

The 80s 791

Chapter 791 What's The Origin

The night was deep and quiet when Qi Taiguo stood on the balcony, pinching a cigarette in his hand, pondering the events of the day.

He never expected that Ning Ge would appear here, at such an important meeting, and he didn't hurt anyone, didn't do anything, except for that visit to the room which allegedly held top-secret documents. It was only there that he struck. Could it be that was his sole target?

Qi Taiguo gazed into the flickering lights of the night, reflecting on the oddities of before. Could all this have been the reason? Was this young man already infiltrating the villa at that time?

So many days had passed, and yet this young man had hidden himself quite well.

Qi Taiguo snorted.

He took a drag from his cigarette, resting his elbows on the railing, and thought carefully about Ning Ge.

From the start, when he first appeared before him, claiming he had been robbed, Qi Taiguo felt it was wrong, too coincidental, but at that time, he didn't think deeply about it. Now that he looked back, there really were quite a few loopholes.

Afterward, the young man behaved like a spoiled scion, with the temperament of a master spoiled by his family. Then he started doing business with Cheng Su, further dispelling Qi Taiguo's suspicions.

Qi Taiguo took another puff of his cigarette, thinking of Ning Ge's silhouette that day, when suddenly another figure flashed through his mind.

He was startled.

The figure in his mind was none other than the person who had escaped from Master Wei's side during that bandit blockade mission...

The two silhouettes overlapped, merging into one.

Qi Taiguo's breathing hitched, his lips pressing into a straight line.

During that mission, someone had tipped him off about Master Wei's escape. Later on, that same person had given him suggestions on how to handle the information slip they had obtained.

Would someone not close to him really offer such guidance?

Qi Taiguo found it hard to believe, yet it all seemed to make sense, it all felt plausible, if it was indeed him.

So, it was him?

What exactly was this young man's background!

He had been involved in the bandit blockade mission and now he had stolen documents. What was he trying to do, and for whom was he working? Did Chief Ning and the others know about this? A pain in his hand snapped Qi Taiguo back to reality; he had inadvertently flicked the cigarette ash that had burnt his finger.

Flicking away the cigarette, Qi Taiguo patted the ash off his hands when suddenly his ears twitched.

"Who's there!" He shifted quickly in a defensive stance, turning to look behind him like a leopard eyeing its prey, his entire body tensed.

Someone emerged from behind the curtains, and in the faint light, Qi Taiguo's breathing relaxed for a moment before tensing up again.

"Are you insane, daring to come back here?" He glanced around and lowered his voice, demanding.

The person was not somebody else but Ning Ge, who had escaped during the day. Qi Taiguo couldn't believe he had the gall to return; wasn't he afraid of being caught?

Ning Ge said, "Don't worry, if I had the means to come to you, I have the means to go unseen by others."

Qi Taiguo scoffed and suddenly moved, grabbing Ning Ge's collar with one hand, his voice cold, "Sure, for a mere spy, this really isn't anything. But don't you forget who I am!"

He was a soldier, and even though Ning Ge was someone he knew, a member of the Ning Family, if he truly was a spy for a foreign country, a threat to his own nation, then no matter who Ning Ge was, Qi Taiguo wouldn't spare him, disowning all kinship!

"Speak! Who exactly are you, and what is your identity?" Qi Taiguo pressed him against the wall and demanded.

His voice was harsh, and in the darkness, a pair of eyes sharp as an eagle's bore into the other man unflinchingly, an imposing aura all around. Ning Ge, however, began to laugh.

Chapter 792: I am a Spy

Ning Ge smiled, and Qi Taiguo's face darkened. His aura grew colder as he gradually tightened his grip on Ning Ge's collar.

"Cough cough, don't get excited, I didn't say anything." Ning Ge patted his hand and said, "Let go first, I'm running out of breath here."

With a grunt, Qi Taiguo loosened his grip, and Ning Ge gained his freedom.

"That last mission, with the highway bandit, was it you who tipped me off?" Qi Taiguo looked at him and asked.

"Yes!"

Qi Taiguo's breathing tightened slightly.

"Were you the one who killed Master Wei?"

"No!"

Qi Taiguo's breathing relaxed again. He looked at Ning Ge and asked, "Do you know about Master Wei? Do you know what I have? How could you... "

"I'm a spy!"

Ning Ge's light remark pierced into Qi Taiguo's ears, and he stared at him, dumbfounded.

Ning Ge walked over to the balcony railing, took out a cigarette from his pocket, and offered one to Qi Taiguo first.

