

## Folly 421

Chapter 421: Pounce Over

Mrs. Lin was the first to clarify herself.

Then a few others followed suit, speaking up as well.

"Mom, when it comes to arguing, you're the best. How dare we step forward? Besides, you aren't being bullied, are you?" Mu Dazhong said.

"You bunch of rascals!" Old Mrs. Mu cursed, while Mu Shuangshuang took the opportunity to wink at Yu Liulang.

Several people supported Mu Dashan, taking Yu Si Niang quickly into the house.

Old Mrs. Mu turned around and disappeared, yelling furiously at the sky.

Inside the house, Yu Si Niang was still a bit worried.

"Shuangshuang, do you think it's okay to leave your grandma outside like that?"

"Mom, didn't you hear my grandma cursing outside? It's fine. Later when my grandpa hears it, he will surely call my grandma back."

Old Mrs. Mu's reputation concerns Mu Dade, and Mr. Mu has no reason to let it go.

Sure enough, after a while, Mr. Mu personally came to invite Old Mrs. Mu back, and spoke outside the house.

"Old Dashan, I know you're still upset with me, and I know my words hurt you. But don't worry; we'll find a way about your brother's money!"

Mr. Mu's approach was quite ingenious.

Initially furious, Mu Dashan's face softened, even showing a hint of disappointment.

Mu Shuangshuang felt helpless towards Mu Dashan; when people treated him softly, he couldn't remain stern, no matter how much he had suffered before!

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Old Mrs. Mu caused a stir with the Old Mu Family and then left.

Mu Shuangshuang started preparing lunch, and the kitchen was unbearably hot. Luckily, Lu Yuanfeng was helping to fan Mu Shuangshuang with a straw fan.

However, even with the fan, Mu Shuangshuang was drenched in sweat once the fire started.

Behind her, Lu Yuanfeng was so focused on fanning her that sweat was pouring from his own forehead.

In a short while, his clothes were soaked through.

"Yuanfeng, you should rest outside; it's too hot in here."

Mu Shuangshuang muttered while washing the prepared vegetables in a wooden basin, finally feeling relieved after touching the cold water.

"No problem, you won't let me do anything else, and you won't even let me fan!"

Lu Yuanfeng's tone was gentle, always unconsciously softer around Mu Shuangshuang, not wanting to scare her.

"But it's really hot; what if you get overheated?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"If Shuangshuang's not afraid of the heat, then neither am I. Right, Shuangshuang, I noticed there are some water reeds by the lake; I'll collect them this afternoon to make you a mat."

"You can make mats?"

Mu Shuangshuang was surprised once again, amazed at how this man seemed to know everything.

Hunting, making furniture, even blacksmithing.

"Yes, I learned a bit from my master back in the day."

Lu Yuanfeng's survival skills were remarkable. In those days, his father Lu Xiao was focused solely on gambling, and the Old Lu Family ignored Lu Xiao as well as Lu Yuanfeng's family, leaving everything to Yuanfeng's mom to handle.

From an early age, Lu Yuanfeng knew he had to support the family.

From summer's eels and loaches in the fields to fish under the iced lake in winter, whatever he could think of, he would do.

But at that time, it was just to get by, never thinking he could make money from those things.

After returning from the army, he still relied on his catches to trade for rice and oil, living day by day until he met Shuangshuang.

"Can I go with you?" Mu Shuangshuang looked at Lu Yuanfeng with anticipation.

"I want to learn how to make a mat!"

Mu Shuangshuang was genuinely curious about these ancient crafts, which seemed impressive to her.

Lu Yuanfeng gazed at Mu Shuangshuang with a faint smile, taking some time before he spoke.

"Okay, but... but you have to give me a kiss."

After saying this, Lu Yuanfeng's face turned red.

Mu Shuangshuang blushed, silently thinking: Who says this silly guy is dumb? He's clearly good at securing his own interests!

Hmph!

But Mu Shuangshuang still rose on her tiptoes, and seeing this, Lu Yuanfeng cooperatively bent down.

Holding Lu Yuanfeng's head, Mu Shuangshuang lightly grazed his forehead.

Whether it was because the kiss was too gentle or Mu Shuangshuang's expression was too alluring, Lu Yuanfeng suddenly wrapped his arm around Mu Shuangshuang's waist.

He lowered his head and kissed her intensely, leaving Mu Shuangshuang stunned by his wild actions, her eyes wide and somewhat incredulous.

Lu Yuanfeng felt like he was on fire, even hotter than before.

"Close your eyes, like this, I'll feel like I'm bullying you!" Lu Yuanfeng said softly, his rough breaths hitting Mu Shuangshuang's face.

