

Fat Wife 251

Chapter 251: Paying a Visit to Apologize

However, when it came to the bangle on her wrist, she could not bear to give it to others. After all, this was a very rare treasure and not all jade stones turned out like this. It was definitely not as good as the pendant Xia Zhe had given her, but no one would dislike having a portable “small air conditioner”.

Qiao Mei then brought the three pots of flowers in the bedroom to the loft to change the flower pots. Upon replacing the original ceramic pots with the porcelain pots, it suddenly seemed like the pots were too good for the flowers.

“Mei Mei, it’s too extravagant to pair these flowers with such nice flower pots,” Xia Fang said.

“Aunt, these are all cheap goods from the market. They’re not very expensive. I even bargained on the price,” Qiao Mei said as she repotted the plants.

Xia Fang brought over a small stool for Qiao Mei to sit on. She could not help much with such matters, so she decided to let Qiao Mei do whatever she wanted.

She liked to grow flowers and liked every kind of flower. There were more orchids at home because Xiang Jin liked them. Xiang Jin liked orchids the most and he had planted them when he came back on leave.

She only knew how to water them and put them under the sun, and nothing else. The orchids at home either died or became wilted under her care. However, ever since Qiao Mei came, all the flowers had grown really well and the smell they emitted was also different from usual.

It appeared that Qiao Mei was really a lucky star.

The truth was that Qiao Mei would go to the loft every day to exchange energy with these orchids. Although these orchids were not expensive species, their quality was not too bad. Qiao Mei would exchange some energy with them every day and they grew up well.

“Mei Mei, you should stop now. Take a rest first before continuing!” Xia Fang shouted towards the loft.

“I’m coming!” Qiao Mei finished up with the flower pots and moved them back to the bedroom. They now looked much more pleasing to the eye.

She washed her hands and was about to eat an apple when the doorbell suddenly rang. Qiao Mei got up to open the door but was stopped by Xia Fang.

“It must be that real uncle of yours forgetting to take something. I’ll go.” Xia Fang smiled and went to open the door.

When she opened the door, she realized that it was not Liu Yang, but Qian’e and Qian Wang. Xia Fang looked at them with annoyance and did not say anything, nor did she invite them in.

“Um... Xia Fang, I brought my daughter here to apologize for what happened the last time,” Qian Wang said embarrassedly.

Xia Fang did not answer and just looked at them silently.

Qiao Mei looked at how Xia Fang was behaving at the door and knew that whoever the visitors were, they must be someone not nice. Otherwise, with Aunt’s temperament, she would not make visitors stand outside.

“Xia Fang, our Xiao’e was in the wrong the last time. She was impulsive and almost made a big mistake. I hope you’d allow her to apologize to Qiao Mei,” Qian Wang said sincerely as he looked at Xia Fang.

Xia Fang trusted Qian Wang, but not Qian’e

“Who knows what your daughter is capable of. If she comes into my house and breaks my things, it will be a mess to work out whose fault it is,” Xia Fang said as she looked at Qian’e.

Qian'e was only there because Qian Wang forced her. Her mother, Zhao Ni, had been beaten and scolded by her grandmother at home. Her grandmother was angry that she had embarrassed her father with what she did and that he even needed to pay her victim a visit to apologize.

In the past, Zhao Ni had married into the Qian family through underhanded means. Qian Wang had always listened to his mother and at that time, he was already engaged to the child of a relative from his hometown. No one expected a pregnant Zhao Ni to appear at that moment.

For the sake of the family's reputation, he had no choice but to marry her. He did not expect that she not only did not stay at home to take care of her husband and children properly, but she went out every day to show off, pretending to be a full-time wife and a well brought up young lady from a wealthy family.

In reality, Zhao Ni did not have much of a family background and was just a girl from a humble family. She not only did not live a prim and proper life after getting married, but she even brought up her daughter so badly that it made it embarrassing for the family to live in the apartment compound.

Due to that, everyone knew that Old Madam Qian would often beat and scold Zhao Ni for no reason. Qian Wang did not care about family matters and left everything to Old Madam Qian, and this arrangement made Qian'e very unhappy.

If not for Qian Wang's lack of concern about anything at home, her mother would not have led such a miserable life.

Qian Wang only cared about his own reputation as well as the reputation of the Qian family. He did not care about anything else. He used to care about his daughter, but ever since she embarrassed him, he did not care much about her anymore.

Chapter 252: Snatching What Belongs to Me

"Don't worry, Xiao'e will never hurt the child from your family again. I swear to Heaven," Qian Wang said.

Qiao Mei looked at Qian Wang and felt a little sorry for him.

“What’s the matter?” Qiao Mei walked to the door and asked.

Xia Fang hurriedly pulled Qiao Mei behind her, not giving them a chance to face her directly.

“I’m sorry. I brought Xiao’e here to apologize. We were in the wrong the last time. We’re really sorry and Xiao’e already knows her mistake,” Qian Wang said sincerely.

After saying that, he handed over two bags full of big and fresh fruits. He certainly looked very sincere but there was not a word from Qian’e, the main culprit.

When Qian’e saw Qiao Mei, her originally indifferent attitude turned into a fierce stare, as if she wanted to disassemble and eat up Qiao Mei.

“You shouldn’t be the one apologizing. Whoever made the mistake should be the one apologizing,” Qiao Mei said with a smile while looking at Qian’e.

