

Fat Wife 121

Chapter 121: Going Home in a Sorry State

Zhang Cong was so exasperated that he spoke without thinking and blurted out everything. "It's impossible that you don't have money! What did you do in the county city today! You sold so many mushrooms! I'm going to file a report on you! You're opportunistic! You're taking the capitalist path! You're undermining the foundation of socialism! I'm going to file a report on all of you!"

His words completely infuriated the villagers. In this day and age, there was no one who did not sell some vegetables to supplement their family's income. The black market was an unspoken secret. At that time, it was a capital offense to buy and sell items in private and people could get denounced for it!

"Get lost!"

"Don't come here again!"

A few burly men chased Zhang Cong out of the village, beating and kicking him for good measure. By the time he reached the train station, there was not a single untouched spot on his body and his clothes were all in tatters. This was the most presentable and stylish set of clothes that he owned. It was really embarrassing how he looked like a beggar now instead of a city dweller.

When he finally made it home, he heard Old Madam Zhang say when he went in, "You damned child, why are you only back now! Aiyo! Who hit you!"

When Zhang Cong entered the house and saw Old Madam Zhang, he hugged her tightly and cried, "Grandma! Li Gui hit me!"

Old Madam Zhang was shocked when she saw Zhang Cong's injuries. When she heard him say that it was Li Gui who did it, she did not believe it. Old Madam Zhang would believe him if he said it was someone else, but Li Gui was usually very submissive at home and the best thing about her was that she was very obedient. She hit Zhang Cong? That must be a joke.

Old Man Zhang took out some money from the family savings and said to Old Madam Zhang, "Let's talk about it later. Hurry up and send Cong Cong to the hospital."

At that time, it was indeed very expensive to go to the hospital, but fortunately, Zhang Cong had a work permit and many of the medical tests were free for him. He was only charged for the medication and went home with a cast on his leg. Zhang Qian then bought a pair of crutches from his neighbor for five dollars.

“You useless thing, you went to ask for money and got yourself injured instead. You just wasted five dollars of my money!” Zhang Qian threw the crutches to one side when he returned.

Old Madam Zhang doted on this eldest grandson of hers the most. “Why are you saying this! As if Cong Cong is doing this on purpose!”

Zhang Cong sat beside Old Madam Zhang and complained tearfully, “Grandma, you have to uphold justice for me! This Li Gui, she hit me!”

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“Li Gui hit you? Are you muddled, how would she have the guts to do that! Besides, as if you can’t beat her in a fight?” Old Madam Zhang did not believe him. The injuries on his body were definitely caused by a group of people.

“It’s Qiao Mei! It’s Li Gui’s daughter who hit me!”

“Ah, her, the one that Old Madam Li said looked like a Black Bear Spirit.” Old Madam Zhang thought for a long time before she remembered who Qiao Mei was, but how could a woman beat up his grandson? “Just by herself?”

“And the people from their village! They all helped Qiao Mei hit me!” Zhang Cong cried out to Old Madam Zhang.

Zhang Cong had no way of winning a fight with the people from that village, and he had even said something that offended them. If he went back, he would definitely get cut up into pieces. However, his grandmother would definitely help him. Old Madam Zhang doted on him the most, and he was quite sure that a group of people would not bully an old person.

“Don’t be afraid! Grandma will think of a way for you. Hey, you’re his father, but why aren’t you saying anything! Where’s your usual attitude! People are bullying your son!” Old Madam Zhang pointed at Zhang Qian and shouted at him.

Zhang Qian was the type of person who would not care about anything as long as it had nothing to do with him. He was a loafer who just wanted to hang out and waste his time in the factory every day. He did not really like anything but he was a lecherous man who liked beautiful women. The only other thing he cared about was his reputation. When he heard that people bullied his son, he felt that it was a slap to his face. Old Madam Zhang was so good with her words. If she had only mentioned Zhang Cong without adding the fact that he was Zhang Qian’s son, Zhang Qian would not have been so angry.

“Tomorrow! We’ll go to that village tomorrow to demand an explanation! If she doesn’t give us the money and doesn’t apologize to Cong Cong, she can rot in the countryside for the rest of her life!” Old Madam Zhang said to Zhang Qian.

Zhang Qian was so angry that he wanted to go to the village immediately to find out who had injured his son. However, he also had other plans in mind. He was already tired of Li Gui. If not for the fact that she was so beautiful in the past, he would not have given so many betrothal gifts to marry a widow! It was fine if he did not think about the past, but the more he thought about it, the angrier he got.

Chapter 122: Wanting a Divorce

“Hmph, even if she has the money, she won’t be able to come back. She won’t be able to come back in the future,” Zhang Qian said coldly with a snort. He had long gotten tired of looking at Li Gui’s face. Back then, he had thought that she was beautiful but who knew that in just a few years, she aged so much that she had become uglier than his mother. It just so happened that he had taken a fancy to another woman, so Li Gui could forget about coming back for the rest of her life.

When Old Madam Zhang heard this, she looked at her son in confusion. “What?”

At first, Zhang Cong did not understand what Zhang Qian meant. Suddenly, he remembered that he saw his father sneaking around behind the factory a few days ago. At that time, there were too many people around, so he did not follow his father. He had also heard some rumors in the factory recently. Could it be that this old man wants to get a divorce and remarry! Then what about his betrothal money!

“Father, what do you mean by that! Are you planning to divorce Li Gui! Don’t tell me you’re going to get another wife!” Zhang Cong asked accusingly.