But instead of closing her eyes, Mu Shuangshuang looked at Lu Yuanfeng with a kitten-like pitiful gaze.

Lu Yuanfeng kissed Mu Shuangshuang again, and the two were inseparable—

Until suddenly there was a knock at the door outside.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng quickly parted, their faces red like May cherries, especially Mu Shuangshuang, whose face was so bright and inviting it seemed irresistible.

As the kitchen door opened, Mu Xiangxiang rushed in.

She started pulling at Lu Yuanfeng's clothes, inspecting him up and down.

"Yuanfeng, are you okay? I heard my mom had a run-in with you? I just talked to her, told her not to bother you anymore. You shouldn't hang around the third branch—it's so cramped, there's barely room to turn around."

Mu Xiangxiang looked at Lu Yuanfeng with infatuated eyes.

Her gaze was eager enough to devour Lu Yuanfeng whole.

"Aunt, your butt is really big, even bigger than this room!"

Seeing someone flirting with her man right in front of her, Mu Shuangshuang was furious.

"You brat, I'm talking to Yuanfeng; what's it to you? Step aside!" Mu Xiangxiang said indifferently.

Mu Shuangshuang pulled Lu Yuanfeng over, asserting, "He's standing beside me now, he's my man. So yes, it is my business!"

Mu Shuangshuang's words that he's her man made Lu Yuanfeng excited; he could hardly believe as he stared at Mu Shuangshuang.

"You shameless thing, how can you say Yuanfeng is yours? See if I don't tear your mouth apart!"

Mu Xiangxiang threatened as she came over to grab at Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang raised her foot and kicked Mu Xiangxiang, causing her to stumble aside.

Unexpectedly, Mu Xiangxiang started wailing loudly when she fell.

"Murder! The brat is killing me..."

"Dad, Mom, someone's bullying Xiangxiang..."

Mu Xiangxiang's voice was exceptionally loud, and when Old Mrs. Mu heard, she quickly rushed over.

As soon as she arrived, Mu Xiangxiang threw herself into Old Mrs. Mu's arms.

"Mom, the brat hit me and stole my things!"

Old Mrs. Mu's face immediately changed.

"Brat, how dare you hit our Xiangxiang? You're living on borrowed time!"

Chapter 422: Looking for a Beating

"Nai, it was the Little Aunt who struck first. She wanted to tear my mouth apart, and besides, it wasn't me who took the Little Aunt's things. During Qixi, it was Qingqing who took the Little Aunt's things!"

Though shifting the blame isn't very noble, remembering how often Mu Qingqing gossiped and badmouthed her, Mu Shuangshuang found it easy and natural to do so.

"Mom, look at her..." Mu Xiangxiang sat on the ground and began to roll around.

Her plain white clothes were instantly ruined.

Yet despite this, Old Mrs. Mu didn't scold Mu Xiangxiang. Instead, she held the now-dirty Mu Xiangxiang with pity.

"Don't bother with that stinky girl. Let's go home, and I'll make you something delicious."

For once, Old Mrs. Mu didn't want to rip Mu Shuangshuang's mouth.

Perhaps she cared too much for Mu Xiangxiang, preferring to let Mu Shuangshuang go rather than see Mu Xiangxiang cry so miserably alone.

"No, I won't..." Mu Xiangxiang kept crying.

"Mom, make that stinky girl give Fengzi to me, or I won't get up." Mu Xiangxiang cried out.

Old Mrs. Mu looked troubled but turned to Mu Shuangshuang and said, "Stinky girl, how could you steal from your Little Aunt? Do you still have any decency left?"

To Old Mrs. Mu, Mu Xiangxiang was the apple of the Old Mu Family's eye. Whatever Mu Xiangxiang wanted, no matter who it belonged to, had to be given to her.

Whether it was a person or a thing.

"Nai, first, Fengzi is a person, and secondly, feelings can't just be given. You could ask Fengzi if he even likes my Little Aunt?"

Lu Yuanfeng naturally shook his head, not backing down in front of Old Mrs. Mu.

"Mu Family Nainai, I don't like Mu Family's Little Aunt at all. I'd appreciate it if she didn't jump at me when she sees me."

"Waa... I don't want to live anymore..." Mu Xiangxiang cried even more pathetically.

Old Mrs. Mu's face turned purple with rage.

"You two shameless pair! God's going to strike you with lightning one day!"

Old Mrs. Mu stormed off, dragging a nearly breathless crying Mu Xiangxiang back to the Old Mu Family. Mu Shuangshuang was left with a deadpan expression.

"My nai is really senile, giving everything to my Little Aunt, not even sparing a person. It's downright insane!"

Mu Shuangshuang didn't say out loud the last part, but Lu Yuanfeng understood.

