

Folly 171

Chapter 171: Love It So Much That You Can't Let Go

"But..." Little Zhi still wanted to say something, but Mu Shuangshuang's pleading eyes forced her to swallow her words.

Little Zhi was at the age where she was curious about everything. If you added up everything she said, it would probably be like the book "Ten Thousand Whys."

Usually, Mu Shuangshuang would answer her questions, but at this moment, all she wanted was to quickly help Xiao Han take off his clothes.

"Xiao Han, stop dawdling and take off your clothes. I'll hang them for you to dry."

"Sis, you... you turn around too. I'll hang my clothes myself." Xiao Han's face was as red as a boiled lobster shell.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly realized that this little guy was being bashful not just because of Little Zhi, but because of her too.

Come to think of it, hasn't she seen everything already?

But, well, he's a kid with his own ideas, which is normal, and she had to respect that, right?

Mu Shuangshuang turned around, waiting for Xiao Han to take his clothes off. She gave Little Zhi a few instructions and then went up the mountain by herself.

Whenever she came here, she thought of picking some wild vegetables to make the trip worthwhile.

As usual, she picked some fresh wood ear mushrooms and a handful of wild greens before heading down the mountain.

Xiao Han had already put his clothes back on. When he saw Mu Shuangshuang, he ran up to her and checked, as if to see if she was hurt.

"Let's go home!"

With a bountiful harvest, Mu Shuangshuang and Little Zhi headed back more energetically than usual, walking with heads held high—so spirited.

Back at home, Lu Yuanfeng and the Zhao Brothers were busying themselves. Yu Si Niang wasn't home; Mu Dashan said she went to Lu Yuanfeng's house to make lunch.

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't spare a moment for rest and headed straight to Lu Yuanfeng's house, carrying a basket.

Once lunch was ready, everyone enjoyed a sumptuous meal at Lu Yuanfeng's house.

Lu Yuanfeng followed Mu Shuangshuang back home. She had mentioned to him the day before that she had something for him, but they hadn't run into each other earlier in the morning since Mu Shuangshuang had left early.

"Lu Yuanfeng, wait here for a moment."

After speaking to Lu Yuanfeng, Mu Shuangshuang went into her room. When she came out, she was holding two bags made of pigskin, more polished than the one Little Zhi had made, and much nicer.

"This bag is made from that wild boar skin you got last time. The big one is for you; you can use it to carry some tools. I reinforced it, and even the stitching is done with thick thread.

Even if a hammer is inside, it won't fall out and hit your feet. The small one is Yuanbao's, for him to carry spare change more conveniently.

Inside your bag, I've made a few pairs of gloves for you. When we go plowing this afternoon, you can wear them so you won't have to worry about snakes or getting injured."

The gloves were rushed out overnight, only two pairs. In all her time here, Mu Shuangshuang hadn't seen anyone in the village working with gloves.

Everyone worked with bare hands, and after a day's work, they often had blisters of all sizes on their hands. It hurt, not to mention it slowed down their work the following day.

Lu Yuanfeng couldn't put down the bag Mu Shuangshuang gave him. Although he had never seen anything like it before, he knew what Shuangshuang gave was always good stuff.

He was quite keen to open the bag and see what the gloves Mu Shuangshuang mentioned were. The term was very unfamiliar to him, never heard it before.

But he felt embarrassed to do so, especially since Shuangshuang hadn't explicitly said he could look at it now.

His curiosity was like a cat scratching at his heart, itching to take a peek.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't notice at first. When Lu Yuanfeng kept staring at the bag for a while, she suddenly understood.

"You can open it and have a look. I can show you how to wear them. If you find them useful, I can make a few more pairs."

Lu Yuanfeng untied the bag, and the cotton gloves were revealed inside.

Lu Yuanfeng looked at the gloves in his hands with confusion until Mu Shuangshuang picked up a pair and put them on her hands, and only then did Lu Yuanfeng react.

The cotton had decent breathability, was the right thickness, and didn't feel cumbersome when worn.

"These are amazing, Shuangshuang, how did you come up with this?"

Lu Yuanfeng held onto the gloves, trying them on his own hands, and played with them like a toy.

Because of these gloves, Mu Shuangshuang rose a few ranks higher in Lu Yuanfeng's mind.

"Ah, that's a secret!" Mu Shuangshuang pretended to be mysterious, then laughed and went inside the house.

After lunch, it was time for a little nap.

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The next day, the entire Old Mu Family set out grandly. Today was the day for rice transplanting at the Old Mu Family, so everyone except Old Mrs. Mu and Mu Dashan went out to work.

Mu Dashan had been called by Old Mrs. Mu to work, but Mu Shuangshuang had told Old Mrs. Mu about Mu Dashan's health, though she didn't mention the cost to avoid having Old Mrs. Mu bring it up to Mu Dashan and make him feel bad.

Old Mrs. Mu did throw a bit of a tantrum, but eventually, it was Mr. Mu who told her to come out and work, and she finally settled down.

The children were tasked with pulling seedlings in the rice field. The seedlings were tied up with straw and thrown to the bank, waiting for Mu Danian and Mu Dazhong to carry them in baskets.

If you had to guess what was in highest demand during the double cropping season, it would inevitably be people, cattle, and carts.

The Old Mu Family only had one wheelbarrow, which was fine for pushing a couple of bags of rice, but for transporting seedlings, it was far from sufficient.

So Mr. Mu designated Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian as the porters.

Mu Danian was in the lead, bent over and looking like he could barely move.

"I'm telling you, I'm still injured, so put fewer seedlings in my basket. If I get crushed under the weight, it's not going to be good for any of you."

Mu Shuangshuang decided not to play into Mu Danian's whim. He asked for fewer seedlings, so she had Xiao Han and Little Zhi stuff them in like crazy. In no time, Mu Danian's basket was overflowing with seedlings.

"Hey, you little brat, can't you understand human language? I said don't put them in my basket."

"Uncle Wu, Grandpa is already urging. Aren't you going quickly? I heard Grandpa say that whoever slacks off today, he'll have a piece of their flesh cut off."

The Old Mu Family's work was already behind schedule, so to speed up, Mr. Mu had to press Mu Danian and Mu Dazhong to work harder.

He had given the two of them a stern talking to about slacking off and made them promise not to do so in front of everyone.

Mu Danian turned around and indeed saw Mr. Mu waving at them.

"Damn, thought I could get away with less work. Now I have to do everything myself."

"Ugh, so heavy!" Mu Danian tried his basket, and it was just impossible.

"Ow, this job's going to kill me! I quit, I quit!" Mu Danian threw down the carrying pole, refusing to work.

"Fifth brother, just keep calm. Don't drag me down with your laziness. I'm off first."

Mu Dazhong's seedlings had been loaded by Mu Qingqing, so there weren't many in his basket, and he could move nimbly.

Mu Danian was quite envious, looking at his second brother's basket and then at his own.

Darn, heartless brat!

Chapter 172: Shameless! (Part 1)

Mu Danian sat on the slope of the field, legs spread apart, looking like he wouldn't work even if he died.

Today he was being stubborn; whoever gave him so many seedlings, let them carry it!

"Sis, Uncle Five hasn't worked at all, what should we do, keep working?"

Xiao Han lowered his voice, speaking to Mu Shuangshuang who was working nearby.

Mu Shuangshuang paused while pulling seedlings; this Mu Danian was not just any troublemaker. With such blatant laziness, the remaining work would likely end up being done by the third branch. She couldn't let him be lazy like this.

"Here's what we'll do, wait for me, I'll go see Grandpa."

The sooner they finish the rush planting, the sooner the third branch can get Old Mu Family's small piece of land.

Mu Danian saw Mu Shuangshuang heading up the slope and said mockingly.

"Oh, the brat is going to complain! Go ahead, let your grandpa see how much of this heartless seedling you've given me."

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't angry, last time she beat Mu Danian until his nose was bruised and swollen. His face still hadn't healed, looking comically swollen and purple.

"Uncle Five, you're strong and healthy, you should do some work, otherwise when can we gather enough for Uncle's tuition.

You're thinking about living a good life, right? Then you have to work hard for Uncle. Good times don't fall from the sky."

"Bah, you say it easily. You, from the third branch, can just wipe your butt and leave, leaving a mess for me to clean up.

Why don't you from the third branch work, and there's my third brother, who lazes around at home every day, just trying to work me to death. Don't think I don't know."

"Uncle Five, it seems your eyes aren't good. Except for my dad who's recuperating at home because of his poor health, everyone else from the third branch is here working.

