not to mention cooking, even after eating, they wouldn't wash their own bowls.

It seems like men, apart from working in the fields, left all the household chores like laundry, cooking, feeding chickens, and pigs to the women.

He never thought much of it before. After all, both at home and in other families, it was always like that.

Only after witnessing his second sister and brother-in-law's lifestyle did Lin Jiadong realize that when it comes to working the fields, women did just as much, sometimes even more than men.

Why should men come home from the fields and lie on the kang, while women still have to cook and feed chickens?

It turns out women have never been holding up half the sky.

It's just that they choose not to acknowledge the sky women are supporting, only seeing their own sky that they bear alone and feel unbalanced.

Just like those participants in the national competition, female classmates are no worse than male classmates.

Yet some male classmates just look down on female ones.



"You're back?" Lin Chuxia said as she saw Lin Jiadong returning.

Lin Jiadong gathered his thoughts and nodded with a smile, "Second sister, brother-in-law."

"It's cold today, right? I just heard on the weather forecast it might snow tomorrow," Lin Chuxia noticed Lin Jiadong's wind-blown red face, "Didn't you wear the scarf I gave you?"

"I'm not cold, don't need a scarf," he said and glanced at Qin Yang beside him.

Qin Yang said straightforwardly, "If your second sister gave it to you, wear it. She's in charge here, no need to look at me."

"I didn't mean anything by it," Lin Jiadong scratched his head.

It was windy today, and his second sister, fearing he'd be cold, had quickly found a scarf for him.

The scarf looked like it belonged to his brother-in-law, so he actually didn't dare to wear it much.

Little did he expect his brother-in-law to say that second sister had the final say.

Oh, of course, seeing how brother-in-law usually treats second sister, she should be the one in charge.

What he didn't know is that his brother-in-law had recently received a scarf hand-knitted by his wife and wouldn't care about the ones bought before.

Seeing both busy working, Lin Jiadong hurriedly washed his hands.

Although he doesn't know how to make dumplings, he would learn.

Just a glance and—ah, pure lamb filling—he grinned at Lin Chuxia.

Lin Chuxia smiled back, "Tomorrow's the last day of the training camp, right? Tonight let's have a good meal. By the way, how's the school's plan for tomorrow? If it really snows and the way is bad, isn't the exam the day after tomorrow?"

"Yeah, the teacher mentioned today that we're leaving tomorrow morning, whether it snows or not, just so we can prepare mentally in advance and not underperform in the exam."

"Alright, have you remembered everything I told you?" Lin Chuxia asked again.

Qin Yang also glanced over.

Lin Jiadong nodded again, "I've remembered everything: keep your water bottle and drink your own water, don't eat random things, handle your own affairs, be cautious outside, and remember that helping others shouldn't mean being a pushover..."

Upon hearing the words 'pushover,' Qin Yang pressed his lips together.

Lin Jiadong recited all the precautions, and Lin Chuxia nodded with satisfaction, "Alright, I won't see you off tomorrow. Be careful by yourself."

"Got it, second sister, I will. Also," he looked at Qin Yang, "I didn't understand a question today, can brother-in-law teach me again?"

These days, Lin Jiadong and Qin Yang's relationship had really taken a step forward.

Ever since the second day, when Lin Jiadong was scratching his head over a question, Qin Yang noticed and helped him understand it, Lin Jiadong seemed to have opened a door to a new world.

He knew his brother-in-law was smart, but didn't expect such questions to be child's play for him.

Sometimes, questions he had to ponder for a long time were quickly solved under his brother-in-law's explanation.

Afterward, whenever he couldn't understand something, the first person he thought of wasn't the teacher but his brother-in-law.

Of course, brother-in-law never disappointed.

The knowledge he gained from staying at second sister's house these days was almost as much as the seven-day training camp.

Qin Yang agreed immediately, "Alright, I'll look at it after dinner."

Lin Jiadong happily ate the lamb dumplings.

He had a big appetite and ate a lot, being the last one to finish.

After finishing, he naturally took the bowls to the sink to wash them, then went back to his room to look through his homework.

Qin Yang peeled some fruit for Lin Chuxia, and when Lin Jiadong came, he suggested she watch TV in the living room while the two went to the study.

Just like many previous nights, it was calm and natural, and a bit warm.

When Lin Jiadong finally understood all the questions, Lin Chuxia was dozing off on the sofa.

"Don't watch anymore, go to your room and sleep."

Lin Chuxia instantly perked up, "No, I still want to see the ending, just for a little longer."

She chased this drama every day and got quite hooked.

It must be said that the Hong Kong dramas introduced to the mainland in the 80s were really interesting.

Qin Yang shook his head helplessly and sat beside her, pulling his wife close to lean on him while accompanying her to watch TV.

Lin Chuxia found a comfortable position in his arms, even squirming a bit.

"Did you used to see me as stupid as Lin Jiadong?" Qin Yang's deep voice suddenly sounded.

"Hm?" Lin Chuxia looked up, seeing the flawless jawline of the man.

"You know, a pushover."

"A little," Lin Chuxia said, then burst into laughter.

Qin Yang knew that back then he did things without much thought, often for the sake of convenience.

Sometimes, not to affect work, he'd make compromises.

Looking back now, he really was a bit dull.

Though this doesn't mean his wife can mock him.

He reached out to grasp her chin, leaned down, and kissed her, silencing her laughter.

At first, the kiss was fierce, and Lin Chuxia even considered resisting.

Gradually, the mood turned tender.

