

## Fat Wife 711

### Chapter 711 Wanting To Rebuild The House

Qiao Mei was not angry at all. She even found Qiao Yu very interesting. This girl always looked so gentle and weak, but she actually dared to go to the capital alone to look for someone.

This was definitely not something she could do on her own. Qiao Mei knew very well how much money Qiao Zhuang's family had. If Qiao Yu wanted to go to the capital, she would need at least 20 dollars.

Qiao Zhuang valued money as much as his life. It would be impossible for him to give Qiao Yu a single cent, so the expenses for Qiao Yu's trip to the capital must have been paid by someone else. It appeared that the money must have come from He Ning.

After all, they had all left at the same time and he was the most suspicious person.

"I know about this. As soon as Xia Zhe arrived at the army unit, he called me to explain everything. I know the whole story." Qiao Mei told Xia Wen about how Xia Zhe sent Qiao Yu to Chen Hu and how Chen Hu dealt with Qiao Yu.

When Xia Wen heard this, he slammed the table angrily, causing the vase on the table to fall to the ground. Xu Lan and the others were shocked and looked in his direction.

"It's really too much. I'll think of a way to get rid of her now. You don't have to worry about it," Xia Wen said.

"No, just leave her in the capital for now and perhaps get her a job sweeping the streets. Someone else must have arranged for her to go to the capital, it doesn't seem like something she can do on her own. Don't force her into a corner. If she comes back, she's dead for sure," Qiao Mei said softly.

She was not afraid of how sinister and cunning a person could be. Even a vicious person like He Ning would have a weakness. However, once a person was forced into a desperate situation, that person would want to perish together with everyone.

When one was not even afraid of dying, what would one be afraid of?

What if Qiao Yu had a hard time upon returning and decided to harm Qiao Mei and her children? It was safer to leave her in the capital. There was no urgency to punish her.

"I understand. I'll make the arrangements. How are you now? How's your health?" After Xia Wen clarified everything, he started to engage in casual chit chat.

Qiao Mei understood that Xia Wen was referring to her and her children when he talked about health. She smiled and said, "Thank you for your concern, eldest brother. I'm doing quite well now. I have everything I need at home and I'm in good health."

"We've all received your things and everyone likes them very much. Recently, Mother has prepared some things for you and we're preparing to send them to you within the next two days," Xia Wen said.

Xu Lan quietly walked to Xia Wen's side and leaned close to the phone to secretly listen to Qiao Mei's voice. She did not dare to talk to Qiao Mei directly and could only use this method to get news about Qiao Mei.

Xia Wen smiled when he saw the cautious Xu Lan and handed the phone receiver to her. Xu Lan held on to it in a state of panic and did not dare to say a word.

"Hello? Eldest brother? Are you still there? Hello?" Qiao Mei looked at the phone line on the wall. This phone line was newly installed last year, so how could the signal be so bad?

Xia Wen whispered to Xu Lan, "If you don't speak, Qiao Mei is going to hang up..."

"Hello! Mei Mei! I'm your mother-in-law..." Xu Lan said embarrassedly.

"Mother! I received the things you sent me and the clothes are very warm. I also received that bangle. It's especially beautiful and I like it very much. Thank you, Mother. How have you been recently? Are you eating well? I left in a hurry back then and didn't manage to have a proper conversation with you," Qiao Mei said smilingly.

"I'm glad that you like it. At that time, I saw it on sale and thought that you might like it. I'm glad that you don't dislike it. I'm in good health now, so don't worry. What about you? How are you? Tell me if you lack anything. I'll buy it for you and send it over," Xu Lan said with heartache.

The more she spoke, the more sad she felt. She was worried that Qiao Mei would starve or freeze there, and worried that the environment there would not allow Qiao Mei to recuperate well. She even set aside a sum of money for Qiao Mei to rebuild the house there if she still wanted to go back. She wanted Qiao Mei to live comfortably.

"Mother, you've already bought me enough things. I can't wear all the clothes even if I wear a new piece every day! You have to take good care of yourself, understand?" Qiao Mei instructed.

"Yes, yes, yes! I understand!" Xu Lan said happily.

Xia Wen looked tenderly at Xu Lan who was on the phone. Tan Jing found the scene very jarring. These were clearly her husband and mother-in-law, but they were now having a phone call with another woman enthusiastically.

She was indignant as to why Qiao Mei received such preferential treatment. Xia Wen clearly loved her the most back then, but now she often saw Xia Wen secretly giggling as he fiddled with the children's things.

It was as if everyone was reminding her that she was not as good as Qiao Mei and that she was a woman who could not give birth.

Chapter 712 A Harmonious Family Cultivates Prosperity

After chatting for a while, Qiao Mei and Xu Lan hung up the phone. The two of them even agreed to write each other a letter every month from now on.

Xia Wen helped Xu Lan back to the sofa to sit down. Qiao Mei's call seemed to make her feel reassured. As long as she knew that Qiao Mei was fine, nothing else mattered.

"Xiao Wen, remember to handle that woman well. Don't let her cause trouble everywhere, understand?" Xu Lan said sternly.

The most important thing now was to make Qiao Mei happy every day. She believed that this matter had nothing to do with her son and she knew that Qiao Mei did not believe it either. As long as this woman did not cause trouble, they would be fine.

