

Chapter 161: Demand

Mu Chen stood quietly next to Song Ning and held her hands.

Song Ning looked at him and smiled.

Mu Chen quietly asked, "Is there anything else you need help with?"

Song Ning smiled. "I'm waiting for you and Cheng Che to paste a few couplets. They need to be pasted quite high up so I'll need both of your heights to do it..."

Mu Chen smiled. "Okay."

Song Ning called out to Cheng Che and asked for his help to paste the couplets as well. Once they were done pasting the couplets, they could start eating.

Everyone busied themselves with their respective tasks, covering up awkwardness with their laughter.

Jiang Jin could barely hide her happiness. Her eyes would follow her son, Mu Qing, and her grandson, Mu Chen. Her days were not long, and she had to cherish rare moments such as this one.

Meanwhile, Song Ning secretly observed Liang Zhou. She hoped Liang Zhou would not say anything inappropriate to ruin the atmosphere and destroy Jiang Jin's happiness. However, so far, Liang Zhou had only quietly stayed next to Mu Qing's side and did not approach Jiang Jin; Liang Zhou seemed rather afraid of Jiang Jin.

On the other hand, Mu Chen seemed especially clingy toward Song Ning today. He disregarded everyone and kept a firm hold on her hand. She did not shrug his hand away; she knew he was very vulnerable right now and must be thinking about his mother.

The atmosphere turned even livelier during dinner.

Jiang Jin picked a few dishes for her son and grandson since she knew their preferences. She looked extremely happy just watching them eat.

Cheng Che's evaluation of every dish that was served was 'Delicious!'

Song Ning could not help but laugh. "Assistant Cheng, can you be more sincere with your praises? Use your skills when you write reports. You're too stingy with your praise. You need to appreciate the cooks' hard work!"

Cheng Che put down his chopsticks. After swallowing his food, he said pitifully, "Sister-in-law, please show mercy. I have to rack my brains during work. If they're not satisfactory, your husband will make me rewrite them. Today is the new year so please let me rest. I still have reports to write after the new year."

Jiang Jin and Sister Yu laughed, amused by Cheng Che's words.

Cheng Che continued to say, "In fact, the word 'delicious' is the best praise. No matter how flowery the words are, it all boils down to the same thing: delicious!"

Then, Cheng Che picked up a piece of crispy meat and put it into his mouth. As he ate, he nodded. "Mmmm, delicious! Really delicious!"

Everyone laughed.

Song Ning picked up a piece of crispy meat for Mu Chen as well.

After tasting the crispy meat, Mu Chen smiled gently at Song Ning.

Everyone's attention was on Cheng Che so the couple's tenderness escaped most people's notice.

At this time, Liang Zhou who had been cautiously silent suddenly said with a smile, "The Young Master and the Young Madam's relationship is really good."

Mu Chen, who was picking up a piece of shredded bamboo shoot for Song Ning, froze briefly.

Liang Zhou's words naturally attracted everyone's attention.

Jiang Jin said affectionately, "There are so many meat dishes, and yet, you're giving her bamboo shoots. Give her some meat. You have to fatten her up; she's too skinny!"

Mu Chen listened to Jiang Jin and picked up a piece of braised pork for Song Ning. He carefully removed the fat before placing it in her bowl.

Liang Zhou seized the chance and said in a soft voice, "Song Ning, you have to eat more. It's not easy to get pregnant if you're too thin. You're at the best age to give birth. The earlier you give birth, the happier the Old Madam will be..."

As expected, Jiang Jin grew even happier upon listening to these words.

Song Ning glanced at Liang Zhou and thought to herself, 'So she knows how to speak human words as well. Moreover, she can speak pretty well...'

Meanwhile, Mu Chen seemed to be in a daze as he looked at Song Ning's stomach.

Song Ning could not help but blush when she noticed his gaze and gently swatted his arm.

At this moment, Sister Yu placed a bowl of glutinous ball soup in front of Song Ning and said, "Have some glutinous balls during the new year for good luck, Young Madam.'

Mu Chen scooped a spoonful of the glutinous balls and said, "Then I want to eat them as well!"

Everyone laughed.

Jiang Jin's mood was incredibly good. Seeing everyone eating happily, she spoke non-stop,

Meanwhile, Mu Chen, Mu Chen, and Liang Zhou did not speak to each other at all. In fact, they did not even look at each other.

Liang Zhou's words gradually decreased. Most of her words were just praising Song Ning, making Jiang Jin even happier.

Song Ning discovered Liang Zhou was rather cunning. Liang Zhou was very good at going with the flow and coaxing Jiang Jin.

At the same time, Liang Zhou kept winking at Song Ning meaningfully. However, Song Ning alternated between feigning ignorance and confusion.

In the end, Liang Zhou began to look at Song Ning coldly.

Song Ning found it funny. Was Liang Zhou finally unable to endure and was showing her true colors? Liang Zhou must have been spoiled by Mu Qing and thought that the entire world would cater to her like Mu Qing.

When Song Ning went to the bathroom, Liang Zhou followed suit.

As expected, Liang Zhou no longer wore the perfect smile on her face.. She said haughtily, “Song Ning, what’s wrong with you? Why didn’t you seize any of the chances earlier? As long you speak up, you’ll be able to smooth things over...”

Chapter 162: Borrowing Someone’s Name to Act

Song Ning looked at Liang Zhou. “First, I didn’t promise you anything. Second, I advise you not to have any ulterior motives. It won’t be good if you ruin the present happiness!”

Liang Zhou said indignantly, “Then don’t blame me for being impolite...”

Song Ning replied calmly, “Do as you wish as long as you can bear the consequences...” Following that, she turned around to leave.

Liang Zhou stomped her feet. “Song Ning! You clearly didn’t object to us coming for dinner. As long as you’re willing to help me, I’ll definitely repay you in the future!”

Song Ning did not turn around as she said, “Whether you can continue to stay or not is beyond my control. I can’t help you, and I don’t need you to repay me either. I’ll say it again: you better not have any thoughts about Grandma. Don’t even think about hurting her.” After that, she opened the door and left.

‘This woman really has too many thoughts. I don’t know how she bewitched Mu Chen’s father...’

