

Fat Wife 361

Chapter 361: Confrontation

Xia He still could not bear to see him like this. He did not dare to eat too much just now and he had done so much physical work during the day. He should eat more and have some nourishment.

Xia He stood at the door of the room on the second floor and said to herself, "Xia He, this is the last time. Let's have a good talk and end it here."

After making up her mind, Xia He pushed open the door and placed the food on the table, waiting quietly for Kong Lu.

Kong Lu went to the bathroom and took off all his clothes. The bruises on his body were clearly visible. Xia Zhe had used inner strength when hitting him, so although he did not seem to be injured, it was actually very painful when he tried to move.

Kong Lu took a cold shower and put on his pants before walking out, thinking that there was no one around.

"Oh, you're here." Kong Lu was a little surprised.

Xia He averted her eyes and said, "Put on your clothes first."

Kong Lu swiftly put on his clothes and sat down primly beside Xia He. "Why are you here?"

"I saw that you didn't eat much, so I brought you some food." Xia He pointed at the food on the table.

Kong Lu immediately laughed and sat at the table happily. He knew that Xia He would ignore him and that she still cared for him.

"I know you still care for me," Kong Lu said with a smile.

Xia He sneered and said, "I don't care about you. I'm just doing what a wife needs to do."

Kong Lu knew that Xia He was still hung up about what happened at home. He turned around and looked at Xia He remorsefully.

"My... my mother and the rest didn't do it on purpose... They just had good intentions..." Kong Lu stammered.

"Good intentions? Then what about me? Do I have a lot of bad intentions! Are they the only ones with good intentions!" Xia He glared at Kong Lu and shouted.

She was so loud that it could be heard downstairs and Liu Fen stood up immediately.

"This Xia He is too outrageous! How can she quarrel with a man! I have to go and take a look!" As Liu Fen spoke, she rushed upstairs. However, she did not barge into the room but only continued to watch from the door.

Qiao Mei was about to stop Liu Fen when Xia Zhe stopped her.

"Why did you stop me!" Qiao Mei pouted and said reluctantly.

"Elder sister has to face these things herself sooner or later. We can't meddle too much. Besides, she's not that weak. Don't be anxious," Xia Zhe said.

"I just can't stand that Second Aunt-in-law is always criticizing elder sister," Qiao Mei said as she applied medicine on Xia Zhe.

"Second Aunt-in-law has been like this for so many years. Let's see how elder sister deals with it. Don't be so anxious," Xia Zhe said gently.

In the room, Kong Lu stood up to comfort Xia He and she took two steps back.

“I don’t mean to say that you’re bad,” Kong Lu said.

Xia He asked with tears in her eyes, “In your eyes, am I just a woman who likes to stir up trouble and make things up?”

Kong Lu quickly shook his head and said, “Of course not!”

Xia He looked at Kong Lu angrily and said, “Do you know why I didn’t tell you about all these things? Because we were staying at your house at that time. If I told you, your mother would definitely cause a scene and fussed about it until all the neighbors knew about what happened. They would then all gossip behind my back. In the end, regardless of whether it was my fault or not, you would say that it was my fault.”

“I didn’t...” Kong Lu said softly.

“You didn’t? Aren’t you the one who did all these?” Xia He questioned.

Kong Lu slowly lowered his head. Xia He was speaking the truth, but he was only trying to comfort his mother. She was already so old. If she became angry and got all worked up, she might fall sick from the exertion.

“At that time, you forced me to apologize to her. The neighbors all blamed me. If I didn’t apologize to her, there would have been no end to the matter. How many times has something like this happened? Do you know why I don’t say anything anymore? It’s because I want my dignity! I don’t want to be angry! I want to live my life quietly! Since I can’t afford to offend her, then I will hide from all these!” Xia He snarled in a low voice.

Kong Lu felt ashamed when he heard what she said. These were all true, but he only wanted harmony at home and did not expect to hurt Xia He and leave such a deep scar in her heart.

Chapter 362: Being Subservient

“About that... I just wanted to avoid unnecessary trouble at home... After all, my mother is already so old...” Kong Lu still tried to explain himself.

Xia He sighed and sat weakly on the bed. “Even now, you’re still defending your mother. You’re really your mother’s good son!”

“I’m not defending her. I just want you to know what I’m thinking...” Kong Lu said.

“Alright! Then let’s not talk about your mother. What about your younger sister?” Xia He asked.

Kong Lu also knew that Kong Li was immature. As her elder brother, he thought that it was inappropriate for him to discipline a girl who was already at a marriageable age. However, his decision had caused her behavior to become worse over time.

“My sister is still young. She doesn’t know how to behave herself...” Kong Lu said.

“So does that mean I have to be more forgiving! One is too old and the other is too young. There are also a bunch of brothers whom I have to help because they’re not doing well! You all have your reasons and difficulties, and I’m the only one who’s not human, right?” Xia He shouted at Kong Lu.

Liu Fen, who had been listening at the door for a long time, rushed in and said to Xia He, “Xia He, talk nicely! How can you talk to your husband like that! How can you embarrass him like this? How are you going to get along in the future!”

At this moment, Xia He was so angry that her eyes had reddened. She threw a look of puzzlement at her second aunt-in-law, the one who always asked her to be more considerate of her husband’s family and to take better care of her in-laws.

