

Fat Wife 281

Chapter 281: Tidying up the Vegetable Garden

Xia Zhe looked at how Qiao Mei reacted and felt both angry and helpless. He reached out and held Qiao Mei's head while saying, "You're still pregnant. Be good and go to sleep."

Qiao Mei giggled quietly in Xia Zhe's arms. It got really late after a while and the two of them gradually fell asleep.

On the other side of town, Xia He and Xia Fang returned to the Xia family residence. The moment they entered, they saw Kong Li sitting in the living room with a lot of food on the coffee table.

Xu Lan, who was sitting at the side, looked very haggard. For the entire afternoon, it was only her, Kong Li and the helper at home. Putting aside the fact that Kong Li kept calling her auntie, Kong Li also kept asking her for food and drinks.

If whatever they offered Kong Li was not deemed delicious enough, they would have to go out and buy something else. Otherwise, she would say that they treated their guests poorly and wanted to go out to publicize how the Xia family neglected their guests.

It was how she managed to hold Xu Lan under her thumb as Xu Lan was the kind of person who cared the most about reputation.

Seeing Xu Lan so haggard, Xia He went forward and said ingratiatingly, "I'll leave now, I'll take her with me now."

As soon as Xia He finished speaking, she went forward to grab Kong Li. However, Kong Li shook off Xia He's hand and said, "Where are you taking me?"

She did not want to go anywhere else. She did not know that the Xia family residence was so comfortable. It was such a big house and there were servants helping out. She could have whatever she wanted, so she did not want to go anywhere else.

“This is my grandfather’s house. Do you think you can stay at my grandfather’s house whenever you want? Hurry up and follow me,” Xia He said as she stood at the door and looked at Kong Li.

“I’m not leaving! If you want to leave, you can leave on your own.” Kong Li ignored Xia He and sat on the sofa to continue eating, drinking and watching television.

Xia He was so angry that she clenched her fists and said coldly, “Are you leaving or not? If you don’t leave, I’m going to ask your brother to come back.”

Xia He did not want to get angry with the Kong family and had not quarreled with any of them for a long time. She had been maintaining a nice attitude in front of them.

Kong Li could also tell that Xia He had reached the limit of her patience. She pouted and packed her things before following behind Xia He.

Kong Li used to live in the countryside, in a house with two small rooms and a small courtyard. Later on, she moved to the city to live in Kong Lu’s new house. It was the Xia family who had paid for Kong Lu’s spacious new house with four rooms and two living rooms.

Yet, it was definitely not comparable with Xia Jun’s villa which was a luxurious place with three floors. Now, they were headed for Xia Fang’s house. Xia Fang’s house had three rooms and a living room. The room that was kept for Xia Zhe to sleep in was not open to outsiders. There was still another small bedroom for Kong Li to sleep in while Xia He stayed with Xia Fang.

As soon as they entered, Kong Li looked around Xia Fang’s house and sized it up. For an ordinary family, such a house was already considered the best, but in Kong Li’s eyes, it was just a lousy house.

“What kind of lousy house is this? It’s so small,” Kong Li said disdainfully.

“It’s already good enough that you have a place to stay, yet you’re still so picky. If you continue being so picky, you can go out and find a place yourself,” Xia He said impatiently.

What Kong Li did today had already embarrassed her within the Xia family. She could no longer be bothered to talk to Kong Li in a nice manner.

Kong Li went into the guest room. Xia He and Xia Fang chatted through the night, and Xia He reminded Xia Fang to lock the cabinet doors and drawers at home. Otherwise, things would really go missing.

The next morning, Xia Zhe got up early to tidy up the courtyard. He had finished arranging all the furniture in the house yesterday, but had not tidied the vegetable garden in the backyard yet.

He borrowed a few bricks from the neighbors and placed them around the vegetable garden to demarcate the different areas, making it look much more orderly. He then plowed the old soil and picked up all the broken stones.

When Xia Zhe was done, Qiao Mei was still sleeping on the bed without any signs of wanting to get up.

Xia Zhe picked up a piece of foxtail by the roadside and sat by the bed to tickle Qiao Mei's nose with it.

Qiao Mei seemed to feel some discomfort with her nose in her sleep. She frowned and reached out to rub it before turning her body to the other side. Xia Zhe smiled quietly and started to use the furry part of the foxtail to tickle Qiao Mei's nose again.

Chapter 282: Planting Vegetables

Qiao Mei could not help but sneeze. She opened her eyes in a daze and saw a green furry thing in front of her. She thought it was a bug and screamed in fear.

"Ah, caterpillar!" Qiao Mei covered her face with her hand and said as she backed away.

Xia Zhe threw the foxtail aside and hugged Qiao Mei gently. "Don't be afraid, don't be afraid. It's just a foxtail, don't be afraid."

When Qiao Mei heard that it was Xia Zhe teasing her, she clenched her fists and hit him on his back.

“You scare me so early in the morning!” Qiao Mei said with tears in her eyes.

“It’s my fault, it’s my fault. I won’t do it again.” Xia Zhe was at a loss when he saw Qiao Mei crying. He wiped her tears and covered her with the blanket.

