

The 80s 501

Chapter 501: Training My Lazy Wife to Death

"Time flies and people vanish, cherries turn red, plantains turn green." Cheng Su took a sip of her hot coffee, looking out at the vast expanse of white snow with a light sigh.

Pfft!

Annoyed, Cheng Su looked over and said, "Commander Qi, what's so funny?"

Qi Taiguo looked up from his aviation magazine and laughed, "I'm laughing at how literary you're trying to be. Has the person who's always focused on making money suddenly started to feel the melancholy of changing seasons?"

On this rare sunny winter day, Qi Taiguo was off duty and at home, so Cheng Su didn't go to the company or the restaurant either. She made a cup of coffee to enjoy the snowscape outside the window, and it was looking at the pristine snow that inspired her to recite that line.

"What's this about only focusing on money? Can't businesspeople be cultured too?" Cheng Su gave him a look and clicked her tongue in disapproval of his lack of romantic sentiment, letting go of her leisurely mindset to enjoy the scenery.

She finished her hot coffee in a few gulps and snatched the book from his hands, saying, "Stop reading. Let's take advantage of the good weather today. With the New Year approaching and only a few days left before we head back to the countryside, let's take down the quilts for washing and do a thorough cleaning!"

With the New Year just around the corner, they couldn't possibly wait until New Year's Eve to go back. For their small household in the countryside, preparations had to be made.

Qi Taiguo shrugged his shoulders and didn't say much. He followed her into the bedroom, stripped off the bedding to soak and wash in the bathroom, and took the cotton quilts and pillows down to the courtyard to beat them until they were fluffy and ready to air out.

It was cold outside, so Cheng Su started heating water to wash. Qi Taiguo said, "How many times will you need to heat the water? Forget it, I'll wash it."

Without waiting for Cheng Su to reply, he rolled up his sleeves and began to scrub the pillowcases, quilts, and sheets.

Cheng Su smiled and patted his head as if comforting a puppy, "Good job, you're really teachable. Our Commander Qi is finally coming around and helping his wife with housework."

Qi Taiguo replied, "Even before I married you, didn't I wash my own clothes? It's not a big deal."

"Just make sure you don't let it slip when you get home, or your mom will lecture me for being a lazy daughter-in-law," Cheng Su said.

Qi Taiguo looked up, "There you go talking about that again."

Cheng Su simply shrugged her shoulders.

"Hey, once we're done with the big clean-up, let's go shopping. I've already picked up some New Year's goods and prepared the couplets. We should also buy some nice new clothes for ourselves and some gifts to take back home."

Qi Taiguo set the washed bedding aside in a large tub and said, "Sure, we've got the time. But I don't need new clothes. You go ahead and buy. I mostly wear my uniform, and I don't have that many chances to wear anything else."

"You can't possibly go back for the New Year in your uniform, right?" Cheng Su was already pondering what clothes to buy for him and what gifts to take home.

As they joked and laughed, time quickly passed. Together, they washed the bedding and other items, then cleaned every nook and cranny of the house until everything was fresh and clean before sitting down to rest.

"Let's go eat at the restaurant; I'm too tired to cook lunch now. After we eat, we'll go shopping," Cheng Su suggested, glancing at the clock on the table and sinking into the couch, not wanting to budge.

Qi Taiguo was also tired. He hadn't expected housework to be more exhausting than training and said, "Whatever you say."

After sitting for a while, Cheng Su went to change clothes. As she came out, she heard a clatter as if things were being smashed.

Listening, it was coming from Chen Shouwang's house again.

"What's with those two, fighting every couple of days? With all this commotion, they aren't actually coming to blows, are they?" Hearing the quarreling, Cheng Su looked towards Qi Taiguo.

Chapter 502: Hualing Stirs Up Trouble Again

Qi Taiguo didn't want to meddle in other people's private affairs, but when he heard Cheng Su mention that hands were involved, he couldn't remain indifferent.

Squabbling is one thing, but getting physical is unacceptable, a grown man, how could he lay hands on a woman.

The ruckus from Chen Shouwang's family was loud, and since they lived on the same floor, not only did it alarm Cheng Su's family, but Chunhua's family was also disturbed.

Everyone gathered at Chen Shouwang's door, with Qi Taiguo leading the call.

"Old Chen, open the door, what can't you two discuss peacefully? Don't resort to violence!" Qi Taiguo knocked on the door and said.

Inside the door, there was a moment of silence, and then it was quickly opened; Chen Shouwang stood at the door with a sullen expression, "Nothing's the matter, just a small quarrel, we didn't get physical, sorry to have disturbed you all."

As he spoke, he was about to close the door.

