

Back To The 80s: President's Doted Wife

Chapter 46: Chapter 46 The Mysterious Old Man

Cheng Su steadied Old Master Ning as they returned to the third floor of the inpatient department, then waved goodbye.

Just now, the two of them had engaged in a philosophical discussion on the rooftop, finding common ground; so they simply found a shady spot and continued talking about the scenery which led to even deeper philosophical reflections.

In her previous life, Cheng Su had been a high-level executive at a five-star hotel. She had extensive experience and was a smooth talker, well-read, and a movie buff. She could effortlessly quote famous people, leaving Old Master Ning astonished, marveling that a twenty-year-old girl knew more than he did at sixty-six.

Cheng Su then realized that she might have been speaking too far ahead of her time. Seeing the sun beginning to set, and remembering that Qi Taiguo needed to hurry back to Qing City, she said it was time to leave.

Old Master Ning watched her leave, a rare smile appearing at the corner of his mouth. Suddenly someone rushed over and said, "Old Chief, we've finally found you. Where did you go?"

"Oh, I just went upstairs to take a walk, nothing serious," Old Master Ning said, with his hands behind his back.

"Your blood pressure has just stabilized; you can't wander off like that. What if you had fainted and we couldn't find you in time? What then?" the person said with concern as they supported him back to the ward.

"There's no point in lying in bed all day. Walking is good for the body," Old Master Ning said. "It's precisely this walking that makes you realize when it's time to let go!"

"Old Chief?"

"Send a telegram back to the Capital. We will return tomorrow. Keep it low-key and have the Propaganda Office draft a report. Once we're back, we'll send a telegram to announce my retirement," Old Master Ning stated calmly.

Hearing this, the man's eyes widened in shock. "Old Chief, you!"

Old Master Ning raised his hand, standing in front of the ward's window, and said, "Xiao Cao, I'm old and tired. The world now belongs to the younger generation. There's nothing wrong with making a timely withdrawal."

"But... "

"There are no 'buts.' The Ning Family can't rely solely on me forever. Ning Gang, Ning Li, and... a few other brothers, they all need to come into their own," Old Master Ning said with a stern face, no trace of the gentleness Cheng Su had seen but rather decisiveness. "They are the future hope of the Ning Family. Stepping back now will give them access to better resources."

Xiao Cao, identified as Cao Jinzheng, sighed and replied, "Understood. I know everything now."

Gazing out from the height, Old Master Ning's eyes swept over a tree-lined path in the hospital grounds and murmured, "The view from above is indeed beautiful, but after a while, even beauty tires the eye. And who knows when the people down below might reach out and pull you down? On solid ground, at least one stands steady."

Cao Jinzheng listened, vaguely comprehending.

All of a sudden, Old Master Ning's gaze sharpened. Huh, wasn't that Su Girl?

The man standing next to her, was he her husband?

Old Master Ning's eyes settled on Qi Taiguo. The man was tall, walked upright with a crew cut, and while his face wasn't clear at such a distance, his posture and demeanor suggested he was a respectable individual.

As Old Master Ning surveyed him, suddenly the man looked up, causing Old Master Ning to be momentarily startled.

So alert and perceptive, that gaze, sharp like an eagle's, that demeanor, rigid... it was...

A military man!

Su Girl's husband was a soldier?

Old Master Ning was quite surprised. Watching Cheng Su lead Qi Taiguo away, he withdrew his gaze and laid back down in the bed. What kind of fate was this?

He wondered which military district Su Girl's husband was serving in? Judging by that piercing look and the rigid and upright demeanor, he must be a promising young officer.

Old Master Ning's fingers began to lightly tap.

Chapter 47: Chapter 47: No Way to Divorce

Cheng Su saw Qi Taiguo standing still and reached out to pull him, "What are you looking at? Aren't we in a hurry?"

Qi Taiguo withdrew his gaze and said, "Nothing, I just felt like someone was watching us."

Cheng Su looked up and said, "Are you seeing things? Even if someone is looking, with all these people coming and going, they're looking at you?"

"Maybe I was mistaken!" Qi Taiguo followed her out of the hospital.

"You, always claiming to be so sure of yourself. You scared Jisheng so badly, he turned into a big old bear, all timid. I actually felt sorry for him cowering like that," Cheng Su couldn't help but comment.

When she returned to the maternity ward on the second floor, she saw Qi Taiguo at the corner grabbing Jisheng by the collar, glaring fiercely with anger pulsating in his bulging veins.

