

Fat Wife 1801

Chapter 1801: All a Misunderstanding

"I'll get to the bottom of the matter regarding the jewelry! But you have to marry my younger brother! Divorce that bastard immediately. My brother says that he doesn't mind that you have a previous relationship. On account that your family background is similar to ours, we won't mind that this is your second marriage," Cao Kuan said.

"What did you say?" Qiao Mei asked angrily.

"Am I not being obvious enough? Then let me be more clear. When I came, I didn't know that Xia He was already married, so I brought a lot of betrothal gifts. Given that it's a second marriage for her, our family won't be giving her these things anymore. Your family still has to give us more dowry! Otherwise, our family will suffer a huge loss! I think this house is not bad, so let this house be part of her dowry," Cao Kuan said disdainfully.

"What did you say? You want me to get a divorce! Who do you think you are! You shameless thing! You don't want to listen when I speak to you nicely. Are you asking for a scolding!" Xia He pointed at Cao Kuan and scolded him.

"How can you talk like this! You're the one who let my brother down first! How can you get angry instead! What right do you have to be angry! I've done a check on that man of yours. He's nothing, just a pauper! You might as well be with my brother!" Cao Kuan rattled off.

After Cao Zhai woke up, he started to threaten the Cao family with his life. If they did not satisfy his desires, he would slit his wrist and commit suicide. He only wanted Xia He to be his wife and he had no interest in anyone else. Even if Cao Kuan could only bring back Xia He's corpse, Cao Zhai would still marry her.

Cao Kuan had no choice but to go along with Cao Zhai's wishes. It was more important to him to protect Cao Zhai's life. After all, Cao Zhai was still young. When he got over this in the future and got tired of Xia He, he would fall for another woman. At that time, the family could just get rid of Xia He.

“Hmph, what right do you have to blame the figments of your brother’s imagination on me? I’m going to sue you for slander! You spread rumors and slander me! You want to destroy my family! You want me to divorce my husband! You’re worse than an animal! And let me tell you! This is already my second marriage! Even if I have to get married three times! Or four times! I won’t marry into your family!” Xia He roared.

Qiao Mei wished she could give Xia He a round of applause. Xia He remembered how she usually phrased her arguments and could even draw inferences!

“I heard that your younger brother only managed to stay alive after drinking our family’s medicinal wine, right?” Qiao Mei suddenly looked at Cao Kuan and asked.

“Yes, so what?” Cao Kuan asked. Everyone in the bus had drunk the medicinal wine, so there was no point in lying.

“If that medicinal wine is for sale, a small bottle would cost more than 100,000 dollars. At that time, Xia He did not have much, but she must have given Cao Zhai a few sips, right?” Qiao Mei asked as she looked at Xia He.

Xia He immediately said, “He took three sips!”

“Three sips should cost about 50,000 to 60,000 dollars et Qiao Mei said sarcastically.

“How can that lousy thing be so expensive! Why don’t you just go and rob a bank! Besides, my brother was already unconscious! You must have fed him out of your own accord! You did it willingly!” Cao Kuan said as he pointed at Xia He.

“Nonsense! It’s your younger brother who begged me! During the rescue, my eldest brother even fed him a whole bottle of medicinal wine!” Xia He said.

“That’s right. These are all the things that saved your brother’s life. Don’t you think they’re worth tens of thousands of dollars? Our family saved your brother’s life, but not only did you not thank us, you even

came to our house to force our Xia He to get a divorce and then remarry. I don't think a human being can do such a thing, do you? If we call the police, you won't have it good," Qiao Mei said.

Even if the Cao family was rich, they could not just fork out 100,000 dollars straightaway. He thought about it and finally said, "I'll go back and persuade my brother. Perhaps there's a misunderstanding? I'll go back and ask him! Wait for news from me!"

Before he even finished speaking, he had already run out of the courtyard. However, the group of people did not return to Hu City directly. Instead, they went to the art troupe to investigate who had taken the jewelry which Cao Zhai gave away.

Xia He wanted to sit down and heave a sigh of relief, but Xu Lan said, "Stand there! "

"Mother... what did I do..." Xia He said as she looked at Xu Lan in fear.

"Don't go to the art troupe anymore. Just stay by my side obediently. After some time, get your eldest brother to find you a stable job in the government. You can't leave the capital without my permission," Xu Lan said..

Chapter 1802: Staying Close By

"Mother! I don't want to stop dancing! It isn't easy for me to get to where I am today. I can't give up!" Xia He said agitatedly.

Qiao Mei knew about Xia He's dream and also knew how long Xia He had worked hard for this dream. Now that she had finally gotten what she wanted and was about to fulfill that dream, she would definitely not be able to accept Xu Lan asking her to give up now.

Xu Lan looked at Xia He without saying anything, but the sadness and worry in her eyes was like an arrow piercing at Xia He's heart.

When Xu Lan was younger, she wanted the children to go further in life and show more promises. It was fine with her even if they suffered some setbacks and sufferings. How could there be a rainbow without the wind and the rain? They must go through all kinds of experiences in order to grow stronger.