"Old Chen, talk it out nicely, lay all the cards on the table. Look at the two of you, constantly fighting, what's the point of living like this as husband and wife?" Qi Taiguo frowned and said.

"That's right. Arguing is not like eating, doing it like this, the affection will all be gone." Chunhua, firmly holding her pregnant belly, also added a word.

Chen Shouwang managed a strained smile, "Alright, I know! It's not that I want to fight on purpose, she's just relentless."

These words were like poking a hornet's nest.

"Let everyone make a judgment." Hualing stormed out like the wind, pushed past Chen Shouwang, and said loudly, "See whether I want to argue or he does."

Chen Shouwang's expression changed slightly as he grabbed her hand, "Hualing, enough, let's go back and talk!"

Hualing shook off his hand and scoffed, "What, are you afraid now?"

Cheng Su watched coldly, thinking that Hualing must have crossed the line again. When couples argue, it's a taboo to spread their private affairs to outsiders.

"Hualing."

"What have I done? I am doing it for the sake of Old Chen's family. Isn't it just asking you to go to the hospital for a check-up? What are you so scared of?" Hualing stared back.

Chen Shouwang's complexion went from red to green, and then from green to purple, looking extremely ugly.

The bystanders were clueless, Qi Taiguo said, "Old Chen, where do you feel uncomfortable? If you feel unwell, you need to get checked out. Being unwilling to seek medical advice is not an option."

"I am not sick," squeezed out Chen Shouwang through clenched teeth, his eyes looking at Hualing as if they were poisoned.

Unyielding, Hualing met his gaze, "Whether there's a problem or not, only a doctor can decide."

"Enough!" Chen Shouwang yelled, winding up his hand as if to hit her.

Hualing's face went pale.

Qi Taiguo was quicker, blocking Chen Shouwang's hand, and Cheng Su pulled Hualing away.

"Old Chen, don't get physical!"

Hualing's face was white with fear, pointing at him and screaming, "You, you want to hit me? Chen Shouwang, you ungrateful wretch, you even want to hit me?"

Chen Shouwang, enraged and fearing she might become even more hysterical, tried to grab her hand.

Evading him, Hualing said, "Is it wrong that I want a child? We've been married for so long and don't have any kids. I've been checked by the doctors and they said there's no issue. I'm not saying you have a problem, just asking you to get checked as well. And not only do you pick fights with me, you even want to hit me? Waaah, I can't live like this anymore..."

There, with those words, everyone instantly understood.

Chen Shouwang's face turned an iron shade of blue. If he had been precariously standing on a cliff edge before, now, with Hualing's revelation, he was like a man stripped naked for all to scrutinize, to mock, and to judge with alienated gazes.

All sense of dignity and pride had gone!

Chen Shouwang felt as if he had plummeted into an abyss, bottomless and utterly shameful.

Chapter 503: Fertility Might Be An Issue

What is the one thing a man should never do?

It's to have others say he's not capable.

Although Hualing didn't say outright that Chen Shouwang was incapable, the implication in her words was clear—it had turned a non-issue into an issue.

The couple had been married for almost two years. They hadn't been using contraception, and the woman had been checked and found to have no issues. So what about the man?

Hualing suggested that Chen Shouwang should get a medical check-up, with good intentions—if there was an issue, addressing it promptly would be best.

However, this was not how Chen Shouwang saw it. He felt that Hualing was making trouble out of nothing, challenging his dignity, challenging his bottom line.

You see, for a man to undergo such an examination is tantamount to telling everyone he might have fertility issues, right?

This was something he could not accept!

Cheng Su quickly understood Chen Shouwang's psychology, thinking, are all men like this, or is it just that the male chauvinism of our times is so prevalent?

The majority of men do not wish to admit they could have fertility issues and refuse to get tested, opting to remain in denial of their health.

To her, it was a no-brainer—if the couple hadn’t taken precautions yet had no children, both the man and woman should have been tested long ago. Chen Shouwang’s resistance and insistence that he had no issues were really about pride.

Cheng Su did not look favorably on this aspect of Chen Shouwang, yet she also did not approve of Hualing’s making it public. After all, this was a very private matter; only the couple themselves needed to know. But since Hualing had let it slip, there was no going back.

With Hualing’s actions, it was as if she had trampled on Chen Shouwang’s dignity—a major taboo in marital disputes.

It must be said, Cheng Su had a very clear grasp of Chen Shouwang’s psyche.

Sitting in Cheng Su’s home, Chen Shouwang smoked, a bitter smile on his face, mingled with a hint of despair.

"I really can't live like this anymore," Chen Shouwang said. "She never once considered my feelings."

