

Folly 301

Chapter 301: Mrs. Lin is Pregnant

According to the prior agreement, every time Ah Ru sells a piece of clothing, she has to give Mu Shuangshuang ten percent of the money. So this time, Ah Ru has to give Mu Shuangshuang two hundred cents.

Mu Shuangshuang immediately decided to draw a few more clothing styles for Ah Ru. If she can make them herself, great; if not, she can sell them to someone else.

As for the specific price, we will find out and then discuss.

Mu Shuangshuang originally didn't expect to make money by selling clothing designs, and now that she really earned, it feels like a windfall.

She browsed around the shop again, finally choosing a bolt of bright red fabric to give to her uncle. Since he's not married yet, if he did get married, red fabric would surely be needed.

Additionally, she bought fabric for clothes for her grandmother, Old Mrs. Yu, and Mr. Yu, as well as Fengzi's grandmother. In total, the three fabrics cost one tael of silver.

Mu Shuangshuang now felt relaxed about making and spending money; her long-unseen maternal grandparents have taken good care of the third branch over the years, so sending some fabric is appropriate.

"Shuangshuang, you're truly my lucky star, bringing me business and buying so many things every time you come. Next time, tell me in advance before you come, so I can have my mom prepare a meal to treat you and Fengzi."

Ah Ru stood at the entrance of the fabric shop, reluctantly speaking to Mu Shuangshuang.

"Silly Ah Ru, you didn't earn much from me. The fabric you just sold me would have cost at least one and a half taels of silver at another place, and I couldn't have walked out of the shop."

Ah Ru laughed as she looked at Mu Shuangshuang. The girl in front of her, though younger, had an intelligent and nimble mind, and indeed didn't overcharge for the fabric.

"You're really generous. I've decided; you are my friend from now on!" Ah Ru extended her hand for a handshake.

Mu Shuangshuang shook Ah Ru's hand confidently. She had indeed made this friend.

Previously, they were more than partners but not quite friends; now they were truly friends.

After exchanging pleasantries with Ah Ru, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng prepared to go back. Considering they earned quite a bit today, they planned to buy some meat to make dumplings at home tonight, so everyone could gather together again.

Once they left the town, Mu Shuangshuang pulled Lu Yuanfeng into a grove and split the money earned from selling recipes, cold noodles, and clothes, giving half to Lu Yuanfeng.

Afraid Lu Yuanfeng would refuse, Mu Shuangshuang directly stated, "If you don't take it, we won't go hunting in the winter, and you shouldn't talk to me anymore; I'll be mad!"

Having been refused many times before, she wouldn't take no for an answer this time.

Mu Shuangshuang firmly insisted; Lu Yuanfeng was stuck, unable to either accept or refuse the money.

Finally, he came up with a compromise.

"Shuangshuang, you know our house isn't safe. Can I save my money with you? When we send Yuanbao to the academy next year, you can deduct the gift fee from this money. If it's not enough, I'll make up the difference; if there's extra, consider it as me buying jerky."

For the town's ceremony, it's not just about silver; jerky is also needed. Without these, we might not be able to attend the apprenticeship ceremony.

Mu Shuangshuang thought it made sense; why fuss over these small matters? After all, the two families are tied together. She would prepare the jerky for Yuanbao, and she could also handle the gift fee and such.

"Alright, but I'll only take a tael of silver. You keep the rest."

Mu Shuangshuang mentally recorded the amount of silver not taken by Lu Yuanfeng in her hand. With this extra tael included, they would soon have quite a bit of silver.

"Okay!"

Lu Yuanfeng finally took the silver. When they arrived at Er Gui Village, it was a bit later than usual, but without the sun, they didn't sweat at all along the way.

With quite a few things to carry, Lu Yuanfeng helped Mu Shuangshuang move everything inside. The peaches and pears were all placed on the wall where Mu Shuangshuang had nailed hooks.

Neither Little Zhi nor Xiao Han was there, not even Little Black. Mu Shuangshuang didn't mind, assuming Little Zhi had taken Little Black out, as during the day Little Zhi often played with Little Black.

Speaking of it, Little Black was her catch, but got along with Little Zhi much better. Perhaps because she often liked to playfully punch Little Black.

"By the way, Fengzi, I got some fabric for your grandma too, enough for a set of clothing. Take it back with you, and some pears and peaches for Yuanbao."

While talking, Mu Shuangshuang found a bamboo basket for Lu Yuanfeng, carefully placing the items she mentioned inside, covering them with a piece of dark old cloth.

This way, when Lu Yuanfeng held the basket, he wouldn't have to worry about someone coveting its contents on the road.

While Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng talked inside, Mu Dazhong, informed by his son Gou Dan, quickly ran from his room to Mu Dashan's room.

"Old Three, why are you still lying down? It's better to go out for a walk in this weather!"

Mu Dazhong's sudden attentiveness made Mu Dashan remember the time long ago when Sister-in-law Mrs. Jin deceived him.

Now, he's become overly cautious. Whenever someone who treated him poorly suddenly acts nice, he suspects a plot, likely related to Shuangshuang.

Even Mu Dashan himself wasn't aware that his inner balance had long tilted towards Yu Si Niang and his children.

When it comes to so-called filial piety, the third branch was still the most important.

"Second Brother, just say what you want. You know I dislike beating around the bush; you're making me uneasy."

"Old Three, you think too little of me. I'm your second brother; why would I harm you?"

After speaking, Mu Dazhong observed Mu Dashan's expression and, seeing it soften a bit, he continued.

"Old Three, I've come today to share good news. Your second sister-in-law is pregnant, and we'll have a new addition to the Old Mu Family!"

Mu Dazhong, full of joy, let his focus fall back on Mu Dashan after sharing the news.

Hearing that Mrs. Lin was pregnant, Mu Dashan was genuinely happy. Despite the continuous conflict in the family, the children should not be involved.

The child in his second brother's wife's belly would be his nephew or niece, and that was something to be joyful about.

"What about our parents? Have they been informed? Did they say anything; are they particularly happy?"

Once Mu Dashan spoke, Mu Dazhong's expression changed, awkwardly curling his lips.

"Happy, of course, happy..."

But in truth, Old Mrs. Mu went to the second branch after hearing Mrs. Lin was pregnant, saying a lot of unpleasant things, accusing Mrs. Lin of being lazy and getting pregnant just to avoid chores.

The words were unbelievably harsh. If not that person was his mother, Mu Dazhong would have already thrown punches!

Chapter 302: Should Go For It!

"That's good, that's good!" Mu Dashan nodded with satisfaction.

"By the way, second brother, let mother make some good food for second sister-in-law. Don't let the child go hungry."

Mu Dashan reminded Mu Dazhong, in fact, he still valued these brotherly feelings a lot. As long as they were sincere with him, he was willing to trust these brothers who had deceived him before.

Seeing Mu Dashan finally say what he wanted to hear, Mu Dazhong sighed heavily.

"Ah, youngest brother, you know mother's temperament. Asking her to spend money is like asking for her life. Her money is only accessible to father, eldest brother, and the two sisters. As for us insignificant sons and daughters-in-law, we have no privilege at all."

After speaking, Mu Dashan's face also showed embarrassment.

But his second brother was telling the truth!

"Second brother, these words are just between us. Try not to speak ill of father and mother to outsiders." Mu Dashan hesitated for a moment before saying these words.

"I know, but youngest brother, could you help second brother out? Make some good food and send it over to second sister-in-law?"

I know Shuang went to the town today, she must have earned a lot of money and surely brought back some nice food.

If there's any meat, just send her a bowl of meat soup, even if it's watered-down meat soup, just let her enjoy it a little."

Mu Dazhong spoke pitifully, and Mu Dashan understood. In the Old Mu Family, except for the eldest brother, having a meal with meat every half-year was already considered very good.

Given that second sister-in-law is now pregnant, she really needs to be nourished.

"Second brother, I understand. When Shuangshuang comes over, I'll mention it to her and see if she can help you out."