"Why does he have to handle this? This is all Xia Zhe's own fault. Why does his eldest brother need to handle it?" Tan Jing complained softly out of dissatisfaction.

Xu Lan looked over. She had never really paid attention to this daughter-in-law of hers and did not expect her to be such a sharp-tongued person.

"Don't tell me you think what that woman said is true?" Xu Lan said while suppressing her anger.

Tan Jing could not tell what Xu Lan was thinking and wanted to say more. Xia Wen quickly stopped Tan Jing and said, "Don't worry, Mother. I'll definitely make proper arrangements for this matter. There won't be any issues."

Xu Lan nodded in satisfaction and continued to knit for her eldest grandchildren. Although Tan Jing felt resentful, she could not go against Xu Lan openly. She could only turn all her resentment into motivation and knit with more strength than usual.

The price for this was paid quickly. Tan Jing accidentally pierced her hand with the knitting needle and bright red blood soon stained the snow-white sweater.

"Are you alright!" Xia Wen looked at Tan Jing nervously.

Liu Fen said disdainfully, "You, how can you get injured when knitting? It's such a pity that such nice clothes are stained with blood."

Xu Lan did not even look at it. She threw the bloodstained white sweater into the trash can and focused on the small piece of clothing in her hand.

"Mother... Sister-in-law knitted this... You shouldn't have thrown it into the trash can..." Xia He reminded Xu Lan softly, feeling indignant for Tan Jing.

Although what Tan Jing said just now had hurt the harmony between the brothers, not only did Xu Lan not care about Tan Jing when she got injured, but Xu Lan even threw away the things she had painstakingly knitted in front of her. It was more or less unjustifiable.

"How can it be worn if it's stained with blood? It's so inauspicious. If you have the ability, quickly help me with the knitting and stop gossiping!" Xu Lan said unhappily.

She just did not like this eldest daughter-in-law of hers. Tan Jing had married into the family for more than 10 years and she never got pregnant. The neighbors all had grandchildren over the years. Even Liu Fen's eldest daughter Xia Yin, who got married later than Xia Wen, had a seven-year-old child.

When her son joined the army, he had already done all-round physical examinations. Back then, because she wanted Xia Wen to have a child, and she was afraid that she would wrongly accuse Tan Jing, she specially asked Xia Wen to do another checkup in secret. Even after all this, she had never insisted that it was Tan Jing's fault.

At the moment, not only was Tan Jing not self-reflecting on why she could not give birth, but she was also slandering Xia Zhe and sowing discord between the two brothers. She could be useless in the Xia family and not achieve anything in her life, but she must not do anything to separate the two brothers.

This was also a rule set by Xia Jun for the sake of family harmony.

A harmonious family would cultivate prosperity.

Xia He stood at the side helplessly and shut her mouth. She did not know how to do anything and could not persuade Xu Lan. It was better not to speak.

"Mother, I don't think Tan Jing is feeling too well today, so I'm going to go home with her," Xia Wen said respectfully.

"Don't forget what I reminded you just now. Remember to make arrangements and don't let anything happen," Xu Lan instructed worriedly.

Xia Wen noted it and left the Xia family house with Tan Jing. Along the way, Xia Wen drove while Tan Jing sat in the front passenger seat and did not say anything. She just looked out of the window and cried silently.

Her heart was filled with resentment. She did not understand why the two people who were so in love back then could not say anything to each other now.

She did not understand why she was so determined to marry Xia Wen back then. Was it really a wrong decision?

In the beginning, she was also like Xia He, a girl who liked to smile and had a cheerful personality. Why was she becoming more and more sarcastic now?

Was this all her fault?

#### Chapter 713 Eavesdropping Outside The Window

Xia Wen could not bear to see her like this and said patiently, "Don't take it to heart. Mother didn't do it on purpose. She's just more sensitive nowadays. You know my younger brother's character. He won't do such a thing. What you said today was indeed too much."

"I'm too much? Even you say that about me! I'm doing this for your own good! Your sister has a conflict with her in-laws and is clamoring for a divorce, but it's you, the eldest brother who has to deal with it. You have to deal with your brother's shady relationship with a woman outside, and you have to handle everything in the family! Will this family die without you!" Tan Jing roared angrily.

Xia Wen remained silent. He was driving now and it was not good for him to be distracted. They would have a good talk when they got home.

On Qiao Mei's end, as soon as she chased Zhao Liang and Wang Qin out, Wang Qin tried her best to eavesdrop. However, Zhao Liang was so guarded that she could not hear anything clearly.

"Brother Zhao, I'm going to the toilet," Wang Qin said as she pointed at the toilet.

Zhao Liang looked at Wang Qin suspiciously. He clearly remembered that Wang Qin had just gone to the toilet not long ago. Why did she have to go to the toilet again? Could it be that she had eaten something bad?

"Alright then, hurry up and go," Zhao Liang said.

Wang Qin hurriedly ran to the toilet. After leaving Zhao Liang's field of vision, she started to walk along the wall to the window beside Qiao Mei.

Although the window was not open, she could more or less hear what was being said in the room.

After hearing most of it, she realized that someone had gone to Qiao Mei's in-laws' place in the capital. Moreover, this person was related to their village. The only people who had left the village recently were the two guests from her house and Qiao Yu.

It seemed that Qiao Yu had really found a good place to go. Could it be that she really had some kind of relationship with Xia Zhe? Otherwise, why would those two people bring her to Xia Zhe's house?

