

## Folly 351

Chapter 351: Qixi

"Xiangxiang's father, you heard it too, our Zhenzhen didn't do what that brat accused her of. Let's just move on from this!"

Old Mrs. Mu was eager to defend her daughter and quickly shot a glance at Mu Zhenzhen, hoping she'd leave quickly.

To her surprise, Mu Zhenzhen wasn't appreciative at all.

She said, "Dad, did that brat say something in front of you? I knew it was her. She's the biggest liar in the whole family. I'm going to find her."

Mu Zhenzhen was ready to fight as she anxiously rushed outside.

"Mu Zhenzhen, do you really think I'm that foolish? You say you didn't accompany people to drink and eat, then tell me, where did you get these fine clothes?"

"Don't tell me you bought them with your own money. Where would you get the money?"

At Zhuangzi's house, your clothes were taken, as well as your money and jewelry. You clearly have no extra cash.

You tell me, how is selling your charms, smiling, and drinking with people any different from those prostitutes in the brothels? You're utterly disgracing our Old Mu Family."

Mr. Mu's aggressive words were extremely harsh and left Mu Zhenzhen with no escape.

Mu Zhenzhen was about to explode with rage, just at the thought of her father comparing her to those in the brothels made her furious.

"Dad, what are you saying? How can you compare me to the prostitutes in those places, who sell their bodies?"

Let me be honest with you today, I don't think what I did is shameful. I'm not selling my body. If you think I'm disgraceful, I can't help that.

Don't think I don't know that you're afraid I'll ruin my brother's reputation. I, Mu Zhenzhen, walk a straight path and have nothing to fear from gossip."

"Is what you're saying even human? You're not ashamed, you take pride in it instead.

Old lady, tie her up for me, and from now on, she's not allowed to go to town. When she's married, you can let her out."

Mr. Mu was dead serious this time; he insisted on disciplining his daughter. Old Mrs. Mu stood frozen, not daring to move.

He called for the sons who were watching the commotion outside.

"Danian, Dazhong, what are you standing around for? Tie her up for me!"

"Got it!" Mu Danian and Mu Dazhong readily agreed, and as soon as Mr. Mu spoke, they somehow found a wrist-thick hemp rope.

Mu Zhenzhen had been freeloading at home for so long, not working a day, yet eating and using better than everyone else.

Mu Danian and Mu Dazhong had long disliked her, so when they exchanged a glance, they decided to be ruthless.

It should have sufficed to just tie her up, but the two deliberately pinched Mu Zhenzhen's skin from behind.

Soon Mu Zhenzhen was crying out in pain.

The two behind her continued, and she plaintively called out to Old Mrs. Mu, "Mom, my second brother and Fifth are hitting me, it hurts! My back is swollen!"

"Old man..." Old Mrs. Mu called out.

Mr. Mu refused to relent. "If you dare to plead for her again, then you might as well leave the Old Mu Family, pack your things and go back to your own family!"

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Yu Si Niang fed the pigs and chickens, but still felt deeply puzzled.

Her own pigs were nothing like those two pigs; they wouldn't eat and lay there half-asleep.

So, as soon as she got home, she told her daughter about it.

"Mom, you mean the pigs seem off?"

Mu Shuangshuang frowned. Logically, it shouldn't be like that; these pigs were caught from Wang Erma's place, and if Mu Dazhong had seen anything wrong, he should have said so.

After all, everyone in the village knew that once something was sold at Wang Erma's place, there was no returning it.

So, villagers didn't catch piglets from Wang Erma's place because they were expensive and unreliable.

"I don't know, but they aren't eating well. The two piglets in the same trough don't even fight for food.

And that's not all, the chickens your Fifth Uncle brought back are even scarier. They've grown rough feathers and soon they'll be crowing."

Mu Danian left with only one hundred and twenty coins, the chickens he could buy would be no better than the ones from the third branch. They wouldn't be any better.

Also, given Old Mrs. Ge's good relationship with Lu Yuanfeng, she wouldn't give her subpar items.

Mom, just keep this in mind, and from tomorrow, don't feed the pigs and chickens. It just doesn't seem right.

"I won't feed them; not for anything in the world."

Yu Si Niang was also afraid something would happen. If something did, Old Mrs. Mu would definitely make her husband divorce her.

"That's good!" Mu Shuangshuang was secretly pleased, thinking that if her mother was this easy to persuade, she shouldn't have given Old Mrs. Mu another chance to intervene.

After Yu Si Niang stopped feeding the chickens, a few days passed, and soon it was Qixi.

Early in the morning, Mu Shuangshuang delivered some popcorn and cold noodles, hurrying back from town to home.

Today, Mu Shuangshuang was the protagonist at home.

It was both her birthday and the Qixi Daughter's Festival.

On the road, Lu Yuanfeng was quieter than usual, but he stole glances at Mu Shuangshuang more often than normal.

Several times, he was about to speak but then stopped himself.

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't hold back any longer.

"Fengzi, is there something on my face? Is it dirty, or what?"

Being stared at like a zoo animal made Mu Shuangshuang uneasy.

Little did she know that Lu Yuanfeng had made a gift for her and didn't know how to bring it up.

"Shuangshuang, are you going with the village girls to pray to the moon tonight?"

A Qixi tradition is praying to the moon, hoping to meet a good husband under the moonlight.

"I won't, because there's no moon tonight!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Ah, no moon?" Lu Yuanfeng was anxious; if there was no moon, what should he do?

"But don't worry, there should be stars tonight. Who knows, we might even catch a shooting star."

She had no interest in moon-gazing, but shooting stars were another story.

Though Lu Yuanfeng didn't know what a shooting star was, seeing Shuangshuang so excited made him look forward to it too.

Upon reaching Er Gui Village, the girls who rarely made public appearances came out, each dressed in new festival clothes, as lovely as flowers.

In contrast, Mu Shuangshuang wore her usual ragged clothes, looking so plain amidst the crowd it was startling.

Lu Yuanfeng suddenly regretted not buying Shuangshuang a new outfit at the town earlier, but he didn't know her size.

After much internal debate, they found themselves at Shuangshuang's house.

"Fengzi, come over for dinner tonight. I'll make something tasty," said Mu Shuangshuang.

"Sure, I'll see if I can find something in the mountains later."

Being a festival, just a little bit of meat wouldn't do.

Lu Yuanfeng was eager to head into the mountains, and Mu Shuangshuang also had things to attend to, so after a brief chat, they each went home.

At home, Yu Si Niang wasn't there; upon inquiry, it was learned that Old Mrs. Mu had called her away to make something nice.

Mu Xiangxiang from the Old Mu Family was her age, and Qixi definitely included her, but why should her mother be helping with that?

Chapter 352: Too Shrewd

Mu Shuangshuang's displeasure on her face let Little Zhi know that her sister was about to lose her temper.

She sensibly suggested, "Sister, why don't we go and bring mom back? Mom's definitely going to get bullied there."

Not to mention when the Old Mu Family was still together, Old Mrs. Mu bullied Yu Si Niang.

Now that the third branch has split, Old Mrs. Mu treats Yu Si Niang as a thorn in her side, itching to get rid of her.

Yu Si Niang definitely doesn't have a good life there.

"Alright, let's go now!"

They went straight to the kitchen and saw Mrs. Liu and Yu Si Niang making dumplings inside — various fillings of meat and vegetables, and with the dumpling wrappers, they were turned into pretty-looking dumplings in the hands of Mrs. Liu and Yu Si Niang.

She also noticed that Yu Si Niang put a Copper Coin in one of the dumplings, which seemed to have some meaning.

Qixi in the Da Ning Dynasty was indeed considered a big festival. Melon seeds and biscuits were to be placed under the moonlight at night, and unmarried girls would pray for a good husband under the moon.

Mu Shuangshuang stood at the kitchen door, just in time to hear Mrs. Liu and Yu Si Niang chatting.

"Third sister-in-law, thank you so much today. If it weren't for you coming over to help, I wouldn't know how to handle all the food for this big family," Mrs. Liu said, wiping the sweat from her forehead, looking delighted, and addressed Yu Si Niang.

"Jinhua, don't say that. I didn't have much to do myself, so I thought I'd come over to help," Yu Si Niang waved it off, not appearing to be forced.

Mu Shuangshuang had no reason to make Yu Si Niang leave anymore.

The third branch had already split off. If she really didn't work, at most, Old Mrs. Mu would make a fuss, but nothing serious would happen, after all, Mu Dade cared about face.

However, if Yu Si Niang leaves, Mrs. Liu would have to bear all the work alone, unable to rest from morning till night.

