

## The 80s 991

Chapter 991: Worried for Xiao Ya

There are only a few days left before the New Year. Since they are not going back, naturally someone has to tell the family, and Qi Taiguo will do the talking. Hearing they were not going back, disappointment was inevitable, but nothing was said. As for whether the mother-in-law might complain privately, Cheng Su wouldn't worry about it.

The jam factory decided to start the holiday on the twenty-eighth of the New Year, because there was a large order volume this year. They would resume work on the thirteenth day after the New Year.

Before the holiday, Cheng Su had Xiao Pinshan plan a New Year's meal and organized a lottery event. As for the year-end bonus, that naturally was not to be missed.

Ning Ge also returned before the year-end party, but his complexion didn't look too good. Cheng Su would naturally ask.

"It's nothing, just tired." Ning Ge smiled.

Cheng Su looked full of skepticism.

Ning Ge continued, "If you took a long-distance train from Beijing back here, you'd be tired too, and your complexion wouldn't look good either."

Cheng Su snorted and said, "Whatever you say always makes sense."

Ning Ge didn't argue further, only saying, "Alright, alright, I won't argue with you. You can watch over the factory. I'll go find Big Brother Qi to chat. Truly, it's hard to deal with women and petty people."

Cheng Su was furious, "Stop right there!"

But Ning Ge was already running away in a flash.

Cheng Su was so angry that she stomped her foot.

Ying Xiaoya glanced around a few times and said, "Did Ning Ge run off again? His butt hasn't even touched the chair yet!"

"Who knows what he's up to, being all secretive." Cheng Su snorted lightly.

Ying Xiaoya shrugged, her eyes suddenly lighting up.

Cheng Su followed her gaze. It was Xiao Pinshan, and she coughed heavily.

Ying Xiaoya's face instantly turned red, yet she still sneaked glances at Xiao Pinshan.

Xiao Pinshan smiled at the corner of his mouth, nodded at her, and then went to Cheng Su to inquire about the details of the year-end party. After finishing, he continued to be busy, and Ying Xiaoya's eyes seemed to be glued to his back.

Cheng Su coughed again, looking at her with a teasing smile, "Wow, in just a few days, you're sticking together like sugary beans!"

"Not at all!" Ying Xiaoya was a bit embarrassed, her ears turning red.

Cheng Su then asked, "Do your parents know?"

Ying Xiaoya's mischievous smile froze.

Seeing this, Cheng Su frowned slightly, "You didn't tell them?"

"I only mentioned it briefly and planned to bring him back to meet them during the New Year." Ying Xiaoya said, looking down.

That shouldn't be the case. If Director Ying knew about Xiao Pinshan's specifics, he would definitely call Cheng Su to inquire. But now there's no sign of anything, is it not fully discussed?

"You haven't mentioned Xiao Pinshan's situation to Uncle Jian and Auntie, have you?" Cheng Su pointed out.

Ying Xiaoya hung her head even lower, finally saying after a while, "I, I just mentioned I'm seeing someone and plan to bring him back during the New Year."

"Didn't they ask anything? You should give them a heads-up beforehand and talk about Xiao Pinshan's situation. Don't wait until the meeting and have them ask some inappropriate questions, that would be awkward!" Cheng Su advised her, "If you tell them in advance, they can be mentally prepared and know how to respond. If you don't say anything, they know nothing, what will you do if it gets awkward?"

Ying Xiaoya clearly hadn't thought that far, "I'm afraid they won't agree."

"You're so muddled. You're already seeing him, and they need to know his situation. Whether they'll agree comes later. This paper-covered fire, can you cover it for a lifetime?" Cheng Su really wanted to open her head to see if it was filled with mush.

Ying Xiaoya reluctantly said, "Then, I'll mention it when I go back tonight!"

Cheng Su nodded, but wasn't optimistic. She feared that Xiao Ya and Xiao Pinshan would have to overcome many obstacles to be together.

#### Chapter 992: Mother Ying Pays a Visit

Cheng Su expected this, and the next day, Ying Xiaoya came back to the factory with red eyes. Xiao Pinshan saw her and felt heartbroken, chasing after her to ask what happened.

"Sand got in my eyes!"

No one would believe that excuse, and Xiao Pinshan probably guessed something, pursing his lips without saying a word.

Cheng Su, on the other hand, directly pulled Ying Xiaoya aside to ask.

