

Chapter 971: Twenty Dollars

They heard footsteps when the night was pitch-black, and my, if it wasn't Changsheng's footsteps! The village houses didn't have good soundproofing, and there were only three of them living under the same roof, so it wasn't difficult to identify each other by the sound of their footsteps. Changsheng's mother's footsteps were slow and draggy, while Changsheng's footsteps were impatient and loud.

"Changsheng's back," shouted Changsheng's mother, audibly relieved. As the saying goes, a mother worries as a son journeys. Changsheng was only on a trip downhill, yet it made his mother so worried she couldn't eat or sleep. She wondered if the old woman would worry herself to death if her son had gone to the town to work. No wonder there was that old saying: a child shouldn't travel far when their parents are around.

Having a mother is such a wonderful thing.

Yan Huan cuddled against the blanket.

Truly. Her mother had never let her go through any hardships, even though they weren't well off. Growing up, she didn't miss out on anything other children had.

She felt a lump in her throat but managed to fight back tears.

She couldn't cry here. Crying would only make herself suffer. What's the point of crying if it wouldn't change anything? This wasn't a film shoot; this was life. In life, there weren't any retakes.

That's why she had to walk forward.

She sat up, slipped into her shoes, and walked to the kitchen to retrieve the warm food in the pot.

Changsheng was starving, and wasted no time in gobbling down the food.

Yan Huan didn't know what it was like at the bottom of the mountain, but she deduced that Changsheng had not eaten anything from the way he ate. And who could blame him? Earning money wasn't easy for the villagers; they had to walk long distances to reach the town, where they can sell their goods and purchase some basic necessities.

Changsheng's mother regarded him with a wide smile, telling him to eat slowly so that he wouldn't choke.

There was a pile of items on the floor, things which Changsheng had brought back from the village. There wasn't a single egg, however, and Yan Huan surmised that he must have sold all of them.

"The eggs sold for a good price," said Changsheng after swallowing a mouthful of rice. "The city folks value them, since our chickens are healthy and organically grown. They fetched such a good price that I had money left even after buying all this stuff!"

"Good, good," said Changsheng's mother, all smiles as she sorted out the items. He had bought a bit of every basic ingredient—oil, salt, vinegar, and soy sauce. As Yan Huan brought the bottles into the

kitchen, with their labels and everything, she was reminded of the fact that she was still living under the same sky as Lu Yi. Sometimes she felt as though she had time-travelled again and became a farmer.

She opened a packet of salt, filled the salt jar, and sealed the remaining to be stored away. There were only the three of them, and it might take an entire year before they finish the salt in the jar.

When she was done sorting out everything, Changsheng's mother called out to her and stuffed some money—around 20 dollars—into her hands.

"I cannot take this," said Yan Huan, passing the money back. She was a freeloader here, and she already owed them too much. How could she take their money?

"Take it. You might need it someday," insisted Changsheng's mother, shoving the money back into her hands. "You earned it."

As much as Yan Huan didn't want to accept the money, she realized that the money might come in handy on the way home, and so she took the money and stuffed it in her pockets.

It should be enough for a phone call, right? She did need the money; at the very least, she needed enough money to use the payphone once.

When she returned to her room, she stuffed the money under her pillow—twenty dollars, the entirety of her assets.

New Year's Day was only a couple of days away. Changsheng's mother cooped up at home, working tirelessly on the three padded jackets. They had cloth and cotton now, so the jackets would be warm even if they didn't look nice. Changsheng's mother still had decent eyes, so she wasn't bad at knitting. Changsheng continued to work in the fields every day. The weather was getting warmer, and the field was in need of weeding. Yan Huan still had a steady stream of customers, and very soon, she had saved up a whole basket of eggs. She kept some for themselves and gave the rest to Changsheng to sell. Changsheng had to go to town for another purpose; to collect the annual government aid.

The village was too poor, and so the government always provided some monetary aid on New Year's Day. Yan Huan didn't know how much there would be, but she reckoned it wouldn't be a small amount. It only comes once a year, so it should at least be enough to let the villagers celebrate a good New Year.

Changsheng gathered all the eggs and went to town again, intent on buying everything they lacked at home.

This time, the expedition party was out for an entire day. As usual, Yan Huan didn't get to tag along.

She felt the twenty dollars in her pockets and wondered when she could go home. She had been here for nearly half a year. How's the delicate Xunxun doing? Had she grown bigger? Is she picky with her food? And what about the other two? Have they learned to talk and walk?

"There's a customer outside, Xiao Yan," shouted Changsheng's mother as she directed the customer to sit down.

"Coming!" answered Yan Huan, quickly wiping away the tears in her eyes and stuffing the money back under the pillow.

When she was done, they had five eggs again, which meant that she could now make an egg dish for lunch.

Whenever she made egg dishes, Changsheng's mother wouldn't eat any of it, and neither would she. All of it was reserved for Changsheng. Not once did she sneak any bites out of the egg dishes. All she asked for at the moment was warm clothes and a full tummy; eating one less egg didn't make a difference to her. She didn't feel indignant at someone else eating what she earned either. After all, she was living under their roof and sharing their meals.

She laid the omelet across the rice reserved for Changsheng and covered the lid of the pot, then came out of the kitchen to have lunch with Changsheng's mother.

Chapter 972: Mummy Will Come Back

She put the egg on the rice and kept it warm in the pot for Changsheng. Then, she came out to eat with Changsheng's mother.

Changsheng's mother took some vegetables and put them into Yan Huan's bowl. She was becoming more satisfied with Yan Huan as the latter was a kind and warm-hearted person. Putting aside Yan Huan's appearance and disability, she was more than willing to let Yan Huan be her daughter-in-law. Ah, there was no choice left after all. Since it was not easy to get a daughter-in-law in this village, it was better for her to get a readily available daughter-in-law rather than waiting for those unreliable ones.

"Xiao Yan, how old are you?" Now only Changsheng's mother recalled that she had never asked about Yan Huan's age and family matters. She forgot to ask as Yan Huan never mentioned about it.

Yan Huan paused for a second. Then, she took some vegetables and put them into her bowl.

"Auntie, I'm 28 years old."

"28 years old already?"

Changsheng's mother was stunned upon hearing it. How could she be 28 already? She looks just like a 24 or 25-year-old little girl. So she's actually quite old, and three years older than Changsheng. However, she felt it was no big deal after giving it some thoughts. As the saying goes, a wife three years older than the husband ensures a richer life. Such a thing was not a big deal in the village. There were women who were seven or eight years older than their husbands and yet they still lived happily.

Besides, an older person could take better care of others. Contrary to the other ordinary girls, she was quite thoughtful. In that case, it seemed like an older girl would be better.

"How about your parents? What do they do for a living?" Changsheng's mother continued to ask.

Yan Huan bit on the chopsticks. She had a mild toothache, perhaps it was because the food was too sour or she had injured her teeth.

"My father passed away when I was young." Again she took some vegetables and ate rice, one after another. "My mother died from an illness when I was 18, so..." She felt a tinge of pain and bitterness as she raised the corner of her lips. "I'm an orphan."

"Sigh..." Changsheng's mother breathed out a sigh. "A parentless child, what a pity."

She did not ask further, as she thought Yan Huan was alone now because she had no parents. As for the matter about her marriage, she thought she was late for marriage because there was no one to plan for her. Little did she know that Yan Huan was actually married a few years ago and had given birth to three children.

