

## Fat Wife 1701

### Chapter 1701 Irreconcilable

Just like that, Liu Yun and Wang Nuo bantered with each other. Miao Le was so embarrassed that she could not even raise her head. She carried the child and ran home. No one knew what she might say to the neighbors when she returned to the apartment building!

"Look at her! How shameless! She can't take good care of the child and wants to palm the work off to someone else! The child was originally so chubby but look at his size now!" Wang Nuo said angrily.

"Enough! You should calm down. This is that child's fate. We can't even take good care of ourselves, how can we have the energy to take care of other people's children?" Liu Yun said with a deep sigh.

"I heard from Qiao Mei that some time ago, she made mushy vegetables and a bowl of steamed egg for Zhuang Zhuang every day. Guess what happened in the end! Miao Le ate all the steamed egg and only gave Zhuang Zhuang the mushy vegetables! Do you think this is something a human being should do?" Wang Nuo said.

"Really? No wonder Zhuang Zhuang doesn't gain weight no matter what he eats. When Zhuang Zhuang was six months old, Miao Le even asked Rong Xiao to take care of the child. Rong Xiao fattened Zhuang Zhuang up after one month. After he was sent back to Miao Le, the child became so skinny again!" Liu Yun said resentfully.

Rong Xiao could be considered one of the few righteous people who lived in the apartment building. She and her husband were very nice people with very straightforward personalities and she liked to interact with Liu Yun and the rest. Sometimes, Liu Yun and the rest would also give Rong Xiao some fresh vegetables which they grew themselves. These few women got along very well.

Rong Xiao was kind-hearted and magnanimous. She could not bear to see children suffer, so she asked Miao Le to send Zhuang Zhuang to her house for two days. Her own child was about the same age as Zhuang Zhuang and she felt that taking care of one was not much different from taking care of two.

Her original intention was to help out and take care of him for a few days, but she did not expect to have to take care of him for more than a month. Miao Le did not feel apologetic or grateful at all and even passed nasty comments when Rong Xiao sent Zhuang Zhuang back. From then on, Rong Xiao became irreconcilable enemies with Miao Le's family.

Liu Yun and Wang Nuo chatted for a long time. They vented all their frustration before returning to their respective houses to clean up and do housework.

When Qiao Mei drove out of the compound, she actually caught a glimpse of Miao Le in the rearview mirror. She did not care about the kind of lies which Miao Le might spread at the apartment building. The more ridiculous the rumors, the better. This way, fewer people would come to trouble her. In the beginning, when she came to the military family compound, she had wanted to build a good relationship with everyone. However, it seemed that the best way out now was to let everyone think that she was not one to be trifled with.

Who would have thought that there would be more annoying matters in the military family compound than in Xia Fang's neighborhood!

Qiao Mei bought a lot of fencing and bricks, but she did not transport these back in her own car. Instead, she asked the shopkeeper in the county city to deliver them to her house and paid them well for the service.

Qiao Mei also ordered 20 chickens, 10 ducks and two piglets, to be delivered to the military family compound three days later. Qiao Mei had originally planned to go home after she was done, but after taking a few steps, she turned around and bought two big geese from the shopkeeper.

A big goose would do an equally good job as a dog when it came to guarding the house. Sometimes, a big goose was even more fierce than a dog! Qiao Mei's reason for raising the big geese was to prevent what happened in Foshan Village from happening again.

Qiao Mei hummed a song happily as she returned home. As soon as she got out of the car, Liu Yun and the others surrounded her and told her about what happened in the morning.

"It's fine, ladies. I don't care what they say about me," Qiao Mei said.

"Yes! That's how you should think! I'm still worried that you will be too kind-hearted because you feel sorry for that child," Wang Nuo said.

Qiao Mei looked sad as she said, "Sigh... that child's situation is indeed heartbreaking. I'm also a mother and can't bear to see children suffer, but I only have enough to feed my own children and I don't have the extra capacity to take care of other people's children."

While everyone was chatting, the people from the county city came to deliver the goods. Three men came and unloaded a load of bricks. The shop even gave her a lot of tiles for free!

"Qiao Mei, did you buy all these? Are you going to rebuild the house?" Liu Yun asked curiously.

"I think it's a pity that the backyard is so empty. Our family can't eat that much vegetables, so I want to build a pigsty," Qiao Mei said truthfully.

"What? You want to build a pigsty yourself? Do you know how to build one?" Wang Nuo asked Qiao Mei in surprise.

"Of course I do! I'm from the countryside! Have you forgotten!" Qiao Mei said with a smile.

#### Chapter 1702 Building A Pigsty

Qiao Mei was beautiful and always dressed well, so everyone always forgot that Qiao Mei was actually a girl from the countryside. The thing was that when it came to building a pigsty, even women like them, who came from the countryside and were familiar with farm work, might not necessarily be able to do it.

Building a pigsty was a tedious job. It involved the laying of sewer pipes, the construction of the pig trough and the reconnection of the water pipes. These were not things that just anyone could do, even among the men.

Everyone thought that Qiao Mei was joking. They did not expect to really see Qiao Mei rolling up her sleeves and working in the backyard in the afternoon.

"Oh my goodness... Qiao Mei is too capable..." Liu Yun sighed.

"It's really rare to see such a good wife. That Xia kid is so lucky," Wang Nuo said.

"At first, I thought that Qiao Mei married well, but now it seems that it's that kid who has a good eye! Such a capable woman will do well no matter which family she marries into!" Zhang Cai said solemnly.

Everyone had an even better impression of Qiao Mei by now. They now firmly believed that Qiao Mei was from the countryside and was one of them!

