Rent day, a Chinese short story for HSK 5

Wáng Lěi's ten-year-old daughter gets five kuài a week and does nothing at home for it. He has a plan.

你小时候有零花钱吗？要做什么才有？我有一个零花钱的故事！
Nǐ xiǎo shíhou yǒu línghuāqián ma? Yào zuò shénme cái yǒu? Wǒ yǒu yí ge línghuāqián de gùshi!
Did you get pocket money as a child? What did you have to do for it? I have a pocket money story!

我女儿十岁那年，每个星期我给她五块零花钱。可是她在家什么活儿都不干。什么都不干。
Wǒ nǚ'ér shí suì nà nián, měi ge xīngqī wǒ gěi tā wǔ kuài línghuāqián. Kěshì tā zài jiā shénme huór dōu bú gàn. Shénme dōu bú gàn.
The year my daughter was ten, I gave her five kuài a week. But at home she did no work at all. Nothing.

她的房间乱得像刚刮过大风一样。碗也都是我一个人洗。我请她帮忙，她说："爸，我正忙着呢。"
Tā de fángjiān luàn de xiàng gāng guāguo dàfēng yíyàng. Wǎn yě dōu shì wǒ yí ge rén xǐ. Wǒ qǐng tā bāngmáng, tā shuō: "Bà, wǒ zhèng mángzhe ne."
Her room was as messy as if a storm had just hit it. I washed all the dishes by myself. When I asked her to help, she said: "Dad, I'm busy."

我什么办法都试过了。我说："不帮忙，就没有零花钱。"她只是耸耸肩。五块钱太少了，她不在乎。
Wǒ shénme bànfǎ dōu shìguo le. Wǒ shuō: "Bù bāngmáng, jiù méiyǒu línghuāqián." Tā zhǐshì sǒngsong jiān. Wǔ kuài qián tài shǎo le, tā bú zàihu.
I tried everything. I said: "No help, no money." She only shrugged. Five kuài was too little for her to care.

一个星期天，我让她坐在厨房的桌子旁边。我有一个计划。你猜，我的计划是什么？
Yí ge xīngqītiān, wǒ ràng tā zuò zài chúfáng de zhuōzi pángbiān. Wǒ yǒu yí ge jìhuà. Nǐ cāi, wǒ de jìhuà shì shénme?
One Sunday I sat her down at the kitchen table. I had a plan. Guess what my plan was?

"从今天起，你每个星期有二十块零花钱。"她的眼睛一下子睁大了。二十块！我还没说完，她就说"好"。
"Cóng jīntiān qǐ, nǐ měi ge xīngqī yǒu èrshí kuài línghuāqián." Tā de yǎnjing yíxiàzi zhēngdà le. Èrshí kuài! Wǒ hái méi shuōwán, tā jiù shuō "hǎo".
"From today you get twenty kuài a week." Her eyes went wide. Twenty! She said yes before I had finished.

然后我把话说完："可是从今天起，你在这个家要像大人一样生活。大人是要交钱的。"我把三张纸放在桌子上。
Ránhòu wǒ bǎ huà shuōwán: "Kěshì cóng jīntiān qǐ, nǐ zài zhège jiā yào xiàng dàrén yíyàng shēnghuó. Dàrén shì yào jiāo qián de." Wǒ bǎ sān zhāng zhǐ fàng zài zhuōzi shang.
Then I finished: "But from today you live in this home like a grown-up. And grown-ups pay." I put three pieces of paper on the table.

每张纸上，我写了一项要交的钱：房租，五块；饭钱，五块；网费，五块。每个星期天，交现金，交给我。
Měi zhāng zhǐ shang, wǒ xiěle yí xiàng yào jiāo de qián: fángzū, wǔ kuài; fànqián, wǔ kuài; wǎngfèi, wǔ kuài. Měi ge xīngqītiān, jiāo xiànjīn, jiāo gěi wǒ.
On each paper I had written something to pay. Rent: five kuài. Food: five kuài. Wi-Fi: five kuài. Every Sunday, in cash, paid to me.

她马上算了一下："二十减十五，还是五块！跟以前一样！"她气坏了。你觉得，我对她说了什么？
Tā mǎshàng suànle yíxià: "Èrshí jiǎn shíwǔ, háishi wǔ kuài! Gēn yǐqián yíyàng!" Tā qìhuài le. Nǐ juéde, wǒ duì tā shuōle shénme?
She did the math at once. "Twenty, minus fifteen, is five. That's the same as before!" She was furious. What do you think I told her?

"不一样。现在你可以多赚钱：每次洗碗，一块；每次收拾房间，两块；每次倒垃圾，一块。"
"Bù yíyàng. Xiànzài nǐ kěyǐ duō zhuàn qián: měi cì xǐ wǎn, yí kuài; měi cì shōushi fángjiān, liǎng kuài; měi cì dào lājī, yí kuài."
"Not the same. Now you can earn more. Every time you wash the dishes, one kuài. Every time you clean your room, two. Every time you take out the trash, one."

第一个星期天，她把十五块钱一张一张交给我，慢极了。她看每一张钞票的时候，好像那张钞票在跟她说再见。
Dì yī ge xīngqītiān, tā bǎ shíwǔ kuài qián yì zhāng yì zhāng jiāo gěi wǒ, màn jí le. Tā kàn měi yì zhāng chāopiào de shíhou, hǎoxiàng nà zhāng chāopiào zài gēn tā shuō zàijiàn.
The first Sunday she paid me fifteen kuài, one note at a time, very slowly. She looked at each note as if it were saying goodbye.

