

The 80s 581

Chapter 581: Only with Goals Can One Ascend

Cheng Su soon met the girl named Liang Dan, and how to describe her? A bit proud, but with a straightforward gaze, and she was quite graceful and pretty, too.

What Cheng Su liked about her were her thoughts, very independent and confident. As for why she hadn't gone to college, Liang Dan was somewhat embarrassed.

It wasn't that she didn't want to go, but that she had taken the exams three times in a row and hadn't passed.

Cheng Su was stunned for a moment, then watched her do the calculations; indeed, she was quite quick and accurate. Upon careful inquiry, the girl stuttered out that she was in the humanities, especially in English, which she couldn't pass.

"Are you also re-studying?" Liang Dan looked at Cheng Su with a scrutinizing gaze.

Long before her arrival, she had heard about Cheng Su from her cousin. She could tell from her cousin's tone that he admired Cheng Su, saying she was a woman of great determination. Since she rarely heard her cousin praise anyone, she naturally regarded Cheng Su with scrutiny and curiosity.

She further heard that Cheng Su had bought a shop from their family, the one where someone had died, and that had piqued her curiosity even more.

Cheng Su smiled and said, "I don't even know if I can pass!"

Liang Dan opened her mouth to speak, hesitated, and in the end did not voice her thoughts out loud.

Cheng Su acted as if she didn't notice and simply talked about working at Joy Soon Loy Restaurant. It definitely didn't have the sense of superiority that working at the supply and marketing cooperative did, and she'd have to face a multitude of people, a variety of situations, and would likely be busier.

Moreover, she had to be there for both the lunch and dinner rushes, with the lunch shift being from eleven to two, and the dinner service time, which had shifted from five to nine-thirty, meaning her working hours ranged from seven and a half to eight hours. Considering the possibility of overtime, there were only two days off per month.

Liang Dan had no objections to this.

Before leaving, Liang Dan couldn't help but ask Cheng Su about re-studying and how her English was, whether it was good or not.

Cheng Su raised her eyebrows, pursed her lips with a smile, and suddenly uttered a phrase in English so fluently it made Liang Dan's eyes widen in surprise.

"You can speak so well? Can you teach me?" Liang Dan was very excited.

It seemed the child hadn't given up on college aspirations after all!

Cheng Su said, "I can correct you, but as for teaching, I'm still learning myself, so I dare not claim that role. You should memorize more vocabulary, a hundred words a day, and you will definitely be able to learn. As for speaking, just practice speaking more."

Liang Dan bit her lip, "Can I still ask you when I don't understand something?"

Cheng Su nodded with a smile, "Of course that's natural, as long as I have the time and availability to reply to you."

Liang Dan was overjoyed upon hearing this, "So I'll start working tomorrow?" Having someone who could speak English around, she wanted to start work immediately and learn alongside.

"That would be best."

"This cousin of mine is very persistent about university, having taken the exams three times and still not giving up. I hope you don't find it laughable," Luh Kai said with a shake of his head and a laugh.

Liang Dan pouted, "Cousin, you've been to university yourself, how can you understand the painful feelings of someone who's just one step away from it?" Cheng Su thought to herself, it seems these days, attending university is almost like ascending to heaven.

"I think her persistence is good; only those with goals will continually strive for higher achievements," Cheng Su said with a smile. "It's this kind of drive that continually inspires progress. In olden times, some scholars would keep taking exams until old age before they became Successful Candidates."

As long as one's steps don't stop moving forward, there will be progress.

Upon hearing this, Liang Dan frowned, "I don't want to be those miserable scholars; I hope to pass sooner rather than later."

Cheng Su and Luh Kai exchanged smiles.

After sending Luh Kai and the others off, Cheng Su then realized it was already the seventeenth; why hadn't Elder Sister and the others come yet?

Chapter 582: Disappointed Elder Sister

Qi Fenglian didn't not want to leave, but her mother-in-law held her back, claiming that her sister-in-law Zhang Zhenzhu had given birth, and the mother-in-law needed to take care of her for a couple of days, thus asking Qi Fenglian to delay her departure.

Qi Fenglian trembled with anger, pointing at Zhang Jisheng and saying, "She definitely did it on purpose. Zhenzhu gave birth at home, and with a mother-in-law around, could they really not take care of her and the child? She clearly just doesn't want to help me."

Fully aware how difficult it was for her to take leave and come home for the festival, and knowing she had to go to Qing City, it was exactly at this time the mother-in-law had to take care of the sister-in-law.

