

Fat Wife 351

Chapter 351: Repairs

Qiao Mei returned to the room and put away all the bedding into the closet. There was not much left in the house now, given that she would be staying at Xu Lan's house for a while. She intended to take whatever she could with her and to take the opportunity to clean up the house properly during the renovation period.

Qiao Mei secretly ran to the small side room and grabbed the vines from before. She quietly pulled out the box that she previously removed from the Cao family's jar and took out all the jade inside. Other than a few broken pieces, there were also a few carved jade pendants and a bangle. Even though they were still intact, there were crack lines in them. They would be useless after she absorbed all their energy.

Recently, Qiao Mei had discovered that the energy she could exchange with plants was unlimited until the plants died. However, there was a limit to the energy she could receive from precious stones like jade. The energy in the jade could not regenerate after it was absorbed.

Although the jade would not have any energy left, Qiao Mei's special energy would be sealed inside and the color of the jade would become nicer. Qiao Mei found that the "air conditioner" bangle that she bought not long ago had become even more translucent than before. Although she had completely absorbed the energy inside, it would be even more valuable than before if it was put on the market now.

Qiao Mei had discovered a new way to get rich.

Qiao Mei took out the carved jade pendant with the smaller crack lines from the box, pulled it to the ground beside her and moved it to the window with the help of the vines. She held the pendant in her hand and observed it carefully. This looked like a valuable piece of treasure carved by a master, but it was a pity that there were crack lines in the corner.

After a while, the crack lines in the pendant in her hand faded. Qiao Mei rubbed her eyes and carefully examined the carved jade pendant.

“This shouldn’t be the case... There was clearly such a big crack line just now,” Qiao Mei muttered to herself as she looked at the carved jade pendant.

Qiao Mei suddenly thought of something and transferred some energy to the carved jade pendant. The last crack line disappeared and a carved jade pendant was restored to its original flawless glory!

Qiao Mei raised the pendant up against the sun and looked at it. Its color was thousands of times better than before. She did not expect to have such an effect on it.

There were familiar footsteps outside the door but Qiao Mei was still immersed in staring at the carved jade pendant.

Xia Zhe walked over and saw Qiao Mei acting all mysterious. Just as he was about to call her, he discovered the carved jade pendant in her hand.

“When did you buy it?” Xia Zhe asked curiously.

Qiao Mei indicated for him to go over to her and said, “I didn’t buy this. I saw something shiny in the soil here just now. This is what I found when I dug into the soil.”

Qiao Mei had used the vines to dig a small hole at the corner of the wall when Xia Zhe was not paying attention. Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei in disbelief.

There were so many people digging this place earlier, but they did not manage to find anything. Qiao Mei were able to dig things out once they were gone. Were they not meticulous enough? Or did Qiao Mei have an extremely good eye for such things?

Xia Zhe quickly went out and dug a little more. He did not find anything and carefully filled back the hole.

Qiao Mei decided not to keep the broken items that belonged to the old man from the Cao family. It would be terrible if Xia Zhe found out that she could restore broken items. It would be even worse if the Cao family found out about it.

She did not want to tell anyone about her superpower, not even Xia Zhe.

“Hide this thing and don’t bring it out,” Xia Zhe said.

Qiao Mei put the carved jade pendant into her pocket. She would not dare to bring it out to show anyone. It would be terrible if the old man from the Cao family saw it one day.

The two of them sat in the courtyard for the entire afternoon. They did not know much about construction, so they could only let Professor Zhu and Xia Wen worry about it.

At night, Professor Zhu and the students left to go back and rest. Xia Zhe pulled Xia Wen to one side and whispered, “There are two boxes in the middle of this courtyard. I had found them earlier.”

Xia Wen already had an idea about why Xia Zhe had been keeping an eye on the courtyard today. If there was nothing in the courtyard, Xia Zhe would have long brought Qiao Mei back to rest and relax. There would be no need for him to stay here and supervise the work!

“We can’t send anyone here to stand guard for now. He Ning’s people are nearby,” Xia Wen said as he looked up at the roof.

Chapter 352: It Does Not Matter

In the past, when the house was still in good condition, there was no one living in the house and no one guarding it. It would be a little too obvious if they should get someone to stand guard over it now when the house was dilapidated.

However, if he did not find someone to keep an eye on the place, he was afraid that He Ning would get his men to come back and dig up the things in the courtyard. He Ning would not do these things himself, but he was worried about those people who went to the Cao family’s side to dig around. There were people trying their luck by searching through the wreckage every day.

“It’s fine. If someone wants to dig, let them. Anyway, they won’t make a fuss even if they manage to find anything,” Xia Zhe said.

So many people came to dig inside the house on official business but they did not manage to dig out anything. It would be a slap to Section Chief Chu’s face if any other person managed to find something as soon as he and his team left. Therefore, even if someone really dug out something, they would quietly remove it without saying anything.

Xia Wen nodded. The two of them chatted about how to rebuild the remaining rooms and did not mention the two boxes again.

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe and Xia Wen with some admiration. Xia Wen knew that there was something underground but he did not covet them like Zhou Hua, and Xia Zhe did not have any greed for the things in the boxes. Qiao Mei knew what was in the two boxes. They were a box of priceless old paintings and a box of gold.

When Xia Zhe found these things, he only had three words for them.

It did not matter.

