

Fat Wife 141

Chapter 141: Hundred-Year-Old Wild Ginseng

Qiao Mei brought her tools and went to the mountains to look for the place where she previously harvested the wild ginseng. During the last time, she had only taken a portion of it. The other portion was still buried there and growing slowly. Some had already been discovered by other people and dug up, while others were still well hidden.

Qiao Mei made a few simple energy exchanges and produced three 20-year-old ginsengs. She turned around and was about to leave when she remembered that Xia Zhe might get injured and be in danger on the way to Gushan this time. In that case, she had to get some ginseng that was rarer and of better quality. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to save his life if she just depended on these 20-year-old little things.

It was not that Qiao Mei wanted to think negatively but she had to plan for everything at this point in time, otherwise it would be too late when something really happened. She would be away from home for at least more than a month. During this period of time, the lingzhi and ginseng that she gave her grandfather to put in his drinking water would be almost all used up. It would not be difficult to produce some more good quality herbs for her grandfather to use.

The wild ginseng was similar to the other plants, but there were also some differences. The main difference was that apart from being precious and difficult to find, it could also grow continuously. For the ordinary bushes and fruits, they would wither after a few blooms. However, the wild ginseng was different. The wild ginseng could grow continuously and become more and more rare as the years passed. Some could even reach the level of the “king of ginsengs”. Therefore, the wild ginseng could keep exchanging energy with Qiao Mei and grow continuously.

Qiao Mei calculated the growth and decline of the wild ginsengs one by one. For one, she stopped after 50 rounds. For another one, she ended only after 100 rounds. Qiao Mei could communicate with these wild ginsengs, so she did not have to dig them out by herself. The wild ginsengs would emerge from the soil one by one on their own with intact roots and in good condition.

Qiao Mei kept these wild ginsengs and also produced a good quality lingzhi, as well as some broken pieces of lingzhi for her grandfather’s drinking water. It was not necessary for him to put them in his water, but by doing that over a long period of time, it was still good for health. The quality of the lingzhi and wild ginseng that had undergone energy exchange was also much better than the ordinary ones found elsewhere.

Qiao Mei went back with these items and could see Qiao Qiang waiting for her at home from afar. As soon as she entered the house, Qiao Qiang asked, "Mei Mei, did you manage to dig anything up today? If there is nothing, Grandpa will go and buy some good liquor from your Uncle Chen Hu. Don't tire yourself out."

Qiao Mei put down the basket from behind her and said, "Of course I found it!"

Qiao Mei went into the house with the items in the basket and placed them one by one on the brick bed. There were two 20-year-old wild ginsengs, a 50-year-old one and another 100-year-old one. There was also a whole lingzhi and a few catties of loose lingzhi.

Qiao Qiang was completely dumbfounded when he saw them. The quality of these items was definitely top-notch. He could not imagine that there were actually such treasures in the mountains. He had lived here for so long and had never found any before. Mei Mei was still the lucky one. Now she could hold her head up high when she went to the capital.

"Mei Mei, you're really good at digging them up. The roots aren't even broken. This is really great." Qiao Qiang looked at these items and sighed.

"Of course. I'm especially lucky today!" Qiao Mei said with a smile.

Qiao Mei thought to herself, "These things popped out in front of me themselves, so of course the roots are not broken. If I have to dig them out myself, there probably won't be many roots left."

.....

"Grandfather, keep this 50-year-old ginseng for yourself. I'll take the rest with me. Also, take this lingzhi and put it in your drinking water. I saw that you don't have much left from the last batch I picked for you." Qiao Mei took out the remaining exquisite box they had at home and tied the ginseng up. She fixed the roots one by one so that the ginseng looked nice when it was put in the box. Otherwise, as time passed, the wild ginseng would lose its shape.

"Okay, that's good. I'm relieved now." Qiao Qiang had been worried for the entire day and finally felt at ease. She would not be looked down upon by others if she brought these things along with her.

Qiao Mei thought so too. It would be a huge surprise for everyone if she just brought along the 100-year-old wild ginseng with her. At this time, it was already rare to find 20-year-old wild ginseng. If she took out three 100-year-old wild ginsengs at once, that would make people feel that she was trying to curry favor with their family.

Chapter 142: Upgraded

Qiao Mei suddenly realized that the post-energy exchange smell on her body was not as bad as before. Previously, when she did the energy exchange too many times, she would stink so badly that people would avoid her from afar. Although there was still some odor on her body now, it was much fainter than before.

Qiao Mei went to the kitchen to boil water and took a short bath before going to sleep. Lying on the brick bed, Qiao Mei kept feeling uneasy, so she slowly touched her belly. Although she was only a few months pregnant and she had not grown big yet, her belly was starting to look obvious.

“Babies, let’s go and find daddy together. Your father will definitely be fine,” Qiao Mei touched her belly and muttered softly.

The next morning, she got up early to look for Auntie Dong to go shopping with her in the county city. She pushed her bicycle to Auntie Dong’s house and saw Auntie Dong washing vegetables at home.

“Aiyo! Mei Mei is here. Why are you pushing the bicycle, where are you going?” Auntie Dong looked up and saw Qiao Mei when she was about to enter the courtyard.

“Auntie, can you bring me to the county city? I want to buy some fabric to make some clothes. My grandfather is worried about me going alone, so I have to come and trouble you,” Qiao Mei said.

“Aiyo! Of course it’s alright, it’s no trouble at all. Wait for me to change my clothes and I’ll bring you there!” Auntie Dong quickly wiped her wet hands on her clothes and went into the house to change into a clean set of clothes before leaving the house.

