

Switched M 731

Chapter 731: I Do

The child has congenital heart disease, and the welfare institution can only solve his basic living issues; there's no extra money for his treatment.

Unless he gets lucky and meets with some policy or a kind-hearted person.

"By the way, what are your plans for the mall over in Ancheng County? There's absolutely no problem with the goods from the garment factory, I've already talked to your great-aunt, and Jianjun is reliable. Surely you don't plan on having him manage both malls, do you?"

Lin Chuxia shook her head, "No."

There's more than a hundred miles between Yan City and An City, and even with Qin Jianjun's abilities, it's hard to manage such a distance.

"I have arrangements. Tomorrow I'll go to An City and then get back to you."

"Why so mysterious? Don't tell me you've found someone again?"

Wang Tianxue was also convinced by Lin Chuxia's ability to find people.

When she first saw Gu Peng, she really thought he was a homeless man picked up from somewhere.

Wang Tianyu told her that Lin Chuxia picked him up from a construction site and he was a porter, and she didn't doubt it at all, only wondering if Lin Chuxia's judgment had failed this time.

Who would have thought that in such a short time, Gu Peng would be so familiar with all the company businesses under Lin Chuxia? There was no barrier when discussing matters.

He even adapted faster than Wang Tianyu did initially.

Wang Tianyu could smoothly become Lin Chuxia's assistant because she, as his sister, gave him a lot of guidance.

When Wang Tianyu started his internship at the garment factory, she told him a lot about Xiyang.

She also thoroughly explained matters related to the garment factory and the mall.

In short, she instilled in him everything except for the company's accounts and some confidential matters.

Later, when he started working with Lin Chuxia, whenever he had doubts, Wang Tianyu would always ask her.

Gu Peng didn't have this favorable condition, yet he integrated into the work so quickly by himself, showing how smart he is.

Lin Chuxia laughed at her tone, "It's not that easy to find someone. Alright, I'm off."

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The next day, Lin Chuxia drove straight back to Ancheng County.

Her target wasn't the Qin Family Village, nor the Xiyang Building, which was already renovated and in the final stages of preparing for its inauguration ceremony.

It was a residential area not far from the Xiyang Building.

Standing in front of a small courtyard, she knocked on the door.

After a moment, a woman came out holding a child. Seeing Lin Chuxia, she was visibly delighted.

"Mr. Lin, what brings you here?"

Liu Na hurriedly opened the door, letting Lin Chuxia inside.

She hadn't seen Lin Chuxia for a while, and she couldn't hide the happiness on her face.

"Are you here to see Houzi? He's not home right now; he should be at the motorcade. Hold on a moment, I'll call and have him come back immediately."

Liu Na let Lin Chuxia into the house and turned to leave with the child.

Lin Chuxia grabbed her, "I'm not here for Houzi. I came to see you today."

"Me?"

Lin Chuxia looked around the small courtyard.

It wasn't large, just a three-room courtyard, with two eastern rooms, but it was enough for the young couple.

The house looked quite old, with gray brick walls and old wooden window frames, with paint flaked off.

However, the glass was spotless, and the paper in the windows was newly pasted.

The whole courtyard was clean and tidy.

Lin Chuxia and Liu Na entered the house together, and the furnishings were all basic household items, also tidy and clean.

Liu Na made a cup of tea for Lin Chuxia and sat properly opposite her.

Lin Chuxia looked at the child in her arms—he was a boy, and he resembled Liu Na more.

"How long have you been here?"

"Three months. Houzi came to be the team leader of the motorcade and thought of settling down in Ancheng County. After all, An City is his root. However, suitable houses are hard to find, and as you know, he has no relatives, so he always considered Aunt Jia's family as relatives. He wanted to live close to them. Fortunately, we found this small courtyard, and we're quite satisfied with it."

Lin Chuxia had already known the location when she heard Houzi's address; Jia Liang's house wasn't far from this courtyard.

Liu Na spoke with a bit of nervousness, hands unconsciously rubbing together.

Lin Chuxia then looked at the child again, "Such a good boy, what's his name?"

"Hou Yongqiang, Houzi isn't good at naming children; my dad picked the name."

"It's a nice name with a good meaning," Lin Chuxia smiled.

Her smile made Liu Na even more flustered.

"Mr. Lin, I'm sorry, I let you down..."

She was embarrassed and didn't dare to meet Lin Chuxia's eyes.

Mr. Lin had taken good care of her, and she knew Mr. Lin had high expectations for her.

But in the end, she gave up her job for a man and a child.

That's why, after having the child, she didn't dare to see Lin Chuxia.

"What's the harm? Your situation is different from others. Hou Xiaobao has no elder relatives, and you can't rely on your own family either, so someone has to take care of the child."

Lin Chuxia never held a grudge over this matter.

"But I did come to you today for something else, I'm just not sure if you're willing to part with your child."

Upon hearing this, Liu Na's head shot up, her tone firm, "Mr. Lin, please, as long as it's within my capability."

Lin Chuxia waved her hand, "Hear me out first. As you might know, the building at the old vegetable station is the future headquarters of Xiyang Group, with the bottom three floors as a shopping mall. All preparations are in place, except for a manager..."

Before Lin Chuxia could finish, Liu Na's eyes were already red.

"You don't have to worry about the child. I plan to build a Xia Yang Kindergarten over there, specifically to take care of our Xiyang employees' children. It can be seen as employee welfare, easing their concerns."

By the time Lin Chuxia finished speaking, Liu Na was already choked up and nodding incessantly, "I'm willing, Mr. Lin, I'm willing..."

"No need to rush in your response. This isn't something you should decide alone. Discuss it with Houzi when he gets home."

"No need," Liu Na smiled through her tears, "If it were something else, I might not be so confident. But for something you've entrusted me with, I don't need to consult Houzi. He will definitely support me. Moreover, you've solved all our concerns, so what is there to hesitate about?"

She approached with red-rimmed eyes, "Thank you, Mr. Lin, for trusting me. Rest assured, I'll do my best."

Tears finally fell from Liu Na's eyes as she looked at Lin Chuxia.

No one could understand her gratitude at this moment—it wasn't something simple words of thanks could express.

Before, she thought about working while taking care of her child, but reality was just so helpless.

Hou Xiaobao had no parents, and her own family was occupied with her brother, sister-in-law, and little nephew, leaving no one to help her with childcare.

Chapter 732: Don't Be Too Greedy

They say women hold up half the sky, and she wants to, too. But when a family faces hardship, it's often the woman who gets sacrificed.

Of course, she's not complaining about her husband. She's just seeing the reality of the world clearly.

The child is young and needs to be fed every day; moms are more attentive in caring for children...

From any angle, it seems women should stay at home.

She's grateful she met Hou Xiaobao, who understood she had to stay home to care for the family and child, and gave her respect. Each month, he handed over his salary in full, fearing she'd feel unbalanced.

She knows many men take women's sacrifices for granted, saying things like, "I earn money to support you outside, you relax at home, what is there to complain about?"

As for all the household work, raising children to adulthood, it goes unnoticed.

Where did women willingly stay at home?

Liu Na is the same, knowing there's no hope for her career because of the child.

She even brainwashes herself repeatedly that she already has a happy family; Hou Xiaobao loves her and cares for the family, handing over his salary for her to manage.

And she has a child.

You can't be too greedy.

If the family is happy, should you also expect career success?

With such repeated brainwashing, she decided that she'd be the homemaker while Hou Xiaobao worked outside.

Hou Xiaobao handles earning money, and she'll manage raising the child.

She even had a conversation with Hou Xiaobao because she feared he'd feel he owed her for giving up her job at the Department Store to raise the child.

She arranged everything so naturally, but was she truly content inside?

She didn't dare to ask herself this question.

Initially, Feng Zhong deceived her; she even considered dying in her despair.

It was Mr. Lin who pulled her out of the abyss. She wanted to repay him well, aiming to make a career like his, ensuring no one looked down on her.

But...