Even five-year-old Little Zhi is working. Could it be, like my grandma said, your eyes are covered in crap?"

"Hey, you brat, you're defying me now, even dare to say that to me. Watch me slap you!"

Mu Danian raised his hand and rushed at Mu Shuangshuang with a menacing posture, scaring Xiao Han. Xiao Han waded through the water in the field's ridge, prepared to rush up and save Mu Shuangshuang.

In his eyes, his sister was standing still, seemingly waiting for his Uncle Five to come and beat her. He couldn't let his sister be beaten; he wanted to protect her.

But looking further down, he unexpectedly saw in his sister's eyes a hint of craftiness, and perhaps a touch of treachery?

Xiao Han paused his steps, remembering his sister's abilities, and automatically stepped back a few paces, leaving the spot for his sister.

As Mu Daniao approached, just as he raised his hand to slap her, Mu Shuangshuang grabbed his arm, and with an over-the-shoulder throw, hurled Mu Daniao away.

Mu Shuangshuang executed the move with seamless precision, not a hint of delay or messiness.

With a "thud," Mu Daniao's head plunged into the muddy water in Old Mu Family's seedling field, swallowing several gulps of mud-water, while his legs flailed in the air, kicking uncontrollably.

Xiao Han dashed forward, collided forcefully against Mu Daniao's thigh, and feigned concern, "Uncle Five, what's wrong? Uncle Five..."

Another "thud," Mu Daniao rolled over, now covered entirely in mud.

"Oh Grandpa, look quick, Uncle Five wants to avoid work, he's jumping into the field, Grandpa..."

Mu Shuangshuang shouted loudly, many people busy working on the ridge turned their attention toward her.

Mu Daniao's laziness was well-known, and so was Mr. Mu's bias.

But no one spoke up, as such family matters were usually ignored by outsiders.

However, since Mu Shuangshuang brought it up, it was different. With her leading the way, and since the third branch had split, it wasn't under Old Mu Family's control anymore.

Right now, the third branch was still helping Old Mu Family, even five-year-old Little Zhi came out, yet Mu Danian continued to be lazy; who could endure this?

"I say, Old Mu, your Danian is not going to work, even jumps into the field to avoid labor.

Knowing that water in the field is shallow, won't drown him, he still insists on messing around. If he keeps this up, I doubt anyone will want to propose marriage for him."

The usually fair-minded Old Qian couldn't help but express his thoughts to Mr. Mu, even mentioning Mu Danian's marital prospects.

Mu Danian's marriage was a concern for Mr. Mu; not because he cared much about this son, but because Mu Dade was set to become a high official. If his fifth brother can't get a wife, it'd be a laughingstock.

"Let me see what this brat is up to!"

Mr. Mu stormed over angrily, with a shoulder pole that Mu Dazhong had just brought him, the few people working in the field loosened up a little without him supervising.

Especially Mu Dazhong who had just brought seedlings over and was now resting on the slope.

"Hey, did any of you bring water, I'm thirsty." Mu Dazhong scanned everyone in the field before speaking.

Yu Si Niang had brought water, which Shuangshuang had given her in the morning, saying it was boiled with fishy-smelling plants, good for relieving heat.

She's been thirsty for a while but couldn't bring herself to drink it, considering it was her daughter's first homemade tea.

"Mrs. Lin, did you bring water?" Seeing no answer, Mu Dazhong first asked his wife.

"Would you not know if I brought water? There's a jug of water on the slope, drink it and be done, really getting exhausted."

Mrs. Lin spoke reluctantly, rubbing her sore waist. Why was she doing so much work?

Why could that wretched Mrs. Jin rest, and the old hag just yelled all day, it hurts terribly...

"You woman, your temper is growing, continue nagging, I'll send you back to Old Lin Family."

In the heat and with much work, the two of them from the second branch spoke harshly, Mu Danian cursed Mrs. Lin, then walked a few steps along the field ridge and found Yu Si Niang's water jug.

"Who's water jug is this, I'll drink it!"

Yu Si Niang hadn't had time to stop him, and Mu Dazhong drank more than half the jug in a go.

Not only did he drink it, he didn't tighten the cap, spilling the rest all over the ridge.

By the time Yu Si Niang noticed, the jug was completely empty.

Looking at the now empty jug, Yu Si Niang's stubbornness flared up.

"Second Brother, what's the matter with you, who said you can touch my jug, why didn't you tighten the cap?"

"You say I touched your jug, and therefore I did? Which eye saw me?"

Mu Dazhong was utterly shameless, thinking by using third branch's water, it's their fortune.

"You... and you find yourself right, you clearly asked whose jug it is."

"I did say it, but it doesn't prove it's yours."

Mu Dazhong's shamelessness was truly unmatched, leaving Yu Si Niang with no choice but to take the loss quietly.

Without Mu Dashan, she'd have no backup, surely couldn't defeat Mu Dazhong, not as thick-skinned as him.

Meanwhile, in Old Mu Family's seedling field, a dramatic scene was unfolding...

Chapter 173: Take Good Care

Mr. Mu grabbed a carrying pole and struck Mu Danian, who had just crawled up from the field.

Mu Danian clutched his head, crying out in pain.

"Dad, I know I was wrong, I know I was wrong..."

Being lazy at work was something Mu Danian was accustomed to; in the past, if he didn't work, he was at most scolded a few times or threatened, never actually beaten like now.

Such a thick carrying pole hitting his body really hurt deep to his bones!

"Oh oh oh... Dad, take it easy, it hurts..." Mu Danian was "dancing" on the field ridge, his hands and feet flapping around, looking just like someone performing a ritual dance.

Mu Shuangshuang covered her mouth and laughed secretly; it was rare for Mr. Mu to not protect his own, and to be so willing to use a heavy hand, it was on par with when she and Lu Yuanfeng ganged up on Mu Danian with a sack last time.

"Today I'll teach you a good lesson, make you lazy again!" Mr. Mu shouted while hitting.

"Fifth Uncle, why are you dazing, hurry up and get to work!" Mu Shuangshuang "kindly" reminded aloud.

"You brat, it's all your fault, it's all your fault, you just wait, wait..."

Mu Danian, covered in mud, despite being in such pain, still didn't forget to curse Mu Shuangshuang. He thought in his heart, if Mu Shuangshuang hadn't kicked him into the field and tattled, he wouldn't have been beaten.

Mu Danian struggled to run to a bundle of seedlings, picked up a basket, and dashed away quickly.

The way he moved swiftly, there was none of his usual laziness.

Sure enough, usually Mu Danian was just pretending, saying he had no strength, couldn't do work, were all lies!

"Grandpa is truly the head of the family, even Fifth Uncle only listens to you. This way, the work in the field can be finished quickly." Mu Shuangshuang flattered Mr. Mu with a few words, and only then did the expression on Mr. Mu's face ease up.

Mr. Mu thought: The work at home really needs to be done, if Fifth could do more work, the family could save more silver for Da De!

"Shuang, you are the oldest here, although the third branch has split, they came from the Old Mu Family after all, as a sister, you also have a responsibility for Old Mu Family matters.

If Qing and Gou Dan are lazy at work, you should give them a good lesson, in short, urge them to finish the work as soon as possible this morning."

This was probably the politest sentence Mr. Mu had said, Mu Shuangshuang was anything but polite, she just didn't have a reason to discipline Mu Qingqing.

"Grandpa, why let that brat watch over us, she hasn't even done much work herself." Mu Qingqing was dissatisfied, she didn't want Mu Shuangshuang to lead her no matter what.

"Qing, you better behave too, don't think I don't know the little tricks you and your father play, if the work in the field isn't finished, in the end, it's still you guys who have to do it!"

Mr. Mu's lessons made Mu Qingqing much more obedient, but her eyes still had a murderous look as she stared at Mu Shuangshuang.

In her eyes, Mu Shuangshuang was a jinx, ever since she showed up, the work she had to do increased, and now she could freely discipline her, who knew if she'd deliberately discipline her?

Mu Shuangshuang chuckled, the angrier Mu Qingqing was, the happier she felt.

"Grandpa, don't worry, I'll definitely take good care of sister Qingqing and brother Gou Dan. But as far as I'm concerned, dividing tasks like before is better.

Whoever finishes their work first gets to rest, if not, they stay here to continue working at noon, everyone has their own work, so no one will idle and have others complete their tasks."

This is the best way to prevent the people from Old Mu Family from being lazy, and it's also the best way for honest people to get some rest.

If those capable of working must do extra work, then the remaining people will only get lazier.