Qiao Mei did not know what was wrong with her. She never used to cry, but ever since she got pregnant and when Xia Zhe was by her side, she felt like crying whenever she felt aggrieved.

Perhaps it was because her emotions kept fluctuating after she got pregnant and Xia Zhe had always indulged her and spoiled her too much.

“Then don’t do this again next time,” Qiao Mei said as she sobbed.

Xia Zhe nodded and tried to redeem himself by saying, “I got up early this morning to tidy up the vegetable garden you wanted. I didn’t know what you wanted to plant though, so I haven’t gone to buy any seeds.”

Vegetable garden? Planting? What was he talking about?

Qiao Mei had just woken up and felt a little puzzled. Why did Xia Zhe suddenly mention a vegetable garden?

“What vegetable garden? Where did that come from?” Qiao Mei asked in puzzlement.

“Did you become forgetful after getting pregnant? You were the one who told me yesterday that you thought the backyard looked quite nice and wanted to have a vegetable garden there,” Xia Zhe said.

“Ah.” Qiao Mei’s memories gradually returned and she recalled what happened yesterday.

“How is it, do you feel better now?” Xia Zhe asked.

"I'm awake now. Let's go take a look at what we can plant in the backyard." Qiao Mei got dressed and followed Xia Zhe to the backyard.

The yard looked quite big. It was definitely more than enough to grow vegetables. They could also have fruit trees or something similar. Then they would not have to go out to buy fruits in the future.

However, Qiao Mei did not plan to stay in this house for too long. She still wanted to return to the village to stay for a while before returning to the capital with her grandfather when he was ready.

"Let's go and buy the seeds to grow some potatoes, sweet potatoes and corn," Qiao Mei said.

It was easy to grow these things. All they had to do was to sow the seeds and let them grow. Moreover, these things did not require much care.

After they bought the seeds and planted them, Qiao Mei wanted to try her hand at making desserts. At this moment, Zhou Sheng came to visit again.

"I saw the two of you going out to buy things early in the morning. Where did you go?" Zhou Sheng came in and said with a grin.

"Grandpa Zhou, you're here. I thought that the vegetable garden in the backyard was too empty and wanted to plant some vegetables," Qiao Mei said.

"It's such a big yard. It would be exhausting if you grow too many plants," Zhou Sheng said.

Most of the neighbors in the vicinity had the same house layout, so they all knew what it looked like.

"That's so true. That's why I'm also thinking whether it's better to plant fruit trees or something," Qiao Mei said seriously.

“In the past, your family had plum trees. Those plum trees grew tall and big, and the flowers that bloomed every winter were especially beautiful. The neighbors in the vicinity all came to this house to get some plum branches to plant in their own homes,” Zhou Sheng said.

Looking at Grandpa Zhou’s dazed expression, it appeared that he was thinking of their grandmother again. It looked like he was not missing the plum blossoms, but the person who planted them.

“Alright, let’s grow a plum tree then. There will be flowers blooming again during winter in the future,” Xia Zhe said.

“Good, good, good. When I’m free later, I’ll take a few branches off my plum tree and plant them for your family,” Zhou Sheng said with a smile.

“Thank you, Grandpa Zhou,” Qiao Mei said with a sweet smile.

Zhou Sheng felt very happy to see Qiao Mei. Who would not like such a smart and capable girl? This must be a blessing that Xia Zhe had accumulated from his previous life.

Chapter 283: Antiques and Treasures

“I heard that you had made an exchange for the two sections of your backyard from the Cao family,” Zhou Sheng asked.

Xia Zhe nodded and said, “Qiao Mei was the one who did it.”

“This young girl is quite capable. She actually managed to get the entire house back. This has always been your grandmother’s wish and now it has finally come true,” Zhou Sheng said emotionally.

“It’s true. If not for Qiao Mei, I don’t know when we will be able to get that part of the house back,” Xia Zhe said with a smile as he looked at Qiao Mei, who was busy in the kitchen.

“Kid, you’re so lucky. You have to treat this girl well and not do anything to let her down. You must dote on her,” Zhou Sheng said sternly.

“Yes I know, Grandpa Zhou. I will definitely treat Qiao Mei well,” Xia Zhe said.

At this moment, Qiao Mei brought out a plate of low-sugar cake for Zhou Sheng.

“Grandpa Zhou, try this. I’m worried that it’s not good for your health to eat too much sugar at your age. There’s no sugar in this. Try it and see if it tastes good,” Qiao Mei said.

Qiao Mei looked at Zhou Sheng expectantly. This was her first time making low-sugar cake. Zhou Sheng took one piece and tasted it. It was indeed not sweet, but had a nice milky fragrance.

Zhou Sheng nodded and said, “It’s really delicious, and it’s not sweet either. It’s so fluffy and soft. Mei Mei, you’re really capable!”

After saying that, Zhou Sheng was about to pick up the second piece when he realized that half of the plate was already empty. Xia Zhe had been quietly helping himself to the cakes.

“I say, you’re already an adult, yet you’re snatching food from an old man like me!” Zhou Sheng looked at Xia Zhe and said angrily.