She didn't dare to see Mr. Lin, fearing she'd disappoint him.

To her surprise, Mr. Lin didn't feel disappointed and kept thinking about her.

Knowing she was in trouble, he helped her resolve the issues.

At this moment, Liu Na decided firmly that this time she must achieve results and not fail Mr. Lin's trust.

After Lin Chuxia left, Liu Na was revitalized, opened the wardrobe, and began trying on clothes.

Little Yongqiang sat nearby, also grabbing her clothes along with his mom.

Kids are most sensitive to adult emotions. He knew his mom was very happy now, even if he didn't know why. As long as mom's happy, he's happy.

Peals of laughter from mom and child occasionally rang out, and as Hou Xiaobao came home and entered, he heard the laughter.

"What are you two laughing about?"

He was slightly stunned to see Liu Na in a change of clothes.

A white shirt, black trousers, and her hair was tied up.

"Why this outfit today?"

Since having the child... No, to be exact, since being larger in pregnancy, Liu Na hadn't dressed like this.

Earlier, her belly was big, clothes didn't fit; after childbirth, managing the child, she definitely wouldn't wear white clothes.

At a glance, Hou Xiaobao felt reminiscent of first seeing Liu Na.

Liu Na tugged at her collar, "How does it look, okay? Feels a bit tight, maybe I've gained weight."

"These clothes are from before you were pregnant. Of course, you'd gain weight after childbirth. If you like dressing like this, buy a slightly looser piece tomorrow."

Hou Xiaobao laughed casually.

"Didn't I just get my paycheck a couple of days ago? It's perfect for buying a few new clothes. After having the child, you barely buy new clothes. Don't just buy for the child, you need some too."

"Alright, I'll go buy them this afternoon. But Ancheng County's Department Store surely won't have as many styles as our mall."

Though neither of them worked at Xiyang Clothing Mall anymore, they were still used to referring to it as their mall, which felt comforting.

Liu Na changed out of her clothes while Houzi had already set the prepared warm dishes on the table from the kitchen.

Looking at the dishes on the table, she laughed and said, "Why so many good dishes today? I'll hold the child while you eat first."

Liu Na refused the hand Hou Xiaobao extended, "I can eat while holding him, let's eat together. It won't taste good if it cools down."

Only then with a goofy smile did Hou Xiaobao sit down, handing her chopsticks.

The main food was steamed buns. Cooking with a child naturally calls for efficiency.

The buns were large, almost the size of a plate.

However, Hou Xiaobao ate a lot as well.

He took a bun, didn't even break it, bit a large piece directly.

Liu Na picked up a bun, broke off a small piece, dipped it in soup, and fed it to her son's mouth, before taking a small bite herself.

"Today Mr. Lin came by. He wants me to manage the mall in Ancheng County..."

At the front half of the sentence, Hou Xiaobao raised his head in surprise, thinking he'd misheard.

Upon hearing the latter half, a bite of bun lodged in his throat.

He leaned forward, eyes wide.

Liu Na got startled seeing him like that, quickly set the child aside to pour him water.

Hou Xiaobao gulped down the full mug of tea water, only then swallowing the bite of bun.

Ignoring Liu Na's inquiry if he was okay, he stared and asked, "Did you say Mr. Lin specifically came home to see you today, wanting you to manage the mall at Xiyang Building?"

Liu Na nodded, "Mm, I already agreed with Mr. Lin, Houzi. Actually, Mr. Lin wanted me to discuss it with you first, but I couldn't wait, so I agreed directly with Mr. Lin. But don't worry, even if I go out to work, I won't neglect the family, nor Yongqiang. Mr. Lin said Xiyang will have a nursery for Xiyang employees' kids. Yongqiang will go there, so you don't have to worry about him not being taken care of. So don't stop me..."

Although she knew Hou Xiaobao had special feelings for Lin Chuxia and would likely support anything Lin Chuxia assigned her.

But regarding the child, Liu Na's heart was uncertain, so she spilled everything.

Hou Xiaobao gripped her shoulders and laughed heartily, "Why would I oppose? Silly girl, you think I'd oppose? Mr. Lin favors us, I'm beyond happy. How could I oppose? Hahaha... My wife Hou Xiaobao is going to be a manager, you're simply amazing..."

Liu Na was dizzy from his shaking, and seeing daddy and mommy's excitement, Little Yongqiang joyously yelled.

"Alright, alright, let's eat, look, you're a dad now, so restless..."

Hou Xiaobao didn't care, "What's the need for calm at home? And what's more, such a happy thing, I can't be calm. Right, Yongqiang, your mom's going to be a manager, aren't you as excited as dad? In our home, your mom will be the boss, the most remarkable person."

Little Yongqiang ate the bun dipped in soup, cheeks bulging...

Chapter 733: Xiyang Group Listed

In the blink of an eye, it was June 18th.

The sun was shining brightly, with clear skies.

Ancheng County's skyline was illuminated by a brand-new building.

The Xiyang Group Building was like a dazzling pearl, embedded in this vibrant land.

At this time, the huge Xiyang Group logo on the building's exterior wall was covered tightly by a red silk curtain, awaiting the unveiling ceremony, ready to embrace its moment of glory.

Lin Chuxia had been staying at Qin Family Village these days, as such a significant event as the unveiling of the Xiyang Group was something she had never experienced before in two lifetimes.

She arrived at the site early that day.

The building's exterior was redesigned by the team that Lin Chuxia had overseen, and adapted according to her perspective from future generations, completing the final design.

The entire building exterior was simple and elegant, with a complete plaza and landscaping surrounding it.

The location of the vegetable station was initially quite good; although not in the center of Ancheng County, with the process of urbanization, it is bound to become a new landmark of Ancheng County.

Lin Chuxia was quite confident about this.

Not only was Lin Chuxia confident in this, but it seemed the entire Ancheng government also had such plans.

Previously, Li Jian had hinted to her that the new plan for Ancheng County focused on their location.

So today, besides the management of various divisions of the Xiyang Group, Lin Chuxia also invited leaders from Ancheng County, and even a few provincial leaders came over.

Before the time was up, the first leadership guest arrived, none other than He Shichang, the county magistrate of Ancheng County.

Speaking of firsts, this was He Shichang's first interaction with Lin Chuxia.

When he received the Xiyang Group's invitation, he was beyond excited.

Initially, when bidding for the old vegetable station, he had refused Lin Chuxia, giving the land to Walson Company.

Later, the land saw no activity for a long time; he sought details on Walson Company's bid for the land, and after Bai Qifeng's guidance, he realized Lin Chuxia had planned to convert the vegetable station into a garment factory. All because of his wrong decision, he missed out on this golden opportunity, and the garment factory ended up opening in the city.

He regretted so much that he couldn't sleep for days.

Unexpectedly, the tide turned—the chairman of Walson Company turned out to be Lin Chuxia's mother, and the old vegetable station came back to Lin Chuxia's hands, appearing before the public in such a grand manner.

Even if the garment factory was set up in the city, what difference does it make? The root of the Xiyang Group is in their Ancheng.

"Mr. Lin, I've long wanted to visit you, but never had the chance. Now with the establishment of the Xiyang Group, Ancheng County's development will surely rely on Mr. Lin,"

Normally, as the county magistrate, He Shichang would never lower his stance like this.

But facing Lin Chuxia was another story.

She was indeed their Ancheng County's God of Wealth.

It's not an exaggeration to say that the future GDP of Ancheng County will rely on the Xiyang Group's driving force.

As long as Lin Chuxia, their God of Wealth, was happy—unlike the garment factory—his performance as county magistrate would be a glorious slate in his life resume.

He could not make the same mistake twice. After all, why was Bai Qifeng able to directly transfer from being a county magistrate to the provincial party committee?

He Shichang lamented that he had been too young and short-sighted back then.