"Alright then, I'll go back and tell second sister-in-law that there'll be meat tonight, so she won't eat the family's meal. Remember to ask Si Niang to bring over two bowls of rice when delivering the meat, I'll be heading off!"

Ignoring Mu Dashan's tentative tone, Mu Dazhong confidently instructed Mu Dashan to prepare this and that, and as soon as Mu Dashan opened his mouth, he disappeared.

Mu Shuangshuang, having just seen off Lu Yuanfeng, saw Mu Dazhong walking out from her father's room, and she quickly rushed inside.

In a hurry, she asked, "Dad, what did second uncle come here for? What did he say?"

Mu Dashan paused for a moment, then shook his head with a smile.

"Shuangshuang, don't worry. Your second uncle means no harm and won't do anything to me. He just came to say that your second aunt is pregnant and mentioned some things, hoping we could make a good meal and send it over."

Mu Shuangshuang rolled her eyes unceremoniously and said, "He thinks too highly of it. They're clearly from grandma's side; eating and drinking should be there too. Now they're eyeing our food, just like chickens in the field.

Planning to eat their fill there at grandma's, then come here to freeload? Dad, I think you're just too honest, so they come to you without any qualms."

It was the first time Mu Shuangshuang spoke so bluntly. Though Mu Dashan felt uncomfortable, he had to admit it was true, especially with his second brother's last remarks, he realized he had been deceived.

But even knowing it was a scam, he couldn't do anything, as he had already made a promise.

Mu Dashan valued his word; if he promised something, he would certainly do it.

"Shuangshuang, but Dad just promised second uncle, he would..." Mu Dashan said, looking troubled.

"Even if you promised, you can still back out. After all, you were deceived. Are you really intending to cook and send them good food?"

"Maybe, this time we should forget it..." Mu Dashan pleaded, his gaze seeking help from Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang could see his difficulty and struggle.

"Alright, alright, we'll forget about it this time. But next time, Dad, you mustn't be fooled again. If it happens, I really won't intervene."

Mu Shuangshuang finished, then explained since she felt her words were too harsh. "Dad, I don't mean it that way. I just feel they're clearly targeting you, and if they truly cared, I wouldn't be stingy with those things."

"Dad understands, you're a good child, I shouldn't put you in a difficult position." Mu Dashan lowered his head, a flicker of guilt in his eyes.

"Don't mention such difficulties, it's embarrassing to say among family. By the way, where are mom and uncle? I haven't seen them."

Mu Shuangshuang returned and didn't see her mother or uncle, so she was curious.

"Your mom and uncle went out to work. Mom said the vegetables you planted need to be weeded and loosened, and she also found another piece of wasteland for your uncle to help cultivate. By year's end, we'll plant seeds so our family doesn't have to buy oil from others."

Yu Liulang, being strong, was easily utilized by Yu Si Niang as he stayed for a few more days.

In just a day, a piece of wasteland on the hillside was nearly cultivated by Yu Si Niang and Yu Liulang, with all the grass cleared, leaving bare land.

Fortunately, this piece of land isn't clay soil. Although it's not very fertile, they don't have to cover it with manure.

"Sis, when will these days come to an end? Brother-in-law can only lie in bed, and Shuangshuang is the only capable one in the family. But she's just a child, and Xiao Han and Little Zhi are so young, I'm really afraid you won't be able to hold on."

Yu Liulang only dared to express his true thoughts in front of Yu Si Niang. Even though brother-in-law is close, he is still an outsider, especially after hearing about the days his sister spent with the two elders, he had formed opinions about Mu Dashan.

Initially, Mu Dashan insisted on marrying his sister, which led the Old Yu Family to give gifts and marry her off without accepting a penny in bride price. By right, his brother-in-law should treat her like a treasure.

"I know you're concerned about me, but sister isn't tired. It's Shuangshuang who is the most burdened in this family. I see her sleep late, wake up early, and she's so skinny, ah..."

"Shuangshuang is a good girl, but brother-in-law..."

Yu Liulang spoke about Mu Dashan a few times, and Yu Si Niang became a bit upset.

"Sixth Son, with what position do you make such remarks? As an outsider, you shouldn't interfere in my family matters; as a brother, you should support me in keeping this family together."

Having not yet married, his words were somewhat childish.

But he was, after all, her brother.

Yu Si Niang sighed deeply and then said, "Sixth Son, you're not young anymore. Quickly marry a wife; if you continue like this, you'll never understand what responsibility and accountability mean!"

"Sis, how can you say I lack responsibility? I've always known that I would rather starve than let the family starve. Clearly, it was brother-in-law's mistake initially; he should apologize and stand up to father and mother!"

Chapter 303: Little Black "Died"

"Enough, Sixth Son, what do you mean by saying these things now? Do you want me to quarrel with your brother-in-law, or have your brother-in-law go quarrel with my parents? Do you really want to see the third branch fall apart? Let me tell you, I won't let such a thing happen." Yu Si Niang scolded Yu Liulang loudly.

In Yu Si Niang's heart, what's past is past.

Since she married into the Old Mu Family, married Mu Dashan, she has the responsibility to keep this family united, to ensure everyone has a common goal. She's not the kind to make trouble without reason; everything from before was wiped clean after the family split.

From now on, as her daughter said, the third branch living well is truly living well.

Everything else has nothing to do with them.

Yu Liulang realized his words hurt his sister, and promptly spoke up to apologize.

"Sis, don't be angry, I just think you've suffered too much in the past. I know you and brother-in-law have a good relationship, I won't say anything from now on, just hope you're happy."

Yu Si Niang holds an extraordinary place in Yu Liulang's heart. When he was very young, Mr. Yu and Old Mrs. Yu would get up early and stay up late to work, and Yu Si Niang would assume the family's role, cooking, washing clothes, and taking care of the children.

So Yu Si Niang's feelings are what Yu Liulang cares about most.

"Sis isn't angry, Sis just wants to tell you, once you're married and have a family, that's how it is. You can't put yourself first in everything, you have to think about the whole family, and the children. The most important thing is not to let outsiders talk behind our backs."

Yu Si Niang sincerely shared her years of experience with Yu Liulang, hoping Yu Liulang would consider his own marriage a little bit.

Unexpectedly, Yu Liulang directly refused.

"Sis, I will never marry in my lifetime. You know about Xiuxiu's matter. If you want me to be a laughing stock again, just go ahead and push."

"You child, how can you be so immature, forget it, I won't talk to you anymore, let's go back, I'll let Shuangshuang talk to you!"

It was getting late, time to go back, Yu Si Niang picked up the kettle, Yu Liulang picked up the hoe, and headed towards the Old Mu Family.

...

...

Mu Shuangshuang was in the kitchen preparing ingredients needed for dinner, she not only needed to make dumplings tonight, but she had to make a lot, trying all kinds of fillings, both meat and vegetarian.

Just as she placed the washed five-flavor pork on the chopping board, ready to mince it, Little Zhi and Xiao Han returned from outside.

The two little kids were surprisingly in sync, heading straight to the kitchen, looking at the stove as soon as they entered.

"Sis, we're back." Little Zhi said sweetly to Mu Shuangshuang while looking.

"Hmm, Sis hasn't cooked yet, but I just pickled some cold cucumber salad, want some?"

After playing all day, Little Zhi and Xiao Han were already hungry, so they both nodded.

"Hey, Little Zhi, why didn't you bring Little Black in with you today?"

Mu Shuangshuang instinctively asked, because normally Little Black would be following Little Zhi at this time.

"Sis, isn't Little Black with you?" Little Zhi blinked and asked curiously.

Clearly, Sis had taken Little Black out in the morning.

"Bang!" The spatula in Mu Shuangshuang's hand fell to the ground, directly gouging a hole.

"You said Little Black was with me? But I went to town today, Little Black didn't go with me!" Mu Shuangshuang answered with certainty.