Auntie Dong rode the bicycle while Qiao Mei sat in the back. It did not take long for them to reach the county city. Qiao Mei first bought a few types of plain fabric and then some ready-made embroidery patterns. She knew how to embroider, but there was not enough time for her to make her own beautiful patterns from scratch.

Auntie Dong also bought some items and they returned home before noon. After saying goodbye to Auntie Dong, Qiao Mei hurriedly ran back home. First, she drew a few patterns on paper and then, she slowly made the clothes one by one. In two to three days, she made a few sets of maternity clothes and comfortable pants. After that, she intended to go to the mountains to do energy exchange for the remaining few days.

Ever since Qiao Mei discovered that she no longer emitted a stench after energy exchange, she did a few experiments and found out that plants like chestnuts and mushrooms, which were not too valuable, did not require much energy exchange to gather a big quantity. For precious plants like lingzhi and wild ginseng, which could only be chanced upon by luck, there was a higher level of energy exchange needed, which was purer and made the pendant look better.

...

Previously, the pendant was dark green and appeared dim, and there were still some cotton-like impurities in it. However, as Qiao Mei exchanged energy many times during this period of time, the color of the pendant became a brighter green and also looked more transparent. The impurities in the pendant also decreased a lot. This was all due to Qiao Mei's efforts.

The pendant could also be upgraded and evolved. As long as one persisted in exchanging energy, one would be able to improve one's ability after a certain number of times. In the past, Qiao Mei could only exchange energy with plants which were right under her nose, but she could currently communicate with plants within a ten-mile radius.

Qiao Mei spent all her time in the mountains every day. At the crack of dawn, she would prepare Qiao Qiang's meal and then go up the mountain to exchange energy with the plants. She only returned when it was almost dark. Many people found that the trees in the mountains had grown especially dense recently and the leaves were also emerald green. Many people went into the mountains to take a look to see if they could find anything valuable.

Most people found a lot of wild lingzhi and wild ginseng. Of course, these were all relatively young ones that had just grown out. However, people still considered them to be very precious items. To Qiao Mei though, they had about the same value as weeds and wildflowers.

After a while, Qiao Mei felt that it was not a good idea for her to continue in the same manner. Due to her energy exchange, many plants reproduced more and they were all of very good quality. If this continued, everyone would be able to dig up wild ginseng and wild lingzhi. Then if they were to decide to dig them up to sell, the ecology of this mountain would probably be destroyed.

Recently, Qiao Mei did not go up that mountain anymore. She found a small cave in the mountain behind her house and cultivated a small piece of land where she planted all the small ginsengs she had picked from the mountains. She decided to carry out the energy exchange here as she felt that the effect should be much better than doing it outside alongside the other ordinary plants.

Chapter 143: Simple Happiness

Qiao Mei planted 10 small wild ginsengs in the ground and carried out the energy exchange at the same time. After 300 rounds, half of the wild ginsengs had dried up, leaving only three that were still in relatively good condition and the remaining two also showing signs of withering. It seemed that the energy exchange did not guarantee absolute success. Ultimately, it was the composition of the soil, humidity and temperature which decided whether the plants could survive in the end.

“Sigh, I thought they could really grow indefinitely. Looks like I have to think of another way,” Qiao Mei said as she looked at the wild ginsengs on the ground.

It was getting late so Qiao Mei went home and prepared some lingzhi so that she could carry out experiments tomorrow. She also wanted to replant all the wild ginseng she had at home so that she could better cultivate them into older wild ginseng.

Qiao Mei was about to leave in the morning when Qiao Qiang stopped her.

“Mei Mei, don’t tire yourself out nowadays. I see you going to the mountains every day. You’re still pregnant, so you have to take care of your own body.” Qiao Qiang looked at Qiao Mei worriedly.

Although Qiao Mei went out early and returned late every day in order to carry out energy exchanges in the mountains, she would obtain more and better energy after each exchange. She did not feel tired even if she walked 100 miles every day, so working in the mountains actually made her more refreshed.

“Grandfather, don’t worry, I’m feeling fine. I’m leaving now. The food is in the pot, remember to eat it!” Qiao Mei called out to Qiao Qiang as she walked away.

“Aye.” Qiao Qiang could only sigh to himself as he felt worried about his granddaughter. “I wonder where this stubbornness comes from...”

On the topic of Qiao Mei’s temper, she definitely did not resemble Li Gui who was a very agreeable person. Qiao Mei’s father, Qiao Yue, was also an upright man who was famous for his good temper. When it came to Qiao Mei’s stubborn temper, there was actually a strong resemblance with Qiao Qiang.

Qiao Mei came to this cave again. This time, Qiao Mei planted 500 wild ginsengs in one go and put the lingzhi aside first. After countless rounds of blooming and withering, more than half of the wild ginsengs had dried up and died. After 500 rounds, there were only 15 left.

Every 100 rounds, Qiao Mei would record the number of wild ginsengs left but she did not stop the energy exchange. After 1,000 rounds, there were only two wild ginsengs left. Qiao Mei looked at the wild ginsengs on the ground and felt extremely happy. These were thousand-year-old wild ginsengs and she did not expect to have two left.

Qiao Mei’s body was already covered in a thin layer of sweat and she emitted a faint fragrance. This fragrance was not like the fragrance of flowers, but it was a kind of medicinal fragrance that was fresh and elegant. The smell was so faint that it was not obvious at all. Compared to the previous stench all over her body after an energy exchange, the current smell was something completely different.

Her complexion was also getting better and better as well. Her dark skin had become much fairer and now looked the color of cream or a piece of unpolished jade which was delicate and clear.