Poor Jisheng, already skinny and short, looked even more pitiful shaking like a baby chick as Qi Taiguo twisted his collar.

"He deserved it!" said Qi Taiguo with a stern face, "My sister was so good to him, so hardworking and dutiful. And him? When it really mattered, he abandoned her. I didn't beat him to death only because he's my sister's husband."

"You really hit him?" Cheng Su was surprised; she didn't see any injuries.

"I hit him where it doesn't show," Qi Taiguo said, as if he knew what she was thinking.

Cheng Su gave him a sly look, "That's enough. After all, my sister is still going to live with him. If they harbor grudges in their hearts, it'll only make her life all the more miserable."

Beating him might instill fear, but who knows whether it will foster more bitterness and resentment towards Fenglian, making their lives even harder.

After all, even if they support her, they can't quench a fire that is close with distant water.

"If it really comes to it, just divorce."

Cheng Su raised an eyebrow. His words were similar to what she'd said initially, so she laughed, "Telling her to divorce is like telling her to die." Seeing Qi Taiguo's incredulous

stare, she quickly added, "That's what your mom told me when I said it. So, you'd better make sure your mom doesn't hear this."

Qi Taiguo frowned, somewhat displeased. What's this 'your mom, my mom'? Did they really need to differentiate so clearly?

Somehow, he suddenly disliked the clear division between 'you' and 'me' in her speech, but he didn't say anything.

Qi Taiguo asked, "So you said that too?"

"Yes. Nowadays, who can't live without whom? The world keeps turning. What's the big deal with divorce? If you can't live together, then split up, everyone is the same," said Cheng Su, walking ahead without noticing that Qi Taiguo had stopped following.

"Women can hold up half the sky. If they get divorced, with hands and feet available, can't they earn a living?"

Suddenly, realizing there was no one by her side, she stopped and turned around, "Hey, why aren't you moving? Aren't we going back to Qing City?"

Qi Taiguo caught up, glaring at her. "So that's what you think too? If we can't get along, just get a divorce?" He remembered her talk of mutual love – what nonsense!

Cheng Su was taken aback.

"Is that so?" Qi Taiguo pressed with an intense gaze.

Cheng Su nodded, "If we can't live together, of course I'll divorce. Why would I cling to a stagnant pool?"

Hearing her speak so lightly, Qi Taiguo's face darkened, "I am a soldier, and there is no word for divorce in my vocabulary!"

With that, he strode forward. Thinking of divorcing him, no way!

Cheng Su watched his back, a bit baffled. What was he getting angry about? She hurriedly followed him, "Hey, wait for me, let's go together!"

She caught up and grabbed Qi Taiguo's arm. He shook her off. She grabbed again, he shook her off again, and again she reached for him. The two of them went on, pulling and tugging each other into the distance.

Chapter 48: Chapter 48 Ugly Words Said in Advance

The long journey by car was awkward for both of them, but it was Cheng Su who first opened up the conversation by asking about the arrangements for military spouses like Qi Taiguo.

Military spouses have varied roles, from raising children to finding work. Whatever they do, the goal is to reunite with their husbands and put an end to the pain of separation. If certain requirements are met, they can also receive a monthly allowance.

The army has a special residential compound for families, typical of the old houses from the seventies and eighties, with a large courtyard shaped like the character for "return."

Normally, soldiers stay at the barracks, and during rest periods, they return to live in the family compound. Qi Taiguo was no different, except he lived the life of a bachelor, without the warmth of a wife and children waiting at home.

However, this way of life was soon to come to an end with Cheng Su joining the military.

"The spouses in the compound are all right, but let me tell you, where there are lots of women, there's bound to be gossip. When you get there, be careful not to idle away your time gossiping in the women's group or causing trouble," Qi Taiguo said with a frown. "The rules in the family compound aren't as strict as in the army, but it's still under the military jurisdiction. If issues escalate, they will be dealt with by the organization, and that's not a good thing."

Cheng Su rolled her eyes. "Don't worry, that's not my thing." What was he thinking, seeing her in such a negative light? Didn't she have any redeeming qualities?

"Your father said you're going to look for work. What do you plan to do?" Qi Taiguo asked, thinking to himself if he should find someone to arrange a job for her.

But what was she suited for?

