

The 80s 551

Chapter 551: We Won't Muddle in These Troubled Waters

Cheng Su had transmigrated, and although she had taken over the body of the original owner who had parents and siblings, to be honest, because they were not her biological parents and she hadn't spent much time with them, she lacked a sense of belonging with them.

It was only now, watching her protective Father Cheng and her Mother Cheng, who looked at her son-in-law with complaints in her eyes, that Cheng Su felt a sense of belonging, and the warmth and love of parents.

It was only just now that she felt that she was not alone in this world, that she too had parents and family. Although Mother Cheng could sometimes be quite harsh with her words, her intentions were always for her good.

Cheng Su was moved. She wiped the corner of her eye and a smile curled up at the corners of her mouth.

Qi Taiguo's scalp exploded, and he hastily made his position clear, "Father-in-law, I dare not fail to protect her. It's just that I haven't done well normally, but I truly want to spend my life with Susu. I've never thought about divorcing her. I—I love her!"

Cheng Su was stunned for a moment, then glared at Qi Taiguo. She had never heard him say that before!

"Taiguo, just saying you love her is not enough; it's about how you act. I understand that a wife can be changed, but a mother cannot. It's right for you to be filial to your parents. But between your mother and Susu, I hope you can stand more on her side. You should know that in the eyes of the Qi family members, Susu is just an outsider. She can only rely on you, and you alone," Father Cheng said, shaking his head.

Qi Taiguo's face was full of guilt, and he nodded, "Father-in-law, I understand."

"Your mother-in-law and I, naturally, also hope that you two can live together for a long and happy life, but our daughter is our own flesh and blood. Even if she is married, she is still our daughter; that can't

change. If one day you fail to protect her, the doors of the Cheng family will always be open to her. Even if the two of us old men are gone, she still has her brother." Father Cheng looked at Cheng Zhi.

Cheng Zhi then said, "Brother-in-law, I'd like to side with you, but this time, my dad is right." So, that's where he stood.

The Cheng family's united front made Qi Taiguo feel like he was on the verge of a great battle, pouring wine for his father-in-law with trembling hands while seeking Cheng Su's help.

But Cheng Su acted as if she didn't see it.

Qi Taiguo's face crumpled with distress.

At the Qi family, the mood was also somber. Father Qi was very uncomfortable inside; who would feel good after such discord during the New Year festivities?

So, after barely touching his food, he retreated to his room.

The great-aunt's face was unpleasant as she said to Mother Qi, "He better not be showing his displeasure with me!"

Mother Qi forced a smile, "Big sister, how could that be? Old Qi has always respected you the most. He's probably annoyed with Taiguo's wife. We can't even have a peaceful New Year." Upon hearing this, the great-aunt snorted, scoffed, and said, "Your daughter-in-law really needs to be dealt with properly. Otherwise, sooner or later, she'll turn the Qi family upside down, and it'll be renamed the Cheng family!"

"I'd like to see her try!" Mother Qi slammed the table.

Not far away, Zhang Jisheng took Qi Fenglian by the hand and said, "Let's go back tomorrow. We'd better not get involved in the muddy waters of your maternal family."

"But, Taiguo's wife has already gone back to her parents' home; how can we just leave now?" We should at least coax Cheng Su back home first!

Zhang Jisheng said, "Are you being foolish? If we don't go back, and things get even more chaotic, who are you going to support here? No matter whom you support, it won't end well. It's better to leave cleanly, and no blame can fall on you. Besides, you've already arranged the time to start work with her." He paused, then added, "At most, before we leave tomorrow, we can visit the Cheng family as relatives!"

He rarely had constructive suggestions, but this one made sense. Qi Fenglian thought for a moment, then agreed. Moreover, she felt that the great-aunt was somewhat unrelenting.

Chapter 552: If He Doesn't Understand, She'll Teach

Qi Taiguo sat on the stone slabs under the eaves, holding a cigarette in his hand, staring into the vast swirling snowflakes in a daze.

Suddenly, his shoulder was pushed by someone. Looking up, it was Cheng Su.

Wrapping her arms around herself, she said, "Why are you sitting out here in the cold wind? Either go back to your family's home or come inside to sleep."

Qi Taiguo said, "I won't go back," and pulled her down beside him. "Keep me company for a while, will you?"

"It's still snowing, I don't want to freeze to death out here," Cheng Su sniffled.

Qi Taiguo pulled her into his embrace, wrapping her with his coat and body, and said, "You're not cold now, are you?"

Indeed, it was quite warm.

Cheng Su cozily settled into his arms and said, "Don't think that because of this, I'll go back home with you. I've said it, I'm staying with my parents these days."

"Alright," Qi Taiguo's chin rested on her head as he asked, "Susu, are you really mad at me, blaming me?"

