

Back To The 80s: President's Doted Wife

Chapter 16: Chapter 16: Saving Face

A night passed without word, and Cheng Su thought she'd be unable to sleep with a "stranger" beside her, but that wasn't the case; she fell asleep and when she awoke, the sky was already light.

Touching the space next to her, she found it cool and couldn't help sitting up.

Had he risen so early? Or had he already left?

Cheng Su's brows furrowed slightly, feeling somewhat melancholy for some reason.

It was strange; she wasn't familiar with Qi Taiguo, even though they were legally husband and wife. To her, he was still a stranger. Yet, she had managed to sleep peacefully through the night.

Could it be because it's someone else's body with her memories inherited?

As Cheng Su pondered wildly, she heard voices outside the room, seemingly Mother Qi and Qi Taiguo. Her heart jolted, and she hurriedly got dressed.

Stepping outside, indeed it was the two of them, Qi Taiguo wearing only a pair of shorts, his upper body bare, bringing up a bucket of cold water from the well and dousing himself with it.

Mother Qi was nagging at him, saying something about the well water being icy cold and how it wasn't good to drench himself with cold water so early in the morning, and so on.

Qi Taiguo said he was used to it, that he had done the same after training in the military. It seemed he had gone for training early in the morning!

Seeing Cheng Su appear, Qi Taiguo looked at her unfavorably and huffed.

Mother Qi also saw her daughter-in-law and hurriedly said, "Go quickly and make breakfast. Taiguo has to eat and then return to the military. You can go back to your family later today for the home visit!"

That's right, today was Cheng Su's day to return home, three days after her marriage.

It was rather pitiable; married to a military man, even her return home had to be done alone.

A trace of sadness flitted across Cheng Su's face.

Qi Taiguo said, "I'll leave in the afternoon, no need for breakfast. Get ready, and let's head back to your home!"

Cheng Su was startled and looked toward Qi Taiguo.

Mother Qi was also surprised and said, "Didn't you say you had to go back early this morning? Will it be okay if you're late?"

"It's fine, I have a three-day leave anyway. It's okay if I go back later," Qi Taiguo replied indifferently. "Mom, you should prepare the gifts for the return visit too. She doesn't understand any of this, so it's to avoid any issues with proper conduct."

Mother Qi felt slighted, but she knew her son was right. Even the old man had mentioned in private the night before that the gifts for the daughter-in-law's return visit should be well-prepared, to avoid criticism.

Now that the two families were linked by marriage, no matter how reluctant she felt inside, she had to ensure things looked good on the surface. Otherwise, it would make them the laugh of the town, suggesting the Qi family lacked manners and that even Taiguo's reputation wouldn't be favorable.

Since it concerned the reputation of her family and her son, Mother Qi naturally wouldn't refuse and so went to get things ready.

Cheng Suxin felt content; this man did have some redeeming qualities.

"Don't get too pleased," Qi Taiguo snorted. "Accompanying the wife on her return visit is a matter of protocol. I just don't want others to look down on the Qi family or on me, Qi Taiguo."

In fact, as a soldier, if there was any urgent mission, forget the return visit, he'd have to skip even the wedding ceremony and prioritize the country.

So if he truly didn't accompany Cheng Su on her return visit, they could have made an excuse for it.

But just now, upon seeing the fleeting sadness on Cheng Su's face, he impulsively said he would accompany her back.

How he regretted it, what was he thinking this early morning? Just last night, she was on guard as if she saw a lecher!

Qi Taiguo, annoyed, picked up the bucket and threw it harshly back into the well, drawing another bucket of water to drench himself, as if only by doing so could he conceal the barely visible irritation.

Cheng Su said with a smile, "I'm quite happy, thank you," valuing her face.

Qi Taiguo was taken aback as he watched her return inside, feeling an unexpected slight easing in his heart. The corners of his mouth twitched up, but as soon as he noticed his own reaction, he huffed again.

Chapter 17: Chapter 17: Returning Home

Cheng Su's parental home was in Myrica Rubra Village, just next to Huangtian Village. A fifteen-minute walk was all it took to get there.

Wearing a new red dress, Cheng Su, following the original host's memories, led Qi Taiguo, who was carrying gifts for the return visit, unevenly back to her maternal home.

Upon entering the village, people who saw them knew they were making a return visit and curiously sized them up, their gazes lingering on Cheng Su.

When a bride gets married, those from well-off families usually give her some gold ornaments or heirlooms to bring back to her parents' home. Brides would wear them openly for all to see, a matter of pride for both the bride and her in-laws.

The Qi family wasn't particularly wealthy, but they had given Cheng Su a gold ring and a pair of silver bracelets to wear, which looked quite nice.

Cheng Su found it amusing and didn't mind the looks from others; after all, it was common practice and there was no loss to be seen from it.