Lin Chuxia faced He Shichang's low stance without putting on airs. "You flatter me, Magistrate He. The smooth development of Xiyang has always benefited from the support of government leaders. Factory Director Su has often mentioned that the integration and development of Xiyang Food Factory and the old Food Factory over these two years greatly benefited from the support of county leaders. We are grateful beyond words."

"It's only right, only right. The Xiyang Food Factory has solved many employment problems for our county..."

While they were busy exchanging pleasantries, a hearty laugh rang out from behind.

The etiquette ladies had brought Bai Qifeng over.

He was indeed an old acquaintance.

Seeing He Shichang's manner, Bai Qifeng teasingly pointed at him a few times. "Old classmate, we must cherish today's occasion together."

"Absolutely, absolutely. I was just telling Mr. Lin that having Xiyang Group is a blessing for all the people of Ancheng."

The rest didn't need to be spelled out explicitly.

Lin Chuxia, seeing Bai Qifeng arrive, knew the other leadership guests were about to show up as well.

Bai Qifeng belonged to her personal invitation, while the others were more formal workplace arrangements.

Sure enough, Su Wensong was busy welcoming a few other leaders.

Besides these government leaders, Lin Chuxia had also invited the mechanical factory director Xu Changping, county police station director Wang Yuanchao, and Ancheng County Market Supervision Bureau Director Feng Kaiwei...

These were old friends who had witnessed her growing step by step.

Even the cotton fabric factory Director Kang and Qiao Lan were there.

Not to mention all the curious onlookers, the entire area around the Xiyang Building was crowded with people in layers, all wanting to witness this glorious moment together.

It's as if it were a grand celebration of city development.

The ceremony site was very festive and bustling.

Flags flew high, and celebration banners from various units draped down from the building top.

The red carpet stretched from the entrance of the building all the way to the sign-in area, resembling a red silk road towards a glorious future.

Wang Tianyu had been busy in Ancheng County organizing the unveiling ceremony.

He had overseen all the procedures, which were then finalized by Lin Chuxia.

At this moment, he was the busiest one.

To match today's occasion, he specially wore a suit.

He had used two months' salary to order this suit from his sister's garment factory.

Houzi was much simpler today, donning a white shirt and black pants.

He knew nothing much was required of him today; initially, he wanted to wear a tank top and shorts, but before leaving, his wife had pressed him to change.

Seeing his wife in a white shirt and black pants, he offered no objections.

As the saying goes, in harmony with your spouse.

In his case, he follows his wife.

Wang Tianyu's decision to dress well carried a bit of personal intent.

He once again sneakily glanced at Gu Peng not far away.

This kid, after being with Mr. Lin for such a short time, seemed like a different person.

The suit fitted him well; didn't he feel awkward wearing it?

He remembered the first time he wore a suit; it was uncomfortable everywhere.

Raising his arms and legs felt restricting.

Looking at Gu Peng, seemingly unfazed, his suit seemed even better suited than Wang's custom-made one.

He graciously greeted guests with an air, as if he'd taken the role of the boss.

They were Lin's assistants, and to outsiders, they were indeed seen as Lin's right-hand men, speaking and acting in many situations representing Lin.

But right now, on such an occasion, with Mr. Lin not far away, was it appropriate for him to assume such a major role?

Didn't see how only Factory Director Su and his sister were with Mr. Lin greeting guests.

Moreover, even if Lin's assistant was needed to greet guests, it should be him.

He'd been with Mr. Lin longer than Gu Peng.

Wang Tianyu adjusted his clothes and stepped towards Gu Peng.

Chapter 734: I'm Not Like You

Assistant Gu had long noticed Wang Tianyu's expression and now that he was approaching, he merely gave him a casual glance.

Wang Tianyu raised his eyebrows, his face carrying a gentle and harmless smile, "Assistant Gu, aren't you hot wearing so much today? Why don't you go rest in the back, I'll take care of this here."

Upon hearing this, Gu Peng turned his head to scrutinize Wang Tianyu, speaking indifferently, "You're wearing quite a bit yourself. Instead of worrying about others, you should worry more about yourself."

Having said this, he took another deep look at Wang Tianyu, "Assistant Wang, I'm not like you. Don't use your petty thoughts on me. If you've got the ability, excel in your job, and put your mind to work."

He finished speaking and refused to give Wang Tianyu another glance.

Wang Tianyu was stunned in place for quite a while before realizing he had been reprimanded.

Hey, he actually got lectured by a newcomer, and in such a contemptuous tone.

He had been working beside Mr. Lin for so long, and Lin had never scolded him before, so why did Gu Peng have the right to lecture him?

He even said he was different from him?

Different in what way? They were both assistants to Mr. Lin.

Speaking of which, he had entered the industry later than him, he should call him senior.

If it weren't for today's special occasion, Wang Tianyu would have rushed to confront him properly.

Just because he hasn't been beside Mr. Lin for a while, does this kid think he's more important to Mr. Lin than him?

Does he not know that the inauguration ceremony for Xiyang Building is the top priority?

Mr. Lin entrusting such an important matter to him indicates his higher status in Mr. Lin's mind.

Wang Tianyu comforted himself with this thought and looked up, only to see Gu Peng speaking to Lin Chuxia.

Still with that stone-faced expression, no visible trace of a smile, yet Mr. Lin listened attentively, nodding occasionally.

Wang Tianyu suddenly felt a sense of urgency and quickly composed his emotions.

He glanced at the time, acknowledging the auspicious hour was soon upon them, and strode toward the temporary stage.

He needed to check the preparations one more time to ensure that the inauguration ceremony was flawless.

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The ceremony formally commenced, and the invited guests entered orderly under the guidance of the ceremonial hostesses.

Lin Chuxia stood at the forefront.

At this moment, beneath the stage were not only the invited guests but also thousands of Xiyang employees, coming together to witness the group's glorious moment.

Standing on the stage, Lin Chuxia gazed at numerous familiar old faces and many excited new ones, and slowly began to speak.

"Today, we stand at a new starting point. Xiyang Group is embarking on a new journey, thanks to the efforts and dedication of every single employee of Xiyang. Let's join hands to create an even more brilliant tomorrow."

Thunderous applause erupted from the audience.

Following this, several invited government leaders also delivered speeches.

Finally, Lin Chuxia and County Magistrate He unveiled the red silk covering the plaque together.

At that moment, the shining words 'Xiyang Group' captivated everyone's attention.

Xiyang Group was officially founded.

Standing on the stage, Lin Chuxia scanned each enthusiastic face in the audience, feeling overwhelmed with emotion.

Just then, she caught sight of a familiar yet somewhat unexpected figure in the crowd.

Qin Yang's position wasn't very forward, even rather offset.

Yet Lin Chuxia still spotted him immediately.

Obviously, the man had dressed up specially today, wearing a fitting suit, and holding a small bouquet of flowers in his hand.

Meeting her gaze, he gently waved his hand, giving her a tender smile.

"Mr. Lin, we should head over to the restaurant."

Seeing Lin Chuxia unmoving for a while, Gu Peng approached and reminded her quietly.

After the inauguration ceremony, the group had prepared a sumptuous lunch at Xiyang Group's own hotel.

"You all go ahead, I'll join you shortly," Lin Chuxia instructed Gu Peng and directly jumped off the stage.

Gu Peng followed Lin Chuxia's sight and also spotted the man.

Qin Yang was startled by Lin Chuxia's actions and quickly stepped forward to support her.

"Go slow, be careful not to twist your ankle."

Lin Chuxia flashed a radiant smile, shedding her previous commanding demeanor on stage.

"Why did you come? Are these flowers for me?"

It's not the weekend today, Qin Yang should be at work.

And she's been busy in Ancheng County for the past few days with no time to even call him.

Qin Yang directly handed the flowers to her, "How could I not come at such a significant moment?"

"Are you coming with me to the restaurant or..."

"You go ahead. I'll just roam around here."

Qin Yang interrupted Lin Chuxia's words, his urgency bringing a chuckle to her lips.

This man dislikes socializing the most.

Most attendees today were leadership from the government side, whom he detests interacting with.

