

Fat Wife 611

Chapter 611 What An Idiot

Zhao Liang was still trying to catch his breath. He stood in the courtyard and stammered, "Come... come with me quickly! Xia Zhe... Xia Zhe, he..."

When Qiao Mei heard that it was about Xia Zhe, she grabbed onto Zhao Liang's shoulder and asked, "What's wrong with Xia Zhe!"

She used so much strength that she almost crushed Zhao Liang's shoulder.

"Ouch! Be more gentle! Xia Zhe is fine... but he's looking for you. He said he'll call again in half an hour. Come with me quickly," Zhao Liang said in pain.

When Qiao Mei realized what she did, she immediately let go of Zhao Liang and gave him an embarrassed smile.

Zhao Liang did not have the time to care about the pain in his shoulder. Once Qiao Mei hopped on the vehicle, he rushed towards the brigade office. It was quite a distance away from Qiao Mei's house and it took them 20 minutes to get there.

Xia Zhe called up the brigade office at the agreed time.

Wang Qin picked up the call out of habit and said emotionlessly, "Hello, Foshan Village Brigade. What's the matter?"

Hearing Wang Qin's voice, Xia Zhe was stunned for a moment before saying, "I'm Xia Zhe. Isn't Uncle Zhao around?"

Wang Qin immediately perked up. She would not miss out on anything that was related to Qiao Mei. Ever since this girl married Xia Zhe, she seemed to have become a different person. Not only did she become beautiful and capable, but she was also much smarter than before.

This must have something to do with Xia Zhe!

Moreover, ever since then, Qiao Mei had been finding fault with her and making her feel irritable. First, it was about the house that belonged to Qiao Mei's mother, Li Gui. Then, it was about growing bean sprouts, and now Qiao Mei even caused her to be disgraced!

Although it was Qiao Zhuang's own fault that he was criticized during the open meeting not long ago and he brought it on himself, Wang Qin was also humiliated because of this matter and there was a lot of gossip everywhere she went.

Some people said that she had a vicious heart and married off her husband's younger sister to a dirty old man. There were also people who said that she sold the girls in her family for her own personal gain, and that she would even sell her own daughter when the girl grew up.

People said so many nasty things. She could only ignore them all. Otherwise, if she went around arguing with everyone, she would be angered to death sooner or later.

"Zhao Liang is not around. If there's any issue, you can just tell me. I'll pass the message to him later," Wang Qin said.

"I'm just calling to ask about Qiao Mei," Xia Zhe said.

"Qiao Mei... I'm afraid it's not convenient for Qiao Mei to talk to you now," Wang Qin said hesitantly.

Xia Zhe was not in the village anyway. As long as she kept this matter a secret, who would know that Xia Zhe had called Qiao Mei?

She had not had an easy time lately! So Qiao Mei could forget about having one as well! Xia Zhe was Qiao Mei's husband, so he could also forget about having an easy time!

"Inconvenient? Why?" Xia Zhe asked curiously.

"Qiao Mei hasn't been feeling well recently. I heard that she went to the village clinic for treatment," Wang Qin said.

Of course, Xia Zhe would not fall for it so easily. He had just made an appointment with Zhao Liang to call again in half an hour. If something had happened at Qiao Mei's place, how could Zhao Liang not know about it?

Wang Qin must be lying to him. Since she wanted to lie, he would continue with the act.

"What! Qiao Mei is at the clinic! Is it serious?" Xia Zhe said anxiously.

Wang Qin curled her lips slyly and said, "Sigh, I don't know what the doctor says, but Qiao Mei is staying there now. I hear that it will cost a lot of money and that she needs to take medicine for a long time to protect the child!"

Many men in the village went out to work in other places. Every month, when they sent money to their families, they would first go to their local post office to send it via a telegram to the post office in this area. The telegrams would then be forwarded to the various villages and the villagers would go personally to collect the money.

This way, not only could one ensure that the money would not get lost, but one could also ensure that one would be able to find the responsible party should there be any losses.

Xia Zhe used to send Qiao Mei his salary. Wang Qin was the village accountant and she had secretly taken a look at the receipt. It was 120 dollars a month! That was more than 1,000 dollars a year!

If Xia Zhe sent over Qiao Mei's "medical expenses" this time and she secretly intercepted it, she would be able to make up for the money she owed the village! She could even earn a lot from it!

"A lot of money? Then she must be very sick. I can't go back now. I'll get ready to send the money now," Xia Zhe said.

Wang Qin did not expect things to go so smoothly. Xia Zhe looked very capable, but he was actually just an idiot! How could he be deceived by such a simple plot!

Chapter 612 Conspiracy

"Fine, fine, fine. Don't worry, Xia Zhe. I'll try to find out more about Qiao Mei's situation. Don't be anxious," Wang Qin said pretentiously.

Qiao Mei kicked the door open and said, "What do you need to find out?"

Wang Qin froze on the spot with the phone in her hand. Why was she here!

She also saw the livid Zhao Liang behind Qiao Mei. Wang Qin immediately understood that this was all a trick. They were lying to her! They were playing her like a fool!

"You! You tricked me!" Wang Qin roared at Qiao Mei.

"What trick? Didn't you tell Xia Zhe you will find out more about my situation? Have you lost your mind? What are you talking about?" Qiao Mei was confused and did not know what Wang Qin was talking about.

She had only heard Wang Qin's last sentence and did not know anything about what happened earlier.