"They wouldn't agree once they heard he's been married and has a child with him," Ying Xiaoya said, holding back tears with a pout. "They wouldn't even let me bring him home. I knew they wouldn't approve."

"But you said it beforehand, which is better than bringing it up later and getting kicked out, right?" Cheng Su said.

Ying Xiaoya began to cry, "What am I supposed to do? What are we supposed to do?"

Cheng Su sighed, thinking about what to do in such a situation. If they really wanted to be together, they would have to work hard to earn her parents' blessing.

"First, work on changing their minds bit by bit, and maybe let them meet him before deciding anything," Cheng Su said, offering the only advice he could.

Ying Xiaoya was deeply upset. She was seriously considering this for the first time, but lacked her parents' approval and blessing, which made her extremely sad.

Cheng Su expected that Director Ying would ask about her situation, but didn't expect that Director Ying would be so anxious as to come to her directly.

"It's getting dark, why come at this time? It's cold, and the roads aren't easy to walk," Cheng Su poured a cup of hot tea for Director Ying.

Director Ying, frustrated, took the tea and drank two sips, saying, "I'm so worried I had no choice but to come over and talk to you."

"Auntie, don't worry, have some water to calm down," Cheng Su said with a smile.

Director Ying took another sip of water and asked, "Are you aware that Xiao Ya is seeing that Manager Xiao from your factory?"

Cheng Su knew she came for this matter and nodded.

"Is it true? How could she be so foolish? I heard her say that the man has been married and has an eight or nine-year-old daughter?" Director Ying's expression tightened, clearly worried.

"Yes, they were schoolmates. After Manager Xiao got divorced, his daughter stayed with him," Cheng Su replied.

Director Ying's face darkened instantly and said, "Tell me more about this person!"

Cheng Su proceeded to describe Xiao Pinshan's resume, including how he came to work at Joy Soon Loy's company, how his former boss recommended him, along with his work capability and character, all in detail.

"Manager Xiao is quite exceptional in his abilities. I'm attending university most of the time, and he helps manage the company with no issues, and he's very nice as a person, with enough competence to manage others," Cheng Su shared his objective opinion.

"No matter how good he is, it doesn't change the fact that he's divorced and has a child," Director Ying sighed, "You young people only pursue so-called love but don't know how difficult it is to be a stepmother. With a child in the middle, he will inevitably stay in touch with the ex-wife. How long can you endure it? Xiao Ya doesn't understand; being a stepmother isn't easy. Our generation knows this."

"Auntie, I think so too. Xiao Ya actually has many choices."

"Exactly, exactly."

"But you've introduced her to several people, and she wasn't interested. Why? Because it's her own preference. Getting married is for a lifetime, she has to want it and like it. Marriage should be about being family, not enemies, so forcing her won't turn into enmity?" Cheng Su laughed, "You should meet him, given your experience, you'd surely know what kind of person Xiao Pinshan is, but you have to meet first to find out."

Director Ying listened, and after a moment of silence, she nodded.

#### Chapter 993: Hardships of Being a Stepmother

Director Ying lingered around Cheng Su for a long time, only deciding to leave after having a thorough chat with her.

"You're younger than Xiao Ya, but you're much more mature and steady than she is. This girl, alas, has been spoiled by her father and me, she doesn't understand things." Director Ying said, holding Cheng Su's hand. "Talking to you feels comfortable; you always hit the point. That girl, she said a couple of things last night, and then cried herself back to her room!"

"Xiao Ya has an outgoing, simple character. She just doesn't want things to be too complicated, but that's not bad. I actually quite like that," Cheng Su said with a smile. "You and Uncle Jian should first take a look at this Xiao Pinshan. You've traveled more roads than us; surely you have a clearer sense of a person's character than we do!"

"Alright, I'll talk to her dad when I get back. But I still don't like it, among all these choices, why insist on being a stepmother, what's so good about it? Definitely a lot of grievances in the future!" Director Ying said.

"Then it depends on how firm their hearts are. If the love isn't deep, you don't even need to hit them with a stick, they'll separate on their own. But if the love is truly deep, even if you come at them with sticks and bats, or even ten-level hurricane, you can't break them apart," Cheng Su said playfully.

Director Ying laughed: "Look at you, this girl, you really know how to talk! I'm leaving now!"

"Ah, let me see you out!" Cheng Su escorted her to the door.