It did not take long for Qiao Mei to finish building the pigsty. The only thing missing was the roof. It was better to let Xia Zhe deal with the roof. Qiao Mei still had to play safe because of the baby she was carrying. What if she stepped on a stool and then fell off?

After resting for a while, Qiao Mei went to put up the fence to mark out an area for the chickens, ducks and geese. The fence was not as easy to build as the pigsty. To construct a proper fence, one needed to tie the fencing slowly and tightly to bamboo stakes. There was also a need to dig holes in the ground to set up the stakes properly! It was a job that could not be rushed. The more anxious one was, the harder it was to do it well.

Xia Zhe slept until the afternoon. He lay comfortably on the brick bed and stretched. As he moved slightly, he felt like there was something pressing down on him. When he turned around, he saw Xia Fan and Xia Xing sleeping soundly while crouched over him.

"These two fellows..." Xia Zhe smiled dotingly. Then, he carried the two children and placed them back into their blankets to have a good sleep.

Xia Zhe sat next to the brick bed and observed the two children carefully. Although he had only been gone for a few days, the two children seemed to have grown up a lot. Xia Xing was getting prettier and Xia Fan was getting rounder. He remembered hearing from Xu Lan that he was very chubby when he was young. He guessed that Xia Fan would turn out like him.

Xia Zhe walked out of the house and looked around, but he did not see Qiao Mei anywhere. Liu Yun was washing clothes in her courtyard. When she saw Xia Zhe, she immediately said, "Qiao Mei's husband! Your wife is in the backyard!"

"Thank you, Sister-in-law." Xia Zhe nodded slightly and thanked Liu Yun before running towards the backyard.

At this moment, Qiao Mei was struggling with a bamboo stake. No matter how she placed it, it could not be placed parallel to the other bamboo stakes. Qiao Mei felt very uncomfortable looking at it. She must straighten out this bamboo stake today!

"You must have been busy here all morning. Why don't you take a good rest at home and let me do all the work here. Have you forgotten that you're pregnant?" Xia Zhe said with a slight frown.

"Can't it be that I have nothing to do? Besides, these chores aren't too dangerous. Since you're here, help me build the roof for the pigsty. I dare not climb up for fear of falling down," Qiao Mei said.

Xia Zhe reached out and poked Qiao Mei's forehead as he said disdainfully, "So you know how dangerous it is! I thought you don't know anything and only know how to act recklessly!"

"Of course I know it's dangerous~ I also know that my husband can help me settle such things!" Qiao Mei held Xia Zhe's hand and said coquettishly.

Xia Zhe was defenseless whenever Qiao Mei acted this way. As long as Qiao Mei gave him this look, he would forget all about his principles. Even if she wanted someone's life, perhaps he would only hesitate for a moment before thinking of a way to fulfill her wish.

Then again, Qiao Mei was not a vixen who harmed others. She still had morals.

Xia Zhe rolled up his sleeves and started to build the roof. As soon as he climbed up, he came back down again. He looked at Qiao Mei hesitantly and said, "Why don't I do this after a few days? Aren't I still 'injured' at the moment?"

"Oh my! How can I have forgotten about this! Then don't worry about it. Go back into the house!" Qiao Mei made a big show of helping Xia Zhe back into the house.

Liu Yun looked at the couple curiously. Xia Zhe was fine just now, so why did he start limping in the blink of an eye?

"Qiao Mei! Is your husband alright! I have medicine for bruises and injuries at home! Do you need it!" Liu Yun shouted towards Qiao Mei's courtyard.

Chapter 1703 Man Of Few Words

"It's fine, Sister-in-law. He came back yesterday with some superficial injuries. It's not a big deal, he just needs to rest well. Just now, he insisted on helping me with the fence and accidentally tore his wound," Qiao Mei said as she ran out.

"Then he has to be careful! It takes 100 days to recover from a serious injury! Be more careful! You have to be careful too. Your stomach is already so big, yet you're still doing farm work! It's not easy to build the roof of the pigsty. When my husband comes back later, we'll come over and help you!" Liu Yun said.

"Really? I'm surprised he knows how to build the roof of a pigsty," Qiao Mei said to Liu Yun in surprise.

Liu Yun patted her chest confidently and said, "Of course! My husband is very capable! He knows everything! Just wait! When he comes back, I'll bring him over to your house!"

"Sure! Then I'll make a few more dishes tonight! Have dinner at my house tonight!" Qiao Mei said happily.

Qiao Mei went home and took out all the meat she had at home. Tonight, she would make them braised pork and sweet and sour pork ribs. The fish she made for Xia Zhe yesterday was still in the fridge too. These dishes should be enough for the guests.

Liu Yun did not go back on her word. She remembered what she said. As soon as her husband returned home, she hurriedly pulled him to Qiao Mei's house.

"Qiao Mei! Quick! We're here to help you! Oh my, what's that smell? it smells so good!" Liu Yun felt hungry the moment she smelled the food.

"I've made a few more dishes tonight! Hello, Big Brother. I'll have to trouble you to help me with the pigsty today," Qiao Mei said embarrassedly.

"This is my husband, his name is Liu Dong. You can just call him Brother Liu!" Liu Yun said.

"I didn't expect his surname to be Liu too!" Qiao Mei said curiously.

Speaking of which, the two of them were actually from the same village! This village was called "Liu Family Village" and most of the people in the village had the surname Liu. Perhaps the ancestors of Liu Yun and Liu Dong were from the same family a long time ago!

However, the two of them were definitely from two different branches of the family which were separated by more than six generations. If the two branches were separated by less than three generations, the two of them could not get married! Otherwise, their children would turn out to be deformed!