.....

Qiao Mei observed these changes happily. She did not find anyone selling mirrors in the county city, otherwise she would definitely buy one home to take a good look at all the changes happening to her. She did not know how she looked now, but she could tell from what everyone else said that she had indeed become prettier and more good-looking.

Qiao Mei packed her things and went back home. That was all for today’s energy exchange and she did not remove a lot of ginsengs, thinking to continue with the energy exchange tomorrow. She wanted to go back and boil some water to wash up and have a good rest. Also, she wanted to go back early today,

otherwise her grandfather would be worried again. When Qiao Mei got home, it was still dusk and the sky had not turned dark yet.

Seeing that Qiao Mei had returned early today, Qiao Qiang smiled happily. She had taken his words to heart. Not bad! Not bad!

Qiao Mei looked at the happy Qiao Qiang in the courtyard and gradually realized that what her grandfather wanted was actually so simple. As long as she was safe and happy, her grandfather would be very happy. She decided to go back earlier in the future so that her grandfather would not be on tenterhooks at home. Once she set off on her trip, it would be more than a month before she could get back or maybe even longer.

Qiao Mei shouted towards the courtyard, "Grandfather! I'm on my way back!"

Chapter 144: Stalking

Qiao Qiang could see Qiao Mei waving her hands and smiling happily on the mountain not far away and he replied, "Hurry up and come back to eat! The food will get cold soon!"

After Qiao Mei went down the mountain, the first thing she did was to pack up the things in the basket and then she washed her hands before sitting down for a meal. During this period of time, hygiene standards were not that prevalent and it was rare to see people washing their hands regularly. However, in order to prevent illnesses from entering through their mouths, Qiao Mei repeatedly reminded Qiao Qiang of the importance of hand washing. At first, Qiao Qiang felt that it was cumbersome, but he was also afraid that Qiao Mei would be angry, so he obediently washed his hands often.

After dinner and cleaning up, Qiao Mei returned to the house to take inventory of the things she wanted to bring with her. She suddenly realized that she was missing some underclothes and that she had to top up the supply of some necessities at home. Otherwise, it would be inconvenient for her grandfather to go to the county city alone since it was so far away from the village.

"Sigh, looks like I have to go to Auntie Dong's place." Qiao Mei put away her things and went to look for Auntie Dong.

Qiao Yu had just finished her work when she saw Qiao Mei leaving her house while carrying something. She curiously stopped to take a peek, but did not expect Qiao Mei to move closer and closer to her, scaring her so much that she quickly hid to the side to avoid being discovered.

“Where is Qiao Mei going with such a big watermelon?” Qiao Yu looked in the direction that Qiao Mei had gone.

Ever since Qiao Zhuang’s family failed to grow bean sprouts, everything else they planted also withered. They could not grow anything at all, so they simply stopped trying. Everyone said that it was because Qiao Zhuang’s family had done too many bad things, leading to bad feng shui, so everything they planted withered and died.

Qiao Yu followed Qiao Mei to Auntie Dong’s house and hid behind a pile of firewood.

“Auntie Dong! Auntie Dong, are you home!” Qiao Mei shouted into the courtyard.

Auntie Dong ran out of the house and said, “Who is it! Aiyo! Isn’t this Mei Mei, why are you looking for me?”

Qiao Mei smiled and pushed open the door. When Auntie Dong saw the big watermelon in Qiao Mei’s hands, she hurriedly took it.

“Aye, you can just come over as you wish, yet you carry such a heavy thing even though you’re pregnant! You just won’t listen no matter what I say!” Auntie Dong frowned and scolded Qiao Mei.

“Hey, don’t be angry. I won’t do it again.” Qiao Mei replied simply so that she could move on to talk about other things.

.....

“I don’t know what to say about you. Come in quickly.” Auntie Dong brought Qiao Mei into the house.

Qiao Yu heard everything clearly from the outside. There must be a reason for her giving the watermelon to Auntie Dong out of the blue! However, Auntie Dong's courtyard was huge and it was difficult to eavesdrop so she had to give up on this idea.

When Qiao Yu thought about the fragrant and sweet watermelon, she felt her mouth watering. At her house, food was only prepared for the men and the womenfolk did not get anything good to eat. The last time Qiao Mei hosted everyone at her wedding banquet, there was so much nice food. There must be things to eat at her house.

Qiao Yu wanted to take advantage of the fact that Qiao Mei was not at home to see if there was any food at her house. If there were, she was prepared to steal something.

Qiao Yu picked up the hoe and ran over to Qiao Mei's house in a hurry, but when she saw Qiao Qiang taking a stroll in the courtyard, she turned around and ran off. Qiao Qiang also saw Qiao Yu running away quickly the moment she saw him, and he thought that she must be up to no good. Qiao Qiang did not like Qiao Zhuang's family.

Qiao Yu walked home dejectedly. She was feeling really hungry after not eating for a few days in a row. If she went back today and there was still no food, she would starve to death sooner or later. Qiao Yu looked at the nearby houses and saw smoke rising from the chimneys. Then she turned her attention to Li Gui's house.

"Hmph, I can't enter your house, but I'm sure you give food to your mother!" Qiao Yu's eyes lit up as she walked quickly to Li Gui's house.

Qiao Yu first circled the house a few times before looking in through the window to see if there was anyone around. Before long, the fragrance of food coming from the house was so enticing that it made Qiao Yu unable to walk away.

"It smells so good... It smells like big steamed buns!" Qiao Yu muttered to herself.