It was almost night time when Changsheng came home. He brought back meat and some other foods for the Spring Festival, and also a pair of antithetical couplets. He did not know a lot of words, so he just took whatever the others said was good.

Most of the villagers had bought couplets. He took a look into the direction of the village entrance and as expected, he could see all the families putting up couplets right now. It somehow brought some festive atmosphere to the village, making it no longer as deserted as before.

Changsheng's mother used flour to make some glue and pasted the couplets together with Changsheng. They cleaned the house thoroughly, waiting for the Spring Festival to arrive. Each and every family in the village had couplets up on their doors and bought meat. However, not every family was the same. There was at least one family who kept their door shut tightly. Nobody ever saw them coming out to buy anything.

It was Jin Gen's house.

Jin Gen's mother put her arms around an old and shabby jug. More than half of the jug was filled with rice. Luckily, they still had rice. Jin Gen's mother appreciated the rice very much.

"Jin Gen, you're really awesome! If you did not get this rice for us, I wonder how many meals we would have to skip."

Jin Gen squatted on the ground and picked his teeth, "Of course! I'm a capable man. I can take out a pack of rice, let alone a jug of them."

If Yan Huan were here, she would definitely realize that the jug in the hands of Jin Gen's mother was the one that she had lost. And the rice in this jug was exactly the rice she lost as well.

It was really stolen by an ignorant and incompetent person like Jin Gen.

"Mother, give me some money." Jin Gen reached out his hand to his mother and asked for money after he finished picking his teeth.

"What do you want the money for?" Jin Gen's mother valued money more than her life. It was impossible for her to take out an extra penny as that money was saved for Jin Gen's marriage. She would still be responsible for the money even if Jin Gen got married in the future, so she would not let Jin Gen spend the money for no reason.

"For the Spring Festival shopping, of course." Jin Gen stood up. He had always been a gluttonous and lazy guy. He was not really going shopping. He just wanted to hang around in the town.

"Look, all the other families, including Changsheng's family has pasted up couplets, but we have nothing."

Jin Gen's mother disliked Changsheng's family the most. Changsheng's mother was a widow, just like her, but she lived a happier and easier life than her. Now they even had a woman in their family who

knew how to cut hair. Although the woman was a bit ugly, she could make money. Yes, money. There's no difference between giving eggs and giving money.

Why did such a good thing never happen to her?

She reluctantly took out some money and gave it to Jin Gen. Then, she told Jin Gen what to buy but Jin Gen was getting impatient as he listened to her.

"Mother, you just gave me such little money. What else can I buy?" He interrupted his mother and put the money into his pocket. He was planning to go down the mountain and go to town. Of course, he had a plan in his mind. He wanted to take the alms from the country. As soon as he got the alms, which were a few hundred, he could buy everything he wanted.

When he reached the entrance of the village, he met Yan Huan, who had gone out to collect some firewood. He hated her so much that his face turned distorted with hatred when he saw her.

"Ugly monster, why aren't you starving to death yet?"

Yan Huan paused at her steps, turned around and looked coldly at Jin Gen's disgusting face. How she wished she could pick up a brick and throw it at his head.

Her rice was definitely stolen by this person. If she was the previous Yan Huan, she would have made this bastard live a life that was no better than death.

"Hmph! Wait and see how I torture you in the future! You ugly monster!" Jin Gen sneered. He caught a handful of snow from the ground and threw it at Yan Huan's face. It hit Yan Huan as expected. She paused for a moment, but she chose to suppress her feelings.

Those who have done bad things will surely pay for the consequences. What goes around comes around, it's just a matter of time now.

She would like to see when Jin Gen would get his karma. Not only did he steal, but he had also put her to death. He stole her rice and her hope to stay alive.

How could such a person not face retribution? If there was none, she would punish him by herself.

Chapter 973: Jin Gen's Missing

She picked up a bundle of firewood and moved it into the house. Then, she went out again. These firewood were to be used during the New Year, for Changsheng's mother to fry up some meatballs and Youtiao. It was Yan Huan's first New Year in the village, and things were about to get busy. In the past, people were busy during the New Year too, but things weren't so hands-on.

She and Changsheng's mother worked together to cook the meat and fry the youtiao. Things were much faster with an extra pair of hands around. In the past, Changsheng's mother had to toil from day to night to get things done, but everything was ready before noon this time.

They were all set for the New Year. Changsheng's mother even made meat dumplings—although the filling mainly consisted of vegetables—since meat didn't come by easy.

The villagers rarely got to eat meat, except a morsel or two during the New Year.

When night fell, the quiet village was unusually loud—since there was someone yelling and cursing at the entrance of the village, for some reason.

Changsheng's mother wiped her hands on the apron and went out to take a look. Yan Huan wasn't interested in such things, so she remained in her room and spaced out on the warm bed.

The noise swelled, and the cussing eventually turned into wails.

The wailing continued as Changsheng's mother returned.

Changsheng's mother sighed. "My goodness, for such a thing to happen... Jin Gen has not returned after leaving the village, and his mother is worried sick."

"Ah..." said Yan Huan indifferently. She didn't feel happy or smug about it. To be precise, she didn't feel anything. What did it have to do with her anyway?

Changsheng's mother sighed.

"Hai... What a tragedy. How is Jin Gen's mother going to survive if her son really goes missing?"

Yan Huan pulled a face. That was none of her business. She's cold-blooded, and she admits as much. She would never be able to feel sympathetic towards her enemies.

Why should she show them sympathy when they never showed her any?

Jin Gen's mother made a ruckus outside the village, and soon the villagers had formed a circle around her, trying to calm her down. They failed, however. How could a grown man go missing like this? Jin Gen's mother had not seen him for the entire day, and was bawling her eyes out. She then pleaded with the villagers to go down the mountain and look for her son, for she was a poor woman who could not do it by herself.

But going down the mountains at this time was too much of a risk. Everyone in the village knew how dangerous the mountain pass was even in the day, and none of them was willing to take such a risk. Plus, Jin Gen wasn't very well-liked among the village in the first place. Some might even call it a good riddance.

Even so, he was part of the small community, and no one dared to express their discontent in front of his mother.

And so the villagers set out with torches and flashlights, thinking that Jin Gen might be fooling around in the village somewhere. They weren't willing to go down the mountain, that's for certain, but searching around the village was okay since it wasn't dangerous. They agreed to hold a meeting on the next day, to discuss sending a search party down the mountain, if they failed to find him.

The villagers searched for an entire night, looking through every nook and cranny, but they couldn't find him. At this point, they were certain that Jin Gen had to be at the bottom of the mountain or some part of the forest, or else they would surely have found him already. Jin Gen's mother sat on the ground in the wintry coldness, bawling and cussing at Jin Gen and his father.

"Have you found him?" whispered Changsheng's mother. "It has been a whole night. Surely you must have found something?"

Changsheng shook his head. "Nothing at all. Who knows, he might have spent the night at the bottom of the mountain, and will come back by himself in the morning."

"Hopefully," said Changsheng's mother. She was a kind woman, and she kept thinking about how Jin Gen's mother was going to survive if she lost her only son. She put herself in her shoes, forgetting about all the wrongs they had done in the past.

Yan Huan stayed in her room and did not join in the discussion. She wasn't from the village, and everyone but Changsheng and her mother were only strangers to her. Their lives did not concern her, nor was there anything she could do to help them.

On the second day, Jin Gen still did not return.

Every young person in the village, including Changsheng, had gone down the mountain to search for him. Originally, they didn't even need to make this trip, but now Changsheng's mother had to worry for him all over again.