...

After the meal, everyone shifted to the living room to chat.

Song Ning helped Sister Yu and brought various fruit platters.

Liang Zhou squeezed next to Mu Qing on the couch.

At this moment, Mu Qing was telling Jiang Jin his interesting experiences when he was abroad.

Jiang Jin and Sister Yu were engrossed listening to Mu Qing’s story.

On the other hand, Cheng Che approached Mu Chen to play a game.

Liang Zhou spoke softly to Jiang Jin, "The Young Madam is really gentle and virtuous. She's very understanding as well."

Jiang Jin smiled and nodded. Then, she said to Mu Chen, "Song Ning is indeed a good child. It's Mu Chen's blessing to be able to marry her."

Mu Qing smiled. "Since Grandma approves of her, it's only natural that she's good..."

Jiang Jin was about to speak out when Liang Zhou suddenly said, "Song Ning just said that we've been away for so long and are unable to show the Old Madam filial piety. She suggested we move back to the family house. Our family will be reunited at that time, and it'd be beautiful. I think what she said made sense. She's really sensible..."

Everyone suddenly froze.

Jiang Jin and Sister Yu looked at Song Ning in astonishment. After all, Song Ning had never expressed such thoughts to them before.

Song Ning, who was holding onto a fruit platter at this moment, was caught off guard by Liang Zhou's words. She instinctively turned to look at Mu Chen and saw the hurt in his eyes. He silently put down the chess piece in his hand and rose to his feet. In the process, he accidentally flipped the chessboard over. The sound of the falling chessboard and chess pieces sounded like the sound of a heart being broken.

Mu Chen strode to the staircase, clearly intending to head upstairs.

Song Ning shouted, "Mu Chen, stop right there!"

Surprisingly, Mu Chen stopped in his tracks and did as he was told.

Song Ning inhaled deeply and placed the fruit platter on the table. Then, she looked at the fallen chessboard and chess pieces before she said sternly to Cheng Che, "Pick it up."

Cheng Che shuddered. He lowered his head and immediately began to pick up the chess pieces and the chessboard.

Subsequently, Song Ning walked up to Mu Chen and raised her head to look at him. "Just a casual sentence from an outsider is enough for you to doubt me? Did you even try to ask me for the truth? You believe the words of an outsider without even consulting me. Don't I even get a chance to defend myself? Mu Chen, have you lost your mind?"

Mu Chen's cold expression began to ease.

Song Ning stared at him and asked, "Don't you think you owe me an apology?"

Mu Chen slowly reached out and grabbed Song Ning's hand. He said softly, "I'm sorry; I was wrong."

Song Ning looked at him fiercely. Then, she pulled him to the living room and pushed him to sit on the couch. She looked at Liang Zhou who was maintaining the posture of a bullied victim, but her gaze was vicious.

Song Ning smiled faintly as she said, “Ms. Liang, you’ve been praising me non-stop just so you can borrow my name to return to the family house, right? I didn’t say anything of that sort and remained silent, but you seized this opportunity, thinking I would be unable to defend myself, right?”

Liang Zhou said apologetically and timidly, “Song Ning, I... I didn’t expect you didn’t discuss the matter with Mu Chen. I’m sorry for causing a conflict between both of you. I’m really, really sorry.” She leaned closer against Mu Qing as though she was being bullied.

Mu Qing’s gaze toward Song Ning turned unfriendly immediately.

Mu Chen felt the scene before him was an eyesore. He said icily, “Back then, something like this happened here as well, right? You wanted to stay so you used mother’s name and said that mother wanted you to stay for a few days. In fact, mother said no such things. However, you knew that because you were sisters, she would not say anything to embarrass you. You forced her to accept that. Following that, you stayed for more than a few days until you finally climbed into his bed...”

Liang Zhou’s face paled immediately.

Mu Chen sneered. “Back then, my mother didn’t say anything and endured the grievances on her own. She even had to endure people saying she invited a wolf into her house. It’s been more than ten years, and you still want to use the same trick on Song Ning? You thought she would endure and remain silent, right? Unfortunately, you miscalculated.”

Following that, he lifted Song Ning’s hand and gently kissed it. He looked at her with eyes shining with affection and determination..

Chapter 163: Advice

Liang Zhou’s face was ashen.

Mu Chen turned to Mu Qing and said disdainfully, “Why didn’t you say it yourself if you want to return? Does that woman speak for you now? If she succeeds, you’ll obtain what you want. Now that she failed, she has lost her dignity. You’re really something else, using a woman to do your dirty work.”

Mu Qing’s face turned green and red upon hearing Mu Chen’s words.

Liang Zhou’s eyes brimmed with tears as she said pitifully, “Mu Chen, you’ve misunderstood us. That’s not my intention at all. It’s all Song Ning. She suggested we stay. Since the Old Madam is getting advanced in age, if we stay, your father will be able to show his filial piety.”

Mu Chen sneered. “So you only remember about filial piety after being reminded by Song Ning?”

Liang Zhou was at a loss for words.

Mu Qing quickly said, “Mom, Xiao Zhou has always been straightforward. After staying abroad for so many years, it’s only natural that her way of thinking has changed. However, she doesn’t have any ill intentions. You have to believe her.”

Jiang Jin shook her head and sighed in disappointment. “Mu Qing, you’re just as muddle-headed as before. After so many years, you didn’t change for the better. Back then, I asked you to choose between the Mu Group and her; you chose her. No one forced you to leave. Now, you want to have your cake and eat it too?”

Mu Qing hurriedly said, “Mom, that’s not my intention. It’s really not like that...”

Jiang Jin nodded. “Then don’t create unnecessary drama or let others with ill intentions seize the chance to cause troubles. I don’t want to watch that farce from back then again nor do I have the energy to go through it again. Behave yourself unless you want people to say you caused your mother’s death!”

Jiang Jin’s words were grave.

Mu Qing fell to his knees immediately.

Liang Zhou hurriedly followed suit and fell to her knees and lowered her head.

Jiang Jin waved her hand, exhausted, “You should leave now. I want to rest early. The relatives and friends will be coming over for the new year’s greeting tomorrow.”