However, Wang Qin felt that this was all a scheme that Xia Zhe, Qiao Mei and Zhao Liang had come up with to trick her!

Qiao Mei was a vicious and scheming person. This was definitely all part of her scheme! This matter was not caused by her own greed! It was all part of the evil Qiao Mei's scheme!

That was definitely the case!

Just as Wang Qin was doubting herself, Qiao Mei snatched the phone from her hand. She did not have time to argue with Wang Qin about this. The bill for this phone call was very expensive and she was the one who had to pay for it. Her heart ached for the amount of money.

"Hello, are you still there? I'm Qiao Mei," Qiao Mei said gently.

"Are you alright?" Xia Zhe asked nervously.

Although what Wang Qin said was just a lie, he was still worried about Qiao Mei. What if something really happened? If he had not made an appointment with Uncle Zhao today, then if Wang Qin had just given him more details just now, she might have gotten away with it.

Being concerned made one unable to think straight.

"Of course I'm fine! Silly man!" Qiao Mei said.

"I'm just concerned about you and worried that something had happened to you," Xia Zhe said with a sigh.

Qiao Mei deliberately said loudly into the phone, "What did she say to you? The moment I entered, she started barking like a mad dog."

"Nothing much, just that you went to the village clinic and needed a lot of money. She asked me to send you the money quickly. That's all," Xia Zhe said honestly.

Money? She had always known that Wang Qin was greedy, but why was Wang Qin all about money recently?

In the past, Wang Qin was only greedy for petty gains, such as giving herself a few more work points and taking more vegetables.

If Xia Zhe really believed Wang Qin, the amount of money he sent over would definitely be quite a big sum. If she was found guilty of fraud, they would definitely be able to send her to jail.

The amount of 1,000 dollars during this time was more than equivalent to 1 million dollars after 50 years.

Wang Qin was really bold. Could it be that she needed the money for something else?

However, Xia Zhe's performance was not bad either. He even had the patience to put on an act with Wang Qin. He showed promise!

"Alright, got it. Then why are you looking for me so urgently?" Qiao Mei said.

"I've already reached the army unit safely. I want to discuss something with you. I can't make a decision on my own," Xia Zhe said hesitantly.

Qiao Mei took a stool from the side and sat down to talk to Xia Zhe on the phone.

Wang Qin returned to her seat dejectedly. Zhao Liang looked at her even more fiercely. In the past, he only felt that everything was all Qiao Zhuang's fault, but he did not expect Wang Qin to be the same kind of person as that brute!

In the future, he would definitely need to be more wary of Wang Qin and not let her hurt Qiao Mei.

"I never expect there will come a day when you're unable to decide. Tell me about it," Qiao Mei said smugly.

"Aunt called uncle and asked him to inform me that my mother's condition is not very good at the moment. There's nothing wrong with her health, but she has been feeling depressed and crying every day. She's also worried about your health," Xia Zhe said.

Qiao Mei did not expect herself to be so important to Xu Lan now. It was just that she did not know the progress of the matter in the capital yet, so they still had to let Xu Lan suffer for a few more days.

"The postman hasn't come by this month. I prepared something for mother, but I haven't had the chance to send it out. I have to wait until the end of the month. Why don't you give her a call to comfort her?" Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe was silent for a long time. He was in a dilemma about how to talk to Xu Lan.

"Don't tell me you dare not make the call," Qiao Mei asked suspiciously.

"No! I know what to do!" Xia Zhe said stubbornly.

Chapter 613 - 613 Fake Account Book

613 Fake Account Book

Qiao Mei was able to help him with this matter, but she did not want to do it. If she was the one to resolve the matter for Xia Zhe and Xu Lan, it would only affect the relationship between mother and son.

There was already a rift between them. If they did not take this opportunity to reconcile, it would be difficult to find another suitable opportunity in the future.

"Talk to her nicely, do you understand? Don't just hang up after a few words. Also..." Qiao Mei told him a lot of things.

Xia Zhe silently noted down everything in his mind and asked earnestly, "I get it. Let's not talk about me anymore. How has grandfather been recently? How are Zhang Wei and Zhang Miao? Is Zhang Chao feeling better?"

"Everyone's in good health. Zhang Miao has woken up recently, but her movements are a little slow and she still needs to rest. Recently, I realized that Zhang Chao likes to invent and create things. If you happen to have any weird materials, remember to bring them back for him. I think he's very talented and we can nurture him well," Qiao Mei said happily.

"Alright, I've noted it down. I'll definitely bring some stuff with me when I go back in the future," Xia Zhe said.

It was getting late and he still had to go back and deal with all his work. After saying a brief goodbye to Qiao Mei, he hung up.

Xia Zhe did not leave immediately. He stood at the phone booth and thought for a long time before deciding to call Xu Lan tomorrow. He still could not face Xu Lan yet.

Qiao Mei went to Wang Qin's table to settle the phone bill and said to her with a smile, "Oh my, should I be terminally ill now?"

"Qiao Mei, don't be so smug! If you hadn't joined forces to trick me, I wouldn't have fallen for it!" Wang Qin roared.

"You're making things up out of nothing. How can Xia Zhe have the chance to join forces with me? Even if he can, when did Uncle Zhao come to look for me? Aren't you contradicting yourself by saying these things? Is it so difficult to admit that you're stupid?" Qiao Mei said mockingly.

"You! You b*tch! It's not my fault! You're the ones who schemed against me! Don't pretend to be merciful here! Get lost after you're done!" Wang Qin stood up and pointed at the door as she roared.