Xia Zhe was stunned by the outburst. He just felt that the cake was very delicious and could not resist the temptation. He did not realize that he had wolfed down so many of them.

“Hahahahahaha. Don’t worry, Grandpa Zhou. I’ll make some more for you so that you’ll be able to keep some at home. Whenever you’re hungry after going out, you’ll have something to munch on,” Qiao Mei said.

“Good, good, good. Thank you for the hard work, Mei Mei,” Zhou Sheng said.

“Not at all,” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

“By the way, you must take note of the Cao family’s movements in the coming days,” Zhou Sheng whispered.

The Cao family’s movements?

Qiao Mei looked at Zhou Sheng in confusion and then turned to look at Xia Zhe, but Xia Zhe was equally confused.

“In the past, your grandmother’s father was a famous gambler in the capital. Although your grandmother’s ancestors were very rich, your grandmother’s father was quite the prodigal son,” Zhou Sheng said.

Xia Zhe did not know anything about these things. His grandmother never mentioned anything about the past. Even if she happened to mention something, she never elaborated and would move on to something else.

After all, being born into a noble family was not something glorious at that time. Back in those days, his grandparents only managed to cover up this background due to their countless contributions to the country.

“Your grandmother’s grandfather was a very capable man. He was a businessman and had a lot of money, to say the least. However, when it came to your grandmother’s father, he was not that capable. He liked to go around buying antiques and got cheated at some point in time,” Zhou Sheng said.

Xia Zhe did not care much about money, as he saw money as just a worldly possession. However, when Qiao Mei heard this, her eyes lit up.

“Young girl, did you think of something?” Zhou Sheng smiled at Qiao Mei.

“You said that grandmother’s father is a prodigal son. Then where did all the antiques go? Since he had both real and fake ones, there must have been some real ones around, right?” Qiao Mei voiced her thoughts.

“Hahaha, you’re indeed smart.” Zhou Sheng laughed heartily.

Qiao Mei’s quick-wittedness reminded him of Xia Zhe’s grandmother, Wu Min. Moreover, she was also beautiful and capable. Compared with Xia Zhe’s grandmother, she was not inferior in any aspects.

“You’re right, he had real antiques. After he died, he split all these things into two sets, giving one set to your granduncle and the other set to your grandmother. But one day, when I visited your grandmother, I realized that everything had disappeared,” Zhou Sheng said.

It was not just the decorative ornaments which had disappeared, even the furniture was gone.

When he asked Xia Zhe’s grandmother what had happened, she only said that her children were sick and she had exchanged all the items for money so that she could seek medical treatment for the children.

Chapter 284: Know Nothing

However, Xia Mao was at home at that time and he was not sick at all. He was only asked not to go out of the house.

At that time, it was very chaotic in the capital, so it was likely that she did not tell Zhou Sheng the truth. He thought that if the things were not really sold away, then it meant that they were all hidden away.

“When you’re able to do so, you can check if there are any of them hidden within the entire house. If there are none, then it would mean that she really sold those items back then,” Zhou Sheng sighed and said.

Antiques! Treasures!

Qiao Mei did not pay any attention to what Zhou Sheng said after that. She felt that those things must have been hidden under this house.

“You both need to be careful too. Don’t let others know that you know all this,” Zhou Sheng reminded them carefully.

He did not know if it was a good thing for him to do this. After all, although it was not as strict now as in the past, it would still be considered a very serious crime if someone found out and reported it.

If that happened, it would not just be Xia Zhe’s career at stake. His entire family might even need to go to jail for it.

“Sigh, maybe I shouldn’t have told you.” Zhou Sheng began to regret what he did.

“What? I didn’t hear anything. Wasn’t Grandpa Zhou telling us that this cake is delicious? I don’t know anything,” Qiao Mei said as she blinked her big bright eyes.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei and smiled. He turned to Zhou Sheng and said, “That’s right, we didn’t hear anything. If those things are there, let them stay there. If there’s nothing, then it’s a relief for us.”

Zhou Sheng looked at Xia Zhe and then at Qiao Mei. He thought that these two kids were really good kids and it set his mind at ease.

Now, Zhou Sheng could understand why Wu Min did not give this house to anyone else back then, even when people said that she was biased. She did not even give it to her own son, but chose to give it to her precious grandson instead.

Xia Zhe was the kind of person who could give up a mountain of treasures. He had so far remained unmoved by such a huge temptation. No other person in the Xia family would be like him.

“You’re good kids, I’m relieved to see you like this. Even if I die, at least I didn’t let your grandmother down,” Zhou Sheng said with a smile.

“Pfft, pfft, pfft. What are you talking about, Grandpa Zhou? You still have to bring our baby out for walks in the park!” Qiao Mei hurriedly spat three times on the ground.

Old people often said that if someone said something inauspicious, one must spit three times on the ground and pretend that nothing had been said.

Zhou Sheng then took out a brocade box from his pocket.

“This was passed down from my ancestors. It’s one of the pocket watches that they had received as tributes. There were three in total and I inherited this one,” Zhou Sheng said.

The gold pocket watch shone brightly in the brocade box. Although it no longer had the luster of a brand new item, it had aged really well.

