

## Folly 311

Chapter 311: Found a Solution

"Uncle, I know, the first reason you don't want to get married is because you're afraid you can't forget Luo Xiu'er and would let her down."

"Secondly, you're afraid that someone might run away like Luo Xiu'er before marriage and put you through that pain again. But I want to say, people are different."

"There are still people who are willing to eat humble food for you and be with you through thick and thin. Think carefully, is there someone who has always silently supported you, so that whenever you turn around, you can see her?"

Mu Shuangshuang slowly guided Yu Liulang to think positively.

She believed that everyone should have someone willing to give everything for them.

It's just that person often appears very late.

Yu Liulang has been in Yu Family Village for so long, and his abilities and morals are good in all aspects. If there really is such a person, his uncle would have hit the jackpot.

Listening to Mu Shuangshuang's words, a slender figure suddenly appeared in Yu Liulang's mind.

That girl, no matter rain or shine, would come to his house to make him breakfast and wash his clothes.

Whenever his clothes tore, he would find them patched up, and that person was Feng Quezi's daughter from the village, Feng Xiaohua.

The Feng family doesn't have any man to make decisions. Whenever the Feng family needed labor, Yu Liulang would go help.

All these years, he always thought Feng Xiaohua did so many things just to repay his kindness. But now, thinking about it, that's not quite right either.

Feng Xiaohua turned down one marriage proposal after another, and now in the blink of an eye, she is a twenty-year-old spinster.

Yu Liulang once asked Feng Xiaohua why she didn't marry. She said she was waiting for her beloved to marry her...

The more he thought, the more Yu Liulang felt that something was off. All the moments he spent with Feng Xiaohua poured into his mind all at once.

He was confused, bewildered, and even a little bit fortunate.

"What's up, uncle, did you remember something?"

Mu Shuangshuang was very excited. Yu Liulang's changing expressions as he recalled memories made her feel that maybe there indeed was someone who had been waiting for her uncle.

And her uncle must also care, or else what would that expression of relief mean?

But Yu Liulang's answer made Mu Shuangshuang feel as if she had been doused with cold water from head to toe.

"No, I... I can't hurt Xiao Hua, Shuangshuang, let's stop today's matter here, we won't talk about it anymore."

Yu Liulang stood up and quickly went into Mu Dashan's room.

Mu Shuangshuang's mouth subtly curved up, she muttered to herself, "Xiao Hua, huh? Then Uncle will have to wait and see Shuangshuang's capability!"

Mu Shuangshuang returned to the kitchen just in time to see Yu Si Niang putting the lid on. She came over upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang.

"How did it go, did your uncle agree?"

"No, my uncle is still very resistant!"

"Is that so? I thought your uncle would... would let go of it." Yu Si Niang looked disappointed.

"But I found out something quite important instead: there seems to be someone named Xiao Hua who is particularly good to my uncle, and in my uncle's heart, she should carry some weight."

Mu Shuangshuang shared what she knew with Yu Si Niang, and she unexpectedly reacted with excitement.

"Feng Xiaohua, ah! Last time I went back, she even gave me a stick of fried dough. She's so courteous, and the way she looks at Liulang... No wonder, she likes our Liulang!"

"Yes, that's very likely the case. But my uncle directly refused. I feel this situation isn't easy to handle either."

Yu Liulang's situation is unique. He already has someone in his heart. Forcing him to accept Feng Xiaohua wouldn't be fair, not just to him but also to Feng Xiaohua.

"Mom, how much do you know about this Feng Xiaohua?"

"How would I know, we're not from the same generation. Feng Xiaohua is six years younger than your uncle, only twenty this year. But she truly likes your uncle and has waited until she's a spinster, probably with no one proposing to her."

Yu Si Niang's term "spinster" made Mu Shuangshuang feel awkward. That's one downside of ancient times. Once past sixteen or seventeen without marrying, people assume something's wrong with you.

If you pass twenty, the matchmakers will introduce you to those with missing limbs.

Sigh, what a fantastic age, twenty!

"Not knowing isn't good either. This matter isn't just about my uncle; it also involves Feng Xiaohua. We have to interact with her too."

Mutual affection is needed for Luo Xiu'er to completely disappear from Yu Liulang's mind.

"Then, Mom will take you to see for yourself today?" Yu Si Niang suggested.

"Great, but you can't intervene yet, Mom. This is a situation where the eight characters haven't even begun. We can't ruin the girl's reputation."

An elder brother is like a father, an elder sister is like a mother. Although Yu Si Niang isn't the elder sister, the whole Yu Family Village knows Yu Liulang was raised by her. If she approaches Feng Xiaohua, everyone would soon find out.

If it doesn't work out, Feng Xiaohua's situation would just become more difficult.

"Then what should we do, you've never been to Yu Family Village. What if you get lost?" Yu Si Niang worriedly paced back and forth.

"Mom, don't be anxious. Just tell me where Yu Family Village is, and once I get there, I'll ask around."

Plus, over the years, it's always been Grandpa and Grandma who came over, and I have never gone, it's the perfect opportunity now."

Mu Shuangshuang felt relieved, having bought things for her grandparents and uncle in town. These should be useful soon enough.

"Shuangshuang, are you going to Yu Family Village alone?"

"Yes, the younger siblings are still small. They aren't suitable for long trips, and I'm also a bit tired lately. Hugging them halfway would be a challenge."

Last night, she didn't rest at all. Her mind kept pondering Lu Yuanfeng's words, and she got up early today. If not for these bits and pieces, she would have just wanted to sleep.

"How about having Fengzi accompany you? Our Yu Family Village has quite a few good things, and there are several fruit trees in your grandmother's backyard. You can pick some and bring them back for the younger siblings to eat."

"Ah?" Mu Shuangshuang jumped in surprise, quickly shaking her head, "Mom, let's forget it. Fengzi has his own things to do. If I bother him every day, he won't have time to hunt. Besides, he mentioned wanting to buy land these days, I can't delay him!"

"Okay then!" Yu Si Niang looked disappointed, though she worried about her daughter going alone, what the daughter said made sense.

Fengzi has his own things, unsure how much there is, and to keep asking him to do this and that seems excessive.

"Mom, don't worry, isn't it just a trip to Grandma's? It's not like it's anything big, I'll be back by nightfall, don't worry about it!"

"Alright, alright, you said it, Mom will listen, but going to your grandmother's means crossing a mountain. It's not hard to walk, but there are many woods alongside, easy for people to hide in them. You should take a stick with you for protection!"

"Yes!" Mu Shuangshuang nodded, returned to her room, and took a stick from the door gap.

"Mom, now with this, you can be at ease, right?" Mu Shuangshuang waved her customized stick in front of Yu Si Niang.

This stick was specially crafted by Mu Shuangshuang.

At the very top of the stick, she nailed a nail, specifically to deal with those who like to sneak into others' homes to steal chickens and dogs late at night.

Seeing the nail on the stick, Yu Si Niang felt a bit weak but was ultimately relieved.

With this, when her daughter goes out, the bad guys wouldn't dare to touch her.

"Shuangshuang, well done, but still don't be careless!"

"Hmm, Shuangshuang understands. Breakfast should be ready, I'll go and wake up Xiao Han and Little Zhi."

The meals at the third branch for breakfast, lunch, and dinner are slightly different from those at the Old Mu Family. Other than Mu Shuangshuang going to town for business, at other times, people won't eat if they aren't all present.

In the past, the most frustrating thing at the Old Mu Family was that the person who did the most work was always the one eating dishwater.

When Yu Si Niang was cooking, Old Mrs. Mu would assign her a pile of tasks, leaving her to do everything herself. By the time she finished, the meal would already be over.

Mu Shuangshuang always disliked this way of eating, clearly they're one family, can't they wait for a while?

Thankfully, the third branch is now separated, and everything is governed by them!

Mu Shuangshuang went back inside, just in time as Little Zhi and Xiao Han had already gotten up. Although the two kids were young, they were quite adept at dressing themselves and rinsing their mouths, never needing Mu Shuangshuang's help.

The breakfast was set, and the group had just gotten ready to eat when a piercing scream came from the Old Mu Family, extremely harsh.

The few people eating "jumped" up all at once.