Qi Taiguo said, "You're being paranoid. What's wrong with getting a check-up? It's not a big deal."

Chen Shouwang sneered and glared at him, "Easy for you to say. If it were you, could you just casually go for a check-up? Isn't it just like stripping down and letting people examine you? How is it any different from saying I'm not capable, that I can't have children?"

Qi Taiguo sneered in return, "So just because of your pride, you won't go? If the tests show no issues, naturally that's good. But if there's a problem? It could be treated earlier, right? Without a check-up, how would you know what's going on? Are you confident things will just get better on their own?"

Chen Shouwang fell silent.

"This test is not only to ease her worries but also your own. Once you know what the issue is, you can come to terms with it earlier. If there's no problem with either of you, then just wait for the children to

come. If there is a problem, it can be treated, no? Or do you plan to wait until you can't ignore it anymore before dealing with it? That's just being willfully blind," said Qi Taiguo.

"There are plenty of couples who don't have any news for a few years after getting married," Chen Shouwang muttered.

"So what are you saying, that you don't want children anymore, just for the sake of this masculine pride?" Qi Taiguo looked at him, "What's the deal with you? When you first got Hualing, you were so proud and cherished her like a jewel. What's happening now? Fighting every other day, you may not be tired, but even us onlookers are exhausted. You need to think, if you're missing a child, might things be better with one?"

Chen Shouwang opened his mouth to speak, but under Qi Taiguo's stern gaze, he couldn't rebut a single word; he felt a little guilty.

Chapter 504: The Joke is All Your Own Doing

Qi Taiguo was preaching to Chen Shouwang on this side, while at Chen Shouwang's home, Cheng Su and others were also trying to console the crying Hualing.

"He's just a poor boy with nothing, and I didn't despise marrying him. Now he's getting angry and even dares to hit me? This life is unbearable, divorce, let whoever loves whoever go, living this cursed life might as well stop, boo hoo." Hualing was wiping her tears with a handkerchief, her voice filled with accusation.

"Look at you talking in anger. Platoon Leader Chen just lost his temper for a moment, how could he hit you? Just because a couple quarrels, you want a divorce—that's not so easy. Not to mention that we're already married and don't divorce easily, soldiers even less so. Calm down a bit!" Chunhua advised.

"How could we not get divorced? It's just a matter of filing a report, there's no law that says you can't divorce." Hualing wiped her nose, "Is it just about quarreling now? He's even dared to lay hands on me, what if he goes further and kills me someday?"

"Tsk tsk, you're just scaring yourself." Chunhua said helplessly, looking at Cheng Su with eyes that said, I can't handle her anymore.

Cheng Su coughed once and said, "Hualing, don't overexaggerate things. Platoon Leader Chen didn't really lay hands on you."

Hualing raised her head and glared fiercely, "Now you just enjoy watching my embarrassment."

Cheng Su rolled her eyes and said, "How am I laughing at you? Aren't all the jokes caused by your own commotion?"

"You..."

Hualing was furious. Was she here to comfort her or to add fuel to the fire? Was this the way to comfort someone?

"What do you mean 'you'? Did I say something wrong? Have you ever thought about why Platoon Leader Chen wanted to raise his hand to you?" Cheng Su looked at her with a cold smirk.

"When a couple fights, doesn't everyone do it behind closed doors? Who brings it out into the open for the whole street to know? Is that something to celebrate? It's not a good thing, but what did you do?"

"Not only did you make it known to everyone, but you also trampled on your husband's dignity, you know?" Cheng Su scoffed coldly. "Men, which one doesn't have a strong sense of self-esteem? Let alone something relating to fertility. Your starting point was right, after all, if there's a problem, it's better to treat it early. But where you went wrong was in publicizing it."

Hualing was stunned, "I..."

"You keep saying you've checked and there's no problem, asking him to get tested. It's fine to say it nicely, but you did it so arrogantly and let everyone know, isn't that saying he's impotent? Not to mention him, even I would feel humiliated," Cheng Su snorted with a mocking laugh.

Which man wouldn't feel uncomfortable and ashamed if they couldn't father a child?

And Hualing just had to spread the word, like using a megaphone to announce: "Married for two years without a child, I'm not the problem, it's him, that's why we can't have a baby."

"You were a bit in the wrong here," Chunhua said cautiously, "Men all care about their face."

Hualing was caught in a breath of anger, "Do you think I wanted this? I originally spoke to him kindly and asked him to get a checkup. He just kept insisting he was fine and got annoyed when pushed, that's how the fight started. Isn't all this for the sake of Old Chen's family?"

As she spoke, she felt an overwhelming sense of grievance.