It was self-evident who this ancestor might be. He must also be from a very prominent family. However, Qiao Mei felt that the gift was too precious for her to accept.

“Grandpa Zhou, this item is really too valuable. You should take it back,” Qiao Mei said to Zhou Sheng as she closed the brocade box.

Zhou Sheng smiled and shook his head. He said emotionally, “I’m already so old and I don’t have any children. I like Xiao Zhe and treat him like my own grandson, so you’re like my granddaughter-in-law. Consider this watch to be a token from me. You just have to take care of it well.”

Qiao Mei glanced at Xia Zhe as she could not make up her mind. Xia Zhe smiled and nodded. “Since it is a token from Grandpa Zhou, just accept it.”

Qiao Mei took the brocade box with both hands and said, “Thank you, Grandpa Zhou. I’ll definitely take good care of it. When the time comes, I’ll pass this box to my child.”

“Good, good, good. That’s good to know.” Hearing that Qiao Mei treasured this pocket watch so much, Zhou Sheng felt very happy and satisfied.

Zhou Sheng slowly stood up and walked out of the door, taking with him the remaining cakes as well as his bird cage.

“Grandpa Zhou, remember to come for dinner tonight!” Qiao Mei said.

“Alright!” Zhou Sheng left after saying that.

Qiao Mei looked at the pocket watch in her hand and felt very happy. She thought that Grandpa Zhou was such a nice person.

After putting away the brocade box, Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe eagerly and he could not help but smile at how she looked.

“Why? Are you thinking about the treasures Grandpa Zhou mentioned?” Xia Zhe said.

Chapter 285: Another Appraisal

Qiao Mei knew that Xia Zhe already understood what she wanted.

“Let’s just pretend that we don’t know about those things. If we find them now, it will only attract unwanted attention. Besides, the Cao family might also be eyeing them,” Xia Zhe said after some thought.

Qiao Mei felt listless when she heard that, but after a while, she also thought that what Xia Zhe said made sense. After all, there was only a wall between them and the Cao family. It would not be a good thing for the Cao family to hear the sounds of them knocking the ground and digging into the earth. No one knew what would happen if any valuable items were found in the yard.

“Alright, don’t be sad. Come, let’s go and deliver wedding candy to the neighbors,” Xia Zhe said as he held Qiao Mei’s hand.

Qiao Mei nodded and went back to the room to change into a dark blue maternity dress. Yesterday, they had gone back to have a discussion with the Xia family. Since they had already held a banquet at Qiao Mei’s hometown earlier, they did not plan to hold another one here.

It was also a time of exceptional circumstances now, so they did not dare to make a big deal of the occasion. Qiao Mei even had to think twice even though she really wanted to wear red. Although every woman would want to have a nice wedding, Qiao Mei found herself liking the Xia family's prudent attitude.

After all, during such turbulent times, it was very rare for a family to be able to make steady progress within the last ten years.

After dressing up nicely, Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei went knocking on the neighbors' doors one by one to deliver the wedding candies, peanuts and melon seeds in a simple manner. They did this to inform the neighbors that they were already married.

The Xia family had a harmonious past few days, but it was different with the Cao family.

After the Cao family received the ginseng, the first thing they did was not to start moving out. Instead, they immediately took the ginseng and visited another very famous old Chinese doctor in the capital. They wanted to check if this ginseng was as good as what others said.

The old Chinese doctor examined the ginseng and said in surprise, "How did you manage to get this wild ginseng? This ginseng is simply fantastic!"

Cao Da remained silent, not knowing where to start. The more people who knew about this matter, the more dangerous the situation would be.

"Is there really no problem with this ginseng?" The Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law tried to change the topic.

"There's no problem with this ginseng. Just tell me the price. I want to have it," said the old Chinese doctor as he looked at the couple from the Cao family.

"That won't do. We still have a use for this," Cao Da said.

He knew that the old Chinese doctor's backer was the He family. If the doctor took this ginseng, he would definitely give it to the He family as a gift. The Cao family's real intention was to give it to the He family themselves.

"We would like to give this ginseng to the third master of the He family, He Ning. Would it be convenient for you to introduce us?" said the Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law.

When the old Chinese doctor heard this, he immediately understood what they wanted. This old Chinese doctor was He Ning's personal doctor and helped to take care of his health.

There were three sons in the He family. The eldest son was He Guo, whose daughter was He Mei. The second son had died of illness when he was young. The third son of the He family was He Ning, who was also the largest shareholder in the family business. However, as the old saying went, the great had great hardship to contend with. Although He Ning was still young, he had been seriously ill for a long time.

It was difficult for the He family to have more children, so He Mei was currently the only heir to the He family fortune.

"Alright, then come with me," the old Chinese doctor said.

The old Chinese doctor brought the couple from the Cao family to the third master, He Ning's house. It was a villa with a medium-sized garden that was located in the suburbs.

They drove from the city to the suburbs and it was already dark when they reached. The area was so far that it was not even serviced by public buses, and the surrounding areas had always been occupied by businesses dealing in flowers, plants and fruits. It was a vast area with very few people and surrounded by farmland, so it was very quiet and the air quality was very good.