The search party returned at night with the same result. Changsheng's mother threw a fit again, but it didn't help any bit to bring her lost son back. Deep down, everyone was a little relieved that the person that had gone missing was Jin Gen and not their own children. They couldn't even begin to imagine what they would do if it had been them.

Many people in the village felt the same way as Yan Huan.

The village might be better off with a deadbeat who was always up to no good. Who knows, he might go around stealing again and cause more troubles for the villagers. If that happened, they wouldn't even be able to celebrate the New Year in peace.

Jin Gen never returned, and Jin Gen's mother kept crying, but no amount of tears brought her son back. Jin Gen's mother began behaving strangely. Whenever she met someone, she would ask them if her son had returned. Sometimes, she would call the women in the village vixens and accuse them of seducing and abducting her son.

After a while, no one approached Jin Gen's mother again. They shared the same thought: It's your problem that your son had gone missing, not ours, so don't go pinning the blame on us. And given Jin Gen's character, he might simply have been caught doing something bad, gotten a good beating, and would come back someday.

In the end, no one got to celebrate the New Year in peace, since Jin Gen's mother wailed all day, and the dogs would bark along whenever they heard her wailing. There hadn't been a single peaceful day in the village since Jin Gen went missing.

"Come eat dumplings."

Chapter 974: Kids With No Mother

Changsheng's mother put a bowl in front of Yan Huan. Inside the bowl were dumplings in the size of ingots. This was the first time Yan Huan ate dumplings after leaving home, not to mention a wheat flour dumpling.

“Thanks, Auntie.” She used the chopsticks to take one dumpling. Although she might burn her mouth with the hot dumpling, she forced herself to eat it anyway. As expected, it burned her mouth, but it warmed her heart and satisfied her appetite.

The dumpling was delicious. Indeed, it was really good. There was not much meat in the filling which was made with mostly flour and vegetables planted by the villagers. It might be cheaper than any other dumplings she had in the restaurants at Sea City, but they were the only dumplings she had this year. The dumplings definitely tasted more delicious as they were rare.

Yan Huan finished the big bowl of dumplings and even the soup.

It was the Spring Festival again. However, the vibe was quite cold and cheerless here.

Yan Huan went back to her room after cleaning all the dishes. There was a set of cotton clothes on top of the table, which was made by Changsheng’s mother. Both Changsheng and she had one set each. Hugging the blanket on her bed, she took the clothes and put them on her lap. The cotton felt unbelievably soft and mushy under her hands, even the fabric on the outside was extremely soft. This cloth must be warmer and softer than any other down jacket, she thought.

She put the new clothes on the table and hugged the blanket. She did not hear any sound of firecrackers outside, but she could still feel the festival vibe. The fire pit was still hot. She withdrew her hand from the fire pit and could see that her frostbite was getting better. It meant the spring was just around the corner and the weather was getting warmer. It was time for her to go home.

She laid down and leaned against the warm fire pit, not feeling the least bit cold. She thought she could finally have a good sleep tonight.

However, she let out a bitter laugh.

Perhaps the three kids have forgotten about her already.

She wondered whether Lu Yi had forgotten her as well.

At a place far, far away from the village, a firework rose, bringing a moment of splendor. After the seconds of grandeur, the night sky became silent again.

Lu Yi stood in front of the window with Xunxun in his arms. Xunxun pointed at the fireworks outside with her little fingers.

“Yes, that’s a firework.” Lu Yi explained to her daughter. “Everyone will set off fireworks during the Spring Festival. Isn’t it beautiful?”

Xunxun leaned her little head on her father’s shoulder. Her big eyes were filled with streaks of fireworks, but only loneliness like snow was left after the fireworks faded off.

Lu Yi closed the curtain, put his daughter in his arms and let her sit down properly. Then, he took out a photo frame and put it in front of her daughter.

“Baby, wish your mother a Happy Chinese New Year.”

Xunxun reached out to embrace the picture frame. The woman in the photo was extremely gorgeous, looking warm and beautiful as she smiled. Xunxun put her little face on the frame and frowned when she felt the cold on her mother. She thought mummy should be as soft and warm as her daddy.

Notwithstanding the fact that her mother was hard and cold now, it did not affect her love for her mother. She still loved her mother the most even though she was not as warm compared to her father.

Rubbing his daughter's small head, Lu Yi said, "Yes, Xunxun, remember that this is your mother. This is Xunxun and your brothers' mother, no one can ever replace her."

Lu Yi feared that the three kids would forget their mother, which was why he let the kids look at Yan Huan's picture every day, just to make sure they would not forget their mother's appearance. In case their father passed away in the future, they would still be able to look for their mother.

He put his hands into the pocket and took out a red envelope.

"Daddy is giving this to Xunxun. Happy Chinese New Year, Xunxun."

Holding her mother's picture in one hand and Lu Yi's red envelope in her other hand, Xunxun grinned from ear to ear, showing two beautiful dimples on her cheeks. Ye Shuyun had always said that Xunxun looked very much alike with Ye Rong as Ye Rong had a pair of dimples too. However, now that Xunxun had grown up, she actually looked even more like her mother.

He held his daughter up and brought her to the living room. Old Master Lu and his second son's family were here today to celebrate the Spring Festival. It had been very long since Old Master Lu celebrated the Spring Festival with his sons and grandsons, he had come today solely because of Little Xunxun. Other than Qin Xiaoyue and Lu Qin, Sun Yuhan was here as well. Sun Yuhan and Lu Qin just got married, they had earned their place and fame and were one of the most famous couples in the entertainment industry. Since the Ye family had been supporting Sun Yuhan, it was no wonder she could become famous, albeit her bad acting skills. Even if she attracted many anti-fans and received a lot of criticism, she could get famous as long as she had enough resources.

She did end up rising to fame, together with Lu Qin.

The two kids who looked exactly the same with each other were standing outside, wearing the same clothes. One of them was holding Ye Shuyun's hand while the other was holding Lu Yi's hand. Both of them looked just like Lu Yi and their personalities resembled their father's too. They rarely put up a smile, but they were fair, clean and looked adorable.

Qin Xiaoyue's words were always stinging with jealousy.

"The kids have grown so much, it's such a pity that they don't have a mother."

Ye Shuyun had a strong impulse to punch her in the face and throw her out upon hearing what she said. What she hated the most right now was people saying that her grandsons did not have a mother right in front of them.

Old Master Lu took a glance at Qin Xiaoyue, his squinted eyes were filled with anger and sternness. Qin Xiaoyue could feel pressure on her body. "Shut your mouth if you don't know how to talk properly. Get back to your house and stop annoying me here."

He had always been mean to Qin Xiaoyue since the beginning as his temper was always like this anyway. Especially when it came to his great-grandsons, he would not allow anyone to insult them. He would not only scold but also beat anyone who dared to do so, even if that person was Qin Xiaoyue. Besides, he always talked harshly, those mean words were popping out one by one like ice beads.

“Why? Are you envious of others’ grandchildren because you yourself cannot have one? If you’re jealous of me, why don’t you give birth to one yourself?”

Qin Xiaoyue was unable to rebut Old Master Lu’s words, with her face flushed red as she felt extremely embarrassed.

“It’s a fact that they don’t have a mother. Why can’t we talk about that?” Sun Yuhan rolled her eyes. She had no intention to help her mother-in-law as she had always looked down on Qin Xiaoyue. All in all, there was no need for her to seek help from the Lu family since she had support from Ye family.

