

## **Fat Wife 391**

### Chapter 391: Repaying Within a Month

There was a dormitory at the workplace unit and she could stay there as long as she paid the rent. However, if the people there found out that she was divorced, she could drown in the amount of saliva generated by their gossiping. She might as well go out and find her own place where she could get some peace.

When Xia Fang returned that night, she saw Kong Lu busying himself in the kitchen. The dining table was already filled with dishes.

Kong Lu stood in front of Xia Fang and stammered, "Aunt, I'm sorry... That television... was broken by my sister. I'll pay for it."

Xia Fang glanced at him and did not say anything. She walked straight to the room to look for Xia He.

"Are you alright?" Xia Fang asked nervously.

Xia He did not expect Xia Fang to check on her the moment she returned. She smiled and said, "Aunt, I'm fine."

"It's most important that you're fine. What happened to the television?" Xia Fang heaved a sigh of relief and asked as she sat on the bed.

She had heard some gossip at the hospital and quickly came back after work. The television did not matter to her, but she was afraid that Xia He was being bullied and had no one to back her up.

Xia He told her the whole story in detail and did not leave out the fact that Kong Lu and Kong Li had created a mess at the Sun family's house.

"Aunt, don't worry. Just let Kong Lu compensate for it. All these years, his salary has been more than 100 dollars a month and I haven't gotten a single cent. He doesn't give his mother money every month

and there's no telling how much he has in his own pocket. Don't stand on ceremony with him," Xia He said with a smile as she held Xia Fang's hand.

Xia Fang nodded in understanding.

At this moment, Kong Lu knocked on the door and said, "Aunt, Xiao He, the food is ready."

The four of them sat at the table without saying a word. Kong Li did not treat herself as an outsider and seemed not to feel that what happened in the afternoon had anything to do with her at all. Before Xia Fang even picked up her chopsticks, Kong Li had already started eating.

Xia He looked at Kong Lu mockingly without saying a word. Xia Fang did not care about such etiquette and just started eating.

"Aunt... I don't have enough money for that television now. Can you give me some time?" Kong Lu said.

Xia He put down her chopsticks and said with a smile, "Aunt, he's just joking with you. His money is all with his mother!"

Kong Lu's expression froze. Although he gave all his salary to the family during the past few years, Old Madam Kong had always told him that the little bit of money was not even enough to feed the family. She also said that Xia He must have fish and meat for every meal...

He used whatever money he had left to buy cigarettes and liquor or to go out to socialize, so he did not have much left.

He had a lot of social activities, like when his comrades got married, they all had to give gifts. Everyone would need to chip in a few dollars. Actually, he had been tight on money for so many years and he had to live extremely frugally so that he did not have to ask Xia He for money.

Xia He then said to Kong Lu, "This 2,000 dollars is not a small sum of money. If you're short of a few hundred dollars, go and ask your mother for it. She has plenty of money as I've been the one paying for

all the family expenses all these years. She hasn't contributed a single cent of the money you gave her. I can promise you that."

The smile on Kong Lu's face froze even more. He knew that Xia He had said these things to him on purpose, both for him and Xia Fang to hear.

"Also, give the money to my aunt as soon as possible. It can't be that you want to start saving from now, right? How many years would you need to save up that amount? Are you saying that my aunt can't watch television during this time?" Xia He asked.

Kong Lu lowered his head and said, "Yes, yes, yes. I'll definitely return Aunt's television."

Xia Fang looked at the two of them and said, "There's no hurry. Just give it to me within a month."

Kong Lu had nothing to say to that. Kong Li was so angry that she immediately slammed the table and stood up. "Where can we get so much money! Besides, I didn't break this television, so why should our family pay for it!"

"Kong Li, sit down!" Kong Lu said sternly.

"I won't! They're all bullying our family!" Kong Li said to Kong Lu as she pointed at Xia He and Xia Fang.

"The Kong family maintains such a good upbringing. Juniors can even talk back when their elders are speaking," Xia Fang said sarcastically.

Kong Li clenched her fists in anger and wanted to retort further, but Kong Lu stopped her with a look and she sat back down silently.

Chapter 392: Forgetting About It

"I'm sorry, Aunt. My sister is so immature. I hope you won't take it to heart. She's still a child," Kong Lu said with an apologetic smile.

Xia He said from the side, "Your sister treats me like this in my own house. How dare she speak to my aunt in this manner now? Do you think that my Xia family can be easily bullied?"

To Xia He, Old Madam Kong's insults and Kong Li ordering her to do things were all her own family matters. Since she had married into the Kong family, she had no choice. However, for such things to happen to any Xia family members, she deemed it to have crossed her bottom line.

"No, no. It was a slip of the tongue on my sister's part. I hope you can forgive her," Kong Lu said.

"One week. This money must be repaid within one week. Don't you have plenty of money at home? We just found out today that your sister has so much money. I've spent so much money on your family for so many years. I'm sure all your brothers also have money. Just pool all your money together and pay it back within a week! Call your mother tomorrow!" After saying that, Xia He slammed the table and brought Xia Fang back to the bedroom, unwilling to spend another moment with the Kong siblings.

Kong Lu sat on the chair dejectedly, not knowing what to do about this matter.

Kong Li seemed to understand that she had gotten into trouble and returned to the bedroom silently, not daring to make a sound.

Kong Lu cleaned up the dining table and kitchen and planned to sleep on the sofa in the living room for the night. Xia He had not told him where to sleep. There was only one room left in Xia Fang's house, but it was Xia Zhe's room, so he did not dare to enter rashly.

