

Folly 38

Chapter 38: Token of Love?

"There are many people doing business in the town, but the turnover is fast. We've just finished fighting wars, and everyone has no silver in their pockets. It's quite difficult to make a long-lasting business in town."

Lu Yuanfeng almost had to go to the town every two days. Each time he saw the vendors, the next time they would be gone, probably having stopped their businesses.

For the game he hunted on the mountain, he would usually leave one alive so that the animals could be kept fresh longer. When taken to the market, they were more popular. Even so, it was just enough for him to make ends meet. Saving any silver was simply a luxury.

Life after the war indeed was tough, but compared to the time in the camp, it was quite good.

"Is that so!" Mu Shuangshuang nodded. It seemed she had to go to the town herself to truly know what the situation was.

"Yuanbao, let's go back!"

After staying for a while, with the sun dissipating a bit, Lu Yuanfeng said to Yuanbao, who was still boasting to Little Zhi. Perhaps because they were close in age, ever since Little Zhi called him Brother Yuanbao, Yuanbao began telling Little Zhi all sorts of tales about him and Lu Yuanfeng hunting together.

The tales of a six-year-old child weren't entirely truthful. Listening next to them, Mu Shuangshuang occasionally heard Yuanbao say Lu Yuanfeng hunted a giant monster with teeth longer than chopsticks. Other times, the rats in the mountains were as big as chickens. She just smiled, while Little Zhi listened very seriously.

"Little Zhi, Brother Yuanbao has to go. Next time when we meet again, Brother Yuanbao will tell something else. This is for you."

Yuanbao ran to Lu Yuanfeng's little bamboo carrier, untied a grey rabbit secured by straw rope, and stuffed it into Little Zhi's arms.

"Little Zhi, this is a gift from Brother Yuanbao. Take good care of it."

"No, I can't." Little Zhi quickly waved her hands. "Little Zhi has nothing to feed the little rabbit; it will starve to death."

The little grey rabbit's fur was sleek and shiny. Although it was still a young rabbit, it looked particularly silly and exceptionally cute.

"Not at all. Little rabbits can eat many things—wild vegetables, wild grass, it eats them all. Brother Yuanbao believes in Little Zhi; you can definitely raise the little rabbit into a big rabbit."

"Okay, thank you, Brother Yuanbao. Little Zhi promises to take good care of the little rabbit. But Little Zhi has no gift for Brother Yuanbao; Little Zhi has nothing. Mother said if you take something from someone, you should exchange something for it." Little Zhi finished speaking and lowered her head.

"Who says you don't have anything? Little Zhi, look at this."

Mu Shuangshuang extended her right hand, and a grass-woven grasshopper lay in her palm. It was originally prepared for Little Zhi when they returned, but now it seemed giving it to Lu Yuanbao as a return gift was also good.

Although compared to a rabbit, this was worth much less, Mu Shuangshuang wouldn't always do this; one day, she would repay the kindness of the Lu brothers.

"Wow, a grasshopper! Sister Shuangshuang, did you make this?" Yuanbao was excited; boys and girls were different. Compared to a cute rabbit, they liked these handmade things more. Lu Yuanbao took the grasshopper from Mu Shuangshuang's hand and said to Lu Yuanfeng.

"Second Brother, Second Brother, look, Sister Shuang made it, it's Little Zhi's gift to me." Lu Yuanbao raised the grasshopper high above his head, face filled with pride.

Lu Yuanfeng stared at the grasshopper, a bit dazed. How could a few grass-blade woven things look so realistic?

How did Mu Shuangshuang know how to do this?

In Lu Yuanfeng's heart, Mu Shuangshuang was becoming increasingly mysterious. Zhang Huai Shu told him Mu Shuangshuang was dumb, didn't talk for years, and stunk so badly no one dared approach. But now?

Everything had changed, or did she have some hardship before?

"Thank you, for the rabbit and those herbs, I'll repay you later." Seeing Lu Yuanfeng in deep thought, Mu Shuangshuang feared he would notice the change in her. People from the military camp should have stronger perceptive abilities than ordinary people.

She didn't want her secrets uncovered.

"No need, it's rare for Yuanbao to make friends."

Lu Yuanfeng wasn't a petty person. If a rabbit could help Yuanbao gain a friend, it was a good thing.

Mu Shuangshuang said no more; actions speak louder than words.

Little Zhi was overjoyed. Before Lu Yuanfeng could walk far, she was holding the little rabbit, vigorously smoothing its fur, her small face full of smiles.

"Sister, do you think when we get back, mom will eat the little rabbit?"

"No, with Sister here, that won't happen. Little Zhi just needs to take care of the little rabbit. Later, Sister will wrap up the little rabbit, and when I hold back mom, you secretly take the little rabbit home. We'll keep it in our room, and every night bring it some wild vegetables, making sure the little rabbit grows plump."

Only then was Little Zhi at ease.

According to Old Mrs. Mu, they all had to wait until dinner time before they could return, or they would be severely scolded.

In the remaining time, Mu Shuangshuang took Little Zhi up the mountain once. In the coming days, she would spend almost most of her time in this mountain, so she had to find a safe place to store the mushrooms and wild vegetables she gathered.

In the end, Mu Shuangshuang chose a cave shaded from the sun. The cave wasn't deep, but it was covered with grass. Even if villagers went up the mountain, they might not find this place.

"Little Zhi, from now on, this is our secret base. All the things we find on the mountain, we can hide them here. When we go to the market, we'll take it all and sell it to the townspeople."

With Old Mrs. Mu's keen eye, if she doesn't see the silver, let's see how she can act up.

"Mm, Little Zhi remembers, so mom won't snatch our stuff."

The impression Old Mrs. Mu left in Little Zhi's mind was deep. Mentioning her, Little Zhi was afraid she would take away her things.

Carrying a few old wild vegetables that were almost as tough as loofah sponge, Mu Shuangshuang carefully wrapped the little rabbit in leaves. Once back at the Old Mu Family, Mrs. Lin came to greet them.

"Oh, what good things does this Shuang girl bring? It mustn't be a few weeds, treating them as wild vegetables for us to eat?" Mrs. Lin covered her mouth, laughing loudly.

"Here, this." Mu Shuangshuang extended her hand, and a bunch of amaranth appeared before Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin was first delighted, quickly reaching out to snatch the wild vegetables from Mu Shuangshuang's hand.

"Why not show it to Second Aunt? You stinky girl, are you itching for a beating? Believe it or not, I'll smack you."

"Second Aunt, Shuangshuang is still not well. Are you planning to make her sick again, spending twenty or so silver coins on medicine per prescription?" Mu Shuangshuang raised her eyebrow, looking provocatively at Mrs. Lin.

"Hey, you shameless girl, how did Yu Si Niang teach someone like you..."

Mrs. Lin started cursing, but Mu Shuangshuang flung the wild vegetables into Mrs. Lin's face.

"Oh my..."

A handful of wild vegetables hit her face; it would be a lie to say it didn't hurt. Mrs. Lin covered her face, and before she could scold, Mu Shuangshuang spoke.

"Second Aunt, what are you doing? I told you, these wild vegetables are for Grandma. Even if you want to eat, you can't just grab them like that, can you? You can't cook it yourself, can you?"