

Fat Wife 421

Chapter 421: Lying Again

It was not up to her to make any decisions. Since she had come to this world, she had to understand the rules of survival here. Only then could she protect herself and not let others bully her as they pleased, and to make sure that what He Ning did to her would not happen again.

Qiao Mei looked at her stomach worriedly, not knowing how much more trouble was waiting for her or her children in the future. She hoped that the children would be safe and could grow up without any worries. She also wished that she could be the one to bear all the hardships on their behalf, unlike the descendants of the Jiang family, who had to experience so much at a young age and were even displaced from their home.

“It seems that this world is not as simple as I imagined...” Qiao Mei said, feeling melancholic.

Xia Zhe hugged Qiao Mei and said firmly, “I will definitely protect you and our children. I won’t let you get hurt or suffer.”

Qiao Mei looked into Xia Zhe’s determined eyes and said with a smile, “I will also protect our home.”

She must understand the rhythm of this world and master its rules and regulations. Only then could she protect her children, the people she loved and everything she cherished.

Xia Zhe looked at Qiao Mei’s determined gaze. The gentle young girl in his arms had become strong for their family and was willing to go through thick and thin with him.

Xia Zhe stroked Qiao Mei’s stomach gently and said, “Alright, we’ll go over there and take a look together.”

He felt that there would be moments when he could not keep an eye on her, and thought that it would be safer to borrow a few security guards from his father to protect Qiao Mei and avoid any accidents.

Xia Zhe coaxed Qiao Mei to sleep for a while more. Otherwise, she would have rushed off to the He family's house immediately even though it was still before dawn.

Most of the neighbors in the vicinity were reputable people in the capital and many families had complicated relationships with one another. They all knew that Xia Zhe's house had been dug up a few days ago and that the mastermind was the He family.

Now that the He family's house was being dug up, there would definitely be people who would come by to ask the Xia family to go and take a look. People would want to see the sparks fly between the two families, so naturally there would be people who would come to look for them immediately when anything happened.

As Xia Zhe had expected, someone came to the door as soon as dawn broke.

"Is anyone there! Is anyone home! Something happened!" There was a frantic knocking sound on the door downstairs.

Xia Zhe had already been waiting in the living hall for a long time, concerned that the rest of the family would be woken up if someone pressed the doorbell.

"What's wrong, auntie? What's the matter so early in the morning?" Xia Zhe wrapped a jacket around himself and pretended to look sleepy as he asked.

The neighbor whispered, "Xiao Zhe, I see you just got up. I want to tell you that something happened at the He family's house. Hurry up and go take a look. I heard that it's not a small matter!"

Xia Zhe pretended to be shocked and said, "Huh? What happened?"

"I heard that they got reported and that someone from the Jiang family had come looking for them! I'm just here to tell you that. I'm going over first! You guys come quickly!" The neighbor hurriedly left after saying that.

Xia Zhe watched his neighbor leave and closed the door before calling Xia Mao on the phone.

“Hello... Father, it has already started at the He family’s side. The neighbors have also gone over,” Xia Zhe said in a low voice.

“Alright, I’ll go over with your elder brother now.” After saying that, Xia Mao prepared to hang up.

After finishing what they needed to do last night, Xia Wen brought Xia Mao to his house. Tan Jing was staying with Xu Lan now. If they went back so late, it would disturb their rest. He had asked Xia Zhe to go with them, but Xia Zhe was afraid that Qiao Mei would be worried if she waited too long at home for him, so he went back to the house alone.

“Wait! Can I borrow 10... no, no, no, 20 security guards from you?” Xia Zhe asked softly.

Xia Mao found it to be a very strange request. Putting aside his own achievements when he was young, Xia Wen was a top army warrior for three years. Xia Zhe did even better than them.?Who would dare to attack the three of them?

“What do you need so many people for?” Xia Mao asked.

“I... I’m afraid that the He family will incite a riot. If all the He family’s enemies swarm over, we won’t be able to stop them. What if they have a backup plan and we’re outnumbered,” Xia Zhe explained haphazardly.

Xia Mao thought about it and felt that it made sense. It was better to be safe than sorry.

Chapter 422: Simply Messing Around

“Alright, I’ll inform them to go there too.” With that, Xia Mao went to make the arrangements.

Xia Zhe leaned against the cabinet and heaved a sigh of relief. This was only the second time he had lied to Xia Mao. The first time was when he was young and he lied to Xia Mao that he had finished his homework so that he could go out and play. Later on, his teacher found out and went to look for Xia Mao. After he returned home and got a beating, he did not dare to do it again.

When Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei made their way there, the neighbors all glanced at them with a gossipy look in their eyes, as if they were asking whether this matter was done by their family.

“Xiao Zhe, did you guys do this?” a neighbor asked curiously. Everyone looked at Xia Zhe and waited for his answer.

Xia Zhe also pretended to look very surprised as he looked at the neighbors around him and asked, “What’s going on? I don’t even know what happened. I only came here because I heard someone on the street say that something had happened to the He family. What has happened to the He family?”

“What else could it be? Someone reported them,” the neighbor said.

“Oh my, who? Who dares to report the He family?” Xia Zhe looked at the people around him in disbelief.

The neighbors all played along with Xia Zhe. After all, they were all of a certain socio-economic status and everyone could tell what Xia Zhe was thinking. Since Xia Zhe wanted to put on an act, they would just play along with him. It was better for them to side with the Xia family than the He family. With the He family, no one knew when they would bite back.