Qi Taiguo accepted it woodenly, not bothering to light it, just holding it. Ning Ge didn't mind, he took one out for himself, put it into his mouth, struck a match to light it, then shook off the match flame and watched it extinguish before flicking the matchstick into the garden.

Like Qi Taiguo did earlier, he placed both hands on the railing, gazing at the flickering distant lights while taking drags from his cigarette.

"As far back as three or four years ago, when I was still studying abroad in the United Kingdom, I joined the Special Service Organization. I studied abroad, and whenever I received a mission, I carried it out," Ning Ge said casually. "Usually, when there's no mission, we're just ordinary people, like me, an unworthy scion of a prestigious family. We have many such people: some are chefs, some are students, some are timid and scared little girls. But once on a mission, we become completely different people, ready to put life and death aside, determined to make sacrifices for the country as spies."

Qi Taiguo was silent.

"That mission involving Master Wei, it was our intelligence organization that discovered his collusion with the military. To get that list, I got involved with a girl from his village. Ah, not really involved—I didn't defile her—I just dated her, as a cover, to successfully get into Master Wei's home," Ning Ge explained. "Unexpectedly, the man had some brains. He hid the list and ledger with one of his mistresses, and he hid another list in his boots, which you found. He was very suspicious!"

Qi Taiguo rolled his eyes and said, "Then why did you tip me off? Shouldn't this have been kept secret?"

"Anyway, the man was bound to be caught. It doesn't matter who catches him. I gave you a chance to earn military merits; it's my way of not letting our acquaintance go to waste," Ning Ge shrugged.

"So what, I should be grateful to you?" Qi Taiguo sneered. "What I got was Master Wei's corpse."

"I really didn't kill him, what would I kill him for?" Ning Ge scoffed sharply, his gaze growing keen as he said, "I think, once the affair blew up, he became a disposable piece, just like that Zhang guy, all disposable pieces."

Qi Taiguo was startled. "Are you saying there's someone else behind them?"

"Nine times out of ten. But such incidents that damage the military's image are only covered up. You better not get involved, just honestly be your soldier," Ning Ge's tone carried a hint of warning towards the end.

Qi Taiguo understood his meaning; the dirtier the conspiracy, the more he knew, the more he'd be restrained. Everyone has their duties, and his was to follow orders from above—wherever he's needed, he goes!

Chapter 793: Be Careful Not to Give Yourself Away

The night was deep, and Qi Taiguo stood on the balcony with Ning Ge, discussing the most secretive matters.

When he heard Ning Ge's words, Qi Taiguo was shocked and conflicted. He hadn't expected that beneath this man's flippant and unserious exterior hid such an identity.

"Do your big brother and Old Master Ning know about this?" Qi Taiguo took a drag of his cigarette and asked.

"Besides you, no one else knows," Ning Ge glanced at him.

Qi Taiguo fell silent, then said, "You don't plan to tell them?" He paused before adding, "There are no walls that can block the wind forever, one day they will find out."

"I'll talk about it when the time comes! If I told them now, they probably wouldn't let me continue!" Ning Ge chuckled lightly, "In their eyes, it's better for me to remain a good-for-nothing!"

"Nonsense, Chief Ning and Old Master Ning have high hopes for you," Qi Taiguo blurted out a rebuke.

Ning Ge merely shrugged noncommittally.

"Espionage always lurks in the shadows, it's inherently a covert identity. Once a person is sacrificed..." Qi Taiguo pursed his lips and said, "Once sacrificed, the person won't be publicly acknowledged but will forever be buried in the archives."

Spies cannot be exposed to the light; even if sacrificed, they will not be recorded and will remain in eternal darkness.

"I didn't take on this role for personal glory," Ning Ge said, shrugging.

"That's the point, in the public eye, one always carries more value. Being an agent for the state or something along those lines is better than being a spy," Qi Taiguo said. "If you really want to continue in this line of work, with Chief Ning's support, getting into the National Security Department wouldn't be a problem."

"We'll see. I don't have that intention for the time being!" Ning Ge replied.

Qi Taiguo ground his teeth in frustration at Ning Ge's nonchalant demeanor.

"What's the mission this time? What exactly is that document, did you really steal it?" Qi Taiguo asked again about the day's events.

Ning Ge's expression turned stern as he said, "It's the alliance contract terms with Japan. Our goal this time is to sabotage their alliance."

Qi Taiguo was slightly startled, "Then, taking it away is enough to sabotage them?"

"Of course not, there's much more to do. You also know of the strategy of sowing discord?" Ning Ge raised an eyebrow and chuckled lightly.

