

The 80s 511

Chapter 511 Put Yourself in Others' Shoes

Father Qi, puffing on his dry tobacco pipe, glanced at her indifferently upon hearing this and said, "What do you mean by that, 'elbow turns outwards'? Talking nonsense? According to you, isn't the daughter-in-law a member of our Qi family anymore?"

Mother Qi was left speechless by his retort, her face turned beet red, and she stuttered without being able to utter a word.

"How can people of our age still act like they have no brains at all, with mouths firing away like machine guns, relentlessly spurting out words? Luckily, it's just the two of us old folks talking behind closed doors. If you said this outside, I'm afraid it would make others laugh their heads off," Father Qi humped.

Mother Qi's face was filled with indignation, "So, you're going to lecture me too?"

"I'm not lecturing you; I'm telling you not to embarrass yourself. Once a daughter-in-law enters our home, she becomes part of the Qi family. If you say that our son's elbow turns outwards, that means you're seeing the daughter-in-law as an outsider. Let's not even talk about others; if people found out, what would that make you? How would Fenglian and her sister be treated at their in-laws' house? They would also be seen as outsiders. Just look at Fenglian," Father Qi continued.

"My daughter is flesh of my flesh; how can she be compared?" Mother Qi argued defiantly.

"Once they go to another family, they become members of that family. If you even harbor the thought of seeing your daughter-in-law as an outsider, others will surely belittle your daughters," Father Qi said irritably. "And don't say other families are different from ours, otherwise, you'll truly be slapping your own face."

Mother Qi was so choked by his words she could barely breathe; didn't he have any conscience? Wasn't she also defending his seed? Yet he insisted on siding with outsiders against her?

"You, always only think about your own son, never trying to put yourself in others' shoes. When you give away your daughter, you hope others will treat her as one of their own. It's the same for others; they all

hope we treat their daughters well. When dealing with people, we must have empathy," Father Qi sighed and began puffing on his tobacco pipe again.

"So you're always right," Mother Qi huffed and sat down, saying, "What did I even say about her? It's just that I can't stand her attitude. So what if she earns a bit of money? As if she's capable, as if she's arrogant, like she's better than everyone else."

"Eating someone else's food makes you quiet, taking someone's hand makes you shorter; don't you understand this saying?" Father Qi said disdainfully with a glance.

Mother Qi opened her mouth, snorted, and said, "Since she married into this family, siding with our family is right."

Father Qi scoffed, "If you're not nice to them, what reason do they have to be loyal to you? You think everyone is a clay Bodhisattva? Even a clay Bodhisattva can get fired up!"

"Hey, what's with you tonight? You're like a thorn in my side, just daring to oppose me," Mother Qi glared at him.

"I talk because I have reason. Whether you want to listen is up to you, but that's all I'm saying." Father Qi put down his tobacco pipe, lay down, and added, "Just don't talk to our son about his wife anymore. It makes things difficult for him."

With that, he stopped talking and closed his eyes to sleep.

Mother Qi fumed to the point of falling backward, wanting to muster some rebuttal, but she lacked the confidence and finally gave in resignedly. It took her a long time to settle in bed before she managed to fall asleep.

In the room of Taiguo and his wife, Cheng Su, reflecting on the evening's events, sighed, "Since ancient times, it has been hard for mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law to get along. We've just come back, and the rivalry between the two has kicked off. How long will this battle go on until it's settled?"

"Is it as serious as you make it out to be?" Taiguo clicked his tongue.

Cheng Su huffed lightly, "You expect me to believe you didn't see what happened at dinner tonight?"

Taiguo fell silent, then embraced her and said, "Being someone's daughter-in-law is very hard; you have my sympathies."

"Here, you're the only one I'm closest to. If you don't protect me, then no one will! So, Taiguo, you have to stand by me," Cheng Su looked at him.

"Fine, I'll stand by you," Taiguo kissed her and said, "Let's sleep!"

Chapter 512: Our Chiang Family Can't Afford to Lose This Face

The flowers displayed were of two kinds, each blooming just one blossom.

Beijing, at the Chiang Family, Jiang Conghe and Lu Shufen looked at their daughter with iron-green faces, disbelief in their eyes caused by the information they had just heard.

What, their precious daughter had taken a fancy to a married man? And someone who was from a rural background to boot?

When Chiang Qing was born, although she was a daughter, she was also their first child. They put countless efforts into raising her, terrified she might melt in their mouths, worried she might dissolve held in their hands, cherishing and pampering her as if she was a precious piece of gold, resulting in the regal bearing she had today.

But could such an outstanding daughter really like a married man?