"I'll chat with you about family matters later. It's going to be dark soon, so we must get to work quickly. We'll go to the backyard ourselves! Go back and take care of your husband. Don't worry about us!" With that, Liu Yun went to the backyard with Liu Dong.

Liu Dong was a reserved person who did not talk much. It was already considered a lot if he spoke more than 10 phrases a day. As for Liu Yun, she talked a lot every day and even saying 10,000 phrases was considered too little for her!

The two of them, one extroverted and one introverted, were actually quite compatible with each other. Most soldiers knew how to do things like building pigsties and repairing fences. They did not specially take lessons, but every time they went down the mountain to help the villagers, they would encounter such situations. As time passed, they learned how to do all these things.

When the soldiers went through a particularly difficult time, they were only able to tide through it with the help of the common people at the foot of the mountain who shared their family's rations with the soldiers. Even though the soldiers returned double the amount of rations later, they would never be able to repay that friendship for the rest of their lives.

Therefore, there was an unwritten rule within the troops. Whenever there was no mission, they had to go down the mountain to help the villagers. During the farming season, they would help with the farming and during the autumn harvest season, they also had to go and help out.

"So you really know how to do this. I thought you were just saying it casually!" Liu Yun looked at Liu Dong excitedly.

"I know a bit," Liu Dong said.

"Then build one for our family when you're free! I also want such a pigsty and fenced compound!" Liu Yun said.

"Alright," Liu Dong replied.

"How much do you think these bricks cost? Our family may not be able to afford it. If we raise livestock, I have to feed them every day! Sigh... this is not suitable for our family. I'm not as capable as Qiao Mei, so maybe we should forget it," Liu Yun said dejectedly.

"Alright," Liu Dong said.

"It's crooked! Move more to the left!" Liu Yun instructed.

Xia Zhe looked into the backyard through the kitchen window. He whispered to Qiao Mei, "I didn't expect Brother Liu to be like this at home."

"Do you know Brother Liu?" Qiao Mei asked.

"I do, but I don't know him well. He's from Zhao Wu's team and they know each other better. I was still thinking of calling Zhao Wu to ask him to come and help!" Xia Zhe said.

"Zhao Wu? I've forgotten that he keeps pestering us about coming over. Next time, we must set aside some time to host him at home," Qiao Mei said seriously.

"It's fine. He's not very particular. Actually, he just wants to come and deliver money to us," Xia Zhe said.

Chapter 1704 I Am Her Elder Sister

"Doesn't he need that money to get married? Why does he want to give me money? It's so abnormal. He must have some ulterior motives!" Qiao Mei said.

"Who knows? The truth will be out when he comes over. I'll go to the army camp tomorrow to get some medicine from the military doctor and I'll only be back at noon," Xia Zhe said.

"Alright, go and lie down. Brother Liu and Sister-in-law Liu will be having dinner here later! Don't let the cat out of the bag," Qiao Mei said with a laugh.

Xia Zhe left the kitchen reluctantly and returned to the bedroom. He actually wanted to help Qiao Mei with the chores, but in the current situation, Qiao Mei had to take care of him instead.

Liu Yun stood in the backyard and looked at Liu Dong with an expectant look. Liu Dong was so tired and his clothes were soaked in sweat. He looked like he had just been fished out of water.

It was said that men were the most handsome when they were hard at work. That was indeed not nonsense!

"Hubby, come down if you're tired!" Liu Yun shouted with heartache.

"I'm not tired," Liu Dong replied.

It was not until it was totally dark that Liu Dong finished off the roof of the pigsty in the backyard. His handiwork was even better than Qiao Mei. Tomorrow, those livestock would have a place to stay!

"Sister-in-law! Come and eat! Come inside!" Qiao Mei said.

Qiao Mei had made eight dishes. She served both liquor and meat, and it was even more grand than a new year's meal! Liu Yun and Liu Dong had never done something so grand for dinner in their lives. They were only ever slightly extravagant on the day of their wedding.

"Tell me, is there anything you don't know how to do! Look at the food, it's so fragrant! Even the rice at your house seems better than ours," Liu Yun said enviously.

"If you like it, I'll bring some back for you the next time I go home. These are all homegrown. I'm not used to rice from the capital and I prefer to eat the ones from my hometown. Every year, my relatives and neighbors will send me a lot," Qiao Mei said.

"It comes from so far away! Then there's no need to trouble you. I'll just come to your house occasionally for a quick meal. Just don't chase me away!" Liu Yun said embarrassedly.

"Of course not! Come over whenever you want to eat!" Qiao Mei said.

At first, Liu Yun and Liu Dong were too embarrassed to eat the meat dishes. After all, meat was rare and very expensive. They were already very grateful that Qiao Mei had served it to them. Qiao Mei was so nice to them, so they could not go too overboard and eat up all the meat and vegetables. That would be behaving too badly.

Seeing this, Qiao Mei placed all the meat and vegetables in front of Liu Yun and Liu Dong and kept taking food for Liu Yun. Xia Zhe also understood what Qiao Mei was trying to do and kept putting meat in Liu Dong's bowl.

In the end, the meat was all piled up in the couple's bowls till they could not see the rice at all.

"It's too much! You must eat too!" Liu Yun said.

"There's still a lot in the pot! Let's all eat it!" Qiao Mei said.

The two families ate happily. Liu Dong was not a talkative person and Xia Zhe did not want to force him into a conversation. In the end, it was only Qiao Mei and Liu Yun talking at the dining table.

This was the first time Xia Zhe had seen Qiao Mei like this. In the capital, the people who interacted with Qiao Mei were all her relatives and it was rare to see her chatting with her neighbors.