"Ah... then where did Little Black go?" Little Zhi panicked, eyes instantly filled with tears.

Mu Shuangshuang instantly became alert, Little Black was playful but would definitely appear at mealtime, especially since she went out today, it wouldn't make such a mistake.

The only two explanations, either Little Black went back to Dashan, or something happened.

The second possibility seemed more likely.

Mu Shuangshuang took a deep breath, telling herself to stay calm.

Meanwhile, she dashed to her room, and Little Black's tree hole was just as she left it last night before bed.

"Damn, something must have happened to Little Black..."

Little Zhi, following Mu Shuangshuang, heard Mu Shuangshuang's words, and immediately burst into tears, remembering last time Little Grey was eaten, tears flooding out.

Xiao Han's face also changed, he staggered a few steps, nearly falling.

"No way, Little Zhi, Little Black will be fine, I'll go find Brother Yuan Feng, he definitely has a way."

"Xiao Han, I'll go with you, we'll find Little Black together!" Mu Shuangshuang steadied her nerves, knowing that she couldn't panic now, if she did, Little Black might really not be found!

...

...

Mu Danian waited in the dilapidated house in the village for Chen Hong all day, but didn't see a sign of her. Just as he was about to leave, Chen Hong finally arrived late.

Perhaps because she did unspeakable things last night for too long, Chen Hong's steps were a bit unstable, and her face somewhat swollen.

Mu Danian rushed forward and gave Chen Hong a hard pinch on her chest, causing her to scream in pain.

"Ouch, are you crazy, trying to pinch me to death!"

"You little slut, don't I know what you're thinking about? What, already wanting it again after just a day?"

Mu Danian was always crude in his speech, Chen Hong was long accustomed to it; normally, she'd play along.

But now she couldn't wait to get back at Mu Shuangshuang for hitting her.

"Stop fooling around, I don't feel like doing that stuff today, first make me that roasted yellow weasel. When I'm full, we'll see."

Chen Hong wasn't her usual flirtatious self, Mu Danian was momentarily taken aback, but quickly returned to normal.

Women are petty, love jealousy, always repay grudges, isn't that typical?

Mu Danian rubbed Chen Hong's hand with consolation. "Why are you in such a hurry? I'll make it right away, I've prepared the firewood, and the lard I stole from that brat's house. That brat, think as she might, won't expect I hid the lard in my mom's house; even if she does know, she wouldn't dare take it."

Speaking, Mu Danian picked up the burlap sack that was thrown aside.

"Do you think this little bastard is dead, it's been a whole day, only made noise at the start."

Mu Danian put his hand into the sack, pulling Little Black out.

He was surprised to find Little Black no longer struggled, limp in his hands, not responding no matter how he shook.

"Damn, really dead, I heard yellow weasels are only good roasted alive."

"Then what do I do, you promised me roast yellow weasel, I won't accept that this doesn't count as revenge against your niece!"

Mu Danian hastily placed Little Black on the ground, Chen Hong crowded in too, the two of them stared at Little Black lying on the ground.

Chapter 304: Mu Danian Was Bullied to Tears

Chen Hong kept looking and sensed something was wrong. The creature on the ground, despite resembling a weasel, didn't look like a weasel at all, from its fur to its finer features.

Instead, it looked exactly like something she had seen while shopping in town, which could be made into a coat. The only difference was the color of the fur. That creature was called... mink, yes, mink!

She pointed at Little Black on the ground and said, "This... this thing... It's not a weasel, it's a black mink... It... It is worth quite a lot of money..."

As soon as she finished speaking, Little Black, who was presumed dead, suddenly opened its eyes and simultaneously scratched Mu Danian's handsome face with one paw, while the other scratched Chen Hong's neck.

The mink's claws were very sharp, and with a single swipe, red marks appeared on Mu Danian's face and Chen Hong's neck.

Both of them screamed in agony. Mu Danian angrily reached out to grab Little Black, but accidentally, Little Black climbed onto his head.

Little Black darted its coal-black eyes around, furiously digging with its claws atop Mu Danian's head.

Its actions were extremely lively.

Mu Danian only felt that his scalp was about to be ripped apart. His hair, which had been meticulously groomed, was now a mess in Little Black's paws.

"You little beast, I'm going to kill you!"

Mu Danian waved his arms frantically, determined to catch Little Black, but the nimble creature was bouncing around on his head.

Not only was Little Black retaliating for being kept inside all day, but it also decided to relieve itself atop Mu Danian's head.

Mu Danian felt a warm, wet sensation on his head, followed by a stench of urine.

"Damn, the little beast peed on my head..."

"Beat it to death, the little beast ruined my neck."

With burning eyes, Chen Hong grabbed some firewood from the ground and threw it at Mu Danian, intended for Little Black, but missed and fell due to inertia instead.

Her body slammed heavily onto the dirt blocks of the decrepit house, scraping the skin off her elbow, particularly hurting her stomach terribly, making Chen Hong unable to utter a word. The money pouch from her pocket had somehow gotten knocked out and lay not far from Little Black.

Taking advantage of the opportunity, Little Black grabbed the money pouch and sped off.

Leaving Chen Hong alone there, wailing about her pain and money being stolen, altogether in a pitiful state...

Once out of the run-down house, Little Black regained its freedom. By now, dusk was settling as the pouch-carrying Little Black initially headed towards Shuangshuang's house.

But for some unknown reason, it suddenly changed direction, heading towards Niuwei Mountain and quickly disappearing down the country roads of Er Gui Village.

Everybody in the third branch, except for Mu Dashan, was out looking for Little Black. They were loudly calling for it throughout the village, asking the passing people, but no one had seen Little Black.

Little Black was indeed quite unique; if anyone saw it, they wouldn't forget.

"Shuangshuang, what shall we do? If Little Black is gone, Little Zhi will cry her heart out."

Yu Si Niang was on the verge of tears as she kept stomping her feet anxiously on the spot.

Mu Shuangshuang's mind was completely blank at the moment; she was analyzing who might have taken Little Black, quickly forming relationship maps in her head.

After pondering several times, Mu Danian seemed the most suspicious.

Because yesterday he was watching Little Zhi all the time. It was a misunderstanding; Mu Danian's target was not Little Zhi at all, but rather Little Black in Little Zhi's arms.

"Fengzi, I know where Little Black is!"

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly shouted towards Lu Yuanfeng, who sprinted towards her.

With just a glance exchanged between them, their thoughts were understood.

"Mother, take the others home first; Fengzi and I are going to rescue Little Black."

"Sister, Little Zhi wants to go too." Little Zhi, standing beside Mu Shuangshuang, wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Be good, Little Zhi; sister will be back soon. Go home and wait for sister's good news."

After speaking, Mu Shuangshuang pulled Lu Yuanfeng along.

Every moment lost meant greater danger for Little Black.

She remembered when she had stolen Mu Danian and Chen Hong's clothes from the village's abandoned house; if Mu Danian was indeed responsible, the two would definitely be there.

Her fists clenched unconsciously as she led Lu Yuanfeng to the abandoned house's entrance, with Lu Yuanfeng climbing onto the roof in no time while Mu Shuangshuang quietly sneaked inside.

At that moment, Chen Hong was still wailing about her Silver, and Mu Danian was cleaning his filthy self.

Suddenly, a thin figure rushed in through the house door, and when Chen saw who it was, she was kicked to the ground.

Her back slammed hard against the ground, and Mu Shuangshuang stepped on Chen Hong's chest.

"Speak, where did my Little Black go?"

Chen Hong was too shocked to speak, even forgetting to shed tears.

Mu Danian wasn't much different; upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang, he instinctively tried to escape, but Lu Yuanfeng jumped down from the hole in the roof and landed in front of him.

Before Shuangshuang entered, Lu Yuanfeng had already checked, but Little Black wasn't there.

"Speak, where is Little Black?" Lu Yuanfeng extended his hand, blocking Mu Danian's way with a glare that sent a frostbitten killing intent directly toward Mu Danian.