"What's going on?" Yu Si Niang looked surprised.

Mu Shuangshuang calmly continued eating her breakfast, replying leisurely, "Guess something's missing again!"

Mu Shuangshuang remembered the last time Old Mrs. Mu's chicken was stolen, she screamed the same way. This time, she wondered what exactly was taken.

Though it was amusing, despite all their precautions day and night, they couldn't defend against the thieves within the family. Old Mrs. Mu probably still didn't know that her things were stolen by her own family.

"Shuangshuang, do you think we should go take a look?" Yu Si Niang asked.

After all, Old Mrs. Mu was Yu Si Niang's mother-in-law. With her screaming so miserably, Yu Si Niang felt compelled to go check.

Mu Dashan also struggled, trying to go out.

"Let's wait, this is the time when Grandma is in a fit of rage, whoever goes up will have bad luck. Let's go out after she vents!"

"Alright."

Mu Shuangshuang's words were unanimously agreed by everyone in the third branch. Everyone was a bit wary of Old Mrs. Mu's unreasonable nature.

Meanwhile, in the second branch of the Old Mu Family, Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin were so scared that sweat started appearing on their faces.

Mrs. Lin tugged at Mu Dazhong's sleeve, looking frightened. "Daddy Gou Dan, do you think Mom will find out that thing was taken by us..."

"Shh, if you don't tell and I don't tell, how would Mom know?"

Last night, under the cover of darkness, Mu Dazhong opened Old Mrs. Mu's latch and took away a basket full of eggs.

They spent the night eating till full; out of a basket of 30 eggs, they gobbled down 16 of them. It wasn't until midnight when they were completely stuffed did they stop.

"True, but did you hide those eggs and the shells properly?" Mrs. Lin was tense, recalling the last time Old Mrs. Mu found five hundred coins, her heart still aches.

This time, she and Daddy Gou Dan were in deep trouble if it gets found out.

"Don't worry, I hid the eggs at Xiangxiang's place. Even if Mom suspects someone, she wouldn't suspect Xiangxiang, nor would she go looking at Xiangxiang's place."

Outside, a small figure heard Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin's conversation and quickly ran off.

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Old Mrs. Mu was still crying out loud in her room; early in the morning, she discovered that the basket full of eggs she placed in the corner was gone, not only the eggs but even the bamboo basket went missing.

"Old man, our home has been robbed!" Old Mrs. Mu startled Mr. Mu awake, shouting loudly.

"What happened? What got stolen?" Mr. Mu abruptly woke up, looking around, finally resting his gaze on Old Mrs. Mu's face.

"Our... eggs are gone..." Old Mrs. Mu said with a sob.

That basket of eggs, she had planned to let the third branch's brat take to town, sell them for thirty coins, but now the eggs were gone, and money couldn't be there either.

"What? Didn't you put it in your own room?"

Mr. Mu scanned the surroundings, finally his gaze fell on the opened latch.

"Oh no, we really got robbed."

Strangely enough, despite Old Mrs. Mu crying for so long, none of the other branches came over, the second branch was guilty of theft, the third branch didn't want to be the first to face the wrath, and the fourth branch Mrs. Liu was too afraid to come out after being scolded, hiding in her room, not daring to step out.

As for Mu Danian, he got beaten too badly by Lu Yuanfeng last night, and couldn't get up.

"What's with these kids, why is no one coming?" Mr. Mu walked outside and shouted to the outside.

"Big things happened at home, you all better get up!"

After some dithering, everyone reluctantly showed up, Old Mrs. Mu was still ranting, Mu Shuangshuang stood there for a while, listening to her curse all eighteen generations of ancestors of others.

It was unclear though, if this time, Old Mrs. Mu's angry words were directed at someone from the Old Mu Family.

"Dad, what's happening to our house? Did we get robbed again? We haven't caught anyone from the last time the chicken was stolen." Mu Dazhong was the first to speak, rattling on like peas spilling out.

Mu Shuangshuang felt curious; usually, in such incidents, Mu Danian was the first to speak, as he relished the spectacle.

Mu Dazhong was often the one delivering the final blow, so why was he taking the first charge this time?

She glanced at Mrs. Lin, whose head was sweating profusely, her palms shaking uncontrollably, and she understood a bit of the situation.

How amusing, the last time was Mu Danian, this time it's Mu Dazhong, the Old Mu Family really has internal thieves.

Speaking of the last time with that chicken, Old Mrs. Mu cursed even more fiercely.

"Who the hell ate my old lady's chicken and eggs, if they give birth to a son may they not have a damn skin, and when they go out may they get crushed by Mu Tou, and choked to death while drinking water..."

The more Old Mrs. Mu cursed, the more vicious she became, both Mu Dazhong and wounded Mu Danian frowned simultaneously.

In their hearts they couldn't help but complain, was it necessary to curse so harshly just for stealing a chicken (egg)?

Once Old Mrs. Mu had almost finished her performance, Mu Shuangshuang spoke up.

"Grandpa, Grandma, Shuangshuang has to go to Grandma's house today, it's getting late, I'll head off first."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't actually come to watch the fun. With Old Mrs. Mu's personality, if she had sneaked off, Old Mrs. Mu's stolen chicken egg blame would likely be pinned on her.

Might even outright insist the eggs went to her grandmother's place.

Chapter 313: Supporting the Maternal Family

"Go on, remember to give regards to the in-laws, and come back early!"

Mr. Mu waved his hand, not forgetting to remind Mu Shuangshuang of some matters concerning etiquette.

Although Yu Liulang hasn't visited him yet, Mr. Mu believes he shouldn't be so petty, after all, he is an elder.

If an elder quarrels with a junior, they lose their social standing.

"Okay." Mu Shuangshuang said and was about to leave.

"Don't go, you brat! Did you steal my eggs and plan to take them to Yu Si Niang's house?" Old Mrs. Mu rushed out and blocked Mu Shuangshuang's path.

"What nonsense are you talking about? How could Shuangshuang steal your eggs? Get out of the way." Mr. Mu's expression turned sour because of Old Mrs. Mu's unreasonable behavior.

"Just because you say so, it doesn't mean it's true? Some people are born poor and mean, it's possible for them to become thieves or villains.

Moreover, the third branch doesn't have big chickens, so all their eggs have to be bought. If they stole my basket of eggs, they'd save the money for buying eggs." Old Mrs. Mu sneered, glaring fiercely at the third branch.

At that moment, Old Mrs. Mu thought, if the third branch hates her so much, maybe they stole the chicken and the eggs.

If that's the case, she'll make them return it with interest.

"Mother, what are you saying? I've been married into the Old Mu Family for over ten years; don't you know my character? Would I do such shameless things?"

Yu Si Niang stepped forward to protect Mu Shuangshuang, defending her while angrily reasoning with Old Mrs. Mu.

Her daughter didn't do anything, so why should she be wrongly accused?

"Whether she did or not, let me search and I'll find out!" Old Mrs. Mu snapped at Yu Si Niang, her face full of disdain.

Yu Si Niang's eyes instantly reddened. She had worked like a horse for the Old Mu Family all these years, only to be falsely accused like this.

"Mother, don't be upset. If Grandma wants to search, let's let her. If she finds nothing, she must apologize to our third branch!"

Yu Si Niang is usually a strong person, but today she felt shattered, as Mu Shuangshuang's suspicions of her character had hit her hard.

Women in ancient times cared deeply about their reputation and integrity; such slander about their honor hurt more than any beating.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't bother arguing with Old Mrs. Mu; if she wanted to search, let her search. After searching, she'd have to face Mu Shuangshuang's wrath.

"Old Three, look at the nonsense your daughter is spouting, is this even human speech? She actually wants me to apologize—this damned thing, she'll be struck by lightning."

Mu Dashan's face flushed; never good at speaking in front of Old Mrs. Mu, he finally spoke after much stammering.

"Mother, Shuangshuang's right. If you search the third branch, you'd imply we're thieves; if you don't restore our reputation, how can we live in Er Gui Village? What will people think of us? Shuangshuang and Little Zhi still have to get married..."

"Bah, you're something, Mu Dashan. It turns out the silent dog is the most dangerous; I always thought you were honest, but you are that silent dog!"

"This old lady will definitely search today, and whether I find anything or not, I will never apologize!"