Qi Taiguo pursed his lips.

"Don't worry about this matter; it's not your business," Ning Ge advised.

Qi Taiguo huffed, "You talk as though it's simple. We are responsible for the mission; now that there's been trouble, we're the ones who will take the blame."

"Relax, nothing is more important than national interests. No blame will be cast upon you," Ning Ge patted his shoulder.

Qi Taiguo dodged his hand, finished his cigarette, and said, "No matter what you're doing now, take good care of yourself. And, don't say anything in front of Cheng Su; she's a smart woman. Be careful not to slip up in front of her."

Thinking of Cheng Su, a gentle look flickered in Ning Ge's eyes, but it quickly faded as he looked down and feigned composure, "I've got it in my mind. She won't find out." And he thought thankfully it was nighttime as he sternly reminded himself not to indulge in baseless fantasies.

"Accidents can always happen. She's smart, but she's still an ordinary woman. Some things are not meant for her to bear. I only hope that she can lead an ordinary, peaceful life, just like now, doing business, reading books, that's all," Qi Taiguo said.

Ning Ge gave him a look and said, "Don't underestimate her. Sometimes, she is much stronger than you'd think."

"However strong she is, she's still a fragile woman," Qi Taiguo stared at him. "I don't want her living in constant fear, understand?"

"Fine, fine, I'll be careful to keep it hidden, happy?" Ning Ge raised his hands in surrender.

Qi Taiguo snorted coldly and turned to go back to the room behind him, "I'm going to sleep. You should leave."

Ning Ge did not say a word, he just slowly finished his cigarette, deep in thought.

Chapter 794: The Uncle's Intentions

Cheng Su, upon leaving the house that day, saw Chunhua and her husband bundled up with large and small bags, getting ready to step out, Yuer strapped to her back, prompting Cheng Su's curiosity.

"Where are you off to with all those bags? Moving?" she asked.

"Not at all. We're thinking of taking Yuer back to her grandmother's place for a while. Isn't it time to visit the hometown?" Chunhua replied with a smile, while the grin on Liang Shurong's face seemed somewhat forced.

Cheng Su was taken aback and said, "Have you thought it through? Can you really bear to do it?"

"I have to bear it, even if I don't want to. We can't just live on the small allowance Old Liang gets," Chunhua said with a wry smile.

Cheng Su fell silent and sighed in her heart.

"If you need any help, just let me know," Cheng Su said again.

"Thank you!" Chunhua hurried Liang Shurong out of the door.

Cheng Su was also headed to the fast-food joint, so she walked with them, helping carry some luggage. Before boarding the bus, she even bought a big bag of apples for them nearby; they were good for the ride or to take back home.

Chunhua and her husband couldn't refuse the gift, so they accepted it gratefully.

Since it was still early, Cheng Su first went to check on the restaurant. Finding nothing particularly pressing, she then returned to the fast-food shop.

Inside the shop, everyone was bustling, preparing to open for business. Xiaohua sat obediently at the cash register, peeling garlic cloves on her knees.

"Oh dear, sweetheart, you shouldn't be doing this. Be careful not to hurt your fingers. Stop peeling," Cheng Su called out.

Shi Ling laughed and said, "President Cheng, just let her peel. She's six years old; can't she peel some garlic? When we were her age, we were already carrying firewood up and down the hills!"

"Aunt Su, I can do it, and it doesn't hurt my fingers," Xiaohua said with a smile.

Cheng Su affectionately stroked her head and said, "Then Aunt Su is grateful for your help!"

Xiaohua blushed and smiled shyly.

Cheng Su marveled at the resilience of children from poor families who took on household responsibilities early. They were survivors of great adversities.

Her thoughts turned to Chunhua, who, despite her daughter's young age, was willing to send her back to her grandmother's, and to her own Elder Sister, who had left Baobao at just seven or eight months old to go out and work.

All was done for a livelihood; sacrifices had to be made. She reminded herself to plan well so as not to have to leave her child for the sake of making ends meet.

After a busy day at the fast-food shop, Cheng Su surprisingly had a visit from Third Uncle Cheng that evening.

"I heard from Jisheng that you've been at the shop these days, and here you are," Third Uncle Cheng said with a smile.

Cheng Su replied, "My Elder Sister has gone back to our hometown, so I came to check on the shop for a few days. Please have a seat, Third Uncle. Look at you, you've lost weight. Your job must be hard." She poured a cup of water for him and took out her own wallet to buy a meal ticket, handing it to Xiaoying, instructing her to prepare a generous portion.

