

## Fat Wife 261

### Chapter 261: The Poor Potatoes

Wu Min was the name of Xia Zhe's grandmother.

"You might know this child's grandfather. His name is Qiao Qiang," Xia Fang said.

Oh, Qiao Qiang...

Zhou Sheng fell into deep thought. He did know about this matter. Back then, Qiao Qiang had saved Xia Jun's life. Everyone of the older generation knew about this story. Then that young girl must be the one who was betrothed to Xia Zhe before she was born?

"How did Xia Zhe get to know this young girl? Based on his character, he doesn't seem to be the kind of person who gets married without meeting his partner first," Zhou Sheng asked.

Xia Fang had thought about this question as well. She also suspected that initially, Xia Zhe did not marry Qiao Mei willingly.

"We don't know any details about this, but after spending some time together, I find that Qiao Mei is indeed a very nice child. Qiao Qiang brought her up especially well," Xia Fang praised.

"Looks like you like this child very much. Then I can feel assured." Zhou Sheng nodded in satisfaction.

While the two of them were chatting enthusiastically, the "action" in the kitchen was also in full swing.

"You have never been in the kitchen before?" Qiao Mei asked Xia Zhe.

Xia Zhe nodded awkwardly. Nothing in his immediate surroundings looked familiar to him.

“There’s nothing we can do about it. Just help me wash the vegetables,” Qiao Mei said.

“This is definitely not a problem.” Xia Zhe rolled up his sleeves and prepared to go all out.

Qiao Mei took a quick look at what was available in the kitchen. She did not expect to see an oven in Zhou Sheng’s kitchen. This way, she could let him have a taste of the pastries she made.

There were some cabbages and chives in the fridge, a piece of tofu on the chopping board, and a basket of potatoes in the corner of the kitchen.

“Do you know what Grandpa Zhou likes to eat?” Qiao Mei asked.

“Grandpa Zhou is not picky about food. He eats everything, but since he’s elderly, he can’t eat anything that tastes too strong,” Xia Zhe said.

“Then let’s have scrambled eggs with chives, tofu with stewed cabbage, stir-fried potato slices, and braised pork. For dessert tonight, let’s make a low-sugar cake for Grandpa Zhou,” Qiao Mei said.

“Sure, anything that you want to make is fine,” Xia Zhe said as he smiled at Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei looked at the ingredients in front of her and thought that they seemed a little too plain. This was the first time she was cooking for Grandpa Zhou and she should be making some nice dishes. The normal dishes she wanted to make seemed a little too boring.

“I’m thinking maybe I should go out and buy more stuff. These dishes are a little too common. Will Grandpa Zhou like them?” Qiao Mei frowned as she looked at the ingredients on the chopping board.

Xia Zhe gently held Qiao Mei’s hand and said, “Don’t worry, Grandpa Zhou won’t think much of it. He’s very easygoing, you don’t have to think too much.”

Qiao Mei nodded. Even if these were very ordinary dishes, she could still make them delicious. She immediately got to work.

“What can I help you with?” Xia Zhe said.

“You can help me prepare the potatoes. Just peel them,” Qiao Mei said as she pointed at the basket of potatoes.

“No problem. You can do something else.” Xia Zhe took a small stool and a small knife and sat in front of the basket, preparing to peel potatoes.

Qiao Mei quickly washed the rest of the vegetables and then started the fire to heat up the oil. She finished cooking the other dishes very quickly. The rest of the dishes were ready to be served, but Xia Zhe had not finished peeling the potatoes yet.

Qiao Mei looked over curiously and saw Xia Zhe chopping the potatoes with the knife.

In the end, there was not much left of the pitiful potatoes in that basket. Qiao Mei stood behind Xia Zhe silently and watched until there was only one left. Xia Zhe happily held out a plate full of potato chunks for Qiao Mei.

“I’m done with the potatoes,” Xia Zhe said happily as he held on to his plate.

Qiao Mei looked at the plate helplessly.

“Everything in this plate is what’s left of this basket of potatoes?” Qiao Mei asked.

Xia Zhe turned to look at the potato pieces all over the ground and then at the remaining potatoes in his hand.

“Did... did I do it badly?” Xia Zhe said as he looked at Qiao Mei, feeling a little lost for words.

“No, it’s just that we need to change the potato slices to shredded potato.” Qiao Mei took the potatoes and prepared to shred them.

The potatoes on this plate were really pitifully small. There were not enough of them to cut into slices at all and they could only be used to make shredded potato.

## Chapter 262: Wages Too Low

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei, feeling a little embarrassed. In the future, he must watch Qiao Mei cook more often and learn how to make a few dishes.

Later on, after Qiao Mei gave birth, she would have nothing to eat if he did not know how to cook. Xia Zhe watched carefully as Qiao Mei used a kitchen knife to shred the potatoes and also paid attention to how she added the seasoning after she heated up the oil.

From the corner of her eye, Qiao Mei saw Xia Zhe watching her secretly but she did not say anything. Xia Zhe was still in a daze when Qiao Mei was done.

“Are you done watching?” Qiao Mei asked.

“Yes,” Xia Zhe replied blankly.

“So, does your wife’s cooking taste good or is your wife pretty?” Qiao Mei asked, holding back her laughter.

“My wife is pretty... No! My wife’s cooking tastes good,” Xia Zhe said laughingly.

“Let’s go. The dishes will get cold soon. Ask Grandpa Zhou and Aunt to come over for dinner,” Qiao Mei said as she carried the plates.