Without another word, Wang Qin quickly ran home. As long as Qiao Yu was back, she would not have to do chores at home. This morning, Qiao Zhuang had asked her and Qiao Gui to go home and even said that she had to go home every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday to do the chores at home.

Qiao Zhuang was even raising a pig at home. Of course, he did not buy this pig, but snatched it from Wang Wu. According to Wang Wu, this pig was no longer as fat as it was at his house. It was so skinny that it did not have any flesh left.

"Father! I know where Qiao Yu went! Father! I know!" Wang Qin rushed into the house excitedly, one of her shoes missing.

"Why are you so flustered!" Qiao Zhuang said disdainfully.

"Father, I know where Qiao Yu went. She went to the capital and is now at Qiao Mei's in-laws' house!" Wang Qin said as she sat on the brick bed.

Qiao Zhuang did not believe what Wang Qin said at all. She was simply out of her mind. Qiao Mei hated their family so much, how could she still let Qiao Yu go to her in-laws' house? Was she not afraid that her in-laws would find trouble with her?

"Don't spout nonsense here. Quickly go back to work," Qiao Zhuang said as he waved his hand.

Wang Qin anxiously leaned forward and snatched Qiao Zhuang's pipe away. "I'm telling the truth! I heard it with my own ears! Qiao Yu is really in the capital! The people in the capital have already called Qiao Mei, how can it be fake!"

Qiao Zhuang was skeptical. Putting aside how Qiao Yu got there, she was illiterate and had never left the house. How could she make her way to Qiao Mei's in-laws' house?

"Are you sure that Qiao Yu is in the capital? If this is true, we'll go and ask Qiao Mei for an explanation! Back then, when Qiao Yu wanted to marry into the Guo family, she was the one who caused trouble. Now that she has let Qiao Yu go, she's openly going against me! I'm already so old, yet I can still be bullied by a junior!" Qiao Zhuang shouted angrily.

The student had really surpassed the master. Qiao Mei was now exactly the same as the Qiao Qiang who bullied him back then, or maybe even more high-handed.

"Father! Quick, go and ask! If we delay any longer, Qiao Mei and the others will hide Qiao Yu. At that time, even if the immortals come, we won't be able to find Qiao Yu," Wang Qin said pitifully.

Those who did not know better would really think that she was the sister-in-law who doted on her sister-in-law.

Qiao Zhuang weighed the issue carefully and asked, "How much does it cost to go to the capital?"

"About 50 dollars. I'm not too sure either," Wang Qin said after being stunned for a moment. She had never gone out before and had never even taken the train, so how could she know the prices of goods outside? However, she knew that it must not be cheap.



## Chapter 714 Thinking Straight For A Change

"Then forget it. There's no need to look for her anymore. It's such a waste to use 50 dollars to look for that little b\*tch! 50 dollars is enough to buy a lot of vegetables and meat. Even if we sell this little b\*tch, she won't even be worth 50 dollars. If she likes to go out so much, then she'd better not come back. Don't come back for the rest of her life!" Qiao Zhuang said.

"No! Since Qiao Mei is the one who did this, we have to make her pay a price! We can't let her off just like that!" Wang Qin said anxiously.

Now, as long as there was any issue related to Qiao Mei, she had to grasp it. As long as she could make Qiao Mei pay the price, she wanted to do it no matter how big or small it was.

However, Qiao Zhuang did not think so. Some time ago, Qiao Yu's marriage had already caused an uproar in the village and Qiao Mei had even asked the armed forces department to find trouble with him. If he still went to look for Qiao Mei because of Qiao Yu, it would only put them in an even more passive position.

Everyone already felt that Qiao Mei was right in this matter. Now, if they said that Qiao Yu had gone missing and pushed the blame to Qiao Mei, the villagers would not buy it. They would all say that their family was abusing Qiao Yu and no one would believe them.

They would inevitably hold another open meeting to criticize him. He could not afford to be so embarrassed again!

It was rare that Qiao Zhuang was thinking straight enough to consider so many things.

"Who are you to care! This matter is over! If not, why don't you give me 100 dollars! Your mother and I will go to the capital to look for her. Otherwise, you can shut up and stay at home obediently! Isn't it enough for me to be scolded in the village because of what you did! Save me the trouble!" Qiao Zhuang said as he pointed at Wang Qin.

Wang Qin had no choice but to give up on the idea of confronting Qiao Mei. Previously, when she had no evidence, Qiao Zhuang had asked her to ask Qiao Mei for an explanation. Then, she was afraid that she could not win against Qiao Mei without any evidence and would embarrass herself.

Now that she had evidence, and could also prove that Qiao Yu was in the capital, Qiao Zhuang would not let her confront Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei hung up the phone and stretched lazily. Back then, she thought that Xu Lan was a cold person and was not as nice as Qiao Qiang described. She did not see what he said about Xu Lan's bark being worse than her bite.

Now that Xu Lan was so concerned about her, she realized that Xu Lan's cold appearance was all an act. Putting herself in Xu Lan's shoes, she would also be very shocked if her son found someone with an ill-matched family background in the future. Furthermore, it was a sudden marriage without his parents' consent.

Qiao Mei was in a good mood and decided to go home and take out all the good fabric in the house to make a few dresses for Xu Lan. She would make clothes for all the four seasons of the year and send them to Xu Lan when the postman came.