"You..." Mu Qingqing's face changed, she didn't want tasks to be divided, last time tasks were divided, Lu Yuanfeng helped that brat finish the work in a day, while she didn't finish hers even after several days.

"Grandpa, I don't agree, we are one big family, we should work together, how can we just divide the work."

Mr. Mu directly ignored Mu Qingqing's words, he waved his hand and said to Mu Shuangshuang and Mu Qingqing, "Qing, you and Gou Dan finish pulling these seedlings, and Shuang and Xiao Han over there, whoever finishes first leaves first, anyone who doesn't finish stay here at noon and skip lunch."

Having assigned tasks, Mr. Mu returned to the field and assigned tasks to the daughters-in-law.

With tasks assigned, just like Mu Shuangshuang said, the work in the field quickly picked up pace; Lin, who was used to slacking off, even started working with both hands, as for Mu Dazhong, he was unexpectedly focused.

In one morning, Old Mu Family planted seedlings in several acres of land, the efficiency much higher than usual.

At lunch time, Mr. Mu gave a command and those who had finished their work started heading home, while Mu Danian tried to slack off and follow them but got caught by Mr. Mu.

"Fifth, today don't eat lunch, along with Qing and Gou Dan, you finish the work in the field before you leave."

"Grandpa..."

"Dad..."

Mu Qingqing and Mu Danian said simultaneously.

"No use discussing it, from today until the harvest, no work, no food!"

Under the hot sun, Mu Danian and Mu Qingqing worked on their tasks in the field, while Mu Shuangshuang prepared lunch for the Zhao Brothers in Lu Yuanfeng's home in the shortest time.

The speed of building the kitchen and pigsty at home was faster than Mu Shuangshuang expected, and by the time she returned home, the house was already taking shape, with a stack of timber piled up like a mountain in the morning reduced by more than half.

When working, Lu Yuanfeng and the Zhao Brothers all worked like mad, barely stopping to drink water, and Mu Shuangshuang seeing the barrel of water almost untouched, shook her head helplessly.

"Lu Yuanfeng, Da Niu, Da Hu, hurry up and take a break, it's already noon, go home and eat lunch."

Upon Mu Shuangshuang's shout, Lu Yuanfeng and the Zhao Brothers came down from the racks.

Knowing Mu Shuangshuang had to plant seedlings in the morning, only after finishing work she could cook, none of them said anything unnecessary, they went directly home to have lunch.

Yu Si Niang returned home, gulped down two full ladles of water, and finally calmed down.

This much water naturally caught Mu Shuangshuang's attention.

"Mom, didn't you drink the water this morning?"

Water boiled with fish mint has good cooling effects and is quite thirst-quenching, Yu Si Niang shouldn't have drunk water so fiercely.

Yu Si Niang hesitated for a moment but still told Mu Shuangshuang what Mu Dazhong said in the morning.

"So, Mom hasn't drunk water all morning, all thanks to that bastard?" Mu Shuangshuang squinted her eyes, her face suddenly clouded.

Yu Si Niang herself felt quite embarrassed, being bullied like this as an adult.

"Mom, it's okay, we're not angry, this afternoon listen to me, let's teach Second Uncle well, let him know not to touch what's not his!"

Chapter 174: Mu Dazhong Has a Dream Disorder

Mu Shuangshuang was speaking with all her hair standing on end.

Suffice it to say, she was extremely angry at this moment!

Yu Si Niang naturally couldn't tell her daughter to let it go, after all, she was the one who brought it up first.

"Shuangshuang, whatever you want to do, I'll support you, but you mustn't hurt yourself, okay?"

Knowing that her daughter had ideas and that she was determined, Yu Si Niang made up her mind to never hold her daughter back in the future, no matter what.

"Okay, Mom, you go have lunch first, I'll head out for a bit!"

After speaking, Mu Shuangshuang went out alone through the side door. If she remembered correctly, the last time she was chased by a wild boar, she saw a long stretch of white flowers growing on the hillside from a distance, which should be the Mandala Flower mentioned in martial arts dramas.

The Mandala Flower has a hallucinogenic effect; using it on Mu Dazhong couldn't be better.

It took Mu Shuangshuang about the time for three sticks of incense to pick the Mandala Flower on the mountain before coming down. The people of the Old Mu Family were already preparing to go out to work.

She quickly gobbled down a few bites of food and stuffed some Mandala Flower petals into Yu Si Niang's teapot, covered the lid, and left the house.

The afternoon work was the same as in the morning, pulling seedlings. But when Mu Shuangshuang arrived in the field and saw Mu Qingqing still working alone, her mood immediately improved.

At this moment, Mu Qingqing was feeling dizzy, her vision blurry, and she had to work without having eaten; she felt like crying.

And Gou Dan was being mischievous at this moment, "Sis, do you know what we ate for lunch?"

"It was meat, big chunks of fat meat." Gou Dan's words were incredibly irritating.

Originally, eating meat at the Old Mu Family was a rare occasion, and this time just so happened when Mu Qingqing wasn't present. Her face immediately fell.

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't understand; a few slices of meat stir-fried with vegetables, not to mention it was fatty meat, and most of the meat ended up in Mu Zhenzhen's mouth. Even then, Gou Dan wanted to boast.

Speaking of which, Mu Zhenzhen was still Old Mrs. Mu's nemesis. Not only have the meals been varied these days, but the regular guest at the dining table, black bean paste, was reportedly dumped by Mu Zhenzhen secretly.

This luckily was done by Mu Zhenzhen, otherwise, anyone else would have been skinned by Old Mrs. Mu.

"Sis, how much longer do you think Second Aunt will stay at our house?" Gou Dan sniffed, remembering the meat aroma, he was hungry again.

"Get lost, if you slack off in the afternoon, don't come back home tonight." Mu Qingqing gave Gou Dan a push and continued her work.

She didn't even hope for lunch, and if she didn't work, she'd lose her dinner too.

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Mu Dazhong, as usual, didn't bring water. After working for a while, he found Yu Si Niang's cup and gulped down all her water.

Indeed, the water Yu Si Niang brought was delicious.

So refreshing!

Yu Si Niang kept her eyes on Mu Dazhong. Before she left, Shuangshuang gave her some water, saying there was something added to it that wouldn't kill but would teach Mu Dazhong a good lesson.

Yu Si Niang wasn't sure what it was, but she trusted her daughter wouldn't harm anyone. Watching Mu Dazhong drink the water, Yu Si Niang felt a bit scared.

If something truly happened, what would they do?

As Yu Si Niang was worrying, Mu Shuangshuang walked over, holding two large handfuls of seedlings. She was there to watch the fun but couldn't show it too obviously, so she found this excuse to come.

"Mom, let me help you plant the seedlings!"

Mu Shuangshuang said and then started planting, while secretly observing the surroundings.

Mu Shuangshuang worked quickly, plus the seedling field hadn't run out, so Mr. Mu didn't say anything.

But Mu Dazhong, as time went by, began feeling a bit hot. At first, he thought it was the sun being too strong, the weather too hot, but gradually, as he got hotter, and his vision began to blur, his mind flared.

The moment he looked up, his eyes almost popped out.

In front of him, a young maiden in a red belly band was completely naked, her white legs, smooth and glossy skin...

Indeed, she was a beauty; the maiden beckoned to Mu Dazhong, and he started taking off his clothes.

First, the outer coat. As he took off the coat, Mr. Mu noticed but thought it was hot, so taking off a piece of clothing was fine.

But when Mu Dazhong took off the second piece, baring his chest, Mr. Mu was already unhappy.

Others could bare their chests to work, but not the people of the Old Mu Family. If people knew Da De had a brother who liked working shirtless, what would they do?

"Old Second, put your clothes back on!" Mr. Mu shouted loudly.

Mu Dazhong only had eyes for the beauty; his ears couldn't hear Mr. Mu's words, and he charged toward the beauty, accidentally hitting Mu Danian, who was picking seedlings.

"Come, beauty, let brother kiss you..." Mu Dazhong made a salacious smile, and started kissing Mu Danian wildly.

Slick saliva smeared all over Mu Danian's face; being kissed by a man, Mu Danian immediately felt nauseous and threw up.

"He's gone mad, Dad, Second Brother's gone mad..." As if that wasn't enough, Mu Dazhong started taking off his pants...

With the pants off, the Old Mu Family's dignity was utterly lost.

Mr. Mu couldn't care about anything else and rushed up to pull Mu Dazhong apart.

"Beast, in broad daylight, you dare..."