This was the best location for someone who was recuperating from illness.

The old Chinese doctor brought the couple from the Cao family to He Ning's house. As soon as he opened the door, they could smell the strong scent of Chinese medicine mixed with the smell of medicinal cuisine.

The moment Cao Da entered, he saw He Ning sitting at the dining table and looking at four medicinal dishes without even lifting his chopsticks.

“Mr. He, this medicinal cuisine is good for your body. You should eat it,” said the old Chinese doctor.

“The medicine concoctions you prescribed are too bitter. How am I supposed to eat this?” He Ning complained.

“You must have heard of the saying that good medicine tastes bitter.” The old Chinese doctor tried to lighten the mood.

He Ning did not say anything. He knew that the old Chinese doctor was truly very skilled.

Chapter 286: Giving Ginseng as a Gift

He Ning could feel his health getting better after eating these medicinal dishes, but he also thought that the food really tasted very bad and found it difficult to swallow.

“She’s already the best cook specializing in medicinal cuisine in my family. If you’re not satisfied with her skills, who else can you find?” The old Chinese doctor looked at He Ning helplessly.

The family of the old Chinese doctor had been in the same line for generations. Most of his relatives and friends also did work that was related to Chinese medicine. In this instance, He Ning’s current cook was the old Chinese doctor’s cousin.

This cousin’s family was very good at making medicinal cuisine. His cousin was the best cook among all of them and was well known for her skills in the capital. There were many people who wanted to invite her to their house to make medicinal cuisine, but she turned them down.

“But it really doesn’t taste nice.” As He Ning spoke, he saw the couple from the Cao family behind the old Chinese doctor.

“Isn’t... isn’t this Director Cao? How did you find time to come to my humble house, please come in and take a seat,” He Ning said with a smile.

He had only seen Cao Da once and they did not even speak that time. He only saw Cao Da from afar that time, but it was enough for him to remember Cao Da’s face. He Ning had a photographic memory since he was young.

“We! We are... we are not... we are...” Cao Da stammered, not knowing what to say.

He Ning continued smiling. He knew that people would not visit unless they needed something. Furthermore, given that the old Chinese doctor had brought them, they must be useful to him.

The old Chinese doctor went forward and slowly opened the cloth bag. As soon as the bag was opened, He Ning had a whiff of an extremely strong smell.

“Yes! The smell is so strong. It must be top-grade.” He Ning’s eyes lit up.

Although He Ning had never studied medicine, he had learned a lot from taking medicine for so many years and had some basic medical knowledge.

The old Chinese doctor whispered to He Ning, “The medicinal value of this ginseng cannot be compared to those available in the market. This 100-year-old ginseng can let you live for another 15 years.”

Another 15 years! That was not a small number.

He Ning was currently being kept alive by all kinds of valuable herbs. If not for these herbs, he would have died long ago. It would be great news for him if this ginseng could allow him to live for another 15 years.

The couple from the Cao family stood rooted to the ground in a daze. They did not know what the old Chinese doctor and Xia Ning were talking about and did not dare to go forward to listen.

He Ning nodded in the end. The old Chinese doctor understood what he meant.

“This is what Director Cao wants to give you. You can talk about other matters. I’m going to prepare the medicine.” The old Chinese doctor looked towards the couple from the Cao family before heading to the small pharmacy in the next room to brew the medicine.

Ever since He Ning fell ill, the guest bedroom on the first floor had been renovated into a small pharmacy. It was filled with priceless medicinal herbs that the old Chinese doctor used to prepare concoctions.

Seeing that He Ning had accepted the ginseng, Cao Da felt at ease. It seemed that this matter was settled.

He Ning had been ill since he was young and he was congenitally deficient. This illness had haunted him for his entire life. The He family had all kinds of medicinal herbs, but the medicinal value of ginseng was determined by its quality. There were not many ginsengs of good quality around, let alone good quality wild ginseng.

He thought that it was heaven’s will that he could come into possession of this wild ginseng. It was the heavens that were allowing him to live a few more years.

In the past two years, He Ning’s health had been deteriorating and he could only stay at home to recuperate. The He family’s businesses were all handed over to the eldest son of the He family, He Guo. However, the one who really had the right to make decisions was still He Ning.

“You’ve done me a favor, so now I’ll do you a favor as well. Tell me what you want,” He Ning asked calmly, the fake smile gone from his face.

Cao Da looked at He Ning nervously. He had heard rumors about He Ning, but he did not expect himself to be so afraid of He Ning even though there were no emotions on He Ning’s face.

He had originally wanted to ask for something sky-high in exchange for this 100-year-old wild ginseng, but when he looked at He Ning’s face, he found himself unable to say a single word.

“What do you want? You have no desires?” He Ning asked with a frown.

The Cao family’s eldest daughter-in-law hurriedly gave the stunned Cao Da a push and said, “Speak quickly!”

Cao Da came back to his senses and he hurriedly took two steps forward and looked at He Ning.

Chapter 287: Save Myself

“I want to hold on to my current position. It’s best if I can keep this position until I retire!” Cao Da said agitatedly.

Until retirement? At Cao Da’s age, there was more than 30 years to go before he needed to retire.