Qian Wang nudged Qian’e and said, “Hurry up and apologize.”

Qian’e looked at Qiao Mei indifferently. She would rather be killed than to apologize, and she would probably feel better that way as well. The initial deal she had with him was that she only needed to follow him to the house.

She did not expect that it was not enough just to turn up and that she even needed to apologize.

Xia Fang looked at Qian’e who refused to open her mouth. She shook her head helplessly and said to Qian Wang, “Since the two of you haven’t discussed it properly, you should just go back.”

Xia Fang was about to close the door but Qian Wang held on to it and said, “My daughter is very immature. Please don’t mind her. My daughter already knows her mistake. The kids may fool around but we should continue to get along well.”

So this was his actual purpose!

Xia Fang looked at Qian Wang mockingly and suddenly felt that Qian'e was actually quite pathetic and pitiful. Her useless father only cared about his own reputation and did not care about her at all.

"You all just continue to get along with one another. What I do has nothing to do with him. If you need to hate someone, just hate me," Qian'e said stubbornly as she looked at Qiao Mei and Xia Fang.

"If you don't want to apologize, then you can go back," Qiao Mei said to Qian'e.

Although Qian'e almost hurt her, she could roughly understand the situation Qian'e was in by looking at the way Qian Wang behaved. She just could not understand why Qian'e carried on making mistakes and getting into trouble.

Seeing Qiao Mei's nonchalant attitude, Qian'e felt her eyes reddened. She thought about how she used to frequent this house and come over often for meals.

She still remembered all the furnishings in this house clearly. Yet, everything belonged to Qiao Mei now.

"What right do you have to enjoy all of this! All these used to belong to me!" Qian'e suddenly shouted at Qiao Mei.

Xia Fang immediately shielded Qiao Mei behind her. For consecutive days, it was either the Sun family's children who came to cause trouble or Qian'e who came to pick a fight. It was so hard to chase away these people.

"What used to belong to you?" Qiao Mei asked curiously.

"The person Xia Zhe should marry is me! Why should it be a country bumpkin like you! What trick did you use to make Xia Zhe walk into your trap! Shameless thing! All of these should be mine!" Qian'e walked forward slowly and Qian Wang did not stop her.

Xia Fang pointed at Qian'e and roared, "I dare you to take another step! I'll call the police! We won't do anything, we'll just let the police settle everything!"

The moment Qian Wang heard that Xia Fang wanted to call the police, he hurriedly held Qian'e back and said to Xia Fang, "No need to go to that extent. Don't be angry, Xia Fang. It's just that Xiao'e could not let go of the issue yet."

"If she can't let it go, then go home! Don't cause trouble for us here! What a jinx!" Xia Fang said.

Qian Wang whispered to Qian'e, "Don't go looking for trouble. Think about it, your mother is still at home."

When Qian'e heard this, she fell silent. Both Qiao Mei and Xia Fang also heard what he said. They originally thought that Qian Wang was a decent person, but they did not expect him to be such a person.

Qiao Mei looked at Qian'e, who was being forced into a corner by Qian Wang, and thought of the time when she was forced to do farm work at Qiao Zhuang's house. At that time, they all lied to her and said that her mother did not want her anymore, and that she needed to work hard to be able to see her mother.

Chapter 253: Two-faced

She tried her best to hold on and waited for Li Gui to come and save her, but she almost died that winter. Fortunately, her grandfather came back in time to save her.

"I... I..." Qian'e opened her mouth hesitantly, but she still could not bring herself to apologize.

Qiao Mei did not have any sympathy for Qian'e. Even if her father did not treat her well and she had to go through all the unfortunate things, there was still no reason for her to do evil things. The matters were completely unrelated and each matter should be judged on its own.

"Speak up!" Qian Wang snarled.

"I... I'm sorry," Qian'e turned her head to the side and muttered softly.

Xia Fang waved her hand in annoyance and said, "Just leave quickly. We don't want the things you brought. Just go."

Qian Wang thought that Xia Fang did not hear what Qian'e said and was worried that Xia Fang would tell her other colleagues about this matter when she returned to work. This might in turn affect his reputation. There was going to be a promotion grading at the hospital this year. If news of this matter spread, then he would not have any chance at all.

Impatiently, Qian Wang gave Qian'e a kick and said, "Louder!"

Qian'e glared fiercely at Qiao Mei and said, "I'm sorry."

When Qiao Mei saw the look in her eyes, Qiao Mei understood that this matter was not over. Instead, it had become even more serious. It was such a bad end to the day.

After Xia Fang heard this, she pushed Qian'e away. Before closing the door, she said, "Don't ever come again! Get lost!"

Qian Wang carried the two bags of fruits and walked down the stairs without looking back. As he walked, he ranted, "This woman is really ungrateful. I've already come to her door, what else does she want! Just because she's the sister of the hospital director, she thinks she can do whatever she wants!"

"Pfft! Who does she think she is!" Qian Wang spat and cursed again when he felt that his earlier ranting was not enough to vent his anger.

Qian'e continued standing at the door and staring at it, thinking to herself that she only came to save Zhao Ni from getting beaten up. Zhao Ni had said that otherwise, Qian Wang and Old Madam Qian would beat her up badly, not give her any money and then send her back to her hometown.