Such an attitude was definitely not something an ordinary person would have. It was no wonder that this courtyard was left to only Xia Zhe. Xia Zhe could feel Qiao Mei’s gaze on him and he turned to look at her. When he saw her looking at him with a look of admiration, an indescribable feeling came over him.

As Xia Wen spoke, he saw that Xia Zhe was not paying attention and followed his gaze to look at Qiao Mei.

He and Tan Jing had fallen in love on their own. Back then, he felt that Tan Jing was liberal and dignified, which was rare for a child from an ordinary family. She was also kind, mature, gentle and responsible. He married Tan Jing very quickly, but the gossip that started in the third year of their marriage had crushed the spirit of such a gentle person.

Tan Jing's relatives and friends laughed at Tan Jing for not having any children and forced her to give all her money to her maternal family. Otherwise, they would come and cause trouble. As time passed, Tan Jing was no longer the same as before.

Xia Zhe had grown up in an environment where he was used to having money and unimpressed by it. This was the character and upbringing that the Xia family had carefully nurtured in him.

What about Qiao Mei?

Xia Wen had the honor of meeting Qiao Qiang when he was young. Qiao Qiang was not a cultured person and there was nothing outstanding about him, but he was a very upright person.

That same trait was probably in Qiao Mei's nature as well.

Xia Zhe could tell Qiao Mei's character after seeing her only once, which meant that his instincts were really sharp.

Both Xia Zhe and Xia Wen looked back at Qiao Mei with admiration. Qiao Mei quickly hid behind the door in embarrassment. They had really misunderstood her. She had never mastered the concept of treating money like dirt in both her two lifetimes and, if anything, she was even more money-minded now.

Ever since she was reborn, all she could think about was how to make money and become so rich that she did not have to worry about anything for the rest of her life. She was able to seem so nonchalant about it now because the money was all hers and no one else could snatch it away. She was not in a hurry to take out all her money and hug it all.

"Let's stay at Grandpa Zhou's house for the night," Qiao Mei said.

"Are you not going back to our parents' house?" Xia Wen asked curiously.

"I'm thinking about coming here again tomorrow. Grandpa Zhou's place is nearby, so it's a good place to stay for the night." Qiao Mei glanced at Xia Zhe.

Xia Zhe said dotingly, "Let's ask Grandpa Zhou later."

"I won't go with you. I still have to go home," Xia Wen said with a smile.

They discussed what to do tomorrow and then carried on with their respective lives.

As expected, the courtyard house was not too peaceful at night. Many people came and almost got into fights over their preferred digging spots. In the end, these people who did not know each other came to an agreement and they each chose a spot to start digging.

Initially, Qiao Mei's ability to use plants from a distance only allowed her to do it within a radius of one kilometer. By now, it had increased to three kilometers. The reason why she wanted to stay in Zhou Sheng's house was to secretly protect the things in the house from outsiders.

At night, Qiao Mei used plants to protect the boxes before she retracted her energy and went to sleep. Even if those people dug through the entire ground, they would not be able to get to the treasure boxes.

Chapter 353: Sudden Visit

The next morning, Qiao Mei was still sleeping soundly in the room when Xia Zhe and Zhou Sheng did their morning exercise in the courtyard.

"What do you plan to do with your house?" Zhou Sheng asked.

"My brother found an expert to repair it. It will probably be exactly the same as before, or even better," Xia Zhe said with a smile.

Zhou Sheng nodded in satisfaction. When the house collapsed, he had been worried that it would be different from before. Now that Xia Zhe had handled it well, he felt at ease.

Xia Zhe looked towards the room and shook his head resignedly. He got up and walked into the kitchen to prepare breakfast.

“When did Xiao Zhe learn to cook?” Zhou Sheng asked laughingly.

“Only recently. It’s not convenient for her after she’s pregnant so I want to help as much as I can,” Xia Zhe said as he cut the potatoes.

Zhou Sheng nodded in admiration. He was very supportive of the idea that both men and women should contribute to their families. Zhou Sheng took the birdcage and said, “Then I’ll go out and buy something for Mei Mei. I’ll be back soon.”

Xia Zhe replied, “Alright!”

Qiao Mei curled up in bed and did not want to open her eyes. In addition to the hard work over the past two days, Second Aunt-in-law had been keeping an eye on her and not letting her relax, so she was feeling a little tired by now even though Xia Zhe had tried his best to help her.

Qiao Mei reached out to touch the blanket beside her. There was no one there and it was very cold. It was obvious that he had been up for a long time.

“Xia Zhe...” Qiao Mei slowly opened her eyes to look for him.

There was no one around. She called out a few times but no one answered. Qiao Mei could only get up, feeling aggrieved, and put on her clothes and tidy her hair before walking out.

“Oh, you’re awake?” Xia Zhe had just finished cooking a dish and was placing it on the stone table in the courtyard.

Qiao Mei pursed her lips unhappily and said, “Why are you up so early?”

“I accompanied Grandpa Zhou to do his morning exercise. Are you unhappy?” Xia Zhe asked gently.

“No, go back to your cooking. I’m going to wash up.” Qiao Mei slowly walked to the side room to wash up while Xia Zhe returned to the kitchen to continue cooking.

On Xu Lan’s end, she received a guest early in the morning.

“Eldest Sister-in-law, Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei didn’t come back last night?” Liu Fen asked in surprise.

Xu Lan never cared about these things. It did not matter if Xia Zhe or the others returned or not.

“So be it,” Xu Lan said indifferently.