"Qingqing, are you disturbed by something, or feeling unwell? Don't scare Mom. Just say what's wrong, and we'll discuss it, okay?" Lu Shufen reached out to feel Chiang Qing's forehead, a look of deep concern on her face.

"Mom, what are you doing? I'm perfectly fine!" Chiang Qing pulled her hand away, somewhat speechless.

"Perfectly fine, I think you've gone out of your mind." Jiang Conghe glared at his daughter: "There are plenty of well-suited, young men from respected families, all promising prospects, and you don't have eyes for any of them. Instead, you favor some unknown country bumpkin from god-knows-where?"

"Dad, he's not just some bumpkin; he has distinguished military achievements and is already a company commander. Dad, you've also said he has a limitless future," Chiang Qing couldn't help defending her beloved, Qi Taiguo.

"Ridiculous! Even if he is a company commander, how does that make him good enough for you? Let's not even say that he already has a wife, even if he didn't, he would still not be worthy of Jiang Conghe's daughter!" Jiang Conghe was truly furious. He and his wife had spoiled their daughter, who had now gone and fallen in love with a married man. If word got out, where would he put his face?

"Dad, compared to those pampered princes, heirs who rely solely on their forefathers' fame, Qi Taiguo is a true soldier, a real man. That's what I admire about him," Chiang Qing said with a defiant pride.

It wasn't that she was just speaking well of Qi Taiguo; in fact, what she said wasn't just superficial talk either. Born into the Second Generation of Red, she knew since childhood the backgrounds of all the boys around her. Who among them wasn't known inside and out?

Because they were known, she also knew what they were made of. Due to their backgrounds, they didn't have to fight or struggle much to gain their positions. In contrast, it was someone like Qi Taiguo, who had no family background to speak of, who truly fought with a gun, shed blood, and struggled to achieve his current status on the battlefield.

He earned his position through his own strength and skill. If compared, aside from his background, who really had more ability?

And there was another point: the more Qi Taiguo ignored her and looked down on her, the more she wanted to win him over, perhaps because of her inherently competitive nature.

Jiang Conghe was so angry his liver ached: "You..." He clutched at his chest and rubbed it.

"Qingqing, what kind of talk is that? Look at how upset you've made your father," Lu Shufen walked over to rub his back, saying, "I think that rascal has bewitched you with some kind of love potion, sending you into a frenzy. What do you see in a man with a wife? No matter how promising he is, he's just a bumpkin. Is he worthy of you? You'd better snuff out those feelings promptly. Our Chiang family can't afford to lose face like this. Tomorrow, I'll arrange a dinner for you with a handsome young man from the ministry."

"I won't!" Chiang Qing glanced at her, saying, "Mom, what's wrong with liking a man who has a wife? Weren't you and Dad the same when you got married?"

Chapter 513: Back Then, the Lord Also Had a Wife

As soon as Chiang Qing spoke, Lu Shufen and Jiang Conghe's faces changed simultaneously.

"You... bastard!" Jiang Conghe slammed the table heavily, pointing at Chiang Qing and bellowing, "Who taught you this nonsense?"

Lu Shufen was also shocked. How could this be, how could her daughter know?

The union of Lu Shufen and Jiang Conghe had originated from a stage play—back then, she wasn't yet a director but a talented and delicate flower of the Cultural Work Troupe, while Jiang Conghe was not the commander he is now but merely a low-ranking squad leader.

To show their love and perform for the Old Red Army soldiers, the Cultural Work Troupe and the military unit Jiang Conghe belonged to at the time jointly put on a play about the Red Army fighting the Japanese invaders. It was during that time that she fell for the tall and handsome Jiang Conghe.

However, Jiang Conghe had just got married and had a child. Meeting too late to change anything and constrained by societal norms, they could only bury their feelings for each other deep inside their hearts.

But as the saying goes: when the turtle spots the green bean, if it's the right one, how can it simply let go?

When the man's willing and the lady's eager, the more they tried to suppress their so-called love in their hearts, the more they yearned, eventually leading to an uncontrollable affair.

Lu Shufen and Jiang Conghe secretly got together and conceived Chiang Qing, which truly caused an uproar.

The Loo Family had by that time already established a firm footing amidst chaos. Seeing Lu Shufen with a hidden pregnancy and considering her suitor was already married, the Loo Family leveraged their connections to force Jiang Conghe to divorce his first wife, Li Jinlan.

One month after Jiang Conghe and Li Jinlan divorced, he married Lu Shufen. Within less than a year, they had Chiang Qing. With support from her father's family and his own efforts, as well as his heroic past in the resistance against Japan, his political career soared. In less than two years, they had a son, Chiang Tian, and up until today, he could be considered a winner in life.