In the house, Li Gui was busy cooking. Zhang Wei had brought Zhang Chao and Zhang Qin, the two older kids, to the mountains to have a look around and pick some vegetables. The young Zhang Miao was at home helping out with housework like washing the dishes.

“Mom, who’s that person, she keeps looking into the house.” Zhang Miao looked at Qiao Yu curiously.

When Li Gui first came to the village, she had only met Wang Qin and a few of the older women. She had never met Qiao Yu before and thought that Qiao Yu looked quite young but could not recall anything about this person.

Li Gui walked out of the house and asked, “You are?”

“Ah! I’m Qiao Mei’s aunt. I’m from Qiao Zhuang’s family. Don’t you remember me?” Qiao Yu asked tentatively.

Chapter 145: Snatching Someone’s Dinner

Li Gui tried to recall if she knew anyone called Qiao Yu but she was unable to. There were too many people in Qiao Zhuang’s family. When she left, some of them were still young children.

“What’s your name?” Li Gui did not manage to recall anything.

“Qiao Yu! My name is Qiao Yu!” Qiao Yu said excitedly.

“Ah... You’re Qiao Zhuang’s number six, right? I remember that the sixth child is a daughter.” Li Gui recalled carefully and finally remembered the number of children that Qiao Zhuang had.

“Yes, yes, yes! Sister-in-law, it’s good that you still remember me!” Qiao Yu said.

Li Gui did not know why Qiao Yu was here, so she could only greet her with a smile and asked, “What’s the matter? Are you looking for Qiao Mei?”

“No, no, no, I’m here to look for you, sister-in-law.” When Qiao Yu heard Qiao Mei’s name, she was so frightened that she hurriedly waved her hand to clear the air.

“Then did... Did my children do something wrong?” Li Gui asked carefully.

“Ah! No, no! It’s like this... I... Sister-in-law, can you give me some food? I haven’t eaten for a few days,” Qiao Yu said.

Looking at the skinny Qiao Yu, Li Gui could not bear to reject her. However, she still had two growing boys at home, who had adult appetites, as well as two girls. She had so many mouths to feed at home. If she were to let Qiao Yu share their food, then what about the children’s share. However, when Li Gui saw Qiao Yu’s pleading look, she hesitated.

“Sister-in-law! I beg you! My father and the rest won’t give me food! I can only beg you! I haven’t eaten for a few days! I beg you!” Qiao Yu immediately knelt in front of Li Gui and cried out for help.

Li Gui was so alarmed that she hurriedly helped Qiao Yu up and said, “Don’t be like this! You! Sigh... come in.”

“Aye, aye! Yes! Thank you, sister-in-law! Thank you, sister-in-law!” Qiao Yu hurriedly stood up when she heard this and ran into the house without even cleaning the dust off her legs.

.....

Zhang Miao looked at Li Gui and Qiao Yu from the doorway. Before she could dodge to one side, she was knocked down by Qiao Yu who had rushed in. When Li Gui saw this, she ran in and helped her child up. She patted her all over and asked, “Miao Miao, how are you? Are you alright!”

“Mom... I... I’m fine... Who is she?” Zhang Miao was not one of those spoiled children who would cry after falling down. She brushed off the soil on her hands and took it in her stride.

As Li Gui watched Qiao Yu wolfing down the food, she did not know what to say. She brought her child to another room and decided to wait for Qiao Yu to finish eating before they had their meal.

Qiao Yu looked at the big bowl full of steamed buns and immediately reached out to take two and wolfed them down. She did not care whether Li Gui’s family had eaten or not, she only cared about filling her own stomach. In the end, she ate four to five steamed buns in a row before stopping, and even took four more and held them in her lap. In the end, there was only one bun left in the bowl.

Qiao Yu thought about it and decided that there was no point in leaving just one, so she took the last one as well. Afraid that Li Gui would turn hostile, Qiao Yu left immediately after she finished eating. As she walked off, she was still chewing a bun as she said, "Sister-in-law! I'm... I'm leaving! There's no need to send me off!"

As soon as she left the house, she bumped into Zhang Wei and his younger siblings who were on the way home. They did not manage to find much today and only brought back two baskets of wild vegetables. Qiao Yu's eyes lit up when she saw them. Buns with stuffing made from these vegetables must be delicious. She decided that she would come back tomorrow.

Zhang Wei stared at Qiao Yu curiously and only went in after she left. After instructing Zhang Qin and Zhang Chao to sort out the vegetables in the courtyard, he went into the house to look for Li Gui.

"Mom? Mom! Where are you!" Zhang Wei shouted.

"Elder brother!"

"Xiao Wei! I'm here!"

The mother and child answered in unison.

Looking at Li Gui's sad expression, Zhang Wei guessed that the woman must have come to bully his mother. Zhang Wei asked patiently, "Mom, what's wrong? Who was that person from just now?"

Li Gui did not know how to explain it. Besides, Zhang Wei was still young, only 10 years old. It was better not to let the child know of such things, so she decided not to tell him.

Chapter 146: Intercepting Midway

The young Zhang Miao did not understand all these things her mother was thinking about. She felt so aggrieved and said to Zhang Wei, "Elder brother! That person pushed me! She even ate all the steamed buns that mom worked so hard to make!"

When Zhang Wei heard this, he then understood why Li Gui was so sad. However, he was young and did not know how to handle this matter.

Zhang Wei thought to himself, “Elder sister Qiao Mei said that I’m the eldest brother among my siblings and I must be their role model. Mom is taking care of us now and I’m the man of the family. I can’t let them be bullied.”

Zhang Wei was about to head out when Li Gui stopped him.