Qiao Mei wiped the saliva that Wang Qin sprayed on her face in disdain and said calmly, "What's the hurry? This office belongs to the village and I'm also from this village. I can come and go whenever I want. What right do you have to criticize me? Don't tell me you have some unspeakable secret?"

Wang Qin instinctively pressed down on the account book on the table under her hand. Qiao Mei noticed this action. She just wanted to test if Wang Qin had really done something wrong, but she did not expect her guess to be right.

"You... you're talking nonsense! I don't!" Wang Qin said stubbornly.

Zhao Liang hurriedly walked over and said, "Mei Mei, your grandfather is still waiting for you at home. Let's go."

Qiao Mei also did not want to waste any more time with Wang Qin and followed Zhao Liang back.

“Uncle Zhao, do you think you should check the village accounts?” Qiao Mei whispered.

Zhao Liang did not respond. He had actually noticed something fishy a long time ago, but he could not find anyone more suitable to be the accountant of the brigade than Wang Qin. Moreover, she was elected by the villagers, so it would not be good to dismiss her.

“Let’s talk about it when we get back. There are many people on the road. Sit tight!” Zhao Liang stepped on the accelerator and sped up. It did not take long for them to reach Qiao Mei’s house.

Qiao Mei went into the house and brought out a stool for Zhao Liang to sit down in the courtyard. She then sat opposite Zhao Liang.

In her memories, there were no problems that Zhao Liang could not solve. He could handle all the big and small matters in the village effortlessly, but Wang Qin’s matters seemed to have made him extremely worried.

It would appear that this matter was really very tricky.

“Uncle Zhao, tell me about it. Since you’ve already discovered it, why don’t you put a stop to it?” Qiao Mei asked curiously.

“Sigh, I have no choice. I discovered it a long time ago. The current account book seems to be fake. The real account book is not in the office,” Zhao Liang said helplessly.

“Fake? Then how do you know that this account book is fake?” Qiao Mei asked curiously.

“The accounts get checked every quarter. After so many years, I already know the rough figures. However, although the harvest this year is not good due to the natural disaster, the village’s accounts remain the same as last year. I started to become suspicious after that, but I don’t have any evidence to prove that she is the problem,” Zhao Liang said.

Chapter 614 Do Not Alert The Enemy

If Wang Qin wanted to falsify the accounts, no one would be able to catch her. After all, she was the only person in the entire village who knew about these things. Most of the other people had not even studied for a few years, so how could they even know that there was a problem.

Even if anyone suspected Wang Qin, with a village tyrant like Qiao Zhuang protecting her, no one could do anything to her.

It was likely that Wang Qin had grasped this loophole of everyone being fearful of Qiao Zhuang, so she started to steal from the brigade.

Perhaps she had already started to falsify the accounts from the start. In the beginning, it was only one or two dollars. When she realized that no one was paying attention, she started to carry on recklessly, until the amount got bigger and bigger.

"Then does Uncle Zhao have a countermeasure for this matter?" Qiao Mei asked.

"No. Firstly, there are very few people who have gone to school and no one can take over Wang Qin's job. Secondly, we can't find any evidence to prove that Wang Qin is behind this. I've been observing her for a long time, but I haven't been able to find the real account book," Zhao Liang said.

Most of the villagers who had been to school were children of Zhang Wei's age. The rest of them had gone to work in other cities. It was indeed not easy to find a replacement for Wang Qin.

"Qiao Mei, you're literate too. How about you take over Wang Qin's job," Zhao Liang said expectantly.

Any cadre in the village could only take office through an election. Based on Qiao Mei's personality and character, everyone would definitely support her!

Qiao Mei quickly rejected Zhao Liang. She would not be permanently staying in this village. She still had to go to the capital from time to time. What if she became a military spouse and followed Xia Zhe around in the future?

She was destined not to stay in the village for the long term and definitely could not be the brigade's accountant.

"Uncle Zhao, you also know what my husband does. I'll become a military spouse in the future. I can't live in the village forever, so I can't help you with this matter," Qiao Mei said regretfully.

This time, Zhao Liang was really in a dilemma.

Qiao Mei thought about it for a long time and finally thought of Chen Hu.

Previously, when Chen Hu chatted with her, he had mentioned that most of his men in the army were not married. Some of them had parents who lived far away and they were unable to take care of their parents.

Most of the men in the armed forces settled down in the county city after they got married, but there were still a few who were married but left their wives at home. It was usually because they needed to support a large family, so they could not afford to buy a house in the county city.

If any of these men had any family member who was literate, the village could make an exception and allocate them a small homestead. They could deduct the cost from the person's salary so that the person could have a job and also settle down here.

Although the salary of the village accountant was not as high as the salary one could get in the county city, there was no need to rent a house or buy groceries, so there would be more savings.

"Uncle Zhao, we have to consider this matter at length. Let me help you think of a way. We can't alert the enemy now," Qiao Mei said.

"Alright, then I'll go back and continue to keep an eye on her so that she doesn't steal more money. You should rest early too. Don't tire yourself out." After saying that, Zhao Liang drove the three-wheeled vehicle back.

Qiao Mei lay on the rocking chair and looked at the sky as she thought of a countermeasure. Wang Qin had been thinking of ways to target her, so she could not just sit back and do nothing.

