

## Folly 411

Chapter 411: The Old Man Visits 3

"Ouch... it hurts... it hurts..." Even though he was drunk, Mr. Mu still felt the pain and shouted loudly.

"Hmph, you still know it hurts. With such a big issue at home, you still have the heart to drink!"

Old Mrs. Mu didn't care whether Mr. Mu could hear or not, the force in her hand did not lighten.

Gradually regaining consciousness, Mr. Mu looked at Old Mrs. Mu standing at the head of the bed, and said dizzily, "Did you hit me, woman? Why do I feel my arm hurts so much?"

"You're full of crap, you old geezer. Let me ask you, is the third branch willing to hand over the money?"

Money was never far from Old Mrs. Mu's mind; Mr. Mu frowned.

"Why are you fussing blindly? The silver is from the third branch. Whether to give it or not is their matter."

"Fine, you old geezer, you actually said such a thing. Who was it that agreed to sell that stinky girl to finance the eldest son?"

Old Mrs. Mu turned the tables, which made Mr. Mu furious.

"You woman, are you still reasonable? Clearly, it was you and the eldest daughter-in-law stirring things up in between, why are you blaming me now?"

Old Mrs. Mu was extremely angry, she raised her foot and kicked towards Mr. Mu.

"You heartless old man, now you know to blame me. Why didn't you stop when the third branch was divided? Now they're separated and you can't get even a penny!"

Mr. Mu climbed up from the bed and waved at Old Mrs. Mu.

"We're mules and horses pulling dung, no one should mind anyone's stench!" said Mr. Mu.

"I spit on you, old thing, you speak nicely now, but when it comes to the eldest son's silver tael, it's still me who has to shamelessly gather them."

Tonight, Old Mrs. Mu was like she had been energized, her words were sharp. Usually, by nightfall, she would make water for Mr. Mu to soak his feet, serving him like ancestors, making Mr. Mu very comfortable.

But tonight, there wasn't a cup of hot tea, let alone preparing foot soak water.

"Old woman, quick, pour me a cup of hot tea, I feel terrible." In the end, it was Mr. Mu who gave in, saying soft words to Old Mrs. Mu.

No matter how malicious her heart was, Old Mrs. Mu was ultimately a woman. When her man spoke up, however angry she was, she still went to do it.

A cup of hot tea, a basin of warm water, a soft cotton towel.

With the tea handed over, she crouched down, lowered her stance, and started rubbing Mr. Mu's feet.

"Still, my own woman is the best, knows how to take care of people." Mr. Mu's heart warmed, and he said gently to Old Mrs. Mu.

Under the bright moonlight of the evening, Mr. Mu looked at the woman washing his feet, and for some reason, felt an urge to... do that thing.

He leaned closer and whispered, "Old woman, it's been a long time, do you miss it?"

Old Mrs. Mu's face flushed red, she lightly tapped Mr. Mu's hand, bashfully saying, "You old silly, I know you want it."

After speaking, Old Mrs. Mu threw away the cotton towel in her hand and pounced on the bed.

"Old man, here I come!"

A thirty-year-old woman is like a wolf or tiger, a forty-year-old woman, not to be underestimated. This fifty-year-old woman, sitting, can draw dirt, better than a thirty-four-year-old in that aspect.

Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu had a wild tussle...

Afterwards, Mr. Mu felt thoroughly satisfied, clung to Old Mrs. Mu, whispering dirty words.

"Old woman, wasn't I great just now? How does it compare to when I was in my twenties?"

Old Mrs. Mu lightly patted Mr. Mu.

"You're annoying~" That sound of annoyance was like the sound of cutting old tree bark, very harsh, but Mr. Mu didn't find it unpleasant, rather thought of it as fun between spouses.

"Tell me, how is it, otherwise I won't give it to you anymore!"

"Great, even better than when you were twenty!"

Mu Danian listened outside the door for a while, feeling his whole blood boiling.

Oh dear, he never knew his parents were this shameless.

Surely they're not very proper people usually.

Mu Danian thought secretly, gradually feeling uncomfortable himself, he wanted...

He quietly left Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu's room.

Mu Danian did not return to his own home, because he really couldn't sleep, he walked under the bright moonlight towards the other end of the village.

After walking for a while, Mu Danian suddenly thought of someone—Gu Jiulian.

Thinking about it, he sneaked to Gu Jiulian's house.

Chapter 412: Farm Girl

Gu Jiulian was originally sleeping, but felt a stomach ache in the middle of the night.

She got up and went to the outhouse. Just as she was pulling up her pants, she was pinned inside the outhouse.

"Mmm mmm..." Who are you? What are you doing?

"Jiujiu, don't you know who I am?" Mu Danian said as his hand wandered over Gu Jiulian's body.

Mu Danian was experienced and knew which spots of a woman's body were sensitive. A few touches and Gu Jiulian went limp in Mu Danian's arms.

Mu Danian released Gu Jiulian's hand, bringing his mouth close to hers.

With his stinky breath drawing near, Gu Jiulian felt like she was being nuzzled by a pig.

But Mu Danian's technique surpassed that of the deadbeat man at her home.

Gu Jiulian wasn't some virtuous maiden, so when she felt it, she went with it!

The two of them fumbled around in the outhouse, their clothes completely removed.

In the end, Mu Danian embraced Gu Jiulian and they finished their first time in the outhouse. Both were satisfied with the results, though the process left much to be desired.

After all, the outhouse was a stinky place.

Afterwards, Gu Jiulian lay in Mu Danian's arms, unwilling to get up.

Mu Danian spoke sweetly. "Sister-in-law, you're the most captivating woman I've met."

Gu Jiulian was ten years older than Mu Danian. Being praised by him made her secretly delighted, though she pretended to be modest.

"You cheeky boy, always trying to fool me. I'm ignoring you."

Gu Jiulian wasn't considered pretty, much less so than Chen Hong.

Her figure wasn't as good as Chen Hong's either.

But she had a certain toughness that Chen Hong lacked, which Mu Danian liked a lot.

He held Gu Jiulian's soft body and caressed it for a while, but suddenly felt a bit exhausted.

He felt as if all his strength had been drained.

Damn, this woman was formidable.

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The night with the big moon, the Mu Family's third branch was still brightly lit.

Everyone was busy waiting for Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng in Mu Dashan's room.

A while ago, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng had taken Liu Zian back to Liu Family Village, borrowing a horse from the village and using the dilapidated cart given by Zhuangzi's mother from Dahuo Village.

Lu Yuanfeng had repaired it, replacing the planks, so it should be a new cart now.

Just at dusk, the three of them reached the outskirts of Liu Family Village.

The two elders of the Liu Family were actually waiting at the entrance to the village for Liu Zian.

As soon as Lu Yuanfeng stopped the cart, the two elders approached. Upon seeing Liu Zian, the weight on their minds was lifted.

Liu Zian jumped off the cart and introduced Mu Shuangshuang to his parents.

"Dad, Mom, this is Shuangshuang, the one who helped me earn travel expenses."

Mr. Liu naturally expressed his gratitude, insisting on inviting Mu Shuangshuang into the village for some refreshments.

"Uncle Liu, I won't go in. My home is quite far from here. If I don't leave early, I won't be home until midnight." Mu Shuangshuang waved her hand.

"Then stay at our place! We have an extra kang," said Mrs. Liu from the Song Family.

"Yeah, Shuangshuang, come to our place for a look. Who knows when we'll meet again."

This time, Liu Zian was really preparing to head to Qianzhou Prefecture.

He wasn't Mu Dade and couldn't afford a fast ride, so he had to rent a cheaper ox cart to Qianzhou Prefecture, which would take over half a month. He would probably arrive in early August.

When Mu Shuangshuang didn't say anything, Liu Zian added, "With Fengzi going with you, it's safer to return together tomorrow. You can sleep with my mom, so you won't be alone."

Lu Yuanfeng stood beside the horse without saying a word, but Shuangshuang's answer was his answer.