"Hey, you ruthless scoundrel, what are you doing!" Mrs. Lin also saw, her husband was hugging and kissing a man non-stop, saliva almost gone, and dared to take off clothes.

Mrs. Lin scolded, seeing no effect, she joined the rush.

The field ridge was already small; with four people there, naturally, there wasn't enough space. In the pulling struggle, Mr. Mu was kicked into the field, and Mrs. Lin lost two buttons on her shirt.

Mu Dazhong still indulged, his face smiling even more idiotically.

"Shuang, what's wrong with your Second Uncle?"

Mr. Mu, after climbing out of the field, first thing, asked Mu Shuangshuang.

Unknowingly, he felt this granddaughter might solve his problem.

"Dream disorder, surely it's dream disorder, Grandpa, quickly press Second Uncle into the water to wake him, wake him."

On hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words, Mr. Mu came to his senses; didn't he know his own son?

A bit lecherous, but definitely not someone who likes men.

Right, it's dream disorder, "Alright, Danian, kick your Second Brother into the field, quick..."

Mu Danian naturally wanted, but Mu Dazhong was fatter, and stronger, he struggled for a long time without breaking free.

In desperation, Mu Danian kicked hard at Mu Dazhong's lower part. The pained Mu Dazhong screamed, holding his lower part, and fell directly into the field.

The field's water started to flooding his mouth, the beauty before his eyes instantly turned into dirty mud and water.

"Glug glug, save... me!" Mu Dazhong cried out.

"Grandpa, Second Uncle is crying for help, he's about to wake up, quick, press him a few more times, he'll definitely be fine!"

Chapter 175: Let the Great Aunt Join in the Work

Dazhong was forced to drink several gulps of muddy water, his nose was running, and he flailed his hands desperately, his cries for help growing more pitiful.

"Alright, alright, Danyan, don't end up killing your second brother."

Mrs. Lin quickly interjected, after all, he was her man, the sky above her head. No matter what Dazhong had done, Mrs. Lin would forgive him.

"No way, second sister-in-law, you saw it too; second brother is so dream-ridden he even kisses men. If he doesn't snap out of it, who knows what scarier things he might do."

The thought of more terrifying things made Danyan shudder, and he tightened his grip even more. Only when Dazhong was nearly breathless was he dragged up.

Dazhong was in a sorry state by now, his hair and face covered with mud, looking like a clay man. He was panting heavily and took ages to come around.

Once he was somewhat cleared up, Mr. Mu scooped some water and poured it over Dazhong's face, finally revealing his greasy face.

"Dad, what happened to me?" Dazhong asked weakly.

"Hmph, you're asking me what happened? You beast!" Mr. Mu slapped him, hitting him so hard that Dazhong flipped over.

"Dad, have you gone senile? Why are you hitting me?"

Danyan was bewildered; getting hit right off the bat and being called a beast, was his dad losing his mind?

Mu Shuangshuang kindly explained, "Second Uncle, just now you were dream-raving, not only did you hold and kiss Fifth Uncle, but you also... started taking off your clothes..."

When she got to the end, Shuangshuang pretended to be too embarrassed to continue, but what she had said was a bolt from the blue for Dazhong, especially the part about passionately kissing Dazhong.

Dazhong held his chest, feeling so nauseous he wanted to vomit but couldn't.

"Oh lord, it's making me sick, making me sick..."

"Well, second brother, how can you even say that, you're the one who disgusted me, you shameless thing."

Danyan and Dazhong, two grown men, were quarreling uncontrollably on the field ridge, until Mr. Mu wielded his authoritative methods and hit them both with a stick, making them finally quiet down.

Dazhong's incident quickly passed as a mere interlude, and it was rare for Mr. Mu to not show favoritism for once. The morning and afternoon's work in the fields matched the amount done in several previous days.

It seemed that the people of Old Mu Family could indeed do work when they set their minds to it.

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By dusk, the exhausted members of Old Mu Family sprawled on the long bench in the main room, waiting for dinner.

All the food on the table was cooked by Mrs. Liu from Fourth House after finishing a full day's work, while Old Mrs. Mu devoted all her time to preparing delicacies for Mu Dade.

On the dinner table, a few simple vegetable dishes and a chili stir fry with a few slices of fatty meat completely qualified as a balanced meal.

Mr. Mu had sent Dazhong early in the morning to weigh two pounds of fatty meat from Wang Erma's house.

Meat was already expensive, and the fatty meat was two wen more expensive than the lean meat, so for Old Mu Family, it felt like celebrating a festive occasion, making life a bit more comforting.

Even though there were only a few slices of meat in the chili stir fry, it was still much better than having none.

The moment the dishes were served, Zhenzhen swiftly moved her chopsticks, scooping the meat from the dish bowl into her own, as if she was the only one dining.

"Zhenzhen, your dad and mom haven't eaten yet, what are you doing eating on your own?"

Dazhong, who had been beaten in the afternoon and was already boiling with anger, seized the moment to criticize Zhenzhen.

"Why can't I eat? Didn't dad and mom buy the meat because me and Zhuangzi are here? Otherwise, would mom have spared the money to buy meat?" Zhenzhen snapped back impolitely and then audaciously asked Old Mrs. Mu right in front of Dazhong.

"Mom, second brother says I shouldn't eat these few dishes. I feel like I can't stay in this house any longer; I want to go back. At least at home, no one says I shouldn't eat."

The moment Zhenzhen mentioned going back, Old Mrs. Mu's heart ached.

"Oh, my precious daughter, what are you saying? Isn't dad and mom's place your home? Eat whatever you want, don't mind your second brother, his words are nonsense."

"Mom, you're too biased; I'm not eating anymore." Dazhong threw down his chopsticks and stood up to leave.

"Then don't eat, as long as our Zhenzhen is eating well," Old Mrs. Mu sneered before speaking.

"Yep, that's right, mom. If they don't eat, give everything to me; I can handle it," Zhenzhen said, stuffing fatty meat into her mouth.

After gobbling up several chunks of fatty meat, Zhenzhen finally felt some richness in her stomach.

She actually preferred lean meat, but she couldn't say it outright; otherwise, all the fatty meat would just benefit her brothers.

"Zhuangzi, you eat more too, treat it like home," Mr. Mu said to Zhuangzi, who was burying his head in eating.

Zhuangzi nodded and lifted his face full of horizontal meat from the bowl, devouring his food in a few bites before handing his bowl to Old Mrs. Mu, "Mom, no sweet potatoes, all white rice."

Old Mrs. Mu was already aware of Zhuangzi's gluttony. Ever since he came, all the rice meals at home were his, and even she could only eat sweet potatoes.

"Zhuangzi, rice isn't as tasty as sweet potatoes. Listen to mom, eat more sweet potatoes, that'll make you stronger."

As the word "stronger" was mentioned, Mu Shuangshuang, who was munching on a sweet potato, almost choked to death.

This second uncle-in-law probably weighed about two hundred pounds, even fatter than Dazhong. Was Old Mrs. Mu suggesting he was too thin?

Since Zhuangzi came, Old Mrs. Mu hardly ever had a pleased expression. Every morning, the first thing she did was check how much rice was left in the jar, watching it decrease day by day, she had long been wanting to say something to Zhuangzi.

"Mom, I'm already strong enough, besides, I didn't grow up on sweet potatoes, I can't eat them if you force me to."

Zhuangzi was somewhat displeased. This mother-in-law, ever since wrongly accusing him of stealing her clothes last time, hadn't given him a good look, and now she wanted to cut his food portion, no way.

"Oh, then you go to the fields with your dad this afternoon, there's a mountain of work waiting; you can't just eat without doing anything."

Just eating without working, that was the truest reflection of Zhuangzi's routine. Every day, he and Zhenzhen only got up after the sun was high.

After breakfast, they'd sleep, then have lunch, and the entire day was about eating and drinking and nothing else, completely unlike coming to work.

But as the saying goes, it's easy to invite gods but hard to send them away. Zhuangzi and Zhenzhen were hiding from work back home, aiming to fatten up here, so how could they start doing anything themselves.

"Mom, why are you always thinking about Zhuangzi working, my third brother and brother's wife aren't working either?"

"Zhenzhen, your big brother is preparing for his imperial exams, I don't have time," quickly piped up Mrs. Jin who was dining.

Hearing Mrs. Jin's words, Mu Shuangshuang's eyes twirled, and she immediately followed up. "Second Aunt, eldest uncle taking the imperial exam is no trivial matter; auntie is quite precious, she can't go to work."

Zhenzhen didn't like her, so anything she agreed with, Zhenzhen would oppose.