He comforted Mu Shuangshuang, "Forget it, let's not bother with them!"

"You're right, let's get back to cooking!"

Mu Xiangxiang's interruption didn't affect Mu Shuangshuang.

After lunch was ready, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng took their portions, along with a share for the patient, to his home. Yuanbao ate lunch with Little Zhi.

At this moment, the man was still lying weakly on the kang in Lu Yuanfeng's house.

However, the heat was overwhelming, and his clothes were drenched with sweat.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, the man struggled to get up, completely disregarding his current state.

"Come on, no need to rush getting up; healing is the most important thing right now."

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't one to speak softly; she was straightforward and not subtle.

Yet her voice often gave people a sense of comfort.

The man lying down suddenly froze.

He simply opened his big eyes, staring back and forth at Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

"Shuangshuang, what should we do with him?"

In this sweltering heat, sweating could easily lead to infected wounds. If he caught a heatstroke on top of that, this man could die.

"Fengzi, go and get him a bowl of wine to wipe him down with. It might help a bit!"

"Okay!"

Lu Yuanfeng went to the kitchen. The distance between Mu Shuangshuang and the man remained considerable.

"So, what's your name?"

Mu Shuangshuang thought that since they were taking care of one more person, she'd better clarify who he was; otherwise, they wouldn't even know how to address him in the future.

The man hesitated for a moment and then spoke. "My name is Xing Beichen. Thank you and your friend for saving me."

Xing Beichen?

Could he be related to the War God, Xing Ningtian?

Mu Shuangshuang frowned slightly, and the man explained, "Xing Ningtian is indeed my father."

"You're telling me your identity just like that? Aren't you afraid I'll harm you?" Mu Shuangshuang asked curiously.

"Not afraid. Since you saved me, I should be honest with you. Besides, you don't seem like a bad person."

Hearing Xing Beichen's words, Mu Shuangshuang had only one thought.

Fool!

So easy to trust a stranger.

But even if he didn't say it, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng could have guessed most of it.

"Why are you so seriously injured?" Mu Shuangshuang was genuinely curious. Logically, such a big man shouldn't be in Er Gui Village.

Isn't this a typical case of a phoenix turning into a chicken?

But by this time, Xing Beichen stopped speaking. It was just when Lu Yuanfeng walked in with a bowl of wine.

He was holding a piece of cloth in his hand.

Cleaning up Xing Beichen was naturally his responsibility since he didn't want Shuangshuang to see other men half-naked.

"Shuangshuang, I'm about to clean him."

The implication was for Mu Shuangshuang to leave.

After receiving the message, Mu Shuangshuang left Lu Yuanfeng's room and happened upon Xia Guagua sneaking around outside.

"What are you up to? How did you get in?" Mu Shuangshuang asked bluntly.

After being caught, Xia Guagua wasn't at all embarrassed. Instead, she questioned Mu Shuangshuang.

"Who's the man lying inside? Who did you save?"

"None of your damn business, now get lost!" Mu Shuangshuang snapped back.

This instantly angered Xia Guagua.

To Xia Guagua, the man on Lu Yuanfeng's kang was surely sick or frail.

Perhaps he was a mountain bandit or some thug, seriously injured and saved by Lu Yuanfeng.

"Are you harboring mountain bandits?" Xia Guagua pointed at Mu Shuangshuang's nose and yelled.

Mu Shuangshuang slapped her rude hand away.

"What mountain bandits or thugs? Did you take your meds before coming out? You're acting like a lunatic!"

"You're the lunatic! You jinx! Whatever you do, don't drag my Yuanfeng brother into it! You'll be the death of him!"

Xia Guagua was now convinced Mu Shuangshuang had brought back someone dubious and started to argue with her.

"Could you use your brain when thinking, please? Mountain bandits, thugs, have you ever seen any? In our area of Er Gui Village, it's always been peaceful and safe. When has anything happened? The only thing that's ever happened is wolves dragging away villagers, not bandits coming to kill us."

Mu Shuangshuang was stating a fact, given that in this Niuwei Mountain area, even hunters were rare, let alone actual bandits.

Setting aside the infertile land, it's truly a place to cultivate oneself.

"How dare you scold me!" Xia Guagua's eyes widened, her body trembling as she spoke.

"Not only will I scold you, but I'll also beat you up!" Mu Shuangshuang picked up a broom by her feet and swung it at Xia Guagua.

The broom hit the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust, causing Xia Guagua to cough uncontrollably.

She assumed Mu Shuangshuang wouldn't dare hit her, but once the pain hit her, Xia Guagua wailed endlessly.

She cried out as she ran away!

It was only after she ran out of Lu Yuanfeng's yard that the pain on her head and body subsided.