Liu Fen sat at one side angrily. She thought that Qiao Mei must have found her troublesome and decided not to come back. Qiao Mei must have gone to someone else’s house to hide and did not want to come back and face her.

“Second Sister-in-law, don’t think too much about it. Hurry up and eat,” Zhou Hua said as she sat at the dining table.

As soon as Liu Fen stood up, she heard someone knocking on the door. When she opened the door, she felt that the person looked familiar but could not remember who it was.

“You are?” Liu Fen asked.

“Second Aunt-in-law, I’m Kong Lu. I’m Xia He’s husband,” Kong Lu said with a smile.

“Oh, oh, oh! I remember now! Look at my memory, I’m getting old and can’t remember things. Don’t take offense, come in quickly!” Liu Fen greeted Kong Lu enthusiastically.

“Oh, Xiao Kong is here. Why are you so free to come to the capital?” Zhou Hua asked.

“Hello, mother. Hello, Third Aunt-in-law. I’m here for business,” Kong Lu replied.

Seeing that Xia He was not in the living room, Kong Lu asked softly, “Where’s Xia He? Why isn’t she here?”

“Oh, Xia He is staying at her aunt’s place. Have you eaten? Come over and have a bite.” Liu Fen pulled Kong Lu to the dining table.

Liu Fen did not understand the conflict between Kong Lu and Xia He, but she felt that these things were not a big deal. All families had their own issues.

Old Madam Kong always used Kong Lu’s money to supplement his younger brothers. There was nothing wrong with her wanting her other sons to have a better life.

Kong Li was a troublesome sister-in-law, but she would get married sooner or later. After she got married, she would rarely come back and the problem would be solved then. How many sisters-in-law in the world were easy to get along with? Was there a need to hold on to such a small matter?

As for the issue about having children, it was even less of Kong Lu’s problem. At Xia He’s age, she was still only concerned about work and not about having children! She was just like the older boy’s Tan Jing...

Chapter 354: Deliberately Making Things Difficult

In Liu Fen’s eyes, Kong Lu was the aggrieved party. Thus, Liu Fen tried her best to please Kong Lu so that he would not blame Xia He.

Xu Lan sat at the side and did not say a single word. She understood the whole issue and knew what kind of person Kong Lu was. Although he did not commit any mistakes, his inaction was a problem.

“I’ll go look for Xia He,” Kong Lu said as he stood up awkwardly.

After greeting Xu Lan and Zhou Hua, he hurriedly ran off with his luggage.

“Why is this child in such a hurry? He didn’t even eat breakfast.” Liu Fen looked at Kong Lu’s back and sighed.

Kong Lu had never been to Xia Fang’s house and did not know where it was, but he knew where the Xia family’s ancestral home was. Back then, he had fetched Xia He from there during their wedding. At that time, Wu Min was still alive and both Xia Wen and Xia He held their weddings at the Xia family’s old house.

Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe had already gone to the courtyard house to help pack up. There were many things that required supervision during the construction process. Qiao Mei also wanted to give her ideas about making some changes to the house.

Kong Lu asked around the neighborhood based on his memory and finally arrived at the courtyard house. As soon as he entered, he saw Xia Zhe and Xia Wen supervising the work, and there was an unfamiliar woman standing beside them.

“What are you doing?” Kong Lu asked.

The three people in the courtyard turned to look at Kong Lu. Xia Wen was the first to react and said, “Brother-in-law, why are you free?”

Everyone in the family knew what kind of life Xia He was living in the Kong family. They all felt that Kong Lu was a good-for-nothing and no one was willing to be nice to him.

“Ah... I’m here at the capital for a meeting. I wanted to go to Aunt’s house to look for Xia He, but I only remembered this address, so I came here first to try my luck.” Kong Lu smiled awkwardly.

Xia Zhe walked up to Kong Lu and said, “There are many people here right now. You can wait here and we can catch up at home tonight.”

Xia Zhe's expression was fierce and cold. If not for the fact that there were too many people and also students around, he would definitely teach this bastard a lesson on the spot.

"Right, right, right..." Kong Lu stood at the door with his luggage and did not dare to enter. Both Xia Zhe and Xia Wen ignored him.

The courtyard fell silent again. Qiao Mei looked at Kong Lu and said, "Brother-in-law? I'm Qiao Mei, Xia Zhe's wife. Brother-in-law, come in and have a seat. Elder sister will be here soon."

Kong Lu looked at Qiao Mei gratefully and said, "Alright, alright."

Qiao Mei stood beside Xia Zhe and gently held his hand as she whispered, "Bear with it first. He just came and there are so many people here. Don't be angry."

When Xia Zhe saw how Qiao Mei patiently coaxed him, all his anger dissipated. Kong Lu needed to be in the capital for a while, so he was not in a hurry.

Not long after, Xia He arrived at the courtyard house. As soon as she entered, she saw Kong Lu sitting in the house in a prim and proper manner.

"You're here." Kong Lu stood up and stammered.

Xia He nodded but did not say anything. She turned to Qiao Mei and said, "I hope you have not tired yourself out recently?"

"No, I even put on weight!" Qiao Mei said with a smile.

"That's good, then I don't have to worry," Xia He said.

She still had to face whatever was coming. Xia He walked to Kong Lu's side and said, "Let's go to my mother's place for dinner tonight. You have to go over since you're back."

“Alright, whatever you say,” Kong Lu said.