星期一，她没等我开口就洗了碗。星期二，她收拾了房间。我太太问我：“孩子是不是病了？”
Xīngqīyī, tā méi děng wǒ kāikǒu jiù xǐle wǎn. Xīngqī'èr, tā shōushile fángjiān. Wǒ tàitai wèn wǒ: “Háizi shì bu shì bìng le?”
On Monday she washed the dishes without my asking. On Tuesday she cleaned her room. My wife asked me if the child was sick.

你看，以前那五块钱是从天上掉下来的。现在二十块每个星期都在她手里，可是一到星期天，大部分都要交出去。交钱的时候，她可心疼了。
Nǐ kàn, yǐqián nà wǔ kuài qián shì cóng tiānshang diào xiàlái de. Xiànzài èrshí kuài měi ge xīngqī dōu zài tā shǒu li, kěshì yí dào xīngqītiān, dàbùfen dōu yào jiāo chūqù. Jiāo qián de shíhou, tā kě xīnténg le.
You see, before, the five kuài fell from the sky. Now twenty kuài was in her hand every week, and every Sunday she had to give most of it away. She hated giving it away.

到了月底，她干活比我还努力。而且她开始问问题了。你猜，她问了什么？
Dàole yuèdǐ, tā gàn huó bǐ wǒ hái nǔlì. Érqiě tā kāishǐ wèn wèntí le. Nǐ cāi, tā wènle shénme?
By the end of the month she was working harder than I was. And she had started to ask questions. Guess what she asked?

“爸，网费为什么要五块？我只有晚上才用。网费太贵了！”
“Bà, wǎngfèi wèi shénme yào wǔ kuài? Wǒ zhǐyǒu wǎnshang cái yòng. Wǎngfèi tài guì le!”
“Dad, why is the Wi-Fi five kuài? I only use it in the evening. The Wi-Fi is too expensive!”

她要看电信公司的账单。我给她看了。她拿铅笔算了半天：网费一个星期七块五，家里三个人用，她那一份只有两块五。我只好同意。
Tā yào kàn diànxìn gōngsī de zhàngdān. Wǒ gěi tā kàn le. Tā ná qiānbǐ suànle bàntiān: wǎngfèi yí ge xīngqī qī kuài wǔ, jiā li sān ge rén yòng, tā nà yí fèn zhǐyǒu liǎng kuài wǔ. Wǒ zhǐhǎo tóngyì.
She wanted to see the bill from the phone company. I showed it to her. She worked it out with a pencil: it cost seven fifty a week and three people use it, so her part was only two kuài fifty. I had to agree.

下个星期轮到饭钱了：她中午在学校吃饭，为什么要交饭钱？饭钱降到了四块。
Xià ge xīngqī lúndào fànqián le: tā zhōngwǔ zài xuéxiào chī fàn, wèi shénme yào jiāo fànqián? Fànqián jiàngdào le sì kuài.
The next week it was the food's turn: she has lunch at school, so why pay for food? The food went down to four kuài.

到了年底，她每个星期只交我十一块五，她洗碗、收拾房间、倒垃圾，每个星期还能赚十块。我太太说：“你养出了一个怪物。”我说：“不对，是一个女商人。”
Dàole niándǐ, tā měi ge xīngqī zhǐ jiāo wǒ shíyī kuài wǔ, tā xǐ wǎn, shōushi fángjiān, dào lājī, měi ge xīngqī hái néng zhuàn shí kuài. Wǒ tàitai shuō: “Nǐ yǎng chūle yí ge guàiwu.” Wǒ shuō: “Bú duì, shì yí ge nǚ shāngrén.”
By the end of the year she paid me eleven fifty a week and earned ten more every week with the dishes, her room and the trash. My wife said: “You have raised a monster.” I said: “No. A businesswoman.”

现在她是大人了，在上海的一家银行工作。去年过年她回家吃饭，我讲了这个故事，大家都笑了。然后她放下筷子。你猜，她说了什么？
Xiànzài tā shì dàrén le, zài Shànghǎi de yì jiā yínháng gōngzuò. Qùnián guònián tā huíjiā chī fàn, wǒ jiǎngle zhège gùshi, dàjiā dōu xiào le. Ránhòu tā fàngxià kuàizi. Nǐ cāi, tā shuōle shénme?
Now she is grown up and works at a bank in Shànghǎi. Last New Year she came home for dinner, and when I told this story, everybody laughed. Then she put down her chopsticks. Guess what she said?

“爸，网费还是太贵了。”
“Bà, wǎngfèi háishi tài guì le.”
“Dad, the Wi-Fi is still too expensive.”

Words in the story

零花钱 línghuāqián *pocket money*	干活 gàn huó *to work, to do chores*	耸耸肩 sǒngsong jiān *to shrug*
不在乎 bú zàihu *not to care*	计划 jìhuà *plan*	房租 fángzū *rent*
饭钱 fànqián *money for food*	网费 wǎngfèi *internet bill, Wi-Fi fee*	交钱 jiāo qián *to pay*

钞票
chāopiào
banknote

赚钱
zhuàn qián
to earn money

账单
zhàngdān
bill

收拾
shōushi
to tidy up

倒垃圾
dào lājī
to take out the trash

现金
xiànjīn
cash

轮到
lúndào
to be the turn of

降到
jiàngdào
to go down to

同意
tóngyì
to agree

怪物
guàiwu
monster

女商人
nǚ shāngrén
businesswoman

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