Chapter 423: The True Nature of the White Lotus

Xia Guagua fled back home, she lifted her clothes, her hands full of red and purple marks, all showing how ruthless Mu Shuangshuang had been just now!

Xia Guagua bit her lip, her heart filled with bitter hatred: She would never let that woman off, never!

Turning around, Xia Guagua walked out, heading towards the Wang Family.

Wang Fugui hadn't shown his face for a long time since being beaten by Mu Shuangshuang last time, and happened to be out airing himself today.

He intended to see if the one who bumped into him was around; if he met her, Wang Fugui would not be polite!

Unfortunately, he didn't run into Mu Shuangshuang but encountered Xia Guagua instead.

Upon seeing Wang Fugui, Xia Guagua was first surprised and then started crying.

"Boohoo... it's so good, Brother Wang, you're alright!"

Xia Guagua cried and deliberately exposed her wrist covered with red marks, just to let Wang Fugui see her miserable state.

Indeed, at the sight of Xia Guagua like this, Wang Fugui rushed over and asked sternly, "What's wrong with your hand? Who hit you?"

"No... no one hit me, I bumped it myself." Xia Guagua hesitated for a moment before shaking her head, which gave Wang Fugui a misconception that there was something hidden.

"Sister, don't be afraid, tell me, was it that wretched woman Mu Shuangshuang?"

At this moment, Wang Fugui was convinced in his heart; in his life, no one dared to hit him?

Just that wretched woman had beaten him in front of the entire village, making him lose face.

"No, no!" Xia Guagua quickly shook her head, but the quicker she denied it, the more Wang Fugui felt this had something to do with Mu Shuangshuang.

"Tell me the truth, don't be afraid, I've already thought of a way to deal with that little wretch, it's just that I felt awkward acting in front of the village before."

"Boohoo... she hit me..."

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Lu Yuanfeng used alcohol to clean the parts of Xing Beichen that were not injured and changed him into clean clothes.

He placed the meal beside Xing Beichen and went out holding Xing Beichen's sweat-soaked clothes.

Ever since Xia Guagua cut his clothes last time, Lu Yuanfeng didn't have many clothes, and Yu Si Niang made him two new outfits, which he had been reluctant to wear.

Now he gave a set to Xing Beichen, and if he gave any more, Lu Yuanfeng wouldn't have any left, so he could only help Xing Beichen wash his clothes in time.

"Is it done?" Mu Shuangshuang curiously glanced inside the room.

Lu Yuanfeng nodded. "Mm, after wiping with alcohol, he stopped sweating. Shuangshuang, how did you know that alcohol could relieve the heat?"

"Well..." Mu Shuangshuang acted mysteriously, and when Lu Yuanfeng really started guessing, she burst into laughter, "I'm joking, some things can only be passed down orally, not understood!"

Lu Yuanfeng was stunned for a moment, then laughed along with her.

With Xing Beichen's issue resolved, as agreed, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng went to the water's edge to gather water plants.

The water plants for making bamboo mats are different from regular ones, they are specialized, and those water plants can also be made into cattail fans.

Mu Shuangshuang followed Lu Yuanfeng out of the village and arrived at a lakeside.

The lake water was crystal clear, and several fish were happily frolicking underneath, possibly the most beautiful lake view Mu Shuangshuang had ever seen.

Lu Yuanfeng was cutting water plants with a curved knife, while Mu Shuangshuang found a stick and took out a prepared long rope.

She squatted down, searching for worms in a slightly wetter place, and after some searching, she actually found two.

When Lu Yuanfeng turned around, he saw Mu Shuangshuang messing around by herself, a long thin rope tied to crushed worms, the other end fastened to a half-human-high stick.

Lu Yuanfeng thought Mu Shuangshuang wanted to fish, so he said to her, "Shuangshuang, you can't catch fish without a hook!"

"It's okay, I'm not fishing, I'm catching crayfish!"

Lu Yuanfeng suddenly heard a new term and thought Mu Shuangshuang was just playing, so he continued to cut water plants.

Mu Shuangshuang cast the rod, and after a while, she caught a crayfish.

She felt a bit proud but somewhat regretful that she hadn't come earlier to catch something so easy.

Mu Shuangshuang spent the whole afternoon catching crayfish, and by the time Lu Yuanfeng had bundled the water plants, Mu Shuangshuang had nearly a bucket full.

Lu Yuanfeng was immensely surprised when he came over.

"Shuangshuang, why catch so many hunchback eunuchs? To play with? This stuff isn't edible and can hurt your hand. If you want fish, I'll go over to the creek tomorrow to spear some for you."

"What? Hunchback eunuch?" Mu Shuangshuang wanted to laugh!