Sure enough, the moment Mu Shuangshuang spoke, Zhenzhen got invigorated, determined to drag Mrs. Jin down, making sure she couldn't have a comfortable life.

"Shuang girl, you're wrong. My big brother's exam isn't being taken by her, why should she rest while dad and mom toil every day, having to serve her too?"

Plus, the eldest house's Ying girl and Dan girl, they're no official's wife kids, why are they being raised as ladies?

Eating and dressing isn't for free, if they don't have the life, don't pretend to be wealthy, so as not to be laughed at, losing Old Mu Family's face."

Chapter 176: The Ability to Make Money

To be honest, when Mu Zhenzhen speaks, she really knows what she's talking about.

Even Mu Shuangshuang was almost persuaded by her.

Old Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu didn't look very happy, especially Old Mrs. Mu.

After all, daughters-in-law aren't as dear as one's own daughters. Her courtesy to Mrs. Jin was only for the sake of their eldest son's face.

Now, the eldest son's travel expenses aren't fully gathered, and the household chores aren't finished. It's not right to keep expecting Mrs. Jin to support them.

"Mother, every day Dan Dan's father drinks a cup of tea I brew. If he doesn't have it, he's uneasy about his studies all day."

Mrs. Jin wasn't stupid either. Her delicate skin would turn into tree bark if she worked under the sun all day.

Even if her man became a scholar and held a high office, people would still mock her for her lowly past if she walked outside.

Speaking of Mu Dade, Old Mrs. Mu hesitated. Her son's matters are significant. If a cup of tea affects him, what should they do?

Mu Shuangshuang's eyes were fixed on the adults' table, and after hearing Mrs. Jin's words, she couldn't help but snicker.

Was Mu Dade being used as a shield like a sword granted by the emperor?

No way, no window!

"Aunt, now is the busy time at home. Everyone is trying their hardest to finish the work quickly, while you, you're thinking of slacking off."

Uncle's tea time isn't as strict as you say. Just come back at set times to brew him a cup of tea and go back to the fields. Wouldn't that solve everything?"

Mu Shuangshuang's mocking words hit the others' ears just perfectly.

No one wants to work hard while someone else eats meat. If Mu Dade eats their meat and drinks their blood, his wife should pay the price.

"Shuang's words make sense! Sister-in-law, stop being lazy. Everyone knows you do the least work at home. Even mom and dad aren't as comfortable as you. It's about time for you to contribute."

Mu Danian's words thoroughly dispelled Old Mrs. Mu's worries.

Old Mrs. Mu always regarded herself as the head of the family. Mr. Mu dealt with things outside, while she managed everything inside.

"Eldest daughter-in-law, starting tomorrow, you'll work in the fields, beginning with pulling up seedlings.

You are allowed to return twice in the morning to brew tea for the eldest and then resume work. Each stay cannot exceed the time it takes for an incense stick to burn."

"Mother, I..." Mrs. Jin wanted to say something, but Old Mrs. Mu's glaring eyes scared her into silence.

The decision for Mrs. Jin to work in the fields was set by Old Mrs. Mu.

Mrs. Jin's face was already ashen, and Mu Dandan and Mu Yingying were on the verge of tears. But they dared not speak out, for the old lady was fearsome.

Mu Shuangshuang's lips curled slightly. That's more like it. Sharing the hardships. Surely, in a day or two, Mrs. Jin will turn as dark as an African under the sun.

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After dinner, Mu Shuangshuang walked out of the main house and circled to the empty lot beside her room. This empty plot could hardly be called "empty" anymore, as the frame of a house was already in place.

Mu Shuangshuang carefully counted the remaining pieces of wood. It looked like in two or three days, they could put up a roof, and then the family kitchen would be ready.

Once there's a kitchen and a proper stove is built, it would be about time not to eat at Old Mu Family's place anymore.

"Shuangshuang, your dad wants you to teach him how to make straw fans. The sulfur has been fuming the whole night, so it's time for the next step. He's getting impatient."

Mu Dashan was focused on recuperating and not having much to do. Plus, the medicine Mu Shuangshuang brewed was so bitter it was unbearable.

He wanted to occupy himself, distract his attention, to not focus too much on the bitter taste of the medicine.

"Alright, it's perfect timing to test the results ourselves, but mom needs to prepare a stove first."

After the straw fans were fumed, they needed to be roasted on the stove, then the leaves pressed flat.

"Okay, you wait a moment."

Yu Si Niang headed to Old Mu Family's kitchen, and when she returned, she had a charcoal stove in her hands.

Mu Shuangshuang carried the stove to Mu Dashan's room, picked up the fumed straw fan, and moved it back and forth over the stove.

"Dad, Mom, watch closely. When roasting the straw fan, you must keep the surface flat, without leaving too many wrinkles."

Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang listened attentively. They had never seen a straw fan before, and with their daughter making it, they dared not be careless.

Finding a wooden board, Mu Shuangshuang pressed it on the fan surface, smoothing it out. Afterward, she took out a knife to trim off the protruding stalks.

The process of making a straw fan was truly straightforward. At least after one round, Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan could replicate it.

And given that they typically had more hands-on experience than Mu Shuangshuang, their crafted fans looked even better than Mu Shuangshuang's.

"I've finished pressing, Shuangshuang, what's next?" Yu Si Niang's face was filled with unconcealable excitement, as working together as a family was immensely gratifying.

"Next comes the stitching. Mom's sewing skills are great; I'm sure the fan will look beautiful."

As everything was prepared beforehand, when Mu Shuangshuang fetched three half-meter long bamboo slats to wrap the fan, Yu Si Niang wasn't as curious anymore.

With simple guidance from Mu Shuangshuang, she started sewing, and within a quarter of an hour, she finished one fan.

Mu Shuangshuang finished the final step of trimming the handle, and the fan was complete.

The round fan, played with by Yu Si Niang in her hands, stared blankly at Mu Shuangshuang, as if not knowing how to use it.

When Mu Shuangshuang picked up the fan and waved it a few times, Yu Si Niang's dumbfounded expression shifted to surprise.

"Oh, this fan produces such a strong, cool breeze. Shuangshuang's dad, try it!"

"Really, let me try it."

Mu Dashan took the straw fan from Yu Si Niang and fanned himself a few times. The cool breeze hit him directly, instantly making the stuffy room feel not hot at all, but rather refreshing.

"This really is a good thing. If everyone had one, wouldn't summer heat be no issue? Good daughter, you're amazing. How did you come up with this idea?" Mu Dashan said excitedly.

He always knew when his daughter said he could earn money sitting on the bed, she wasn't lying.

With the method his daughter taught for making fans, he could make at least thirty a day.

Even if sold for a penny each, it would be enough to support the family.

"It just came to my mind randomly. Mom, Dad, if I take the straw fans to town for sale, do you think people will buy them?"

"Of course, what Shuangshuang made is so useful. If we found it, we'd definitely buy one." Yu Si Niang laughed cheerfully.

"Then I'm assured. Mom, Dad, let's make as many as we can. In a few days, I'll take them to town to test the waters. We might be able to sell a fan for four or five pennies."

Chapter 177: Yuanbao's Fate

"Shuangshuang, do you think this fan can sell for four to five wen each?"

Mu Dashan stared at Mu Shuangshuang, dumbfounded. If it's four to five wen each, and he weaves thirty fans a day, wouldn't he earn over a hundred wen a day?

Mu Dashan couldn't help but laugh out loud. Over a hundred wen is not a small sum for a family in the countryside. When he goes to the dock to carry goods, he only earns about a dozen wen a day...

"It might be more than four to five wen; specifically, I need to go to town and see the situation first."

While Mu Shuangshuang spoke to Mu Dashan, Yu Si Niang finished sewing the edge of another fan.

You know, at this rate, the third branch would surely get rich sooner or later.

Mu Dashan laughed like a fool. He was no good at needlework, so he stayed by Yu Si Niang, fanning her to cool down.

The two cooperated seamlessly. Mu Dashan's eyes and heart were all dedicated to Yu Si Niang.

Mu Shuangshuang felt she was quite unnecessary standing there, so she took a few unfinished fans, along with a needle and knife, to her room.

Xiao Han and Little Zhi were in her room teasing Little Black. As soon as they saw Mu Shuangshuang, the two Little Doudings ran up to her.

"Sis, Little Black seems to have grown a lot. When will we change its house? I think it's uncomfortable where it is."

Now, besides eating and working, Little Zhi was almost inseparable from Little Black.