"But you can't just explode in anger like that. Look, is there any room left to recover now? If we talk too much and it spreads, how will Platoon Leader Chen face anyone? By then you won't have to mention divorce, I estimate he'll want to divorce you himself," Cheng Su said.

Hualing's face changed, and she looked at them defensively.

"I won't talk nonsense," Chunhua said quickly.

"Now that you're scared and know about it, think about how you're going to recover the situation!"

Hualing mumbled and stubbornly said, "What's said is said, and what's spilled is spilled, if we're going to divorce, so be it, who's afraid of whom!"

Chapter 505: Stick Head Drinks

Even at this time she was stubborn as a dying duck, Cheng Su couldn't be bothered with her anymore. After all the housework she had done, she was exhausted enough as is. She had good intentions to mediate and make peace, but she happened to encounter someone who just wouldn't see reason.

"We may dine at the same table, but each must cultivate their own path, and nobody can walk it for you. However, Hualing, let me tell you, if you don't change that arrogant and haughty temper of yours, your marriage with Chen Shouwang won't last long," Cheng Su said indifferently.

"Sister-in-law Qi!" Chunhua tugged at her sleeve.

They had come to mediate a conflict, so why were they saying such disheartening things now?

But Cheng Su couldn't be bothered to persuade gently. People like Hualing needed a stern warning!

"You always feel superior because your family background is better than Chen Shouwang's, and that he should pamper and indulge you, but there's a limit to everything. He loves you, accommodates you, but if you keep acting so high and mighty, who wouldn't get tired? Hearts can tire too. Once it becomes unbearable, there'll come a day when he'll no longer keep up with it," Cheng Su continued, "Of course, if you really want to divorce him, then you can continue to act high and mighty, keeping him underfoot."

Listening to this, Hualing's face turned from white to red, then from red to black.

"Everyone has their limits of endurance, and if you keep behaving this way, you'll only push him further away. You might feel it's unfair, that he's getting worse towards you, but what about your attitude towards him? You know very well how Platoon Leader Chen has treated you, has it always been like this or did it start to deteriorate at some point? Without going too far back, let's just talk about the incident with buying the fan. He went to such lengths for you, what more do you expect him to do?" Cheng Su hit the nail on the head again.

Chunhua's face was full of confusion about the fan-buying incident, while Hualing knew exactly what it entailed, her face flushed and lips pursed.

"We came here to mediate, maybe we can mediate once or twice, but can we do it for a lifetime? You have to live your lives yourselves, and both of you need to reflect on things," Cheng Su said.

Hualing bit her lip.

Next door, Qi Taiguo was also giving Chen Shouwang a hard time.

"Don't talk about wanting a divorce so casually. As soldiers, we have our military discipline; divorce isn't just a matter of a few words," Qi Taiguo said, "You don't really want to stop being with her. If that's the case, then show the dignity of a man. It was wrong of you to think of hitting her. A man, no matter how angry, should never hit a woman. Reflect on how eagerly you courted her in the beginning?"

Chen Shouwang, with a stern face, said, "I've been tolerating her for quite some time as well."

"Even so, you can't resort to violence. She's so frail, how could she withstand your beating? Would you really be able to stand it if you hurt her? I remember you two weren't like this before. Why have things become so tense since you moved here?" Qi Taiguo asked.

Could it be that absence makes the heart grow fonder?

"Go on, swallow your pride, speak to her kindly. If she asks you to reflect, then do it. What's the big deal? Reflecting might ease your own mind. Not just for now, but for the future as well," Qi Taiguo urged him.

Chen Shouwang muttered, "I, ah, this..."

"Don't worry, we all won't spread the word," Qi Taiguo pushed him, "Go on, what's the harm in a big man making a concession?"

Chen Shouwang was pushed back into his home, where Cheng Su and the others stood up. Only Hualing was there, head down, wiping her tears, the corners of her eyes red. Cheng Su's heart softened somewhat.

"Wife, it's my fault, I was wrong," Chen Shouwang went over to her.

Qi Taiguo gave Cheng Su and the others a look, and they left, closing the door behind them. From inside came the sound of sobbing, which was relatively calm, and they all shook their heads and sighed.

Chapter 506: Before the New Year

Chen Shouwang's submission pleased Hualing greatly. After being reprimanded by Cheng Su, she didn't cling to the issue. Seeing Chen Shouwang giving in, she gracefully stepped back and naturally apologized, allowing Chen Shouwang to relax as well. The couple considered the matter settled.

And just a few days later, Chen Shouwang secretly visited the hospital where Hualing worked to get a check-up. Once the results came out, both breathed a sigh of relief; there were no problems with either of them. Their childlessness was probably due to their past pattern of frequent separations combined with their recent daily arguments, which significantly reduced their intimate moments, and thus, the delay in having a child.