To her, Yu Si Niang was both a relief and a comforting presence.

"Mom, Aunt Si, is there anything Shuangshuang can do?"

Mu Shuangshuang had never been someone to hesitate. Since she had figured it out, she simply rolled up her sleeves to join in.

"Shuangshuang, you're back?" Yu Si Niang put down the dumpling wrapper in her hand and came up to greet her.

"Yes! I'll help make dumplings!" Mu Shuangshuang responded.

"No, it's your birthday today, and the Daughter's Festival. How can you work? I already left a bowl of porridge in the pot when I came out, you go have some first, and I'll go back to make lunch when I'm done," Yu Si Niang said.

"Mom, Shuangshuang will make lunch then. By the way, why did you just put a Copper Coin in the dumpling?"

"It's not just Copper Coin. Your mom also put silver needles and red dates in there," Mrs. Liu chimed in from the side.

"Putting a Copper Coin in the dumplings signifies wealth; a needle represents skillfulness; as for the red dates, it's for having children early," Yu Si Niang explained patiently, which Mu Shuangshuang found quite amusing.

"Oh right, Shuangshuang, you need to go to the village entrance later. Today the village chief said that there would be a grand celebration for Qixi in Er Gui Village.

The offerings for praying for skills, like fruits and such, are funded by the village, and they'll select a weaver girl, rewarding her with three hundred wen," Yu Si Niang added.

Mu Shuangshuang found it particularly interesting; the selection of a weaver girl, in other words, was like a beauty pageant. She didn't expect such an amusing event in this old age.

She became even more excited about tonight's praying for skills event.

"So, is mom trying to make Shuangshuang apply for the weaver girl selection?" Mu Shuangshuang playfully blinked her eyes.

Yu Si Niang sighed and tapped Shuangshuang's head gently. "You little smarty, you know everything, but mom won't force you."

If selected as the weaver girl, her daughter's future marriage prospects wouldn't need to be in a hurry, and matchmakers would rush in.

If not, just treat it as participating!

"Then Shuangshuang won't participate," Mu Shuangshuang decided.

Participating in selecting the weaver girl isn't as fun as making money. Mu Shuangshuang was eager to go home, made lunch, fed Little Black Dog and Little Black, and took two bowls of rice to Lu Yuanfeng's house.

Lu Yuanfeng hadn't made lunch yet, so when Mu Shuangshuang appeared, he was so surprised his jaw nearly dropped.

"Fengzi, you and Yuanbao quickly eat, and after eating, we'll go to town. There's a big business coming."

The three hundred wen reward assures her that even if her business today earns less than three hundred wen, someone would buy.

Without asking a word, Lu Yuanfeng finished his meal and headed out with Mu Shuangshuang.

This time, they didn't walk; they rented a horse in the village. Lu Yuanfeng, who already knew how to ride, managed to reach the town in less than half an hour.

After getting off the horse, Lu Yuanfeng still didn't know what Mu Shuangshuang wanted to do.

Until Mu Shuangshuang spoke up, "Fengzi, we need to buy lanterns, the blank ones without paintings. I checked in the morning; they're one wen each.

But those with paintings range from eight to ten wen, I'll draw some patterns and sell for five wen each, and then there's rouge and powder. I'm going to do makeup for the girls in the village."

Modern makeup skills are much better than those in ancient times, and even those cucumber masks and such can be applied. This can start at ten wen.

With quite a number of girls in Er Gui Village, Mu Shuangshuang already imagined herself counting money until her hands cramped.

Lu Yuanfeng couldn't help but laugh; what kind of girl did he fall for?

Thinking about nothing but making money, and yet he thought she was completely right.

"Then let's hurry up and buy them, so we can get back soon."

Lu Yuanfeng prayed in his heart, hoping not to miss Shuangshuang's birthday.

"Okay!"

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The Old Mu Family was extremely lively at this moment; in the main hall, led by Old Mrs. Mu, the group of women sat scattered around, each wearing different expressions on their faces.

The main hall was filled with the hearty laughs of Old Mrs. Mu, sounding like another great celebration was happening at the Old Mu Family to those who didn't know better.

Mu Xiangxiang was wearing a light pink gown bought just yesterday from town. The gown's design was particularly novel, but it wasn't entirely unique. At least Mu Zhenzhen had worn a similar one, differing only in color.

"Mom, look, don't you think my dress is pretty?"

Mu Xiangxiang spun around in the main hall twice, and the pink dress hem spun up to add a touch of ethereal charm.

Except for that that face, which was better left unseen!

Her little face, the size of a palm, was thickly coated with makeup, and the white powder covered the entire face of Mu Xiangxiang. As she spun around, the powder began to fall off in flakes.

However, Old Mrs. Mu paid no mind to these things, her deeply lined face full of smiles.

"Our Xiangxiang is beautiful, and with that dress on, she looks even more beautiful!"

Mu Qingqing stood beside Mrs. Lin, staring intently at Mu Xiangxiang's dress.

In the whole Old Mu Family, only Mu Xiangxiang was allowed to wear new clothes, while the others could only make do with old ones.

Heaven knows, she too wanted to wear new clothes and wanted to be the weaver girl.

"The village weaver girl position is mine. Qingqing and Xiaxia, both of you better not participate today, or else I'll not be happy with you."

With one less person, there was one less competitor, and Mu Xiangxiang knew this well in her heart.

"Grandma, Qingqing also wants to go, just to watch, definitely won't steal little aunt's spotlight."

Mu Qingqing acted coy with Old Mrs. Mu; if she couldn't get the same treatment as Mu Xiangxiang, at least she wanted to participate. Who knew, maybe the opportunity would be hers.

Chapter 353: Be My Man

"Mom, don't let Qing go. If she goes, I won't!"

Mu Xiangxiang pouted and started to act coy, hugging Old Mrs. Mu's arm.

Old Mrs. Mu lovingly petted Mu Xiangxiang's head and turned on her protective mode.

"Alright, if Xiangxiang says who can't go, then that's it, they can't go."

To reassure her daughter, Old Mrs. Mu hastily instructed everyone, "Mrs. Liu, Mrs. Lin, you heard Xiangxiang!"

"Neither of your daughters are allowed to go. If they do, don't call them part of the Old Mu Family."

As soon as Old Mrs. Mu finished speaking, both Mrs. Lin and Mrs. Liu's faces changed.

They knew in their hearts that with Mu Xiangxiang's powdered face and shockingly red lips, it was unlikely she'd be chosen.

While their own daughters, even if they didn't have such fine clothes, were much prettier than their aunt.

Thus, their chances of being chosen were higher.

Mrs. Lin was eyeing the three hundred coins given as a prize for being chosen as a weaver, which, combined with some money her husband had skimmed from buying piglets,

would help the second family stand tall.

Mrs. Liu, on the other hand, was interested in the honor Yu Si Niang spoke of, because being chosen as a weaver meant a swarm of matchmakers would come knocking.

Mrs. Liu knew that with Old Mrs. Mu around, there was no rush concerning Mu Xiangxiang's marriage.

However, it was different for her own daughter. The fourth family never was in Old Mrs. Mu's favor, so even if suitors came, Old Mrs. Mu would prioritize Xiaxia, the young aunt.

All of Old Mu Family's silver was held by Old Mrs. Mu. At that time, forget about preparing a dowry for Xiaxia, she'd probably even be forced to demand money from the groom's family.

Rather than face that, Mrs. Liu decided it was better to plan for her own daughter.

Mrs. Liu mustered up the courage to stand up and said to Old Mrs. Mu, "Mom, I feel that letting Xiaxia and Qingqing go benefits their young aunt.

Almost all the young girls in the village are going to the weaver selection. Families are going as units; if only Xiangxiang from our Old Mu Family goes, we'll be losing in spirit.

Let Xiaxia and Qingqing go; they can help their young aunt in the selection."

After speaking, Mrs. Liu stood there nervously with sweat forming on the soles of her feet, as it's said that mothers are strong, and this was her bravest moment.

Perhaps it was the only one in her lifetime.

"Mom, what Jinhua says makes perfect sense. How can Xiangxiang compete alone against so many people!

That Shen Rong from Wang Fugui's family and that Xia Guagua, the daughter from Old Lu Family, they are first-class beauties.

Granny Sun has visited so many times that the thresholds are nearly worn out."

Mrs. Lin chimed in, unlike Mrs. Liu's cautiousness, she spoke with more confidence.

In Er Gui Village, there indeed were a few beauties; although there weren't any ugly ones in the Old Mu Family, few could carry themselves well.

The only second aunt was now locked up, no longer grooming herself daily, resembling a lunatic and was useless.