Xia He suddenly came out and said, "It's already late. Hurry up and bring your sister to a guest house to stay for the night. There won't be any good rooms left if you wait any longer."

Kong Lu paused his actions. He did not expect that he could not even stay here?

Kong Li rushed out of the room and questioned, "It's so late and you want to chase us away! Isn't there another room? Why can't he stay there!"

“That’s my brother’s room. He doesn’t like others going inside,” Xia He said.

“I... I can make do in the living room for the night,” Kong Lu said as he looked around and pointed at the sofa.

“There’s no need to make do. What if my aunt wakes up in the middle of the night while you’re sleeping in the living room? It’s inconvenient for you to be here.” Xia He took out everything belonging to Kong Lu and Kong Li from the room and said, “Hurry up and call your mother. The earlier you get the money back, the sooner my aunt can watch television.”

“You!” Kong Li was so angry that she wanted to go up and argue with Xia He, but Kong Lu stopped her.

“Your luggage is all here. Take care. I won’t send you off.” With that, Xia He returned to the room.

Kong Li asked angrily, “Elder brother, why should we leave!”

She was not willing to go to the guest house. There was nice food and drinks here and the bed was big. It was so comfortable to live in a big house. She would not even be able to toss and turn in the hard little bed in the guest house, so she did not want to go!

“Stop talking and go take your things from the room,” Kong Lu said.

Seeing Kong Lu’s somber expression, Kong Li did not dare to complain anymore. She slowly packed up her luggage in the bedroom to leave with Kong Lu.

Before she left, she looked at Xia He’s bedroom and spat on the floor. If not for Kong Lu, she would have fought with Xia He earlier.

When she turned around, she saw Kong Lu staring at her fiercely. Kong Li was so frightened that she shivered and did not dare to walk forward.

“Is this how you usually treat your sister-in-law?” Kong Lu asked.

Kong Lu had spoken softly, but it sounded like an explosion in Kong Li's ears. She suddenly recalled all the previous reminders from Old Madam Kong that in front of Kong Lu, she must treat Xia He well, listen to Xia He and show respect.

Only in this way could they continue to act like tyrants and enjoy life. If Kong Lu found out the truth, it would be over.

In the end, she had been too comfortable and presumptuous for the past two days and had forgotten about all this...

What should she do now... Kong Li looked at Kong Lu motionlessly and did not even dare to breathe out loud.

The neighbor next door opened the door and came out to throw out the trash. Kong Lu turned around and rushed downstairs. He had already embarrassed himself enough in front of the neighbors today and did not want to see them anymore.

Kong Li followed closely behind and did not dare to cause any delay. Now, she could only tread carefully and do whatever Kong Lu said.

### Chapter 393: Planting Trees

The autumn air was refreshing after the scorching sun set. After dinner, Qiao Mei started work on the vegetable garden and fruit trees at home.

They were not in the courtyard house now as it was not ready yet. They were now at Xu Lan's house and they intended to plant the fruit trees they had bought previously.

Based on Xia Mao's seniority, the house he lived in was much bigger than the house of an ordinary family and had two yards. If they planted two fruit trees, there would be a nice shaded area that the family could use during summertime.

After they were done, they still had a peach tree left. Qiao Mei thought about giving it to Xia Jun.

“Let’s give this peach tree to grandfather. He loves peaches the most,” Xia Zhe said as he looked at the extra sapling in Qiao Mei’s hands.

“Alright. I also intend to give this to grandfather too,” Qiao Mei said with a sweet smile.

In the backyard where they planted the trees, Qiao Mei said, “We would be able to get a harvest after a while. Then we’ll have fruits to eat.”

Liu Fen was lazing around at the side when she heard this. She laughed and said, “How can it be so fast? At the earliest, it will only bear fruit next year.”

“No, Third Aunt-in-law. I bought a three-year-old sapling. It’s able to bear fruits this year,” Qiao Mei said.

“To think that you’re from the countryside. Saplings don’t like to bear fruits in the first year that they are planted. We have to wait until next year,” Liu Fen said.

Qiao Mei muttered softly, “Just because they don’t like it doesn’t mean they can’t. You’ll definitely be able to eat fruits this year.”

Xia Zhe whispered to her, “I believe you. It’ll definitely bear fruit this year.”

Qiao Mei smiled brightly at Xia Zhe. Even when people around said that what she did was impossible, Xia Zhe was still willing to believe her. It was a good feeling to have.

Qiao Mei patted the dirt off her hands and went into the house to wash her hands. This year, the fruit trees must bear fruits. She wanted the Xia family to slowly get used to the fact that she knew how to cultivate flowers and plants and fruit trees. She was looking to make money from this in the future.

At the thought of this, Qiao Mei looked at her stomach. She was about to become a mother and would not have much time to go out and start a career. The current social environment also did not allow her to go out and start a career.

Qiao Mei did not really want to socialize with outsiders. She might as well plant flowers, grow plants and sell fruits from home. She could still earn a lot of money but in a relaxed manner.

It was dark after they planted the trees. Xia Zhe brought Qiao Mei back to the room.

It was Tuesday, so there were no television programs in the second half of the day. The television station staff took their break on Tuesday afternoons. Then again, Xia Zhe had already realized that Qiao Mei did not like to watch television.

Coincidentally, he did not like to watch television either. He had something important to do tonight!

