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Chapter 174: The Bitter Platoon Leader Chen

Cheng Su lived in the same building, one stairway to their apartment, which was warm and cozy. But next door, it was as cold as early spring, and the male homeowner had stormed out, his whereabouts unknown. The wide-open door seemed to be telling some sort of joke.

And where was Chen Shouwang at this time? After leaving home, he had boarded a bus, headed out of town. When the bus reached the terminal station, he looked around. He was in the suburbs of Qing City.

His stomach growled with hunger, rumbling nonstop. Chen Shouwang touched his belly and gave a bitter smile. Was this what they called reaping what one sows?

Walking in the suburban town, which was very small, he wandered aimlessly. Suddenly, an appetizing scent caught his attention. He looked up to see a flag with the word "Tavern" fluttering in the breeze. The scent was coming from this tavern.

Chen Shouwang walked in. There was no one around except for a few small tables. He sat down and called out, "Boss."

"Ah, coming." A woman's voice answered. Soon, someone emerged from the kitchen behind the cloth curtain—a young woman in her thirties, wearing dusty pants and a red long-sleeved floral shirt, with short hair. The orange light shone on her face, casting a soft glow.

Chen Shouwang suddenly felt a sense of peace settle in his heart. He asked, "Do you serve food here?"

The woman seemed surprised for a moment but then smiled and said, "Yes."

"Just stir-fry one dish, and also..." Chen Shouwang glanced at the shelf behind the cash register and pointed, "bring a bottle of 'Laobai Gan' liquor."

The woman acknowledged with an "All right" and brought over the Laobai Gan, placing it on the table, and also fetched a glass. She then went back to the kitchen to get busy.

Chen Shouwang unscrewed the bottle cap, filled a shot glass to the brim, and without regard for his empty stomach, poured the entire glass of strong liquor down his throat. The spicy alcohol scorched his throat, seemingly taking away some of the bitterness in his heart.

He poured himself another full glass and downed it, then grasped the empty glass, lost in thought, growing bitterer as he pondered.

When he first got together with Hualing, everyone said he had married above his station, taking as his wife the daughter of an official, saving himself at least thirty years of struggle. Because of this, her family's sense of superiority always loomed above him, while his own parents couldn't even hold their heads up high.

Of course, he knew that he had a family, his own little home, but did starting a family mean he had to forsake his own parents who raised him, abandon his younger siblings?

Why couldn't Hualing understand at all? He always yielded to her, accommodating her in every way, fulfilling whatever she wanted if it was within his means. Why couldn't she be satisfied? Why couldn't she try to understand him?

Now, just because he said this month's allowance wouldn't be handed over, she had flown into a rage, causing a scene, hurling harsh words at him. Why was she so willful and thoughtless?

Chen Shouwang's heart was filled with bitterness, and he poured another glass of liquor.

The tavern owner had brought out the meal. Chen Shouwang had already finished more than half a bottle of Laobai Gan. She exclaimed in surprise, "You're drinking too fast. Take care not to get drunk. Eat something first to line your stomach, okay?"

The fragrant meal was placed on the table, the aroma assailing his nostrils, steam rising. Chen Shouwang picked up his chopsticks, his face flushed red, his eyes somewhat blurred from the vapors.

"Drinking on an empty stomach can really harm your stomach. Have a cup of hot water first, then eat something, and drink slowly. My tavern isn't closing just yet," the woman said, rising to pour him a cup of hot water and placed it beside Chen Shouwang.

The warm water heated his palms. Chen Shouwang looked up, gazing at the woman's gentle face across from him, his eyes reddening. He muttered, "Why can't she be like you, why can't she understand me?"