Old Mrs. Mu pondered for a moment, acknowledging the reasoning of her two daughters-in-law, but she knew her daughter's temper well, so she spoke up.

"Xiangxiang, here's the thing, let Xia and Qing go, even if they luckily win the weaver selection, I'll have them yield it to you, how does that sound?"

Mu Zhenzhen heard these words and finally stopped making a fuss.

She nodded, "That's what you said, Mom. If anything goes wrong, you're responsible!"

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Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng roamed the town's streets and alleys, buying brushes, rouge and powder, and even a shaving knife and firecrackers.

This was the only time Lu Yuanfeng didn't understand the things Shuangshuang bought.

In merely half an hour, they managed to buy everything they needed.

Fifty lanterns in total, Lu Yuanfeng was unsure how many other items they had.

He only knew that by the time they returned, the horse was laden with things.

They were so close that their bodies were practically touching; it was so cramped that Yuan Feng encircled Shuangshuang's waist with his hand, only in this way could they avoid falling.

"Shuangshuang, what if... I get down and walk? It's quite hard on you like this..."

Yuan Feng's face was flushed red. If it weren't for the fear of the person in his embrace getting hurt, his mind would be lost.

"Get down? Why? We walked for so long this morning, and we're already tired."

"But..."

"It's fine, don't overthink it. Once we get to the village entrance, we'll both get down."

Mu Shuangshuang didn't think it was a big deal; she knew Yuan Feng was shy, so she didn't forget to comfort him.

"Think of it this way, just pretend I'm a piece of pork, you're holding a piece of pork, you wouldn't get embarrassed by that, right?"

This was perhaps Mu Shuangshuang's most self-deprecating moment, she would never have done it if not to relax Yuan Feng.

But little did she know, Lu Yuanfeng had no sense of humor, he seriously retorted, "Shuangshuang is not pork, Shuangshuang is a person!"

"..."

Mu Shuangshuang looked helpless and simply grasped the hand Yuan Feng had on her waist.

"Is this better? I'm holding onto you, you're being held by me, isn't it so you won't feel it's tough on me?"

Mu Shuangshuang had seen those who liked to take advantage of others, but she'd never encountered anyone like Lu Yuanfeng, who blushed at even a casual touch.

She initially attributed it to his young age, but now she thought it wasn't wholly so.

Lu Yuanfeng's behavior was typically mature, even his thoughts were, it was just that interacting with her occasionally made him blush, so Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but tease him.

"Fengzi, why do you always blush, making me feel like I've wronged you every time."

Even though he knew the girl he held was joking, Lu Yuanfeng's blush deepened.

His chest felt heavy, and it thudded incessantly.

Mu Shuangshuang heard it too, and she burst into laughter.

Lu Yuanfeng's reaction was just like that of a pure-hearted young boy, and boys like him should be most suited to be men.

Be a man?

Realizing where her thoughts had drifted, Mu Shuangshuang blushed too.

A peculiar feeling subtly arose in her chest.

This wasn't the first or second time she'd felt this way; several times, she suspected it was heart trouble, with her heartbeat racing, her chest feeling tight, and her body slightly weak...

She quickly shook her head, trying not to think about it, but the more she suppressed it, the stronger the feeling became.

When they reached the village entrance, just as she was about to jump off the horse herself, Lu Yuanfeng stopped her, knowing her intentions.

"What are you doing, are you courting disaster?" Lu Yuanfeng had a hint of anger in his voice.

If he hadn't reacted quickly, Shuangshuang would have jumped off, did she really dislike being with him?

Lu Yuanfeng couldn't help but ponder, the trace of anger in his eyes turned into disappointment.

"I... I forgot..." Shuangshuang came up with an excuse.

But even she didn't believe it.

Yuan Feng definitely didn't believe it.

He lowered his head, took a deep breath, and tried his best to calm down.

"Shuangshuang, I'll get down first, wait for me to get down then you can come down!"

Chapter 354: Very Dominant

Lu Yuanfeng dismounted and helped Mu Shuangshuang down by stepping on the saddle.

Originally, it was a simple task, but with almost everything hanging on the horse, getting down became unusually difficult.

Especially since Shuangshuang was small and had short legs, she tried several times to hook the saddle with her toes but failed.

Just as she was about to jump down directly, Lu Yuanfeng reached out his hand and held Shuangshuang around her waist horizontally.

In this way, he carried Shuangshuang down.

"You..." Shuangshuang stared blankly at Lu Yuanfeng, eyes fixed on the hand still at her waist.

"This time, consider it as me bullying you!" Lu Yuanfeng spoke boldly.

Seemingly rebutting what Mu Shuangshuang had said before.

"..."

"Let's go inside! We'll head to my house first, and I'll come find you at your house in the evening."

Lu Yuanfeng finished speaking, then directly led the horse forward.

The series of actions and words truly felt quite domineering.

Of course, this required ignoring Lu Yuanfeng's heart that kept jumping and his trembling legs.

Mu Shuangshuang stood still, watching Lu Yuanfeng enter the village entrance without looking back or calling for Shuangshuang.

By the time Shuangshuang realized she had been teased, Lu Yuanfeng's figure had long disappeared from the entrance.

"This silly boy, why did he suddenly refuse to be at a disadvantage?"

Mu Shuangshuang touched her chin, questioning herself with a puzzled expression.

After returning to the village, Mu Shuangshuang rushed straight to Lu Yuanfeng's home, without pausing for rest.

Their trip back and forth to the town had already wasted quite a bit of time.

Now, all the remaining time could only be used for preparing for the Qixi Festival.

Lu Yuanfeng had already laid out everything on the horse's back.

He tied the horse under the big tree by the dung pile beside his house; the horse was quite docile, crouching and resting in the dung pit.

"Shuangshuang, I've brought out the Eight Immortals table, let me know if you need anything else?"

Lu Yuanfeng had returned to normal by then, as if he wasn't the one who had claimed to bully Shuangshuang earlier.

Mu Shuangshuang saw this and didn't dwell on the incident.

Let's just consider it an accident!

"Table, long benches, ten earthenware bowls, and half a bucket of water."

Mu Shuangshuang was preparing to paint; her style differed from ancient techniques as she was unaccustomed to using brushes and used feathers instead.

Before painting, she closed her eyes, recalling the principles of color mixing and the appearances and styles of ancient beauties in period dramas, considering what colors were needed.

Once done reminiscing, she began mixing colors, blending them to achieve the desired shades.

Lu Yuanfeng watched her, seeing her slightly close her eyes; after a while, she started blending colors, with various hues continually changing in her hands.

In front of her was an Eight Immortals table, filled with lanterns, while four long benches were placed beside it.

The benches were covered in overturned earthenware bowls, each with rings of pre-mixed paint.

"Fengzi, after I finish painting the lanterns, approximately an hour and a half, do you want to set up a stand in the yard to display the lanterns later?"

Since Mu Shuangshuang intended to sell lanterns, displaying them was necessary, so preparing beforehand would avoid rushing later.

"Sure, the bamboo pole for drying clothes can be used."

Lu Yuanfeng took action, setting up a stand and using tree branches to make hooks.

Mu Shuangshuang also sped up with the painting; being simple sketches, completing a design on a lantern didn't take much time.

After busily working for a while, thirty lanterns were done, and Mu Shuangshuang's eyes felt dizzy, overwhelmed with the fatigue of overusing her brain.

"Shuangshuang, let's stop, we've done enough."

Lu Yuanfeng didn't want Shuangshuang to tire herself out, so he took away the feather from her hands, forcing her to rest.

Mu Shuangshuang herself felt it was sufficient, with twenty lanterns remaining to use during the festival.

"Alright, let's hang up the lanterns, I'll take the rouge and powders back and make some money first."

Such an event as selecting the Weaver Maid, the second branch of the Old Mu Family definitely wouldn't miss it; in such a case, Mu Qingqing could earn some silver.

After taking a few steps, Mu Shuangshuang remembered to remind Lu Yuanfeng. "Remember to come to my place early for dinner; I've prepared something tasty."

Without waiting for Lu Yuanfeng's response, she turned and ran away.

As soon as she left, Xia Guagua, hearing movement, came out of the house.

Xia Guagua also intended to be selected as the Weaver Maid, dressing exceptionally well today in a peach-colored pleated skirt with shallow white satin overlaid above.

She appeared a bit more graceful than usual.

She gazed in wonder at the lanterns in Lu Yuanfeng's courtyard, pointing at them.

"Brother Yuan Feng, are these yours? They're so beautiful, Gua Gua loves them, you can..."