Chapter 975: Believe In Father

The two children could already think reasonably and had become more sensible. They could perceive the meaning behind those scathing words. After all, they were the children of the Lu family, who usually matured early. Thus, they could catch on to Qin Xiaoyue speaking ill of their mother, claiming that she had gone missing and abandoned them.

Just when they became disheartened and were nearly reduced to tears, a tiny palm reached out to grasp both of their small, chubby hands. They looked down to find that it was their younger sister’s. Although she was still very young, she had delicate and angelic features that resembled their mother’s countenance. She lifted up her tiny head and peered at Qin Xiaoyue with wide, unblinking eyes. Then, the two boys stood in front of their younger sister to shield her.

“Mommy will come back,” Xiao Guang said as he clenched his tiny fists tightly. He had faith that his mother would surely return. Father said that mom is just lost. When father finds a way, mom will, without a doubt, return.

“Right, mom will definitely come back.” Xiao Qi stubbornly lifted his head. The two children bore a great resemblance to Lu Yi, their expressions carried unwavering resolve.

Lu Yi sauntered over, each hand resting atop each of his sons’ heads.

He emotionlessly glanced at the family from the second household.

“Second Aunt, my household no longer welcomes you. I’ll have to politely ask all of you to take your leave.”

“On what grounds?”

Qin Xiaoyue sneered, clearly displeased. This was Old Master Lu’s property, their Lu Qin also had the Lu surname and they were clearly part of the family as well. There were no justifications as to why only the eldest son’s household could stay, while the second son’s family needed to leave.

“Why not?” Old Master Lu answered with an indifferent tone, “The Classical Garden is a property that I will be leaving for my great-grandsons and great-granddaughter. If Lu Qin can give me a granddaughter, he would naturally get his share. Otherwise, you have no right to cause a fuss here.”

Those words greatly hurt Qin Xiaoyue's pride. Qin Xiaoyue had always found the prospect of her own son being unable to bear children ludicrous. She used to constantly ridicule Ye Shuyun because of her inability to have grandchildren in this life. How could it be possible when her son had passed? With no grandchildren, the Lu family line would end.

At present, the one being snubbed was her. That person not only had one grandchild, she had three, and one of them was a girl. It was a once-in-a-lifetime miracle for a female to be born to the Lu family and thus Old Master Lu loved that child dearly. It now seemed as though everything within the Classical Garden would undoubtedly be inherited by the eldest son, while the second son's family would be left with absolutely nothing.

This shouldn't be possible. How is this possible? All of them are equally from the Lu family. Why does the eldest son get everything but the second son receives nothing? The Classical Garden is a priceless location with great Feng Shui in the mountains, it will surely fetch a sky-high price. There are also plans to build a holiday villa in the near future. I've heard that the value of the Classical Garden will only continue to rise.

An indescribable emotion flashed within Lu Qin's eyes, as his lips arched upward into a cold smile. As for Sun Yuhan, she did not hold an interest in the Classical Garden. She would let the Ye family decide how much she would own. In her point of view, there was nothing in the world more profitable than the Ye family's private airport. Despite that, her gaze still fell upon the little girl held in Old Master Lu's arms.

The little girl really resembled Yan Huan. When she was not smiling, she seemed stiff like Lu Yi. When she smiled, she possessed a charming pair of dimples. Everyone claimed that the child took after Yan Huan, but the child still bore the most resemblance to a certain person.

However, she would take that secret to the grave with her and never mention it in this lifetime. Anyway, she believed that no one would find out about the secret. However, the one with the greatest unforeseen misfortune would not be her, but this child.

Xunxun suddenly glanced up. Pursing her tiny rosebud lips, she gave Sun Yuhan a brief look. However, she quickly looked away, ignoring her and remaining silent still.

Qin Xiaoyue not only could not receive any reassurance, but she had also provoked Old Master Lu's ire. The family of three immediately took their leave without even dining together.

Lu Yi crouched down to his sons' eye level and reached out to them.

"Xiao Qi, Xiao Guang, come to father."

The two children obediently made their way to their father's side. Their expressions seemed pitiful, yet they maintained a brave front and did not shed a tear. Only their younger sister could cry in the family. Father had said that they were boys, hence they must protect their younger sister and should not weep.

Lu Yi held his sons in his embrace, letting Old Master Lu tend to Xunxun. He brought his two children into the bedroom, so he could have a heart-to-heart with the little fellows.

"Mommy..." Xiao Qi struggled to get out of his father's arms. Then, he dashed toward the bedside and grabbed the photo frame with his mother's photo. Their mother and sister looked incredibly alike. Even though neither of them could recall any memories about her, they at least knew what she looked like.

“Yes. That is your mother.” Lu Yi gently stroked his eldest son’s head. “Do you believe in your father?” he asked his two children, communicating with them effortlessly.

Both children stood before Lu Yi and vigorously nodded.

Lu Yi walked over, seating himself on the ground and letting both children sit in his lap.

“Trust me. Mommy will definitely come back because she loves all of you the most. How could she bear to leave us all behind? Both of you have to eat well and grow up healthily. Only then, both of you will be able to see mom sooner. You’re both going to be men, so no crying. You still have a sister to protect, right?”

The two children would always be reminded of their father’s words in their hearts. They needed to eat well. Only when they had grown up, their mother would return. Furthermore, only then they could protect their crybaby younger sister, so that she would not be bullied by others.

They aspired to grow up and be just like Big Brother Leilei, as no one in the kindergarten dared to bully him.

Big Brother Leilei is Lei Qingyi’s son, Little Lei. Naturally, no one would dare to find trouble with him. He had only just started kindergarten, but he was at least a head taller than the other children in his class. Besides, he was also strong and burly, like a calf, unlike his father when he was at his age. When his father was younger, he was incredibly slender. However, Little Lei was not the same. He had inherited his father’s terrifying height and his mother’s hot temper. The kindergarten class was filled with weak little children. He was built like an elementary school student, so no one would dare to find trouble with him. All the other children feared him greatly and he soon became the kindergarten’s little overlord. Every time he came over to Lu Yi’s home, he would brag about his heroic performance to the three siblings. He would tell them about who he had beaten up, who cried from a beating, and whose toy he snatched. Therefore, Little Lei had left an imposing impression on the three siblings. To them, besides their father, Big Brother Lei was the most impressive person that they knew.

Chapter 976: You Will Come Back

Little Lei certainly did not reveal to the three children that his father would spank him every time he returned home after a fight with his peers. In fact, he had lost count of the number of slaps his little butt had suffered. Nevertheless, Little Lei was not afraid of his father as his grandmother would always coddle him and his mother would protect him. Therefore, he never succumbed to the punishment. Despite the fact that he was punished repeatedly, he continued to create trouble, which again, brought him another round of spanking.

Lu Yi took the photo frame from Little Qi and held it before himself. Immediately, his eyes were brimming with tears.

“I have faith in you. You’ll come back, right?”

“Just like how you believed in me and waited relentlessly for me to return. Eventually, I came back.”

“You’ll come back.”

“I always had faith in you.”

Another set of fireworks exploded in the sky. The fireworks faded away, revealing a pure white scene where everything was blanketed by snow.

When Yan Huan opened the door, the snow had been falling for a while. The earth was once again wrapped in white, but all she could feel was the chilliness. She grabbed a broom before she began to sweep the snow aside to clear out a pathway in front of the door. Most of the villagers would not leave their houses during the new year. They rarely visited their relatives, not to mention during this snowy weather. If the weather was nice, it might be possible for them to visit each other. However, it was difficult and extremely dangerous to walk on the roads in the mountains under the heavy snow. Moreover, after what had happened to Jin Gen recently, most of the villagers opted to stay on the low and had become more vigilant. They refused to leave their houses if there was no major event.