Xia Zhe helped to carry the plates and brought Qiao Mei to the dining room before making his way to the courtyard to call out to Zhou Sheng and Xia Fang.

“Aunt and Grandpa Zhou. The food is ready. You can come and eat now.” Xia Zhe turned around and went back to the kitchen to get the rice.

Zhou Sheng and Xia Fang sat in the dining room, waiting for Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe. The fragrance of the food made their mouths water.

“The food smells quite good,” Zhou Sheng said.

“Don’t just think they smell and look good. The food that our Mei Mei makes tastes even better. Even the neighbors praise her,” Xia Fang said proudly.

“It’s not as exaggerated as Aunt says.” Qiao Mei brought the rice into the house and sat down. After Xia Zhe came in, they all started eating.

“Grandpa Zhou, this is the special liquor I bought in the army. Give it a try.” As Xia Zhe spoke, he poured the liquor for Zhou Sheng.

“Then I must try it today,” Zhou Sheng took a sip after saying that. This liquor was indeed of good quality and it left a nice fragrance in his mouth.

“Grandpa Zhou, I hope you don’t mind these dishes. It’s raining outside and we can’t go out to buy any other groceries. We can only use what’s available in the kitchen to make a few simple dishes. I don’t know if you’d like them,” Qiao Mei said embarrassedly.

“There’s no need to be so polite with me, my child. I usually just eat steamed buns and drink some soup at home. These dishes are already very good. Besides, the food you make is indeed very delicious. Even your ordinary home-cooked dishes are comparable to the dishes served at the hotel restaurants,” Zhou Sheng took a sip of wine and praised her with a smile.

“Grandpa Zhou, we might move here in the next two days. When you’re free, I’ll come and play chess with you. You must come to our house for dinner too,” Xia Zhe said.

“Then I would be disturbing the two of you,” Zhou Sheng said as he shook his head.

“How can that be? I’m still unfamiliar with the capital and I think it’s nice to have someone as approachable as Grandpa Zhou around,” Qiao Mei said happily.

She felt that Grandpa Zhou was very similar to her grandfather. If her grandfather came to the capital to live in the future, the two seniors would definitely get along well.

“Uncle Zhou, do you know if anyone around here wants to sell their house?” Xia Fang asked.

“Huh? Why are you asking this? Are you going to sell the old house?” When Zhou Sheng heard what Xia Fang said, he immediately put down his chopsticks and spoke with a stern expression.

“That’s not it, Grandpa Zhou. It’s that my grandfather is alone in the countryside. As I’ll stay in the capital after giving birth. I’m worried about him. Furthermore, he wants to return to the capital to live, so he asked me to buy a house here,” Qiao Mei said.

Hearing this, Zhou Sheng felt relieved. However, it was Xia Zhe who became jittery.

Xia Zhe whispered into Qiao Mei’s ear, “Why don’t I know about this? If Grandpa wants to buy a house, it won’t be easy to buy one around here. My wages are still too low. We have to save up for another year before we can afford to buy a house here.”

Even at this moment, Xia Zhe’s main concern was about using his own limited salary to buy a house for her grandfather, and it made Qiao Mei very happy to know that. Xia Zhe did not immediately blame her for not telling him that she wanted to buy a house. Instead, he was worried that his salary was not enough for her grandfather to live around the same area and afraid that her grandfather would not be able to live comfortably.

“My grandfather had dug up a 100-year-old ginseng on the mountain. Since he had been thinking about returning to the capital, he told me to ask around when I’m here and see if I can sell the ginseng and then exchange it for a house,” Qiao Mei explained.

Xia Zhe got a huge shock when he heard what Qiao Mei said. She had actually brought such a valuable item all the way from the village. If she had run into criminals, she might even have lost her life.

Xia Zhe frowned as he looked at Qiao Mei and said, "I'll settle this score with you when we go back. You brought along such a valuable thing without considering that there would be people who might covet it."

Qiao Mei quietly stuck out her tongue at Xia Zhe and said playfully, "You think you have a score to settle with me. I still have scores to settle with you tonight. Sooner or later, you'll have to give me a clear explanation about your romantic debts."

"Sure, sure, sure. We'll explain everything to each other then," Xia Zhe said.

"This task is not an easy one. After all, such a valuable thing cannot be exchanged within a short period of time," Zhou Sheng said after some thought.

"Then does Grandpa Zhou know who would want this thing?" Qiao Mei asked.

"The houses in this area all have good feng shui. There are very few people who want to sell their houses given that they are all used to living here. The old people here usually won't want to sell," Zhou Sheng said.

Everyone fell into deep thought. At this moment, Xia Fang said, "Perhaps we can ask the Cao family who lives in the back part of our house. If they're willing, then the entire house will be ours."

Zhou Sheng nodded and said, "That's certainly worth a try."

The whole house originally had four sections. The house that the Cao family lived in was the back part of the original house that was separated out and allocated to them. In actual fact, the Cao family had always been dissatisfied with the house they were living in now.

The front yard was located on the Xia family's side, so they had the main entrance. The Cao family were allocated the two back sections of the house so they could only use the back door. The alley outside the back door was narrow. People could enter on foot but the alley could not accommodate cars.

The Cao family always felt that their house had bad feng shui. They thought that it was an inherent problem that came with the house and that it was inauspicious to have to use the back door.