The Cheng family's home was constructed similarly to the Qi family's but housed fewer people, consisting only of a large main house with a spacious courtyard. Next to the door, there was also a pigsty housing two plump pigs shuffling around inside.

Cheng Su pushed the gate open and was about to shout when someone came out from the house carrying a plastic bucket.

She was dressed in a floral cotton shirt with a pair of dusty grey trousers, wearing slippers, her hair curled up in a bun. Her robust figure could only belong to Mother Cheng.

"Mom!" Cheng Su blurted out instinctively, and she felt surprised at how natural it felt, without the slightest discomfort.

Mother Cheng looked up upon hearing the call, "Oh, Susu and my son-in-law are back already?"

"Mother-in-law," Qi Taiguo greeted.

"Ah, come in quickly." Mother Cheng replied with a smile, then asked, "I thought you wouldn't come until lunchtime, why so early? Have a seat first; I'll just feed these pig feed to the pigs. Your dad, our daughter has come back on her return visit!"

Father Cheng, hearing the commotion, also came out from the house. Seeing the two, he smiled warmly, "You've come back so early, come on in."

"Father-in-law." Qi Taiguo greeted Father Cheng, then set down their things and explained, "I need to return to the army this afternoon, so we came over early. We'll have to leave after lunch!"

"I see. Then let your mother-in-law cook lunch a little early. You and I can have a few drinks, and we'll call your third uncle over too."

"Yes!"

Once inside, Cheng Su and her husband put down their belongings and looked around the room, which wasn't much different from other homes—a square table, a big red cabinet, portraits of Grandpa Mao on the wall, and a tea caddy with the inscription 'Serve the People.' The room was partitioned into four, plus one for the household gods.

However, the cleanliness left much to be desired. Dust was everywhere, suggesting Mother Cheng didn't clean often. There were also scraps of firecracker paper lying around, probably leftovers from yesterday's wedding celebration that hadn't been picked up, along with various items still scattered in the yard.

Father Cheng casually made some tea and invited the couple to drink. Not long after, Mother Cheng came in, drying her hands on her apron.

According to tradition, the couple knelt and offered tea to her parents, and only then did they sit down to talk.

Cheng Zhi, Cheng Su's only younger brother, also came out of his room yawning and greeted them. Cheng Su gave him a red envelope, and then Father Cheng sent him off to call the third uncle and others to keep them company.

Cheng Su chatted for a while before heading to her own room, guided by her memories.

The room was typical of a young girl's, with posters of various stars, a mosquito net covered with dust, and a wardrobe draped with a layer of dust too.

She looked around, from outside to in. Within the wardrobe hid her diary. She flipped through it, finding entries full of youthful infatuation, mostly about Qi Taiguo.

The original host, though sharp-tongued, must have been quite fond of Qi Taiguo; otherwise, she wouldn't have pushed to marry early, dropping out of high school. But she was not skilled in expressing or nurturing love, only in possessiveness, leading to many misunderstandings.

Chapter 18: Chapter 18: Biological Mother

The bride and her husband returned to her parental home, and they were accompanied by her brothers and male relatives. The Cheng family had few members; Father Cheng only had one younger brother in his generation. Before him, there was an elder sister who was mentally disabled and had died young after falling into the river as a child.

In Cheng Su's generation, there was only her and her brother in the family. Her third uncle had a pair of twin brothers, not much younger than Cheng Zhi.

Now, they had all been called to the Cheng family home, and Third Aunt also came over to help make lunch.

The women were busy talking and working in the kitchen, while the men gathered in the main room. Mother Cheng first pulled Cheng Su aside to have a private conversation, even asking about the marital affairs, causing Cheng Su, who lived in an open era herself, to blush with embarrassment.

"Mom, you're asking too many questions," she said in annoyance.

Seeing her daughter's red face, Mother Cheng pinched her teasingly and mocked, "Oh, you're blushing? Weren't you the one who was so eager to get married? Why are you embarrassed now? What were you doing earlier?"

Uh...

How was Cheng Su supposed to respond to that? Could she say she wasn't really her daughter? But looking at Mother Cheng's face, she couldn't bring herself to say it.

In her previous life, Cheng Su was an orphan and didn't even know what her biological mother looked like. Now she had Mother Cheng, who wasn't her real mother, but the body's mother. Seeing the lady's teasing smile, she felt an unusual sense of affection.

It was as though her mother was supposed to be just like that.

So now, hearing her mother tease her, she couldn't bring herself to get angry.

Thankfully, Third Aunt came to her rescue, saying, "Sister-in-law, stop teasing her. A newlywed young lady is still shy!"

Mother Cheng snorted lightly, then asked, "Is Taiguo going back to the army this afternoon?"

Cheng Su nodded.