Zhang Qian lowered his head and took a sip of water without answering and seemed to acquiesce. This made Old Madam Zhang very confused. He wanted to get a divorce and marry someone else?

“Who are you going to marry?” Old Madam Zhang looked at Zhang Qian and asked.

When Zhang Cong realized that his father was really going to marry another woman, he immediately became anxious. “It’s someone from our factory! The famous one! The widow whose name is Feng Fang!” Zhang Cong sat on the chair and sized up Zhang Qian. “No wonder you let Li Gui go to the countryside so readily. You must have wanted to marry Feng Fang for a long time! The two of you must already be together!”

When Zhang Qian heard his son reproaching him, he raised his stool in anger and wanted to smash it at Zhang Cong. Zhang Cong still had an injured leg, so he hurriedly grabbed Old Madam Zhang’s arm and did not let go. He was so frightened that he begged for mercy repeatedly, “Grandma! Grandma! Look at my father! Save me!”

Old Madam Zhang hurriedly stopped Zhang Qian. “He’s your son! One of his legs is already broken and you still want to break the other one!”

Zhang Qian pursed his lips and threw the stool to the side. He sat down far away and ignored the others. This divorce is set in stone! It does not matter what anyone says. He has long found Li Gui to be an eyesore. Feng Fang is so good, she is so young and beautiful.

Zhang Qian, who sat a distance away, muttered, “No matter what, I will get a divorce...”

Feng Fang was only 32 years old this year. Her previous husband was a worker at the food factory, but he died in an accident. Later on, the people at the factory pitied her and allowed her to take over her husband’s job at the factory, and that was how Zhang Qian got to know her. Old Madam Zhang had heard of Feng Fang before. The Zhang family and the family of Feng Fang’s husband knew each other previously, but they lost contact after they moved.

“Feng Fang has three boys! They’re all younger than our Zhang Wei. If you bring all of them back, how can you afford to raise them! No!” Old Madam Zhang had only just managed to chase Li Gui and the two girls away, but now there were four people coming to live off her. That would not do!

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Zhang Qian snorted coldly and said, "Feng Fang has a registered residence and household register in the city, and so do her children. She has food stamps every month and doesn't need us to give her food. She will be giving us food!"

Every registered household in the city received about 30 catties of foodstuff per month. Previously, Li Gui had a registered residence and household register in the village, and the four children had to follow their mother's registration, so it was hard to feed everyone in the family. If Feng Fang had a city household register, it meant that the children would be able to get about 10 catties of foodstuff per month. The children would not be able to finish so much foodstuff even if they wanted to, so it would be possible to save a lot on food. Old Madam Zhang did her calculations and it did seem that Feng Fang was more cost-effective than Li Gui.

"If you get married, you need to give betrothal gifts! Then what about me! I have to get married too!" When Zhang Cong saw that Old Madam Zhang was also satisfied with Feng Fang, he became anxious. If his father's new wife married into the family first, he did not know what to do if the Sun family would not let him off.

Old Madam Zhang also looked at Zhang Qian. She had been so concerned about the food that she did not think of this. If Feng Fang wanted 500 dollars as a betrothal gift, who would still marry her!

"She said she doesn't want betrothal gifts or anything," Zhang Qian said.

Zhang Cong heaved a sigh of relief, but on second thought, Feng Fang did not seem like an easy person to deal with as she was not as obedient as Li Gui. It was possible that when the time came, she would ask for money just because she wanted it. Zhang Cong hurriedly said to Old Madam Zhang, "No! Grandma! Think about it! Who is Feng Fang! What if she doesn't want to give you money after marrying into the family. Then even if she makes a lot of money in a month, she still won't give it to you!" If Feng Fang did not give them any money, then he would not be able to get the betrothal gifts for the Sun family.

Chapter 123: Pick One of Two

Old Madam Zhang said confidently, "Hmph! How dare she! She can't enter the Zhang family and not listen to me. That won't do! After getting married, she has to hand over the money to me obediently."

When Zhang Qian heard this, he grinned. It appeared that Old Madam Zhang was very satisfied with Feng Fang. That was great news to him and he could now dump Li Gui quickly. This Feng Fang was sexy and had a good figure and was so much better than Li Gui. To him, Li Gui was like a block of wood and he found her annoying.

Of course, Zhang Cong knew what his father was thinking, but he found no point in Feng Fang marrying over if she did not bring any money with her. They would be better off having Li Gui who was obedient and knew how to earn money. "Li Gui can earn more than 30 dollars a day! I saw it with my own eyes!"

Old Madam Zhang got a shock! 30 dollars! That was 900 dollars a month! That was not a small sum so she hurriedly asked Zhang Cong, "You said you saw it? How did you see it and how did she make so much money!"

Even Old Man Zhang, who usually did not care about family matters, came out of the room to hear the answer. Zhang Qian was also shocked and looked at Zhang Cong, waiting for him to speak.

"I saw it this morning. She had a pile of vegetables and fruits with her! She was selling them in the county city and business was very good! She made a lot of money in a day!" Actually Zhang Cong did not know what was considered a lot of crops as he had never worked in the countryside, but he was just astonished by the fact that she could make more than 30 dollars a day.