"I have money; you don't need to pay for me!" Third Uncle Cheng hurriedly objected.

"It's fine, I can certainly treat my uncle to a meal," Cheng Su said as she sat down.

Third Uncle Cheng smiled and took a good look around the shop, nodding to himself in approval. This was his first visit, after all!

Who would have thought that a fast-food shop could be run so successfully? His niece was really impressive.

Cheng Su scrutinized Third Uncle Cheng's appearance closely, noticing that although he had lost weight, his spirit seemed lively, and it was clear that the renovation work was taking its toll on him.

"What job isn't hard? It's nothing. Work is less grueling than digging in the fields, right?" Third Uncle Cheng laughed and said, "And although it's tough, it's worth it. The more you work, the more you earn. In the future, I can even consider doing this on my own."

Cheng Su agreed, "That's the spirit. Learn the skills first, then work for yourself later. I've been telling you to come over for meals when you have time, but you never show up. Now you come to the fast-food shop instead. Are you facing any difficulties?"

Chapter 795: Whistleblowing

Third Uncle Cheng was drinking tea when he heard Cheng Su's question, his hand holding the cup paused, and he hesitated a bit.

Cheng Su was sharp-eyed and immediately spotted Third Uncle's dilemma. She said softly, "Third Uncle, I am your true niece, and here in Qing City, I am probably the closest person to you. If there is any difficulty or problem, please don't keep it bottled up inside you. If there's trouble, just talk about it, and we can solve it together."

Her words were grave, and Third Uncle Cheng almost laughed, saying, "You have filial piety, and your Third Uncle knows that. It's not like you think. I have a good job, I eat well, yes, it's a bit tiring, but my spirits are high. I get along with my coworkers, and there are no troubles!" His heart warmed at the thought. He had only two sons, but his elder brother's daughter, though a niece, was treated like his own daughter. And besides, she was the only daughter in their branch of the Cheng family!

Thinking this, Third Uncle Cheng told himself that in the future he also had to educate his two sons to treat their cousin as their own sister and to protect her, to give her support so the Qi family wouldn't look down upon her.

Cheng Su didn't know what Third Uncle was thinking. Hearing him say it was not a problem, she breathed a sigh of relief and asked, "Then what is it about?"

"Hasn't your Elder Sister come back yet? I heard from Jisheng that she's been home for several days now, right?" Third Uncle Cheng asked in a lowered voice.

Cheng Su was startled. Was it related to Elder Sister?

No, Third Uncle and Elder Sister didn't have much to do with each other. An encounter would only involve a simple greeting, far from close.

Then, was it related to Jisheng?

Cheng Su was smart. As soon as Third Uncle Cheng asked about Elder Sister not being back, she immediately inferred that Jisheng was acting up in Elder Sister's absence!

"Third Uncle, what have you heard or seen?" Cheng Su's complexion darkened a bit.

Third Uncle Cheng hesitated for a while and then said, "Honestly, I shouldn't be speaking of this, and you shouldn't meddle. But I'm worried that Jisheng, being too honest, could be deceived. So, I still need to warn you."

"What exactly happened?" Cheng Su couldn't contain her anxiety.

"A while back, we went out to eat at a restaurant. You know, in our renovation team, it's all men, some of whom don't have their wives with them," Third Uncle Cheng said, his old face turning red. Talking about this with his niece was really embarrassing.

Cheng Su suddenly understood and her face also turned red.

"You know how men are..." Third Uncle Cheng stumbled over his words: "That time, a few coworkers were going to drag that silly boy Jisheng to a dark alleyway."

Dark alleys, streetwalkers!

Cheng Su stood up abruptly, her face stormy.

Xiaoying and the others looked over. Cheng Su had to suppress her anger and lowered her voice to ask, "Then, did Jisheng go?"

"He didn't go that time, probably because he saw I was there. But he was called out two more times, and I think he was somewhat tempted," said Third Uncle Cheng. "If there's nothing urgent at home, it would be better to urge your Elder Sister to come back sooner. I've heard that these streetwalkers are all restless. If something happens, it will cause big trouble!"

"Third Uncle, I understand!" Cheng Su said. "Just pretend you don't know anything about this and leave it alone. You all work on the same team, so he might think you're going against him and deliberately snitching to cause him trouble!"

"I know. I see he's an honest and silly boy, and it wouldn't be good for him to be led astray like this. After all, he is your brother-in-law!" sighed Third Uncle Cheng.