However, now that Xu Lan was older, she could not accept the possibility of losing her children at this age. When she heard the news of Xia He's disappearance, she wished she could exchange her life for Xia He's life. She knelt in front of the Buddha statue day and night. As long as Xia He could return safely, she would be willing to be a vegetarian in the future!

Fortunately, everything turned out to be fine in the end, but it was still better to be safe than sorry from now on. If the rescue team had been a step too late this time round, Xia He would already be dead now.

"You can go and learn how to do business from Qiao Mei, or you can work under your brother, or you can even go to Lu Huai's company to do odd jobs. Anyway, you can't go to the art troupe anymore," Xu Lan said with a sigh. "Mother!" Xia He shouted.

Qiao Mei quickly held Xia He back and said, "You have to give Mother some time. It's not easy for her either. During the period when you went missing, she didn't sleep at all and could not eat much. Mother is really worried about you, so you have to be more understanding. I'm also a mother and I can understand how she feels. Once she thinks it through, she will naturally let you do what you want. Don't refute her yet for now."

"Alright... I understand.." Xia He said dejectedly.

Everyone packed their luggage and went back to their own homes. They could not keep staying at Qiao Mei's place because it would lead to gossip. Back then, before Qiao Mei married into the family, the extended Xia family had been fighting for this house among themselves for many years. All the neighbors knew about it. If the Xia family's eldest son and his entire family moved into Qiao Mei's courtyard house, it would lead to rumors and trouble in a few days.

Fortunately, for now, Zhou Hua was already locked up in jail and Liu Fen did not care about such things. Otherwise, the Xia family would be in chaos again.

Xu Lan brought Xia Wen and Xia He home. Deng Fan also moved into Xu Lan's house. Xu Lan did not want Xia He to leave her line of sight at all. If Xia He slipped away on her own, Xu Lan would no longer acknowledge Xia He as her daughter!

Cao Kuan drove to the entrance of the art troupe with his subordinates. Ever since what happened to Xia He and the others, the art troupe went on a break and all performances had been put on hold.

It was not a big deal for these dancers if they did not practice for one day. However, if they did not practice for a long time, it was inevitable that their skills would become rusty. Therefore, although they were on a break, everyone came back to train every day.

"Which one of you is in charge! Come out quickly!" Cao Kuan shouted into the studio.

Many passers-by stopped in their tracks and the people from the art troupe also ran out to watch the commotion. In the past, Xia He was the most senior among them and also the principal dancer, so she naturally had the final say in everything. However, since Xia He was not around, Bai Dian was the one in charge.

"I'm the person in charge here now. My name is Bai Dian. What can I do for you?" Bai Dian asked.

"What can you do for me? I have a big issue for you to deal with! You should all be familiar with my younger brother. His name is Cao Zhai and I'm his elder brother, Cao Kuan. I'm here this time to ask who has taken my family heirloom, the pearl and emerald necklace! I want to take back all my younger brother's things!" Cao Kuan said domineeringly.

Everyone instantly turned to look at Li Hua, who was standing in the corner. That thing was in the possession of none other than Li Hua. Back then, when she received that piece of jewelry, she had flaunted it for a long time, as if she was afraid that no one would know about it.

"Can you roughly describe it?" Bai Dian asked.

"That emerald is as big as a pigeon's egg. It's surrounded by a bunch of pearls and those pearls are also dazzling. They look like the moon in the night sky. I'm a rough man and I don't know much about the jewelry that you women wear. That's the only way I can describe it," Cao Kuan said..

Chapter 1803: Coming to Ask for the Necklace

This description matched the necklace which Li Hua wore before. Even if Li Hua did not have it now, everyone knew that it was the necklace which Cao Kuan was talking about.

Bai Dian looked at Li Hua and said, "Show this gentleman your necklace. If it really belongs to their family, go to the police station to sort this out. After all, there's no reason for anyone to take back something that was already given away."

"Hey! Wait! You little girl, how can you talk like that? You're right. We really shouldn't ask to take back something we gave away, but my brother wanted to give it to Xia He! Not this woman! As for how this necklace ended up in her hands, she's the only one who knows the truth!" Cao Kuan said as he pointed at Li Hua.

"That's not true! Cao Zhai gave it to me! I didn't steal it! He really gave it to me!" Li Hua explained.

Everyone here knew Li Hua's character very well. She had always been jealous of Xia He and it was not surprising that she would steal other people's things. After all, Li Hua had snatched the second female lead role which originally belonged to Bai Dian.

"Did Cao Zhai really give you that necklace personally? You have to be clear about whether he wants you to pass it to someone else or he wants to give it to you. You can't be vague about such things," Bai Dian asked.

Li Hua stammered and did not dare to tell the truth. She muttered softly,

"Anyway, it's a gift from Cao Zhai. He gave it to me personally. I didn't steal

For a moment, Bai Dian did not know how to deal with the issue. No matter how much she hated Li Hua, Li Hua was still a member of the art troupe. If Li Hua embarrassed herself, it was also an embarrassment

for the art troupe. She could not let Cao Kuan take away either Li Hua or the item. Otherwise, that would be no different from a robbery, right?

“Since you’re saying that your brother gave it to someone else and my colleague is saying that your brother gave it to her personally, we don’t know who p s the one telling the truth. Let’s call the police! Let the police investigate this matter!” Bai Dian said seriously.