"Alright, feel free to wander. Should I send someone to accompany you?"

"No need at all."

Lin Chuxia offered a couple of instructions to him before heading to the restaurant.

As she approached the restaurant, she saw Gu Peng waiting at the exit.

"Why are you here? Who's accompanying them inside?"

Having spent time with Gu Peng recently and helping him get on track quickly, Lin Chuxia completely trusted his current ability to manage things.

With him handling these matters, she felt assured.

Gu Peng noted the smile lingering on Lin Chuxia's face, "Wang Tianyu and Factory Director Su are inside."

Lin Chuxia nodded and walked past Gu Peng, stepping inside.

"Mr. Lin," Gu Peng reminded her, "the flowers in your arms."

"Oh," Lin Chuxia just remembered that she was still holding a bouquet of flowers.

Bringing flowers into the restaurant indeed seemed inappropriate.

"Please find a suitable place for them first."

She handed the flowers to Gu Peng.

"Rest assured, I'll take care of them."

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The inauguration ceremony concluded, the leaders left the stage, and the gawking crowd gradually dispersed.

They didn't go far; today was not only Xiyang Group's inauguration ceremony but also the first day of Xia Yang Mall's opening.

For the first three days of the mall's opening, there would be discounts and grand promotions.

Many people had heard long ago about the fashionable clothing styles at the city's Xia Yang Mall, though visiting the city wasn't easy; now that Xiyang Clothing Mall had opened right at their doorstep, even without buying anything, it was worth a good browse.

The crowd gradually scattered, yet one person still stood beneath the stage, gazing at the empty podium like a statue.

Only when all surrounding individuals had departed did Li Guangyuan withdraw his gaze and silently turn away.

"Hey, Guang Yuan, where have you been? I heard today the building built by Old Cai's station is opening, and people from the city are flocking there. Folks are too busy to buy groceries; the market is quite deserted. Had I known people would be too caught up in the excitement to eat, I would've joined in the fun too; heard there's even a TV crew. Maybe I'd end up on TV."

Chapter 735: Are You Really That Unwilling?

"Hey, Guangyuan, I'm talking to you, why are you ignoring me?"

Li Guangyuan finally looked up and smiled at the person, "It is quite lively."

The person felt uneasy at Li Guangyuan's smile, finding it odd, shrugged, and went back to tending to their vegetable stall.

Li Guangyuan sat on a vegetable crate, looking at Lin Jiayi busy not far away, and suddenly sneered.

"The city is so bustling today, you should really go have a look."

Lin Jiayi paused in her movements, didn't say a word, and continued to handle the vegetables with her head down.

Li Guangyuan's voice continued, "Why aren't you talking? Haven't you always been condescending, looking down on me, a mere vegetable seller? Lin Jiayi, to be honest, being here selling vegetables with me every day, it's really beneath you, I even feel wronged on your behalf."

"You look down on me selling vegetables yet eagerly flung yourself to the rich, divorced me without hesitation when you acknowledged a rich woman as your mother, not even wanting your son. Now you're back here groveling. Lin Jiayi, you're really something, I almost admire you."

"That scene earlier was really something, so many officials, even the county mayor was trying to ingratiate himself smiling at her, probably city officials too. In my whole life, it's the first time I've seen such a scene. You should have watched it, to see if you'd still have delusions after."

"If I'm not mistaken, you were the one who got that foreign woman to buy the old vegetable station back then, right? You made her buy the old vegetable station, wanting to become a strong woman, a lady boss like Lin Chuxia. But after buying it, you were clueless and couldn't do anything while that woman, before exposing your trick, was helping Lin Chuxia set up a clothing factory. She'd rather help an outsider than you, her so-called biological daughter. Lin Jiayi, tell me, how much of a failure are you in life? Can people see at first glance that you're a waste?"

"And now look, the vegetable station you insisted on buying, that woman built such a large building and gave it to Lin Chuxia. Aren't you resentful? Everything ended up being a wedding dress for Lin Chuxia."

Lin Jiayi continued sorting vegetables, her eyes dim, and after a while, replied, "I'm not resentful."

"Ha..." Li Guangyuan sneered, "You can fool others but not me, we've been married for so many years, I know exactly who you are, Lin Jiayi. I told you before, people have to believe in fate; you're just cursed

with a bad fate, how do you compete with others? But then again, with what I know about you, how did you agree to Lin Chuxia's arranged marriage back then?"

He suddenly laughed loudly, "Look at that, Lin Jiayi, this is your fate. There was a road to heaven that you didn't take but you willingly walked into hell. You're only fit to sell vegetables with me here..."

Lin Jiayi bowed her head, not saying another word to him.

She was long used to Li Guangyuan's humiliations, waiting for him to tire of talking.

There had been no news of their son, and they reported it to the Public Security Bureau.

But it's been so long since their son went missing, finding the child is like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Without her son, she and Li Guangyuan got their divorce certificate; her status in the Li Family was shaky, and she felt insecure.

She no longer expected Li Guangyuan to achieve anything, choosing to run a small vegetable business diligently. As long as Old Mrs. Li and Li Dongmei didn't cause any trouble, the days were manageable.

Fortunately, Li Guangyuan had come to his senses, no longer allowing Old Mrs. Li and Li Dongmei to leech off them.

Just as she was thinking this, two figures arrived at their vegetable stand.

Seeing the visitors, Lin Jiayi's face subtly changed.

It was Old Master Zhang and Mrs. Zhang.

Since the fight before the Spring Festival when Li Dongmei and her mother-in-law came to the market demanding money, the Zhang family had quieted down significantly.

Later, she heard that Zhang Wenbin was incarcerated, and knowing Li Guangyuan's nature, he looked even less favorably upon the Li Family.

Even when Li Dongmei came back later with a sob story, claiming they were out of food, begging for money from the Li Family, Li Guangyuan refused to lend her any.

Old Mrs. Li, ever since learning that Genbao was lost, was constantly throwing fits, and would scold her on sight, eventually working herself into an illness.

She had been weak and sickly, with no energy to meddle in her daughter's affairs.

If not for seeing this family, even with Li Guangyuan causing her some annoyance, she found life better than before.

At least the money she earned from selling vegetables was hers, not just going into someone else's pocket.

But seeing these two geezers today, it was clear they were up to no good.

Are they short on money again, coming to their vegetable stand?

She had never seen an in-law family so shameless, daring to go to their daughter-in-law's family to demand money where they sold vegetables.

Watching Mrs. Zhang walking with a limp, Lin Jiayi felt a cold smile rising inside her.

After that visit before Spring Festival, Mrs. Zhang and Li Dongmei encountered Zhang Wenbin's ex-wife and were harshly taught a lesson by her ex-wife's mother-in-law and the Qin Family, she heard about it on the same day.

She even inquired about it later, learning that Mrs. Zhang injured her back, and it took a long time to heal.

When she heard the news, she couldn't have felt more satisfied.

Mrs. Zhang is crippled yet still comes to demand money?

When Li Guangyuan really started arguing with them, she planned to specifically target Mrs. Zhang.

Since she's crippled yet insists on coming out, she might as well make her bedridden, so she no longer dares to cause them trouble.

While Lin Jiayi was thinking this over, Old Master Zhang had already started speaking to Li Guangyuan.

"Where's Li Dongmei? Where are you hiding her?"

Seeing the visitors, Li Guangyuan grew more vigilant.

Upon hearing the question, he frowned, "Li Dongmei is your Zhang family's daughter-in-law, why are you asking me?"

Li Guangyuan previously felt inferior in front of the Zhang Family, after all, they were city people.

But after all these years, he no longer had any regard for them.

What city people? If they lost their jobs, they couldn't even afford to eat without relying on a rural person like him.

Li Guangyuan looked down on the Zhang Family, and Old Master Zhang looked down on Li Guangyuan even more, being just a peasant.