“Go help Xiao Zhe and the others with some work,” Xia He said.

Xia Wen deliberately asked Kong Lu to go to the doorway to carry the building materials. Those were all real antique bricks. They had actually hired workers to carry the bricks, but now that Kong Lu was here, they could reduce the number of workers.

“Brother-in-law, there aren’t enough people carrying the bricks over there. Go over and take a look. We’re all busy here,” Xia Wen said with a smile.

Kong Lu could only brace himself and go over. He knew that he was not going to have an easy time at the capital this time round, so he just had to endure it for a while.

After Kong Lu left, Xia He stood there and looked at his back in a daze.

“Elder sister, what are you thinking about?” Qiao Mei waved her hand in front of Xia He’s eyes.

“I’m just thinking about how difficult it is to have a chance to see him and how unusual it is to see him under such strange circumstances.” Xia He smiled resignedly.

Chapter 355: No Regrets

Xia Zhe stood at the side and looked at Xia He quietly. “Elder sister, are you regretting your decision?”

Xia He understood what her brother was referring to.

“No regrets. We definitely have to split up.” Xia He lowered her head and sighed. When she looked up again, her eyes were filled with determination.

In the evening, when Professor Zhu and the others needed to leave, Kong Lu's hard labor also came to an end.

"Let's go. Mother and the others are waiting for us at home," Xia Wen said.

Kong Lu stood behind them with his face covered in dirt. Xia He could not bear to see him like this and pointed towards the side room. "You can go over there and wash up."

"Alright, I'll be right back." Kong Lu smiled happily and hurried to the side room.

Kong Lu had thought that the Xia family would definitely blame and scold him while he was in the capital this time, but as long as he apologized properly, Xia He would change her mind. Before he left, Old Madam Kong told him that there was no such thing as an overnight feud between husband and wife. As long as they talked things out, the matter would pass.

Xia Wen drove all of them back to Xu Lan's place. Liu Fen and the helper were busy cooking. Xu Lan and Zhou Hua did not enjoy each other's company and were in their rooms.

"Second Aunt-in-law, where's my mother?" Xia Wen asked with a smile.

"Oh, you're all back. Your mother is upstairs. Since you're back, go and call her. I still have work to do!" Liu Fen said and went back into the kitchen.

Xia Wen looked at Xia He. After all, he was the son and it was not convenient for him to go upstairs when his father was not at home.

Xia He went upstairs to call the two elders downstairs. Xu Lan was still working on some paperwork for the military art troupe and said she would go down a little later.

When Zhou Hua came down and saw Kong Lu, she said with a laugh, "Oh my, why is it that you look so fresh in the morning but so dusty when you come back at night? What did you do?"

“Third Aunt-in-law, I got into this state by accident,” Kong Lu said with an awkward smile.

Zhou Hua glanced at Xia He and said, “If you ask me, it’s still my family’s Xiao Hui who is sensible. Your husband is covered in dirt, yet you have not made the preparations for him to take a shower? What kind of wife are you?”

Xia He was speechless. At this moment, she did not want to have an argument with Zhou Hua. She only wanted to resolve this matter quickly and not have anything to do with the Kong family anymore.

“Come with me,” Xia He said coldly.

This house had two floors. The guest room and store were on the first floor, and the master bedroom and the three children’s bedrooms were on the second floor, together with a study room. Xia He’s room was not big. As she had grown up in the military art troupe, she had always stayed in the dormitory and did not spend much time at home, so her room was not decorated in a feminine style like other girls’ rooms.

The furnishings in the room were all old furniture that had been brought over from the old house.

“That’s the bathroom over there. Hurry up and wash up and then go down to eat. Don’t let my mother wait too long. You brought your own clothes, right?” Xia He asked.

“Yes, yes I did. I’ll go now.” Kong Lu immediately took off his clothes in the room. He felt that there was nothing wrong about that since they had been married for a long time.

If it was in the past, Xia He would still feel shy or would tease him. However, right now, she only had a feeling of endless disdain and annoyance.

“I’m going out.” Xia He quickly walked out the door and closed it.

The dishes were ready very quickly and the family sat around the dining table to eat. Other than Zhou Hua and Liu Fen, everyone else was very quiet. Liu Fen kept putting food into Kong Lu’s bowl while Zhou Hua watched from the side.

“Xiao Kong, eat more!” Liu Fen said with a smile as she took more food for Kong Lu.

“Enough, enough. Second Aunt-in-law, you eat too. I have enough,” Kong Lu said.

“Second Sister-in-law, do you think he’s a three-year-old child? Do you have to send food to his bowl? Even Eldest Sister-in-law isn’t so solicitous, yet you’re so enthusiastic,” Zhou Hua said mockingly.

Liu Fen snorted coldly and said, “I’m happy to do it. Since Xiao Kong is here, we have to treat him well. Xiao Kong, try this again.”

Kong Lu nodded repeatedly and did not dare to raise his head to look at Zhou Hua and Liu Fen. Xu Lan, who had kept quiet all this while, snorted coldly at this moment. Back then, she thought that this kid was talented and was a soldier with a promising future. Now, she felt that he was just an idiot.

Chapter 356: Let’s Go Out and Have a Chat

Kong Lu picked up a piece of fish for Xu Lan and said respectfully, “Mother, have some fish.”

Xu Lan tossed the fish out of her bowl without even looking at it. She stood up and said, “I’m full. Take your time, everyone.”