His wife had said that he could use his mouth but not his hands! Since she had already made such a request, he would not stand on ceremony.

“What are you doing...” Qiao Mei pushed Xia Zhe with some difficulty, but her arms were so weak that she could not exert any strength.

No wonder Xia Zhe was acting so strangely today. He was happy to do anything she asked him to do. It turned out that he was up to no good!

Previously, Xia Zhe had only tried his luck. Now, he was really going overboard.

“Stop it!” Qiao Mei pouted.

However, at this point, it was impossible to stop. Every moment of the night was precious.

While a sultry night was only just beginning at the Xia residence, it was not such a comfortable night at the He residence.



He Ning lay on the bed and tossed and turned, unable to fall asleep. Without the fragrance of flowers in the air, it felt as if he had run out of oxygen. His head hurt and he could not breathe.

The medicine tonight also seemed to be very different from usual, as if it had lost its effect.

Previously, he would feel refreshed after drinking the concoction and feel much less ill. Moreover, he could clearly feel that his body was slowly getting better. However, he started feeling more and more uncomfortable today and it even felt as if he did not have long to live.

He Ning immediately called the doctor and asked him to come over.

After the doctor took He Ning's pulse, he felt that something was wrong. Then he looked at the dregs of the medicine that He Ning had taken.

There was nothing wrong with the medicinal dregs, but there was something wrong with the ginseng that he would never bear to throw out. The doctor immediately opened He Ning's medicinal safe to check on the remaining ginseng.

He Ning had locked the precious thing away in the safe so that no one could see it. Every time, he would personally take out a small piece before getting his subordinates to brew the medicine. Apart from him, only the doctor knew the password to this safe. This was so that if he was dangerously ill, the doctor could come and retrieve the medicinal herbs that could save his life.

#### Chapter 394: Something Wrong With the Ginseng

"There's no way there's anything wrong with this ginseng. Because you haven't come by recently, the servants had to prepare the medicine. I personally took out the ginseng. Even if there's a problem, it can only be during the brewing period," He Ning said with a frown.

The brewing of the medicine was done by either his helper or subordinates. There was still no need to trouble the doctor to do such a small thing himself.

The doctor did not say anything. He was not the one who brewed the medicine personally, so he could not be sure that everything went well. However, there was indeed something wrong with this ginseng. It disintegrated when he pressed on it, which did not happen previously.

There was a red sandalwood box in the safe. This box came with a lock, an exquisite Burr lock. Only he could open this kind of lock. Even if someone came to steal it, it would take them a few days to open it without causing any damage.

After He Ning fiddled with the lock using a complicated process, the 100-year-old ginseng was revealed to be in the box unscathed. He did not bear to eat this ginseng often. Usually, he would take out a small portion to add to the ginseng that were used earlier and brewed them repeatedly.

The doctor leaned forward to take a sniff and realized that something was wrong!

“This is not right! The smell is wrong! This is definitely not the same ginseng from before!” the doctor said firmly.

“What did you say!” He Ning’s hands trembled as he looked at the ginseng in disbelief. No one had touched this ginseng except him. This was the treasure that could save his life! The thing that could give him another 10 years of lifespan!

He Ning immediately plucked a piece of ginseng root and tasted it carefully. It indeed tasted different from the last time. Previously, he could not resist the temptation and had tasted this 100-year-old ginseng once when he was alone. The moment it entered his mouth and he tasted the strong flavor, his entire body felt very comfortable. However, at this moment, it felt as if he was chewing wood scraps.

“But... this ginseng is indeed that one...” the doctor said as he looked at the mark on it.

He Ning was afraid that he could not recognize the ginseng if anything happened, so he had made a marking on it. The mark was still there and had not changed at all.

“What exactly is going on!” He Ning sat on the sofa dejectedly, not knowing what to do.

This safe was placed under his bed and he did not leave this place at all. It was still fine when he took the medicine in the morning, so why did it lose its effect in the afternoon? How could someone have swapped it?

“If no one swapped it, then that means the problem lies with the ginseng itself,” the doctor guessed.

He Ning’s gaze instantly turned fierce. The Cao family, or should he say the Xia family, had sold him a fake ginseng? To harm his body! Or to take his life!

However, on second thought, it could not be so. Back then, the doctor had checked this ginseng and there was no doubt that it was a 100-year-old ginseng. Moreover, the medicinal effect had been very good when he started taking it and he could tell that it was real.

There was also a saying that the medicinal effects of a 100-year-old ginseng would not just last for only a few days. If the ginseng was stored well, it could last for many years.

Then what went wrong?

The doctor let out a long sigh and said, “Maybe there’s something wrong with the way we kept it, causing it to go bad. The ginseng should be kept in a ventilated and dry place, but the safe is dark and damp, so it’s not a suitable place to keep ginseng. In such hot weather, it’s very likely...”

He Ning looked at the ginseng in his hand with great pity.

“Sigh, I forgot that this is fresh ginseng. It’s all my fault.” The doctor looked at the ginseng helplessly.

Actually, this matter had nothing to do with him. He had already told He Ning a long time ago how to store the ginseng, but He Ning did not believe him and insisted on putting the ginseng in the safe before he could feel at ease. He knew that He Ning had a bad temper and was hard to persuade, so he did not give any further advice and just let He Ning do whatever he wanted.

The ginseng was in a semi-dried condition and he thought that it would be fine. He did not expect something to happen to it. For the sake of He Ning's reputation, he could only take the blame on himself now.

