

Folly 16

Chapter 16: The Things on the Ridge

On the ridge, a few scattered families were cutting the rice stalks under the blazing sun. The harvest was good this year. They all said that the land follows the year, the year follows the sky, and the sky looks after people. Now that the war has paused, it immediately brought a bumper year. How could the villagers not be happy?

But this was still far from enough. The taxes owed to the government had been unpaid for a year now. Seeing that the war had just ceased, the court was also waiting for the new rice to cook. So the newly harvested rice had to first pay the taxes before it could be considered one's own. Those who farmed landlord's land also had to pay land rent besides the tax. But even so, everyone was still happy at heart.

Harvest was always the most important string in everyone's heart!

"Dad, take a break, let me do this here."

On the ridge, Mu Dashan, the third son of the Mu Family, could not care less about the sweat droplets about to fall into his mouth, and he shouted at Mr. Mu, who was still cutting the rice.

"Break? I've just come to the field, haven't done much work yet, how could I rest? We must finish harvesting the rice from this acre of land this afternoon. The sooner we cut it, the sooner we can plow the fields, by then, that's two acres less of work."

Following Mr. Mu's gaze, the golden rice stood irregularly in front, the grains on top full and bulging, emitting an enticing golden glow.

The most important thing for farmers was the rice. Whether the rice harvest was good or not, the grains were the main factor. The panicles neat, few empty shells, large grains, and this year's rice met these conditions perfectly, making anyone looking at it smile joyfully.

But the joy of this harvest was not the same in everyone's eyes. At least Mu Dazhong, the second son of the Mu Family who was lagging four or five meters behind Mr. Mu and Mu Dashan, didn't feel it.

A good harvest meant more work, more early mornings, and late nights. After all, light rice with empty shells was always lighter than full grains. Even the extra harvest might not really benefit them. With his parents favoring the eldest brother so much, who knows who would end up benefiting.

Better to have a smaller harvest and less work.

So, Mu Dazhong's pace grew progressively slower. When Mu Dashan finished cutting a ridge of rice, Mu Dazhong hadn't moved an inch from his previous spot.

"Dad, look at the second brother, been working for so long but hasn't moved an inch. He's clearly slacking off!" Mu Danyan, the fifth son of the Mu Family, shouted while pointing at Mu Dazhong. But in truth, he wasn't doing much better than Mu Dazhong.

The fifth son of the Mu Family was one of only two sons still unmarried, and although he was not young, having turned twenty this year, he was considered an older young man.

Ordinarily, farm children got married at sixteen or seventeen, bringing in a wife, living in a separate room, yet not dividing from the family.

Because he had not yet married, he still lived in a large room with Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu, but in separate rooms.

Notably, his behavior was much like Mrs. Lin, Mu Dazhong's wife, having a penchant for tattling. Any little thing that happened in the family, if he saw it, he would definitely go tell Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu, then gleefully clap when bad luck befell those he reported on.

"What's all this noise? Which eye of yours saw me slacking? Keep yapping and I'll tell mom about your nasty affair with widow Chen Hong from the next village and let her deal with you."

"You... Fine, second brother, you dare to threaten me." Mu Danyan, hearing his second brother daring to threaten him, immediately refused to budge, throwing aside the sickle in his hands with an air that he was done working.

"What are you arguing about, hoping others won't notice you're slacking off? Keep rambling, and once the rice is done, you'll be out picking cow dung every day. Can't gather two hundred pounds of cow dung, none of you get to enter the gate of Old Mu Family."

Mr. Mu finally spoke, and his words left Mu Dazhong and Mu Danyan speechless.

Cow dung wasn't common in the village because there were only a few cows. To collect two hundred pounds of it, one would have to travel across many villages.

And picking cow dung was such an embarrassing task that no grown man was willing to do. It was always assigned to children to handle.

"Dad, I'm not going to pick cow dung. Let Shuang do it. She smells worse than cow dung, and when she goes, she can make the cow dung stink a bit more. When we burn it, it won't even smell bad to her." Mu Dazhong stepped back, looking completely unwilling.

"Yes, yes, dad, let Shuang go. Her body odor can just about cover the smell of cow dung."

On the matter of Mu Shuangshuang, Mu Danyan and Mu Dazhong surprisingly agreed for once. After all, that so-called niece could really turn one's stomach.

But Mu Dashan felt uncomfortable about it. One was his second brother, the other his fifth brother, yet they had no qualms about speaking ill of their own daughter.

Mu Dashan's hands slowed down in work, and Mr. Mu, noticing this, quickly interjected.

"What are you saying? That's your niece, whether a second uncle or a fifth uncle has no right to talk about her that way. Hurry and finish cutting the rice in front of you! No dinner if it's not done today!"

There were dozens of ridges of rice to go, and to finish meant working till late into the night. Mu Dazhong widened his fox-like slender eyes, quickly plotting, a calculating light flashing across them.

Suddenly Mu Dazhong clutched his belly and shouted, "Oh no, my stomach hurts terribly!"

"What's wrong, second brother..." Mu Dashan was the first to rush over. Even though his second brother had just badmouthed his daughter, Mu Dashan still showed concern for him.

This was possibly the difference between people.

"What else could it be, just slacking off!" Mu Danyan remarked sarcastically from the side.

"Fifth brother, you..." Mu Dazhong angrily retorted, then clutched his belly again, wailing continuously, even attracting Mr. Mu's attention.

"What's the matter, second son, feeling unwell?"

"Dad, I think he's got heatstroke. His face is pale; he needs to see a doctor immediately."

At the mention of seeing a doctor, Mu Dazhong panicked, quickly waving his hands. What a joke, going to the doctor would reveal his act!

"I'm fine, fine. Just stomach ache, must have eaten too much at noon. Now I just need to relieve myself. Dad, let me go first; you all carry on with the field work. I'll come back once I'm done."

After speaking, Mu Dazhong got up and ran towards the field ridge, and in no time, he was nowhere to be seen.

"Hmph, told you he's slacking. Won't be back all afternoon!" Mu Danyan commented sarcastically, then plunked down on the ground, refusing to work as well.