

Back To The 80s: President's Doted Wife

Chapter 36: Chapter 36 Speaking Well of Her

The next day, Mother Qi arrived at the county hospital with a belly full of anger and started nagging as soon as she caught Qi Fenglian.

"...You haven't seen the way she cooks, she almost tips over the oil jar, that woman is such a spendthrift, has no idea how to run a household. We in Taiguo really drew the short straw by marrying her."

"And those eggs, I didn't even ask her to cook them, but she went ahead and fried up three all by herself. I was saving those for your postpartum care, and she, without asking, just used up three."

"Your father even says her food tastes good, pah! Anyone's food would taste good drowned in that much oil. Such a wasteful woman, she really doesn't know how to manage a home!"

Qi Fenglian weakly smiled and said, "Mom, don't be so hard on her. Everyone has their own way of cooking. If it has been eaten, then it's been eaten."

"No matter what the habit is, nobody uses oil like she does. I knew she was a big spender even before she married into our family. I've sneakily looked at the clothes in her wardrobe, they look expensive, who knows how much money she has spent," Mother Qi said with a face full of displeasure.

Qi Fenglian chuckled again, "Mom, you really misunderstood her. Which young lady doesn't like to dress up? Maybe she bought the clothes before she got married?"

"Even so, she spent it all on herself. Look at what she brought as a dowry when she married into our family, not a single decent item. Hmph, always talking about how glorious her ancestors were, bah, when the capitalists were being denounced fiercely, why didn't she mention that? In the end, she was just spoiled by her parents, always wasteful since she was young."

Qi Fenglian stayed silent and after a while, she said, "When I married, it was the same, not very glamorous either."

Mother Qi was taken aback by her remark, her face looked a little unpleasant, and she awkwardly said, "Back then, the family's circumstances weren't good, but it's better now, isn't it? Taiguo also gives you money from time to time, right?"

"Yes, so every family has its tough times. Mom, stop criticizing Taiguo's wife. Being a daughter-in-law is hard, and I didn't realize how hard it was until I was in that situation myself," Qi Fenglian said with a rueful smile.

"I'm just worried about your brother. Taiguo only has that little allowance, and if she doesn't economize, how can that money be enough for her lavish spending?"

Qi Fenglian propped herself up from the bed and said, "Mom, young people have their own world. Life will get better. Don't worry about it. Oh, they just got married. Why didn't she accompany Taiguo to the military base? Don't tell me you kept her here? Mom, you know Taiguo is always in the military, how often does he get to come home? If they keep living separately like this, when can you expect to hold a great-grandson?"

"It's not that I kept her here; she mentioned she'll go to Qing City in a few days," Mother Qi said, sounding frustrated. "If she goes and gives me a big, fat grandson, then it would all be worth it. Hey, she has a wide hip, she should be able to give birth easily, right?"

"Yes, yes, I think she's a lucky woman. She will surely give you a big, fat grandson," Qi Fenglian reassured her.

Mother Qi smiled from ear to ear, then suddenly felt something was amiss, and eyed her daughter skeptically: "Why are you suddenly speaking up for her today?"

"Am I?" Qi Fenglian looked down and fiddled with the quilt on her body, saying, "I'm just grateful to her, mom. You know, if it weren't for her, I might have died."

Mother Qi's smiling face froze: "Why bring up such things?"

Qi Fenglian's eyes reddened, "I just feel so resentful. How can people be so heartless? I've worked hard for their family for over a decade."

"Alright, alright, you're doing fine now, why talk about this? Careful Jisheng hears you when he comes back," Mother Qi consoled her. "You can't cry, you didn't rest well during your miscarriage, and if you don't take care now, you might end up with puerperal diseases. And stop crying or you might ruin your eyes later."

"Well, if he hears, he hears. Am I afraid of him?" Qi Fenglian wiped the corner of her eye.

Zhang Jisheng entered, smiling broadly, "The doctor said Baobao is doing well, she might be able to go home soon!"

"Amitabha, may the Bodhisattva protect us. We should really pray and give thanks when we get back," Mother Qi chanted a Buddhist phrase and shot her daughter a glare, prompting Qi Fenglian to start asking about her son.

Chapter 37: Chapter 37: Someone's Admirer

Summer days drew to a close at a snail's pace, with the sky still brightly lit at five or six in the afternoon. Her mother-in-law had gone to the hospital to see Elder Sister, and Cheng Su, with time to spare, wandered over to the fields.

In her past life, when she was a student, she busied herself with studies and working to pay tuition. After starting work, she scrambled to keep up with her job, only managing to take a long vacation abroad once a year. That was unlike this month, where she could stroll leisurely through the countryside.