Kong Lu was like a child who had done something wrong. He sat motionlessly in his seat and watched Xu Lan go upstairs. At this moment, Xia Zhe also stood up and said to Kong Lu, “Let’s go and have a chat.”

Xia Wen gave Xia Zhe a meaningful look. Xia He lowered her head and remained silent. She knew what Xia Zhe wanted to do, but she did not want to stop him.

“Are you going to have a heart-to-heart talk with your brother-in-law?” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

Xia Zhe casually patted Qiao Mei’s head to let her know she need not worry. Qiao Mei blinked and said, “Go on. Elder sister and I will clean these up.”

“Why do you have to go out and talk!” As soon as Liu Fen stood up, Qiao Mei pulled her back.

“Second Aunt-in-law, you’re not done eating, right? I see that you’ve been so focused on brother-in-law that you haven’t eaten much yourself. Eat more, I’ll accompany you,” Qiao Mei said with a grin.

At this moment, Xia Zhe and Kong Lu had already arrived at the backyard. There was no sign of the two of them in the living room anymore.

“You! I’m not hungry! Xia He, why don’t you go and take a look at your husband! And you, Xia Wen! Why don’t you keep an eye on your brother!” Liu Fen said anxiously in an accusatory manner.

Xia Wen shrugged and said, “Second Aunt-in-law, Xiao Zhe has grown up and I can’t keep an eye on him. Jing Jing is waiting for me at home, so I’ve got to go now.”

“Take care, elder brother.” Qiao Mei sent Xia Wen off with a smile.

“Let go of me! You’re just causing trouble! Hurry up and let go!” Liu Fen reached out to pull Qiao Mei’s hand away.

Qiao Mei held on to Liu Fen’s arm tightly and forced her to sit down.

Liu Fen was shocked as she sat on the chair. Opposite her, Zhou Hua and Xia He also looked at Qiao Mei in disbelief. Liu Fen was so frightened that she did not dare to move. She was very aware that the woman holding on to her was pregnant, yet the force that was pressing down on her was terrifyingly strong.

“Second Aunt-in-law, you should just stay here and eat more. Don’t waste all the good food on the table.” Qiao Mei smiled at Liu Fen. Her smile looked sweet and alluring, but her eyes were filled with menace and coldness.

“Do... do... do you know what they’re doing? Aren’t you afraid that something will go wrong?” Liu Fen asked fearfully.

"I know, but Second Aunt-in-law, you also said that there are things that should be handled by men. It's none of our business," Qiao Mei said.

"What if he hurts him!" Liu Fen said anxiously.

"Don't worry, Xia Zhe knows his limits." Qiao Mei picked up a piece of potato with her chopsticks and placed it in Liu Fen's bowl. "Second Aunt-in-law, you should eat more."

"Xia He! How can you indulge your brother!" Seeing that she could not do anything to Qiao Mei, Liu Fen vented her anger on Xia He.

"Second Aunt-in-law, don't make things difficult for elder sister. Brother-in-law bullied elder sister. Isn't it only right for Xia Zhe to stand up for his sister?" Qiao Mei said.

"When did Kong Lu bully your sister? As a woman, you should act like one. Look at how Xia He has been married for so many years and still doesn't have children. She's still busy with work outside and doesn't care about the family. Who wants to have such a daughter-in-law!" Liu Fen said angrily.

Liu Fen turned around and said to Xia He, "Which family doesn't have to deal with conflicts? If you ask me, Xia He, your mother-in-law is already not bad. She doesn't hit you or scold you, but she still cooks for you and cleans up your house. Why are you still dissatisfied?"

Xia He lowered her head and did not want to repeat the hardships she had suffered for so many years. At this moment, she finally understood what kind of life Tan Jing had been living all these years. She had only needed to go through it for one day, but Tan Jing had to bear with it for years. Xia He muttered softly, "You've said this kind of thing 800 times. Look what you've done to my sister-in-law..."

"You!" Liu Fen was about to point at Xia He and scold her when Qiao Mei pulled her back.

Qiao Mei took the dish in front of Xia He and put them in front of Liu Fen before she said, "Second Aunt-in-law, I see that you want this dish. Come, have some."

“Don’t you understand human language!” Liu Fen shouted angrily.

Qiao Mei did not get angry. She was in no hurry to argue with Liu Fen.

Chapter 357: Punches

“Second Aunt-in-law, eat more. There’s so much food, isn’t it enough for you?” Qiao Mei said.

Wasn’t this saying that she was a busybody! That even so much food could not stop her from talking!

At this moment, Qiao Mei suddenly understood how to get along with Liu Fen. She had thought that as long as she tolerated Liu Fen for a couple of days, she would be free after Liu Fen went home. However, that was not the case in reality. She had to be ruthless to people like Liu Fen and let them see what she was capable of. Only then would such a person avoid her and not meddle in her business.

Liu Fen also realized that Qiao Mei was not someone to be trifled with. She had looked so obedient and cute when she first got here, but in fact, it was just an act and this niece-in-law of hers was actually very capable.

Liu Fen ate obediently and everyone quietened down. At this moment, the sound of punches could be heard even more clearly from the backyard.

In the backyard, Xia Zhe leaned against the wall and looked at Kong Lu who had fallen to the ground. There were a lot of fallen leaves and mud in the courtyard due to the heavy rain over the last two days. Kong Lu’s newly changed clothes were now covered in mud.