Mu Qing fell silent for a moment. In the end, he gritted his teeth and rose to his feet. He said with his head lowered, “Okay.”

Before Mu Qing left, Jiang Jin said. “Mu Qing, you’re already at the age where you could be a grandfather. You should save some dignity for yourself and act your age. Don’t act recklessly if you still think of me as your mother...”

Mu Qing did not turn around.

Jiang Jin continued to say, “There will be many people visiting tomorrow. Liang Zhou, there’s no need for you to come. After all, you have no status in the Mu family..”

Liang Zhou’s body swayed slightly before she straightened her back.

After the duo left, silence descended in the living room. No one was in a good mood.

Song Ning bit her lips, feeling annoyed.

At this moment, Jiang Jin looked at Song Ning and waved her over.

After moving to sit next to Jiang Jin, Song Ning called out softly, “Grandma...”

Jiang Jin looked at her and patted her hand. “Do you feel like you’re unable to defend yourself? I know you’re in a dilemma. If you speak bluntly, you’re afraid of hurting my feelings. If you don’t clarify things, it’d be easy for people to scheme against you...”

Song Ning felt tears threatening to roll down her face. “Grandma...”

Jiang Jin sighed. “Mu Chen has previously expressed his wish for me to guide you. You’re too kind and honest. I can’t teach you how to deal with people who have evil intentions. Only by experiencing it first hand will you be able to learn and understand the twists and turns of life. However, Grandma wishes that you’ll always stay true to yourself and be honest. Like earlier, although you spoke honestly, there’s

no poison in your words... All you need to do is be honest with us and don't keep everything to yourself..."

Song Ning nodded. "She went to Zhuang Ji to look for me. She told me she planned to stay in M City. She said it's hard for Mu Chen to manage to Mu Group alone and to let Mu Chen's father help with managing the company. With that, she said Mu Chen and I can spend more time together. I refused her. She said she was not in a rush and would take things one step at a time so I didn't pay attention to her. I didn't expect her to follow me to the bathroom earlier and demanded that I help her. I rejected her again. I... I didn't expect she would do such a thing in the end... I... I..."

Song Ning gritted her teeth; she was really angry. How could someone be so despicable and shameless?

Mu Chen said coldly, "You're no match for her. She still has many tricks up her sleeves..."

Song Ning said, clearly aggrieved. "If you know that, why did you believe her words earlier? Do you really think I would say such things?"

Mu Chen was rendered speechless by her words. Then, he apologized in a low voice, "Ningning, I'm really sorry."

Song Ning turned away, refusing to look at him.

Jiang Jin gestured for Mu Chen to sit closer. Then, she placed her hand on Song Ning's hand and calmly said, "Liang Zhou played her cards really well. She dragged Song Ning into this matter. Regardless if she obtained her goal or not, she succeeded in affecting your relationship. She has created trust issues between the both of you, and now, there are knots in both your hearts..."

Mu Chen hurriedly said, "No, I don't!"

Song Ning leaned on Jiang Jin as tears fell from her eyes. She felt aggrieved for being doubted. "Grandma, you're right. I do have a knot in my heart."

Jiang Jin smiled as she raised her hand to smooth Song Ning's hair. "Silly child, you're the most precious in our family. If you have something to say, say it. This way those wicked people won't have a chance to sow discord. In a relationship, it's important to be honest with each other and not hide your thoughts. Humans can't read minds after all. However, if you speak your mind, Mu Chen will be able to understand you more... With that, the thing that happened earlier won't happen again...."

Chapter 164: Calculations

Jiang Jin nudged Mu Chen. "You've wronged your wife. Shouldn't you coax her? It's the new year, how can you let her shed tears?"

Mu Chen's lips curled up slightly. "Song Ning, I was wrong. Please forgive me."

Song Ning turned her head away.

Jiang Jin covered her eyes. "Both of you get out of my sight. Go, go, go! Cheng Che, come play a game of chess with Grandma!"

Cheng Che happily carried the chessboard over. "Grandma, see, I'm the least worrying among everyone. Can my red packet be more than brother this year?"

Jiang Jin smiled and patted him. "You're really obedient and smart. You should marry a wife next year for Grandma. Grandma will double your red packet money this year!"

...

When Mu Qing and Liang Zhou returned home, Liang Zhou finally let loose of her temper. She swept all the bottles and glasses on the dining table to the ground in a fury

The sound of glasses breaking reverberated in the house.

Mu Qing frowned upon seeing this.

Liang Zhou said viciously, "Song Ning, that wretched girl, I'll drive her out of the Mu family sooner or later!"

Mu Qing's expression turned even gloomier. "You best dismiss those thoughts. Concentrate on how to return to the Mu family!"

Liang Zhou scoffed. "With your IQ, you're no match for your son, and you still want to compete with him? Dream on! You don't even know how to please that old lady!"

Liang Zhou felt her head ache. Mu Qing was really worrying and unreliable.

Mu Qing said indignantly, "Isn't it all because of you? If I were to leave you now, there's no problem for me to return to the Mu family now, and Mu Chen wouldn't be so cold to me."

Liang Zhou was furious. All his intelligence was used to deal with her instead! She suppressed her anger and asked, "Have you contacted the elders of the Mu family?"

Mu Qing looked at the mess on the ground and waved his hand dismissively. He said impatiently, "I've already contacted them. Why do you have to do so much? Tomorrow is the first day of the new year. The elders' words carry a lot of weight, but you just have to act out tonight. How great! Now we've alerted the enemy. Who knows what trouble we'll have to face tomorrow!"

Liang Zhou switched her tactics immediately. She went up to Mu Qing and tugged on his sleeve, acting coquettishly. "Hubby, we must succeed this time! We must stay here. I refuse to go back to that place in Australia where the rabbits don't even sh*t!"

Although Mu Qing let her hold him, he said indifferently, "Women are fickle. You were the one who cried and shouted to leave this place, and now you're jumping about staying here. I'm afraid other than me, no one will be able to tolerate your fickleness!"

Liang Zhou leaned on his arm affectionately. "Hubby, I know you love me the most."

...

Early in the morning.

The Mu family set off firecrackers to signify the arrival of the new year; they were ready to welcome the new year.