No wonder nobody took these crayfish; they had no idea they were edible.

But the name 'hunchback eunuch' was quite apt.

Mu Shuangshuang glanced at the crayfish in the bucket, smiling at Lu Yuanfeng, "I'll cook something delicious tonight; you'll definitely like it!"

"Alright!"

They both happily headed home, and when Mu Shuangshuang arrived, Yu Liulang was packing up, with Yu Si Niang beside him, eyes red and looking like she really didn't want him to leave.

"Sixth Son, why don't you stay another two days and keep your sister company?" Yu Si Niang said reluctantly.

"Sister, now that you've bought dry land, and I've taken care of the fields for you, it's time to head back, especially since Xiao Hua and I need to prepare for the marriage!"

The feast planned for the sixteenth of August indeed couldn't be delayed!

"Uncle, I just mentioned getting something good for you and Aunt to eat; how about you stay for dinner, and tomorrow morning Fengzi and I will take you back?"

Yu Liulang had brought the cart himself; Mu Shuangshuang could let Lu Yuanfeng borrow a village horse to take several people over, and they could ride back, which would be faster!

"Well..." Yu Liulang hesitated and glanced at Feng Xiaohua.

The decision to leave was Feng Xiaohua's idea. She felt that since she and Yu Liulang had finished everything they needed to do, it was time to return, especially since her father was alone at home, which worried her.

"Aunt, just stay one night, weren't you the one who wanted me to teach you cooking?"

How about tonight? I promise the dishes I cook tonight will definitely please the men."

Only then did Feng Xiaohua nod her head.

"Alright, Uncle and Aunt are staying, Mother, why don't you take Aunt inside!"

Yu Si Niang, in a good mood, took Feng Xiaohua's hand and led her into the house, while Yu Liulang, standing in the yard, suddenly noticed the crayfish in Mu Shuangshuang's bucket and showed an expression of surprise similar to Lu Yuanfeng's.

"Shuangshuang, do you like playing with hunchback eunuchs too? I used to play with them as a kid, lend me two to play!"

"..."

Mu Shuangshuang was at a loss for words and then explained again, giving the crayfish their rightful name.

Yu Liulang was still incredulous, and Mu Shuangshuang, being the kind of person she was, liked to prove things through actions.

She took a wooden basin from the kitchen, poured all the crayfish into it, and soaked them with some salt for about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn.

Feng Xiaohua, after sitting in the room for a while, came over to see Mu Shuangshuang preparing food; she wasn't as surprised as Lu Yuanfeng and Yu Liulang upon seeing what Mu Shuangshuang was holding.

Chapter 424: Spicy Crayfish

"Shuangshuang, what can I help you with?"

Feng Xiaohua squatted down and quietly asked Mu Shuangshuang, who was facing her.

"Auntie, you can just sit and watch!"

Mu Shuangshuang stood up and headed towards the kitchen.

When she came out again, she held a clean loofah sponge in her hand. A small portion had been snipped off with scissors, leaving a palm-sized piece that was quite handy to hold.

In ancient times, there were no bristle brushes, so old loofah sponges could serve as a replacement to some extent, though not as convenient. Mu Shuangshuang carefully cleaned the crayfish bodies, and finally removed the shrimp vein.

Feng Xiaohua watched with great interest. Unlike the men, she had a special fondness for food.

Mu Shuangshuang was the most enthusiastic cook Feng Xiaohua had met, adding wine and various spices to large dishes, but never masking the true face of the delicacy.

After the crayfish were cleaned, Feng Xiaohua's limbs got a bit numb from squatting beside her.

Originally, Feng Xiaohua wanted to get up quickly, but she was supported by Mu Shuangshuang.

"Auntie, don't get up too fast, or you'll feel dizzy!"

Mu Shuangshuang's concern was justified, as most women were a bit anemic, and getting up too fast could easily make one fall.

Feng Xiaohua didn't know this, but because Mu Shuangshuang told her to stand up slowly, she did.

Inside the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang handed a straw fan to Feng Xiaohua, so she wouldn't get too hot.

Feng Xiaohua sat beside her, unable to take her eyes off what was happening.

She saw Mu Shuangshuang get a big green onion, wash it, and then cut it into sections. Next was ginger, sliced into pieces.

After preparing these, Mu Shuangshuang went to the stove to start the fire; cooking and going to the latrine were the hottest things in the summer.

Once the fire was ready, Mu Shuangshuang felt like she was at Fire Mountain, feeling unbearably hot. She took a cup of water on the stove, drank it, and finally felt a bit better.

Once the fire was up, the pot started heating up. Mu Shuangshuang poured in two to three times the usual amount of rapeseed oil, and when the oil was hot, she added ginger, green onion, and minced garlic.