The Cao family was also a military family. Old Master Cao and Xia Mao were of the same generation and they were in the same troop. Old Master Cao was at the peak of his career when he was allocated this house and his luck went downhill after that. The Cao family had always felt that it was the house which brought about the bout of bad luck.

The eldest son of the Cao family, Cao Da, was the only one in the family who had a source of income at the moment. Recently, there were also some signs of trouble and the entire family was very worried.

They heard that after Old Madam Xia passed away, she left her house to her grandson. This grandson had always been in the army and did not live here, so the wife of the Cao family's eldest son came up with a selfish idea.

"Why don't we discuss with the Xia family about swapping houses? In any case, people from the Xia family don't live in the house. The army will eventually allocate a house to him too. Why don't we ask the Xia family to swap houses with us and let us have the front yard?" said the Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law.

It was not as if the rest of the Cao family did not have the same idea, but they did not dare to raise the issue in view of the Xia family's standing in the community.

They wanted to sell their house and live elsewhere, but no one would be able to afford such a big place now even if they put it up for sale. Even if someone could afford it, who would dare to show off their wealth since it would be like courting death?

"When Old Madam Xia was still alive, we told her that we wanted to swap. In the end, we were scolded and chased back by Old Madam Xia. Now that you mention the topic of swapping again, I don't know who you can talk to about this," Cao Da said.



Cao Da had actually gone around asking for more information previously, but Xia Zhe's troop was considered a classified unit and no details were allowed to be released. He asked around so many times that someone started to cast suspicions on Cao Da's intentions and he almost got investigated. He did not dare to continue asking around after that.

They did not expect Xia Zhe to come uninvited, which saved them any further effort. They were caught by surprise by the arrival of Xia Fang and Xia Zhe.

"What are you here for?" Cao Da asked.

"We're here to buy your house," Xia Zhe said.

When the Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law heard this, she looked at Xia Zhe and Xia Fang mockingly and said, "You really don't visit unless you need something. There are so many of us living here. If you buy our house, then where do we go? We definitely can't sell it, but if you want to swap houses with us, then it is something we can accept."

"We're indeed here to swap the house with something, but not with our house," Xia Zhe said.

If he did not use his house to swap for their house, what else could he use? Could it be that Xia Zhe had another property elsewhere that he wanted to use to swap with them?

That should not be the case. Why would Xia Zhe want to do this?

Xia Zhe's actions made the Cao family members very confused.

Chapter 264: Intercepted

Xia Zhe turned around and glanced at Qiao Mei. She immediately understood what he meant and took out a metal box from her backpack.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei and smiled before taking the metal box from her and opening it to show the Cao family members.

“This is a 100-year-old wild ginseng. We would like to exchange it for your house.” Xia Zhe showed the wild ginseng to the Cao family members.

The Cao family members gathered around curiously to take a closer look. However, no one in the family was a doctor, so they did not know if this was really a wild ginseng which was 100 years old.

“A 100-year-old wild ginseng is so rare. How can you have such a thing? Could it be that you’re lying to us,” said the eldest daughter-in-law of the Cao family.

Although this eldest daughter-in-law of the Cao family was not very cultured, she was indeed very shrewd and could always get to the point.

“To check if this is a 100-year-old wild ginseng, you can ask Old Mr. Sun to come and take a look,” Xia Zhe said.

Old Mr. Sun was a famous old Chinese doctor in the capital. He had already retired and also lived in this area. Everyone in the neighborhood thought highly of his medical skills. Usually, if anyone had any headache or fever, they would look for Old Mr. Sun and he would always help out.

“Alright, then let’s ask Old Mr. Sun to come and take a look,” Cao Da said.

Old Mr. Sun’s house was only about 100 meters away from here. After a short while, Cao Da came back with him.

Old Mr. Sun was very curious. He had not seen many 100-year-old ginsengs during his time, let alone a wild ginseng like this one.

Old Mr. Sun’s eyes fell on the ginseng the moment he arrived and he could not take his eyes off it after that. He looked at it and then sniffed it, but he did not dare to touch it.

"It's fine, old sir. You can take it to have a look." Qiao Mei saw the way the old man looked at the ginseng like it was a valuable treasure and recalled how Liu Yang looked when he saw this 100-year-old wild ginseng.

"Can I try a little bit?" Old Mr. Sun asked.

"Of course." Qiao Mei nodded.

Old Mr. Sun gently pinched a small piece of ginseng root and tasted it.

"The medicinal effect of this ginseng is extremely good. Perhaps it's due to the mountains and rivers that nurtured it. This ginseng is so much better than ordinary 100-year-old ginseng," Old Mr. Sun said in a state of shock and his eyes lit up as he looked at the wild ginseng.

"It's actually true!" Cao Da said.

"Where did you get this 100-year-old wild ginseng?" Old Mr. Sun asked.

"This was dug out from the mountain behind my wife's house," Xia Zhe said with a smile.

"Your wife? Xia Zhe, did you get married? Xia Jun didn't tell me about that. I have to call him and tell him off," Old Mr. Sun said angrily.

Xia Zhe smiled and did not say anything.

Old Mr. Sun wrapped the ginseng and placed it back into the metal box, then he turned to look at Qiao Mei and asked, "Young girl, did you go up the mountain to harvest this?"

"It wasn't me. It was my grandfather who went up the mountain to harvest it," Qiao Mei said.

Old Mr. Sun nodded in appreciation.