Lin Chuxia instinctively wrapped her arms around his neck, while Qin Yang's kiss became progressively gentle and lingering.

Someone let out a soft moan, changing the flavor of the kiss.

Lin Chuxia, nestled in his embrace, sensed the changes in him, with a slight tingling in her heart, like a little cat scratching, a yearning.

She snuggled into his arms a bit more, whispering softly, "Carry me to the bedroom," Lin Jiadong was still in their home, and if the silly boy came over and saw, it would be embarrassing.

#### Chapter 545: The Meat at My Lips Is Gone

Qin Yang almost didn't think, directly picked her up, and even turned off the TV, then walked quickly into the bedroom.

As he placed her onto the bed and was about to get up, his neck was still tightly embraced by the small woman.

"Hmm?"

His gaze was deep, looking at her blurry eyes, becoming even more somber.

Lin Chuxia couldn't handle his focused gaze, nor could she resist his hoarse and sexy voice, so she lifted her chin and kissed him again.

"I've counted the days; it's been about three months..."

Qin Yang's breath caught, and realizing something, he directly turned the small woman over, changing from passive to active.

Just when Lin Chuxia was feeling the man's passion, all movements ceased.

Moreover, the man decisively stood up, looking deeply at her.

She, puzzled, propped herself up, her soft pajamas sliding down with her movements, revealing her snow-white shoulder, "What's wrong?"

Qin Yang didn't answer her, hurriedly organizing her neckline, swallowed hard before saying, "Let's forget it, I'm a bit scared."

Lin Chuxia was almost shocked speechless by his words.

No matter how she explained, Qin Yang always insisted, prioritizing her and the baby's safety.

In the end, she could only regretfully watch the desired 'meat' slip away.

And so, he fled in panic!

Fled!!

Lin Chuxia never thought that one day, because of this issue, Qin Yang would flee from her without a thought.

To be honest, although facing this issue, this guy's face was usually thicker than usual.

Sometimes even her pleading and kind words had no effect.

Lin Chuxia, depressed, smacked her lips, and touched her still unchanged small belly, "For you, your dad has sacrificed a lot."

Hmm, your mom's sacrifice isn't small either.

She had no mood to go out and watch TV, so Lin Chuxia simply turned over and hid under the blanket to sleep.

As for the man who fled...

The wind outside was strong, going out to blow some cold air might help.

Thinking of this, Lin Chuxia turned over again, and soon fell asleep.

Meanwhile, the man was indeed standing in the yard, blowing in the cold wind.

The wind was very strong today, and it was quite cold. Qin Yang had rushed out, only wearing a sweater, not even an outer jacket.

Yuan Bao, after hearing the owner's voice, ran out of the doghouse, circling around the male owner, seemingly asking why he wouldn't play with it, what he was doing standing in the yard in the cold weather without playing.

Qin Yang looked at Yuan Bao and sighed, "Yuan Bao, I remember you're almost two years old too? Shouldn't you find a partner too?"

Yuan Bao wagged its tail, not sure if it understood.

However, Qin Yang remembered the way the small woman clung to him.

Lin Chuxia rarely clings to him; the last time was the night he rescued someone from the water, she clung to him for a long time, sincerely asking for a child.

Counting the days, their child was probably conceived around that time.

This time is different from the last. Last time, the small woman clearly had something on her mind, even if she passionately clung to him, it always made his heart ache.

Now, the small woman is like a ripe peach, her entire body exuding a mature aura, with an indescribable taste, probably the allure of pregnancy hormones, easily stirring his emotions.

Yet he still can't.

They have painstakingly conceived the baby, and his wife is so looking forward to this child; he cannot allow them any danger.

"Brother-in-law, what are you doing in the yard?"

Lin Jiadong's voice came, Qin Yang instinctively stiffened.

Turning to smile, "Nothing, ate too much dinner, came out to walk it off."

Lin Jiadong looked at the room on the east side.

It's been a while since dinner; he ate a lot without any issue, brother-in-law didn't eat much.

And does one not need to wear clothes when going out to digest food?

Suddenly realizing something, Lin Jiadong quickly returned indoors, shortly coming out with his own cotton jacket, approaching Qin Yang and whispering, "I heard that pregnant women's emotions are



quite unstable; but brother-in-law, you need to take care of your health too, don't catch a cold. This jacket is newly bought for me by my second sister, I haven't worn it yet."

Saying this, he had a face saying 'I understand everything, second brother-in-law no need to explain.'

Qin Yang: •◡•❓

Thank you very much, indeed.

Qin Yang didn't take Lin Jiadong's clothes, just calmly returned indoors while under his 'I respect you as a man' look.

He tidied up the living room a bit, dispersing most of the cold air.

He tiptoed back into the bedroom, seeing the small woman already asleep and sweetly dreaming.

Really a face of helplessness.

She had unknowingly tossed him around, yet she was like nothing had happened.

Lin Jiadong's words weren't wrong; pregnant women should indeed not be provoked.

.....

The next morning, sure enough, light snow started falling.

Lin Chuxia still drove Lin Jiadong to the training location.

"Second sister, I've said I'm okay with it; if brother-in-law knows you came out in the snow to send me, he'd probably want to kill me."

Lin Jiadong was still nagging before getting out of the car.

Lin Chuxia found it amusing, "Haven't you gotten along well with your brother-in-law these days?"

To be honest, previously Lin Jiadong feared Qin Yang a bit.

Since Lin Jiadong asked Qin Yang for advice, they had been getting along more harmoniously.

Last night they were even discussing something for quite a while.

Lin Jiadong thought about the way brother-in-law looked at him last night, still felt his back getting cold.