“Until retirement?” He Ning glanced at Cao Da uncertainly.

Putting aside whether He Ning had the ability to help him keep his position for more than 30 years, using a 100-year-old wild ginseng to exchange for riches for the rest of his life was really asking too much.

“No, no, no. A few years is also good enough,” Cao Da immediately corrected himself when he saw He Ning’s expression.

Standing at one side, the Cao family’s daughter-in-law sweated profusely. She had never seen someone like He Ning, who exuded a sense of authority even while sitting there motionlessly.

“Sure,” He Ning said nonchalantly.

In the coming days, there were going to be big changes at the top. Cao Da was the kind of person who was dispensable so it would not be difficult to protect him.

“Thank you, Third Master He! Thank you, Third Master He!” Cao Da said excitedly.

He Ning just sat there quietly without any expression and ignored Cao Da.

“Then shall we take our leave now?” Cao Da said.

“Wait, where did you get this ginseng?” He Ning asked.

Cao Da was stunned for a moment and did not answer the question. He wanted to keep the source of the ginseng to himself so that he could keep asking He Ning for favors and getting the He family to help the Cao family.

“Is it from a dirty source?” He Ning said slowly.

Cao Da was so frightened that he broke out in a cold sweat. He turned around and said respectfully, “Xia Zhe from the Xia family brought this to us. He used this ginseng to exchange for our house.”

When did the Xia family have such a treasure? Besides, shouldn't such a thing be given to that old man Xia Jun to keep in case of emergencies? Why would they use such a treasure to exchange for a house?

“Xia Zhe gave it to you?” He Ning asked.

“Yes, he gave it to us. He said that his wife dug this ginseng out at her village,” the Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law added.

“His wife? Xia Zhe is married?” He Ning was very surprised by this news.

He had been living in this house for more than three months, focusing on his health and not bothering about the outside world. He Mei had always been very concerned about Xia Zhe's affairs. It was too strange that she did not react to Xia Zhe's marriage.

“He’s married, probably for more than three months. From the looks of it, his wife is pregnant,” said the Cao family’s eldest daughter-in-law.

He had originally thought that the He family and the Xia family would have a better future together if they had a marriage alliance. He did not expect this future to have disappeared.

“Alright, I understand. You can leave now,” He Ning said with a frown.

After the Cao family members left, He Ning thought for a long time before calling his eldest brother, He Guo.

“I’ve just sent people to investigate this matter. It’s very likely that the marriage happened because the woman lied to Xia Zhe.” He Guo told He Ning about all his speculations.

Although He Ning was not able to investigate these things personally, he believed in his eldest brother’s capability. Given that such things were usually not groundless, he wanted to let these speculations ferment and become something real.

He Ning already had a plan in mind.

“Leave this matter to me. When you have all the information, organize everything and send it to my house. I’ll make the necessary arrangements after that,” He Ning said.

“Sure, sure, sure. It’s best if you are able to handle this matter,” He Guo said happily.

The main thing was that He Ning succeeded at everything he did. He Guo just needed to wait quietly to become Xia Zhe’s father-in-law. When the time came, all the Xia family’s possessions would belong to him.

“I hope He Mei did not cause any more trouble recently,” He Ning asked.

“She has been very well-behaved recently and has not gone there to cause trouble,” He Guo said after some thought.

“That’s good. Let her stay at home for the time being. When this matter is settled, she can do whatever she wants.” He Ning hung up after that.

At this juncture, he could not let He Mei ruin the big plan. Otherwise, if this matter failed, he would need to think of other ways to salvage the situation.

Chapter 288: Eavesdropping

As dusk fell, Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe finished sending the wedding candies to the last few families and headed home.

“Sigh, it’s been such a tiring day,” Qiao Mei said as she massaged her sore shoulders.

Xia Zhe was also feeling very tired. They visited about 20 families along the streets and alleys today. Not only did they have to send wedding candies to every family, but people from each family would also hold them back to chat for a while. They wasted a lot of time doing that.

“You must be exhausted. I’ll go boil some water for you to take a bath. You can go to bed once you’re done,” Xia Zhe said.

Qiao Mei nodded listlessly and sat on the rocking chair by the door as it swayed gently.

She had not rested long before she suddenly heard a strange sound.

“What’s that sound?” Qiao Mei looked around the room curiously.

It was a strange sound. Although this house had been around for a long time, it was not in a bad condition or in any danger of collapsing. Even if there were rats gnawing on the wooden beams, it would not make a sound like that.

Qiao Mei walked into the house slowly and checked the rooms one by one. The sound was sometimes distant and sometimes close, and it was most obvious at the wall near the yard next door.

Qiao Mei quietly brought over a stool and stood on it, looking through the small window to see what the Cao family was doing.

The Cao family did not notice Qiao Mei. They were focused on searching for something.

They had even removed the bricks in the yard. Logically speaking, if they wanted to move, they could have just moved their items away. Why did they have to remove the bricks from the ground?

Qiao Mei felt that what Grandpa Zhou said made sense. The Cao family also seemed to know that Xia Zhe's grandmother might have hidden something underground back then.