“I heard that it was someone from the Jiang family who reported them. And it’s related to that incident back then. Don’t you know anything about it given that the Xia family is so resourceful?” the neighbor whispered.

“Hahaha, my wife and I have been resting at home recently. We don’t know much about these things,” Xia Zhe said with a fake smile.

“Sigh, didn’t everyone from the Jiang family already escape? Why are they back now?”

“Who knows? But there’s going to be a good show today.”

“The He family has done many evil things. I guess this can be considered their retribution.”

“It’s not certain who’s right or wrong in this matter. Who knows what the third son of the He family will do.”

“You’re right...”

The people in the crowd chattered noisily about the past and made their guesses about what was going to happen today.

This scene looked very similar to what happened to the Jiang family 10 years ago. Back then, there were also as many people surrounding the house. This incident served as a constant reminder to Qiao Mei to be careful and take every step carefully so that she would not follow in the footsteps of the Jiang family.

In aristocratic families, not only did the family members have to learn to protect themselves, but they also had to protect the interests of the family. No one could ever know whether decline or prosperity would come first. The only thing they could do was to play their parts well.

“Sigh, the Jiang family is really pitiful. Back then, our family had even received help from Old Master Jiang,” the neighbor said regretfully.

If not for the fact that it was a follow-up to the Jiang family’s incident today, many people would not have come over to join in. Old Master Jiang was a sore point in everyone’s hearts. He had always helped others without asking for anything in return. Many neighbors in the vicinity had received help from Old Master Jiang before, and found it a pity that the heavens were unfair and let evil people get their way.

Soon, Xia Mao and Xia Wen rushed over with the security guards. From afar, they could see Xia Zhe waiting for them at the side with... that was Qiao Mei!

Xia Mao and Xia Wen were both shocked. Xia Mao hurriedly walked forward, pointed at Xia Zhe and berated, “Why is Qiao Mei here! You’re simply messing around! What is she doing here!”

Ever since Qiao Mei married into the family, Xia Mao had always been amiable and had never said anything harsh to her. This was the first time he had behaved like this.

Qiao Mei was so frightened that she hid behind Xia Zhe. Xia Mao's loud voice was like a clap of thunder. When Xia Mao saw Qiao Mei like this, he also felt that he had spoken a little too harshly just now. After all, Qiao Mei was not a soldier reporting to him. This was a dainty young girl and not one of those rough men in the army. Besides, Qiao Mei was pregnant with the eldest grandchild of the Xia family, so she could not be frightened. It would not be good if it affected her pregnancy.

Xia Mao stood rooted to the spot, not knowing how to gently persuade Qiao Mei to go back. After all, he had been speaking sternly for most of his life and never needed to be gentle, so he had no idea how to do it.

Only then did he understand that Xia Zhe did not ask for so many security guards as a precautionary measure. Instead, it was to protect Qiao Mei as he was worried that something would happen to her.

At this moment, Xia Wen also had a stern expression on his face. He had thought that Xia Zhe was a dependable person and he did not expect him to be so reckless.

Chapter 423: Defend to the Death

When Qiao Mei saw that Xia Mao was embarrassed, she smiled and said sweetly to him, "I'm the one who begged Xia Zhe to bring me here as I had trouble sleeping. Father, don't be angry. I just want to come and take a look!"

When Xia Mao heard that Qiao Mei had trouble sleeping, he quickly asked, "Are you not feeling well? Do you want your aunt to come and take a look? When did you start having trouble sleeping?"

Facing a string of rapid questions, Qiao Mei did not know which one to answer first. Xia Mao turned to look at Xia Zhe and said, "Why aren't you concerned about Qiao Mei's health! How long has she been in this state! Is this how you treat her! I'll call your aunt and ask her to come and take a look."

After saying that, he wanted to go to the newspaper stand at the side to call Xia Fang. During this era, there were no mobile phones. Everyone relied on the phone booth or the landline at home to make phone calls.

"It's nothing, it's nothing! I'm just tired from all the work at home last night. I'll be fine once I get some rest," Qiao Mei said as she hurriedly stopped Xia Mao.

Xia Mao also understood that Qiao Mei was talking about the matter of the food stamps and banknotes.

Xia Mao looked at both Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe suspiciously and asked, "Are you really feeling well?"

"I'm fine, Father. Don't worry," Qiao Mei said with a smile.

Seeing how assured Qiao Mei was, Xia Mao felt more at ease. However, he still could not accept the fact that Xia Zhe sneaked out with Qiao Mei, and even lied to him.

No one knew if the same tragic situation from 10 years ago would happen today. What if Qiao Mei got a shock, what if she was traumatized, what if...

Xia Mao's mind was filled with the fear that something would happen to Qiao Mei, but since she was already here, there was no time to send her back. The women at home were not awake yet, so he decided to keep her by their sides.

The action had already started at the He family's house.

"You brat! I'll settle the score with you later!" Xia Mao still felt worried and went to the newspaper stand to make a phone call.

He asked for another 10 security guards to come over to protect Qiao Mei. He wanted to be very careful today and not let anything happen.

Now there were a total of 30 security guards, almost enough to make up a company. With so many of them around, it would definitely arouse He Ning's suspicions.

