

## Fat Wife 691

### Chapter 691 Confession

When Qiao Mei was pregnant, she was already treated like a treasure by the family. Now that she was not pregnant, she received even more care and favor.

Was this not telling her that she was not as good as Qiao Mei, not as outstanding as Qiao Mei, and that she was not a good daughter-in-law of the Xia family?

As long as Qiao Mei was around, she would not have a good life in this house.

Nowadays, everyone outside knew that the eldest son of the Xia family had a capable and virtuous granddaughter-in-law who was also very beautiful. As soon as she married into the family, she had made an exchange to get back Wu Min's house. How filial. Everyone praised her and envied the family.

Tan Jing had been married into the Xia family for so long and had never been valued by the outside world.

"Mother, come over and let me take a look," Xia Wen said to Xu Lan with a smile.

The last time he saw Xu Lan so happy was when Xia Zhe became the top army warrior for the first time. She could not hide the pride on her face.

Xu Lan twirled around and danced her way to Xia Wen. However, Xia Wen did not admire Xu Lan's clothes but pulled her into the backyard instead.

"Xiao Wen, why did you bring me here?" Xu Lan looked at Xia Wen in confusion.

Xia Wen whispered, "I brought you here to tell you something about Qiao Mei."

When Xu Lan heard that it was about Qiao Mei, she nervously grabbed Xia Wen's arm and asked, "What's wrong with Qiao Mei! Tell me quickly! Did something happen to Qiao Mei! Is it a problem with her health or is she short of money? I'll bring money and go look for Qiao Mei now!"

"No, no! It's good news about Qiao Mei!" Xia Wen said as he held Xu Lan back.

Xu Lan slowly relaxed. She only wanted Qiao Mei to be fine.

"Get to the point next time! Don't you know that I have a heart problem! You'll scare me to death!" Xu Lan held her chest to catch her breath and glared at Xia Wen.

"I'm telling you now. Previously, because the issue with Qiao Mei's miscarriage had something to do with the He family, we kept it a secret from everyone. Now that the He family has been punished, I'm not afraid to tell you the truth about this matter. Actually, Qiao Mei did not have a miscarriage and the babies are fine," Xia Wen said.

The babies are fine? What does that mean? Is this a scheme to frame the He family?

"Wait, I don't understand. Are you saying that Qiao Mei is actually still pregnant? My two eldest grandsons are still around!" Xu Lan said as she looked at Xia Wen agitatedly.

Xia Wen nodded to affirm what Xu Lan said. Xu Lan was so excited that she almost shouted out. Xia Wen covered Xu Lan's mouth and said, "Don't shout! I know that you're sad, so I'm telling you first. You can't let my second aunt-in-law know about this. Otherwise, I'll get beaten up on Xia Zhe's behalf."

Xu Lan blinked and asked Xia Wen to remove the hand covering her mouth. She definitely would not go out and publicize it.

"Oh my, that's so great. Then I'll take out the baby clothes and wash them! I'll wait for Qiao Mei to come back and give birth! No, no! I'll make another set for the babies. The original set is inauspicious! Oh right, I also have to speed up the renovation of the house so that Qiao Mei can go through confinement at our house!" The more Xu Lan spoke, the happier she became.

Qiao Mei, who was the mother, was not even in such a hurry. Instead, it was Xu Lan who was extremely anxious, worried that she would not be able to take good care of Qiao Mei if she did not get everything ready in time for Qiao Mei to deliver the babies.

Seeing his mother so happy, Xia Wen felt much more at ease. As for He Ning being with Qiao Mei now, it was not a big problem.

It was not difficult to get He Ning to return immediately. As long as he created some issues for the He family and gave He Ning something to do, He Ning would definitely return.

Qiao Mei busied herself at the back mountain until it was dark. She had left in a hurry previously and many plants in the back mountain had started to wither, so she used them to do experiments.

Since ginseng could be refined into essence, could she also refine pine cones into oil? Then she would be able to add pine nut oil to her cooking. It would be nutritious and delicious.

Just like that, Qiao Mei did experiments from noon to night and only returned home after she had grasped some logic.

At this moment, Qiao Qiang was already at home. He Ning and Huo Gao were sitting opposite him. Qiao Qiang was listening to the radio nonchalantly and did not care what He Ning was saying to him.

These two people could not be chased away, and they even took the initiative to come and deliver money. He could only pretend not to see anything.

Chapter 692 I Want To Eat Fish

Like Qiao Qiang, Qiao Mei pretended not to see anything and walked straight into the house.

When He Ning saw Qiao Mei coming back, he smiled and pointed at the vat in the courtyard. "I want to eat fish."

Qiao Mei remained silent.

"I want to eat fish," He Ning repeated.

"I'm not free. If you want to eat, make it yourself," Qiao Mei said sulkily.

He Ning did not continue to insist. Instead, he asked Huo Gao to catch the fish and pass it to Qiao Mei after cleaning it up. He was quite sure that Qiao Mei would not reject an ingredient that had already been nicely prepared.

"Miss Qiao, can you see if the fish is prepared to your satisfaction?" Huo Gao said.

Qiao Mei looked at the fish in the basin and then at the smug He Ning outside. She silently suppressed her anger. Anyway, as long as He Ning was alive, she would be able to earn an endless amount of money. She would just take it that she pitied him.

After dinner, it was still Huo Gao who went to wash the crockery and cutlery. For a moment, Qiao Mei did not know exactly what kind of existence Huo Gao had in He Ning's life.

