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Chapter 318: Ripples

Chen Shouwang returned home, and hearing the laughter and conversation coming from next door at Qi Taiguo's, he glanced at his own pitch-black, deserted room. He turned on the lights, saw the mess all around, and felt an increasing irritation within.

He closed the door again, left the compound, got in and out of his car, and found himself back at that little bar.

The weather in October was already quite cold, with the biting wind blowing. Chen Shouwang sneezed, wrapped his trench coat tighter, and rubbed his hands as he entered the bar.

At this time, there was only one table of customers in the small bar, a pair of youngsters, and they too were settling their bill to leave.

The bar owner, Liu Li, noticed him and instinctively glanced at the clock above her cash register. It was already eight in the evening.

Ever since Chen Shouwang had inadvertently come here for a night of drinking and passed out, he had returned twice, and the two of them had become quite familiar.

This little bar used to be run by Liu Li's husband, Liu Jun, who died in a car accident, leaving Liu Li a widow, raising their three-year-old daughter.

Liu Li also knew that Chen Shouwang was in the military district of Qing City, a soldier, and also a platoon leader.

"The weather's cold and it's so late, what brings you here at this time?" Liu Li, having seen off the customers, approached Chen Shouwang and asked with a light smile, "Have you eaten?"

Hearing this gentle question, Chen Shouwang's heart felt both sore and warmed, and he absently shook his head.

Liu Li poured him a cup of tea, and then she headed into the kitchen to start cooking with the gas on.

Listening to the sounds from the kitchen and smelling the fragrant aroma of the food, his chilled heart gradually warmed. Gazing at the dim light, his eyes felt slightly hot.

Hualing had been back to her parents' home for three days now. Since the day she made a fuss about getting a divorce, for the first time, he did not panic or fret, nor did he try to coax her; he simply argued with her.

After a whole night of arguing, Hualing packed up her things and said she was going to her parent's house. He didn't stop her, and these past few days, he didn't go to coax or to fetch her.

He knew Hualing was waiting for him to capitulate, but he just didn't want to grovel again.

He was really feeling a bit tired!

Liu Li brought out the cooked dishes and placed them before Chen Shouwang, one vegetable, and one meat dish, the rice piled up steaming hot, making Chen Shouwang's nose tingle with the scent. Stiffly, he picked up the chopsticks, lifted his bowl, and started shoveling in the rice.

Liu Li brought over alcohol; unusual for her, this time she took out two cups, filling both to the brim for each of them.

"Is this because of a fight with your sister-in-law?" she asked first.

Having finished his now-empty bowl of rice, Chen Shouwang downed his drink in one gulp, looked at Liu Li's plain face, and murmured, "Why doesn't she understand me? She only knows how to demand this and that from me, to compare me to others. Where have I wronged her? For her, I even nearly destroyed my own future..."

Once he opened up, Chen Shouwang's grievances poured out to Liu Li like a stream of bitterness, alternating between tears and laughter, anger and exasperation, ending with tears staining his red eyes.

Liu Li sighed, "Big Brother Chen, these issues aren't that big, things will get better if you talk it out. I think your sister-in-law will understand. If you don't tell her, how will she know about your difficulties?"

Chen Shouwang scoffed, "Speaking out is just as useless, in the end, she still wants me to keep up with the Joneses. Now she wants a divorce, so be it, I've had enough!"

"You're speaking in anger. Think about the love you shared in the beginning. Is it worth it to be this troubled over some mundane possessions?" Liu Li sighed softly, "Big Brother Chen, treasure the one by your side. If she's gone, you won't have the chance to treasure her anymore!"

Chen Shouwang was startled and looked over, only to see her eyes were slightly moist, her gaze sorrowful, her face fragile. Ripples stirred within him.