But despite all this, there was always a stain on how the two of them initially came together—they tried hard to suppress it and erase traces of the past, but a stain on fabric is impossible to ever fully wash away.

Yet, how could their daughter have known about these things?

"How do you know this?" Lu Shufen asked through clenched teeth.

Chiang Qing regretted mentioning this, seeing how taboo the topic was to her parents. Why had she suddenly blurted it out?

She stuttered, not daring to speak.

"I'm asking you, how do you know this?"

Lu Shufen, who usually doted on her daughter, was now also fuming, and in extreme anger, she smashed the teacup beside her against the ground.

Chiang Qing was startled.

In her memory, her mother was gentle and graceful; she had never seen her get so angry.

"I've known for a long time. A couple of years ago, I saw Jiang Dafang come to see Dad, and I asked my uncle about it," Chiang Qing hurriedly said.

Jiang Dafang, that was Jiang Conghe's first child, the bastard born to Li Guilan.

Lu Shufen's gaze whipped towards Jiang Conghe, her eyes wide with shock.

Jiang Conghe felt uneasy. After he divorced Li Guilan, she never remarried but instead lived alone with her son, enduring gossips and whispers.

Out of consideration for this fact, Jiang Conghe also provided for the mother and son in secret, of course, without Lu Shufen's knowledge.

Cautious and jealous, Lu Shufen could take offense at the smallest slight; if she were to discover that he had been secretly seeing the mother and son, who knows what commotion she might cause!

And now, this matter he thought was hidden had been uncovered by his daughter, and exposed at such a time.

"Shufen, I can explain," Jiang Conghe said in a hurry.

"Shut your mouth!" Lu Shufen roared, "Jiang Conghe, you've kept this from me for so long, oh how you've deceived me, you really... you..."

Lu Shufen felt a sudden pain in her chest and collapsed to the ground.

Chapter 514: Like Mother, Like Daughter

Lu Shufen had heart disease, and the excitement had caused her heart to twist in pain and she fainted. Fortunately, they had Chiang Qing, a military doctor, at home, who immediately took action, fed her medicine, and she came to.

"Mom, are you feeling any better?" Chiang Qing anxiously asked.

"Sister, you should stop upsetting Mom. I think it's because of you that she fainted," Chiang Tian said coolly.

Chiang Qing glared at him.

Chiang Tian glared back, saying, "Isn't that so? Sister, I don't understand your taste. Of all the young talents available, you just had to fall for such a poor boy!"

Were these two deliberately poking at her sore spot?

Hearing this, Lu Shufen felt like her son's words were a reflection of herself and couldn't help but angrily say, "All of you, get out!"

"Mom!"

Lu Shufen glared at her daughter, "If you want to make me angry, continue talking, keep bringing it up." Then to her son, "You too, always pushing my buttons."

The siblings, Chiang Qing and Chiang Tian, both looked sheepish.

Jiang Conghe then said, "Go out, all of you go rest. We can talk about this later, don't disturb your mom's rest."

In fact, the person Lu Shufen was most angry with should have been Jiang Conghe. The siblings cast him a look as if to say, "You're on your own," and walked out.

Closing the door to their parents' room, Chiang Tian couldn't wait to ask, "Sister, have you really seen Jiang Dafang? What is he like?"

"What, you want to acknowledge him as a relative?" Chiang Qing scoffed.

Chiang Tian spat and said, "Why would I acknowledge such a poor relative? He's still Dad's son after all. I'm just curious what he looks like and what he's doing looking for Dad."

"How would I know what he's here for? As for what he looks like?" Chiang Qing paused, he probably looked a lot like Dad.

She had seen photos of her father when he was young, and Jiang Dafang bore a striking resemblance to him then—tall and handsome. That's why she was curious, and it led her to discover there was such a story behind her parents' union.

"Could it be he came to acknowledge Dad and ask for some sort of relationship?" Chiang Tian frowned.

"Who knows!" Chiang Qing suddenly felt irritated.

Inside the room, Jiang Conghe was also trying his best to explain to Lu Shufen.

"Back then, I abandoned him and his mother. She never remarried, but raised the son on her own. After all, he is my son, so I sent them a little money every month. I really haven't gone to see them, believe me!" Jiang Conghe insisted.

Lu Shufen sneered and shoved his hand away, "So you're saying, by marrying me, you've been feeling guilty towards his mother and him?"

Jiang Conghe didn't speak, but his expression said it all.