Mu Danian was trembling in fear, yet his stubbornness and clever mind held him up.

He would never admit it!

"What Little Black, Fengzi, what are you doing? You want to bully people, right! Do you think Mu Dania is easy to bully? I tell you, Mu Dania isn't someone to be messed with. If you dare provoke me, it won't end well for you."

Lu Yuanfeng immediately grabbed Mu Dania by the neck. While he wouldn't hit a woman, he'd never promised not to hit a man.

He lifted Mu Dazhong by the neck.

Within moments, Mu Dazhong's face turned red from strangulation, then purple, and after a while, he shook his legs desperately like a dying duck.

Chen Hong was dumbfounded, crying and screaming in terror.

"I... It's nothing to do with me; it was Mu Dania; he was the one who captured that beast."

"You're the beast, where did Little Black go, did you eat it?" Mu Shuangshuang roared.

Mu Dania struggled to speak.

"Let... me... go."

Lu Yuanfeng loosened his grip, and Mu Dania fell directly to the floor.

He had lost count of how many times he had suffered like this, aching as though his body was falling apart, and upon hitting the ground, Mu Dania tried to escape yet again but was caught by Lu Yuanfeng.

"You... You have the guts to kill me; otherwise, I won't hand over that little beast."

"Fengzi, beat him to death! Damn it, I'll see today whether it's their mouths that are hard or my shoe soles!"

Chapter 305: A Proud Face

Mu Shuangshuang took off her shoes and swung them at Chen Hong's face.

The first slap resounded loudly, and Chen Hong wailed for her parents.

A shoe print appeared on her face, looking terribly unsightly.

The second hit followed, the shoe sole struck Chen Hong's face, causing her to scream, "It hurts so much. I'll talk... I'll talk..."

Mu Shuangshuang let out a cold laugh, "Too late now, I don't want to hear it anymore!"

There was another chaotic beating. Mu Shuangshuang strictly followed her boxing practice rhythm; one strike from the left, one from the right.

Chen Hong's face was swollen like a pig's head, and Mu Danian wasn't much better off. Lu Yuanfeng didn't use shoes, but his fists were hard enough. After several punches, Mu Danian was knocked to the ground.

"I'll talk... I'll talk... That little beast peed on my head and then ran away..."

"He also stole my money, you all have to repay me... sob..."

Mu Danian and Chen Hong spoke almost simultaneously, and the originally anxious Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng simultaneously chuckled.

Peeing on Mu Danian's head?

Stealing the silver?

Wow, Little Black really outdid himself!

"Shuangshuang, I think Little Black might have gone back!" Lu Yuanfeng said.

"I think so too, let's clean this up first and go back to check later."

After all, they dealt severely today, they definitely couldn't just leave, otherwise, Mu Danian could find ways to sling mud on them later.

Mu Shuangshuang walked up to Mu Danian and said, "Fifth Uncle messed with Shuangshuang's things today and got punished.

Of course, this doesn't mean today's matter is over. I just want to remind you that your little escapade with Chen Hong in the cotton field last time was caught by someone.

If you throw dirt at Shuangshuang today, everyone in the village will know your business!"

Mu Danian was startled. He believed the incident was very secretive. How could it have been discovered?

Could it be a bluff?

This sneaky girl has a way of trying to bluff him, no way!

"What are you talking about? It's dark and blind at night, how can you say it was me? What evidence do you have? Besides, who would believe a kid's words!" Mu Danian responded stubbornly.

"I knew Fifth Uncle wouldn't admit it, but last time in this broken house, I picked up a couple of clothes. From underwear to women's bras, I'm just not sure whose they are. If I bring them to the village, I wonder if anyone will recognize them!"

"..."

Mu Danian never knew Mu Shuangshuang had such cunning; he always thought Mu Shuangshuang only liked solving matters with fists. Even if he'd suffer today, it would only be a severe beating.

Now it seems different; this girl wants his life!

The story of Mu Danian bullying widows in the village was something everyone knew, but there had never been evidence. If this time Shuangshuang provides such crucial evidence, Mu Danian and Chen Hong are done for.

Neither would be able to stay in their village!

Mu Danian's face turned black again, and his teeth nearly shattered from gritting.

To think Mu Danian, clever all his life, would be outsmarted by a sneaky girl.

So hateful, so infuriating!

"Shuangshuang, I am your Fifth Uncle. If you do that, it won't benefit you either. Instead, why don't you give me the things, and I'll talk to your parents and stop calling you a sneaky girl. When your eldest uncle returns, I'll make sure he takes you to live a good life.

That way, you'll be an official's daughter. I'll ask your aunt to find you a good marriage, and you'll have a grand wedding, how about it?"

Mu Danian looked at Mu Shuangshuang ingratiatingly. Even now, he thought if he adjusted his attitude a bit, he might have a chance.

This is the nature of the Old Mu Family.

When bullying you, they spare no effort, stomping you relentlessly.

When you show signs of turning the table, they immediately bind you with affection.

If you refuse, they get furious.

Mu Shuangshuang gave a little smile and declined directly. "Sorry, I disagree!"

"You sneaky girl, why are you so bad, driving me to death? Saying you shouldn't have been born, if you were dead, there wouldn't be so much trouble."

Mu Shuangshuang watched coldly; true to character, they couldn't withstand pressure!

"Then just consider me dead!"

After all, the original host was already tormented to death, not much different from the death Mu Dania mentioned.

Mu Shuangshuang stood up. She picked up a jar of lard from the ground, opened the oil cloth, and saw that the originally half-full lard was almost gone; thought it had been used by Mu Dania to mix into rice.

Mu Shuangshuang was angry and added another kick to Mu Dania's handsome face, knocking him back onto the ground. After that, she and Lu Yuanfeng decided to leave.

Her purpose was achieved; regarding Little Black, the two wouldn't dare to try anything funny again. As for future matters, she would naturally adapt promptly.

Mu Shuangshuang walked to the door, but before she could leave, a badly beaten Chen Hong clung to her leg, "Spare me, I... I know nothing, it's all your Fifth Uncle, the clothes are his, okay?"

"Of course not, if you dare do bad things again, I'll make you famous instantly, and let you get punished severely!"

Chen Hong abruptly sat on the ground, her body quivered, then she fainted.

After leaving the abandoned house, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng first went to the north of Niuwe Mountain, intending to catch a fish for Little Black as dinner.

If Mu Shuangshuang was right, Little Black took the silver as a reward.

Since it's so obedient, she's glad to do this good deed.

It's the first time fishing at night, but with Lu Yuanfeng, it wasn't difficult at all. Shortly, the two caught a fish about the size of two palms, heading towards the direction of Mu Family's Third Branch.

No one noticed Little Black was secretly following them with the money bag in its mouth...

When Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng returned happily with the fish, the family was still looking listless.

Little Zhi rushed up to Mu Shuangshuang and asked:

"Sister, what about Little Black, where did Little Black go?"

Mu Shuangshuang's smile froze immediately.

"You say it hasn't come back? Impossible!"

According to Mu Danian and Chen Hong, Little Black should have returned already. The two looked at each other, surprised.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't think Mu Danian would lie, yet after Little Black left, where did it actually go?

"Little Black is gone... sister... sob..." Little Zhi sat down on the ground, starting to wail.

Little Han, who had been holding back tears, also began to cry, even Yu Si Niang wiped her tears secretly.

The whole Third Branch became chaotic.

"I'll go look for it again!" Mu Shuangshuang said towards the yard.

"I'll go with you!"

Chapter 306: Quite Insidious

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng continued along the path they had come, searching for the missing Little Black.

Both were exhausted and hungry, having been busy all day without even a sip of tea, just focused on finding Little Black.

Yet neither of them suggested resting, because Little Black meant too much to them.

So much so that losing Little Black felt like losing a family member.

Mu Shuangshuang was used to teasing Little Black, always thinking the black mink would forever stay with her. Who would have thought, in a blink of an eye, everything had changed, and something so endearing had disappeared.