“No problem! But let me make it clear. If this woman really stole our family’s treasure, I won’t show any mercy. She’ll have to be dealt with accordingly.

That necklace is worth a lot of money. If she has stolen it, she’ll have to go to jail for at least five years. If any of you withhold any information, you will be considered an accomplice. So consider your move carefully. If you give it back to me now, I can let you off,” Cao Kuan said.

Time was very tight for him. He had been in the capital for too long and needed to go back to Hu City as soon as possible to manage his business. It was really not worth wasting time in the capital for such a small matter. He wanted to go back soon.

“You’d better think about it carefully. We can all testify for you and protect you. But if you lie, we won’t be able to protect you anymore and can only send you to the police station,” Bai Dian said.

“Tell us quickly! What’s going on! Don’t make everyone suffer with you!” Xiao Nan said anxiously as she grabbed Li Hua.

“I... L.. L..” Li Hua did not dare to look at anyone and was hesitant to speak up.

“Say something! Tell them the truth! They already said that they won’t hold you responsible! If they bully you, we’ll back you up! We’re not afraid of them!” a colleague from the art troupe shouted out.

“That’s right! They cannot come to the art troupe and bully us out of the blue!

Say something!’

“We’ll back you up!”

“We will support you! Just tell us the truth!”

“Don’t be afraid, we’re here!”

The art troupe members shouted loudly one after another. If Xia He was around, she would definitely feel touched. However, in Li Hua’s eyes, these yells were like curses meant to kill her.

Cao Zhai had indeed sent many gifts to the art troupe, but they were all for Xia He and had nothing to do with her. After the security guard at the door rejected him many times, Cao Zhai wanted to get someone from the art troupe to pass the gifts to Xia He. In the end, he found Li Hua.

Li Hua had deliberately approached Cao Zhai. She had always told everyone that her family was doing quite well, but in fact, they did not even have enough money to eat. She had put in a lot of effort to join the art troupe. If she had been diligent and spent more time on dance practice, she might have been able to make a name for herself.

However, she was very vain and could not bear to see anyone owning nice things. In fact, she was the real cause of the art troupe members often finding their things missing..

Chapter 1804: Not Found

Li Hua was jealous of Xia He, but not to the extent of wanting to harm Xia He. She just spread gossip and slandered Xia He to vent her frustration. That was until Xia He and Deng Fan got married and led a loving and sweet life, and their life together got better and better. Also, Xia He’s family background was superior to everyone and she got along very harmoniously with her sister-in-law. After that, Li Hua became even more jealous of Xia He.

She could not accept the fact that Xia He could have such a blissful life even after getting married for the second time, while her own life paled in comparison. Her husband drank himself into a stupor every day

and would beat her up after that. She did not have the courage to get a divorce and was stuck in this situation.

Many of Xia He's fans would buy gifts for her. Xia He told the security guard at the door to turn them down, but unknown to Xia He, Li Hua secretly communicated with these fans and told them that she could help them pass the gifts to Xia He. In the end, she kept all the gifts for herself.

"I... I didn't..." Li Hua whispered.

"I don't have that much time to waste, Hurry up and choose a solution. Either you come to the police station with me, or hand over everything that my brother has given you!" Cao Kuan said.

"Are you going to tell us or not! If you don't, we'll get the police to search your house!" Xiao Nan shouted angrily.

"I... Cao Zhai gave them to me! He didn't tell me who the recipient was and just asked me to bring the things in! Doesn't that mean that those things are for me? Why are all of you looking at me like that! Cao Zhai gave them to me!

Those people gave the things to me! Those gifts are all mine! Not Xia He's!" Li Hua shouted hysterically.

Bai Dian frowned slightly and looked at Li Hua as she asked, "How many of those gifts meant for Xia He did you take?"

"I didn't! Those are all mine! Who says those things belong to Xia He! Since those things are all with me, don't even think about asking me for them!" Li Hua turned to Cao Kuan with a crazy look and said, "You want that necklace? Let me tell you! I've already destroyed it! I smashed it! Hahaha! I've already smashed it! You won't be able to see it again!"

"You vicious woman! What did you say!" Cao Kuan widened his eyes and roared angrily. If not for his subordinates stopping him, Cao Kuan would have gone forward to strangle Li Hua.

"Are you telling the truth or not?" Bai Dian asked.

“Of course it’s the truth!” Li Hua said.

“Call the police! Call the police now! Immediately! She has to take out the necklace! Even if it’s smashed up, I want to see the broken pieces!” Cao Kuan shouted agitatedly.

His subordinates hurriedly went forward to restrain all the art troupe members and prevent any of them from leaving. Soon, the police arrived and took everyone away for interrogation. They also searched Li Hua’s house and found many valuable items there. However, the number of items found did not tally with the list of items which the fans said they had given her. Many gifts were not found, including the necklace.

Zou Ming told Xia Wen and Xia He about this matter. Xia He wanted to head down to the police station immediately to take a look. After all, this matter was related to her.

“Where are you going!” Xu Lan shouted from upstairs.

“Mother! Something has happened to the art troupe members! I want to go and take a look!” Xia He said.