However, He Ning's suspicions were not as important as the safety of his daughter-in-law. Over the phone, Xia Mao ordered them to protect Qiao Mei from a distance not too far away from her.

He reiterated that both the inner and outer areas had to be absolutely safe. Nothing must happen to Qiao Mei!

Qiao Mei looked at the busy Xia Mao and smiled. It felt so good to be cared for by her family.

In less than half an hour, a car arrived at the entrance of an alley not far from the He family's house and 10 people jumped out one after another. Among them, five people quickly disappeared into the crowd in the vicinity, making it impossible to spot them at all. The other five were elite officers who lingered close to Qiao Mei to protect her.

The 20 security guards who had followed Xia Mao here in the beginning were also lurking around and protecting Qiao Mei.

They only had one order and that was to protect Qiao Mei with their lives.

After making the necessary arrangements, Xia Mao brought them to the He family's compound. If they did not go in soon, the kid from the Jiang family would not be able to hold on much longer.

The He family's old house was about the same size as the Xia family's courtyard house. The eldest son of the He family, He Guo, and the second son of the He family, He Wei, had both lived here. He Ning felt that as there were too many people around, it was too noisy and not conducive to his recuperation, so he moved out.

The main door of the He family's house was wide open and one could see that it was filled with people inside. There was also a big group of people outside the door who had come to watch the commotion. Everyone found it really rare that someone would dare to cause trouble for the He family in this day and age.

After He Ning's father passed away, many people came around to ask for their debts to be repaid. They said that He Ning's father had gambled away the family business and even owed them large sums of money. Then they beat up the three He brothers when they could not receive any payment.

After that, it was Old Master Jiang who helped to settle all the debts.

Later on, He Ning became famous after excelling in a battle. As his reputation grew, no one dared to cause trouble for the He family anymore. Those people who came to bully them in the past all disappeared without a trace.

As the saying went, even a goose passing by would leave a sound. However, those people disappeared as if they had never existed. It was just that these incidents were not as prominent as what happened to the Jiang family, so no one paid much attention to them.

This time, someone from the Jiang family had returned and even brought along a group of people who rushed into the He family's courtyard to block everyone's way and wanted to dig everywhere. The method was exactly the same as the one used on the Jiang family 10 years ago.

The Xia family members pushed their way through the crowd and approached the He family compound. They had to go in and support the Jiang family. Otherwise, He Ning would definitely try his best to stop them. Xia Wen stood beside Xia Mao, followed closely by Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei. The five security guards stood at the back to block away passers-by and keep people away from Qiao Mei.

Chapter 424: Who Dares to Behave So Atrociously

The scene in the courtyard was very similar to what had happened to the Xia family not long ago. More than 20 men with shovels and hoes stood on both sides of the courtyard, waiting for the section chief to give the order to start work. There were also experts looking around to find the best spots to dig.

A young and good-looking man stood in the courtyard. Opposite him stood the eldest son of the He family, He Guo, and the second son, He Wei. Behind He Wei was his son, He Li.

Neither party spoke as they quietly waited for the right timing. The arrival of the Xia family broke the silence.

"I was wondering why you haven't made a move. So you're waiting for the Xia family to arrive," He Wei said to the man as he looked at the Xia family members who had just entered through the door.

The man was unfazed and stood on the spot without saying anything. He just stared fixedly at the He family members, as if he wanted to chop them into pieces.

“Do it!” the man said to Section Chief Huang, who was beside him.

Section Chief Huang was about to ask the people to start work when He Li pointed at them with a stick and said, “Let’s see who dares to move! Do you really think you can behave so atrociously in our He family’s territory! Wait for my little uncle! Don’t even move!”

Qiao Mei looked at the person in the courtyard who was making threatening gestures. He was probably the silly son of the He family that her youngest aunt, Xia Fang, had mentioned.

Xia Fang had previously told her that there were very few people in the He family. He Wei did have two sons, but they were both useless. When the children were first born, He Wei was still smug about it for a period of time. It was only when they grew up that he realized the shortcomings of these two children. The eldest son, He Li, had brute strength but no brains. The second son, He Han, was timid and unwilling to speak.

He Ning arrived very late and made his way in slowly with his walking stick. As soon as He Ning entered, he saw the Xia family and immediately understood everything. The only person who could manage to find any Jiang family member was the Xia family’s Xia Xiu.

As Xia Mao was still an elder after all, He Ning slowly walked up to him and greeted, “What brings Uncle Xia here?”

“I heard from the neighbors that there’s something going on at your house, so I came over to take a look,” Xia Mao said.

“Looks like they’ve been waiting for Uncle Xia to come before they start work. Since they’re all here, let’s begin,” He Ning said to the man in the middle of the courtyard.

“It’s your people who kept stopping me. Otherwise, work would have started long ago,” the man said.

Xia Wen slowly walked up to He Ning and said, "We only heard about this from our neighbors. This matter has nothing to do with our Xia family. We're not the only people who have come to watch the commotion. Does the He family disallow people to watch what's going on?"

He Ning smiled and did not say anything.

"Since Mr. He is here, let's begin," the man said to Section Chief Huang.

Section Chief Huang made some simple arrangements and the men started work. The bricks in the courtyard were lifted one by one and dust flew everywhere.

No one from the Jiang family, the He family or the Xia family said anything. They were all observing each other, but everyone could feel the heated tension in the air.