“Sorry for that,” Xia Zhe said casually without any sincerity.

“I... I’m fine.” Kong Lu forced himself to say this and slowly got up from the ground.

Previously, he had thought that it was an exaggeration that Xia Zhe was the top army warrior who had held that title for consecutive years and was unsurpassed. He had never been convinced before, but now he knew that it was all true.

At that time, he was also the top warrior in his district. He thought that since they were all soldiers, no matter how capable Xia Zhe was, there was no way Xia Zhe could be that accomplished. He felt that everyone was just exaggerating and praising Xia Zhe on account of the Xia family.

Now he knew the truth. Just now, Xia Zhe had beat him up like he was a worn-out sandbag, and he was unable to fight back at all.

Why was it like this! He had also trained very hard! Why was he not as good as Xia Zhe!

“Do you know why I beat you up?” Xia Zhe asked as he walked up to Kong Lu.

“It’s my fault. I let your sister suffer,” Kong Lu said as he looked up at Xia Zhe.

“Suffer? Tell me how she suffered?” Xia Zhe asked.

Kong Lu was stunned for a moment. Before he came, he had heard from his mother about the recent issues at home, but he felt that these were just small matters and not worth mentioning. Besides, Kong Li was still young and ignorant. As her sister-in-law, Xia He should take care of her.

Kong Lu stammered, “I... My mother and Li Li went overboard. I didn’t stop my mother from doing that or educate my sister well. It’s all my fault.”

Xia Zhe continued asking, “How did you people go overboard?”

This time, Kong Lu could not answer. These things were too trivial, and they were all minor issues during daily life. There were so many things that could have happened.

Did my mother and sister take things from the house?

But we are all family. What's wrong with taking a few items? His brothers can't even afford to eat. He is doing quite alright, so there's nothing wrong with him helping his brothers, right?

Had his sister taken something from Xia He?

However, he remembered it was just a few pieces of clothing, cosmetics and jewelry. After that, he bought new ones for Xia He. Those were not expensive things, so what if his sister took them ...

No matter how he thought about it, he still could not figure out what mistakes his family members had made. Then, he suddenly remembered that his mother and sister were always very fierce when they quarreled with Xia He. After all, they were originally from the countryside and were not as refined and polite as the Xia family.

"The way they speak and their attitudes are not good. They should talk to Xia He properly and should not be so uncouth," Kong Lu said as he looked at Xia Zhe seriously.

Xia Zhe was so angry that he did not speak. He raised his hand and punched Kong Lu in the stomach again.

He threw punch after punch but he made sure that he did not touch Kong Lu's face. Kong Lu still had to report to the capital troops in two days. If his face was injured, it would be hard to explain it.

Qiao Mei took a look at the time and went to the backyard to take a look. Qiao Mei heard their conversation and thought that since Kong Lu still did not seem to understand Xia He, there was no need for him to be the Xia family's son-in-law anymore.

Qiao Mei stood at the door to the backyard and looked at Liu Fen, who did not dare to move from the dining table. She asked, "Second Aunt-in-law, will you take your daughter-in-law's money to give to your other son?"

Chapter 358: How Generous

Liu Fen waved her hands and said, "How can I do such a heartless thing! Of course I won't!"

Liu Fen did not know why Qiao Mei suddenly asked her this question, but she felt that all families had their own issues. Liu Fen thought for a moment and added, "Every family has their own difficulties. If Kong Lu's own family is doing too much better than his brothers, it will inevitably cause a rift. I mean, he can't just watch his brothers starve to death."

"It's indeed alright to help out, but he can't go overboard!" Qiao Mei deliberately opened the backyard door a little so that Kong Lu could hear them.

"Elder sister said that in the past few years, Old Madam Kong had taken more than 3,000 dollars in cash from her. In addition, the old lady also took away many of her other belongings. She took two television sets, and also three or four bicycles and sewing machines. She actually wanted more, but elder sister did not agree to it. Otherwise, she would have taken even more! It was only after all that that elder sister started having a problem with Old Madam Kong," Qiao Mei said.

When Liu Fen heard this, she looked at Xia He. When Xia He heard someone else finally saying all the things she wanted to say, she wept silently at one side. Finally, there was someone who knew all the hardships she had gone through over the years.

"There are only two younger brothers in the Kong family. Is there a need for so many household appliances? The money they took is enough to build a big villa for them in the countryside! I also hear that these two brothers are very generous now. They agree to whatever the villagers request from it, they just go back to ask our elder sister for it. Furthermore, where are all the various coupons that brother-in-law sent back in the past few years? Why is it that our elder sister has never seen any of it?" Qiao Mei continued.

By this point, Qiao Mei became more agitated and shouted towards the door, "Our elder sister's own coupons are all taken away by Kong Li. That woman can even smash open locked drawers! Yet she's still not satisfied and wants our elder sister to hand over all her salary."

"Old people actually don't spend that much... Besides, Xia He earns a lot... They probably just want to save some money, right? It's not like she can't afford it... There's no need to quarrel over money and ruin the harmony in the family..." Liu Fen defended the other party softly.

Qiao Mei was so angry that she laughed. Liu Fen's family member was being bullied by outsiders and yet she still did not want to side with her own family.

"So I know now that Second Aunt-in-law is so generous. Then when Xia Zhe and I finished renovating our house, I'll like to trouble Second Aunt-in-law to buy us all the electrical appliances we need," Qiao Mei said.