Hualing reflected on her behavior and had another in-depth conversation with Chen Shouwang. She promised to try to control her temper from now on. Once she opened up, Chen Shouwang himself felt somewhat guilty.

He thought of Liu Li.

Perhaps, going to the small bar was no longer an option!

There were no fertility issues for the couple, and to clear up any misunderstandings, Hualing specifically showed Cheng Su the report, partly to restore her husband's dignity.

Cheng Su was overjoyed, and she shared the news privately with Qi Taiguo, remarking that both were stubborn, complicating their otherwise good life needlessly.

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As the days grew shorter and nights longer, time flew by, and as the year drew to a close, Cheng Su, looking at the account books, gave her restaurant staff a generous bonus. She then chose a date to gather everyone for a year-end feast.

Since it was the restaurant's first year, Cheng Su decided to close on the twenty-ninth of the lunar year, and to reopen for business on the eighth day of the lunar month, allowing everyone to have a joyous holiday. In the future, if the restaurant grew larger in scale, she anticipated there would be no holidays, just a rotation of shifts for rest instead.

As the New Year approached, the calls from home grew more frequent; there were constant inquiries about when Qi Taiguo and his family would return, especially from Mother Qi, who even told Qi Taiguo in private what to buy for the trip back.

To coordinate with Cheng Su's restaurant holiday schedule, Qi Taiguo's shifts at the military unit were until the evening of the twenty-eighth of the lunar year, and his official holiday started on the twenty-ninth, but because of military regulations, the holiday could only extend until the fifth day of the lunar month.

Even so, Cheng Su was happy. Over time, she had purchased many New Year's goods and packed them into large bundles, so much so that even Qi Taiguo teased her for wanting to move the whole of Qing City back to her hometown.

After Little New Year, Ning Ge returned to Beijing. Cheng Su didn't forget to prepare some local specialty gifts for him to take to the Chief as New Year's presents.

"You better not toss them away halfway, I'll be calling the Chief to wish him a New Year and ask about it," Cheng Su warned.

Ning Ge rolled his eyes, "I got it, why do you nag like an old mother!"

Cheng Su was provoked and chased after him to hit him playfully.

Once the factory officially closed for the holiday, Dazhi managed to wrap up work at the shop by the twenty-sixth.

Cheng Su, accompanied by Qi Taiguo, went to check it out especially. The shop had been completely renovated and emitted a faint scent of paint. The kitchen had expanded to more than twice its original size, not only fitted with stoves but also with stations for chopping vegetables, washing, and sinks for dishes.

After inspecting everything inside and out, and seeing that all was developing according to plan, Cheng Su settled the renovation payment with Dazhi. Once the New Year rolled round, the shop could set a date for its opening.

On the twenty-seventh, Cheng Su separately invited County Chief Ying, Luh Kai, and others for a New Year's meal. It was a way to offer early New Year wishes, and the prepared gifts went without saying.

By the twenty-eighth, Joy Soon Loy Restaurant had seen off its last customers. Everyone cleaned up, properly storing food that needed refrigeration, locking up, and tidying everything. After wishing each other a good New Year, they all headed home for their own celebration.

Cheng Su arrived home and sat on the sofa. It was only then that she felt that having been here for more than half a year, she was truly taking a break for the first time and finally had a moment to relax.

Outside the window, someone began setting off fireworks. She smiled, amused. The New Year was coming.

Chapter 507: No Means Yes

On the twenty-ninth of the lunar year, the sky had cleared up. Qi Taiguo had come back from his night shift and slept for a few hours. When he woke up again, he found his little home decked out all in red.

Cheng Su was busy at the dining table. Qi Taiguo walked over and saw that there were red couplets on the table, along with a bowl of flour paste that had been cooked. Cheng Su was using her fingers to apply the paste on the back of the couplets.

"Why didn't you call me to help paste them?" Qi Taiguo yawned, moving to help.

"Weren't you supposed to sleep? If not, go wash your face. There is still some food left warm in the pot. We should be leaving soon, right?" Cheng Su pushed his hand away.

Qi Taiguo complied quickly, washing his face and eating the meal Cheng Su had left for him, a serving of large meat dumplings.

After he had washed the dishes, he saw Cheng Su tiptoeing to paste a red paper on the door of their bedroom. Qi Taiguo walked over: "Let me do it!"

He took over the red paper from her hands, pasted it perfectly straight and saw, oh dear, the four big characters written in regular script that meant "loving and harmonious."

Qi Taiguo chuckled: "Did you write these yourself?"