Qiao Mei carefully sized up the good-looking man in the courtyard. He looked about the same age as Xia Zhe and was dressed in burlap clothes with patches on the shoulders and elbows. One look and she could tell that he had grown up in a poor village. However, with his ramrod straight back and calm temperament, she could tell that he was destined to be an extraordinary person.

The man was also looking at the Xia family members. It was early dawn and a ray of sunlight shone on the man. His bright and piercing eyes which should have been filled with aspirations and ambitions were only filled with hatred at the moment. He then stared fixedly at He Ning's back, wishing he could tear the man apart.

He Ning seemed to have sensed something and turned around to look at the man with a smile. "Jiang Shu, I haven't seen you for so long, but you seem to be very different from before. In the past, you always liked to hang out around me and call me Brother Ning."

Back then, the Jiang family and the He family had three children each. He Ning and Jiang Shu were the youngest kids, so they got along best. He Ning was born with poor health, so as long as it was something He Ning wanted, Jiang Shu would think of a way to help him fulfill it. He Ning also gave everything nice to Jiang Shu first.

On the day that they became enemies, Jiang Shu even wept and asked He Ning why he treated him and his family like this.

He Ning did not say anything and only left Jiang Shu with a view of his aloof back.

Ever since then, Jiang Shu kept to himself and became unwilling to talk to anyone.

Chapter 425: Thanks to You

Later on, he followed his father, Jiang Yan, as they fled everywhere to avoid being found by their enemies. In those days, he still had a younger sister. Then, she fell sick while on the run and passed away due to malnutrition. Soon, Jiang Yan also could not hold on anymore. Before he passed away, he sent Jiang Shu away to be raised by Jiang Jin, who had changed his name and gone into hiding.

From then on, Jiang Shu and his second uncle, Jiang Jin, only had each other left. Jiang Jin never got married as he only had Xia Xiu in his heart. To Jiang Shu, Jiang Jin was like a father figure to him.

Section Chief Huang carefully observed the expressions on the faces of the members of the He and Xia families. If he was not careful, he might not be able to keep his job.

Ever since Section Chief Chu messed up the last time at the Xia residence, he had disappeared without a trace. After that, everything related to the search for restricted items had been handed over to Huang Fei.

They had all waited for such a long time earlier because not only were the He family members waiting for He Ning, he was also waiting for the Xia family members to arrive. There was no way this poor kid from the Jiang family would be able to keep the He family in check.

Jiang Shu looked at He Ning mockingly and said, "Things are different now. I only feel that I was very stupid back then. I should have persuaded my grandfather not to help your family earlier. Otherwise, how would we get bitten back by a heartless person like you!"

"What did you say! Say it again if you dare!" He Li pointed at Jiang Shu and shouted.

Usually, everyone looked down on He Li. Only He Ning would take care of him and speak up for him. Over the years, as long as their family went to He Ning for help, there was nothing that they could not do. He did not know what kind of bad things that He Ning had done, but he knew that He Ning was sincere when it came to them.

He Li hated it the most when people badmouthed He Ning!

He Ning smiled as he looked at He Li. At least he did not dote on the kid for nothing.

“He Li, go back,” He Ning said.

He Li obediently put down the stick and stood beside his father, He Wei, as he looked warily at the people around him. Although he was not very clever and did not understand the twists and turns of the conversation, he knew very well that he had to protect He Ning.

Actually, he was protecting He Ning not just because He Ning treated them well.

He Wei had previously said that as long as He Ning was well and still around, the He family would not fall from power. If He Ning was no longer around, the He family would be nothing. Those who flattered He Li and tried to curry favor with him would also leave him then.

He Li was used to being flattered by others. Only by protecting He Ning would he be able to continue having everything he had now.

“I wonder if you’re well after all these years? Where are you living? Why are you wearing such tattered clothes? Do you need our help?” He Ning said hypocritically.

“I’m in good health, so there’s no need for Mr. He to worry. As for you, why are you still not dead yet after so many years?” Jiang Shu said disdainfully.

Jiang Shu's tone was filled with regret, but He Ning did not care about Jiang Shu's curse at all. After so many years, there were many people who wanted him dead, so one more person would not make any difference.

"Thanks to you, I'm still alive and well. However, where have you been all these years? I've been asking around for your whereabouts. It must not have been easy for the Xia family to find you. I wonder if your father and uncle are doing well?" After saying that to Jiang Shu, He Ning turned around and looked at Xia Wen intently.

When Xia Xiu found Jiang Jin, he was already terminally ill. He had been malnourished for a long time and still had to do farm work to support his family and his body was on the verge of collapse. Now that Xia Xiu had transferred him to a private hospital for treatment, Jiang Shu was here to seek justice on behalf of him and his father, Jiang Yan.

Jiang Shu had already suffered once, so there was no way he would fall for the trick a second time.

"You don't have to try and trick me to give you information. I'm the only one in my family. The rest of them are all dead. Thanks to you, my whole family died when they were on the run," Jiang Shu said through gritted teeth.

He Ning's expression was solemn as he said regretfully, "What a pity."

"What a pity? It's not a pity at all. Your good days are coming to an end. You can go down and accompany them soon," Jiang Shu said with a smile.

"I'm being framed. The things in the courtyard are not mine," He Ning said.

"We'll all know in a while if you have been framed. Besides, who told you that I'm here to make a report against you?" Jiang Shu gave He Ning a meaningful look.

He Ning felt his scalp tingle. He had not felt such fear for a long time.