Wasn't this just making trouble for herself?

Zhang Jisheng said, "How is this deliberate? Giving birth isn't something that happens exactly when you want it to, isn't this all just coincidence?"

Qi Fenglian sneered, "What a coincidence. Isn't Zhenzhu already has a mother-in-law? Does she need her help?"

"So what do you want? A job is not going to run away just because you're two days late, right? After all, it's your sister-in-law's business!" Zhang Jisheng lost his patience.

Qi Fenglian looked at him in shock, "Do you have no conscience saying that? Just because it's my sister-in-law's shop doesn't mean she can do whatever she wants, does it? We had clearly agreed that I would go there after the festival, but she keeps dragging her feet. Is that the behavior of someone who is supposed to work? My sister-in-law was kind enough to find me a job, and I don't even expect gratitude, but to take advantage of this family connection and act however she pleases? Zhang Jisheng, even your family wouldn't behave like this!"

Zhang Jisheng's face showed some embarrassment, replying, "I didn't mean anything by it, it's just a delay of two days, and besides, the child is ours, my mother isn't obliged to take care of him for us!"

Qi Fenglian suddenly felt disappointed, with this man.

She sneered repeatedly, "That's right, she indeed has no obligation. When I needed her help, she didn't help me, because she had no obligation. So in the future, when she gets old, I also have no obligation to take care of her and provide for her old age."

The so-called reciprocal feeding, everyone has the duty to repay, now I ask you, you do not respond, then in the future when you get old, don't expect anything from me.

Zhang Jisheng's expression slightly changed.

"If she won't help me, that's fine. I won't ask her. I'll get my parents to help me take care of Baobao. That should be fine, right?" Qi Fenglian huffed.

Having said that, she turned around to pack up the child's things.

Zhang Jisheng forcefully contained his anger, quickly pulling her back, saying, "Look at you, making such a big fuss over such a small matter."

"Is it me who is being rash?" Qi Fenglian turned around, her eyes already red, tears welling up, and said, "I originally shouldn't have come back for the festival. You insisted on telling Yunyun that I didn't want her, whom are you trying to scare? Is that how a father should behave? Fine, I came back for the festival, but that's also owing someone a favor. In others' eyes, I'm just relying on connections. My colleagues look down on me, I just wanted to work well and not be disrespected. I'm struggling so much, and you're not considering me at all, only helping your mother and sister. Then why are you clinging to us three? Just let us go back to our parental home!"

"Yunyun's mother, I was wrong, it's all my fault. Just these two days, alright, and once Mother comes back, we'll go to Qing City right away. We'll work hard together to earn a big house, how about that?" Zhang Jisheng appeased her gently.

In fact, with things as they were, what else could be done? Was she really going to abandon her two children and just walk away?

Qi Fenglian felt a sense of despair. Was she destined to spend her life begging others, depending on someone else for everything?

She collapsed onto the floor, crying woefully.

Chapter 583: You Rascal

Cheng Su received a call from Elder Sister, frowning as she listened to her hemming and hawing on the other end of the line, saying she'd only be able to come over in a couple of days.

When she had left, she'd sworn that she would come over after the holiday, so why the sudden change of plans?

Upon asking, she found out that Elder Sister's mother-in-law had to take care of her younger sister-in-law who had just given birth. With no one else to look after the child, there was no choice but to delay her visit by a couple of days, leaving Cheng Su somewhat helpless.

No sooner had she hung up the phone than Qi Taiguo, who had just taken a shower, came over and seeing her sigh, asked, "Why the sigh? Is something the matter?"

"Elder Sister said her sister-in-law just had a baby, and her mother-in-law has to go take care of her for two days. Yunyun and the others have no one to help out, so they can only come over after a few days," Cheng Su explained.

After thinking it over, Qi Taiguo said, "What do you think is really going on? Do you think her mother-in-law is deliberately holding Elder Sister back from coming here?"

He knew very well that Elder Sister's mother-in-law was not too keen on having Elder Sister come out to work.

"That's hard to say, isn't it? Taking care of a daughter who's just given birth, and it being her own daughter, is understandable. But from Elder Sister's tone, she didn't seem too pleased," said Cheng Su.

After a moment, Qi Taiguo said, "Let it be, we can't make decisions for her, just like you said, she has to decide for herself."

Cheng Su laughed upon hearing this, "I thought you'd be going to the Zhang family with anger in your eyes ready to settle accounts!"