It was now the time for the rice to ripen; in a few more days, the busy harvest season would begin. The rice stalks in the fields were heavy with mature grains, promising a bountiful harvest year.

As their lands lay to the north, they only grew one crop of rice a season. After the summer harvest, it would be time to plant wheat, which could be grown in two cycles, one in autumn and one in winter. Hence, many households consumed a lot of wheat.

The Qi family had saved quite a bit of old wheat flour. It was strange; despite having so much that they couldn't finish it, resulting in its stale taste that couldn't compare to that of fresh flour. Over time, it would even develop a musty old smell. She couldn't fathom why they stored so much wheat flour.

Toward dusk, with the sun slanting westward and the temperature lower than at midday, there were many people working in the fields. Wearing straw or bamboo hats, with their pant legs rolled up, chatting or laughing, and with black and yellow dogs running and barking playfully in the fields, the scene was a picture of serenity.

Cheng Su picked two pieces of foxtail grass by the roadside to play with, walking along and taking in the surrounding pastoral scenery, relishing the rare peace.

"Hey, Taiguo's wife." Two people carrying hoes approached her and stopped to greet her upon spotting Cheng Su.

Cheng Su didn't recognize the two, only knowing they were fellow villagers. She smiled and said, "Auntie, have you finished your work in the fields?"

The woman addressed as Auntie replied, "Yes!" thinking to herself that since marrying into Taiguo, the young woman had become much more polite than before, no wonder the villagers now said she had become sensible!

Cheng Su smiled faintly, sensing a resentful gaze directed at her. She couldn't help but look over to find a girl about seventeen or eighteen glaring at her with wide eyes.

When the girl noticed Cheng Su looking her way, she quickly lowered her head. Cheng Su raised an eyebrow and searched her mind swiftly but couldn't find any memory of the girl's existence.

"Why didn't you follow Taiguo to the military base?" the Auntie asked again.

"Oh, I'll be heading there in a few days," she replied.

"I see. Taiguo is very promising, so young and already a high-ranking officer. He's the pride of our village," the Auntie said with a mix of sigh and envy, looking deeply at Cheng Su. "You're lucky too, your father had high standards and foresight."

Cheng Su smiled silently, catching that her so-called cheap father had made a prudent choice by arranging her marriage early to Qi Taiguo. The Auntie's tone clearly wasn't devoid of envy, jealousy, or bitterness.

Seeing Cheng Su's indifferent demeanor, the Auntie likely found it uninteresting and moved on.

As the girl passed by Cheng Su, she muttered an offensive remark, "You brazen thing, what makes you think you're worthy of Taiguo bro? Pah!" And then she ran off quickly, as though afraid that Cheng Su might pounce and tear her apart.

Cheng Su's eyes narrowed.

By the sound of that indignant tone, was this girl one of Taiguo's admirers?

Indeed, Qi Taiguo was young and successful, with a bright future shining before him. Tall, handsome, and a tough military man; he drew the fancy of girls harboring dreams. Unfortunately for them, her father had swiftly claimed him for her.

Cheng Su pursed her lips and twirled the foxtail grass in her fingers, musing about her upcoming visit to Qing City. Wouldn't he be surprised?

Chapter 38: Chapter 38: Comparing People Can Kill

By the time the sun set, Cheng Su had returned from the fields to the Qi family's fenced compound, where Qi Family's Younger Sister and Father Qi were squatting by the well, busy with something.

Upon hearing footsteps, Qi Fengping looked up and shouted, "Where on earth have you been? It's almost dark and dinner isn't even cooked yet! A wife should be back on time to prepare dinner. Who are you expecting to serve you?"

Cheng Su's face darkened. No matter what her reputation was, nominally she was Qi Fengping's sister-in-law. It wasn't strange for her not to respect her, but Qi Fengping had no right to scold her, especially with such heart-piercing words.

"Fengping, what are you saying? She's your older sister-in-law; don't be so disrespectful." Father Qi spoke up to correct her before Cheng Su could retort.

Qi Fengping pursed her lips, "Dad, I would respect her if she acted more like an older sister-in-law!"

What older sister-in-law? The dramas that Cheng Su caused out of jealousy in the past had already made her the subject of ridicule in private, it was so embarrassing!

"Regardless of how I behave, I am still your sister-in-law. You'd better not attract criticism for disrespecting and being rude to your sister-in-law—it won't do you any good," said Cheng Su calmly.

"You, pssh, you're the one who's rude!" Qi Fengping couldn't contain her anger.

"Fengping!" Father Qi's face turned stern.