"It is indeed getting along well, but I always feel that brother-in-law treats me well because I'm your brother; he likes me because he likes you too. If it involves you, I would definitely be set aside, and if you were hurt because of me, I would surely be done for."

Lin Jiadong's intelligence was really online this time.

The brother and sister chatted while reaching the location.

The weather suddenly changed today, to avoid affecting tomorrow's competition, the students' training was stopped today; they planned to depart early before the snow got heavier.

Others had already packed their backpacks, ready to go; only the ones not staying at the hostel were still arriving one by one.

Lin Jiadong greeted Lin Chuxia and went to the teacher, as Lin Chuxia was about to leave, she saw a black sedan parked behind her car, from which a young guy got out.

The guy walked straight to where Lin Jiadong went, should be one of the contestants too.

Lin Chuxia glanced at the license plate, a black Santana, the plate number was quite easy to remember.

She didn't stay longer, started the car, and drove away.

As she and the black Santana just left, another car stopped, Hu Yaping quickly got off, followed by Sister-in-law Fu's voice, "Don't be in such a hurry, slow down, it's snowing heavily, don't fall again."

Looking closely, Hu Yaping was limping slightly while running.

She was the last to arrive, five minutes late from the appointed time.

Hu Yaping first apologized to the team leader, "I'm sorry, teacher, there was a bit of trouble on the way, so I came late."

#### Chapter 546: About to Become Famous

The teacher leading the group nodded. Although there was some dissatisfaction, given today's weather, he didn't say much.

He glanced at his wristwatch, "Alright, everyone is here. Let's set off."

The provincial education committee provided a bus, and the group boarded the minibus.

Li Youmin, lowering his voice at the back with Lin Jiadong, said, "It seems there are really hidden talents among us. So many people can ride in a car to school. I saw Shao Tianyu, who is in first place, ride in the fanciest one. Even Hu Yaping's car wasn't far behind. I say, do you really not know Hu Yaping? She seems to treat you differently."

"I don't know her."

Lin Jiadong spat out a few words, found a seat, sat down, and pulled out a book to read, with no intention of talking further.

Li Youmin pursed his lips, invited Xu Cheng to come over and sit with him, and started talking to Xu Cheng instead.

Lin Jiadong paid them no mind and focused on reading his book.

Soon, it dimmed slightly beside him, bringing with it a faint fragrance.

He slightly glanced sideways and saw Hu Yaping sitting next to him.

This was a minibus, with single seats on the left side, double seats on the right, and a row of five seats at the back.

The back seat was filled with some luggage, making it inconvenient for people to sit there, so apart from the back seat, the only empty seat was the one beside him.

He turned his gaze back to his book.

Next to him, Hu Yaping also calmly took out a book and a notebook, and started writing and calculating.

Their natural behavior caught Li Youmin's eye again.

.....

After sending Lin Jiadong off, Lin Chuxia had just returned home when Sister-in-law Fu hurriedly came over.

"Xiao Qin's household, are you just coming back from outside?"

"Yes, Sister-in-law Fu, do you need something from me?"

Seeing Sister-in-law Fu's attire, Lin Chuxia thought she too seemed to have just come back from outside.

Sister-in-law Fu covered her mouth and laughed, "It's nothing urgent. It's about your Qin Yang. Haven't you heard? Your Mr. Qin is about to become famous. Did your Mr. Qin save a life not long ago?"

Lin Chuxia didn't answer Sister-in-law Fu's question directly. Qin Yang hadn't publicized his act of saving someone from the river, and she wasn't at liberty to spread it.

However, Sister-in-law Fu wasn't looking for a response from Lin Chuxia, as she continued, "I just came back from Old Wei's workplace. Today, our Yaping was going to the capital for a competition, and she fell right after stepping out the door, almost making her late. Old Wei borrowed a car from work to take her there. When I went along to return the car, a couple with a TV station journalist came looking specifically for Mr. Qin at their work unit, saying Mr. Qin saved their child and they wanted to thank him. I guess the TV station journalists are interviewing your Mr. Qin right now. Do you want to go and watch the commotion?"

Lin Chuxia was surprised that the child's parents really found Qin Yang.

She remembered clearly from her previous life that the child's parents had exhausted all means to find their child's savior, but to no avail.

If not, she wouldn't have wrongly benefited by claiming the title of the child's lifesaver for herself.

Unexpectedly, in this life, they found Qin Yang so quickly, and it's only been a little over two months.

Lin Chuxia shook her head, "I won't go."

Whatever happens, Qin Yang will inform her when he returns.

Sister-in-law Fu knew that Lin Chuxia was pregnant and precious, so she thought the snowy weather made it inconvenient for her to go out, and didn't press the matter further.

"Do you have plans today? If not, come over later, and we can knit together."

"No plans, Sister-in-law Fu, you can come over. I'm feeling a bit lonely by myself."

The two agreed, and soon Sister-in-law Fu came over with knitting yarn and needles.

Lin Chuxia had just finished knitting a scarf earlier in the morning, which Qin Yang wore to work.

She planned to knit an identical one for herself, so she started anew and continued knitting.

With the experience from the first one, the second was coming along more smoothly.

Sister-in-law Fu, observing her posture, laughed and said, "Smart people learn fast. Look at your nimble fingers, almost catching up with someone like me who's been knitting for half a lifetime."

"I'm still far from it. I've been working on this one stitch for days; even the clumsiest would have learned it by now," Lin Chuxia replied modestly.