Cheng Su stiffened a bit, slightly bowing her head, "Why bring this up now?"

"Your father scolded me rightly. I failed to protect you, leaving you isolated and unsupported in our family. I just thought that they were nothing serious, that little disagreements are common in every family. I thought, I imagined that keeping the peace was enough. You're so strong, so independent, so confident, I thought, you could handle it," Qi Taiguo spoke somberly.

But his father-in-law's reprimanding made him recollect the past half year, Cheng Su's compromises and avoidance, up to her outburst today. Was it because she was driven into a corner with no way out?

There's a saying, 'When forbearance is exhausted, there's no need to endure any further.' Was that the case for Cheng Su?

"In my mind, once you married into the family, you became a part of the Qi family, my person, not an outsider. But my father-in-law's words have confused me. In the eyes of our family, do you only count as an outsider? Susu, I don't understand," Qi Taiguo pressed his face against her neck and said, "I don't understand, you're my wife, and in the future, you'll bear the Qi family name when entering the ancestral grave. How could you be an outsider?"

He was straightforward, with low emotional intelligence, holding on to one principle. He didn't bend or understand the heart of a woman, so how could he understand?

He didn't understand, so she would teach him.

Cheng Su wiped the tear from the corner of her eye and said, "Qi Taiguo, I married you, and I'm your wife. But in the eyes of your mother and the others, I'll always be an outsider who invaded your family. Even if I give birth to children in the future, deep down, they'll only truly accept the grandchild as their own, not me. Don't say it's not like this. This is the old generation's way of thinking, just like how a married daughter is seen as someone belonging to another family, someone who can only return to her parents' house as a visiting 'daughter-in-law.'"

"You say once married, a daughter becomes a 'daughter-in-law,' and at the in-laws, not being cherished and seen as an outsider, what else can a woman rely on besides her husband? If he doesn't stand by her side, doesn't that leave the woman isolated and alone?" Cheng Su continued, "You ask me to yield everywhere, that 'good enough' is enough, but am I really that spoiled and headstrong? Isn't it she who provoked me? Everyone is an independent individual; I have my thoughts and temper and was also raised by parents. I endure for your sake and because it hasn't yet touched my principles and bottom line. But once it does, Qi Taiguo, I'm sorry, even if it means divorcing you, I will not endure any further."

Qi Taiguo's body shuddered, and he hugged her tightly, "I'm sorry, from now on, please teach me more!"

Cheng Su bowed her head, murmuring, "I ask for nothing more than for you not to leave me feeling cold and hopeless."

Chapter 553: This Family's Surname is Qi, Not Deng

Qi Taiguo and Cheng Su did not return all night, and the next day, Mother Qi's face was as black as the bottom of a pot. It's the New Year, and yet this commotion has made it impossible to have a peaceful holiday.

After breakfast, Qi Fenglian and her family mentioned that they wanted to leave and go back home.

Mother Qi said, "There's nothing much going on, stay for another two days."

Qi Fenglian replied, "We won't stay, we might have guests at home, and it wouldn't be good for us all to be gone." She then craned her neck and, pulling Mother Qi to one side, spoke softly.

"What are you doing, who are you guarding against!"

"Mom, I'd advise you not to get too involved with my aunt's matter, it's not worth it to make a fuss with Taiguo's wife over them," Qi Fenglian persuaded.

Mother Qi glared at her and said, "What are you talking about? She is your aunt, now that she is having a hard time, can't you offer some support instead of siding with outsiders to trample on her? Do you think she is not miserable enough? How much benefit have you received from Cheng Su?"

It was infuriating, her son following his wife, and now her daughter was also singing a different tune for Cheng Su's sake. Just as her eldest daughter had said, would this family have to change its name to Cheng in the future?

Qi Fenglian was also irritated, but she restrained her anger and said, "Mom, I think you're getting more confused as you get older. Who is the outsider, can't you tell? It's true that Auntie is your elder sister, but she is married to the Deng family. Now she comes to visit relatives; isn't she seeking a future for the Deng family with Taiguo's help? Isn't that for the Deng family, not the Qi family?"

Mother Qi was taken aback.

"And Cheng Su, she is Taiguo's wife, part of the Qi family. The children she bears will bear the Qi surname; aren't they part of the Qi family? You talk about outsiders, so who are the outsiders? For the sake of Auntie, you are disagreeing with Cheng Su, and now you've driven her away. If she really gets fed up and doesn't come back, what will become of our Qi family? What about Taiguo? And will the Deng family suffer even a slight loss from this? We don't need to do this math, do we?"

Mother Qi pursed her lips.