"Don't pretend you don't understand, Li Dongmei left early yesterday morning, she told us she was going back to her family, but she hasn't returned yet. We sent someone to Xiaoqingshan Village to look for her, your mother told us she never went home, and even accused us of not returning her. Don't think I can't see what kind of trick you're playing, you think just because Wenbin is locked up, you want to back out? You begged to marry into my family in the first place, wanting to marry my son you married him, and now you want to back out? No way, if you don't hand her over today, I'll go to the police station."

Lin Jiayi couldn't help but detect a hint of irony in Old Master Zhang's words.

Li Guangyuan had just said something similar to her, though Li Guangyuan's words were: "You want to leave, you leave; you want to come back, it's not that easy."

Chapter 736: Low Emotional Intelligence

Is this the fate of women?

If it were Lin Chuxia, could she come and go as she pleases?

Li Guangyuan also sensed something at this moment, his brow furrowing deeper.

"You said my sister has been out for two days? Did you do something to her again?"

Although Li Guangyuan didn't want to involve himself in Li Dongmei's family matters, Li Dongmei was still his sister.

A cold snort sounded from behind Mrs. Zhang, "Listen to what you're saying, what could I possibly do to her? We've kept her well-fed and well-cared for every day, if she doesn't do anything to us, that's good enough. Stop saying things that are useless. Where is Li Dongmei? Quickly hand her over, the children at home are waiting for her to feed them."

She was now in poor health and couldn't take care of the old man and the little girl at home.

Old Master Zhang continued, "Every time Li Dongmei goes out, she takes the little girl with her. This time, she's left her at home for two days and hasn't cared. I think you Li Family members are doing this deliberately. We've all come here today; does she still want to show off in front of us?"

Li Guangyuan felt a sudden jolt in his heart.

He knew his second sister's temper too well. If even the child hadn't been taken from Zhang's house for two days...

He thought of his elder sister Li Hongmei.

"Look after the stall, I'll go back for a bit," Li Guangyuan turned to speak to Lin Jiayi.

Mrs. Zhang sneered, "What other tricks do you want to play? Li Dongmei ran away without even taking care of her child, your Li Family has to take responsibility for this..."

.....

After the luncheon ended, the leaders and guests who came to attend the listing ceremony were sent off, and the listing ceremony was officially successfully completed.

However, Lin Chuxia was not in a hurry to leave; she took another tour of the various departments of the whole building.

When she reached the mall, she happened to bump into Qin Yang.

He had just finished lunch and wanted to take another stroll before leaving, so he volunteered to accompany her.

She had already taken a brief tour earlier and understood almost the entire building.

Lin Chuxia smiled and raised her eyebrows, "Alright, you can be my guide then."

Gu Peng originally wanted to catch up with Lin Chuxia but was pulled back by Wang Tianyu.

He instantly frowned with dissatisfaction, "Why are you pulling me?"

Wang Tianyu rolled his eyes mentally, thinking that this foolish fellow is quite useless despite his strong business skills; his emotional intelligence is too low.

In the workplace, one's abilities only account for half; you must also understand the ways of the world and be able to read people's expressions.

This foolish fellow was really bad at reading the room.

He slightly nodded, "Didn't you see Mr. Lin is with Deputy Minister Qin? Why are you rushing over there? To play the third wheel? Alright, alright, I know you take your work seriously and want to show off in front of Mr. Lin, but there are times when it's really not the time for us to shine."

Gu Peng coldly withdrew his arm, "I'm just doing my job; not everything is about showing off to Mr. Lin like you."

Then he walked away without looking back.

"Hey..."

Wang Tianyu stood there dumbfounded, did he just get schooled by a newbie?

His shoulder was patted, and then he saw his elder sister Wang Tianxue standing behind him.

"Sis!"

Wang Tianxue glanced at the departing Gu Peng, "What happened, aren't you getting along with the new colleague?"

Wang Tianyu gathered his emotions, smiled, and shook his head, "How could that be? You know me, sister, even if the other person isn't easy to get along with, I can still get along happily."

Wang Tianxue gave him a thumbs up, "My little brother is still so impressive."

Wang Tianyu scratched his head and changed the topic, "Sis, are you done now? Mom and Dad should still be waiting for you at home. They know you'll come home today, so they've stayed in all day just waiting for you."

Wang Tianxue's smile faded a bit, "Not today, something's going on at the factory that I need to rush back for."

"Sis, you probably wouldn't go back even if there's nothing at the factory, right?"

Wang Tianyu knew his elder sister's personality; since she got divorced, she hadn't visited home, even during holidays she only sent some money to their parents through him.

"I understand it's not your fault. Back when you were getting divorced, Mom and Dad shouldn't have said those things. But they've realized their mistake now..."

"Tianyu," Wang Tianxue interrupted him directly, "The headquarters of the group is located in An City, with Mr. Lin's situation there, she can't always be at the headquarters. By having you stay at the headquarters, Mr. Lin is trusting you to do your job well; don't disappoint Mr. Lin's expectations. Also, with Gu Peng, both you and Gu Peng are the same in Mr. Lin's eyes; you are indispensable aides. You shouldn't, because you've been with Mr. Lin longer, develop thoughts you shouldn't have about competing for a moment of credit. Mr. Lin is a very wise person, your little tricks won't amount to anything in front of her but will instead make you look foolish."

"Sis, I know. I won't compete against Assistant Gu."

Having received his promise, Wang Tianxue nodded, "That's good, I have to go back to take care of some matters, call me if anything comes up."

"Sis..."

Wang Tianyu wanted to say more, but Wang Tianxue was already striding away.

Her back was straight, emitting a sense of pride and coldness.

But her heart at that moment was filled with desolation.

She would never return to that home, not since she wanted to divorce Yang Rui when her parents staunchly opposed it, even knowing Yang Rui had found someone else outside.

"Tianxue, this isn't really an issue. Men, how many don't stray a little? Besides, Yang Rui is such a big figure at the Department Store."

"She seems to be discontent, done enjoying good days now wants trouble. Yang Rui even came to me saying he'd live well with you, apologized as needed. What more do you want? Even when facing death, one should be lenient. Yang Rui is a man; considering you didn't even give him any face, it's a blessing he's not divorcing you. Stop holding onto it."

"Your dad's right, Yang Rui seems good to me; how many men voluntarily yield to their wives? He just made a mistake momentarily, bewitched by those tempting foxes outside. I say it might not even be Yang Rui's fault; maybe it's those foxes seeing his potential that won't let go. If you really divorce him, wouldn't you be helping those foxes?"

"Furthermore, think for Xiao Long, he's young; can't grow up without a mother."

"Mom, Dad, I've decided not to continue with Yang Rui, don't try to persuade me further. And Xiao Long, he's my son; I'll have him with me; he won't be motherless."

"Foolish, how will you survive as a woman with a child? With such a burden, how could you remarry? There's no place for you at home. Your brother's grown; soon he'll want a spouse. But with a divorced elder sister at home, who would want to marry your brother?"

Chapter 737: Little Schemes

"I'm putting it down right here, if you don't listen to us and dare to get a divorce, don't ever come back to this house, we'll just pretend we never raised a daughter like you, don't come back and disgrace us..."

.....

Wang Tianxue closed her eyes, then opened them, her gaze full of mockery.

Indeed, people can only rely on themselves. Once you're strong, there's nothing to fear.

Love and family affection are all worthless in the face of personal interests.

Back then, when she had nothing and a child to raise, her parents could say such heartless things.

Now they just see her as successful and capable and want to act like a loving family again.

She can give them pocket money, as a token of gratitude for raising her.

But the moment her father said those words, she decided she'd never set foot in that house again.

.....

It wasn't until today that Lin Chuxia finally managed to tour every floor of the Xiyang Building.

Except for a portion of the reserved fourth floor, almost the entire building was in use.

The mall was bustling, with grand promotions for its opening day, and customers coming and going without end.

The mall's service staff were all systematically trained by Liu Na.

The opening of the clothing mall in Yan City was jointly overseen by Liu Na and Wang Tianxue.