Sister-in-law Fu pried further about Qin Yang saving someone, and Lin Chuxia briefly mentioned that he saved a child around October.

Just a few words left Sister-in-law Fu sighing in amazement.

"How dangerous that was! It's fortunate your Mr. Qin encountered it; otherwise, that child might be less fortunate. Judging by the couple's attire, they didn't seem ordinary. If something had happened to their child, how devastating would that be? You haven't been in Yan City long, so you might not know, but that river, although seemingly narrow, has a dangerous current, and people drown there while swimming every year. Rumor has it there's a ghost in there looking for a substitute every year..."

Realizing something, Sister-in-law Fu quickly added, "Oh, but your Mr. Qin is a good swimmer, so you don't have to worry too much."

Lin Chuxia offered a reassuring smile, not saying much more.

She had experienced the dangers of that river in her past life.

As for Qin Yang's swimming skills, if the person who saved her in her past life was Qin Yang, there's no doubt about his capability.

However, as his wife, and someone close, she wouldn't want him to risk even the slightest danger.

So, she found it hard to agree casually with Sister-in-law Fu's comments.

The two knitted and chatted, and outside, Yuan Bao started making a fuss.

Both looked out through the glass, with Sister-in-law Fu chuckling, "Sister-in-law Gong has come. They all know you're currently at home taking care of yourself, and have time to spare. In the past, it was difficult to catch you for a chat."

Lin Chuxia put down her yarn and got up to greet outside.

"Sister-in-law, why come out in this snowy weather?"

Sister-in-law Gong wasn't very healthy, particularly sensitive to the cold, and rarely went out in winter.

Sister-in-law Gong dusted the snowflakes off herself and laughingly replied, "Staying at home every day turns the bones soft. Seeing the snowfall today, the air outside felt fresh, so I came out to take a stroll. Walking around, I ended up here. Looks like I came to the right place, it's quite lively here."

She also noticed Sister-in-law Fu who had come out from inside the house.

They were familiar with each other, having more to talk about when they sat down together.

From knitting to sewing clothes, to some everyday little matters, before they knew it, it was midday.

Sister-in-law Gong was about to take her leave, but outside came Wei Bing's voice.

Sister-in-law Gong sighed helplessly, "This kid finished work pretty early today. If he finds me out, I'll hear a lot from him."

"Wei Bing cares about your health," Lin Chuxia explained, with Sister-in-law Fu chiming in.

"Exactly, Wei Bing is so filial and understanding. Look at mine, causes nothing but trouble and makes me so angry. If my kid were half as good as Wei Bing, I'd laugh in my dreams."

Though Sister-in-law Gong outwardly complained, she knew her son had good intentions.

She adjusted her clothing, said goodbye to Lin Chuxia and Sister-in-law Fu, and followed her son's now grumbling voice out the door.

As they walked, they could still hear Wei Bing's frustrations and Sister-in-law Gong's gentle voice in the distance.

#### Chapter 547: Not Meant for Longevity

"I understand, you don't have to worry so much. I know my own body well. Even if there are some old ailments, I can't just stay indoors all the time, else I'll suffocate and develop new issues."

"I don't object to you going out, but choose good weather. See, the snow is getting heavier and it's so cold. What if you catch a cold?"

"Who doesn't catch colds? They're minor issues. Didn't I have a cold just a few days ago?"



"For others, a cold is minor, but for you, is it really minor? Every winter, when you catch a cold, it's as if it's taking half your life away. Have you forgotten?"

.....

"Sister-in-law Gong's health is really not good," said Sister-in-law Fu to Lin Chuxia after they left, "You haven't lived here long enough to know, but a few years ago, Sister-in-law Gong nearly lost her life from a minor winter cold. I say Minister Wei's affection for Sister-in-law Gong is genuine. During that time, he didn't even care about work and stayed by her side every day. Alas, no one is perfect. Sister-in-law Gong is kind and amiable. No one in this residential compound has anything bad to say about her. Her relationship with Minister Wei is harmonious, but her health is poor. Many people secretly feel she isn't destined for a long life and feel sorry for her."

"Has she not gone to the hospital for her illness?"

Lin Chuxia didn't know exactly what illness Sister-in-law Gong had, only that her health seemed poor.

The last time Sister-in-law Gong fainted at home, Qin Yang helped take her to the hospital, but in the end, it seemed they didn't find any conclusive results.

"How could she not have been seen? As far as I know, over the years, Minister Wei has taken Sister-in-law Gong to many big hospitals. I heard they've even been to hospitals in the capital, but in the end, they just said it was an underlying weakness and that she needs to take care of herself."

Sister-in-law Fu and Lin Chuxia exchanged a few simple words, and seeing that it was about time, they hurried home to cook.

Lin Chuxia was thinking about what to eat for lunch when Qin Yang came back from outside.

He didn't care about what to eat, but instead asked about the events of that morning.

Qin Yang didn't expect her to find out so quickly and didn't hide it. He told her what happened.

Even though Lin Chuxia had a hunch, when she heard that the father of the other party was named He and the mother was named Yu, she was slightly taken aback.

Yu Manwen was the mother of the child she saved in her previous life, a great benefactor who had helped her.

"What happened next?" Lin Chuxia asked again.

"The other party wanted to report the story widely, perhaps thinking that such a story would be beneficial for me once it was reported, but I refused. Minister Wei also respected my decision, so the matter was settled. I didn't really mind; knowing the child is healthy and safe now is enough for me."

Lin Chuxia looked at him, with admiration and respect in her eyes that even she hadn't noticed.