After the doctor's explanation, He Ning looked much better. He felt comforted knowing that he had not been tricked.

All these years, he was always scheming against others, but no one had ever succeeded in scheming against him. Even the Xia family had not been able to make him fall into a trap. If he let others succeed in scheming against him, he would become a joke. How would his reputation fare then?

Chapter 395: Doing It Personally

"Come in!" He Ning shouted towards the door.

The attendant outside quickly walked to He Ning's side.

"The person you told me about today... that person from the Xia family..." He Ning looked at his attendant with a perplexed expression.

"Zhou Hua, the wife of Xia Guang, the third son of the Xia family," said the attendant.

"Yes, her. How's the matter going?" He Ning asked.

His attendant had reported this matter to him in the daytime, but he was feeling too dizzy to pay attention then.

"Zhou Hua asked for the ginseng but did not manage to get it, and Xia Zhe even found out that she had been in contact with you. He had already sent her to Xia Guang during the night," said the attendant.

He Ning looked at his attendant in disbelief. That woman could actually mess up this matter?

“What did you say? Asked for? Didn’t I give her money? How did it become a situation where she went to ask for the ginseng?” He Ning’s eyes seemed a little dazed as he wondered what had gone wrong.

His goal was to get the ginseng whatever it took. At that time, he felt that the fastest way was to buy the ginseng through someone else and that was how they found Zhou Hua. He knew that if he went personally to the Xia family to buy the ginseng, he would definitely not be able to get it. He could only make use of Zhou Hua.

He Ning did not lack money. Besides, there was no need to scheme against the Xia family for ginsengs. It was not something to lose his dignity over.

As long as the Xia family wanted to sell the ginseng, it should not matter who they sold it to, even if it was someone sent by him. There was no need for him to snatch it by force.

He had even offered a large sum of money. He promised Zhou Hua that he would take any number of ginseng that was available. If it was a 100-year-old ginseng, he would give Zhou Hua 200,000 dollars as a thank-you gift. If it was a 50-year-old ginseng, he would give her 100,000 dollars.

At that time, He Ning had even given Zhou Hua an initial payment of 50,000 dollars, as he was worried that Zhou Hua would think that he was insincere. However, Zhou Hua had actually pocketed the money now.

This incompetent and stupid woman! None of these things had gone smoothly recently!

He Ning was so angry that he closed his eyes and fell to the side.

“Third Master He!” Both the doctor and the attendant were so shocked that they immediately held on to He Ning. He Ning leaned weakly against the doctor.

“Cough, cough, cough... Does the Xia family know that I gave Zhou Hua money?” He Ning asked.

“I don’t think so,” the attendant said.

That made sense. If she had told them about this, the Xia family would have already sent the money back to him. They would not have waited.

“I underestimated her. I actually got cheated by a woman. Cough, cough, cough. How impressive.” He Ning panted and then said, “Go and tell the Xia family this piece of news. My money can’t go to waste like this! Cough, cough, cough!”

“Yes, I’ll go now.” The attendant immediately went to the Xia family’s house.

The doctor slowly helped He Ning to catch his breath and said, “At that time, I already said that we can’t offend the Xia family. Even though they still have ginseng now, you can’t negotiate a deal with them even if you wanted to. If anything, the whole issue has become so convoluted after what happened. It’s even less likely for their family to be willing to offer you any ginseng now.”

“It’s not my intention to offend the Xia family, nor do I want to do anything nasty to them. That Qiao Mei was so fat in the past, but she still managed to marry Xia Zhe. I thought that she must have used some tricks so I wanted to give the Xia family a reason to dump such a person. I never expected her to be so capable. Sigh... I have underestimated my enemy,” He Ning said with a sigh.

“Is it still possible for you to underestimate your enemy?” the doctor said with a smile.

“Me? One can’t spend decades tap dancing on hornets’ nests and not expect to be stung. It’s not possible for me to succeed in everything. As for that matter of digging for treasures, even if anything is found, I have a way to get the Xia family off the hook completely. Since I want Xia Zhe to be our He family’s son-in-law, naturally there can’t be a stain on his reputation. I just didn’t expect them to be able to escape unscathed,” He Ning said.

He Ning muttered, “Without the Xia family, Xia Zhe is nothing.”

The doctor also agreed with this point, but it was not something he should interfere in. His job was to take care of He Ning’s health and help him to live for a few more years.

“These things are not important, but you can’t do without ginseng now. Otherwise, you won’t be able to hold on for long,” the doctor said anxiously.

He Ning understood this very well too.

“That Qiao Mei should still have some left. I’ll go and look for her personally tomorrow. This matter can’t be delayed any longer.” He Ning closed his eyes and sighed deeply.

They had used so many tricks against Qiao Mei but none succeeded. He could only feel at ease if he took action personally. He could not afford to have another failed attempt.

### Chapter 396: Creating a Persona

The next day, Qiao Mei only woke up when the sun had risen high in the sky. When she opened her eyes, it was already past nine in the morning.

Usually, Second Aunt-in-law would not be able to sit still by this hour. She would have started knocking on the bedroom door at around seven o’clock. Why was she not here today?

Qiao Mei got up slowly and got dressed.

Qiao Mei had only realized something last night. Although she was stronger than others, she could not tolerate physical contact very well and her body was much more sensitive than ordinary people. Even if she was being touched using normal strength, she would feel more itchy, painful and sensitive than others.