Amidst the sound of the firecrackers, Song Ning buried herself in the quilt.

Mu Chen uncovered her and pulled her into his arms, amused.

She said weakly, "I want to sleep for a while more..."

Mu Chen's way of apologizing to her was to give himself to her; she could not even refuse him. How was it that she was wronged but was still exhausted in the end?

"Then sleep for a while more. What's the big deal? I know you're tired so rest more," Mu Chen said as he held her against his chest.

Song Ning said in a daze, "So you know I'm tired? Then why do you still insist on torturing me?"

Mu Chen smiled. "Because I like you. I can't help myself."

Song Ning covered his mouth and closed her eyes. "Did you eat honey early in the morning?"

Mu Chen grabbed her hand and pulled it away from his mouth before he kissed her palm and bit one of her fingers, chuckling.

When Song Ning felt the sharp pain on her finger, she pulled her hand away and swatted him gently. She sighed and sat up. "I'm going to take a hot bath to clear my head."

Mu Chen immediately sat up. He said, "I want to take a hot bath as well. I'll join you!"

Song Ning turned around and pushed him back onto the bed. "Don't move! Stay there!"

When Mu Chen looked at Song Ning's fierce gaze and sleepy expression, he found her soft and cute. He could not help pull her back into the bed with him to hug her.

When Song Ning was completely awake, she pushed him away with all her strength and hurriedly jumped out of the bed. She put her hands on her waist and said angrily, "Mu Chen, you believe me when I say I'll press your acupuncture points and make you unable to move?"

Mu Chen laughed and nodded. "I believe, I believe you!"

Song Ning scoffed. She was truly helpless against him. She turned around and hurried into the bathroom.

Meanwhile, Mu Chen leaned against the headboard of the bed. His smile was gradually disappearing. Yesterday's incident reminded him of the past. If his mother were like Song Ning, if she were a little tougher, she would not have ended up that way. His mother was too proud and was not one to bow to her father. His mother was too passive, only waiting silently for her father to make the first move and love her. Unfortunately, his father's idea of love was nothing like his mother's; his father used his lower body to think instead.

Fortunately, Song Ning was not like his mother.. Although she was strong, he was still determined to protect her well!

Chapter 165: Confrontation

On the first day of the new year, those who visited were relatives. Almost all of them gathered at the Cloudy Peak Villa.

The Mu family was a rather large family with many branches. It was only natural that some of them were envious when visiting a place where the wealthy and influential families stayed.

With so many people gathered, there would undoubtedly be conflicts. On such an occasion, the womenfolk would naturally have a lot of dramas.

First of all, they would compare their clothes. Next, they would compare the children and grandchildren, bragging about their results in school. After that, they would brag about their newly married children and make snide comments about those who were still single.

In previous years, Jiang Jin would sit at the main seat and watch the show. She did not particularly care about her clothes nor did she have children of the same age as those women to compare with. The only thing was she had two single grandsons. In any case, she enjoyed watching the show. The gossip was enough to last her and Sister Yu for half a year.

However, it was different for Jiang Jin this year. Her new year's clothes were prepared by Zhuang Ji. Most importantly, her granddaughter-in-law had personally designed it; it was one of a kind. Even Sister Yu's clothes were one-of-a-kind. How could those old, middle-aged, and young women compare to them? Moreover, she finally had a granddaughter-in-law this year. This was what she felt the proudest about. She did not even need to speak for others to know how outstanding her granddaughter-in-law was. Therefore, she was incredibly excited about this year's new year.

Jiang Jin brought Song Ning to her side and smiled brightly. She thought that if she did not show off now, when would she show off?

Although many people came to see Mu Qing, their attention was all caught by Song Ning, the new Young Madam of the Mu family. After all, she had only gotten a marriage certificate and had not held a wedding banquet but was already highly favored by the Old Madam of the Mu family. There was no doubt her position as the future Madam of the Mu family was secure.

The second Old Madam, Ding Hong, arrived the latest. It was rather different from her usual style. Moreover, she came in holding a middle-aged woman's hand.

When Jiang Jin saw the middle-aged woman, her expression changed drastically.

It was Liang Zhou.

Liang Zhou was dressed in a stone-green qipao. She looked graceful and dignified; her expression was gentle and respectful.

Before Jiang Jin could speak up, Ding Hong smiled and said, "Sister-in-law, your dress is really pretty. The craftsmanship is amazing as well. It's from Zhuang Ji, right? The Young Madam is really filial and sensible. Mu Chen has done so much for her, it's only natural for her to treat you well..."

Jiang Jin's expression darkened.

Song Ning gently pulled Jiang Jin forward to greet Ding Hong.

Ding Hong held Liang Zhou's hand and said, "Young Madam, this is your stepmother-in-law. You have to greet her. Good child, quickly bow!"

Song Ning saw the smugness flashing in Liang Zhou's eyes.

Before Song Ning could speak, Jiang Jin said, "Not everyone's worthy of Song Ning's respect." Then, she looked at Liang Zhou and said, "You're quite capable. I just told you yesterday not to come over today, but you already managed to get the Second Madam to bring you here. I guess I've underestimated your shamelessness."

Liang Zhou quickly lowered her gaze and said carefully, "Old Madam, I... I was invited by the Second Madam and I... I couldn't refuse..."

Ding Hong said with a smile, "That's right, sister-in-law. I invited her. She isn't an outsider. Mu Qing and Liang Zhou have been together for more than ten years. Isn't she already the daughter-in-law of the Mu family. Moreover, Liang Zhou is very sensible. I think she's worthy of being the Madam of the Mu family; that's why I brought her here today. I'm taking advantage of the festive season to plead with you. Let's go to the ancestral her and acknowledge her status!"

Jiang Jin looked at Ding Hong and smiled. "I didn't expect sister-in-law to be so kind. Why don't you bring your grandson's mistress over as well? Let's acknowledge her status in the ancestral hall as well?"

Ding Hong's expression froze instantly. After she recovered from the embarrassment, she said, "Sister-in-law, what are you talking about? Why are you bringing my family into this? Liang Zhou has been with Mu Qing for so many years, and she's related to Liang Zhen as well. Why must you be so narrow-minded? You should give them your blessings."

