

Folly 191

Chapter 191 Stinky Girl is a Thief!

With Chen Hong's advice, Mu Danian immediately had an idea; he needed to teach that brat a lesson.

After chatting, Mu Danian processed the chicken he had stolen from home and had a feast with Chen Hong before returning home.

It was already noon, just the right time for lunch.

Mu Danian hadn't done any work the whole morning, came back home and started eating, and his eating manner was quite ugly, inevitably getting scolded by Old Mrs. Mu.

"Fifth, you're treating my words like wind beside your ears, aren't you? At such a critical time, you dare to slack off; why don't you just die?"

These venomous words spewed from Old Mrs. Mu's mouth.

Mu Danian didn't mind much, it's not like he hadn't been scolded before; being scolded, so what? It wouldn't make him lose a piece of flesh.

"Fifth, tell me, where exactly did you go?" Mr. Mu was furious; everyone had been working hard all morning, except for Fifth, who went off to slack somewhere.

It caused the Old Mu Family to have no one to carry the burden, so he had to do it himself.

In the entire Er Gui Village, whose sons don't do the heavy work while the fathers give instructions? Only he, the old man, had to do such heavy labor.

"No need for me to talk about you, Fifth brother, you're already grown up without a wife; do you know why you don't have a wife? Because you're lazy! If you were as hardworking as our dad, you would have married several concubines, not to mention a wife."

Mu Zhenzhen didn't mind stirring the pot, she mixed in from the start, getting involved in Old Mu Family's business; her manner was exactly like Old Mrs. Mu, utterly annoying.

But there was no choice, Old Mrs. Mu liked Mu Zhenzhen, even Zhenzhen's shit was better than others'.

"Zhenzhen's right, Fifth, don't eat today, don't waste food!"

This whole family was noisy, and even eating Mu Shuangshuang felt a little like laughing.

Back then, before the family split, Old Mrs. Mu's attention was all on her, but now the family split, plus Zhenzhen came, Old Mrs. Mu's attention turned away from her.

But Mu Shuangshuang hadn't enjoyed it for long before Mu Danian pointed at her nose in shock.

"Mom, I know, the chicken thief must be a family thief, it's probably this brat."

Yu Si Niang stood up right away. "Fifth brother, don't speak nonsense, how's our Shuang a thief, and our family also lost something."

"Mom, listen, the third branch lost something too, isn't that absurd?"

Mu Danian behaved like a clown, his words were utterly disgusting.

Mu Shuangshuang waited coldly for him to finish speaking before reacting.

"Uncle, accusing someone requires evidence, just because you say I stole the chicken, does that mean I stole it? Then I could say that the wealthier family in town lost something and blame it on you too, did you do that?"

"Also, it's a fact that our third branch lost something, why do you claim we didn't lose anything?"

"I can't argue with you, brat; anyway, your third branch stole it; hadn't you brought beef back yesterday, maybe you sold the chicken to exchange for beef, otherwise where would your third branch get money?"

Mu Danian continued to throw dirt on Mu Shuangshuang, speaking more enthusiastically.

"Where did our third branch get money, we earned it; does Uncle think our third branch can't earn money? Or do you think, after splitting, our third branch deserves to starve?"

Inside the house, the tension was mounting, Old Mrs. Mu didn't believe Mu Shuangshuang stole the chicken, as she thought the third branch didn't have the guts.

But when Mu Danian talked about the third branch not handing over the beef they bought, she was unhappy.

"Okay then, I was wondering why our family's chicken disappeared so early, turned out it was you all, even turning my chicken into beef, I'll go search the third branch now; if the evidence is clear, let's see how you continue to deny it."

Old Mrs. Mu rolled up her sleeves with the intent to search the third branch.

Mr. Mu was watching nearby, when it came time to take charge, he didn't step in.

Mu Shuangshuang sneered, directly blocking Mrs. Mu's path.

"Grandma, our third branch already split, how we earn and how much has nothing to do with you, right?"

"Moreover, we had a contract back then, all the silver Shuangshuang earned is hers."

The people of Old Mu Family were unsure of exactly how much Mu Shuangshuang had earned or the method used, but seeing the third branch suddenly having money and eating beef, they all wanted a bite.

Unfortunately, they underestimated Mu Shuangshuang.

Ever since she openly didn't do work, she had thought about her path ahead; if Old Mrs. Mu directly stopped the third branch from eating at the Mu Family, she could have her mother and younger siblings stop working, since the stove was already set.

"You..." Old Mrs. Mu was furious and looked for a stick to beat Mu Shuangshuang, Yu Si Niang got frightened, grabbed Mu Shuangshuang and wanted to run.

"Shuangshuang, let's go quickly, your grandma is going to hit people." Yu Si Niang couldn't move Shuangshuang and got anxious, her words were trembling.

Escape wasn't a solution, sooner or later, the Old Mu Family will know she is earning money now, and they would come for it; might as well let them know now, show them she's not someone easy to bully.

"Mom, please go back first, some things need to be clarified; Grandpa, you've seen these things, won't you intervene?"

Didn't we initially have a contract, and Uncle saw us having beef at dinner, while the family's chicken was stolen later, could such reasoning become the evidence of blaming me?"

Mu Shuangshuang was somewhat aggressive, yet Mr. Mu still said nothing.

Since this was the case, Mu Shuangshuang wasn't polite anymore; she stepped out and shouted towards the outside of the yard.

"Come and see, Old Mu Family is bullying the third branch, my grandparents are being unreasonable, come watch the excitement..."

With one shout from Mu Shuangshuang, several villagers who liked excitement came out, each moving towards Old Mu Family's direction, Mr. Mu couldn't remain seated any longer.

"Alright, everyone stop talking; I know about this matter, Shuangshuang didn't steal the chicken, as for... the silver earned by the third branch, that belongs to the third branch."

Mr. Mu was originally pressed by Mu Dade's expenses, hearing from Mu Danian that the third branch had money, for a moment he even considered having the third branch produce the money, hence allowing the commotion.

But now, Shuang started calling outsiders; the Old Mu Family couldn't lose face!

"With Grandpa's words, I'm relieved, don't worry Grandpa, once Shuang's work with snatching is done, our third branch won't eat here, we'll eat in our own kitchen."

Chapter 192: The Things We Didn't Finish Last Time

In the afternoon, Mu Shuangshuang headed out with a hoe in hand.

The hoe was borrowed from Zhao Yun's house, as all of Old Mu Family's farming tools were kept tightly locked up, especially after the incident she caused at noon. Old Mrs. Mu watched her even more closely.

Afraid that Old Mrs. Mu might steal from her room, Mu Shuangshuang specifically instructed Mu Dashan not to let anyone inside as she left.

She went to the field quite early, but Lu Yuanfeng was even earlier; he was already shirtless, working the soil with a pick.

The land, which was previously overgrown and desolate, now had several trenches dug, and the ridges looked increasingly organized.

In the corner, manure was piled up like a small hill, but seeing the quantity, Mu Shuangshuang realized it wasn't just the manure in front of Lu Yuanfeng's house.

As she was wondering, Lu Yuanfeng happened to look up.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang standing there looking at the manure, he directly said, "These were fetched by Daniu and Dahu from their grandmother's house; there are fewer people farming over there. Most folks go hunting in the mountains; the two of them spent the morning gathering this much."

Speaking of which, Zhao Daniu and Zhao Dahu were quite grateful to Mu Shuangshuang. Upon hearing she and Lu Yuanfeng were short on manure, the two immediately helped without hesitation, saving Mu Shuangshuang the effort of making organic fertilizer herself.

Since Lu Yuanfeng had almost finished plowing the soil, Mu Shuangshuang picked up the dustpan on the side and started spreading the manure on the ground.

The seven or eight parts of the land were enough with this manure.

The thought of vegetables soon growing on this barren land made Mu Shuangshuang work more cheerfully.

"Shuangshuang, the manure is dirty, leave it; I'll come over once I'm done hoeing."

Lu Yuanfeng saw Mu Shuangshuang using her hands to grab the manure directly, even without her homemade gloves, and quickly stopped her.