"Your surname is Xia, right? Seeing that you're younger than me, I'll call you Xiao Xia! Xiao Xia, you're really lucky to be able to marry such a good wife like Qiao Mei!" Liu Yun said agitatedly after drinking some liquor.

"Sister-in-law is right. I'm really lucky to be able to marry Qiao Mei," Xia Zhe said seriously.

"You have to treat my younger sister well! I'm the eldest at home and I only have younger brothers. I don't have a younger sister or an elder sister. I like Qiao Mei and I just want to acknowledge her as my younger sister. If you dare to bully my younger sister, I definitely won't let you off! I'll deal with you no matter where you go! Do you remember that!" Liu Yun said as she looked at Xia Zhe sternly.

Liu Dong did not stop Liu Yun. Instead, he sat at the side and smiled at her dotingly. Back then, Liu Dong liked Liu Yun for her enthusiasm and kindness, which was why he married her very early.

Everyone thought that theirs was a marriage arranged by their parents since they were from the same village. In fact, it was Liu Dong who sent a matchmaker and expended a lot of effort to marry Liu Yun. On the surface, it looked like he did not do much, but in fact, if he had not taken the initiative, Liu Yun would have married someone else long ago.

Chapter 1705 Paying A Visit Again

"I swear! I will definitely cherish Qiao Mei! I won't let her get hurt in any way! I won't let Qiao Mei down either." Xia Zhe raised three fingers and made an oath.

"I'm relieved to hear that..." Liu Yun smiled happily. She was already a little drunk and wanted to continue talking to Xia Zhe. Seeing that it was getting late though, Liu Dong decided to bring her home. He carried her on his back and walked back slowly. Before he left, he even apologized to Xia Zhe and Qiao Mei.

"This is the first time I know that Sister-in-law Liu sees me as such an important person in her life. I thought that they are just going through the motions and there is no sincerity involved. It seems that I'm the small-minded person with the nasty thoughts," Qiao Mei lamented as she looked at the spot where Liu Yun was sitting just now.

"You have to believe in your charm. Many people like and love you. It's not your fault that you're more careful. Don't talk about yourself like that," Xia Zhe said as he hugged Qiao Mei.

"Whatever you say is true too. There are indeed many people who like me and also many people who are wooing me! You have to be careful! What if someone steals me one day?" Qiao Mei said as she looked at Xia Zhe smugly.

Xia Zhe frowned slightly and said, "No! You can only be mine! No one can take you away!"

Qiao Mei reached out to smoothen Xia Zhe's furrowed brows and said, "I'm just teasing you. Why are you so serious?"

The two of them teased each other as they tidied up. After playing with the children for a while, they went to bed. The next morning, Qiao Mei was still sleeping when she heard someone shouting loudly outside.

"Qiao Mei! Qiao Mei! Is Qiao Mei at home?"

Qiao Mei reluctantly put on her nightdress and got up to open the door. She had exhausted a lot of energy yesterday building the pigsty. Ever since she came to the military family compound, she had not managed to sleep in at all. Even now when there was nothing important going on, she could not sleep in even if she wanted to.

"Who is it?" Qiao Mei asked impatiently as she opened the door.

Miao Le stood uneasily at the door with Zhuang Zhuang in her arms. This time, Miao Le had even brought a backpack with her! It looked like it was bulging with things and Qiao Mei did not know what it contained.

"Sister-in-law, it's me!" Miao Le replied.

This was the first time she had seen Qiao Mei dressed so... sexily. Actually, there was nothing inappropriate about Qiao Mei being dressed in a flesh-colored silk nightdress with lace trimmings at the cuffs on both sides. It was just that Qiao Mei had a very voluptuous figure now, so she looked very sexy. Xia He had given this dress to Qiao Mei to wear during the pregnancy.

It was really enviable that she had such a good figure even though she was pregnant!

"Why are you here so early? What's the matter?" Qiao Mei asked.

"It's nothing... I'm just here to help Sister-in-law take care of the children..." Miao Le said softly.

Zhuang Zhuang seemed to play along by crying out twice. Qiao Mei stared at Miao Le for a long time before letting out a helpless sigh and letting her enter the house. Xia Fan and Xia Xing were still sleeping, so Qiao Mei did not let Miao Le into the east room. Instead, she asked Miao Le to stay in the west room to coax Zhuang Zhuang.

Seeing Miao Le sitting obediently on the brick bed seemingly without any other thoughts, Qiao Mei returned to the east room and changed into a set of clothes made from rough linen. She still had to continue building the fence today!

Xia Zhe had already bought breakfast for Qiao Mei before he went out. Today, the breakfast truck had soy milk and steamed buns for sale. In order to keep the steamed buns warm, Xia Zhe packed them in an iron lunch box and wrapped a towel tightly around the lunch box to prevent the heat from escaping too quickly.

It was only because of this that Miao Le did not see the buns and Qiao Mei could hide comfortably in the room and eat them.

Actually, Qiao Mei was also feeling very annoyed. This was clearly her house but she actually had to eat breakfast secretly. It was really unacceptable to her.

However, what could she do even if she could not accept it? She must think of a way to chase Miao Le away completely.

As usual, Qiao Mei made mushy vegetables and steamed egg for Zhuang Zhuang. After Qiao Mei fed Xia Fan and Xia Xing, she did not bother whether Zhuang Zhuang had finished eating or not. She simply locked the door of the east room before going to the backyard to build the fence.

Xia Fan and Xia Xing knew how to sit obediently on the brick bed and play by themselves. They would not crawl down to the floor. This was something Qiao Mei discovered after testing them many times. In the beginning, Qiao Mei was still worried that the two children would accidentally touch the wires while playing. She did not expect the two of them to be very smart and would not touch anything dangerous. Even if someone gave something dangerous to them, they would throw it away.