Old Mrs. Mu stood with her hands on her hips, spit flying everywhere, Mu Shuangshuang silently pulled Yu Si Niang back two steps to avoid the spittle.

"Mother, since you say so, then don't bother searching the third branch. I can't let you ruin our branch's reputation!" Mu Dashan bravely argued back against Old Mrs. Mu.

"Alright, it seems you've turned rebellious. I'll beat you to death now, you shameless one." Old Mrs. Mu said as she went back to her room to find a stick. After a while, she came out with a broom, threatening to hit Mu Dashan.

Stubborn as ever, Mu Dashan was ready to be beaten but refused to back down.

"Go ahead, even if you beat me to death, I won't let you search."

Old Mrs. Mu was truly merciless and swung the broom toward Mu Dashan's face, only to be stopped halfway by Mu Shuangshuang.

"Grandpa, Grandma, my father is ill; if something really happens, it wouldn't just be a problem for our third branch. The entire Old Mu Family and Uncle who is taking exams would be affected."

Mu Shuangshuang also looked displeased, gripping one end of Old Mrs. Mu's broom, not letting her strike.

At this moment, she cursed Old Mrs. Mu in her heart. If she wasn't Yu Si Niang's and Mu Dashan's mother and an elder, she would have beaten this nasty old woman to death!

Wang Ba, how could there be such a bizarre person in this world?

Finally, when it involved Mu Dade, the turtle Mr. Mu opened his mouth. "Enough, what are you shouting about? Put the broom down. I know the character of Old Three and Si Niang; they absolutely wouldn't do such shameless acts."

"If it's not them, then who could it be?" Old Mrs. Mu asked.

Just then, a crisp "crunch" sound came, and Gou Dan swaggered over, chewing something.

On his ten fingers dangled long strands of puffed rice candy, each about twenty centimeters long.

The rice puffs hung on his fingers, from a distance it looked glaringly white; Gou Dan's hands were too dark and dirty, creating a stark contrast with the white rice puffs.

Mu Shuangshuang had seen this type of puffed rice in her previous life, made from glutinous rice. Usually, an old man pulls a cart with machines, selling them for three yuan per puff. Families prepare rice or offer two eggs in exchange.

She hadn't expected to see this in ancient times.

"Why are you looking at me? This is Gou Dan's; Gou Dan won't give it to you!" Gou Dan said in a childish voice to the crowd at Old Mu Family.

At that moment, Mrs. Lin was already trembling; just where did Gou Dan get the glutinous rice for these puffs, or where did he find money to buy them?

Could it be...

Mu Dazhong also noticed and moved his foot stealthily to check if the remaining fourteen eggs were still there.

Suddenly, Lu Yuanfeng walked over from the Mu Family's third branch's courtyard, holding a bamboo basket. If that basket wasn't Old Mrs. Mu's, whose was it?

Finished, it's finished!

Mrs. Lin and Mu Dazhong both screamed inwardly.

Upon seeing the bamboo basket, Old Mrs. Mu rushed up to grab the eggs back from Lu Yuanfeng. "My eggs, my eggs..."

Old Mrs. Mu counted and recounted them in the basket, but there were only fourteen eggs. Before she could chastise Lu Yuanfeng, he calmly explained the situation.

"I was at the village entrance making puffed rice when I saw Gou Dan carrying a basket. He wanted to trade all the eggs in the basket for puffed rice. I thought it was a bad deal and gave Gou Dan some puffs."

"Then I brought the basket back to you, I didn't take any of the eggs. You can have the puffed rice man as a witness."

#### Chapter 314: Shameless

Lu Yuanfeng has always been a meticulous person, especially when dealing with the people of the Old Mu Family, he becomes even more cautious.

Determined not to cause trouble for Shuangshuang, he had already had someone count the eggs in the basket before arriving, not fearing Old Mrs. Mu blaming him.

Of course, these were all reasons Lu Yuanfeng made up for himself, he just wanted to come over and see Shuangshuang.

Last night, Lu Yuanfeng also didn't sleep at all, still unsure if Shuangshuang understood his intentions.

His gaze fell on Shuangshuang, and unexpectedly, he received a look of appreciation from her.

Lu Yuanfeng felt more certain that this trip wasn't in vain.

After hearing Lu Yuanfeng's words, Old Mrs. Mu carried the egg basket and loudly confronted Gou Dan.

"You little brat, where did the remaining sixteen eggs go?"

Gou Dan was still munching on the rice puff in his hand, seemingly ignoring Old Mrs. Mu's words, and only answered after a while.

"Gou Dan doesn't know."

Mrs. Lin and Mu Dazhong exchanged a glance, both thinking of quietly slipping away.

But they were also afraid of Old Mrs. Mu losing her temper.

"Mom, maybe the thief was in such a hurry to steal and afraid of being caught, that's why they left this half basket of eggs.

Our Gou Dan just happened to wake up early, saw the eggs inside, and not knowing whose they were, thought of exchanging them for rice puffs to give to his grandparents to eat. This child has always been very filial." Mrs. Lin explained while clutching her chest, about to burst.

But Old Mrs. Mu wasn't so easily fooled.

"Mrs. Lin, you shut up, do you think I'm an old fool? Whoever stole it, once I ask, I'll know!"

"Gou Dan, give me the rice puff in your hand!" Old Mrs. Mu extended her hand towards Gou Dan.

"No, Gou Dan wants to eat rice puffs, bad grandma!" Gou Dan turned his back, showing only his backside to Old Mrs. Mu.

Old Mrs. Mu was almost driven mad with anger.

She rushed up and snatched all the rice puffs from Gou Dan's hands, throwing them on the ground with force and stamping on them a few times.

The white rice puff bars fell onto the dirty muddy ground, quickly turning into debris mixed with mud...

Gou Dan's eyes were fixated, he raised his hands; his long white "fingernails" were gone.

He suddenly wailed and started rolling on the ground like an eel.

"Tell me, who gave you the eggs, did you steal them from my room?" Old Mrs. Mu's eyes were terrifyingly fierce, she wished she could swallow Gou Dan whole right then.

Even at this moment, Gou Dan, as if gone mad, cried hysterically.

Kids, when they cry, they don't care about anything else, Old Mrs. Mu, seeing Gou Dan not responding, kicked him again, making him cry even harder.

"You greedy little thing, stealing even from your own family, I'll beat you to death today."

"Dad, please convince Mom, if she keeps hitting, Gou Dan will be beaten to death." Mrs. Lin tugged at Mr. Mu's sleeve, urging him.

But Mr. Mu turned away.

"Gou Dan went too far this time, the door to our room was bolted, and he not only stole but broke the bolt. If we don't discipline him today, the consequences will be unimaginable in the future."

"Steal a needle as a child, steal gold as an adult, if you really care about him, you should have disciplined him long ago."

The matter of theft can be serious or trivial, Mr. Mu wasn't going to cover it up.

Anyway, Gou Dan was due for a beating today, since his wife had started, he wouldn't step in.

"Dad, no matter how wrong Gou Dan is, he's still just a child, please convince Mom..."

Mrs. Lin was increasingly reluctant to admit it was her doing, but seeing her son being beaten, she felt distressed.

Mu Dazhong also approached. "Dad, even if Gou Dan stole it, he's been punished, and the eggs aren't missing, let's just drop it!"

"How can you say they're not missing, where did the sixteen eggs go? Your indulgence has given this child such guts, today, no one should interfere. If not properly disciplined, when he follows your brother to a better life, who knows how much trouble he'll cause for your brother!"

Mu Shuangshuang listened to Mr. Mu's words, her brows furrowed. These people were heartless; a six-year-old child, even if he's done something wrong, shouldn't be beaten like this. Besides, it wasn't even Gou Dan who did it.

"Grandpa, it wasn't Gou Dan who did this!" Mu Shuangshuang said responsibly.

"If it wasn't him, then was it you?" Old Mrs. Mu stopped her foot in a mocking sneer.

"Grandma, you always bring up Shuangshuang in three sentences, just admit you want to falsely accuse her. Since Yuan Feng is here, just say it: whenever something from the Old Mu Family goes missing, it's Shuangshuang who did it; whenever there's something bad, you love to tarnish Shuangshuang!"