"No, if you want them, pay silver to buy!" Lu Yuanfeng outright rejected Xia Guagua's familiar approach.

Xia Guagua's face, initially full of delight, instantly fell; her eyes on the pile of lanterns emitted a venomous glow.

Lu Yuanfeng keenly sensed this and squinted his eyes, warning Xia Guagua: "If you touch my things again today, I definitely won't let you off."

Cutting his clothes and humiliating Shuangshuang, if Lu Yuanfeng were to settle accounts with Xia Guagua, she shouldn't have stood before him at all.

Xia Guagua was forced back several steps by Lu Yuanfeng's sharp gaze, breaking out in a cold sweat.

She shrank back, declaring indignantly: "Brother Yuan Feng doesn't like Gua Gua, Gua Gua understands, but Gua Gua won't give up, you'll realize my worth someday.

Gua Gua will definitely be selected as the Weaver Maid, and will defeat that ugly girl, just wait, I definitely will."

Xia Guagua was confident that with her attire today, the villagers' rough men would certainly choose her.

By then, the ugly girl without any figure would surely be heartlessly abandoned.

"Shuangshuang won't compete to be the Weaver Maid; in my heart, she already is."

Being chosen as the Weaver Maid on Qixi symbolizes cleverness, beauty, and kindness; Lu Yuanfeng understood its significance and firmly believed in the village, Shuangshuang was the Weaver Maid.

"You..." Xia Guagua was infuriated, stomping heavily in place before reluctantly returning home.

Once home, she fumed with rage.

Gu Jiulian didn't need to guess to know what troubled her daughter.

"Oh, were you rejected again? Becoming a daughter like this truly loses a girl's dignity!

I've long told you to use some tactics, yet you stubbornly didn't listen, now see the result, that brat's all buddy-buddy with someone else."

Gu Jiulian spoke sarcastically, not wanting her daughter to marry Lu Yuanfeng in the past, especially since the silver he brought back from the military had ended up in her hands.

But now things were different; hearing that brat planned to buy land, he likely had quite a bit of money. Now see the result, that brat's all budd-buddy with someone else."

Chapter 355: Looks Really Good)

Mu Shuangshuang returned home, Yu Si Niang was already back, busy in the kitchen preparing things for the Seven Sisters Festival.

Mu Shuangshuang entered the kitchen, and before she could wipe her hands, Yu Si Niang hurriedly grabbed her hand.

"I've been waiting for you for a long time, where have you been? I haven't seen you all afternoon."

"I went to town with Fengzi again this afternoon, Mom, are you cooking dinner tonight?"

"What did you do in town?" Yu Si Niang curiously asked.

"Business, Mom, you'll know tonight. I won't explain it to you now. Cook dinner, I'll go busy myself first."

Mu Shuangshuang put all the things into her room and went to the Old Mu Family to find Mu Qingqing.

Before she reached the second room, Mu Shuangshuang ran into Mu Qingqing, who had just come out of the outhouse.

Even on the Seven Sisters Festival, Mu Qingqing wore old clothes, and with a bare face, luckily her skin was nice.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Mu Qingqing's eyes began to blaze as if she wanted to eat her alive.

Mu Shuangshuang was not angry, she smiled and said to Mu Qingqing, "Want to be the Weaver?"

Mu Qingqing's eyes lit up, she naturally wanted to be the Weaver; money was not important, the honor was.

Plus, with the relationship with the elder uncle, she could certainly find a good husband.

If someone else said it, Mu Qingqing would surely believe, but since it was Mu Shuangshuang speaking, she didn't believe it.

"Hmph, what do you mean? Want to harm me? You know that Auntie is the Weaver today."

Mu Qingqing pretended to be indifferent, but inside, she was already filled with envy.

"Oh, if you don't care, then forget it. I thought you wanted to be the Weaver, but since you don't, I'll ask Auntie. Maybe she will be willing."

Mu Shuangshuang played the game of retreat to advance, changed direction and began to walk towards the elder uncle's room, taking only two steps, Mu Qingqing stopped her.

"You... can really make me the Weaver? You're not lying?"

Mu Shuangshuang turned back, raising her eyebrows.

"If you think I'm unreliable, then don't believe, anyway, there's only this opportunity. The next Seven Sisters Festival is a year later, by then you'll be fifteen, right!"

Mu Qingqing was younger than Mu Shuangshuang by a few days. She will turn fifteen, soon after Mu Shuangshuang's birthday.

Fifteen is a threshold, around fifteen, matchmakers will come with marriage proposals. Mu Qingqing wanted more matchmakers to come, so she had to win the Weaver title this year.

"I... believe!"

At this point, Mu Qingqing had no choice but to believe Mu Shuangshuang.

"It doesn't matter if you believe, you know I never do things that lose money. If you want me to help you, you must pay the price.

I can do makeup for you. You know the powder Aunt usually applies, I can make you look even better than her."

Mu Shuangshuang was confident she could transform Mu Qingqing's image.

"I don't charge much, you know (as the Weaver) you win three hundred coins, you only need to give me a hundred and fifty coins."

If it were someone else, Mu Shuangshuang might only charge ten coins, but Mu Qingqing had bullied the original Mu Shuangshuang many times, so it's only right she demands it.

"One hundred and fifty coins?" Mu Qingqing's eyes widened, filled with disbelief.

She thought Mu Shuangshuang was crazy. Why does she think her plan is worth one hundred and fifty coins?

"If you're unwilling, that's fine, I'll find others. This deal whoever gets it won't lose."

Mu Shuangshuang's plan to make Mu Qingqing the Weaver was not a joke.

Mu Xiangxiang would particularly want to be the Weaver, and if Mu Qingqing won, she would cling onto Mu Qingqing tightly.

By then, the second room would be busy handling Mu Xiangxiang, so they'd cause less trouble for her. Plus, Old Mrs. Mu's vengeful nature wouldn't spare Mu Qingqing.

The thought of the Old Mu Family going haywire amused Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Qingqing was contemplating Mu Shuangshuang's words, agreeing with them, but where could she get a hundred and fifty coins?

She didn't have a single coin.

Mu Qingqing's hesitant posture was noticed by Mu Shuangshuang; she wasn't in a hurry.

"Think of a way for the money yourself, I'll go play for now."

By playing, she meant finding her target.

Fortunately, it was quite easy to find young girls in the village, especially today being the Seven Sisters Festival.

Everyone gathered and chatted, even encountering topless men on the road wouldn't cause embarrassment.

Because today is the Daughter's Day, the freest day for young ladies.

Only this day belongs to themselves, the rest of the time is living for others.

For family, for offspring, for spouses.

Mu Shuangshuang found a few girls she had talked to before, explained her intentions, upon hearing she could help with makeup, everyone excitedly headed to Shuangshuang's house.

Ten coins to have a clean face like town girls, everyone was willing.

"Shuangshuang, you're really willing to do makeup for us for just ten coins?"

The town's rouge and powder weren't cheap, especially powder that makes the face white, costing one or two silver per box.

Such a small box, quite intimidating.

"Yes, but the ten coins are only for makeup, if need a prior skincare it costs five more coins, as I use eggs and other herbs to make your skin smooth.

Of course, this is optional, you can choose."

Everyone looked at each other, hesitant to try.

Because saving five coins is naturally preferred.

"How about this, I'll do skincare on one person, if it's good, you pay me, if not, I won't charge."

Upon hearing this, someone sat down.

She had a copper mirror in her cabinet, a gift from Lu Yuanfeng, probably to make her morning routine easier.

Unfortunately, she was used to simple grooming, spending less than ten minutes daily in front of the copper mirror.

Mixing egg whites with rice paste, Mu Shuangshuang began applying to the experimental girl's face.

Like watching a circus monkey, everyone was intrigued, until Mu Shuangshuang finished cleansing her face.

The girl touched her face, exclaiming in surprise.

"My face... My face is smoother than an egg..."

Everyone touched it and truly believed Mu Shuangshuang.

"Shuangshuang, I want to be the second to try it, here are fifteen coins."

The Chen Family's daughter, Chen Er Ya, was the first to pay, followed by others.

Mu Shuangshuang was pleased, collecting money until her hands were tired.

This time six girls came, she earned ninety coins.

She wouldn't need to go out for more, as they would bring her more business.

Mu Shuangshuang spent three sticks of incense time applying makeup to six girls.

By the time she finished, the sun was already starting to set.

Yu Si Niang's dinner was ready; she came to call Mu Shuangshuang, meeting the girls just in time.

Every one of them had bright eyes and shiny teeth, extremely beautiful.

"Oh my, seeing you like this, I almost didn't recognize you."