Qi Taiguo glared at her and said, "You already said it's understandable to take care of one's own daughter, what more can I do? In her mother-in-law's eyes, a daughter-in-law certainly isn't as dear as her own daughter."

Cheng Su looked at him meaningfully and said, "Oh, our Old Qi is familiar with this harsh reality now, is he?"

Qi Taiguo, teased and embarrassed, walked over, hugged her, and pinched her nose, "Seizing the chance to make jabs at your husband, huh? Let's see how I deal with you."

With that, his hands began to move all over Cheng Su.

Cheng Su squealed as he playfully pinched and tickled her, leaving her body feeling weak, but stubbornly she didn't let him off the hook, "What I said is simply the truth."

"Still talking, tell me to stop talking, isn't it enough that I know I'm wrong?" Qi Taiguo pressed himself over her and stuck his head under her roomy nightgown.

"Ah, Qi Taiguo, you hooligan," Cheng Su screamed, quickly turning into breathless moans.

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Before Elder Sister and the others could arrive, Cheng Su had an unexpected visitor, her own Third Uncle, Cheng Shuqiang.

Like many other migrant workers who sought a livelihood away from home, Cheng Shuqiang arrived carrying a large cloth bag on his back, with two chickens and some wild goods in hand, as he followed the address Cheng Su had given to find his way over.

The chickens and wild goods were Third Aunt's idea; she insisted it wouldn't be proper to come empty-handed, and it was also a way to express her gratitude.

"Third Uncle, if you were coming, you should have just come, why bring so much stuff? Isn't it heavy and troublesome?" chided Cheng Su.

Cheng Shuqiang laughed, "Your Third Aunt insisted I bring it, saying home-raised tastes better and wanted you to have it."

Cheng Su clicked her tongue, "What can't you buy here? Instead, it's the two younger brothers who are growing and in need of nourishment. Keeping it for them to improve their health would have been better."

"We have more at home, there's plenty," Cheng Shuqiang said nonchalantly.

Seeing that Elder Sister and the others hadn't arrived yet, Cheng Su first settled Cheng Shuqiang into her home, and then made a call to Dazhi.

She had already given Dazhi the heads-up; his decorating business was starting to take off. Thanks to his good and meticulous work as well as his honest reputation, he had gradually built up a good word-of-mouth, and just through Cheng Su, he had secured several deals already.

With business booming, more hands were naturally needed, so when Cheng Su asked if he needed more people, Dazhi promptly said he did.

Chapter 584: Honoring Third Uncle

After speaking with Dazhi, Cheng Su took her Third Uncle to apply for a job, and everything went smoothly. Dazhi had specifically rented a place for a dormitory, and Third Uncle moved in right away.

Cheng Su suggested he stay two more days, but he firmly said it wasn't convenient and not right. Besides, living with other workers, all males, meant there were plenty of topics to discuss.

Seeing his insistence, Cheng Su could only let it be, writing down her home phone number and several shop numbers for him to keep on hand in case he needed to find someone, and quietly slipped him thirty yuan.

Cheng Shuqiang was startled, his face flushing as he pushed the money back: "What are you doing, girl, sneaking me money like this? Take it back, hurry, take it back."

"Third Uncle, just keep it. It's your niece showing her respect. Besides, didn't you bring me chickens too? You've just arrived in Qing City and you don't know, everything here is much more expensive than in Flower County and our town, there are also more expenses. Just take it, and buy whatever you need," Cheng Su wouldn't take it back.

"I have my own money, really don't need it. It's not easy for you to earn money either; how can I just take it? Take it back! Besides, if your in-laws find out, they won't be pleased," Cheng Shuqiang said, full of embarrassment.

"Third Uncle, you're my only blood uncle, and my father's own brother, I'm your blood niece. This is my show of filial piety, and it's my own earned money, who dares say a word to me? Even Qi Taiguo wouldn't dare," Cheng Su said with a smile: "Just keep it. Later on, when you've earned some money, or when I have a child in the future, you can give my child a red envelope."

Unable to refuse, Cheng Shuqiang accepted the money, saying, "What can I say about you, girl, ah."

His wife mentioned that since Cheng Su got married, she's become more mature and stable than when she was a girl, and not as willful anymore. It seems that it's really true.

"Third Uncle, renovation work is all about physical strength, and getting tired is inevitable. You, however, are still young, so just work hard, observe, learn, and think more. I see that Dazhi is quite skilled; he started this renovation team just last summer. In just a short half year, he's achieved this scale, which shows his capabilities. Don't look down on him because he's young; watch how he handles things," Cheng Su poured out her heart: "Life is getting better now, and going into business, unless you're really unlucky or incompetent, you won't fail to make a way out. Just stick with it for now, and if you have any ideas later, it won't be too late to talk about them."