Qian'e knew that her mother did not want to return to the hometown to be looked down upon by her uncle and aunt-in-law. Her mother did not want to be despised every day, so her mother chose to sacrifice her.

“You money-losing good-for-nothing! What are you still doing at her door! Get down here!” Qian Wang cursed.

Qian’e followed behind Qian Wang silently. If it was Old Madam Qian, Qian’e would still talk back. However, Qian Wang was a two-faced person. On the surface, he was amiable to everyone, but in reality, he was an evil person.

Everyone thought that he was good-natured and a nice person, and that he just had a wife and daughter who were out of line. In actual fact, if it was not for Qian Wang beating up Zhao Ni all year round, the family would not have become like this.

When they reached the courtyard, Qian Wang quickly changed his expression and looked mild-mannered.

“Oh, Qian Wang, why are you walking out of this block?” an elderly female neighbor asked.

“Oh my, Auntie, I’m old and went to the wrong place. I’m so forgetful,” Qian Wang said with a grin.

“You’re not that old. Why did you buy so many fruits! Goodness, these fruits are not cheap,” the neighbor smiled at Qian Wang and said.

“This Xiao’e had hurt her hand. It’s good for her! We’re going off!” Qian Wang hurriedly brought Qian’e home.

The few older women started talking among themselves.

“He said that he went to the wrong place. I’m sure he went to Xia Fang’s house.”

“That’s right, that’s right. He was carrying so many things. Looks like Xia Fang didn’t give them a nice attitude.”

“Don’t you know Xia Fang? It would be weirder if she accepts his apology. She doesn’t even care about the hospital director, why would she care about him?”

“Also Qian’e and her face. She pulled such a long face that it’s almost drooping to the ground. I can’t imagine how her father can still smile.”

“Hahahahaha.”

Qian Wang did not know what the neighbors were talking about. He was still thinking about how to make Xia Fang forgive and forget about this matter and let it pass so that it would not affect his rating at work.

The moment Qian Wang entered the house, he heard Zhao Ni screaming, but his expression did not change at all. When Old Madam Qian saw her son, she stopped the beatings and scoldings. She observed that he had come back with all the things that he brought with him. It must mean that the matter did not get settled.

Looking at Qian’e and the indignant expression on her face, Old Madam Qian knew that she must be the cause of it.

Chapter 254: Betrothed

Qian Wang said respectfully, “Mother, I’m back. I’ll go to my room.”

Old Madam Qian nodded and tacitly agreed to what Qian Wang wanted to do. Qian’e tried to secretly sneak in by following behind Qian Wang.

“Stop right there,” Old Madam Qian said.

Qian’e slowly turned around and looked at Old Madam Qian with a feeling of unease. She knew that she would definitely get beaten up today, so she lowered her head and remained silent.

“Tell me, what did you two do today?” Old Madam Qian said.

“We went out to convey our apologies. We didn’t do anything else,” Qian’e said casually as she tilted her head.

“You went out to convey your apologies? Then why didn’t you manage to give these things away? Did the Xia family reject them?” Old Madam Qian said.

“They said that they appreciated our gesture but they won’t accept it,” Qian’e said.

Old Madam Qian thought that what she said was indeed possible. However, it did not seem that believable. The expression on Qian Wang’s face when he returned did not look as if the Xia family had forgiven them for this matter.

“You’re not lying?” Old Madam Qian asked as she looked at Qian’e suspiciously.

“No!” Qian’e replied softly.

Old Madam Qian held the stick and walked in a circle around Qian’e, wondering if what Qian’e said was true. She could ask the few old ladies in the courtyard who liked to gossip and she would immediately know if it was true or not, but that solution was useless now.

“I won’t argue with you on this matter. You’d better not be lying. Also, I have settled your marriage for you. Your father has already agreed to this matter, so it’s final.” Old Madam Qian walked back to the sofa and sat down.

Marriage? What marriage?

Qian’e looked in shock at Zhao Ni, who was bent over the ground. Zhao Ni shook her head helplessly. It seemed that she knew about this matter and she had been beaten up because of it.

“I’m not getting married,” Qian’e said.

“You’re not getting married? It doesn’t matter what you say! You don’t have any right to speak in this family!” Old Madam Qian pointed at Qian’e and shouted.

“I just won’t get married. It’s useless no matter what you say!” Qian’e said as she looked at Old Madam Qian.

Old Madam Qian’s hands trembled in the face of the tough stance from Qian’e. She glanced at Zhao Ni and gave her a kick.

“Ah!”

“This is the kind of good daughter that you brought up! She ruined her own reputation and even dragged me and my son down! Why did I let you enter our Qian family!” Old Madam Qian said.

“Don’t hit my mother! Anyway, I won’t get married. If you want to get married, you can do it yourself!” Qian’e pounced over to protect Zhao Ni.

“What a rebel! Do you really think you have a say in this family?! You heartless brat! See if I don’t break your legs!” Old Madam Qian picked up the stick and wanted to hit her.

Qian Wang, who had been silent in the room, suddenly opened the door and walked out shouting, “Stop arguing! There’s no end to it!”

“You spoiled brat, who are you talking to? Is this how you talk to your mother?” Old Madam Qian said.

“Xia Fang did not accept our apology at all. Instead, this wretched girl made her angry,” Qian Wang said.