"No worries, you finish hoeing and take a break. Leave this to me, I plan to sprinkle water directly and plant the seeds afterward."

Planting the seeds earlier meant they could eat vegetables from their home garden sooner.

Seeing Shuangshuang refuse to stop, Lu Yuanfeng could only work harder, hoping to finish quickly to help Shuangshuang.

If it weren't for Shuangshuang's suggestion, Lu Yuanfeng would certainly never have done something like planting vegetables.

Although he had the strength, he had never done farm work like this; before, whenever his family needed vegetables, he would exchange game caught in the mountains with neighbors, sometimes getting more, sometimes less, but enough to eat.

By the time Lu Yuanfeng finished hoeing the ground, Mu Shuangshuang had almost spread all the manure, and next was to dig small troughs and throw seeds into them.

Mu Shuangshuang initially planned to finish the few parts of the land in the afternoon and then find ways to get manure, so she didn't bring any seeds when she went out, and now she needed them, so she had to go back once.

On the way to get seeds, Mu Shuangshuang unexpectedly encountered the lazy Mu Danian coming out, recalling his ugly face when he falsely accused her in the morning, Mu Shuangshuang decided to follow Mu Danian to see what he was up to.

Mu Danian went to a well-known deserted house in the village, which had been abandoned for years and rumored to be haunted, so no one would go there.

Mu Danian was bold; whenever he had affairs with Chen Hong, he would choose either this place or the wild, making it hard to be discovered and especially thrilling!

Seeing Mu Danian's familiarity with the place, Mu Shuangshuang knew it was his secret spot and watched him enter the house. After a while, strange sounds of men and women yelling and moaning came from inside.

She wasn't stupid enough to believe the two were practicing singing there; after about half an hour, when it quieted down inside, Mu Shuangshuang sneaked up with a stick, hooked Mu Danian and Chen Hong's clothes, tied them to stones, and threw them into the nearby stinky ditch.

She wanted to see how the shameless couple would leave without clothes!

When she returned to get the seeds, almost an hour had passed since Mu Shuangshuang left, and she saw Lu Yuanfeng at home, sweating heavily.

He seemed to have been searching for her for a long time, his eyes full of panic, until he saw Mu Shuangshuang, his heart finally eased.

Lu Yuanfeng initially waited for Mu Shuangshuang at the vegetable garden, but after waiting and not seeing her, he decided to check if something had happened at Shuangshuang's house, only to be told by Mu Dashan she hadn't returned.

Lu Yuanfeng was almost frantic, having searched the village several times back and forth without seeing her. Now that Mu Shuangshuang was safe in front of him, he was both worried and angry.

"Where did you go? Do you know how long I've been looking for you?"

Though Lu Yuanfeng was not a petty person, all so-called rationality vanished when facing Shuangshuang.

The seventeen-year-old boy had a hint of anger and a bit of relief on his face. Mu Shuangshuang suddenly realized something, her heart beating strongly, but quickly she suppressed this feeling.

She had more important things to do at the moment, and being only thirteen, it was not time for such thoughts.

Mu Shuangshuang regained her smile, "I just ran into someone..."

Mu Shuangshuang briefly recounted her encounter with Mu Danian to Lu Yuanfeng, but didn't mention stealing the couple's clothes.

She still remembered being carried away from the field by Lu Yuanfeng last time.

Actually, this kid wasn't someone who compromised easily; at least Mu Shuangshuang saw him as someone with spirit, a straightforward man.

Lu Yuanfeng breathed a sigh of relief, but immediately grew serious, "Lately, things haven't been peaceful around several nearby villages. I heard today that kids from Dahuo Village were stolen the day before yesterday, and they haven't been found yet.

Now the villages are preparing to increase vigilance, each village head already looking for people to patrol; Shuangshuang, until the people are caught, you must not go out alone and keep Xiao Han and Little Zhi safe."

Abduction in the village was a matter of concern, and hearing about Dahuo Village, Mu Shuangshuang remembered her idle-taking second aunt seemed to be from Dahuo Village too, wondering if it had anything to do with her family.

"I understand, you must also remember to take Yuanbao with you when you go out these days; we can't take such risks."

After chatting for a while, Mu Shuangshuang took the seeds and returned to the garden.

Mu Shuangshuang planted a few cabbage seeds into the dug troughs, followed by chili and eggplant, and Lu Yuanfeng followed behind her, pouring water every time she set down seeds.

Chapter 193: Second Aunt Is Leaving

The seeds that were planted couldn't just be watered as the final step; they still needed a layer of grass on top to prevent the small seeds from drying to death or being eaten by the nearby birds.

Finally finishing all of this, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng both breathed a sigh of relief.

They watched this piece of land transform from wasteland to flat land, then to a vegetable garden.

It was like their own child, from birth to being able to walk and jump.

In their hearts, there was both expectation and longing.

Perhaps, before long, they could eat the vegetables they planted themselves.

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After returning home, Mu Shuangshuang helped sort the straw fans that Mu Dashan had made, but to her surprise, the Old Mu Family became lively again.

A kidnapping incident happened in Dahuo Village, and Mu Shuangshuang had only coincidentally thought of Mu Zhenzhen's in-laws living there, but unexpectedly, it indeed involved Mu Zhenzhen's in-laws.

Since the rice planting began, Mu Zhenzhen and Zhuangzi, to avoid work, came to the Old Mu Family, sleeping in every day and eating more than anyone else. Such days were naturally enjoyable and comfortable, even a fool wouldn't return.

It was precisely because of this that there was an opportunity for a mistake at Zhuangzi's family.

Zhuangzi's mother had three sons, plus their family had twenty to thirty mu of land. Life was really quite good, but once each daughter-in-law got busy during the double harvest.

Mu Zhenzhen didn't give birth to any children for Zhuangzi after marrying and was always thinking of different ways to slack off. People say a heart is made of flesh, but after five years of freeloading, Mu Zhenzhen's heart didn't grow a bit of flesh.

The twenty-three mu of land kept Zhuangzi's father, mother, eldest brother, and second brother busy working tirelessly, so naturally, they couldn't look after their own child. As a result, this time, his eldest brother's son, Xiao Mizi, was kidnapped, and they still haven't found him.

Zhuangzi's eldest brother, Zhuzi, naturally blamed everything on Mu Zhenzhen.

If only she hadn't run away to slack off, if only she'd stayed home watching the child, how could the child have gone missing...

That's why Zhuangzi's parents gathered a big crowd to come catch Mu Zhenzhen, saying this time they must catch Mu Zhenzhen and make her suffer a pig basket dunking.

"That woman must be in there, find her for me and beat her to death!"

In the front yard of the Old Mu Family, Zhuangzi's mother waved a carrying pole and charged ahead, shouting vehemently at the tightly shut door of the Old Mu Family.

No one from the Old Mu Family came out to resolve the issue, each of them hiding inside like a turtle, letting them bang their door until it was falling apart.

Mu Zhenzhen's face turned pale with fright, her body trembling uncontrollably.

"Mom, Dad, did you hear what my mother-in-law said? She wants to dunk me in the pig basket!"

"Zhenzhen, don't be afraid, your mother won't let them dunk you in the pig basket. Your eldest brother's child was lost, you didn't steal him, so why should you be responsible," Old Mrs. Mu said as usual, still arrogant when she spoke.

But Mr. Mu's face was already full of worry.

Because of this incident, Mu Zhenzhen couldn't stand firm.

A married daughter is like spilled water; a woman who marries should stay with her in-laws. Which married woman stays at her parents' house all the time? The most important thing is, this time Mu Zhenzhen's return has caused such a huge loss to Zhuangzi's family.

It's the Old Mu Family's fault to Zhuangzi's family.

In the backyard, the separated Zhuangzi had already started to go mad, Mu Dazhong and Mu Dajiang held him down together, but they were completely no match for Zhuangzi.

Mu Danian was nowhere to be seen, in the afternoon he said he was going to relieve himself and never came back.

