

Back To The 80s: President's Doted Wife

#Chapter 61: Neighbor's Pantothenic Acid - Read Back To The 80s: President's Doted Wife Chapter 61: Neighbor's Pantothenic Acid

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The restaurant was secured, but Cheng Su didn't rush to open it. She planned to sell fast food, but of course, the restaurant would also serve individual stir-fried dishes.

Fast food required a food cart, the type that could hold water and heat up, which she had seen in her previous life and even patronized. A food cart with dishes neatly arranged inside for customers to pick from was still common in the twenty-first century; it was just that the prices got more expensive with each passing year.

Cheng Su asked around and found a kitchenware manufacturer. She provided her own design for a food cart and dishes, paid a deposit to have them made quickly, and then went to scout the market.

The market was bustling. Besides the market's own stalls, villagers from several nearby villages brought their produce to sell—meat, vegetables, rice—all available without the need for grain or meat coupons, which was very convenient.

According to Cheng Su's plan, she aimed to do business twice a day, serving breakfast and lunch.

While waiting for the food cart to be delivered, she didn't hurry. She first bought some dry and non-perishable food ingredients to stock up, planning to wait for the food cart's arrival before buying fresh meat and vegetables. Otherwise, storing them now would result in less freshness and affect the taste of the dishes.

So, Cheng Su did a full round of the market, buying a lot of things, and in the end, paid someone with a cart to help transport everything back to the restaurant.

This restaurant was formerly known as Old Wang's Family Restaurant, and now that she had taken over, she couldn't continue using that name; it had to be her own.

Beyond that, it was best to publicize it. Yes, print flyers and distribute them near schools to help create some buzz for her business.

Cheng Su personally designed the flyers, sought out a small printing shop to print a generous number of them, and even highlighted a grand opening discount.

After all this was settled, Cheng Su visited the kitchen equipment manufacturer again to check on the progress of the food cart and get the delivery date, then picked an auspicious day to open the restaurant.

From the time she took over the restaurant until now, Cheng Su had been busy outside, truly embodying the early-to-rise, late-to-return work ethic, which made Chunhua and the others very curious.

Commander Qi's wife had only recently joined the military community and should have been unfamiliar with everything. But on the days when Taiguo was out on missions, she was nowhere to be seen.

When Cheng Su returned home, the nosy Chunhua immediately took the opportunity to ask.

"Oh, sitting at home with nothing to do, I just thought about looking for suitable work or business to do," Cheng Su said, looking visibly tired.

So that was it.

Military allowances were not high, especially for most soldiers who came from rural backgrounds with large families back in their hometowns to support—a meager allowance was never enough.

Therefore, the family members who accompanied the military often worked if they didn't have family responsibilities, and even those who stayed at home to care for their husbands and teach their children would take on some handicrafts to work on at home, earning a bit extra because, after all, that's how life goes.

"We earn five cents for every twenty pieces of handicraft we do. If you like, you can also take some to do at home!" Chunhua said with a smile.

Uh, Cheng Su smiled and replied, "Thank you, if I need it, I'll join you."

Chunhua caught the polite brush-off, glanced at her, and said with a forced smile, "That's true. You are an educated person; you don't need to do handicrafts. You could even be a teacher."

Cheng Su had finished high school, unlike them, who were happy just to be literate and able to count after completing elementary schools.

Thinking this, another twinge of sourness crept into her heart. Her husband was a company commander, and she was educated. Whatever job she took would surely be more respectable than handicrafts, right?

Chapter 62: Chapter 62: Funds Running Low

Chunhua's heart was sour, but of course, Cheng Su had no idea. These past few days, she had been busy with the opening of her small restaurant, coming home late and leaving early, and was tired enough already. Even if she did know what others were thinking, she simply didn't have the "international time" to care about it.

She had plenty of matters to attend to, and she was not the type to be petty.

After taking a bath, Cheng Su took out some paper and a pen, along with the money she had left from the past few days, laying it all out.

She needed to calculate the cost of running the restaurant and see how much money was left, to see if she could make it to the opening day. It was essential to have a figure in mind; otherwise, it would be a joke if the money ran out right when the opening day arrived and there was no cash left even to buy ingredients.