She continued to clean the pavement as she swept the snow aside. If she was in the Sea City, she would have used the snow to build a snowman. On the contrary, in the village, the accumulated snow was nothing more than a pile of snow. They would leave the snow as it was until it melted away naturally.

She closed the door, continued to clean her house and her yard. Finally, she entered the kitchen. She began to make a fire to cook some leftover dumplings from the day before. She only had to briefly cook the dumplings before she could eat them.

She opened an old cabinet and took out some dumplings, but quickly found out that the dumplings had been frozen due to the chilly weather. She touched the skin of the dumpling and was not surprised to find that it was completely hardened. Although she did not own a fridge, she reckoned that there was no difference for her to keep the dumplings under room temperature.

She put the frozen dumplings into the pot. The dumplings were ready to be served when Changsheng and his mother woke up. Yan Huan took a few dumplings for herself and kept the rest for Changsheng and his mother.

Changsheng was rather happy with Yan Huan when he saw the big bowl of dumplings in front of him and his mother. He thought she was a potential wife after she left all the delicious food for him. Notwithstanding the fact that she was not pretty and limping, he preferred Yan Huan than the other ladies who liked to criticize the others but clumsy in doing things themselves.

As Changsheng's mother was sizing her son and Yan Huan up, she was pleased.

They could hold the wedding ceremony this year, and hopefully, she would have a grandchild in her arms by next spring.

Yan Huan picked up a dumpling, brought it to her mouth and took a bite. In fact, she did not eat much as she was not really hungry. Judging from the dark circles under her eyes, she had not been able to sleep well last night.

It's Chinese New Year and I miss home.

I miss home very, very much.

She took another bite of the dumpling, but she did not enjoy it. She was filled after eating two dumplings. Nonetheless, she still forced herself to finish the rest of the dumplings in her bowl, hoping that it would take the edge off her hunger and she could skip lunch later.

This was how the villagers celebrated Chinese New Year. They did not have much entertainment, nor did they have televisions and cinemas. Without any entertainment, they usually spent their days eating dumplings or snacking on peanuts. All this made up an average new year for the villagers. Meanwhile, the children's happiest memory would be the time when they received one or two pennies as pocket money.

The snow continued to fall and only stopped on the fifth day of the festival. However, the weather became even colder.

After changing her clothes, Yan Huan took advantage of the nice weather and went outside to collect some firewood. The winter was extremely cold this year and there was not much firewood left in Changsheng's house. Initially, it was enough for them, but the firewood supply had been exhausted at a greater speed now ever since her arrival. They needed to warm an extra person and cook another bowl of rice. Since nobody visited their salon now, she spent all her time collecting firewood. The firewood could not be used right away as they were mostly damp. They had to be dried for a while before they could be used to make fire. The firewood would be enough during the winter if she continued to collect firewood on a daily basis.

Owing to her diligence, Changsheng's family had never run out of firewood. They had not faced any ordeal during this winter. At the very least, they never felt cold when they slept in the winter night.

Yan Huan poured the cooked water from the pot into a basin before she soaked both her hands in the water. The water was extremely hot and she was finally able to endure the heat after a few attempts. The water was cooked with the eggplant stems, a traditional remedy that had been passed down for generations to treat frostbite. The frostbites on both her hands were extremely bad. Some of them were scars from before while the rest were recent wounds. Even though her condition had gotten better after she moved into Changsheng's house, both her hands were still a pitiful sight to see.

Perhaps because she had always been constantly collecting firewood, her hands never truly healed. Sometimes they were itchy, and sometimes they were extremely painful. Changsheng's mother found some eggplant stems for her to boil with the water, so that she could use it to bathe her hands whenever she was free. Even though she had been doing it every day, there was not much improvement. She was not confident that the remedy would work, as she had not tried the remedy for a long time. However, she was satisfied as long as the condition of her hands did not worsen

She removed both her hands from the basin. Her fingers had swollen so much that she was nearly unable to bend them. Luckily, her hardest times had passed. All she had to do now was to wait for the spring to come, the weather would get warmer by then and her hands would heal naturally.

Yan Huan had dealt with frostbite on her own before. It took her about three months to fully recover from it. It was only February now. Her hands would probably heal in another month or two. By that time, she might possibly be able to leave the mountain and return home.

In fact, she never told Changsheng's mother about this, because in her opinion, those who wished to leave would leave and those who wished to stay would stay regardless. It was not important whether she chose to tell them or not as the end result would be the same in either case — she would leave the village.

She was imagining all the entertaining events she would have if she was currently in Sea City, including the Spring Lantern Festival which was not celebrated by the villagers. Away from the village, people celebrated the Spring Lantern Festival by eating tang yuan on the 15th day of the first month of the lunar calendar. However, it was nothing more than an usual day for the villagers. Perhaps they did not even know that today was the Spring Lantern Festival.

Chapter 977: She Could Finally Go Down the Mountain

To be honest, besides them, even Yan Huan had forgotten what today was.

She placed all the firewood that she had collected from outside. As the weather today was quite nice, she collected more firewood so that they could last longer.

The weather had gradually become warmer, thus the snow on the mountains was beginning to melt. The frostbite on Yan Huan's hands was slowly recovering, and at least the swelling had begun to subside. It seemed that in just a day's time, her fingers that had originally swollen terribly like little carrots had become much better. Now that the frostbite had mostly healed, her fingers gradually returned to their normal sizes. However, the remaining scars would not seem to disappear as easily, and the marks would inevitably remain. Nevertheless, with the passing of time, they too would fade. When the new year arrived, the scars would resurface. The cold would cause her great pain and itch, so much so that she wanted to cry.

When the second day of the second month arrived, a large crowd of people visited the saloon to cut their hair. On that day, Yan Huan did not have a moment's rest, but she was able to earn a basketful of eggs from her tireless effort.

They would have two large baskets of eggs if they included the basket of eggs that Changsheng's mother had kept all this while as well. If they brought them down the mountain to sell it, they could definitely earn quite a lot of money.

"I'll come along with you." Yan Huan placed her hand into her pocket, and found a 20 yuan note inside. When she cut the customers' hair, all she could earn were chicken eggs. It would be much better if she could earn cash instead. However, few people in the village would pay money and would use chicken eggs to trade. Even though this barter system was quite peculiar, the villagers preferred to use chicken eggs as the currency because they did not have to keep them in their pockets.

"Are you sure that you want to go?" Changsheng asked doubtfully, "You will have to walk a lot to go down and back up the mountain."

"That's alright, I want to go down and have a look around." Yan Huan raised her head and gave an elated smile. Naturally, she was looking forward to it, although she was quite nervous too.

She was worried that Changsheng would forbid it and told her that she could not go. If she could not go down the mountain, she would have to wait again. It would simply be another listless limbo that went on forever.

Changsheng thought for quite some time, before nodding his head and saying, "Alright, you need to get up earlier tomorrow morning if you want to come with us."

“Thank you.” Yan Huan finally relaxed her fingers that were nervously grabbing the money in her pocket, as her palm was drenched in an anxious cold sweat. At long last, she could go down the mountain after spending nearly an entire year in the village. After having been nearly frozen to death in this godforsaken place, she could finally go down the mountain and begin to look for a way home.