"Liu Zian, if fate allows, we'll meet again. Take this!" Mu Shuangshuang said, grabbing Liu Zian's hand and placing two taels (two hundred coins) of silver in his palm.

"Shuangshuang, what are you doing?" Liu Zian panicked. They had agreed she wouldn't pay him back.

But Mu Shuangshuang quickly jumped onto Lu Yuanfeng's cart.

"Fengzi, let's go quickly!"

Following orders, Lu Yuanfeng flicked the whip in his hand, and the cart picked up speed, soon disappearing from sight.

Liu Zian wanted to chase after them but couldn't.

It was Liu Zian's mother from the Song Family who comforted him.

"Anzi, if the girl doesn't want to stay at our place, then let it be!"

"Yes, Anzi, you're going to take the imperial exams, you shouldn't spend time thinking about this. Focus on studying, and don't let your parents handle anything for you. If you pass, there will be hope for our family."

Previously, Liu Zian always felt motivated upon hearing this.

But tonight, he felt exceedingly agitated.

A mother knows her son well, and Mrs. Liu realized her offhand suggestion to have the girl stay might have struck a chord with him.

It seemed he had unusual feelings for that girl.

On the way back, Mrs. Liu advised Liu Zian, "Zian, you're at a crucial stage in your life, don't think about anything else!"

"Just remember to focus on your exams. As for marriage and children, I will arrange everything for you in the future and find you a suitable daughter of a wealthy family, ensuring you don't disgrace our Liu Family."

"Mom, what do you mean by suitable match? Our family are farmers, who could we possibly match with? Besides, I already have someone in mind. No need for you to worry!"

"Someone? Are you talking about that girl just now?"

"No way, mom disagrees. She's just a country bumpkin, how could she be good enough for you!" Mrs. Liu shook her head, immediately dismissing Mu Shuangshuang.

"Mom, why are you speaking so harshly? If it wasn't for Shuangshuang, your son wouldn't even have travel expenses for the exam, and I'm currently living worse than her."

"Silly son, what are you saying? What do you mean she helped you? You have skills, you were the one who painted those pictures. If anything, that girl benefited from you."

Liu Zian recounted the events on the street that day for Mrs. Liu.

He didn't mention Shuangshuang taking money, but Mrs. Liu was convinced Mu Shuangshuang was trying to take advantage of Liu Zian.

However, she never voiced this opinion to Liu Zian.

She believed her son was naive and easy to deceive.

"Mom, I know my own limitations. Don't flatter your son, he can't afford it!"

After speaking, Liu Zian walked away alone.

Leaving Mrs. Liu and Mr. Liu behind.

"His dad, look at Anzi, has he been led astray by that girl? He never dared defy me before!" Mrs. Liu said, her voice tinged with tears.

"Enough, don't you know Zian's character? That girl holds a significant place in his heart. By speaking ill of her, aren't you just slapping Zian in the face?"

Mr. Liu was still reasonable, explaining the situation clearly to Mrs. Liu.

But she remained steadfast in her stance.

"I don't care, I won't let that country girl set foot in our house!"

#### Chapter 413: You Can Only Look at Me

Riding the cool night breeze, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng sat on a cart from Liu Family Village to Er Gui Village.

On the way, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng chatted intermittently.

It was all very ordinary stuff, but both were especially relaxed.

By the time they arrived at Er Gui Village, the moon had already risen overhead, and its bright light illuminated the ground beneath them, allowing them to see even distant scenes.

Lu Yuanfeng parked the cart behind his house, tied the horse, secured the cart, and set off with Mu Shuangshuang, carrying a burlap sack.

During the day, the vegetables they saw, by nightfall, became possessions for Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

They sneaked into the cotton field and visited the vegetable patch at Ma Houhou's house, selected a few ripe vegetables, and were about to leave when they heard faint, shaky footsteps approaching.

Mu Shuangshuang's heart skipped a beat, and she immediately felt scared; stealing was not exactly honorable, though they were taking things from Aunt Zhang's house. If caught, she and Fengzi would not be able to stay in Er Gui Village.

"What do we do?" Mu Shuangshuang whispered.

Behind her, Lu Yuanfeng was much more composed than Mu Shuangshuang; he whispered, "Shh..."

Mu Shuangshuang then really stayed silent. At that moment, the two were very close, Mu Shuangshuang snuggled entirely in Lu Yuanfeng's arms, with Lu Yuanfeng holding her.

This posture brought a sense of security, yet also an air of intimacy.

The footsteps grew nearer, and Mu Shuangshuang's body curled up even tighter.

At this point, regardless of who was coming, neither of them was safe.

Suddenly, a "bang" was heard as if the person had fallen to the ground. Mu Shuangshuang craned her neck for a while but did not see the person get up.

"Drunk? Or dead?" Mu Shuangshuang asked in a lowered voice.

Lu Yuanfeng frowned; he also didn't dare to go out. But they couldn't possibly stay like this all night; if discovered, it would be even more troublesome.

Lu Yuanfeng hesitated for a moment and stood up. Mu Shuangshuang's hand promptly held onto him.

"Fengzi, don't go!"

"Don't worry, you wait here. If I don't call you, don't come out." Lu Yuanfeng soothed Mu Shuangshuang like a child.

This made Mu Shuangshuang want to laugh, but considering Lu Yuanfeng had spent a few years in the military and could handle situations on his own, she felt reassured.

After a while, Lu Yuanfeng began to call Mu Shuangshuang softly.

She slowly approached Lu Yuanfeng, and as she got closer, a strong smell of blood assailed her, causing Mu Shuangshuang to frown.

"What is this..."

"This person isn't from our village and is severely wounded. What do you say we..."

Lu Yuanfeng left the decision to Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't even think before shaking her head. "Don't save him; if he's a bad person, it'll be trouble."

"Even if he's not a bad person, if he dies, we can't stay clear of it either."

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng were just common folks; no matter what, getting involved in unclear matters wouldn't benefit them.

Lu Yuanfeng also felt Mu Shuangshuang made sense. As the saying goes, mind your own business when out and about.

Especially for local matters at their doorstep, getting involved was even less advisable. They couldn't leave Er Gui Village for a stranger.

After figuring this out, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng returned to the field to carry the vegetables. Passing by the man, Mu Shuangshuang was still cautious, but even then, she was caught by the suddenly awake person grabbing her ankle.

Mu Shuangshuang was startled and already prepared to kick the person, but who would've thought the man would speak.

"Help me... I won't cause you trouble..."

The man's voice was very weak, but Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng heard it.

This caused both of them to face another dilemma, Lu Yuanfeng searched the man thoroughly but found nothing.

"Shuangshuang, this man doesn't have anything to prove his identity."

Moreover, Lu Yuanfeng felt the fabric of the man's clothes didn't belong to ordinary families, and his physique suggested he was a martial artist.

"How about this, Fengzi, take him to your back mountain. Didn't we set up a rest spot for the chicks there? If anything happens, we just won't admit it; he didn't enter either of our houses anyway."

"Okay!"

Lu Yuanfeng carried the man to the back mountain, incense of mosquito-repellent herbs, lit the lamp, and placed him in the resting shed, then found some tools at home and, with Mu Shuangshuang, gathered in the shed.

"Shuangshuang, turn your back," Lu Yuanfeng suddenly said seriously.

"Ah?" Mu Shuangshuang was stunned, not quite understanding.

Who would've known Lu Yuanfeng would blush and say, "I need to take off his clothes, you can't look; if you want to look, you can only look at mine."

"..."

This time, Mu Shuangshuang blushed too.

This silly boy, does he always have to speak like this... this openly?

However, even if he hadn't said it, Mu Shuangshuang wouldn't look at someone else's chest.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang obediently turn around, Lu Yuanfeng felt relieved.

He untied the man's bloodied clothes, using clean cotton cloth soaked with alcohol. Upon careful observation, the man had four major wounds, all from knives.

Not fatal but lost a lot of blood.