At the same time, she would write a letter to Xu Lan to let her know about her life in the village.

When she was in the capital, she had even asked Xia Wen to get her an advanced film camera. However, although it was easy to find the machine, it was difficult to get the film. Film was a consumable product. Not only was it expensive, but there were also very few places to go to develop photos.

During this time, it was really difficult to record the lives of the people around. They could only go to the photo studio to take formal photos during the holidays.

The next time He Ning bought ginseng from her, she would ask him to find 300 rolls of film and exchange the remaining money for the denominations she wanted. This way, the Xia family would not have run around to help her with this matter.

Ever since she found He Ning's weakness, he was like a tool to Qiao Mei. She would look for him whenever she encountered any difficult issues. He Ning could only blame himself for doing those things to harm her back then.

"Uncle Zhao, I'm done. Let me know how much it costs," Qiao Mei said.

"It's two dollars. Put it in my drawer. I'll give it to Wang Qin later. I'll send you home first. Otherwise, your grandfather will get anxious later," Zhao Liang said.

"There's no need. I'll walk back. It's not good to keep staying at home every day. It's not conducive to my future delivery. I'll walk home slowly," Qiao Mei said.

Zhao Liang could not dissuade Qiao Mei and gave her a few reminders before letting her go back on her own.

Along the way, she observed the situation of every family with their melon seeds. Some families had already started to plant the seeds, while others were still watching. She estimated that all the villagers would plant the seeds within the next two days.

She was lying earlier when she said that the melon seeds could be harvested early. How could there be seeds that could be harvested so quickly? She had distributed these seeds to everyone before she even developed them.

Now, she could only cheat secretly and send some energy to each family's seeds.

Chapter 715 Separating From Xia Zhe

When Xia Wen reached home, he remained silent. It seemed as if he did not say anything, but it already confirmed his stand.

From the majestic Xia family's main residence, they had arrived at their small apartment unit which was far away from the city. They even had to share the kitchen with others. If they had children, this house would be unlivable.

"You didn't say anything along the way. Now that we're home, don't you think you have to give me an explanation," Tan Jing asked as she sat on the bed.

They did not even have a sofa in their house. The moment they entered the house, there was only a bed. Although the survey document stated that the area was 60 square meters, more than half of it was shared space. The corridor, kitchen and the corner of the storage room were all shared by everyone.

In reality, that part did not belong to them at all.

During the past few years, she had been advising Xia Wen to talk to his father and ask Xia Mao to get them a bigger house close to the school. She knew that there was a small house there that was allocated by the army. Although it was not big, it was a single-family house and did not have any shared area. The kitchen was also situated inside the house.

However, for the sake of his reputation, Xia Wen did not want to say anything. He kept telling others that he was doing very well and did not want his family to help him, but he helped his family selflessly.

How could anyone live like this!

"What kind of explanation do you want?" Xia Wen asked.

"Don't you and your mother both blame me for not being able to have children? I know that you all like Qiao Mei and her babies! It's not that I don't want to have children, so can't all of you restrain your feelings for Qiao Mei! For Qiao Mei, you're almost emptying our house!" Tan Jing shouted aggrievedly.

"We like Qiao Mei because she's Xia Zhe's wife. Regardless of whether she has children or not, we'll treat her the same way. As for the issue of children, perhaps my parents really want to have grandchildren early. I can't do anything about them being especially biased towards Qiao Mei, but no one is blaming you," Xia Wen explained earnestly.

Tan Jing did not listen to these nice words at all. In her ears, they were all excuses and nonsense. She had never been treated in the same way as Qiao Mei. There was not a single person in the entire family who did not like Qiao Mei.

Qiao Mei was just a country bumpkin from the countryside. What right did Qiao Mei have to rise above her? She was someone who was born and bred in the city. Qiao Mei even had difficulty reading. What was so good about such a woman?

"You're lying to me. Even if Mother is anxious to have grandchildren, what about you? Why are you so nice to Qiao Mei? You do everything yourself even when their courtyard is damaged. After the courtyard is repaired, you still go to clean up the house and take care of the plants in the courtyard every week. You even dig up all your old books and send them to her. How can you say that you don't care?" Tan Jing said as she looked at Xia Wen agitatedly.

What Tan Jing said was true, but Xia Zhe was the one who asked him to repair the house. He was paid for it so he was not doing it for free. Since he was the eldest brother, he decided to help take care of the flowers and plants in the courtyard. He no longer had any use for the old books and it was a pity to leave them piled up there. Since Qiao Mei wanted them, he decided to give them to her.

How did these appear to be ulterior motives?

"Just say what you want to say." Xia Wen could not be bothered to beat around the bush with Tan Jing. He knew what Tan Jing wanted to express. Basically, it was a woman's jealous feelings.

"Don't interfere in Xia Zhe's family matters in the future. Don't bother about them from now on." After Tan Jing said that, she sat opposite Xia Wen and looked into his eyes.

Xia Wen laughed and said, "Live separately? Then how are you going to pay off the gambling debts for your elder and younger brother? How much do you think I can save with my low salary? Can I afford to take out 10,000 dollars at one go to pay off your younger brother's gambling debts?"