The most important thing was, the Black Mink's habit of eating little and often was completely changed by Little Zhi. Now Black Mink could stuff itself into a dumpling, eating and then lying down.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly realized that Black Mink couldn't be fed like this anymore. If it continued, Black Mink would lose its ability to climb trees.

"Little Zhi, Little Black has been eating too much lately. We need to put it on a diet, or it'll get sick from obesity."

Being named, Little Black shrunk its neck and started making a "hiss" sound. It looked at Little Zhi, hoping for rescue, but Little Zhi didn't notice.

"Alright, then I'll leave Little Black to sis." Little Zhi felt somewhat reluctant, but she had to listen to what her sister said.

"Okay, you two should go outside for a bit, digest a bit; you can't rest immediately after eating."

"Okay—"

Once Xiao Han and Little Zhi left, Mu Shuangshuang originally holding Little Black's chubby body, suddenly ended up pinching its little neck.

The once skinny Little Black had nearly turned into a meatball. Mu Shuangshuang's eyes twinkled as she suddenly said, "Little Black, I'll help you lose weight. How about some exercise before bed?"

"..."

Little Black shook its body, trying hard to escape, but Mu Shuangshuang was quick and nimble, leaving it no chance of escaping Five Finger Mountain.

Half an incense stick's time later, desperate cries echoed from Mu Shuangshuang's room...

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Early the next morning, as the sky barely brightened, Mu Shuangshuang carried Little Black, took a hoe and sickle, and headed to the wasteland in the north.

With double harvest starting, her time shrank significantly as she usually helped uproot seedlings, with not much time to spare.

Fortunately, today there were Mrs. Jin, Mu Dandan, and Mu Yingying helping in the field. She had talked to Mr. Mu last night, saying she wouldn't have breakfast and lunch at home today and wouldn't be working.

Mr. Mu knew she still "owed" Zhang Huai Shu twenty taels of silver, so he didn't stop her and even asked her to be home on time for meals.

This reasonable attitude made Mu Shuangshuang inwardly wonder if the sun was rising from the west, as Mr. Mu was surprisingly agreeable.

However, Mu Shuangshuang wasn't a person to overthink; even if she ate more at Old Mu's house, it was justified. The work Mu Dashan did all these years was enough to support their family of five.

On the wasteland, wild grass still grew thickly. Mu Shuangshuang put on her handmade gloves and started cutting grass with the sickle. She piled the grass neatly and bundled it firmly when Lu Yuanfeng unexpectedly showed up.

He carried a bamboo basket, followed by Yuanbao the little chubby toddler. Both seemed to be there for cutting grass as well. Upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Lu Yuanfeng's mouth couldn't help but form a smile.

"Sister Shuangshuang, I knew you'd be here; my brother didn't believe it." Little Yuanbao showed a peculiar confidence on his face.

Mu Shuangshuang put down the sickle, extended her hand from the gloves, and lightly knocked on Little Yuanbao's head.

"You're so smart, why not become a Divine Calculator? Maybe you could even predict marriage and destiny."

Mu Shuangshuang was just saying casually, but Little Yuanbao's mouth pouted high. He glanced at Lu Yuanfeng and said.

"I want to, but my brother won't let me. Those fortune tellers in town make a lot of money. Last time, my brother got a reading from one, they charged him two hundred wen just for saying a few words.

If I became a fortune teller and charged several hundred wen for just a few sentences like him, I'd definitely get rich."

"Phhf~" Hearing that Lu Yuanfeng had gotten a fortune told for Yuanbao, Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but laugh.

"Lu Yuanfeng, you actually believe in this stuff?"

Lu Yuanfeng ducked his head, his face unusually flushed. "Yuanbao's skin is too tough; he climbs trees and swims rivers; so..."

Lu Yuanfeng didn't really believe, but Yuanbao was his brother after all, and he'd rather spend some money for peace of mind.

"Why don't you tell me; what did the fortune teller say?"

Mu Shuangshuang was quite curious. In modern times, she had seen many fortune tellers but never tried it herself.

"Cough..." Lu Yuanfeng suddenly coughed, turning his head aside, hesitating whether to share this matter.

To her surprise, Yuanbao blurted out himself. "That white-bearded old man said I'm not cut out for studying, that studying would be a waste, and advised my brother to save money and not wash it down the drain."

"Does Yuanbao think he's cut out for studying?"

Mu Shuangshuang steadied her mind. She didn't think the fortune teller was accurate, but since he said it like that, it might influence Yuanbao's thoughts, which wouldn't be good if he resisted learning later.

"I don't know myself. But studying is for earning money, doing other things is also for money, the end result is the same, so why should I worry?"

Yuanbao rarely appeared serious, even speaking with some philosophical insight.

Mu Shuangshuang patted Yuanbao's head, "Things like fate are actually in your own hands; whether it's studying or doing something else.

If you feel happy studying, then study; don't care about what others say. If you feel happy farming, then farm. Don't be afraid of others looking down on you.

But Yuanbao, your thinking is slightly off. Learning isn't just for earning money; it might involve many aspects.

For example, you enjoy eating rabbit, so you go learn to hunt, but is learning this only for eating rabbit?

Certainly not. There are other important things; for example, enjoying learning hunting can be a gain by itself."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't know how much her words would influence Yuanbao's thoughts, but saying them was better than not.

Life is not just about earning money; Mu Shuangshuang always believed that.

However, when food and clothing are scarce, all learning becomes for earning and survival!

Lu Yuanfeng gazed at Mu Shuangshuang with a peculiar gleam in his eyes; Shuangshuang was indeed different...

Chapter 178: The Land Is Not Fertile

"Why are you staring at me?"

Lu Yuanfeng's gaze was too intense, and Mu Shuangshuang naturally felt it.

"Haha, nothing!" Lu Yuanfeng shook his head, then curiously asked, "Weren't you pulling seedlings these past two days? Why are you out here?"

"There are many people at home. Missing one worker won't have much impact. Besides, this land has been left idle for so long, it needs to be cultivated as soon as possible."

Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang were indeed on the same page; he too was anxious to cultivate the land.

As soon as he said he'd work, he started working. He put on gloves, carried a hoe, and began to weed.

Yuanbao followed behind, helping Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng pick up stones, sweating heavily.

After working hard for an entire morning, the wasteland was finally cultivated.

"I must say, this land looks pretty good after being cleared."

Mu Shuangshuang wiped the sweat off her forehead, looking at her results with quite some emotion.

By the edge of the wasteland, all the stones of various sizes were piled together by Yuanbao and Lu Yuanfeng, forming a small mound.

"But the soil here needs to be completely turned over with a hoe, and this yellow mud isn't really fertile. It definitely won't grow good vegetables.

If we want to grow vegetables that we can eat, we still need to change the soil composition."

Thinking of this, Mu Shuangshuang felt a bit troubled.

A wasteland is a wasteland, it's tough work, and it doesn't change the fact that it doesn't grow much.

"Shuangshuang, what do you mean by changing the soil composition?" Lu Yuanfeng didn't quite understand, so he asked, "Is it turning this yellow mud into black soil that changes the composition?"

There are many types of soil; the most fertile, of course, is black soil. Plants grown on black soil are larger than those grown on regular soil.

"That's right, but changing the composition is quite difficult, and we don't have the tools.

However, we can use another method. For example, we can put a layer of black soil on the yellow mud or cover it with manure ash to allow the vegetable roots to reach the fertile soil layer."

Manure has always been indispensable for fertilizing fields in the village. Most of the time, people directly scoop it from the latrine and dump it into the fields, simple and effective.

Another way is to burn various trash, pile it with decaying leaves and animal manure, let it ferment, and then spread it over the dry fields.

Mu Shuangshuang naturally agrees more with the second method; if fermented leaves and waste residue are dumped on the yellow mud, it might just cover it.

"We have quite a bit of manure in our compost heap at home. Once I dig it out, I'll spread it here."

Lu Yuanfeng's household didn't have farmland, so the manure hadn't really been used. Last time Gu Jiulian wanted some, but he scared her away, and now it comes in handy, but it wasn't enough.

Mu Shuangshuang realized, "Yours definitely won't be enough. I need to think of another way to collect more manure."

Simply fermenting leaves doesn't work as well as mixing in manure. While Mu Shuangshuang was thinking of a solution, Yuanbao suddenly unbuttoned his pants and urinated onto the newly weeded wasteland.

"I've got it!" Mu Shuangshuang suddenly had an idea.

"What's up?" Lu Yuanfeng leaned over curiously and asked.

"We can build a public latrine for everyone to use when they have urgent needs while working.

The village's fields are quite concentrated and aren't close to home. Every time someone needs to go, they have to walk quite a bit to resolve their situation at home."

