

## The 80s 99

### Chapter 99: Saving Face

Qi Taiguo was bubbling with enthusiasm, and Platoon Leader Chen, unable to decline and noticing the worn-out look on his wife's face, reluctantly turned to Cheng Su and said, "Then we'll have to trouble you, sister-in-law. Once our place is set up, we'll treat you to a warm pot meal and return the hospitality."

"What trouble is it?" Qi Taiguo spoke for Cheng Su with a smile, then turned to instruct her, "Do we still have any peanuts at home? Fry a plate for me and Platoon Leader Chen to have a few drinks."

"No need, no need, just a few bites of rice will do," Platoon Leader Chen said, waving his hands repeatedly.

Cheng Su, smiling, went to get busy; turning around, she muttered to herself, "Mr. Qi can really work someone to death with just one sentence. This is so sudden; while the dishes aren't a problem since I've bought some meat and vegetables, where can I find extra rice in such short notice?"

Only noodles will do!

To celebrate securing her first order in this new era of her life, Cheng Su had specially bought some roasted meat, stirred it with some garlic for a dish, made a winter melon and white clam soup, stir-fried some greens—enough for two people.

Now, to accommodate Platoon Leader Chen and his spouse, she took a look at the ingredients she had at home, stir-fried some shrimp with rice and egg, and made a dish with bamboo shoots and cured meat. When she brought it to the table, the three began to eat.

Commander Qi was already setting himself up to drink with Platoon Leader Chen, while Hualing was attacking the plate of roasted meat. Seeing Cheng Su, she moved her chopsticks to the greens instead.

Cheng Su pretended not to notice, placed the freshly stir-fried dish on the table, and said, "I'm really sorry, there wasn't time to make rice, so I'm boiling water for noodles. Platoon Leader Chen, would that be alright with you?"

Platoon Leader Chen felt very embarrassed and quickly stood up, saying, "That's fine, that's fine. We are the ones who should be sorry; we just came to say hello and didn't expect to end up getting a meal. You've gone to a lot of trouble for us, sister-in-law."

He was very respectful, which caused Hualing's expression to darken.

Cheng Su said it was no trouble with a smile and turned back to the kitchen to keep busy.

Before long, she brought a plate of noodles to the table, and they all started eating.

"I've heard from comrades before that sister-in-law's cooking is great, and it truly is. The food is really delicious," Platoon Leader Chen complimented.

"Oh, you're too kind. It's just comrades giving face," Cheng Su responded warmly with a smile.

"She can only cook a few dishes, unlike Hualing, who is a 'white angel,'" Qi Taiguo laughed heartily.

Hualing straightened her chest and gave Cheng Su a sidelong glance, to notice her merely focused on eating, with the corners of her mouth slightly upturned, which could not help but discourage her.

"That's because Commander Qi, you're fortunate..." Platoon Leader Chen started.

"I'm full," Hualing suddenly put down her chopsticks and bowl, stared at Platoon Leader Chen, and said, "Can you hurry up a bit and not keep people from resting? The house is a mess. Are we going to clean it up or not?"

Platoon Leader Chen, taken aback by her sudden interruption, looked somewhat displeased.

Commander Qi, observing Hualing's domineering demeanor, imperceptibly frowned, glanced at Cheng Su, and noticed she appeared as if she hadn't heard, only caring about eating her food, meekly keeping her eyes down, which inwardly pleased him.

It was said that Platoon Leader Chen's wife was a city girl, with her well-off parents both being cadres; marrying Platoon Leader Chen was considered marrying down. People said Platoon Leader Chen was lucky. Now it seemed that she had quite a temper, behaving this way in front of outsiders, publicly undercutting her own husband. Cheng Su, although sharp-tongued, would never belittle him in front of outsiders.

With these thoughts, Qi Taiguo suddenly felt a bit of sympathy for Platoon Leader Chen.

"Sister-in-law, would it be alright if Platoon Leader Chen and I have a couple of drinks? We promise to leave in a bit," Qi Taiguo offered a way out.

Hualing, who had let her temper flare up, suddenly cooled down and, seizing the opportunity, said, "I've been busy moving and tidying up these past few days and am truly exhausted. Old Chen, don't drink too much and come back early, okay?"

Platoon Leader Chen assured her promptly, and only then did Hualing leave contentedly.