Tan Jing's younger brother was a gambling addict. In the beginning, Xia Wen did not care about it at all. He did not care to punish that fellow for small issues. Later on, the matter blew up. Tan Jing's younger brother owed money to a loan shark and the other party said that they wanted 10,000 dollars before they would let her younger brother go.

Xia Wen had no choice but to ask Xia Zhe to pay the ransom first and then captured all these loan sharks in one fell swoop later. However, he could not get back the 10,000 dollars.

It could be said that Tan Jing's younger brother's life was bought with money. He only told Tan Jing's younger brother about this matter and even threatened to send him to jail if he dared to gamble again. Only then did he manage to have a few years of peace.

"What did you say? Did you take that money from home?" Tan Jing looked at Xia Wen in surprise.

Chapter 716 Let Dreams Come True

"With our combined salary, we can only be considered an average family in the capital. There are also all kinds of subsidies in school. Do you know how much money we have?" Xia Wen said.

He never asked about family matters and left the money to Tan Jing to manage. As for the fact that she always helped her maternal family, he turned a blind eye to it and pretended not to see it.

He had only been busy with Xia Zhe's matters for a while and Tan Jing already started to be so calculative. If she really wanted to settle the scores, then she should include everything that happened with her brothers.

"We have no more money..." Tan Jing lowered her head in shame.

"Has my younger brother been back for so many years? Has he ever begged us? When we got married, my younger brother even gave us a big red packet of 1,000 dollars. Don't tell me you've forgotten that? What's wrong with me helping my younger brother and sister-in-law now? Then I'll completely separate from the Xia family and we'll live our lives behind closed doors. You will also separate from your family," Xia Wen said calmly.

How could she do that! Her family would definitely not agree!

Back then, she was able to marry into the Xia family without a hitch because her family had taken a fancy to the Xia family's prominence. Due to the fact that she married into the Xia family, her family members were all promoted. Although the Xia family did not openly arrange for their promotions, the leaders of their workplaces all rushed to curry favor with the Xia family.

If one could get some pointers from the Xia family, it was not something that one could buy with money.

Everyone knew that the Xia family would not be tempted by money and had never taken sides. This was also the reason why the Xia family could protect themselves during all those dangerous times.

"No! That won't do. It's better for a family to be harmonious. How can we separate?" Tan Jing said in a panic.

Xia Wen snorted coldly and did not want to continue arguing with Tan Jing. He had never thought of himself as a good husband and always felt that he was not able to protect his wife and did not earn enough money to cover the family expenses. He always saw himself as being the problem.

Therefore, he had always allowed Tan Jing to do whatever she wanted. It did not matter even if she used all their money to help out her maternal family. However, now that she even wanted to cause trouble for Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei and spoke ill of them, she had crossed a line.

No matter what she did, she could not touch the Xia family members.

"Go to sleep." After saying that, Xia Wen lay on the bed and prepared to rest. Tan Jing sat at the side silently. She still hated Qiao Mei. Even though Xia Wen had helped Qiao Mei out of kinship, she was still jealous of Qiao Mei.

Xia He also wanted to pack up and leave, but Xu Lan grabbed hold of her. For the past few days, Kong Lu had been calling her so many times like phone calls were free.

Although their family could afford the phone bill of a few dollars, they still had to resolve this matter as soon as possible. Otherwise, they would get a heart attack from the ringing of the phone every day.

"How have you and Kong Lu been recently?" Xu Lan asked.

"I haven't contacted him. The last time I contacted him was when he was about to leave. He said that he would go home to raise money. He owes me a lot of money and he says he'll find a way to return it to me," Xia He said.

"You've already transferred your position to the capital. Are you really not going back?" Xu Lan knitted her sweater and did not look at Xia He.

Xia He had thought about this question many times. She did not want to stay in the capital all the time. The best opera house in the country was located in the South Sea, where there were many opportunities to interact with foreign dancers. If she focused on her studies, she would have a chance to go there.

"I'm still thinking about that, but I'm serious about getting a divorce from Kong Lu. Don't try to dissuade me from this. I've made up my mind. The reason why I didn't get a divorce immediately is because Qiao Mei told me something about premarital assets. I didn't understand what she said. Anyway, the general meaning is that I should only get the divorce after Kong Lu returns me all the money," Xia He said as she looked at Xu Lan firmly.

Xu Lan had always been aloof to Xia He. She knew her daughter best and she also knew Xia He's dream very well. Going to the South Sea dance troupe was Xia He's dream since she was young.

It was not only Xia He's dream, but also the dream of all dancers.

"Next year, there's going to be an examination at the South Sea side. They recruit people every two years and the requirement is that these recruits need to have outstanding performances and must have danced solo as the principal dancer. Next month, your dance troupe will perform as a group. During the new year, there will be a chance to get a solo performance," Xu Lan said casually as she looked at Liu Fen.

In reality, what she said was meant for Xia He to hear.

#### Chapter 717 Going To School

Xia He took out a notebook from her pocket and noted down the timeline that Xu Lan had mentioned. She could not treat this matter lightly and she must seize the opportunity.

"Thank you, Mother." After saying that, Xia He hurriedly left the house. Taking advantage of the fact that it was still early, she quickly went to the dance studio to practice.

After the children left one by one, only Xu Lan and Liu Fen were left in the house. It instantly seemed cold and deserted.



"Look at you. It's clearly for the good of the child, but you have to say it behind her back. Who would appreciate that," Liu Fen said disdainfully.