Old Madam Qian looked at Qian’e fiercely. Not only did this girl cause trouble for the family, but she was also going to affect her son’s grading at work. If her son could not get a good grade at work, he would be stuck for the rest of his life and would not have much of a future.

“Didn’t you say that you have settled with the Xia family? Damn girl, how dare you lie,” Old Madam Qian said.

Zhao Ni protected Qian’e with all her might. Before Qian’e and Qian Wang returned, Old Madam Qian told Zhao Ni that she had already betrothed Qian’e to a rich family in the countryside.

It was hard to imagine that a rich family in the countryside could be really rich. Qian’e would have a hard life for years if she married into the family. Furthermore, it was not like Qian’e could carry anything with her hands or shoulders, and she was not particularly capable.

Moreover, the man from that family had been married before. His wife had died three years ago and left behind four daughters. If Qian’e married into the family, she would definitely not have an easy life.

Even if Zhao Ni was greedy for her own wealth and status, she could not treat her daughter badly and she felt really bad about it. After all, her daughter was her own flesh and blood.

In addition, that family was from her hometown and the same village. If news of this got out, she would not be able to return to her parents’ house in the future...

Chapter 255: A Long Time Ahead

That family said that as long as Qian’e married into their family, they would give her 500 dollars as a betrothal gift. They would also give her the ‘three turns and one sound’.

At first, Zhao Ni could not understand why that family wanted Qian’e to marry into their family. Later on, when she knew that that family had four daughters, she then understood that what they wanted was for Qian’e to bear a son to carry on the family line.

However, Qian’e had already removed her uterus during the previous incident and could no longer have children.

If that family found out about this, they would definitely break off the engagement. However, she did not know how Old Madam Qian had managed to persuade them to agree to Qian’e marrying into their family and also give her a generous betrothal gift.

It was possible that Old Madam Qian did not tell them the truth at all and was just tricking them, and throwing Qian'e under the bus for that bit of money.

"This matter is already settled. You'll get married next month. There's no room for discussion on this," said Qian Wang.

Qian'e laughed like a lunatic and said, "Could it be that you all did not tell them that I'm infertile. If they find out, they definitely won't agree to the marriage."

Before she could finish speaking, Old Madam Qian went up and slapped Qian'e.

"You money-losing good-for-nothing. If you dare to say anything, I'll beat you to death right now," Old Madam Qian said.

"Come on, kill me if you can. I'll see if you need to go to jail then," Qian'e said as she glared fiercely at Old Madam Qian.

"If you go to jail at such an old age, you definitely won't be able to come out alive. When the time comes, see if anyone would go there to collect your bones. When you die, you'll be casually thrown aside somewhere," Qian'e said.

Old Madam Qian raised her stick and started hitting Qian'e. Qian'e did not make a sound and only looked at Old Madam Qian fiercely.

"Alright, alright, stop hitting her. Is it true that you did not tell that family that this wretched girl can't have children?" Qian Wang looked at Old Madam Qian and asked.

Old Madam Qian hesitated for a moment before saying, "I didn't tell them. If I did, they wouldn't want Qian'e."

Qian Wang frowned and looked at the old lady. It seemed that he would not be able to marry off Qian'e this time.

“You’re really muddle-headed. If Qian’e really marries into their family and they find out that she’s infertile, and then that family comes to the hospital to look for me, I would get into trouble during the grading exercise,” Qian Wang said.

Old Madam Qian was stunned on the spot. During that time, all she could think of was showing photos of Qian’e to that family. After that, they were very satisfied with how Qian’e looked.

She was focused on how this money-losing good-for-nothing could get finally married and not be a burden at home, and that Zhao Ni would become more obedient after that.

Between marrying off this money-losing good-for-nothing and Qian Wang’s grading, Qian Wang’s grading was definitely more important.

“Let’s not talk about this matter anymore. Quickly tell that family that we are not going through with this marriage,” said Qian Wang.

“It’s all your fault, you money-losing good-for-nothing. If you had built a good relationship with the He family back then, would we have such a hard life?” Old Madam Qian said.

Back then, Qian Wang rose to become the department head only because Qian’e had a very good relationship with He Mei. At that time, when Qian’e casually mentioned that her father was still a trainee doctor, He Mei arranged for her father to get promoted.

Speaking of the He family, she would not have ended up like this if not for He Mei.

Qian Wang’s mind was filled with thoughts of how to reconcile with Xia Fang. It was important to have the support of the hospital director during this upcoming grading exercise. He knew that the hospital director and Xia Fang were relatives.

If Xia Fang said anything detrimental to Liu Yang this time, he would definitely not be able to pass the grading exercise.

This matter could not be rushed as everything had to be considered at length. He felt that he still had ample time.

“This matter ends here. From tomorrow onwards, go to Xia Fang’s house every day to apologize until they forgive you.” After saying that, Qian Wang returned to the room.

Qian’e looked at Qian Wang and Old Madam Qian with a great deal of resentment in her eyes. When she was on good terms with the He family, everyone at home was very nice to her regardless of what she did.

Now that she had fallen out with He Mei, she was scolded and beaten up at home every day.

There was still a long time ahead. She would remember all these things and return the treatment to them one by one in the future!