A wave of sadness swept over her heart.

"Little Black..." Mu Shuangshuang shouted at the top of her lungs.

Lu Yuanfeng joined in calling.

The two ran towards the direction of the abandoned house where Mu Danian and Chen Hong were staying, hoping to find Little Black nearby.

"Little Black, can you hear me? If you can, come out. I promise never to hit you again."

"Little Black, I know you're nearby. You're so clever, you won't be caught, right?"

Mu Shuangshuang murmured as she searched.

By now, it was completely dark; there was no moon, not even a star, and Er Gui Village was pitch black.

Beneath her feet were either clumps of mud or rotting branches, and with each step Mu Shuangshuang staggered.

Several times, Mu Shuangshuang nearly fell.

Luckily, each time Lu Yuanfeng managed to pull her back in time.

She thought, if not for Lu Yuanfeng, she would probably fall face-first into the mud.

After circling the village three times, Mu Shuangshuang's legs were about to give out, yet Little Black's shadow was still nowhere to be found.

Mu Shuangshuang felt chaotic inside; suddenly, she crouched down and began to blame herself.

"What do we do, Lu Yuanfeng? We can't find Little Black. Little Zhi will cry herself dead. I couldn't protect her rabbit last time, and now this..."

"Shuangshuang, don't be sad..." Lu Yuanfeng crouched down too, frantically trying to comfort Shuangshuang.

Seeing Shuangshuang like this made his heart ache, like being stabbed in the chest.

His throat tightened, making it difficult to speak.

The more he comforted her, the more Mu Shuangshuang blamed herself.

Lu Yuanfeng became anxious; he just wanted the girl in front of him to not be so upset.

Everything went black, Mu Shuangshuang's chin resting on Lu Yuanfeng's shoulder.

"Shuangshuang, Little Black will be fine, you're not allowed to talk about yourself like that."

His hand rested on Mu Shuangshuang's back, gently patting her.

This was the first time he saw Shuangshuang so sad; ever since he met her, she's always faced everything around her optimistically, always the brightest of the crowd.

But this time...

While Mu Shuangshuang was feeling down, something knocked into the back of her heel, causing her to tilt forward, inadvertently dragging Lu Yuanfeng down with her.

Her head hit Lu Yuanfeng's chest, her palm pressed against his waist.

Lu Yuanfeng's eyes glimmered brightly, his waist under her small hand, which seemed to move slightly, perhaps intentionally.

His adam's apple quivered, his voice gruff and hoarse, carrying an unspeakable tone.

"Shuangshuang, are you... hurt?"

Mu Shuangshuang was completely dazed, her head a mush, barely any strength left.

She felt a pleasant scent of soap drift over...

Mu Shuangshuang tried to get up, but Lu Yuanfeng suddenly let out a low cry.

"Shuangshuang, don't move..."

A seventeen-year-old boy, at that age of emotional uncertainty, especially with someone he loved being so close.

Lu Yuanfeng struggled to endure, wanting to do something mischievous but knowing he couldn't.

Mu Shuangshuang realized Lu Yuanfeng's unusual behavior and truly stayed still, yet her body felt frozen, immensely uncomfortable.

Mu Shuangshuang thought she could just slightly adjust her leg, it should be fine!

But just a small movement was detected by Lu Yuanfeng.

In the pitch-black night, the two felt a peculiar sensation hovering around.

Mu Shuangshuang opened her mouth, completely lost, unsure what to do or say to ease the awkwardness.

Especially when she sensed a domineering air on Lu Yuanfeng that wasn't usually there, Mu Shuangshuang began to feel scared.

Then, the culprit let out a joyful "hiss hiss" nearby, piercingly loud in this quiet night.

But like a bucket of cold water, it extinguished the flames between Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Mu Shuangshuang shot up like a monkey, scrambling away from Lu Yuanfeng as far as possible.

She knew that youths with adolescent hormones have little self-control.

Even if Lu Yuanfeng was mature, he was still seventeen, and her mental age, well, in her twenties.

Mu Shuangshuang silently scolded herself; after all, she's been an "auntie" before, nearly taken advantage of by a young lad.

Truly useless.

Little Black realized it was completely ignored, its hissing grew louder. At that moment, Mu Shuangshuang took hold of its ear, shaking it several times.

"You knew to come back? Why not die out there, following us for quite a while now, huh? Seeing us unhappy, are you smug?" Mu Shuangshuang threatened with a cold snort.

She thought Little Black was lost, crouching down embarrassingly to blame herself only for it to have been trailing her all along.

Little Black hissed even louder, its paws constantly sliding back and forth, yet it was too dark for Mu Shuangshuang to see its cute antics.

Lu Yuanfeng mostly recovered by now, and Mu Shuangshuang gave Little Black a good lesson.

The earlier unexpected incident was unanimously ignored, as if it never happened.

Returning home, the Mu Family's Third Branch members each came forward, relieved to see Little Black.

Especially Little Zhi, who took Little Black from Mu Shuangshuang's hands, giving it a big kiss.

This revived Little Black's spirits, which had been down due to the scolding, and it purposely bared its teeth at Mu Shuangshuang, only to burrow into Little Zhi's arms when Mu Shuangshuang raised her hand.

As they say, there's always one that can overcome another, and the crowd laughed at this scene.

"Everyone have some water and take a rest. I'll prepare dinner!"

Searching for Little Black took about an hour and a half in total, but fortunately, the outcome was good.

Mu Shuangshuang let out a sigh of relief.

Tonight, it was indeed getting late; she needed to cook dinner quickly.

Chapter 307: Where is Your Face?

"I'll go with you, I know how to make dumplings!"

Lu Yuanfeng, blushing, stepped forward.

"Alright, let's hurry, I've everything ready for making dumplings, just need to roll out the dough and cook them!"

Having a helper certainly speeds things up. Although what happened before still feels a bit awkward, everyone knows eating is more important, and anything embarrassing can be thought about after filling their stomachs.

Once in the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang took out the fermented flour and various fillings.

Originally planning to make many types of fillings, Mu Shuangshuang decided to keep it simple with just a meat filling, a corn filling, and a cabbage filling.

Lu Yuanfeng was rolling out the dough on the table, and to be honest, he wasn't exaggerating one bit; each piece of dough he rolled was thin and even.

"Fengzi, your skills—it seems like this isn't your first or second time making dumplings!"

Mu Shuangshuang picked up a piece of dumpling skin and exclaimed in surprise.

"In the camp, everyone made dumplings by themselves."

"Did you all do it together?" Mu Shuangshuang asked, actually reminiscing about her own past life, a communal lifestyle she once experienced.

In some ways, Lu Yuanfeng's experiences were quite similar to hers. Although the era and the specifics differed, she could imagine what it was like for Lu Yuanfeng back then.

"Yes, everyone together. Life at the border was harsh and lonely. The only time we could rest was during New Year's Eve when everyone would make some good food together.

Of course, it was mostly simple stuff baked over the fire. Dumplings were the only dish everyone knew how to make."

As Lu Yuanfeng spoke, he subconsciously observed the expression of the girl beside him.

He had noticed early on that, compared to other topics, Shuangshuang seemed more interested in his days at the camp.

Every time he talked about those events with Shuangshuang, Lu Yuanfeng felt a surge of excitement, as if he were reliving those experiences.

With Lu Yuanfeng rolling out thin dumpling skins and Mu Shuangshuang wrapping plump dumplings, their cooperation was seamless. In no time at all, all the dumplings were wrapped.

Mu Shuangshuang added water to the pot, preparing to scrub it clean, planning to make a hot soup, so that once the dumplings were cooked, they could enjoy them with the soup.

However, at that moment, the courtyard suddenly erupted with a few voices of quarrel. From the sound of it, it seemed to be Mu Dazhong, and only then did Mu Shuangshuang remember that when they returned, Mu Dashan had been persuaded by Mu Dazhong playing the emotional card.