"Besides, who goes to visit relatives and manages to drive the host away? I've never seen anything like it. Now, look, during the New Year, it's the Qi family who isn't at peace, our Qi family that's disturbed. People are watching, but they are only seeing the joke of the Qi family, do you think it's about the Deng family? Who knows about the Deng family?" Qi Fenglian said, irritated.

It seemed like her words did make sense.

Seeing her old mother calculating, Qi Fenglian continued, "Anyway, I've done the math for you, you know how to calculate it. It's pitiful for Auntie, but you can't use pity to gain anything. Even yesterday's incident, called a misunderstanding, still caused such a fuss, what's the point? Mom, even if Cheng Su is not great, she's still the Qi family's daughter-in-law. If she's doing well, doesn't it mean the Qi family is doing well?"

"No matter how you put it, you're always right," Mother Qi said sheepishly.

"All in all, Mom, I just don't agree with you taking a stance against your own family for the sake of others. This family bears the Qi surname, not Deng—don't you understand that?" Qi Fenglian shook her head. "As for Auntie's words, just listen and let them go. Don't take it to heart. I'm going to visit Cheng Su's parents' home before I go back, to persuade her too. If she and Taiguo come back, Mom, please don't make a scene. If you really drive this daughter-in-law away, I think you'll be the one crying."

Mother Qi opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but could not come up with a single retort.

After Qi Fenglian and her family left, the aunt pulled her and asked, "Fenglian was whispering with you for so long, what did she say?"

Mother Qi's eyes flickered, "Nothing much, she was just talking about her family affairs."

The aunt looked suspicious, not buying it. The expression had been so serious; she had a feeling they had been talking about her.

Chapter 554: Old Qi Awakens

Qi Fenglian and the others really took a detour to Myrica Rubra Village, arriving at Cheng Su's parental home, and didn't leave until after lunch.

Mother Cheng, holding Cheng Su's hand, asked, "What did your Elder Sister say?"

"What else could it be? She came to smooth things over, to comfort me, and to tell me not to be as petty as her aunt, saying her aunt had lived alone for so long that she had become somewhat gloomy," Cheng Su replied.

Mother Cheng then said, "Your Elder Sister is still reasonable."

Cheng Su nodded. If that weren't the case, would she have helped her and let her work in the shop?

Cheng Su's principle was to respect others as she was respected: if her Elder Sister respected her, she naturally would not treat her unfairly.

"And what about you? It's still the New Year, and Taiguo also came back with you last night. You should temper your anger a bit; it's enough now. Don't let people gossip about your petty squabbles!" Mother Cheng advised.

Cheng Su furrowed her brow and said, "What can I do? Can't I stay at home for a couple of days? I really don't want to go back -- their faces just annoy me!"

"So are you going to stay at your parents' house for the rest of your life?" Mother Cheng glared at her.

Pouting, Cheng Su kicked at the dirt beneath her feet and said, "Anyway, I just don't want to go back right now."

Mother Cheng wanted to say more, but Qi Taiguo walked over, and she stopped talking.

"Mother-in-law, I'm going to head back home first," Qi Taiguo told Mother Cheng.

"Ah, oh." Mother Cheng looked towards Cheng Su, giving her meaningful glances.

Cheng Su pursed her lips, reluctantly opening her mouth.

"Susu, if you don't want to go back, you can stay here, and I'll come to get you tomorrow, how about that?" Qi Taiguo interjected, "We'll return to Qing City tomorrow afternoon."

Cheng Su was astonished; he actually wasn't insisting on her returning to her marital home.

"How can that be okay? You came together; you should go back together," Mother Cheng insisted.

"It's fine, Mother-in-law. Susu is comfortable here, let her stay. It's not about these one or two days – after a busy year, let her have some comfort for a few days," Qi Taiguo said with a smile.

Cheng Su was completely surprised. Had this man had an epiphany?

Mother Cheng still wanted to speak, but Father Cheng came over and said, "Alright, since that's the case, Taiguo, come pick up your wife tomorrow."

"Yes, Father-in-law."

Qi Taiguo left.

Mother Cheng turned to her husband and said, "Are you confused too? During the New Year's, we should give them a bit of face."

"What's wrong with staying two days? The Qi family is so troublesome, let them be; we'll see if they really treat that aunt like family," Father Cheng huffed and called to his daughter, "Girl, let's go inside."

"Alright." Cheng Su, overjoyed, wrapped her father's arm and entered the house.

As for Qi Taiguo, when he returned home, both Father Qi and Mother Qi wrinkled their brows as they saw him alone, looking behind him, noticing Cheng Su was not there.

"Where's your wife?" Father Qi asked.

"She's staying at her parents' place for a couple of days; I'll pick her up tomorrow, and we'll go back to Qing City in the afternoon," Qi Taiguo answered.

Father Qi's eyebrows knit together tightly, and he pursed his lips.