When Old Madam Zhang heard this, she immediately lost interest. Those crops depended on the weather and the harvests were sometimes good and sometimes bad. She had also secretly sold these before and she knew that it was not a long term way of making money. It was just something that one could do sometimes to earn a living, not to mention that this was an act that one could get caught for. People who did this did not know if they could get a chance to spend the money that they earned. Only people who were bold would dare to make this type of money.

"Oh, that's not something profitable. I thought it was something else," Old Madam Zhang said.

“It’s different, Grandma! I went to take a look! Li Gui built a house in the village, with an especially big courtyard. She must have planted a lot of vegetables! It’s not just a few hundred dollars a year!” Zhang Cong hurried to explain himself.

The people in the city only earned about 40 dollars a month, that was only about 500 dollars a year. If people in this village could earn a few hundred dollars a year, someone would have investigated it long ago. Who would still want to stay in the city! Everyone would go home to do farming. Old Madam Zhang still felt that the food stamps in the city were better than the undependable income from selling vegetables in the countryside.

Seeing that everyone kept quiet, Zhang Cong got really anxious. Feng Fang had a sharp tongue and was famous for being difficult to deal with in the factory. Once she came into the family, how would he still have a good life at home!

“In any case, I don’t want Li Gui anymore. I want a divorce! I’m a man and I have no one to take care of me at home. She’s not as considerate as Feng Fang!” Zhang Qian said.

Pfft!?Zhang Cong rolled his eyes.?His father is as lecherous as him and the dirty old man only knows how to think for himself, but what about his betrothal gifts. He also knows that Feng Fang is beautiful and, speaking of which, Li Gui’s daughter is also good-looking. If not for Old Madam Li and Li Gui teaming up together, he would not have fallen for Sun Yan!

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No, I can’t let this beating go to waste. Besides, Sun Yan has been urging me to hurry up over the past few days. If I don’t give her the betrothal gifts soon, her family will report me and I will go to jail!

“Grandma! Then let’s go and get the money from Li Gui! She has a lot of money! I can’t just get beaten up for nothing! I have to get her to compensate me!” Zhang Cong felt that even if his father wanted to get a divorce, he had to get the money from Li Gui. After so many days, she must have made at least 100 dollars. He did not believe that he had bumped into her on the only day that she sold her goods.

Old Madam Zhang nodded. “That’s right, my eldest grandson can’t be beaten up for nothing! We have to go back and talk to her, and also bring her two sons to her so that we don’t have to feed them.”

Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao did not dare to speak and could only listen to Old Madam Zhang's arrangements. The two children did not want to return to the countryside. What was so good about the countryside? Why did the two of them have to go along when Li Gui was the one who wanted to go back? Old Madam Zhang would usually say bad things about Li Gui to the two children, and the two children hated Li Gui even more now.

"You come with me too! You have to avenge your son tomorrow!" Old Madam Zhang pointed at Zhang Qian and said.

Zhang Qian waved his hand. "I'm not going. If you want to go, you can go by yourself." He got up and prepared to leave. He did not want to go there to see Li Gui, just looking at her made him feel disgusted.

Chapter 124: The Original Reason

"How dare you not go!" Old Madam Zhang chided.

The next day, everyone in the Zhang family, except Old Man Zhang, headed to the countryside. Zhang Qian did not want to go at first, but Old Madam Zhang said that if he did not go, she would not let him divorce Li Gui. Old Madam Zhang also knew that her husband was a person who did not care about anything. If she brought Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao along tomorrow, coupled with the injured Zhang Cong, she would not look imposing at all. Therefore, Zhang Qian must go with them.

"Grandma, can you not bring me to my mother!" Zhang Wei cried and pulled her back. Zhang Qian pulled the boy over and kicked him.

"Shut up! Are you trying to embarrass me!" There were many people on the street and they looked over when they heard Zhang Wei crying, making Zhang Qian very frustrated. When he got kicked, Zhang Wei did not dare to make a sound even though he was in so much pain that he wanted to cry. He was afraid that if he annoyed Zhang Qian, he would be beaten up again. His younger brother, Zhang Chao, did not dare to cry when he saw his brother being beaten up and followed behind Old Madam Zhang obediently.

Even if Li Gui could earn 180 dollars a month, Zhang Qian did not want to be with Li Gui anymore. He was determined to get a divorce.

After the ruckus created by Zhang Cong yesterday, Li Gui did not dare to go out on the streets to buy groceries, afraid that she would be seen by any Zhang family member. It would not be worth it to get beaten up.

Qiao Mei also did not bring the children up the mountain to pick mushrooms today. She predicted that Zhang Cong would bring his family over to seek justice today. There was going to be a lot of drama today.

When it was almost time for lunch, Qiao Mei called Auntie Dong, Auntie Wang, and the other older women over to her house for a chat. Not long after, they heard a commotion and saw a big group of people making their way over.

“Wow, who are these people?”

“There are so many people!”

“Why are there both adults and children!”

“Sister, if this is your man, then you’ve really had a hard time these past few years.”

Everyone lamented about how difficult it had been for Li Gui all these years and felt really bad for her. They were all women and naturally understood how much Li Gui had suffered for her children all these years. Therefore, everyone spoke up for Li Gui.

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Auntie Zhou, who was previously quite close to Li Gui, said, “Back then, Li Gui did not want to marry him, but Li Gui’s mother, Old Madam Li, is not someone to be trifled with. During that time, Li Gui was one of the most beautiful women in the village. Otherwise, Qiao Mei would not be so beautiful! Later on, the man was very generous with the betrothal gifts, so Li Gui’s mother forced her to get married in order to save money for Li Gui’s younger brother to get married.”