Little did they know, right now Mu Danian and Chen Hong were naked together, waiting for nightfall to return.

"Get out of the way, all of you get out of the way. I want to see my parents, I want to go back, I want Mu Zhenzhen to apologize with me..."

Zhuangzi howled and whimpered, like a trapped beast, his bloodshot eyes looking at anyone with terrifying intensity.

"Zhuangzi, you need to calm down. Zhenzhen is your wife. If you take her back like this, your mom will kill her."

"I don't care, I just want to go back. Xiao Mizi is gone, I have to find him..."

Zhuangzi wasn't always like this, he used to be honest and decent. It was only after marrying Mu Zhenzhen, who was beautiful and never did a day's work, so she was no different from girls in town.

Zhuangzi cherished Mu Zhenzhen dearly, reluctant to beat or scold her, but ended up being led to indulgence by Mu Zhenzhen.

At this point, when his nephew Xiao Mizi was kidnapped, he suddenly realized he had to do something.

Seeing the situation turn bad, Mu Dazhong prepared to make a run for it, wiping his feet and telling the exhausted Mu Dajiang.

"Fourth brother, you hold on, I'll go get mom and dad over here."

After saying that, Mu Dazhong ran into the main house of the Old Mu Family, shouting as if he had encountered something particularly frightening, "Mom! Dad! Zhuangzi is too strong, we can't hold him down!"

"Indeed, mother. Perhaps it's best to let Zhenzhen and Zhuangzi return. Zhenzhen is Zhuangzi's wife, those people are just saying things, how could they actually dunk her in the pig basket," Mrs. Lin breathed two breaths, mindlessly agreeing with her husband.

"Mrs. Lin, is what you said human words? Zhenzhen is already like this, you still let her go back? You'll be struck by lightning for harming even your second aunt..."

Outside, the people of Dahuo Village argued, while inside, the people of the Old Mu Family argued.

Mu Shuangshuang's family stayed in their own house, busy with their things, not getting involved in this matter.

But Mu Dashan couldn't help but speak up in the end, "Si Niang, shouldn't we take a look, it's gotten quite noisy out front."

"Look at what? Big brother and the others haven't come out. If you, a sick person, go out and something happens, what will we do?"

Yu Si Niang rarely took a strong stance in front of Mu Dashan. Usually, she was obedient and docile to men, like most wives.

But this matter could either be big or small, and if Mu Zhenzhen was really dragged off to be dunked in the pig basket, it's uncertain that the Old Mu Family wouldn't get physical.

If they pushed her husband out then, she wouldn't have time to cry.

Mu Shuangshuang, helping with work nearby, just happened to hear Yu Si Niang's words, and couldn't help but give her a thumbs up in admiration.

The matters of the Old Mu Family should be left to them to resolve.

"Dad, Mom, if you're tired, why not take a break? Once I'm done patching these straw fans, it should be about enough."

Ever since teaching Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan to make straw fans, they had practically become addicted, keeping at it with scissors and needles, making straw fans quickly in no time.

Sometimes when Mu Shuangshuang was busy and couldn't go pick the palm leaves, Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang would surely start to complain.

This way is also good; after some time, when they've earned enough silver, they can repay Mu Dashan's ten taels of medicine money, and also save up Fengfeng's tuition for school.

The commotion at the Old Mu Family reached a stalemate when Zhuangzi's mother grabbed Gou Dan.

Gou Dan was the grandson of the Old Mu Family, but their Xiao Mizi was their own grandson. If the Old Mu Family wasn't willing to hand over Mu Zhenzhen, then Gou Dan doesn't need to return.

Finally, peace returned outside the yard of the Old Mu Family, as Zhuangzi's mother took Gou Dan back to Dahuo Village, and Zhuangzi left after knocking down Mu Dajiang.

Now, only the second house was in turmoil.

After all, it was their own child. How could Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin not be heartbroken?

They suggested letting Mu Zhenzhen go back, saying she should be responsible for her own troubles and exchange Gou Dan back.

Mr. Mu's back hunched significantly, facing his own daughter on one side and his own grandson on the other; sacrificing either would cause him pain!

Chapter 194: Asking for the Third Branch

"Dad, why don't you go find Big Brother? He's a scholar; maybe Zhuangzi's mother will listen to him."

Mu Dajiang, who had always been reticent, hesitated for a long time before speaking.

In this situation, if no one comes to handle it, the Old Mu Family will fall into chaos.

Gou Dan is just a six-year-old child; no matter how you put it, he didn't do anything wrong.

Mr. Mu hesitated and hesitated again before finally letting out a low sigh.

"This is the only way. Go and ask your Big Brother!"

Actually, Mu Dade had heard the news early on, but he didn't come out. First, he was afraid of getting into trouble, and second, he shared the same thought as Mu Shuangshuang—if it didn't concern him, stay out of it.

Now, when Mr. Mu sent someone to call him, he finally came slowly.

When he arrived, Mu Dade said directly to Mr. Mu, "Dad, why don't you invite Third Brother's family?"

Mu Dade was referring to the third branch of the family, not just to Mu Dade and Yu Si Niang. Actually, he really wanted to say just directly call Mu Shuangshuang over.

But after seeing the sufferings his wife had gone through, Mu Dade became cautious, realizing that Mu Shuangshuang wasn't someone to be easily bullied.

Now that the family is separated, doing anything has become even more difficult.

"Why invite them? To watch the drama? Just look at the third branch; when there's any benefit, they push their way in. Now they become old turtle-heads, and I, an old lady, refuse to call them over."

Old Mrs. Mu decisively said no, not allowing the third branch to get involved.

"Mom, don't say that. I just listened to Fourth Brother telling me about the situation. This matter can be big or small. Gou Dan is a member of the Old Mu Family. Everyone gathered together can come up with a good solution."

Mu Dade tried hard to appear brotherly and gentle, successfully gaining the favor of several others in the Old Mu Family.

"Yes, at a time like this, Mom, let the third branch in. Perhaps they have ideas. My son Gou Dan is my heart and soul. Without Gou Dan, I wouldn't want to live..."

Mrs. Lin was crying pitifully, completely different from her usually headstrong self. Her hair was disheveled, her clothes were messy, her face was dirty, and her eyes were red and swollen.

When Gou Dan was taken, everyone in the Old Mu Family feared the hoes and sticks in Zhuangzi's mother's group, except for Mrs. Lin, who rushed forward, pulling and tugging. In the end, she was kicked away by Zhuangzi's mother, so her current state was understandable.

When Mu Qingqing came over to call the third branch, Mu Shuangshuang had just finished bathing, feeling refreshed.

Mu Qingqing spoke to Mu Shuangshuang with a sarcastic tone. "You stinky girl, Uncle asked me to call your third branch to discuss tonight's matters."

Mu Shuangshuang refused without even thinking. "Not going!"

The issues of the Old Mu Family can't be resolved, so they come to the third branch. How ridiculous.

When Mu Dade needed money for exams, he wanted to sell her. When there was no one to do household work, Mu Dashan had to do it alone. Now that his grandson was taken, they still come to the third branch.

"You stinky girl, how dare you..." Mu Qingqing shouted shrilly at Mu Shuangshuang.

"Mu Qingqing, you should correct your address. Between the two of us, who's the stinky one now? Look at yourself, and look at your face. Anyone who didn't know would think you crawled out from some filthy ditch."

Mu Qingqing indeed looked a bit unkempt at the moment, having worked all day, it was inevitable she was dirty and had a smell.

Especially since Mu Shuangshuang stopped smudging her face with ashes, the contrast between them was more pronounced whenever they stood together. Mu Qingqing hadn't noticed before, but now the disparity was increasingly obvious.

The girl she used to bully and look down upon suddenly became clean one day, with a face fairer than anyone else in the village. Especially when you see her looking good even in simple rough clothing, Mu Qingqing completely forgot about her kidnapped brother.

"You stinky girl, I'll beat you to death." Mu Qingqing's features twisted in anger.

Mu Shuangshuang thought the person in front of her looked like an enraged monkey, holding a wooden stick picked up from somewhere, flailing wildly at her.