"Do you call that human speech? How have I falsely accused you?" Old Mrs. Mu was so angry she almost spat blood. "Listen, this spiteful girl blackens my name, it's heartless!"

Mu Shuangshuang walked over to the still wailing Gou Dan, helped him up from the ground, and asked softly, "Gou Dan, tell your sister, who gave you the eggs, say it, and grandma won't hit you anymore!"

"Filthy girl, keep away from our Gou Dan!" Mrs. Lin was extremely nervous that Mu Shuangshuang might actually get something out of him.

"You all shut up, listen to Gou Dan, if you keep yelling, go back to your kennel!" Old Mrs. Mu glared fiercely, scaring Mrs. Lin to hide behind Mu Dazhong.

"Gou Dan, don't you still want rice puffs? If you tell me, sister will buy you more, isn't that good?" Mu Shuangshuang looked at Gou Dan, her eyes full of sincerity.

In her view, it wasn't right to let a child bear the fault of mistakes made by parents.

Speaking of rice puffs, Gou Dan finally stopped crying.

"I took them from my little aunt's room, there are lots of eggs in second aunt's room!"

Old Mrs. Mu's face immediately changed. "You liar, trying to saddle your little aunt with this, see if I don't beat you to death."

She said, raising her fist to hit Gou Dan, who curled up in fear.

At this point, anyone with a clear mind would think it was Mu Xiangxiang who stole them, Mrs. Lin and Mu Dazhong breathed a sigh of relief, thankful Gou Dan didn't know they placed the eggs in Xiangxiang's room.

"Mom, you saw what happened, it was Xiangxiang who stole the eggs, it had nothing to do with Gou Dan." Mu Dazhong stepped up, holding Gou Dan in his arms, comforting him gently.

Old Mrs. Mu couldn't maintain her composure, thinking about the harm this incident might do to her daughter's reputation, she feigned surprise.

"Oh dear, my memory, the eggs weren't taken by Gou Dan, yesterday Xiangxiang said she wanted to eat some eggs, so I took some to her room."

"I didn't eat breakfast this morning, I forgot, now that I remember, you all go do what you should, I won't stop you!"

Chapter 315: Persimmons Are Picked Soft to Squeeze

Old Mrs. Mu's mood changed faster than flipping a book. Earlier, upon hearing it was Gou Dan's doing, she was all about beating Gou Dan half to death.

Now, thinking it might be Mu Xiangxiang's doing, she didn't want to tarnish Mu Xiangxiang's reputation. Not only did she stop pursuing it, but also took all the responsibility herself.

She runs the household, and as long as Mr. Mu doesn't speak up, even if she's wrong, no one dares to do anything about her.

Looking at Mr. Mu, Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but be amused. The comments he made to discipline Gou Dan are now useless. His double standards are impressive, she accepted.

Mu Shuangshuang originally wanted to drag Mu Dazhong and Mrs. Lin into the mess, but now feels it's unnecessary. Let's just let Mu Xiangxiang take this blame.

"Mom, since this matter is already clarified, it shouldn't concern our third branch, right?" Yu Si Niang asked.

"You woman, I already said I remembered wrong. What, really want me to apologize? As an old lady, I'm telling you, no way, not even just acknowledging I've made a mistake, it's impossible!"

Old Mrs. Mu looked arrogant, with an expression saying "this is how I am, what can you do", staring at Yu Si Niang.

"Of course Grandma can't admit she's wrong, after all, you weren't wrong to begin with! People of the third branch are ugly and deserved to be blamed, mom, you needn't worry anymore."

"Later we'll go back and make ourselves a facial mask, maybe once we look prettier, Grandma won't bother with us anymore."

"Besides, right and wrong, everyone sees it clearly. Things clear in the heart don't necessarily need to be spoken out loud."

Mu Shuangshuang held Yu Si Niang's hand obediently, but the words she spoke were like two slaps to Old Mrs. Mu's face.

Old Mrs. Mu, so angry she jumped on the spot, just about to curse Mu Shuangshuang, was stopped by Mr. Mu.

"Enough, aren't you embarrassed enough? Hurry up and go reflect in your room."

Mr. Mu's shout made Old Mrs. Mu dare not speak, but she had nowhere to vent her anger until she saw Mrs. Liu standing silently in the crowd, directly cursing her without thinking.

"Mrs. Liu, what are you still standing here for, have you made breakfast? Washed clothes? Cleaned the house?"

"I'm telling you, now your second sister-in-law is pregnant, if you're lazy again, get out of Old Mu Family! Ugh, what do you think you are anyway!"

Mrs. Liu, being scolded, her whole body swaying, if not for Mu Dajiang supporting her in time, she would have collapsed to the ground.

It's not the worst to be scolded; the worst is being called the laziest when you're the one who works the most every day. It's a blow that no one can stand.

Mu Shuangshuang despised Old Mrs. Mu in her heart and sympathized with Mrs. Liu, but she hoped more that Mrs. Liu would stand up and retort.

Waited for a long time, not seeing Mrs. Liu retort, instead, saw her crying alone running to the kitchen.

Washing vegetables, scrubbing pots, it only made one feel uncomfortable watching, coupled with a hint of exasperation at her inability to stand up for herself.

The third branch, along with Lu Yuanfeng, returned to their home, where there was currently a game of chase happening in the yard.

Xiao Han, Little Zhi, Yuanbao, and a Little Black dog were running around, each holding puffed rice candy sticks, waving them around while laughing heartily, dispelling the gloom they felt at Old Mrs. Mu's place.

Little Black wasn't eating the rice puffs, but it was adept at playing with them. A piece of puffed rice under its paw was instantly torn open. Upon seeing Lu Yuanfeng, Little Black ran over.

Like presenting a treasure, it gave its rice puff to Lu Yuanfeng.

It made a cheerful "hissing" sound, Lu Yuanfeng picked up Little Black, gently caressing its fur. Little Black wanted to close its eyes comfortably but when it saw Mu Shuangshuang, it turned its head with a contemptuous expression.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't have time to fuss with it, after all, being looked down upon by Little Black wasn't anything new.

"Fengzi, what are you doing giving them so much food, aren't you going to eat?" Mu Shuangshuang frowned, this silly boy, coming over in the morning just to give out food, seemingly not caring for himself.

"I have some at home, thinking Yuanbao can't eat it all alone, Shuangshuang, make sure you eat some later too, I left it on your dinner table in the kitchen."

"Did you have breakfast?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

Naturally, breakfast hadn't been eaten. Early in the morning, he heard the puffed rice vendor's call, went to his granny for money, exchanged it for glutinous rice, made some puffed rice, and came over.

"No need to answer, I'll make you and Yuanbao some egg fried rice."

The breakfast Mu Shuangshuang made in the morning had been completely eaten, but there was a little rice leftover from last night, so making some egg-fried rice should be fine.

Yu Si Niang came out of the house and heard Mu Shuangshuang's words and quickly said:

"Shuangshuang, let me make the fried rice for Fengzi. Aren't you going to your grandma's now? It's not hot outside yet, so go quickly."

"Are you going out?" Lu Yuanfeng asked curiously.

"Yes, going to visit my grandma, help my uncle solve his marriage issue." Mu Shuangshuang, afraid Yu Liulang would hear, approached Lu Yuanfeng and whispered.

"Oh, but the mountain road to Yu Family Village is unsafe, I... how about I take you?"

"Aren't you busy?" Mu Shuangshuang knew that when Lu Yuanfeng wasn't going to town, he was always hunting in the mountains and occasionally doing short-term work for others to earn some money.

"It's okay, I checked the traps last night, nothing inside, and I'm familiar with Yu Family Village, Shuangshuang can rest assured."

"Is that so!" Mu Shuangshuang was still a bit hesitant, having someone accompany her would be good, but if it delays Lu Yuanfeng's matters, she'd feel guilty.

"Shuangshuang, just let Fengzi go with you, there are lots of good things in Yu Family Village. Fengzi might even catch a pheasant or something on this trip."

Yu Si Niang was already hoping Fengzi would go with her daughter. Now that Fengzi spoke, she was certainly all for it.

About Yu Family Village having pheasants, it's actually true, Yu Family Village has many low mountains and is primarily tea plantations, where pheasants often appear.