Chapter 256: Lost

After the father and daughter from the Qian family left the Xia residence, Xia Fang and Qiao Mei did not dwell on it. They actually felt that it would be stranger if Qian’e admitted to her mistake.

“Why was Qian Wang so anxious to come to our place to apologize?” Qiao Mei asked.

“There is a grading exercise in the hospital. He might be fighting for a chance to get a good grade,” Xia Fang said nonchalantly.

Grading? Then why wasn’t Aunt anxious about this?

“Aunt, aren’t you going to be graded?” Qiao Mei asked.

Xia Fang shook her head and said, “This kind of thing is most troublesome and useless. I won’t take part in such a thing.”

“Isn’t grading based on capability where anyone who is more capable gets a higher grading? Why would it be troublesome?” Qiao Mei looked at Xia Fang in confusion.

“Silly child, it’s not like that now. It depends on a person’s personality nowadays. Capability only plays a small part,” Xia Fang said.

No wonder Qian Wang was so adamant about visiting them to apologize. It was to let everyone think that he had a good character.

However, in reality, he looked like a two-faced person. Qian’e definitely looked like she had her share of beatings and scoldings at home.

Qian’e was also a pitiful person.

“Don’t be so kind as to forgive Qian’e. I hope you won’t forget what she did,” Xia Fang said.

“No, Aunt, of course I won’t,” Qiao Mei said.

After a night’s rest, Qiao Mei and Xia Fang headed to the old house the next day to take a look around.

It was a work day today, so Xia Fang specially applied for leave to accompany Qiao Mei.

“Aunt, where is the exact location of the old house?” Qiao Mei asked.

“It’s near the museum,” said Xia Fang.

Xia Fang had a poor sense of direction and she usually went to the house with her other family members.

As there was a museum nearby, the land in the area was very expensive and the government also imposed height restrictions. Businessmen usually did not invest in the area, so the houses nearby were all compound complexes where each house was occupied by many families.

Qiao Mei thought that the old house was located in such an area, but Xia Fang brought her into an alley.

Even though it was an alley, it was big enough for a horse carriage to pass through. Ordinary alleys could only allow a maximum of two people to pass side by side, so it was obvious that this was an area where rich families lived.

Not long after, Qiao Mei and Xia Fang arrived at a courtyard. An old man came out and smiled happily at Xia Fang.

“Oh my, what a rare guest. Why did you think of coming here to take a look today?” said the old man.

Qiao Mei stood obediently behind Xia Fang and smiled sweetly.

“Uncle Zhou, I brought Xia Zhe’s wife to come and take a look at the old house. Where are you going?” Xia Fang said.

The moment Uncle Zhou heard that Xia Zhe’s wife was there, he instantly perked up and sized Qiao Mei up carefully.

“This Xia Zhe is so lucky. This young girl is really good-looking. If his grandmother can know about it, she will definitely be very happy,” Uncle Zhou said happily.

As he spoke, Uncle Zhou’s eyes turned red. Uncle Zhou had lived in this place since he was young and could be said to be childhood sweethearts with Xia Zhe’s grandmother. They used to be very close.

“Grandpa Zhou, you flatter me,” Qiao Mei said with a shy smile.

“Our Xia Zhe is more than just lucky. Mei Mei is a good cook. When they move here, Uncle Zhou, you must oblige them and come over for a meal,” Xia Fang said happily.

“Alright, alright, alright. Xia Zhe’s grandmother is not lucky enough to try it so I’ll try it for her.” Uncle Zhou smiled happily and waved his hand.

“Alright, Uncle Zhou. We’re going to look at the house. Take your time and be careful.” With that, Xia Fang left with Qiao Mei.

Along the way, they encountered many old people. There were not many young people around and the common area was being taken care of by the old people who lived here. Now that the pace of life in the city had become very fast, the old people were unwilling to live in the apartment buildings, so they all chose to live in the old houses which they found more comfortable.

The neighbors also knew one another and they were quite comfortable chatting and playing chess together at the entrance of the alley.

“Aunt, how long until we arrive?” Qiao Mei asked.

Xia Fang looked at the houses nearby. Even though she had grown up here, she could not remember the roads around here. When she was young, she often needed Xia Zhe’s father, Xia Mao, to bring her home when she got lost.

Now that the road signs around the area had changed, it was indeed difficult to distinguish the roads.

Chapter 257: Staying Over at the Old House

“Eh? I clearly remember it being around here!” Xia Fang said as she looked at the surrounding houses.

Qiao Mei shook her head helplessly. Before she came, Xia Zhe had told her about the personalities and shortcomings of everyone in the Xia family, and he specifically mentioned that she must not let Aunt take her out for a long walk.

“Aunt, do you remember if there’s any special signs or characteristics?” Qiao Mei asked.

“I remember there is a big cherry tree in the yard, right at the door,” Xia Fang said.

Cherry tree?

Qiao Mei looked around and saw a big tree in a courtyard in front. Based on Aunt’s description and the age of the tree, it looked to be that one.

“Aunt, do you think the courtyard in front looks like it?” Qiao Mei pointed at the courtyard in the distance.

Xia Fang took a look and confirmed that it was the correct courtyard. She slapped her thigh and said, “Oh my, look at my memory.”

“Let’s go, Aunt. Let’s go over,” Qiao Mei said as she held Aunt’s hand.

The two of them came to a pitch-black wooden door. The door was not big and could not be compared to those belonging to the ancient royal residences, but it was still imposing enough.