"And you? Have you packed your things?" In Mother Cheng's eyes, it was natural for a daughter to follow her husband and live with the army after getting married.

"I'm not going just yet!"

Mother Cheng was taken aback, "Why not? Is it Taiguo who doesn't want you to go? I'll talk to him." She was aware that her son-in-law was somewhat reluctant about the marriage.

"No, it's not that. I just don't want to go for the time being, I'd like to stay at my in-laws' house for a while before deciding," Cheng Su hurriedly explained.

"Are you silly? If you don't go to the army, how are you going to take care of his daily life? How are you supposed to have children? How can you nurture affections?" Mother Cheng strongly disagreed, saying, "Once you're married, you should prioritize your husband. As a wife, it's only right to follow and attend to his needs. Living together will strengthen your bond. Otherwise, when will he have time to come back? Can children just spring out of stones?"

After a moment's thought, she felt something was amiss and asked, "It's not your mother-in-law's idea, is it? Keeping you deliberately at your in-laws' house?"

Her barrage of questions left Cheng Su both amused and moved. This was how a mother was, always thinking of her daughter's well-being, and she couldn't help feeling a closeness.

"Listen to me, once you're married, you should live together. Now that Taiguo has tasted the joys of a woman, how can it be okay not to have his wife by his side? What if some 'Fox Spirit' catches his eye and lures him away? If that happens, you'll have something to cry about!" Mother Cheng continued, "Life in the army is good; you wouldn't have to deal with your mother-in-law's nagging. Are you being foolish?"

Well, that really took a turn.

Cheng Su quickly said, "Mom, you're overthinking it. Qi Taiguo is a soldier; he wouldn't mess around. I just don't want to go yet. I'm thinking of getting to know the Qi family a bit better first, to avoid people saying I left to enjoy my husband's company as soon as I got married without having done any housework for the in-laws."

She certainly couldn't say that she was afraid of sharing a room with Qi Taiguo and that was why she didn't want to go!

Chapter 19: Chapter 19: Being a Mom is Not Easy

Upon hearing what Cheng Su said, Mother Cheng's eyebrows knitted together. Although the words seemed to make sense, on the other hand, being married and living with one's husband is quite normal. Not to mention that Qi Taiguo is a military man who scarcely gets a holiday to come home. If they don't live together, when in the world would they be able to have a child?

Moreover, having children is what's important. Since ancient times, a woman gains confidence and secures her place in her husband's family only after giving birth to a son!

Now, although it's not the old times anymore, given Taiguo's military status, it's still sensible to have a son sooner rather than later.

"What you said is right, but it's not completely right. Your in-laws are still young, not at the age where they need you to take care of them at home. But what about Taiguo? Should a grown man have to wash his own clothes and cook for himself when he comes home from the military?" Mother Cheng said, "Let me tell you, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are natural enemies. If you stay in your hometown, it'll only lead to your mother-in-law's displeasure, which is not good for you. Out of sight, out of mind, you understand that principle, don't you?"

"I know, and it's not that I will never go there, just not for the time being. I have my own judgment!" Cheng Su replied, showing rare patience.

Third Aunt also spoke up, smiling, "That's right, sister-in-law, don't worry. Su Girl's idea is also correct. Staying home for a while before heading there, no one can find fault with that!"

Cheng Su looked at her with gratitude.

"But Su Girl, before you got married, didn't you clamor about staying with Qi Taiguo? Now that you are legally husband and wife, you're not in a hurry?" Third Aunt teased her, "Could it be that you're playing hard to get?"

This puzzled Mother Cheng too, who looked at Cheng Su with suspicion, "Right, before getting married, you were always talking about getting married every three days, and now that you're married, why aren't you following Taiguo?"

Cheng Su coughed and touched her nose, thinking to herself that of course it was because she had become a different person, this Cheng Su was not the same as the other Cheng Su!

Of course, these were thoughts she could not voice out loud. Cheng Su smiled and said, "Third Aunt is right, I'm just playing hard to get. You see, the more anxious you are about someone, the more they take you for granted. On the other hand, if you are indifferent, they start to get anxious!"

What a skewed theory. Mother Cheng scoffed lightly and said, "Just go ahead and play your games, but Taiguo's temper, can it really tolerate your antics? Be careful not to end up crying!"

Cheng Su shrugged her shoulders.

She wasn't really concerned. After all, relationships are about give and take. If they get along, they stay together; if not, they part ways. She had made an effort, and if it still turned out that they were not destined to be together, then it was what the heavens had decreed.

"Your mother has a point, Su Girl. You've always been sharp and competitive by nature. But as the old saying goes, 'Softness overcomes hardness.' Now that you're married, you're an adult and you need to learn to temper your own character, not to wear out someone's patience!" Third Aunt advised softly.