"Then I'll go prepare things." Lu Yuanfeng was excited and ready to head back.

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but laugh heartily, knowing she couldn't stop Lu Yuanfeng today. But if there really are pheasants, and with the peaches her mom mentioned, this trip wouldn't be a waste for Lu Yuanfeng.

"Why are you in such a hurry, eat breakfast here first, I'll make something good for you all." Mu Shuangshuang pretended to be mysterious, as she went inside and took out the dried corn she had prepared.

Since the puffed rice vendor is here, popcorn is certainly not to be missed. She also wants to let everyone see what people eat a millennium later.

Holding a few Copper Coins, a bamboo basket, carrying the corn, Mu Shuangshuang headed towards the village entrance.

### Chapter 316: Popcorn

At this moment, quite a few people were gathered at the village entrance, clustered around watching the process of popping rice.

From a distance, Mu Shuangshuang saw an elderly man with dark skin and white hair, hunchbacked, busy managing both the fire and the task at hand.

With a tin box for popping rice, a bit of firewood, and a cloth bag, these simple items in his hands turned cups of rice into popped rice.

Generally, everyone would bring a cup of rice to pop or watch how much others popped and then go ask for some themselves.

After a loud "bang," the last batch of popped rice was ready. Everyone took a little bit, and then they were satisfied and about to leave.

A few young wives approached after seeing Mu Shuangshuang.

"Hey, Shuang! Is your family also popping rice? What are you holding, isn't it corn?"

"Yes, my uncle came over and brought some corn, so I thought I could try popping it." Mu Shuangshuang nodded in response.

"You're really silly. Who pops rice without using glutinous rice? What's with using corn?"

Your family doesn't have any glutinous rice, right? Or is it that Yu Si Niang is so stingy, letting you—a child—bring out some corn pretending it's glutinous rice?"

"Haha... Yu Si Niang is really interesting. This kid was silly before, and she's still silly now. How can this be? Who would dare to marry her in the future!"

The people speaking were full of sarcasm. They didn't understand Mu Shuangshuang's behavior and looked down on her actions.

Especially recently, the Mu Family's Third Branch started raising pigs and catching chickens; they were clearly the poorest and most struggling family.

Suddenly, they jumped ahead, leaving others far behind. Naturally, this made others eager to make Mu Shuangshuang feel bad.

At present, Mu Shuangshuang had become a laughingstock in others' eyes, appearing with something incomprehensible and arrogantly claiming to pop rice.

"Aunt thinks Shuangshuang is embarrassing, but Shuangshuang doesn't. Because with anything, only by trying can you know if it's good; someone who doesn't try new things will forever just tread old paths."

Mu Shuangshuang was not the least bit angry because she knew that mocking words like these would only become more frequent from now on.

She would not stay like this forever. Someday, she would prove with her actions that she was always trying, always improving.

However, the old man popping rice was kind. He didn't dismiss Mu Shuangshuang like the others or deliberately say anything excessive. Instead, he greeted her warmly with a smile.

"Girl, how many batches do you want to pop?"

"Grandpa, could you pop two batches for me? Please don't add anything to the corn."

Before heading out, she had added a little caramel, and now she just needed to pop the corn.

"Alright!"

The old man took the corn Mu Shuangshuang handed over, poured half into his tin can, then covered it, lit the fire, and started to rotate the can.

These familiar tasks, the old man had been doing for nearly fifty years. Relying on this craft, he had earned quite a lot and seen a lot of the world.

He didn't see the little girl as wrong; rather, he thought the girl was very clever.

Ten minutes later, the first batch of popcorn emerged. The aroma of popcorn spread everywhere, and the white popcorn attracted everyone's gaze.

Everyone stared at the novel snack for quite a while, unwilling to take their eyes off it, while Mu Shuangshuang grabbed a handful to stuff into her mouth.

"Crunch, crunch~" The popcorn's full flavor spread in her mouth, so fragrant, sweet, and crispy that it almost made Mu Shuangshuang want to scream.

She secretly thought, how had she never realized popcorn was this delicious before? Could it be that everything seemed tastier after coming to this ancient time?

"Shuang, the thing in your hand, can you let us have a taste?"

Just watching was unbearable, so someone boldly asked.

Mu Shuangshuang was generous, giving some to each person, but when she reached those who had insulted her, she stopped.

She turned her body with the basket and continued waiting for the pop to finish.

"Hey... You little girl, why so stingy? We only just spoke about you, is that necessary? Just look at your stingy-cat demeanor, overly protective of food."

"I say you should just calm down, Zhang Family's daughter-in-law. Shuangshuang is just a child; being scolded like that, she surely got mad. If it were me, I'd have slapped you already!"

Having a bite makes more reserved, the group eating the delicious popcorn saw Mu Shuangshuang being bullied and didn't hesitate to come forward to argue for her, not needing her to speak up herself.

"Exactly, Zhang Family's daughter-in-law is renowned for having a spiteful tongue, not even sparing a child. Surely, she will have her tongue pulled out after death."

After someone stood up for her, everyone spoke even more freely.

"Well, it's just a little nasty thing. Is it worth saying so much about me? Do you really think that brat likes you? She's just using you, fools!"

"That's still better than you. You've never given us anything—if you don't snatch things from us, consider it a blessing!"

"You... you all make me so angry." Zhang Family's daughter-in-law stomped her foot and left in anger, but before leaving, she didn't forget to cast one last glance at the popcorn.

Mu Shuangshuang naturally didn't miss that final look from Zhang Family's daughter-in-law or her action of licking her own lips, yet she didn't want to give her any.

After all, she had insulted her.

Once the last batch of rice was popped, Mu Shuangshuang gave two copper coins to the old man, then casually asked, "Grandpa, if I go to buy one of these popcorn-making things, how much would it cost?"

"What's up, little girl wanting to start this business too?" The old man was in good spirits and simply paused his work to chat with Mu Shuangshuang.

"Yes, but I am not doing business; I want to make it for myself to eat."

Yeah, right, Mu Shuangshuang indeed wanted to start a popcorn business, just as Jiu Si Xuan needed something new. But she definitely wouldn't casually share such plans with outsiders.

"Haha, you clever little girl, haha... you crack me up, such a blatant lie. Who would buy such a big contraption just to make some at home for themselves? This thing could provide you enough popped rice for half a lifetime."

Her lie exposed, Mu Shuangshuang shyly looked down at her toes, but deep inside, she grew more respectful towards the old man.

"Since Grandpa put it that way, Shuangshuang won't beat around the bush. I just want to see if the business is good. If it is, I'll focus on doing this!"

Mu Shuangshuang was still half-serious and half-joking. She felt quite lost now, not knowing what to do, but she planned to do whatever earned money.

"Haha, imagine an old man like me, meeting such a clever girl at this age. Tell you what, since you saw me do it twice, if you can pop a batch yourself, then I'll tell you!"

Chapter 317: Feng Zilai, Open Your Mouth!

"Alright!" Although the old man's request was peculiar, Mu Shuangshuang still followed through.

She had a good memory and strong observational skills. When the old man made the first batch of popcorn, she memorized each step. By the second time, she was almost in a simulation training.

Adding rice, adding sugar, twisting the lid, lighting the fire, every action Mu Shuangshuang followed the old man's steps.

The old man watched from the side, occasionally stroking his long beard and sometimes giving Mu Shuangshuang a pointer or two.

At the final crucial moment, knocking the can, fearing Mu Shuangshuang might run into trouble, he deliberately stood by her side.

With a loud "bang," white rice popped out from the can, spraying into the large sack. Each piece of popcorn was plump and enticingly aromatic.

"So, Grandpa, how much would you rate my skills on your scale?" Mu Shuangshuang leaned in expectantly.

"Huh? Rating?" The old man was surprised, but his eyes couldn't hide his curiosity.

"On a scale of one to ten, one being the worst, ten being the best, score it like that!" Mu Shuangshuang explained.

The old man nodded: "Five points, then!"

"Oh!" Mu Shuangshuang lowered her head in disappointment, wondering if she had made some mistake to get such a low score.

"You silly child, my five points are full marks. I'm giving you a five today, not worried it might make you cocky!"