The parts wiped with cotton cloth revealed the man's robust chest, even in a coma, the strong alcohol stimulus still caused him to sweat profusely.

Having cleaned the wounds, Lu Yuanfeng began to apply medicine, carrying golden sore medicine being a habit Lu Yuanfeng developed in the military camp, and even now, was not forgotten.

By the time the man's injuries were treated, it was already past midnight.

People from the Third Branch of the Mu Family had long been anxious.

"Shuangshuang's mother, do you think Fengzi can protect our daughter? It's so late," Mu Dashan anxiously said, his eyes red.

Er Gui Village isn't too far from Liu Family Village, why haven't they returned yet?

"Brother-in-law, shall I go to the village entrance to look?"

As the currently strongest man in the third branch, Yu Liulang stood up to take on the task of finding her.

"I'll go too!" said Mu Xiaohan, who had stayed up all night to stay awake.

Yuanbao and Little Zhi had already fallen asleep.

They were the most relaxed in the family, not worrying about much.

"Alright, let's go look together," said Yu Liulang.

Yu Si Niang also wanted to follow, but Yu Liulang was worried about Shuangshuang returning without anyone at home to inform them.

Unbeknownst to them, as they reached the side gate of the courtyard, Mu Shuangshuang had returned.

"Uncle? Xiao Han, where are you going?" Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng hastened back, luckily catching Yu Liulang before he left, or who knows how long they'd be fussing before resting.

"Shuangshuang, you're finally back; we were worried sick!"

Chapter 414: Good Mother-in-law in the Da Ning Dynasty

"Fengzi and I got delayed on the road, that's why we're back so late. Really sorry for worrying you all."

Mu Shuangshuang looked apologetic. Originally, she wanted to say she was delayed at Liu Zian's house, but thinking about the man still in the chicken coop on the back hill, she definitely wouldn't lie about that.

If someone went to the Liu Family to verify, it would be troublesome.

"By the way, are my parents asleep?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"No, your parents are almost worried sick, and everyone was waiting for you to discuss things today. But since it's late, we won't talk about it today." Yu Liulang, considerate of Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng's journey, decided to put everything aside for now.

"Oh right Fengzi, Yuanbao is already asleep, don't wake him. Today, let him sleep with Xiao Han," Yu Liulang said to Lu Yuanfeng.

"Okay!"

Ever since Yu Liulang arrived, he had been sleeping with Mu Dashan, while Feng Xiaohua was sleeping with Mu Shuangshuang and Yu Si Niang. Fortunately, Mu Shuangshuang's bed was big enough to fit three without feeling cramped.

"Then Fengzi, I'll go in to rest. You... take care," Mu Shuangshuang said, giving Lu Yuanfeng a meaningful glance, of which he understood the implication.

It was a hint to watch out for the man behind him.

Lu Yuanfeng nodded knowingly.

Then they each went home, and after washing up, Mu Shuangshuang went to bed.

The next morning, very early, Mu Shuangshuang began preparing breakfast. Considering there's still a patient on the back hill, the breakfast was still porridge. She diced the wild vegetables she picked from the mountain, blanched them in hot water, drained the water, directly added water and rice into the pot.

When the porridge was about 80% cooked, she gradually added the wild vegetables into the pot.

Yesterday, Aunt Xiao Yun brought over some cucumbers, Mu Shuangshuang crushed three of them and made them into pickled cucumbers.

A summer morning is the most comfortable time of the day. Drinking a bowl of wild vegetable porridge paired with a bowl of pickled cucumbers is the best combination.

The cucumbers were seasoned with garlic, soy sauce, vinegar, chopped chili, and a little sugar. Then, heat some rapeseed oil in an iron pot, once it was hot, pour it into the cucumbers and mix thoroughly, thus making a crisp and refreshing plate of pickled cucumbers.

Mu Shuangshuang added some firewood to the stove, the flames roared, and the little black pig in the pigsty started squealing.

Mu Shuangshuang figured it was hungry, so she scooped two ladles of the pig feed Yu Si Niang cooked last night and poured half a bucket of swill from the swill bucket, and with this, she first took care of the little piglet.

Mu Shuangshuang carried the wooden bucket to the pigsty next to the kitchen, coincidentally meeting Yu Si Niang who was already dressed. She said, "Why are you up so early? As soon as I woke up, you were gone. Didn't I say these rough chores should be done by me?"

Yu Si Niang had long stopped letting Mu Shuangshuang feed the pigs, saying this work was for servants, too dirty and stinky for young ladies.

"Mom, regardless of who does it, raising our piglet is what matters. Besides, I'm your daughter, shouldn't I show my filial piety?" Mu Shuangshuang glared playfully at Yu Si Niang.

Yu Si Niang was momentarily speechless, though her heart was warm. Who wouldn't love having such a sensible daughter?

"Shuangshuang, do you need mom to help in the kitchen?" Yu Si Niang asked Mu Shuangshuang, who was feeding the pigs.

"No need, I've finished making breakfast. Once the porridge is cooked, we can just serve the meal."

"Great!"

Mu Shuangshuang fed the pigs, released the chicks from the chicken coop, and scattered some bran. The chicks began eating in the yard.

The breakfast was almost ready, and when Mu Shuangshuang went to the kitchen, Yu Si Niang had already started setting the table.

Usually, after setting the table, they would either wake up those still sleeping or leave the porridge to cool.

Mu Shuangshuang grabbed a large bowl, filled it with porridge, and took a small bowl of pickled cucumbers, placing both in a bamboo basket, ready to go out.

Yu Si Niang saw this, felt delighted, and asked, "Shuangshuang, is this for Fengzi?"

In the past few days, Yu Si Niang noticed that the two kids were getting increasingly close, sometimes even whispering in front of everyone.

Yu Si Niang was naturally happy about it, as she had always considered Fengzi her ideal son-in-law.

"Yes, mom, I need to tell you something," Mu Shuangshuang suddenly blushed and said.

"What is it?" Yu Si Niang leaned in with a delighted expression.

"I... I agreed to Fengzi!"

"Agreed to what?"

"Fengzi asked if I liked him, and I said I did." Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking with a blush as red as a monkey's bottom.

Yu Si Niang clutched her stomach, laughing uncontrollably.

She thought her daughter was just too funny, being shy to such an extent.

But Fengzi finally saw the light at the end of the tunnel.

"Mom, don't you have anything to say?" Mu Shuangshuang asked, surprised.

As her daughter formed a mutual affection with another man, heading towards marriage, shouldn't a mother put on a serious face and say some educational words?

"Silly child, what should I say? I'm eager for you and Fengzi to be together, and besides, our two families are close, making it convenient for you to return home. You and Fengzi shouldn't feel pressured. Our family is not like others; we won't ask for betrothal gifts or anything."

Mu Shuangshuang felt Yu Si Niang might be the best mother-in-law in Da Ning Dynasty: a daughter getting married and directly saying no need for dowry!

Indeed, as long as her daughter was happy, nothing else mattered.

"Mom, you're speaking too soon about this, I'm leaving now!" Mu Shuangshuang stomped her foot playfully, picked up the bamboo basket, and dashed away.

At Lu Yuanfeng's house, she called out at the courtyard gate, and an unfinished dressed Lu Yuanfeng rushed out in a hurry.

As the courtyard gate opened, seeing what Shuangshuang was carrying, he first froze, then spoke quietly.

"Shuangshuang, you don't have to bring me breakfast every day, my family has everything, I can make it myself."

Now that Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng's relationship had changed, yet he still didn't want Shuangshuang to spend too much effort on him, not wanting her to constantly bring him breakfast.

Such things, he as a man hadn't done, how could he let Shuangshuang, a girl, keep doing?

Mu Shuangshuang knew that Lu Yuanfeng didn't want her to suffer.

However, her status was different now, already being Lu Yuanfeng's "girlfriend," could naturally help manage his life.

"Fengzi, don't think of these things as prepared by me. Think of it as my things are yours, yours are mine. This way, would you still feel embarrassed?"