Back then, the brothers of the Li family wanted to take over the assets and money that belonged to Li Gui and Qiao Yue. Li Gui felt that her brothers would definitely not take care of Qiao Mei, so she decided to entrust Qiao Mei to Qiao Zhuang's family, along with her own house and the savings she had accumulated over the years. She did not expect Qiao Zhuang to be so heartless as to bully Qiao Mei and not give her food. If Qiao Qiang had not returned in time, Qiao Mei might have died long ago.

"Ah..."

"What a thing to happen!"

"Li Gui, your mother is too..."

Everyone now understood that it had not been not easy for Li Gui. It was not as if she did not leave anything for Qiao Mei, but it was fate that had been playing tricks on people. They could only blame those black-hearted people.

"Eh? Li Gui, why hasn't your mother come over recently? Isn't she moving to our village? Why isn't there any news," one of the aunties asked.

"It's probably because she knows that Qiao Mei is here to back Li Gui up, so she doesn't dare to come," Auntie Dong said.

"Hahahahaha!"

As they chatted, they watched the Zhang family members getting closer and closer. At this moment, no one in the village dared to mention bean sprouts. Previously, they could supply 2,000 catties of bean sprouts but now, they could barely make up 15 catties a day even if they collected from house to house. No one was earning any money, and they had made a lot of losses.

In the past, when each household could earn one dollar a day, it meant 30 dollars a month and they were all overjoyed. However, because they had once earned 10 dollars in the past, it made the one or two dollars they made now hardly worth mentioning.

Everyone was feeling frustrated when Zhang Cong came running into trouble and it made everyone want to teach him a lesson.

Chapter 125: Bullying

As the Zhang family members got nearer, the villagers realized that there were five people. There was a middle-aged man who should be Li Gui's husband and also an old lady who should be her mother-in-law. The one limping was Zhang Cong, and those two children were...?

"It's our older brothers! Our older brothers! They're here too!" Zhang Qin pointed into the distance and said to Qiao Mei.

"What! Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao are here too! They! What are they doing here!" Li Gui was greatly shocked and did not know what to do. She worried that the two children would get hurt.

"They either want to use the two children to threaten you into giving them the money or they intend to send the children back to you," Qiao Mei said as she looked at the group of people walking over.

When she was a lawyer in her other life, she had seen too many people make use of children to threaten their mothers into making compromises. She had thought about how the situation would turn out today, but she did not expect Zhang Qian and Old Madam Zhang to be so heartless.

"Sister, don't worry. It's still a good thing to have the children sent back to you. It's better than the children being bullied by them all the time!" Auntie Wang said.

"That's right, sister. We have Qiao Mei with us. Don't worry, the children will definitely be fine," Auntie Dong also comforted Li Gui.

The women had become even angrier when they saw the two children. They felt uncomfortable seeing people using children to threaten their mothers. As mothers themselves, they also could not bear to see other people's children being bullied.

"Don't be afraid, mom. You've got me. Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao, go back to the house," Qiao Mei said to the two children. It would not be good if a fight broke out again later and caused them to get hurt.

Qiao Mei held the hands of the two children and said, "Remember, no one will bully you in the future. If anyone bullies you, hit them back. Don't be soft-hearted and don't let yourself be manipulated by others. You have me, so don't be afraid. But we won't take the initiative to bully others, understand?"

Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao looked at Qiao Mei and nodded. "We get it, elder sister."

In the past, they could only be in a position to be bullied and they neither thought of fighting back nor imagined that they could fight back at all. Now that they had an elder sister, they were no longer afraid and they would not allow anyone to bully them.

"Yes, yes! Children, come with me. Come in quickly." Auntie Zhou brought the two children into the house before she came back out.

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Not long after, the Zhang family members reached the villagers. Old Madam Zhang first looked around and sized up the courtyard, and was very satisfied with what she saw. The vegetables planted in such a large courtyard would be enough for their whole family to eat. If they could not finish it all, they could sell the remaining vegetables on the black market to supplement the family's income. This could be worth a lot of money.

The more Old Madam Zhang looked around, the more satisfied she was. In her mental calculations, she even removed the expenses for Li Gui and the four children as if they were not human and not part of the family.

Everyone in the courtyard was staring at these people from the Zhang family. Old Madam Zhang had swaggered in once she arrived. Was it wrong of her to come to see her daughter-in-law? There was no reason to chase her out.

As soon as she entered, she pointed at Li Gui and said, "Don't you know to get me a glass of water! Do you want me to die of thirst!" The way that Old Madam Zhang scolded Li Gui made everyone present feel very unhappy. When Old Madam Zhang saw that these women were gathered here, eating watermelons and snacking on melon seeds, she had the preconceived notion that the food were all planted by Li Gui and that what belonged to Li Gui also belonged to her.

“Don’t you know how to give up a seat for an old lady like me. This is my daughter-in-law’s house and you’re all here to sponge off her so shouldn’t you have some decency to give up a seat for me. I’m exhausted from walking all day!” Old Madam Zhang looked at all the people in the courtyard and said reproachfully.

Auntie Dong was not to be outdone. “Aiyo, I was wondering who’s this old woman who looks like she’s from some remote village. So you’re Li Gui’s vicious mother-in-law. Anyway, although this place belongs to your daughter-in-law, this stool belongs to my family, the watermelons belong to Sister Wang’s family, and the melon seeds in her hand are brought by Qiao Mei. Which of these is yours?”