"Don't come over tomorrow morning. There won't be anyone at home. We have to go into the mountains to dig up ginseng for you. You can come back at night. The kitchen is closed tomorrow and no one will cook for you," Qiao Mei said.

He Ning was still reminiscing about the taste of the fish just now, but now he looked unhappy. Did that mean that he had to eat Wang Qin's cooking tomorrow?

That food tasted terrible. It was already good enough that he was not poisoned to death.

"Alright, I understand." After saying that, He Ning reluctantly left Qiao Mei's house with Huo Gao.

Qiao Mei quietly put a drop of 100-year-old ginseng juice into Qiao Qiang's glass. The medicinal effect of the 1,000-year-old ginseng juice was too strong. She had heard that if one ate too much ginseng to nourish one's body, one's hair would turn completely white overnight!

Although Qiao Qiang was already at the age when his hair was turning white, it was still harmful to a person's body if all the hair turned white overnight.

Qiao Qiang picked up the glass of water and took a sip. He looked at it in puzzlement. The taste of the water seemed to be different from usual. There was something different about it, but he could not describe the feeling.

Perhaps what Qiao Mei cooked tonight was too fragrant, so much so that even water tasted very fragrant now.

Qiao Mei sat on the brick bed and counted the melon seeds. These were all new varieties that she had brought over from the capital. She did not know if these seeds were suitable for planting in the northeastern region. The ripening time of these melon seeds was 25% shorter than the usual melon seeds in their village. If she planted them now, they would definitely be ready for harvest before the first snowfall in winter.

A few days ago, she had fried the last of the melon seeds in the house and sent them to Xia He. She wanted to see if this new variety was suitable for planting in their village.

She could not always depend on her energy. If the villagers discovered that they could not grow the new variety that she had brought and only she could do it, everyone would suspect that she was trying to cause trouble here.

She would bring some over to Li Gui tomorrow and get Zhang Wei and the other children to help with the planting. They could plant it in their private plot in the courtyard.

"Grandfather, who won the chess game today?" Qiao Mei asked with a smile.

Qiao Qiang snorted coldly. If not for Old Man Sun cheating today, he would have won all those old men! Recently, Qiao Qiang only listened to the radio programs that discussed chess. Every day, he would put on his reading glasses and work hard, reading the books that Xia Wen sent over.

Even when Qiao Qiang was in the military academy, he did not put in so much effort. In Qiao Qiang's words, he would not fight for steamed buns but he would fight for validation. In order to get everyone to come to their village to play chess the next time, he must fight for glory.

He made it seem like he represented the entire village.

Early the next morning, Qiao Mei woke up early and prepared dry rations for Qiao Qiang to bring with him when he entered the mountains. She also filled up a military water bottle and then put three drops of 100-year-old ginseng juice into it. She shook it gently a few times and it was all done.

She was not using Qiao Qiang as a guinea pig. She had tried it herself before she dared to give it to Qiao Qiang. Besides, not everyone could be Qiao Mei's guinea pig. Even if He Ning knelt on the ground and begged her to give him a few drops of ginseng juice, she would not bear to part with it.

It would not be considered a good deal. Only a few drops could be extracted from an entire ginseng. To be able to sell to He Ning, she would need an amount that was extracted from hundreds of ginsengs.

The price of one ginseng was already hundreds of thousands of dollars. The concentrate would probably cost tens of millions.

Those who did not know better would think that Qiao Mei was trying to rob them.

#### Chapter 693 Entering The Mountain

Besides, how was she going to explain to He Ning that she had hundreds or even thousands of 100-year-old ginsengs? Was she here to do wholesale?

With He Ning's intelligence, he would soon be able to sense that there was something wrong with her. When he discovered her special ability, she would probably be rumored to be a "spirit" and it was even possible that she would get sent to be dissected.

"Grandfather, be careful when you enter the mountain." Qiao Mei handed the backpack to Qiao Qiang. Not only did it contain the food and drinks she had prepared for Qiao Qiang, but it also contained the tools he needed to dig up the ginseng.

Qiao Qiang put on his straw hat and walked happily into the mountain. The sun had not fully risen yet and there was some morning dew hanging on the plants. Not long after, the hem of Qiao Qiang's pants were all wet.

He waited until he walked three to four miles, when he was halfway up the mountain, before he started to patiently search for traces of ginseng. The area at the foot of the mountain had already been searched by others, so there would not be any good quality ginseng there.

Even if there was any, it would have been poached long ago.

Qiao Qiang did not find any trace of any ginseng even at noon, but he was not in a hurry. Finding ginseng needed patience and one could not be anxious. The more anxious one was, the more one would not be able to find it.

Qiao Mei did not idle around the entire morning. She went to look for Li Gui with the seeds she had picked out. Although Li Gui was still a little weak, she looked much better after eating a few full meals.

Zhang Wei brought Qiao Mei a glass of water. Qiao Mei secretly took out the small bottle containing the 1,000-year-old ginseng juice and gently poured a little into it. The amount was almost negligible.

However, this little bit was still better than 10 drops of 100-year-old ginseng juice.

Li Gui coughed all the time and would occasionally have gastric pains. Since she did not have money to go for treatment, she could be Qiao Mei's second "guinea pig".

"Drink some water." Qiao Mei handed the glass of water to Li Gui, who obediently drank it all in one gulp.

Now, she listened to everything Qiao Mei said. If she had a different opinion, she would discuss it with Qiao Mei.