Mother Qi said with a grim face, "She's really grown bold, hasn't she? Does she need to be carried back on a palanquin?"

Qi Taiguo, looking at his mother, said, "Mom, please don't say such things again. If you really don't like her, from now on, Cheng Su and I will come back less and interact less."

Mother Qi was taken aback. "What are you saying?"

Were her ears malfunctioning? What was this boy talking about – come back less, interact less?

Was he resenting her, threatening her?

Qi Taiguo went inside.

"See what you've done? Are you happy now? No sense of priority, no understanding of right and wrong," Father Qi snorted coldly and walked away.

Mother Qi's vision went dark for a moment, nearly fainting. One by one, were they all turning against her?

Chapter 555: Aunt Defeated and Fled

The aunt was taken aback to see Qi Taiguo return alone and her impression of Cheng Su worsened. What an assertive daughter-in-law, she thought, showing no sense of wrongdoing at all.

"Taiguo, you really can't indulge that wife of yours. Otherwise, she'll end up walking all over you. With such a temper, how can she be so unsubmitting?" the aunt couldn't help but advise Qi Taiguo.

In her view, having such a daughter-in-law, Qi Taiguo had really been cheated.

Upon hearing this, Qi Taiguo wasn't as 'obedient' as he used to be. He suddenly remembered what his father-in-law had said the night before. Though initially not quite convinced, now it was clear to him that what he had thought – that his family considered Cheng Su as one of their own – wasn't really the case.

So she truly was alone and unsupported!

"Aunt, Cheng Su is very good. She is independent and strong; she can do business and make money; she keeps our home neat and clean; and she takes good care of me and treats my parents well. So even if she does walk over me, I don't mind. She's my wife; if I don't indulge her, who will?" Qi Taiguo said indifferently.

The aunt felt choked by his response, swallowing her prepared lecture and looking at him as if she were dumbfounded.

"Being able to marry Cheng Su is the blessing of my life, aunt. What you've said, I'll only listen to this one last time. From now on, anyone who speaks ill of her is speaking ill of me," Qi Taiguo added before leaving the room.

"Everything's turned upside down, Erzhen, have you seen this? What did I tell you? Your Qi family will eventually change its surname to Cheng. Look at them, all bewitched, even disrespecting their elders," the aunt leaped up.

Mother Qi had a splitting headache. She had just been rebuked by her husband and given a cold shoulder by her son, and now her elder sister was speaking out, causing her head to throb violently.

"Elder sister, please stop talking, I'm upset enough as it is!"

Hearing this, the aunt's face darkened and she sneered, "It seems you find me annoying and meddlesome too, don't you? That's right; a widow like me can't reach your family's high branch."

Standing up, she said, "If that's the case, consider this a mistaken good intention on my part. I'll leave now, and in the future, I won't trouble you anymore."

Mother Qi then said, "It's almost afternoon; how about leaving tomorrow instead?"

The aunt didn't truly want to leave; she was just irate. But Mother Qi's words made her even angrier, and with years of being strong-willed and stubborn, she couldn't bear to stay any longer. She immediately called her daughter-in-law and the others to pack up and leave.

Mother Qi did want to keep them from leaving, but with her husband and son both blaming her, along with her elder daughter, and even her usually silent younger son saying that the aunt was overreacting this time, she couldn't help but become alert to the situation.

Even if they were blood sisters, everyone had their own families. To put it bluntly, they had lived most of their lives. Could sisterly love be closer than that of a husband and son?

After all, the Qi family was named Qi. Surely they couldn't let discord ruin their peace, right?

So, Mother Qi just mentioned the idea of leaving passively and didn't insist further. Instead, she packed up many special local products and also secretly gave away fifty yuan.

"Elder sister, I don't have much to offer you. We're both at this age; buy whatever you want to eat, and don't scrimp. And about Weixia, don't worry, I will have Taiguo find a decent government job," Mother Qi promised.

The aunt wanted to scoff at this, but upon further reflection, considering the state of her own family, she lacked the conviction to refuse. Of all the relatives with prospects, Qi Taiguo likely stood alone.

Clenching the fifty yuan, the aunt pursed her lips, led the children with her, and left with a belly full of stifled anger.

Chapter 556: A Drink and a Peck

On the fifth day of the Lunar New Year, Taiguo Qi came to the Cheng family as promised to pick up his wife, and to everyone's surprise, Father Qi came along with him.

Father Qi's intention was to pay a New Year's visit to his relatives. Since the two families lived close by, he decided to come over.

With her father-in-law's arrival, Cheng Su, who had originally planned to leave directly from there, changed her mind after being advised by Father Cheng.

"You should stand firm when you need to be firm, and yield when you should yield, giving someone a way out will make your own path smoother. By conducting yourself well, you won't give others anything to talk about," Father Cheng had said.