“There are techniques involved in harvesting ginseng. Ordinary people can’t do it. This ginseng is perfectly whole, and the medicinal effects of natural wild ginseng which are nurtured by the mountains and rivers are always more effective than other types of ginseng. This is such a rare object,” Old Mr. Sun said with a sigh.

Old Mr. Sun then said, “Do you still have any more ginseng like this?”

So that was his focal point. There was an ulterior motive behind all the things he said.

Qiao Mei looked at Old Mr. Sun and smiled without saying anything.

Old Mr. Sun immediately understood and did not continue asking.

“You’ve already asked Old Mr. Sun to take a look at this ginseng. Let us know if you want it or not,” Xia Zhe asked.

The Cao family members could not make up their minds at that moment. Although they knew that it was not easy to get hold of this 100-year-old wild ginseng, and Old Mr. Sun already said that this wild ginseng was a hundred times better than other types of ginseng, where would they live after making the exchange?

“Oh, you want to exchange it for a house? Then why not take my house. I’m willing to exchange it with you. My house is even more spacious than this place. There are four sections in total. If you want to do an exchange, you can exchange it with me!” Old Mr. Sun hugged the metal box tightly and said to Xia Zhe.

When the Cao family members saw that the situation was no longer in their favor, they became anxious. The Xia family had originally come to exchange it for their house, but they could now exchange it for Old Mr. Sun’s house.

Chapter 265: Signing the Contract

When the Cao family members saw how determined Old Mr. Sun was, they immediately panicked.

“Wait, wait! Didn’t we agree to exchange it with our house? How did it become yours?” the eldest daughter-in-law of the Cao family looked at Old Mr. Sun and said anxiously.

“When did you agree, haven’t you guys been hesitating?” Old Mr. Sun said.

“We agreed just now,” said the eldest daughter-in-law of the Cao family.

When Cao Da heard this, he hurriedly pulled his wife to his side and whispered, “Are you crazy? If we don’t have this house, where are we going to live?”

“Didn’t you hear Old Mr. Sun said that this ginseng is priceless? Old Mr. Sun is even willing to exchange his big house with four sections for this ginseng. Doesn’t that tell you something of its worth,” the eldest daughter-in-law of the Cao family whispered back.

Cao Da thought about it for a moment. He felt that what his wife said made sense, so the two of them immediately agreed and said that they were willing to exchange their house for it.

“Yes, we’ll do the exchange,” Cao Da said.

“We will exchange it with you, but you’ll have to sign a contract and move out within half a month. What we are exchanging for is your entire house,” Xia Zhe said.

Cao Da and his wife said in unison, “No problem.”

“We’ll give you this ginseng after you hand over the house to us,” Qiao Mei said.

Old Mr. Sun hugged the metal box tightly. He knew he had to return it now.

When Old Mr. Sun returned the metal box, he cast reluctant looks at it.

“I’m sorry, Old Mr. Sun. This house is meant for my wife’s grandfather. Your house is really too far away,” Xia Zhe said embarrassedly as he took back the metal box.

“My place is not that far, it’s just two steps away. Sigh, what a pity,” Old Mr. Sun said regretfully.

“There’s one more thing I need to trouble Old Mr. Sun with. Please stay and be our witness,” Qiao Mei said.

Old Mr. Sun nodded. Since he was already here, he was willing to render his help.

“What about you guys? Do you need a witness?” Xia Zhe asked.

Cao Da hurriedly shook his head and said, “No, no, we all trust Old Mr. Sun. It’s sufficient for Old Mr. Sun to be a witness for this matter.”

He did not want the news of the 100-year-old ginseng to spread.. If more of his relatives knew about it, then there would be more people coming to ask for the ginseng. If he did not give it to them, he would offend many people. He felt that it would be better if fewer people knew about it.

Moreover, this ginseng was a very useful thing. He definitely did not want any strangers to know about it.

The two families agreed on this matter and signed the contract. From that moment on, Qiao Mei had the right to live at the property.

Qiao Qiang was not present, so it was Qiao Mei’s name that was written on the contract.

The two families only signed the documents, but they did not have to go through the procedures to transfer the ownership. This was because the property deed of this house still belonged to the Xia family.

Back when the house was reallocated, it was actually considered rented out. For people who lived in the capital, if they owned more than 15 houses or an area of 200 square meters, they would have to demarcate a portion and rent it out.

The party who rented the house would then pay the owner 15% to 30% of the property value as the yearly rent. After 10 years, it would be deemed enough to cover the cost of the house and there would be no need to pay the rent anymore.

Although there was currently a policy in place to return such houses to the original owners, it was only implemented in some regions. For other areas, the policy implementation process had been delayed repeatedly.

In the end, once the ownership of a house became unclear, the government would seize it and tear it down.

Qiao Mei looked at the hard copy contract and still felt uneasy. She did not know if such a contract without any evidence would be legally binding.

All of them might not understand why Qiao Mei kept wanting to buy a house now. Qiao Mei could not say that it was because she knew the price of this house would increase by dozens of times within the next few decades. That would likely make them think that Qiao Mei was a money-faced person.

“Does this mean that the house belongs to us now?” Qiao Mei asked.

“This will do,” Xia Fang said.

After thinking about it, Qiao Mei still felt uneasy.

“Why don’t we go around and meet the neighbors to tell them that this house is now ours?” Qiao Mei looked at Xia Fang and asked.

Xia Fang smiled and said, “You think things through quite thoroughly. Then let’s go and say hello to the neighbors around us.”