"Why is this water different from what I usually drink? It smells a little fragrant." Li Gui looked at the glass in surprise.

After drinking the water, she instantly felt energetic and refreshed. It felt as if she could even walk 50 miles without any problem.

Over the past few days, her waist had been sore and her body felt weak. After drinking the water, these symptoms seemed to have disappeared.

"Is there any difference? Isn't it just water from home? Then how do you feel?" Qiao Mei probed.

"I feel so energetic after drinking it. If I had known earlier, I would drink less. I could have let Zhang Miao drink some too. This way, she'll recover faster," Li Gui said regretfully.

It was all her fault for being greedy. Otherwise, she could have given some to Zhang Miao.

Qiao Mei originally did not intend to give it to Zhang Miao, but after hearing what Li Gui said, she had a new idea. Yesterday, she had sprinkled ginseng juice on the plants and they could all be revived.

So if she heated up the ginseng juice and soaked the towel in it before applying it to Zhang Miao's ribs, would it have the same effect?

Zhang Miao was still so young, so the 100-year-old ginseng juice would definitely be too strong for her. Qiao Mei would have to find some time to go to the cave to cultivate more 10 to 20 years old ginseng to extract the juice and then dilute it with water before applying it to Zhang Miao like a medicine.

This way, maybe Zhang Miao would be able to stand up and go to school with Zhang Wei and the others in less than a month.

"What are you holding in your hand?" Li Gui asked.

Qiao Mei reached into the bag and took out a handful of melon seeds. The shiny melon seeds immediately attracted Li Gui's attention. This was the first time she had seen such big and good quality melon seeds.

"Did you grow this? I've never seen such big ones! This is really good stuff!" Li Gui said excitedly.

"I bought this from the capital. Our local melon seeds can produce about 300 catties per mu of land. If the land is fertile, then maybe a maximum of 500 catties. The person who sold me this in the capital said that this variety of melon seeds can produce at least 800 catties per mu!" Qiao Mei said.

An amount of 800 catties! That was worth a lot of money!

If she planted them in the two mu of land in the courtyard, she would be able to harvest at least 1,600 catties!

It was almost the end of the year and every family would need to buy things for the new year. Even poor people like them would buy melon seeds for the festive season, let alone the families in the county city.

If she could really grow these melon seeds, she would definitely be able to earn a lot of money! It would be at least 300 dollars!

"But it's going to snow soon. If we want to plant it, we can only do it next year," Li Gui said regretfully.

Chapter 694 - 694 Planting Melon Seeds

694 Planting Melon Seeds

"These melon seeds will ripen much faster than the ones we grow now! We'll definitely be able to harvest by winter! At that time, there won't be any melon seeds for sale in the market, only ours!" Qiao Mei said.

When Li Gui heard this, she stood up excitedly. If she could earn so much money, Zhang Miao's medical expenses and her family's living expenses would be settled. She could even return some money back to Qiao Mei.

"How much did you pay for these seeds? I'll buy them," Li Gui said.

Qiao Mei felt that Li Gui was quite good when it came to this. Even biological brothers should settle their accounts clearly. However, these seeds were indeed much more expensive than the ones on the market. The cost price of melon seeds in their village is 25 cents per catty. Hers, excluding the freight fee, already cost 50 cents a catty just for the seeds.

“I’ll give you some to plant first. These seeds are much more expensive than those being sold in the market. You can pay me back when you make money.” Qiao Mei grabbed a few handfuls of melon seeds and handed them to Li Gui.

“No, I have to pay you. I’ll eventually pay you back all the money I owe you. We have to be clear about this. Feelings are another matter,” Li Gui said seriously.

Qiao Mei had no choice but to weigh the seeds. In the end, she received four dollars from Li Gui. These seeds were enough for Li Gui to plant in the two mu of her own land at home.

The two of them worked hard for the entire afternoon and finally planted all the seeds, including in the private plot of land in Qiao Mei’s courtyard.

Not only did Qiao Mei want to grow them herself, but she also wanted to get everyone else to join in. When winter came and only her family had melon seeds, the others would definitely be envious.

The hunter would shoot the bird that stuck out. One could not just focus on getting rich alone. The foundation of being able to have long-term earnings was to ensure that everyone could make money. Such endeavors were all speculative in nature. If someone reported it, people might die!

“Auntie Dong! What are you doing!” Qiao Mei said as she walked into Auntie Dong’s courtyard.

Auntie Dong was lecturing her youngest son. Recently, he had not been studying well in school. He even skipped class to go out and play yesterday. He simply did not respect her as his mother.

She had heard that Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao were both hardworking children. As they had previously studied in the county city, she found it acceptable that they would do better than the rest of the children in the village. However, even Zhang Qin, who had not gone to school previously, was one of the top students in the class with good results.

Therefore, it must be her child who did not study hard enough!

“Mei Mei! I’m really going to be angered to death by this little brat! I paid for his education with my hard earned money! But he skipped school and went out to play! He played crazily with a bunch of children on the mountain outside. Tell me, what kind of future does he have! I’m so angry!” Auntie Dong said angrily as she held the feather duster.

She did not know what to do about this matter. After all, the three children at home were good at their studies because of Qiao Qiang’s influence. Qiao Qiang kept a closer eye on the children’s homework than she did.

If they had not finished their homework when he came back, they would be hit on the palms. If they did not do well in the examination because they encountered problems that they did not understand, they would still be forgiven. However, if they were too careless and made the same mistake more than three times, they would have to stand in the corner for four hours!