Yu Si Niang wasn't using polite words.

She genuinely felt the transformation of the girls.

Chapter 356: Not as good as the town

"Aunt Si, it's all thanks to Shuangshuang's skilled hands. She's the one who did our makeup and applied flower yellow, which is why we look so different now."

A few girls watched as Mu Shuangshuang picked up a bunch of small boxes and began applying makeup to their faces.

After a few rounds, everyone saw the transformation.

They looked pretty, with fair skin.

Mu Shuangshuang used all ancient cosmetics, and with some appropriate tinting, the beauty was only natural.

However, she was wary of using ancient face powder; it whitened the face, but the mercury content was too high.

In the long run, not only would it cause poisoning, but blotches would also appear on the face.

Mu Shuangshuang subtly expressed her concerns, but these girls didn't care at all.

Being beautiful for this day was all that mattered.

"How about you stay for dinner? I've made some delicious food."

"No, Aunt Si, the weaver selection is coming up soon, and we're not eating tonight."

After eating, the belly would swell, and everyone preferred to stay hungry.

"Alright then, I'll see you out."

Yu Si Niang followed behind the girls, and after they left, she returned indoors to call Shuangshuang.

She made today's meal particularly early, just so her daughter could go to the weaver selection sooner.

"Shuangshuang, stop worrying about making money. Look what I've prepared for you."

Yu Si Niang brought out the dress she had made overnight for Mu Shuangshuang.

This was the cloth Shuangshuang bought last time; she made it, and before starting, she even asked Shuangshuang about the style.

So this dress should be unique throughout the Da Ning Dynasty.

"Mom, I'm not entering the weaver selection; what's the point of wearing this?"

Mu Shuangshuang had no interest in the weaver selection; her choice was Mu Qingqing.

"Child, even if you don't enter, you should at least go to watch. Besides, today is your birthday; don't you want to appear beautifully in front of someone who cares about you?"

Yu Si Niang wanted to mention Fengzi's name but was afraid Shuangshuang would be upset.

"Someone who cares about me? Dad? Mom?"

Mu Shuangshuang's response made Yu Si Niang want to bang her head on the wall. Her daughter seemed sharp, but when it came to matters of the heart, she was so oblivious. Could it be true that an observer is clear-minded while the one involved is confused?

"Girl, you seem smart normally, but you're muddled at crucial times. Just think about whose presence you most want to wear this dress in."

"Who do you want to see how nice you truly look?"

Yu Si Niang, as a mother, fretted so much, trying to guide her daughter.

But Mu Shuangshuang didn't want to think about it because the image that kept flashing in her mind was Lu Yuanfeng's.

Mu Shuangshuang felt the world had gone crazy. She clearly only regarded Lu Yuanfeng as a brother, like those comrades through thick and thin in the past.

Mu Shuangshuang thought to herself, just let go of all the thoughts now, and don't think about anything.

"Mom, we had dinner too early today; let's eat when it gets dark. Pass me the dress; I still have people coming over later."

As soon as she finished speaking, more girls entered through the side door of the courtyard, all dressed very plainly.

Yet, their eyes all sparkled with hope.

Mu Shuangshuang greeted them, "Are you here for makeup and dressing up?"

Everyone nodded vigorously.

Without another word, Mu Shuangshuang got to work.

Yu Si Niang stood aside watching Shuangshuang collect money—fifteen coins from each person, an amount she'd earn from two days' work, and Shuangshuang got it in an instant.

She knew her daughter was capable, but to see money come so easily was a first.

Yu Si Niang stood by as Shuangshuang helped groups of people with makeup.

Soon, over half an hour passed, and night fell.

The weaver selection event started, with everyone headed towards the village entrance.

During this time, Mu Shuangshuang had made up thirty-five girls and earned five hundred twenty-five coins.

Seeing this sum, even she was startled.

Yu Si Niang was even more shocked and couldn't stand steadily.

"Shuangshuang, did mom see wrong? How much is this?"

"Mom, over half a tael!" Mu Shuangshuang replied with a beaming smile.

This money came at a perfect time, split in half with Lu Yuanfeng, and the rest could be saved.

"How did you think of such a clever idea, child?" Yu Si Niang couldn't comprehend it no matter how hard she thought.

"Because Shuangshuang has money on her mind all the time!"

The fact was, Mu Shuangshuang had merely tapped into women's desire for beauty. In truth, for her, if one can be beautiful for a day, fifteen coins would be worth it.

Unfortunately, tonight wasn't just about fifteen coins.

"Mom, I'm going to call Fengzi for dinner. Later, give the porridge in the clay pot to Little Black Dog. Although its face has de-swollen, it's better to eat something light."

"Alright!" Yu Si Niang, listening to Mu Shuangshuang, began to busy herself again. After Shuangshuang left, she realized her daughter hadn't changed into that beautiful dress.

"Why doesn't this girl treat herself a bit better?"

...

...

As night fell, Lu Yuanfeng lit the candle in the lantern.

The array of colors attracted a few girls; as they approached and asked the price, upon hearing five coins, gasps were heard.

"Five coins, that's too expensive! Brother Fengzi, how about a discount, one coin each? We'll all take one."

"Yeah, Brother Fengzi, you know there's only so many of us in the village. If you don't sell them, it'll be wasted. Better to give us a good deal."

With some instigating, others naturally agreed, and just when Lu Yuanfeng was about to decline, he saw a small figure dressed in coarse cloth rushing over.

His mouth curved slightly into a smile.

Looking towards Shuangshuang, he beamed brightly.

"Brother Fengzi, one coin, could that work?" another voice asked.

Before Lu Yuanfeng could respond, Mu Shuangshuang had already joined them.

"No way, one coin doesn't even cover the cost. Selling like this would be a loss. Plus, in town, they sell for eight, ten, fifteen coins, and we're only selling for five, which is much cheaper!"

"But the town's items are prettier!" came a quiet voice from the crowd.

Mu Shuangshuang glanced at the girl.

She wore a dingy gray long gown, her face unpainted but still showing deep pits.

"You can take a look at our lanterns and see whether it's town's that's prettier or ours!"

Mu Shuangshuang generously took a lantern down for the girls to examine.

As they looked more, they liked them more, but still felt they were expensive.

"I know you think it's expensive, but for the weaver selection, preparation is a must. A lantern per person; maybe the villagers will like this style."

Mu Shuangshuang continued her persuasive talk.

Lu Yuanfeng also chimed in.

"I also think this looks good! If, in the dark, I saw a lantern, I'd definitely take a few more glances and might remember that person."

"Alright, I'll buy it. I want that red one; red stands out!"

Business was concluded; this was a principle Lu Yuanfeng learned after meeting Shuangshuang.

He pulled down a lantern and handed it to the girl at the front.

Chapter 357: Provoking Someone Who Shouldn't Be Provoked

With someone who bravely eats the crab first, the rest feel reassured.

Five coins, normally, people would definitely be reluctant to spend.

But now it's the Qixi Festival, an exclusive holiday for daughters; even if it feels expensive, they'll grit their teeth and buy it.

Several girls took a lantern each and left, leaving only the girl who had initially said that things from the town looked nice, standing in place.

Mu Shuangshuang recognizes this girl, she's Wang Xiaoya from the Old Wang Family at the village entrance, one of the two infamous ugly girls in Er Gui Village alongside the original Mu Shuangshuang.

But unlike the original Mu Shuangshuang, this Wang Xiaoya knows to stick with several girls who have somewhat good looks in the village, even if she's often mocked and turned into a punching bag.

Wang Xiaoya still enjoys it regardless.

Because she feels she at least has friends, unlike the original Mu Shuangshuang, who was always alone.

Mu Shuangshuang took down an orange lantern from the bamboo pole and handed it to Wang Xiaoya.

"This is five coins. I don't do unprofitable trades. Pay me back when you have money!"

Wang Xiaoya's eyes widened, looking at Mu Shuangshuang with disbelief.

"You... really willing to give it to me?" Wang Xiaoya repeated.

Since she's always been bullied, Wang Xiaoya can't believe such a good thing could happen in this world.

"Not giving it to you, but temporarily lending it to you. You need to return it later."

No matter what Mu Shuangshuang says, Wang Xiaoya is already very happy.

With the lantern, she is just like everyone else.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't miss that little hope in her eyes.

She shook her head quietly.

This Wang Xiaoya still hasn't learned her lesson, still thinking that friendship without dignity is worth protecting.

Holding the lantern, Wang Xiaoya went off to find those friends.

Mu Shuangshuang exchanged a glance with Lu Yuanfeng.