## Chapter 266: Settling Scores Later

On the way, Qiao Mei asked Xia Zhe curiously, "Do you think the Cao family members will really move away by the scheduled time? I don't think their eldest daughter-in-law is an easy person to get along with."

"They will. Although the Cao family isn't really well-known, everyone involved in the deal is a reputable person. How can they take our ginseng for nothing?" Xia Fang said.

Xia Zhe nodded and added, "Don't worry. Even if they refuse to move, we still have Old Mr. Sun as our witness. Old Mr. Sun's words carry a lot of weight in this area and everyone will believe what he says."

"Mei Mei, don't be afraid. Even if that really happens, you can ask your father-in-law to settle it for you," Xia Fang said.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei with a smile. Qiao Mei smiled back and felt much more at ease. However, she still had the nagging feeling that the Cao family was not trustworthy, and she was worried that something would go wrong in the future.

After they went around to meet and greet the people who lived in their vicinity, the three of them returned to the old house.

"It's getting late. Tidy up and go to bed." After saying that, Xia Fang went into the other bedroom.

Qiao Mei sat on the bed and looked through the contract carefully. She kept feeling that something was missing.

Xia Zhe brought over some water for her to wash her feet. Seeing Qiao Mei deep in thought, he flicked her head gently.

Qiao Mei immediately covered her forehead and pouted in an aggrieved manner.



“What are you doing? It hurts!” Qiao Mei’s eyes started to water.

Tears welled up in her eyes, scaring Xia Zhe so much that he did not know what to do.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry. I just saw that you were staring into space and lost in your thoughts, so I just wanted to scare you,” Xia Zhe said.

When Qiao Mei saw Xia Zhe’s embarrassed expression, she suddenly laughed out loud.

Only then did Xia Zhe know that Qiao Mei was teasing him. He could only smile resignedly.

“Alright, stop fooling around. Hurry up and wash your feet and go to bed. You’ve walked all day today,” Xia Zhe said.

Qiao Mei thought about what happened during the day as she soaked her feet. All the neighbors knew that the house had been taken back by the Xia family. Even if the Cao family went back on their word in the end, she had both evidence and witnesses. There was nothing for her to be worried about.

“What are you thinking about this time?” Xia Zhe sat at the side and looked at Qiao Mei.

“Me? I’m thinking about all your romantic debts!” Qiao Mei said deliberately.

“What romantic debts do I have?” Xia Zhe asked, feeling puzzled.

“Let me do a count. Ever since I came to the capital, three or four women have come to find me and each of them said that she is Xia Zhe’s fiancée,” Qiao Mei said.

What romantic debts? What women? How could there be three or four?

Xia Zhe was confused by what he heard.

“I’ve never had a fiancée. If we want to go into details, then you’ve always been my fiancée. Back then, our marriage was already arranged by our grandfathers,” Xia Zhe said seriously.

Qiao Mei blushed slightly and looked at Xia Zhe, feeling a little embarrassed.

“So there’s this person called Qian’e who lives in the same compound as Aunt. There’s another one whose surname is He. I can’t quite remember the other girls already,” Qiao Mei said as she tried to recall the details.

He thought he had some impression of this person called Qian’e. After all, they had lived in the same compound. As for that person whose surname was He, he was not sure who she was.

“Qian’e grew up in the same compound as me, but we didn’t interact much. I heard that she’s already married. As for the person with the surname He, I’m not too sure who she is. I don’t seem to remember knowing anyone with the surname He,” Xia Zhe said.

Qiao Mei looked into Xia Zhe’s eyes. He did not look away and looked straight back into her eyes. It seemed that he was not lying, and that the truth was that those women were deeply in love with him but he felt indifferent about them.

“Sigh, how pitiful then,” Qiao Mei lamented.

“Pitiful? Pitiful about what?” Xia Zhe asked, not understanding her.

“Those women pursued you so wholeheartedly, but in the end, you don’t even know who they are. Aren’t they pitiful?” Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe wanted to laugh even though he was upset. He smiled helplessly and said, “Young girl, I don’t know if you can see how weird this is. You say they’re pitiful when I say I don’t know them, but you will definitely get angry if I say I know them. I’m a loser on either end, so don’t you think that I’m the most pitiful?”

Qiao Mei thought about what Xia Zhe said and felt that it made sense. Actually, she was not angry. She also knew that Xia Zhe did not do anything.

However, she just felt uncomfortable. She kept feeling that someone was trying to snatch away what belonged to her.

#### Chapter 267: First Visit

Xia Zhe bent down to wipe Qiao Mei's feet with a dry towel and said patiently, "Don't let your imagination run wild. You're my first woman and you'll be my only woman."

Hearing this, Qiao Mei's face turned red in an instant.

She reached out and gently gave Xia Zhe a slap on his back as she pouted and said, "What nonsense are you saying. You're telling me this in broad daylight. If other people hear this, they will definitely report you and say that you're shameless!"

"I'm not afraid. We're a legally married couple. Besides, it isn't broad daylight now. It's already dark, and I'm not saying this in public," Xia Zhe muttered softly.

Xia Zhe picked up the basin of used water and walked out. He poured it away and came back to rub Qiao Mei's back.

As Qiao Mei's pregnancy progressed, she began to face the same issues as other pregnant women, even though she was still less affected than other women.

If she walked for too long, she would still get a backache. The capital was not like the village. There were plants everywhere in the village and it was also a good place for resting. The supply of energy was endless.

There was nothing much in the capital, and the few trees on the road were all a little withered.