She grabbed a big handful of bright red dried chili, tossed it into the pot, and it sizzled immediately, causing the oil to roll in the pot. Mu Shuangshuang stirred it twice and then added Sichuan peppercorns, white wine, fermented soybean paste, and sugar. Once evenly stir-fried, she added the crayfish.

Feng Xiaohua watched in amazement. From her angle, Mu Shuangshuang stood at the stove, wielding a spatula, swiftly stir-frying.

The thing called crayfish, after high temperatures, turned completely red, even deeper than the dried chili's color.

Feng Xiaohua couldn't stop swallowing. She just knew the dish would be delicious.

Moreover, the aroma drifting in the air was enough to enthrall anyone.

Feng Xiaohua even felt grateful she hadn't left today; if she had, she would have regretted it for life.

Mu Shuangshuang scooped a ladle of water, poured half into the crayfish, then added some salt.

While waiting for the crayfish to cook, Mu Shuangshuang began preparing other dishes. Since there was already a big pot of crayfish, Mu Shuangshuang only needed to make a few small dishes: pickled cabbage duck egg soup, stir-fried greens, blanched wild vegetables, and a plate of slapped cucumber prepared in the morning.

Mu Shuangshuang felt that everyone could probably eat a lot tonight, so she deliberately made each dish about half more than usual.

When the crayfish were cooked, Mu Shuangshuang had finished preparing the dishes.

She served the crayfish, filling two large bowls, and the stacked crayfish looked especially appealing.

"Auntie, please help me taste it. Shuangshuang isn't sure if the salt is enough!"

When Feng Xiaohua swallowed earlier, Mu Shuangshuang knew she wanted to eat.

Using the excuse of tasting, it just satisfied Feng Xiaohua's curiosity.

Otherwise, with Feng Xiaohua's personality, she certainly wouldn't want to eat before dinner.

"Shuangshuang, how do I eat this thing?"

Feng Xiaohua was inwardly excited but faced with the shelled crayfish, she was indeed perplexed.

"I'll teach you!"

Mu Shuangshuang helped remove the crayfish shells, pointed to the white meat inside, and gestured for Feng Xiaohua to eat.

Though it was something unfamiliar, Feng Xiaohua didn't feel scared at all while eating it. After finishing one crayfish, she completely fell in love with its taste.

Spicy, numbing, aromatic, combined with the unique flavor of crayfish, Feng Xiaohua felt this was the best thing she had ever eaten.

Mu Shuangshuang was very satisfied with Feng Xiaohua's reaction and continued preparing other dishes.

Once the meal was ready, Mu Shuangshuang felt as if she had fought a battle, her whole body covered in sweat.

"Auntie, I'll head outside for a bit. If you want to learn to cook anything, I'll teach you tonight!"

After stepping outside, Mu Shuangshuang felt she came back to life, shaking the straw fan vigorously.

At that moment, Mrs. Lin sneakily approached.

Her eyes were fixed on the kitchen of the third branch, and she almost drooled from her mouth.

"Shuang, quickly tell Aunt Lin, what delicious thing did you make in the kitchen? It smells so good. Your brother is hungry, so he sent me to check it out."

Mrs. Lin's mention of her brother made Mu Shuangshuang pause, and after a moment she remembered the dried-up baby in Lin's belly.

"Aunt Lin, you're so funny. Little brother isn't even three months old, yet he can urge you to find good food. Surely, he's something special and will achieve great things!" Mu Shuangshuang teased with a smile.

"Shuang, only you recognize it. Your uncle said yesterday he'd send little brother to study, and when he becomes the Champion Scholar, he'll serve you well as his sister!"

Mrs. Lin had a smile plastered on her face, looking sly and treacherous, causing Mu Shuangshuang to grow wary.

Although Mrs. Lin was indeed thick-skinned, her uncle always wished for her demise. The notion that her uncle would say his son would serve her was truly unexpected.

"Then Aunt Lin, remember to thank little brother and uncle for me. Shuangshuang feels the warmth of family for the first time!"

Mu Shuangshuang still smiled.

Seeing this, Mrs. Lin inwardly cursed Mu Shuangshuang foolish. She casually said one sentence and actually moved her.

Mrs. Lin swaggered towards Mu Shuangshuang's kitchen to eat the food, but Mu Shuangshuang stopped her.

"Aunt Lin, where are you going?"

Mrs. Lin gave Mu Shuangshuang a look that said, "Are you stupid?" "I'm going in to eat! Shuang, didn't you just say you really like little brother? He wants to eat good food; you wouldn't stop him, would you?"