“No! If there’s a situation at the art troupe, the troupe leader will take care of it. It’s not as if you can solve the problem. Just stay at home obediently! You can’t go!” Xu Lan said firmly.

“But if I don’t go, they will have to stay in the detention center for many days! This matter has nothing to do with them!” Xia He said agitatedly.

“Zou Ming isn’t a fool. He’s been doing this job for so many years, so how can he not know how to deal with these things? People who have nothing to do with the matter will be released in a few days. If there’s anything which concerns you, then you can go and help with the investigation. There’s no point for you to go now. Just stay at home! You’re not allowed to go! If you’re still worried, then ask Xia Wen to go and have a look!” Xu Lan said.

Xia He thought of what Qiao Mei told her and decided not to make Xu Lan angry for the time being. She looked at Xia Wen pitifully and said, "Eldest Brother... Can you help me go and take a look? Bai Dian and Xiao Nan are both at the police station. They're implicated only because of me. Can you help me?"

"Don't say silly things. I'm your eldest brother. If I don't help you, who should I help? Stay at home and wait for news from me. I'll call you if there's anything." Xia Wen walked over to Xia He's side and whispered, "Don't make

Mother angry. Bear with it for a little longer. After a while, Mother won't be so worried anymore.."

Chapter 1805: Bad Temper

"I know. I'll be good," Xia He said.

Xia Wen and Zou Ming sent out all their subordinates and finally found the valuable gifts from Xia He's fans in various black markets. Li Hua's husband was a gambling addict and had sold the things which Li Hua brought back to pay off his gambling debts.

Although they managed to find most of the items, there were a few which could not be found. The necklace had gone missing and they could not find any clues at all. Qiao Mei was familiar with the jewelry trade, so Xia Wen immediately told her about it.

"There's a high chance that someone has bought this necklace for their own private collection, which is why you can't find any information about it. People who trade in the black markets follow their own set of rules, so they naturally won't reveal who the buyer is. Otherwise, how can they still make a living on the black market in the future? However, it's not as if we can't find it. It'll just cost a lot of money," Qiao Mei said.

"Li Hua's husband is a gambling addict and he said that he used all the proceeds to pay off his gambling debts. He doesn't have a single cent on him and his house is a rental. Our family paid to get those items back from the black markets. Don't tell me we have to bear the cost? Then our family is just a

pushover!" Xia Wen said unwillingly.

"In the end, Xia He's fans are the ones who are taken advantage of. If our family doesn't do anything about it, won't it make the fans feel very hurt? If so, Xia He's popularity will also be affected. Besides, our family doesn't lack that money. Eldest Brother, don't be angry," Qiao Mei said comfortingly.

"Sigh... but I'm still angry. Why does our family have to solve other people's problems? At this point, we have to look for the missing items even if we don't want to. But where are the things?" Xia Wen said irritably.

Qiao Mei did not care where those things had gone, but she was very curious about why Xia Wen was in such a state. She looked at Xia Wen with some interest and asked, "Eldest Brother, why are you so annoyed when faced with this matter? Your temper was not like that in the past. Did something happen at home?"

"Not really. It's just that there have been too many issues recently. The MO family feels that our family is insincere as we don't even go and discuss the wedding plans with them, so they're feeling a little unhappy with us. However, they're just dissatisfied and they don't stop me from seeing MO Zhu. I must have sounded rude just now. I'm sorry," Xia Wen said apologetically.

"Eldest Brother, you don't have to apologize to me. I'm fine. Then again, it's normal for the MO family to behave like this. After all, they only have one precious daughter and our family has indeed been negligent. Leave this current matter to me. You should go and handle the MO family. If Father really doesn't have time, then ask Grandfather to go with you," Qiao Niei said.

"Aren't you busy with the university application recently? Do you have time to deal with these things?" Xia Wen asked.

"I have more free time than you. Trust me, I'll definitely be able to get those things back," Qiao Mei said firmly.

Qiao Mei returned to her room and wrote a letter to Yao Nian, asking him to do a check on the underground gambling dens in the capital, find out the ones which Li Hua's husband had visited and also which gambling dens accepted collaterals in lieu of payment.

In less than half a day, Yao Nian had found three gambling dens frequented by Li Hua's husband. The only gambling den in the capital which accepted collateral was located outside the suburbs, and the name of the place was "Carpe Diem".

Qiao Mei touched the words on the letter and said, "Interesting... This name is quite fashionable. It seems that this gambling den might have connections in high places."

Yao Nian even wrote in the letter that she should not casually provoke the owner of this gambling den. Even an experienced private investigator like him could not find out who the owner was. In all these years, no one had ever seen the owner's face.

Qiao Mei did not believe in heresy and wanted to go and meet this boss for herself. Perhaps she could gain something unexpectedly?

This gambling den was located near He Nings villa.

She changed into a faded white dress and put on some light makeup before she went to the gambling den named "Carpe Diem". Before she went, she informed Yao Nian that if she did not come back out after half a day, he should immediately inform Xia Wen,

The main door of the gambling den was very well hidden. Qiao Mei walked around the place three or four times but still could not find the entrance. It was only when she saw a manhole cover which looked different from the rest that she guessed it might be the main door..