"Fengzi, let's go with them. Once the lanterns are sold out, we can go back to eat, and in the evening we'll make a bonfire, roast some meat."

To wait for this Qixi night, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng caught two rabbits, both prepared to make roasted rabbit meat.

Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan are not going out, Mu Shuangshuang plans to take a few kids together.

"Okay!"

Mu Shuangshuang brought over twenty lanterns to the village entrance; soon enough, they were sold out.

The speed was astonishing.

And those who got the lanterns were grinning ear to ear.

It seemed like what they held was not a mere lantern, but that they'd been chosen as the weaver.

Mu Xiangxiang arrived late, surrounded by the crowd of the Old Mu Family.

Her skirt did catch quite a few people's attention, but as soon as they saw her face full of powder,

everyone felt a bit nauseous and couldn't help but turn away.

Mu Xiangxiang remained oblivious, as she saw many girls in the village carrying a lantern, she was instantly drawn in.

"Hey, where did you buy the lanterns you're holding? I didn't see them."

Relying on her older brother being a scholar and her eldest sister doing business in town, Mu Xiangxiang always looked down on everyone.

The girl called out wasn't just anyone, it was Shen Rong, the niece from the wealthiest family in the village, the Wang Family. Previously surnamed Wang, she was renamed after a fortune-teller predicted prosperity from her mother's surname.

So, Old Master Wang immediately decided to change her surname.

Shen Rong rolled her eyes, showing absolutely no intention of acknowledging Mu Xiangxiang.

Mu Xiangxiang was given the cold shoulder, getting so angry that her nose twisted.

"Mom, look at that person!" Mu Xiangxiang stomped and complained to Old Mrs. Mu.

"Xiangxiang, don't bother with such people, uneducated ones. It's just a damn lantern, we at the Old Mu Family can afford it."

"I don't care, I want it, I want it now!"

Mu Xiangxiang acted like she was going to cry and make a fuss; Old Mrs. Mu got anxious, but she had no solutions, so she turned to Mrs. Liu with anger.

"What kind of fourth aunt are you? Xiangxiang is bullied, and you just stand there like a stump. What's the Old Mu Family need you for?"

Mrs. Liu was scolded so badly that her eyes turned red, and Mu Xi Xia hurriedly tugged on her hand coaxingly.

"Mom, forget it, let's not participate, let's just go back!"

Mu Xi Xia had no interest in being a weaver; if not for her mom insisting she be here, she certainly wouldn't have come.

"Xi Xia, don't speak nonsense, you can't refuse!"

Mrs. Liu already made up her mind; if Xi Xia gets selected, she definitely won't let her give it up.

Even if Old Mrs. Mu targets her in the future, as long as her daughter's marriage can end up well.

"Mom..."

"Don't say anything, no matter what your little aunt and your grandma say, you must listen and go try for the weaver selection."

Mrs. Liu felt this was the most adamant moment in her life; she had already summoned her courage and wouldn't let herself back down.

Walking ahead, Mu Xiangxiang confronted someone else, this time she learned to use her status directly.

"My big brother is Mu Dade, the village's only scholar; my big sister runs a shoe store in town. You better not offend me, if you dare, my family won't spare you!"

The person being stopped wasn't anyone else, but Wang Xiaoya who had earlier received a lantern from Mu Shuangshuang.

Wang Xiaoya's family lacked money and status, combined with her habit of being used by others, she stuttered a bit before opening up.

"This is... from Shuangshuang!"

"Which Shuangshuang?" Mu Xiangxiang's mind immediately thought of Mu Shuangshuang, because she was the only Shuangshuang in the village.

But she simply didn't want to admit that the annoying girl could possess such good things.

That annoying girl deserved to be in the mud, not to be respected by anyone.

"Mu Shuangshuang from the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family, Xiangxiang, I need to go try for the weaver selection now."

Wang Xiaoya's timid appearance reminded Mu Xiangxiang of her habitually bullied fourth aunt, and immediately placed Wang Xiaoya in the soft target category.

"Hey, give me that lantern or I'll be unkind to you!" Mu Xiangxiang extended a hand, her face displaying a look of 'if you don't listen to me, you're done for,' staring fiercely at Wang Xiaoya.

Wang Xiaoya got scared, nervously clutching the lantern, and just as she was about to hand it over to Mu Xiangxiang,

Shen Rong returned, mocking and rolling her eyes at Mu Xiangxiang.

"People say ugly ones act out the most; I didn't believe it before, now I surely do.

Some people are not only ugly but also vile, wanting to take things others paid for without spending a penny themselves.

I don't know, what kind of family taught such a daughter."

Shen Rong's voice wasn't loud but just enough for the surrounding young ladies to hear.

The crowd had long since had a poor impression of Mu Xiangxiang; if not for her brother being a scholar, they'd think of slapping her upon sight.

So when Shen Rong led, others spoke up as well.

"It's just the youngest daughter Mu Xiangxiang from the Old Mu Family, why paint your face so white today, are you trying to be a ghost?"

Mu Xiangxiang's makeup was truly frightening, with an unknown amount of powder layered on for effect.

Under the lanterns and torches along the road, everyone who glanced saw nothing but Mu Xiangxiang's eerily pale face.

"Haha, you guys probably don't know, Mu Xiangxiang's makeup is so scary, if she went out, even ghosts wouldn't dare come out because she's uglier than them!"

Chapter 358: Little Aunt Was Tricked by Shuangshuang

The crowd pointed at Mu Xiangxiang, and each comment was harsher than the last.

But it was fair, as Mu Xiangxiang had humiliated many people herself, so being attacked by everyone this time was deserved.

"You little pests, how dare you talk about our Xiangxiang like that. You're asking for it!"

Old Mrs. Mu was always protective, and now her temper flared up, regardless of how many people were around.

"Old hag, you must be utterly disgraced. When girls in Er Gui Village choose bridesmaids, they do it themselves, but your Old Mu Family always has grandmothers and mothers involved. Are you trying to rely on your seniority?"

"I'll tear your mouth apart!"

Old Mrs. Mu was insulted, so she rushed forward and slapped the speaker.

The girls nearby were stunned, staring at Old Mrs. Mu in disbelief.

"You... you just wait; I'll make sure my uncle takes back the land your Old Mu Family rents!"

The speaker was Fu Xiaonan, a girl from Fu Wujia, one of the few moderately well-off families in Er Gui Village.

The land that Old Mu Family rented was through Fu Wu, and although the contract was for several years, what would they do when those years end?

Mrs. Lin, who had been silent until now, quickly spoke up to mediate.

"Haha, Miss Fu, my mother was just joking with you. Please don't tell Fu Wu to stop renting us land. Our family relies on that land to survive."

"Joking? I'll slap you and see if it's a joke."

Fu Xiaonan rushed forward and kicked Old Mrs. Mu, and they began fighting fiercely.

It instantly drew the attention of many villagers, including Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng who were about to leave.

Mu Shuangshuang watched the annual drama from the crowd, as Old Mrs. Mu, in her fifties, had a firm grip on a fifteen-year-old girl.

Fu Xiaonan was left with several slap marks on her face, and she kicked Old Mrs. Mu repeatedly in the stomach.

Both let out a cry, then continued to fight in a tangled mess.

They've seen young people fight!

They've seen children fight!

But they've never seen an old woman and a young girl fight.

So, before long, the village was in an uproar.

Mu Shuangshuang quickly pulled Lu Yuanfeng away.

She had no reason to interfere, especially since she might need Fu Wu as a middleman to buy land in the future.

She took a few steps, and Mu Xiangxiang started following Mu Shuangshuang.

Completely ignoring the Old Mrs. Mu who was fighting for her.

Mu Shuangshuang had already noticed the person behind her. She didn't say anything but quickened her pace while pulling Lu Yuanfeng along.

Later, they were almost running, and Mu Xiangxiang, unaccustomed to exercise and quite frail, quickly collapsed to the ground.

They managed to reach the Old Mu Family, just about to step through the side door opened by the third branch.

"Ptooeey!" A shadow suddenly jumped out, shouting at Mu Xiangxiang.

Mu Xiangxiang screamed, feeling warmth below, and wet her pants.

She clutched her head, crying loudly, "Don't hurt me, don't... I have money, I have money..."

Mu Shuangshuang smelled the stench, turned her head away in disgust.

She only meant to scare Mu Xiangxiang a little, but didn't expect such a quick reaction resulting in soaked pants.

It was truly ridiculous!

Lu Yuanfeng, hidden in the darkness, chuckled, almost unable to contain his laughter. In this world, there seemed to be only one Shuangshuang.