It looked like the doorway had been modified in recent years. It was probably because it had been in disrepair for a long time and given that the city no longer allowed such a large doorway, it was rebuilt to make it smaller.

It was a standard siheyuan courtyard house, with side houses in the east and west sides and an opposite house facing the north.

The courtyard was very big. The moment they entered the courtyard, they saw a huge cherry tree. Immediately next to it was a grape rack made of vines.

There was also a stone table and stone chairs in the middle of the courtyard. It would be perfect for drinking tea and enjoying the scenery in autumn.

Before Qiao Mei could appreciate the place, the sky quickly darkened and it looked like it was going to rain. Qiao Mei and Xia Fang hurriedly ran into the house.

“It looks like it’s going to rain,” Qiao Mei said.

“Yes, looks like we have to stay here tonight,” Xia Fang said.

Qiao Mei looked around at the furniture and fittings and did not see any dust at all. She immediately knew that someone must have come here often to clean up.

“I have an arrangement for cleaners to come in twice a week. Otherwise, we wouldn’t be able to stay here today,” Xia Fang said proudly.

It was a good thing that the house was clean and tidy. Otherwise, they would not be able to live in it.

As they spoke, the rain began to fall. Qiao Mei stood at the door and stared blankly into the distance.

Xia Fang went into the rooms to tidy up the beds. When she came out and saw Qiao Mei staring into space, she said, “My mother loved to eat grapes and cherries when she was younger. My father planted that cherry tree back then.”

Given that, this tree should be almost 100 years old.

“After my mother passed away, this cherry tree never bore cherries again. Don’t cut down this tree when you move in in the future. It would be good to keep it if only for the shade,” Xia Fang said sadly.

“No, no, of course not. I think this tree is not old, but it lacks nutrition. When the time comes, I’ll change the soil to a special type that’s suitable for it. I’m sure it can still bear fruits,” Qiao Mei said as she patted her chest.

Xia Fang shook her head. It was not as if they had not tried to think of ways to save the tree. The eldest son of the Xia family, her eldest nephew Xia Wen, was a university professor.

He knew many geologists and plant experts who came over to help think of ways to save this tree, but in the end, nothing came out of it. She knew that Qiao Mei could do a lot of things, but could Qiao Mei save the tree that all the experts said could not be saved?

Xia Fang looked doubtful.

“Aunt, do you doubt me, but I’m one of the best farmers in our village. I can’t say for sure about anything else, but I can definitely save this tree. Just wait to eat cherries!” Qiao Mei clapped her hands and said confidently.

This action made Xia Fang laugh out loud. She smiled and said, “Then I’ll wait for you to save it. When that happens, I’ll find someone to set up a swing for you so that your child can play under the tree.”

As Xia Fang spoke of her child, Qiao Mei also smiled gently. She was already thinking about how the two children would look playing under the tree after they were born.

Chapter 258: Settle the Score Later

“Next time, I’ll send you cherries every year. I used to grow grapes at home, and I would dry the grapes I planted and send them to Xia Zhe to eat. Even Xia Zhe said that they were delicious! So Aunt, don’t worry!” Qiao Mei said.

Xia Fang said suspiciously, “But Xia Zhe dislikes sweet things the most.”

“He doesn’t like sweet things, but he often writes to me saying that he wants to eat raisins!” Qiao Mei said seriously.

In Xia Fang’s memories, Xia Zhe had never eaten anything sweet from young. Even for fruits, he only picked out those that were not sweet. Perhaps he was trying to make Qiao Mei happy during their lovey dovey period.

“Perhaps his taste changed after he grew up, or the raisins you dried must be really delicious, so that’s why he wanted to eat them. After all, you made them yourself,” Xia Fang said.

Qiao Mei nodded. She was sure that the raisins she made must be delicious, and that Xia Zhe definitely did not lie to her.

As Qiao Mei looked around, she suddenly realized that a head had appeared at the top of the wall.

“Hey Aunt, can you see who that is?” Qiao Mei asked curiously as she pointed to the top of the wall.

Xia Fang took a closer look and said, “Isn’t it Xia Zhe! Why doesn’t this kid use the main entrance, and he doesn’t even use an umbrella on a rainy day.”

Xia Zhe was still in his military uniform. He climbed over the wall and quickly ran into the house. Qiao Mei immediately leapt into Xia Zhe’s arms.

“Why are you back suddenly! You didn’t even send a letter!” Qiao Mei hugged Xia Zhe excitedly.

“I wanted to give you a surprise,” Xia Zhe hugged Qiao Mei and whispered into her ear.

Seeing his aunt watching them curiously, Xia Zhe blushed.

“Oh my, our Xia Zhe actually knows how to blush,” Xia Fang teased.

Xia Zhe realized that his aunt had become more talkative and much more cheerful. She seemed different from the aunt he remembered. He had not returned to the capital for more than two years.

In his memories, his aunt always had a stern expression and was usually very serious. Since he was young, she had been strict with him and always told him to have self-discipline.

He did not expect his aunt to become so smiley and mischievous, and even knew how to tease him now.

Only then did Qiao Mei realize that she had hugged Xia Zhe for a long time and she quickly let go of him. Fortunately, no one else had seen her. If anyone else saw her, they would say that she was indecent and she would be berated for being shameless. This would in turn affect Xia Zhe.