Since this woman cherished her job as an accountant in the village the most, she would make her lose it! This way, she would be disgraced in front of everyone and she would no longer be able to show off in Qiao Zhuang's house.

If people do not offend me, I will not offend them either. Since she keeps causing trouble for me, then she can forget about having a good life!

Suddenly, a delicious piece of braised pork appeared in the air.

"Ah~" Qiao Mei opened her mouth to eat it and tasted it carefully.

"Is it delicious?" Qiao Qiang asked with a smile as he held his chopsticks.

"Grandfather's cooking is so delicious! It's a hundred times better than mine!" Qiao Mei said in satisfaction.

Qiao Qiang asked Qiao Mei to go into the house to wash her hands and eat. The table full of delicious food gave Qiao Mei a good appetite and she forgot all her earlier worries.

The most important thing now was to have a good meal!

The next morning, Xia Zhe followed Qiao Mei's instructions and went to the phone booth to give Xu Lan a call. He held a piece of paper in his hand, which was filled with all the questions Xia Zhe wanted to ask Xu Lan.

It was packed tightly with words. He had come up with these as he thought through the night, afraid that he would not know what to say and ended up making things difficult for Xu Lan.

Chapter 615 First Phone Call

He had thought that he would only write one or two lines, but he did not expect to have so many questions that he wanted to ask Xu Lan. The fact was that he was concerned about Xu Lan.

Xia Zhe took a deep breath and slowly pressed his home phone number. He waited uneasily for the other end to pick up.

"Beep, beep, beep..." On the fourth ring, someone picked up the phone.

"Hello? Who is it?" Xia Zhe did not expect Liu Fen to be the one to pick up the phone and his nervousness eased a little.

"Second Aunt-in-law, I'm Xia Zhe. How... has my mother been recently?" Xia Zhe asked hesitantly.

Liu Fen almost spun around in excitement. It seemed that Xia Fang had taken her words to heart!

"Xiao Zhe! Your mother hasn't been in a good state recently and she doesn't eat much. We have been trying to make her different kinds of food so she would eat, but she still doesn't have much of an appetite. She's already lost so much weight in a few days. If this continues, I'm afraid your mother won't be able to carry on. I was also anxious, so I contacted your uncle. Don't blame Second Aunt-in-law for being nosy," Liu Fen said.

Xia Zhe understood why Liu Fen did what she did and he did not blame her. As Xu Lan's son, he was unfilial and it had nothing to do with anyone else. He should be grateful to Liu Fen.

Otherwise, he would really regret it for the rest of his life if Xu Lan became so sick that she could not get out of bed.

"Second Aunt-in-law, I don't blame you. When I get back, I still have to thank you properly for taking care of my mother. Then what is my mother doing now? Is it... is it convenient for her to talk to me?" Xia Zhe asked nervously.

He clutched the piece of paper so tightly in his hand that there were already signs of it tearing in some places.

"Yes! Yes! Wait a moment! I'll go get her now!" Liu Fen hurriedly ran upstairs to wake Xu Lan up.

"Eldest sister-in-law! Wake up! Xiao Zhe has called home!"

"Wake up! Eldest sister-in-law! Don't sleep anymore!"

At this moment, she could not care less about whether Xu Lan was sleeping soundly or not. It was so rare for Xia Zhe to call her, so she must not miss this opportunity!

Xu Lan slowly opened her eyes and frowned at Liu Fen. "What's wrong?"

"Xiao Zhe! He called!" Liu Fen said happily as she pointed outside the door.

Xu Lan did not even bother to put on her slippers and rushed downstairs barefooted, almost falling down the stairs. Even though there were small stones on the floor that hurt her feet, she did not care about the pain.

"Eldest Sister-in-law, put on your slippers! Eldest Sister-in-law!" Liu Fen shouted behind her with the slippers.

She picked up the phone and shouted, "Hello! Son! Son! Are you still there! I'm your mother!"

Xia Zhe heard all of this over the phone and did not know what to say for a moment.

In his memories, Xu Lan had always maintained an elegant image. No matter what happened, she would not allow herself to lose her composure. This was also the reason why Xia Mao liked Xu Lan back then. It was because she was beautiful and dignified enough to be the eldest wife of the Xia family.

"Mother... it's me... how... how have you been recently?" Xia Zhe was so nervous that his voice was trembling. He really did not know how to talk to Xu Lan.

This was the first time in so many years that mother and son chatted casually on the phone.

"I'm fine. Everything is fine at home. What about you? How are you?" Xu Lan said agitatedly.

"I have reached the army unit. There's no problem now," Xia Zhe said.

Xu Lan gripped the phone receiver tightly, not knowing how to ask Xia Zhe about Qiao Mei. She felt that she was the cause of everything that happened. If she had cared more about Qiao Mei, none of it would have happened. Now that Qiao Mei had lost her babies, she did not have the cheek to ask about how Qiao Mei was.

The two of them held on to their respective phone receivers without speaking. Liu Fen placed the slippers by Xu Lan's feet for her to put them on and looked at her anxiously.

"Xia Zhe! Has Qiao Mei contacted you recently! Is she doing well! Do you have any recent news about her!" Liu Fen shouted towards Xu Lan.

Xu Lan also looked at her gratefully.

"I spoke to her on the phone yesterday. She said that she's in good health now and that her grandfather and mother are taking good care of her, so you don't have to worry. Qiao Mei even said that she doesn't blame you. At that time, she was in a hurry to leave because she missed her grandfather. The methods of communication in their village are not very advanced and there will only be a postman going around to pick up the parcels at the end of the month. When the time comes, you'll be able to get her letter," Xia Zhe said with a smile.