“Xiao Wei, she... she’s mom’s younger sister. She’s just here to have a meal because she’s hungry. It’s not a big thing,” Li Gui said hesitantly.

After all, Zhang Wei and the other three children were all children that she had with Zhang Qian. Qiao Yu was Qiao Yue’s younger cousin and so could be considered to be like a younger sister to her. It was only right for her to help out.

Zhang Wei looked at his mother’s troubled expression and nodded. He decided not to do anything about it. Although he was still young, he was the leader of the group of local children in the village. Everyone listened to him and played with him. It was not a big deal for a few children to play pranks and throw stones at people. The adults would usually turn a blind eye and not raise the issue to the brigade.

Li Gui took out all the food left in the house so that the children would have something to eat tonight. She let the children eat first and only ate when they were done. Her sacrifice did not go unnoticed by the children.

The next morning, the children went up the mountains again to see if there were any new crops to pick. This time, they also brought Zhang Miao along. Li Gui laid out the wild vegetables to dry at home and went to work after finishing the housework. When she was on the way home later, she ran into Qiao Yu at the crossroads.

When Li Gui saw Qiao Yu, she quickly lowered her head and prepared to walk away. However, Qiao Yu was shameless enough to go over and greet Li Gui warmly, as if she was afraid that Li Gui could not see her.

“Aye, sister-in-law! You’re back from work too!” Qiao Yu said enthusiastically.

“Ah... What a coincidence... What do you need?” Li Gui said awkwardly.

“Oh, I was just thinking about you taking care of four children at home on your own. I was worried that you would be too tired, so I came to help you.” Qiao Yu did not give Li Gui a chance to even take a breath before grabbing onto her and pulling her towards her house.

.....

As soon as Qiao Yu arrived at Li Gui’s house, she behaved like she had entered her own house and went straight to the storeroom to take a look. All the houses in the village had similar layouts, with two rooms on the east and west sides. The kitchen and dining area were located in the middle part, also known as the central room. People with money usually made the central room bigger, so that it was an area which was specially used for dining and entertaining guests, and moved the kitchen outdoors by building a stove outside.

There was also usually a storeroom at the side of the house. The basement of the storeroom would be used to store tools and food that could be kept well. The room on the ground floor would be used to store stuff like corn and other similar items. However, most of the families had no excess food now, so in order to save money, some people would decide not to build the part of the storeroom that was above ground.

“Sister-in-law! You have so much food at home!” Qiao Yu reached out and took a lot of cabbages and potatoes and intended to get Li Gui to cook them.

Li Gui did not know how to chase Qiao Yu away. If Li Gui tried to chase her away, she would scare Li Gui by acting like she would starve to death or get beaten to death at home. She would kneel down and beg for mercy at every turn, causing Li Gui to be at her wits’ end.

A person like Qiao Yu needed someone with Qiao Mei’s harsh temper to discipline her. Otherwise, she would never listen obediently.

The four children managed to find a lot of vegetables today. Each of them came back with a full basket. They even saw new vegetables today that they could not recognize, so they brought them back for Li Gui to see if they were edible. This way, the children would be able to apply the new knowledge in the future.

Zhang Miao carried her small little full basket and shouted excitedly at Li Gui, "Mom! Mom! Look, I picked so much today! There's also vegetables that we don't know! Mom, take a look..."

Zhang Miao, who was hopping happily, had just made her way halfway into the house when she saw that the bad woman from yesterday had come to the house again. She immediately fell silent and did not dare to move.

Zhang Wei, Zhang Chao and Zhang Qin, who were walking behind, wondered why their youngest sister, Zhang Miao, had suddenly stopped moving.

"Miao Miao, why did you stop? You... Hmm? Who are you, why are you here again?" Zhang Wei was in the midst of asking Zhang Miao a question when he saw the unfamiliar Qiao Yu.

Chapter 147: Hard Work for Nothing

Qiao Yu was holding on to a pile of vegetables in her lap and eating half a watermelon, spilling watermelon juice everywhere. She hurriedly wiped her mouth with the corner of her shirt and ran to the children, smiling as she took the small basket from Zhang Miao.

"Oh my, there are so many things. You're really capable!" Qiao Yu smiled and took the basket away. Her eyes were fixed on the vegetables in the basket, thinking that it was all good stuff.

"Who are you!" Zhang Chao asked impatiently.

"Ah, I'm your aunt. My name is Qiao Yu," Qiao Yu said by way of introduction.

Qiao Yu??The children looked at one another.?They had never heard of this name before, but her surname was also Qiao and their elder sister's surname was also Qiao. Could she be related to their elder sister?

“Then what’s your relationship with elder sister Qiao Mei?” the smart Zhang Qin asked.

At the mention of Qiao Mei, Qiao Yu hurriedly interrupted them and changed the topic.

“Oh, you must have had a long day. Sister-in-law! The children are back!” Qiao Yu shouted towards the house.

When Li Gui saw that the children had returned, she ignored Qiao Yu and told them to go into the house to wash their hands and get ready to eat. This was also what Qiao Mei had taught them. They had to wash their hands before and after having a meal.

As soon as she sat down at the table, Qiao Yu immediately started wolfing down the food. No one could interrupt her and no one could even manage to take any food. In a flash, she finished everything on the table.

Looking at the motionless Li Gui and the children, she even said hypocritically, “Eat up! Hurry up and eat, don’t let me eat it all by myself!”

Zhang Chao watched as Qiao Yu ate all the things that they had worked so hard to pick. His brother and mother did not get to eat anything and he looked at Qiao Yu angrily. Zhang Miao did not get to eat yesterday and when she saw what was happening today, she felt so aggrieved that she wanted to cry. Zhang Qin hugged Zhang Miao and comforted her.