Lu Shufen was furious, "Jiang Conghe, you feel guilty toward them, so what about us, your wife and children? Does your conscience not pain you?"

"Look at what you're saying. I swear, you and Qingqing, Xiao Tian, you are all the apples of my eye. If I'm lying, may I be struck by lightning. I only gave them aid out of humanitarian concern, nothing more," Jiang Conghe raised his hand and said, "Even when Dafang came to see me, he only told me his mother was gone and he had grown up, and there was no need to send money anymore!"

Thinking of what Jiang Dafang had said, Jiang Conghe felt a pang of discomfort in his heart. That child must harbor some resentment towards him, right?

Lu Shufen saw the dejection in his eyes and her heart twisted in pain once again. She had endured so much pain for him over the years and even after becoming husband and wife, there was always a knot in her heart.

And she had lived with this knot for so many years, yet now her daughter was following in her footsteps, falling for a married man. Was this what people meant when they said like mother, like daughter?

Lu Shufen shivered and forced herself not to think about it, pressing on, "What else did that bastard say when he came to tell you she was dead?"

Chapter 515: Such Vilified, All Vilified

What did Jiang Dafang come for?

Jiang Conghe remembered his three children; it was that child who looked exactly like him when he was young, even the expression when frowning was the same, more so than Qingqing and Xiao Tian.

He came not only to report a death but also brought a bag of money, which was all the money he had sent over those years, saved up by Li Guilan.

They hadn't used a dime of it.

Thinking of this, Jiang Conghe felt quite bitter.

"My mother has died. Before her death, she instructed me to return this to you. She said she was from the lower class, too poor to be entitled to enjoy this fortune. I don't want her to be restless in death, so I came," Jiang Dafang said coldly as he threw the bag of money at his feet.

"What kind of attitude is this?" Jiang Conghe looked very angry, his face darkening, "No matter what, I am still your father!"

And what was Jiang Dafang's expression at that time?

Mockery, sneers, indifference, it had it all, except the admiring reverence Qingqing and her siblings held for him.

His gaze towards him was as if he was looking at a stranger with whom he had no relation, cold enough to chill one's heart.

"I don't have a father. But if Commissar Chiang feels guilty, I do have a favor to ask of Commissar Chiang," said Jiang Dafang.

Jiang Conghe was angry, but looking at his son, who closely resembled him, he couldn't remain mad. Hearing the words 'ask for help', with a desire to make amends, he asked, "What favor, you say!"

"It's not a big deal. I have partnered with someone to form a transportation team. I heard there are some military supplies that need to be outsourced for transportation, and we are vying for them. If Commissar Chiang could give us an opportunity, I would owe you this favor," Jiang Dafang explained.

"A transportation team?" Jiang Conghe was surprised and asked, "Xiao Tian is also in this business. How did you come up with the capital?"

Jiang Dafang sneered, looking down, and said indifferently, "We cannot compare with the Loo family, it's just a small-scale business. Whether it succeeds or fails, it is what it is. I am here for a word from Commissar Chiang."

This was mere child's play, and since his son had come to him, how could Jiang Conghe refuse?

Besides, Li Guilan was already dead. She raised his son alone, enduring hardships without ever using his money. Now, even though his son was indifferent, he was showing some promise; he ought to lend a hand, so he agreed!

"So, you used your connections to clear the way for that little wretch? A transportation team..." Lu Shufen thought for a while. In the past two years, which external company was responsible for transporting military supplies?

"Is it Fangzheng Transport Company?" Lu Shufen thought of one and asked.

Jiang Conghe nodded.

"Jiang Conghe, do you not understand the significance of military supplies? Our Loo family has always handled this business. Yet, you want to help that little wretch get ahead. What are you trying to imply? Are you grooming that wretch to challenge our Loo family?" Lu Shufen shrieked.

Hearing that Jiang Dafang was involved in a transportation team, she felt incredibly uneasy, too uneasy.

Jiang Conghe was somewhat displeased. How could his children be wretches?

"It's just the younger generation's business. It's not what you think. The Loo family has deep roots; is he even capable of shaking them? If indeed he could, then I would truly be impressed!" Jiang Conghe lost his patience, and continued, "Also, stop calling him a wretch every second. They are my blood. If you call him a wretch, then what about Qingqing and the others? How would they feel?"

Lu Shufen was taken aback, "What? You're comparing my children to that wretch?"

Jiang Conghe frowned, and before he could speak, Lu Shufen threw a pillow at him, "Jiang Conghe, you ingrate, get out, get out of here!"

Chapter 516: Girl, what's the rush?