Qiao Mei also taught them not to eat things given to them by strangers. She told them to tell her if they really wanted to eat something and she would buy it for them. They tried their best to follow her instructions. Even Xia Fan, the little foodie, tried his best to do it.

Chapter 1706 Do You Have A Brother

There was a pot of wildflowers in the west room. When Qiao Mei first came to this courtyard, she saw a few wildflowers in bloom near the door, so she repotted a few and put them in the house to add some vibrancy to the living area.

If she planted precious flowers and plants like camellias in this place, she did not know what others would say about her. The matter of the ginseng juice was already very high profile. In addition, the factory operations were in full swing recently, so Qiao Mei did not want to complicate matters and do anything to stand out.

However, Qiao Mei realized that the mountain behind her house was a very good place. When there was time, she could find a cave to use as her secret base to cultivate these plants.

She still had a luminous pearl back at home! She wondered how it was doing after soaking in the ginseng juice. When the time was right, she would go home and study it to see if it had any other abilities.

Qiao Mei observed Miao Le's every move through the wildflowers in the west room. As long as she did anything wrong, Qiao Mei would immediately be able to see it and catch her red-handed.

As usual, Miao Le ate the steamed egg and only fed Zhuang Zhuang the mushy vegetables. She knew that as long as he continued to be so thin and weak, Qiao Mei would always take them in.

She had heard that Qiao Mei even gave everyone in the vicinity some fabric yesterday! It was good fabric bought from the capital. Since those women chatted with Qiao Mei every day, Miao Le thought that if she stayed at Qiao Mei's side every day, she might be able to get some benefits as well. She could get some stuff for her dowry!

This was Miao Le's first time in the west room. Qiao Mei kept all the things that she did not usually use in the west room, as well as some gifts from her relatives and friends for her children. All the things were new and unused!

Zhuang Zhuang climbed into the pile of gifted toys and unboxed most of them to play with. Miao Le also secretly helped to open some of the gifts and the two of them had a lot of fun. If Qiao Mei were to ask Miao Le about it later, she already had an excuse ready. It was not uncommon for a child to be disruptive if one took an eye off the child for a moment. Qiao Mei could not possibly beat the two of them to death.

Qiao Mei did not really care. Those were things which Xia Fan and Xia Xing did not like. However, just because her children did not like those things did not mean that just anyone could play with them.

She made a note to remember this debt and to make Miao Le pay for it sooner or later. Within the next two days, she would make Miao Le pay the price for it.

"Hey~ Is anyone home? We're delivering piglets!" someone shouted from the door.

Qiao Mei rushed out of the backyard and said, "I'm here! I'll have to trouble you to help me put them in the pigsty in the backyard. I'm pregnant and it's not convenient for me to catch them. Just quote me a price for the service."

"There's no need to stand on such ceremony! You're considered our big client. It's just a matter of taking a few more steps! We'll do it for free! Tell me where you want them and my guys and I will bring them there for you," the shopkeeper said.

At the moment, the economy was not doing too well and most people had no money. Some people even had problems providing for their families. It was even more difficult for people running a business of buying and selling livestock. Fortunately, they still had a collaboration with the supply and marketing cooperative. However, they had heard that the supply and marketing cooperative was also going to raise their own livestock, so their lives were probably going to be even more difficult in the future.

"Thank you, Big Brother." Qiao Mei smiled as she stood at the side and looked at these young animals. In a few months, these animals would grow fat! Qiao Mei wanted to drool just thinking about it.

When Miao Le heard the commotion, she also came out to take a look. This was the first time she had seen so much livestock. Just feeding these livestock would require a lot of food. Qiao Mei's family must be very rich! Miao Le became even more curious about Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe.

"Sister-in-law, does Big Brother agree with you bringing back so much livestock?" Miao Le asked curiously.

"I have the final say in our family. He lets me do everything I want," Qiao Mei replied with a smile.

Miao Le remained silent. In this era, the heads of the families were usually the men and there were very few women in charge. The fact that Qiao Mei had such confidence proved that Xia Zhe doted on her very much.

Miao Le kept staring at Qiao Mei without saying anything. Qiao Mei could not help but say, "You... You want to say something?"

"Sister-in-law, does Big Brother have any other brothers at home?" Miao Le asked shyly.

Qiao Mei heaved a sigh of relief. She had thought that Miao Le had taken a fancy to Xia Zhe, but Miao Le was actually eyeing the other men in the Xia family. Miao Le could be considered a smart person, at least a little smarter than Qiao Yu in this aspect.

"He has an elder brother and an elder sister. There's no one else," Qiao Mei replied honestly.

One could find out these things with very minimal investigation. There was no need for Qiao Mei to lie to Miao Le.

Chapter 1707 Go Home Early

Miao Le instantly felt dejected. Xia Zhe was already in his 30s, so Xia Zhe's elder brother must be even older and could even be around her father's age! It seemed there was no one available in the Xia family.

In fact, there were other men in the Xia family. For example, Xia Yuan from the second son's family was not married yet and had not met anyone he liked. However, it was impossible for Xia Yuan to take a fancy to Miao Le, so Qiao Mei did not want to cause trouble for herself.

"Then Elder Sister, do you have any brothers?" Miao Le continued to ask.

"Me? I have two younger brothers. The older one is only 11 years old. If you don't mind, you can wait a few more years," Qiao Mei said with a smile.

In 10 years' time, Miao Le would be 26 years old and Zhang Wei 21 years old and no one would gossip about it. However, it would be a little strange for a 16-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy to get together.

Miao Le blushed from Qiao Mei's teasing. She was not in such a hurry that she would get married to a child!