Holding various receipts and a notebook for tracking expenses, Cheng Su started calculating everything meticulously, serious enough to pass for an accountant.

An hour later, she looked at the few scattered banknotes on the table and let out a long sigh.

As the saying goes, "One doesn't know the cost of firewood and rice until one keeps house, one doesn't know the boss's troubles until one becomes a boss". In business, even if it's just a tiny stall, you have to calculate the cost of expenses. It's only when everything is accounted for do you realize that everything requires money, from the large-scale operations down to a single bowl or bottle of oil.

If the funds aren't abundant, the headache of managing finances to ensure business operations becomes a reality, and running a business like this without sufficient money would likely add a couple of white hairs.

Now, Cheng Su was precisely the one who should worry about getting white hair because the money she had scraped together was running low.

Booking a food cart, printing flyers, as well as this and that purchase, she was now left with less than four Taiguo dollars.

"Money really doesn't last," Cheng Su looked at the few banknotes and felt a headache coming on again.

How was she going to open the restaurant with just a few dollars? And moreover, it wasn't even opening day yet.

So, she had to forget about decorating the restaurant; without money for ingredients, what decoration could she even talk about?

And then there was hiring staff.

The restaurant couldn't run on her alone at opening; she needed to hire someone to help. But that was not an immediate financial concern. Workers' wages were settled after a month of work, and some employers even held back half a month's pay, so this was not a problem.

The decoration could wait; she could open as soon as the restaurant had a name. After she made money, she could decorate however she wanted.

The biggest issue right now was the money not being enough. She wondered how much of this small amount would be left by the opening day?

If everything was ready except for the "east wind", and it was just the money for ingredients she lacked to open the business, that would be truly embarrassing.

Indeed, dreams are full and lush, reality is gaunt and stark.

She was so enthusiastic about doing business, but it might stall due to lack of money, which would be humiliating.

With a snap, she closed the notebook and placed the pen against her nose, pursing her lips and holding it there with one hand propped against her cheek, lost in thought.

Qi Taiguo wasn't around, and even if she sought his help, his distant aid wouldn't quench an immediate need.

And borrowing money from neighbors was even more difficult. She was new in town, barely knew a few good acquaintances—all rather casual—they would think what of you, borrowing money so bluntly?

Okay, even if she had the nerve to ask, would people lend her the money or not?

Especially in the army, where everyone's daily life wasn't particularly prosperous, if they did have a bit of money, it was usually earmarked for home use, so how much could they realistically lend out?

Anytime, unless with very close friends, asking to borrow money is difficult.

Cheng Su's nature was such; she never liked to trouble others, for troubling others was troubling oneself.

She had better think of another way.

Chapter 63: Chapter 63 Confiscation of Private Money

As Cheng Su expected, by the time the dining car was delivered to the restaurant and the day to open for business arrived, her money, which was less than four yuan, had dwindled to just two yuan.

With two yuan, she made a trip to the market, and at most she could only buy some of the cheapest radishes and Chinese cabbage. As for meat, like pork ribs and chicken, she could forget about it. She could get some fatty pork, but that too wouldn't be enough. Even the simplest restaurant opening would require some other kinds of meat.

What to do?

Cheng Su returned home despondently, lying on the bed, staring blankly.

It was really true that everything was ready except for the crucial element. Just a little bit short. If only she had known, she would have cut down the transfer fee she paid Sister Wang and the others by ten yuan. Paying two yuan more in interest when repaying wouldn't have left her in such an embarrassing situation now.

So, this was her first business venture, and she was so inexperienced, failing to calculate the costs properly.

Or perhaps, she got too excited about securing the restaurant and subsequently overspent.

Either way, it was her own failure to plan properly. She really needed to be more cautious in the future.

Cheng Su got up from the bed and, still not giving up, took out her private cash box and opened it.

It was completely empty.

She rummaged through all her possessions again, feeling sheepish, finding nothing of value to sell or pawn.

However, on the cabinet, there were medals and trophies, all belonging to Qi Taiguo's glory.

Even if these could be turned into cash, she wouldn't dare pawn or sell them even if she had nine lives; Qi Taiguo would melt her down in fury if he found out!

"No, I can't think about this," Cheng Su slapped her own cheek and forced herself to look away.