Qiao Yu acted as if she was oblivious to all this. After dinner, she went about her way as usual, but there was something different this time round. She took out a bag and removed from the courtyard all the vegetables and other crops that the children had just brought back.

.....

“Sister-in-law, I’m going off! No need to send me off! I’m leaving!” Qiao Yu picked up the hoe and left, feeling very satisfied.

The children looked at the empty plates in front of them and sighed, not knowing what to do. Li Gui went to the pot to take out the steamed cornbread and boiled potatoes that she had hidden away for the children.

“Look at what we have here!” Li Gui grinned as she looked at the children. The food in her hands were like treasures that seemed to be sparkling.

The children’s eyes lit up. The four children each took a cornbread and a potato and were about to start eating when they realized that Li Gui did not have a share.

“Mom, where’s yours?” Zhang Wei asked.

A few days ago, Qiao Mei had sent food to Li Gui, but Li Gui was too embarrassed to keep taking food from Qiao Mei. There was already not much food left at home and Qiao Yu had now taken everything.

Li Gui smiled and said, “Mom ate when I was cooking. Hurry up and eat.”

The children always believed what Li Gui said but Zhang Qin realized that Li Gui always secretly got up in the middle of the night to drink a lot of water. Li Gui was so hungry that she had no choice but to drink water to fill her stomach. No matter how hungry she was, she could not let the children starve.

Zhang Qin quietly handed her cornbread to Li Gui and said, “Mom, I’m still young and can’t eat so much. You can have mine.”

Li Gui looked at the sensible Zhang Qin with reddened eyes. She broke off half of the cornbread and returned it to Zhang Qin. “You eat it, Xiao Qin. This is enough for mom.”

I did not know how much mom could eat, but after mom ate the cornbread from me, she would not be so hungry that she needed to get up and drink water in the middle of the night. Zhang Qin happily finished the rest of the food. The children were also thoughtful enough to clean up and then store the bowls and chopsticks properly. The girls wiped down the kitchen and the stove, and the boys washed the tableware, fetched the water and tidied up the vegetables they had picked today.

There was not much left in the courtyard at all. There was only one basket left among the four full baskets that the children had returned with.

“Hoho, that woman still knows how to leave a basket for us,” Zhang Chao said unhappily.

Zhang Wei looked at the remaining basket and sighed helplessly. He had no way of dealing with this woman as well.

Chapter 148: Getting Worse

Zhang Chao was so angry that he got really sullen. He sat at the door and played with stones by himself. Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao did housework with their mother. Seeing that the fruits of his siblings’ labor ended up being taken away by others, coupled with the fact that their mother had nothing to eat and was getting skinnier, Zhang Wei felt very uncomfortable.

“Elder brother, what should we do about this,” Zhang Chao said.

“It’s fine. I’ll think of something tomorrow,” Zhang Wei walked over and said to Zhang Chao.

He could not do anything to Qiao Yu, but he thought that eldest sister Qiao Mei definitely would have a way. I will find an opportunity to talk to elder sister Qiao Mei tomorrow. Otherwise, if this goes on, his family will starve to death.

That night, Li Gui again secretly got up and went to the kitchen to drink water. Zhang Wei witnessed what she did and was even more determined to ask Qiao Mei for help. I will not let Qiao Yu succeed again tomorrow.

Qiao Yu went home with a bunch of things. For the past few days, Qiao Zhuang’s family had been treating her well since she could even bring back big steamed buns and vegetables. They never asked where the food came from as long as they could eat it. The rules were still the same though, the women had to wait for the men in the family to finish eating before they could eat. They still had to provide for the men in the family because after all, the men were the ones heading out to work.

“You’ve been making yourself useful for the past two days. Bring back more food in the future though. This little bit of stuff isn’t even enough to fill the gaps between our teeth,” Wang Qin said to Qiao Yu.

“That’s right. I thought that you would be able to bring more back for all of us. This is not enough to feed a few men,” Liu Ying said mockingly.

“The amount that Qiao Yu brought back is alright, isn’t...” Jiang Ye asked in confusion.

Right now, Qiao Zhuang’s family was spending more than they earned and everyone was not in a good mood. They were people who could not bear to see others living better than them. At home, Qiao Yu was the youngest and also just a girl, so the few sisters-in-law and Qiao Yu’s mother all liked to take jibes at Qiao Yu. Only the third sister-in-law, Jiang Ye, was a person with sense, but then again, she was also stupid and did not have so many tricks up her sleeve.

...

“Third Sister-in-law, you don’t know anything. If Qiao Yu comes home empty-handed, she will be beaten to death by our father. So she needs to bring more foodstuffs back,” Wang Qin said.

“That’s right. Qiao Yu has been so lucky recently and has brought back quite a lot more things than before. Keep working hard in the future,” Liu Ying said.

“Hahahaha, you’re right,” Wang Qin said laughingly.

Qiao Yu stayed at one side and did not dare to say anything to rebut, much less to reply in the affirmative. She hoped that Li Gui would continue to be so silly enough to bully, but she had basically taken all the food that Li Gui had at her house and there was not much left.

The few men did not say anything as they ate at the table. This noisy conversation eventually became a disturbance to Qiao Zhuang and he coughed while looking coldly at his daughters-in-law.

“Cough...”

The few of them were so frightened by the sound that they quickly fell silent and obediently did needlework near the fireplace.