Cheng Su naturally took the hint and left with the local products Mother Cheng had prepared.

On the way, Taiguo quietly told her that his aunt and her family had already left, which caused Cheng Su to pause for a moment, her heart slightly relieved. She really didn't want to see her aunt's face.

"Big daughter-in-law, your mother-in-law is getting more and more confused and can't tell right from wrong. But don't worry, I'm still in charge of this household. I see everything that's black and white, and you shouldn't feel burdened. Your father hopes both you and Taiguo live well. Your merits and good deeds are also seen and remembered in my heart," Father Qi solemnly said to Cheng Su before they entered the house.

Cheng Su was touched and replied, "Dad, I'm sorry to have worried you. I, I also have my flaws and have not done well enough."

Only then did Father Qi smile, "You've done very well. Come inside, we'll eat, and then you can go. I'll make you a braised fish for lunch."

Cheng Su smiled sweetly, "Thank you, Dad!"

As they entered, Mother Qi was out feeding the chickens with leftover grains. She saw them returning and snorted, ignoring them.

"Mom, we're back. We'll return to Qing City after lunch," Taiguo called out.

"Whether you come back or not, I can't control you!" Mother Qi retorted without turning around.

"Ignore her, she's just being contrary," Father Qi beckoned Cheng Su inside.

Mother Qi caught a glimpse from the corner of her eye and her face twisted with anger as she felt a sour pang in her heart.

With her father-in-law speaking up for her, Cheng Su had no reason to put on airs, and by lunchtime, she too pitched in with the cooking.

Qi Fengping secretly said to Mother Qi, "We really can't afford to offend this sister-in-law. Dad's supporting her, and so is the eldest brother."

Mother Qi's heart felt even worse, and she wanted to explode, but remembering her eldest son's words that he would visit less if she was displeased made her realize that this would mean seeing even less of her son.

She had to suppress her feelings, which pained her deeply.

After lunch, when Taiguo and the others were about to leave, Mother Qi couldn't bear to let them go and finally spoke up, "Can't you leave tomorrow? You've only been home for a few days, I can count the days on one hand, and you haven't even had a proper New Year."

"Mom, I have to be on duty tonight if I go back!" Taiguo's face showed no signs of reluctance, causing Mother Qi's heart to tremble and her head to buzz.

Before she could say anything else, Father Qi interjected, "That's enough, don't delay them. If they wait any longer, it will be too late to get back. They can come back next time when they have leave." He thought to himself, if not for your eldest daughter's scene, would this New Year have been unpleasant?

Mother Qi knew what he resented, and feeling guilty, she kept her mouth shut, gathering local produce and other special items from the house to pack in a sack for them to take back.

Cheng Su took out one hundred yuan and handed it to Father Qi, saying, "Dad, my shop is reopening on the eighth day of the lunar month, and I also need to get the new shop ready. I can't stay at home to take care of you for a few days. Take this money and buy some nice food."

"That's too much money, I don't want it. Keep it for yourself, you have plenty of expenses!" Father Qi hastily refused.

"It's okay, we have enough!" Cheng Su insisted, smiling.

After Father Qi tried several times to refuse it without success, he finally accepted the money and repeatedly reminded them to look after their health, telling them that money couldn't be earned all at once but health was the most important.

Seeing Cheng Su give money to the old man, Mother Qi's eyes reddened. She waited a long while for Cheng Su's indication of generosity toward her, frustrated to no end, thinking to herself that Cheng Su was playing favorites.

However, she failed to consider that in this world, affairs of the heart are reciprocal. How you treat others is how they will treat you.

Chapter 557: The Family Affair Has Spread

Father Qi and the others saw off Qi Taiguo to the car, still waving even when the car had driven a few meters away, Cheng Su saw and leaned out the window to shout, "Dad, go back now, it's too cold. Come to Qing City when you have time, and call us if you miss us."

She completely ignored the mother-in-law standing by Father Qi, as if she didn't exist at all, not even mentioning a word to her.

Mother Qi's face was even darker than the clouds in the sky.

"Oh, okay," Father Qi replied with a beaming smile, shouting back.

As the car drove away and his smile still hadn't faded, this scene was witnessed by the villagers, who came over to strike up a conversation.

"It's only the fifth day, and your son and daughter-in-law are leaving already?"

Father Qi explained, "Taiguo has to be on duty tonight, he needs to hurry back, and the daughter-in-law also has to work."

"I see. Hey, Old Man Qi, you're looking quite sharp in that outfit," the person remarked, eyeing Father Qi's new clothes with a hint of envy.

Father Qi tugged at the hem of his coat, grinning, "Nice, isn't it? It's a gift from my daughter-in-law, cost a pretty penny."