But those medals seemed to be possessed by some magic, constantly beckoning to her.

Cheng Su reached out, and just as her fingertips barely touched a medal, her other hand grasped her wrist.

"Cheng Su, steady on!" she chided herself, saying, "If you don't want a family disaster, dispel those thoughts right now."

Staring at the medals for a long time, Cheng Su suddenly burst into laughter. She never imagined that one day, for the sake of money, she would be so troubled and even consider touching the medals.

Her best friend would probably laugh until his stomach hurt if she told him.

Speaking of her best friend, she wondered how he was doing. He'd probably be heartbroken, knowing she'd fallen from such a height, her soul now residing in this era, not dead but vegetative!

Alas, she couldn't dwell on that anymore. If she continued, she'd grow melancholic too.

Cheng Su's gaze then fell on some books next to the medals, a mishmash of texts, including a Bible?

Qi Taiguo, that guy, actually read such books? Truly unbelievable. No wonder his beliefs were in God and Jesus.

Cheng Su picked up the Bible and flipped through it, and indeed it was the Bible. She was scanning through the whole book when suddenly she paused.

This...

Cheng Su's eyes narrowed as she took out the bookmark that was stuck in the book, her lips curling into a smile. What a unique bookmark, a Great Unity RMB!

Yes, this so-called bookmark was actually a Great Unity RMB note, placed there by Qi Taiguo. So, this was his hidden money?

Ha-ha, what a unique way to hide private savings!

Cheng Su quickly flipped through the rest of the book, finding another Great Unity note, then she reached for the other books.

Unsurprisingly, she found several more Great Unity notes hidden among other pages.

Cheng Su's face lit up with joy—they were one as husband and wife, his was hers, so these private funds were temporarily confiscated!

Chapter 64: Chapter 64 The First Pot of Gold

June 20th, eight o'clock, the almanac stated it was auspicious to open for business, very lucky, Cheng Su placed a Ba Xian table at the entrance of the restaurant, on which she arranged a plate of blanched pork belly, along with several apples, a few cups of rice wine, and in a bowl, she placed a serving of rice with a few sticks of incense inserted into it.

The opening ritual required offerings, a practice that hadn't changed since ancient times. In her past life, she had experienced hotel openings that were grand affairs with roast suckling pig for offerings, lion dances, ribbon-cutting, and setting off firecrackers.

Now, she was opening a small restaurant and couldn't put on such a grand display, so she made do with a simple offering to express her sincerity.

Cheng Su held the incense, lit it, and bowed several times with her eyes closed, murmuring her blessings, then inserted the incense, and lit a string of firecrackers signaling prosperity.

The sound of firecrackers drew a crowd of onlookers, Cheng Su smiled and unveiled the restaurant's name covered in red silk: Joy Soon Loy Small Restaurant fell into everyone's view.

"Oh, a change of owner, huh? Even the name of the restaurant has been changed."

"It's still a restaurant; it was before too. Didn't seem too prosperous, can it be successfully run?"

Cheng Su said brightly with a smile, "Our shop opens today, guaranteeing all ingredients are freshly purchased, and hygiene and quality are assured. Everyone is welcome to supervise and come taste."

The crowd chuckled.

Cheng Su pointed to a box at the door, from which she took a stack of flyers, and said, "Everyone can take a flyer home to look over. If you order dishes during the opening period, by presenting this flyer, you'll enjoy a 20% discount."

People surged forward, each taking a flyer to inspect.

Long before the opening, Cheng Su had already distributed many flyers; these were extras, all part of the publicity strategy.

After a simple opening ceremony, Cheng Su had no more time to chat, as she had not yet hired any workers, and was all on her own for now; with lunch service imminent, she had to hurry to get the food ready.

On this first day of the new opening, preparations were rushed. Cheng Su decided not to make any particularly troublesome dishes, focusing on fast food. She had prepared two cold dishes, cucumber salad and wood ear mushroom with vinegar, considered vegetarian dishes, along with stir-fried vegetables. The meat dishes included steamed chicken with shiitake mushrooms, spicy beef, sweet and sour spare ribs, scrambled eggs with tomatoes, and fish-flavored eggplant.