Of course, she didn't think that being a decorator for life was enough. With real estate booming and the decoration industry having great potential, doing well and understanding the ins and outs of the industry would give her a clear idea for when she decided to do it on her own.

As for whether he could achieve success, that was up to Third Uncle himself.

Cheng Shuqiang knew that this niece, who could open one shop after another, definitely had good ideas, and he took her words to heart: "I understand. Your Third Aunt also said, before I came here, that if I have any problems, consulting with you is definitely the right choice. Don't worry, I know what to do. Third Uncle won't bring you any shame."

"It's not about bringing shame or not, as long as Third Uncle is happy with his work," Cheng Su said with a smile, nodding: "And if you have some free time, come over to our house for a meal."

"Okay."

Cheng Su escorted him out. There was also a vehicle arranged by Dazhi waiting. Once she couldn't see him anymore, she turned and went back to the compound.

Chapter 585: Declaring War on the Goblin

Cheng Su had only taken a couple of steps when she was stopped by someone. Recognizing the familiar voice, she furrowed her brows.

Turning around, she had already put on a polite expression, her lips curving into a courteous smile, "It's Doctor Chiang, long time no see."

Who else could it be but Goblin Chiang?

She saw her clutching a handbag and dragging a suitcase, clearly just returned from somewhere.

She hadn't seen her since the new year, and she thought she might never see her again. Little did she know, she was like a bad penny always turning up!

Such a mood dampener.

"Sister-in-law Qi, happy new year," Chiang Qing approached with a smile beaming across her face.

"Happy new year to you too," Cheng Su replied with a faint smile, "I haven't seen Doctor Chiang for some time, I thought you weren't coming back."

"How could that be? Although we're just military doctors, we still have our organization and discipline. How could we say we're not coming back and then not return?" Chiang Qing slightly squinted her eye-

lined eyes and raised an eyebrow, "But the way Sister-in-law Qi says it, seems like you were hoping that I wouldn't return? Surely I'm not overthinking this?"

You're definitely not overthinking it; I truly was hoping you wouldn't come back!

Cheng Su suppressed her real thoughts and said, "Whether I'm hoping or not doesn't revolve around my wishes. Besides, someone as talented as Doctor Chiang wouldn't just linger in a small place like Qing City, right?"

The moment the two met, it was a covert clashing of swords, subtly exchanging blows.

Chiang Qing thought to herself, to put it bluntly, you're just afraid I'll come back to steal your thunder, how hypocritical.

"That's hard to say. Qing City is a good place; the people here are nice too. I actually do want to settle down here for good," Chiang Qing hinted purposefully.

Cheng Su then said, "Oh, in that case, Doctor Chiang, you can only look for a local to marry and have kids with. I wonder who would be a good match for you!" Such bad luck, truly a family misfortune.

Chiang Qing, seeing Cheng Su's imperturbable demeanor, felt like going up there and tearing her apart.

Without her around, couldn't I, with my capabilities, easily snare that stubborn ox?

"The person I will marry must naturally be a peerless hero, someone worthy of me, Chiang Qing," Chiang Qing declared, chin held high with arrogance.

Cheng Su clapped her hands and said, "Then I wish you luck in finding your peerless hero soon." She paused and then added, "But Doctor Chiang, you should also hurry. It seems that after the new year, you look a bit more worn than before, not looking so well. We women, we have limited youth, and we can't afford delays."

Chiang Qing was so angry she could collapse. What did that mean? Was she saying she was old, that she had aged?

Touching her cheek, she knew in her heart that Cheng Su was telling the truth. This year had been too uncomfortable—with conflicts with her parents and being lovesick, she had cried more tears than in the past twenty-six years, couldn't sleep well at night, and couldn't enjoy food either. Could she not look haggard?

And whose fault was it, if not this very couple's?

"There's no need for Sister-in-law Qi to remind me. A phoenix will never become a crow, rest assured," Chiang Qing retorted without pretense, her face cold.

Cheng Su smiled slightly, "Confidence is good, but excessive confidence could lead to a fall. Doctor Chiang should be careful."

Chiang Qing snorted coldly, "In my dictionary, there's no such word as 'fall.' It's you, Sister-in-law Qi, who should be more careful. Some things might not belong to you forever."

Having said that, she dragged her suitcase and walked away in her high heels.