Although Jiang Jin missed her son very much, it was undeniable that his return was a disaster. She looked at Liang Zhou's weak and timid appearance as she asked coldly, "Liang Zhou, your sister, Liang Zhen, is the legitimate Madam of the Mu family. She's enshrined in the ancestral hall. Do you plan to kowtow and kneel to her every year from now on or do you want to enter the Mu family's ancestral hall with her 100 years later?"

Liang Zhou's face turned slightly pale.

Jiang Jin glanced at Ding Hong. "Don't worry. As long as I'm still alive, you won't be able to enter the ancestral hall. If I die, I'll also make a will and instruct the next generation to do the same. Liang Zhou, I'm doing this for your own good! I don't want you two sisters to fight even in death. You've made your choice.. Don't blame the heavens and the people, and you don't have to come up with so many schemes to break your vows!"

Chapter 166: Threats

Liang Zhou's tears fell like pearls immediately. She kneeled gracefully and said, "Old Madam, I'm sorry. It's all my fault. I've been regretting it for so many years; I shouldn't have fallen in love with Mu Qing

and made him selfishly leave his family for me. Mu Qing missed you very much over the years and was depressed. Seeing him like that makes my heart ache. Old Madam, please let him return. He's your biological son after all." After she spoke, she began to kowtow.

Ding Hong and the others immediately stepped forward to help Liang Zhou up.

However, Liang Zhou refused to get up. It was as though if Jiang Jin did not agree, she would kneel until she died.

Jiang Jin was so angry that her whole body was trembling.

Song Ning rushed forward and held Jiang Jin's arm. She reminded her in a low voice, "Grandma, you can't be angry!"

Jiang Jin took a deep breath and said in a trembling voice, "If you like to kneel, then kneel." After saying that, she turned around and was about to leave.

Ding Hong hurriedly stopped her. "Sister-in-law, how can you do this? Today is the first day of the new year. It won't look good if she kneels here like this!"

"Why don't you agree? It's not a big deal. Mu Qing is your child. Sister-in-law, why are you so hard-hearted? You can't just favor your grandson! Without your son, would you have a grandson?"

Jiang Jin was so angry that her demeanor changed immediately. "I thought you all finally found your conscience and came to visit me out of kindness. I didn't expect all of you to scheme against me. You even calculated the time and occasion. Very good! You even dare to plot against my son!"

Song Ning grew even more anxious. She looked to the left and to the right, looking for Mu Chen.

"Grandma, what happened?" At this moment, Mu Chen walked over with large strides.

Upon seeing Mu Chen, Song Ning sighed in relief inwardly. However, her relief did not last long before the anxiety returned. What if Mu Chen did something drastic? She was seething with anger; she had really underestimated Liang Zhen.

Song Ning had assumed Liang Zhou was just a vain woman who was not very intelligent. Who knew Liang Zhou was so cunning. This kind of underhanded scheme was the most difficult to solve. Whether it was Jiang Jin or Mu Chen, they were both kind people. They would be at a disadvantage faced with such people.

When Song Ning saw Jiang Jin's trembling growing worse, she quickly put her hands on Jiang Jin's back to steady her. "Grandma, don't be angry! It's not a big matter."

Nevertheless, Song Ning knew these were just empty words.

Meanwhile, Ding Hong and the others recounted what happened to Mu Chen.

Mu Chen looked at the woman kneeling on the ground as his expression gradually turned cold.

Song Ning reached out to hold his hand and found it cold to the touch.

"What's the big deal?" Mu Chen finally said.

Everyone was stunned by his words,

“If you want to stay, then stay. There’s no need to look as if you’ve been wronged. Who are you acting like this for? It’s the new year. If you make Grandma angry, don’t blame me for being impolite...” Mu Chen said. Following that, he reached out to hold Jiang Jin and said, “Grandma, let Ningning give you a massage. It’s the new year so you have to be happy. Don’t be angry, okay?”

Mu Chen and Song Ning supported Jiang Jin on each side.

Ding Hong quickly walked up and said ingratiatingly, “That’s right, sister-in-law. Look, Mu Chen is so sensible. Our Mu Chen has a family now. Mu Qing and his wife want to come back to see him. It’s only human nature...”

Mu Chen stopped in his tracks. “Second Madam, tell Mu Wei to leave for South Africa in two days. The branch manager there hasn’t been back in two years. Mu Wei should go there and replace him.”

Ding Hong froze immediately. “W-what?”

Mu Chen no longer paid attention to Ding Hong as he supported Jiang Jin inside.

When she regained her senses, Ding Hong hurried next to Mu Chen and said, “No, Mu Chen, what did you say? It’s the new year and you want Mu Wei to go to that sh*tty place? Mu Chen, don’t you think you’re going too far?”

Mu Chen said expressionlessly. “What’s wrong? That manager hasn’t come back for new year for two years now!”

“What does it have to do with us whether he comes back or not?” Ding Hong raised her voice, attracting everyone’s attention.

Mu Chen said lightly, “That’s right. What does it have to do with you if other people come back or not?”

Ding Hong was rendered speechless.

Mu Chen’s words were ruthless and hit the nail on its head.

Ding Hong originally wanted to see the main branch of the Mu family make a fool of themselves so she ignored all the taboos and brought Liang Zhou over. She had been extremely happy when she saw how angry Jiang Jin was. After all, it was not easy to cause trouble for the main branch of the Mu family.. In the end, Mu Qing and Liang Zhou got off unscathed and she became the scapegoat! What kind of new year was this?!

Chapter 167: Strange Trick

Ding Hong really did not expect her grandson would be dragged into the matter before she could even watch the show. Moreover, Mu Wei was the grandson she loved most. She said, “No! Mu Chen, this is impossible! Mu Wei isn’t as capable as you; how can he be given such an important task? Mu Chen, you should send someone else.

“Oh?” Mu Chen cocked an eyebrow before he looked around. He raised his voice and called Cheng Che over. Then, he said in a business-like manner, “I wanted Mu Wei to fly to South Africa in two days to replace Manager Li who hasn’t returned home in two years. However, the Old Madam said that Mu Wei isn’t qualified. Get him assessed. If he’s really unqualified then he should leave the Mu Group. Our Mu family doesn’t have a bit of supporting useless people. Remember to do it tomorrow.”