Her man was like this, only doing what he believed was right, rather than for any advantage or benefit the situation might bring him.

She even wondered again if the man who did good deeds without leaving a name in her past life was Qin Yang. Although there was no way to verify it, she already had an answer in her heart.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Qin Yang noticed her gaze and smiled slightly.

"I just think my husband is amazing and great. Qin Yang, I'll support whatever decision you make."

Qin Yang gently stroked the top of her head, "This isn't great, just a simple gesture. What do you want for lunch? I'll make it."

"I don't know what I want to eat. My mouth feels a bit bland. I want something flavorful but not too heavy."

This was a tough request for Qin Yang.

If she'd actually specified what she wanted, no matter what it was, he would try his best to satisfy her.

But this request had him at a complete loss.

"How about fish soup? We can still get fresh fish at the market now," he suggested.

Lin Chuxia shook her head, "I don't want it; it's too fishy."

"Maybe chicken soup?"

Lin Chuxia shook her head again, "I don't want that either. How about we have hot pot without the meat? Just some vegetables with sesame paste dipping sauce, and I want to add some fried chili. Just this, Qin Yang, hurry up. I'll check what veggies we have, and you prepare the sesame paste sauce."

The more she talked, the more she couldn't help herself, and her mouth started watering. "Oh, right, you do the fried chili," she added.

The chili Qin Yang fried was fragrant and spicy, just perfect for the dipping sauce.

Qin Yang watched her eager expression, shaking his head in resignation.

Since she got pregnant, whatever she craved, she wanted immediately. If he said no now, she'd probably cry out loud.

But it was impossible for Qin Yang to refuse his wife's requests.

He took the sesame paste and started preparing the sauce according to his wife's taste, while Lin Chuxia had already found several vegetables ready for the hot pot, most of which were from the Qin Family Village's greenhouse.

With the cold weather, even the refrigerator was unnecessary, and they could still keep the vegetables fresh.

As a result, they always received extra when vegetables were delivered, so they could eat whenever they wanted.

It wasn't long before the sauce was ready. Lin Chuxia couldn't even wait for the vegetables and dipped a bit of the sauce with her chopsticks to taste it.

Qin Yang found it amusing, "Wait a bit longer, these veggies will be ready soon for dipping."

To distract her so she wouldn't finish the dipping sauce before the veggies were ready, Qin Yang shifted the topic, asking what Lin Chuxia did in the morning and when Lin Jiadong and the others set off.

As soon as the topic changed, Lin Chuxia forgot about the sauce.

When the steaming hot pot finally boiled, Lin Chuxia could finally enjoy her veggies in the hot pot.

Outside, little snowflakes drifted down, making the hot pot experience exceptionally cozy.

Qin Yang wasn't in a rush, focusing on cooking for her, while Lin Chuxia happily enjoyed his service.

As she was almost full, she suddenly asked, "Aren't you finding it hard to fill up just eating these?"

Qin Yang smiled and glanced at her, "Isn't it a bit late for you to think about that, Madam?"

However, not giving her the chance to feel guilty, he continued, "It's okay. I can cook some noodles."

As long as his wife was happy, even just watching was satisfying for him.

.....

The snow this time wasn't heavy and didn't last long, stopping by the afternoon, leaving only a thin layer on the ground.

Lin Chuxia let out a breath of relief.

Actually, this region sees one or two heavy snowfalls and several light ones every year.

However, this year the Qin Family Village had started with the vegetable greenhouse, and any snow could have an impact.

If the vegetables froze in the greenhouse, this season's investment would be a total loss.

Although after the market opened, they were mentally prepared for such challenges in agriculture, losing everything in the first year would still hit them hard.

If the snow fell later, the greenhouse vegetables could be sustained longer.

The sooner the sun came out, the sooner the temperature in the greenhouse could rise.

Chapter 548: It's Too Late to Say Anything Now

Just as Lin Chuxia expected, the sky cleared completely after a windy snowstorm.

The winter sun wasn't very powerful, but under its plentiful light, the snow had melted almost entirely.

With New Year's Day approaching, and seeing the good weather, Lin Chuxia decided to visit the mall.

The sales promotions before New Year's and between New Year's and the Spring Festival are important times for shopping malls.

The Department Store has been holding back energy to try and regain business during this period. It's a time of rivalry between the two malls.

Although Wang Tianxue is quite capable, Lin Chuxia cannot truly act as a hands-off boss.

Perhaps it was the nice weather today, as everyone seemed to be out shopping.

As soon as she approached Huamei Mall, Lin Chuxia felt the lively atmosphere.

Lin Chuxia intentionally stopped between Huamei Mall and the Department Store to have a look. The Department Store had also posted large banners, and many people were heading there.

At the same time, Huamei Mall also had a bustling crowd.

At first glance, it was hard to tell which side had more people.

"Is Mr. Lin here for an on-site inspection?"

A man's voice sounded from behind. Lin Chuxia turned around in surprise and saw Manager Wang nearby, smiling at her.

"Manager Wang, long time no see," Lin Chuxia greeted politely.

Manager Wang let out a wry smile, "Indeed, it's been a long time since we last met. But even though we hadn't met, your name has been ringing in my ears almost daily. I even dream about you, Lin Chuxia."

"Don't say that, Manager Wang. I can't accept your words," Lin Chuxia laughed.

Manager Wang nodded, "I really didn't expect such a connection between us. I remember when you came to the Department Store to buy clothes. The membership system at the Department Store was your idea. I thought you were a smart young girl back then, but I was a step too late in keeping you, or we wouldn't have such a strong opponent."