Cheng Su watched her stomping away in her clacking shoes, her gaze turning icy. Shameless, is she declaring war on me?

Chapter 586: Never Dig One's Own Grave

"Uncle Three left?" Qi Taiguo had returned from the military, and not seeing Cheng Su's Uncle Three, he couldn't help but ask.

"Mhm, the renovation team has prepared a house, and he's moved over there," Cheng Su replied.

"He sure moves fast."

Cheng Su hummed in affirmation, then added, "I don't know when Big Sister and the others will come over, but we've already got a lead on a house. It's not far from the new shop--a bungalow. I plan to go check it out. If it's suitable, I'll rent it, so they'll have a place to stay when they arrive."

"When are you going? I'll come with you to take a look," Qi Taiguo said eagerly after hearing this.

"I'll make some time tomorrow," Cheng Su hadn't planned anything in particular; it was just that today she received a call from the intermediary, mentioning a house that she thought might suit her.

Qi Taiguo thought for a moment, then said, "Then let's go together tomorrow at noon. The area around the train station is chaotic."

Cheng Su nodded, then cast a sidelong glance his way.

"What's wrong?" Qi Taiguo felt uneasy under her gaze.

"Today, I noticed that Doctor Chiang has returned," Cheng Su said, raising her eyebrows. "Didn't you see her?"

"I did. She even brought me some specialties from old Beijing," Qi Taiguo frowned and continued, "But I shared them with the lads."

Quite frank!

Cheng Su said, "You didn't feel touched at all? She brought you specialties the moment she returned. She seems to hold Commander Qi in a special regard!"

Shameless Chiang the Fox, really becoming brazen as hell!

Qi Taiguo's scalp tingled at the sound of this, and he quickly explained, "I've nothing to be touched about. When she brought them, the office door was open, with Xiao Zheng standing guard outside. He's very clear about everything. It was definitely not the two of us alone in a space."

Actually, it was truly bothersome for him. The moment Chiang Qing returned, she made her way to his office, carrying a bag of items. Was he supposed to throw them back in her face?

He said he didn't like sweets, but politely accepted and thanked her. Before Chiang Qing even left, he handed them to Xiao Zheng to distribute, turning Chiang Qing's face green with anger.

Dealing with someone like Chiang Qing was indeed a headache for him. He'd told her countless times, explicitly and implicitly, about the importance of maintaining a distance between men and women, but it seemed like she just didn't get it.

So-called arrogance and indifference, all bullshit. She was nothing but a clingy plaster.

"You're getting tense. I didn't accuse you of anything," Cheng Su hummed.

Qi Taiguo approached her, saying, "I always remember your words and my identity, maintaining my distance from other women."

"That's good to know. Don't be bewitched by a Fox Spirit and her love potion, Qi Taiguo. Being admired and adored by women often becomes an executioner's curse. One wrong step, and you'll never be able to turn things around," Cheng Su warned.

"I understand," Qi Taiguo said.

Cheng Su gave him a stern look, "Once unfaithful, always unacceptable. If you really take a wrong step, I'll divorce you immediately, no arguments!"

"Look at you, bringing this up again," Qi Taiguo said helplessly.

"Just make sure you understand, paying attention to your image. Don't give others something to hold against you. Being criticized means your reputation is at stake. You just had a talk with the organization," Cheng Su added, "Self-destructive actions are absolutely out of the question."

A tarnished record, accumulating over time, could only be detrimental to one's political career, especially for a soldier like Qi Taiguo. If he were said to have a reputation problem, then his future promotions would be severely discounted by the organization. That would indeed be digging his own grave.

Qi Taiguo frowned slightly, his gaze becoming heavier, and he nodded, "I understand."

Chapter 587: The Elder Sister and Her Husband Arrive

The next day, Qi Taiguo took Cheng Su to the train station on his bicycle to look at a house. The couple went out the door laughing and talking joyfully, a scene that many people witnessed, including Chiang Qing.

As she watched the two of them disappear into the distance, Chiang Qing almost snapped her well-maintained fingernails in the palm of her hand.

After inspecting the house, a square single-story with two rooms, including a bathroom and kitchen, they found that the monthly rent was ten yuan.

It was a bit more expensive than other houses, but considering the prime location and how new and tidy it was, not to mention roomy enough for a couple and even children, it seemed perfectly suitable.

Cheng Su and Qi Taiguo were both very satisfied and, after discussing, decided to sign the lease so that Elder Sister and her family could settle in when they arrived.