If anyone should feel embarrassed, it was Mu Shuangshuang. Lu Yuanfeng's game, aside from what was sold, was almost entirely given to her family.

Moreover, for various dirty jobs, tiring and heavy labor, Lu Yuanfeng was always the first to offer help.

With him around, her family hadn't collected a single stick of firewood; he did all the work.

And then there were the field drainage and ditch digging tasks, all handled by Lu Yuanfeng alone; Mu Shuangshuang didn't really consider what she did as significant.

Chapter 415: Interrogation

Mu Shuangshuang said, "What's yours is mine, and what's mine is yours."

This made Lu Yuanfeng feel like he had eaten honey, sweet and delightful, no, even sweeter than honey, because honey sweetens the mouth, while Shuangshuang's words sweetened Lu Yuanfeng's heart.

"Shuangshuang, you sit down for a bit, I'll go freshen up." Lu Yuanfeng walked lightly, with his mind and eyes filled with thoughts of Shuangshuang.

"Okay, you freshen up, I'll tidy up the room for you!"

Actually, Mu Shuangshuang didn't need to tidy Lu Yuanfeng's room, it was spotless and didn't look like a man's room at all.

However, since he hadn't made the bed after waking up, the bedding needed folding, clothes needed tidying, and those needing a wash set aside.

Last night, Yuanbao was at Shuangshuang's house, so there was no one lazing around this morning, and Mu Shuangshuang quickly folded Lu Yuanfeng's quilt into a neat square like tofu, with not a wrinkle in sight.

The clothes needing washing were placed on a chair, she carried them all out, opened doors and windows to let in some air.

At this moment, Lu Yuanfeng had finished washing up.

Not sure if it was just Mu Shuangshuang's imagination, but she noticed Lu Yuanfeng kept gazing at the neatly folded bed.

"Fengzi, do you want to learn?"

Folding the quilt into tofu squares was Mu Shuangshuang's specialty. In her past life, the first lesson at school was this skill, even Yu Si Niang had been crying out to learn it recently, but unfortunately, always failed, either unable to smooth out the edges or manage the wrinkles.

"Yes!" Lu Yuanfeng didn't hide his intention at all; he truly wanted to learn how Shuangshuang folded the quilt.

He had grown up without ever seeing a quilt folded like this.

"Alright then, go mess it up however you like. I'll just demonstrate directly."

Lu Yuanfeng stepped forward to mess up the neatly folded quilt until it was completely unrecognizable, then Mu Shuangshuang came over, unfolded the quilt, and guided him step by step.

There was a formula for folding tofu squares, but the main thing was carefully adjusting the edges and corners. Mu Shuangshuang was accustomed to it, taking only two minutes, however, for Lu Yuanfeng, it took about five minutes.

After finishing, Lu Yuanfeng was sweaty, but fortunately, he finally learned.

"Fengzi, that person..." Mu Shuangshuang took the opportunity as Lu Yuanfeng was wiping his sweat to ask him.

"I checked this morning, he's not awake yet, but should be by now."

"Shall we go have a look?"

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng took a bowl of porridge with some pickled cucumbers to the person on the hill.

When they arrived, the person hadn't woken up yet. Last night, Lu Yuanfeng had taken off his clothes, which were too bloodstained and tattered, and washed them overnight, now drying them in the backyard.

This way, no one would see them, ensuring safety.

Last night was too dark to clearly see the person's face, but now Lu Yuanfeng could see it clearly and was surprised to find a mark on the man's abdomen.

He stared at the mark for a long time, forgetting even to cover the man's muscular chest with clothes, allowing Mu Shuangshuang a glimpse.

"Fengzi, what are you looking at?" Mu Shuangshuang asked curiously.

"Shuangshuang, I've seen the mark on this person before!"

"Huh?" Mu Shuangshuang squatted down and saw near the man's right waist a tattoo-like mark resembling a token, with writing on it, but she didn't recognize it specifically.

It wasn't traditional script but looked more like seal script.

"Fengzi..." Just as Mu Shuangshuang spoke, the man showed signs of waking.

Lying there, it couldn't really be called a man, he seemed to be about eighteen or nineteen, with a youthful innocence on his face, slightly immature features, but overall they were still exquisite, not handsome, but enough to feel comfortable looking.

Upon waking, he stared blankly at Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang.

His immediate reaction was to cover his abdominal area.

But as he moved, wounds on his body tore open, instantly staining the bandages with blood.

"Don't move, your wounds are reopening!" Mu Shuangshuang reminded him aloud.

Lu Yuanfeng also stepped forward to support the man, his movements were gentle but enough to completely shield the man's half-naked body from Mu Shuangshuang's view.

"Who are you people?" The man asked in confusion.

"We are your saviors. Who are you, and how did you end up in this remote place?"

In Mu Shuangshuang's eyes, Er Gui Village was indeed a remote place, with unfertile land and no crops, if not for the strong and hardy people, surviving on wild vegetables mixed with porridge day and night, many would have starved long ago.

The man's hand still hovered protectively over his waist and abdomen, clearly guarding that mark.

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't worried though; she had memorized the strange pattern and could draw it later.

"I..." The man opened his mouth, a look of pain on his face, and Lu Yuanfeng, noticing, reached out to feel his forehead, finding it unusually hot.

"Shuangshuang, he's got a fever!"

"Oh no! If a fever comes with wound infection, that's really bad!"

Mu Shuangshuang realized there was no penicillin here, no fever-reducing shots, and the weather was hot.

"Why don't we ask Grandpa Zhang to come and have a look?" Lu Yuanfeng suggested.

"In a moment, let me ask a few questions first!"

Lu Yuanfeng stepped back, and Mu Shuangshuang moved forward.

"Answer me a few questions, or I'll kill you!" Mu Shuangshuang said with a dead seriousness, not at all like joking.

The man hesitated for a moment, finally nodding.

"Are you a good person or a bad person?"

The simplicity of the question surprised even Lu Yuanfeng behind her.

Yet he didn't know, at that moment, Mu Shuangshuang's gaze was sharp, meticulous, serious, having met thousands of people.

Those who could disguise and those who couldn't, she'd seen them all.

If this man was lying even a bit, he wouldn't escape her eyes.

"I... I'm not a good person, but I'm not a bad person either. I haven't harmed ordinary people."  
Surprised at a village woman having such a penetrating gaze, the man forgot all the prepared responses.

The words he uttered now were from his heart, with not a false word.

Mu Shuangshuang nodded, this question checked out!

"Will your presence bring trouble to our village?"

Mu Shuangshuang didn't want to cause trouble that would bring disaster to the entire village.

The man still shook his head; he could completely ask Mu Shuangshuang to send him to the county city, solving everything, yet it was Mu Shuangshuang's gaze that made him think of staying.

"If that's the case, I have no more questions!"

Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking and pulled Lu Yuanfeng aside.

"Fengzi, after he eats, call a doctor for him, he shouldn't be a bad person!"

## Chapter 416: Not Disliking His Clumsiness

"Alright!" Lu Yuanfeng handed the bowl of porridge to the man, but in his current condition, the man was unable to feed himself.

Lu Yuanfeng decided to feed the man porridge, but he was so clumsy that he almost scalded the man.

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't bear it any longer and said to Lu Yuanfeng, "Fengzi, forget it, let's ask Grandpa Zhang to take a look. Put the porridge aside, and he can drink it himself when he gains some strength."

Lu Yuanfeng was stunned, completely not expecting Shuangshuang to say that.

He thought Shuangshuang would criticize him for being clumsy and then feed the man herself.

"You fool, do you think I'd feed another man?" From the look in Lu Yuanfeng's eyes, Mu Shuangshuang knew what he was thinking and couldn't help but tap his head.

Ever since confirming that the person she liked was Lu Yuanfeng, Mu Shuangshuang had been faithful, hardly even looking at another man's face, let alone taking care of one.