“Hahahahahaha!”

What Auntie Dong said made everyone laugh out loud. The color of Old Madam Zhang’s face alternated between green and purple, and she was so angry that she could not speak. In the end, everything belonged to others, so Old Madam Zhang naturally could not ask them to get up and give up a seat for her. She could only swallow her anger.

Chapter 126: The Guilty Party Files the Suit First

Li Gui’s house had only just been built a few days ago and there was not even a warm mat in the house yet. Although she had asked someone to make a table and chairs for her, the furniture was not ready yet and she still had to wait for a while more.

When Zhang Qian saw others reproaching Old Madam Zhang, he only stood at the back and did not say a word. He was the type of person that was a tyrant at home and a wuss outside. At home, he flaunted his might, but when he was outside, he behaved like a subservient grandson. Even while his mother was being criticized, he did not even retort and just stood there watching.

Zhang Cong, on the other hand, would usually speak up for her. After all, Old Madam Zhang doted on Zhang Cong the most. No matter how heartless he was, he would still help Old Madam Zhang. However, these women were not to be trifled with. They had very strong hands and they knew how to pinch the most tender spots on the body. Even now, Zhang Cong’s body was still covered in bruises. Therefore, at this moment, Zhang Cong did not dare to refute anything and could only watch Old Madam Zhang get scolded.

Li Gui brought over a glass of water and handed it to Old Madam Zhang. Old Madam Zhang did not even look at it before throwing it down.

“You blind thing! Don’t you see that your husband and children are all thirsty and also need a drink!” Old Madam Zhang criticized Li Gui immediately. She was here to find trouble today, so no matter what Li Gui did, she would not be satisfied.

Old Madam Zhang pointed at Li Gui and said, “You heartless thing! It’s fine if the adults don’t get water! But you don’t even care about your two children! Is there a mother like you! Pfft!”

After Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao heard what Old Madam Zhang said, they both looked at Li Gui with hatred in their eyes. They felt that not only was their mother unfilial to their grandmother, she did not care about their lives as well. Li Gui’s heart almost broke when she saw the way the two children looked at her. She really did not mean it that way and she found it really difficult to defend herself.

Qiao Mei smiled and said, “You’re old and you speak sharply and clearly. There’s only one cup at home. Of course, it’s served to the elder first, then your son, and finally the two children. It’s the same at home, right? If there is good food and drinks, you get served first and the two children are last. My mother doesn’t even have a share, right? Sometimes, when there is not enough, the children don’t even get anything as everything must be given to you first.”

Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao looked at each other. This elder sister seemed to be right, it seemed that their mother had never eaten anything nice before. Good things were always given to their grandmother first. The two children thought for a while and looked at Qiao Mei and Old Madam Zhang, wondering who was right.

“You still have the cheek to say that she doesn’t care about the children! To say that she has no conscience! If you really care about the two of them, why did you choose to throw away the water rather than to give it to the two children, why didn’t you let them use all the good things first, or give them a few bites of any delicious food first! You blame my mother for not caring about the children? She has given you all her things! What do you want her to give to the children!” Qiao Mei said as she looked at Old Madam Zhang. Old Madam Zhang was so flustered that she could not say anything and had nothing to refute.

“In this situation, you’re really the guilty party who files the suit first and self-directed your own drama. Did you also tell the two children that Li Gui left because she didn’t want them anymore? You’re really good at scheming!” Qiao Mei sneered.

Zhang Wei was a little older and Zhang Chao was also not that young anymore. They were already old enough to remember things. The situation at home was indeed as Qiao Mei had said. They had to give everything to their grandmother and father first and even if they had any leftovers, their eldest brother still ranked ahead of them.

Qiao Mei pulled up a stool and sat down before continuing, "Do you intend to wait until you're done arguing with Li Gui before these two children can have something to eat and drink? I don't think you brought your entire family here for a visit, right? You didn't even bring anything with you. If this is how you pay someone a visit, it's really an eye-opener for me!"

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"Hahahahaha..."

"In my opinion, they must have come to do some sponging off! Yesterday, someone failed in getting money so they had to send someone else!" Auntie Dong said laughingly while munching on melon seeds.

"Hahahahaha..."

All the women laughed and Auntie Wang continued, "Look! This person can't do it so he even brings his entire family here. So many people come to ask us villagers for money. It's so embarrassing."

"With so many people here, do you think they have enough travel expenses!" Auntie Dong continued.

"Hahahahaha..."

"That's true!" Everyone laughed heartily while making fun of the Zhang family.

Chapter 127: Revealing Her True Colors

Old Madam Zhang was so angry that her face turned green. Standing behind her, Zhang Qian also felt embarrassed. He had always been very proud of himself for being a city dweller, yet this time round, he came along to ask a villager for money. He was really too ashamed to say it out loud. With so many women making fun of him, he did not know where to hide himself.

Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao had thought carefully about what Qiao Mei said earlier. The two children seemed to understand what she was talking about, but they still did not understand what had transpired between the adults. When Old Madam Zhang looked into the two children's eyes, she knew that something was wrong. They were no longer at the age of three or four years old when they were easily fooled. After this, would these two children still listen to her in the future? This was going to turn their world upside down!

"All of you shut up! You gossiping women! Our business is none of your business!" Feeling exasperated, Old Madam Zhang pointed at all the women in the courtyard and shouted at Qiao Mei, "Who do you think you are? Why are you poking your nose in our Zhang family's matters! You're a busybody!"