Under such an environment, even children who were not good at their studies would be motivated to study.

“Put down the feather duster. Even if the child is in the wrong, you can’t hit him. If you hit him, won’t he hate you?” Qiao Mei whispered.

Auntie Dong sulkily asked her son to go into the house to study. She sighed deeply and said, “Why can’t I hit him? He’s the only one in this family who has an education. Our older son didn’t even go to school. He’s the only one who gets to eat the eggs at home when none of us bear to eat any. Yet he doesn’t even study hard!”

“You can’t always spoil him like this and give him everything good. Don’t you still have an older son at home? If the two brothers don’t get the same things, it’s inevitable that they will grow up resentful of each other,” Qiao Mei said.

“I know that too, but our family’s financial situation is such that only one kid can go to school. We really can’t afford it,” Auntie Dong said with a frown.

At this moment, Qiao Mei took out a bag of melon seeds from behind her and placed it in front of Auntie Dong. The moment she opened the bag, the fragrance of melon seeds wafted into her nose.

“Oh my, such big melon seeds! Where did you get them? The quality is really not bad!” Auntie Dong said as she looked at the melon seeds in satisfaction.

Chapter 695 - 695 Not Selling To Your Family

695 Not Selling To Your Family

“I brought these over from the capital. They’re a new variety! They can be harvested before winter if you plant them now. Moreover, the yield is 50% higher than our local old variety!” Qiao Mei said.

“Really! Then how much do you have? I want to buy it!” Auntie Dong said readily.

“Auntie Dong, this is a new variety. If it’s not suitable for our land, won’t you lose money? Besides, it’s much more expensive than our local seeds,” Qiao Mei said awkwardly.

Auntie Dong did not think too much about it. When Qiao Mei first started growing bean sprouts, she believed that she would definitely be able to earn a lot of money by following Qiao Mei. During that time, her family made the most money in the village.

Now that Qiao Mei wanted to grow melon seeds, she had to trust Qiao Mei again. Since Qiao Mei came to look for her, she would trust that Qiao Mei was here to make her rich!

“Just tell me how much for a catty,” Auntie Dong said.

“I carried this all back from the capital myself. I’ll sell you at cost. It’s 50 cents,” Qiao Mei said.

Auntie Dong’s heart skipped a beat. She had thought that it would maybe cost 30 cents and did not expect it to be 50 cents. However, these are things where you got what you paid for. If she bought the melon seeds now and planted them earlier, she would be able to harvest them earlier. Otherwise, if it really snowed, she would have planted them for nothing.

“I’ll take four catties! I don’t have much land at home, so I’ll try to grow four catties first. I’ll go get money for you!” Auntie Dong went into the house to get money for Qiao Mei without any hesitation.

This was also within Qiao Mei's expectations. After Auntie Dong bought the seeds, everyone in the village knew about it. The few women who were closer to Qiao Mei all heard the news and went to buy seeds from her.

They did not care about how expensive the seeds were. As long as Qiao Mei was the seller, she must be helping them to earn money.

Even if they were to lose money, it would be because they did not put in enough effort to take care of the seeds. Anyway, it was impossible for them to plant any vegetables by this season. When it snowed in winter and the land became covered by heavy snow, everything they planted would be finished.

In the end, almost everyone in the village came to look for Qiao Mei to buy seeds, except for Qiao Zhuang's family.

By the time Qiao Zhuang's family rushed over after hearing the news, the seeds were already sold out and there were none left for Qiao Zhuang's family.

"I think that wretched girl Qiao Mei does it on purpose! Why is it that the entire village has seeds, but our family doesn't!" Wang Qin said angrily.

"Why are you shouting? If not for you, would our family have ended up like this?" Qiao Zhuang said sulkily.

After the open meeting, no one in the entire village took him seriously anymore. This "village tyrant" had a reputation that was not real.

Wang Qin's job in the village office was not going well either. After He Ning gave her the rental fees for these two days, she immediately went to put the money back into the accounts.

"Father, if our family doesn't vent our anger, won't we always be bullied by Qiao Mei?" Wang Qin whispered.

"It's more than being bullied! If not for your lousy idea, Qiao Yu would have marry into that family long ago! Why would we have to return the betrothal gifts to the family! I even have to compensate the matchmaker with an amount of money equivalent to the price of a pig's head. It's all your lousy idea!" Qiao Zhuang said as he pointed at Wang Qin.

Wang Qin hid at the side and did not make a sound. Now that the eldest daughter-in-law, Liu Ying, had run away, there were only Jiang Ye and Qiao Yu doing housework at home. It was impossible for the two of them to take care of such a big family.

Shen Ge already could not take care of her children now. Ever since Qiao Yu could not marry into the Guo family, Shen Ge had been locked up in the room and beaten up every day. They did not care as long as she did not get beaten to death.

"That's right. I'm so tired every day. Second Sister-in-law, Eldest Sister-in-law is not at home now. You should help out with some chores," Jiang Ye said unhappily.

Although Qiao Zhuang was an asshole, his second and third sons doted on their own wives. Qiao Wang, who did not have much say at home, also chimed in, "That's right, Second Sister-in-law. You're all daughters-in-law of the family. My wife can't take care of so many things by herself. What if she's too slow for Father?"

Qiao Wang was quite smart. With just a few words, he pushed all the responsibility to Wang Qin. It was not Jiang Ye's fault for not taking good care of the family, but it was because of Wang Qin's inaction.