Not long after, the sound stopped. It seemed that the Cao family was intent on searching through their entire house. Judging from the mess outside the house, they seemed to have started removing the floor tiles inside.

Qiao Mei took a closer look and found nothing useful in the Cao family's yard. There were no plants around, even the weeds on the ground had been pulled out by the Cao family.

"This Cao family won't stop until they have searched the entire house," Qiao Mei muttered to herself.

Qiao Mei returned to the room and took out the remaining vine seeds from her backpack. These seeds were from the same batch as the ones she used when she saved Xia Zhe. They had become useful again at this moment.

Qiao Mei returned to the wall in the back room and stood on the small stool. Through the small window, she gently scattered the vine seeds into the Cao family's yard.

"Little vines, it's up to you now!" Qiao Mei said and used her energy to stimulate the vines to grow.

At this moment, Qiao Mei's energy was already connected to the vines.

Ever since Qiao Mei obtained the other bangle, she felt that her energy was even purer than before. She could even attach her energy to plants.

The vines gradually penetrated deep into the ground of the Cao family residence. Now, she was able to share what the plants heard and saw.

She was still not very familiar with this new ability, so she could not hear very clearly. However, she could roughly make out what was going on from the intermittent voices.

"Brother, is what you said true?" asked the Cao family's second son.

"I'm not sure about it either. This is what our father said at that time," Cao Da whispered to his younger brother.

"Then why didn't you say so earlier? We could have searched in any manner we wanted when the Xia family members were away. Now, we can only do the search secretly. It would be bad if what we're doing gets discovered," complained the Cao family's second daughter-in-law.

"Sister-in-law, you're being unreasonable. If we had said this earlier, wouldn't you have demolished this house long ago? Would we still have a chance to live here until now?" said the Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law.

"Sister-in-law, you've misunderstood me. When did I say that I wanted these things? If the Old Master had wanted to give them to me, I'll take them. If not, I won't force it," the Cao family's second daughter-in-law said mockingly.

The Cao family had two sons. The second son was a businessman and had a small business selling fruits and vegetables.

The eldest son of the Cao family was the only one in the extended family who was a government official. Their relatives and friends usually ignored the second son and only paid attention to him. This caused the second daughter-in-law of the Cao family to be mocked and looked down upon from the moment she married into the family.

Chapter 289: Searching for Treasure

It was usual for the Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law to act like a tyrant and order the second daughter-in-law around like she was the maidservant.

Previously, the Cao family's eldest son lived in the front part of the house while the second son lived in the back part. However, the Cao family's eldest daughter-in-law disagreed with the arrangement and went to make a scene in front of Old Master Cao.

She wept and complained about how good her family was to the old man and how they gave him the best things and the nicest food. Yet, they were not rewarded for their efforts and only had a room to stay in.

When the neighbors heard this, they also said that the Cao family's second son and his family were insensible and ungenerous. In the end, all the gossip made the Cao family's second son and second daughter-in-law decide to move out and live on their own.

"The two of you stop arguing. Hurry up and carry on with the digging," Cao Da said angrily.

They had been digging for two days, but they did not manage to find anything in the courtyard. By right, if there was really anything, they would have dug it out long ago. However, even after tearing through the entire house, they still could not find anything.

"Could it be in a corner? If I wanted to hide something, I would definitely put it in a corner and not anywhere else," said the Cao family's second daughter-in-law.

When everyone heard this, they thought she made sense and they all stopped what they were doing. They decided to dig at the corners of the house instead.

“Hey, big brother, how do we split it if we dig up something?” said the Cao family’s second daughter-in-law as she looked at Cao Da.

“This...” Cao Da looked at the Cao family’s second daughter-in-law, not knowing what to say.

There were only four people in his own family. Other than him and his wife, he also had two sons. The two sons were very young and were unable to help with the digging, so he had no choice but to ask his second brother for help. He did not expect his second brother to be interested in these things as well.

“Big brother, let’s be fair about it. We’re all children of the Cao family. Whoever digs up something in this courtyard will get ownership of it,” said the Cao family’s second daughter-in-law.

In any case, it was possible that the Cao family’s eldest daughter-in-law would take it away even if it was someone from the other family who dug it out. It would be better to leave it to fate.

“Alright, we’ll take your idea. I’ll go dig in the east corner and you’ll dig in the west. Whoever finds something will get ownership of it,” Cao Da said.

Hearing what Cao Da just said, the Cao family’s second daughter-in-law felt relieved and agreed with a smile. She hurriedly brought the Cao family’s second son to the west side and started digging fervently.

By now, Qiao Mei roughly understood what was going on and slowly pulled back the vines. It turned out that the Cao family had long known that it was highly possible that something was buried in this courtyard.

Qiao Mei also felt a little anxious at this moment. Although she did not covet these things, she did not want to let them fall into the hands of others.

Qiao Mei used her ability again to make the vines grow insanely fast underground to check if the treasure was really there.

Not long after, using the roots of the vines, Qiao Mei found a fairly large box buried very deep underground. There was also another small box buried nearby.

At this moment, the Cao family had not even managed to dig one meter deep. This box was at least at a depth of ten meters.