As Qiao Mei thought of the village, she realized that it had been about a month since she left. She missed her grandfather and wondered if he was doing well while living alone at home.

“Shall we go and see my grandfather tomorrow?” Xia Zhe asked.

Qiao Mei nodded and said, “Of course. I hope your grandfather won’t dislike me.”

“No, he won’t. My grandfather is very easy-going and a very direct person. He won’t dislike you. Besides, you’re the granddaughter-in-law whom he chose personally. How can he not like you?” Xia Zhe said.

After he rubbed her back for a while, the two of them lay down on the bed and prepared to sleep. Xia Zhe lay on his side and gently pulled Qiao Mei into his arms. Qiao Mei was tired from the long day and quickly fell asleep.

Xia Zhe looked at the sleeping Qiao Mei and smiled tenderly. He felt that this young girl looked so cute when she was at rest and not talking. She was usually very spirited, but when she was quiet, she looked especially gentle.

It had been a long day of traveling for Xia Zhe as well and he gradually fell asleep.

The next morning, the three of them took the bus back to the military compound.

Xia Jun was a very busy person and was seldom at home. When he heard that Xia Zhe had brought his wife home, he quickly rushed back from outside.

His eyes lit up as soon as he entered and saw Qiao Mei. She was exactly how he expected Qiao Qiang’s granddaughter to be like, and it was clear that he had not made a wrong choice.

Back in those days in the army, Qiao Qiang was one of the most handsome men around. He had already married Wu Min by then. Otherwise, he was quite sure that Wu Min, that woman who liked good-looking people, would definitely be interested in Qiao Qiang.

“This must be Qiao Mei.” Xia Jun’s smile was so wide that his eyes disappeared.

“Yes, grandfather. It’s me,” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

“Aye! Come and sit here! Tell me about your grandfather’s health? Is he well?” Xia Jun said in a gentle manner.

At home, Xia Jun was only amiable towards Xia Zhe. He did not have a nice attitude for the rest of the family.

In the past, when Xia Jun was still in the army, he had a strong temper and was very insistent on his ways. He behaved the same way at home after he retired. It was only after Xia Zhe was born that people saw an improvement in his temper.

“My grandfather is well and he has been taking good care of his health recently. He will come to the capital to meet you sometime soon,” Qiao Mei said.

After knowing that Xia Zhe’s wife was visiting, Xia Zhe’s elder brother, Xia Wen, also came home with his wife, Tan Jing.

Tan Jing looked at the smiley Xia Jun and felt very shocked. When she first came to visit, Xia Jun did not behave like this. He did not even come home that day.

Tan Jing looked at Qiao Mei’s stomach. She thought it was indeed true that a pregnant woman received better treatment, and she looked at her own stomach indignantly.

Xu Lan came back slightly later than them. She usually spent most of her time in the military art troupe. Although she had already retired, she still liked to sing and dance and was willing to go over to help and guide them.

When Xu Lan came back, she was also shocked to see Xia Jun like this. After living with her in-laws for so many years, she had only ever seen Xia Jun smile at Wu Min.

Xia Jun also had a happy smile when Xia Zhe was born. He had always treated Xia Zhe very well. As Xia Jun's daughter-in-law, she had never seen his smiling face again after that. However, with Qiao Mei's arrival, Xia Jun was now grinning from ear to ear.

## Chapter 268: Monsters and Demons

"Really? It's great that your grandfather will be coming here!" Xia Jun said.

What? She wanted to bring her own family over to live with her so quickly after she married into their family?

"What plans do you have for the future? Do you intend to let her become a military spouse?" Xu Lan said as soon as she entered.

"Mother, this is Qiao Mei." Xia Zhe frowned as he looked at Xu Lan. Then, he turned to Qiao Mei and said, "Mei Mei, come here. This is my mother."

"Hello, mother," Qiao Mei said timidly.

"Mmm," Xu Lan replied coldly.

After that, Xia Zhe introduced Qiao Mei to Xia Mao, Xia Wen, Tan Jing as well as the family's helper, Auntie Feng.

Xia Mao had inherited all of Xia Jun's strong points, but also the way that Xia Jun worked meticulously with a long face.

Currently, Xia Mao was looking at Qiao Mei with a gentle expression on his face. In the face of the cute and lively Qiao Mei, he felt the same as Xia Jun and could not bring himself to be solemn.

Xia Zhe's eldest brother, Xia Wen, was also a good-looking man. Xia Zhe looked like Xia Mao, manly and gallant. Xia Wen was more like Xu Lan, gentle and refined.

Tan Jing was Xia Wen's wife. She used to be a model, but she liked to dress older than her age. For some reason, she did not like to smile and had a cold demeanor.

Xia Zhe had told Qiao Mei earlier that Tan Jing and Xia Wen had been married for 10 years and did not have any children. It had always been a sore point for Tan Jing, and she was bothered by it even though no one said anything about the issue.

Xia Zhe told Qiao Mei not to hang around Tan Jing for no reason and not to mention anything related to children in front of her.

Qiao Mei looked at Xu Lan. Even though she was in her fifties, she was still charming and very beautiful. She used to be the mainstay of the military art troupe, and it seemed befitting of her.

Qiao Mei just did not know what she had done wrong. The moment Xu Lan entered, Qiao Mei could clearly feel that her mother-in-law did not like her very much.