This chaotic fighting style, she even learned to fight.

Mu Shuangshuang sighed, swiftly sidestepping and grabbing Mu Qingqing's hand.

To be honest, ever since she started to improve her life by eating well occasionally, her strength had increased a lot. Most importantly, the grappling skills she learned finally came in handy.

Twisting Mu Qingqing's arm behind her back, Mu Qingqing's bones made a "crack" sound, seemingly dislocated.

The stick fell from Mu Qingqing's hand, and she immediately began to cry in pain.

"Waa, my hand, it hurts so much..."

"Let go, let go..."

"Just because you say so, should I let go? That would make me lose face," Mu Shuangshuang whispered in Mu Qingqing's ear. "Qingqing, if I dislocate your arm, who would want you in the future?"

Mu Qingqing's face instantly turned pale, full of fear and dread.

When Yu Si Niang came out of her room, she saw her daughter grappling Mu Qingqing from the Old Mu Family's second branch. Mu Qingqing's face was filled with terror. Seeing Yu Si Niang, Mu Qingqing began to plead for help.

"Third Aunt, please save me. Sister Shuangshuang is going to dislocate my arm. It hurts so much, my hand is going to break..."

When Mu Qingqing pleaded for help, Mu Shuangshuang secretly applied more force until Mu Qingqing started to tremble. Then she flipped her over her shoulder, throwing her out.

Mu Qingqing cried even harder after hitting the ground.

Yu Si Niang sighed, stepped forward to comfort Mu Qingqing, but never mentioned any wrongdoing by her daughter.

"Qingqing, you should go back. We can't meddle with the family's affairs. We also hope Gou Dan can come back."

Mu Qingqing whimpered a few times; not seeing the imagined scene of Mu Shuangshuang being reprimanded, she ran off crying.

Mu Shuangshuang's growing violence hadn't concerned Yu Si Niang a bit.

She had experienced the same youth, fighting with the village kids, and now everyone had good relations.

Only after joining the Old Mu Family, all those wild instincts were worn away completely.

Seeing Yu Si Niang not mentioning anything despite waiting for a while, Mu Shuangshuang was in a great mood.

"Mom, I'll go prepare something to eat first. Tonight, we might not even have dinner."

The sky gradually darkened. After Mu Qingqing returned, she exaggeratedly narrated what Mu Shuangshuang had done, deliberately pointing out that Mu Shuangshuang said she had nothing to do with the Old Mu Family.

Such twisting of the truth, along with Mu Qingqing's injured arm, enraged Old Mrs. Mu, who said she'd beat Shuangshuang no matter what.

In the end, it was Mr. Mu who stopped her.

"Since the third branch doesn't want to help, then forget it! We'll solve our problems ourselves!"

Chapter 195: A Night of Restlessness

The night was dark and windy, and when everyone had gone to sleep, Mu Danian was dragging his mosquito-bitten body full of sores back.

He carried a tattered cloth picked up from who knows where, wrapping around the indescribable thing in front of him, carefully avoiding everyone along the way.

He finally breathed a sigh of relief when he reached the Old Mu Family's courtyard.

Just as he was about to quietly step into the house, a person who had been watching him all night suddenly jumped out from the darkness.

This person was none other than Mu Shuangshuang.

Holding a long wooden stick she had prepared in advance, she started yelling while fiercely swinging the stick at Mu Danian.

"Thief, chicken thief..."

Mu Danian hadn't reacted yet, but suddenly felt a sharp pain on his body, and he cried out then and there.

"Ah... Ouch, it hurts..."

"Who is it, who hits me..."

Mu Shuangshuang acted like she didn't hear him, and her shouting grew louder.

Old Mrs. Mu was already having trouble sleeping because of the missing chicken in the morning and the unresolved issue with Mu Zhenzhen at night.

So, upon hearing Mu Shuangshuang's shouting, Old Mrs. Mu hurried out, not even bothering to put on clothes.

The rest of the people rushed out one after another without carrying a lamp, only seeing a shadow being fiercely beaten by Mu Shuangshuang.

"Granny, come quickly! I've caught the chicken thief..."

As Mu Shuangshuang shouted, Old Mrs. Mu stepped forward to dodge her stick and went in with a few strikes.

"You stinking thief, daring to steal my stuff, may you never have children, doing such wicked things..."

Old Mrs. Mu swung the stick much more viciously than Mu Shuangshuang, who at least tried to avoid the vital spots, but Old Mrs. Mu came up and beat him relentlessly.

Then Mu Dazhong and Mu Dajiang joined in...

Mu Danian was beaten and cried out in pain. He said, "I'm not a thief, mother, it's me, I'm Danian..."

When the few people from the Old Mu Family heard Mu Danian's voice, they were puzzled and weakened their blows; finally, Mr. Mu went back to light a lamp.

As the lamp illuminated a corner of the courtyard, everyone saw the pitifully beaten Mu Danian.

Through the beating, the cloth covering Mu Danian had come off long ago, so to everyone's eyes, Mu Danian was now naked.

"Are you going to die? You're not even wearing clothes!" Old Mrs. Mu angrily kicked the helpless Mu Danian on the ground.

The rest naturally turned their backs quickly.

Mu Danian was close to tears, how could he know there would be people so late, how could he know... Ouch, it hurts!

"Mother, it hurts, that brat did it on purpose, she deliberately shouted 'thief' to make you beat me..."

Mu Danian, tears and snot covering his face, was beaten by outsiders; he could at least retaliate, but being attacked by his own family, what could he do?

So in Mu Danian's eyes, everything was Mu Shuangshuang's fault.

The Old Mu Family's gazes all focused on Mu Shuangshuang, full of suspicion and contempt; Mu Dazhong directly asked, "Shuang, why aren't you asleep at such a late hour?"

Mu Shuangshuang knew she would be blamed by Mu Danian, so she was already prepared with a response.

"During the day, Fifth Uncle said the chicken was stolen by me, but actually it wasn't me. I just wanted to do something to prove my innocence; otherwise, when I get married, people would hold this over me and doubt me. And I didn't know Fifth Uncle would show up here so late and not wear... not wear clothes."

Mu Danian appearing here late at night was already suspicious, and now not wearing clothes made it even worse, but he was injured after all.

"Old Second, go ask Zhang Huai Shu to check on Fifth; the rest, come with me to the main house. Old Second's wife, invite your big brother and sister-in-law over, Gou Dan's issue can't be delayed."

Tonight was an opportunity, a chance for the Old Mu Family to gather together.

These days, Mr. Mu had been pondering if the third branch shouldn't split off, maybe things would be better for the Old Mu Family.

This is why during this time, even though Shuang wasn't working, he didn't say anything.

After all, Old Third is also one of the labor forces in the family, having worked hard and done a lot over the years, it didn't feel right to abandon the third branch while the eldest had good days.

The deeper reason actually started when the third branch built a kitchen and pigsty.

In Mr. Mu's eyes, the third branch doesn't have the money to build a house.

Yet the third branch with nothing managed to build a house, and shortly after splitting the household, especially that granddaughter he always ignored, suddenly went through a big change, becoming fairer, and her energy and spirit improved.

Anyway, all of these made Mr. Mu feel that the household division was a mistake.

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In the main house, Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu sat in the high seat, to the right sat Mu Dade and Mrs. Jin; according to ancient seating arrangements, other than the high seat, the rest would sit on the right.

After all, right up, left down!

Fortunately, the others in the Old Mu Family didn't care about seating arrangements and sat quite casually.

Mu Zhenzhen was holding her head, sitting in the corner. She now feared the Old Mu Family would hand her to Zhuangzi's family, she didn't want to be dunked in the pigpen.

"Shuangshuang, any good ideas to solve the current problem?" Mu Dade singled out Mu Shuangshuang for advice, intending to later ask the third branch for a formula, hoping the Old Mu Family could play a role.

Mu Shuangshuang instantly became the focus of everyone's attention.