If it weren't for the fear of causing a scandal that would reflect badly on Cheng Su and her husband, he really wouldn't bother to deal with such a mess!

Chapter 796: A Sword Hanging Overhead

Third Uncle Cheng left after dinner, and Cheng Su was holding back a belly full of anger. She hadn't expected Zhang Jisheng to be like this. Honest? Pah!

Just a few suggestive words from others, and he became restless, ready to stray while his wife was away?

Third Uncle said he didn't see him, but once someone is tempted and has the thought, who knows if he might sneak off on his own when he's not with his coworkers?

The mere thought of that scene made Cheng Su's skin crawl, and she felt like vomiting.

She was acutely aware that these so-called "misses" would become increasingly prevalent with the passage of time. They seemed not too common now, but come the nineties, there would be plenty.

These people were controlled by others. It would be fine if it was just honest business, but the real fear was the traps they set—that's when the trouble starts.

"Xiaoying, how many days has it been since your Brother Zhang came here for a meal?" Cheng Su suddenly asked.

Xiaoying thought for a moment and said, "It seems he hasn't come since Sister Lian went home. Why do you ask?"

"No reason, just asking."

"Oh!"

Cheng Su's face darkened with worry.

She knew that in the past, when Qi Fenglian was around, the family hardly cooked in the evenings, so Zhang Jisheng would eat at the store. Now that he wasn't coming, was it because she, Cheng Su, was here watching, or was there another reason?

Whether Zhang Jisheng could keep his fidelity, if he truly sought out those women, then what?

Cheng Su shuddered at the thought and suddenly felt a wave of sorrow for Qi Fenglian.

Above the character for "lust" swings a knife. She hoped this man wouldn't lose his senses to that extent, that he would know when to pull back from the brink.

Otherwise, once the scandal broke, it might destroy this family.

However, would Zhang Jisheng truly pull back from the brink as Cheng Su hoped?

After eating his fill at another fast food store, Zhang Jisheng casually strolled home, picking his teeth leisurely.

The rental house they were staying in wasn't far from the train station, which was convenient for Qi Fenglian to get to work at the store and was also quite affordable.

Turning from the main road into a small alley, Zhang Jisheng's heart started to race. He knew how many temptations hid within these narrow lanes.

"Brother, finished work? Come in for some fun?"

Zhang Jisheng was suddenly grabbed by someone, which startled him, changing his complexion.

Turning his head, he saw a woman with curled hair and bright red lips giving him a flirty wink and a coquettish smile.

Looking further down, he saw a white tank top over a red bra, revealing half of her midriff.

Below that, she wore black shorts that showed off plump legs, with her toenails painted red.

Zhang Jisheng's heart pounded like a drum as he swallowed hard, his mind filled with the various jokes his coworkers had shared.

His head was buzzing when he suddenly smelled an overpowering fragrance, which brought him to his senses, only to find the woman somehow had moved closer, rubbing against his arm.

Zhang Jisheng hastily pushed her away, but his body had already quietly reacted.

The woman let out a whimper and looked at him pitifully, cooing, "Brother, you're so rough!"

Zhang Jisheng wanted to pull away but didn't dare. The woman boldly moved closer again, tracing his neck with her hand, saying, "Brother, you've worked hard all day. Come relax a bit!"

"How much?" he asked.

The woman lit up, pulling him into the alley, saying, "Don't worry, it's not a lot of money, I guarantee you'll be satisfied."

The night was deep, concealing all filth, with soft and faint moans drifting up into the air as passersby quickly covered their faces and walked on.

Chapter 797: Elder Sister's Narration

Qi Fenglian returned to work at the shop two days after her third uncle's visit, but she looked haggard, with especially dark circles under her eyes, and an indefinable irritation furrowed her brow.

Cheng Su frowned as she looked at her, thinking Elder Sister's current state wasn't far from that of a resentful wife.

After introducing her to Shi Ling and her daughter, Qi Fenglian sized up the woman. When she respectfully addressed her as Sister Lian, a smile graced her face, and she said, "Now that you're here, work hard!"

Shi Ling nodded and agreed.

Only then did Qi Fenglian sit down, her face showing utter exhaustion.

"Elder Sister, you just got back; you could have rested at home for a day before coming over. There's no rush at this moment, I'm here at the shop anyway," Cheng Su said, pouring her a glass of water.

Qi Fenglian offered a forced smile, "How could I do that? I've already delayed your work for so many days, and you have exams coming up. I can't be the reason you're held back! Who knows, maybe you'll be the first college graduate from our Qi family."

Cheng Su pressed her lips together in a light smile and asked, "How is Xiao Bao doing?"