Xia He was clearly the one who was a member of the Xia family and Kong Lu was an outsider. Why did her aunt-in-law scold her even more harshly after knowing what she was going through?

“Second Aunt-in-law, this is my family matter. Please leave the room.” Xia He calmed herself down.

After all, Liu Fen was still an elder. No matter how angry Xia He was, she had been brought up to have good manners.

Liu Fen looked at the trembling Xia He and felt at a loss. She took a few steps back and said to Kong Lu before closing the door, "Xiao Kong, don't lower yourself to Xia He's level. She's just too worked up for now. Don't be angry."

"I'm not angry, Second Aunt-in-law. It's fine," Kong Lu said with a smile.

"That's good," Liu Fen said and left after she closed the door.

Qiao Mei thought that there were certain things that Liu Fen said which made some sense. Some men had a conscience and would protect their wives when they saw their wives being bullied. Sometimes, it was quite useful for a woman to act subservient.

However, when Kong Lu saw Xia He being subservient, he bullied her even more. It became a habit to bully her, which was what led to the entire situation today.

Third Uncle had probably doted on Third Aunt-in-law because Third Aunt-in-law took care of the family well and loved Third Uncle deeply enough to back down whenever they quarreled.

For people like the Kong family members, if they had been taught the lesson that the Xia family was not one to be bullied, they might have stopped their bad behavior long ago.

Qiao Mei looked at Liu Fen silently as she came down the stairs.

Liu Fen walked over agitatedly and said, "Look at this Xia He! She..."

Before Liu Fen could finish speaking, Qiao Mei looked at her and said, "Second Aunt-in-law, sit down."

It was like Liu Fen suddenly had a fishbone stuck in her throat. She sat obediently on the sofa and started eating fruits, not daring to say a word.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei and Liu Fen curiously. When did Liu Fen start giving in so easily? What exactly happened while he was away?

Qiao Mei sat beside Liu Fen and continued to maintain her “authority” as she looked at Liu Fen silently.

Liu Fen did not dare to look at Qiao Mei or to say anything else.

Even Zhou Hua, who usually liked to join in the fun and make mocking remarks for a long time, did not say a word today.

At this moment, Xia He did not want to argue with Kong Lu anymore. There would be no outcome even if they continued arguing.

She was completely disheartened.

“Finish up the food. I don’t want to argue with you anymore,” Xia He said calmly.

Kong Lu did not know how to persuade Xia He and just sat silently at the side to finish his meal.

Xia Zhe felt bored staying in the living room and brought Qiao Mei to the swing in the backyard to take a break.

“What method did you use to make Second Aunt-in-law so afraid of you?” Xia Zhe asked.

Qiao Mei touched her nose in embarrassment and said, “I just intimidated her a little.”

Xia Zhe asked again, “But what did you do to intimidate her?”

“I didn’t do anything. I just grabbed her and glared at her.” Qiao Mei stood up and glared at Xia Zhe with her hands on her hips.

Chapter 363: Three Wonderful Principles

Qiao Mei’s big bright eyes flashed with a sly glint, like a cute little fox.

Back during the earthquake, she was so thin and her face was so sharp. Now that she had been in the capital for a period of time, her face had become rounder. Now, it was rosy and chubby, like a delicious little bun. He really felt like taking a bite to see what it was made of.

This look of hers would not have made Second Aunt-in-law feel intimidated. This was clearly the look of a kitten that had not been weaned yet, trying hard to act fierce but looking adorable instead.

“Why do you look younger and younger...” Xia Zhe said as he pinched Qiao Mei’s cheeks.

When he first saw Qiao Mei, she had a tanned and muscular figure and looked like she was in her 30s. Later on, when he met her again, she looked like an 18-year-old girl. Now that she was pregnant, she looked like a 15 or 16-year-old girl.

“You said it yourself. You can’t touch me!” Qiao Mei pointed at Xia Zhe and pretended to threaten him.

Xia Zhe’s eyes flashed and he said, “Alright, no touching.”

Eh? Why does this statement sound so strange?

Qiao Mei looked at the smirking Xia Zhe and was about to question him when Xia Zhe interrupted her thoughts and said, “So, how exactly did you intimidate Second Aunt-in-law?”

“It’s nothing. I just let her know how strong I am and how unreasonable I can get, and she got scared,” Qiao Mei said with a shrug.

“What if she accidentally pushes you?” Xia Zhe asked with a frown.

“She’s so timid that she doesn’t dare to move at all. I would agree with you if you’re worried about Eldest Aunt doing that. Second Aunt-in-law and Third Aunt-in-law are not of that caliber,” Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe shook his head helplessly and said, “Be more careful in the future. The force of your strength is even too much for me. If you really hurt Second Aunt-in-law, I won’t be able to help you plead for leniency. After all, she’s an elder in the family.”

“Yes, yes, I know what I’m doing. I didn’t even use much strength! Of course I’ll think about the Xia family before doing anything. I’ll consider what you have to go through and won’t make things difficult for you,” Qiao Mei said obediently.

Xia Zhe reconsidered it and felt that it was not such a good idea. Xia He and Kong Lu were living examples of that. Back then, Xia He loved Kong Lu so much that she kept accommodating the Kong family so that she would not make things difficult for him and she endured everything quietly on her own. This was their most fundamental problem.