Qiao Mei quietly pulled the boxes even deeper underground and used excess soil to fill up the empty spaces where the boxes were originally occupying. When the Cao family eventually dug into this spot, they would only feel that the soil here was looser than the surrounding areas, but would not find anything unusual.

By the time she was done, Xia Zhe had come back from buying food. He originally wanted to cook, but after thinking about his experience a few days ago, he decided to go to the small restaurant in the alley to buy a few dishes.

After all, Qiao Mei was pregnant. If the food he made was not delicious, she might go hungry. He was worried about her not getting enough nutrition, as now was the time when she needed nutrition the most.

Xia Zhe had a lot of worries on his mind. Ever since he found out that Qiao Mei was pregnant, he had been very concerned about her safety. He was determined to take care of both her physical and mental health.

When he returned home and did not see Qiao Mei anywhere, he went into the house to search for her and found her looking around while standing on a small stool.

Xia Zhe was so frightened by the sight that he did not dare to make a sound. He was afraid that if he made any sound, he might scare Qiao Mei so much that she fell off the stool. Xia Zhe slowly approached Qiao Mei and gently wrapped his arms around her waist.

Chapter 290: Amazing and Charming Man

“My little ancestor, what exactly are you doing?” Xia Zhe asked Qiao Mei with a frown.

“Shh!!!” Qiao Mei quickly raised her left index finger to her mouth and made a shushing gesture.

“Lower your voice and listen to what the Cao family is doing,” Qiao Mei whispered as she pointed towards the house next door.

Xia Zhe pressed his ear against the wall and listened carefully for a while before saying, “They... they’re demolishing the house?”

“I think they know grandmother’s secret. Listen carefully!” Qiao Mei tiptoed on the stool and tried her best to lean her head out.

Seeing this, Xia Zhe immediately picked Qiao Mei up and sat her on his shoulder. Qiao Mei hurriedly held on to Xia Zhe’s arm.

This man of hers was really amazing!

She was already very impressed by the fact that Xia Zhe could carry her up. She did not expect him to be able to sit her firmly on his shoulder.

Qiao Mei sat on Xia Zhe’s shoulder and giggled. She would not exchange such a man for any amount of money.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei giggling away and wriggled his shoulders slightly, making Qiao Mei shake a few times.

“Don’t just play around. Hurry up and listen to what they’re doing,” Xia Zhe said as he looked up at Qiao Mei.

Only then did Qiao Mei clearly see where they were digging. The bricks in the entire courtyard had already been pried up and all the furniture had long been moved away. Now, they were digging down at the corners at both the east and west sides.

Qiao Mei patted Xia Zhe on the shoulder and said, “I have seen everything. Put me down first.”

Xia Zhe squatted steadily on the ground so that Qiao Mei's feet could reach the ground.

Qiao Mei jumped down from Xia Zhe's shoulder and stood beside him as she whispered, "They have already moved everything away, but the entire courtyard is already in a mess. The square bricks on the ground have all been dug up."

Xia Zhe frowned when he heard this. The old house used to have wooden floors. It seemed that this had been ongoing since Old Master Cao's time.

"Come, let's go back into the house first." Xia Zhe pulled Qiao Mei back to the bedroom.

"What should we do?" Qiao Mei sat on the bed and said worriedly.

"All the old houses used to have wooden floors. Given that they've already changed it to square bricks, it would appear that Old Master Cao had already been searching since the beginning. Their house has always been undergoing renovations, so it looks like they've been searching all this while," Xia Zhe said.

"Then is it possible that they have already found it?" Qiao Mei said agitatedly.

After all, the Cao family had lived here for so long. Since they had already redone the floor, they would definitely have found some clues along the way. It would have been possible that they had already found and taken away boxes which were buried at more shallow depths.

Xia Zhe shook his head and said, "I'm not too sure about this either, but it doesn't matter even if they take it. It's not a good thing for these things to be dug out."

"But it's still a pity for these things to fall into their hands," Qiao Mei said indignantly.

"It would still be alright if they hand it over to the authorities after finding it, but if they keep it for themselves, the consequences will be unimaginable if they are found out. Since they want to dig around, then let them be. If they manage to dig up anything, they won't have it easy either," Xia Zhe said gently.

Qiao Mei understood all these principles, but she still felt uncomfortable to imagine that something belonging to the Xia family had fallen into the hands of the Cao family for no reason.

“Alright, let’s not think about this anymore. Let’s go and eat.” Xia Zhe brought Qiao Mei out to the dining room.

As soon as they entered the dining room, she could smell a nice and strong fragrance. There were three dishes and a bowl of soup on the table, and they all looked and smelled good.

“You... you made these?” Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe curiously.

“Am I that capable? I bought all these,” Xia Zhe said embarrassedly.

Even while eating, Qiao Mei continued to think about what happened just now. She could not just leave this matter alone.

Xia Zhe watched as Qiao Mei picked up a piece of meat with her chopsticks and chewed on it non-stop. She stared blankly ahead, and it was obvious to him that she was still interested in those treasures.

“What are you thinking about? You’re not even eating.” Xia Zhe knocked on Qiao Mei’s bowl lightly.