Qiao Mei had also heard from her grandfather that Xu Lan thought highly of herself. Xu Lan had always intended for Zheng Yuan from the Zheng family to be her daughter-in-law, but she did not expect Qiao Mei to mess up her plans.

This caused Xu Lan to particularly dislike Qiao Mei. She felt that there was no need for her to take special care of Qiao Mei in the same manner as her biological daughter.

After Qiao Mei greeted everyone politely, Xia Jun went upstairs to get Qiao Mei's first-meeting gift.

Xia Mao had prepared his gift as soon as he received the phone call. He took out a red packet and handed it to Qiao Mei. Xu Lan also reluctantly took out a red packet from her bag.

"These are a token from us," said Xia Mao.

“Thank you, father and mother!” Qiao Mei said obediently.

Xia Wen took out a tiger head pillow and a red packet.

“This is a little token from your sister-in-law and I. You can take it,” Xia Wen said gently.

“Thank you, elder brother and sister-in-law!” Qiao Mei did not expect a red packet from him.

Tan Jing looked at Xia Wen in shock. Xia Wen had not discussed this with her before he prepared these gifts.

It was one thing to give a red packet, given that it was something that an elder brother and sister-in-law should give. However, he even gave them a tiger head pillow that was meant for a child to use!

Tan Jing looked at Qiao Mei’s stomach and felt even more unbalanced. She wondered about the extent of her husband’s desire for children, given that he had actually given another woman a pillow meant for children.

However, she could not blame others. She could only blame herself for being a disappointment. Tan Jing turned around silently and wiped the tears from the corners of her eyes.

Tan Jing thought that she was very discreet and no one could see what she did, but in fact, Qiao Mei saw what happened.

It was hard to blame Tan Jing for feeling that it was unfair. Back when Xia Wen married her, apart from the three turns and one sound, she received a betrothal gift of 500 dollars.

When it came to Qiao Mei, the betrothal gift was 2,000 dollars. Back then, when Xia Mao and Xu Lan first met Tan Jing, they only gave her a first-meeting gift of 100 dollars.

Looking at the thickness of the red packets they gave Qiao Mei, the amount was definitely more than 100 dollars.



Did they consider how she would feel about such unfairness?

Did the Xia family still acknowledge her presence?

A mere village girl actually received more respect than her.

This entire matter was not the fault of Xia Mao and Xu Lan. From the wedding to the betrothal gifts to the three turns and one sound, Xia Zhe had paid for everything himself.

The Xia family did not contribute a single cent, so they naturally did not feel that there was any unfair treatment.

Xia Mao had felt that it was not appropriate. He asked Xia Fang to contact Xia Zhe and say that he wanted to give Xia Zhe the money for the betrothal gift so that the gift was from the Xia family.

In the end, his proposal was strongly rejected by Xu Lan.

Chapter 269: Finding Fault

Xu Lan did not like the idea of this marriage at all. Furthermore, Xia Zhe had gotten married on his own without informing his parents.

“Nobody is allowed to worry about this matter. Doesn’t he like doing things himself? Let him handle it on his own!” Xu Lan said to her family sulkily.

Xu Lan was in charge of everything in the family. Xia Mao had his hands full with work and he forgot about the matter as time passed.

As for how Tan Jing found out about it, it happened when Mrs. Zheng from the Zheng family and Xu Lan went for a massage together some time ago. At that time, Mrs. Zheng had tactfully said that Xia Zhe’s marriage was the hardest on Zheng Yuan as she had waited for him for so many years to no avail.

Xu Lan felt really embarrassed, but there was nothing that she could say. After returning home, she vented her anger on Tan Jing.

She kicked up a fuss about why a village girl could get 2,000 dollars as a betrothal gift, but she only mentioned the amount and did not tell Tan Jing where the money came from.

Therefore, Tan Jing thought that the betrothal gift was given by the family. Xu Lan did not have any confidence to tell the truth either. After all, if parents did not help with the expenses when their son got married, people would say that the parents were incompetent and biased.

Xu Lan sat on the sofa and looked at Xia Zhe unhappily, feeling very upset.

He had been away from home for so many years and did not even bother to write a few more letters to his family. When he was back, all he could think of was to pick up his wife first.

“Now that you’re back, what’s your plans about your future together?” Xu Lan asked.

Xia Zhe frowned and did not speak.

Xu Lan was about to say more when Xia Jun came back down with a brocade box in his hand.

“Come and take a look. This is the first-meeting gift that your grandmother prepared for her granddaughter-in-law a long time back. It’s for you.” Xia Jun opened the box gently.

There was a pair of shiny green bangles in the box. The jade was very transparent with no impurities inside and it looked especially clear when the light shone through it.

“Thank you, grandmother. I really like it!” Qiao Mei said.

Qiao Mei did not stand on ceremony and immediately wore the bangle on her arm. She looked at it from different angles and decided that she liked it very much.

However, everyone's eyes were actually not on the bangle given by Xia Zhe's grandmother. This was because Qiao Mei had another bangle on her arm that was even more transparent and greener in color.

That bangle was even more valuable than the one Xia Zhe's grandmother had prepared for her as a gift. Anyone who had some knowledge on the quality of jade would know which one was better.

Xia Jun could tell that Qiao Mei really liked it and he felt very happy.

However, that was not what Xu Lan was thinking. Xu Lan only had eyes for the other bangle on Qiao Mei's arm.

"Where did you get the other bangle?" Xu Lan asked sternly.

For a country girl like her to have such good jewelry, her son must have bought it for the girl.