"Yeah, since it's just for our own room, what's there to be afraid of?" Cheng Su shrugged.

Qi Taiguo pulled her in and pecked her on the cheek, praising her with a smile: "Not bad!"

Cheng Su looked quite pleased with herself and then stuck out her left cheek: "This side too."

Qi Taiguo laughed and planted another kiss on her delicate cheek.

"Hurry up and finish pasting the rest. Then let's pack up. It gets dark late; we'll have to walk in the dark if we don't leave soon!" Cheng Su pushed him away.

"At your command!"

One took responsibility for pasting the couplets while the other ensured they were straight. In no time at all, they had finished pasting the festive couplets.

Cheng Su went into the room to pack their luggage while Qi Taiguo tidied up the outside and gathered all the trash together.

After he had finished his part, he followed her into the room, picking up Cheng Su's luggage and took a peek, then he couldn't help but start to chuckle mischievously.

"What are you sneakily laughing at?" Cheng Su came over from the wardrobe, rolling up her thermal underwear.

Qi Taiguo chuckled twice and pulled out a box from the luggage.

That was...

Condoms!

Cheng Su's face flushed with heat, and she let out a sharp scream, lunging to grab them.

Qi Taiguo held his hand up high, teasing her: "What's this? Why are you bringing these along!"

"Qi Taiguo, give them back to me, or I'm going to be mad at you!" Cheng Su yelled.

How embarrassing, why did he have to rummage through her luggage.

"Then call me 'husband,' 'my good husband,' let me hear it." Qi Taiguo teased her with a grin.

"Husband, my good husband, is that okay now!" Cheng Su climbed onto him, using her hands and feet, stretching out her hand to snatch it back, rubbing up against him in the process, which kindled a fire in Qi Taiguo.

He flipped over swiftly, pinning her beneath him, and said, "I had no idea you were thinking about this!"

At the end of the year, there were so many things to be busy with, and in order to secure a holiday for the New Year, Qi Taiguo had worked more night shifts, so it had been some days since they had been intimate.

"What do you mean? I'm just being prepared for anything!" Cheng Su glared at him.

Qi Taiguo leaned in, purposely rubbing himself against her, his voice husky: "I think, we should use one right now."

"Ah, but we have to go back!"

"Let's do it and then go back."

"No, I still have to redo my makeup..."

"No means yes. Be good, husband will be gentle with you." Qi Taiguo quickly kissed her chattering red lips, his hand moving up from below her waist, skillfully undressing her.

Soon, the bed with the red bedspread started swaying, accompanied by moans and groans that made anyone who heard them blush and turn away.

As for that box of condoms, it had long been scattered across the bed in disarray.

Chapter 508: Husband and Wife Both Return Home

Cheng Su and Qi Taiguo returned to Flower County, then took a one-hour ride on a small minibus to the entrance of Huangtian Village. By the time they arrived, it had already gotten dark. The lights of a hundred families shone brightly, like stars scattered across the dark night sky, exuding a special sense of tranquility and serenity.

"This is all your fault, insisting on being rash. Look, it's already dark." Cheng Su glared at Qi Taiguo with a playful complaint.

Qi Taiguo chuckled, "You blame me, but didn't you keep urging me to go faster, saying 'I'm so comfortable I could die'?"

Cheng Su's face warmed, and she stomped her foot, "You... you still say that."

As Qi Taiguo was about to speak, suddenly a beam of light shone toward them, and someone asked, "Is that you, Taiguo?"

That voice, so very familiar, Cheng Su exclaimed, "It's Dad!"

Looking over, they saw two figures approaching. Wasn't it Qi Taiguo's father, Father Qi, and his brother Qi Jianguo?

"Dad, why did you come here?" Qi Taiguo still used the way of addressing him from when he was younger.

"I came to see if you had arrived, and here you are." Father Qi was beaming with joy.

"Big brother." Qi Jianguo also approached and glanced at Cheng Su before calling her 'sister-in-law'.

"We would have come home anyway. Why come out in this cold?" Qi Taiguo picked up his luggage.

"Big brother, let me help you." Qi Jianguo stepped forward to take the luggage.

"Your mother sent me to check on you as well. Everyone is waiting for you. Are you hungry?" Father Qi picked up a bag and muttered, "Why bring so much back with you? Aren't you finding it heavy?"

"Dad, it's all New Year's gifts. We can't come back for the New Year empty-handed, can we?" Cheng Su said with a smile.

"You shouldn't come empty-handed when you visit others, but it's okay to do so when returning to your own home." Father Qi said.

Cheng Su smiled in silence. If she really came back empty-handed, she feared Mother Qi's spit might drown her.