As expected, Qiao Zhuang became even angrier. It was an embarrassment for him to have to return the betrothal gifts that he had received. When he was young, he was always in the limelight. Now that he was old, it seemed like anyone could bully him.

Chapter 696 Hand Over The Money

"How can you say that, Third Brother! If not for your second sister-in-law, would your work points be so high! Don't just keep saying that my wife is not good, why don't you talk about how she has helped you!" Qiao Gui said angrily.

The two brothers started arguing with each other. Seeing that a fight was about to break out, Qiao Zhuang picked up the tea jar and threw it on the ground. The loud noise made the two brothers shut up.

"What are you doing! Do you think I'm dead! Do you think you have the final say in the family now!" Qiao Zhuang roared.

The two brothers, Qiao Gui and Qiao Wang, shook their heads cautiously, afraid that they would anger Qiao Zhuang again.

"Wang Qin, I heard that your family recently took in two outsiders who came to the village. Is that true?" Qiao Zhuang asked as he stared at Wang Qin.

Wang Qin had already expected such a day to come. She gripped the corners of her shirt tightly and said nervously, "That's right... I did take them in."

"Don't they pay you?" Qiao Zhuang asked as he shook his tobacco bag, pretending like he did not care.

"No! I'm the village accountant. Since these outsiders come to the village, I should help out, so I didn't ask them to pay," Wang Qin said with a smile.

There was no such thing as a secret in the village. If Wang Qin did not receive any money, why would Wang Wu, who sold pigs on the east side of the village, tell others that she had bought a lot of pork. Why would Old Madam Dong, the loudspeaker in the village, go around saying that those two people were people Qiao Mei knew in the capital.

If these two people did not pay, then where did they get the money to buy meat!

"I'll give you another chance. Tell the story properly," Qiao Zhuang said.

At this moment, Wang Qin started to feel nervous. Could it be that she had done something wrong and let Qiao Zhuang realize what happened?

When she took the money, she always made sure that there was no one around. Even Qiao Gui did not know how much money He Ning was paying Wang Qin, so how could Qiao Zhuang know?

Could it be that He Ning told Qiao Zhuang? However, they did not know each other at all, so how could they have met?

Qiao Zhuang must have said this to get information out of her. As long as she refused to admit it, Qiao Zhuang had no evidence to refute her.

"No! I swear! We definitely didn't take any money from them!" Wang Qin said firmly.

Qiao Zhuang stood up with a whoosh and raised his walking stick to point at Wang Qin as he said, "You still deny it! If you didn't receive any money, where would you get the money to buy meat from Wang Wu! If you didn't receive any money, then you must have hidden some money away! How can a stingy person like you let two strangers take advantage of you?"

Wang Qin was so frightened that she fell and sat on the ground. Qiao Gui also knelt on the ground and begged for mercy. Wang Qin said shakily, "Father... I did receive some money for this, but it's all proper! It's not much, just a few dollars! The meat was bought with food stamps and money that I received from others! I really didn't do much!"

The two strangers indeed looked like rich people. Moreover, they had clearly said that they were from the capital, so they should not be too poor.

Qiao Zhuang sat down slowly and thought for a long time before saying, "Give me all the money you have left tomorrow. You can't hide away money on your own, do you understand?"

Wang Qin quickly agreed to this matter and pulled Qiao Gui along as she ran home. Along the way, she did not give Qiao Gui a kind face. As a man, he actually could not protect his wife and children. What a good-for-nothing!

"Honey! Honey, walk slowly! Wait for me!" Qiao Gui shouted as he smiled.

Wang Qin said unhappily, "Don't you know to protect me in front of your father! I have to worry about everything at home. Why don't you care about anything? You never say anything whenever your father bullies us! Back then, if I knew that your father is such a person, I definitely wouldn't have married into your family!"

In those days, there were many people who wanted to marry Wang Qin. If not for the fact that Qiao Gui knew how to sweettalk her and had good culinary skills, she would not have taken a fancy to him!

"Who would dare to say no to someone like my father? Honey, just bear with it. We can go to the county city once we save more money!" Qiao Gui said ingratiatingly.

He still dared to say he wanted to go to the county city! Qiao Zhuang did not allow them to save money at all. They had to hand over all their money to Qiao Zhuang, otherwise he would beat and scold them.

If not for the fact that she stole money from the village office and falsified the accounts all these years, they would have starved to death long ago! They would not even be alive now!

However, this was not a long-term solution. It would be over if He Ning and the other man let it slip about the truth.

#### Chapter 697 Digging Up Ginseng

Qiao Qiang walked a few more miles into the mountains and suddenly saw lush grass growing under a pine tree. The grass at the other places were not so densely packed.

He took a closer look and realized that there was a ginseng in the middle of the grass patch. There were even red small fruits growing on it!

Qiao Qiang calmly took out a red string from his bag and gently tied it around the ginseng. The older generation all said that ginseng had spiritual energy. If he did not tie it with the red string, it would run away if he was not careful!

He placed his tools on the ground one by one. Then he took out a straw mat and sat on it, carefully digging up the ginseng.

Ginseng was expensive partly because of its age. The older it was, the more valuable it would become. On the other hand, it also depended on the quality of the ginseng. Even if the main ginseng was intact, but the roots were damaged, the price would drop a lot!

Digging for ginseng tested one's endurance and skills. If one was not careful, one would lose money.