An eye for an eye, turning tables, never allowing herself to suffer a loss.

Lu Yuanfeng loved Shuangshuang's personality dearly; living freely with no burdens.

"Fengzi, let's go eat!" Mu Shuangshuang beckoned to Lu Yuanfeng.

Before leaving, she shot another glance at Mu Xiangxiang who was still screaming and jumping in place.

Guess it would take a while to return to normal.

At last, it was quiet, Mu Shuangshuang sighed!

Upon entering the house, Yu Si Niang had been waiting for her.

"You child, everyone went to choose the weaver girl, yet you only just returned? I've been waiting for you forever."

Yu Si Niang's words were filled with anxiety; as a mother, naturally she wanted her daughter to be the best.

And Yu Si Niang was no exception.

"Mom, I've said it numerous times, I'm not choosing the weaver girl. I'm hungry, let's eat!"

Being judged by others was something Mu Shuangshuang wasn't interested in participating in.

"You..."

"Si Niang, the child has been busy all day, let her eat first. Whether she chooses to be the weaver girl or not doesn't matter, she can just pray under the moon later."

Mu Dashan played the peacemaker.

Lu Yuanfeng also spoke up, "Aunt Si, Shuangshuang doesn't need such things to prove her worth; she's the best!"

Lu Yuanfeng didn't want Shuangshuang to participate either.

"Alright alright, you're both right, let's hurry up and eat; after all, today is Shuangshuang's birthday!"

Speaking of it, Yu Si Niang felt somewhat sad. Her daughter was celebrating her birthday, yet her grandparents hadn't bothered to send treats or even acknowledge it.

In their hearts, they truly didn't acknowledge this granddaughter.

The food on the table had been set by Yu Si Niang long before, and she had reheated it several times while waiting for her daughter and Lu Yuanfeng.

By now, it was still cold.

"Shuangshuang, I'll reheat the food, go call the kids to eat."}

Yu Si Niang relit the fire and started reheating the dishes in the pot.

Mu Shuangshuang called out loudly.

"Yuanbao, Xiao Han, Little Zhi, come eat!"

Instead of the little kids, an unexpected guest appeared.

"Does what you said before still stand, about making me chosen as the weaver girl?"

"Not letting you be chosen, but to make everyone remember you. You know, these village activities aren't always fair. If they don't pick you, it might not be because they dislike you!"

Mu Shuangshuang's underlying message was to tell Mu Qingqing that if there were any connections involved, there was nothing she could do!

"You..." Mu Qingqing remembered Mu Shuangshuang's words were different in the afternoon.

"What do you mean you, if you have money, we can start. If not, I'm going to eat!"

Mu Shuangshuang had already lost patience. If not for the significant sum of one hundred and fifty coins or her desire for chaos within the Old Mu Family, she would have long driven the person before her away.

Mu Qingqing deeply resented Mu Shuangshuang and vowed to herself to crush the woman who trampled on her dignity one day.

"Here's one hundred and fifty coins, do it for me now!"

Mu Shuangshuang nodded.

"Go to my room! I'll tell my mom not to wait for me to eat."

When talking about eating, Mu Qingqing swallowed saliva.

She hadn't eaten all day in hopes of being chosen as the weaver girl, and she was starving.

She looked at Mu Shuangshuang bitterly, feeling it was deliberate.

But she couldn't do anything against the person before her.

Upon entering Mu Shuangshuang's room, Mu Qingqing stared enviously around.

A clean bed, a beautiful cabinet, and a copper mirror—all things she didn't have.

Soon, all things belonging to this brat would be hers!

"Stop looking; those won't belong to you, not now, not ever!"

Mu Shuangshuang saw through Mu Qingqing's greed, disgusted. A broken bed, a room, worth such envy?

Could it be she coveted the dressing cabinet gifted by Fengzi?

Chapter 359: Specialized in Causing Trouble

"Mu Qingqing, you'd better put away your greedy eyes. Taking what you want through plundering is the worst way.

If you really want these things, you should know whom to blame. You know it in your heart."

The Old Mu Family's focus on one major branch, while neglecting the other branches, is the root cause of everyone's struggles.

Unfortunately, these people are lost in their own worlds, always thinking that Mu Shuangshuang is everyone's enemy.

Hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words, Mu Qingqing's thumbnail dug deep into her own flesh.

In front of Mu Shuangshuang, Mu Qingqing felt like everything about her was under Mu Shuangshuang's control, and she...had no secrets.

"I'm going to start putting makeup on you, you'd better not move, or I'll ruin your face!"

Mu Shuangshuang squinted her eyes and warned.

Sure enough, Mu Qingqing finally behaved.

She began to focus on fixing up Mu Qingqing's face.

Transforming Mu Qingqing was indeed some effort, after all, she wanted Mu Qingqing to be chosen as the weaver, so she had to stand out and get the village's approval.

After thinking about it, Mu Shuangshuang felt that makeup alone wouldn't suffice, and she needed to add some words.

Most people in Er Gui Village have no money, so when they choose, they will tend to favor families with money, like that of Shen Rong.

Or the daughter of Fu Jiu, Fu Xiaonan, only these two families in Er Gui Village have money; the rest can't afford new clothes except during holidays.

"Sigh, choosing the weaver is indeed somewhat unfair; Shen Rong's family has money, Fu Xiaonan's family has connections.

Oh, right, I forgot to mention, when I came, I seemed to see Xiangxiang and Fu Xiaonan fighting. The villagers who want to rent land from Fu Jiu might not choose someone from the Old Mu Family!"

Mu Shuangshuang casually mentioned Fu Xiaonan, and as expected, Mu Qingqing's expression changed.

Her mood suddenly turned sour, and she seemed to lose all energy, as if all her strength had been drained.

Mu Qingqing was just brainless and hated Mu Shuangshuang, but she wasn't oblivious to the village affairs.

The village couldn't afford to offend the two households: the Wang Family, the only landlord in the village, and the Fu Family, with Fu Jiu facilitating land rentals; without him, villagers couldn't rent land.

Realizing she had been tricked, Mu Qingqing's gaze turned vicious in an instant.

"You tricked me out of my money!"

Mu Qingqing looked at Mu Shuangshuang with certainty.

"Yes, and so what? Haven't you bullied me enough before? And if I'm not mistaken, that money should be stolen, right?"

Grandma guards her money like her life, you couldn't steal from her. Only you know where Second Aunt hides her money, but I remember last time Second Aunt's money was taken by Grandma, so this time, how did she manage to save up this silver?"

Mu Shuangshuang stared at Mu Qingqing, her sharp eyes instantly seeing through her.

"I..." Mu Qingqing was frightened by that gaze and, thinking of the things Mu Shuangshuang mentioned, felt a sense of despair.

She missed the chance to be chosen as the weaver and trapped herself instead.

"I...Mu Shuangshuang, don't forget, your third branch is separated now. When Big Brother gets his government degree, the third branch doesn't deserve to enjoy it. Our second branch will be the ones following Big Brother."

Mu Dade was a tension, holding all the remaining members of the Old Mu Family taut.

"It makes no difference to tell me. The villagers don't know how impressive Big Brother is, but honestly, if Big Brother did get his degree, then they'd really choose you as the weaver."

Mu Shuangshuang intentionally guided Mu Qingqing, and sure enough, after hearing her words, Mu Qingqing's eyes suddenly gained some confidence.

With the issue resolved, Mu Shuangshuang began fixing Mu Qingqing's face, but not with total attention.

After all, it's a game she was bound to win; why put in so much effort?

So Mu Shuangshuang dismissed Mu Qingqing in the time it takes an incense stick to burn and headed to the kitchen with 150 Wen.

In the kitchen, everyone hadn't eaten. They were all waiting for her.

"Why aren't you eating?"

The meal was already on the table. The ribs and corn were still steaming hot, suggesting they had just been reheated.

"You child, you wait for us when we work, now that it's you, we can't wait for you?" Yu Si Niang shook her head helplessly.

"Alright, alright, I know you're the best, Mom. We can eat now, but before eating, I need to give out red envelopes!"

As Mu Shuangshuang spoke, she took out 150 Wen wrapped in cloth.

"No, we don't want it, Shuangshuang. Your earnings are yours to keep." Mu Dashan waved his hand quickly.

He was now relying on his daughter for support, so he couldn't take his daughter's money.

"Shuangshuang, I don't want it either. You've been tired all day, hurry and eat."

Mu Shuangshuang's seat was beside Lu Yuanfeng, so Lu Yuanfeng stood up to pull out Mu Shuangshuang's chair and even handed her the chopsticks.