As she lay on the heated floor, she did not feel cold at all. The cotton blanket had a natural fabric fragrance, and otherwise, there was no other unusual smell. When she slept there at night, she could easily fall into a deep sleep as it was warm and comfortable. She did not need to worry that the stove would extinguish or that someone would barge in in the middle of the night.

However, tonight, she could not fall asleep. She kept tossing and turning, afraid that she would miss the golden opportunity to go down the mountain if she slept too soundly. If that happened, she did not know how long she had to bitterly wait for that chance to arrive again.

She desperately wanted to go home, so much so that she was becoming insane.

On the second day, she had already woken up before the skies became bright. She changed into the new cotton clothes that Changsheng’s mother had prepared for her, and put on a new pair of shoes. However, she still felt that something was amiss, until she touched her face. As she ran her fingers across her cheeks, she could feel the rough creases on her face. She finally realized what was wrong with her.

It was her face...

However, she was unperturbed. After all, she had been beautiful and ugly before. Thus, at this point in time, this layer of skin-deep outer appearance was not significant anymore. There was no one or anything that was more important than her returning home. Still, even though she was not bothered by it, other people might not look at her disheveled appearance kindly. She was afraid that others would criticize and abhor her, or refuse to let her do anything when they saw her face, perhaps not even making a call.

She hastily looked around for a piece of cloth and covered her face with it, leaving only her eyes uncovered.

The skies were still dark, but she had already cooked the dishes under the light of an oil lamp. She had left a portion for Changsheng’s mother as well, as she was worried that his mother would not have anything to eat since they would be leaving very early.

“You got up really early.” Changsheng laughed teasingly and said, “Actually, there is no need to get up this early, since we have to wait for the sun to rise before going. The mountain roads are dark and dangerous, so we need to be careful.”

“I will.” Yan Huan lowered her head and ate, slightly shuffling her leg as she had her meal. Even though this leg of hers was a little crippled, it would not affect her gait. Just like her face, even though it seemed quite unsightly, it could still be of use.

After breakfast, Changsheng carried the large basket of chicken eggs on his shoulders, and prepared to lead Yan Huan down the mountain.

When they reached the edge of the village, Yan Huan realized the reason Changsheng agreed to bring her down the mountain. It turned out that not only that the male villagers were going down, but even some women and elderly folks were there too. No matter how bedraggled and crippled she was, she was definitely more able-bodied than an elderly person.

The mountain roads were not too difficult to travel on, as they were quite flat. The only trouble was that the journey down was very long. Even though they had departed at dawn, they still seemed to be only midway down the mountain when the sun was up high.

Perhaps, it would be noon when they reached the little town outside. Yan Huan hurriedly kept at the heels of the others without stopping for a rest. After all, she had been diligently collecting firewood during the winter and had trekked through the woods countless times. Thus, she had become more athletic and could handle the arduous journey down.

“Xiao Yan, you’re doing okay, right? Can you still walk?”

Changsheng worriedly asked Yan Huan, since he could see that she was still dragging one of her legs when she walked. It seemed pitiful and difficult for her. Is her leg really fine, even though it seems so crippled?

“I’m alright,” Yan Huan replied with a smile. Despite the exhausting journey, her face was not reddened and her breathing was still steady. Even though she appeared to have a crippled leg, she was actually much more at ease than the rest. After all, she had been in the army before, so walking was not a difficult task for her to do at all.

As expected, they reached the foot of the mountain around noon. However, Yan Huan could not help but feel a little disappointed as she thought that the village below would be more civilized. At the very least, they should have basic necessities such as telephones and computers. However, the village seemed painfully similar to the village on the mountain, shabby and dilapidated. The only redeeming quality was that there was electricity here.

Changsheng placed the basket on his back on the ground. Then, he sat down beside it and waited patiently for potential customers to buy the eggs. Yan Huan followed suit and sat down as well. Since she was not too familiar with the people or the place, she did not dare to venture about on her own.

Soon, the streets were filled with a sea of people. The villagers had swiftly found a spot to place the things that they brought to sell. However, people merely glanced and left, and very few people actually purchased items from them.

Chapter 978: Selling Eggs

They had been here for more than an hour. The other hawkers managed to sell out some things, except Changsheng who was trying to sell his eggs. He did not know if he was having a tough luck or he had brought too many eggs with him, for he had not sold any of his eggs.

Changsheng grew anxious as the clock ticked by. His forehead was beaded with cold sweat. Do we really have to bring these eggs all the way home if we fail to sell it today?

They remained at the same spot for another hour. Before long, two hours went by. Yet, the number of their eggs stayed the same.

Yan Huan rose to her feet, thinking that nothing would change if they continued to stay here quietly. Soon, they would have to head home as it would be dangerous to take the mountain roads after the sunset.

“Changsheng, do you know if there’s any eatery around this area?” Yan Huan asked.

“Are you hungry?” Changsheng took out a biscuit. “Here. You can have this first. We can have our dinner at home after the eggs are sold out.”

Yan Huan was flustered by Changsheng’s words, knowing that it was impossible for them to sell all the eggs now that the peak hour had passed. It was not as easy as he expected it to be. Is this kid naive or simply overconfident?

“Let’s find a restaurant first,” Yan Huan insisted. Of course, she did not accept the biscuit that Changsheng offered.

“Sure.” Changsheng stood up after giving it some thoughts. He carried the basket on his back. Let’s just go to the restaurant since Yan Huan insists. He still had some money with him and it was enough to buy her to have a nice meal. He could get up earlier the next day to sell the eggs and earn some money.

When they reached a considerably decent restaurant, Yan Huan entered the restaurant alongside Changsheng. Yan Huan was used to visiting many restaurants and hotels, and thus, she was very familiar with the environment. On the other hand, it was Changsheng’s first time at such a place. He was evidently not at ease. He dared not lift up his head as he tightened his grip around the cash, not knowing if he had enough money to pay the cheque.

His cheeks were burning. This was his first time feeling ashamed of his lack of wealth as he could not afford to provide her much. The people in the village were poor, and he was no exception.

Only then he understood why the men of the village wanted to work outside the village. They only wanted to earn more in order to buy gifts and provide a better life to their loved ones.

“What would you like to order?” A waiter greeted them as they entered the restaurant. Yan Huan’s face was masked with a piece of cloth while she was limping on one leg. As for Changsheng, although he had a tall and masculine physique, he was obviously a country bumpkin.

“Can I know if the restaurant needs any egg?”

Yan Huan spoke fluently in a standard accent. She had been learning some of the dialect, but she was not familiar with it yet. Therefore, it was better for her to speak in an accent which was widely understood.

“Eggs?” Seeing the load on Changsheng’s back, the waiter immediately realized that they were trying to pitch sales. However, they had their own purchasers in the restaurant and did not need to buy any more eggs.

She was about to reject them, but she found it really hard to decline Yan Huan after she looked into Yan Huan’s mesmerizing and beautiful eyes.

“Let me bring you to the kitchen. Is that alright?” The waiter could not bring herself to turn them away. Therefore, she decided to lead them to the kitchen. All in all, she would let the head chef take a look at the goods. Then, it would be his decision to either accept or reject their offer.

Changsheng was still out of the loop. Anyway, he followed Yan Huan wherever they went.

The waiter made known of their purpose to the head chef when they reached the kitchen. They were indeed lucky as the kitchen was in need of eggs and their purchaser had yet to deliver a new batch. The head chef was in a pickle about the egg dishes on the menu. Their timing was perfect. It was as if he was given a pillow as a gift just in time for bed.