After getting dressed, Qiao Mei went to the bathroom to wash up. She looked around but could not find Xia Zhe, and wondered where he had gone so early in the morning.

Xia Zhe usually kept a close eye on her and basically stayed by her side 24 hours a day, almost never leaving her line of sight. He would even do his morning exercises inside the courtyard and would leave a note by the bedside if she was not up yet.

“Second Aunt-in-law, where did Xia Zhe go?” Qiao Mei went downstairs and asked.

“Xiao Zhe left in a hurry this morning. I think the old master asked him to go back there. He even said to tell you not to wait for him and to eat on time as he’s not sure what time he’ll be back today. He also said that you can’t go out today and don’t go anywhere.” Liu Fen counted on her fingers and reported one thing after another to Qiao Mei.

It seemed that Xia Zhe had given her a lot of instructions.

Qiao Mei nodded and said, “Second Aunt-in-law, have you eaten?”

“I’ve already eaten. The food on the table is for you. I’m going out now to buy the ingredients for lunch. I’m leaving.” Liu Fen pointed at the breakfast on the dining table and then left.

After breakfast, Qiao Mei went to the backyard to take a look at the new fruit tree she bought yesterday. She fussed with the watering and fertilizing for a long time, and was still not done with the small fruit tree even after Liu Fen returned from doing the marketing.

“You don’t say. Yesterday, the leaves on your small fruit tree were still wilted. After one night, the leaves have already straightened out. Perhaps the tree will really bear fruit this year,” Liu Fen said as she stood behind Qiao Mei.

Liu Fen grew up in the countryside when she was young and only moved to the city much later. She had some knowledge about farming.

This fruit tree had already bloomed previously when they bought it. At that time, there were already a few small fruits hanging on the tree, but there were not many and the survival rate was low. She thought that these fruits would fall off after a few days, but she did not expect the tree to be growing well instead.

“Of course! I’m a professional! I’m very good at planting flowers, vegetables and trees in our village!” Qiao Mei took the opportunity to praise herself and create a persona. This was so that later on, everyone would believe what she said and they would not find it strange when she started growing different plants at her house.



Liu Fen listened in a daze. Back when she lived in the village, she only knew how to plant crops in the fields, that she needed to sow in spring and reap in autumn, and that there were different tasks to do at different times of the year. She did not know anything about high yield, survival rate and crossbreeding in plants. However, since Qiao Mei knew how to dig out good quality ginseng, then what she said must be true.

Suddenly, the phone in the house rang. Liu Fen hurriedly ran to answer it.

“Who is this?” Liu Fen asked.

“What! How would I have so much money... Why the need for so much money! My family only has 2,300 dollars in savings. I didn’t bring much with me this time.” She had even given 100 dollars to Qiao Mei when they first met. Now, she only had a little more than 100 dollars left.

“How about this, I’ll think of a way. Let me ask my maternal family if they have money and also check with my children. Don’t be too anxious.” With that, she hung up.

As she hurriedly ran upstairs, she shouted to Qiao Mei, “Mei Mei! I’m going out for a while! Don’t go out by yourself! Get the helper to cook lunch for you!”

Qiao Mei held out her dirty hands and looked at Liu Fen in puzzlement. “Second Aunt-in-law, what’s wrong? What happened?”

In the backyard, she could hear Liu Fen say things like money, being anxious, and something about wanting to go back to her maternal family. She did not manage to hear everything clearly.

“It’s... your Third Aunt-in-law! Oh my, I’m so angry that I’m muddled! Your Third Aunt-in-law is so bold as to borrow 50,000 dollars from He Ning! It’s 50,000 dollars! Oh my goodness!” Liu Fen was so worried that she paced around the house, not knowing where to go first.

Qiao Mei had a shock as well. The sum of 50,000 dollars was not a small amount.

Chapter 397: Going Everywhere to Borrow Money

“So what’s the situation at home now?” Qiao Mei asked with a frown.

Liu Fen knew that even if she took out all her family’s savings, it would not help much with this debt created by Zhou Hua.

Liu Fen took her bag and prepared to go back to her parents’ house to borrow money. As she packed her things, she said, “There’s also nothing much you can do about this matter. It’s such a big sum to repay! I’ll go back and think of a way now. You must stay at home and don’t wander around.”

Xia Yao’s career had been thriving. When they first got married, they were so poor that they could not even afford to eat, and they had needed financial help from the Xia family. Now that Xia Yao’s salary was more than 100 dollars a month, she stayed at home to take care of the family. Occasionally, she would return to Xia Jun’s house to demonstrate filial piety on behalf of Xia Yao. At home, she had a small courtyard where she could grow vegetables so she did not need to buy any. Over the years, she had managed to save up some money for her two sons to get married.

Everyone already knew that Qiao Mei’s family was from the countryside. Even if Qiao Mei wanted to help, she only had the 2,000 dollars that Xia Zhe had given her and it was most likely that she had already spent most of it. She did not think that Qiao Mei would be able to help out right now.

Qiao Mei quickly stopped Liu Fen and said, “Second Aunt-in-law, don’t be in such a hurry to go back. Tell me more as I have ginseng that I can sell!”

Liu Fen felt more at ease when she heard that. Ginseng was a rare commodity. If a well-to-do family wanted to buy it, it could be worth more than 10,000.

“Second Aunt-in-law, don’t be anxious. Come back and tell me slowly what’s going on?” Qiao Mei slowly pulled Liu Fen back into the house.