"Aunt Lin, you sure are good at flattering yourself. Little brother can't eat any good food, so why use his name to deceive and boast here!"

Having been exposed, Mrs. Lin flushed, stuck out her belly, and shouted loudly.

"I want to eat, so what can you do about it?"

Chapter 425: When to Get Married

Mrs. Lin flaunted her belly, giving Mu Shuangshuang a look as if daring her to do something.

Mu Shuangshuang glanced at Mrs. Lin with a half-smile, then said, "This isn't a place where you can come and go as you please, Second Aunt!"

The dishes I make, I'll decide who gets to eat them, and who doesn't!"

"You little wench, are you only happy if you drive me to my grave!" Mrs. Lin planted her hands on her hips and thrust her belly towards Mu Shuangshuang.

She was determined to show this brat how tough she could be.

Mu Shuangshuang jumped aside, pointing at Mrs. Lin's nose in alarm. "Second Aunt, you're with child, don't just bump into people casually. If something happens, don't blame others!"

This palace intrigue act, Mu Shuangshuang had seen on TV, but never thought Mrs. Lin would use this trick on her today.

Except Mrs. Lin was underestimating her.

"Second Aunt, you should think carefully. If you lose the baby, I'll at most get scolded by Grandma, but you'll become a sinner throughout the ages. With Grandma's temper, she'll surely hold you responsible."

"She'll make Second Uncle divorce you, and you'll work non-stop, from dawn till dusk, until you die!"

Mu Shuangshuang threatened and scared Mrs. Lin, causing her to clutch her belly.

She instantly realized that the fake pregnancy couldn't be exposed, or else Grandma would definitely have her life.

Mrs. Lin's expression was tumultuous, while Mu Shuangshuang watched coldly.

After a long while, Mrs. Lin gave up on immediately framing Mu Shuangshuang.

At least, she had to wait until her elder brother had passed the exam. By then, even if the child was lost, they could move to the city for a better life and she wouldn't have to work anymore with servants around.

Understanding this point, Mrs. Lin felt relieved.

However, she still couldn't let go of wanting to taste the food from the third branch's kitchen.

She pondered how to rush to the kitchen, but Mu Shuangshuang blocked her way, so Mrs. Lin had to try and sweet-talk Mu Shuangshuang.

"Shuang girl, what exactly did your family make? It smells so good, let me take a look, and maybe I'll learn to make it!"

"Want to learn, huh?" Mu Shuangshuang grinned lightly.

"Yes, yes, I'll come in to learn!"

"Sorry, but our kitchen is off-limits to outsiders. Otherwise, I won't be polite!"

After saying this, Mu Shuangshuang rolled her eyes at Mrs. Lin.

Mrs. Lin insisted on staying put, not wanting to leave, but Mu Shuangshuang ignored her and went into the kitchen, locking it with a padlock.

Now, Mrs. Lin couldn't possibly get in!

Mrs. Lin was so furious that her teeth itched.

"You little wench, being so possessive of your food! Just one look, and would it reduce your meat by a piece?"

"Just you wait, don't expect to get anything good from me in the future!"

Leaving these harsh words, Mrs. Lin stormed off in anger.

Mu Shuangshuang jiggled the keys in her hand, swaggering back to unlock the kitchen.

Hmph, she's still a bit green to contend with me!

After a short while, everyone returned, drawn by the appetizing smells from the kitchen.

"Yo, what delicious dish has my niece whipped up? Smells amazing!" Yu Liulang shouted.

"Uncle, why don't you go taste it yourself?" Mu Shuangshuang winked at Yu Liulang.

"You little rascal, always up to mischief, and playing mysterious! I'm going in to take a look." Yu Liulang entered the house, while Mu Shuangshuang went to call on Lu Yuanfeng's family for dinner.

Before cooking, Mu Shuangshuang simmered a pot of porridge with a crock pot; nothing was added to the white rice porridge, but she did bring over some soy pickles and greens, avoiding crayfish as it might harm anyone's stomach.

Several children have taken to liking Lu Yuanfeng's backyard bamboo grove, cool and quiet, with Xiao Han there reciting letters and Little Zhi and Yuanbao hunting for treasures in the hills.

Basically, it's just rooting around in fallen bamboo leaves with a stick, and usually finding nothing, since it's just a bamboo mountain without any treasures, especially not in bamboo shoot season.

Having rounded up everyone, Mu Shuangshuang had Lu Yuanfeng deliver the meal to Xing Beichen, for him to eat on his own. If he's too weak, he'll have to wait for Lu Yuanfeng to come back and feed him.

With Xing Beichen, Mu Shuangshuang was quite casual. Even if injured, he handled his own affairs, which pleased Xing Beichen greatly.