Chapter 616 Compensate Slowly

Xu Lan never even dreamed that Qiao Mei would be concerned about her and think about her.

Could it really be that when Qiao Mei left in a hurry back then, she just missed Qiao Qiang? Was it really not because Qiao Mei hated her for the loss of her children?

"Xia Zhe... Can you ask Qiao Mei to call me when she's free... No, no, no! Just give me her address. I'll send her some stuff. It's going to be winter soon and I'm worried that she'll get cold. I don't know what she's lacking, but I want to send her more things," Xu Lan said timidly.

If she rashly gave Qiao Mei a call, she was worried that Qiao Mei would not pick up the call. Qiao Mei might even despise her for being too nosy. It was best to just send a parcel.

"My elder sister knows the address. Mother, you can just ask elder sister. I still have something on here, so I won't talk to you... I'll talk to you another day." Xia Zhe wanted to say "I won't talk to you anymore", but he was worried that Xu Lan would feel sad and thought that this was his first and last call, so he changed his words at the last minute.

Xu Lan was so excited that tears welled up in her eyes as she said, "Fine, fine, fine! Go ahead! Call me again when you're free!"

After hanging up, Xu Lan still held onto the phone reluctantly and refused to put it down. Tears slowly rolled down from her eyes.

She finally knew how ridiculous she had been back then. However, it was very difficult to have a balance between her career and family. If she had cared more about Xia Zhe when she was free, perhaps the relationship between them would not have been so stiff.

However, it was not too late to salvage the situation now. At least Xia Zhe did not reject her.

As long as she treated Xia Zhe well, the conflict would definitely be resolved as time passed.

Liu Fen went forward and took the phone receiver from Xu Lan's hand. She helped her to sit on the sofa and said, "Now that you know about Qiao Mei's situation, don't you feel much better?"

"It's also rare for Xia Zhe to call me. This is the first time he has spoken to me for so long since he grew up. He even said he'll call me another day! Did you hear that! Did you hear that! Is it true!" Xu Lan held Liu Fen's hand tightly, eager to know if she had heard wrongly.

"Yes! I heard everything clearly! He'll call you another day!" Liu Fen said with a smile.

At the moment, Xu Lan's complexion was rosy and her eyes were lively. She was no longer as lifeless as a few days ago.

"Let's not wait anymore. I'll change my clothes now. You come too! Let's go shopping and buy clothes and things that Qiao Mei needs!" Xu Lan went upstairs excitedly to change her clothes.

Liu Fen was also happy to see her so energetic. She returned to her room to pack up her things and go shopping together.

It was almost noon when Qiao Mei woke up. If she was in an ordinary village, she would have been scolded long ago!

Zhang Wei and Zhang Qin were still sweeping the fallen leaves and dead branches in the courtyard. Zhang Chao squatted at the side and silently fiddled with a few strange items. Many of the tree branches that looked quite good could be used to make models. Although they looked very rough in the eyes of others, they were perfect pieces of work in Zhang Chao's eyes!

Not long ago, he had used branches to make a small crooked boat. Li Gui had never understood what he was doing, but Qiao Mei could tell at once and excitedly praised him for doing a good job. Zhang Chao's confidence increased greatly and he had made more models over the past two days.

According to Zhang Qin, her eldest brother was busy training up and her second brother was busy building items. If she did not do anything soon, she would be ostracized by her family!

She was just joking.

"You're here so early. Have you all eaten?" Qiao Mei rubbed her eyes and walked out of the house.

Zhang Qin put down the broom and said, "Elder sister! It's lunchtime now! Mom said that if elder sister wakes up and doesn't have anything to eat, you can come to our place. Mom made a lot of delicious food!"

Qiao Mei looked at the pots and saw that there was indeed nothing prepared for her. She guessed that Li Gui and Qiao Qiang had probably come to some sort of agreement. Otherwise, no matter how busy Qiao Qiang was, he would not forget to take care of Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei brought the three children back to Li Gui's house. As soon as she reached the door, she saw Old Madam Li and two young girls walking shakily in their direction.

The three children all knew that this was their maternal grandmother. Zhang Wei had the deepest impression of her. When they were still living in the Zhang family, Old Madam Li often went to Li Gui to ask for money.

Chapter 617 Seeking Refuge

If Li Gui did not have money to give her, she would beat and scold Li Gui until Li Gui found something to give her. She wanted everything that Li Gui had, but when Zhang Qian found out about it, he beat her up and chased her out. Only then did she stop turning up to ask for things. Later on, Zhang Qian went home and beat Li Gui half to death, saying that she had stolen the Zhang family's things to supplement her maternal family.

The children heard that she contacted Li Gui behind his back not long after. They did not know how this matter was resolved after that.

Qiao Mei gently patted Zhang Wei's back and whispered, "Go and find your Uncle Zhao. Tell him that an outsider has come to our house and we need his help."

Zhang Wei understood what she meant and disappeared in a flash. Old Madam Li did not even notice that there was a child missing.

"Oh my! You're Qiao Mei, right! I finally found this place!" Old Madam Li said as she staggered forward.

Even if she had not met the current Qiao Mei, this girl's reputation had already spread to the villages around!

Everyone said that not only did this girl help the villagers get rich, but she was also young and beautiful. Many young men regretted not going to Qiao Mei's house to propose marriage back then.