On New Year's Eve, a commotion broke out in the Chiang Family, leaving everyone in a foul mood during this grand holiday. Chiang Qing didn't dare mention Qi Taiguo's name for a while. Lu Shufen, seeing that everyone in the family was on edge and couldn't relax even during the New Year, hated Qi Taiguo, the instigator of it all, and that despicable Jiang Dafang as well.

In contrast to the Chiang's low spirits, Cheng Su and her family were very cheerful.

On New Year's Eve, every household slaughtered chickens and ducks, pasted red couplets, fried 'four-happiness' meatballs, and wrapped 'grandchildren' buns.

This was Cheng Su's first New Year as a wife, so she also got up early from the warm bed to help with the chores.

The rituals for worshipping the gods were handled by the mother-in-law, the pasting of new couplets by Qi Taiguo and his brothers, and Cheng Su went to help Father Qi slaughter ducks and pluck their feathers.

"You don't need to do this, I'll have the duck ready in a moment. Why don't you see if your mother-in-law needs any help?" Father Qi smiled and stopped her hands.

Cheng Su really didn't want to crowd around her mother-in-law, so seeing that everyone had not yet had breakfast, she went to the kitchen to prepare it.

In winter, there weren't many fruits or vegetables in the house, mostly just cabbage, radish, and potatoes. Cheng Su decided to knead some dough and chopped up cabbage and pork filling to make dumplings.

She worked swiftly and had half a pot of dumplings wrapped before her sister-in-law Qi Fengping got out of bed and came to the kitchen, yawning, looking for something to eat.

Seeing Cheng Su busy, Fengping felt a bit embarrassed and called out "sister-in-law" before retreating.

Cheng Su didn't mind, but she still felt a pang of envy when she heard Mother Qi outside telling Fengping to put on a few more layers.

They say that a woman's most carefree time is when she's unmarried. After getting married, she has to deal with daily necessities and various social interactions.

And that was no lie. The contrast between her and her sister-in-law made it clear. If she were only now getting out of bed and waiting for breakfast to be served, her mother-in-law would likely have had an opinion by now, right?

After being busy for half the morning, the family gathered around the table for breakfast.

"Dad, how come I've seen some unfamiliar faces in the village?" Taiguo asked.

He had spotted a few unfamiliar faces greeting the villagers while he was outside pasting couplets.

"Oh, back at the end of October, some cadres were sent to our production team for labor reform. The ones you saw were probably those people," Father Qi replied.

"Dad, they still do labor reform? What crimes did they commit?" Cheng Su asked curiously.

"Of course, there are. People who commit crimes and wish to be reborn must undergo labor reform to clearly recognize their mistakes," Father Qi laughed. "The ones sent to our village didn't commit any major offenses, just some minor corruption, not murderers or robbers."

"If they were those kinds of people, then it would be the end," Mother Qi added. "Murderers are heartless; they are not human, they are devils!"

"I saw one that looked quite young," Taiguo mentioned as he swallowed a dumpling.

"Brother, the one you saw must be Zhou Qiang. I heard he's a college student who got implicated," Fengping said.

Cheng Su glanced at the young sister-in-law, "Little sister-in-law, you seem to be quite well-informed."

Fengping's face turned red, and she defended, "He's been here for quite a while; who doesn't know?"

Cheng Su felt puzzled; she was just making casual conversation, why was she so defensive?

"Let's eat quickly. I'll take you to the town later to wander around, and we can buy some fireworks to set off tonight," Taiguo said to Cheng Su.

Cheng Su's eyes lit up, "That sounds great!"

Mother Qi frowned upon hearing this, but before she could say anything, Father Qi offered a dumpling, "Wife, the dumpling filling your daughter-in-law made is good, isn't it? You like cabbage filling, eat a couple more!"

Chapter 517: Envious of Someone Else's Grandson

Qi Taiguo and Cheng Su had barely stepped out the door when Mother Qi began to grumble.

"Buying fireworks to set off, doesn't that cost money? Setting off fireworks is just like burning cash! I think Taiguo is becoming more and more out of line. Where did he get such an idea!"

What's so great about those fireworks? Once they're lit and burst in the sky, you see a flower and then it's gone. In her eyes, that's not burning fire, but money, and it's honestly impractical.

"It's the New Year, they rarely come back, let them have their fun. What's the harm in buying a few fireworks to set off? As long as the children are happy." Father Qi said.

"As long as they are happy, they get itchy hands the moment they have a little money. Wouldn't it be better to save it for raising children?" Mother Qi disapproved of his defense of the couple and said irritably, "They keep saying they will have children after making money. I think that's just an excuse, they just don't want to have them. Look, they must be rich to burn money like that!"