As they chatted, Xia Zhe came back. He returned with a lot of medicine as well as Zhao Wu.

"Sister-in-law! I'm here to visit you and the children! Look at the fish I bought! I really got lucky today. The fish is especially cheap! Moreover, it looks like it was just caught! It's especially fresh!" Zhao Wu yelled out happily at Qiao Mei.

Miao Le hurriedly turned around to see who the owner of the unfamiliar voice was. When she saw Zhao Wu, her eyes widened and she could not look away at all. This was the first time she had seen such a handsome man. Zhao Wu, on the other hand, did not look at Miao Le at all. He only had eyes for Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe.

"I heard that you brought two gold locks for my children. Is that true? Are you really willing to spend the money you're saving for your wedding?" Qiao Mei asked.

"Of course! Don't look down on me! I've already saved up enough to get married! It's just that I don't have a wife yet! Didn't you say that you wanted to introduce me to my wife? Sister-in-law, you have to hurry up!" Zhao Wu said.

When Miao Le heard that Zhao Wu did not have a partner, she became even happier. Someone who could afford two gold locks must be from a well-to-do family. She deliberately coughed twice to attract Zhao Wu's attention.

"Sister-in-law, this is?" Zhao Wu asked hesitantly as he looked at Miao Le.

Before Qiao Mei could speak, Miao Le immediately said, "I'm Sister Qiao Mei's younger sister. My name is Miao Le~"

Qiao Mei frowned slightly. She did not like people who went around claiming to be her relatives, especially people she did not like. Zhao Wu had grown up in a military family compound and had seen all kinds of weird people. He immediately knew what Miao Le was thinking. Coupled with Qiao Mei's expression, he already knew what was going on.

"Sister-in-law, why don't you make your famous braised pork ribs for me today? I haven't eaten it in a long time. Ever since I ate it last time, I can't stop thinking about it! And the salted vegetables! I want to eat that too!" Zhao Wu ignored what Miao Le said and only looked at Qiao Mei, leaving Miao Le standing there awkwardly.

At the mention of salted vegetables, Qiao Mei realized that she had forgotten to make some. Ever since she left Foshan Village, she had not made them again, mainly because she had no place to do it. Now that Zhao Wu mentioned it, she was tempted to make it again.

"You have to wait a while for the salted vegetables. I haven't made any yet!" Qiao Mei said.

"Let's talk inside. Oh right, what's your name again... Miao Le, right?" Zhao Wu said as he looked at Miao Le.

"Yes!" Miao Le said excitedly.

"Alright... It's already so late. Your family must have prepared dinner for you, so we won't keep you! Go home early and don't let your family members worry about you," Zhao Wu said as he pretended to be considerate.

Miao Le's smile froze on her face. This was the first time she had met someone who chased her away so bluntly. She silently turned around and returned to the west room to carry Zhuang Zhuang and left Qiao Mei's house.

Qiao Mei looked at the departing Miao Le and gave Zhao Wu a thumbs up. "You're really amazing. I'm going to be tortured to death by her after so many days."

"I've seen many women like her. This is how my mother dealt with them back then. Don't worry, with me around, I'll definitely settle her for you!" Zhao Wu said confidently as he patted his chest.

Qiao Mei shook her head helplessly and said, "As long as a golden goose like you doesn't get targeted by others..."

Xia Zhe had been standing behind Zhao Wu the entire time. His legs were already numb from pretending to have a limp. He looked at Qiao Mei and Zhao Wu and said, "Can we go in and talk? I feel very uncomfortable after standing here for so long."

Zhao Wu quickly put on a show of helping Xia Zhe back into the house. Qiao Mei also returned to the house after settling the final payment with the shopkeeper.

#### Chapter 1708 Eight Bowls Of Rice

Since it was a rare visit from Zhao Wu today, Qiao Mei took out all the meat from the fridge and prepared a grand feast for him! She would give him an eye-opener today!

Zhao Wu took out two boxes from his pocket and carefully opened them before putting them in front of Xia Fan and Xia Xing. The two children had already seen countless gold necklaces and locks and were already used to these things.

"Do you like Uncle? Look at these gold locks that Uncle bought for you. Do you like them? No, you should address me as Godfather. I want to be the children's godfather!" Zhao Wu said as he looked at Xia Zhe excitedly.

Xia Zhe said helplessly, "I don't have the power to make this decision. You have to ask my wife."

Zhao Wu wanted to ask Qiao Mei about becoming the children's godfather, but after thinking for a long while, he gave up the thought. He should do it step by step and let the two children have a good impression of him first. Once that happened, Qiao Mei would have no choice but to agree!

Qiao Mei made a total of 12 dishes, all of them meat dishes. After she placed all the dishes on the table, Zhao Wu did not dare to believe his own eyes. He had never seen such a feast even in the army canteen.

"So am I being treated like an esteemed guest?" Zhao Wu asked smugly.

"Of course. How can I let you spend money on the gold locks for nothing? I must definitely take good care of you," Qiao Mei said.

"Then it's indeed worth the money. The next time I come, I'll give you a gold Buddha statue. Does that mean I'll get 24 dishes?" Zhao Wu asked with a laugh.

Qiao Mei raised her eyebrows and looked at Zhao Wu as she said, "If you really give me a solid gold Buddha statue, there's no issue with serving you 88 dishes."

"Hahaha, it's a deal!" Zhao Wu said excitedly.

The price of gold was still very low at the moment, but it was not something that ordinary families could afford. Zhao Wu's living expenses were all taken care of in the army. In addition, he had also earned a lot of money after so many years, including the bonuses from completing missions and getting merit medals. If he wanted to give Xia Zhe a gold Buddha statue, it was just a matter of being willing to part with that amount of money.