“Tell me, were you just humoring me or were the raisins I made really delicious?” Qiao Mei said.

“It’s that my Mei Mei is especially capable and everything she makes is delicious,” Xia Zhe said.

It seemed that Xia Zhe really did not like sweet stuff. He only ate more than usual because Qiao Mei made it.

“Yes, yes, yes. I’ve long known that your Mei Mei is the best. She knows how to do everything. The neighbors all praise her and even say that you’re lucky,” Xia Fang said proudly.

Xia Zhe did not tell anyone of his trip home this time so that he could give Qiao Mei a surprise. When he returned to the camp after the competition, they had promoted him to an officer straightaway. Initially, they only intended for him to remain as the acting battalion commander, but he was officially the battalion commander now.

“Are you officially the commander now?” Xia Fang asked.

Xia Zhe nodded.

It was very impressive for someone his age to be in this position and this was the result of his own hard work. In terms of military achievements, he was only slightly inferior to Qiao Mei’s grandfather, Qiao Qiang.

Qiao Mei was overjoyed when she heard the news. She said excitedly, “Then let’s have a good meal tonight. I’ll cook a big meal to celebrate.”

Xia Fang nodded in agreement, and Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei tenderly.

“Whatever you say,” Xia Zhe said.

“Also, I’m going to settle scores with you after dinner!” Qiao Mei said as she pretended to be angry.

It made Xia Zhe puzzled as he did not know what mistake he had made. He looked at his aunt in confusion.

Xia Fang shook her head, indicating that there was nothing she could do and that Xia Zhe should take care of himself.

“You have so many older sisters and younger sisters who want to marry you in the capital. I have to settle these scores with you properly. How many romantic debts do you actually have!” Qiao Mei glared at Xia Zhe with her hands on her hips and said in a serious tone.

Chapter 259: Modern Furnishing

Romantic debts?

For a moment, Xia Zhe had no idea what he had done. He had never been in a relationship before and Qiao Mei had been the only woman in his life. How could he have any romantic debts?

Xia Fang watched the show silently as a bystander.

Qiao Mei waved her hand and said, “Forget it, forget it. I’ll settle the score with you tonight.”

When Xia Zhe saw Xia Fang’s expression, he blushed and nodded as he stood next to Qiao Mei.

There were a total of five rooms in the main house of the old courtyard house. In addition to the living room in the middle, there were two bedrooms on the east side, and a study and a guest bedroom on the west side. There was also an additional small room attached to each side of the main house.

The furnishings in the house were not the modern type either. These were all antique furniture. The tables, chairs and benches were made of wood. Even the roof had a wooden ceiling.

When they entered a bedroom, Qiao Mei realized that the furnishings in this room were completely different from what she saw outside. The mahogany furniture outside looked very classical and elegant, while the bedroom contained modern furniture. Qiao Mei looked at Xia Fang in confusion.

Xia Fang sighed and said resignedly, "In the early days, all the things were mostly plundered by my sister-in-law's family. We had to replace some of the things that were damaged."

Qiao Mei nodded.

When Qiao Mei entered the master bedroom, she realized that there was still an old bed inside. It was very exquisite and the carvings on it were particularly detailed. The bed had a traditional bedframe with a moon-shaped entrance.

"Wow, I like this bed so much!" Qiao Mei hurriedly went forward to take a closer look.

The carvings on the bed frame were all done by hand and each pattern was exceptionally exquisite. All these made it very valuable and she felt fortunate that there was at least one such treasure left behind.

"This is the bed that Xia Zhe's grandmother had slept on. Everything else is gone, I only manage to keep this one," Xia Fang said.

Qiao Mei looked at the bedframe with the moon-shaped entry and could not bear to let go of it. Initially, she had thought about placing an arhat bed in the house where she could relax and have tea. However, after looking through the antique market, she did not manage to find a bed that she liked.

She did not expect the old house to contain so many treasures. She must take good care of them and keep them in a good condition.

Xia Fang and Xia Zhe were very happy to see how much Qiao Mei liked these items.

After looking at the two bedrooms on the east side, they went to the study and guest bedroom on the west side.

The study was empty except for a few bookshelves and a desk. There was nothing else, and it contained all modern furniture.

The guest bedroom was even more simply furnished. There was only a bed and a closet and nothing else.

Qiao Mei did not ask for more. She would just go to the antique market to buy more antiques in the future. It was already very good that the old house was maintained in this condition.

There were a total of six rooms in the side houses in the east and west wing, but there was nothing in them. There was not even any hanging piece on the wall, not to mention tables and chairs. The kitchen was located at the corner of the east wing.

There was modern furniture in the kitchen. It was well-stocked with all kinds of kitchenware, as well as a small amount of rice and oil.

Qiao Mei looked at the things and was secretly worried. It was raining heavily outside and there was nothing to eat at home. What should she do?

"Aunt, there's nothing here. Maybe I should go out and get some groceries," Qiao Mei said.

"At this hour, there's nowhere to buy anything. Let's go to neighboring Uncle Zhou's house to ask for a meal," Xia Fang said with a smile.

“Ah? Is this acceptable?” Qiao Mei said as she looked at Xia Fang uncertainly.