Once the matter of the house was settled, Qi Taiguo went back to the military base, and Cheng Su went to the master who had performed the ritual for the new shop to choose an auspicious day. They set the grand opening for the twenty-second day of the first lunar month.

With these details arranged, she then checked the shop's facilities to ensure everything was ready, just waiting for the staff to arrive.

Without pausing, Cheng Su took the promotional fliers she had prepared earlier to the printing factory. She returned with a large stack of handouts detailing the fast-food shop's location and opening specials.

Of course, she also made sure to include the main shop's location on the handouts, indicating that this one was a branch.

With the promotional materials ready, they went out with the staff of the branch location to buy firecrackers and other items for the opening, bustling with activity.

As the opening preparations needed attention and Ning Ge was in Beijing for business recruitment, the company could only be left in the hands of Ying Xiaoya for the time being. Regarding the Joy Soon Loy Restaurant's main location, the business model was becoming more mature.

Especially now that they had hired Li Dan as a cashier, Qiulan and the others finally had room to breathe, focusing on their respective roles without looking busy.

It was clear that sufficient staffing was essential for maintaining the rhythm of the shop's operations.

With people in place for both ventures, Cheng Su could concentrate on the various details of preparing for the opening.

On the twentieth day of the first lunar month, Cheng Su finally welcomed the arrival of Elder Sister and her husband.

Cheng Su and Qi Taiguo personally went to pick them up. Both guests looked travel-weary. Elder Sister's husband, Zhang Jisheng, appeared somewhat bitter, while Elder Sister, though tired, had excitement in her eyes.

"Elder Sister, we've already rented a house for you. Since you have to move anyway, would you like to go straight there, or do you prefer to rest at our place for a couple of days first?" asked Cheng Su.

"You've already rented it? Let's move in then, to avoid moving again," Qi Fenglian replied right away.

Zhang Jisheng just frowned slightly but didn't say anything.

The group arrived at the new house. Seeing how square and bright the place was, and quite clean, Qi Fenglian liked it immediately. After asking about the price and hearing it was eight yuan, she was momentarily taken aback but then agreed, biting the bullet.

A decent home was worth striving for. The most important thing was that it was their own place, to do with as they wished.

"I've done a simple cleanup. Elder Sister, if you see anything else you need, we can buy it. I've asked around, and the farmers' market isn't far from here, just a ten-minute walk, which is very convenient," said Cheng Su.

Qi Fenglian kept expressing her approval. Noticing her husband surveying the house nearby, she quickly pulled Cheng Su aside and asked eagerly with rubbing hands, "Taiguo's wife, about my husband's job...?"

Cheng Su glanced at her brother-in-law, who hung his head low, and laughed, "Don't worry, once you've settled in, I'll take him to see about a job."

Relieved, Qi Fenglian's face lit up with a truly joyful smile.

Chapter 588: Ungrateful

Zhang Jisheng looked at Qi Fenglian busying herself around the room, her face adorned with a satisfied smile, a kind of smile he had never seen before. At their old home, she never had such an expression on her face. Could it be because they had come to Qing City, far away from their hometown and relatives?

Thinking this, Zhang Jisheng felt somewhat choked up and said with a sour tone, "Look at the corners of your mouth, grinning as if you've found several bars of gold."

Qi Fenglian's hands paused, and she turned her head, "What do you mean by that?"

"Isn't it so? I see you looking very happy. At home, I never saw you smile like this. You still manage to smile, while Xiao Bao is probably crying his throat sore by now!" Zhang Jisheng said sourly.

His words truly hit her where it hurt, and not just anywhere but the most tender and painful spot. Immediately, Qi Fenglian was reminded of the time not long ago when Xiao Bao was crying bitterly, not letting her leave.

He was such a young child, not even a year old. Who knew if he would hold a grudge against her in the future.

Qi Fenglian's heart turned sour, her eyes reddening as tears welled up, but she said stubbornly, "You always bring up the worst at the wrong time. Do you think I wanted to leave my brother and sister behind? If it wasn't for the sake of our family, would I separate from them? It's as if you make it sound like I want to live a good life alone, not caring about their wellbeing at all."

Zhang Jisheng, feeling the sting of her words, softened and coughed to change the subject, "This house costs eight yuan. Why is it so expensive?"

Qi Fenglian looked around and said, "This is Qing City, and it's near the train station. It makes sense that it's a bit expensive. I think it's not bad. Once we settle down here and earn money, we can bring Yunyun and the others here to live together, reuniting the family."

This was her only motivation and support!