Qiao Yu went out even earlier the next day. Now, the family did not even feed her breakfast and they asked her to either go and beg on the streets and find someone who pitied her enough to feed her, or to quickly get married. They did not want her to continue living at her maiden home and be an eyesore to them. They felt that if she got married and received betrothal gifts, they could even use that to find a wife for the fifth son of the family.

This time, she was expressionless when she went to Li Gui's house and was no longer as sneaky as when she went the first time. Qiao Yu pushed open the door to the courtyard and when she saw Li Gui with some clothes, she enthusiastically went forward to help.

"Oh, sister-in-law, are you doing the laundry, let me help you." Qiao Yu smiled at Li Gui and grabbed the clothes, looking around to see if there was any food.

"Oh, Qiao Yu! There's no need! It's fine... Ah, thank you, Qiao Yu." Before Li Gui could even reject it, the clothes were taken away from her.

Qiao Yu went to fetch water and washed the clothes. She made it appear as if she put in a lot of hard work and it made Li Gui feel ill-at-ease enough to want to prepare some food for her. However, there was really nothing much left to eat at home.

Zhang Chao was so angry that he wanted to scold Qiao Yu and chase her away but he was stopped by Zhang Wei.

"Elder brother! Why are you stopping me! It's not as if she can kill me!" Zhang Chao clenched his fists in anger.

Zhang Wei bent down and whispered into his brother's ear, "Don't kick up a fuss. I'll go look for elder sister Qiao Mei. Don't hit or scold this woman. Even if she leaves today, she'll still come back in the future."

Zhang Chao could understand the logic behind what he heard and remained sulking in the house. Zhang Wei asked Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao to look after Zhang Chao while he prepared to go out and inform Qiao Mei about what was happening.

Continue reading on [On MYBOXNOVEL.COM](http://OnMYBOXNOVEL.COM)

Chapter 149: Caught in the Act

When Qiao Yu saw Zhang Wei going out, she immediately asked, "Zhang Wei, where are you going?"

Zhang Wei did not panic and simply replied, "Ah... I'm going to pick some vegetables. There's not much left at home."

"Then why aren't you bringing your siblings along?" Qiao Yu looked at Zhang Wei in puzzlement.

"We... we... We found a bunch of stuff yesterday! But we were too weak to carry it all, so we hid it under a pile of soil. I'm going back to take a look." Zhang Wei casually came up with a lie.

Qiao Yu's eyes lit up when she heard that there were a bunch of good things to be had. She wiped her hands on her clothes and stood up to go with Zhang Wei.

"Then you won't be able to carry it either. Auntie will go with you!" Qiao Yu quickly came over and wanted to follow him.

Zhang Wei quickly turned her down and said, "No need, no need. There's not much left so I can carry it myself. You can stay at home and help my mother with the cooking."

When Qiao Yu heard that, she took it that Zhang Wei had invited her to stay for a meal and she became even more confident. She straightened her back and said to Zhang Wei with a wide smile, "Ah, okay then, Auntie won't go with you. Be careful!"

After saying that, Qiao Yu went back to wash the clothes with a big smile on her face. Zhang Wei did not say anything else and hurriedly ran to look for Qiao Mei.

"Elder sister Mei Mei! Are you there! Elder sister Mei Mei! Elder sister Mei Mei!" Zhang Wei was so anxious that his forehead was covered in sweat as he shouted at the doorway.

...

Qiao Mei had felt lazy today and stayed at home to help her grandfather clean up the courtyard. Currently, the grandfather and granddaughter were chatting in the house.

“Isn’t that Zhang Wei calling for you?” Qiao Qiang looked outside in confusion.

“I think so... Grandfather, hang on, I’ll go take a look,” Qiao Mei said.

When Qiao Mei came out of the house and saw the distressed Zhang Wei, she thought that something had happened to Li Gui and asked anxiously, “What’s wrong, did something happen.”

“There’s... there’s a woman who came to our house. She’s been freeloading for a few days and even took away a lot of food. She said... said that she’s our aunt.” Zhang Wei was panting after running over and could not even speak properly.

Qiao Mei wondered where this domineering aunt in Li Gui’s house came from. Zhang Qian was an only child and he was the only one in his own family. She had never heard of him having a younger sister, so she was curious about where this aunt came from.

“Aunt? What aunt? Don’t be anxious, bring me over to take a look. Wait a moment.” Qiao Mei went back into the house and gave her grandfather a brief of the situation before going to Li Gui’s house with Zhang Wei.

By the time the two of them reached home, it was already lunchtime. The weather had gotten warmer and Zhang Wei had earlier told Zhang Qin and Li Gui to say that they would be having lunch in the courtyard today. He would then ask elder sister Qiao Mei to come over to deal with this woman.

Qiao Mei watched Qiao Yu wolfing down the food in the courtyard as Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao looked at Qiao Yu from afar and did not dare to go over and eat. To be precise, it was not that they did not dare to eat but there was nothing for the children and Li Gui to eat at all. All the food had all been eaten by Qiao Yu, and even if Qiao Yu could not finish it, she was going to take it all with her.

“Oh my, I was wondering which destitute aunt had popped up from some nook and cranny. So it’s you, Qiao Yu.” Qiao Mei looked at Qiao Yu mockingly.

Qiao Yu’s back was facing the door, so she could not see the people coming and going at the door. When she heard Qiao Mei’s voice, she was so frightened that she dropped her cutlery on the ground and did not know if she should spit out or swallow the food in her mouth.

“Ah... It’s Qiao Mei. Why are you here?” Qiao Yu turned around nervously and saw Zhang Wei standing beside Qiao Mei.

So this child was lying when he said he was going out to get the vegetables!