The moment Qiao Mei mentioned the matter, Liu Fen almost went crazy with anger. What Zhou Hua did was equivalent to pushing the entire family into a fire pit!

“Your Third Aunt-in-law! It’s all her fault! They called to say that they just found out that Zhou Hua took 50,000 dollars from the He family and that Eldest Brother had managed to grab hold of her on the train. However, she refuses to admit that she has taken the money and refuses to hand it over. They’ve searched the entire house but they still can’t find where she hid the money,” Liu Fen said angrily.

If Zhou Hua refused to say anything, they would definitely not be able to find the money within a short period of time. She must have hidden the money somewhere. Her ancestors were tomb raiders, so she definitely knew of places where others could not think of.

“The most important thing now is to quickly pool the money to return to the He family. Otherwise, the He family won’t let this matter rest. If there is any delay, He Ning will definitely make an issue out of this matter. By then, the Xia family will be finished! Your second uncle will also be finished!” The more Liu Fen said, the more she felt that the task was impossible and she started crying.

It was an amount of 50,000 dollars! Even if they sold the house, they still might not be able to pool together this 50,000 dollars. Moreover, no one was allowed to buy or sell anything now, so she had no idea how they could get the money.

Besides, Xia Yao had written to her a few days ago to say that his superior was happy with his performance and that he might be promoted soon. If anything went wrong at this critical moment, it would be all ruined!

Qiao Mei was a little puzzled. The Xia family and the He family were both among the most prominent families in the capital. The Xia family had to mobilize the entire family to pool together a sum of 50,000 dollars, but He Ning could take out so much money so easily. How was it that he was not afraid of being investigated for taking out so much money so openly?

“Where did the He family get so much money?” Qiao Mei asked, feeling confused.

“I’m not too sure about this either. The old master was the one who called me. Since that’s what he said, then it must be He Ning who did it. Where’s that ginseng of yours? Sigh, even if you take it out, there might not be anyone willing to take the risk to buy it. Besides, what if He Ning turns around and takes a fancy to this ginseng now?” Liu Fen said with a sigh.

Qiao Mei was a little surprised. She did not expect Second Aunt-in-law to be so smart as to be able to guess what He Ning might be thinking.

She did still have ginseng with her. It was a 20-year-old ginseng. However, even if she found a buyer now, it was very likely to be someone sent by He Ning. In the end, even if she got money for it, she would still have to return it to He Ning. That would be like giving He Ning a ginseng for nothing.

“Qiao Mei, Second Aunt-in-law knows that you’re being kind, but the situation is tense now. I think I should go back and think of a way. You must stay at home. The whole family is in such a mess now. If anything should happen to you as well, it would be a disaster.” Liu Fen picked up her bag and rushed out of the door.

By the time Qiao Mei reacted, Liu Fen had already disappeared.

“Second Aunt-in-law can actually run so fast...” Qiao Mei looked at Liu Fen’s back in a daze and sighed.

At this moment, Qiao Mei suddenly remembered that she still had more than 10,000 dollars in her bag that she kept aside for emergencies. In the end, she had forgotten to tell Liu Fen.

#### Chapter 398: Coming to Request for Ginseng

Qiao Mei pushed hard on the door of Xia Mao’s house and realized that the Xia family’s main door was double-layered. The outer door was locked once it was closed. One needed a password even to open it from the inside. Unless she had a key or a password, she was unable to open this door.

“Forget it, we can talk about it tonight,” Qiao Mei said with a sigh.

From what she could hear from the phone conversation just now, it seemed that everyone would get together that night to see how much money they had managed to pool together. The Xia family members were either political officials or soldiers, and their salaries were not high. They were not able to save much from their salaries and depended on subsidies to help out with their expenses.

The Xia family received a lot of subsidies and did not need to spend money on food and clothing at home. This was how they managed to have more savings than other families. Nowadays, ordinary families with only a few hundred dollars in savings could be considered to be rich.

Liu Fen's maternal family was from the countryside and they were self-sufficient by growing their own food. Qiao Mei did not know how much savings they could have and thought that they probably would not be able to help much.

Qiao Mei still had a small 20-year-old wild ginseng she brought along to cater to emergency situations. She had no idea about the prices of goods and houses in the capital and was worried that a 100-year-old ginseng might not be enough to exchange for a house. That was why she had hidden one more ginseng in the compartment of her bag in case of any emergency.

Xia Zhe did not even know about these things. He did not have the habit of going through her bag.

Actually, there was something even better in her bag. It was meant to save Xia Zhe's life back then, but it was something a little too extreme. If she took it out, it would probably shock the entire country...

At this moment, Qiao Mei suddenly heard someone ringing the doorbell. She opened the inner door and saw an unfamiliar man through the glass of the outer door. However, she felt that he looked a little familiar.

"Hello, who are you looking for?" Qiao Mei asked politely with a smile.

The stranger was clearly stunned for a moment before he quickly sized Qiao Mei up. He smiled faintly and said, "Are you Miss Qiao Mei? I'm here to look for you."

"Looking for me? Then who are you?" Qiao Mei looked at the man in puzzlement.

This was the first time someone had come to the Xia family's house to look for her. She had no relatives or friends in the capital, so she did not expect someone to come looking for her.

"My surname is He. I'm He Ning," He Ning said.

It took Qiao Mei by surprise. So this was He Ning. No wonder he looked so familiar.

She had seen him from afar when she went to the nursery to absorb the ginseng energy.

“So you’re He Ning,” Qiao Mei said.