Chatting and using a flashlight, they made their way home. Mother Qi had been waiting at the courtyard gate for a while. As soon as she saw Qi Taiguo, she asked why they were so late, whether they were hungry or cold, and hustled them inside.

As for Cheng Su, she didn't ask her a single thing, completely ignoring her.

Cheng Su felt an unpleasant sensation in her heart, but she didn't take it to heart. After all, a mother-in-law can't be regarded as one's own mother.

Once inside the main room, the younger sister Fengping brought over hot water, which was probably ordered by Mother Qi in advance for Qi Taiguo to wash his face and warm up.

Cheng Su followed behind. The room had a charcoal stove burning; the warm air felt comforting, opening one's pores.

"Susu, you should also wash your face, warm your hands." Qi Taiguo looked toward his younger sister.

Qi Fengping pouted, then brought over a peony-patterned towel.

"Younger sister-in-law, thank you." Cheng Su said with a smile, took the towel, soaked it in the hot water, and felt her slightly stiff hands warm up quickly.

Unlike Qi Taiguo, who used the wet towel to wash his face directly, she simply wrung it out and pressed it against her face before calling it done.

Qi Fengping watched from the side. Cheng Su was wearing black velvet pants and short leather boots, with a red down jacket that reached to her calves. It was belted with an elastic waistband, looking stylish without being bulky. She looked quite attractive.

Originally, she had been wearing a red knitted hat. Now, with her hat taken off and her hair draped down, her face-washing movements were slow and elegant. After washing, her face seemed to glow under the light.

Qi Fengping looked away, murmuring to herself: Ever since this woman married my big brother, she's been getting prettier and prettier!

Chapter 509: The Sister-in-Law's Provocation

After washing up, the family sat at the table for dinner—a feast of five dishes and one soup: a big fat chicken, a plate of duck, braised pork belly with lotus root, a dish of greens, and spicy cabbage stir-fried with cured meat, topped off with ribs soup.

Cheng Su glanced at the fatty meat in the soup, then gave Qi Taiguo a meaningful look, as tonight's meal was on his dime.

"Here, have a chicken drumstick. Look how skinny you've gotten—are you not eating meat usually?" Mother Qi placed a drumstick in Qi Taiguo's bowl with a look of sorrow, then turned to Cheng Su with an accusatory gaze, her meaning clear: she was blaming her for being a negligent wife.

Qi Taiguo laughed, "Mom, I'm all grown up now, what do I need a chicken leg for?" Then he passed the drumstick to Cheng Su, "Here, you must be tired today."

His insinuation did not go unnoticed; Cheng Su shot him a glare as they exchanged loving glances, which only served to infuriate Mother Qi, her face stretching long with displeasure.

What did this mean? The special chicken drumstick she had cut for her son—did Cheng Su even deserve to share it?

Feeling the heat of Mother Qi's gaze, Cheng Su thought about returning it but then considered, why shouldn't I eat what my husband is willing to give me?

Right then, Cheng Su sweetly said, "Thanks, husband."

Qi Fengping and Qi Jianguo, the dragon-phoenix twins, shivered in unison at her coy tone.

Cheng Su didn't care. She picked up the drumstick and bit into it, her mouth glossy with grease, which nearly popped Mother Qi's eyes out of their sockets. To Mother Qi, Cheng Su's bite felt as if taken out of her own flesh, sending pangs of hurt through her.

As Mother Qi was about to react, Father Qi, who knew her thoughts best, immediately placed some chicken in her bowl, "Let's eat, everybody!" He then shot her a warning glare.

Mother Qi seethed internally but decided to leave it at that.

During the meal, Qi Taiguo inquired about his younger siblings' studies. As the eldest brother, and considerably older, it was inevitable for him to give them guidance again.

"In two more years, it will be time for college entrance exams, right? These next few years are crucial; you can't slack off. As for the tuition, don't worry about it—I'll have it ready. Just make sure you get into a decent university."

Qi Jianguo, a reticent and somewhat sullen teenager, simply responded with a heavy "Yes."

But it was Qi Fengping, the sprite-like character, who challenged, "Big brother, can you really support two college students? Wait, not two, three—I heard my sister-in-law is also taking the college entrance exam next year?"

All eyes at the table turned towards Cheng Su. It seemed Mother Qi had made Cheng Su's plans clear to everyone.

Cheng Su said, "Yes, I'm retaking the exam next year."

"Sister-in-law, didn't you dislike studying? You were only focused on marrying my brother and even quit school for him. After leaving your studies for so many years, can you really pick them up again?" Qi Fengping provocatively said, "You might as well not waste your effort."

Oh, the younger sister-in-law was looking for a confrontation!