By the entrance of the courtyard, they saw Qi Taiguo return. Upon hearing that Director Ying was going to catch a ride, without a word he accompanied Cheng Su on her way, since it was dark and coming back alone wouldn't be safe.

Director Ying felt delighted in her heart, praising them repeatedly before getting on the car: "Still, it's people like you two who are good, huh." Her tone carried immense admiration.

After seeing her off, Qi Taiguo held Cheng Su's hand as they walked back, asking her what was going on, why did her tone have a hint of melancholy about it?

Cheng Su then explained her purpose.

"Calling you a busybody is not wrong, are you meddling in this too?" Qi Taiguo poked her nose.

"Meddling in what? Simply empathizing with parents' hearts; they're all just being considerate for their sons and daughters." Cheng Su said: "I also understand her feelings, being a stepmother is hard, that's undeniable. If the elders dislike and don't support a marriage, surely they have their reasons. Those who sincerely think for their children definitely wish them to have better matches."

Qi Taiguo responded with a hum.

"Moreover, actually the issue Xiao Ya is facing isn't the hardest; the most difficult part will be after she forms a family with Xiao Pinshan, how she gets along with his child. That's the real challenge. The child is already eight or nine, old enough to understand. Suddenly having a new mom—is there going to be hostility? Will there be opposition to her? These are issues that will confront her daily life in the future."

Qi Taiguo said, "But Xiao Ya must definitely like him, then these will be her own choices, she should be aware of this."

Cheng Su let out a deep sigh, "Yes, it's all about her own affection. Even Director Ying and them disagreeing with Xiao Ya's choice, even I don't really approve of her choosing someone like this. She should have better options. Choosing Xiao Pinshan will definitely bring plenty of grievances and difficulties in the future. I just feel sorry for her!"

"Enough, each person's path is theirs to walk; only they know if the shoes fit. What good is worrying on your part? Lay out the issues before her, letting her consider and choose herself, no matter what happens in the future, there'd be no blaming." Qi Taiguo replied.

Cheng Su sighed: "We can only hope then that Xiao Pinshan cherishes her, thinks more considerately for her!"

Otherwise, without the support or caring of a husband, her days being a stepmother would be tough to bear.

#### Chapter 994: Advise Prudence Once More

With Cheng Su as the mediator, Director Ying agreed to let Ying Xiaoya bring Xiao Pinshan home for the New Year and meet him.

This was a softening in her parents' attitude. Ying Xiaoya was delighted, knowing Cheng Su played a role in this, and gratefully hugged her and kissed her heavily.

Cheng Su was left with her face covered in spit, feeling both amused and annoyed. Thinking of Director Ying's worries and Xiao Pinshan's personal situation, she earnestly shared a few thoughts with her.

"... Xiao Pinshan's family background is different from yours. He's from the countryside, and his parents are on a different level compared to yours, which is the class difference of one's original family — the so-called 'matching families.' He's divorced with a child, and that child is nine, turning ten during the New Year, right? You should understand his temperament. Xiao Ya, honestly, if it weren't for your own feelings, I hope you would make a more cautious choice, just like your parents do."

"Why are you saying this too? We're not some wealthy family, so there's no talk of climbing up the social ladder." Ying Xiaoya pouted, kicking the snow beneath her feet. Her parents didn't like Xiao Pinshan, and even Cheng Su was saying this.

"I know you're not listening right now. But we wouldn't harm you; Manager Xiao likes you, loves you. But whether this liking and loving will continue in your future life, whether any sudden changes might occur, you need to consider carefully." Cheng Su said seriously, "You can date now, but don't rush into

marriage. Spend more time together, meet his family more, especially the child, to see if you get along. These are things that will appear in marriage, so you must be cautious."

If it weren't for the times, she would suggest she live together as a trial marriage, but it's not an open era now, so spending more time together is the way.

Ying Xiaoya is a good girl, very innocent in character, and Cheng Su feared she might suffer a setback in love. Zhang Yujun previously was such a rogue, it was an undeserved disaster. She hopes for smooth going this time.

Not to say Xiao Pinshan is bad; his abilities and character are apparent and good, but often in a marriage, family factors decide many things.

Marriage is different from love; love allows for willfulness and breaking apart, but marriage doesn't. Once both sides marry, many things need to be considered — two families and big responsibilities.

Anyway, if possible, Cheng Su hopes Ying Xiaoya could marry someone whose family is clean on both sides, so the days after marriage wouldn't be too difficult.