Qiao Mei also sized him up. He was in his late twenties and tall with fair skin. He stood very straight but he was very thin. She did not expect a ruthless person like He Ning to look so gentle and refined.

“Why? You don’t believe me?” He Ning asked.

“No.” Qiao Mei just wondered how such a person could actually seem to have a similar temperament to Xia Wen. However, when she conversed with Xia Wen, it felt like there was a spring breeze blowing on her, while this man was just unfathomable.

“In that case, can you let me in to talk?” He Ning said with a smile.

Qiao Mei shook her head and said, “I’m sorry, but you can’t. There are no other men in the house now, so it’s not convenient for you to come in. If you have anything to say, you can say it here. Or you can come another day.”

During this era, men and women still kept a distance from one another as it was not in line with societal norms to get too close. Qiao Mei’s answer was not inappropriate at all.

“Alright,” He Ning said helplessly.

He Ning knew that Qiao Mei was telling the truth. After all, he had used all kinds of excuses to divert away all the occupants of the house. Otherwise, he would not have been able to pay her this visit.

“It’s like this. I’m not in good health and need ginseng to save my life. I heard that you still have a 100-year-old ginseng? I wonder what it would take for you to sell it, Miss Qiao. I’m willing to pay any price, just name it,” He Ning said.

It was now that Qiao Mei understood what Xia Zhe meant. He Ning was indeed an unpredictable person who did things decisively and according to his own whim and fancy. Not long ago, he had framed the Xia family and almost killed them. Now, he was openly coming by to buy ginseng.

It looked as if He Ning had been in very poor health for the past two days. After she had drained all the energy from all the plants and medicinal herbs in his house, it seemed to have made his life very difficult.

Qiao Mei held back her laughter and looked at He Ning politely without saying anything.

Then, Qiao Mei pretended to look at He Ning in confusion and said, "Oh? Didn't the Cao family give you the ginseng?"

At the mention of this, He Ning's head hurt even more. He was really too embarrassed to say it out loud that he had wasted such good ginseng. He found it to be a great humiliation and a reckless waste of natural resources.

#### Chapter 399: The Fragrance of Flowers

"How can one be enough? A sick person like me needs to take it every day. Basically my life depends on ginseng, so it will never be enough. The more the better," He Ning said with a smile.

He Ning looked at Qiao Mei's doubtful expression and immediately said, "Name a price or condition, Miss Qiao. I'll do my best to fulfill it."

Qiao Mei looked at He Ning and said, "Actually, there's something I don't quite understand. I wonder if I can ask Mr. He about it?"

With Qiao Mei's beautiful face and sweet voice, coupled with her young age and the innocent and puzzled expression on her face, there was probably no one who could resist her charm.

No wonder there was an old saying about how no man could resist the charms of a beautiful woman. Just looking at a beautiful woman made one want to speak gently as well.

He Ning had always been dismissive of marriage and relationships, especially when it came to men who were trapped by women or love. He Ning felt that these men were extremely stupid.

However, as He Ning looked at Qiao Mei, he finally understood why those people would make such crazy choices.

“You said that ginseng is very helpful to you?” Qiao Mei asked.

He Ning nodded and said, “Yes, very. I really need ginseng. I’m here today not only to ask for the ginseng that you have, but also to thank you. Without your ginseng, my health might be even worse.”

How sanctimonious.

“Then what did you do to thank me? You got someone to dig up my house, got people from the Liang family to come and look for me, tricked Zhou Hua into helping you and created a mess in the Xia family? Is this how you thank people? Then your way of saying thanks is really quite special,” Qiao Mei said mockingly.

He Ning looked at Qiao Mei with some admiration. As he listened to what Qiao Mei said, his initial faint smile turned into a big laugh. He found himself liking this young lady very much.

She was frank and did not beat around the bush. He found it tiring to keep scheming against others, and there were very few people who were willing to talk to him so bluntly by now. It felt very good and he liked it very much.

Since Qiao Mei was so frank, he decided to also lay his cards on the table.

He Ning stopped his earlier act of pretense and said, “Whether it was you or your grandfather who dug up the ginseng, you never thought of giving it to me. Furthermore, you were also not the one who gave it to me. The ginseng was given to me by the Cao family, so I will only thank them.”



“If someone gave me life-saving medicine, shouldn’t I thank the person who gave me the medicine instead of the person who made the medicine? Or should I just go and thank that ginseng and the rivers and mountains that nurtured it?” He Ning asked.

What He Ning said made sense and Qiao Mei was rendered speechless.

“As for the things you mentioned, I admit that I did them. I did go overboard, but on account that you were not hurt in the end, please forgive me,” He Ning said with a slight bow.

To He Ning, putting on such an attitude was already a show of humility. It had always been people coming to apologize to him. He Ning had never apologized to anyone before.

If anyone who knew He Ning saw this scene, they would probably be so shocked that their eyes would pop out.

Suddenly, a gust of wind from inside the house blew into his face. He caught a whiff of a faint fragrance and immediately felt his headache lessen by a great deal.

He Ning was stunned by it and remained in the bowing position for a while. He had spent a lot of money to get people to find rare and precious herbs for him but he had never come across this fragrant smell before. The more amazing thing was that this floral fragrance was surprisingly useful to him.

As the gust of wind died down, the fragrance gradually dissipated. He Ning straightened up and looked at Qiao Mei with a burning gaze. He was sure that he had just smelt the fragrance of flowers.