"Ah? Grandpa, you're really something, teasing a little kid like me!" Mu Shuangshuang squealed in excitement but felt a bit miffed at the old man's jest.

"Haha, you, girl, are really something, how amusing!" the old man said with laughter.

Mu Shuangshuang watched the time and got straight to the point.

"Grandpa, you haven't told me yet, how much does this thing sell for when you take it to town?"

"Let me think. This thing, you don't often find in town. Mine was bought from the previous popcorn maker for two silver taels. It's been fifty years, and it's never broken."

"So, I can't buy it then." Mu Shuangshuang felt a bit down, thinking without this big iron can, she wouldn't be able to make popcorn anymore.

Wouldn't that close off another avenue to make money?

"I haven't finished talking. Why are you in such a hurry? I can sell it to you, but I have one condition!" The old man said with a mysterious air.

"Tell me then, as long as I can do it..."

"You can definitely do it. At my age, it's not about needing money anymore, but the feeling that if I died, there'll be one less person in the popcorn trade. Kids would lose some of their fun too."

Everywhere the old man went, he was greeted by blissfully smiling children.

Being with them made him feel young as well, to a large extent, these children's satisfied smiles were what kept him going all these fifty years.

"You're not asking me to take over your job of making popcorn, are you?"

Mu Shuangshuang was startled, and the thought of having to push a cart around just to make popcorn made her head ache.

That's something she simply couldn't do!

She didn't even know how many times she could sell popcorn, and she certainly didn't need to waste her time on a popcorn machine, did she?

Otherwise, she'd rather use her family's clay pot on the stove. Although the flavor was weaker and the quantity smaller, at least she'd have plenty of time.

"That's exactly what I mean, but if your family has a relative, you could have them do it too. Basically, I want someone to replace me."

Mu Shuangshuang twitched her mouth, taking quite a while to respond.

But in her heart, she already had someone in mind.

"Alright then, I promise to find someone for you, but it definitely won't be now, at least not until after August, maybe even September."

After August, there would surely be a significant upheaval in the Old Mu Family. Whether or not her uncle passed the imperial exams, someone would suffer.

And that person was most likely to be her fourth uncle's family.

The second branch of the Old Mu Family was clever, and her fifth uncle was shameless, leaving only the fourth branch. If things came to being kicked out, at least she could find him a job to keep him from starving.

"After August..." The old man hesitated but felt it was feasible.

"Alright then, give me five hundred cash, and this will be yours."

"What? Five hundred cash, wasn't it two taels?" Mu Shuangshuang exclaimed in shock.

"Yes, over the years I've made quite a bit, and my wife doesn't want me traveling around anymore. Selling it to you for five hundred cash isn't a loss. I can go home to be with my wife, and the craft will be passed down."

In fact, the latter point was what the old man cared about most.

After doing the same thing for fifty years, it wasn't just about making money with it. Making popcorn had almost become a faith in his life. Rather than let the skill die with him, he preferred to pass it on.

Just knowing someone would continue his work made the old man feel no regrets even after death.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly had the feeling that this thing she saw as a money-making skill was considered a cultural heritage by the old man.

Like the street vendors she saw in ancient times, making candy figures and candied fruits. To others, maybe it was just some food. If available, they'd eat it, if not, they'd get it eventually. It was just a matter of time.

But a thousand years later, those crafts had vanished.

Machine production replaced handcrafting, increasing efficiency, but the products never tasted the same.

"Grandpa, don't worry, I'll find someone reliable for you. Wait for me a moment, I'll go get the money."

Mu Shuangshuang left a scoop of her popcorn for the old man and carried the rest back home.

At home, Lu Yuanfeng had already finished breakfast and was helping Yu Si Niang chop firewood in the yard.

Most of the firewood at home was delivered by Lu Yuanfeng every other day. Mu Shuangshuang had tried to stop him, but he continued anyway.

"Fengzi, can you do me a favor and help me carry something back?"

"Sure!" Lu Yuanfeng put down the axe and walked over. As he approached Mu Shuangshuang, she grabbed a handful of white popcorn, and Lu Yuanfeng noticed the pop's shape was completely different from what he'd seen before.

Before he could ask, Shuangshuang spoke up.

"Bend down, open your mouth!"

Lu Yuanfeng followed her instructions, and the white popcorn was stuffed into his mouth by Shuangshuang.

The sweet and crispy taste melted in his mouth, sweet but not cloying.

The girl's tender hand was still by his lips, the soft touch sent a shiver through him, a current of electricity ran from his lips to his whole body.

That tingling sensation came, his body shivered, and in his heart, a sweet taste gradually spread...

Chapter 318: Old Yu Family

"Is it tasty?" Mu Shuangshuang looked at Lu Yuanfeng, who was already in a daze, and couldn't help but tease him.

"Mmm! Sweet... but not greasy, it's different from the rice puffs."

"Of course it's different, I made it with corn. But as long as you like it, I'm relieved."

Lu Yuanfeng hardly eats sweets—even when they're out eating glutinous rice cakes, he'd request no sugar. As for the sugar-coated hawthorn, he wouldn't touch it at all.

"Alright then, let's go fetch the big guy!"

Mu Shuangshuang handed the basket to Yu Si Niang, asking her to portion some out which she would deliver to her grandmother's house later.

After bringing Little Black back inside, she had the little creature go into the mouse hole to fetch five strings of Copper Coin. Predictably, Little Black was reluctant again.

It seems its sense of financial awareness is growing stronger. Last time, the Silver it stole was well-hidden, and when Mu Shuangshuang tried to see how much there was, it wouldn't let her, standing there stubbornly.

Fortunately, all the Silver now belongs to Mu Shuangshuang.

Finally, after pulling out the last string of Copper Coin, Little Black hissed at Mu Shuangshuang, its expression full of dissatisfaction.

Mu Shuangshuang could almost imagine its words: [Caretaker, it's been so long since you earned money for the house. You only know how to take from the house all the time. Sooner or later, you'll bankrupt this home!]

Finishing the thought, Mu Shuangshuang clutched her stomach and laughed heartily, while Lu Yuanfeng stood beside her, affectionately watching her completely unrestrained laughter, not asking the reason or interrupting.

But as soon as Shuangshuang turned away, he could see it.

"Alright, don't be so stingy. How about this, when we come back tonight, I'll prepare you a feast? Meat? Or chicken?"

Mu Shuangshuang stepped forward to stroke Little Black's smooth fur, secretly admiring it: This fur really is top-notch, no wonder so many people love wearing mink coats—so comfy! Only then did the expression on Little Black's face soften.

It waved away Mu Shuangshuang's hand and strutted out.

"..."

"Fengzi, do you think this creature has become sentient? It's just a Black Mink, yet its behavior is cleverer than a fox, no, you could say it's on par with humans."

"Maybe it's just particularly smart."

Lu Yuanfeng didn't believe in spirits and monsters. If they really existed, he would've encountered them long ago with how many people he's fought.

"Perhaps, let's hurry along, don't let that old man wait too long."

After a short incense stick's time, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng waved goodbye to the old man at the village entrance as he headed towards Niu Village. Apart from a few cherished items, he left everything to Mu Shuangshuang.

When he came, he came full, and when he left, he was almost empty. But seeing his deliberately straightened back, Mu Shuangshuang knew the old man, slowly walking away, wouldn't stop there.

Maybe he'd find another job that suited him, one that didn't require long-distance traveling.

Seeing the cart loaded with items, Lu Yuanfeng didn't know if he should admire Shuangshuang or praise her boldness.

Frying rice puffs, she even bought the person's tools. If faced with something else, she might just purchase the whole person.

"Fengzi, why are you laughing?"

When Mu Shuangshuang turned around, she noticed Lu Yuanfeng was grinning slightly and couldn't help but ask.

"Nothing, let's hurry back. I still need to go back once more."

...

...

After packing up neatly, Lu Yuanfeng pushed the wheelbarrow filled with items to take to Old Yu and Old Mrs. Yu.

The weather wasn't particularly hot yet. Walking on the mountain path, munching on popcorn now and then, they didn't feel tired while chatting along the way.

But as they got closer to Yu Family Village, the trees on both sides of the road became denser, and the cicadas' buzzing filled their ears.