"Your daughter-in-law is really filial towards you, you're blessed indeed."

"Right, right," Father Qi said, visibly pleased.

Mother Qi couldn't take it anymore, she tugged at him and snapped, "Let's go, enough chatter!"

With that, she didn't wait for him but marched off into the village in a huff.

Father Qi exchanged a few more words with the person before he followed suit.

Mother Qi returned home feeling dejected, while next door, Granny Pan was taking her grandson out for a stroll. The moment she saw Mother Qi coming back, she hurried over and asked eagerly, "Has your daughter-in-law left?"

Mother Qi frowned and grunted in acknowledgment.

"Didn't manage to coax her back? She's still angry even after coming home? She left so soon," Granny Pan was very gossipy.

Mother Qi sensed something off in her words and questioned, "What do you mean angry or not angry? What are you talking about?"

"I've heard all about it, they say your eldest sister and your daughter-in-law had a quarrel, and it angered her so much she went back to her parents' house!" Granny Pan inquired, "What exactly happened?"

The rumor had spread?

Mother Qi was stunned, how could she have picked up no wind of it?

"Who told you that? Who is stirring up trouble during the New Year, spreading others' private matters?" She demanded vehemently.

In asking, she even managed to scold Granny Pan.

Granny Pan's face couldn't quite maintain its composure as she sheepishly said, "These past couple of days I've been visiting relatives, just heard about it recently, who knew who started it? Anyway, it's going around that your eldest sister and your daughter-in-law had a falling out, and it upset her so much that she went back to her parents' house at night! During the New Year, when you should be visiting to pay respects, to have the host leave in a huff, that's something only your family can manage, it's like the sparrows ousting the doves from their nest, isn't it?"

Mother Qi trembled with rage.

All because of Cheng Su and her fierce temper, a small matter had been blown out of proportion, and she had even gone home late at night, obviously something was amiss.

But how had it come to be that the eldest sister was to blame for her leaving? Who was eavesdropping on their argument?

"They say your eldest sister is domineering and unreasonable, accusing people unjustly, and insisting your daughter-in-law is to blame, pressuring her to remarry and such. Tsk, I thought that wasn't right. Your daughter-in-law is capable and has quite the presence; she doesn't seem like one to force someone to remarry. Your daughter-in-law isn't the type to get into street brawls with her mouth, maybe your eldest sister was too aggressive?" Granny Pan went on and on, praising Cheng Su.

"Enough!" Mother Qi was so angry she gritted her teeth, "Mind your own family's business before you meddle in others'!"

With that, she stormed into the house.

Having the family business aired like this during the New Year was truly face-losing!

Chapter 558: Calling You Stupid and You Won't Admit It

Mother Qi entered the room and plopped down, so angry it truly made her liver and heart ache. After all these years, there had never been such a shameful incident in the family.

And yet, now, during the Chinese New Year of all times, tales had spread, painting her eldest sister as overbearing and domineering, and even she, as the mother-in-law, was described as formidable.

She was formidable? It was clearly Cheng Su who had the temper!

Who else would run back to her parents' home just because the elders scolded her a bit? Look at Wenjing, the daughter-in-law of the eldest sister's family. When the eldest sister coughed, she wouldn't even dare to grunt.

It was only Cheng Su who could storm the heavens!

And Taiguo as well, for her sake he had said that they should lessen contact in the future. It's like gaining a wife and forgetting his mother. Doesn't he think about who it was that raised him from a baby?

The more Mother Qi thought about it, the more suffocated she felt inside, and the tears welled up in her eyes.

Father Qi entered the room with a cigarette in his mouth, saw her wiping away tears, but didn't ask anything. He just walked over to the cupboard, grabbed the thermos, and drank some water.

Mother Qi glanced at the coat he was wearing, and thinking about how he had persistently taken Cheng Su's side, couldn't help feeling angry and remarked, "Aren't you grand? Our family can't even move around outside during the New Year."

"What is it you're getting worked up about now?" Father Qi turned his head to give her a look.

"What am I doing? It's all because of your precious daughter-in-law. You go outside and listen, what are people saying? They say my eldest sister is domineering, they say I am formidable, banding together to attack the daughter-in-law, driving her back to her parents' home! How disgraceful!" Mother Qi shouted.

Father Qi was startled for a moment, then scoffed coldly, "But what they say is the truth, isn't it? It was indeed the two of you sisters who drove Taiguo's wife away. They haven't said anything wrong!"

"You!" Mother Qi raged, "How much benefit have you received from her, always speaking well of her? Oh, just one hundred yuan is enough to buy your favor as a father-in-law!"

Father Qi said, "Whether she gives me money or not, I would still stand on her side and say good things about her, because I know what's right and wrong, I know priorities, I know the degrees of kinship!"