He Ning looked at the people in the courtyard, then at the crowd standing at the door and the eyewitnesses to the incident back then. He Ning instantly knew what Jiang Shu was going to do.

Chapter 426: Framed

He looked at Jiang Shu in disbelief and said, "Did the Xia family force you to do this! Think about it carefully. It won't do you any good!"

"As long as you, He Ning, can die, so what if I 'confess'? I don't have any other wishes. In any case, my Jiang family has long been destroyed! I'm the only one left now! There's nothing else I want! Even if I die, I want you, He Ning, to be buried alongside me!" Jiang Shu laughed maniacally.

He Ning was instantly filled with murderous intent. He turned around and stared fixedly at the Xia family members. He was sure that the Xia family was behind this entire matter.

He already knew that the Xia family would not just sit around without doing anything nor write off everything that had happened. That was not their style, but he did not expect the Xia family to take such ruthless actions so quickly.

Xia Wen took a step forward to block He Ning's view, so that He Ning could only look at him.

"Why are you looking at me like that? Aren't you happy that a Jiang family member has confessed to the family's crimes? The fact that he's confessing now means that you didn't falsely accuse them back then. This is good news for you!" Xia Wen advised with a smile.

"Xia Wen, I don't think this matter only involves the Jiang family," He Ning said as he glared fiercely at Xia Wen.

Xia Wen smiled and said, "He Ning, why are you still not giving up? I already said that we're here to watch the commotion. No matter how many times you ask, you'll get the same answer."

He Ning remained silent. They knew very well whether this matter was a false accusation and whether the Xia family was really just here to watch the commotion. For someone from the Jiang family to come out and “confess” at this time, there were definitely no good intentions behind it.

When He Ning heard this piece of news early in the morning, he did not take it seriously at all and did not even want to go to the old house. A long time ago, he had already instructed He Guo to get rid of the things from back then as quickly as possible. Even if anyone managed to dig up anything now, it could only be antiques left behind by Old Master He.

He did not expect this matter to become so tricky, but he was just pretending to be nervous. If he did not put on a good act, he would not be able to make the Jiang and Xia families believe that there was really something in this courtyard.

He Ning smiled and glanced at He Guo, but He Guo lowered his head guiltily and did not dare to look at He Ning.

He Ning’s smile froze on his face as he felt that something was wrong with He Guo. Could it be that He Guo had not destroyed it...

No wonder He Guo always sent him all kinds of valuable herbs to curry favor with him. It turned out that he was still doing those shady things behind his back!

He Ning looked darkly at the people digging in the courtyard and shouted, “Stop right there!”

No one there listened to him. They all worked for Section Chief Huang and the only person who could make them stop work was Huang Fei.

He Ning stared at Huang Fei and said, “Don’t forget who helped your cousin to get promoted to his position.”

Huang Fei said nonchalantly, “Mr. He, that’s my cousin, not my biological brother. My family hasn’t interacted with them for a long time.”

He was able to take over Section Chief Chu's position because of the Xia family's support. He understood that loyal servants could not change sides.

He Ning turned to look at Xia Wen and said slowly, "Tell them to stop. Someone is framing me in this matter. Someone must have done it! What evidence do you have to prove that what's dug out of the ground belongs to me!"

"Then we also felt very wronged about what happened to our family not long ago. Who can seek recourse for us? The house was so badly dug up that no one can live in it even now. Eh? You also went to report it out of the kindness of your heart, right?" Xia Wen said with narrowed eyes.

When the onlookers outside heard this, they all tried to squeeze their way forward. They had waited all morning to see the Xia family and the He family arguing.

"Xia Wen, don't go too far. I'm being wronged here!" He Ning said through gritted teeth.

A voice suddenly came from the crowd and said, "What a thing to say that you're being wronged! Does that mean that everything that's dug up here later is planted by others? Then what about my family being set up by you back then!"

A man walked out of the crowd agitatedly and pointed at He Ning as he shouted, "What about my house! What right did you have to say that something that was dug out of my house back then belonged to my family! Why didn't anyone believe me when I said that someone framed us! What right do you have to insist that what you say is true! Then where does that leave us?"

These questions made some people in the crowd, who originally did not dare to speak, raise their voices.

"That's right! What right do you have!"

"It's the same thing for our family! You did it!"

"Why doesn't anyone believe us! What right do you have to stop the digging!"

“Yes! What right do you have!”

Chapter 427: Body Search

Furious shouts could be heard from the crowd one after another. These were all people from the families who had been set up by He Ning in the past. Some of them were asked to come by the Xia family, while others had rushed over on their own after hearing the news so that they could see the He family get into trouble.

This was probably what it meant by everyone kicking a man who was down. It was all He Ning's own fault for doing all kinds of evil.

What He Ning said brought back painful memories for them. They could not help but want to vent their frustrations on him and take revenge for the families who were wronged in the past.

“You must have asked all these people to come here. It must have been really a tough job to be able to gather all of them,” He Ning said through gritted teeth as he looked at Xia Wen.

“What does this have to do with my family? Didn't I say that we're just here to watch the commotion? Why are you so sure that we have anything to do with it? Our Xia family didn't do anything,” Xia Wen said with a laugh.

“There are so many people in my courtyard. It would be easy for anyone to frame me! You're just trying to take advantage of the chaos to slander me!” He Ning said as he pointed at the people around him.