"Alright, alright. Look at you. You're supposed to be my best friend, but you're not on my side at all; you're on my parents' side like my sister, even though I'm older than you." Ying Xiaoya pouted again in dissatisfaction.

Cheng Suxin thought, I truly am your sister; I've lived two lifetimes!

"It's precisely because I'm your friend that I want what's best for you. Marriage isn't easy; just look at me. Even when the families are matched, and everyone's background is clean, there's still the in-laws. You know what I've been through, right? Not to mention, you have an ex-wife's child there." Cheng Su spoke like someone who's been there.

Seeing Cheng Su's serious expression, Ying Xiaoya said, "I know. We're just dating now, not getting married. I will look carefully, decide whether to marry or not."

Cheng Su smiled, feeling quite relaxed now, only too aware that women in love can be foolish, their eyes blind.

#### Chapter 995: Susu's Words of Wisdom

On the twenty-sixth day of the twelfth lunar month, the jam factory held its year-end party. Cheng Su and Ning Ge, the two bosses, naturally attended. It was all about eating, drinking, and holding a lottery; everyone was in high spirits.

Cheng Su saw Ning Ge walk to a corner with a bottle of beer and sit down, so she went over and kicked his crossed leg.

"Hey, hey, what's this about, woman? Can't you be a bit more refined?" Ning Ge called out.

Cheng Su glanced at him sideways: "Come on, we all know each other well, stop pretending." She sat down beside him and said, "So, what's up? You look like you've got a lot on your mind!"

"Pfft, I'm doing just fine, eating and sleeping well. What issues could I possibly have?" Ning Ge snorted lightly, putting on an air of nonchalance on purpose.

"Still pretending! Ever since you got back, you haven't truly enjoyed yourself. What's really going on? Are you having issues with your family?" Cheng Su's eyes showed obvious concern.

Seeing the concern in her eyes and hearing it in her voice, Ning Ge felt a warmth in his heart, and his voice softened: "Thanks, but there's no conflict, just some things I can't figure out."

"Wanna talk about it?"

Ning Ge took a sip of his beer, a hint of confusion in his eyes, and after a while, he said, "I can't quite articulate it. It just feels like some people may not be as they seem. It feels like certain things and people are shrouded in a veil, making it hard to see clearly."

Cheng Su raised an eyebrow: "Do you really have to see it clearly?"

"Yeah, I really do."

"If you want to see clearly, just lift the veil, and then you'll see clearly, right?" Cheng Su shrugged.

"How do you lift it? It's too difficult!" Ning Ge let out a bitter smile.

"Is it difficult, or are you scared?" Cheng Su asked another question.

Ning Ge froze, his heart racing.

Is it really too difficult? Or is he just scared?

"No matter how difficult, there will always be a way to lift that veil; it's just whether you're willing to or not. But fear can prevent you from overcoming this difficulty. Are you scared that once the veil is lifted, what it reveals will be nothing like what you imagined, and you'll be unable to accept it?" Cheng Su looked at him: "So, do you think it's difficult, or are you just scared?"

A word to awaken the dreamer.

Is it difficult to clear up that matter?

Not really, there are even shortcuts. He just needs to ask his big brother directly.

But does he dare?

He doesn't dare, and he's even a bit scared. Just as Cheng Su said, he's scared that things will differ from what he imagined, scared that the big brother he has always respected isn't as worthy of respect as he thought. If that's the case, what would he do?

Cheng Su was right, he is just scared, which is why he's been bottling up this frustration, making him feel uncomfortable, his chest aching.

He dares not linger in Beijing, fearing he might impulsively confront his brother and fearing the truth.

He's scared!

Ning Ge's eyes gradually became clear, and he looked at her, saying, "You're right, I am indeed scared!"

Cheng Su then said, "It's normal to be scared, but you can't let fear hold you back; that'll just leave you in an awkward situation. There's a saying, 'If you're going to stab, do it upfront rather than stabbing in the dark.' Instead of hesitating and overthinking, why not just face it head-on and at least get some clarity! If we can't be straightforward, how can we talk about living or accomplishing anything big?"

Ning Ge laughed heartily, picked up his beer and clinked glasses with her: "Right, let's just aim for clarity!"

Ding, the clinking of beer bottles rang out clearly.