Cheng Che played along and answered in a professional tone, “Understood, President Mu. I’ll make an appointment with Young Master Wei for the assessment tomorrow morning.”

Ding Hong was flustered. She knew Mu Chen was seeking revenge because she tried to stir up trouble by using Mu Qing and Liang Zhou. She felt incredibly regretful now. However, there was no way for her to take back the words that had been said earlier. Moreover, Liang Zhou was still kneeling with tears streaming down her face.

At this moment, Mu Qing quickly ran over and helped Liang Zhou up. “What happened? Who bullied you?”

Mu Qing’s gaze swept across everyone’s faces. Since he and Mu Chen looked somewhat alike, his gaze was almost as terrifying as Mu Chen’s.

Mu Chen looked at Mu Qing expressionlessly as he said, “No one bullied her. She asked Grandma to let you return to the Mu family with the Second Madam’s help. Although the method is disgusting, it’s quite effective. I don’t want to anger Grandma and make a fool of myself on the first day of the new year so bring your woman in. It’s up to you to come in or not...”

No one dared to move for a moment, stunned.

Realization finally dawned on Song Ning. This was a trap that was dug for Mu Chen. This was emotional blackmail. Jiang Jin had specifically told Liang Zhou not to come, but Liang Zhou still came. Moreover, Liang Zhou acted in a manner that was difficult to refuse.

If Jiang Jin did not give in, people would say she was narrow-minded and heartless. After all, she did not even want to accept her son and the woman who had followed her son for more than ten years. At that time, everyone would forget about Liang Zhou’s dishonorable past and pity her. However, once Liang Zhou entered the family, everyone would bring up her past and shame the Mu family.

Song Ning felt chills run up her spine. Mu Chen’s relatives were too vicious. She did not expect this at all. However, she was even more surprised by Mu Chen’s reaction. Based on what she knew of him, he would have lost his temper and chased Mu Qing and Liang Zhou out. If he had done that, he would be labeled as an unfilial son and would be despised by others. An unfilial son who refused to recognize his father would probably be criticized even in the business industry.

However, Mu Chen did not let those people get what they wanted. His actions caused Mu Qing, Liang Zhou, and the troublemakers of the Mu family to be at loss. They did not know what to do next. They were like a group of people who were running at full speed and suddenly fell into a deep pit. This fall caused all of them to feel suffocated.

The Second Madam had just said a few words and threw her grandson into a pit. With that serving as an example, the others did not even dare to breathe loudly. They had forgotten that Mu Chen was the most powerful person in the family and challenged his authority.

They assumed Mu Chen would consider the big picture and take into account that they were all family. They did not think he would act against them. At that time, they would seize the chance to negotiate with him to get as many benefits as they could. They probably followed the saying, 'The monarch is like the water, and the people are the water. The people can carry or sink the ship'. Alas, they had deeply miscalculated and misjudged Mu Chen.

Mu Chen helped his grandmother to the couch before he sat down. Then, he pulled Song Ning to sit on his other side. He wrapped his arm around her shoulders as he said, "Today is the first day of the new year. According to tradition, you can speak freely. If you have any requests, you can mention them. Perhaps, they'll be fulfilled..."

There was a smile when Mu Chen spoke, but the smile did not reach his eyes.

Everyone shuddered when they saw his smile.

Mu Chen swept his gaze across everyone as he said, "Earlier, Second Madam advised my Grandma regarding if some people should be allowed to return or not. I feel that Second Madam is really kind so I decided to do a good deed and send Mu Wei to South Africa in two days' time to replace the branch manager. If anyone has any ideas, please speak up..."

Heavens, this was considered a good deed?

Chapter 168: Complete Defeat

Song Ning really wanted to applaud Mu Chen. Who knew he had a black-bellied side to him as well?

However, there were still some people who were unafraid of death.

A few elders carefully proceeded with their plan and pleaded with Mu Chen. They said as the eldest son of the Mu family's main branch, it was inappropriate for Mu Qing to stay outside. It was best if Mu Qing could return to the family home. They even suggested that Mu Qing be given a role in the company even if the role was not an important one. In their opinion, when a family was united, success was sure to follow. The Mu family was now thriving under Mu Chen's leadership. If Mu Qing entered the company as well, they believed the Mu family would prosper even more.

The elders surrounded Jiang Jin and spoke up one after another while Mu Chen and Song Ning stood behind her.

Mu Chen put his hand on Jiang Jin's shoulder and gently tapped it, indicating that she should hold her temper and not act rashly.

Jiang Jin, naturally, understood the two youngsters' thoughts. She had calmed down by now and could see that these relatives were trying to target Mu Chen. She also knew Mu Qing was determined to return to the Mu family. This was bound to be another test on Mu Chen and Mu Qing's already strenuous relationship. She also understood Mu Chen did not want her to speak and planned to deal

with it himself. She would follow his plan. After all, this was no longer ten years ago when he still needed her to support him.

When everyone finally finished speaking their minds, Mu Qing finally walked over, looking anxious and ill at ease.

One of the seemingly kind elders said, "Mu Qing, you've left the Mu family for a long time. It'll take some time to get used to now that you've returned. Fortunately, Mu Chen is your son. There are no eternal feuds between fathers and sons, after all. In the future, the Mu family will depend on you father and son. You have to get along well with each other..."

Mu Qing nodded humbly and thanked the uncle.

At this moment, Mu Chen said in an even tone, "There's no need for us to get along with each other. From tomorrow onward, I'm taking time off from the company. There's no need to ask for instructions from me regarding the Mu family and the company."

Everyone fell silent immediately.

Even Song Ning was taken aback by Mu Chen's words; she looked at him in confusion.

Sensing Song Ning's gaze on him, Mu Chen lowered his head and smiled at her. "I've decided to take time off; I can help you with your thesis as well. Once you've completed your thesis, we'll get married and travel. If Grandma is willing, she can come with us as well. I think I want to spend time with you and Grandma for a long time..." His voice was gentle when he spoke; this tone of voice was only reserved for his grandmother and his wife.

It took the elders a long time to recover from Mu Chen's words.