Back then, even though Wang Tianxue took the lead and Liu Na assisted, having gone through it once made it much smoother the second time.

The Xia Yang Kindergarten has also opened, although Xiyang employees can send their children there, right now awareness is still quite low, and families with someone to help look after the kids rarely send them to the daycare, so there are only about 20 children there.

Looking at those lively and adorable children, Lin Chuxia thought of her daughter.

Earlier during the opening, her mother was holding her daughter downstairs, but now she couldn't find them.

"After the ceremony ended, mom took Qi Qi to the mall to buy her a few clothes and then Zhuang Yang sent them back," Qin Yang explained.

Lin Chuxia nodded, feeling there wasn't much left to do here.

"I'll give them some instructions, and then let's head back."

"Alright."

Lin Chuxia called over Gu Peng and Wang Tianyu, went over the things she could think of in detail, and then left with Qin Yang.

On the way back, Qin Yang felt a bit emotional, "I used to think if I worked hard to earn money, you and our daughter could live a good life. But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't keep up with your pace, and in the end, I benefited from your achievements in every way."

Just like the Santana he's driving now, he wouldn't be able to afford it with just his salary.

Lin Chuxia sitting in the passenger seat, rested her chin on her hand playfully, her eyes slightly raised to look at him, "What? Feeling guilty toward me and our daughter again?"

Seeing her little look, Qin Yang couldn't help but chuckle, reaching out to pinch her cheek.

"No, I feel very lucky to have married such an amazing wife. Not just me, even my parents think marrying you is a blessing of several lifetimes."

He suddenly lowered his voice with a teasing tone, "You don't know, recently when mom came to the city to see my sister, she noticed an extra Gu Peng in the car, and privately warned me a lot, fearing I upset you and that you'd grow tired of me."

At the end of it, he even sounded a bit aggrieved.

Lin Chuxia suddenly remembered the look in Mrs. Qin's eyes that day and couldn't help but find it amusing.

How insecure is his mom about her son?

Though Gu Peng is not bad-looking, compared to Qin Yang, there's still a gap.

Besides, even in their past life, her relationship with Gu Peng was only that of friends.

Qin Yang is her husband, the person she holds dear, the father of her daughter.

No matter the identity, they couldn't be compared to Gu Peng.

Moreover, whether it's Qin Yang or the Qin Family's attitude, Lin Chuxia had long felt it.

That's why she sincerely treats Qin Yang and the Qin Family well.

In their past life, she was also diligent, struggling for a living.

But Li Guangyuan enjoyed the good life her efforts brought him, while mentally oppressing her.

Fearful that she would break free from their control.

While enjoying and using what she provided, he feared others saying he relied on a woman, that he was a freeloader.

The Li Family, especially, had always thought she was sold to them for that 300 yuan bride price, so everything she did was naturally the Li Family's rightful gain.

Qin Yang never thought marrying a woman more capable than him was a disgraceful thing.

The Qin Family regarded everything she did as a source of pride.

This emotional value was more important than anything.

After saying this, Qin Yang secretly glanced at her out of the corner of his eye, seeing her smiling happily and relaxed, he let out a sigh of relief.

And felt a bit ashamed for his own petty thoughts.

.....

By evening, everything had settled.

All the tasks were proceeding in an orderly manner.

Wang Tianyu finished his day's work, packed up his things, and prepared to go home.

During this period, he still needed to stay in An City, going directly home after work.

Riding his bicycle, he took two turns, following the straight path toward home.

Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, he spotted a familiar figure not far away.

He squeezed the brake, gradually slowing down, finally coming to a halt in the distance, watching the figure disappear at the entrance of the alley, a trace of doubt in his eyes.

Earlier things had calmed down quite a bit, and thinking Gu Peng needed to return to the city, he let him leave first.

Unexpectedly, Gu Peng was still in An City, why hadn't he returned to the city?

The last bus from Ancheng County to the city was at 5 p.m., and it was now 6 p.m.

Gu Peng shouldn't have missed the bus at that time.

Moreover, Gu Peng had terminated the lease of his rented house in Ancheng County when he and Mr. Lin left.

If he was staying in An City, he didn't even have a place to live, so what was he wandering around here for?

Even if he wanted to spend the night in An City, he should have stayed at the Xiyang Group Building.

Did he just mistake someone else for him?

The more Wang Tianyu thought about it, the more it didn't add up. He turned his direction, pedaling his bicycle to follow.

As he entered the alley, he saw at the end of the alley, the figure who should have been on the bus to the city right now, Gu Peng, wearing the same clothes he had on today, clear as day in his memory.

Worried about making too much noise and alerting the man ahead, Wang Tianyu quickly locked his bicycle by the roadside and jogged after him.

The person ahead kept making turns, heading west, and Wang Tianyu followed, trying to determine where Gu Peng was heading.

In a residential area, a turn later, the figure suddenly disappeared.

This road was flanked by residences, and it was dinnertime, with every house having someone visible.

Some doors were tightly closed while others were half open.

Wang Tianyu walked as he observed the households on both sides.

This must be an employee housing area for a factory; the yards were small.

Was Gu Peng here to find someone? Did he know someone living here?

Chapter 738: Are You Following Me?

He had clearly understood before that Gu Peng was not a local in An City. He hadn't been there long, and before joining Xiyang, he had merely been living from one odd job to the next, often not knowing where his next meal would come from.

Wang Tianyu felt that he had lost the person he was following. Gu Peng was not necessarily among these residents, so he quickened his pace, walked out of the alley, and continued pressing forward.

He turned two more corners and still didn't see that figure, realizing he had indeed lost the person, and was resigned to turn back.

As soon as he turned around, a figure blocked his path, with a voice cold and low, "Are you stalking me?"

At that moment, Wang Tianyu's hair stood on end.

Curiously tracking Gu Peng was one thing, but being caught in the act was another.

And one had to admit, Gu Peng had a very unique aura about him.

Though Gu Peng was only seven or eight years older than Wang Tianyu, the kind of steady presence he carried, especially the oppressive feeling he exuded when surrounded by a low pressure, made Wang Tianyu feel that it was even more intense than his old professors from university.

That kind of aura didn't seem fitting for someone of his age.

He attributed Gu Peng's aura to the fact that he had committed offenses in the past and had undergone reformation in prison for so many years.

Isn't there a saying that life grinds down a person's edges, and experience is the best teacher?

Gu Peng, having gone through so much, thus carried himself with a composure beyond his years.

That being said, facing him head-on left Wang Tianyu a bit frightened, hastily explaining, "No, no, how could it be? I just saw that person looked like you and came over to ask if you missed the bus. If you did, you could spend the night at my place; we have space. If need be, we could share a room—it'd be better than staying outside."

Gu Peng looked down at him, his face unreadable.

He said nothing, and the atmosphere between them grew even more tense.

Just as Wang Tianyu was considering whether to continue fabricating excuses, Gu Peng finally spoke.

"Did you forget? We have my office at the Xiyang Group headquarters, and there's the Xia Yang Hotel below the Xiyang Building. Mr. Lin has said that with our status, staying at the Xia Yang Hotel is free."

Wang Tianyu laughed awkwardly, "Is that so? Look at me, I got so busy I forgot."

He certainly knew this, and precisely because he knew, seeing Gu Peng outside of the Xia Yang Group Building seemed odd to him.

Moreover, he always felt that Mr. Lin hiring Gu Peng into the company and even making him his close assistant was too hasty.

His intuition told him Gu Peng was not that simple.

That's why when he saw Gu Peng, he didn't hesitate to follow.

But facing Gu Peng's scrutinizing gaze, he dared not voice these thoughts.

Gu Peng suddenly let out a cold chuckle, as if he saw right through Wang Tianyu, "Put away your petty tricks and focus on doing your own work. Mind your business less. Mr. Lin has taken a liking to you, and that's your luck. If you put your mind where it shouldn't be, watch out for your job security."

With that, he ignored whatever Wang Tianyu's reaction might be, turned, and walked off in another direction.