"You still have the cheek to criticize me? Isn't that how you treat your children? Otherwise, why would your third and fourth sons not come home all year round, but are doing the best among all these grandchildren," Xu Lan said with a smile.

"You're teasing me! Your eldest child is a university professor at such a young age, your second child is about to become the principal dancer of the dance troupe, and what more your third son. He's an elite in the army and the top army warrior every year. If you say that my family members are not bad, then you're really laughing at me," Liu Fen said.

The two of them did not stay for long before they returned to Xu Lan's house with their things. They asked the helper to buy some of the old master's favorite dishes and prepare it for him when he got home.

Every week, regardless of whether the old master was at home or not, they would come back to the house. Sometimes, the old master would only come home late at night in order to get some peace and quiet, so no one really waited for him to come back. They went there every weekend so that everyone could get a chance to get together and the family could be harmonious.

Early the next morning, Qiao Mei's house was empty. Qiao Qiang went up into the mountain to pick the remaining ginseng while Qiao Mei brought Zhang Wei, Zhang Chao and Zhang Qin to school.

After being delayed for so long, Qiao Mei had to go to school to show her face. Otherwise, she would not be able to get her graduation certificate and would be an uneducated person.

This was the first time she had entered the school in a long time. Before she went to the capital, she had always sent the children to the school gate only. She had never applied for admission.

When the principal saw Qiao Mei, he said in a kindly manner, "You must be their elder sister. I always hear these three children talk about you."

"Yes, it's me. Are these three children obedient in school? I hope they didn't cause you any trouble." Qiao Mei said.

"No, no! They're very obedient! Their results are also not bad! Particularly Zhang Qin, her results are especially good. Zhang Chao is also very good at mathematics. Zhang Wei has consistent results. The youngest Zhang Miao also has very good results," the principal said in satisfaction.

These children were easy to look after. When the other children were having fun and rolling around, not only did the four of them complete their homework and obtain outstanding results, but they also helped the teacher clean the blackboard and clean up after class.

These were things that other children could not do. It was all because of their good upbringing. With these children around, his usual workload became much easier.

There was only one school in the village, and he was both the principal and the teacher. The salary here was low and the work was tiring. It was not a nice place to work and if the children were not taught well, he would get criticized by their parents.

Moreover, many parents did not have good family backgrounds and did not have the money to continue paying school fees. He would help to pay for the school fees in such cases because he wanted more children to have the chance to study.

The principal brought the children into the classroom and then realized that Qiao Mei was still standing in front of the door. Thinking that she was worried about the children, the principal said patiently, "Don't worry, the children are very safe with me. You can just come back and bring them home tonight."

"I'm not worried about the children. I just want to tell you that I also want to go to school," Qiao Mei said with a smile.

That bright smile and positive optimism stunned the principal for a moment. One look at Qiao Mei's stomach and he knew that she would be giving birth in a few months.

It was ridiculous for a pregnant woman to come to study in elementary school. If anything happened, he would not be able to continue running the school.

"Students, take out the language books first and memorize the ancient poems inside! I have something on and will be back soon." After saying that to the children in the room, the principal brought Qiao Mei to the room next door.

There was only a cabinet and a table inside, and a tattered bed in the corner. The so-called bed was built from a few broken wooden planks and covered with a few layers of quilts.

This was his home and what he had worked hard for his entire life.

"Please take a seat. My place is quite rundown. You can sit on the bed, it's more comfortable," the principal said.

Chapter 718 Entrance Examination

Qiao Mei did not stand on ceremony with the principal and sat down on the bed. Her purpose for coming today was to find out how she could get her elementary school certificate and obtain a qualification.

"Principal, I'm not joking with you. I really want to study here," Qiao Mei said sincerely.

The principal considered it again and again and finally felt that Qiao Mei did not seem to be joking. The academic system was very short during this time. It was five years in primary school, two years in junior high school and two years in high school. After that, one could go to university.

There were people of all ages in elementary school. As long as their family could afford to send them to school, they would be accepted no matter their age. However, whether they could graduate or not was a different matter.

The students needed to take a graduation examination in order to progress to the next year. Only those who passed the graduation examination would be able to get their certification. Therefore, in this era, the certification was very precious.

"Then you can learn with the first graders. We have five classes here, one class for each grade. You can go to the first class," the principal said.

Qiao Mei shook her head. She only wanted the certificate. If she had to study here for five years, the policy would have long been reformed and she would not be able to take the first college entrance examination. By then, it would be meaningless.

"No, can I join the fifth grade?" Qiao Mei said.

The principal widened his eyes and looked at Qiao Mei. Fifth grade! Did she know what she was talking about?

For an uneducated person, going to the fifth grade at once was like reading a heavenly book. One would not be able to understand anything and would not be able to get one's certificate after next year's graduation examination.

"Have you been to school previously? The graduation examination is next year. If you haven't studied before, it's better to start from the first grade," the principal said tactfully.

"I've never studied in school, but my grandfather has always taught me how to read and write at home. Why don't you use the fifth-grade examination paper and test me? If I pass, can you let me go to the fifth grade?" Qiao Mei asked.

This was not impossible. He took out the graduation examination paper from last year. No one knew the answer to the questions. Every year, the students would leave after taking the paper and there were no explanations given to them. He could guarantee that Qiao Mei would not know the type of questions listed in this paper.