After a while, one of the elders asked, "M-mu Chen, what do you mean? You're taking time off from the company?"

Mu Chen replied, "That's right. I haven't taken any time off in over ten years. I plan to take all the time off I've accumulated. If the company doesn't allow it, then I'll just resign."

"W-what? Why?"

Mu Chen feigned confusion and surprise as he said, "What the big deal? Every employee in the company has this right."

"No, that's not what I mean. Why are you taking time off at this time? You know that the upcoming spring festival is the golden season for businesses. How can you take time off? By doing this, you're ignoring the interests of the family and the company's employees, right?"

Mu Chen's expression darkened immediately. He said emotionlessly, "No one considers my interest so why should I consider the family's interest? If all of you feel I'm not qualified to lead the Mu family and the company, I can step down. You can find someone else who's capable. After all, the Mu family has many descendants. It won't be a problem even if I'm not around."

Song Ning really admired Mu Chen's cunning from the bottom of her heart. She had been worried for him when she saw the relatives cornering him like a pack of hyenas. She did not expect him to be such an amazing strategist and defeat those sly foxes in the family.

"Mu Chen, you can't do this."

"That's right, Mu Chen. You have to consider the big picture. How can you act like a child and quit just like that? This isn't right..."

Mu Chen turned a deaf ear to their words. He only spoke to his wife in a lowered voice, laughing as they chatted. He would also speak to his grandmother, looking content.

Mu Qing stood still, feeling awkward and not knowing what to do. He had taken into account everyone's strengths and weaknesses; he had done his research. He had also let Liang Zhou test the water to see everyone's reactions. He felt he had a good grasp of everyone's personality in the Mu family. As for his mother and his son, he did not think much of them. He was certain the duo would consider the bigger picture and endure for the sake of the Mu family. It was out of his expectations that Mu Chen would not play by the rules at all.

Mu Qing had attacked step by step. He had used Liang Zhou, the Second Madam, and the stubborn elders to force his son and mother into letting Liang Zhou join them for the new year. When he saw Mu Chen allowing Liang Zhou to enter the house, he assumed Mu Chen had been forced to retreat in defeat to avoid causing a commotion. Who knew Mu Chen's retreat was part of the plan to lure the enemies into his trap?

Now that Mu Qing was back, Mu Chen stated he wanted to take time off or resign. There was nothing worse than Mu Chen resigning from the company. With Mu Chen gone, the Mu family would not be what it was now. There was nothing Mu Qing could do now. Things would continue as it was as long as he did not enter the MU family.

Realization hit Mu Qing hard. He had lost, completely and utterly..

Chapter 169: Retreat

Mu Qing stood respectfully at the side of his uncles and said with a simple and honest smile, "Uncles, please listen to what I have to say. Listen to what I have to say."

The elders who were so embarrassed that they did not know how to react hurriedly shut their mouths and looked at Mu Qing.

Mu Qing bowed deeply before he said, "I appreciate everyone's kindness, but please listen to what I have to say!" Following that, he looked at Mu Chen affectionately and said, "I return this time because I've been thinking about my mother's health recently. After all, she's getting advanced in age, and she's not very healthy; I just want to spend the new year with her. As for returning to the Mu family, please don't make things difficult for Mu Chen. After all, Mu Chen deserves all the credit for bringing the Mu Group to such great heights. I'm afraid I can't do better than him even if I return to the company. After all, mother taught us that the Mu Group belongs to everyone in the Mu family not just the eldest son of the Mu family's main branch..."

The elders' expressions eased, and they looked at Mu Qing with approval. On the contrary, they looked at Mu Chen in disdain and anger.

Mu Chen remained indifferent as he met their gazes.

Mu Qing hesitated for a moment, as if he had just made a great decision. Then, he looked at Jiang Jin and said in a trembling voice, "Mother, I just have a small request. I hope I can stay a little longer this time to spend more time with you."

Jiang Jin's eyes could not help but redden upon hearing these words.

Meanwhile, the elders spoke up one after another.

"That's right. You should stay and show your filial piety. Although we're a business family, we value filial piety the most!"

"That's right, that's right!"

"Mu Chen, you can't object to this! He's your father. Moreover, how can you stop him if he wants to be filial to your grandmother? It'd be a great sin if you stop him."

"That's right, Mu Chen. Although your father's at fault for what happened back then, more than ten years have passed. How can a pair of father and son's feud last for such a long time?"

"Sister-in-law, please say something. Your son is so filial; can you bear to hurt him?"

Mu Chen immediately said, "Granduncles, you don't have to pressure Grandma. Everyone's free to leave or stay. After all, the Mu family has many properties. It's not like there's no place to stay."

"Hey, child, what are you saying? Your father specifically returned to accompany your grandmother. How can you expect him to live outside?"

The elders grew anxious again and began to scold Mu Chen.

At this moment, Jiang Jin raised her voice and said, "We'll do as Mu Chen said. This matter is settled."

Everyone fell silent immediately.

Following that, Jiang Jin looked at her son with a complex gaze and said, "Mu Qing, it's been more than ten years. I'm afraid Liang Zhen has already reincarnated. However, those of us who are still alive are unable to get over this matter. Don't forget how you cornered her back then. The heavens are watching, my son. Karma will always come to those who deserve it. Moreover, you were the one who willingly abandoned the Mu family back then; it was your own choice. I'm afraid it's too late for you to regret your decisions."

Jiang Jin continued to say, "Have you forgotten what I taught you when you were young? Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Mu Chen is your son. As his father, how have you treated him? No matter how he treats you know, it's your own doing. Why didn't I agree to you marrying Liang Zhou back then? It's because of Liang Zhen. Moreover, they were biological sisters. If it were someone else, I would've given you my blessing. Son, you've sinned!"

Following that, Jiang Jin glanced at the people present on the scene and said, "Today is the first day of the new year, and the ancestral hall is open for visits. Our ancestors are watching us; what kind of intentions do you have by bringing Liang Zhou here? Aren't you afraid of Liang Zhen appearing in your dreams tonight? It's fine if you want to scheme, but if you want to harm others, you'll only end up harming yourself."