One was unwilling to speak and the other was unwilling to ask.

In the end, the two of them quarreled even more and were about to part ways.

“In the future, don’t endure things because you’re afraid that you’ll make things difficult for me. No matter what happens, you have to tell me. If any of my parents’ relatives bully you, even if it’s my grandfather, feel free to come and look for me. Don’t be afraid that you’ll be making things difficult for me. No matter what, I’ll stand up for you,” Xia Zhe said as he looked at Qiao Mei seriously.

It might be difficult for him to face his family if that happened, but that was a trivial matter compared to the possibility of Qiao Mei leaving him.

Qiao Mei looked at the serious-looking Xia Zhe and was a little stunned. Then, she smiled sweetly.

Fortunately, Xia Zhe was the kind of man who cared for her and she did not meet a bad person like their elder sister. It was like a woman's life would go through a restart when she got married.

Qiao Mei smiled and said, "Don't worry, I won't leave you. If anyone bullies me, I'll tell you and you can help me bully them back!"

In her other life, she did not get married and had no in-laws to dispute with. However, she was a lawyer in her other life and had heard too many stories from her colleagues about family disputes. There was even a case where the daughter-in-law wanted to go to work but her mother-in-law did not allow it, so her mother-in-law went to the company to make trouble, causing her daughter-in-law to lose her job.

She also took away a few principles from these cases.

The first principle was that she needed her own comrades. There was no way she could fight alone. If her mother-in-law went to look for neighbors to be the judge, who could she look for?

She must look for her husband and children, especially her husband. She must have him on her side.

The second principle was to hide at the back and not be the one to go into battle. She must let her husband resolve the conflict because one was his biological mother and the other was his wife. Her mother-in-law and her husband were related by blood, so they would not hurt each other. As the saying went, even if the bones were broken, the tendons would still be connected.

If the fight was between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, the mother-in-law would not feel any heartache at all even if she hurt the daughter-in-law.

The third principle was that after the husband solved the problem, he must appease the emotions of both parties so that they could get along harmoniously.

Chapter 364: Hiding It Quite Deeply

Qiao Mei could not stop smiling when she thought of all these. It seemed that Xia Zhe would have a hard time in the future!

Qiao Mei had observed Xu Lan carefully. Although she looked cold and heartless and did not like Qiao Mei, she maintained her decorum and did not make things difficult for Qiao Mei.

Perhaps it was because Qiao Mei had been hiding away in the courtyard house and did not have much chance to interact with Xu Lan, or perhaps Xu Lan could tell that Xia Zhe cared a lot about Qiao Mei and did not dare to do anything to her, or perhaps Xu Lan just did not know what it meant to put someone in a difficult position.

Qiao Mei realized that although Xu Lan was arrogant, she was very simple-minded. In addition, Qiao Mei did not know what it was like for a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law to have a conflict, nor did she try to pick a fight, so they did not quarrel.

During the few times they met, Xu Lan mostly ignored Qiao Mei and chose to sit quietly at the side to do her own things.

This trick might work on a daughter-in-law like Tan Jing, but it was useless on someone like Qiao Mei.

“Alright, it’s not right for us to hide here. What if Second Aunt-in-law makes things difficult for elder sister again? Let’s go into the house.” Qiao Mei pulled Xia Zhe back into the house.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, everyone returned to their rooms.

Early the next morning, Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe left the house to supervise the work at the courtyard house. As soon as they entered, they saw Xia Wen looking at the ground around him with a frown.

“Elder brother, what’s wrong?” Xia Zhe asked.

“Look, all these spots showed signs of being touched. You’re not bad, kid. You hid it quite well and no one discovered anything,” Xia Wen sighed as he looked at the freshly filled pits in the ground.

Xia Zhe did not say anything, but he also found it strange. Even though he had hidden everything away, it had been so many days and there were so many people involved, but nothing had been dug up yet.

Were they not diligent enough, or did he hide it too well?

Xia Wen glanced at Qiao Mei, who was beside Xia Zhe, and said, "Leave this place to me. You can show my sister-in-law around town. You haven't been to any fun places yet, right?"

Qiao Mei smiled and said, "Aunt brought me out before."

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe and thought for a moment before saying, "I want to go to the nursery and buy some fruit tree saplings and vegetable seedlings for the backyard."

These were things that Xia Wen and Xia Zhe did not know how to do. Qiao Mei could only rely on herself to choose these things.

Xia Zhe thought for a moment and said, "I'll bring you there in a while."

He turned around and said to Xia Wen, "I beat up Kong Lu."

Before Xia Wen left yesterday, he already knew that Xia Zhe would not be able to resist the urge to beat the man up.

"Did you hit his face?" Xia Wen asked casually.

They were indeed biological brothers given that they even think the same way.

"No," Xia Zhe said.

"Then all good. So what does Xiao He want to do now? Does she want to go back with him?" Xia Wen asked.

Xia Zhe shook his head and said, "She wants a divorce now."

Xia Wen was shocked. He had thought that they only needed to teach Kong Lu a lesson so that he would be more mindful in the future and not let Xia He suffer anymore. He did not expect them to have already reached the point of getting a divorce.