Just like Mu Dazhong, he needs to defecate seven or eight times a day at least, almost wearing out the latrine planks just by himself.

Building a public latrine near the fields could just sort out benefit lazy people like Mu Dazhong.

"That's indeed a good idea." Lu Yuanfeng's smile was even brighter.

This way, there'd be free manure, and no need to spend money competing for the night soil from town with villagers.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng agreed on developing this piece of land, both targeting to grow vegetables they like to eat.

Once Yuanbao finished addressing his physical need, he didn't bother to wipe his hands clean but ran over to Lu Yuanfeng, pointing at the mountain.

"Second brother, shall we take a walk to the mountain? It's almost noon, and I'm hungry."

Lu Yuanfeng had set traps on the mountain and occasionally went up to check if any animals fell into them. When they left, Lu Yuanfeng and Yuanbao planned to cultivate land first, then head to the mountain.

"Not today, you're tired too. We'll go home first, eat lunch, then I'll head up the mountain."

"I'll go with you. It's perfect, I was planning to go up the mountain too."

Mu Shuangshuang brought Little Black out not just for fun, but to catch a few rabbits to raise at home.

"Alright, then I'll first take these grass bundles to Uncle Wang."

This trip, they unexpectedly gathered a lot of grass, ten bundles in total. Lu Yuanfeng carried the grass to Wang Fugui's house, exchanging it for twenty coins, handed ten to Mu Shuangshuang, and the three went home to make lunch.

Last time, Mu Shuangshuang gathered eels and mudfish in the fields, keeping them in a wooden bucket, today she planned to cook the eel, as Zhao brothers indeed worked hard at her home.

The eel was Mu Shuangshuang's main dish, Lu Yuanfeng helped her handle the eel, saving her quite some effort.

Eel sections were placed in a small bowl, the stove's fire controlled perfectly by Lu Yuanfeng.

Mu Shuangshuang poured three spoons of vegetable oil into the iron wok, and once the oil was hot, she tossed in a handful of garlic, and with a sizzle, the wok made a joyful sound.

Lu Yuanfeng squatted at the stove's mouth, watching the girl cooking with a smile, sweet as honey.

After adding ginger and scallions into the wok, Lu Yuanfeng's kitchen was filled with an enticing aroma, Yuanbao moved a stool, stood on it, watching how Mu Shuangshuang cooked, constantly drooling as he smelled the aroma, which was perfectly childlike.

Mu Shuangshuang added the eel into the stir-fried ginger and garlic, cooked for a while, then poured wine. Lu Yuanfeng noticed that she often added wine to dishes, the last time was snake stew, and before that the meat for roujiamo.

Is there a secret to it?

Before Lu Yuanfeng spoke, Mu Shuangshuang solved the mystery.

"Lu Yuanfeng, adding wine is to enhance flavor and remove odors, eel is a bit fishy, adding wine helps greatly."

"Also, you really need to learn more. Yuanbao is growing, and balanced meals are best, don't just eat meat, have a balanced diet."

A man lives in a man's way, but with a child around, there's a lot more to think about.

"Sister Shuangshuang, why bother with all this, you could just cook for me every day. My second brother is good at earning money. Once he earns it, he can buy tasty food."

While speaking, Yuanbao winked at Lu Yuanfeng.

His second brother's interest in Sister Shuangshuang is obvious enough; he's just shy, afraid to speak up. He should be like a man and help his second brother.

Haha, this way, he'll have lots of good food.

Chapter 179: Protecting

"That's a good idea," Mu Shuangshuang said, ruffling Yuanbao's hair lovingly.

"But you need to wash your hands first, then we can call Daniu and Dahu, and then we can start eating."

"Got it, Sister Shuangshuang and Second Brother, wait for me a bit, I'll go wash my hands first."

Yuanbao grabbed a ladle, ran out of the yard quickly, and rinsed his hands with water.

"Yuanbao, come over here."

Just ten meters away from Lu Yuanfeng's yard, Xia Guagua beckoned to him, holding half a bright red watermelon in her other hand.

Clearly, she was using the watermelon to lure Lu Yuanbao.

With food around, Yuanbao naturally ran over happily.

"What's up?"

"Eat first, I'll tell you after you finish."

Yuanbao wasn't shy, he started devouring the watermelon, and soon his face was covered in watermelon juice.

When you take something from someone, you owe them a favor, Xia Guagua knew this well, so she quickly spoke up.

"Yuanbao, does Brother Yuanfeng have something going on with that woman? Did they do something shady together? Can you help me teach that b*tch a lesson?"

Yuanbao paused his munching, then forcefully smashed the half-eaten watermelon in Xia Guagua's hand.

"Not eating anymore, this watermelon tastes bad, it's rotten. My Second Brother likes Sister Shuangshuang, he wouldn't like you. I also won't do something to hurt Sister Shuangshuang, you're too mean!"

"You..." Xia Guagua's face turned green with anger. This damn kid, after eating her stuff, now says he won't help, how evil!

"What 'you'? I'm not talking to you anymore, don't follow me, or I'll get Sister Shuangshuang to beat you up."

Yuanbao finished speaking and ran back to the kitchen.

Leaving Xia Guagua stomping her feet in frustration, cursing...

Mu Shuangshuang saw his flushed face, panting and concerned, so she spoke up.

"What's the matter with you? Why are you in such a hurry?"

"Nothing, nothing. Let's go call Brother Daniu and Brother Dahu, and also Little Zhi, Xiao Han, and Uncle Dashan, Aunt Si for lunch."

Yuanbao was smart enough not to mention his encounter with Xia Guagua to Sister Shuangshuang, what if Sister Shuangshuang overthinks it?

Da Long once said, women are best at overthinking and can easily overturn the vinegar jar when jealous.

As for how Da Long knew this, he didn't know.

"Haha, okay!"

Yu Si Niang didn't come for lunch in the end, and Mu Dashan also ate at home. Both felt that since they were working at Old Mu's place, they should eat there too.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't say anything, just hoping their kitchen would be built soon so the third branch could cook on their own sooner.

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After lunch, Mu Shuangshuang rested for half an hour, then went to the foot of Niuwei Mountain to pick some palm leaves.

The more than twenty palm fans she picked earlier were finished overnight by Yu Si Niang, and all the straw fans were completed.

Mu Shuangshuang kept three fans at home, gave one each to Lu Yuanfeng and Zhao Yun's house, and kept the rest in her room, preparing to sell them when she goes to town the day after tomorrow along with the cold noodles.

The green palm leaves were spread out in the yard to dry. As soon as they were laid out, Zhao brothers came to work. Every day, apart from eating and necessary rest, they worked in Mu Shuangshuang's yard.

In just a few days, Zhao Dahu and Zhao Daniu were tanned dark by the sun.

"Wait for me to get you some water, it's too hot right now, we shouldn't hurry with the work."

"No need, Sister Shuangshuang. Since we took your money, we should finish the work quickly.

I figure in just a few days, this work will be done, and then you can have Fengzi build the stove and start cooking."

Zhao Dahu, being the older brother, voluntarily replied to Mu Shuangshuang.

In their hearts, Mu Shuangshuang was the best employer, not only paying them fully but also providing better meals than they would have during their own New Year celebrations.

"Yeah, yeah, be careful when you work, rest if you're tired, don't push yourself, your health is your wealth."

"Oh, right, Sister Shuangshuang, Fengzi asked if you want to go to the mountains, he said he's planning to go there..." Zhao Daniu gently scratched his head, almost forgetting Fengzi's message.

"Then I'll go first, the tea and stuff are here, help yourselves, and if there's anything else, you can ask my dad, he knows where things are."

Mu Shuangshuang instructed, then went to find Lu Yuanfeng with Little Black and some small items.

It had been a while since they went into the mountains, but Lu Yuanfeng wasn't slacking at all, preparing all kinds of tools.

He was wearing a long bow on his back, holding a sack in his hand, standing straight, his eyes like those of a wolf searching for prey, full of wildness and confidence in his hunting.

Mu Shuangshuang saw Lu Yuanfeng from afar, the strong aura surrounding him in the sunlight intensified even more.

Mu Shuangshuang became even more curious about Lu Yuanfeng's past. She knew that demeanor could be cultivated, but such innate presence was natural.

This guy, no matter how you look at him, doesn't seem like the low-rank soldier he claims to be from the military camp. Could there be more hidden secrets?

Before Mu Shuangshuang could overthink, Lu Yuanfeng took a few strides forward, reaching out to take everything Mu Shuangshuang was carrying.