Mu Dazhong, having waited fruitlessly at home for the broth that Mu Dashan promised, plus Mrs. Lin's constant complaining of hunger, simply left the house to check if the third branch was not honoring their promise and not giving them the meat broth.

To his surprise, Mu Dazhong encountered a hard nut to crack, Yu Liulang.

Yu Liulang already had no fondness for the Old Mu Family, and now that someone was openly trying to freeload, he naturally had to speak up to stop them as a member of the family.

"I say, Sixth Son of the Yu Family, I'm simply eating my brother's food, why should you care? Keep your nose out of my business!"

Mu Dazhong puffed out his chest, glaring fiercely at Yu Liulang.

"Well, I'm meddling in this affair today. In my sister's house, I'm in charge. In short, you cannot eat my sister's food, nor use her things, or else I won't be polite to you."

In terms of height, Mu Dazhong was no match for Yu Liulang.

In terms of strength, he was no match either against Yu Liulang, who had been working consistently for years. All he had was a stout body and nothing else.

Mu Dazhong dared not engage in a fight with Yu Liulang, so he could only place his hopes on Mu Dashan who had not come out of the room yet.

"Old Third, come out and look at your remarkable brother-in-law. He won't let me into your house, nor let you fulfill your promise. You tell him, wasn't it you who said this afternoon that you'll make up to your second sister-in-law tonight?"

Inside, under the dim oil lamp, Mu Dashan paused his work on the straw fan and struggled to get up.

"Shuangshuang's father, if you have something to say, just tell me, and I'll relay it to the second brother. Getting up might expose you to the cold and make you sick."

Generally, by evening, Mu Dashan didn't venture out much. Other than finishing his meal, he would stay in his room.

"Then tell the second brother honestly, about Shuangshuang's dinner tonight. If he's willing to wait, I will definitely keep my promise!"

Though Mu Dashan's heart viewed his promise as rather half-hearted, his upbringing over the years told him that if he made a promise, he must fulfill it.

Yu Si Niang, as instructed by Mu Dashan, went and told Mu Dazhong everything, including the matter of Little Black's disappearance.

Mu Dazhong burst out laughing mockingly, "Sister-in-law, your third branch is truly interesting. If you're reluctant to spare some meat, just say so directly, don't use an animal to trick me. Do you think I'm uneducated, with no brains to speak of?"

Saying they went to look for a lost animal at home, hence no dinner made—who would believe that?

"Second Brother, why are you speaking so harshly? Just because you think something is impossible doesn't mean it can't happen to others. Little Black is very important to our family. We are certainly anxious about it being lost."

"Enough, don't give me any more useless explanations. Whenever you make me that meat broth, I'll leave. Otherwise, I won't be leaving today!"

As Mu Dazhong spoke, he found a comfortable spot on the ground and sat down, truly showing he was waiting for a meal.

Yu Si Niang's face turned greenish from frustration. It wasn't that she was unwilling to spare one dinner, but Second Brother's attitude was far too casual.

Did he really think the third branch could be used at will, to be close when desired and ignored otherwise?

"I'm afraid if you eat it, you'll die!" Yu Liulang rolled his eyes, and his dislike for the Old Mu Family deepened in layers at this moment.

"Watch your mouth, just because you're the brother of the Third Sister-in-law, Shuangshuang's uncle, doesn't mean I won't hit you. I warn you, I'm not afraid of you!"

"Then bring it on!" Yu Liulang rolled up his sleeves, acting as if he was ready to fight Mu Dazhong.

Mu Shuangshuang walked out from the kitchen, with Lu Yuanfeng following beside her.

"Second Uncle, what are you doing? Fighting or stealing food?"

"I'm just taking the meat broth old Third promised me. Your second aunt has been waiting a long time for it."

"Second Uncle, quite the joker. My dad promised to give you the meat broth, so ask him for it. Yet here you are, seeking my mom, seeking my uncle, what's the point?"

Mu Shuangshuang's meaning was very clear—whoever made the promise, they should fulfill it!

"You, this girl, how can you be so unfilial? Debts of a father are the responsibility of the child, and you, the daughter, dare to..." Mu Dazhong was fuming.

But Mu Shuangshuang turned to the indoor Mu Dashan and said, "Dad, did you hear that? Your goodwill has turned into a debt in Second Uncle's eyes. Now he wants you to repay the afternoon's debt!"

Chapter 308: Mu Dazhong Wants to Overturn the Sky

Inside the house, Mu Dashan listened to his daughter recounting Mu Dazhong's words, and his heart grew cold.

The words his brother said in the afternoon still echoed in his mind, but none of them were about him owing a debt as his brother claimed.

At that time, he spoke about discussing with Shuangshuang, but now in his brother's eyes, it seemed taken for granted.

Under the dim oil lamp, the man's face turned grim, his work stalling as he did it, ultimately followed by a low sigh.

Mu Dazhong listened for a while, not hearing Mu Dashan's voice, and became anxious.

"Dashan, say something! Your Sister-in-law is pregnant, asking for a good meal won't cost you your life. Just ask Shuang to make something good for your sister-in-law!"

"Haha, picking on the soft persimmon, Uncle, you're just bullying my dad because he's honest, aren't you? But don't worry, today I'm not cooking dinner for you, let's see you get angry!" Mu Shuangshuang lifted her chin, shaking her head proudly with a smile.

"Before we split up, you sucked my parents' blood. Now we've divided, it's harder to suck blood, if you want a good meal, why don't you ask my grandma to cook it!"

Mu Dazhong was so angry that smoke almost came out of his seven orifices, nearly falling to the ground.

"Fine, you brat, just wait! If your third branch has any skills, don't beg our second branch!"

Throwing out those words, Mu Dazhong stormed back to his house.

Mu Shuangshuang happily stamped her feet in place, while Yu Si Niang looked at her daughter indulgently, not thinking her daughter's actions were wrong at all.

If her brother had done something right today, she wouldn't have begrudged that bowl of dinner.

Back in the second branch, Mrs. Lin suddenly bounced upright from the bed, showing none of the previous demeanor she had displayed before Old Mrs. Mu.

"How did it go? Did you bring back the meat soup?" Mrs. Lin asked eagerly, staring at Mu Dazhong.

"Bring what back, that brat came to make trouble, didn't drink the soup, and got nothing but embarrassment!"

Mu Dazhong was still completely indignant.

How did the third branch produce such a miser?

"I knew it, that brat is way too stingy, practically inhuman!" Mrs. Lin grumbled, then held her flat belly, lamenting, "Poor child in my belly, can't even have a good meal, sigh!"

"Enough, no one's here, what are you pretending for in front of me? Besides, it's not certain you're even pregnant!"

Mu Dazhong grumbled discontentedly, he hadn't done that sort of thing with Mrs. Lin in a long time, how could she be pregnant.

"Why am I not pregnant? I haven't had my period for a month, still feel like throwing up, if not pregnant, then what?" Mrs. Lin muttered discontentedly.

A woman's temper is at its worst when she's pregnant, and even Mrs. Lin, who admired Mu Dazhong normally, was the biggest in the house at this point.

"I don't care, I must eat something good today, or you'll be starving your son!"

"You want to eat, I do too, but that's easier said than done." Mu Dazhong rolled his eyes.

Suddenly, he had a bright idea.

"Right, I heard from my mom today, there's a basket of eggs at home that hasn't been sold, they're all in her room. Should we..."

Stealing and cheating weren't things Mu Dazhong did often, but it's not like he never did them.

Since Mrs. Lin was pregnant, if anything happened, he could just put the blame on her; her mom wouldn't have the heart to hit her.

Indeed, Old Mrs. Mu was usually harsh, but if any daughter-in-law got pregnant, she would scold but never hit, for fear of miscarriage taking the blame.

"Qingqing's dad, have you lost your mind with rage? Sneaking into mom's room to steal, isn't that courting death?"