"Uncle, naturally these matters are for you and Grandpa and Grandma to decide. I, as a junior, understand nothing and wouldn't know what to say."

If they wanted her to stand out, no way!

Not only no way, not even a window!

Mu Dade wasn't angry either, he gave Mu Shuangshuang a meaningful glance.

In that glance, Mu Shuangshuang saw calculation, and a certain confidence that could not fail.

The few eccentrics of the Old Mu Family had the heart and courage of a thief but lacked the brains.

But Mu Dade was different, having studied for many years and knowing many people; with all these complexities gathered, he must have used quite a few tricks.

The atmosphere in the room suddenly became heavy; Mu Shuangshuang was ready to leave but didn't realize Mu Dade had already asked Mu Dazhong to bring Mu Dashan over.

The moment she saw Mu Dashan, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly understood why Mu Dade looked at her with that kind of gaze.

He was counting on Mu Dashan's honest nature and indelible family ties.

"Third Brother, you're finally here, Big Brother has been waiting so long." Mu Dade personally came forward to welcome Mu Dashan.

During this recent period, Mu Dashan scarcely left home; the food was sent by Yu Si Niang, and occasionally he would step out for fresh air early at dawn.

After some rest, Mu Dashan's complexion did look better than before, but still somewhat unnaturally sallow.

Chapter 196: Sensible

On the way to the main hall, Mu Dazhong exaggerated the events that happened in the Old Mu Family while talking to Mu Dashan.

Now Mu Dashan already knew the general situation.

He glanced at Mu Zhenzhen sitting in the corner and hesitated for a moment before speaking.

"We can't let Gou Dan face these things alone, we must bring Gou Dan back."

Mu Zhenzhen looked up at Mu Dashan in disbelief. "Third brother, are you asking me to be drowned in a pig cage?"

What, drown Zhenzhen in a pig cage?

As soon as Mu Dashan spoke, Mu Shuangshuang noticed Old Mrs. Mu's expression change. She stood up, pointed at Mu Dashan's nose, and was about to start cursing.

"Grandmother, my father didn't mean that. What he meant was that Gou Dan is the grandson of the Old Mu Family, only our family would care for him. If he stays at Zhuangzi's family, who knows what Zhuangzi's mother might do."

Mu Shuangshuang hurried to explain for Mu Dashan.

Mu Zhenzhen was indeed the apple of Old Mrs. Mu's eye. If anyone wanted to send her away, they'd certainly be asking for trouble.

"That's more like it!" Old Mrs. Mu's expression softened a bit.

At this point, Mu Shuangshuang could clearly see her selfishness. Mu Zhenzhen's issue wasn't exactly significant. If they went back to apologize and searched for the child together, maybe nothing serious would happen.

Yet she hid away like a turtle, causing everyone to suffer together, making the situation worse.

"Third, continue speaking, I saw you had something else to say just now." Mr. Mu refocused his attention on Mu Dashan, but Mu Dashan didn't dare to speak anymore.

If it hadn't been for his own daughter smoothing things over, he might have been scolded.

"Father, I'm not sure either, I just said it off the cuff."

Mr. Mu sighed and asked, "Third, you weren't like this before. If father asked, you would always say whatever was on your mind, why aren't you saying anything now?"

Mr. Mu actually knew his sons' temperaments. He just didn't have them in his heart; all his affection went to Mu Dade.

"Yes, third, speak up. Our second branch is counting on you."

"Third brother, say something..."

Everyone focused their attention on Mu Dashan. They said they wanted Mu Dashan to speak, but Mu Shuangshuang knew it was actually Mu Dade pushing her to speak.

Fine sweat beads immediately appeared on Mu Dashan's forehead, and he became a bit flustered, his breathing turned rapid.

"Enough, my father can't take stress. Grandpa, grandmother, uncles, don't push him. Aren't you looking for a solution? I'll tell you!"

Ultimately, she couldn't bear to see Mu Dashan being backed into a corner.

The blame lay with Mu Dade for being too crafty.

Once everyone focused on Mu Shuangshuang, she said, "The most important thing now isn't whether Gou Dan or second aunt should go to second uncle's, but the whereabouts of that little child Xiaomi at second uncle's.

Their family is causing a fuss simply because the child is missing. If we find the child, second aunt won't be in trouble."

"Yes, find Xiaomi, and I won't be in trouble!" Mu Zhenzhen stood up abruptly and walked up to Old Mrs. Mu, pleading, "Mother, you must help me, tell the brothers to look for Xiaomi."

"It's easy for you to say, what about the work at home? What about the double harvest? Should we just leave them?" Mrs. Lin interjected unhelpfully.

"So what does second aunt think? This isn't right, that isn't right? The paths laid out are only so many. Either we find the child, forget about Gou Dan, or second aunt goes!"

Having laid out the options, Mu Shuangshuang had done her utmost.

Ignoring anyone else's opinions, she exchanged a glance with Yu Si Niang and supported Mu Dashan out of the main hall returning to her own home.

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In the evening, Mu Dashan felt like a child who had done something wrong, head lowered, not daring to look at Yu Si Niang.

Yu Si Niang felt annoyed. Today it was Shuangshuang who shielded her from Old Mrs. Mu's fury, so Mu Dashan hadn't been scolded. How could this man be so naive.

Yu Si Niang said nothing, just looked at Mu Dashan.

Mu Dashan initially thought of how to explain, but when he heard Yu Si Niang's sobs, he disregarded everything and went over to hug her, repeatedly apologizing.

"Si Niang, today I really didn't leave on purpose, it was second brother, he begged me."

"He begged you so you went? I said I was not there, that you can't go to the fields, why didn't you listen."

Yu Si Niang was still crying; people are usually like this, once emotions start venting, all the things previously unsaid spill out like beans.

"Your mother can't stand us of the third branch leading a good life, Shuangshuang made some tasty food, and she said it was stolen."

"You say, all are children, why is there such a big difference; older brother is human, and we're not?"

"Did you hear the scolding from mother? She deliberately makes it hard for us in the third branch!"

"Life is unbearable..."

Yu Si Niang said a lot, each matter felt like a needle prick, piercing Mu Dashan's heart.

"You say, what's the difference between us splitting from the family or not? We bear the bad while they enjoy the good. I... should have listened to Shuangshuang long ago, not stayed here..."

Yu Si Niang cried bitterly, Mu Dashan's emotions that had been held back burst forth at that moment.

"Si Niang, I know you felt wronged, forget it, from now on we won't care, don't cry anymore, let's live our own lives, without hiding anymore!"

"..."

Outside Mu Dashan's room, Little Zhi heard all of this and after the room quieted down, she quickly returned to Mu Shuangshuang's room and relayed everything she had heard.

"Sister, that's all I heard. Mother was crying, should we go comfort her?"

Tonight, the Mu's three siblings slept on the same bed, Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan slept together.

It was Mu Shuangshuang's idea for Little Zhi to eavesdrop. After all that's happened, she knew Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang were growing, gradually beginning to detach from this place called Old Mu Family.

"No need, father will take care of mother. You and Brother Xiao Han sleep early, tomorrow you don't have to work, I'll take you to town to buy some nice clothes."

Mu Shuangshuang had earned some silver recently, though she occasionally bought some food, there were still things she hadn't provided for her two younger siblings.

Whenever she saw Xiao Han and Little Zhi wearing patched clothes, she felt sad.

After all, they're children, not like her who has weathered storms.

To her, wearing anything doesn't matter; she once wore a uniform every day. Now a few patched clothes are merely a different kind of uniform.

But the two kids are still young, whenever the children of the other branches wore new clothes, Mu Shuangshuang could feel the kids' envy.

"No need, sister, save the money for big things. If not, let Brother Xiao Han study!"

Chapter 197: Moved

Little Zhi's words made Mu Shuangshuang feel both gratified and distressed.

It's often said that children from poor families mature early, and with Little Zhi being so sensible, she should be happy.

But she preferred for Little Zhi at this age to snuggle in her arms and act spoiled, telling her what she wanted and what she wanted to eat.