This was Third Aunt's heartfelt concern for Cheng Su. Cheng Su was not unappreciative and responded with a smile, "Third Aunt, I understand, don't worry!"

"Exactly, getting married means you're an adult now, and you've become sensible!" Aunt Cheng smiled with relief.

Cheng Su bowed her head with a suppressed smile, offering no explanation.

However, Mother Cheng, seeing her demeanor, said, "I see she's good at pretending and acting all earnest." She then seasoned the just-fried peanuts, which had already cooled down somewhat, with salt and handed them to Cheng Su, "Take them up front. I reckon the men have started drinking; give them something to snack on with their liquor!"

Cheng Su cheerfully accepted and carried the peanuts out.

Mother Cheng sighed.

"Sister-in-law, you shouldn't worry. I think she really is beginning to understand," Third Aunt said reassuringly.

Mother Cheng replied, "Sigh, being a parent's daughter and being a parent's daughter-in-law are ultimately different. Her temper worries me. But let's just wait and see. Life is lived one's own way. Only if she stumbles will she learn what's good and bad!"

Aunt Cheng smiled quietly. Having a daughter is just like this; even after she gets married, the mother still worries. This is the difficulty of being a mother.

Chapter 20: Chapter 20 Farewell

After having lunch at the Cheng family, Qi Taiguo, reeking of alcohol, and Cheng Su returned from her parents' home. He sipped some tea and, glancing at the time, which was about right, he picked up his bag to head to the road at the village entrance and take a bus back to the troops in Qing City.

"Let me help you with that," Cheng Su offered eagerly as she reached for his luggage bag.

Qi Taiguo cast a fleeting look that held an indescribable weariness. She seemed eager, almost as if she couldn't wait for him to leave so he wouldn't be in the way.

Hmph, she'd better not regret this!

"No need," Qi Taiguo took back his bag.

"Taiguo, this is all smoked meat. Take it all back with you. When you have time, you can steam some for a treat," Mother Qi, carrying a bag full of things, ran out and stuffed it into Qi Taiguo's hands.

"Mom, keep it for yourselves. I'm alone, I don't usually cook, mostly I eat in the canteen, and I don't have the time to make these things," Qi Taiguo was reluctant to take them.

He knew that at home they didn't eat meat every day, and the meals couldn't compare to those at the military base. To ensure the soldiers' physical strength, the base's meals, although not extravagant with fish and meat, always included some meat, necessary for the intense training they faced.

"You could make it as a midnight snack sometimes!" Mother Qi insisted he take it.

Having no choice, Qi Taiguo took it.

"Taiguo's wife, why don't you accompany Taiguo back to his military base? He has a dormitory, and you two could have a place to be together," Father Qi said to Cheng Su.

Mother Qi frowned slightly upon hearing this.

Qi Taiguo looked over.

Cheng Suxin's heart skipped a beat, and she smiled. "Dad, I'm not in a hurry. I just married into the family. It won't be too late to spend a few days at home to show respect to you and Mother-in-law before I go!"

"Good girl, we're not so old that we need your care. It's Taiguo, he's on his own, with no one to wash clothes or cook for him, that's what we're worried about!" Cheng Su's sweet words made Father Qi happy; he felt that his daughter-in-law had become much more obedient than before.

Indeed, people truly grow up after getting married.

"It's fine, I'll go after a few days," Cheng Su stood her ground.

Listening, Qi Taiguo felt frustrated. Cheng Su's attitude was as if he was the one begging her to come, so he said, "Dad, Mom, it's also good if she stays here to look after you both, you can enjoy yourselves. I need to go now, otherwise, I'll miss the bus and have to wait another two or three hours."

The buses from Huangtian Village to Qing City, which only passed three or four times a day, required a long wait if missed. And the journey back took six hours. If the roads were in poor condition, it could take even longer!

Father Qi was aware of this and didn't persist. He wanted to see his son off himself, but then, casting a glance at his daughter-in-law, he hoped for the couple to have some time together, so he said to Cheng Su, "That's fine then, Taiguo's wife, you go send Taiguo off!"

"Alright!"

Qi Taiguo snorted and strode away.

Mother Qi felt sad at the thought of parting and wanted to accompany her son a bit of the way, but her old man grabbed her. She protested, "What are you doing?"

"Where are you going?"

"To send off Taiguo, of course! Now that he's leaving, who knows when he'll be able to come back," Mother Qi said irritably.

Father Qi replied, "He's grown up, he doesn't need you to see him off. Alright, the daughter-in-law sending him is enough," he said. "Let the two of them talk."

A sour feeling rose in Mother Qi's heart: "How can she compare to me? I am Taiguo's mother!" After all, her eldest son wasn't the type to forsake his mother for his wife.

But looking around and finding that the pair had vanished, she wiped the corners of her eyes and returned to the house, feeling annoyed.