Actually, Manager Wang also thought back then that with this woman, it was better to make friends than enemies.

He never intended to offend Lin Chuxia, but his subordinates laid a big trap for him.

If only he had known...

Now, it's too late for regrets.

Lin Chuxia felt there wasn't much to discuss with Manager Wang.

Manager Wang had spoken for her back then, and in return, she'd given him the idea for the membership system.

Now standing on opposite sides at the same level, there was no need to recount past events in detail.

Manager Wang probably realized he had said too much, so after some polite words, they parted ways.

Inside the mall, the New Year atmosphere was even stronger.

Wang Tianxue had mentioned earlier that this wave of promotions would last until after the New Year to satisfy customer demands.

Both the strength of the promotions and the mall environment were up to holiday standards.

It was at this time that Lin Chuxia deeply realized another year was about to pass, and soon it would be 1988.

Wang Tianxue was busy in the main hall. She hadn't relaxed for a moment, constantly monitoring the mall's customer flow and sales.

As soon as Lin Chuxia entered the mall, she quickly came to greet her.

"What brings you here today? Did Mr. Qin allow you out?"

"Of course, I missed you. Lately, I've been missing you so much that I can't eat. My dear Mr. Qin felt sorry, so he let me come out to see you," Lin Chuxia replied absentmindedly.

Wang Tianxue, exasperated, wanted to pinch her, "Get lost! If I meant that much to you, Mr. Qin would have already come with a knife to find me. Speaking of which, I saw Manager Wang from across talking to you. Was he trying to get you to leak something?"

"Not at all, just some life reflections," Lin Chuxia shrugged.

Wang Tianxue scoffed, "What reflections could he have? With the Department Store in such a state, shouldn't he be reflecting on himself? What kind of person Yang Rui was, he couldn't have been clueless. When I first went south to stock up, I was with Yang Rui. Later, when Yang Rui was promoted to head of the purchasing department, I lost my job to Tang because I was pregnant. I refuse to believe he didn't know. Virtually no one in the mall was unaware of Yang Rui's relationship with Tang at the time. Manager Wang chose to turn a blind eye. I don't expect him to uphold justice, but since he chose to side with Yang Rui back then, he, along with the entire Department Store, should bear the brunt of my revenge. Isn't that fair?"

Lin Chuxia nodded in agreement, thinking about Manager Wang's expression earlier. He probably realized this by now.

But so what?



There's no medicine for regret in this world.

"Of course, this doesn't really count as revenge," Wang Tianxue changed the topic, affectionately putting her arm around Lin Chuxia's shoulder, "We're doing honest business and fair competition. Manager Wang and the Department Store misjudged people and are facing the consequences."

"Yes, we're engaging in fair competition, with no personal grudges involved."

Lin Chuxia rolled her eyes, replying to her, provoking another low chuckle from Wang Tianxue.

"But to be honest, I'm quite pleased with the state of the Department Store and Yang Rui now," she said, looking at Lin Chuxia with a sigh, "When I divorced him, it was simply because I wouldn't bow my head, and I still had some pride. But in the face of reality, how much is that pride worth? I had made the worst plan, to set up a street stall with Xiao Long. Though it would be a bit rough in the wind and sun, I didn't want to live at the mercy of a man's mood anymore. Avenging Yang Rui, seeking justice from the Department Store and Manager Wang, I never thought of these things. The current situation was unimaginable, and it's all thanks to you."

"How does it feel now? Is your heart satisfied?"

"It is somewhat satisfying," Wang Tianxue laughed again, "I'll tell you, not long ago, I saw Yang Rui setting up a stall at the night market."

"Has he been fired from the Department Store?" This surprised Lin Chuxia.

Has Manager Wang grown to hate Yang Rui so much that he needs to be removed?

Wang Tianxue shook her head, "Not yet, but I reckon soon."

She glanced around, looking secretive, unlike the usual mall manager demeanor.

But Lin Chuxia understood Wang Tianxue's personality. This likely meant she had some gossip to share.

This friend, on the surface a cool businesswoman, had a strong sense for gossip.

She suspected the gossip involved her ex-husband again.

Sure enough, the next second, Wang Tianxue said, "Last time we mailed something to my brother, we saw Tang put a green hat on Yang Rui again, didn't we? Probably because she's disappointed with Yang Rui's current job. I found out that Yang Rui, to support Tang's expenses, secretly took clothes from the warehouse to sell at stalls..."

#### Chapter 549: Hidden Meanings

"He actually stole clothes from the warehouse for Tang Lili? This is truly love."

Lin Chuxia was amazed; getting caught wouldn't just be a minor work mistake.

Wang Tianxue sneered, "That Tang is pregnant, Yang Rui is desperate for a son, of course, he wants to take good care of her."

Lin Chuxia: "..."

For some reason, it felt like there was more to Wang Tianxue's words.

Thinking back to the incident that day, is the child in Tang Lili's belly really Yang Rui's?

"Mr. Lin, it's really you. I thought I was mistaken."

A voice from behind interrupted their gossip, and they saw Liu Na walking over with a smile.

In just a year, Liu Na had completely transformed into a different person.

The naive and humble girl at Qin's Restaurant had now evolved into a confident and graceful woman of strength.

She managed the service staff at the mall, constantly attending to customers' preferences, controlling the direction of supplies, and became Wang Tianxue's right-hand woman.

Especially after getting engaged to Houzi, Lin Chuxia noticed Liu Na became even more confident.

Someone who loves you will not dim your light or overshadow your talents but will make you shine brighter and more assured.