Xia Fang frowned slightly. She already knew Xu Lan's character, but she did not expect Xu Lan to go out of her way to make Qiao Mei look bad during their first meeting.

Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe looked at each other at the same time. He did not know anything about the bangle, nor did he know that Qiao Mei had given his aunt a set of jewelry.

However, money was meant to be spent. If he did not allow Qiao Mei to spend his money, then who else could spend his money?

"Didn't I already tell you? Don't wear this when you go out," Xia Zhe said as he tugged at Qiao Mei's sleeve.

From the looks of it, Xia Zhe must have bought her the bangle.

Qiao Mei smiled happily when she saw Xia Zhe covering for her.

“As a daughter-in-law, how can you not know how to be thrifty!” Xu Lan said sternly.

“Mother!” Xia Zhe frowned at Xu Lan.

In his memories, Xu Lan was not like this. Although the Xu Lan he remembered did not have a close relationship with him, she was not such an aggressive person.

It was the first time she met Qiao Mei today. He did not know what Qiao Mei had done wrong for Xu Lan to keep treating her like this.

“Am I wrong to say that! It’s not as if our family has much money and yet she has gone out to buy jewelry. It’s so wasteful. My son’s hard-earned money will soon be all gone because of you!” Xu Lan said angrily.

Qiao Mei stood rooted to the ground, not knowing what to do. She was not afraid of Xu Lan, but she felt that if she retorted, it would make things difficult for Xia Zhe.

Chapter 270: Announcing the House Exchange

Looking at Xu Lan’s behavior, Xia Jun could not take it anymore.

“They’re a couple, what does their lifestyle have to do with you?” Xia Jun said sternly.

Hearing Xia Jun’s words, Xu Lan fell silent. She could not afford to offend Xia Jun.

“Mei Mei is very capable. She even bought back the other part of my mother’s old house to make it whole,” Xia Fang said calmly.

The other part of the old house! Bought back!

The entire family was shocked.

Xia Jun and Xia Mao looked at Xia Zhe in shock, looking to get his answer.

Xia Zhe nodded slightly.

“The two sections that the Cao family lived in?” Xia Mao asked uncertainly.

Xia Zhe said confidently, “That’s right, that part of the house.”

When Xia Jun heard the affirmative reply, his face lit up.

“Young girl, tell me quickly. How did you do it?” Xia Jun pulled Qiao Mei to his side and asked excitedly.

“Like I told you earlier, my grandfather wanted to move back to the capital to live. However, he doesn’t have a house here and I thought it would be nice if he could live closer to me. Later on, when I heard about what happened with Xia Zhe’s grandmother, I thought we might as well buy back the backyard part of the house,” Qiao Mei said.

Qiao Mei related it in a light manner, but to the people at home, it was extremely shocking news.

It was most impactful for Tan Jing. They were both granddaughters-in-law, but they were treated so differently.

The differences span from the betrothal gifts to the attitude of the family to the bangle on Qiao Mei’s arm. Although she also received a bangle, hers was far inferior to the one that Qiao Mei had.

Moreover, her younger sister had taken a fancy to the bangle after she wore it back home when she was newly married. At that time, her sister said that she only wanted to borrow it, but she had not even returned it by now.

Xia Wen was also aware of this matter. When it happened, Xia Wen said that he would buy another one for Tan Jing, but because he was too busy with work, he forgot about it.

Now, Qiao Mei had actually bought back the other part of the old house. This had always been something that Xia Jun regretted not being able to do and Qiao Mei had now fulfilled it for him.

Tan Jing looked at Qiao Mei indignantly, but there was nothing she could do except to feel disheartened.

“That Cao family is not easy to talk to. What did you tell them, and did you sign a written contract?” Xu Lan said sulkily.

“We have all that. I was with her,” Xia Zhe said.

Since Xia Zhe had gone with her, everyone felt at ease. However, Xia Mao was still a little puzzled. The Cao family had always kept a tight grip on the house and he wondered why they decided to sell.

“Didn’t the Cao family make things difficult for you?” Xia Mao asked.

“No, they were happy to do it,” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

That was even more weird. Their family was doing quite well, although they had not been in the limelight in the past two years. Logically speaking, they would not be that tempted by an offer of money.

Xu Lan suddenly stood up as she thought of something.

“How can a girl like you have so much money? Do you know if you have that much money and if others find out about this, the Xia family will suffer for it!” Xu Lan scolded angrily.

“Sit down! We still don’t know if it was bought with money!” Xia Jun said.

“But!”

“No buts! Sit down!” Xia Jun said sternly.

Xu Lan still wanted to speak, but she could not go against Xia Jun. She sat down silently and stared hard at Qiao Mei.

“Child, tell me how you got the house back,” Xia Jun said patiently.

Experience really counted for something. As expected of a veteran, both his observation and thinking skills were really good. He immediately knew that this house could not have been bought with money.

“My grandfather paid for this house, but he did not really pay for it. It was actually an exchange,” Qiao Mei said.

Everyone looked puzzled.

An exchange? An exchange for what?

Qiao Mei took out a metal box and a cloth bag from her bag. She knew that the Xia family was well-to-do enough not to be impressed by her gifts, so she did not bother to wrap them nicely.

Qiao Mei carefully opened the box to reveal two 30-year-old wild ginsengs. The cloth bag contained some wild lingzhi.

“These two 30-year-old wild ginsengs are supplements for grandfather and father. The lingzhi is a gift for mother,” Qiao Mei said.