Seeing her father angered, Qi Fengping pursed her lips, threw down the knife in her hand, and said, "I won't kill this fish. Let my dear sister-in-law do it!"

With that, she ran into the house.

Only then did Cheng Su notice a plate of fish and couldn't help but ask, "Dad, where did these fish come from?"

"Your second uncle's pond was drained for cleaning today. The fish have gotten fat, and he gave us a few pounds. I was worried about them not surviving, so I decided to kill a few and dry them into fish jerky," Father Qi said with a simple smile.

The second uncle he referred to was his own brother, Qi Taiguo's second uncle from the same branch of the family.

"It's too hot these days; if it's not done properly, it might rot or become infested with worms," said Cheng Su, frowning. Such tasks as drying fish or meat are usually done in autumn or winter. In the heat of summer, one careless move could turn it all into stinky fish.

"No worries, just add more salt," he replied.

Cheng Su, hearing this, didn't feel it appropriate to say more. Looking around, she asked, "Has Mother not come back yet?"

"That's correct. I expect she'll be back soon," Father Qi said without looking up. "You go ahead and start cooking. Tonight, let's have one of these fish for a fresh taste."

"Okay, great. I'll make a braised fish for you, Dad. You can have a couple of drinks tonight," Cheng Su said cheerfully, then headed for the kitchen.

Father Qi raised his head, watching her figure vanish at the kitchen doorway. He smiled faintly and continued gutting the fish.

Cheng Su hadn't been so articulate before, nor as diligent, and as for cooking, this month she had tried many new recipes and made some quite delicious meals.

Seeing his daughter-in-law become more sensible than before her marriage made him very relieved, especially after his eldest daughter's difficult birth. His satisfaction with Cheng Su had risen a great deal.

He smiled, feeling less of the guilt he'd harbored inside. After all, when he had decided his son would marry her, the entire family was against it, especially Taiguo himself who, though silent, had internally blamed his father. There was no choice; they were poor back then.

As Cheng Su grew bolder over time and displayed jealousy, Father Qi felt somewhat uneasy and particularly felt he had shortchanged his son.

Now, seeing Cheng Su behaving sensibly and understandingly, he was somewhat reassured. After all, affection is built through interaction. With time, things would improve.

Thinking this, Father Qi's movements in gutting the fish became more brisk, and a smile crept onto his lips. With family harmony comes prosperity, and the Qi family's days would only get better.

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The fact that Qi Fenglian had nearly died during childbirth had been made known to Qi Taiguo by Mother Qi. It wasn't that she wanted to stir up trouble; it was out of anger upon seeing Fenglian's mother-in-law reluctant to even spare an extra egg to feed her daughter.

She's not a sick cat to be trifled with; her son Taiguo was a platoon leader. How dare the Zhang family treat her daughter poorly? She would have them pay dearly!

Therefore, Qi Taiguo learned of his eldest sister's perilous birth from Mother Qi and, furious, shattered a glass cup.

Being a military man, it was not easy for him to take leave at will, but he also had his times of rest. Qing City wasn't too far from Flower County, and it was just a matter of a few hours' journey.

He managed to find some time, informed his superior, swapped shifts with someone, and left the base after afternoon roll call to catch a bus back to Flower County.

The weather was sweltering. Cheng Su moved a chair with a backrest out into the courtyard, where she sat fanning herself with a large palm-leaf fan in one hand and resting the other behind her head. She gazed at the starry sky, her thoughts drifting far away.

The countryside was engulfed in silence, punctuated only by the distant barking of dogs, the croaking of frogs from the pond, and the chirping of insects, all mingling together.

What could the 21st century be like at this moment?

Cheng Su's eyes suddenly moistened.

Thrown into this era without any support, she didn't know whether she had offended Heaven or failed to do something right in a past life to be repaying debt this way?

Woof woof woof!

Not far away, a dog barked loudly, followed by the sound of heavy footsteps getting closer from afar.

It seemed they were headed towards the Qi family's direction. Cheng Su's train of thought was interrupted, and she became somewhat anxious.

Times had changed, and while people's lives had improved, the number of thieves and evildoers had also increased. It was best to be cautious.

She went to the door and peered in the direction of the footsteps. Indeed, there was a tall figure approaching.

As the figure drew closer, Cheng Su's heart rose to her throat, and she subconsciously grabbed the pole lying in front of the house.

There were no lights in the courtyard; only a dim light filtered out from inside the house. As the person neared, Cheng Su felt the silhouette seemed familiar.

"Who's there?"

When the person stood at the courtyard gate, Cheng Su couldn't help but ask out loud.

"Cheng Su?"

