

Folly 37

Chapter 37: The Road to Making Money

"Sister, you're sweating."

Little Zhi, who was gnawing on a fish, noticed that Mu Shuangshuang's face was sweating, and it was even black sweat. He didn't even accept the fish Mu Shuangshuang handed over because he wanted to help her wipe the sweat off.

"No, Little Zhi, I've applied something on my face. Don't wipe it off."

After taking a bath, Mu Shuangshuang was clean, and the smell was gone. For now, she wasn't planning to let the Old Mu Family see her real appearance. At least, she couldn't let them know that her face was quite pretty.

As the saying goes, people's hearts are unpredictable. She was already thirteen years old, and in two years, she would be of marriageable age.

She had heard of cases where children were sold for survival. She trusted Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan completely, but as for Old Mrs. Mu, who knew if she might not sell her to an old widower in the village for money?

So, it's better to be cautious.

"Is that so? Then I won't wipe your sweat, Sister. By the way, why did you gather so many mushrooms and wild vegetables? We can't eat that much."

After finishing the fish, the two of them were basically full and could only eat a couple more wild vegetables. Wild vegetables that weren't boiled or oiled tasted bad. Even if hungry, one person couldn't eat many.

This was also what Mu Shuangshuang considered. She could take a couple of wild vegetables back to Old Mrs. Mu to make soup, but mushrooms were definitely not something she could do. If Old Mrs. Mu found out, she would probably make her go out to pick mushrooms every morning.

Her eyes darted around and eventually spotted a large and a small figure coming down from the mountainside, and Mu Shuangshuang immediately had an idea.

"Little Zhi, quickly finish the fish. I'll tell you later how to handle these mushrooms and wild vegetables."

"Alright!"

After finishing a whole fish and roasting two pieces of mushrooms, they scooped up a few handfuls of spring water to drink and finally felt full. The creek had running water, so Mu Shuangshuang dared to drink it after bathing in it, as the bathwater flowed away with the stream.

As the people on the mountain drew nearer, Mu Shuangshuang and Little Zhi stood in the shade, waiting for them to approach before quietly calling out.

"Lu Yuanfeng, come here for a moment."

Mu Shuangshuang's voice was not clear, still carrying a hoarseness from a long illness, as if there were grit in her throat. Lu Yuanfeng paused before walking towards her.

"You... What" he was about to say before he stopped mid-sentence when Mu Shuangshuang directly handed him the basket full of mushrooms.

"This is for you. Thank you for the herbs."

"Wow, these are mushrooms! Xiangxiang, you're amazing, managing to gather mushrooms. My second brother has been on the mountain for so long and never saw these things."

Lu Yuanfeng went hunting on the mountain every day, but he never paid attention to wild vegetables in the mountains. So, at the Lu family's house, meat was their most common fare.

They had no restraint on Yuanbao's diet and made no demands, resulting in Yuanbao growing fatter and rounder, yet still, no one stopped him from eating, as if that sort of body shape was quite normal.

The villagers of Er Gui Village were generally thin, either with sunken eyes or cheeks. Fat people in the entire Er Gui Village were few and far between, which might be why Old Lady Lu didn't impose any dietary restrictions on Yuanbao.

"Xiangxiang?" Mu Shuangshuang frowned. Isn't that the name of Old Mrs. Mu's youngest daughter?

She was the same age as her, usually treated like a little princess by the family, currently living at their oldest aunt's husband's house — indeed, Old Mrs. Mu's youngest daughter.

Aside from Mu Dade, Old Mrs. Mu cherished Mu Xiangxiang and Mu Zhenzhen, who had already married into another village, the most.

Years ago, Old Mrs. Mu hadn't had any children for six years after having Mu Dashan, and the children born afterward, except for Mu Danian, were greatly valued by her.

"I'm not Mu Xiangxiang. I'm Mu Shuangshuang, and Mu Xiangxiang is my little aunt."

"Yuanbao, what's wrong with you, calling others by the wrong name? Be careful in the future." Lu Yuanfeng's tone was more stern than usual, lacking his usual gentleness. He thought such mistakes shouldn't happen.

"Second brother, I didn't mean it that way," Yuanbao said, aggrieved. "Didn't you tell me not to mind Sister Shuangshuang being smelly? I said she's the sweetest-smelling person in the world, so I just called her Xiangxiang Sister."

Yuanbao wasn't very old, and his encounters with the Old Mu Family barely went beyond the time when his second brother saved someone from the ground. As for who was in the Old Mu Family, how would he know?

"You can call me Sister Shuangshuang. This is Little Zhi, probably of the same age as you."

Yuanbao's attention was immediately drawn to Little Zhi, especially after hearing they were the same age, prompting him to ask, "How old are you? I'm six years old now."

Little Zhi bore no ill will towards Yuanbao and Lu Yuanfeng; on the contrary, she remembered Lu Yuanfeng as the one who saved her sister.

"I'm not six yet, but Mother says I already am."

"Then I'm still the elder brother. Little Zhi, you can call me Brother Yuanbao, and I'll give you delicious food." Yuanbao thumped his chest without considering that his food came from Lu Yuanfeng.

Since it was midday, he was likely to be drenched in sweat by the time they walked back, so Lu Yuanfeng suggested resting in the shade where Mu Shuangshuang and Little Zhi had roasted the fish.

On his back, he carried a deer, with his bow, and the pole weighed down with two wild chickens. The morning's catch seemed modest.

Lu Yuanfeng glanced at the girl in front of him. Perhaps because her hair was dry, Mu Shuangshuang's hair was tied up, using a forked twig twisted into a bun.

What surprised Lu Yuanfeng the most was why her face, even after being washed clean, was daubed again with some dark substance. Could it be that she didn't want to be recognized?

"Lu Yuanfeng, may I ask you something?" Mu Shuangshuang stared at him earnestly.

"You... You can ask!" Lu Yuanfeng was somewhat nervous, especially after seeing something he probably shouldn't have. Whenever the person in front of him stared at him, he felt like he'd done something wrong and had been caught, feeling very guilty inside.

"The things you hunt, besides selling them to the villagers, do you take them to the town?"

"Not all of them. My second mother demanded quite a few," Yuanbao interjected, answering for Lu Yuanfeng.

"Yuanbao..."

"Okay, okay, I'll be quiet now."

At this moment, Mu Shuangshuang found it amusing. Lu Yuanfeng seemed mature despite his age; yet, he had a very talkative brother, with a childish heart, unlike Little Zhi, who, though small, showed a greater level of maturity. Little Zhi was obedient and usually didn't engage in conversations unless provoked.

"Most of the prey is taken to town. After all, there are only a few villagers who buy meat."

People couldn't even eat enough, let alone have silver to buy meat.

"So, what's the market in town like? Are there many vendors?" Mu Shuangshuang felt a bit excited. She knew she could soon go to town, but she had to prepare and find out what goods made money in town.

Lu Yuanfeng shook his head, then nodded.

"What do you mean by that?! Is there a lot or not?"