"Tell elder brother about elder sister's life these past few years. Elder sister has told Qiao Mei everything," Xia Zhe said as he looked at Qiao Mei.

This was something that he had found to be strange as well. Qiao Mei had clearly just married into the family, but his elder sister seemed to hit it off with Qiao Mei immediately. She did not say much to her own brothers but went to confide in Qiao Mei instead.

Xia He had indeed told Qiao Mei some stories about the Kong family, but not everything.

"That Kong Lu really doesn't treat elder sister well at all!"

"Elder sister not only has to buy things for her own household with Kong Lu, but she also needs to buy things for Kong Lu's brothers. Just sewing machines, television sets and refrigerators, she already had to buy three or four each!"

"Sometimes, the Kong brothers' neighbors will ask them for things. If they can't fulfill the requests, they will ask elder sister to do it!"

"And..."

Qiao Mei exaggerated a lot of things, making the two brothers so angry that the veins on their foreheads bulged out. They got so worked up that they wanted to beat Kong Lu up again to vent their anger.

When Xia He first mentioned all these things she was going through, Second Aunt-in-law had said that everyone lived like this and even wondered out loud why Xia He was so melodramatic and delicate. None of them took time out to ask her about her hardships.

Chapter 365: Let's Get a Divorce

"It looks like Xiao He has suffered a lot in the past few years. When I have time, I'll go and talk to Kong Lu," Xia Wen said as he rolled up his sleeves.

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Wen skeptically. Xia Wen had always seemed like a perfect gentleman and it was difficult to imagine him fighting with someone.

Sensing Qiao Mei's gaze, Xia Wen looked at her and said, "I used to be a soldier too. Although it was only for five years, I was the top warrior for those five years."

"Really! Elder brother is so amazing!" Qiao Mei stood up excitedly, her eyes filled with surprise and admiration.

"Of course! If I'm still there, it's hard to say who will be the current top army warrior now!" Xia Wen said proudly.

When Xia Zhe saw Qiao Mei's reaction, he immediately glared at Xia Wen. Xia Wen raised his eyebrows smugly.

"Come, let's go to the nursery!" Xia Zhe immediately grabbed Qiao Mei and pulled her out of the house.

If he was any slower, Qiao Mei would be treating Xia Wen like a celebrity and asking him about his past glories!

"Alright, alright. Slow down." Although Qiao Mei followed behind Xia Zhe, she kept looking back as she walked. She took a few glances at Xia Wen, wishing she could hear more gossip.

In the courtyard, Xia Wen's shoulders trembled from the force of his laughter as he recalled the jealous look on Xia Zhe's face. It had been a long time since he had seen such an expression on Xia Zhe's face. He found it extremely interesting.

Back then, Xia Wen was injured after a mission and it left him with a recurring injury, after which he was forced to retire from the army. Otherwise, the current top army warrior might not be Xia Zhe.

He used to be the best sniper in the troops, and his physical fitness and combat skills were not inferior to anyone.

When he thought of this, Xia Wen sighed. If he could ever recover, he would want to go back and continue fighting, and to hold his favorite sniper rifle again.

After leaving the courtyard, Xia Zhe pulled Qiao Mei over to him and looked at her seriously. He gave her a flick on the head and said, "I've been a soldier for 10 years and I've been the top army warrior for all those 10 years!"

Qiao Mei did not look excited or surprised at all. Instead, she had her usual expression on her face.

"I know. You told me before, and you look the part of a top warrior too. But elder brother is different. Look at him, he's so skinny and weak like... ahem... I mean, I'm surprised by what elder brother's achievements." Qiao Mei wanted to say something, but the two of them had not gone far. She did not want Xia Wen to hear her.

Xia Zhe was very satisfied with what Qiao Mei said and happily led the way to the nursery.

In the courtyard, Xia Wen looked towards the door in shock. At this moment, he could no longer smile.

Him? Weak? As weak as what? What?

Xia Wen fell into a deep sense of self-doubt in the courtyard.

Xia He and Kong Lu also went out early in the morning. There were too many people at home and it was inconvenient for them to talk, so they went for a walk in the nearest park.

Early in the morning, the park was filled with elderly men and women who were there for their morning exercises. There were also young people who came here for a run, but very few people went to the lake.

After they arrived at the park, Xia He bought tickets at the lake to row a boat with Kong Lu.

Since there was no one by the lake, no one would hear them if they talked in the middle of the lake. Also, Kong Lu would not be able to run away halfway through the conversation.

There were a few times in the past when Xia He wanted the two of them to sit down after a fight and talk about the grievances in her heart. She wanted to talk about everything that was happening at home so that they could both think of a way to resolve it. However, Kong Lu always felt that there was nothing much to talk about since it was just trivial family matters and he would always find a reason to leave the house.

Every time, he would say that something came up at work or that his superior wanted to have drinks with him.

It happened many times and they never had a chance to talk properly. Even their conversation yesterday was interrupted by Liu Fen.

Neither of them could leave today. She wanted to see where Kong Lu could escape to and whether he would rather jump into the lake to get away than talk to her!

Xia He knew that Kong Lu did not know how to swim.

The two of them rowed the boat in silence. There were a few times when Kong Lu wanted to speak, but he could not think of a suitable topic.