She still felt unsatisfied after scolding her, so she then pointed at Li Gui and said, "You money-losing good-for-nothing! You go around telling outsiders everything! Do you really think you can leave the Zhang family!"

Qiao Mei did not get angry as she already knew that Old Madam Zhang would behave like this. The other women also could not be bothered with such a person. Qiao Mei quickly said to Li Gui, "Hurry up and get water for the two children, otherwise someone will feel sorry for the children again, sigh, and then say that you don't care about the children. Hurry up and go. She won't hit you or scold you to stop you from going. If she doesn't let you go and then the children get thirsty, her heart will ache so much!"

"Hahahahaha!"

These words were said in an enigmatic manner to deliberately irritate Old Madam Zhang. Li Gui quickly went into the house, took two bowls to use as cups and filled them with water. She brought the bowls to the children and Old Madam Zhang shouted, "How dare you! Let's see who dares to drink!"

The two children held their bowls and looked at each other, not knowing if they should drink or not. Qiao Mei laughed loudly at the scene that unfolded in front of her. "Hahaha, you still say that you care about the children. You're the one who won't let the two children drink water, yet you're blaming someone else for not caring about the children. You must have done many such sanctimonious things to sow discord between them!"

Only then did Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao fully understand that their grandmother had been the one telling lies all this while. Their grandmother always told them that she doted on them the most and that it was their mother who treated them badly and mistreated them. It turned out that their grandmother was the one who instigated all of this!

Suddenly, the two children completely understood everything. They scrutinized Old Madam Zhang and looked at her suspiciously.

“You two damn children! Why are you looking at me!” Old Madam Zhang felt goosebumps all over her back from the two children’s stares. She shouted at Qiao Mei, “Who do you think you are! What are you doing in my house! Get lost!”

Hearing this, everyone was unhappy and felt indignant for Qiao Mei.

“This is Li Gui’s house. Which part of the house has your name on it? Shameless old thing! Bah!” Auntie Wang said.

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“Li Gui is my daughter-in-law! What’s hers belongs to our Zhang family! Of course, this house also belongs to our Zhang family!” Old Madam Zhang said arrogantly.

When Qiao Mei heard this, she said slowly, “Oh? Then does the house in the city belong to my mother too? You’re already a family, so that house must also belong to my mother, right?”

“That’s right, that’s right!” Everyone chimed in.

“Pfft! Shameless! That’s our Zhang family ancestral home! What has it got to do with her!” Old Madam Zhang stomped her feet in anger.

“What a joke. Her surname isn’t Zhang and she still has the cheek to say this. It’s as if she’s not just a daughter-in-law of the Zhang family.”

“That’s right. How shameless.”

“What era is this? It’s as if we’re still living in the past!”

“Let’s go and report her! What a mess!”

“Sister Li Gui married into their family, she was not sold to them. You guys really think you have the final say!”

“She had so many children for them, including boys!”

Everyone chimed in to defend Li Gui while she secretly wiped her tears.

When Old Madam Zhang heard that someone wanted to report her, she did not dare to say another word.

Chapter 128: No Evidence

During this period in time, the commoners of the lower social class had their own way of dealing with scoundrels among them. It had been a long time since any of them had encountered such a situation as everyone was very careful nowadays and did not dare to offend anyone. The more the older women talked, the more worked up they became, and someone among them even wanted to go to the brigade to look for Zhao Liang and ask him to come and deal with this old woman. However, based on the rules, people from the city did not come under the jurisdiction of their village. Zhao Liang would have to decide whether he had any say over the matter when he got here.

Qiao Mei did not want to blow things up. Should things really get out of hand, it would not be good for anyone. If the Zhang family became desperate, it was hard to say what they would do. After all, despair gives courage even to a coward.

“Alright, alright. Tell us why you’re here today?” Qiao Mei handed the two bowls of water from Li Gui to Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao. At that moment, Old Madam Zhang did not dare to say anything. If she still

said anything, then it would really seem like she was not nice to the children. The two children hurriedly drank up the water in the two large bowls.

Zhang Qian and Zhang Cong, who were standing behind them, had walked for a long time and also wanted a drink. However, they were really afraid of these people. If even Old Madam Zhang could not handle them, then there was really nothing that the two of them could do.

After talking for so long, Old Madam Zhang still did not know the identity of this beautiful young married woman in front of her. This woman had a sharp tongue and was very shrewd. Old Madam Zhang softened her attitude as she said to Qiao Mei, "Who are you?"

Qiao Mei smiled. Given all the earlier commotion, she did not manage to introduce herself. "My name is Qiao Mei, I'm Li Gui's daughter. Why? Don't you know me?" Qiao Mei had thought that Zhang Cong would tell Old Madam Zhang everything which happened yesterday when he returned home. She did not expect him to have told an incomplete story.

Old Madam Zhang and Zhang Qian had never seen Qiao Mei before and it gave them a shock. Previously, when Old Madam Li came to ask for money, she had said that Qiao Mei was dark and fat and looked like a black bear spirit. This young married woman standing in front of them was quite beautiful, with fair skin and bright eyes, and did not look like a girl from the countryside. She was so different from what Old Madam Li had described.

Old Madam Zhang turned around to look at Zhang Cong and he quickly whispered, "It's true."