Chapter 996: Signs of Softening

On the twenty-eighth of the year, with the factory on holiday, the employees each went back to their hometowns for the New Year. Considering that the Joy Soon Loy Restaurant was still under construction and there weren't many dining spaces to begin with, Cheng Su, who had originally decided not to take a holiday this year, changed his mind and gave everyone the same vacation, starting work again on the thirteenth of the year.

Some people expressed confusion over Cheng Su's generosity, as none of the bosses are willing to forgo business.

Cheng Su said that the New Year is a time for reunion and gathering, and not many people dine out. Besides, the environment isn't great, so why not just sell well and take a nice long vacation? Then, when the new year begins, everyone can happily return to work and be a bit more motivated.

Moreover, this is just for this year. Once Joy Soon Loy is built, next year won't see such a holiday, so it's counted as everyone's last big celebration.

Salaries were paid, bonuses were given, and the restaurant renovation was halted. Even Ning Ge returned to Beijing for the New Year after the factory holiday.

With no need to manage the various businesses, Cheng Su was truly free—light without responsibilities. Her thoughts of spending the New Year in Qing City led her to head downtown to buy New Year's supplies, as the two of them needed food too.

In their building, Chunhua and his wife went back to their hometown for New Year because their daughter was there, and Guiying's family did the same. Their son was only a few months old, and according to the Southern hometown customs, he needed to go home for some ceremonies. So, it was just Cheng Su and Hualing's households left, very quiet.

Cheng Su invited Hualing to buy New Year goods together, but Hualing said, "Even my hospital has vacation, and I'm going to my own family for the New Year; I don't want to prepare New Year goods!"

Cheng Su was puzzled, "What about Chen Shouwang?"

Hualing, a bit awkward, said, "He has to stay on duty. If he visits, he'll come to my family's anyway, as I'm not going to his home this year. My condition isn't good enough for a visit." She said this, touching her belly.

She's now three months pregnant; though her bump isn't visible yet, she doesn't want to exert herself.

Cheng Su knew she was just using her pregnancy as an excuse, saying, "Even if you're going to your family's, you always need to put up some couplets at home, right? A New Year without red decorations doesn't look nice. For the child's luck, you should stick a couple of 'Fu' characters, right? Anyway, no rush, let's go out for a while."

Hualing hesitated for a bit and said, "Alright then! I'll go change my clothes!"

"Alright, I'll get dressed too." Cheng Su then smiled.

Hualing returned to the room to change clothes, and Chen Shouwang saw her dressing up, so he asked, "It's so cold outside, where are you going?"

He didn't expect Hualing to reply, as she had been ignoring him these days. Yet to his surprise, Hualing responded, "Cheng Su invited me to go buy New Year goods. I figured since I have nothing to do, I'll go out with her for a walk."

Chen Shouwang was delighted to hear her reply and even more pleased when he heard about the New Year goods, saying, "Wear flat, slip-proof shoes, walk slowly, there's snow outside."

Hualing replied with a simple "Mm".

Chen Shouwang stopped her again, took out some money from the room, and pressed it into her hand, saying, "Yesterday's year-end bonus, New Year; buy a couple of clothes for yourself and the child."

Hualing glanced at the Great Unity RMB in her hand, blinked, and without saying a word, put it straight in her pocket and went out the door.

Chen Shouwang sighed with relief, fearing she might say something—but she didn't. Does this mean she's showing signs of softening?

Thinking of this, Chen Shouwang couldn't help but smile, looked around the room, rolled up his sleeves, and began tidying up—it's almost New Year, and the home should be neat.

#### Chapter 997: Another Year

On New Year's Eve, Cheng Su was awakened by the sound of firecrackers early in the morning, and when she reached out beside her, Qi Taiguo had already gone back to the army, as usual.

Now that he's been promoted to deputy battalion commander, his role involves assisting with the battalion commander's duties. Whether it's New Year's leave or holiday readiness, he has more responsibilities to handle.

Cheng Su rolled around in the warm bed for a while before getting up to wash up and make breakfast.

In their building, every household's front door was tightly shut, but all had new red couplets pasted on them. The same was true for Hualing's family, with an upside-down "Fu" character pasted on their door.

That day, after she and Hualing went shopping, Chen Shouwang put them up because on New Year's Eve, Hualing was going back to her parents' home for the celebration.

The whole building seemed like only Cheng Su's family was left; it was so quiet that it felt a little unusual and somewhat lonely.

"Humans are indeed social animals!" Cheng Su chuckled as she held the pot and then went to the kitchen to get busy.