This gesture was completely intended to let Mu Shuangshuang sit back and enjoy her meal.

"Dad, Mom, and Fengzi, it's my birthday today, and I earned some money. Giving everyone some lucky money is the right thing to do. Don't feel burdened in your hearts."

Besides, everyone here was family; her money wasn't given in vain.

Mu Shuangshuang gave thirty Wen to Mu Dashan, Yu Si Niang, and Lu Yuanfeng each for the same amount, and for the three children, she gave five Wen each.

Even with only 45 Wen left, Mu Shuangshuang still earned it.

She picked up the bowl and began to eat, and let me tell you, home cooking just tasted better.

After eating two bowls of mixed grain rice, Mu Shuangshuang was finally full. She didn't really reach for more dishes, but when she glanced up, the dishes on the table were still mostly untouched.

"What's up? Hurry and eat the meat. It's so hard to get, and if you don't eat it today, it'll spoil tomorrow."

Even though it was already July, the weather hadn't cooled, and dishes made in the morning went bad by afternoon.

Yu Si Niang prepared a large table of dishes tonight, and if they weren't finished, they'd spoil by tomorrow, something Mu Shuangshuang would hate, so she decided to push and make everyone finish them.

"Sister, if you don't eat, neither will we."

Little Zhi pouted and said in a babyish voice.

As she spoke, the Little Black Dog waiting for bones on the floor barked in perfect cooperation.

"I was hungry and didn't pay attention to take the dishes. Don't follow my lead."

Mu Shuangshuang looked helpless; she really forgot, not to save food for the family.

Her goal now was to gain weight; being skinny was not good at all.

But nobody believed her a bit when she said that.

Seeing that no one understood, Mu Shuangshuang picked up her chopsticks and grabbed a piece of rib.

"Since none of you are eating, I'll eat alone. Anyway, if I stuff myself to death, it's on me."

Mu Shuangshuang pretended to be upset, and only then did the others start taking food, with the little children reacting the most. Yuanbao grabbed a big rib and began happily, "Sister Shuangshuang, you don't know how good Aunt Si's cooking is! I almost drooled."

Chapter 360: The Third Branch Is Better Than You

"Then eat more. Whatever bones are left, give them to the Little Black Dog."

The Little Black Dog eats bones or cooked food, while Little Black prefers raw meat. Two creatures with completely different tastes, apart from both having black fur, have almost nothing in common.

Yet these two little fellows have an unusually close relationship.

The Little Black Dog is a puppy, doesn't have much of its own mind, mostly trailing behind Little Black's tail.

"Woof woof~" Hearing that Mu Shuangshuang wants to give it food, the Little Black Dog barked happily.

"Shuangshuang, you said this puppy hasn't been named yet, why don't you give it a name?"

Lu Yuanfeng placed a piece of rib into Mu Shuangshuang's bowl and scooped several ladles of soup for her.

"Name... How about calling it Er Gouzi, easy to remember!"

As soon as the words fell, Mu Shuangshuang clearly saw everyone at the table pursed their lips.

The name Dogzi is quite alright for a person, but for a dog, it's a bit too...

Not to mention other people's disagreement, even the Little Black Dog disagreed. Mu Shuangshuang called Er Gouzi several times, there was no reaction, and it even stopped eating the food she offered.

Mu Shuangshuang had to change her tone. "Let's call it Lai Mi then, with it, wealth from all directions will come into our hands."

The Little Black Dog was also saved along with Lu Yuanfeng, so he had a share.

"That's a good name, Lai Mi, easy to remember, and still a good omen."

Yu Si Niang smiled with satisfaction, and everyone was quite pleased, while the Little Black Dog also started to be affectionate with Mu Shuangshuang.

At this moment, Mu Shuangshuang realized how lousy her previous name Er Gouzi was.

"Woof woof~" It barked happily again.

The meal finally ended.

Mu Shuangshuang was stuffed, and when she stood up, she could only slowly get up holding her stomach.

Others were in better condition than Mu Shuangshuang, especially Yuanbao, who always seemed hungry, looked at Mu Shuangshuang.

"Sister Shuangshuang, when are we going to roast rabbit meat? I can't wait."

Actually, eating roasted meat was just one aspect; his second brother was going to give Sister Shuangshuang a gift.

Yuanbao felt he had been very concerned about Sister Shuangshuang and his second brother, but both of them were either too timid or didn't understand each other's intentions.

Yuanbao was sharp, having listened to village gossip with his grandmother since he was little. He knew what should and shouldn't be known.

Even though he found it hard watching his second brother and Sister Shuangshuang's struggles, he couldn't help it; they were both so shy.

The rest had to be handled by him.

"Yuanbao, wait a bit. Shuangshuang just finished eating, she needs to rest." Lu Yuanfeng frowned, reminding Yuanbao.

As the saying goes, the Emperor is not in a hurry, but the eunuch is. Yuanbao was also worried. What if Sister Shuangshuang wants to worship the moon later?

With this thought, Yu Si Niang walked into the kitchen from outside.

"Shuangshuang, I've prepared everything for you. Later find a high place and go worship the moon." Yu Si Niang was thoroughly preoccupied with her daughter's Qixi Festival matters.

"Mom, there isn't any moonlight today, maybe skip it?"

Thinking of herself as a modern person, praying for a future man, she felt people would ridicule her.

"Child, how did you promise me before? If I knew, I wouldn't have let you go out today, lest you break your word."

Yu Si Niang stomped her foot in anger, feeling anxious, although her best choice was Fengzi, she still hoped Shuangshuang would pray for an extra layer of assurance.

Fengzi was the village's hot topic, many girls wanted to marry him, but his relationship with Old Lu Family was subtle, and nobody knew who would decide his marriage.

"Alright, alright, Mom, don't be angry. It's just the Qixi Festival prayer. I'll go, I'll go!"

Mu Shuangshuang conceded, knowing well that although Yu Si Niang usually agreed with her, when it came to her marriage, Yu Si Niang would do whatever it took, regardless of Mu Shuangshuang's objections.

"That's more like it, Fengzi. Later, help Shuangshuang, remember to stand at her upper right position, and when kneeling, face north."

Yu Si Niang purposefully instructed Lu Yuanfeng, because the east is a very auspicious direction, and if the deities see it, they will bless this pairing.

Both of them had no experience, so whatever Yu Si Niang said was just followed.

However, Mu Shuangshuang didn't want to go far and set down nuts and sugar cakes in the courtyard as a symbolic gesture, knelt for a moment before taking a few kids to barbecue.

The barbecue was chosen on the north side of Niuwei Mountain, by the creek they often visited.

Yesterday, the two had piled up a bunch of firewood there, just waiting for today to start a fire.

Carrying a big bag of stuff, followed by two little kids and two little animals, they left the noisy village entrance heading north.

At this moment, the village's weaver competition was in a heated stage, those left as Mu Shuangshuang expected were Shen Rong, Mu Qingqing, and Xia Guagua.

As for Fu Xiaonan, who got bruised and swollen after fighting with Old Mrs. Mu, she had already returned home.

On the stage, Mu Qingqing was smiling brightly, feeling confident because along the way she had received envious glances.

Those people stared at her face, looking almost crazy with jealousy, which made Mu Qingqing extremely happy.

Mu Xiangxiang was sitting below the stage, uttering venomous curses.

"Mom, that little witch did it on purpose. She said she'd help me, but I'm out, and she's still here."

Mu Xiangxiang technically wasn't out, because after being scared into wetting her pants, she screamed for a long time before crawling up.

She went back to find Old Mrs. Mu for revenge, but because of her urine smell, she was unsurprisingly dragged to the Old Mu Family to change clothes.

By the time she finished changing, the weaver competition had started, and Mu Xiangxiang hurried on and was ill-prepared, making a fool of herself and getting chased down.

"Our Xiangxiang shouldn't get angry. Today's humiliation, this old woman will avenge for you."

Old Mrs. Mu glared daggers at Mu Qingqing on stage, causing Mu Qingqing to retreat several steps in fright.

But thinking how close she was to success, she gathered courage again.

Being the weaver would bring honor to the Old Mu Family, surely her grandmother wouldn't make it difficult for her.

Mu Qingqing thought as much, but Old Mrs. Mu didn't agree. She valued her daughter above everything else, anyone who dared to touch her, regardless of who they were, would be skinned alive.

"I don't care, I want to be the weaver girl, I don't care!" Mu Xiangxiang sat on the ground in a tantrum.

Luckily the villagers were focused on the people on stage, thus didn't notice Mu Xiangxiang's behavior.

Otherwise, the Old Mu Family's reputation would be utterly ruined.