Chop, chop, chop, Cheng Su, wearing a floral de laine shirt and ankle-length trousers, her neck wrapped with an apron dangling to her knees, her hand gripping a chef's knife, swiftly chopped ingredients needed for the dishes she was preparing.

The weather was hot, her hair now long and tied in a high ponytail, her cheeks flushed from the heat, and the recent hustle had made her noticeably slimmer, her slightly bowed head making her all the more attractive.

However, there were no admirers to appreciate her beauty, and even if there had been, Cheng Su was too preoccupied with her work to notice whether she was attractive or not.

Her entire focus was on making the small restaurant a success, as it could very well be the first key to her fortune.

Therefore, she hoped to make a big impact right from the start, and all her energy was invested in cooking.

Cheng Su quickly prepared the cold dishes, working as if she were two people, boiling a large pot of rice and a large pot of soup—because soup was to be given for free, today's soup was egg flower soup.

Once the soup and rice were ready, she stored them in insulated containers to keep them warm; then she began cooking the dishes, starting with those that were simple and could be kept for longer. Each finished dish was placed on a warming cart, inside which there was already some hot water.

On the glass of the warming cart, prices were taped on with red tape, such as, one meat and one vegetarian dish for three banknotes, two meat and one vegetarian for five banknotes, two meat and two vegetarian for six banknotes, available for dine-in or takeout, tea and soup were always free, with prices clearly marked and fair for all ages.

By 11:30 am, Cheng Su had finished preparing all the dishes and placed them on the food cart, her head already drenched in sweat, and she welcomed the first wave of customers.

Before the opening, Cheng Su had distributed flyers in the vicinity, so a number of people were already in the know. The grand opening indeed bustled for a while, and now, people were intrigued by the novelty of it all.

Following her own idea, Cheng Su modeled her restaurant after the fast food establishments she knew from her previous life, printing meal tickets in various categories like one meat one vegetable, two meats one vegetable, and so forth, each in different colors.

Customers could buy as much as they wanted according to the meal ticket prices, exchange for a meal ticket, and then hand it to the server at the food cart, making everything clear at a glance.

In this way, the server taking the meal ticket knew exactly what to serve without having to ask, sparing both words and direct contact with money, saving time and effort while ensuring hygiene—a win-win situation.

But now, short on staff, Cheng Su had to handle everything herself, collecting money and serving meals, which made things much more troublesome. She had to touch money, which was frankly unhygienic, but with no one to help, all she could do was to wear gloves and stay busy.

At first, she collected money and then served meals, but as it became overwhelming, she had customers throw the money into an iron box, and she served meals according to the amount they paid.

Fortunately, the people were mostly honest, and even when Cheng Su was too busy to keep an eye on things, they wouldn't take advantage of the situation. She served generous portions, there were fans and free soup and tea, which left the customers delighted. If someone tried to take advantage of the chaos, others would call it out.

Thus, everything proceeded smoothly and harmoniously.

It can't be overstated how important it is to spread the word far and wide. As soon as the promotional flyers were distributed, people came under various guises, and by noon, the crowd only grew.

These customers found Cheng Su's multiple-choice fast food concept quite interesting, and the food itself was indeed tasty. Once they left, they unintentionally gave Cheng Su free publicity.

Cheng Su was both collecting money and serving meals. There was no time to clear away used dishes; she could only ask customers to set them aside, and she was so busy she couldn't even take a sip of water.

By 1 pm, the meals Cheng Su had prepared were sold out. When new customers came, there was nothing ready to sell; she had to cook to order, which was more expensive, but naturally, the taste was better than the big-pot cooking. Those with money ordered a couple of dishes and thoroughly enjoyed their meal, singing her praises.

At 2:30 in the afternoon, all the customers had left Joy Soon Loy Small Restaurant, and what Cheng Su saw was chaos everywhere—dishes and food containers were scattered and piled up, giving her a headache.

Gurgle, gurgle.

Her stomach cramped, and she let out a soft grunt, clutching her stomach and furrowing her brow.

She had been busy since the early morning and, needless to say, hadn't had a bite to eat; she had barely drunk any water, and her throat was nearly smoking with thirst. Her stomach was as empty as a drum, and she was famished.