When Old Madam Li finally saw Qiao Mei today, she realized that the girl was indeed different from the fat bear spirit from before. She looked as if she had been reborn! If not for the fact that she had Li Gui's children with her, the old woman would not even dare to acknowledge Qiao Mei.

"Grandmother, why do you have two children with you? Why are you here?" Qiao Mei said as she looked at the old woman.

Without another word, Old Madam Li sat on the ground and sobbed. "That damn Zhang family! They came to ask me for money! I didn't have any money to give them! Everything in the house was smashed! These two children and I are really at our wits' end, so we're here to look for your mother."

As soon as she said that, Qiao Mei understood that these people were here to ask for money. They put it nicely and said that they were here to seek refuge, but they were actually here to try and get a big sum of money so that they could go back and enjoy life!

She did not expect the Zhang family to be released so quickly. She had heard from Chen Hu that Zhang Qian had been imprisoned and sentenced to eight years in jail. Zhang Cong and Sun Yan were afraid that they would be implicated by Zhang Qian, so they cut ties with Old Madam Zhang and the others. Zhang Cong became a matrilocal son-in-law and went to live at Sun Yan's house.

Now, there were only two old people left in the Zhang family who were unable to go out to work. The person who went to look for Old Madam Li must be Old Madam Zhang. The Zhang family would definitely not dare to cause trouble for Li Gui again, therefore they could only bully Old Madam Li.

After all, she was the one who had received all the betrothal gifts from the Zhang family back then. Qiao Mei already expected that after the divorce, the Zhang family would shamelessly go and ask for the gifts to be returned.

Qiao Mei had no choice but to open the courtyard door to let them in. She could not let an old lady and two children make a scene at the main door. If others saw them, they might gossip again.

She had just offended Wang Qin and could not let anything go wrong now.

"Alright, stop crying. Come in quickly. Be quiet and don't disturb the people in the house," Qiao Mei said disdainfully.

Old Madam Li hurriedly rushed into the courtyard with the two children. Her fitful steps were not those of a weak old woman at all. If she did not claim to be weak, no one would even think that she was sick.

"This courtyard is so much nicer than the one at my house! Look! These fruits are so fresh! Oh my, there are even chickens and ducks here! How good!" Old Madam Li looked around the courtyard as if she had never been out before and shouted loudly, not taking whatever Qiao Mei just said to heart.

The way she looked at the chickens and ducks was as if she wanted to immediately heat up oil in a pot and cook all the fowls in the courtyard.

Qiao Mei said coldly to Old Madam Li, "I told you to be quiet! If you make any more noise, then get out!"

Old Madam Li was so frightened that she did not dare to make a sound. She still had something to ask of Qiao Mei. If she offended her now, she would get nothing.

Qiao Mei sat on a bench under the pavilion. If not for the fact that Zhang Miao was still sick, she would definitely teach Old Madam Li a lesson.

Li Gui heard the commotion and walked out of the house. When she saw Old Madam Li, her expression changed drastically. Ever since she was abandoned by the Zhang family and came to Foshan Village, Old Madam Li had never visited her again.

Old Madam Li was worried that Li Gui would not be able to survive in the village and might need a lot of money to furnish her new place. Even if the villagers of Foshan Village were making a lot of money by growing bean sprouts at that time, it would definitely cost a lot of money when starting out. She had been waiting until Li Gui made money.

Chapter 618 No One Can Get Any Closer

She did not expect that the business of selling bean sprouts in Foshan Village gradually declined. Then, many things happened at home. Her two disappointing sons kept causing trouble for her and she eventually forgot about looking for Li Gui.

"My daughter! I miss you so much!" Old Madam Li ran over with tears in her eyes and hugged Li Gui tightly as she cried.

Li Gui could not bear to push her away and asked, "Mother, what's wrong?"

Before Old Madam Li could explain, the two children with her rushed into the house like police dogs and sniffed everywhere.

Actually, Old Madam Li could already smell the fragrance of food the moment she entered the courtyard. She did not enter the house only because she was afraid of Qiao Mei.

Zhang Qin recalled that Zhang Miao was still in the house and immediately rushed in. She stood in front of the dining table and spread out her arms as she shouted, "You're not allowed to come closer! Who let you in! Get lost!"

It was not a big deal for them to eat the food, but the immobile Zhang Miao was near the dining table and it would be a disaster if they hurt her.

When Old Madam Li saw that Zhang Qin dared to speak so fiercely, she entered the house and pointed at Zhang Qin while scolding, "You little brat, how can you talk to your older sisters like that! Are you asking for a beating! I'll beat you to death, you little brat!"

Qiao Mei frowned as she listened from outside. It had only been a while after entering the courtyard, but these people had started arguing again. If she did not chase Old Madam Li away, Zhang Miao would not be able to rest well.

For some reason, she had also been especially averse to noises recently. Every time she heard it, she would feel distraught. It was probably caused by the hormonal fluctuations of pregnancy.

Qiao Mei sat there silently and did not go forward to help. This matter was just like the situation when the Zhang family came to ask Li Gui for money back then. She could manage it once, but she did not want to do it again. If she interfered too many times, Li Gui would still be bullied if she was not around. This time, she did not want to interfere anymore and would let Li Gui handle it herself.

Zhang Qin was not afraid of Old Madam Li at all. She glared at Old Madam Li and stood rooted to the spot with her back straight. It was just a beating! What was the big deal No one could go forward and hurt her younger sister!