"The mountain road is rough, let me carry the stuff!"

"I can carry it, Little Black isn't heavy at all."

Mu Shuangshuang shook her head, but Lu Yuanfeng swiftly untied Little Black's tree house from her back, only relaxing once Mu Shuangshuang's hands were free.

Along the way, Lu Yuanfeng tirelessly reminded Mu Shuangshuang to watch her steps, and on particularly rugged paths, he would even pause to walk with her, holding her steady.

Carrying the gear while still being cautious.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly felt a bit dazed; she wasn't a fragile person, she'd been in tough environments before.

People had helped her before, but no one had given her this unfamiliar feeling like Lu Yuanfeng.

That feeling was peculiar, like a breeze in summer, or warm sunshine in winter.

Mu Shuangshuang took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing that strange sensation.

Soon, they arrived at the spot where Lu Yuanfeng had set up traps. In the grass, a snow-white rabbit stood trembling, unable to move because its leg was caught in one of Lu Yuanfeng's traps.

Mu Shuangshuang curiously approached, ready to take a closer look, but Lu Yuanfeng stopped her.

"This trap is different from the others, only I can remove it."

"Oh, then you handle it. I'll go check by the side to see if there are any rabbit holes."

Bringing Little Black wasn't just for play; after all, she had been brewing the plan for Little Black to catch rabbits for a long time.

"Don't wander off, make sure I can see you," Lu Yuanfeng said, not at ease.

"Got it, you be careful too!"

Chapter 180: The Hen That Doesn't Lay Eggs

Lu Yuanfeng gave instructions to Mu Shuangshuang but still felt uneasy, his eyes occasionally glancing around Mu Shuangshuang.

Having spent so much time in the mountains, he can sense if there's any danger.

Right now, birds are singing high in the sky, with insects occasionally flying by, not looking like there's any danger.

He saw Shuangshuang find a spot, squatting down and tinkering with something, so he focused on his task.

Mu Shuangshuang took out a fishing net she had prepared from a pile of stuff she brought and laid the net over each rabbit hole around, pressing it down with stones.

Finally, she took out her secret weapon, Little Black and a small bell.

This method of catching rabbits was taught by Lu Yuanfeng. In the past, Lu Yuanfeng would use smoke to flush out the rabbits, but he often failed.

But now things are different. With Little Black, it can burrow into rabbit holes to chase them.

With Mu Shuangshuang's cooperation, there's absolutely no rabbit that can escape her grasp.

She placed Little Black with the bell tied around its neck at the rabbit hole entrance, whispering.

"Little Black, it's time to show your skills, don't forget, you still owe me eight hundred thirty-three rabbits. Otherwise, I'll sell you to Xue Yi for a coat."

In a flash, Little Black burrowed into the hole, and Mu Shuangshuang quickly blocked the last rabbit hole.

She followed the sound of Little Black's bell, tracking the rabbits' movements, and when she was sure Little Black had slowed near the grassy hole, Mu Shuangshuang kept her eyes fixed on the entrance.

The moment the rabbit emerged, she swiftly grabbed its ears.

The black rabbit struggled in Mu Shuangshuang's hands, still entangled in a layer of netting, making its movements particularly sluggish.

Mu Shuangshuang held the rabbit and grabbed the dirt-covered Little Black from the rabbit hole, running towards Lu Yuanfeng.

"Lu Yuanfeng, I caught a rabbit..."

Shuangshuang was overjoyed, eager to share her catch with Lu Yuanfeng, while Lu Yuanfeng put the rabbit caught in a beast trap into a sack and looked up to see Mu Shuangshuang rushing towards him.

Her face bore a satisfied smile, the curve of her mouth stretched to the fullest extent.

Lu Yuanfeng, feeling a hint of affection, accepted the rabbit Mu Shuangshuang handed over, and inexplicably felt his mood lift.

"Shuangshuang is amazing."

At this moment, Lu Yuanfeng praised Mu Shuangshuang like a big boy.

After all, Lu Yuanfeng was seventeen, four years older than Mu Shuangshuang, and in terms of mentality and age, he should be more mature.

"Of course, but the most impressive one is Little Black." Mu Shuangshuang lifted Little Black and was surprised to see a flash of cunning in its eyes.

"It's still showing off." Mu Shuangshuang exclaimed as if she had discovered a new world, pointing to Little Black.

Both Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang knew Little Black was intelligent. They were both glad they hadn't sold Little Black back then, or their lives would have been less joyful.

"Probably because it caught a rabbit," Lu Yuanfeng explained.

"Maybe. How many animals did you catch in your traps? Why don't we take Little Black and catch more rabbits?"

Catching rabbits once was addictive, and Mu Shuangshuang found herself increasingly fond of life in the mountains, where even the smallest gain could bring her immense joy.

"Sure, let's wander around some more!"

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That afternoon, the harvest was astonishing. Lu Yuanfeng's beast trap caught three rabbits and a fawn. The fawn was small, merely a few pounds.

Little Black's burrowing was even more impressive, catching four rabbits. In total, this trip should earn several hundred wen.

On their way down the mountain, both of them and the mink were in good spirits. The bell on Little Black's neck had been accepted by it, and when Mu Shuangshuang tried to remove it, Little Black turned its neck away, clearly showing resistance.

Mu Shuangshuang was in a good mood and let it have its way.

While Mu Shuangshuang was doing well, Old Mu Family wasn't faring as well.

For the first time in many years, Mrs. Jin worked in the fields of Old Mu Family, feeling all kinds of discomfort.

The old man asked her to pull seedlings, but even Little Zhi and Xiao Han were better at it, leaving the old man with no choice but to switch Mrs. Liu and Mrs. Jin's roles, sending Mrs. Jin to transplant rice seedlings.

In the paddy field, Mrs. Jin wrapped herself like a mummy, not letting the sunlight touch her, and even splashing a bucket of water on her face would take some effort.

But in doing so, Mrs. Jin found it hard to breathe.

After an afternoon, Mrs. Jin had transplanted less than half a row, feeling utterly exhausted.

She realized that if this continued, her life would be half gone because of Old Mu Family.

No, she needed to gather that fifty taels of silver quickly.

Mrs. Jin looked around the fields, knowing she couldn't rely on Yu Si Niang.

After the family split, she couldn't control that unruly girl's life, but she still had leverage over Qingqing of the second household.

Mrs. Jin quickly plotted how to deal with these problems as she slowly approached Mrs. Lin, who was also working.

"Xiao Zao, are you tired?"

"Big Sister-in-law, are you kidding? Working isn't tiring; what is?" Mrs. Lin rolled her eyes.

"Hehe, true enough!" Mrs. Jin forced a laugh and continued, "Xiao Zao, do you want to live a good life?"

Just the mention of a good life made Mrs. Lin's eyes glow with greed.

Who doesn't want to live a good life? Even a fool would.

"I want to, but it's useless. Big Brother has taken so many exams and hasn't passed; we want to enjoy life with him, but there's no chance.

Big Sister-in-law, I think you should pray more to the Bodhisattva. Your son can't be born, and Big Brother can't pass the exams. Perhaps it's because you've done too many bad things."

Mrs. Lin's words left Mrs. Jin seething with anger.

Yet she relied on Mrs. Lin at this moment.

Mrs. Jin took a deep breath, telling herself she had to endure, just until she got the money.

"Xiao Zao, you're right. I've actually consulted someone, and they said passing the exam depends on this time. But you also know the family's current situation, I..."

"Fifty taels isn't hard for Big Sister-in-law. Just marry off one of your daughters, Dan Dan or Yingying, and once the money comes, the Old Mu Family can enjoy life."

"You mean our branch should provide people and effort, and then take you all to enjoy life, right?"

Hearing Mrs. Lin talk about her daughters, Mrs. Jin was displeased.

Among Old Mu Family's members, what she detested the most was this.

Greedy, always expecting others to sacrifice so they could benefit themselves.

Why?

"Big Sister-in-law, you're talking nonsense. Back then, it was all our branches who sacrificed everything to support Big Brother in his studies, giving him the chance to study instead of working. Otherwise, wouldn't Big Brother be just like us, working in the fields right now?"

In the end, it's your branch owing us. If Big Brother fails again and again, maybe our Gou Dan's father would have had a chance to study too. He's probably already passed by now."

"You're talking nonsense. Is someone like Dazhong meant for studying?" Mrs. Jin completely lost her temper.

No money and being humiliated; who wouldn't be upset?

"Hey, you barren hen, humiliating my man, I'll fight you..."