That voice?

Cheng Su dropped the pole in her hand and shouted, "Qi Taiguo, is that you?"

Qi Taiguo, familiar with the place, pushed open the courtyard gate and walked in. Cheng Su ran over, and with the help of the light, she exclaimed, "It really is you. Why are you back?"

Qi Taiguo, who hadn't expected Cheng Su to still be awake at this hour, replied, "Mom called me about my sister's issue, so I rushed back."

"It's so late, you can leave the army any time you want?" Knowing it was quite late, Cheng Su asked, "Haven't eaten yet, right? Want me to cook something for you?"

"Mhm."

"Who's that talking outside at this hour?" The lights in Mother Qi's room turned on, and she began to inquire, peeking out from beside the window.

"Mom, it's Qi Taiguo. He's come back!" Cheng Su called out loudly.

"Taiguo?"

"Mom, I'm back!" Qi Taiguo also called out eagerly.

"It really is Taiguo. His father, get up quickly, get up, Taiguo is back, get up." Mother Qi was overjoyed, asking through the window, "Why so late? Have you had dinner? Tell your wife to make something for you to eat. Eldest daughter-in-law, eldest daughter-in-law?"

"Mom, I'm here. I know, I'm going to make it right now." Cheng Su replied.

"Make extra, add more scallion, beat a couple of eggs." Mother Qi didn't forget to instruct.

There it was, her son was the most important. Usually, she would get scolded for eating an egg, but now, as soon as Qi Taiguo returned, she was told to use two eggs.

Comparing people can really kill you!

Cheng Su shook her head and quickly walked towards the kitchen.

The whole Qi family's lights were turned on again, shattering the tranquility of the small village.

Chapter 39: Chapter 39 I Don't Want To Deal With You

When Cheng Su brought a bowl of egg soup over to the main room, Father Qi and the others were telling Qi Taiguo about the incident with Qi Fenglian. Taiguo's entire face tensed up as he struggled to contain his rage.

"It was lucky your wife was decisive. Your elder sister and your nephew were saved because of her quick actions, otherwise..." Father Qi sighed before adding, "I told your mother not to mention it, but she insisted. Can you really manage to rush back here like this?"

"I don't have any vacation time either. I came home right after leaving the troops, and I have to return after seeing my elder sister tomorrow," Taiguo explained, his gaze softening as he spotted Cheng Su entering.

Dad said it was all thanks to her decisiveness!

"You didn't have to hurry back since your elder sister is fine now," Father Qi expressed his disapproval of Taiguo's actions.

"It's fine; I have a sense of measure!" Taiguo received the bowl of soup that Cheng Su passed to him. Feeling hungry, he wolfed down the food.

With the first taste, he paused slightly. Egg soup... so simple, yet why did it taste so good?

He glanced at Cheng Su. Had her cooking skills improved so much over the past month?

Seeing that it was the right moment, Father Qi said, "Eat and then go to sleep. You must be exhausted from rushing back like this." With that, he took his wife and returned to their room.

Mother Qi, concerned, reminded Cheng Su to make another bowl if Taiguo wasn't full enough.

At midnight, Taiguo and Cheng Su lay side by side in their marital bed, both staring at the ceiling, the atmosphere somewhat eerie.

Taiguo broke the silence, "It was fortunate that you were decisive enough to sign the papers, otherwise my elder sister might not have made it."

Who would've thought that the Zhang family could be so despicable, so cruel!

Apparently, his usual good temper had made them forget that his elder sister also had brothers to support her.

"In that situation, you would have made the same decision. Your mother said that the child was also born safely. It's better to avoid making more trouble. Don't go too far, to save my elder sister from losing face," Cheng Su said.

Taiguo scoffed, "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

"Are you going to visit your elder sister tomorrow then?" Cheng Su asked.

"Of course, I will," Taiguo nodded. That was the very reason he came back.

Besides, he was looking forward to having a 'proper talk' with Zhang Jisheng and his family!

Cheng Su uttered an "Oh," turned her body towards the wall, and said, "Then sleep. We have to get up early tomorrow, to avoid your mother saying anything."

Taiguo turned his head to look.

It was summer and hot, so they only had a thin quilt in their room, which was now draped over her waist, her curves tantalizing.

Taiguo swallowed hard and turned onto his side, resting his hand on her waist.

The body beneath his hand stiffened significantly, and she sat up abruptly, glaring at him.

Taken aback, Taiguo coughed and averted his gaze.

"What are you doing?" Full from eating, she hadn't entertained such thoughts.

"What do you think," Taiguo responded to Cheng Su's question, feeling somewhat dissatisfied. What else, wasn't it obvious?