"I'll see when I get to Qing City. Previously in Flower County, I wanted to find hotel work, but... I'll figure it out after I arrive. You can't rush these things," Cheng Su said, not disclosing her plans to avoid his disdain. Plus, she wanted to familiarize herself with the pace of Qing City before making detailed plans.

Great endeavors require patience; she preferred to plan things gradually.

And yet some people just had an unpleasant way of speaking.

"I don't expect you to accomplish any grand feats, but I do expect you to keep the peace, keep your temper in check, and not cause any trouble. Otherwise, you can go straight back to your hometown!" Qi Taiguo laid it out bluntly.

Cheng Su bristled with anger, her tone sarcastic, "Why are you so certain I'm going to make trouble?"

Qi Taiguo looked at her with a half-smile, his eyes clearly suggesting, haven't you caused enough trouble before?

Cheng Su saw it all too clearly and scoffed, "People change, so why are you so sure I won't? Why are you convinced I'm the same as I used to be?"

The so-called old habits die hard.

Qi Taiguo wanted to use that phrase against her but held his tongue. She had indeed changed; before, she always clung to him, but now that they were married, she drew back, keeping her distance as if he were some plague or monster. She even talked about only being intimate when they both had feelings for each other!

It was just ridiculous!

Grinding his teeth, Qi Taiguo looked out of the window and said, "Anyway, I've said my piece!"

"Don't worry, I won't embarrass you," Cheng Su stubbornly decided, her pride setting in as she resolved to make sure Qi Taiguo would see her in a new light in the days to come.

She stopped talking and closed her eyes, silently criticizing the plan she had previously laid out, not wanting to speak further and give him the chance to make cutting remarks and spoil her mood.

Qi Taiguo glanced at her with the corner of his eye, then shifted his gaze to the passing scenery, feeling a faint sense of anticipation for the days

Chapter 49: Chapter 49: To the New Home

The journey was smooth, and Cheng Su followed Qi Taiguo off the bus and arrived at the military residential compound he had described. She didn't forget to quietly take in the surroundings and the traffic, as from today, she would be living in this city.

Just as Qi Taiguo had described, the military residential compound was a typical official compound named Goodwill Place No. 6 Courtyard. It was a square complex, with three-story buildings all around. There was a large courtyard in the middle with many bamboo poles and ropes attached, intended for the residents to hang laundry and enjoy the cool air, as the houses were built without balconies and only had small windowsills, which were inconvenient for drying clothes.

It was five o'clock in the evening when the two of them entered the courtyard and saw aunties and daughters-in-law looking over. They greeted Qi Taiguo warmly and naturally turned their attention to Cheng Su.

"This is my wife; she came over today," Qi Taiguo said with a smile as he introduced her.

Cheng Su matched his enthusiasm, smiling and waving to everyone, "Hello, everyone, my name is Cheng Su. Please take good care of me in the future!"

Her warmth was met with an equally warm response, as it was their first meeting. Everyone greeted her, affectionately calling her Sister-in-law Qi and even complimenting her with sweet words.

After the pleasantries, Qi Taiguo led her up the stairs.

Cheng Su's home was at the Southwest Ladder. Since Qi Taiguo held a higher position, they were allotted a separate two-bedroom, one-living-room unit of about fifty square meters. Most importantly, instead of sharing just one large room or a bedroom and a living room with others, and having communal kitchens, toilets, and shower rooms, their home had a private bathroom. However, the kitchen was still shared with everyone else.

Still, Cheng Su was very satisfied, especially when she saw the bathroom inside the house; she was so pleased she practically jumped for joy, glad to no longer endure the misery of pit latrines.

Moreover, she was well aware of the living conditions of the era; not having to share a bathroom with others was a blessing in itself.

She remembered visiting a colleague's home in her past life—it was in such a compound with shared bathrooms, completely lacking in privacy, and her colleague had even been spied on!

As Qi Taiguo had always lived alone, there wasn't much furniture in the house, just tables, chairs, some stools, and a few wooden cabinets.

The two bedrooms, one large and one small, with the smaller one only contained a modest bivouac bed.

Cheng Su's thoughts immediately sprang to life upon seeing this; it was perfect—there were two rooms, so they could sleep separately.

Anyway, although they were husband and wife, there was no love between them, and since they wouldn't be intimate, she thought of their living together more as roommates, close yet companions at a distance.

If they talked it over properly and set some clear rules, he would agree, wouldn't he? He was a proud man, after all.