Liu Fen thought for a moment and said, "Back then, Xia Zhe gave your family a betrothal gift of 2,000 dollars. When you've spent it all and it's still not enough, then come and tell me. I'll definitely get what you need for you."

Qiao Mei was stunned for a moment. She did not expect Liu Fen to use her betrothal gifts as an excuse. "Second Aunt-in-law, the betrothal money is Xia Zhe's gift to me. Don't you also think that a married couple should have some savings in order to have a better life together? So I have to trouble Second Aunt-in-law to spend some money on our electrical appliances. We're a family and it's not good to ruin the harmony in the family because of this little bit of money. Don't you think so, Second Aunt-in-law?"

Liu Fen was rendered speechless by the retort!

Kong Lu fell to the ground and looked towards the door in a daze. He did not expect his mother to have already taken so much money from Xiao He.

He did not know any of this. When he asked his mother about why the television set at home was gone, she said that it was broken. Not long after, Xia He bought a new one. When he returned, it was gone again and his mother had given him the same reason.

After that, he wanted to buy another one, but Xia He disagreed. She said that he should be more mindful, and that he should not buy one since the quality of the television set was not good and it would be a waste of money. At that time, he had thought that Xia He wanted to live frugally.

They never had any sewing machine or bicycle at home as Xia He said that she did not know how to use them. Yet, it turned out that she had bought so many sets for his brothers?

“I... I don’t even know about these things... My mother didn’t tell me either... Why didn’t she tell me...”
Kong Lu said.

Qiao Mei opened the door and stood beside Xia Zhe as she said, “Because our elder sister doesn’t want to bother you with all these nasty matters. She doesn’t want to put any pressure on you and wants to be a good wife. But what about you? What have you done? Has our elder sister said anything bad about your family over the years?”

Kong Lu thought about it and shook his head. She had never said anything in all these years.

“Then what about your mother and sister? Have they ever said anything nice about our elder sister? What did she get in exchange for all her efforts all these years?” Qiao Mei said agitatedly.

Xia Zhe reached out to hug the upset Qiao Mei and quietly helped her catch her breath.

“Your mother’s main problem was not her bad attitude, but her lack of conscience,” Qiao Mei said calmly.

Actually, Xia He did not tell her too much. She had guessed most of what happened. After all, she had seen many such things happen in the village and could make a guess easily.

Chapter 359: Unmoved

Kong Lu looked at Qiao Mei and was about to retort when Xia Zhe stared at Kong Lu with a cold look in his eyes, a look that was as frosty as an ice blade in winter.

“Do you think that your mother has done well in any way?” Qiao Mei asked.

Kong Lu thought for a moment and said, “My mother did not do anything to hurt Xia He.”

“Then what do you think it means to hurt someone? Would you repent only if someone dies?” Qiao Mei looked at Kong Lu mockingly.

Kong Lu slowly stood up and said unsteadily, "Although my mother does not take very good care of Xia He and does not treat her like how my mother-in-law treats Xia He, she does tend to Xia He's basic needs. Isn't that enough? My mother is kind-hearted, although the way she speaks and behaves might not be the nicest."

Inside the house, when Xia He heard what Kong Lu said, she felt utterly disheartened. For so many years, she had acted as if nothing had happened for the sake of family harmony and Kong Lu's filial piety. In the end, all she received in return was a statement that it was all her fault and that she was immature.

"Oh, do you think your mother paid for all the basic necessities at home?" Qiao Mei asked Kong Lu in surprise.

Kong Lu was stunned. Was that not the case?

In the past, Old Madam Kong had asked him numerous times to get Xia He to hand over her salary to the family because they did not have enough money at home. Old Madam Kong also said that the entire family depended solely on Kong Lu's salary, and that Xia He squirreled away all her own money, did not contribute to the family and even relied on the family to provide for her.

"My mother said... said that she was the one who pays for all the food at home..." Kong Lu said hesitantly.

"The art troupe provides meals for their staff, and they're always traveling around to perform. How much food can elder sister eat?" Xia Zhe said as he looked at Kong Lu coldly.

Kong Lu knew about this. When they first got married, he was still not doing well in his career, unlike now. He was always at home while Xia He always traveled, and they quarreled about it many times. It was only after Xia He compromised and applied for a transfer to a local art troupe that the issue was resolved.

Back in those days, Xia He was the principal performer of the capital's art troupe. She need not take part in ordinary performances and would only be asked to participate in large-scale performances. Now, she was just a minor actress in a small county city, and it was all because of Kong Lu.

“But my mother also said that Xia He is domineering and spoiled. She only wants the best things, otherwise she will throw them away and replace them with new ones,” Kong Lu explained.

“My sister went away to boarding school when she was young. She grew up with basic necessities and items provided by the school. How can she be a person who leads an extravagant life?” Xia Zhe asked.

Qiao Mei suddenly thought of something and said, “Does your younger sister also say that her sister-in-law doesn’t dote on her at all and can’t bear to buy anything for her to eat?”

Kong Lu nodded repeatedly and said, “Yes, yes, yes. My younger sister says that often.”

“She’s really been living a good life in the Xia family these past few days. She only eats meat and even asks the family helper to go out and buy the most expensive and best food for her. Your younger sister says that the Xia family is rich and must feed her well, otherwise she’ll complain to you,” Qiao Mei said.

Kong Lu lowered his head in shame and said, “My younger sister... My younger sister is still young and immature. I hope you don’t take it to heart.”