Mu Shuangshuang felt tempted several times to wave away those bothersome creatures with a stick, but seeing Lu Yuanfeng's calm demeanor, she calmed down.

By noon, Mu Shuangshuang, who felt like steam was coming off her head, finally reached Yu Family Village. After walking for another ten minutes, she finally arrived at her grandmother's house.

The Yu family lived beside a road, much like the Old Mu Family, in a soil house with front and back yards. Before Mu Shuangshuang could speak, an elderly woman walked out.

She was wearing a blue-gray cotton long dress, and her hair was combed all the way back, fixed with a wooden hairpin.

"Grandma~" Mu Shuangshuang called out tentatively.

The old woman raised her head in response. Her face smiled kindly, and upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang, she was initially confused, then asked tentatively, "Are you... Shuangshuang?"

"It's me, grandma!"

"Oh my, it really is you! Old man, come out quickly, we have a rare guest at home. Eldest son, second son, come out quickly, Shuangshuang is here."

Old Mrs. Yu called out as she rushed to open the door, delighted to see Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

Earlier, hearing from Si Niang that Shuangshuang had recovered, she didn't believe it, but today she was convinced. Just hearing her call "grandma," she looked exactly like Si Niang when she was little.

"Child, why have you come, where's your mother?"

"Grandma, my mom's at home. She sent me today because there's a big task."

"What task?" Old Mrs. Yu asked curiously.

"I can't tell you for now, I'll explain slowly later."

With Old Mrs. Yu's excited shout, the men still eating inside rushed out, gathering around Mu Shuangshuang like it was a spectacle.

"Shuangshuang, this is Shuangshuang..." Everyone laughed eagerly, quite excited.

"Grandpa, Uncle, Second Uncle, hello, I'm Shuangshuang, and I came to visit you. This is Fengzi, he's a very close friend of mine."

Mu Shuangshuang confidently introduced Lu Yuanfeng to the Yu Family members.

"Haha, good, good, don't just stand there, come in and eat. You arrived at just the right time—we're eating, and your uncle just bought a fish, so we have fish to eat today."

"Yes! We brought some things, all for Grandpa, Grandma, and my uncles."

The fabric for making clothes for Old Yu and Old Mrs. Yu, as well as the fabric for Yu Liulang, was enough for a wedding dress and groom's suit, with some left over to share among the families, as a gift she brought along.

"Good, good, you're thoughtful, girl." Old Mrs. Yu was extremely pleased, having lived here for so many years, it was the first time someone had bought her something.

The sons were honest and sincere, but their wives were clever, barely scraping by without taking something, let alone bringing anything out.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng followed them into the house. Inside, several women were seated, likely her uncles' wives, along with some Little Doudings.

From the moment Mu Shuangshuang entered, Little Doudings had been peering curiously, and as soon as she brought over half a basket of popcorn, they dropped their chopsticks and rushed over.

"I want to eat, I want to eat..."

### Chapter 319: Second Aunt-in-law's Tantrum

"Don't grab, there's enough for everyone!" Mu Shuangshuang said with a smile, watching the children, but not stopping her hands.

The two women in the room stood up, full of enthusiasm.

"Oh, this is Shuangshuang from Si Niang's family! She's grown so big, so fair-skinned. When I last saw you, you were only this big."

The speaking woman wore an old dark green dress, with well-defined features and high cheekbones, her cheeks slightly sunken due to thinness. Yet, her face looked natural when she smiled.

The thickness of her lips was even, and her face didn't suggest a mean person.

Old Mrs. Yu pointed at the woman and said: "This is your big aunt, Mrs. Zhang."

"Hello, big aunt!" Mu Shuangshuang bowed and greeted.

The other woman couldn't hold back as introductions began. "Shuangshuang, I'm your second aunt. You shouldn't have brought anything! Tiancai, take the things your Sister Shuangshuang brought to her room — no eating until dinner's finished."

"Okay!" The boy named Tiancai reluctantly took the bamboo basket, his eyes constantly darting to the white rice puffs inside, just as he was about to grab some, he was stopped by Shuangshuang's second aunt.

"Yu Tiancai, you'd better not sneak any today. If I find less in the basket, I'll chop off your paws."

Shuangshuang's second aunt had a fiery temper, mostly shouting when speaking, and slightly tempered her tone since Mu Shuangshuang arrived, but quickly reverted to her true self.

"Haha, Shuangshuang, your brother Tiancai is quite mischievous. If I don't yell at him, he'll turn the house upside down."

The second aunt standing before her was short, at most 1.55 meters, rather plump, with a rounded belly resembling a five-month pregnant woman, though distinctly due to where the flesh was gathered, Mu Shuangshuang didn't misconstrue it.

Her actions suggested she wasn't one to be trifled with.

Mu Shuangshuang silently mused: It seems Old Yu Family and Old Mu Family operate in completely different models.

In the Old Mu Family, everything was dictated by Old Mrs. Mu; the daughters-in-law didn't have a say.

Even Scholar's wife, Mrs. Jin, behaved obediently like a cat in front of Old Mrs. Mu. No matter the inner anger, she wouldn't dare act out in front of Old Mrs. Mu.

But at the Old Yu Family, the daughters-in-law seemed to hold some status, at least since she arrived, it was Old Mrs. Yu doing the busy work.

"Second aunt, Shuangshuang doesn't mind." Mu Shuangshuang shook her head gently.

Old Mrs. Yu looked embarrassed, especially after her daughter-in-law's behavior, Shuangshuang could still forgive her.

She stepped forward, placing her hand on Shuangshuang's, gently stroking.

"Shuangshuang, your second aunt has this temperament, don't mind her..."

"It's alright, grandma, second aunt is quite interesting, Shuangshuang won't take it to heart." Mu Shuangshuang said, then asked, "Grandma, do you have a ladle? I'm thirsty."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't hold back with Old Mrs. Yu, because they were family.

Old Mrs. Yu stood up and fetched two clean cups from the cabinet.

"You rest a bit; I'll go make tea for you. We just have some freshly picked tea. Try it, it's fresh."

When Shuangshuang's second aunt heard they were using tea leaves, she immediately fussed, "Mom, didn't you say the tea leaves would be sold when the Xue Family came to collect them in a few days? Last time I wanted to bring some to my mother's house and you refused, but now with Shuangshuang here, you don't remember what you said?"

Old Mrs. Yu frowned, "Old second daughter-in-law, Shuangshuang is a guest from Si Niang's family. Her having some tea shouldn't be a problem, especially since she's brought so many things for the family, including you."

"Mom, that's not how it goes. Shuangshuang brought stuff because it's her first time visiting; if she visits more, she surely won't bring anything." Mrs. Li argued.

"You..." Old Mrs. Yu was so angry she stepped back two steps, her expression turning ugly.

"Grandma, it's fine, Fengzi and I can just have some cold water. No need to fuss." Mu Shuangshuang stepped forward to support Old Mrs. Yu and comforted her.

Mu Shuangshuang had decided internally that she wouldn't let her second aunt have the red cloth she brought; the popcorn was trivial if gone.

"That's better, why can't we drink cold water? Our Tiancai, Tianmu all drink cold water and still grow robust." Mrs. Li shamelessly exaggerated.

"Li Erju, just hush. Shuangshuang and Fengzi are here the first time, surely our mother can serve them tea?" Yu Erlang loudly scolded.

"Well, you damn Yu Erlang, I married into your family, labored like a beast, and bore you three children. Now, you dare shout at me?! I want a divorce!"

"Divorce it is; I'll invite the village chief to write a divorce notice right now!"

"Alright, if you want to argue, take it outside! Don't scare Shuangshuang and Fengzi. Get out, both of you!" Old Yu finally lost his temper and slammed his hand heavily on the dining table.

Only then did Yu Erlang and Li Erju quiet down.

The two, displeased with each other, picked up their own bowls and started eating.

"Old woman, hurry up and make tea for Shuangshuang and Fengzi!"

"Alright!"

Soon, Old Mrs. Yu came over with two cups of hot tea. Mu Shuangshuang took the somewhat hot tea, blowing on it several times before daring to drink.

The hot tea entered her mouth, gradually dispelling the smokey feeling in her throat. They say drinking hot tea in summer works wonders, and indeed, though she sweated profusely, she was no longer thirsty.