"Silly girl, you don't need to be an adult in front of your sister. Your sister likes you to be a child, simple and straightforward. If you like anything, just tell your sister.

No matter what you fancy, your sister will buy it for you. And Xiao Han, you should also believe that next spring, your sister will definitely let you go to school in town, so that you can spend the most important years of your life among books just like other boys!"

Little Zhi burst into tears instantly. She had never felt so much love, and her tears flowed uncontrollably like water from an open tap.

Mu Shuangshuang helplessly pulled her into her embrace and comforted her gently.

Behind them, Mu Xiaohan also felt his eyes sting. He knew that the current state of their family was all thanks to his sister's hard work; he reached out and hugged Mu Shuangshuang's waist from behind.

The moist liquid soaked Mu Shuangshuang's back, and she knew that at this moment, the three siblings shared the same feeling.

"Sister, I will definitely study hard. One day, I will take our parents, you, and Little Zhi away together!"

This very night made Mu Xiaohan determined to study and to make a name for himself on this path.

Hearing Mu Xiaohan's words, Mu Shuangshuang was incredibly touched; she was about to cry herself, but she refused to allow herself to cry at such times, so she simply spoke up.

"It's a bit hot, why don't we take turns fanning each other? Starting with Xiao Han, fifty flicks each, and then call the next one, how about that?"

Her suggestion was naturally unanimously agreed upon by the two little ones. Mu Xiaohan didn't bother wondering why he had to start first, he just knew that once he fanned fifty times, the person who said to take turns was already sound asleep.

Was he tricked?

But Mu Xiaohan wasn't angry at all; instead, he felt utterly sweet, like the taste of melting honey in his mouth, sweet and not at all cloying.

Mu Xiaohan helplessly picked up the fan again and fanned a few more times, waiting until Mu Shuangshuang's body temperature completely cooled down before he finally drifted into sleep.

As for Mu Shuangshuang, her tightly closed eyes opened once again.

After Mu Xiaohan finished fanning, she could feel it; she initially wanted to see how he would call her, but not only did he not call, he even gave a few extra flicks for free. Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but laugh inwardly: He's truly a child, not getting angry at all.

The night was still long, but at this moment, the Third Branch of the Mu Family felt particularly warm!

Early the next morning, Mu Shuangshuang went out with Mu Xiaohan and Mu Xiaozhi, just as Lu Yuanfeng suggested. With kidnapers rampant lately, she decided to ask Lu Yuanfeng to join them for a stroll if he was free.

Arriving at Lu Yuanfeng's courtyard, Mu Shuangshuang was surprised to find Lu Yuanfeng washing clothes. A huge basin of laundry piled up like a small mountain.

And he was seriously washing it with great care.

"Pfft..." Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but laugh out loud.

To be honest, she had never seen a man wash clothes so meticulously; at least in police academy or at the station, she only ever saw guys roughly scrubbing their clothes or using... their feet!

It seemed he probably didn't have time to go.

Mu Shuangshuang started to walk away, but then Lu Yuanfeng saw her with surprise.

As always, Lu Yuanfeng's face lit up with elation. "You're here!"

A simple sentence made Mu Shuangshuang stop in her tracks, and she stomped her foot helplessly, because as soon as Lu Yuanfeng spoke, she felt an inexplicable urge to have him accompany them to town.

"What's up? Thirsty? I'll pour you a glass of water. How about you, Xiao Han, Little Zhi, do you want some?"

The two little ones behind Mu Shuangshuang remained as well-mannered as ever. However, Xiao Han still looked protectively at Lu Yuanfeng.

He hadn't accepted Lu Yuanfeng as his brother-in-law yet.

He didn't dislike Lu Yuanfeng at all, but he just couldn't accept the thought that one day his sister might leave home. This strange feeling was like a small seed, already taking root and sprouting.

Perhaps the current life was already perfect for Xiao Han, and he didn't want any further changes.

Indeed, Mu Shuangshuang was unaware of this little conflict and struggle.

"No need to fuss, we've just come out, not thirsty. I wanted to take Xiao Han and Little Zhi to town to pick some fabric for new clothes. Do you want to join us and bring Yuanbao along for a stroll?"

Talking about picking fabric for clothes, Lu Yuanfeng wasn't particularly interested, but if the person asking him was Mu Shuangshuang, it was a different story.

He stood up and wiped his hands, ready to go.

"Just right, Yuanbao hasn't bought clothes for a while either. Let's go!"

Mu Shuangshuang was a little surprised; would he just leave the huge basin of laundry unwashed?

"I'll wash it when I get back later..." Lu Yuanfeng scratched his head in embarrassment, fearing that Mu Shuangshuang would misunderstand his cleanliness. He continued explaining, "I've been really busy lately, haven't had time to wash clothes..."

Overall, no matter how Lu Yuanfeng explained in front of Shuangshuang, he felt he was just covering up. But he really was too busy, helping his uncles with work during the day and occasionally checking the garden.

Moreover, at night, he had to work on the cabinet Shuangshuang had ordered, which was finally almost done. A few days ago, he painted the cabinet, leaving it to air for days, just waiting for the right time to deliver it.

Mu Shuangshuang shook her head in resignation, crouched down, picked up the laundry from the basin, and began to scrub.

Summer clothes, apart from some mud or sweat stains when working, weren't actually that dirty.

Lu Yuanfeng was stunned, looking at the girl washing his clothes, mixed emotions flooded his heart.

"Shuangshuang, you don't have to help me with the laundry. I... I can wash it myself."

"It's okay, I'm quick at it. Now hurry up and get a few more basins so I can pack the clothes. Once we're done here, we can head to town."

"Alright!" Lu Yuanfeng replied softly, feeling warm inside.

Just as Yuanbao emerged from the house, holding a bed sheet in his arms, "Second brother, the sheet needs washing; it smells..."

Initially, Yuanbao hadn't noticed Mu Shuangshuang but by the time he did, it was too late.

He was doomed; he had ruined his second brother's image again!

Eyes darting around, Yuanbao quickly explained, "Sister Shuangshuang, don't misunderstand. My second brother's sheets actually smell great. It's just that I didn't shower yesterday and rolled around on his bed, and then..."

Chapter 198: My Second Brother Has Someone He Likes

The things Yuanbao said in all seriousness really amused Mu Shuangshuang.

She half-jokingly said, "Then Yuanbao better wash up well tonight, or else you'll stink up your second brother, and he won't be able to find a wife."

"No way, my second brother already likes someone, so how could he not find a wife?"

Mu Shuangshuang heard Yuanbao's words and slightly frowned, feeling inexplicably irritable. It took her a moment to respond, "Who does your second brother like? Should we..."

But before Mu Shuangshuang could finish, Lu Yuanfeng's expression had already changed, and he scolded Yuanbao. "Yuanbao, stop talking nonsense, go inside and do your own thing!"

"Oh!" Yuanbao pouted, unwillingly carrying the bedsheet back into the house.

"Yuanbao, why are you taking the sheet away, weren't you going to wash it?"

Yuanbao turned back, glanced at Lu Yuanfeng, and then lowered his head. "Sister Shuangshuang, just leave it for my second brother to wash tomorrow!"

Yuanbao felt terribly wronged, after all, his second brother did like Sister Shuangshuang, so why couldn't he say it? Why did he get scolded!

Wuwu, so sad!

Mu Shuangshuang wiped the water droplets from her hands, walked up, and took the bedsheet from Yuanbao's hands. "It's already out, let's just wash it together, do you really want to leave it to stink? Your second brother didn't mean anything, and you can't get mad, pouting like that, want to hang a chamber pot on it?"

"I'm not angry, it's just..." Yuanbao hesitated.

"There's no 'just', take Little Zhi and Xiao Han to play for a while, and I'll call you when we go to town later."

Lu Yuanfeng's backyard was a bamboo grove, and Mu Shuangshuang knew that the three kids would often go there to play.

Yuanbao, who had lost his enthusiasm, perked up again when Shuangshuang told him to take Xiao Han and Little Zhi to play.