While Mrs. Lin loved to eat, she wasn't stupid.

"Are you dumb? You don't know to go at midnight? My mom's been worrying about my big brother these days, hasn't slept for nights, and today's fuss with you made her exhausted, she's sleeping like a log!"

"That's true!"

Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin hatched a plan, deciding to steal the eggs tonight.

...

...

The Third Branch of the Old Mu Family set the table, with the family gathered to eat a simple dinner, a bowl of hot soup, and a bowl of dumplings.

On a stool beside the dining table, Little Black had a small bowl balanced on its head, half-filled with water.

Its little body swayed constantly, yet not a drop of that half-bowl of water fell.

Little Zhi looked pitifully at Little Black, then turned to look at her sister who was picking vegetables into her own bowl.

"Sister, why don't you let Little Black go, it knows it was wrong!"

"No way, it's too treacherous, if we don't teach it a lesson today, it'll act up in the future." Mu Shuangshuang said as she observed Little Black's expression.

Little Black made mocking faces at Mu Shuangshuang, but as soon she put down her chopsticks, it would shut its mouth and its expression would carry a hint of ingratiating flattery.

Sometimes, she really doubted whether this Black Mink was some kind of spirit, every expression was perfectly articulated on its little face.

Except when she was angry; Little Black always had that haughty, aloof look.

Even when being fed, it never changed that little expression.

How odd!

"Alright, let's stop here today, I won't punish anymore!" Mu Shuangshuang waved her hand generously, as Little Zhi quickly removed the small bowl from Little Black's head and brought the prepared fish from the stove for Little Black.

The fish, cut into small chunks, was stuffed piece by piece into Little Black's mouth. It ate with gusto, casting disdainful glances at Mu Shuangshuang, as if trying to provoke her.

"Hmph, such a lack of character!" Mu Shuangshuang rolled her eyes, ignoring Little Black.

"Everyone hurry up and eat, once we're done, most of the day is over."

Lu Yuanfeng glanced at the dumplings in his bowl, then those in Shuangshuang's, picked up his chopsticks, and placed two meat-filled ones in Mu Shuangshuang's bowl.

"Fengzi, what are you doing?" Mu Shuangshuang looked baffled.

"Sister Shuangshuang, my brother is giving you dumplings to eat. You have too few in your bowl, he's worried you'll be hungry."

Yuanbao chimed in at the right time, again setting him up as a good person.

Mu Shuangshuang felt a surge of warmth in her heart, but still returned Lu Yuanfeng's dumplings to his bowl.

"I'm lean, this is enough. If I eat too much, I'll have to exercise tonight, you're sturdy, eat more!"

"Eating a bit more at night is fine, it'll be okay after sleeping." Lu Yuanfeng insisted, not wanting Mu Shuangshuang to suffer.

At the dinner table, they went back and forth, yet miraculously, those few dumplings weren't broken.

Mu Dashan looked at the heap of dumplings in his bowl, then pushed two into each of their bowls.

"You two, stop it. I've been lying here all day, eating less won't be a problem!"

Chapter 309: Indirect Confession

As soon as Mu Dashan finished speaking, the two people who were just in a back-and-forth suddenly put the dumplings from their bowls into Mu Dashan's bowl simultaneously.

"Dad, Mom, let's not put more into each other's bowls. Fengzi and I have had enough. Any more and we can't eat it!"

While Mu Shuangshuang wasn't paying attention, Lu Yuanfeng quickly moved those two meat dumplings back to his bowl. Afraid Mu Shuangshuang would put them back, he swiftly gobbled up the dumplings in his bowl, finishing in no time.

Mu Shuangshuang helplessly glanced at Lu Yuanfeng multiple times and finally had no choice but to follow Lu Yuanfeng's assumptions, finishing all the dumplings in her bowl.

Once the family finished dinner, it was Mu Shuangshuang's turn to tidy up. The tableware shouldn't be left overnight; it's best to soak them in rice water.

These are life experiences Mu Shuangshuang has accumulated over the years, and she's quite adept at it. However, the figure standing at the kitchen door made Mu Shuangshuang's body tense.

She initially thought of leaving it as is, but being stared at like this continuously made her somewhat uneasy.

"Fengzi, if you have anything to say, come inside; it's pitch dark outside."

Tonight, there were no mosquitoes outside, and even the frogs that usually chirped incessantly at night had quieted down.

Lu Yuanfeng strode into the house; he had been pondering over this matter for a long time, and if he didn't speak up, he wouldn't be able to sleep tonight.

"Shuangshuang, I..."

"You don't need to say anything. I know, I'm not blaming you!"

Mu Shuangshuang understood that Lu Yuanfeng wanted to comfort her by holding her, and she wouldn't ignore Lu Yuanfeng because of this.

Lu Yuanfeng was deeply conflicted; he hoped Shuangshuang would blame him, yet he didn't want her to be angry. But compared to her indifference now, he'd rather she be upset with him.

After taking several deep breaths, Lu Yuanfeng suddenly said, "Shuangshuang, I won't regret what happened tonight. In the future, no matter what happens, I'll be by your side to protect you."

After saying this, Lu Yuanfeng didn't wait for Mu Shuangshuang to react but bolted out, and as he reached the courtyard outside Mu Shuangshuang's home, he even stumbled. But he quickly got up and ran away, disappearing swiftly.

Mu Shuangshuang was utterly baffled, not yet understanding the meaning behind Lu Yuanfeng's words.

But deep down, she unexpectedly felt a touch of sweetness.

She paused for a moment while washing dishes, and when she came back to her senses, she was clumsy with her dishwashing.

Yu Si Niang entered the kitchen at this moment; she had just helped Mu Dashan wash his feet and came to check since Shuangshuang hadn't come inside, coincidentally witnessing Lu Yuanfeng's fall.

She initially intended to step forward to help.

Who knew, he ran faster than a rabbit.

"Shuangshuang, what's up with you and Fengzi? Why did he fall over?"

"Ah, he fell! Let me go take a look!" Mu Shuangshuang, looking anxious, grabbed the bowl and rushed outside.

"Child, you're usually bold and attentive, but why are you so hurried and reckless today? He's already gone, and you won't catch up even if you go now!"

"Oh!" Mu Shuangshuang bowed her head, quickly hiding her embarrassment.

Yu Si Niang felt quite thrilled at this moment, considering her daughter had caught on, and Fengzi might have truly said something.

"Shuangshuang, it's getting late. You should try to rest earlier and avoid overworking. I'll go fetch some water for you!"

"Hmm!"

Mu Shuangshuang tidied up the kitchen, took a bath, and lay down on her small bed, unable to calm her mind for a long time.

"Shuangshuang, if you have anything you're puzzled about, feel free to speak with me. I've been through a lot; perhaps I can help you."

Yu Si Niang saw this situation and felt even more delighted.

Though her expression remained as if she merely wanted to help Shuangshuang solve her issues.

"It's nothing, nothing! Am I disturbing your sleep?"

"No, even if we're just lying on the same bed talking about our thoughts, it's completely fine with me."

Mu Shuangshuang listened to Yu Si Niang's words, nodded, and responded, "Me too. Ever since Uncle came, I've been spending more time with you. But tomorrow, I should find some time to talk with my uncle. His marriage shouldn't be delayed!"

In ancient times, a twenty-six-year-old man would already be the father of several children. Old Yu Family isn't extraordinarily wealthy, and if it drags on, even if Yu Liulang wanted to marry, he'd only be able to marry trifling prospects.

"I talked to your uncle about this today. He said unless he dies, he absolutely won't marry a wife."

Years ago, when Luo Xiu'er married someone else before her wedding day, it became the laughingstock of the entire Yu Family Village. Even now, when the chatter dies down, people still ridicule Yu Liulang.

"This matter is indeed challenging, given the heartache has already set in."

"Yeah, they say to untie the knot, you need the one who tied it; but surely we won't actually bring Luo Xiu'er here!"