Even if it was just the two of them for the New Year, she had to make something delicious. Soup, fish, chicken—they were all essential. After all, the New Year is about celebrating with food.

So after breakfast, Cheng Su started preparing. She stewed soup with lotus root and big bones to attract the good omen of "year-long prosperity."

After putting on the soup, she mixed flour with boiling water to make glue, planning to paste the couplets herself.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

When Qi Taiguo returned, he saw Cheng Su standing on a chair, tottering. He quickly walked over and picked her up.

"You're back? I was pasting couplets!" Cheng Su waved the bowl in her hand, filled with glue.

Qi Taiguo took the bowl from her and said, "Wait for me to do it when I get back. Why are you doing it yourself? What if you fall?"

"I thought you might be busy!" Cheng Su laughed.

"Duty is duty, but since it's New Year, the soldiers staying behind also celebrate at the unit; they just can't go home. Today is about cleaning up and setting the festive mood." Qi Taiguo smeared the glue on the wall, took the couplet Cheng Su handed over, pasted it according to her direction, and continued, "The unit is on holiday for the New Year too—making dumplings, organizing activities, watching galas, and so on for three days, then it's back to training."

"So I thought you'd be too busy!" Cheng Su said.

"With you at home, I absolutely have to make time to come back." Qi Taiguo turned to her with a smile. "I'm here on standby duty, which is good. During holidays, there's readiness to be on guard; many comrades have to go out for readiness missions. In the past years, I've been out almost every year."

"So you rarely celebrated New Year's at home?" Cheng Su found it interesting and handed over another couplet, and they finished pasting the couplets while chatting.

Qi Taiguo mentioned that there would be a gala in the evening and fireworks, so they should have dinner early and then go to the unit.

"Can I come along?" Cheng Su asked.

"Yes, I'll take you to see," Qi Taiguo replied with a smile.

Cheng Su was immediately thrilled, "Then I'll cook dinner early in the afternoon."

Qi Taiguo nodded.

In the afternoon, after Cheng Su finished cooking, Qi Taiguo returned, and they enjoyed their first reunion dinner as a couple. They then called their families, tidied up, and headed to the unit to watch the gala together. It wasn't until the fireworks signaling the new year burst at midnight that they returned home.

In the distance, some people were still setting off fireworks and firecrackers. Listening to the crackling sounds, Cheng Su fell asleep peacefully. Another year had passed.

#### Chapter 998: Bullying Me Early in the Morning

On the first day of the New Year, Cheng Su was woken up by kisses, her cheeks tingling softly. Half asleep, she opened her eyes to find Qi Taiguo's handsome face right in front of her.

"Little lazy pig, it's time to get up." Qi Taiguo pecked her lips and said, "Happy New Year."

"Happy New Year." Cheng Su's voice was soft and sweet, with a hint of a nasal tone: "You're back." She reached out to hug him.

Qi Taiguo grabbed her hand and tucked it into the blanket, then kicked off his shoes and rolled straight into bed.

He brought a burst of cold air with him as he got under the covers. Cheng Su instantly became wide awake from the chill and shivered. "Cold."

Qi Taiguo whispered teasingly in her ear, "You'll get warm soon."

Her ear tickled, sending goosebumps all over her body. Cheng Su let out a soft whimper; this man was so annoying, as if he knew her sensitive spot.

Before she could say anything, his lips enveloped her ear again, gently licking it with the tip of his tongue. Cheng Su trembled slightly, gasping and gripping his hand.

While kissing her, Qi Taiguo skillfully undid the buttons of her pajamas with his other hand. Once undone, his big hand seized his favorite prize.

"Mm..." Cheng Su couldn't help but arch her body, her voice soft, "You, you bully people early in the morning."

Qi Taiguo flipped on top of her and said, "I just want to bully you, what about it?"

With that, he kissed her lips, attacking both above and below.

In the early morning, on the first day of the year, their room was filled with lively sounds. Fortunately, the neighbors on both sides had gone back to their hometowns for the New Year, or else how embarrassing would it be?

After a blissful and intense session of lovemaking, the two lingered sweetly together for a while.

"Are we still going to Ling Shan Temple to offer incense?" Qi Taiguo asked.

Cheng Su let out a sound of surprise, quickly looked at the clock on the table, and immediately jumped out of bed, saying, "Get up quickly, the first incense offering must have already been taken by someone, all your fault."