“Slander? Everyone just stood at the door and never moved. The people outside the door did not break into your courtyard. How can we slander you?” Xia Wen said.

“Then what about these workers! Don't they know how to hide things! Who knows if they're trying to frame me! Cough, cough, cough...”

“Brother!”

“Uncle!”

He Ning shouted so hysterically that his voice went hoarse and he lost all his strength to argue as he started to cough badly.

He Guo, He Wei and He Li rushed over to support He Ning. He Guo immediately asked someone to bring a chair over. If He Ning was to collapse now, the He family would really never be able to make a comeback.

Jiang Shu looked at He Ning disdainfully and said, “With such a weak body, you should go back and rest. Besides, these workers don’t know you at all. Why would they frame you?”

“Stop work! I want to check them one by one to see if they’re carrying anything!” He Li rushed to one of the workers and prepared to check his pockets.

Xia Zhe rushed over and grabbed He Li’s wrist and said, “You have no right to speak here. Get back and stay there.”

With that, he flung He Li’s hand away forcefully as He Li took a few steps back from the impact.

Qiao Mei walked forward and whispered to the worker, “Are you alright?”

“Thank you, I’m fine,” the worker said with a smile.

“Section Chief Huang, please come and handle this matter,” Jiang Shu said.

Section Chief Huang looked at the He family and said calmly, “I’ll get my men to flip out their pockets and show everyone everything they have. What do you think?”

“Who knows if they hide things in secret places. If one of them hides things inside his pants, do I have to reach in to take a look!” He Li spoke vulgarly to Section Chief Huang.

Qiao Mei stood at the side and frowned. Did this fellow not have any family upbringing? He Wei did not look like a person who was full of obscenities and it was hard to imagine that he had a son like that.

Xia Zhe whispered to Qiao Mei, "Let me bring you out. It's not convenient for you to be around later."

Qiao Mei nodded. Xia Zhe informed Xia Wen and Xia Mao and then brought Qiao Mei out of the courtyard.

"Since Young Master He is still so worried, then tell me what to do," Section Chief Huang said.

He Li looked at the people around him and said, "All of you take off your clothes! We have to check every spot! Otherwise, we will think that you have something with you!"

Section Chief Huang did not know how to respond. He turned to look at Xia Wen, who nodded.

If they did not do this, even if they dug up something, the He family would insist that they had been framed.

"I'm sorry, brothers! Since the He family feels that we're not fair enough, please take off your clothes and let Young Master He take a look! This will also prove our innocence!" Section Chief Huang said as he endured the humiliation.

The workers looked at one another and took off all their clothes, leaving only their undergarments on. After a round of checks, there was nothing abnormal found on them.

Section Chief Huang stared at He Li and asked, "Young Master He, I suppose you can rest assured now."

He Li could not think of any other solution and looked at He Ning helplessly. If he could not find any other excuse now, the He family would not be able to overturn the evidence in the event that something was dug up.

He Guo looked at He Ning nervously and said, "Youngest brother... this..."

He Ning held He Guo's hand tightly and whispered weakly into his ear, "This is the price we have to pay. There's nothing I can do about it. Let them continue."

Chapter 428: Protection

Section Chief Huang smiled and then said, "Everyone, continue! Continue digging! Don't miss any single detail!"

Even though He Guo knew the good intentions behind He Ning's advice to him back then, the money he could earn from buying and selling those things was three times the income he could make domestically. In the long run, it was definitely a substantial fortune. Although the He family did not lack money, no one would ever complain about having too much money.

Even if He Guo had any regrets, it was too late now.

Xia Zhe held Qiao Mei's hand and walked all the way to the alley that was furthest away from the He family's main door. He did not care about the looks from the neighbors in the surroundings. During this era, if a man and a woman were to interact too closely in public, they would be criticized for being indecent no matter their relationship. In serious cases, if the couple was reported, they would even be criticized using posters.

Qiao Mei wanted to shake off Xia Zhe's hand, but he held on tightly.

"Quickly let go. What if those people report us? You'll be punished if the army gets to hear of it!" Qiao Mei whispered.

Xia Zhe said without turning his head, "I don't care. I have to ensure your safety. Everything else is secondary."

Qiao Mei looked at Xia Zhe's big and strong back and felt a warmth in her heart. This man was definitely worth relying on.

When he reached his destination, Xia Zhe vigilantly checked the surroundings for any danger. After confirming that there was nothing unusual, he asked Qiao Mei to stay here.

Qiao Mei said to Xia Zhe, "You should go back quickly. There are guards here to protect me. When things get dug out in a while, elder brother and father will need your help."

Xia Zhe shook his head. He was really worried about leaving Qiao Mei here alone. If He Ning instructed people to hold Qiao Mei hostage to threaten them, failing at the last step of their plan would be the least of their worries. It would be a disaster if anything should happen to Qiao Mei.

"It's not like I'm going anywhere. You should go back quickly." Qiao Mei pushed Xia Zhe in the direction where they came from. She could not do anything if Xia Zhe stayed here.

"There are so many people around me. Are you still worried even though it's all already arranged by father? Hurry up and go," Qiao Mei urged.

The voices of the He family's eldest and second sons could be heard coming from the courtyard. They usually did not talk much as He Ning was the head of the He family. However, when they saw that He Ning had fallen ill because of this matter, they thought that they had to help stall for time. Although they did not know what they could do, they knew that if they tried their best to stall for time, He Ning would have a chance to turn the situation around.