"That's my brother doting on his wife!" Qi Fengping interjected sourly.

Father Qi gave her a glare, as if she was pouring oil on the fire!

Qi Fengping stuck out her tongue and noticing someone's silhouette, she said, "I'm heading out." With that, she ran off in a flash.

"Pingping is not wrong, but I think it's not so much doting as spoiling, spoiling them until they don't know hardship or appreciation!" Mother Qi huffed.

"Alright, alright, it's the New Year, can't we just have some peace? Spending a bit of money is worth your clucking and fussing." Father Qi was getting impatient too.

"Oh, now that you've had your good days, you've forgotten about the hard times?" Mother Qi scoffed; "Remember back in the day, we even tried eating tree bark and clay from Guanyin [Buddhist goddess] statue pits, but nowadays, people don't know about that, they only know how to splurge..."

"Who's splurging now? Taiguo's mother."

As Mother Qi turned around, her eyes immediately reddened.

At the entrance of the courtyard stood a woman of about the same age as her, but the crucial part was that in her arms she held a chubby, fair-skinned child.

That was Granny Pan from the house next door, the child she was holding was her grandson, only a couple of months old. The little fellow was both fair and plump, and those little fists, oh my, assertively plump, genuinely adorable and greatly coveted.

Granny Pan's son, Pan Shujun, ran a small business in the city and came back for the New Year too, along with his son, which made everyone extremely envious.

Keep in mind, Pan Shujun only got married last summer, and at this New Year, he was already bringing his son back home, which meant the bride was already pregnant at the time of the marriage.

No one talked about whether that was respectable or not, the world now is more open than it used to be, and what's coveted is the grandchild.

"Are you coming over for a visit?" Mother Qi walked over, her eyes green with envy as she teased him, "Xiao Hu, call me granny, come on, come on."

"Look how much you adore him, you better hurry up and have your daughter-in-law give you one. I just saw Taiguo and his wife going out, didn't I?" Granny Pan said with a smile.

At the mention of this, Mother Qi felt unhappy, "I don't have your luck. You got a grandson less than a year after your daughter-in-law came through the door. As for me, who knows until which Monkey Year and Horse Month I'll have to wait!"

"What, your daughter-in-law can't have kids?" Granny Pan was somewhat gossipy.

This remark, even if Mother Qi didn't like Cheng Su, was not something she'd admit; otherwise, if it spread, how could she show her face?

"No, that's not the case, they just said, they've just married, there's no rush, they'll think about it after the New Year! See, isn't it going to be the death of me?" Mother Qi was squeezing Xiao Hu's hand, which was so soft, so chubby, just adorable.

Chapter 518: Displeasure

"Look at young people these days, they just care about having fun and never think about us. Just imagine, while we still have the physical strength for walking, we can help take care of the kids if they have any. What's so bad about that?" Granny Pan said sympathetically after hearing Mother Qi's words.

Mother Qi felt as if she had found an ally and eagerly responded, "Exactly, that's the point. But there's nothing I can do, they don't want to, can I force them to have children?"

"So, are they using contraception?" Granny Pan asked, bouncing her grandson on her knee.

"If they're not planning on having kids, they have to use it, right? I didn't ask about these things. As a mother-in-law, should I really be meddling in their bedroom matters?" Mother Qi said, embarrassed.

"That's true," Granny Pan said, also feeling embarrassed, "But you still have to talk to your son about it. A daughter-in-law, after all, didn't come out of your own belly and can't have the same heart as you. If you want grandchildren, you should start with Taiguo. In my opinion, with birth control, there are also times when it can't be avoided. If it happens, they'd have to have the child, right?"

Her words struck Mother Qi like a revelation and she felt a jolt. She thought carefully, if there was an accident, the child would have to be born, wouldn't it?

She thought about others who had children whenever they wanted. In their generation, it was the same—all the kids just came one after another; there was no such thing as contraception, not like now, with all the talk about family planning. The village women's leader even organized meetings, advocating birth control and distributing condoms for free, teaching how to use them. Oh my, it was all so embarrassing!

After Granny Pan left, Mother Qi kept thinking about the possibility. But asking her son about something like that, wouldn't it be mortifying?

She thought for a moment, put down the basin she was holding, and walked into Qi Taiguo's room.

Father Qi saw her acting all mysterious after talking with the neighbor and couldn't help shaking his head.

Cheng Su and the others were aimlessly wandering around town, completely unaware that their mother-in-law was fretting over their birth control plans.