Besides, she had no relation to this man, and he hadn't paid her anything, so why should she take care of him?

A bright smile suddenly spread across Lu Yuanfeng's lips.

"Alright, Shuangshuang, let's go quickly!" Lu Yuanfeng took a step forward and headed towards the front courtyard.

The two went to see Zhang Huai Shu, who treated the man, but staying in that chicken coop in the back was not an option. So Lu Yuanfeng brought him to his room, prepared some herbal medicine, and fed it to the man.

By this time, the man had fallen asleep, but his hands remained tightly covering his abdomen.

"It seems that mark must be something particularly important. Fengzi, you said that mark looks familiar to you; where have you seen it before?"

Mu Shuangshuang also reflected, and it looked very much like an ancient Commander's Seal she had seen in history books.

Judging by the man's physique, he seemed to be a martial artist, not an ordinary person.

"Military camp!" Lu Yuanfeng opened his mouth and uttered two words.

Now, Mu Shuangshuang was even more certain that the man was from the military.

And judging by the softness of his clothing, he probably wasn't just an ordinary soldier.

"He's from the Xing Family!" Lu Yuanfeng said confidently.

The military camp where Lu Yuanfeng was stationed was under the Xing Family - he had spent five years there, rising from an obscure soldier to the leading Vanguard before he left for his family's sake.

The commander had tried to persuade Lu Yuanfeng to stay, even promising to make him a General within ten years, but Lu Yuanfeng ultimately didn't stay.

But those former glories are no longer relevant to him now.

At this point, all he had was this mountain, Shuangshuang, and Yuanbao!

Mu Shuangshuang knew about the Xing Family.

A few days ago, she went to listen to a storyteller who spoke about Xing Ningtian, a figure as capable as the Overlord of Western Chu, who made significant contributions to the Da Ning Dynasty but unfortunately died on the battlefield during the decisive battle between Da Ning and Da Wei.

Since then, the Da Ning Dynasty and Da Wei signed a hundred-year ceasefire agreement.

Such a powerful figure now only exists as a historical figure.

Lu Yuanfeng had never told Mu Shuangshuang about his identity in the military camp, fearing she would worry, especially given those days were exceptionally precarious, with his life hanging by a thread.

"Since he's from the Xing Family, once he's healed, let him find someone from the government!"

Mu Shuangshuang didn't want to get involved in those twists and turns.

The officials take their own path, and the civilians theirs.

All she wanted was to earn more silver, buy a few acres of land, become a landlady, and live a safe and sound life with her family, never having thought of anything else.

"Alright!" Lu Yuanfeng nodded.

That's what he thought in his heart too.

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Old Mu Family

Old Mrs. Mu climbed out of bed. Last night's moment with Mr. Mu still lingered sweetly in her mind, but Mr. Mu, being old, still hadn't woken up yet.

The first thing Old Mrs. Mu did when she got up was to check the chicken coop. Seeing no eggs, she angrily grabbed a hen and stuck her finger into its vent to scoop out an egg.

Looking at the warm egg in her hand, Old Mrs. Mu finally smiled in satisfaction.

"Hmph, little beast, just like the third branch, eating inside and siding with the outside. One day I'll skin you and eat your flesh!"

Old Mrs. Mu cursed a round, then carefully stored the egg in a pottery jar in her room.

After finishing these tasks, she went to the second and fourth branches to call them to the mountain gate.

Mrs. Liu from the fourth branch was still ill yesterday, but after Old Mrs. Mu's yelling, she got up anyway.

Only Mrs. Lin, relying on the fake pregnancy, refused to get up for anything.

Old Mrs. Mu kicked open the door and pulled off Mrs. Lin's quilt.

Luckily, Mu Qingqing no longer stayed in the same room with Mrs. Lin and Mu Dazhong; otherwise, she would have seen Mrs. Lin in just a bellyband and Mu Dazhong in only shorts.

"You lazy woman, how dare you slack off? Get up and work! Wash the clothes, empty my chamber pot, and feed the chickens!"

Mrs. Lin wailed. "Mother, the child in my belly is not stable yet. Zhang Huai Shu told me to rest."

"Rest, my foot! Who do you think you are to dare take rest? Let me tell you, you better get up right now; otherwise, don't blame me for being rude!"

Mrs. Lin never imagined Old Mrs. Mu would turn so quickly.

Stumbling out of bed, without having time to properly dress, Mrs. Lin had her hair pulled by Old Mrs. Mu.

Mu Dazhong had been awake for a long time, but seeing Old Mrs. Mu taking action, he did nothing to stop her, allowing Mrs. Lin to wail alone.

When the sounds of Old Mrs. Mu and Mrs. Lin's voices faded, he went back to sleep.

The ruckus woke everyone in the courtyard, and Mu Xiangxiang, rubbing her eyes, came out from the east wing.

"Mom, you're disturbing me." Immediately, Old Mrs. Mu stopped and, using a pleasant tone, coaxed Mu Xiangxiang back in.

By this time, Mr. Mu had also woken up, clutching his aching head, listening to Old Mrs. Mu's tirade against the third branch.

Then he remembered he hadn't mentioned asking the third branch for money last night.

"Old woman, how should we ask the third branch for money?"

Last night, Mr. Mu had meat and wine, and today he was afraid of losing face and being ridiculed for asking for money.

"How else to ask? The eldest is in urgent need. Isn't it the third brother's duty to help?" Old Mrs. Mu rolled her eyes and replied impatiently.

"But the third branch has separated!" Today Mr. Mu was extremely hesitant, unable to make a decision.

"Separated? Just because they've separated, they shouldn't give us filial money?"

"Separated, and they can hog everything?"

"Or have you been seduced by that Mammy Yu's horse urine, forgotten our big day?"

Old Mrs. Mu questioned sternly.

This enraged Mr. Mu.

"You dead old woman, how can you say such things! May you be struck by lightning!"

"Old fool, if you feel I've wrongly accused you, go ask the third branch for money. If you get 20 taels, I'll bow and apologize. Otherwise, I'll tell everyone your unclear dealings with that scumbag and ruin your reputation!"

Chapter 417: A married daughter is like water spilled out of the house

"You... you old bastard, your mouth is full of shit, say that again and I'll divorce you!" Mr. Mu was so angry he could barely speak.

He knew his woman spoke filthily, but never imagined she'd spit out such heartless words.

"Hmph, if you divorce me, it just proves you have a guilty conscience. Anyway, you have to go to the third branch for money!"

Old Mrs. Mu was now determined. The matter of the eldest son was a matter of utmost importance. If the eldest didn't make it, her good days would be gone.

She had spent a lifetime as a peasant in the village and was unwilling to continue. She dreamed of being the wife of an official, flaunting her prestige in the village.

The two of them were at a stalemate for a while, finally ending with Mr. Mu compromising.

Mr. Mu inwardly hoped the third family could provide the money. The eldest's situation was like a stone weighing on his heart, preventing him from eating or sleeping.

After all, the third branch was doing well now. Buying land with the money would undoubtedly help the Old Mu Family through the tough times.

Having thought through all this, Mr. Mu was completely at ease.

After breakfast, Mr. Mu once again went alone to the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family. At this time, Mu Dashan was cooling off under the big tree in the courtyard, grasping some vine grass. Recently, Shuangshuang had been teaching him to weave simple bamboo baskets or dustpans.

The man initially couldn't do it; what he made was slow and ugly, impossible to sell. But once he got the hang of it, it actually looked presentable.

Mr. Mu looked at a bamboo basket on the ground and then at Mu Dashan still weaving, puzzled. He knew all too well the abilities of his son.

He couldn't do anything except dig food from the ground, good at farming and tilling, but how could he manage these meticulous skills?

"Third Son, when did you learn these things?" he asked, puzzled.

When Mu Dashan saw it was Mr. Mu, he struggled to get up, but Mr. Mu helped him in time.

"Dad, have you had breakfast? I'll get you some."