Patting her stomach and surveying the disarray of the restaurant, Cheng Su gave a wry smile, went into the kitchen, and fried herself a plate of egg fried rice, planning to eat before cleaning up.

Filling the stomach is a top priority; one must be well-fed to have the energy for everything else.

The egg fried rice was simple, requiring no special sauces, just oil and soy sauce, and sprinkled with some chopped scallions, resulting in a fragrant plate of fried rice.

As she ate, Cheng Su glanced at the cookie tin being used for collecting money, which contained scattered banknotes, and couldn't help but smile at the corners of her mouth.

From the initial lack of transfer funds, to the subsequent shortage of capital, to solving the issue with Qi Taiguo's hidden savings, up to now, everything had been relatively smooth, and she had made her first bucket of gold here in Taiguo.

Chapter 65: Chapter 65: Off to a Good Start

After finishing the meal and tidying up all the dishes, carts, and tables, it was already past five in the evening.

Exhausted with a sore back and aching waist, Cheng Su closed the exterior door of the restaurant before she began to tally up the day's income. As for tomorrow's vegetables, it was now too late, so she would have to go buy them early next morning.

In the box, there were plenty of banknotes as well as one-yuan bills. Cheng Su counted them one by one and bundled them into neat stacks. The final result took her by surprise.

Thirty-two yuan in total sales from fast food and individual stir-fried dishes was the gross income. After deducting costs for ingredients and labor, her net profit for the day was eighteen yuan.

She had thought that earning ten or twenty yuan would have been good, but she didn't expect to have so much as net profit—it was a pleasant surprise.

No, the current prices were still low, the ingredients were cheap, and that's why the profit margin was larger. As for the labor, she was both the owner and the worker, so for the time being, it wasn't accounted for.

"Anyway, it's a good start, not bad at all," Cheng Su said to herself with a smile.

But upon seeing the chairs stacked on the tables, her lips pursed. She really needed to hire someone. Relying on herself alone, there were too many tasks to handle. Even when customers ordered individual dishes, she couldn't cope by herself.

Today had been exactly that. Some people had ordered individual stir-fry dishes, and due to the lack of help, she missed several orders. Those missed orders equaled missed business opportunities.

After all, the profit margins on individual dishes were even greater.

If she had more hands, she would be able to free up her own. So, it was time to hire someone. Otherwise, on her own, she was stretched too thin, and the business was bound to get better.

What was more important was that, though she wanted to make money, she had no intention of overextending herself to the point of compromising her health. Therefore, she must have someone to share the workload.

As the sky gradually darkened, Cheng Su couldn't dwell on these thoughts any longer. She wrote a hiring notice and stuck it on the restaurant's door, then locked up and took the money home with her.

The restaurant was some distance from her home, and it wasn't good to go back too late.

She wondered how Qi Taiguo was faring and when he would return.

Cheng Su arrived home, too tired to cook. She simply ate a bread roll she had brought back on her way and took a bath. After preparing the menu for the next day, she went to rest and fell asleep almost as soon as her head touched the pillow.

The next day, she left home just as dawn was breaking. Her initial plan to make breakfast, now out of reach as she was on her own, had to be put aside.

So when she arrived at the restaurant, she pulled a cart to the market to buy ingredients, just like the day before, and once again did all the washing, cutting, and cooking by herself.

Just as Cheng Su had anticipated, once the business got rolling, the customers came consistently. Today she prepared one and a half times the amount of food as the day before, but by the end, it was all sold out.

Like she expected, because she was shorthanded, she missed a few orders for individual dishes. Cheng Su could only apologize with a smile, knowing that once she had help, she would definitely be able to manage better.

After a busy day, and despite being very tired when doing the final tally, Cheng Su looked at the assorted banknotes and felt that the exhaustion was worth it; seeing them made her feel less tired.

"Indeed, what better way to dispel worries than to strike it rich?" Cheng Su said proudly to herself. Although being rich was still a long way off, she had opened up the game, hadn't she?

As long as she worked hard and managed well, striking it rich was not impossible, especially now that she was tapping into the excellent resources provided by the reform and opening-up policy.

With this thought, Cheng Su hummed a tune cheerfully, her confidence in the future growing stronger.