Mother Qi was taken aback.

"She is my son's wife, the Qi family's senior daughter-in-law. When I die, she will be the virtuous wife who performs the funeral rites for me, the mother of my grandson. If I don't stand by her, should I stand by your eldest sister instead? Can your eldest sister perform the funeral rites for me? You say you're not foolish, yet you can't recognize that you deserve the bad things people say about you! You go outside and look, whose family is like this? Can't differentiate primary from secondary!" Father Qi scolded back sternly.

"What have I done to her? Am I not her mother-in-law, can't I say a thing or two to her?" Mother Qi cried out in frustration.

"You say it, go ahead and say it. If you speak in a way that distances her from you, that's when you'll know you're wrong. Just wait and see. You too will grow old one day, and you will need to ask for help. Just keep acting this way!" Father Qi sneered.

"I ask her? Am I only going to have her as a daughter-in-law?" Mother Qi sneered back.

"Yes, why don't you just burn more incense, pray more to Buddha, and desperately beg the gods to grant you a daughter-in-law like the one in your eldest sister's house." Father Qi taunted, "As for Taiguo and the eldest daughter-in-law, you'd best give up hope, treat it as if you don't have that son and daughter-in-law, and just look forward to Jianguo's future wife, to see if you have that kind of good fortune! I think you just don't recognize what's good for you, not knowing what's right or proper."

After saying that, he didn't waste any more words with her and left, slamming the door behind him.

Mother Qi listened, her heart aching even more and unexpectedly she began to panic.

Was what that old fool said true? What would become of her in her old age?

No, Taiguo was her own flesh and blood; he wouldn't treat her like this. When it came down to it, she would just need to restrain herself a bit in front of him.

Thinking this way, her heart steadied again. But then she thought of the rumors spreading outside and, gritting her teeth, wondered who was tossing out such idle gossip?

Chapter 559: Embarrassed by One's Own Actions

Who has been spreading such idle gossip? The culprit is now being thoroughly scolded with their ear in someone's firm grip.

"Ay, mum, you're about to twist my ear off; why are you so heartless? I'm your own son, not some foundling from a filthy ditch," Cheng Zhi tilted his head and pleaded with his mother, "Besides, it's not

like I've done anything. Wasn't I just sticking up for my sister? Instead of praising me, you scold me; where's the justice in that?"

"Pah! You little rascal, you could talk a flower into blooming. What's there to praise? You spread gossip about your sister's in-laws, and I should praise you for that?" Mother Cheng retorted incredulously.

She too had heard the idle chatter of Huangtian Village. The two villages weren't far apart, and there were plenty of marriages between them. With all the gossip that goes on, I tell you, you tell me, there simply are no secrets between the two hamlets.

The gossip didn't just stay within the villages; it spread to the town as well.

If there was gossip, how could it not reach Mother Cheng's ears? She was somewhat puzzled—during arguments, isn't it customary to close the doors? How could the details have spread so clearly?

Just as she was mulling over this, her son cheerfully admitted that he was the one who had let the cat out of the bag, which infuriated her so much that her hair nearly stood on end.

"Of all things to spread, you had to spread gossip about your sister's marital home. Are you so eager for everyone to know that they can't even have peace during the New Year? How is your sister supposed to save face?" Mother Cheng fumed in exasperation.

Cheng Zhi finally managed to wriggle away from his mother's clutches and snorted, "It's the Qi family who doesn't care about losing face, not my sister. Let everyone see how domineering the Qi relatives are, driving a wife to return to her parents' home in frustration! Let's see if they dare to do it again in the future."

Mother Cheng thought about it and it seemed to make sense.

"But your sister, she won't have an easy time either. She'll still suffer," Mother Cheng sighed deeply.

Cheng Zhi's lips curled in a half-smirk, "Mom, worry less. Do you think Susu is someone who gets easily troubled? I think she's becoming more and more capable. Does she even care about what others think?"

Besides, she's not living here anymore, so whatever people say, she won't hear. You still think Susu is the type to not get over it? As if!"

From childhood to adulthood, his sister Cheng Su was never the type to dwell on things. Before she got married, so many people said she was not worthy of Qi Taiguo; did she care? She still married him anyway.

Now that she was married and running a business, he believed that his older sister was becoming increasingly prestigious. He, who had once barely acknowledged her, was now, begrudgingly, somewhat impressed.

Mother Cheng was left feeling somewhat abashed by her son's words.

"You, you're not as clear-sighted as your son," Father Cheng, who had been silent so far, suddenly interjected.

Mother Cheng defended herself, "Isn't it because I worry she might find it hard in her husband's family? After all, women have it tougher than men."