Yu Si Niang had gone to find pigweed nearby with the two children, and Yu Liulang and Feng Xiaohua had gone to Tie Dao Village. Yesterday afternoon, they only looked at the fields and hadn't advanced to the agenda.

Today, Yu Liulang went on behalf of the Third Branch of Old Mu Family to take a look. Once it's confirmed, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng will come out to discuss the contract matter.

"Third Son, don't busy yourself, I've already had breakfast!"

Mu Dashan was relieved to hear this. Remembering Mr. Mu's question, he smiled and replied, "Shuangshuang taught me these things. She said the weather wouldn't be hot soon, and straw fans wouldn't sell for much. These bamboo baskets and tubs make money!"

When Mu Dashan talked about Mu Shuangshuang, his eyes lit up. He wished the whole world knew how capable she was and how much she contributed to the family.

In his heart, his daughter was incomparable.

This sense of pride was like an eyesore to Mr. Mu, an instrument for humiliation.

After all, that granddaughter was once cast aside like dust by them.

"Third Son, your days are indeed getting better, I'm happy for you, but..."

"But what?" Mu Dashan asked anxiously at Mr. Mu's words.

"Nothing, Third Son, did you pay for that land yet?" Mr. Mu suddenly asked.

Mu Dashan was stunned for a moment, fumbling before speaking. "I don't think so, Shuangshuang hasn't mentioned it yet. What's wrong, Dad?"

"Nothing, Third Son, there's something I want to discuss with you. Did you know your elder brother wrote home?"

Mr. Mu suddenly softened his tone, a tone he only used with Mu Dade or Mu Xiangxiang, making Mu Dashan feel unexpectedly cherished.

"Dad, I didn't know!"

"Ah! Third Son, originally I didn't want to mention this. Your elder brother said in the letter that he felt guilty about the third branch, told me to treat you better. Thinking back, I did neglect you in the past."

Mr. Mu played the emotional card, knowing his third son was sentimental.

As expected, Mu Dashan's eyes turned red at these words; this big man had waited nearly thirty years for his family to recognize him.

"Dad, please stop, I know you mean well, and I'll surely honor and care for you and Mom."

Hearing Mu Dashan's promise, Mr. Mu was finally relieved.

He continued, "Dashan, there's something else. Your elder brother caught a cold in Qianzhou Prefecture, and now..."

"And now what? Dad, is my elder brother's illness serious?"

Hearing that Mu Dade was sick, Mu Dashan became anxious.

Seeing this, Mr. Mu had an idea; he realized this issue was pretty much set.

"Your elder brother is fine now, but the illness cost a lot of silver. Now, he doesn't even have travel expenses for the exam. You know, your mother and I gave all our savings to your brother, and now with the late rice not yet harvested, we don't have spare money..."

The rest, Mr. Mu didn't say, but he looked expectantly at Mu Dashan.

Mu Dashan was also uneasy. "What should we do? The family really can't come up with twenty taels, not even after selling the late rice."

The family finances of the Old Mu Family were unknown to Mu Dashan, as the money was all controlled by Old Mrs. Mu, and others had no chance to know.

"Third Son, how about you don't buy the land yet and lend me the money for now?" Mr. Mu proposed.

"Dad, I want to help my elder brother, but this silver wasn't earned by me. I'm still bedridden and need medication every day..." Mu Dashan looked troubled.

He wasn't a stingy person. If the silver was earned by him, he would give every copper coin if needed, but it wasn't.

Mr. Mu's face instantly fell.

"Third Son, there's something I need to say. You might not be happy, but I have to say it. After all, Shuang is just a girl. No matter what, she will eventually get married, and it's only the Old Mu Family that has been your support."

"A married daughter is like water spilled from a pot; you understand this logic, right?"

Mr. Mu painstakingly persuaded Mu Dashan, simply trying to get him to harden his heart and bring out all the family money.

Besides, he always believed that men should be the head of the family and make the decisions, never letting a woman, especially a young girl, control the household.

Even if this young girl was his biological granddaughter!

"Dad, I don't care whether Shuang will continue to treat Si Niang and me well in the future. In our hearts, as long as she's happy, that's all that matters. We don't care about anything else!"

"You..." Mr. Mu was so angry at Mu Dashan's words he couldn't even speak.

Yet, faced with the facts, he had no choice but to swallow his pride!

Chapter 418: Buns Are Too Much Buns

With a heavy sigh, Mr. Mu put on a very solemn expression.

"Third son, I know I did wrong in the past, and I apologize to you!"

"Dad, why would you say that? You and Mom gave birth to me and raised me. You don't need to apologize to me." Mu Dashan got anxious, for Mr. Mu had never been like this before him.

"Third son, listen to me. I know, in the past, your mother and I were indeed biased towards your eldest brother. But you know, in this lifetime, I just want someone from the family to become an official; otherwise, we'll always be pointed at and called peasants."

"For your brother, your mother and I have suffered so much, endured countless hardships, all just to see him succeed and lead the entire family out of the mire."

"Third son, I'm not forcing you today, I just have no other way..."

When Mr. Mu got emotional, tears and snot were flowing, and Mu Dashan was heartbroken to see it.

"Dad, I..." Mu Dashan's eyes grew redder, and his chest felt stifled.

"Third son, don't feel pressured. I'll write you an IOU, and pay you back once your brother passes the exam. What do you think?"

"An old man like me probably doesn't have many years left. My only wish is for your brother to succeed, to help the Old Mu Family overcome its difficulties."

Mr. Mu played the emotional card throughout, and the line called affection inside Mu Dashan started to waver.

"Dad, I'll discuss this with Shuangshuang later. My brother's matter is my matter, I'll try my best..."

There was no need for Mu Dashan to finish his words, Mr. Mu already knew eighty to ninety percent of it, but he still assured himself.

"Third son, if you feel overwhelmed, just let it be. I won't blame you!"

"Dad, I'll take the talk. Don't worry about it!"

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Mu Shuangshuang busied herself at Lu Yuanfeng's house for a while before carrying an empty bowl back home.

The kitchen had long been tidied up, dishes dried and stacked neatly in the cupboard, and the kitchen itself was spotlessly clean.

Placing the bowl in the cupboard, Mu Shuangshuang left the kitchen and entered Mu Dashan's room.

"Dad, I'll pour you a cup of tea. Don't tire yourself out, take a rest!"

"No need to fuss, Shuangshuang. Dad wants to discuss something with you." Mu Dashan had thought long and hard, finally deciding to ask Shuangshuang if there was a way to help his brother.

"Dad, go ahead!"

Mu Dashan, finding it inconvenient to move, usually kept the tea in the room, so pouring a cup of water was convenient.

"Shuangshuang, your grandpa came to see me today!" Mu Shuangshuang's action of pouring water halted momentarily, then she resumed filling the cup.

She said nothing, wanting to hear what Mu Dashan intended to say.

But just by pondering, Mu Shuangshuang knew what Mr. Mu had come for.

"Your grandpa said many things, said our third branch had suffered in the past, and mentioned that your uncle always cared about our third branch."

"Your uncle has been sick lately and spent quite a bit of silver in Qianzhou Prefecture. Your grandpa cried today, wanting to borrow the silver we saved for buying land."

Mu Shuangshuang felt a wave of turmoil inside because she knew Mr. Mu had come to borrow money.

But she never thought Mr. Mu would target the silver meant for buying land.

"Did Dad agree to Grandpa?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"No, Dad only said he'd come back and consult with you. Do you think our family should help Uncle since Grandpa took the trouble to visit?"

Mu Dashan felt conflicted in his heart at this moment.

A father who had raised him for nearly thirty years cried so bitterly, merely wanting this son to help his elder brother.

"Help? With what?" Mu Shuangshuang's attitude wasn't overly warm.

Mu Dashan was a softie, that she always knew.

Even Yu Si Niang had recently shown signs of switching to his side.

She wasn't sure if it was because the family's condition had started improving, causing Baozi's parents to forget past hardships.