Not until that figure disappeared from view did Wang Tianyu let out a heavy sigh of relief, feeling completely drained.

If it wasn't for the big tree behind him, he might have just fallen onto the ground.

It was only then that he realized he had been threatened by Gu Peng.

Him, an assistant who had been working under Mr. Lin for a while, threatened by Mr. Lin's new assistant?

The feeling of discomfort and powerlessness grew stronger.

Could he really have Mr. Lin take away his job? Where did he get the nerve to say something like that?

In terms of ability, he was a prestigious university graduate, not inferior to Gu Peng in work performance.

In terms of tenure, he had spent more time at Mr. Lin's side.

In terms of connections, Mr. Lin and his sister were on the best terms; even on his sister's account, he wouldn't dismiss him.

Where did he get the nerve to say such a thing to him?

Wang Tianyu was angry at Gu Peng's arrogance, and even angrier at himself for being so intimidated that he stammered.

Was it just because he was new to society and younger than him?

.....

Gu Peng walked for a long distance before coldly glancing back. Seeing no one behind him, he snorted and continued walking forward.

If Wang Tianyu was still following him, he would have realized that Gu Peng was heading straight for the West Street Market.

The last glow of sunset had disappeared behind the western mountains, and the sky had darkened.

The streetlights along the main road were already lit, but Gu Peng took a side path, which only got darker and darker.

He walked until he reached a courtyard beside the West Street Market, pushed the door open, and went inside.

The courtyard was brightly lit and noisy, indicating that there was quite a crowd inside.

As soon as he pushed open the door, a smell of alcohol hit him, and the noisy chatter stopped abruptly as he stepped inside.

In the center of the room, a round table was set, laden with many dishes, and seven or eight men wearing undershirts or with bare chests were seated around it, drinking.

The table and the floor were littered with beer bottles and bottles of white liquor.

Upon seeing Gu Peng, one of the men stood up suddenly, "Boss, why are you back? You should've told the brothers beforehand."

As he spoke, he vacated his seat and gestured for a subordinate to fetch a chair.

Gu Peng walked straight over and sat in the original man's seat.

Within moments, a subordinate brought over a chair and some clean utensils.

The man sat next to Gu Peng, grinning cheekily, "Boss, where have you been these days? You left without a word, and the brothers have been worried."

The others chimed in as well, "Exactly, Boss, if there's a money-making opportunity, don't forget about us. That suit of yours doesn't come cheap."

With his suit jacket already removed on the way, Gu Peng draped it over the back of the chair and unbuttoned his shirt collar.

Upon hearing this, he looked up, his face still devoid of emotion, as he spoke lightly, "Interested in carrying cement? I've got some connections."

The smile on the man's face froze, and he quickly waved his hand, "I—I was just joking, Boss, don't take it seriously."

The first man to speak also reprimanded him, "Ma, what are you talking for? Can you question what the Boss is doing? I say we need to actually get you some cement-carrying work, lest you waste your big frame."

Ma, true to his name, was tall and burly but had a lecherous look.

He shrank his neck after being called out.

After that, he gestured to Gu Peng, "Boss, don't listen to their nonsense. The brothers have been doing fine. Come, have a taste of this roasted chicken and pig's head meat. Sixth lined up at Qin's to get these. You may not know, since you've been in An City for a short time, but Qin's Cooked Food's roasted chicken and pig's head meat are something else here. One bite, and you'll crave a second. Pair it with this Erguotou, and it's just perfect."

Chapter 739: Even Living Under a Bridge Would Be Fine

With him there to greet and giving a signal to the other brothers, the atmosphere picked up again.

"Qin's Cooked Food is really something now. Everybody knows it's produced by Xiyang Food Factory. You must have heard of the boss of Xiyang Food Factory. The big event in our county today, the opening ceremony of the Xia Yang Group Building, that's the Xiyang."

Gu Peng took a bite of food, noncommittal.

These people were already used to Gu Peng's silence. Although his presence made everyone a bit restrained, the meal was completed smoothly.

Once they put down their chopsticks, the other underlings quickly left, leaving only the one who had first spoken to Gu Peng.

Gu Peng took a sip of beer, "Hui Zi, how's the matter I discussed with you before?"

The man called Hui Zi showed traces of difficulty on his face.

"Boss, the task you gave is indeed a bit challenging for the brothers since the information you provided is really too little. I've sent people to the Northwest twice, but there's no clue at all. You only mentioned looking for someone and didn't specify the matter. Maybe you could tell us what's really going on. If that person offended you, I'll have the brothers find them and avenge you on the spot."

Hui Zi knew that Gu Peng had been imprisoned in the Northwest for several years and thought that person might have offended him.

He even wondered if Gu Peng's imprisonment was related to the person he was asked to find.

Just that Gu Peng wouldn't say more, making it really difficult for him.

After Hui Zi finished speaking, he saw Gu Peng raise his eyes coldly, "Avenge me? Since when did I need you to decide my affairs?"

With just one sentence, Hui Zi stood up instantly, his face turning pale white, sweat dripping from his bare temple.

He lowered his head in panic, repeatedly saying he didn't dare.

Then, remembering something, he quickly spoke, "Boss, that other task you gave me has been completed. You really called it; that woman barely suspected anything and took the train early yesterday morning."

Gu Peng just took the beer slowly, making a sound of approval.

Hui Zi glanced at Gu Peng's face and, seeing no change in his expression, mustered the courage to speak.

"I think this matter won't make much difference. Instead, it might benefit that woman, and the Zhang Family isn't a lucky place. Boss, if you want to deal with the Li Family, the brothers could set a trap and bring in Li Guangyuan. Without Li Guangyuan as their backbone, the Li Family's days should become quite lively."

Gu Peng downed the last mouthful of beer, slammed the glass on the table, and stood up slowly, "No rush, once inside, the fun's gone."

Hui Zi dared not ask further. Seeing Gu Peng about to leave, he quickly followed him out, "Boss, where are you going? It's so late; why not spend the night with the brothers? My place is decent; it's for you to sleep."

Gu Peng chuckled lightly, "Your place for me to sleep? Should I also sleep with your woman?"

The woman entering the yard heard this and instantly lit up, looking expectantly at Hui Zi.

Hui Zi knew Gu Peng was joking and hadn't expected Yanzi to overhear.

Seeing her eager expression, he got a headache.

He forced a smile and said to Gu Peng, "Boss, you're joking again. I know you don't think much of my place. Please, go as you please."

He even made a gesture of invitation.

He just had a slick mouth, having been with the boss for so long. When had the boss ever told them his whereabouts?

Yet he still wanted to offer this courtesy.

Yanzi, unhappy with his words, took initiative and walked towards Gu Peng, casting a flirtatious glance even before she got there.

"Brother Gu, don't listen to his nonsense. If you want to take me along, I'll go wherever you go, even if it's to live under a bridge..."

Hui Zi got anxious, "Yanzi, you..."

Gu Peng hadn't expected a casual joke to be overheard like this and, looking at the colorful face in front of him, turned away coldly.

"I don't have such a good appetite. If you like under a bridge, should I get you a couple of stray dogs?"

Yanzi's expression changed, and she spoke awkwardly, "Wasn't I just joking with Brother Gu? I actually prefer Brother Hui."

Until that figure walked out the door, Yanzi dropped her shoulders.

Hui Zi approached and pinched her, "Silly flirt, haven't you learned? Do you think Boss is someone you can covet?"

"I was just saying. Besides, he did just say he wanted to sleep with your woman."

"You still know you're my woman? I thought you'd forgotten. Don't say I didn't warn you; the boss is in a good mood today, not bothering with you. But if you really crossed him, beware that he might actually bring over a couple of dogs."

Thinking of that scene, Yanzi shivered suddenly.

She hadn't interacted with Gu Peng much but had heard quite a bit from Hui Zi and his brothers.

This kind of thing he might really do.

She then put on a smiling face, gently leaning against Hui Zi's arm.