Cheng Su glanced at Qi Taiguo, then looked out into the corridor outside their ladder.

Their section only had four households, separated by an iron door to form an individual unit. One of the units was still empty, while the others were already occupied. Hearing their arrival, the neighbors came out to see.

As Qi Taiguo introduced the wives of the households, Cheng Su got to know the neighbors named Chunhua and Guiying.

"I need to go back to the base for duty; you stay here by yourself. I won't return tonight. For dinner, I'll have someone bring it to you in a bit. Familiarize yourself with the surroundings for now," Qi Taiguo said after glancing at the small alarm clock in the room. He then asked Chunhua and the others to introduce Cheng Su to the compound and hurried back to the base for his shift.

Chapter 50: Chapter 50 First Arrival

Qi Taiguo had gone to the unit for his shift, and Cheng Su stayed home to familiarize herself with the new environment. She was led by two neighbors to see the kitchen on the other side, which belonged to her own home.

There was a separate gas stove that Qi Taiguo had arranged for. However, according to Chunhua and the others, he rarely cooked, usually getting his meals from the cafeteria. At most, he would make some midnight snacks, like cooking some noodles.

That's why the cooking condiments consisted of only a packet of salt, a small bottle of oil, and a bottle of soy sauce.

"Now that you're here, Sister-in-law Qi, I think this gas stove and the likes should start to be put to good use!" Chunhua said with a giggle, looking at Cheng Su.

Cheng Su offered a shy smile, glanced at the gas stove and a pot, and then surveyed the kitchen. It really wasn't much to speak well of. There was no exhaust hood—the walls were already coated with a greasy film from cooking, looking a bit dirty.

Looking further into the kitchen, there was a row of shower stalls and toilets, simply divided to the left and right from where the kitchen utensils were placed. Each small wooden door was painted red. Whether it was a shower stall or a toilet, none of them were entirely enclosed, meaning they were open at the top. If someone were to use the toilet while another was cooking...

She closed her eyes slightly, banishing that awkward image, but she knew reality did not allow for pickiness. After all, the times were such, and having a gas stove rather than needing to start a fire was a considerable luxury.

A good life needed to be created with one's own hands. If she wanted to live the life she yearned for, hard work and perseverance were necessary.

After exchanging pleasantries, Cheng Su returned to her quarters to take a good look around her new home, inside and out.

The bachelor life was nothing to compliment; dust was everywhere in the house. Fortunately, there wasn't much furniture. Since Qi Taiguo lived alone, it wasn't too chaotic—a good cleaning would suffice.

She was new here and not in a hurry. After scouting around inside and out, she finally sat down.

When it was around six o'clock, someone knocked on her door. Cheng Su went to open it and saw a young soldier smiling, lifting a metal lunchbox in his hand.

"Hello, Sister-in-law Qi. Commander Qi instructed me to bring you your meal," the soldier said.

"Thank you. What's your name?" Cheng Su took the lunchbox.

"Sister-in-law, just call me Xiao Zheng!" The soldier saluted and returned to his post.

After seeing him off, Cheng Su sat at the dining table and opened the lunchbox. There were two compartments: one with rice and the other with a dish.

In the army cafeteria, everyone ate from the big pot, with a mix of meat and vegetable dishes. Cheng Su tried a bite. As for the taste, well, it was passable, but certainly not as good as if she had made it herself.

Being new to the place, she had to make do for the time being. Moreover, since Qi Taiguo had always been single, the house didn't really have much in terms of groceries—just a few tubes of noodles and two eggs.

Even if she wanted to make something delicious for herself, she would need the right ingredients.

No rush. Life couldn't be settled all at once. She needed to adapt gradually.

While eating, Cheng Su looked around the room, pondering over the cleaning and tidying that needed to be done. Most importantly, now that she had arrived, the house

had to be improved. It couldn't continue like Qi Taiguo's bachelor days, lacking in everything.

Alright, since she was to be a cohabitant and close companion, it was only right to try and make their little home cozy.

After dinner, and with no entertainment available, Cheng Su simply began to clean and tidy up slowly, considering it as a form of post-dinner exercise. It wasn't until ten o'clock that she took a bath and went to bed.

Lying on the big bed, she stared at the canopy for a while, finding herself in yet another new environment. What kind of challenges and pleasures awaited her in the days to come?

After letting her thoughts wander for a while, Cheng Su fell into a deep sleep.