In a moment of carelessness, Qiao Yu had allowed Zhang Wei to inform other people about what was happening. Only then did she realize that she had fallen into Zhang Wei’s trap. However, it was already too late and it seemed like she would not be able to bring anything home with her today.

“If I didn’t come, you would probably even eat the house, right?” Qiao Mei walked closer to Qiao Yu and stared at her.

Qiao Yu hurriedly waved her hands and fell off the stool in fright.

“I... I don’t... I don’t have such an ability. Qiao Mei, you really like to joke, hahaha.” Qiao Yu laughed awkwardly.

Continue reading on [On MYBOXNOVEL.COM](http://OnMYBOXNOVEL.COM)

Li Gui heaved a sigh of relief to see that Qiao Mei had come over to back her up. However, she also felt so useless to need her daughter to help her solve the problem. She lowered her head and did not know what to say.

Chapter 150: Chasing Qiao Yu Away

“Aren’t you capable, didn’t I tell you to stay away from my house?” Qiao Mei narrowed her eyes and looked at Qiao Yu.

“Um... Qiao Mei, don’t be angry. I’m... It’s sister-in-law! Sister-in-law invited me! I didn’t come by on my own! Zhang Wei also asked me to stay for a meal today! Isn’t that right!” Qiao Yu looked at Li Gui pleadingly.

Li Gui could not bear to see Qiao Yu like this, but when she thought about how her children had not eaten for so many days, she silently turned her head away from Qiao Yu.

Qiao Mei also knew the truth of the matter and that it seemed to have been going on for a few days. Otherwise, Zhang Wei would not have gone to look for her.

“Tell me, how do you intend to settle this, are you compensating us?” Qiao Mei said.

“I don’t have money! Qiao Mei, let me go! I won’t dare to do it again! Qiao Mei, I was wrong!” Qiao Yu knelt on the ground and begged Qiao Mei.

She knew how shrewd Qiao Mei was. She had once been beaten up by Qiao Mei and knew how fierce Qiao Mei could be. She also knew that Qiao Mei could not tolerate any hypocrisy and deception. If not for Zhang Wei going off to look for Qiao Mei, she would not have discovered this matter so quickly.

Qiao Mei took a few steps back. She also knew about Qiao Yu’s situation, but she was really unable to feel any pity for her. Qiao Yu had lied to the original owner of the body many times in the past and had cheated her of many things including food, clothes and necessities.

“Even if I ask you for compensation, you don’t have any money. Why don’t I go and look for Second Grandpa since he definitely has money and can definitely pay up for you. After all, you’re the sixth child of his family. If I can’t get any money from you, I can just go and look for him,” Qiao Mei said to Qiao Yu with a smile.

When Qiao Yu heard that Qiao Mei wanted to go and look for her father, she was so frightened that she repeatedly begged for mercy. She grabbed on to Qiao Mei’s trouser leg and cried, “Qiao Mei! I was

wrong! I won't dare to do it again! Please let me go! Don't go looking for my father! I won't come again!"

...

Qiao Mei shook off Qiao Yu's hands from her trouser leg in disdain. She knew that going to Qiao Zhuang's house would be a useless endeavor and was just saying it to scare Qiao Yu.

"As if you are any sort of aunt to these kids, don't try to pretend to be someone's relative in the future. Quickly get lost," Qiao Mei said with a frown.

"Aye! Aye! Aye! I'll leave now!"

Qiao Yu took her cloth bag and scrambled out of the courtyard. Of course Qiao Mei did not intend to let her off so easily, but there was nothing that could be gotten out of her for now. As the good saying goes, "Do not pursue a desperate foe."

"Elder sister Qiao Mei! You let her go just like that! What if she comes back tomorrow!" Zhang Chao pointed at Qiao Yu who was already in the distance.

Continue reading on MYBOXNOVEL.COM

Qiao Mei smiled at Zhang Chao and said, "Forget it. If we continue to press her, she might do something nasty. Let's just move on. Don't worry, elder sister will eventually teach her a lesson."

Zhang Chao trusted Qiao Mei very much and believed what she said. However, Qiao Yu had once again finished all the food they had and there was no more food for the children at home.

Qiao Mei glanced at the children and sighed. She felt that if this continued, when she was away from the village, her mother would not be able to protect these children on her own. Her mother was really too weak.

“Come, let’s go to my house for dinner. Grandpa is also waiting for all of you at home. I made delicious potato and meat stew today,” Qiao Mei said.

Qiao Qiang had already gotten the food ready at home and was waiting for the children to come back and eat. As soon as Qiao Mei went out, he understood what had happened. The last time Qiao Yu came by, he thought that she was here to look for Qiao Mei. It was now apparent that she had wanted to steal something, but it just so happened that he was at home.

The children skipped their way to Qiao Mei’s house. Behind them, Li Gui held Qiao Mei’s hand and was silent for a long time. She could only feel that she was a burden to Qiao Mei.

“Sigh, it’s all because I’m useless,” Li Gui said.

“It’s fine. If they come again, you should fight back. I can’t be around all the time. You have to learn to protect yourself and the children. If you really can’t do anything, go to the brigade to look for Uncle Zhao. He’s a fair person and won’t be biased,” Qiao Mei said as she looked at Li Gui.

When Li Gui just returned to the village, the matter of her remarriage became a hot topic. Every family knew that she was a widow who had abandoned her child to get married. She was too embarrassed to interact with these villagers, so when she encountered problems, she would generally try to solve them herself and would rarely seek help. She did not even look for Qiao Mei often.

“Yes, yes, I understand,” Li Gui said with a smile.