In the past, he needed flowers to be piled up next to him at home so that he was surrounded by the fragrance of the flowers all the time. Using self-hypnosis, he was able to ignore his own pain by concentrating on the floral fragrance. However, this fragrant smell today was able to directly reduce his pain. The effect was immediate!

He Ning took two steps forward agitatedly and asked, “Miss Qiao, can you open the door and let me in so we can talk?”

He Ning made full use of his height to look through the glass to see what kind of flowers and plants the Xia family had in their house. He had to know what they were and try his best to get them.

Qiao Mei stared at He Ning as he got very close to her and frowned. "No."

He Ning took a step back and said, "Then about the ginseng..."

"I'm sorry but I can't agree. I can't make a decision on this matter. I'm a woman and I have to listen to my husband when it comes to family matters. Let's talk about it when the members of the Xia family return home," Qiao Mei said as she pretended to be helpless.

#### Chapter 400: Going Head-on

He Ning's eyes lit up. It looked like Qiao Mei still had more ginseng, even if what she had left may not be as good as the previous 100-year-old ginseng. He was still fairly sure that even if she only had ginseng that were tens of years old, the quality would still be much better than what was currently available in the market.

He Ning was finally able to relax. As long as Qiao Mei had ginseng, he would definitely be able to get it. Before he came, the only thing he was worried about was that she did not have any left.

"This ginseng is yours. You can make your own decisions, so why do you need the Xia family's approval?" He Ning asked.

Qiao Mei smiled and said, "Although this ginseng is mine, I still need the Xia family's permission to sell it to people targeting the Xia family. After all, I'm the Xia family's daughter-in-law, so I naturally have to side with the Xia family."

He Ning was a little stunned by Qiao Mei's attitude. He had previously asked around about Qiao Mei and no one had said anything about her having such a sharp tongue.

Qiao Mei did not pretend to be innocent and ignorant like she did with others when she wanted to charm them. When it came to He Ning, there was nothing else she could do aside from going head-on with him.

Even if she put on a front, He Ning would still know it was an act. Instead of circling around with He Ning, it would be better to just go straight to the point. This would also let He Ning know that she was not someone to be trifled with and make him think twice before doing anything.

He Ning had indeed reevaluated Qiao Mei.

Previously, he thought that Qiao Mei was just an ignorant girl who grew up in the countryside. Now, the “village girl” was proving to be very difficult to deal with and was even making him look bad.

The fact that the Xia family let a village girl marry into their family did not make them worse off. Instead, they had added another capable person into their fold.

“That means... the Xia family has to decide on the matter of the 100-year-old ginseng? Do you have any requests that I can satisfy, perhaps like 100,000 dollars? A house? An easy and reputable job? As long as you ask for it, I can help you.” He Ning deliberately emphasized the phrase “100-year-old ginseng”.

Qiao Mei understood what He Ning meant, but she did not intend to reveal her thoughts now.

“Don’t worry, if there is anything I can offer you, it will only be better than the one you had. I don’t really want anything. It mainly depends on the Xia family. Whatever condition that the Xia family asks for will also be my condition since I stand together with them. But if the Xia family is unwilling to give it to you... then there’s really nothing I can do,” Qiao Mei said.

He Ning stared at Qiao Mei and did not say anything. This was really a very smart person. He had found the women of the Xia family to be all very stupid. Now, they had finally found an outstanding woman to make up for this shortcoming.

“You can send all the members of the Xia family home now. I’m going into the house to take a rest. Goodbye.” After saying that, Qiao Mei closed the inner door and returned to her bedroom.

It took her a while to realize that Xia Zhe and Liu Fen had both been diverted away by He Ning. Xu Lan usually went out early and was seldom at home. He had done that so that he could come and look for her when she was alone.

He Ning looked at the closed main door of the Xia family house. Before he came, he thought that she was a village girl who could be easily deceived and it would be easy to take the ginseng from her. He did not expect her to be so smart, and for this whole matter to become more troublesome than before.

With the door closed tightly, there was no longer any trace of fragrance.

After He Ning left, all the Xia family members returned very quickly. Xia Jun, Xia Mao, Xia Zhe and Xia Wen were the first few to return.

After getting out of the car, Xia Zhe rushed into the house to look for Qiao Mei.

“Qiao Mei! Qiao Mei!” Xia Zhe shouted in the living room.

Seeing that Qiao Mei was not in the living room, he headed straight to the bedroom on the second floor. When he pushed open the door and saw Qiao Mei resting in bed, he was finally able to feel relieved.

Xia Zhe slowly made his way to the bed and gently stroked Qiao Mei’s head. “I’m so glad that you’re fine...”

Qiao Mei felt that there was someone next to her and slowly opened her eyes. When she saw that it was Xia Zhe, she said in a childish voice, “Huh? Oh, you’re back.”

Xia Zhe hugged Qiao Mei and said in a voice laced with guilt, “I’m sorry, I was so careless. I shouldn’t have left you at home alone.”

Qiao Mei hugged Xia Zhe back and said, “I’m fine.”

“Did he bully you? Did he threaten you?” Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei and asked.

Qiao Mei smiled and said, "Threaten me? It's already good enough that I didn't threaten him. Is everyone back?"

Xia Zhe nodded and said, "Yes. Grandfather, father and elder brother are all back."

"Come, let's go downstairs to see them," Qiao Mei said.

Qiao Mei tidied up and went downstairs with Xia Zhe. The Xia family members sat in the living room solemnly and got ready to discuss this matter.