Qiao Mei sat quietly at the table and wrote down the answers. While the principal went next door to check on the students' homework, she went on to complete taking the examination.

The subjects were only Chinese language and mathematics for now, so it was relatively simple. The students would only come into contact with the English language in high school, so there was no hurry.

Back in the past, her best subjects were mathematics and English language. She was one of the top students in school and no one had been able to surpass her for many years. She had always been a legend in her school.

"You're done?" The principal stood at the door and looked at Qiao Mei in shock.

"Yes, please take a look." Qiao Mei handed the examination paper to the principal and he gave it a cursory review. Qiao Mei scored more than 80 points in Chinese language and more than 90 points in mathematics.

Among the students here, the best graduates only managed to score more than 70 points. It seemed that Qiao Mei was not lying to him. She could indeed join the fifth-grade class.

"Your results are really good. Your grandfather taught you really well. You can go to the fifth grade now. With your stomach... What about next year's exams?" the principal said worriedly.

There were two examinations every year. As the students' progress was different, there were two examinations every year, in the spring and autumn. The purpose was to let more people have academic qualifications so that there were fewer illiterates.

Qiao Mei's due date coincided with the spring examination and she was worried that she would not be able to take the examination.

"Professor, then can I take the autumn examination?" Qiao Mei asked.

"Yes, of course. If you're still at this level in autumn, you can participate," the principal said excitedly.

Qiao Mei even wanted to skip class. After all, she still had to go to the capital for a period of time. It was also very tiring to take the horse carriage to school every day.

"Then if I can maintain this grade, can I choose not to come to school? Look at my stomach, I really have no choice. These children will still come to school to study. Isn't Zhang Wei also in the fifth grade? He can come back and teach me and also consolidate his knowledge," Qiao Mei said with a smile.

The principal did not hesitate and simply agreed to Qiao Mei's request. He was overjoyed that someone would pay school fees but chose not to come to school, and yet had such outstanding results!

If she graduated, she would become a walking advertisement for him. With Qiao Mei's outstanding results, no one could say that he could not produce good students. Even if a student self-studied at home, she would still be considered a student from his school. When the time came, there would be even more people coming to study at his school.

#### Chapter 719 Someone Who Likes To Laugh

The principal looked at Qiao Mei hesitantly and said, "Look... for you to join the fifth grade directly the moment you start school, it's actually against the rules. No matter how old a student is, everyone starts from the first grade. If you jump straight to the fifth grade, the school fees will be very expensive. You can pay a portion first. If you really don't have enough, I'll help you think of a way."

Most of the children in the village had never gone to school before. Their families saved up money before sending them to school, so all the students would start from the first grade.

Zhang Wei and Zhang Chao were special. They had gone to school in the city and had paid school fees there. They just needed to come here to attend the corresponding grades. Zhang Qin and Zhang Miao started from the first grade.

Therefore, if Qiao Mei wanted to go straight to the fifth grade, she would have to pay 15 dollars for her school fees and 5 dollars for her books. Ordinary families nowadays would find it difficult to fork out so much money at once. If they did that, what about their daily expenses?

However, if he did not collect the school fees, he would not be able to answer to the higher-ups. If the amount of money and the number of students could not tally, it was difficult for him too.

Without another word, Qiao Mei took out 20 dollars from her pocket and placed it on the table. "Principal, please see whether the amount is correct?"

"Yes! I'll go and find the textbooks for you now. However, the textbooks for all five years may be a little too heavy for you. Are you able to bring them back? Why don't you get the three children to bring them back for you," the principal said hesitantly.

"It's fine, it's fine! Principal, don't worry! I'm very strong!" Qiao Mei said as she pinched her biceps.

She thought that the principal was quite a nice person. Not only did he impart all his knowledge to the students, but he also helped them pay for their school fees at times. When she graduated in the future, she could use her status as an alumna to donate money to the school for renovation, to change the tables and chairs for the children, and to buy more pens and books.

Previously, Qiao Mei had noticed that Zhang Qin continued using her workbook even after the pages were filled to the brim. She would use a piece of rubber at home to wipe away the pencil marks bit by bit. If she used a little more strength, she would cause the paper to tear.

However, Zhang Qin could not bear to use an eraser because she wanted to save money. If she used an eraser to rub off the handwriting in the entire notebook, she would need to buy a new eraser once it was used up. It would be like putting the cart before the horse.

Although rubber was not as easy to use as eraser, and the areas rubbed away remained black, it was good enough as long as it worked!

Even though Qiao Mei had bought 10 notebooks for each of the children, they still could not bear to use them. They always told her that there would be nothing left once they used the notebooks, so she just let them be.

In the past, when they were able to earn money themselves, they did not feel so inhibited when it came to spending money. Now that their family was in urgent need of money for Zhang Miao's illness, and after their money was snatched away by Zhang Qian, they felt that money was not easy to come so they were especially thrifty.

"Principal, I'm going home now. If there's any issue but it's inconvenient for me to come, you can just ask Zhang Wei and the others tell me. I have to go home and rest now," Qiao Mei said as she gently stroked her stomach.

The principal carried the books and only felt at ease after sending Qiao Mei to the horse carriage. He instructed Qiao Mei a few things about her studies before asking her to go back.