Qiao Qiang focused on digging out the ginseng. By the time he finished, it was almost dark. There were wild beasts in the mountains at night, so he could not stay any longer.

Qiao Mei had been waiting in the courtyard for Qiao Qiang to return. Looking at how happy Qiao Qiang was, Qiao Mei knew that he must have a fruitful trip.

"Grandfather, did you manage to find any!" Qiao Mei asked expectantly.

"This mountain is really a treasure land. I only dug one out today. From the looks of it, it must be more than 80 years old. I can't see it clearly since it is dark. There should be another one on the mountain. It was too late, so I didn't dig for it." Qiao Qiang put down the bamboo basket and went to the water vat at the side to wash his hands.

One ginseng was enough for He Ning to eat. She would ask Qiao Qiang to dig up the rest for fun.

Qiao Mei did not go to look for He Ning immediately. It was almost dinnertime and the fact was that it was easier to invite someone than to send him away. If He Ning came, he would definitely shamelessly stay for dinner.

In order to maintain the peace and quiet at home, she would approach them tomorrow morning.

Qiao Qiang carefully cleaned up the ginseng and fixed it down with cloth and thread. If he made it look good, Qiao Mei would be able to sell it to that little brat from the He family for a much higher price.

He would settle the score with He Ning when he went to the capital. Although he said that he would never set foot in the capital again in his life, he still had to be there when Qiao Mei gave birth.

Otherwise, he would not be able to feel at ease.

The Xia family's gathering in the capital had also ended successfully and everyone returned home feeling satisfied. Only Xia He decided to make a detour at the last minute and go to the art troupe to practice her dance.

The environment in the art troupe at the Kong family's hometown was very bad and no one practiced dance at all. They did not even have good basic training and did not even know how to stand properly. She had to admit that the dancers did not develop their skills as fast as in the capital.

She must have a more solid foundation than the others. Only then could she stand out in the casting selection next month.

Before she left the house, Xu Lan even called her over for a talk. Xu Lan told her about some techniques and methods for training, as well as the general theme of next month's performance.

As long as she trained hard, she would definitely be able to get the role of the female lead. She could not let Yang Xin and the others take it away from her. Since she had returned to the art troupe, she must return to her original level and get the position that belonged to her!

At this moment, there was another person in the dance studio. It was Deng Fan.

He was in the same batch as Xia He when she joined the troupe the first time and he was one of the best dancers at that time. She did not expect him to secretly do basic training alone at night.

"Ah... you're here too..." Xia He said awkwardly.

"Yes," Deng Fan replied coldly without even looking at Xia He.

Xia He did not care to make things complicated. She took off her coat and did some stretching and warmups before preparing to practice her dance. Although there were two people in the same room, it was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

Xia He really could not stand such an atmosphere. She walked over and said, "It's been a long time. I didn't expect that you would still work as hard as before. I thought no one would be here tonight."

"It's always been like this. I have no talent and can only work hard," Deng Fan said coldly.

"You didn't seem to have such a personality in the past. At that time, you still hung out with me and called me Sister He! Why don't you have anything to say when you see me now," Xia He said.

Deng Fan was silent for a long time and could not figure out how to answer Xia He's question. In the end, he shut his mouth and focused on dancing.

Chapter 698 - 698 A Man and a Woman Alone

698 A Man and a Woman Alone

"Hey! Sister Yang Xin! Quick, take a look and see if the lights are on in the dance studio!" Zhou Ling said as she leaned against the dormitory window.

Yang Xin did not care at all. There was nothing valuable in the dance studio. So what if someone went there in the middle of the night? No matter how hard some people tried, they would not be able to shake her position as the main dancer.

"It doesn't look like Deng Fan is in the dance studio by himself. By right, Deng Fan should have gone home by now," Zhou Ling said doubtfully.

She had always lived in the dormitory building of the art troupe and the facing of her room was the best. Every day, she could see who had entered the dance studio.

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Last year, Zhou Ling's family had made arrangements for her to get married, but she refused and had threatened them with death if they forced her. She just wanted to wait for Deng Fan.

They all said that Deng Fan was someone who did not make sense. He was already in his 30s and was still single. Most people like him were sick in some ways!

In that era, women in the countryside would get married when they were 17 or 18 years old. Men would get married when they were 20 years old. People in the city might do it a little later, but most women would get married at around 20 years old and men at around 22 years old.

If one did not get married after this age, one could get shamed to death by the neighbors! Therefore, even if people did not love their partners, they would still get married when the time came.

For someone like Deng Fan who was not married even though he was in his 30s, there must be something wrong with him!

“You’re just thinking about Deng Fan! Then why don’t you go to the dance studio to accompany him! If you don’t meet him and talk to him, how are you going to get along with him? You even want to marry him. If you can’t even talk to him, how are you going to get married?” Yang Xin said.

Zhou Ling came to Yang Xin’s side shyly and grabbed her sleeve as she said, “Sister Xin~ You’re the best~ Can you come with me. I’m afraid to go alone...”

Although Yang Xin was usually sarcastic, she still treated the two Zhou sisters quite well. After all, these two people were always by her side.

“Alright! But let’s make it clear. I’m only going with you. I won’t help you make conversation with Deng Fan!” Yang Xin said.

“Fine, fine, fine!” Zhou Ling hopped around happily and quickly went to get both their dancing shoes.

During this period of time, Yang Xin had been living in Zhou Ling’s bedroom. It had been more than a month. Although Zhou Ling did not ask about Yang Xin’s family matters, she more or less knew that Yang Xin’s husband did not treat her well.