Qi Fenglian rubbed her eyes and said, "His fever has gone down, but being so young and not well-nourished, his immune system is pretty weak. You should see him; he's become so thin... it's like he's lost a human shape..."

At home, she pleaded nicely with her mother-in-law, entreating her to take better care of Baobao, her voice breaking with emotion. Her mother-in-law merely retorted with, "It's my own grandson, wouldn't I cherish him? If you can do better, then take care of him yourself; don't ask me to," and with that, she blocked any further discussion.

If the child weren't so young, she would have been unable to bear it any longer and would have brought him over, enrolled him in a nursery school, and they could have been together as a family.

But how could she manage her job with such a young child?

Qi Fenglian held back over and over again, telling them how hard it was to have her son, how the illness had caused him to lose all the weight they had managed to put on him, and that they should let him eat well. She sent all of Jisheng's salary back, urging them not to skimp.

Yes, she had conceded, for the sake of her child, ready to abandon the idea of Jisheng keeping any of his earnings, simply wishing her son a better life.

But whether the elders would take her words to heart, she didn't know. She had said all she could; if even that could not earn genuine care, then there was nothing more she could do.

Baobao was the Zhang family's grandson, their own flesh and blood, yet they didn't cherish him. What could she possibly say?

Before coming back, Qi Fenglian quietly instructed her daughter to spend more time with her brother, to feed him more rice porridge, and secretly gave her ten yuan, cautioning her not to let her grandmother know.

Listening to Qi Fenglian's tearless laments, Cheng Su felt a chill settle in her heart.

The helplessness found in reality is often just like this.

"Sister, I think I understand where you and my mom don't see eye to eye. Since ancient times, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law disputes are common, aren't they? My mother-in-law acts like she's my enemy. It'd be one thing if it were just me she treated as an enemy, but why does she neglect her own grandson?" Qi Fenglian wiped the corner of her eye and sniffled.

"When Baobao gets a bit older, able to talk and walk, we'll bring them out and find a nursery here to take care of them. That's possible," Cheng Su offered softly to comfort her.

"This is the only reason I can keep going," Qi Fenglian said with a bitter smile.

Cheng Su pursed her lips, held her hand, and thought about what the third uncle had said. Seeing her bitter expression, she swallowed the words that had been on the tip of her tongue.

It shouldn't be said; how could such matters be spoken of, the affair between husband and wife was not for her to interfere.

"Let's open shop," Cheng Su changed what she was about to say and smiled.

Qi Fenglian nodded, went to the restroom to wash her face and gathered her spirits for work.

Chapter 798: To Tell or Not to Tell

Elder Sister had returned, so the store had an extra pair of hands. Cheng Su didn't stay long and took her study materials back home.

As she opened the door, Cheng Su saw a military duffel bag on the floor and paused, then a burst of joy followed.

From the bathroom, the sound of running water could be heard.

Cheng Su hung up her purse and walked to the bathroom door. She knocked and asked, "Taiguo, is that you?"

The bathroom door opened, and Qi Taiguo emerged with his head covered in foam, giving her a smile, "Yes, it's me. You're back?"

Cheng Su smiled too, "Mhm, you came back pretty quickly. You finish up; I'm going out to buy some ingredients to cook."

"Okay, don't fuss too much, just a simple fish dish will do!"

Cheng Su went back to get her keys, and behind her came Qi Taiguo's voice.

Cheng Su's heart couldn't help but feel uplifted.

A simple meal, a cozy chat between the couple while dining, was very heartwarming.

After eating and cleaning up together, and then getting ready for bed, they finally sat down on the sofa to talk.

Cheng Su rested her head on his thigh, saying, "I thought you wouldn't be back for another couple of days. How did it go? The mission was a success?"

Qi Taiguo was stroking her hair. Hearing this question, his hand hesitated, "It went well enough, no significant losses."

Cheng Su tilted her head up slightly, "Any hitches?"

"There was a bit of a mess, but no one got hurt." Qi Taiguo chuckled and changed the subject, "What about you, where did you go? I thought I'd see you when I got back. Didn't you say you were going to hole up with your books?"

Cheng Su sighed.

"What's wrong?"

"You hadn't been gone for two days when Elder Sister's Baobao ran a high fever. Elder Sister rushed back to take care of her, leaving the store unattended, so I went to look after it for a few days. Elder Sister only got back today!" Cheng Su explained.

Qi Taiguo frowned, "Is Baobao fully recovered?"