"So what is this all about, hurry up and just say it. It has already been a while since you arrived, I am tired even if you're not." Qiao Mei looked at Old Madam Zhang irritably.

One must put the saddle on the right horse. Since she was already here, she could not go back empty-handed. A thief would never leave without something!

Old Madam Zhang pointed at her grandson's leg and said, "You must be the one who pushed my grandson! We spent a lot of money at the hospital yesterday! The doctor said that my grandson would have a disability in the future! You have to give us an explanation!"

Qiao Mei did not think much of it. "Oh, you saw me push him with your own eyes? He fell down himself and yet he's blaming me?"

"That's right, didn't he fall down himself, how could it be that Qiao Mei pushed him?"

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Zhang Cong leaned on the crutches and said to Qiao Mei, "It was you! Yesterday, you admitted that you pushed me!"

"Everyone, listen to this! What a strange thing! Whoever heard that or saw that?" Qiao Mei looked at Zhang Cong mockingly and a few women also chimed in.

"I didn't see anything."

"Did anyone see it? No. There's no such thing."

"Didn't he fall by himself?"

Everyone denied that anything happened as they held back their smiles. There were people who had never lied in their lives, so it was easy for others to tell that they were lying. However, it did not matter as they were in the village and this was their territory.

"All of you! You're all lying!" Old Madam Zhang did not expect them to be in cahoots with one another. In the past, she had also lived in the countryside and none of the families there could get along. They could even argue over a ration of grains or someone overstepping on a piece of land. She had never seen such a harmonious village.

Qiao Mei also felt very pleased that everyone was protecting her and speaking up for her. When she thought about how she did not even know who her neighbors were in her other life and how everyone was so cold and indifferent, she felt that her current environment was so much better.

“I’m going to the police station to report all of you for lying! I don’t believe that things won’t be different if the police came!” Old Madam Zhang pointed at Qiao Mei and said.

“Do you have evidence to prove that I did it?” Qiao Mei munched leisurely on melon seeds as she looked at Old Madam Zhang, who was stamping her feet out of anxiety. Her son, Zhang Qian, had not said a word or done anything since he arrived. Qiao Mei just felt that it was such a pity that Li Gui had actually spent so much time with such a person.

Chapter 129: Claiming To Be Relatives

Qiao Mei placed the melon seeds on the table and patted the dust off her hands. She looked at Old Madam Zhang and said, “Why don’t you go out and ask around about the kind of relationship I have with the section head of the armed forces department? How dare you come here and cause a ruckus? When I got married, he was the one who sent my ‘three turns and one sound’ to the village. You didn’t even bother to check on this.”

These betrothal gifts were indeed sent over by Uncle Chen Hu, but she spared them the complicated details of what happened. It would not be good if they went looking for trouble at Qiao Zhuang’s house.

Old Madam Zhang, Zhang Qian and Zhang Cong looked at one another. They did not know that Qiao Mei was so capable that she even knew the section head of the armed forces department. This time, they got completely flustered as they now knew it would be useless even if they went to report her.

Old Madam Zhang had previously heard that Qiao Mei’s grandfather, Qiao Qiang, was an old war hero and had even formerly held an official position that paid a lot of money every month. Could it be that Qiao Qiang really had some form of relationship with the section head of the armed forces department?

The Zhang family was just a family of show-offs without any substance. They were only people from the working class who had no one to rely on in the city. They were just ordinary people who neither knew anyone from the military or the police force, nor had any relatives who became high-ranking officials. At this point, they were so completely panicky that they would not have dared to go to the police station to report the villagers.

Qiao Mei heaved a sigh of relief when she saw how alarmed they were. She had thought that they were unreasonable people who had some form of powerful backing, but she did not expect that it was all just for show. They were a bunch of nobodies who retreated as soon as they got scared.

“Then... then you have to at least give me some money! This matter happened at your house! You have to bear responsibility!” Old Madam Zhang started acting shamelessly when she realized that the earlier negotiations were fruitless.

“If you die on your own and then get someone to carry you into our house, you’ll even say that I caused your death! You’re making no sense!” Qiao Mei rolled her eyes and did not want to argue with Old Madam Zhang anymore.

“You! You little shrew! How dare you curse me to die! I...” Old Madam Zhang was about to say something when she remembered her reason for coming around today. She gritted her teeth and held back what she wanted to say. She had to swallow her words no matter what, otherwise she would not be able to get the money she wanted.

There was no way she could win against this young girl, so she decided to attack the easy-going Li Gui.

“Li Gui, look at Cong Cong. He’s so seriously injured. What if he really becomes disabled? You’re his mother after all. Shouldn’t you give him some money so that he can get some supplements, or can you bear to see him like this?” Old Madam Zhang pretended to cover her face and cry.

Qiao Mei could not say anything. What Old Madam Zhang said was in a way the truth, so they would have to give her some money. Li Gui looked at Qiao Mei and went into the house to take out a small metal box from her belongings. There was only five dollars in the box and she took the money out and gave it to Old Madam Zhang.

“This is all I’ve earned in the past few days...” Li Gui said as she looked at Old Madam Zhang.

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When Old Madam Zhang and Zhang Qian saw the five dollars, their faces darkened. How could it be only five dollars when they heard she was making more than 30 dollars a day. It was as if she was trying to get rid of a beggar.

“That’s impossible! You bought so many things that day!” Zhang Cong said.