"Brother Hui~, I know I was wrong..."

.....

Li Guangyuan rode his bicycle back to Xiaoqingshan Village.

By the time he entered the village, it was already dark.

The Li Family courtyard was silent.

Since Lin Jiayi divorced him, his mother found raising chickens and pigs troublesome. The pigs were all sold, some chickens were sold, and some were taken by his second sister.

Now, apart from humans, there were no living creatures at home.

To sell vegetables more conveniently, he rented two rooms in the county this spring and rarely came home.

At this moment, only one room in the house was lit.

Li Guangyuan's eyes darkened a bit.

If Li Dongmei had come back, the house shouldn't be this quiet.

As he parked his bicycle in the yard, Old Mrs. Li heard the noise and came out.

Seeing Li Guangyuan in the yard, she immediately began to scold.

"You brat, you still know to come home? I thought you were dead out there and wouldn't return, you ungrateful thing. I raised you all with my own hands, and each one of you stays far away, leaving me as an old lady with no one to care. Aren't you afraid of being struck by lightning for your unfilialness?"

Seeing his mother like this, Li Guangyuan was even more certain that Li Dongmei hadn't returned.

The uneasy feeling in his heart grew stronger.

He took out 20 Yuan from his pocket for Old Mrs. Li, his voice showing no emotion.

"If I don't earn money selling vegetables outside, how will I support you? You know the family's money was all taken by the second sister. If I weren't selling vegetables tirelessly outside, you wouldn't even have money for healthcare. The ones truly neglecting you are the two sisters, not me."

Mentioning the two daughters, it was like touching the old lady's heartstring.

She slapped away the money handed to her, scolding, "You heartless one, dare to blame your sisters? If you were capable, would your sister be mistreated by her husband's family? Would Hongmei have gone missing? You dragged down my two good daughters, and now you still hope for them? If I could depend on my daughters, why would I need a son like you? Look at other families; do they expect daughters to support the elderly? Are you, as the son, dead?"

Chapter 740: Gone

Old Mrs. Li fell sick last year, and after recovering, she seemed to have aged several years at once.

She was feeble, and even shouting left her breathless.

Li Guangyuan ignored her and went straight into the house.

There was only a kerosene lamp inside the house.

Although the village had electricity over the years, during the busy farming season, crops needed electricity for irrigation, so to ensure agricultural production, the electricity for lighting would occasionally get cut off at night.

Tonight, the family had a power outage.

Old Mrs. Li had lived through poverty since she was young, so even when she asked Li Guangyuan for spending money, she didn't dare spend it easily.

With just one kerosene lamp in the house, she didn't even dare to turn up the wick.

The faint light barely illuminated the area close to the lamp.

There was no one else in the house.

Li Guangyuan entered the house and immediately found a needle to adjust the lamp wick.

Old Mrs. Li, behind him, picked up the 20 yuan bill she had dropped, not forgetting to do so before catching up to him.

She hastily wrapped it in a handkerchief and then tucked it into a pocket sewn inside her pants.

Seeing her come in, Li Guangyuan straightforwardly said, "The Zhang family came looking for me at the market today. They said the second sister went back home early yesterday morning. What's going on? Where did the second sister go?"

Old Mrs. Li was slightly taken aback on hearing this and replied evasively, "What are you asking me for? Your second sister married into the Zhang family just fine, and now she's missing. Instead of asking the Zhang family to produce her, you come home to question me. How would I know where your second sister went?"

Saying this, she started crying pretentiously.

"Oh, my poor daughter, marrying that bastard Zhang Wenbin, what city folk? Bull crap, just pretending to be decent while bullying my daughter day and night. They deserve to be jailed forever, to spare my daughter from suffering..."

Though she cried with genuine emotion, Li Guangyuan didn't miss her initial guilty look.

"Mother, we are one family. I also want both of my sisters to live well."

Old Mrs. Li didn't believe him and shot him a dissatisfied glance, "If you really want them to live well, how did they end up like this? When you found such a match for your older sister back then, she couldn't even manage to live properly. Up to now, she's missing without a trace. And no need to mention your second sister. You knew she was having a hard time and were unwilling to help. Do you know what kind of life she's having in the Zhang family? And you still have the face to say you wish them well? I think you're only concerned about yourself, not leaving any room in your heart or eyes for us three..."

Old Mrs. Li began her irrational old talks again, and Li Guangyuan exercised patience to reason with her.

"Mother, be fair. Wasn't the Ma family a good match? Ma Dazhuang is diligent, hardworking, good-tempered. If Li Hongmei lived sincerely with him, how bad could their life be? I've heard Ma Dazhuang remarried, and they've become almost millionaires by raising pigs. Anyway, I was against my second sister marrying Zhang Wenbin from the start. But you and she insisted on marrying someone from the city, putting our family below them right from the start. Haven't I helped her enough all these years?"

"Fine, fine, it's all our fault, and you're blameless. So why do you even bother with us? Just stay in the city with that heartless wife of yours and never come back. I understand now. You've picked up her ways and no longer see anything but money. Even your son is dispensable, let alone your parents."

Mentioning the grandson truly grieved Old Mrs. Li. She clutched her chest and cried, "My poor little grandson, had I known they were so ruthless, I would never have let them keep him. He is the root of the Li Family..."

Zhang Wenbin was somewhat moved by her crying. Her favoritism toward her daughters was obvious, but the little grandson was genuinely dear to the old lady.

Otherwise, after Genbao went missing, the old lady wouldn't have fallen ill.

Since a young age, he knew that his parents had him after many years of marriage.

In terms of children, his mother was always more persistent.

That was why the loss of Genbao distressed her so much.

"Mother, please don't cry. I really am not disregarding you. As for my two sisters, I won't neglect them either. I came back this time to ask you for the truth. I still say, we are family. If my sister has truly disappeared without a word, I definitely need to report to the police for them to help find her and hold the Zhang family accountable. But if she has returned and you are hiding something from me, then an investigation by the police..."

He didn't need to finish the sentence for Old Mrs. Li to panic.

"It's just a small matter. Go and settle it with the Zhang family. Why take it to the police?"

Li Guangyuan answered seriously, "The older sister has been missing for so long, and people say she might have been abducted by traffickers. It's difficult to find her again. I can't let both sisters vanish without a trace. I must find the second sister. Since you don't know, I'll report it to the police."

With that said, he turned to leave, but Old Mrs. Li grabbed him.

"Don't go yet."

Li Guangyuan turned to her, and Old Mrs. Li, unnaturally, brushed her hair.

"Your second sister wanted to divorce Zhang Wenbin for a long time. You know the Zhang family never treated her right. And with Zhang Wenbin imprisoned, they watched her like a hawk, let alone allowed a divorce. Life in the Zhang family wasn't bearable. Yesterday, your sister came home and told me she was leaving."

"Leaving? To where?"

Li Guangyuan thought Li Dongmei might hide at home for a few days, but he never expected she'd just leave directly.

"I don't know where she went, but I heard there's a place down south where she can earn a lot of money. As for the child, he's the Zhang family's; she shouldn't take him. How would she remarry otherwise?"

Li Guangyuan furrowed his brows even more, "Did she leave just by hearsay? That's reckless. Money isn't so easy to earn. A lone woman traveling far, unfamiliar with the place, aren't you afraid she'll get abducted or cheated?"

The older sister, Li Hongmei, has already vanished without a trace. If the second sister also went missing, the Li family's reputation would be utterly ruined.

Old Mrs. Li looked around conspiratorially and whispered, "Your second sister isn't really alone in an unfamiliar place. Your older sister Hongmei sent news to her. She wrote telling your second sister she made a lot of money over there, and had her come along. Otherwise, how would your timid sister dare?"

This time, Li Guangyuan was even more shocked, "Hongmei has news? Where is she? If she can write to my second sister, why can't she send a letter home? No matter what, after all these years, she should come back to visit. Where is she? Tell me, and I'll find her."