Yu Si Niang had been helping Mrs. Liu cook these past days. It sounded nice to say she was helping Mrs. Liu, but wasn't the Old Mu Family benefiting from it?

The fourth branch still hoped for good news from the first branch, then to live a better life.

But in this world, such perfect things don't exist.

Want the wind; get the wind. Want the rain; get the rain!

"Shuangshuang, that's not what Dad means. Dad doesn't want to pressure you. It's just that Dad thinks if our family isn't in a hurry to buy land, wait until your uncle..."

"Dad, how can we not be in a rush to buy land? Until now, the greens we have are wild vegetables from the mountains. Aunt Xiao Yun's family brings some every few days, but my grandma? Those vegetables, she'd rather throw them away than give them to the third branch."

"The dry land we have totals only five mu. If it weren't for Fengzi and me cultivating the wilderness, or your sixth uncle and my mom doing the same, our five mu wouldn't even suffice for a vegetable plot."

"If we don't buy land now, where will our winter vegetables, next year's rape, cotton, and sweet potatoes come from?"

"To really talk about money, over the years, everyone's money has been handed to Grandpa and Grandma. Do you and my mom have any savings at all?"

"No! At the time of the family split, Grandpa and Grandma didn't give us a single grain of rice. If our family wasn't resilient enough, coordinating here and there, we would have starved to death long ago!"

Mu Shuangshuang recounted events one by one to Mu Dashan.

Mr. Mu could play the emotional card, and so could Mu Shuangshuang.

A few words made Mu Dashan blush with embarrassment. Thinking of those past days, his previously wavering heart grew a bit firmer.

Seizing the opportunity, Mu Shuangshuang continued, "Dad, our family is different from others. We don't seek great wealth and status, just for our family to be safe and sound together. If we need money, we'll earn it ourselves, not rely on others!"

"Maybe you think Shuangshuang is too ambitious, wanting to send Xiao Han to school, but I do want to send him, regardless of whether he can pass or not!"

"I want others to know that our third branch isn't always looked down upon. We have the capability to send a child to school without everyone in the family going famished to support just Xiao Han!"

In Mu Shuangshuang's heart, Mu Dade's existence was always a tragedy, not individually, but a tragedy of an entire era—putting the family's hopes on one person, when that person eats well and dresses well.

The rest, just for eating a piece of meat, would be scolded beyond recognition.

The entire Old Mu Family fell into a pathological vicious cycle, with everyone hoping for Mu Dade to rise and turn his fate.

For all the time wasted, the money spent on Mu Dade over the years probably could have bought a house in town by now.

Unfortunately, those people don't understand!

Mu Shuangshuang's words caused Mu Dashan to fall into deep self-blame, recalling his previous thoughts, and he felt immensely ashamed.

He couldn't think of a principle even a child could understand.

His father, his mother must have some savings in hand, and if they really took it out, it should be enough to fill his brother's gap.

The third branch doesn't seek to enjoy wealth and splendor with elder brother; just being able to survive is heaven's gift.

"Shuangshuang, Dad won't say anything more. Whatever you think should be done, just do it!"

Chapter 419: Setting the Contract

Mu Shuangshuang breathed a sigh of relief, making Baozi agree with her ideas was actually not an easy task.

Especially for someone like Mu Dashan, who puts filial piety above all else.

It's not that Mu Dashan is bad, it's just that he's too kind.

No matter the situation, he always thinks of others first.

Mu Shuangshuang feels that if she had lived in this place from the beginning, she would definitely have the same mindset as Mu Dashan.

Luckily, she's not from this era and isn't confined by its thoughts.

"Shuangshuang, even though I won't interfere in this matter, your father wants to know if you have any ideas on helping your grandfather get through this difficulty?"

"Well..." Mu Shuangshuang thought for a bit, then said, "Sell the land. Didn't Grandpa and Grandma tell us not to buy land to fill our uncle's gap? This shows that in their hearts, land isn't particularly important. So let's sell a few acres; after all, we have plenty of land!"

"I..." Mu Dashan hesitated; his father would never agree to such a method.

For farming families, land is life!

With land, you have everything.

But without selling land, where does the money come from?

"Dad, you need not get involved. Grandpa and Grandma have their ideas; let's just focus on living our own lives!"

Once she finished speaking, Mu Shuangshuang handed Mu Dashan a cup of tea.

She left Mu Dashan's room and chased out Little Black and Lai Mi, who were still sleeping in her room.

Lai Mi, the little puppy, was becoming increasingly clingy lately. Most importantly, Mu Shuangshuang noticed it had completely grown crooked, eating just about anything.

In particular, it loved the homemade pickled cucumbers, sour and spicy, consuming several pieces at a time.

"Woof woof~" Lai Mi barked softly at Mu Shuangshuang.

Probably hungry again, Mu Shuangshuang gently poked the little creature's head, went to the kitchen for some leftover wild vegetable porridge, and poured it all into Lai Mi's bowl.

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Mr. Mu was happily at home waiting for news.

But after waiting the whole day for news of Mu Dashan and hearing nothing, he sent Mu Danian to inquire. Mu Dashan said Mu Shuangshuang had already gone to buy land.

Mu Shuangshuang finally purchased four acres of dry land in Tie Dao Village for eight taels of silver. Among them, one acre was at the lowest part of Tie Dao Village, receiving water from the whole village. It used to be an acre of second-grade paddy field, but due to too much water, the field became excessively silty.

Old Wang transformed the field into dry land with his hoe, though it lost its value, it avoided the situation of being submerged and unusable each year.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng glanced at the fields, exchanged looks, and spoke simultaneously.

"Shuangshuang, I have something to say!"

"Fengzi, I have something to say!"

"Why don't you go first, Shuangshuang!" Lu Yuanfeng gave the initiative to Mu Shuangshuang, knowing their thoughts were similar even if he didn't speak.

"I want to turn this place into a fish pond, grow lotus seeds, plant lotus roots, and raise fish!" Mu Shuangshuang replied.

"That's exactly what I was thinking!"

If it's a fish pond, it will need to be dredged yearly. The sludge can be used as fertilizer for fields. The lotus seeds won't require much effort; they can be dug directly from the Lotus Pond River. As for fish fry, they can be bought, and the rest can be collected next summer from Dahuo Village.

This should be a cost-effective way to earn money.

"Then we agree on this. Fengzi, what do you think?" Mu Shuangshuang asked Lu Yuanfeng.

"Great! But I want to buy the adjacent acre as well. One acre won't be enough for our fish pond!"

The digging of the fish pond must be done in winter, so that fish fry can be added in spring when warmer.

"Alright, let's ask Uncle Fu!"

Uncle Fu was observing the land with Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng from the path. In ancient times, lands were named to avoid confusion.

The land Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng planned to convert to a fish pond was called 'Four Acres Land' because the four acres were adjacent, giving it the name. However, they were only interested in the contiguous one acre; the other two acres were of no interest because they were significantly higher in terrain.

"So, have you two decided? Your sixth uncle said he's fine with it, just waiting for your opinions!"

"No problem, Uncle Fu, I want to ask if the neighboring land is for sale? We both want to buy it together!"

"To be honest, this land is the cheapest, one tael and eight per acre. Though it's labeled as an acre, each plot exceeds an acre."

"The land you're interested in belongs to the old Luo family. They've wanted to sell it for a long time to buy better land after selling this."

"But currently, it's still paddy field, so naturally pricier than Old Wang's."

Uncle Fu shared everything he knew with Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

As a land 'broker', his professionalism was impeccable, without any embellishment, very fair.

This is probably why people from all over the ten-mile radius sought his help.

"It's alright if it's a bit pricey, as long as we can get it!" Lu Yuanfeng responded.

"Exactly, getting it is all that matters!"

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang was straightforward, Uncle Fu took them to the Old Luo Family, settling the adjacent plot for two taels and two coins of silver.

Mu Shuangshuang paid on the spot, and since the land belonged to Tie Dao Village, they only needed its village leader to mediate.