Let alone whether she'd be willing, the family she married into wasn't just any ordinary household.

"Mom, did you ever inquire about what's going on with the Luo Family? How is Luo Xiu'er doing?"

"How would we inquire? Years ago, the Old Luo Family and our family became enemies. For years, the Old Luo Family and our Old Yu Family haven't interacted, and even last time I went back, the Old Luo Family didn't greet me kindly."

"This doesn't make sense. Logically, their daughter despised the poor and loved the rich, marrying someone else. Why would they treat our Old Yu Family poorly?"

Mu Shuangshuang found it perplexing; she could understand why the Old Yu Family would harbor resentment.

After all, Yu Liulang was jilted by a girl from the Luo Family, which should induce guilt from their side.

"I think so too, but ever since five years ago, when Old Sir Luo and Old Lady Luo returned from the county, things changed. They used to feel guilty and occasionally sent food over to us."

After listening to Yu Si Niang, Mu Shuangshuang roughly guessed the situation.

"Mom, I know the reason; it must be because Luo Xiu'er is unhappy, or maybe she's happy but ignoring her family. The former seems more likely."

The Old Luo Family believes that because my uncle didn't stop her from marrying that wealthy merchant, they've been unable to live well and have taken out their anger on my uncle and our Old Yu Family."

"That's impossible; the wrongdoing belonged to Luo Xiu'er, and your uncle did nothing."

"Precisely because he did nothing, they're blaming him. I bet the Old Luo Family relied on Luo Xiu'er, but became disappointed later!"

People's resentments can be irrational; knowing it's not Yu Liulang's fault, and despite him being the victim, if they don't find someone to blame, they won't be able to endure.

Sometimes, hating someone can support a dying person to persist until the end.

Yet love doesn't necessarily have that effect!

Chapter 310: Uncle, I Support You!

Yu Si Niang listened to Mu Shuangshuang's words, looking dumbfounded.

The more she thought about it, the more she felt Shuangshuang was right, especially after returning last time, she vaguely heard Old Lady Luo cursing behind her back.

Saying that back then it was because Sixth Son didn't marry their Xiuxiu. At the time, she thought she had heard wrong, but now thinking back, it was indeed correct.

Although the Old Yu Family had neither money nor power, several children were very diligent and hardworking.

Especially Sixth Son, he has almost become the backbone of the Old Yu Family, an excellent worker, managing the Old Yu Family in an orderly manner.

Day by day, he also earns quite a bit of Silver, plus recently the family has been busy arranging for Sixth Son's marriage, afraid of inconveniencing the Old Luo Family.

"It's just that I see these years, the people of the Old Luo Family, aren't dressed poorly. If it weren't for Luo Xiuxiu helping them, could they have such good food, clothing, and supplies?"

Yu Si Niang was left with only one doubt, once this doubt was resolved, she could confirm what Shuangshuang said.

"Mother, you can think, isn't everyone in the Old Luo Family always rosy and plump? And those clothes, are they not changing every day, or you might as well see if the Old Luo Family has contacted relatives over the years."

Thinking about these things should reveal the trick.

Yu Si Niang nodded in surprise. "Shuangshuang, you wouldn't believe it, Old Lady Luo's face is wax yellow, not at all like someone who eats gourmet food every day, rather it looks almost like how we were in the third branch of the Old Mu Family, even worse in complexion."

"This can fully confirm, the Old Luo Family is probably afraid of losing face, so they spent quite a bit of Silver over the years on dressing up their appearance, making you believe their Old Luo Family has money and is a local tyrant!"

Mu Shuangshuang had seen many such instances of pretending to be better off than they are.

"I should now go talk to your uncle, let him forget about that Luo Xiuxiu!"

Saying this, Yu Si Niang was about to get up, but Mu Shuangshuang quickly pulled her back.

"Mother, it's already so late today, my uncle should be sleeping now. If you go now, won't you wake him up?"

"Ah, you're right, then tomorrow morning let's go find your uncle, this matter cannot go unsaid, your uncle has suffered enough, and people from the Old Luo Family are especially adept at bad-mouthing our Old Yu Family."

Yu Si Niang closed her eyes, forcing herself to sleep, and Mu Shuangshuang did the same, but both had things on their minds, unable to sleep.

Early the next day, Yu Si Niang rushed into her room, pulling the still sleeping Yu Liulang from the bed, not letting him wash up, dragging him into the yard.

Mu Shuangshuang turned over just to find no one by her side, immediately realizing her mother went to find her uncle.

Struggling to get up, she saw the two people in the yard.

"Mother, don't rush, let my uncle wash up and dress properly. Sharpening the axe will not delay the cutting of firewood, this little time won't delay the important matter."

"Hmm!" Yu Si Niang then let go of Yu Liulang, allowing him to go wash up.

After they both tidied themselves, Yu Si Niang arranged chairs as if it were a three-way meeting.

"Sister, why such a big show?" Yu Liulang, although already guessing the meaning of his sister, still pretended not to know.

"What do you think? Are you really planning to stay single for life?"

"Sister, I think I'm really fine like this, have food and drinks, and freedom, live with you as long as I want." Yu Liulang laughed sheepishly, showing a bit of carelessness.

"Nonsense, you can't be single forever! When will you forget about that Luo Xiuxiu, she's already married, it's impossible, and she's living like neither a human nor a ghost now, it's karma."

Yu Si Niang is not a vindictive person, but if someone touches her family, she would resist and do things normally wouldn't dare to do.

"Sister, what are you talking about, I've long forgotten her!" Yu Liulang spoke with obvious lack of conviction, especially when hearing Yu Si Niang say Luo Xiuxiu is suffering, a flash of panic in his heart.

Mu Shuangshuang observed Yu Liulang's expression, noticing the fleeting panic when Luo Xiuxiu was mentioned, which she captured precisely.

She stood up, walked over to Yu Si Niang, "Mother, can you cook breakfast? I'm hungry, I'll talk to uncle!"

While speaking, Mu Shuangshuang winked at Yu Si Niang, who, though worried, since daughter made a signal, staying might spoil things.

Soon, only Mu Shuangshuang and Yu Liulang were left in the yard.

"Uncle, we've never really talked, how about we chat today?"

Knowing full well that Yu Liulang knows her true purpose, Mu Shuangshuang still confidently used an opening line.

However, this made Yu Liulang unable to refuse.

"Shuangshuang, my matter with Luo Xiuxiu, it's not like your mother thinks, I... I've forgotten all about it!"

"Forgotten it then why not marry, and why not see better girls in the world?" Mu Shuangshuang looked directly at Yu Liulang.

Yu Liulang shook his head. "Shuangshuang, you wouldn't understand, I... in short, I won't marry."

"Since uncle says Shuangshuang wouldn't understand, then tell Shuangshuang! Or does uncle think Luo Xiuxiu has some hardship? It's been ten years, how come you still can't let go?"

Luo Xiuxiu, in a way, was Yu Liulang's first love, in the ancient conservative society, considered unforgettable.

Especially later when Luo Xiuxiu married another, such heart-wrenching pain likely deepened his memory of Luo Xiuxiu.

But time has passed ten years, nearly a cycle, what should and shouldn't be forgotten, all should have been left behind!

"It's not easy to let go. Shuangshuang, you wouldn't understand, those memories, those beauties, those... every time I close my eyes, I remember Xiuxiu, remember her promise to me by the river... I've been very hard, very hard working..."

It was probably that phrase "let go" that touched Yu Liulang's heart, he unexpectedly started speaking his thoughts, even visible tears were in his eyes.

Men do not easily cry, just not when in sadness!

Mu Shuangshuang at this time truly didn't know how to comfort, ancient feelings are purer than modern, once someone is chosen, probably very hard to change.

But maybe, could it be? A voice in her heart questioned herself again.

"Uncle, it's not your fault, nor is it Luo Xiuxiu's fault, just different pursuits, she chose to stake her marriage for her future, so all future things, are hers to bear!"