"These tea leaves are really good; the taste is simple!"

"As expected of Si Niang's daughter, her sense of taste is similar to Si Niang's!" Mr. Yu exclaimed excitedly upon hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words.

"Hmph, it's just tea. I know this tea leaf is worth quite some money." Mrs. Li muttered, dissatisfied upon hearing Mr. Yu praise Shuangshuang.

"Old second daughter-in-law, if you think you can do this well, then in the future, all tea-picking and quality checking, Lao Liu won't do it – you can do it all yourself!"

"Why should I? That's Lao Liu's job, I won't do it!" Mrs. Li retorted again, thoroughly angering Yu Erlang, who threw his bowl aside and dragged her out by her sleeve.

Mrs. Li struggled hard, spewing all sorts of unpleasant words.

Mr. Yu's face turned blue; today, the Old Yu Family's reputation was completely ruined in the hands of the old second daughter-in-law.

"Shuangshuang, once you're done with tea, hurry and eat; I'll fry two eggs for you and Fengzi."

Old Mrs. Yu genuinely liked Shuangshuang. Ever since she arrived, her smile hadn't faded; whenever there's a pause, her gaze landed on Shuangshuang, regretting why she hadn't visited Shuangshuang earlier.

#### Chapter 320: Defying Heaven

The tea produced in Yu Family Village is quite famous in Qingshan Town, because the natural conditions here are good, with many mountains. The mountain tops are shrouded in mist all year round, making it the most suitable place for tea to grow.

Usually, people from the town come to collect the tea from here, then transport it to the town, process it into tea cakes, and finally sell the tea cakes all over the Da Ning Dynasty.

Mu Shuangshuang finished the last sip of tea and started eating. By this time, the noise in the backyard had stopped, probably because Yu Erlang had stopped Li Erju.

However, Mu Shuangshuang did not expect that Li Erju had entered Old Mrs. Yu's room, saw a bolt of cloth, was moved by it, and then quieted down; otherwise, there would have been more noise.

She caressed the smooth red cloth, shaking her head in intoxication.

"Oh my goodness, the stuff Shuang brought over is really good stuff. This fabric, this color... tsk, tsk, tsk, that girl doesn't seem to dress well, doesn't look like a rich person, yet she has the money to buy such good cloth. Could she have done something unseemly?"

In Yu Family Village, what they call unseemly business, referring to the brothel in town, usually concerns a family that had no money but suddenly becomes rich through a daughter's earnings, leading people to say it's through unseemly means.

Of course, these things are usually meant to slander others.

"Mrs. Li, you're talking nonsense! Shuangshuang is your niece. Saying such a thing will surely get you struck by lightning."

Mrs. Li rolled her eyes and continued, "I'm just saying, why are you so excited? Don't you think if I take some of this to make a couple of bellybands, it would be nice?"

"Don't be so greedy; this is for my sixth brother's wedding. If you take it, how will my sixth brother marry?"

"Are you blind? This bolt of fabric is so long, never mind making two wedding outfits, your brother could marry twice with it and still not use it all. What's wrong with me making two bellybands?" Mrs. Li retorted rudely to Yu Erlang.

"Mrs. Li, why is your mouth so foul? What do you mean my brother marries twice? Are you deliberately cursing him?"

"Say what you will, I've set my mind on it, otherwise when your mother comes, she definitely won't let me touch it." Mrs. Li said this while searching for scissors in the room, and when she found them, Yu Erlang panicked, snatched the scissors from Mrs. Li, and pushed her out.

Yu Erlang leaned against the door, refusing to open it no matter how much Mrs. Li kicked it.

"Yu Erlang, you bastard! Just you wait, after your sixth brother gets married, let's see what benefits you get from this family!"

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Old Mrs. Yu pan-fried the eggs and placed one egg each in Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng's bowls. Unlike Mrs. Li, Mrs. Zhang didn't say a word or think there was anything inappropriate about the two of them eating these eggs.

Lu Yuanfeng looked at the egg in his bowl, then at the skinny Shuangshuang, and took the golden fried egg from his bowl and put it into Mu Shuangshuang's bowl.

"Shuangshuang, eat this. I don't like eggs."

"Fengzi, there you go again. A fat person doesn't become fat overnight. I have my own egg, how can I take yours too?"

Mu Shuangshuang wanted to return the egg to Lu Yuanfeng's bowl.

But he held his bowl tightly, not allowing Mu Shuangshuang to put it back.

After several attempts, the egg still sat in Mu Shuangshuang's bowl, making her a bit amused and exasperated.

Lu Yuanfeng's intentions were understandable, but should he really be sharing his food this way?

Oh well, oh well, if he's being foolish, let him be foolish!

Mu Shuangshuang angrily ate both eggs, then drank a big bowl of corn soup, but after finishing, she still proudly refused to talk to Lu Yuanfeng.

The two elders of the Yu Family looked at Shuangshuang and Fengzi and found them particularly amusing.

After the meal, Mu Shuangshuang pulled Old Mrs. Yu aside for a chat, while Lu Yuanfeng couldn't stay idle and helped Mr. Yu load tea leaves in the warehouse in the backyard.

In Old Mrs. Yu's room, Mu Shuangshuang sat cross-legged on the kang and talked about her purpose for coming.

"Grandma, I've heard about Uncle's situation from my mother, and I know the reasons. I'm here today for Uncle's marriage. Do you have someone in mind?"

Mu Shuangshuang didn't immediately bring up Feng Xiaohua's matter because in this era, parental orders couldn't be ignored, and she needed to understand Old Mrs. Yu's thoughts first.

"Alas, there's no one he's interested in, turning down everyone this and that, over the years I've given plenty of red envelopes to matchmakers. Isn't it frustrating?" As she talked about her youngest son's marriage prospects, Old Mrs. Yu's face was filled with worry.

"Grandma, don't worry. Actually, I already have someone in mind, but I don't know your opinion..."

"Who?" Old Mrs. Yu showed interest.

"Feng Xiaohua from the Feng family."

"That's a good girl, beautiful and capable. She manages all the tea leaves at home herself. Could such a good girl take a liking to your uncle, who's as dense as wood?"

Old Mrs. Yu wasn't quite convinced; she knew her son's limitations, and even though Old Man Feng was a cripple, his daughter was still a good girl.

"Whether she'd take a liking, Shuangshuang can't say for sure, but I want to meet Miss Feng before making any decisions. And if Miss Feng doesn't have an issue with it, you and Grandfather mustn't object."

"Look at what you're saying. If your sixth uncle marries a girl from the Feng family, I'd worship her like a goddess. Your sixth uncle's marriage has always been a worry. If it's resolved this time, even if your grandfather and I were to die, we'd have no concerns."

"Grandma, don't talk about dying and all that. You and Grandpa are fine and will live to a ripe old age," Mu Shuangshuang said sweetly to Old Mrs. Yu.

"You, girl, are indeed caring, even though you just got here. If you had come earlier, your grandma doesn't know how happy she'd be."

After chatting with Old Mrs. Yu, Mu Shuangshuang went directly to find Feng Xiaohua, deliberately reminding Old Mrs. Yu in advance to keep the bolt of red cloth hidden. On her way past her second uncle's room, she overheard her second aunt and second uncle arguing over that bolt of cloth.

The experiences of the Old Mu Family made Mu Shuangshuang realize that a thief within the family is harder to guard against than one outside it.

The Old Yu Family was at the east end of the village, and as for the Feng family, it was on the northern side of the village. Even though it was Mu Shuangshuang's first visit, she didn't feel unfamiliar at all.

Perhaps she was walking the path that Si Niang had tread before. As she walked, Mu Shuangshuang could still see the hillside in the distance, filled with lush green tea leaves.

No wonder it's called the Tea Village, tea leaves indeed stretch as far as the eye can see.

Following Old Mrs. Yu's directions, Mu Shuangshuang finally found the Feng family.

Located at the foot of a low hill, the Feng family's place was worse than most of the village's houses, with a fence made of wattle and several dilapidated thatched cottages. When Mu Shuangshuang arrived, she saw a girl of about eighteen or nineteen, feeding the chickens and ducks in the yard with a tub of pig feed.