“Are the eggs fresh?” The head chef took out one egg and weighed it in his hand as he asked Changsheng. Men were always seen as the leader of the family, while women were deemed indecisive. Naturally, the question was delivered to the man instead of the woman.

Changsheng opened his mouth, but he was too nervous to speak as he had never experienced such an exchange before. Counting eggs and selling them in the markets were his forte, but he had absolutely no experience in pitching.

“The eggs are fresh. They are newly laid from the hens at home.” Yan Huan took an egg and cracked it on the side of a cabinet to show the perfect yolk to the head chef. “The eggs are laid by our free-range hens. They feed off nothing but live insects and vegetables. These are authentic free-range eggs which have a higher nutritional value compared to normal eggs. Besides, they are free from any sort of pollution.”

After finishing her sentence, she threw the smashed egg into a bin at the side without showing any hint of regret. As a matter of fact, she would not even allow herself to eat a single egg at Changsheng’s house.

The head chef picked up another egg. Hmm, every egg is of identical size. There are some with red shells and some with white shells. Judging from the soft sheen on the eggs, he could tell that the eggs had not been touched by many people. He believed what Yan Huan said, that these eggs were indeed very fresh.

“How much are the eggs?” The head chef put the eggs in the basket. “I’ll take them if the price is reasonable.”

Changsheng was stunned. Before he could mention the price, Yan Huan had already interrupted, “These free-range eggs are all from our own farm, so they will be more expensive than the commercial eggs. Since this is our first time selling to you, we’ll give you a discount. The market price for normal eggs is three dollars and fifty cents per catty, our free-range eggs is only one dollars and fifty cents more than that. It’ll be five dollars per catty for you then.”

The head chief briefly pondered upon the offered price. Yan Huan was certainly correct. The normal eggs were sold at a price of three dollars and fifty cents. Meanwhile, the current price of free-range eggs was approximately seven to eight dollars. It was impossible for them to purchase the egg for less than six dollars. Yet, they were offering him with the price of merely five dollars per catty.

“Alright, we’ll take them all,” said the delighted head chef before he immediately told them to weigh the eggs. The total weight of the eggs was more than 30 catties. After they calculated the total sum, he paid them 180 dollars.

Changsheng took the money in his hand, unable to come back to his senses for quite a while. He felt as if the money was burning his hands.

“Xiao Yan, did we really earn this much money? 180 dollars?”

“Isn’t the money in your hands right now?” Yan Huan recomposed herself but she could not comprehend Changsheng’s question. “Why? Is there a problem?”

Chapter 979: The Number Was Not In Service

“No, no. There’s no problem.” Changsheng hurriedly shook his head and said, “It’s just that last time, I only earned about 30 yuans by selling these chicken eggs. How did we manage to earn so much this time?”

He only earned 30 yuan from it last time? Thinking of how she had painstakingly collected that basket of chicken eggs, Yan Huan shuddered at the thought of just how many heads of hair she would have to cut in order to earn 30 yuan.

A mere 30 yuan. Yan Huan was worth a few hundred million, yet now all she could earn was a measly 30 yuan. As she thought about it, it did feel extremely ironic.

Then, she continued to search repeatedly along the road for somewhere to make a phone call. Soon, she found out that there was a public phone inside a shop, so she hastily made her way there. Changsheng was still carrying the money, and felt that the basket on his back was quite heavy. For some reason, it felt as if the basket was still loaded with eggs.

“Xiao Yan, Xiao Yan...” When he raised his head to look for her, he realized that Yan Huan had already disappeared from his side. Immediately, he stood up and rushed toward her, asking “Xiao Yan, what are you going there for?”

“I need to make a phone call,” Yan Huan said to the shopkeeper. After taking the phone from him, she began to dial Lu Yi’s number. No matter how much time had passed or pain she had suffered, she would never forget this number.

At this moment, her entire heart was filled with anxiety and her hands had become damp with sweat. As she pressed on the numbers, she could almost hear her heart racing wildly in trepidation... Thump, thump...

It felt as though it might leap out of her chest at any moment.

She brought the telephone receiver to her ear, wanting to say something. However, she felt that she could not find her words...

If the person on the other end picked up.

What if Lu Yi answers me with a ‘Hello?’

What if he asks another question, "Who are you?"

Can someone please tell me, what should I say to that?

She anxiously opened her mouth, irregularly taking in deep breaths. She was afraid that if she became too nervous, she might not even be able to say anything at all later.

However, when she had dialed the number and was anxiously waiting for the call to be connected, all she heard was a cold robotic voice.

"Sorry, the number you have dialed is not in service..."

The number is not in service? In utter disbelief, Yan Huan desperately tried to call the number again. Maybe I pressed something wrong just now? She meticulously keyed in each digit, one by one, as she carefully called again. However, after this series of numbers were keyed in, she still received the same reply that informed her that the number was not in service.

But, how can it be? Lu Yi would never change his number. It's impossible. His mobile number has remained the same ever since he had his first phone. Throughout all the years, it has never changed. But now, why is the number not in service?

She tried calling again, to no avail. Her fingers suddenly loosened, nearly dropping the receiver onto the ground. She quickly tightened her grip around it, and tried calling other numbers. However, all of them were not in service as well, even Yi Ling's.

Her red lips trembled violently as she tried to take it all in. She was in a daze and could not figure out what had happened that caused everyone to change their numbers.

She picked up the receiver again, wanting to continue calling those numbers again. She could not believe that everyone would change their numbers after using them for so long.

"How long are you planning on using the phone?" The shopkeeper's face had a displeased grimace as he said, "Do you even know how to use a telephone? It's already been half an hour and not one of your calls has gotten through. Are you making prank calls? I didn't install a telephone here just so you could play with it like a toy. With you here in my way, just how do you think I can continue with my business?"

As he had said this, he took the receiver away from Yan Huan. However, the telephone cable was still intertwined with Yan Huan's fingers. Yet, he forcefully pulled it, strangling and hurting Yan Huan's fingers.

Yan Huan's hand trembled in pain and she quickly placed it to her mouth. Her fingers were wounded, just like her shattered heart. The violent struggle caused a bloody streak to appear on her frostbitten fingers.

"Xiao Yan, are you alright?" Changsheng worriedly asked as he approached her.

Yan Huan raised her head to look at him, her usually bright and clear eyes were now swimming with tears. This was the first time that Changsheng had seen Yan Huan cry. After all, she had never shown her tears to other people, as she always did it secretly. Whether it was soundless sobbing or bitter wailing, she had never cried in front of someone else before.

She could smile, become angry, or even appear emotionless, but she had never cried in front of others before.

“Xiao Yan, what’s wrong?” Changsheng was so shocked that he did not dare to randomly touch her to console her, asking, “Why are you crying?”

Yan Huan opened her mouth as if to reply, but it eventually turned into a smile. Then, she shook her head and merely uttered, “Nothing’s wrong, it’s just too windy here.”

That’s right, it’s too windy here. The wind was so strong and cruel, it had ripped off the corners of her eyes and caused the tears to gush from them. It was so powerful and unyielding, it had blown her away, carrying her through the clouds aimlessly. It was as if she was uprooted and floating about, like drifting duckweed. Even until now, she still did not have a home.

“Let’s go,” she said as she stifled the tears in her eyes. Meanwhile, the sky was becoming dark and the sun was sinking over the horizon. If they did not leave now, they would have to stay in this town. They would be forced to find somewhere to take shelter tonight in the bitter cold of December.