Zhang Jisheng frowned and asked, "With a rent of eight yuan, how much is the Thai mistress paying you?"

Qi Fenglian was taken aback, "Why ask that? I haven't asked."

Zhang Jisheng became anxious upon hearing this and said, "How can you not ask? Even clear accounts make for good brothers. Do you plan to work for them for free?"

Qi Fenglian became displeased and said with a cold sneer, "Even if I had to work for her for free, I would. I owe her for signing her name to save my life when Xiao Bao was born."

As she brought up the past, Zhang Jisheng felt a twinge of discomfort and said awkwardly, "Look at you, you've mentioned this countless times, and it never tires you."

"Can I not mention it? I must not only say it, but also remember it: what your family has done for me," Qi Fenglian huffed coldly. "If it weren't for her, would I even be here to talk to you?"

Zhang Jisheng pursed his lips.

"The Thai mistress is like my second parents to me. Working for her is my way of repaying the favor. Besides, will she not pay me? She has done so much for us, running around busy, even your job was obtained with her influence. You can't even manage a thank you, and yet you speak these words. It's fine here, but if it got out, how would you show your face?" Qi Fenglian glared at him and said icily, "As humans, we may be poor, but we must have a conscience. Without a conscience, we're not human at all!"

Zhang Jisheng, scolded to the point of irritation, waved his hand impatiently, "Alright, alright, I just said one thing, and now you're lecturing me with grand principles. In this world, she's the best, isn't she?"

He dropped the comment and walked out.

Watching him leave, Qi Fenglian shook her head in disappointment. She felt bleak inside; this man took for granted others' kindness, and never learned to be grateful.

Chapter 589: Celebrating the New Rise of Luh Kai

On the 21st of the first lunar month, Cheng Su organized the staff of the new shop and distributed flyers to let everyone know that a fast food restaurant would be opening soon. Afterwards, she held a meeting at the shop to allow all the employees to familiarize themselves with each other's faces.

On the 22nd, which is considered an auspicious day, Cheng Su went to the shop at the train station early, as did Qi Fenglian. After exchanging morning greetings, they began to busy themselves with their tasks.

Before long, the chef Old Lu and others arrived. After some re-education, Old Lu slowly improved his hygiene habits, and therefore, was rehired.

Following Cheng Su's plan, all the meat and vegetables were purchased from Song Xiaojang's side and delivered there. So, not long after they arrived, Song Xiaojang came riding on his tricycle, delivering the meat and vegetables needed by the train station shop.

Everyone took up their respective roles and positions, and the new shop bustled with activity.

As usual, they set up tables for the God of Wealth, burned a string of big firecrackers, and the shop could be considered officially in business.

"President Cheng, someone has sent a flower basket!" Xiaoying, the waitress, called out loudly to catch Cheng Su's attention, who was giving instructions to Qi Fenglian.

Cheng Su was startled and went out to see that indeed someone was placing two flower baskets at the entrance. They were the most traditional and common types of flower baskets, which looked very high-end in this era.

She went over and saw on the red silk ribbon there were golden characters of well-wishing, with the name Luh Kai printed as the giver. Cheng Su couldn't help but smile.

"President Cheng."

Someone called out, and turning around, it was Luh Kai holding a Fortune Cat, smiling and saying, "I wish you booming business and a wide source of wealth." As he spoke, he handed over the Fortune Cat.

"Thank you!" Cheng Su received it with a smile, thanked him, and invited him inside.

After pouring tea for their guest, Cheng Su said with a smile, "Why the big fuss? You even ordered a flower basket for my little shop, and brought a gift too."

"Well, I did introduce you to this shop, so of course I wanted to come and offer my congratulations," Luh Kai replied with a smile, then looked around and asked, "Can you give me a tour?"

"Of course, please follow me," Cheng Su said, gesturing grandly.

As she led Luh Kai around the inside and outside of the shop, he noticed the white walls were inscribed with four lines of Buddhist scripture in calligraphy.

All conditioned phenomena are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows, like dew and like lightning; one should contemplate them thus.

He read aloud, his face full of surprise, and looked at Cheng Su, "Why are there Buddhist scriptures written here?"

It was Cheng Su's handwriting, the same as at the Joy Soon Loy Restaurant.

Looking over, Cheng Su said, "This is a passage from the Buddhist scriptures that I quite like. After the renovation, when I came over here to inspect, I don't know why, but I just ended up writing it on the wall!"

"A fast food restaurant with Buddhist scriptures, that's quite interesting," Luh Kai raised an eyebrow.