There were ripples on the sparkling surface of the lake. The sunlight shone on the surface of the lake and was dazzling.

Kong Lu's heart rate rose and fell with the ripples on the water surface.

When they reached the center of the lake, Xia He looked at Kong Lu quietly and said, "Let's get a divorce."

Chapter 366: Being Understanding

Kong Lu was so shocked that he almost threw the oar out of his hand. He looked at Xia He in disbelief.

"What did you say? Are you joking? Say that again?"

Xia He looked at Kong Lu firmly and said, "Let's get a divorce."

"Why? You have to tell me what I did wrong," Kong Lu said anxiously.

His confusion and puzzlement made Xia He very angry. She roared at him, "You're still asking me why? Let me tell you why!"

"Because your family keeps asking me for things, but don't even bother to thank me at all!"

"Because your mother and younger sister always used vulgarities to scold and criticize me! They say that I'm cheap!"

"Because they call me stupid even while they eye my money! They say I'm unlucky! That I deserved it for marrying you!"

"Because every time there's a conflict, you only listen to your mother! You ask me to apologize to your mother! Your mother even goes to the neighbors to talk bad about me! Everyone always comes and scolds me!"

"Every time! Every time! Every time! I've had enough! Kong Lu! I want a divorce! I've had enough! Ah!!!"

After Xia He finished talking about her grievances and indignation over the years, she burst into tears.

Finally, she was free.

Now that she had said everything, she could finally be free.

Kong Lu looked at Xia He in a daze. He had never seen Xia He like this before and he wondered where the cheerful girl from before had gone.

He also felt very unsettled after hearing what Xia He said. It was only at this moment that he realized the matter was very serious.

“Hear me out. I’ll get them to change. I’ll tell them never to scold you again in the future, and that they should not criticize you and ask you for money anymore. Also, I won’t ask you to apologize anymore, is that alright?” Kong Lu said.

Xia He sneered. It seemed that Kong Lu still did not understand her.

“Then ask them to move out of our house and return to the countryside to live with your brothers,” Xia He said with a cold smile.

Kong Lu was speechless. Even if he was willing to do that, Old Madam Kong would definitely cause a scene and there would be chaos again.

“They... I... I’m the eldest child in the family. By right, I should be the one taking care of my mother...” Kong Lu stammered.

“Ha. You can take care of her however you want, but I don’t want to take care of a woman who scolds me every day, so let’s get a divorce. Can your family just let me off?” Xia He said.

“Xiao He, don’t be like this! I’ll definitely make them change! Really!” Kong Lu looked at Xia He sincerely.

“Then tell me how you’ll make them change?” Xia He looked at Kong Lu calmly.

Kong Lu did not know how to explain it, but he believed that his mother and younger sister would change as long as he conveyed it to them patiently for a few more times. Yes! He just needs to talk to them a few more times!

“I’ll definitely talk to them once I get back. They’ll definitely do what I say! Xiao He, believe me!” Kong Lu said anxiously.

“Don’t lie to yourself. Don’t you know your mother and younger sister well enough? If they are willing to listen to you, they would have done it long ago. Can you change them with just your words?” Xia He said mockingly.

Kong Lu did not know how to talk about this matter, but he knew that he did not want a divorce!

“Just let me go. This matter is not negotiable. Let’s get a divorce.” After saying that, Xia He rowed towards the shore.

Kong Lu definitely did not agree with Xia He. He desperately rowed in the opposite direction.

Given that the two of them rowed in different directions, the boat started spinning in the middle of the lake. Xia He quickly stopped what she was doing.

“What exactly do you want! Do I owe your family or what! Do I have to suffer for the rest of my life just because you married me! Just because you married me!” Xia He shouted angrily.

“I’ll get them to change. Trust me!” Kong Lu kept repeating the same thing.

“Unless they move out, there’s no room for discussion! Even our current house is paid for by the Xia family!” Xia He said.

“Xiao He, please be understanding of my situation. I’m the eldest child in the family. If I send my mother back to the countryside, everyone in the village will criticize me! Then people will always be able to badmouth me behind my back!” Kong Lu begged.

Xia He looked at Kong Lu in despair. If she had to be understanding of Kong Lu's situation, then who was going to be understanding of hers?

Chapter 367: This Is a Camellia Plant?

Xia He did not want to listen to Kong Lu anymore. She threw the oar far away and jumped into the lake.

Xia He knew how to swim from a young age and was a very good swimmer.

"Xia He!" Kong Lu shouted anxiously as he sat on the boat.

Now that there was only one oar left, he did not know if he would be able to row himself to shore. The other oar had already drifted far away.

"Oh my." Kong Lu sighed.

He had wanted to have a good chat with Xia He, but he did not expect such an outcome.

On the other side of town, Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe arrived at the state-run nurseries in the suburbs. The largest nursery in the capital that bought and sold all kinds of flowers and trees was located here.

Qiao Mei wanted to build a small garden in the courtyard and to make it a spot where they could have tea and take a rest. When her grandfather came over, he would also be able to enjoy spending time in it.

The two of them entered the first nursery. As soon as they entered, their noses were assailed by all kinds of fragrances. The yard was filled with colorful flowers and the air was filled with the fragrance of all kinds of flowers.