"There's not many shops open for New Year's Eve today, huh?" Cheng Su noted that many shops had closed their doors, with only a few still open.

"Those that are open are probably run by the owners themselves. They take any business they can get. The ones that are closed are likely renting and have gone back to their hometowns for the festivities. It's fine, let's just walk around." Taiguo took her hand, saying, "There might not be many shops open today, due to New Year's Eve. After the first day of the New Year, people will be visiting relatives and such, needing to buy presents like fruit, so there will definitely be some shops open."

Cheng Su smiled sweetly, "Mm!"

They chatted and browsed, buying some fireworks at a grocery shop, envying a child nearby who was looking on eagerly. Cheng Su was delighted.

"Big brother?"

Someone called out to them. Taiguo looked over and saw a young man dressed in jeans, with a slicked-back hair and a jacket, smiling at them; a long-haired girl stood next to him.

"Jianming."

That was his cousin from his uncle's family, Qi Jianming.

"It really is big brother." Jianming walked up, paused when he saw Cheng Su, and then greeted her with a smile, "Sister-in-law!"

"Hello!" Cheng Su smiled.

"I was just thinking of going back to have a few drinks with you, big brother. I didn't expect to bump into you here. Are you out shopping with my sister-in-law? That's great, let's you and me go have a drink." Jianming laughed and said, turning to the woman beside him, "Say hello to big brother, sister-in-law. Big brother, this is my girlfriend, Taozi."

"Big brother, sister-in-law!" The girl named Taozi greeted sweetly, her eyes darting around, moving from Cheng Su to Qi Taiguo, and then settling on him.

Cheng Su saw this and although she was smiling on the outside, she wasn't feeling pleased on the inside.

Chapter 519: Ignorance of the Bigger Picture

After parting ways with Qi Jianming, Cheng Su said to Qi Taiguo as they were walking back, "I don't like Brother Ming's girlfriend."

They had run into each other in town, and as the saying goes, a chance encounter is better than a planned meeting, so they found a small tavern, ordered some dishes, got a bottle of wine, and sat down to chat.

The girl named Taozi was very cheerful and sweet-talking, always referring to them as "Big Brother" and "Sister-in-law," but Cheng Su didn't like her.

Because her eyes were so shifty, always spinning around, it made her seem too sly, too restless.

Beyond that, she was also a bit impolite.

"The young lady has a sweet mouth, why don't you like her?" Qi Taiguo, having drunk about half a jin of liquor, asked with a flushed face and a laugh.

"As soon as she sat down, she started critiquing my clothes and overall look, which was very impolite," Cheng Su thought of Taozi's confident and smug expression, her lips curling slightly.

What did she say again? "Sister-in-law, your down jacket looks really nice, but I think black would suit you better, make you look slimmer too, really, all our sisters do this."

Cheng Su asked her what she meant by "our sisters," and Taozi said she sold fashion in a clothing store and because of her good figure, she even acted as a mannequin for customers to try on clothes.

That was bearable since she was Qi Jianming's girlfriend, but during the meal, she couldn't stop looking at Qi Taiguo, asking him about life in the military, her eyes practically glued to him.

Doing this, where was she putting Jianming and herself?

"I knew it, you're just jealous again. That girl is young and doesn't understand much," Qi Taiguo laughed after he heard this.

Cheng Su retorted, "How is this being jealous? I just don't like her being so 'animated.' She's not that young, she's already dating someone, yet she lacks respect. I just think she's not a good match for Jianming."

Qi Taiguo sighed, "Looks like we'll need to have a daughter in the future, given how picky you are about choosing daughters-in-law!"

"Sure, as long as your parents are happy with it, I'd be willing to have a daughter," Cheng Su said, giving him a sidelong glance on purpose.

Qi Taiguo smiled and said nothing.

And Qi Jianming was having a go at his own girlfriend.

"What was that earlier? Staring at my big brother all the time. Doing that, where do you leave my face? I'm the one you're dating."

Having worked away from home for a year, Qi Jianming had seen the world and wasn't without discernment. All through the meal, Taozi, chattering like a sparrow, kept bothering Qi Taiguo with questions about this and that, while Cheng Su was looking more and more displeased, and he started to catch on.

Taozi was a bit too enthusiastic about Qi Taiguo.

"What, are you jealous? I've always admired military men, you know that," Taozi whined.

But truth be told, having a comparison showed who was better, and that Qi Jianguo really was a manly man, so dashing.

Qi Jianming snorted, "I don't know about other things, but I know you lack sense and propriety. Didn't you see the look on my sister-in-law's face?"