Chapter 1806: Underground Gambling Den

"I didn't expect this underground gambling den to really be underground... I thought the word underground is just metaphorical. I didn't expect it to be so literal!" Qiao Mei said to herself, a little lost for words.

Qiao Mei used her foot to tap on the manhole cover forcefully. When the people below heard the sound, they opened the entrance door. Qiao Mei went down the stairs to the bottom and discovered a different world below. It was a very grand-looking place. The entire room was filled with smoke and everyone looked very euphoric. Everyone here was looking for that one chance which could reverse their fortunes and change their lives. This was the first time Qiao Mei had seen so many gamblers in one place.

“Miss, are you here alone?” the guard at the door asked.

“Yes, why? You don’t allow lone players?” Qiao Mei questioned.

“It’s not that. Miss, please exchange for chips here. We do not allow anyone to bring any communication equipment or other things into this place. Only money is allowed. Please put all your belongings in the cabinet over there,” the guard at the door said.

Qiao Mei only exchanged 50 dollars worth of chips. Big bets were still uncommon in this era. After all, in this era, the average income was very low and the bets commensurate with the situation. However, even then, these gamblers could still rack up more than 10,000 dollars in gambling debts, sometimes even more than 100,000 dollars.

Qiao Mei observed the surroundings. There were many different ways to play.

She did not really know how to gamble, so she chose the simplest game, Sic Bo. She sat down at the table and the people around stopped what they were doing. Everyone looked at her curiously. It was very rare to see such a beautiful woman in the gambling den.

“Why? I can’t play? Or I’m not welcome here?” Qiao Mei questioned.

“That’s not it. Miss, do you want to bet big or small?” the croupier asked Qiao Mei with a smile.

Qiao Mei placed her hand on the table and the butterfly mark on her chest warmed slightly. She could clearly see the numbers on the dice in the dice cup.

“I’ll bet big.” Qiao Mei threw out half of the chips she was holding. Everyone was stunned by Qiao Mei’s action. They had never seen anyone play like this. “Does this woman know how to play? It’s clearly small!”

“Stupid people always have lots of money. She’ll lose everything in a while! How can she play like this!”

“It doesn’t matter. If she loses, I can lend her some money. If she can’t pay me back, then she can pay using her body! It’s no loss to me since she’s such a beautiful woman! ”

“Hahaha! Count me in! I want to have a taste of this beauty too!”

The people around Qiao Mei said all sorts of obscene things, making her feel nauseous. These people looked normal on the outside, but in this underground gambling den, they seemed to have completely torn off their usual disguises and exposed their true selves.

“Everyone, place your bets. I’m going to open it now.” After saying that, the croupier opened the dice cup. The number of points added up to “Big”.

“Damn it! This woman actually guessed it right!”

“Oh my... Seriously... This woman is just lucky! She won’t be so lucky in the next round! ”

Qiao Mei smiled disdainfully. This was only the beginning. In the next hour, Qiao Mei did not lose a single round and there was a mountain of chips in front of her by now. Qiao Mei toyed with one of the gambling chips. She looked at the croupier expressionlessly and the croupier was so nervous that he was sweating. He had never met someone like her before. No one could keep winning at the gambling den, unless the person cheated.

However, croupiers like him knew how to cheat too. Moreover, they had all been trained to prevent those really lucky people who won a lot of money from leaving immediately with their winnings. Otherwise, the gambling den would make a loss. The croupiers would cheat to make these people lose all their winnings. This was how the gambling den kept these gamblers coming back.

Qiao Mei, on the other hand, was different. No matter how the croupier cheated, Qiao Mei could accurately know the number of points the dice added up to every time. He did not believe that Qiao Mei did not cheat.

“You cheated! You must have cheated!” shouted a gambler beside Qiao Mei as he pointed at her. He had already lost nearly 5,000 dollars.

“If so, did you see how I cheated?” Qiao Mei questioned.

The rule in the gambling den was that everyone could win money using their own abilities. There was a common understanding that it did not matter if one won through cheating or by luck. One could cheat as long as one could remain undiscovered. However, if one was caught, one would have to leave behind one’s pair of hands..

Chapter 1807: Baited

“I...” That gambler did not know what to say. He really could not tell how Qiao Mei cheated. She had not even made any extra movements the entire time.

“If you didn’t see anything, what right do you have to slander me? Aren’t there any rules in this place? Don’t you care that there are such troublemakers here? How am I supposed to continue playing?” Qiao Mei said as she pointed at the gambler unhappily.

The people in charge could see everything that was happening. A masked man nudged his attendant next to him and said, “Invite this young lady up for a chat and deal with that person who broke the rules. Make sure I don’t see him again in the future.”

“Noted.” The attendant called four bodyguards to go with him. They rapidly surrounded the gambler from before and stuffed his mouth before dragging him outside to deal with him.

The attendant came next to Qiao Mei and said respectfully, "Hello, Miss. I'm sorry about what happened just now. To express our apologies, our boss wants to invite you upstairs. I wonder if you're willing to do us the honor?"

"Sure." Qiao Mei smiled in satisfaction. After so long, the big fish had finally taken the bait.

"This way, please," the attendant said.

"Wait, get someone to pack up my chips so that I can bring them along. This is all my money. What if it gets lost later?" Qiao Mei said as she pointed at the pile of chips.