Along the way, Qiao Mei looked at the electric poles by the roadside and fell into deep thought. She had always thought that she would leave the village one day and bring her grandfather to the capital to settle down, so she did not install a phone. Now, more and more people were calling her on the phone, and Xia Zhe's frequency of letter replies had also slowed down a lot. He had been very busy during this period of time.

It would be much more convenient if she had a phone at home. The cost was not a problem at all. The problem was the cumbersome installation process. She had to find a tall and big circular column herself. Only Chen Hu would be able to do it.

"Uncle! Can you send me to the village office in our village! I have something to do there!" Qiao Mei shouted at the coachman.

"Alright! Sit tight. We'll be there soon!" the coachman replied loudly.

The coachman knew that the person sitting in the carriage was a pregnant woman, so he drove very slowly. He was afraid that the bumpy road would not be good for the baby. He had been a coachman all his life and his three children were born in this carriage. He knew very well what kind of speed was suitable for a pregnant woman.

Qiao Mei hummed a tune and chatted and laughed with the coachman along the way. Sometimes, she would even greet passers-by. Her bright smile was infectious and made many people very happy.

"Young lady! This is the first time I've seen someone who likes to laugh so much!" the coachman said.

Chapter 720 Intend To Install A Phone

"The day will pass whether you're happy or not. Uncle, you have to be happy too! These are good days! There are still more to come!" Qiao Mei said as she waved her hand.

The coachman liked this young lady very much. She was prompt in payment and was also beautiful. All the men in the surrounding eight villages felt that it was a pity that they did not come to propose marriage to her, either for themselves or their sons!



"We're here! No need to pay me since it's on my way. Take it as I'm giving you a lift," the coachman said with a smile.

"That won't do! I made you wait for so long! I have to pay!" Qiao Mei took money out from her pocket, but the coachman drove the horse carriage away before Qiao Mei could finish speaking.

The coachman shouted as he left, "Just treat me to a meal when you're free!"

Qiao Mei smiled and put the money back into her pocket. The neighbors in the village were still the best. Everyone was nicer and warmer. In the capital, if not for Grandpa Zhou, she would not have any chance to say hello to the neighbors living in the alley.

"Uncle Zhao! I'm here to make a phone call!" Qiao Mei said as she ran into the room.

Zhao Liang was so shocked that he quickly stood up and scolded Qiao Mei, "Slow down! You're pregnant, why are you still so rash? Don't you know how to walk slowly!"

Zhao Liang moved his stool next to the phone for Qiao Mei to sit on. Qiao Mei smiled in embarrassment. The matter of calling Chen Hu had seemed more important to her.

"Hello? This is the armed forces department. Can I help you?" Xiaobei said calmly.

Qiao Mei immediately recognized Xiaobei's voice and pretended to be serious as she said, "Hello, comrade. I'm from the armed forces department in the neighboring city. I have something to ask your Section Head Chen, please transfer the call to him."

"Which... armed forces department are you from? Please tell me the area code," Xiaobei asked suspiciously.

He had been in the army unit for a long time. All this while, from his training days until his work days now, he had never seen a woman in their unit. Even the animals reared for food were all males.

This was definitely a fake call!

Qiao Mei did not know the area codes of the other units and said defeatedly, "Alright, alright. This is Qiao Mei. I have something to discuss with Uncle Hu. Is it convenient for Uncle Hu to answer the phone now?"

"So it's elder sister Qiao Mei! Yes, yes, yes! He's in the office. I'll transfer the call for you." After saying that, Xiaobei transferred the call to Chen Hu.

After three beeps, Chen Hu's voice came through the phone.

"Hello, who is this?" Chen Hu said sternly.

"Reporting to Section Head Chen Hu! I have an urgent matter to ask for your help! Please provide support quickly!" Qiao Mei lowered her voice and said haltingly.

"Qiao Mei," Chen Hu did not even bother to guess and immediately said Qiao Mei's name.

Qiao Mei asked curiously, "Uncle Hu, how do you know that it's me?"

Chen Hu laughed confidently. The guys in their unit were all elite soldiers. They would not have transferred a call from an unknown caller to him. If such a thing really happened, then the person on duty could forget about working there and would be punished in accordance with military law.

"Xiaobei won't dare to put through calls from strangers to me. What's your issue? I'll help you think of a solution," Chen Hu said.

"Uncle Hu, it's like this. I'm thinking about installing a phone at home, but I see that the phone lines along the road are all hung on pillars. I can't get those pillars on my own, and I'm also not sure about the procedures for getting the phone line. Can you help me?" Qiao Mei said sweetly.

Wang Qin originally lowered her head to work quietly. She knew that Qiao Mei was here, but she did not want to look at Qiao Mei, so she kept quiet.

When she heard that Qiao Mei wanted to install a phone, she could no longer suppress her curiosity. Qiao Mei was the first person in their village to have a black and white television and also the first person to have a Beihai sewing machine.

There were no more than six sewing machines in the entire village, but the other sewing machines were second-hand junk bought from factories in the county city.

From time to time, the owners would have to go and look for Lao Fan at the village entrance to fix the machines for them. At that time, the most enviable items one could own were Beihai sewing machine, Tianlan watch, Huaniao television set and Dongying radio.

The betrothal gifts that Xia Zhe gave Qiao Mei were all from these brands and all of them were of the best quality. At that time, this matter had caused a stir in the surrounding villages.

It was not as if they did not understand why someone made such a big fuss about getting a wife.