Zhao Wu picked up his chopsticks and wolfed down the food as if he had never eaten before in his life. He ate four bowls of rice in one go and even wanted more.

"Eat slowly. No one's snatching it from you. You've already eaten four bowls. If you eat any more, you'll get too stuffed!" Qiao Mei said worriedly.

If Zhao Wu really ate too much, he would have to be sent to the hospital for induced vomiting and that would be very harmful to his health.

"Just let him be. He's a famous big eater in the troops and can eat up to eight bowls of rice! Furthermore, the bowls in the army are much bigger than the ones we use," Xia Zhe explained.

"Eight bowls?" Qiao Mei looked at Zhao Wu in disbelief. Zhao Wu did not look that muscular and he was not even as burly as Chi Ze. She did not expect him to be able to eat so much.

While Qiao Mei and Xia Zhe were talking, Zhao Wu took the opportunity to sneak outside to scoop more rice. He behaved like he was at his own house.

It was rare to have one of Xia Zhe's buddies come over. Moreover, Zhao Wu was a person with a good character and Qiao Mei liked to interact with him. If it was anyone else, Qiao Mei might not even want to host them!

After dinner, Zhao Wu took on the important responsibility of washing the dishes. He looked at Qiao Mei with a satisfied look and said, "Sister-in-law, don't stand on ceremony with me! I'll just take it like I'm in my own house. I must do some housework if I'm in my own house. You've put in so much effort to make such delicious food, so it's only right for me to wash the dishes!"

Xia Zhe pulled Qiao Mei over to the brick bed and told her to ignore Zhao Wu. There were other things he wanted to tell Qiao Mei!

"When I went back to the army camp today, I did a quick check. The superiors had given me 15 days off to recuperate from my injuries," Xia Zhe said.

"15 days! That's a lot! Then let's go back to the capital to stay for a while!" Qiao Mei said excitedly. She could also take this opportunity to get away from Miao Le so that there was no chance for Miao Le to bother her.

"It's just that Zhao Wu will tag along if we do that. He's also going on leave and is going back to the capital to visit his parents. However, I haven't told him that we may go back. I want to ask for your opinion first," Xia Zhe whispered.

"Of course it is fine. You can make the decision on such matters," Qiao Mei said gently.

"That won't do! I must still come back and discuss it with you. I can't just make decisions by myself," Xia Zhe said as he looked at Qiao Mei seriously.

Qiao Mei pouted unhappily and asked, "If you do this, doesn't it make me look very domineering? I don't ask you before I make any decisions at home."

Chapter 1709 Expensive Toys

"Of course not. You're the head of the family and you call the shots. I'm more than happy to do what you say," Xia Zhe said blissfully.

"Zhao Wu can go back with us. He can sit at the back and carry the children," Qiao Mei said.

After Zhao Wu washed the dishes, Qiao Mei asked him to rest in the west room. She put all the toys which Miao Le had touched earlier in the day into a big bag and told Xia Zhe to send them to Tian Jun tomorrow morning.

In front of everyone, Tian Jun would have no choice but to accept all the things. As for whether he wanted to give money to Xia Zhe or give other things to Qiao Mei in the future, that was an issue for another time. Qiao Mei did not want to tolerate this kind of behavior again and again just because Tian Jun's family was pitiful. That was considered a form of guilt-tripping, was it not?

Everyone's money was hard-earned money. The money did not simply appear from nowhere. Xia Zhe had worked hard to earn money for their family! The money Qiao Mei made from the factory was also repayment for her hard work in the early days.

"Sister-in-law, you don't want all these things anymore?" Zhao Wu said in surprise.

"I don't want any of them. They've already been opened up and played with. Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan don't like these toys either, so I might as well give them away," Qiao Mei said disdainfully.

Zhao Wu immediately understood what Qiao Mei meant. He leaned against the door frame and gave Qiao Mei a thumbs up as he said, "Impressive. I thought that Sister-in-law is a soft person and will get bullied by that woman."

"Me? It's already good enough that I don't bully others!" Qiao Mei said mockingly.

The next morning, Xia Zhe did what Qiao Mei told him and went to Tian Jun's house. He happened to bump into Miao Le and Zhuang Zhuang, who were on their way out to look for Qiao Mei.

"Brother Xia Zhe, why are you at my house? Are you here to look for me?" Miao Le asked Xia Zhe shyly.

Miao Le's words caused Xia Zhe to break out in goosebumps. He liked it only when Qiao Mei addressed him this way. If it was any other woman, he only felt disgusted.

"You should just address me as Xia Zhe in the future or Commander Xia." Xia Zhe took a deep breath and continued, "Is your brother-in-law at home? I'm here today to look for Tian Jun."

Xia Zhe had already checked Tian Jun's schedule in advance. It was Tian Jun's day off today and he would definitely be at home at this hour.

"Commander Xia, why are you here? Please come in," Tian Jun said in surprise.

"No, there's no need. I'm here to deliver something." Xia Zhe placed the big bag of toys at the door and continued, "These are the things that your younger sister and your son played with at my house yesterday. These are all new and my children don't like to play with them. My wife has asked me to give them all to Zhuang Zhuang."

Tian Jun's face instantly fell while Miao Le hid behind the door in fear. She never imagined that Qiao Mei would use this method to deal with her. Tian Jun cared about his reputation the most. He definitely would not let her off this time!

"Um... Commander Xia, I'm really sorry. My younger sister and my son are both too insensible. I'll pay you for these toys as soon as I can," Tian Jun said awkwardly with a red face.