If Little Zhi and Xiao Han aren't around, then won't his second brother get to be alone with Sister Shuangshuang?

Before Little Zhi and Xiao Han could protest, Yuanbao dragged them both to the backyard, saying he had a secret base, poor Xiao Han, who had wanted to watch Lu Yuanfeng and his own sister, had to give up!

"Shuangshuang, leave the bedsheet, it's too heavy, hard to wash, I'll wash it myself when I get back tonight." Lu Yuanfeng still didn't want the person in front of him to be too tired.

"Wash it tonight, then what will you use tonight? Don't say anything more, go grab a basin for me, and prepare the wooden mallet, we'll take it to the little stream up north to wash, the water there is flowing and fresh."

There was a pond for washing clothes in the village, but it was at the village entrance, and Er Gui Village's entrance wasn't like others, it was neither to the south nor the north, but to the east. It took quite a bit of time to walk there, and there were often young wives washing clothes there, making it hard to find a spot.

Lu Yuanfeng listened to Shuangshuang's directions, standing still, watching her wash clothes alone, occasionally stopping to pound the soap nuts he picked, pouring the soap solution into the washbasin.

Lu Yuanfeng felt that as long as the person in front of him appeared, no matter how boring the task, it instantly became simple and vibrant. Clearly, it was just the simple action of washing clothes, but he saw beauty in it, and couldn't bear to look away.

"Fengzi, if you keep staring, we won't make it to the town."

Mu Shuangshuang said while scrubbing clothes.

Only then did Lu Yuanfeng go into the house, bringing out a wooden basin and bucket, placing them beside Mu Shuangshuang, joining her in scrubbing clothes.

Two people working together is always faster than one, especially since both Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng weren't slow at it.

Once they finished washing a basin of clothes, they took it to the stream, managing to finish earlier than Lu Yuanfeng expected.

Looking at the clothes and bedsheets drying in the yard, Lu Yuanfeng's mouth curled into a slight smile.

They were really clean, the girl just relied on her skilled hands to wash away all the old grime from his clothes, and now standing next to the bamboo pole, one could smell the fresh scent of soap nuts.

Seeing Lu Yuanfeng still admiring the clothes in the yard, Mu Shuangshuang walked up. "Still looking at what? These clean clothes won't run away, hurry up and tidy up, let's go to town and shop."

Mu Shuangshuang and the others, a group of five, didn't draw much attention by going to town during the busy farming season. However, since the journey was long, and the three kids weren't used to such hardships, Lu Yuanfeng pushed out the wheelbarrow, placing the three kids on it.

He initially wanted Shuangshuang to ride it too, but Mu Shuangshuang was worried he'd get tired, so she refused no matter what, and in the end, only the three kids rode the cart.

The five chatted and laughed along the way. Little Zhi and Xiao Han had never been to town before, so they were a bit more curious than Yuanbao, who acted as the "tour guide," enthusiastically sharing with Little Zhi and Xiao Han the fun things he saw in town, making the two kids eagerly anticipate the trip.

Finally arriving in town, the three kids jumped off the cart without waiting for Lu Yuanfeng to park it. Fortunately, they were used to such risky actions, plus they had good agility, so they weren't hurt.

But Mu Shuangshuang still held them back for a bit, giving them a good talking-to.

Having agreed to buy fabric, once Lu Yuanfeng stored the wheelbarrow, Mu Shuangshuang started touring the cloth stores. They didn't dare to enter the expensive ones and chose a reasonably priced one—Ah Rubu's Mansion.

The young ladies and married women from the village usually liked to get fabric from Ah Rubu's Mansion. The quality was good, and more importantly, the prices were fair. The owner, Ah Ru, was a kind young woman who wasn't yet married.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng with so many kids, Ah Ru grabbed a handful of lotus seeds from the counter and handed them to the little ones.

"Miss, what are you looking for? Do you want fabric or ready-made clothes?"

Cloth stores usually carried some ready-made garments, but they were limited. Most people bought fabric to make their clothes, as it was cheaper.

"I need fabric and also want to check out ready-made clothes." After speaking, Mu Shuangshuang added, "Fabric for adults, ready-made clothes for the kids."

"Alright, I'll show you the kids' ready-made clothes first."

Ah Ru went inside the store and brought out several sets of children's clothes, chosen based on the kids' heights, so they should fit.

"If they don't fit, feel free to bring them back for free alterations."

Mu Shuangshuang felt the material of the ready-made clothes, it wasn't particularly soft, and the style had a distinct feel of the era.

Hmm, it's rather plain and falls short compared to the clothes she's seen on TV dramas.

"Are these the only styles available?" Mu Shuangshuang asked Ah Ru.

"Miss, these are already the most trendy styles for kids in our Da Ning Dynasty. You can take a look outside, all the kids on the street are wearing these.

Of course, if you have a particular style you like, you can tell me, and I can help make it."

Chapter 199 Discussing Business

Ah Ru's attitude was very good. From the moment Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng came in with the children to browse to when they changed the styles, she always had a smile on her face.

This reminded Mu Shuangshuang of those modern stores known for their service, where service often determines whether customers immediately decide to purchase, and quality determines if they'll buy again in the future.

To be honest, Ah Ru's words did catch Mu Shuangshuang's attention.

Her hands had only drawn portraits of criminal suspects before. As for those so-called patterns and designs, she hadn't really tried them, but she could certainly give it a shot.

"If I draw a style, can you help me make it?" Mu Shuangshuang asked again, uncertainly.

"Of course!"

"Then, can you prepare a feather, along with paper and ink for me?"

A brush wasn't her strong suit, but a feather dipped in ink could be used for drawing.

Ah Ru smiled and confidently went to the backyard, returning with the items Mu Shuangshuang needed in hand.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't stand on ceremony. She closed her eyes and pondered for a moment, remembering the simple Han Dynasty clothing she had seen in dramas. After the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, she finally finished drawing, though the clothing was for women, and she'd need to draw a male version.

When Ah Ru saw the finished product, she couldn't help but cover her mouth. Her slightly larger almond eyes were full of astonishment, as she looked up and seemed to take a good look at Mu Shuangshuang.

The girl in front of her had a slim, oval-shaped face, with large, impressive eyes that were hard to ignore.

Yet judging from her attire, she seemed unlikely to be the daughter of a wealthy family. However, the style of clothing she drew was something Ah Ru had never seen before, and it was particularly beautiful.

After the time it takes for two incense sticks to burn, Mu Shuangshuang finally completed the second drawing. She was somewhat moved, realizing that in ancient times, one truly had to excel in social settings, culinary skills, and combat, as well as earning money.

She managed to utilize everything she had learned during her school years.

Lu Yuanfeng watched Mu Shuangshuang with admiration. Although Shuangshuang seemed increasingly mysterious to him, this mystery didn't make him feel distant; it actually made him want to get closer to her.

"Shuangshuang, your drawings are really beautiful!" Lu Yuanfeng sincerely praised.

"Of course. If it weren't beautiful, I wouldn't have drawn it," Mu Shuangshuang said shamelessly.

Ah Ru nodded beside them. "Miss, actually... if you take this style to the Xue family's fabric shop in town, you might be able to sell it for a good price."

In the entire Qingshan Town, there were countless fabric shops, but none could compare to the Xue family.

"Thanks, but I don't plan on doing that." Mu Shuangshuang smiled and shook her head. That Xue Yi was not a good partner for collaboration; he was in his twenties or thirties, yet he was always causing trouble, stingy!

"Are you certain you want me to make these two outfits?"

"Of course. But we can also discuss this business. If I sell these two designs to you, how much are they worth?"

Ah Ru actually reminded herself that these two pieces of paper could be exchanged for money. She didn't want to go to the Xue family, so this place was also a good option.

Ah Ru stared at Mu Shuangshuang in surprise. Her own shop wasn't very big, and the goods sold weren't particularly expensive. Usually, she operated on a thin profit margin. If she made clothes in this style, it might not sell at a high price, or no one might buy it.

"You can try it first, and pay me silver after you make money."