"No matter how hard it is, it's still not as important as one's own peace of mind. If it's really not working out, just stay distant. I didn't expect that her father-in-law would be so open-minded and would actually come over to fetch Susu himself," Father Cheng remarked thoughtfully.

That was true, Mother Cheng said, "Luckily that family has at least one sensible person!"

"That's why let it be. Let the rumors spread. It's good to let the Qi family see their own actions have ultimately left them without dignity," Father Cheng actually approved of the gossip.

Cheng Zhi proudly declared, "It's all thanks to me. You should credit this as my achievement."

Mother Cheng glared at him, "Credit you? You think I don't know your sister gave you fifty yuan? Hand it over, we need to pay for your school fees."

Feeling a shiver on his scalp, Cheng Zhi took off, "Ah, I've made plans with Gouzi to hunt wild pheasants, I'm off!"

"You little rascal, get back here!" Mother Cheng chased after him for a few steps and huffed, then thought again and added, "No, I should talk to Susu later so she's aware of this too."

Chapter 560: Please Give Me Another Chance

Cheng Su still didn't know that her younger brother had taken up her cause, stirring up gossip in the village.

"What are you thinking about?" Cheng Su looked at Qi Taiguo beside her, who was so quiet that he hadn't uttered a single word.

Qi Taiguo curved the corners of his lips slightly, pulling her closer, and said, "Nothing much, just thinking about the things that have happened these past few days."

A jolt went through Cheng Su's heart as she tentatively said, "Blaming me? It's made the New Year celebrations difficult."

"No, I'm not blaming you, I blame myself," Qi Taiguo shook his head, gazed at the fleeting pure white snow outside the window, his look distant as he said, "I'm thinking, maybe I've been too presumptuous."

Cheng Su tilted her head up slightly, "How so?"

"I thought I was holding the scales evenly, but in reality, they were tipped. The balance in my heart was off," Qi Taiguo admitted with some shame.

"Then which way do you think it's tipped?" Cheng Su raised an eyebrow and asked.

Qi Taiguo looked embarrassed and said hesitantly, "Looking at it now, I guess it's probably tipped towards my family."

"Oh?"

"Whenever there's a conflict, I always expect you to consider the bigger picture, to concede. Besides feeling that, as they are the ones who gave birth to me and raised me, my wife should respect them as I do, I haven't considered that to earn respect, one must first give it. My mom, with her lack of education and experience, just thinks a mother-in-law should act a certain way, so she doesn't see you the same as her own daughter, but this could also be a trait formed under the long-term oppression by my grandmother."

"Your grandmother?" Cheng Su asked, intrigued.

Qi Taiguo nodded, "I remember, when I was young, my mom also suffered quite a bit, my grandmother would boss her around too."

So there was such a history, but it was hardly surprising. Cheng Su had heard about it too, those who suffered under their mother-in-law might take it out on their future daughter-in-law.

"My mom, she just feels that she endured from a daughter-in-law to become a mother-in-law, so she treats you this way... Actually, precisely because she's been through hardships, she shouldn't treat her daughter-in-law like this. It's just that, my mom is set in her old, narrow ways, and will not adapt," Qi Taiguo sighed heavily.

Cheng Su remained silent.

"I'm not trying to make excuses for my mom, just lamenting. Perhaps people can change. When she was younger, she was quite a gentle person," Qi Taiguo recalled his father-in-law's words. In the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, what matters most is the man's stance. The attitude of a man is critical as it determines the good or bad of that in-law relation. If he resolutely doesn't allow his mother to bully his wife, if he stands by her without compromise, would things still be the same?

"That things have escalated to this point, the key issue is that I haven't done well. If I had firmly stood by your side, perhaps it wouldn't have come to this. The grievances you've suffered now are due to my indulgence. Susu, I'm sorry, please give me another chance," he said.

Cheng Su was slightly moved as she said, "I believe your mother doesn't have much ill intent, at least she didn't abuse me, her daughter-in-law. It's just her actions aren't always fair, her behavior is domineering. To put it bluntly, your mother doesn't like me, she sees me as an outsider. So, no matter what I do, she will never be pleased or willing, and will always find fault. After this incident, Qi Taiguo, all I can say is, I've done what I should. I won't be unreasonably argumentative, but I won't let anyone trample over me again. If your mother continues to be so overbearing towards me, even if she's your mother, I won't be polite with her anymore."

Patience turns to gold, and she had given chances time and again, had made efforts as well, but what was the result? The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were natural enemies, and from now on, she intended to live for herself.

"Rest assured, I won't let them disregard you, trample on your dignity anymore. If I really can't do well, then you should just divorce me!" Qi Taiguo declared as if making an oath.

Cheng Su looked at him in surprise, seeing the determination in his eyes, and suddenly felt, maybe she could trust once more?