As soon as Xia Zhe entered, he sneezed immediately. He did not like fragrant things, no matter what it was. The fragrance of all the flowers mixed together was too complex for him.

Xia Zhe lowered his head and looked at Qiao Mei beside him. The only smell he ever liked was Qiao Mei's smell. Xia Zhe had to lean closer to Qiao Mei and take a whiff of her body fragrance before his nose felt much better.

"Hello, what are you looking to buy?" asked a staff member as he walked over excitedly.

This young man was in his early twenties and not very tall. When he saw Qiao Mei entering, his eyes almost fell out of their sockets. However, when he got closer, he realized that this young lady was pregnant and there was a cold and stern man staring at him from behind her.

When the young man met Xia Zhe's gaze, he was so frightened that his hair stood on end.

The whole situation felt like a jackal had taken a fancy to a rabbit, but there was a fierce tiger standing behind the rabbit.

"Do you... have any particularly beautiful flowers, the rare kind that you can't bear to sell," Qiao Mei said.

The young man was stunned for a moment and quickly said, "Yes, come with me to the back."

After saying that, the young man turned around and led the way to the back, not daring to look back. Qiao Mei wondered why the shop assistant's attitude had changed so obviously.

They passed through the front hall that was filled with flowers and entered the plastic shed at the back. Plastic was very rare during this period of time and plastic sheds could only be found in state-run nurseries. Furthermore, not all state-run nurseries could have as much plastic as they wanted, they still needed to apply for approval.

The flowers and plants in the plastic shed were indeed the more valuable types. The flowers outside were very common, such as different kinds of roses, peonies, azalea and lilies, among others. Inside the shed, there were more tropical plants.

“Master, there are two people here who want to see our camellias,” the young man shouted respectfully towards the small room inside.

An old man walked out of the room with his walking stick and looked at Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe.

This young lady was beautiful and fresh-faced. She was quite a good match for his precious camellias, so they can take a look.

The old man’s camellias ranked top among the nurseries around here. Ordinary buyers would not be able to purchase his camellias, and might not even have a chance to take a look.

The old man nodded and said, “Let’s go.”

He brought the two of them out of the plastic shed and into the glasshouse at the side.

Although glass was not as rare as plastic, the cost of glass was high. It seemed that there must be something even better in the glasshouse.

This glasshouse was very small, with an area of probably only about 100 square meters. Qiao Mei took a quick glance and saw many precious flowers, but there were no plum blossoms. It seemed that the climate and land here were not suitable for plum blossoms.

The old man brought the two of them to the center where there were a few small trees.

“This is one of the best camellia plants in our nursery. Take a look,” the old man said.

Camellias? Where?

Qiao Mei could recognize all the flowers in the courtyard, but she did not see any camellias.

“Old mister... this...” Xia Zhe looked at the old man in confusion.

The old man pointed at the small tree beside him and said, "This is my precious camellia plant."

Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe stared blankly at the ordinary-looking tree in front of them.

This is a camellia plant?!

Chapter 368: Diligent and Thrifty

"Where are the flowers?" Qiao Mei asked curiously.

Qiao Mei's serious expression made the old man laugh. This young lady did not feel that he was lying to her. How interesting.

"It's not the flowering season yet. You can take a look at the booklet. There's a picture of it when the flowers are blooming." The old man smiled and handed a booklet to the two of them.

Qiao Mei flipped through the booklet. There were pictures of all kinds of camellias inside, and in different colors like white, pink and red. There was even one that was actually dual-colored, half the flower was white and the other half was pink.

Qiao Mei pointed at the picture in the booklet and asked, "How much is this variant?"

"Young lady, you have good taste, but this one isn't for sale. After so many years, I've only managed to cultivate this one tree. Take a look at the others," the old man said.

Qiao Mei rolled her eyes and closed the booklet angrily.

Why did he display it if he did not want to sell it!

“The rest of the camellia plants cost 100 dollars a pot,” the old man added.

“It’s so expensive!” Qiao Mei exclaimed.

The old man glanced at Qiao Mei and felt that her reaction was much ado about nothing. These camellias were the best of their kind.

“These are all rare and exquisite plants. You can’t find them elsewhere. We’re the only place that has such flowers. Do you know what it means for you to be able to chance upon them! Moreover, they’re all more than 10 years old!” the old man emphasized.

Qiao Mei looked hesitantly at the pots of camellia trees beside her.

“But we also have cheap seedlings, ranging from one dollar to five dollars per pot,” the old man said.

Qiao Mei’s eyes lit up as she asked, “What about seeds?”

“Yes, we have that too. It’s 10 cents apiece,” the old man said sulkily.

“Alright, then I’ll take some seeds!” Qiao Mei said happily.

The old man looked at Qiao Mei and nodded before going towards the back to get the seeds for her. Qiao Mei was about to follow him when she had a whiff of a strange fragrance.

The fragrance of this flower was different from the others. It was elegant, refined and very subtle. However, anyone who smelled it would definitely fall deeply in love with it and find it unforgettable.

Qiao Mei looked around for the source of the fragrance and quickly realized that it came from some orchids placed in a corner.

However, the leaves of the orchid were a little withered and hung limply. The flowers were also quite wilted and it was obvious that there was something wrong with the plant.

“Old mister, how much is this pot of flowers?” Qiao Mei asked as she pointed at the orchids.