“Those are all my things. It has only been a few days so how would my mother have the time to grow vegetables. Do you think that vegetables can be harvested right after the seeds are planted?” Qiao Mei then continued, “Look at this courtyard. As if there’s any vegetable sprout.”

What Qiao Mei said was also true. Even so, Old Madam Zhang did not want to go back with just five dollars. After putting in so much effort for the entire day, she could not go back just like that. Old Madam Zhang grabbed the money. Since Qiao Mei said that all the vegetables belonged to her, then the money must be with her.

“By right, Cong Cong is also your elder brother. Shouldn’t you help?” Old Madam Zhang looked at Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei looked at this shameless family and was speechless for a moment. She smiled and did not say anything. Old Madam Zhang thought that Qiao Mei had agreed with her and walked forward to continue speaking, but Auntie Dong stepped in and said, “Aiyo, then why didn’t I see you guys here when Mei Mei got married. Have you brought anything for Mei Mei all these years?”

It was a question that stumped Old Madam Zhang. In a moment of desperation, she said, “We gave everything to Old Madam Li! She was the one who said that Qiao Mei wanted money and whatever and we had given her money.”

“Oh yes, then you should go and ask her for it. There’s no use asking me, I didn’t get a single cent.” Qiao Mei smiled and nodded.

Chapter 130: Back to School in the Village

“Besides, where did such an elder brother come from? I won’t recognize anything that had nothing to do with me. We don’t share the same father nor the same mother, what kind of relative is he?” Qiao Mei said.

Zhang Qian had stood there for the entire afternoon without saying a word. He was too embarrassed to stay here when his mother was being so unreasonable and worried that he might need to say something later. Zhang Qian dragged Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao and pushed them towards Qiao Mei.

“These are your mother’s children! Take them with you! They are related to you so you can keep them!” He then turned around and wanted to leave with Old Madam Zhang and Zhang Cong.

“Mother, let’s go!” Zhang Qian shouted and hurried out without looking back, as if he was trying to avoid the god of plague.

Being asked to leave when she had only taken five dollars, Old Madam Zhang became anxious again as she had not gotten the money she wanted. She pointed at Li Gui and said, “Give me 500 dollars! You still have to pay for Cong Cong’s supplements and medical fees! Otherwise, you can keep these two children for yourself! Don’t even think about sending them back to the city to study! You can give up on that!”

“Grandma!” The two children panicked when they heard that they would have to stay in the countryside forever. They had been brought up by their grandmother since they were born and although she had never treated them well, they felt that it was still better than being with their mother. After all, Old Madam Zhang had always said bad things about their mother and they had believed it for so many years. This was not something that could be changed just by talking about it today.

When she heard that the children could not go to school, Li Gui got herself in a frenzy. If they did not go to school, they would be illiterate, then what kind of future would they have. They could not stay in this village for the rest of their lives, otherwise their lives would be over and they would not be able to find a good wife. The two children’s future could not be held back by her just like that.

Qiao Mei said to Li Gui, “Why are you panicking? There’s an elementary school in the neighboring village. They can just go there, it makes no difference where they go to school.”

The school in the neighboring village was only a few miles away from here and all the children in the village took the horse carriage ride in the morning. It picked them up to go to school in the morning and brought them back in the evening.

“That’s right, that’s right. It’s only seven or eight miles away. Our village has a horse carriage to send the children,” Auntie Zhou said.

When Zhang Wei heard that there was also a school in the village, which meant that he would not be able to go back to the city, he cried even harder.

"I don't want to study in the village! How can the school in the village compare to the one in the city!" Zhang Wei cried.

"Alright, alright, don't cry. You're also ranked at the bottom in school in the city. Who knows, you might even be the best or second best student when you come back here. The other children will be so envious of you and think that kids from the city are so grand," Qiao Mei said to Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao.

When Zhang Wei heard this, he immediately stopped crying. There would be children who would be envious of him. Zhang Wei was overjoyed. It turned out that his results were among the worst in his class and his classmates always laughed at him for being a villager. If being here meant that there would be kids who would be envious of him and that his results were comparatively better than theirs, then he could not be happier and so he immediately stopped crying.

Qiao Mei cut up the watermelon for the two children and the sweet smell immediately made the two children unable to look away.

"Who told you that the countryside is not good? Look across the street. That's my house. In the countryside, you can grow whatever you want and eat whatever you want. You can also raise chickens and ducks in the courtyard and pigs as well. If you want to eat meat, you can eat meat. If you want to eat vegetables, you can eat vegetables. Can you eat like this in the city?" Qiao Mei said as she looked at the two children.

In that case, there was indeed nothing good about the city. In the city, everything had to be given to their grandmother, grandfather, father and elder brother first. It never got to be their turn. This watermelon was so sweet and tasted so much better than any melon that they had eaten in the city.

"I hope you're not lying to me." Zhang Chao still had doubts.

"Why will I lie to you, it's not as if it benefits me to lie to you. Go in and take a look at Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao. You can just ask them." Qiao Mei pointed towards the house.

As soon as the two children entered the house, they saw Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao sitting near the fireplace and eating sweet melons. When they saw their two brothers, Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao did

not dare to move. Although their two brothers did not bully them at home, they were told that good things should be given to boys first.

Their two younger sisters had indeed gained weight and were also wearing new clothes. Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao were tempted by the fact that they would be able to live in such a big house and have nice food here. To them, having things to eat was more important than whether they could go to school and everything else was unimportant. Just like that, the two children accepted their fate without crying or making a fuss.