“She’s already 22 years old and still considered young? I was already a mother of two when I was 22 years old,” Liu Fen muttered softly inside the house.

In the past, one could get engaged at the age of 16 or 17 years old and get married at the age of 18. At that time, most families would quickly marry their daughters off for the sake of the betrothal gifts. It was the only option for poorer families, especially if they did not even have money for food.

The more well-to-do families could afford to marry their daughters off later, but most girls would get married around the age of 20.

Xia He sobbed uncontrollably in the house and covered her mouth tightly to prevent herself from making any sound. She did not expect Qiao Mei to be the one to speak up for her about all the hardships she had gone through for so many years.

They had only met a few times, but Qiao Mei knew better than her own relatives how difficult it was for her to live with the Kong family.

Qiao Mei was so angry that she did not know what else to say. She looked at Kong Lu and really felt like giving him a kick to wake him up.

Xia Zhe looked at Kong Lu and shook his head. Back when Xia He said that she wanted to marry Kong Lu, he did not have any objections. He felt that this person seemed to have some potential and was also a filial person. He did not expect this “filial” part to be the reason for his elder sister’s sufferings.

Chapter 360: Things Have Changed

Xia He wiped her tears and went to clear the dining table as if nothing had happened. Liu Fen also helped to clean up while Zhou Hua returned the tables and chairs to their original positions.

By the time the three people outside entered the house, it was all neat and tidy.

“Eh? You’re back. Have a rest,” Xia He said with a smile.

Qiao Mei looked at Xia He in surprise. Her eyes were clearly red and swollen from crying, but she looked calm, as if nothing had happened. She was really a professional actress.

If Qiao Mei was not the one who deliberately left a gap in the door when she entered the backyard, she would not be able to tell that Xia He had heard the entire conversation.

Kong Lu hurriedly tried to cover the dirty spots on himself, but there was no way he could cover all of them. There was hardly a clean spot on him.

Xia He frowned and said, “Didn’t you just change your clothes? Why are you so dirty again? What happened? Did you fall down accidentally?”

When Xia He saw that there was no injury on his face, she knew that Xia Zhe did not beat him up too badly and she felt relieved.

“Yes, I had a fall. I didn’t notice that the ground was slippery,” Kong Lu said embarrassedly.

Kong Lu wanted to go closer to Xia He to let her take a look at the wounds and mud on his body. He was hoping that Xia He’s anger would have dissipated after what he had gone through.

Xia He pointed upstairs and said, “Then hurry up and go in to wash up. I hope you still have clean clothes.”

Kong Lu hurriedly nodded and said, “Yes, I’ll go now.”

“You’re already an adult and yet you’re still so careless. Go off then,” Xia He said.

“Alright.” Kong Lu quickly went upstairs.

Xia Zhe stood at the side and sneered. Kong Lu was obviously trying to make Xia He feel sorry for him and wanted Xia He to give Xia Zhe a telling off.

Kong Lu lowered his head and walked upstairs silently. He was indeed thinking too much.

He did not believe that the usually smart and quick-witted Xia He could not tell that he got all dirtied because of her younger brother! However, there was no show of concern on her face at all and she did not even have any intention to teach Xia Zhe a lesson. She just pretended not to see the wounds on his body and the pain he was going through.

When did Xia He become like this?

When they first got married, Xia He would get extremely worried even if it was just a small cut on his hand. She had even wanted to bring him to Aunt Xia Fang’s hospital to check for tetanus.

Qiao Mei quietly held Xia Zhe's hand and smiled happily. It would be too disappointing if Xia He were to scold Xia Zhe at this moment. Fortunately, Xia He was not the kind of person who did not know what was good for her. Now, she could really see Xia He's determination to get a divorce.

Xia Zhe gently grabbed Qiao Mei's hand. Suddenly, Qiao Mei felt that Xia Zhe's hand was a little wet.

"Oh my goodness, you're bleeding!" Qiao Mei exclaimed.

"It's fine. I accidentally hit Kong Lu's buttons," Xia Zhe whispered.

When Kong Lu was changing his clothes, he realized that the buttons on his shirt had become deformed. He had wondered earlier about why it hurt so much around those areas. These buttons were all very hard and solid. Xia Zhe must really be a monster.

Kong Lu still held some hopes that Xia He would show concern for him. He stood in the corridor on the second floor, still wearing his shirt, and quietly looked at the people downstairs.

"I wonder how he can still stand straight after being beaten up like this?" Qiao Mei said.

"I didn't use all my strength. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to stand up," Xia Zhe said as he sat on the sofa.

Xia He did not say anything. She quietly took out the first aid kit for Qiao Mei and said, "Treat his wound quickly. An injury is not a small matter. You need to be careful of tetanus, you know?"

Kong Lu stood on the second floor feeling completely disheartened. He understood now.

Actually, Xia He had always been that Xia He, but he was no longer the same person.

Kong Lu walked into the room dejectedly to take a shower. Xia He looked up from the first floor and sighed as she watched Kong Lu enter the room.

“Elder sister, do you want to go up and talk to him?” Xia Zhe asked.

Xia He smiled weakly. Since young, she had always thought that Xia Wen was the one who knew her the best. Yet, although Xia Zhe was always very quiet, he was actually the one who really knew her.

“I’ll go for a while. Treat your wound properly.” After saying that, Xia He walked into the kitchen to get some food and brought it upstairs.