The two of them started pestering Section Chief Huang to persuade him to stop digging.

He Wei's son, He Li, had already started to take action. Xia Wen alone could not hold off so many people. Moreover, if any Xia family member took action, this matter would become linked to the Xia family. They should only watch over the He family and the Jiang family for now and wait for something to happen before they chip in to help.

Xia Zhe considered the troubling situation in front of him. He had his wife on one hand and his family's political affairs on the other hand. Both issues were not small matters and he did not know how to choose for a moment.

Qiao Mei patted his shoulder and said, "Get down to business first. I have the ability to protect myself. Father even sent guards. You have to trust me and them."

After much hesitation, Xia Zhe decided to settle the matter with the He family first.

Xia Zhe whispered to the people in the dark, "All of you, come out! Protect her well and don't let anything happen."

"Yes!" All the guards who were in hiding came out and formed a circle around Qiao Mei. From the outside, it was impossible to see Qiao Mei in the middle.

"You must protect her well. Her safety is your top priority. Do you understand!" Xia Zhe looked at them sternly.

The guards shouted in unison, "Understood!"

Xia Zhe took another look at the secure formation around her before he felt more at ease to go back to the He family's house.

Xia Zhe returned to the house and was about to help Jiang Shu when Xia Wen stopped him.

"It's still not the time for our Xia family to interfere. Don't act rashly," Xia Wen whispered.

Xia Zhe frowned and looked at the unreasonable He brothers. He suppressed the anger in his heart and said, "Alright, I'll listen to elder brother."

Xia Mao looked at Xia Zhe and asked, "Have you settled Qiao Mei in a safe place?"

"Everything has been arranged. The guards are all around her," Xia Zhe said.

He Ning sat on a chair in the middle of the courtyard, panting heavily. He held the armrest with one hand and covered his chest with the other, looking very uncomfortable.

Xia Zhe felt that He Ning was faking his current condition. The He family was too busy now and probably would not attack the Xia family, but he could not let his guard down.

Chapter 429: Surveillance Cameras

He Li picked up the wooden stick and wanted to hit Section Chief Huang. Xia Zhe could not stand it anymore and rushed forward to kick He Li's stick away.

He Guo and He Wei immediately stopped what they were doing and did not dare to do anything to Section Chief Huang anymore. Xia Zhe also had a "notorious reputation", but this "notoriety" was very different from He Ning's.

The "notorious" part about Xia Zhe's reputation was simply his brutal methods. He had been to real battlefields and handled real weapons. He had killed countless enemies and slayed countless people. He exterminated enemies cleanly and easily as those were people who deserved to die.

However, He Ning's notoriety was due to the fact that he was truly vicious and liked to scheme against others.

The two He brothers looked at each other and took a step back. It was better to avoid Xia Zhe.

"He Li, come back quickly!" He Wei said to He Li.

He Li rubbed his arm that had gone numb and retreated to He Ning's side. Xia Zhe had already broken the wooden stick into two.

Xia Zhe looked around warily. The He family members in the courtyard did not dare to act rashly. After being stared at by that pair of eyes once, they felt a chill run down their spines, like they were prey being targeted by a wolf.

He Guo and He Wei looked around awkwardly, not daring to meet Xia Zhe's eyes.

"He Ning, I wonder how you plan to deal with this matter? Your nephew wants to attack a government official? Can it be that he has a guilty conscience?" Xia Wen went forward and asked.

Seeing that the Xia family was backing him up, Section Chief Huang straightened his back and looked at He Li arrogantly. "That's right! He clearly wants to beat me to death!"

He Li was so angry that he wanted to go forward and teach Section Chief Huang a lesson. He pointed at Section Chief Huang and said, "Say that again! I'll break your legs!"

"Look, He Ning." Xia Wen looked at He Ning in a seemingly teasing manner.

He Ning frowned and glanced at He Li, who immediately cowered.

"It's inevitable for a small kid to be impulsive. I can't stand noise due to my illness, so he behaves so carelessly all because of me. I believe Section Chief Huang won't take it to heart," He Ning said as he narrowed his eyes at Huang Fei.

When Huang Fei saw that Xia Wen had no intention of speaking up for him, he smiled at He Ning and said, "It's fine given that it's a child being insensible. I won't take it to heart..."

As the conflict intensified in the courtyard, Qiao Mei found that she was stuck outside.

Qiao Mei was surrounded by people and it seemed to be an extravagant hope for her to go to the trees nearby.

"Brothers, can you let me move a little?" Qiao Mei said helplessly.

"No, this is a mission given to us by the regiment commander! We dare not move without orders!" the guard beside her said.

Qiao Mei really did not know how to persuade them otherwise when she suddenly thought of the children in her stomach.

“Brothers, I’m a pregnant woman. I’m not going anywhere. I just want to sit under the big tree over there for a while. I can’t stand for too long in my condition,” Qiao Mei said, putting on a pitiful face.

The guards looked at one another and decided to agree to Qiao Mei’s request. If anything happened to Qiao Mei’s children, they would not be able to absolve themselves of the blame.

They escorted her to the big tree at the entrance of the He family’s house to take a seat. She reached out to touch her stomach. This time, she was really grateful to these two little fellows. Otherwise, she would have to stand there for a long time.