Qiao Mei had said it before! They were siblings and must protect one another! Only then would they not be bullied by outsiders!

At the moment, Zhang Miao was injured and could not move, Zhang Chao was also sick, Qiao Mei was pregnant, and Li Gui had not slept well for a few days in order to take care of Zhang Miao. She was the only one left in this family who could protect all of them!

She just needed to hold on until Zhang Wei returned!

As long as she was around! No one could bully her family!

"Mother, my youngest daughter is sick and can't get up from the brick bed. That's why Zhang Qin is like this. She's not throwing a tantrum at you!" Li Gui explained.

"Hmph, you have to teach her a lesson. Such an uneducated girl who doesn't even respect her elders. She deserves to be beaten up!" After Old Madam Li finished speaking, she pushed Zhang Qin to the side and went forward to pick up a bowl and started eating, not caring whose cutlery it was.

Zhang Qin wanted to go forward and say something, but Li Gui only silently pulled her back. She wrapped Zhang Miao in a blanket and carried her to another room with great effort. During this period of time, Old Madam Li did not even look at them and was only focused on eating.

"Zhang Qin, take good care of your sister in this room. I will be in the other room. Don't come over, do you understand?" Li Gui instructed.

"But what if she hits you again?" Zhang Qin asked as she looked at Li Gui worriedly.

Li Gui patted Zhang Qin's head gently. Actually, she did not know how to face Old Madam Li. After all, this was the mother who gave birth to her and raised her. No matter how big a mistake the old woman made, she still could not be unfilial.

"Don't worry, I will be fine. Just stay here and I'll be back soon." After saying that, Li Gui returned to the room where Old Madam Li was.

At this moment, the three of them had already finished everything on the dining table, including the soup.

"Get me another bowl!" Old Madam Li said as she rudely handed the bowl to Li Gui.

Li Gui sat on the stool and said sulkily, "That's all."

"That's all! Who are you trying to fool! I don't believe you! I don't need you to scoop rice for me! I'll find it myself!" Old Madam Li put on her shoes in exasperation and went to the kitchen to look for food.

There was indeed nothing left in the pot, cabinet and rice jar. It seemed that Li Gui was not lying. There was only that much food at home. She saw two cucumbers on the floor and did not care about the condition they were in. She picked them up and started eating without even washing them.

Chapter 619 The Living Can Also Starve To Death

Old Madam Li swaggered into the house and sat on the brick bed. "You have to help me. Look at your eldest brother's two children. They're so thin that they're all skin and bones! You can't leave them in the lurch!"

"Mother, it's not that I don't want to help, but as you can see, Zhang Miao is just lying there and can't even move. She has to take a lot of medicine every month. There's no food at home. I'm not having an easy time either," Li Gui said awkwardly.

A lot of medicine? That meant she had the money to buy medicine every month!

Old Madam Li's eyes lit up. If she saved all the money she spent on medicine, that would be a lot of money!

In any case, Zhang Miao was just a girl who would have to marry into someone else's family sooner or later. Instead of wasting so many years of rations on her, it was better to just let her fend for herself!

If she managed to stay alive, then she was lucky enough! When it was time for her to get married, she would be able to receive a lot of betrothal gifts. If she died, then it would be even better! There would be one less mouth to feed!

"You still have money to buy medicine! Then you definitely have money to give me! I don't want much, just enough for a living!" Old Madam Li said with a smile.

"No! Zhang Miao won't recover if she doesn't take medicine!" Li Gui said anxiously.

Old Madam Li waved her hand and said indifferently, "It's just a girl. She will have to get married sooner or later! I don't think that child will get any better. Why are you wasting this money! We, the living people, are still hungry!"

"I'm also your daughter! It's not as if you don't come and look for me when you're in need! Zhang Miao will get better! I'll definitely make sure she gets better! I have to borrow money to buy the medicine! How can I have money to give you!" Li Gui said angrily.

Old Madam Li did not believe what Li Gui said. She was sure that Li Gui had money and was deliberately hiding it from her. With a money tree like Qiao Mei around, how could she not have money?

There were so many chickens and ducks in the courtyard. If she sold one, they would have enough money to eat for a month!

There were people here who were about to starve to death. It was such a waste to buy feed for the chickens and ducks!

"Then why do you have feed for the chickens and ducks! You're clearly leaving us in the lurch! This entire matter started because of you! If you hadn't divorced the man from the Zhang family! The things in our house wouldn't have been smashed into pieces by them. Your eldest brother wouldn't have

abandoned me and these two children at home and gone off to the county city with his wife!" Old Madam Li scolded as she pointed at Li Gui.

"Those chickens and ducks belong to Qiao Mei. I'm just helping her raise them and she's the one who provides the feed. How can I just kill these chickens and ducks!" Li Gui said.

"So what if they belong to Qiao Mei! Isn't she your daughter! Doesn't she listen to you! She dares to turn her back on her maternal family after getting married! She's really rebellious!" Old Madam Li said as she put her hands on her hips.

"The money to buy chickens and ducks is from Old Master Qiao. Qiao Mei doesn't have a job, so her grandfather pays for everything. How can I have the cheek to ask him for it?" Li Gui said.

Old Madam Li could not find any other argument. She suddenly knelt on the brick bed and said to Li Gui, "Your mother is now lowering herself! Please save me and these two children!"