Taozi's expression cooled, "What about her look? I just talked a little more with big brother, and she pulls a face? Is she that domineering?" She paused and then said, "And you, what's your deal? Coming back here for the New Year was your idea, now that I've followed you back, you're showing me attitude, scolding me? Qi Jianming, what's your issue? If it's that you don't want to date anymore, just say so, and I'll leave! Who cares."

Qi Jianming's face also darkened at her outburst, but since he really did ask her to come back, and their parents were overjoyed, how could he explain if she left? He had to swallow his anger and appease her.

Only then did Taozi let it go, but in her heart, she somewhat resented Cheng Su, seeing her as uncultured and making a fuss over nothing, Humph!

Chapter 520: Hurry Up and Branch Out

Cheng Su and her husband returned home to find the Qi family already preparing the Chinese New Year's Eve dinner. They came back late and brought a bundle of fireworks, which caused Mother Qi's face to stretch long with displeasure.

"You went drinking, didn't you?" Mother Qi's nose was very sensitive, and she smelled the alcohol on them.

"We bumped into Jianming on the way and had a couple of drinks," explained Taiguo.

Mother Qi pursed her lips and walked into the kitchen.

Cheng Su stuck her tongue out at Taiguo and followed her mother-in-law in, enthusiastically offering, "Mom, what else needs to be cooked? Let me help!"

Mother Qi instructed Cheng Su in the cooking while she seized the opportunity to pull Taiguo aside as he was chatting with Father Qi.

"Mom, what's up?"

Mother Qi hemmed and hawed, thinking of the grandchildren she had yet to see and plucked up the courage to ask, "About that, didn't you and your wife say you wanted to wait a bit before having kids?"

Taiguo's scalp tingled at the question; not this again.

"Mom, we had a good talk before, remember? We said we're not having kids now to give our child a better environment to come into the world," he said.

"I know. Your mom's memory isn't that bad," Mother Qi clicked her tongue and asked, "So what kind of contraception are you two using now? You're not taking pills, are you?"

"How could we do that? Pills are bad for your health. The Women's Federation community provides free contraceptives, so don't worry, Mom!" Taiguo was a bit embarrassed discussing this with his mother—it was still somewhat awkward.

Mother Qi's eyes flickered, "That's not a hundred percent foolproof, you know. Just in case, I mean, if it happened, you'd have to have the baby, right?"

"Of course, if it happens by accident, we'll certainly have the baby. But don't worry, Mom, we're very careful," Taiguo laughed.

Mother Qi twisted her lips and muttered, "I actually hope you're not careful. It would be better if an accident happened!"

"Mom, what did you say?"

"Nothing much. Is dinner ready? I was just asking." Mother Qi waved her hand and went back to her own tasks.

Taiguo was left feeling utterly baffled.

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As night fell, the Qi family's dining table was filled with dishes and each seat had a wine glass filled to the brim.

The family of six sat down together and Father Qi, with a beaming smile, said some auspicious words. As the head of the family, he picked up some food with his chopsticks, signaling the start of the New Year's Eve dinner.

After a few bites, Taiguo picked up his wine glass and toasted his elders.

Cheng Su was not to be outdone and lifted her glass, saying, "Dad, Mom, I wish you health and happiness all year round."

"Very good, I also wish you and Taiguo a harmonious marriage," Father Qi said with a smile.

But Mother Qi said, "I don't ask for much, just hurry up and add branches to the Qi family tree, and I'll be happy."

Father Qi kicked her under the table.

Cheng Su was not annoyed but smiled and said, "Mom, don't worry. When the time is right, we'll definitely give you a chubby grandson."

Of course, that 'right time' had no deadline.

Cheng Su also toasted her sisters-in-law and brother-in-law, offering well-wishes for success in their studies.

The family laughed and talked as they enjoyed their meal, and Cheng Su handed out red packets as a New Year's allowance to Qi Fengping and the others. She also gave a larger red packet to the elders as a sign of filial piety.

Qi Fengping peeked inside and said to Qi Jianguo, "She's quite generous."

Qi Jianguo didn't say anything but put it away carefully; he could use it to buy books.

When it was time to stay up late for the New Year, Taiguo set off fireworks in the yard, and each burst of color was a brilliant spectacle in the night sky.

Qi Jianguo and Qi Fengping joined in their revelry, and the courtyard was filled with laughter, while Mother Qi winced and hissed with pain—those weren't just fireworks burning; it was money!

At midnight, as every household set off fireworks to welcome the New Year, the sound of firecrackers rose and fell. As Cheng Su watched the fireworks bloom in the night sky, she planted a kiss on Taiguo's face and said, "Husband, happy New Year!"