The two children seemed to have sensed Qiao Mei’s thoughts and moved vigorously. Qiao Mei felt their presence and said with a smile, “You clever little things.”

Aristocratic families all seemed to have the same habits. Wealthy families would plant trees near the main door to indicate that their families were prosperous and that their lineages would continue for generations.

The tree in front of the He family’s house was a pine tree. Old Master He probably hoped that the children and grandchildren of the He family would be as upright and unyielding as pine trees.

“What a waste of Old Master He’s painstaking efforts. I don’t think any of the He family members have good and honest thoughts,” Qiao Mei muttered softly.

Qiao Mei reached out to stroke the tree trunk. The pine tree also greeted her mischievously. She had realized that there was a new aspect to her energy and she could see the memories of plants within the last three days.

However, she had only just learned how to use it and was not very familiar with it. That was why she could only go back three days.

This was like having surveillance cameras everywhere! It was simply too convenient! With this, she could easily find out anything she wanted to know. When she knew how to use it properly in the future, she would go home and visit the cherry tree. Perhaps she could discover something embarrassing about Xia Zhe when he was young...

Chapter 430: Carry Out the Will of Heavens

Qiao Mei madly infused a lot of energy into the pine tree and soon, the roots of the pine tree had extended all around the entire He family's house.

This time, her main purpose was to find out the location of the things buried under the He family's house and also to check if there were any other treasures!

Not long after, Qiao Mei found the various locations where things were buried. There were a few boxes, a big jar and a small jar sealed with beeswax.

Qiao Mei set her sights on one of the boxes. During the night, she had asked Xia Zhe for details and he told her that they had buried a box inside, roughly at the main courtyard area. Therefore, the rest that she found must be things that the He family had kept for themselves.

Qiao Mei did not touch the rest of the things that belonged to the He family. She was only checking around to satisfy her curiosity. The He family and the Xia family were on par in terms of stature, so the He family must definitely have things hidden away as well. Maybe they had even more! She just wanted to see if there were any artworks by famous masters.

She was about to quietly lift the box in the main courtyard closer to the surface when she recalled what the people standing at the door had said.

The deafening yells and miserable voices narrating past events made her scalp tingle. She wondered how many of those voices belonged to families who suffered the same fate as the Jiang family, and how many families had been ruined by He Ning's cold-blooded and heartless methods and ended up like the Jiang family.

She could not let He Ning off so easily. He must pay the price. This was the only way to vent the hatred in her heart.

However, it would be too eye-catching to take these things with her now. Qiao Mei moved all these other buried items to the ground under the house behind the He family's house. After this matter died down, she would slowly use vines and tree roots to transport the items to the victims' houses.

She could only limit it to the people nearby though. There was nothing she could do for people who lived too far away.

When these things reached the hands of those people, she hoped that it could be considered a form of compensation from He Ning!

As Qiao Mei touched the pine tree, she could even observe the interior of the He family's house using the leaves on the top of the tree. She quietly closed her eyes and made use of the pine tree's vision.

"You've been digging for so long, but there's still nothing! Are you going to keep digging!" He Li said.

Xia Wen nodded. "This is only the main courtyard and we haven't searched the house yet. We have to check carefully. If we miss anything, we still have to come back and trouble you again. Don't you agree, He Ning?"

He Ning rolled his eyes at Xia Wen and said, "Cough, cough, cough... Go ahead and search. I also want to see what there is... Cough, cough, cough..."

He Ning held his chest and coughed, looking very uncomfortable.

Jiang Shu said mockingly to He Ning, "You sound like you're going to die. You're coughing so badly. If you can't take it anymore, leave quickly. Don't faint here, it's not worth it."

"I didn't expect you to be so concerned about me, Xiao Shu," He Ning said with a smile.

Jiang Shu looked at He Ning in disgust and scolded, "How shameless of you. I care about you? It's much better for me to care about a dog than you. Your hypocrisy is really disgusting. If you die and get fed to the dogs, even the dogs will feel disgusted."

When He Li heard Jiang Shu insulting He Ning, he could not hold back anymore and went up to fight with Jiang Shu.

Jiang Shu dodged the punches easily and He Li launched another attack. Compared to He Li, Jiang Shu was thin and looked weak, but he was much more agile.

Jiang Shu did not attack and kept dodging left and right. His nonchalant manner with his hands behind his back made He Li even more irritated. He Li charged forward like a crazy bull.

Behind He Li, He Guo and He Wei kept asking him to stop. He Li turned a deaf ear to them and only had eyes for Jiang Shu.

In a flash, Jiang Shu stretched out his leg and tripped He Li. He Li did not manage to dodge in time and fell to the ground facedown. He Guo and He Wei immediately went forward and pressed down on He Li together, saying, "Don't get up..."

"Just faint, do you hear me! Stop fighting!" He Wei whispered.

He Li did not care about these things at all. His eyes were already red from the shock of defeat. He could only stop when one of them won the fight.

Since he did not have the upper hand in terms of skills, he would try to win verbally.

He Li stood up and pointed at Jiang Shu as he said, "You're just a bastard mongrel without parents! Your father must have been jinxed to death by you! If you have the ability, then fight me! What's so good about dodging!"

Both Xia Zhe and Xia Wen frowned and looked at He Li. They did not expect that there would be such a vulgar person in the He family who had no manners and spoke so crudely. It seemed that even if they did not do anything, the He family would still eventually decline on their own.