Qi Taiguo lay in bed, propping his head up with one hand, watching her hurriedly dressing and laughing, "You still want the first incense? You've slept until the sun's high. People started queuing up in the middle of the night."

Cheng Su glared at him and said, "We have to go in the morning anyway, hurry up."

Qi Taiguo had no choice but to obediently get out of bed, get dressed, and after hurriedly having breakfast, they set off hand in hand to Ling Shan Temple.

Ling Shan Temple wasn't close to where they lived. Even on a slow ride, it took two hours to get there. By the time they arrived, the temple on the mountain was already shrouded in smoke, and the air was filled with the rich scent of sandalwood.

Everyone coming and going was wearing new clothes and carried incense as they headed towards the temple. Cheng Su also bought a bundle of incense and walked with the crowd, talking to Qi Taiguo.

"...This temple is very effective. When you went to training before, I came here to cast a lot, and it said there would be a turn for the better after adversity, and that I'd see the clouds clear—and indeed you returned safely. This time, we must sincerely thank the Bodhisattva." Cheng Su said.

"I didn't even know you started believing in this? Never saw you believe before," Qi Taiguo found it a bit amusing.

Cheng Su immediately glared at him, shushing him, "Don't talk nonsense, this is a sacred place of Buddhism. If you speak disrespectfully, the Bodhisattva will hear it."

She didn't believe in gods and ghosts, but ever since she crossed over, she held a bit of reverence. People may not believe in gods and Buddhas, but they cannot lack reverence, because everything in the world has its spirituality; all is arranged mysteriously.

So Cheng Su revered it, and after saying this to Qi Taiguo, she silently muttered a plea in her heart, asking the Bodhisattva not to mind him.

#### Chapter 999: Fulfilling Her Every Wish

In the world, there are countless pious people, whether their piety is genuine or not. In front of them, there are quite a few people desperately squeezing forward, holding high incense sticks, all wishing to offer their devout spirit to the Buddha and Bodhisattva.

Qi Taiguo frowned deeply. He had never been to such a place before, let alone to offer incense. If it weren't for Cheng Su wanting to come, he wouldn't have thought to visit. Only after arriving did he see in person how fanatical people were and how deep their reverence for the gods was.

Cheng Su was also holding incense and moving forward. Since they'd come, it was impossible to persuade her to leave. Qi Taiguo had no choice but to open his arms protectively around her. The incense was all lit, the room was only so big, and with so many people bumping into each other, what if the incense ash fell on her face?

He was tall and broad, protecting Cheng Su so that she remained unscathed. As for him, several incense ashes fell onto the back of his hand, some still glowing with embers, quickly burning blisters.

But Qi Taiguo had crawled through gunfire; such incense ashes were nothing to him. Sometimes, he wouldn't even blink.

Finally, Cheng Su offered her incense and then moved to the lottery sticks, drawing an excellent fortune.

Once they left the temple, she noticed the red blisters on Qi Taiguo's hand and quickly asked how he got them. Upon learning they were burned by incense ashes, she felt a pang of guilt.

"It's nothing, just child's play, doesn't hurt," Qi Taiguo said, unconcerned.

Cheng Su pursed her lips and blew on his blisters, saying, "Don't break them, or it'll hurt a lot. I'll put some medicine on them when we get back." Then she dragged him to find the temple guide to interpret the fortune.

It was already noon when they finally left Ling Shan Temple, and Cheng Su's face was full of joy and smiles.

Qi Taiguo held her hand, noticing her smiling face, he couldn't help but smile too, asking, "So happy?"

"Yes, it's a good fortune. It says we'll have good things happen this year, of course I'm happy." Cheng Su smiled and asked back, "Aren't you happy?"

"It's New Year's Day, just trying to get some good luck and fortune. The temple guide certainly won't say anything bad and will speak only of the good. Don't say I told you, but I'm sure that fortune cylinder is filled only with excellent fortunes, not a single bad one." Qi Taiguo said.

Cheng Su stopped in her tracks, staring at him, and said, "Why can't you say anything nice? Can't you say something pleasant?" Even if it was like he said, he shouldn't have exposed it, especially on New Year's Day!

"My fault, my fault," Qi Taiguo quickly admitted his mistake.

Only then did Cheng Su huff and continue walking forward, saying, "Let's go down the mountain to eat glutinous rice balls."

"As you wish, whatever you say. I have time all day."