Jiang Jin did not give the others a chance to speak. She sighed as she continued to say, "Mu Qing, you can stay in your current apartment. It's pretty good. If you miss me, you can come over and visit. However, you'll never be allowed back into Cloudy Peak Villa. The day you voluntarily left, you should've understood this. The Mu Group has nothing to do with you; don't have any thoughts about it. If you have any malicious thoughts, then I'll sever our mother-and-son relationship."

These words scared Mu Qing that he fell to his knees.

Mu Chen quietly kneeled next to his grandmother as Song Ning followed suit without any hesitation.

"Mom, I understand you're teaching me a lesson. I don't have any other thoughts; I just want to be filial to you..." Mu Qing said as tears rolled down his face.

Jiang Jin wiped her tears and said with a sigh, "Get up."

Following that, Jiang Jin muttered, seemingly to herself, "If anyone in the Mu family has evil thoughts, they're only digging their own graves.. I'm going to pay respects to the ancestors and pray that they'll chase out those unfilial descendants!"

Chapter 170: New Year Greetings

The Mu family's ancestral worship ceremony was grand and solemn.

This was the first time Song Ning had witnessed such a scene. She stood next to Jiang Jin and imitated the etiquette. She silently prayed for blessings from Liang Zhen. If Liang Zhen were still here, she would be able to call Liang Zhen mother. Alas, her mother and Liang Zhen could only watch over them from the heavens. She was determined to live a happy life with Mu Chen!

Meanwhile, Liang Zhou was prohibited from entering the ancestral hall to worship the ancestors with everyone.

This was Jiang Jin and Mu Chen's bottom line. No one could touch it.

It was almost noon when the ceremony ended.

Everyone had a lively lunch before they left.

The annual ceremony was finally over.

Song Ning waited until all the guests had left before she quickly helped Jiang Jin up. "Grandma, you must be exhausted, right? I'll give you a massage."

Jiang Jin patted Song Ning's hand before she said bluntly to Mu Qing who was standing next to her, "You should leave now. Don't bother feeling resentful. I will forget about what happened today, but you shouldn't have any thoughts you shouldn't have. Don't take the wrong path again..."

Mu Qing acquiesced silently and bade farewell to everyone before he left.

Song Ning only cared about Jiang Jin. Her duty was to look after Jiang Jin's health while Mu Chen and Cheng Che dealt with the other chores.

The two men had already familiarized themselves with the chores. Moreover, there were helpers helping out as well.

After the two men were done with their chores, they ordered for someone to bring a pot of tea to the living room before they started a game of chess.

At this moment, a servant rushed in and said, "Young Master, the Ning family is here to give their new year's greetings..."

Mu Chen's hand that was holding onto a chess piece froze in midair.

'The Ning family?'

Mu Chen and Cheng Che exchanged a look.

"Is it Mr. Ning Zhe?" Cheng Che asked.

The servant nodded. "Yes. The Madam and Young Master of the Ning family are here as well..."

Mu Chen calmly placed the chess piece down and said, "Let them in."

Cheng Che looked at the unfinished chess game and sighed. "This new year is like a rollercoaster ride!" Then, he asked, "Should I inform sister-in-law about this?"

Mu Chen nodded slightly. "If she doesn't want to see them, she doesn't have to. She can just accompany Grandma while I receive the guests."

"Alright! Don't move the chess pieces! We'll return to the game later!" Cheng Che said before hurrying upstairs to look for Song Ning.

...

Ning Zhe, who brought Su Tong and Ning Dong with him to formally give new year's greetings to the Old Madam of the Mu family, was surprised when he only saw Mu Chen after entering the house.

Mu Chen greeted Ning Zhe perfunctorily before he asked for tea to be served.

Ning Zhe looked around and casually asked, "Where's Old Madam Mu?"

Mu Chen did not reply.

At this time, Sister Yu supported Jiang Jin out. "We have guests?"

Ning Zhe's family of three quickly rose to their feet respectfully.

Jiang Jin smiled and invited them to sit down.

Ning Zhe's gaze could not help but drift to the direction from where Jiang Jin had emerged. Unfortunately, the person he wanted to see did not appear.

Jiang Jin said bluntly, "Mr. Ning, you're here to see Song Ning, right?"

Ning Zhe did not deny the words. "To be honest with Old Madam, I do want to see her. The child is stubborn, and the way I treated her previously wasn't too good, causing a rift to form between us. We came to pay our respect to you and also to ask for a favor from you. I hope you can help me reconcile with my daughter and resolve our misunderstanding."

Jiang Jin looked at Ning Zhe and said with a kind smile, "Mr. Ning, we've lived in Cloudy Peak for so long, but we rarely have any interactions. As a result, we're not very familiar with each other. Song Ning is now my granddaughter-in-law; I treasure her more than my grandson. Therefore, whatever decisions she makes, I'll fully support her."

How could Ning Zhe not understand the implications behind Jiang Jin's words? He sighed. "It's all my fault. As a father, I broke her heart. It's her fortune that she married Mu Chen and became your granddaughter-in-law. With your care, she'll definitely be happy."

Then, Ning Zhe glanced at Su Tong, who was sitting next to him, and cleared his throat lightly before he said, "I also came to formally apologize to you. I'm very sorry that Su Tong offended you previously."

Subsequently, Ning Zhe pulled Su Tong up to her feet.

Su Tong's smile was a little stiff as she said, "Old Madam, I'm really sorry. Please forgive my rudeness from before."

Ning Zhe accompanied Su Tong to bow at Jiang Jin.

Jiang Jin hurriedly raised her hand to stop Ning Zhe. "This isn't necessary. It's all in the past so there's no need to bring it up. Please take a seat."

After taking a seat again, Ning Zhe's tone turned even more sincere as he said, "How can we not apologize. We should interact more in the future. I don't dare to beg for my daughter's forgiveness now. I plan to show my sincerity in hopes that she'll accept me again. I hope Old Madam will help with this..."

Ning Zhe's humble attitude was beyond Jiang Jin and Mu Chen's expectations. Did he decide to change tactics? Since the hard way did not work, did Ning Zhe want to use the soft approach? After all, one would find it difficult to find fault with a person who was friendly. As expected, Ning Zhe was quite cunning..