"She must be, or else she wouldn't have come back!" Cheng Su stated, "These past days, Elder Sister must have been exhausted with worry. She looked so distressed."

"What about Zhang Jisheng?" Qi Taiguo's face darkened, "Didn't he go back?"

"After Elder Sister went back, he didn't." Cheng Su's voice carried a hint of displeasure when she mentioned Zhang Jisheng, "He's not the caring type. Elder Sister really drew the short straw marrying into the Zhang family."

She spoke with discontent, and Qi Taiguo picked up on it immediately, raising an eyebrow to ask, "Did he upset you?"

Cheng Su sat up straight and said, "You don't know him; I think he's taking my store for his own. He invited his work buddies over for food and drinks. If I hadn't been there, he probably wouldn't have paid!"

"Really? He wouldn't dare to do such a thing, would he?" Qi Taiguo's impression of Zhang Jisheng was that he was very timid and cowardly.

Cheng Su scoffed, "Dare? He might not have the nerve in front of you and me, but in front of Elder Sister or others, that's another story! You have no idea, he..."

Cheng Su stopped mid-sentence, hesitating.

Qi Taiguo had a temper. If she told him that Zhang Jisheng, influenced by the nightlife, might have gotten some bad ideas, would Taiguo fly off the handle and give him a beating?

Moreover, whether Zhang Jisheng had solicited prostitutes was uncertain. If she said something and it turned out to be false, accusing her of causing trouble, what then?

But not saying it also made her uncomfortable. They were a couple, after all; how stifling would it be if they couldn't even talk about such things?

"What's the matter? Why stop talking halfway?" Qi Taiguo asked, a trace of suspicion in his eyes.

Cheng Su chuckled awkwardly, to tell or not to tell?

Chapter 799: Playing Deaf-Mute

Couples don't necessarily share everything, not even husbands and wives; they each have their own space and secrets they need not discuss.

Thus, Cheng Su couldn't be sure whether she should tell him about Zhang Jisheng's matter or not.

But this is just idle chit-chat, not really a secret!

"I'm telling you, but you mustn't get angry," Cheng Su hesitated before she said it.

"What is it already? You're making it sound so mysterious," Qi Taiguo said with amusement.

Cheng Su cleared her throat and slowly relayed what her uncle had said about Zhang Jisheng, carefully watching Qi Taiguo's expression.

As Qi Taiguo listened, his smile gradually faded, his complexion turned grim, and his hands clenched, his knuckles cracking.

"Hey, hey, I said not to get angry. I felt just as upset as you when I first heard it," Cheng Su said hastily as she reached to pry his hands open.

"Uncle didn't mishear? That Zhang Jisheng really dared to do such indecent things?" Qi Taiguo gritted his teeth, too embarrassed to even say the word, ashamed.

"He shouldn't have, but we don't know what he did afterward, so I told you about this, and you should just listen and let it be," Cheng Su said. "Elder Sister is back now, and he... he wouldn't go to those places again, right?"

"There's no cat that doesn't steal food! Once he's started, he'd savor the taste," Qi Taiguo muttered angrily through his teeth.

What kind of person is this, getting helped up just to not live an honest life, watching the glitz and glam for a few days, and starting to develop such frivolous whims?

Zhang Jisheng, what does he count for!

"There's no cat that doesn't steal food, hm?" Cheng Su narrowed her eyes, giving him a look that was both mocking and smiling.

Feeling the weight of her gaze, Qi Taiguo's face reddened as he said, "Why are you looking at me like that? I would never do such a thing!"

Cheng Su snorted and pinched a chunk of flesh on his waist, saying, "If you did that, I would cut you, see if you dare then!"

Qi Taiguo's interest piqued, he playfully bit her ear, saying in a suggestive tone, "If you keep me well-fed, why would I look elsewhere?"

"Just afraid you crave novelty," Cheng Su hummed lightly.

In their marital life, the two had always been quite harmonious, but one can never be sure about men always wanting novelty, especially those women who work as escorts, who are professionally trained.

"I wouldn't dare!"

The couple flirted with each other for a while, then sat back down to continue their conversation.

"Men, there's always a time when they'll fool around. As for the brother-in-law, there's no definitive evidence to confirm his fooling around. For Elder Sister's sake, just pretend you don't know anything; it'll save her embarrassment," Cheng Su sighed.

In her marital home, Qi Fenglian had already become a resentful wife. If she found out that Zhang Jisheng was still messing around outside, how could she continue living such a life?

"He's just discontented, useless as a sodden wall," Qi Taiguo said in annoyance.