The old man took a look and said, “That was left here by a Mr. He. He asked me to take a look at the flowers and see what’s wrong with them. He had bought them from me in the past.”

After saying that, the old man lowered his head and continued to look for the seeds. As he searched, he muttered, “It’s really strange. He doesn’t know how to grow flowers, but he insists on doing so. He said that the fragrance of flowers can cure his illness. I’ve spent most of my life growing flowers, but I’ve never heard of such a thing. What a waste of my orchids.”

When Xia Zhe heard this, he frowned and looked at the orchids in the corner. There was only one person in the entire capital with the surname He who would use the fragrance of flowers to treat his illness.

That person was He Ning.

Qiao Mei also noticed Xia Zhe’s abnormal reaction. She walked to his side and whispered, “Is it him?”

Xia Zhe nodded.

“Let’s go, young lady. There are no camellia seeds here. They’re probably in the storeroom. You can both come with me.” With that, the old man led Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe out.

After the two of them left, the orchid plant in the corner completely withered.

The old man brought them to a storeroom that was stocked with seeds. There were also other storerooms at the side that looked as if they were used to keep saplings.

Very few people would come to buy seeds. Usually, only people in the business would do that. Ordinary people would just buy flowers and plants that were already grown.

These kinds of flowers and plants were not like weeds and wildflowers that could grow at will. Some people did not succeed in growing them even if they took good care of them. That was why there was a market for flowers and plants, and there was a reason why they could be sold at astronomical prices.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei strangely. She usually spent money extravagantly, so why was she so reluctant to buy a finished product that cost 100 dollars a piece and insisted on buying seeds that cost 10 cents each?

He felt that this did not seem like something Qiao Mei would do.

Qiao Mei felt Xia Zhe's gaze and said proudly, "Don't you think that I'm especially diligent and thrifty!"

Xia Zhe smiled. This mischievous look of hers definitely did not resemble Qiao Qiang at all.

Chapter 369: Selling on Consignment

Qiao Mei knew that for ordinary people, it was much easier to nurture flowers than growing them from seeds.

It was all the same to her though. However, those mature flowers had already been blooming for 10 years and it would be difficult to explain it if they suddenly mutated in her hands. It was a different thing if she grew them from seeds. Whatever bloomed from the seeds would have nothing to do with her.

The old man stood in front of a small shelf and looked carefully at the words written on the bags. As he was old, his eyesight was blurry and he moved much slower than young people.

Qiao Mei's eyes lit up when she saw a label on the shelf. "These are wild camellias!"

The old man glanced in the direction where Qiao Mei was looking and said, "Oh, I almost forgot about them. I bought those seeds from an old farmer in the south. I want to use them to cultivate new breeds."

Most new varieties were created by hybridizing wild seeds and seeds of existing varieties. After many tries, eventually there would be a likelihood for new varieties to emerge.

“But I want this!” Qiao Mei said.

The old man could not bear to part with these seeds. It had not been easy to buy them from that old farmer in the south back then, and yet this young girl wanted him to sell them to her.

“I can only give you a handful of seeds at most! One seed is 50 cents!” the old man said angrily.

He decided to sell this young girl a handful since she was so beautiful.

This bag contained camellia seeds of different sizes, but they were all much bigger than the other camellia seeds. There were not many seeds in a handful, probably only about 15 to 16.

“It’s enough, it’s enough. Thank you, old mister,” Qiao Mei said happily as she held on to the seeds.

When the old man saw how Qiao Mei treated the seeds, he was relieved. He had been worried that the young lady did not know anything and would just waste the seeds. Looking at her now, the way she cherished these seeds so much made her look like an expert.

“You’ve grown flowers before?” asked the old man.

“My family is from the countryside. I’ve planted vegetables before. Growing flowers and growing vegetables are probably quite similar,” Qiao Mei said laughingly.

When the old man heard this, he regretted what he just said. She was no expert, she was more like his enemy!?

What a waste of those seeds!

After taking the seeds, Qiao Mei looked at the rows of other types of seeds on the shelf and did not feel like leaving.

“Old mister, are you selling those seeds!” Qiao Mei said.

The old man said in exasperation, “No!”

She was not here to buy flowers, she was here to cause trouble!

“Then do you buy flowers?” Qiao Mei asked.

At this point, the old man became interested. Could it be that he had made a mistake?

“I have a few pots of very nice flowers at home that I don’t have space for anymore. I’m thinking of selling them to you since it would be a pity to throw them away. Do you think you would want to buy them?” Qiao Mei asked as she looked at the old man expectantly.

The old man thought for a moment and said, “No, I don’t want to buy. We only sell them here.”

Qiao Mei immediately felt a little dejected. She had thought that this could be another way to make money, and that when these camellias matured and bloomed, she could come back and sell them to him. One camellia plant was worth 100 dollars! It was much more profitable than growing bean sprouts!

Sigh, it was too difficult to live in this era where there was no free market. The commoners could not buy and sell things privately, so it was really too difficult to earn money.

Looking at Qiao Mei’s dejected expression, the old man did not want to be too harsh. He said softly, “If the quality of your plant is good, you can leave it here with me. Whether you sell it or not is up to you. If someone wants to buy it, you can discuss it among yourselves.”