This time round, it seemed that Yang Xin’s husband had another woman outside and even brought that woman home. Yang Xin was so angry that she ran away from home.

Since Yang Xin did not say anything, Zhou Ling did not ask further. She simply pretended that she did not know anything about this matter.

The two of them arrived at the dance studio happily. Before they even entered, they could hear Deng Fan and Xia He chatting and laughing, which made Zhou Ling furious.

Deng Fan was usually a cold person and would not say a word no matter what she asked. Why was he chatting so happily with Xia He now? Something was definitely wrong.

Yang Xin pushed open the door of the dance studio and shouted, "Oh! You're all here! You'd rather chat here in the middle of the night than go home. How fun."

Deng Fan remained silent and quietly did his leg presses at one side. Xia He could not be bothered to talk to them and also started to do leg presses. The entire dance studio was silent and there was no movement at all.

"Xia He, why aren't you saying anything? Are you feeling guilty!" Zhou Ling said angrily.

Xia He smiled and turned around to look at Zhou Ling. "I'm not talking because I'm unwilling to talk to you. I have nothing to feel guilty about."

"Then what are you doing here in the middle of the night? A man and a woman, alone in the same room. What else do you have to say!" Zhou Ling said as she pointed at Xia He.

"Open your snobbish eyes wide and see clearly. Tell me exactly what shameful things I have done. There are also surveillance cameras around. If you don't believe me, go take a look and see what I've done," Xia He said as she pointed at the surveillance cameras above her head.

Xia He was the one who suggested to Xu Lan to install the surveillance cameras. This was because the dancers kept losing their dance shoes in the dance studio. Many people complained to one another about it. It was not because the dance shoes were expensive, but because it was not easy to find a pair of dance shoes that suited oneself. One had to use the shoes constantly and mound them in order to have a pair of dance shoes that suited oneself the most.

Therefore, everyone cherished their dance shoes very much. No matter how much money they were offered, they would not give their shoes away in exchange.

Chapter 699 - 699 A Sharp Knife

699 A Sharp Knife

Now, these surveillance cameras were going to help Xia He prove her innocence. It seemed that she had made a good suggestion back then.

“Don’t you have a husband? Why are you seducing someone from our troupe now? You’re really a ‘public bus’,” Yang Xin said viciously.

Zhou Ling did not immediately understand what a “public bus” meant and only got it after a while. She gave Yang Xin a thumbs up. In terms of scolding people, Yang Xin was the best. She could do it without even using a vulgar word.

“Are you talking about me? In my opinion, this term is more suitable for your husband. Everyone already knows about your family matters, yet you still have the mood to care about things that have nothing to do with you!” Xia He said.

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Yang Xin was so angry that her face turned red. She did not publicize this matter, so how did everyone in the capital know about it? Could it be that her husband had talked about it himself?

“Who did you hear this nonsense from! It’s very harmonious in my family!” Yang Xin braced herself and said.

“Your husband just stops short of bringing that woman out to gallivant on the streets and around the alleys. Everyone knows about it now. I hear that the woman’s name is Yan, right? She’s indeed good-looking. It’s so good to be young. She looks to be in her early 20s,” Xia He said meanly.

In Yang Xin’s eyes, age was the one thing that should not be mentioned in front of her. She had been depressed for so many years that even the most expensive cosmetics could not save her complexion.

Now that she was in her 30s, her face was already sallow and her figure was not as good as before. She used to dance day and night, so she could still maintain her slender figure.

Nowadays, other than eating and drinking, she would cry until late at night every day. She was no longer as beautiful as she used to be. If not for the fact that she relied on her relatives to stabilize her position in the art troupe, she would not have her current position.

“Do you think you’re good-looking! Your husband is not a good person either! Aren’t you getting a divorce!” Yang Xin said as she pointed at Xia He.

When the indifferent Deng Fan heard that Xia He was going to get a divorce, he turned to look at Xia He and then at Yang Xin to confirm if she was telling the truth.

Zhou Ling thought that Deng Fan did not like the idea of a divorce, so she tried to add fuel to the fire and said, “Deng Fan! You don’t know how vicious she is. Not only does she treat her mother-in-law and sister-in-law badly, but she also does not even give them food. Now, she wants to get a divorce and dump her husband’s family. Tell me, how vicious is such a woman!”

Deng Fan did not even hear what Zhou Ling said. He turned to look at Xia He coldly and asked, “Is it true?”

Xia He did not intend to hide it from him and nodded readily. “He still owes me something. We’ll get a divorce once he returns it to me.”

Deng Fan lowered his head and packed his things before leaving with a smile on his lips.

He had waited for so long and this day had finally come. The person who had been in his heart for more than 10 years had finally come back. He had originally planned never to get married in this life, and he only wanted Xia He to be happy. However, now that there was a new opportunity, he must seize it well.

“Xia He, just give up! Deng Fan won’t like someone like you. He’s not married yet. You’re already married once. How can you be worthy of him!” Zhou Ling said disdainfully.

“The fact that I’m a member of the Xia family makes me worthy. What capabilities does your Zhou family have? How dare you say such things in front of me,” Xia He said with narrowed eyes.

Among the three siblings of the Xia family, Xia Wen hid his real thoughts behind a treacherous smile and Xia Zhe could kill someone with one strike. However, Xia He was different. Although she hid her sting and did not seem to have any lethality, she was actually a sharp knife. As long as anyone bullied her and her family, she was fully able to stab them in the heart at any time.