Mu Shuangshuang had already looked around Ah Ru's shop when she came in. It was in a decent location and belonged to the kind of place people would stroll by when shopping. Starting a ready-to-wear business here could be a good choice.

Most importantly, Mu Shuangshuang liked this girl.

If Ah Ru didn't agree with such favorable conditions, it would be somewhat foolish. She calculated in her mind before speaking. "How much silver are you asking for before you'd agree to sell these two designs?"

"You get ten percent of the income from each piece of clothing!" Mu Shuangshuang said calmly.

If a piece of ready-to-wear clothing sells for one hundred coins, she'd get ten coins. The more sold, the more she earns.

"Alright, ten percent it is!" Ah Ru readily agreed, as she could see Mu Shuangshuang's sincerity. Even if others liked these two styles and made money, giving Shuangshuang ten percent wasn't much.

With the deal simply set and the contract written, Mu Shuangshuang began selecting fabrics.

"Ah Ru, do you have any slightly soft and breathable fabric here? I want to make an outfit for each of my parents, and two for Fengzi, plus one each for the three little ones."

When calculated, Mu Shuangshuang needed to pick a few different colored outfits. She and Little Zhi could wear the same ones.

Lu Yuanfeng, Xiao Han, and Yuanbao could wear the same, while Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan would wear something different, so there needed to be at least four different colors.

Upon hearing that Shuangshuang was buying fabric including clothes for him, Lu Yuanfeng quickly waved his hand. "No need, no need to fetch fabric for me. I still have clothes, Shuangshuang, you should take some extra and make yourself a couple of nice outfits."

Lu Yuanfeng considered himself a rough man, often needing to do labor, so what clothes he wore didn't matter.

But Shuangshuang was different; she was a girl, and girls would like dressing up more than boys.

Girls in the village liked wearing pretty clothes and nice hair ties. Even Xia Guagua, whom he didn't like, frequently switched between new and old clothes.

"Ah Ru, don't listen to him, fetch the fabric according to what I said."

"Alright~" Ah Ru chuckled. She had already observed Shuangshuang and Fengzi earlier. It was obvious that Fengzi listened to Shuangshuang. Since they started, Shuangshuang had been the one who spoke, while he attentively listened, occasionally nodding.

Despite Fengzi standing quietly by, you could never ignore him, because this man was different from ordinary people.

With business already discussed, Ah Ru became increasingly attentive in recommending fabrics to Mu Shuangshuang, focusing particularly on its color, texture, and other factors.

"Shuangshuang, you and the little girl should pick the same color, this light pink one enhances the skin tone, and this fabric is soft and breathable, not expensive, at just twenty-two coins per foot. Around six to seven feet of fabric can make an outfit, and about three feet is sufficient for a child's clothes. Get twelve feet for you and this little girl."

"Alright! Please pick some more for the others."

After some discussion, Mu Shuangshuang selected a total of fifty-three feet of fabric. Mu Dashan's fabric was grey, which was dirt-resistant; Yuanbao, Xiao Han, and Lu Chengfeng were given a dark blue color; Yu Si Niang's fabric was a mature peach red, which suited her age.

A fabric roll of forty-five feet was already surpassed by Mu Shuangshuang's purchase.

This trip was truly a splurge, as the fabrics Ah Ru picked for her ranged from twenty-two to twenty-five coins per foot, but all were ultimately priced at twenty-three coins per foot, resulting in a total of 1219 coins.

Mu Shuangshuang instantly felt that all the silver she usually earned paled in comparison to the price of these fabrics!

Chapter 200: Envyng Shuangshuang

"Shuangshuang, are you going to make clothes for the three kids?"

Ah Ru, seeing Mu Shuangshuang had bought so much fabric, couldn't make up her mind whether she should help make clothes herself, considering the cost of handmade clothes was not insignificant.

"Yes, I need to. Just follow the style we discussed earlier, one set for each person. I assume you won't finish them quickly, and I can wait."

Mu Shuangshuang felt the clothes made by herself were quite different from those made by the fabric shop, whether it was the embroidery or the choice of material and craftsmanship. The clothes made at home focused on comfort, while those made outside emphasized aesthetics, though comfort was also important.

Besides, since she had already spent so much silver, she didn't mind spending a bit more.

The three children were very obedient, standing aside waiting for Ah Ru to help measure their sizes.

"Alright, let's agree that if I've made the clothes by the next time you come, you'll take them with you."

Ah Ru agreed while taking out the store's measuring tape, carefully measuring and noting down the sizes, knowing Mu Shuangshuang would still make clothes at home, she deliberately noted the measurements for Mu Shuangshuang to take with her.

As she was about to put away the tape, Mu Shuangshuang quickly spoke up. "Ah Ru, can you help measure Fengzi as well?"

Mu Shuangshuang didn't think a man could make clothes anyway, since Yu Si Niang at home would make clothes for a few of them, it would be better to include him at once, saving on handiwork costs.

Ah Ru glanced at Lu Yuanfeng, her face instantly turned red.

"My mother is not here, and I'm an unmarried girl, so it's inappropriate for me to measure him. Shuangshuang, why don't you wait for my mother to come back to measure?"

Mu Shuangshuang thought measuring next time would be troublesome, and didn't know when that would be.

So she stepped forward, picked up the measuring tape, and said to Ah Ru and Lu Yuanfeng, "Let me measure Fengzi!"

"But you also..." Ah Ru hesitated and said.

"It's okay, I'm young, and besides, if you don't say anything, he doesn't say anything, who would know?"

With Mu Shuangshuang's approval, Lu Yuanfeng's opinion could be overlooked.

Due to the height difference, Mu Shuangshuang had Ah Ru find a stool, and she stood on it to help measure.

Measuring requires measuring shoulder width, waist circumference, and front chest, actually quite similar to choosing clothes online nowadays; in any case, you need to know what size of clothes you wear.

When measuring the shoulders it was fine, Lu Yuanfeng cooperated well, but at the waist, Mu Shuangshuang clearly felt Lu Yuanfeng's body stiffen a bit.

Lu Yuanfeng suddenly remembered the evening when he and Shuangshuang were catching frogs, the scene when he angrily carried Shuangshuang away; she kept struggling on his shoulder, soft little hands pounding his back...

Lu Yuanfeng felt extremely thirsty, his throat seemed to be scorched by fire, and he kept swallowing hard.

Lu Yuanfeng bowed his head, gazing at Shuangshuang who was close to him, small and thin. From his angle, he could only see the top of her head with silky black hair and her constantly moving shoulders. He suddenly wanted to reach out and touch Shuangshuang's hair.

Would it be just as smooth as imagined, like silk?

In fact, he really stretched out his hand, but before he could touch her hair, Shuangshuang already looked up, looking dazedly at Lu Yuanfeng, seemingly not understanding why Lu Yuanfeng raised his hand halfway.

"It's nothing, nothing..." Probably too guilty, Lu Yuanfeng began to explain.

Mu Shuangshuang thought he was a bit nervous, but in her heart, she was somewhat shocked. When she suddenly looked up, she saw something deep and indistinguishable in Lu Yuanfeng's eyes along with inexplicable expectation.

Maybe, she was mistaken, Mu Shuangshuang comforted herself.

When measuring the chest, both faces turned slightly red and hearts raced, finally finishing the measurements with both covered in sweat.

"Thank you, thank you!" Ah Ru giggled, addressing the two who had just separated.

Lu Yuanfeng took this chance to pull out one silver tael plus 219 copper coins from his money pouch and handed them to Ah Ru.

When Lu Yuanfeng went out, he carried the pigskin pouch Mu Shuangshuang made for him, and although no one around him had seen it before, Lu Yuanfeng already received several curious glances.

Seeing Lu Yuanfeng about to pay the silver, Mu Shuangshuang naturally wouldn't agree, since her clothes were the main expense, it should be her who paid.

So Mu Shuangshuang also took out a little more than one tael of silver.

"Ah Ru, don't take his; I'll pay the silver today, since I'm the one who suggested coming shopping." Mu Shuangshuang rushed to explain.