Qiao Mei immediately felt as if there was a beam of light shining on the old man.

He was like her God of Fortune! He was willing to sell them on consignment without taking any fee! Where else could she find such a good deal!

The thing was if the nursery charged her a fee, they might get into trouble.

The old man coughed twice and said, "Let me put it across bluntly upfront. The quality of your flowers and plants must be about the same as the quality of those in my nursery. They can't be too lousy, otherwise I won't be able to help you."

"Thank you, old mister!" Qiao Mei said excitedly.

He was famous for being obsessed with flowers. Whenever he heard that someone had nice flowers at home, he would think of ways to go and take a look and learn from others.

If Qiao Mei really had some quality flowers, he was willing to buy them himself. If they were lousy, he would ask her to take them back and not leave them in front of him like an eyesore. If they were not too bad, he would put them in a corner to see if there were any people who were fated with them.

Chapter 370: Underhanded Swap

Qiao Mei gave him eight dollars and left the nursery with 16 wild camellia seeds.

"Can He Ning's illness be treated with the fragrance of flowers?" Qiao Mei asked Xia Zhe curiously after they left the nursery.

"Maybe. He has been in poor health since he was young. I heard that he had all kinds of illnesses and that he already had headaches during his school days. All the flowers he buys are to help alleviate his headaches," Xia Zhe said.

As Xia Zhe spoke, he suddenly laughed and said, "No one in the He family knows how to grow flowers, so they specially hired a florist to be in charge. However, all types of flowers are unable to survive in his house, so the He family has been searching for all kinds of rare and precious plants during all these years."

Qiao Mei nodded and looked around before asking, "Then where does he live?"

Xia Zhe pointed at the road ahead and said, "Third place ahead. He lives there, inside a nursery that specializes in selling fruit trees."

Xia Zhe had been keeping an eye on the He family recently and had heard that He Ning had recovered very well recently. He had been approaching all his past business contacts and it seemed like he was preparing to go back to work.

After taking a look, Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe went to the next nursery and bought a lot of seeds from there as well.

Only then did Xia Zhe realize that Qiao Mei was not actually diligent and thrifty. Based on his calculations, they had already spent more than 100 dollars buying saplings and seeds of all sizes.

The seeds were of different types and sizes, so they were priced differently. His main concern was that their house was not big enough for them, as the seeds that Qiao Mei bought probably needed to be grown over a few hundred acres of land.

However, Qiao Mei looked really happy when she was choosing the seeds. Therefore, he felt that the 100 dollars was well spent!

"I'm going to bring these home so that I can plant them in the village. Grandfather and I have made use of our private plot of land. Since we don't lack food or clothes at home, I plan to go back and plant some fruit trees and flowers so that it can provide some entertainment for grandfather," Qiao Mei said with a smile.

After leaving the second nursery, Qiao Mei pulled Xia Zhe along and prepared to go to the third nursery.

Xia Zhe stood on the spot and said, "Let's go to another place, not this one."

Qiao Mei stood at the door with her hands on her hips and said fiercely, "Why! Are we afraid of him! What can he do in broad daylight!"

Looking at Qiao Mei trying to act fierce, he felt like laughing. She did not look like a capable person at all. This was clearly a kitten that had not been weaned yet.

In reality, Qiao Mei was also much stronger than Xia Zhe. Xia Zhe was not worried that Qiao Mei would be in any danger, but he just did not want He Ning to see Qiao Mei, not even a glimpse.

Xia Zhe originally wanted to stay at the door and think about whether they should enter this nursery. However, before he could think about it, Qiao Mei forcefully pulled him in.

His Mei Mei was indeed amazing!

Qiao Mei used the excuse of wanting to buy fruit trees to walk around the yard, but she was actually snooping around. Through the gaps between the fruit trees, Qiao Mei saw that there was a house further in, and there was a man sitting inside and reading a book. Behind him, there was a pharmacy.

As she made use of the plants to sense around, Qiao Mei could feel that her ginseng was not in the pharmacy. There were all kinds of precious medicinal herbs there.

Since she was already here, she decided not to let it go to waste!

Qiao Mei quietly absorbed the energy of those expensive medicinal herbs, leaving only a small portion of energy to maintain their appearances so that the He family would not discover that they had been tampered with.

Qiao Mei wandered around, but was actually using all her energy to focus on searching for the ginseng in the house. The ginseng was planted using her energy, and the energy inside it would be able to resonate with her.

It did not take long for her to find the remaining ginseng inside the safe. It seemed that He Ning had not eaten too much yet. Qiao Mei absorbed all the energy inside the ginseng, making it useless despite how good it looked.

This was the real reason why she wanted to come to this nursery. She was not a fool. The He family had framed her time and time again and she naturally knew how dangerous the He family was.

However, her stand was that nothing ventured meant nothing gained. Just as Qiao Mei was about to retract her energy, she realized that there were many rare and precious plants placed in the corner. As her energy swept past them, all the flowers and plants wilted and some even withered.

He Ning suddenly glanced at the flowers and plants and felt that something was wrong.

Qiao Mei quickly said, "Give me two peach trees and two pear trees!"

Peach trees and pear trees were the most common fruit trees in the capital. They could live and grow as long as they were planted in the ground, then fertilized and watered.