"Exactly, and rather than wasting time on that, why not just start having grandchildren?" Mother Qi found an ally and harped on the old tune.

"I haven't even taken the exams yet, who knows if I can pass? But I don't think it will be a big problem. As for whether your big brother can support me, I don't care." Cheng Su smiled and continued, "I want to go to college, and I never planned to rely on your brother for that. I can earn the tuition myself. So, little sister-in-law, Mom, you don't have to worry about whether Qi Taiguo can afford it! And you, little sister-in-law and little brother-in-law, don't have to worry about your own tuition either. Even if your brother's allowance is not much, I can cover your part too."

In other words, I'm going to college on my own merit, without relying on anyone in your family, so you can save your breath.

Chapter 510: Elbows Out?

Mother Qi and her daughter Qi Fengping hit a snag at Cheng Su's place, looking incredibly displeased with their multicolored expressions.

"What's the meaning of this, as if she's scared others won't know she can make money?" Qi Fengping wanted to argue, but Cheng Su cut in before she could speak.

"Does my dear sister-in-law like the coat you're wearing? I asked your older sister about your usual preferences before I bought this outfit for you. I hope you don't look down on it."

Qi Fengping was taken aback and glanced at the trench coat she was wearing. It had a cinched waist and was a trendy style, which had earned her the envy and admiration of many classmates at school.

Cheng Su had bought it for her after Mother Qi and the others had returned from Qing City last time. Not just for her, everyone in the family received something.

As the saying goes, "He who takes the money is short-handed, he who eats is soft-mouthed." Qi Fengping's bluster extinguished immediately, and she muttered reluctantly, "It's alright, just so-so."

Cheng Su smiled faintly.

Don't blame her for her sharp words; she was simply too lazy to make small talk with this sister-in-law of hers. It was more straightforward to shut her up directly. "You're wearing what my money bought, and I don't even blame you for not saying 'thank you.' Let's not have any more complaints."

Mother Qi looked uncomfortable. She wasn't foolish; she could hear the implication in Cheng Su's words. However, she was in no position to refute, so she turned her gaze to her son instead.

Better get a hold of your wife quick before she gets too high and mighty!

Under the expectant gaze of Mother Qi, Qi Taiguo didn't disappoint and spoke up lightly.

However...

"Little Ping, how can you talk like that? It's not easy for your sister-in-law to earn money. She bought you clothes, shouldn't you thank her?"

Mother Qi's face darkened almost to the point of flipping the table.

What was Taiguo thinking? Why was he siding with his wife? Weren't she and her daughter his closest kin?

Qi Jianguo glanced at his older brother and kept his head down, silently continuing his meal.

Cheng Su's eyes crinkled with a smile, and she rewarded him with a large piece of chicken breast in his bowl.

Qi Taiguo raised an eyebrow and turned to Qi Fengping, his stern face full of authority: "Little Ping!"

Snapping out of her shock, Qi Fengping, who had always revered her older brother, trembled as his gaze bore down on her. She hoped Cheng Su would show some discretion and politely say it was unnecessary.

Cheng Su, without glancing at her, kept her head down and devoured a large chicken drumstick as if she hadn't eaten meat in centuries.

Grinding her teeth in anger, Qi Fengping, under her brother's glaring scrutiny, reluctantly said, "Thank you, sister-in-law."

Only then did Cheng Su put down her chopsticks and, with a handkerchief, elegantly dabbed the corners of her mouth, saying, "It's good that my dear sister-in-law likes it."

Qi Fengping pursed her lips, filled with a sense of grievance.

Mother Qi, visibly burning with fury, was about to erupt but held herself back when Father Qi coughed and glanced her way.

"How long is Taiguo's leave this time?" Father Qi deftly changed the subject.

"I have to return and check in by the fifth; I'm assigned to a night shift," answered Qi Taiguo.

Father Qi nodded and said, "That's good. You've been enlisted for a few years now and you got a longer leave this time. Take a good rest for a few days. Your second uncle's son Mingtou is also back, he was asking about you. You two should have a drink together."

Qi Taiguo agreed with a smile.

The conversation shifted, and aside from Qi Jianguo, who ate quietly without a word, Cheng Su was the one who enjoyed the meal the most at the table.

As for Mother Qi and Qi Fengping, their faces were marked with discomfort and annoyance, finding no taste in the food.

After chatting for a while following the meal, everyone went back to their rooms. Cheng Su hugged Qi Taiguo tightly, rubbing up to him with a beaming smile: "Honey, why were you so great tonight?"

In the room of Father Qi, however, the atmosphere was charged with tension: "What got into Taiguo today? Why is he bending over backwards for his wife?"