The attendant called two people to come over and pack up Qiao Mei's chips and carried everything upstairs for her. Qiao Mei finally met the owner of the underground gambling den. He looked different from what she had imagined.

She had imagined the owner to be dressed in a suit and leather shoes, smoking a cigar and drinking red wine with a group of underlings following behind him. However, the person in front of her was dressed casually and wearing a mask. He did not look like an aggressive person and seemed very easy-going instead. He even personally poured tea for her!

"Hello, I'm the owner of this place. You can call me Brother Lei," Brother Lei said, smiling behind the mask.

"I've long heard of Brother Lei's name. Now that I've met you today, I think you really live up to your reputation. Brother Lei is indeed handsome and suave," Qiao Mei said flatteringly.

"You flatter me. I'm not as dazzling as you. You won more than 20,000 dollars

from my place in just an hour. Miss, you're really quite amazing. I actually can't spot how you do it. I wonder if you can help me clear my doubts? Let this group of useless people under me learn from you. Don't worry, I just want to learn your skills. I won't kill you," Brother Lei said sincerely.

“Skills? Brother Lei, you must be joking. I certainly won all the money fair and square. I don’t have any skills and I’m just a very lucky person. What else can it be?” Qiao Mei said with a laugh.

Her words made Brother Lei laugh loudly. This woman was indeed not a simple person if she could remain so calm in front of him.

“Miss, you’re right. Looks like I’m still too inexperienced and not worldly enough. We all know what it’s all about, so let’s drop all this useless talk. What exactly are you here for today?” Brother Lei asked.

“Brother Lei is indeed as sharp as they say. I do have a favor to ask of you,” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

“Miss, your way of asking for help is really special. If you sit around for a while longer, you can even bankrupt this place. How can I continue with my business then?” Brother Lei questioned.

“Brother Lei, please accept my apologies. If I don’t use this method, I won’t be able to meet you. I can return all these chips to you. What I want is very simple. I wonder if you have an emerald necklace in your possession? That is my family heirloom and it’s very precious to me,” Qiao Mei asked tentatively.

Brother Lei stared at Qiao Mei with a cold look in his eyes. Recently, there had been an uproar in the capital as everyone was looking for this necklace. Even the police had started to comb through all the black markets aggressively. The fact that this person in front of him could find out about his den meant that this woman had some connections.

He looked Qiao Mei up and down, and then thought back to all the prominent families in the capital. He chuckled and said, “Miss Qiao, you’re quite capable since you can find me, but what if I say that I don’t have this necklace?”

“Since Brother Lei already knows who I am, then how can you not know that I have the ability to find out if you have the thing I want? Otherwise, I’ll just be kicking up a fuss here in vain,” Qiao Mei said..

Chapter 1808: Be My Sister

“Alright, since Miss Qiao is so upfront, then I’ll be frank too. I did accept this necklace, but it was given to me by someone as collateral. How can I give it to you so easily? You have to give me something to exchange for it, otherwise it’ll be a huge loss for me,” Brother Lei said.

Qiao Mei took out a bottle of dark green medicinal wine from her pocket and said, “Given how resourceful Brother Lei is, you must definitely know about the legendary effects of my family’s ‘divine medicine’. I hear that you have congenital heart disease. This can treat your illness and let you live to a ripe old age,”

Brother Lei narrowed his eyes and looked at Qiao Mei. He had long wanted to buy a few bottles of the Xia family’s “divine medicine”, but this thing was rare and even the black market did not have much supply. The Xia family had given all the medicinal wine to retired veterans from the army, so it was impossible for people like him to get their hands on it.

“Hahaha! Miss Qiao, you really come prepared. It’s really rare to see a woman like you. Aren’t you afraid that I’ll go back on my word after taking the medicine and detain you here to blackmail the Xia family into giving me money in exchange for you?” Brother Lei questioned.

“Brother Lei, you’re such a joker. If I disappear or something happens to me, do you think my family will let you off? It’s better for Brother Lei to be magnanimous and let me go. Harmony is the bearer of wealth. Isn’t it better for us to each take what we need? It’s not good to end up with a lose-lose situation,” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

“I only do business with friends. Are you saying you want to be my friend? How do we do that? Not everyone can be my friend,” Brother Lei said. “I’ll treat your illness so that you won’t have to worry about your health. You can then focus fully on your business in the future. I don’t want much in return. All I want is to exchange medicinal wine for that necklace. What do you think, Brother Lei?” Qiao Mei asked.

Brother Lei shook his head and chuckled before saying, “That’s not enough. If you can guarantee that the police and your backers won’t cause trouble for us after this, then I’ll be more willing to be your friend.”

For people in his line of work, why would they care about their lives when there might not be a tomorrow? They all lived their lives on the edge. Every penny they earned was simply a penny in their

pocket. They would much prefer to have support from someone in the military, rather than being able to live to a ripe old age.

“Brother Lei, as long as you don’t do anything overboard, I believe that they won’t come looking for you. You have operated your business here for so many years, so why would you need my help? If you feel that one bottle is not enough, I can give you another bottle. You must have heard that this “divine medicine” is able to revive a dying person. If you are ever in danger, drinking one bottle can save your life.” After saying that, Qiao Mei took out a bottle of golden medicinal wine from her pocket and placed it on the table.