The two children also knelt on the ground in unison as if they had discussed it in advance. When Old Madam Li kowtowed, they followed suit and kowtowed as well. The knocking sounds became louder and louder, like the sound of a bell striking in a temple. Li Gui was so afraid that they would die from knocking their heads that she hurriedly went to help Old Madam Li up.

"Mother, what are you doing! Even if you do this, I don't have anything else to give you!" Li Gui said.

Seeing that Li Gui was unmoved by force or persuasion, Old Madam Li pointed at Qiao Mei sitting outside and said, "She's your daughter! You're living such a difficult life now, why don't you ask her for help!"

Nowadays, the food they ate at home was all from Qiao Mei's courtyard. Some time ago, when her family was in dire straits, Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe brought over a lot of things. As she was embarrassed, she rejected Qiao Mei's kindness.

Later on, Zhang Wei and the other children brought back a lot of vegetables every day. Sometimes, there was even rice. When she asked them, she found out that Qiao Mei used the excuses that she was pregnant and it was inconvenient for her to move around, and that Qiao Qiang was too old to do farm

work, so she asked Zhang Wei and the other children to help her out. Every day, the children could get vegetables based on how much work they had done.

It was almost winter and there were no more wild vegetables and mushrooms to pick on the mountain. The children actively went to Qiao Mei's place to help out and she tacitly agreed.

Chapter 620 How Did You Come In

Whether it was the Zhang family or Old Madam Li, as long as they asked her for money, Qiao Mei would get implicated. Every time, Qiao Mei would fork out money and put in effort to help her settle these matters. Now, Old Madam Li was eyeing Qiao Mei again.

This time, she could not be weak!

She also had the ability to protect Qiao Mei! She had promised Qiao Mei that she would pull herself together and fight them to the end!

"I haven't raised this daughter of mine for even a day. Why would she give me all the good stuff? Back then, I wanted to raise her, but didn't all the money go into your pocket? It's also your fault that Qiao Mei isn't that close to me now, isn't it?" Li Gui said as she glared at Old Madam Li.

Old Madam Li was speechless. She was indeed in the wrong in this matter. If not for Qiao Mei being lucky, she would have died at Qiao Zhuang's house long ago.

Fortunately, the heavens allowed Qiao Mei to survive. She was the most capable one among these children. Not only did she marry well, but she also knew how to earn money. As long as she could coax Qiao Mei, she could have anything she wanted!

"Can't you just take it that the money is a form of filial piety from you! All these years, you only know how to give money to Qiao Mei! When have you ever said that you will give me money! Take that money as a form of filial piety from you! Don't mention it anymore!" Old Madam Li said overbearingly.

"You!" Li Gui pointed at Old Madam Li angrily. The old woman had already spent all that money, so there was no point in pursuing the matter now.

"Everything in my house needs to be repaired after being smashed up by the Zhang family. They even took away 300 dollars, which is the family's entire savings! You have to make up for this money and also give me 200 dollars for my retirement. That's a total of 500 dollars. Give it to me," Old Madam Li said.

Back then, Li Gui did not get to enjoy any perks from the betrothal money and the three big items. Everything went into Old Madam Li's pocket. Now that the Zhang family took her money, she came to ask Li Gui for it.

How shameless!

"Mother, since you want to settle the score with me, shouldn't you return the money you borrowed from me all these years for my two older brothers to get married?" Li Gui asked.

Old Madam Li used all kinds of reasons to ask Li Gui for money. Over the years, she had already taken more than 300 dollars.

"I... I don't have money. Go and ask your brothers for money! I wasn't the one who got married! I'm not the one who owed you the money!" Old Madam Li said.

"Didn't you say that a daughter is also a biological relative? If my daughter is mine, then why don't you care about your own daughter? I still owe Qiao Mei 500 dollars for this house, as well as the work points and construction materials from the village. There's also the 160 dollars that I owed others for the medical fees for Zhang Miao and Zhang Wei. You should help me pay for all these. If my two older brothers can spend so much money on their weddings, then I can spend money too," Li Gui said as she spread out her hands.

Old Madam Li was about to say something when she was interrupted by Zhao Liang, who had just entered the house.

"Oh my! Is it mealtime!" Zhao Liang said loudly once he saw that Zhang Miao was not in the room.

"Brother Zhao, you're here. Coincidentally, my mother ate all the food and there's nothing left at home. I can't keep you for dinner," Li Gui said, pretending to look troubled.

Old Madam Li's face instantly fell. This daughter of hers was saying that she was greedy in front of outsiders!

The entire table was filled with plates. There were only Li Gui and her and the two children in the room. Where could she hide her face! This was a slap to her face!

"Are you from the neighboring village? How did you get in? Did you get approval? Do you have a pass? How can you enter our village so casually? Can you bear the responsibility if something goes missing in the village!" Zhao Liang shouted as he pointed at Old Madam Li.

A few years ago, people were not allowed to move around casually. If they wanted to go anywhere, they had to go to the village office to get approval and apply for a pass before they could go to other villages or the county city.

The rules were not so strict by now. As long as everyone knew one another, there were not so many complicated rules. However, when faced with such an evil person, he wanted to do things impartially!

Previously, the Zhang family had already disturbed the calm in the village. There were already negative rumors outside the village about how there were always fights in their village.

Such a person would only cause chaos in the village! It would ruin the village's reputation outside! This meant that no one would be willing to come to the village and everyone in the village would want to escape. Soon, this place would become a deserted village.

Zhao Liang would never allow such a thing to happen!