Counting the days, their wedding was less than half a month away.

"How are the wedding preparations going? Do you need me to talk with Manager Wang to give you a few days off?"

"I'd rather make money than prepare for the wedding," Liu Na smiled, "In recent days, our mall's customer flow is several times better than before. I don't want to miss such a good opportunity to earn money."

"You little money-grubber, Houzi would cry if he knew your thoughts."

"No, he is more obsessed with money than I am."

After Liu Na said that, everyone laughed.

These days, it's indeed a good time for business to boost performance.

With Liu Na accompanying her, Lin Chuxia simply let Wang Tianxue handle things and went around the mall.

The membership system proposed last time was already in place, and each floor offered free alteration services.

Any clothes purchased from Huamei Mall could be altered once for free.

Lin Chuxia found a queue at each alteration stall.

Liu Na explained, "These days, many people are buying clothes, most of them are just having their pants shortened, but it's okay, if any tasks can't be completed, we keep the measurements, set a time, and they can come back..."

Lin Chuxia listened to her explanation while nodding continuously.

The various plans she and Wang Tianxue made last time were diligently implemented, along with some unanticipated supplements; no wonder the mall's business was booming.

"Mr. Lin, you wouldn't believe, because of our free alteration services, many customers immediately choose our mall, no matter how much the department store across the street imitates us, they're always a step behind. I had a service staff member investigate, many customers go to the department store, just to look around, see the styles, but ultimately they come to Huamei Mall to buy. Don't be fooled by the similar number of people on both sides, the real spending over there is definitely not as much as ours."

Lin Chuxia was surprised Liu Na had such insight, "Keep up the good work, and I'll give you a big bonus at the end of the year."

"Mr. Lin, even without your big bonus, I'll do my best," Liu Na said with gratitude in her eyes.

By noon, Wang Tianxue wanted to go out for lunch with Lin Chuxia, but Lin Chuxia refused.

Out all morning, if she didn't go back at noon, Qin Yang surely wouldn't be at ease.

Because of this, Lin Chuxia got laughed at by Wang Tianxue.

Laugh if you want, Lin Chuxia always considered those she cared about more important than those harmless jokes.

When she got home, Qin Yang was already cooking, and when he saw her return, he came out of the kitchen to greet her.

Although he didn't say it, his eyes showed concern.

Seeing Lin Chuxia was fine, his eyes shifted from worry to layers of affection.

"What's for lunch? I've been running around all morning, I'm hungry, Sister Tianxue wanted me to eat out with her, but worrying that my husband was bored alone at home, I decided to come back, friends aren't as important as a husband, am I right?"

Qin Yang smiled and took her scarf, "Naughty."

Lunch was rice, Qin Yang cooked braised pork using Lin Chuxia's special seasoning, it tasted great.

He also stir-fried two vegetables to balance out the richness, and made a soup with white radish and egg.

Just as they were starting to eat, Yuan Bao barked lowly outside, and shadows moved in the yard.

"It's Jiadong, why is he here today?"

Qin Yang put down his chopsticks and stood up, while Lin Chuxia frowned.

They were supposed to return directly to school after the competition in the capital.

With the final exams approaching, academic pressure was intense.

"Second sister," Lin Jiadong entered from outside, calling Lin Chuxia first.

Lin Chuxia nodded, seeing his face was red from the cold, his eyes showed fatigue, she didn't ask much, pointing to a seat, "You haven't eaten yet, sit down and eat first."

Qin Yang already served him a bowl of rice.

Lin Jiadong removed his scarf and gloves, looked up with the bowl in his hands, "Thanks, brother-in-law."

"Eat first, we can talk after."

Lin Jiadong said no more, sat down quietly and ate.

After eating, Lin Jiadong instinctively collected the bowls to wash them, Qin Yang took the bowl from his hands, "I'll clean up, you talk to your second sister."

"Okay," Lin Jiadong obediently replied and followed Lin Chuxia to the main room.

"What happened?" Lin Chuxia asked.

Lin Jiadong sat on the chair with his head down, after a long time he said, "Nothing really, I just missed you, second sister, and came over."

Lin Chuxia didn't believe his words.

"Does it have to do with the competition in the capital?"

Lin Jiadong suddenly looked up, then lowered his head again.

Lin Chuxia understood immediately.

"Did the results come out?"

Lin Jiadong nodded, "They came out yesterday, third place."

"That's great, placing third in a national competition, Jiadong, I'm proud of you."

Lin Jiadong looked up again, this time his eyes were slightly red.

"Second sister..."

Lin Chuxia patted his shoulder, "Tell your second sister what's troubling you. You placed in a national competition; what can't you overcome?"

Lin Jiadong nodded, calming himself before speaking slowly.

It turned out that during their trip to the capital for the national math competition, a small incident happened.

When they arrived in the capital, the guesthouse they stayed at was mostly filled with exam participants—a room for six people.

They were three girls, seven boys plus the teacher—three rooms were booked.

But no one wanted to share a room with the teacher, so in the end, Li Youmin pulled Lin Jiadong and Xu Cheng to share a room with the teacher.

## Chapter 550: Cruel and Cold Words

"Actually, at that time, the teacher wanted Shao Tianyu to go with him too, after all, Shao Tianyu is also from City No.1 Middle School, and the teacher was more familiar with him."

For the competition in the capital, only City No.1 Middle School had a teacher leading the team; teachers from other counties and cities were waiting for news in Yan City.