After thinking for a moment, Brother Lei asked his attendant to go to the safe to retrieve the necklace and the other items which Li Hua’s husband had given them.

“These are the things you want. I like your temperament and character. Miss Qiao, why don’t you consider becoming my sister? I can give you all these as a token of my sincerity,” Brother Lei said with a smile.

If Qiao Mei was married to an ordinary man, he would definitely force that man to divorce Qiao Mei and then get hold of her. Regardless of whether she had children or not, he would do it most willingly. It was really rare to see such a smart and bold woman.

However, Qiao Mei had the backing of the Xia family and even the support of other prominent families. He could not have any improper thoughts, but he did not want to lose touch with her. Making her his sister was his best option.

“Brother Lei, you’re really flattering me. I’m just an ordinary woman and I can’t help you with much. I only know how to take care of children and cook. How can I be your sister? Brother Lei, you should go and look for someone else.” Qiao Mei rejected him politely.

The Xia family was a very respectable and decent family. Even if one family member needed a favor from another, they were not allowed to “use the back door”. Moreover, this underground gambling den run by Brother Lei was an illegal business. It would not sit well with the Xia family if she acknowledged the owner of an underground gambling den as her brother. Even before the Xia family could react, Qiao Qiang might have already given her a good beating!

"I won't ask you to do anything. I won't tell you anything about what I do here. I just want you to be my sister. I'm an orphan and don't have any relatives. I just like your temperament very much. How about it? Do you want to give it some thought?" Brother Lei asked..

Chapter 1809: "Guesthouse"

Qiao Mei had only come here to buy back the necklace and she did not expect

Brother Lei to want to become sworn siblings with her. Yao Nian had told Qiao Mei whatever he knew about this underground gambling den. Many years ago, Yao Nian had tried to dig up more information about Brother Lei and found out that he was very likely to be backed by an important member of the government. Furthermore, no one had ever seen what Brother Lei really looked like. He must have other identities.

This gambling den enjoyed the highest status and had lasted the longest in the capital, so there must definitely be more than one group of people behind it. Militarymen in this country had to have their past three generations investigated before they could join the military, so there was definitely no one with a criminal background inside. This was the real reason why Brother Lei wanted to get to know Qiao Mei and befriend her.

"Thank you for thinking so highly of me, Brother Lei, but I really don't have the fortune to accept your kindness," Qiao Mei said seriously.

Brother Lei pursed his lips resignedly. The two bottles which Qiao Mei had placed on the table were truly his "saviors". Human desires were insatiable. Once one was able to satisfy one desire, the next desire would be born. He was no exception. If there was really a day when he was on the verge of death, these things could come in really handy.

"Alright then, you have to leave behind everything you gain from here today. You can only take this necklace with you," Brother Lei said impatiently.

“Brother Lei, thank you for letting me off.” Before Qiao Mei left, she took a long look at the bottles of medicinal wine on the table. She was blindfolded and led out through the back door of the gambling den. The bodyguards brought her to an open area and left her there.

Qiao Mei took off the blindfold. Fortunately, Brother Lei had let her off this time. Otherwise, she could have lost her life inside. Next time, she could not do such things alone and must be even more prepared.

Using the nearby plants, Qiao Mei found the way to the main road which was closest to her. Even if there would not be many people driving by at night, the possibility was still there. Qiao Mei walked quickly towards the main road. It was cold at night and she had taken off all her jewelry before she came to hide her identity. She did not even have the “temperature-regulating bangle” with her.

Fortunately, Qiao Mei had actually prepared three bottles of medicinal wine for Brother Lei. She could not bear to give the last bottle to Brother Lei, so it came in handy now. Qiao Mei drank half of the medicinal wine in the bottle and kept the other half for the rest of the journey.

She slowly walked towards the direction of home. Every time something like this happened, Qiao Mei thought about training an eagle. Then, whenever she needed help, she could whistle and summon it to come and help her send a message. That would be so convenient.

She suddenly heard a car coming up behind her and quickly stretched out her hand to flag it down. When she looked up, she realized that the driver was Xia Wen. She froze, not knowing how to explain the situation to him.

Xia Wen said moodily, “Get in the car! Walking in the wilderness in the middle of the night, you might as well feed yourself to the wolves!”

Qiao Mei scrambled into the front passenger seat and looked at Xia Wen uneasily, hoping that he would say something to her. However, Xia Wen ignored her along the way and did not even look at her.

Just as they were about to reach home, Qiao Mei finally mustered her courage and said, “Eldest Brother, it’s all my fault! You can scold me!”

Xia Wen parked the car in front of the house and said, “Get out first.”

Qiao Mei got out of the car nervously and went into the house. Xu Kang had already prepared hot water and food for her. Qiao Mei did not have her dinner because of this matter! She was already starving by now.

Xia Wen came in and sat opposite Qiao Mei. "Tell me, Heroine Qiao, what have you done?"

Qiao Mei put down her bowl and chopsticks and said, "Um... Eldest Brother, you already know everything?"