They were husband and wife!

"You are my wife!" he stated.

Cheng Su inwardly groaned. They were legally married, and for Taiguo to want to be intimate was perfectly normal, especially since he was a robust young man.

But she couldn't!

Averting her gaze, Cheng Su said, "I... I don't want to!"

Taiguo was stunned, studying her with a heavy look.

What did she mean by not wanting to? She didn't want to sleep with him?

Grinding his teeth, Taiguo scoffed, "Is that right? Well, then, sleep!"

As a proud man, he lay down, back turned to her, annoyed by Cheng Su's pretense of virtue. Fine, let her play the virtuous one!

Cheng Su was inwardly distressed but determined to maintain her boundaries; without trust, she wouldn't sleep with him.

Looking at Taiguo's back, she said, "I'm... not ready yet, I'm sorry."

Taiguo didn't reply and closed his eyes.

Chapter 40: Chapter 40 Listening to the Jade Corner

A tentative attempt at seduction was rejected by Cheng Su. Even though the light had been put out, they both knew that neither of them was asleep.

Cheng Su turned her head to glance at Qi Taiguo, who was facing away from her, and scoffed softly. What was he angry about? Wasn't this sort of thing supposed to happen only when both parties were willing?

She had no feelings for him, so how could she sleep with him? Even if they were husband and wife, what did that matter? This wasn't ancient times, where she was obliged to fulfill the duties of a wife under pressure.

Besides, wasn't it the same for him? He had no feelings for her either, did he?

Thinking this, Cheng Su also turned her back to him and said, "The so-called joy of union requires mutual affection and willingness. Otherwise, it's just like animals releasing their instincts. Qi Taiguo, do you have feelings for me?"

Qi Taiguo opened his eyes but remained silent. However, in the darkness, his eyebrows were tightly furrowed.

Before long, he heard her speak again in a low murmur, as if whispering, "Let's wait until we both have feelings for each other."

His gaze was heavy, and soon enough, he heard her breathing evenly. He couldn't quite identify the taste in his heart, filled with gloom.

Outside the door, Mother Qi tiptoed away, returning to her own room.

She sat on the edge of the bed, irritated, and nudged her old man, muttering, "I think our hopes for a grandson are dashed. There's no sign of any activity from Taiguo's side. How long will we have to wait before we can hold a grandchild?"

Father Qi, roused twice by her nudging and already in a mood, heard this and sprang up from the bed, glaring at her, "What's gotten into you, eavesdropping on your son and daughter-in-law's bedroom at your age?"

Eavesdropping!

Mother Qi's face reddened, and she spat at him, "It's not like what you say, eavesdropping. I was just asking whether Taiguo is going to see Sister Feng tomorrow."

She wouldn't admit that she wanted to eavesdrop. Regrettably, there was not the slightest noise from Taiguo's room.

It really was strange. Taiguo was of an age full of youthful vigor. The two of them were newlyweds, after all. How could they restrain themselves?

"What time is it now? Still going to ask? Aren't you just making trouble for nothing? Our son isn't going anywhere; we can talk about it early tomorrow, can't we?" Father Qi was exasperated, "You always have to make a fuss over nothing; you don't even care that our son just got back from traveling. I don't think you're worried about him at all."

He was genuinely speechless. This old woman had no shame, even listening by the corner of her son and daughter-in-law's bedroom wall. He couldn't believe she would do such a thing.

"You old fart, are you sick of me or what? I haven't even gotten sick of you yet," Mother Qi, feeling a tightness in her chest from his words, reached out to pinch him, "If it weren't for your insistence on arranging this marriage with the Cheng family, Taiguo would have found someone he liked and gotten married by now. We'd have a grandson old enough to fetch soy sauce. Now look at this, he obviously doesn't like his wife!"

Father Qi dodged a couple of times and then lay back down, saying, "Alright, alright, keep dragging on old matters. Go to sleep now. I still have to go to the fields tomorrow!"

Mother Qi turned off the light and listened carefully again. In the deep of the night, the surroundings were silent except for the sounds of insects and frogs. She sighed and lay down sheepishly.

Meanwhile, Qi Taiguo had no idea that his mother had been there. He listened to the breathing behind him and turned over.

At some point, she had also changed her position. Now, with one hand beneath her head, she lay on her side facing him. Outside the window, moonlight poured in, and Qi Taiguo could see her clearly.

Wait until they both had feelings for each other?

What was her plan? Was she saying that without a heartfelt connection, he couldn't touch her?

Considering herself so high and mighty, he snorted and turned away to sleep, thinking let's see who could be more stubborn.