After all, she was trained by the devil, Xia Xiu, since she was young. How could she be bad?

“I’d advise you to go back to bed early. You drink too much, smoke too much and stay up late. Your complexion is worse than my mother’s.” After saying that, Xia He started her practice.

Seeing that Xia He had no intention of arguing with them, Yang Xin and Zhou Ling hurriedly ran back to the dormitory to take a look at the wrinkles on their faces. It would be a disaster if it was really as bad as what Xia He said.

Early the next morning, He Ning brought Huo Gao to Qiao Mei’s house. Qiao Mei also made more food for breakfast as she knew that He Ning would be here today and very early too.

She did not know what He Ning was made of to be so shameless. Not only did he freeload, but he even went to stay at Wang Qin’s house. If Auntie Dong had not secretly told her this news, she would have thought that He Ning was staying in the county city.

Chapter 700 - 700 Astronomically Priced Ginseng

700 Astronomically Priced Ginseng

“Am I a little too early?” He Ning smiled as he led Huo Gao into the courtyard. They behaved in such a familiar manner that it felt as if they were in their own house.

Qiao Mei did not say anything and just walked out with a big pot of dough soup as usual. He Ning thought that it was for them and smiled as he stretched out his hands to take the pot from Qiao Mei. In the end, Qiao Mei did not even look at them. She turned sideways and went to the courtyard door to blow the whistle.

Zhang Wei ran over happily and carefully brought the pot back home.

He Ning awkwardly put down his raised hands and followed Qiao Mei into the house. Qiao Qiang was lying on the brick bed and listening to the radio as usual.

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His greatest hobby was to listen to news from all over the world. As long as it was news, he would listen attentively.

“Old Master, what you’re hearing is what happened the day before yesterday. The broadcast is slow and it’s not accurate. If you like such things, you have to go to the capital to read the newspapers. The newspapers there have all the latest information,” He Ning said.

Qiao Qiang looked at He Ning disdainfully. He was just listening for fun and did not need to know any details.

“If you want to eat, don’t just wait here. Do you really think you’re the boss! Hurry up and help out,” Qiao Mei said sulkily as she put down the bowls and chopsticks.

He Ning gave Huo Gao a look and he got up resignedly to walk towards the kitchen.

It was really not easy to earn this money. Next time, he would not serve He Ning even if he was paid double the amount.

Unless... he was given three times the amount.

Everyone ate quietly and there was not a single sound at the dining table. In the past, Qiao Mei and Qiao Qiang would talk about matters in the village or their future plans while they ate.

Ever since He Ning arrived, the atmosphere had become much more awkward.

“Did you manage to dig up the ginseng?” He Ning asked as he put down his bowl and chopsticks.

Qiao Mei took out a cloth bag from the cabinet and placed it on the table. “This is the only one, but there should be two more on the mountain. It was already too late yesterday, so we didn’t continue digging.”

Huo Gao carefully opened the cloth bag. He thought that the way the ginseng roots were handled could be considered professional. As soon as he opened it, he could clearly see the patterns on the ginseng and its size.

This was definitely a top-grade ginseng. It was obvious that this ginseng was about 100 years old. The medicinal effect would definitely be 10 to 20 years better than ordinary ones! This was not something that could be bought casually off the market.

It was a top-notch item that was priceless!

“Not bad. Name your price,” He Ning said with a smile.

Qiao Mei extended five fingers and He Ning heaved a sigh of relief. He said casually, “50,000 dollars? I’ll give it to you now.”

“Don’t play dumb with me. I already asked you for 100,000 dollars for 20 to 30 years old ginseng. Don’t you think it’s black-hearted to think that it’s 50,000 dollars for 100-year-old ginseng? I want 500,000 dollars,” Qiao Mei said.

An amount of 500,000 dollars! Was this woman crazy! Even if he robbed the bank, he would not be able to get 500,000 dollars. He thought that 300,000 dollars was already a very high price, but he did not expect Qiao Mei to ask for 500,000 dollars.

“Don’t you think you’re a little too much...” He Ning said through gritted teeth.

“Too much? It’s fine if you don’t want to buy it. I can use it to put into my grandfather’s water. There are still two more on the mountain. You can dig them up yourself. But let me tell you, in the entire village,

only my grandfather knows how to dig for ginseng. Even among people within a ten-mile radius, only my grandfather knows how to do it," Qiao Mei said confidently.

This stumped He Ning. If he hired a professional to dig up the ginseng, not only would it be time-consuming and laborious, but the expert was also not very familiar with the mountain. If he got lost or was unfamiliar with the soil quality on the mountain, he might accidentally hurt the ginseng.

It would be a waste of effort. He might as well buy Qiao Mei's ginseng now.

"500,000 dollars is too much. Quote me a little less," He Ning said as he clenched his fists.

"How about this, let's both take a step back. 400,000 dollars. If it's any less, I won't sell it," Qiao Mei said.

He Ning thought for a moment and nodded despite the pain in his heart.

"I don't have that much money now. You have to give me time to raise the money," He Ning said.

"There's no hurry, there's no hurry. I don't intend to ask for it yet. You can give it to me when I return to the capital, but you have to write me an IOU. I don't need interest on it and I don't want the new money either. You know what I like. Let me have 200,000 dollars in the denominations I want and you can decide how to give me the remaining 200,000 dollars," Qiao Mei said with a smile.