"But Li Youmin insisted on going and explained to me that it was more convenient to stay with the teachers, so I didn't think much of it. He brought it up, and the teacher agreed. However, the next morning, when the teacher was about to take us to the examination hall, the teacher's watch was missing."

The teacher's watch was placed on the table, and there were only two teachers and three students in the room. Not too many people, but also not too few.

The watch was gone, and no one wanted to suspect these students, but the fact was right there.

To prove his innocence, Li Youmin suggested the teacher search everyone's bags.

"And the watch was found in your bag?" Lin Chuxia asked.

Lin Jiadong nodded, "Not exactly, the teacher's watch was also a Shanghai brand, I heard it was newly purchased."

Lin Chuxia understood.

To encourage her brother, during the days Lin Jiadong was in the city for intensive training, she had just bought him a Shanghai brand men's watch.

Her brother cherished that watch very much, and since few of his classmates had such a flamboyant accessory, he didn't wear it on his wrist but kept it in his backpack.



"What happened afterwards?"

"It was quite a commotion at the time. Before that, Li Youmin had mentioned the security issues at the inn, and they almost reported it to the police, but the leading teacher suppressed it. With the time running out, we went to take the exam first. After the exam, Hu testified for me that the watch in my bag was mine. When the inn asked if they needed to report it to the police, the leading teacher refused, just saying he made a mistake, and that was the end of it. The teacher never mentioned the lost watch again."

Lin Chuxia knew that the teacher did this to protect these students to the greatest extent.

They were there to participate in a national mathematics competition. Those ten students chosen from the province were all elites.

If the police got involved, no matter the outcome, the reputation of these kids would be affected.

It might even affect the result of the competition in the end.

For a student, such a national competition could very well be a chance to change their destiny; the teacher couldn't bear to ruin their futures over a watch.

So why was this issue brought up again at school after it had passed?

Since the teacher didn't pursue it at the time, the matter was considered over, and the teacher had sacrificed a watch for the students' futures.

Now, after all this time, Lin Jiadong coming to her meant that something must have happened at their school regarding this matter.

Lin Jiadong's eyes turned red again, and he wiped them with his sleeve, clearly feeling truly wronged.

"I really don't know what's going on. The day before yesterday, when the results came out, I was quite happy to find out I placed third. The teacher was happy for me too, and the principal even praised me at the assembly. But when I got back to class, I noticed that my classmates looked at me differently."

At first, he didn't take it to heart, thinking it might be because he had ranked in the national competition.

The national competition ranking was an honor, even he himself found it glorious and incredible.

Until he went to the restroom and overheard classmates talking behind his back, that's when he realized the incident from the Capital Inn about the teacher losing the watch had spread among them, and their words implied they believed the watch was stolen by him.

"What's the use of good grades if your character is questionable?"

"Exactly, a small thief as a child, a big thief when grown. Now he dares to steal the teacher's watch, who knows what he'll steal in the future."

"Exactly, with his character, if he gets into college and enters society, he might sell out the country for money? What baseline does a thief have?"

"You know, those traitors are just like him. The city's teacher involved should've directly handed him to the police to stop him from harming others."

"I lost five cents in class last year, do you think it could have been Lin Jiadong who stole it? I never suspected that my classmates could be thieves."

"Well, it could be. After all, if he stole the city's teacher's watch, what else might he not do? No wonder he's dressed so well; I heard his family is from the village, and their condition is just like that."

"Not only is he dressed well, but he also eats well. I can't bear to buy meat dishes once a month, but he eats it once a week. What kind of money is that family blowing away?"

"Maybe it doesn't hurt when spending stolen money..."

...

Lin Jiadong didn't know how he returned to the classroom.

All his clothes were bought by his second sister, and he ate well because she cared for him, saying he was at the age to grow and study hard, and eating meat could nourish his brain.

His second sister gave him more living expenses than all his dorm mates combined, so why would he need to steal someone else's money?

He wanted to explain to those classmates, but how could he out-talk so many voices?

Even his dorm mates were wary of him.

They clearly knew his situation, that he had a wealthy sister, so why wouldn't they believe him?

Lin Jiadong couldn't understand, and the torment of this period was wearing him out.

"Second sister, the watch really wasn't stolen by me; I didn't do anything..."

In the end, Lin Jiadong couldn't hold back and started crying quietly.

Lin Chuxia sighed. Her silly brother, someone merely used a small trick, played a little game, and he's completely trapped.

No wonder in a past life, he lost his chance to go to university because of being framed.

"Don't cry, I believe you."

Lin Chuxia patted his shoulder and asked, "Jiadong, do you still remember your goal at school?"

Lin Jiadong nodded, his voice still a bit nasally, "I do, study well."

"That's right. Did their gossiping behind your back affect your ability to listen in class? When they slandered you, did they seize your books to frame you? Or did those rumors make the teachers exclude you and not teach you the key points? Or maybe, did the rumors affect your sleep?"

Lin Jiadong thought for a moment, then finally said softly, "The other things weren't affected, just the last one. What they've been saying has really affected my sleep these past two nights. I don't understand why they're slandering me, why they would follow the crowd without any evidence."

Lin Chuxia laughed in anger, picked up a tissue from the table, and threw it to him.

"Wipe your tears. Is it necessary to understand this? Have you figured out your math, physics, and chemistry problems? Have you thought about why in this national competition you only placed third instead of first?"

"Second sister," Lin Jiadong opened his mouth.

He didn't understand why his sister, who was just proud of him, suddenly seemed to be criticizing him.

Is it easy to be first in the nation?

He placed third, and the principal was overjoyed, yet his usually gentle sister spoke such harsh, cold words.