“Of course it is. I was just saying that when you two eventually move into the old house, you should invite Uncle Zhou over for a meal. Since there’s nothing at home, let’s go to Uncle Zhou’s house to cook for him. Then we can eat there too,” Xia Fang said.

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe quietly, not knowing what kind of relationship Uncle Zhou had with the Xia family.

Xia Zhe nodded and whispered, “Grandpa Zhou watched me grow up and was a good friend of my grandmother. It’s alright, our families are very familiar with each other.”

Qiao Mei only felt relieved when heard Xia Zhe say this. She decided to build a good relationship with Grandpa Zhou after they moved in. When the cherry tree in this house bore fruits, she would give some to Grandpa Zhou so that he could try it and see if it was as delicious as those grown by Xia Zhe’s grandmother.

“Mei Mei, you don’t have to worry. Uncle Zhou is a nice person. He’s a loner and has no children. He lives alone,” Xia Fang said.

Chapter 260: Borrowing a Kitchen to Cook

When the rain subsided a little, the few of them made their way to Uncle Zhou’s house.

“Uncle Zhou, are you home?” Xia Fang knocked lightly on the door and asked.

When they spoke at the intersection just now, Uncle Zhou was going out for a walk. He should be back by now.

“Coming, coming,” Uncle Zhou said.

The heavy door opened slowly. When Uncle Zhou saw Xia Zhe, he smiled even more happily.

“Xiao Zhe, when did you come back? Come in, come in!” Uncle Zhou hurriedly invited Xia Fang and the others into the house.

“Grandpa Zhou, I just came back today. The army allowed me to take a vacation,” Xia Zhe said.

He hurriedly pulled Qiao Mei to his side and introduced her to Grandpa Zhou. “Grandpa Zhou, let me introduce you. This is my wife, Qiao Mei.”

Uncle Zhou’s full name was Zhou Sheng. He had been a teacher and educator his entire life and was a high school language teacher. Now that he had retired, he spent his time at the nearby park and played chess. His life was quite comfortable.

He had grown old without having any children. However, the students he taught were all very outstanding and would often come to visit him.

Zhou Sheng only ever loved one person and that person was Xia Zhe’s grandmother. They were originally classmates. However, Xia Zhe’s grandmother liked Xia Jun.

Xia Jun was handsome and well-built, and Xia Zhe’s grandmother married him without any hesitation. Xia Jun also treated Xia Zhe’s grandmother very well. After that, Zhou Sheng did not fall in love with anyone else, and he lived alone without getting married and having children.

Zhou Sheng had always treated Xia Zhe like his own grandson. Ever since Xia Zhe was born, Zhou Sheng had watched him grow up. He always thought about Xia Zhe whenever there was something delicious to eat.

Sometimes, when Xia Zhe got into trouble and was beaten and scolded by Xia Mao, he would run to Zhou Sheng’s place so that Xia Mao would not beat him.

“We met at the entrance of the alley just now. You’re a lucky kid to find such a beautiful and capable wife. Your grandmother would definitely like her very much,” Zhou Sheng said.

Qiao Mei smiled shyly. Xia Zhe also looked at Zhou Sheng in embarrassment.

“Uncle Zhou, have you eaten?” Xia Fang asked.

“Not yet. I’m an old man and I don’t really cook. When I’m hungry, I’ll just grab a quick bite,” Zhou Sheng said with a smile.

“That won’t do. Grandpa Zhou, when I move here in the future, you can come to my house to eat. I can cook well,” Qiao Mei said.

“There’s no need to go through so much trouble. You two just need to live your own lives well,” Zhou Sheng said.

“What trouble? When Xia Zhe returns to the army, I’ll have to stay here alone. When my grandfather comes to live here, the two of you can hang out together and talk to each other,” Qiao Mei said.

Zhou Sheng nodded when he heard what Qiao Mei said.

“Grandpa Zhou, it’s raining today and already so late now. We didn’t buy any groceries, so we’re thinking of having a meal here,” Xia Zhe said.

“Alright, alright, alright. It’s lively when there are more people, but there’s not much food in the kitchen. I’ll go make you guys something to eat.” After saying that, Zhou Sheng wanted to go to the kitchen.

“No need, no need. Grandpa Zhou, didn’t I say that I would show you my skills? I’ll let you have a taste of my cooking today,” Qiao Mei said.

After she finished speaking, Xia Zhe brought Qiao Mei to the kitchen. Xia Fang and Zhou Sheng sat in the courtyard to play chess and drink tea.

“Which family in the capital is Mei Mei from?” Zhou Sheng asked.

“Not from the capital. She’s from a family in the countryside. Xia Zhe took a fancy to her himself and it wasn’t arranged by his family,” Xia Fang explained.

Zhou Sheng was a little shocked when he heard this. Although Xia Jun and Xia Mao did not care about differences in status, Xu Lan was still very particular about it.

“And Xia Zhe’s mother did not say anything?” Zhou Sheng asked in surprise.

Xia Fang sighed resignedly and said, “Don’t you know what Xiao Zhe is like? He got married behind our backs and didn’t let her know at all.”

“Hahahahaha!” Zhou Sheng laughed loudly.

“Sigh, there’s nothing we can do,” Xia Fang said.

“Good lad. So this is how he got married. As expected of Wu Min’s grandson.” Zhou Sheng picked up his teacup and drank some tea as he sighed.