"Yao Nian was really worried that something would really happen to you. He told me about it after you entered the gambling den. You're really capable enough to be able to find the entrance. I can't even spot their main door!" Xia Wen said angrily.

"You flatter me... I just happened to find my way in..." Qiao Mei whispered.

"If I hadn't bumped into you! Would you have walked back on foot? Don't you know that you're pregnant! You're really getting too capable! If Xia Zhe finds out about this, he'll definitely skin you alive! So that you learn your lesson well!" Xia Wen said furiously.

Qiao Mei muttered softly, "He won't dare to do it..."

"Huh? What did you say?" Xia Wen stared at Qiao Mei and questioned her.

"I said that you're right! I've learned my lesson! This will never happen again! In the future, I'll report everything I do to the family! I definitely won't let anyone worry about me!" Qiao Mei raised three fingers and made an oath..

Chapter 1810: Pregnant

“What did you use to exchange for the necklace with that person?” Xia Wen asked.

“Just diluted medicinal wine. How can I bear to give real medicinal wine to those people!” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

The first bottle of dark green medicinal wine could indeed cure Brother Lei’s congenital heart disease, but the second bottle of golden medicinal wine was only a bottle of diluted potion. Brother Lei definitely would not let anyone else try such a precious thing. Moreover, once the first bottle of “divine medicine” was proven effective, he would not question the effectiveness of the second bottle.

“There can’t be a next time! Absolutely not! Do you hear me! If you secretly do such a dangerous thing again, I’ll tell Mother and let you get the same treatment as Xia He!” Xia Wen threatened.

“I promise I won’t dare to do it anymore! I definitely won’t do it again!” Qiao Mei said obediently.

Xia Wen lectured Qiao Mei sternly and then made a call to give Yao Nian a good scolding before he calmed down. He went to the children’s room to take a look at Xia Fan and Xia Xing before returning to work. Qiao Mei handed the necklace to Xia Wen and left it to him to decide how to best deal with this matter. Xia Fan and Xia Xing could talk now and they addressed everyone in their crisp and clear voices, making everyone overjoyed.

Xia He had already been grounded in Xu Lan’s house for an entire week. Qiao Mei had to put in a lot of effort to get Xia He out of the house by using the excuse that she was feeling scared about the upcoming prenatal checkup and needed someone to accompany her.

“Sigh... it’s so difficult to see you! That’s all I can do. You still have to continue working hard,” Qiao Mei said helplessly.

“It’s already good enough that you can get me out! Do you know how strictly Mother has been keeping an eye on me these past few days! She even wants me to go and take the college entrance examination! She wants me to get into university like you. But I had already gone to military school back then and it was as difficult as what you had to go through to get into university. I don’t want to go through it again,” Xia He said.

“Hang in there for a few more days. I’ll think of a way to free you from

Mother’s clutches. She’s just scared out of her wits by what happened to you. She also needs some time to calm down. Don’t be angry with her,” Qiao Mei said.

“Your results are out, right? Are you number one in the capital?” Xia He asked expectantly.

“Keep a low profile! I’ve already applied to Capital University to study agriculture. The admission letter will be issued soon,” Qiao Mei said with a smile.

The two of them chatted happily on the way to the hospital. When they reached the floor where Xia Fangs office was located, they heard someone making a scene. It even sounded like the person wanted to pick a fight with Xia Fang!

Qiao Mei and Xia He hurriedly went to stand in front of Xia Fang to shield her.

When they took a closer look, they realized that it was Jiang Yi and Tan Jing!

What was going on? Why would these two people come to the hospital to cause trouble?

“The Xia family is heartless! My daughter is clearly able to have children! However, the Xia family keeps saying that she is infertile! They make my daughter suffer all kinds of injustice! Now that my daughter is remarried, she’s pregnant! The problem has always been Xia Wen! My poor daughter is framed!” Jiang Yi cried.

“Nonsense! When has our family ever lied to you!” Xia He shouted agitatedly.

“Then tell me why my daughter can get pregnant after leaving your family! It’s because you people want to hide the fact that Xia Wen is infertile and so you blame it all on my daughter!” Jiang Yi shouted furiously.

Tan Jing just stood quietly behind Jiang Yi and looked coldly at the Xia family members. She also did not know why she suddenly became pregnant, but she was certain that this matter had something to do with the Xia family.

Xia He looked at Tan Jings stomach in shock. Tan Jing was actually pregnant! How was this possible? At that time, everyone in the Xia family knew about this matter and Xia Wen went for a checkup every year. It was definitely not Xia Wen who was the problem!

The hospital sent security officers to chase Jiang Yi and Tan Jing out. Jiang Yi stood at the door and scolded, "Don't worry! I'll come again! Just you wait!"

Xia Fang sat on the chair and massaged her temples. She had been listening to Jiang Yi's yells the whole day and finally had some peace and quiet. "Aunt, is what they say true? Is Tan Jing really pregnant?" Xia He asked.

"Yes, I did the checkup for her. She's indeed pregnant," Xia Fang said with some annoyance.

"How is that possible! She's clearly infertile! Didn't we already get this clear a few years ago? There's definitely nothing wrong with my eldest brother! Can it be that those folk remedies Tan Jing use really work?" Xia He said..