Cheng Su, feeling satisfied, pulled his hand and went around the various food stalls, also buying two heart knots. They were sold by a young girl who claimed she made them herself, speaking sweetly.

Walking a little further, they saw wood carvings, a set of festive children carvings, lively and exquisitely done, and bought a set.

Seeing a beggar, Cheng Su also gave two coins away, acting like a generous child, overjoyed beyond herself.

Qi Taiguo went along with her, seeing her happiness, his mouth lifted up in a smile as well.

The couple's relationship relied on companionship. He often had tasks to attend, and now that he's promoted to deputy battalion commander, he would likely be busier with less time to accompany her.

So now, he tried to satisfy her as much as he could, accompanying her whenever possible.

#### Chapter 1000: Qi Fenglian's Plans

Cheng Su spent the entire Spring Festival immersed in the rhythm of raising pigs, except for the first day of the new year when she spent with Qi Taiguo. They visited the Ying family and Principal Gong for the new year greetings; otherwise, she stayed at home, either eating, sleeping, or reading books, truly like a rice weevil.

Then, Cheng Su sadly discovered that her waist had gained an extra circle, and her face too, rounding out noticeably, so much that Chunhua and the others who returned from their hometown were all chasing after her to ask what she had been eating.

Cheng Su was about to cry without tears, but Qi Taiguo was very happy, smiling all day, pinching her soft flesh and saying, "Very good, just like this is perfect, I really like it!"

There's no point talking to a man about being fat, so Cheng Su could only silently start her weight loss exercises.

On the thirteenth day of the new year, all industries reopened, and the restaurant's renovation was also underway. Cheng Su hadn't started classes yet, so she took her own designs and went to the restaurant daily to discuss with Dazhi where things should be installed and what items to put where, talking confidently.

In the renovation team, someone knew that Third Uncle Cheng was Cheng Su's uncle and flattered him, saying, "Your niece is really remarkable; we've worked with her on several projects. Now it's a big deal, such a large restaurant, she'll surely make it big in the future. Old Cheng, when your niece helps you get ahead, don't forget us!"

Third Uncle Cheng said, "Sure, sure," with a proud smile on his face.

After the fifteenth day of the new year, Qi Fenglian, who had taken a long holiday, also returned to work at the fast food place. Before going to work, she first brought two live chickens and some cured meat to Cheng Su and the others, saying that since they hadn't gone back for the New Year, her family insisted she bring these.

Cheng Su accepted them and asked how her family was, and how she herself was.

Qi Fenglian said, "Everything's fine, as for me, just the same."

Cheng Su carefully observed her complexion and asked, "Did Zhang Jisheng come looking for you again later?"

Qi Fenglian nodded, "He came to our house during the New Year under the guise of the festival. He wanted to take the two children back home, saying their grandma misses them, and mentioned that without me, the Zhang family isn't like a family anymore, also wanting to remarry."

Cheng Su thought, 'I knew it.'

"What's your plan?"

Qi Fenglian replied, "Only realizing a household without me now? What were they doing before? As for remarriage, forget it, I've finally stepped out."

Cheng Su asked again, "How are the kids? Are they well-behaved, causing any trouble?"

When mentioning the kids, Qi Fenglian's eyes dimmed and she said, "Xiao Bao is still a bit clueless, but Xiao Yun, I feel she's becoming more and more withdrawn."

As she spoke, her eyes became slightly red.

Xiao Yun was also Cheng Su's biggest worry, so she said, "Just wait a little longer, I'm sure she'll understand eventually. Wasn't there talk about bringing her over here to study?"

Qi Fenglian nodded and wiped her eye corners, saying, "That's my plan, wait until the new school year starts in September. Moreover, I wish to rent another place; the area around the train station is close, but it's indeed chaotic there."

Cheng Su thought about it and agreed; the current security is not like before and will continue to deteriorate. Qi Fenglian living in that place alone probably isn't convenient.

Besides, it's a place of heartbreak, used to be two people living, now just one, what's the point?

"Then pay attention, and I'll keep an eye out too; let's find another place. Ask Shi Ling, it seems the place she and her daughter are living now isn't bad!" Cheng Su said.

Qi Fenglian agreed and left without waiting for Qi Taiguo to return.

When Qi Taiguo came back, Cheng Su told him about Qi Fenglian's visit, and he remained silent for a while. Cheng Su knew he wasn't feeling good about it, so she could only sigh.