"That may be, but let's pretend we don't know. Elder Sister has to live with the Zhang family, and she herself has no intention of leaving. If we interfere, we might even be criticized."

One shouldn't meddle in other people's marriages, because even if you mean well, they might end up blaming you for being meddlesome.

Some people choose to turn a blind eye to such matters, but what choice will Qi Fenglian make?

Hard to say!

Without definitive evidence, perhaps they should pretend to be blind.

But this is just too disgusting and suffocating.

"Ah, humans really are contradictory creatures!" Cheng Su leaned on Qi Taiguo's shoulder, letting out a long sigh. She knew very well that they shouldn't keep such things from Qi Fenglian, yet due to social decorum, they couldn't speak of it.

Chapter 800: This Man Is Unreliable

Qi Fenglian had no idea about her husband's sordid thoughts; her mind was fully occupied with her child back in her hometown, and the injustices she faced upon returning home.

So, when she got home, she grabbed Zhang Jisheng and let it all out.

Zhang Jisheng frowned as well when he heard that his own mother had poured out the milk powder for his nephew, leaving his son so hungry he had become skinny.

"Enough, stop crying. No one's to blame, I told you from the beginning, we shouldn't have come this far for work, but you insisted. With no one to look after the child, entrusting him to two old folks, it's inevitable they'd neglect him; after all, they're getting on in years!" Zhang Jisheng was impatient with Qi Fenglian's sobbing.

Qi Fenglian felt a chill in her heart. She certainly knew this, but when she spoke out, she just wanted her husband's support, yet instead of comforting her, he blamed her.

Is this the attitude a husband should have?

"Without coming out to work, where would the milk powder come from? Where would the money come from? Are you able to give all your money to your mother?" Qi Fenglian sneered, "I did give, but did she spend a cent on Baobao? She hoarded it, and I bet it all went to my younger brother and his wife!"

Didn't she know that the two old folks favored the younger brother? Even when buying a house, who knows how much they quietly contributed, thinking she wouldn't know?

Isn't it just because they look down on her and Zhang Jisheng for being uneducated and unsuccessful!

"Look at you, starting to argue again! What giving it to your brother, your brother and his wife can make their own money, so why would they need ours?" Zhang Jisheng's face darkened.

"They can make money, have bought a house in the city, and left the two old folks to us without giving a dime. Your mother, in front of everyone, says how successful her younger son is, how capable her daughter-in-law is. Has she ever praised you? She just looks down on us. And here you are, giving her heaps of money, thinking she'll speak well of you? Pah, she only ever thinks about your brother," Qi Fenglian sneered coldly.

Zhang Jisheng hated being compared to his brother the most. They were incomparable, and so he gave all his earnings back home to let his mother know he made as much as his younger brother.

But the truth might be that his money had all been secretly given to supplement his younger brother's household, and that stung. Now that Qi Fenglian had brought up the comparison again, his annoyance grew even further.

"If we don't give it to her, who will help with the child?" Zhang Jisheng said angrily.

Qi Fenglian wiped away her tears and said, "Zhang Jisheng, I've figured it out. Give your salary to her if you want, and let her give it to your brother if she likes. As for my salary, it will go towards supporting the three of us. I've thought it over, once Xiao Bao grows up, and can walk and talk, I'll bring him here to go to kindergarten."

Zhang Jisheng was stunned.

Bringing him here, wouldn't that create an uproar at home not seeing their grandchild?

"We both have to work, how would we take care of the child?" Zhang Jisheng furrowed his brows.

"Leaving him at the kindergarten would still be better than him being fed one day and starving the next," Qi Fenglian lay down and turned her back to him, going to sleep.

She had come to a clear realization—this man was not very reliable after all; she had to rely on herself.

Zhang Jisheng lay down in a daze, pulling the lamp cord.

"You've come back to work today, will Cheng Su still go to the store tomorrow?" Zhang Jisheng suddenly asked.

"What would she come to the store for when I'm there? She's got exams to worry about. Why?" Qi Fenglian said.

"Nothing. When she's in the store, I don't even dare to go eat!" Zhang Jisheng admitted, the thought of Cheng Su's eyes, which seemed to see right through people, scared him.

"That's your own guilty conscience, thinking she's out to get you," Qi Fenglian huffed.

Zhang Jisheng turned over, reaching for Qi Fenglian's waist.

"I'm going to sleep now. These few days taking care of Xiao Bao, I haven't had a good night's rest," Qi Fenglian slapped his hand away.

Zhang Jisheng gave an embarrassed snort and turned away to sleep.