"The money is paid; please, Uncle Fu, draft the contracts for me, including the copies for government filing."

This time, the land purchase cost was ten taels and two coins.

Uncle Fu's commission was three hundred wen, plus administrative fees were twenty wen per acre, resulting in Mu Shuangshuang spending nearly eleven and a half taels in total, quite a financial hit.

Thankfully, the popcorn helped ease the burden, but she still owed money for corn tailings from Yu Family Village.

Reflecting, Mu Shuangshuang felt she was being wasteful, earning not enough to cover her spending.

Seeing her distress, Lu Yuanfeng seriously consoled with a serious expression. "Shuangshuang, we can earn more money. We have four hands, surely enough to cover Xiao Han and Yuanbao's tuition."

Mu Shuang loses heart, but the tacit understanding between them is assured.

Whatever she thinks, Lu Yuanfeng always knows, and vice versa.

"Yeah! We'll earn our own keep!"

The two discussed and signed various contracts on the spot.

In ancient times, such contracts came in sets, including for the buyer, seller, government, and parties, serving as vital evidence for confirming land transactions.

"Uncle Fu, thank you so much today, running so many errands for us. As per Er Gui Village's tradition, we owe you a drink. You can let us know when you have time, Shuangshuang will go to town to get some side dishes, and we'll prepare a good meal for you!"

Uncle Fu felt flattered, but upon realizing these were from the third branch's Mu Shuangshuang, he understood.

"Ah, you know kid, you are so endearing. If only your grandparents had half of your charm!"

Chapter 420: Disheartened

Uncle Fu's words about Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu left Mu Shuangshuang in a fit of laughter and tears.

She knew that Fu Jiu didn't like Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu, and she didn't like them either, but there was no need to say it in front of her!

After all, she was part of the Old Mu Family.

If people found out that she was joining in on badmouthing Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu, she'd be done for!

Fortunately, Uncle Fu realized his mistake and quickly tried to make amends.

"Shuangshuang, your Uncle Fu didn't mean anything by it, don't take it to heart. Your Uncle Fu just can't swallow it and has to let it out!"

"Uncle Fu, let's put that unpleasant business aside for today! We won't talk about unhappy things; let's discuss happy things instead."

Even though Mu Shuangshuang was dissatisfied with Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu, she wouldn't criticize them in front of outsiders. After all, trouble comes from the mouth.

Judging by the current attitude of the Old Mu Family, the third branch was always on the right side. If someone heard, even the right things would seem wrong.

Uncle Fu's dinner was set for two days later, when Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng would return from the town.

It was the perfect opportunity to buy meat and prepare ingredients in town, ensuring a more respectable setup.

Additionally, Mu Shuangshuang wanted to use this opportunity to invite a few people who had helped the third branch over for a meal.

There was also the Mid-Autumn Festival's yellow paper money and ingot paper not to be forgotten, as Mu Shuangshuang made a simple mental checklist to remember everything.

The remaining matters of the land purchase were entirely entrusted to Uncle Fu. Once he finished the paperwork with the government, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng would have five acres of dry land.

On the way back, Lu Yuanfeng seemed like he had something to say.

Mu Shuangshuang knew what he wanted to say. This silly boy, it was agreed that she'd pay for the land, yet just now, he didn't even want to sign his name.

"Shuangshuang, why did you insist on putting my name on those two acres of land?"

Lu Yuanfeng finally asked.

"Because it's the silver we both earned. It was agreed that half of it is yours, and don't you think owning land feels wonderful?"

Saying this, Mu Shuangshuang took out the land deed and solemnly handed it to Lu Yuanfeng.

"Fengzi, congratulations, you own land now too! By the end of the year, we can buy two more acres of paddy, and then we can stand tall in the village!"

Modern people buy houses, ancient people bought land; essentially, it's all for peace of mind, and in ancient times, land was essential for a family to survive long-term.

Initially, Lu Yuanfeng wasn't excited, but now that Mu Shuangshuang had given him the land deed, he couldn't help but feel overjoyed.

However, Lu Yuanfeng didn't take the deed. Instead, he blushed and said, "What's mine is yours, you keep it for me!"

Mu Shuangshuang laughed so hard her face cramped. This silly boy really learned quickly!

However, Mu Shuangshuang felt a sweet sense of joy inside; this feeling of being trusted was more comforting than earning lots of money.

"Fengzi, these days, you look after that man. About meals, sometimes I'll come to your house to cook, or just bring it over, how does that sound?"

Of course, Lu Yuanfeng had no objection, and he nodded in agreement.

Back in Er Gui Village, Lu Yuanfeng brought Mu Shuangshuang home and was about to leave when he was startled by the noise in the courtyard.

At this moment, Old Mrs. Mu was causing a scene in the third branch's courtyard. It was noisy, and everyone from the Old Mu Family was interrogating Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan as if they were criminals.

Yu Liulang was arguing with the Old Mu Family people.

Feng Xiaohua was comforting Yu Si Niang.

"You tell me, why would my brother-in-law's family take their own money to buy land and lend it to you? Why?"

Yu Liulang shouted fiercely.

"Why, because the third son came from my womb, because I clothed and fed him. Without me, he wouldn't even have a chance to survive."

To this day, Old Mrs. Mu still had an air of superiority.

Mu Dashan, standing nearby, was furious, his face turning beet red.

The more Old Mrs. Mu criticized him now, the more he felt grateful for listening to Shuangshuang in the past.

"Your words, grandma, would deeply hurt my brother-in-law's heart. Haven't you seen how much he's done for this family?"

Yu Liulang had visited the Old Mu Family countless times, and whenever his own family wasn't busy, he'd come to help. During those times, who else but his brother-in-law was doing all the work for the Old Mu Family?

"You little brat, this isn't a place for you to speak. Get out of here!" Old Mrs. Mu shouted fiercely at Yu Liulang.

"Third son, are you just hiding under a woman's protection like a coward? How will you resolve today's issue? Give me a definite answer."

Old Mrs. Mu had already decided that whether the third branch had bought land or not, the silver had to be handed over. Otherwise, the matter wouldn't end today!

Mu Dashan finally spoke up.

"Mother, I don't have any silver. The family silver belongs to Shuangshuang, who used it to buy land!"

Old Mrs. Mu didn't realize the courage it took for Mu Dashan to say this.

Just a moment ago, he was filled with guilt for not helping his elder brother, internally reproaching himself. He even thought of making more bamboo baskets and straw fans to alleviate his parents' burdens.

But these words from his mother left him completely heartbroken.

All those years of feeling guilty and thinking he was doing what was right, were probably lies!

The more he thought about it, the darker Mu Dashan's face became, and the harsher Old Mrs. Mu's words grew.

Mu Shuangshuang walked over to the arguing group with a stern face.

Intentionally, she called out loudly to Mu Dashan, "Dad, I've already bought the land, the money is paid!"

"What? You wretched girl spent all your big brother's money?"

Old Mrs. Mu was startled, looking at Mu Shuangshuang in disbelief.

Big brother's money?

Ha!

That was the funniest thing Mu Shuangshuang had ever heard!

When did her money become Mu Dade's money, and how could someone demand it so confidently?

"Grandma, if you think the money I worked hard for is big brother's, there's nothing I can do. But the deed is done, and now our third branch has nothing but land. Also, let me tell you, the land deed has my name on it."

"Other than me, no one can sell the land, so trying to get my dad to give it up is unlikely to work!"

"You... you..." Old Mrs. Mu was so angry she almost fell over, her whole being demanding to slap this wretched girl and tear her mouth apart.

But as she approached, Lu Yuanfeng stepped in.

Clearly, he gave Old Mrs. Mu no chance to harm Mu Shuangshuang.

"Are you all mute? Don't you see me being bullied here?" Old Mrs. Mu yelled at the silent daughters-in-law and sons behind her.

"Mom, this lad is quite strong, and I'm with child. I can't take a blow from him. You wouldn't want anything to happen to your eldest grandson, would you?"