"It's fine. It's our gift to Zhuang Zhuang. We also want him to grow up healthily and happily. I still have something on, so I'll go off now. I'll leave you to do your things." After saying that, Xia Zhe left the apartment building, leaving Miao Le and Tian Jun looking at each other.

Tian Jun looked at the bag of toys on the floor for a long time. One look and he could tell that these toys were exquisitely made and very expensive. These were definitely things that they could not afford. Perhaps one toy was already equivalent to his monthly salary.

Miao Le stood at the door fearfully and did not dare to approach Tian Jun. She wanted to slip out quietly, but Tian Jun yelled loudly, "You'd better come in!"

She slowly walked into the house with Zhuang Zhuang in her arms and did not even have time to close the door before Tian Jun scolded her angrily, "Don't you have any sense of shame! Don't think I don't know that you go to other people's houses to freeload on food every day! Isn't the money I give you

enough for Zhuang Zhuang and you to eat? Why do you still have to go to other people's houses to embarrass yourself!"

"I... I don't go there on purpose... They're the ones who invited me..." Miao Le lied.

"Invite you? Why will they invite you? Who are you? Do you know who you offended this time? That's the battalion commander! Moreover, he has received a third-class merit this time round and is about to be promoted to deputy regiment commander! His wife will invite you to her house? Who will believe it? I'm just a platoon leader. Even if she wants to invite someone, why will she invite you instead of the regiment commander's wife?" Tian Jun said angrily.

#### Chapter 1710 Hiding Money

"These are a gift from them! They give it to us out of their own accord! I didn't force them to give it to me! Why are you scolding me! Do you know it's also very difficult for me to take care of a child! I'm at the most charming age in a girl's life and yet I'm here to look after your child for you! It's all my elder sister's fault for dying so early~ All of you bully me~" Miao Le started crying as she held on to Zhuang Zhuang.

Zhuang Zhuang was so frightened by Miao Le that he started crying as well. For a moment, their cries echoed in the corridor. Many people opened the door to take a look at the commotion. Tian Jun hurriedly ran to his front door and closed it after hurriedly saying "sorry" to everyone.

He sat on the sofa dispiritedly. When Miao Le's elder sister, Miao Ting, died, he was also in great pain. He even had the thought of joining Miao Ting in death. Tian Jun's parents had passed away a long time ago and he had no family members to worry about. However, the Miao family was full of people whom he needed to take care of. He had to take good care of Miao Ting's family.

Tian Jun opened all the drawers and cabinets in the house and started looking for money. After rummaging through them, he only found 16 dollars. This was all the money left in the house.

"Go to the county city to withdraw some money later. Send my entire salary for this month to Commander Xia's family," Tian Jun said sternly.

"If we give them all the money, then how can I afford to buy food? What about Dad and Mom? If they don't have money to buy medicine, they'll die!" Miao Le questioned.

"How do you have the cheek to say such things to me? If not for you, do I have to give them all the money? Will we be in such a situation now?" Tian Jun said angrily.

Miao Le placed Zhuang Zhuang on the sofa and stood up to argue with Tian Jun. "They gave those things to me! It's a gift! I didn't ask them for it! Since they are willing to give it to me, then they're the crass ones! Why are you scolding me! If you give them all your salary, then what about my parents, Second Brother's family, Third Sister's family and me! How are we going to survive!"

Tian Jun earned a salary of 90 dollars a month. He would keep 15 dollars for Miao Le and send the rest to her parents and siblings.

Every year, the army base was given a quota to take care of five soldiers who faced difficulties in their lives. For the soldiers on this scheme, the military would subsidize their expenses for the year, pay for their food and give preferential treatment to their families.

When they heard about Tian Jun's situation, they gave him one of the spots. However, Tian Jun did not appreciate their kindness and even wrote to his superiors, refusing to accept their help. Tian Jun ate in the canteen like everyone else and barely had enough money to get by.

Everyone wanted to help him, but they did not know what to do. Tian Jun had a strong sense of pride and did not accept anyone's "charity".

The Miao family's situation was very complicated. Miao Le's father was a sick man and needed to rely on medicine to stay alive. Last year, the Miao family's second son accidentally fell off the roof when he was repairing it. He was paralyzed from the waist down and could not work anymore. The third daughter had mental issues since young. She was sometimes lucid and sometimes crazy and needed someone to take care of her.

This entire family depended on Tian Jun's salary for their survival! All of them basically latched onto Tian Jun and kept sucking his blood. They would not stop until they squeezed him dry.

Tian Jun set aside 15 dollars a month for Miao Le. By right, if she used the 15 dollars to buy groceries, she and Zhuang Zhuang should be able to get by. He did not know where she spent all the money for Zhuang Zhuang to end up so skinny.

"You must have money on hand," Tian Jun said confidently.

"I... I don't!" Miao Le said hesitantly.

"At this point in time, you're still unwilling to take it out? In the past, I took it like you're still just a child and I don't hold anything against you. But now that something like this has happened, I can only send you back to the Miao family to wait upon the old folks," Tian Jun threatened.

Miao Le was so frightened that she quickly dropped to her knees and hugged Tian Jun's leg. She cried out, "Brother-in-law, I really don't have any money! If I have hidden any money away, I'll die a horrible death! I've been taking care of Zhuang Zhuang wholeheartedly. If I leave, then what about Zhuang Zhuang! He can't go without someone to take care of him!"

Tian Jun had heard such things too many times. In the past, Miao Le only got into minor trouble and there was no need for Tian Jun to be too harsh on her. Now that she had offended someone important, he had to be strict with her.

"It's useless no matter what you say. You provoked someone you shouldn't have this time round. There's nothing I can do," Tian Jun said coldly.