"You're making me embarrassed. I was even thinking of repainting it!" Cheng Su said, feeling sheepish.

"No, no, it's quite good this way. I remember, isn't this from the Diamond Sutra?" Luh Kai asked, wagging his finger.

Cheng Su's eyes brightened, "Exactly."

On the day she wrote the scripture, the passage suddenly came to her mind, so she inscribed it. Later, she felt her action was somewhat abrupt and thought about asking Dazhi to repaint it, but as she kept looking at it, she found it gave a special flavor to the place, so she decided against repainting.

"You always manage to present things in a novel light," Luh Kai said, not hiding the admiration in his eyes as he smiled, "This shop has really changed a lot with the renovations compared to before."

"Too kind, too kind!" Cheng Su replied with a humble smile.

Qi Fenglian, at the cash register, looked over at the two of them chatting and laughing. Noting the man's pleasant demeanor towards Cheng Su, her eyebrows knit slightly.

Chapter 590: Prosperous and Thriving

Luh Kai had been there for a while before he left. Qi Fenglian walked over to Cheng Su and asked, "Taiguo daughter-in-law, who is that guy?"

"A friend, he's the one who introduced me to this shop, it used to be his uncle's." Cheng Su explained with a smile.

Qi Fenglian made an understanding noise, just as she was about to continue inquiring, Cheng Su said, "Where were we just now?"

Qi Fenglian's attention was immediately diverted, "It's about selling the meal coupons."

"Oh right, let's continue, these coupons..." Cheng Su walked with her to the counter and started showing the various meal coupons to Qi Fenglian.

Cheng Su had hired three waitstaff for the new shop, responsible for serving food, collecting meal coupons, selling meals, and cleaning. There were also two dishwasher aunties, who not only washed dishes but also helped clear the plates after customers had finished eating. In the kitchen, there were three people, two of whom were chefs and one was an assistant. As for Qi Fenglian, she was the supervisor, handling the cash register, balancing accounts, management, and had to be there to open and close the shop morning and evening, so she needed to be the first to arrive and the last to leave.

Of course, since it was just opening, Cheng Su also had to help out so she could quickly learn the ropes.

The kitchen was busy with washing, cooking, and stir-frying until after eleven o'clock before they packed the food into insulated barrels and arranged the hot dishes onto the food carts successively.

At the entrance of the shop, Xiaoying and Jin Zhi were distributing flyers to the passersby, some of whom took a flyer and peeked inside curiously.

The food cart was placed near the entrance, separated by glass, visible from the roadside, showcasing the fresh and spicy dishes. On a cold day, just looking at a pot of spicy chicken or green pepper beef, who wouldn't salivate?

One meat dish and one vegetable, two meats and one vegetable... the choice was yours, with soup and tea both offered free of charge.

People started walking in, one by one, and gradually, the shop started to fill up with customers.

Cheng Su called Xiaoying and the others back to help sell food, and she also directed on the side. It was a bit chaotic at first, but gradually everyone's hands and feet became faster and steadier.

Those who came to eat were mostly travelers, carrying large and small bags to Qing City for work, and as they all came into the shop to eat, placing their bags at their feet, the shop quickly became crowded.

Cheng Su watched the weathered faces eating heartily, moved by their satisfied expressions, she couldn't help but smile too.

It was still the mid-1980s, yet the number of people going out to find work was increasing, and with the advance of the era, it would only continue to increase and not decrease.

It was all for a warm meal and warm clothes, to secure a bit of savings for the family.

After being busy all morning, once past the lunch rush, around one-thirty, the customers started to dwindle, and the food prepared for the day had mostly sold out.

Cheng Su checked the time on her wristwatch and called the staff to eat.

Like the main store, the branch shop's staff also benefited from provided meals, and they would get bonuses at the end of the year. The meals here were also two dishes and a soup, cooked by the main chef, and staff could dish out as much as they wanted.

Seeing the crumpled banknotes in the drawer, Cheng Su was delighted, so she sent Xiaoying to buy a couple bottles of soda from next door to celebrate the shop's opening.

"You've all worked hard. As long as we work together, our shop will thrive and I won't let you down with the year-end bonus. This is to everyone," Cheng Su said, raising her glass.

"Thanks, President Cheng."

Laughter filled the shop, and even in the chilling cold, it was warm with good cheer. The laughter attracted the attention of people passing by, who occasionally stopped to watch, their faces showing envy at their joy.

Someday, they too, would be able to smile like that.