Changsheng clearly knew that something might have happened to Yan Huan, but he was not very articulate. Thus, he was hesitant to console her, and simply scratched his head repeatedly as he thought to himself. What exactly is wrong with Yan Huan?

Not long after they had left, another person came to the shop to make a telephone call. After trying to call for a long time, the only response he received was that the number was not in service. That was impossible, as he had called the same number from somewhere else just moments ago.

“Is your telephone broken?”

He asked the shopkeeper, “I’ve been calling for so long, but why did none of them go through?”

“This telephone was installed recently, how can there be any problems?” The shopkeeper quickly hugged the telephone away. The telephone costs so much, if you don’t know how to use it, you shouldn’t pretend that it’s the telephone’s fault. Everything was fine before this.

The caller turned to leave and went elsewhere to make his call.

After the person had left, the shopkeeper felt something was amiss as well. This entire day had been unusual, as every single call was not connected. Could it be that the telephone really malfunctioned? Even in disbelief, he still used the telephone to try calling home. After a few seconds, the response that he had was that the number was not in service. It’s just like what the others said!

His eyes widened in despair. It’s really broken, but it’s brand new! Everything was fine before, why is it broken now?

Sadly, Yan Huan was oblivious of the broken phone. After purchasing some oil and salt, the two of them returned to the assembly point of the villagers. Every one of the villagers who came today had to return. If someone was not there yet, the rest would not leave and would wait for the missing villager. When Yan Huan arrived, the villagers had just finished packing and were ready to return.

Somehow, everyone's business was poor today. Some people could not sell any of the chicken eggs that they brought, thus they had to bring all of them back. After that, it would be quite some time before the next trip here. By then, the eggs would no longer be fresh and would definitely sell even more poorly.

"Changsheng, did you sell all of your eggs?"

Chapter 980: Sold at A High Price

Someone reached out to touch the basket Changsheng carried on his back. He had carried the most. They themselves had clearly sold only some. But Changsheng had not even had his first sale yet, had he? Did he sell all of them?

"Yeah, I sold them," Changsheng laughed and said, "Our luck was good, and we happened to meet a buyer, so he bought all of them." All of the words that he spoke was taught to him by Yan Huan.

It was not that they were being mean and did not tell other people. But the market over there was not opened yet. If the restaurant accepted their eggs, then the eggs from the village could be taken there to sell. It could also save a lot of time and earn a lot of money.

But speaking out now would be equivalent to talking big. If the restaurant did not want them, then the villagers, who were full of hope before, would return in disappointment in the end. If the eggs were not sold, then Changsheng would be blamed instead of the market.

So, under the uncertain circumstances, Yan Huan did not let Changsheng say.

Although Changsheng was simple and honest, as well as uncultured, he still understood the basic principle. Except that he was still excited with the 200 dollars he grasped in his hand until now.

Yan Huan followed the villagers and walked forward. At this time, her face was all covered up with a cloth. The ugly half of her face was covered which was also to cover the menacing part. Only her pair of eyes was left uncovered. Her eyes were exceptionally good-looking with a beautiful shape and long eyelashes. They looked like they were shrouded with a layer of fog and misty at all times. It was her extremely depressed heart that she hid.

The villagers only felt relieved when they returned to the village. They were afraid that what happened to Jin Gen would come to pass for them. They did not know where Jin Gen had gone, whether he fell down the mountain, or something happened to him below the mountain. So, everyone was now afraid that their loved ones would turn out like Jin Gen and did not come back after meeting with a mishap. When they saw their return, smoke came out of the chimneys in each household and dogs were also barking happily. The people also laughed happily.

Changsheng's mother had already made dinner. Yan Huan held up a bowl of porridge with both hands and took little sips. She appeared to be the same as other times. But only she knew that at this time, that seed of hope had already withered. All the beliefs she held were smashed in that moment.

After dinner, she cleared the table and washed the dishes, while Changsheng and his mother were talking outside.

"Why is there so much today?" asked Changsheng's mother, holding the money with quivering hands. It was almost 200 dollars. In the past, the eggs were sold for 50 or 60 dollars at the most. They were still

the same quantity of eggs, not much more or less. How did they get so much more money all of a sudden? Where did it come from?

“Mom, the money came from selling the eggs,” said Changsheng happily, rubbing his hands. All of it were earned from selling the eggs.

“But how can it is so much more?” asked Changsheng’s mother, still not quite believing. The price of the eggs was clearly still the same. Could it be possible that the eggs from their house look better than other people? Or was it to say that the eggs were made of gold?

“Mom, don’t you know?” Changsheng quickly said like he was telling a story. He even spoke with a thrilling tone, “Originally, no one wanted our eggs. I had gone for two hours, but there were still so many eggs. I did not sell a single one of them. There were not that many people today. It might also be due to the cold weather, so the eggs were slow to sell. Seeing how the day was turning dark and our family still had not sold, Xiao Yan brought me to a restaurant and then sold the eggs to the kitchen back there. Half a kilo of eggs sold for five dollars, saying that they were organic eggs from free range chickens. So, it was expensive.”

“So, I see.....” it was also the first time Changsheng’s mother had heard of organic eggs from free range chickens and that there was even such a label. Their village had always raised chickens in such a way and ate such eggs.

“Mom, Xiao Yan comes from outside. Of course, she knows more than we do,” said Changsheng with a look of pride. Yan Huan was knowledgeable. He himself also felt immensely proud.

“Look at your silly manner,” Changsheng’s mother said as she poked her son’s head. While she thought to herself that when spring came, she would settle her son’s matter, lest it became more complicated the longer time went.

She put the money away for it would be used to prepare for the wedding. Because both of them had been diligent for so many years, they had also saved a lot of money. The money was enough for her son to marry a wife and bring her home.

Yan Huan was lying on the heated brick bed. She closed her eyes tightly. At this time, all the hope in her eyes had become a fog of tears. She did not want to cry, but she was secretly crying here instead.

How could they have changed their cell phone numbers? Did they not know that she still wanted to go home? If she could not find them, then how was she going to go home?

No, she shook her head as she sat up. Then she used her hands to wipe her tears clean with force. She could not cry. It was only the numbers that changed, but the people were still around. She was still around.

No matter what, she would go back to Sea City. She only lost her way here. She would find the way home. Regardless of how hard it was, how exhausting it could be, she must return to her home.

When she woke up the next day, she still picked up firewood as usual and then gave other people haircuts. She tried her best to collect eggs so as to sell them and earn some money. Changsheng’s mother would give her some money. Sometimes it was ten dollars and sometimes 20 dollars. She had

saved nearly 70 dollars. She had not touched the money and was going to wait to use it the next time she went down the mountain.

She touched the front of her chest and took out a necklace from inside. The necklace had a ring looped through it. When she was thrown into the Sea River, she had nothing on her except this necklace and ring. The necklace was made of platinum, and the ring had a diamond.

Although she was very reluctant because it was Lu Yi's birthday gift to her, her wedding ring was a little ostentatious when worn, so under general circumstances, she would wear such a small diamond ring, which was very suitable for her finger and also did not affect her work and life.

If the ring was sold, it should be enough for her expenses on the road. The train required identification card and so did the flight. She was now a woman without an identification card and status. With her appearance, even if she said she was Yan Huan, no one would believe. So, she thought about it. She had to find the bus station here to take the bus back. Perhaps the journey would take longer but this means of transport did not require an identification card.