Having grown up, no one ever treated him as an ordinary person, so Xing Beichen didn't feel bad at all; instead, he decided to properly thank Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng once he recovered.

Dinner was the most cheerful occasion for the Third Branch of the Old Mu Family, all thanks to Mu Shuangshuang's spicy crayfish, which had everyone drooling and gulping down water, with tears and snot flowing.

"I say, Shuangshuang, you really went heavy-handed!" Yu Liulang stuffed a crayfish into his mouth, looking on the verge of tears at Mu Shuangshuang.

"Uncle, sorry, I didn't know Aunt Xiao Yun's dried chilies were so hot."

Mu Shuangshuang regretted it a bit; this time, the generous sprinkle was indeed spicy enough to knock everyone out.

"No need to apologize, this is delicious. I can't bear to stop eating."

Mu Shuangshuang covered her mouth and giggled, and soon enough, a peeled shrimp tail appeared in her bowl, placed by Lu Yuanfeng.

"Don't touch the shell; I've tasted it, eating the meat this way isn't particularly spicy." Lu Yuanfeng kindly said.

"Thank you!" Mu Shuangshuang winked at Lu Yuanfeng.

From then on, Lu Yuanfeng didn't serve himself any more food, focusing on peeling crayfish for Mu Shuangshuang.

His hands were all covered in red chili, but he didn't feel it burnt at all and instead had a blissful look.

Mu Shuangshuang felt bashful under his gaze.

Several people in the room caught the scene and exchanged knowing glances.

Yu Liulang couldn't hold back and asked.

"Fengzi, what's going on between you and our Shuangshuang? You two?"

Lu Yuanfeng reined in his smile, looking solemnly at Uncle Dashan, Sister-in-law Xiao Yun, and Uncle Liulang, and replied, "As you can see, Shuangshuang and I are fond of each other.

For now, I'm not asking you to agree to marry Shuangshuang to me, as I'm not yet qualified. I'll propose once I've bought more land and earned enough silver."

Lu Yuanfeng was well aware that currently, in comparison to Shuangshuang, he was still lacking.

In both looks and other matters.

Though Shuangshuang was thin, she wasn't any less than the prettiest girls in Er Gui Village.

Moreover, her skin was even fairer than theirs. If she weren't usually indifferent to appearances, villagers would surely have realized already that Shuangshuang wasn't unattractive, but quite beautiful.

Lu Yuanfeng thought Shuangshuang was like a treasure; he wanted to cherish and pamper her.

He didn't want to be empty-handed, letting Shuangshuang suffer with him, so he had to work hard to earn money and have the ability to provide Shuangshuang with what she desired without relying on anyone else.

## Chapter 426: I Will Accompany You in Working Hard

"Good boy, you're ambitious!"

Yu Liulang nodded with satisfaction. He had always thought his niece and this Lu Family's boy were quite a good match.

Now that the Lu Family's boy made a promise in front of the whole family, he, as the uncle, couldn't say much against it.

Yu Si Niang was also excited; her daughter finally had confirmed feelings with Fengzi.

Although marriage was still a long way off, at least the two of them were together now.

And Yu Si Niang believed her son-in-law would be Fengzi.

"Alright, alright, let's not talk about this now, let's eat first! Fengzi, you must have a drink with me today!"

Mu Dashan rarely took the initiative to invite someone for a drink, but as soon as he spoke, Yu Si Niang stopped him.

"What are you doing? You're not well and you want to drink? Don't you want your health?" Yu Si Niang scolded Mu Dashan with a playful eye roll.

But the reprimand was soft and gentle, hardly resembling a scolding.

"I'm just happy!" Mu Dashan explained with a red face.

"Even if you're happy, you shouldn't drink like this. You're not well yet, and you're still on medication. You can't do that."

Yu Si Niang said while thoughtfully adding a cup of water for Mu Dashan.

"Fengzi, your uncle isn't well, I'm not letting him drink. You should drink less yourself, don't hurt your body!"

"Okay!" Lu Yuanfeng nodded slightly.

However, Mu Shuangshuang moved quickly, picked up the wine pot, and poured a small half cup for Lu Yuanfeng, then a little for herself.

"Shuangshuang, you..." Lu Yuanfeng got anxious and tried to take away Mu Shuangshuang's cup.

"Fengzi, a little drink is fine, plus eating crayfish calls for some wine!"

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking, Yuanbao and Little Zhi started to make a fuss, wanting to drink too.

Given their age, Mu Shuangshuang naturally didn't allow it, but she dipped a drop with chopsticks for the two kids.

Watching the kids sticking their tongues out because of the spiciness, Mu Shuangshuang burst into laughter.

"Sister, you're mean!" Little Zhi pouted in discontent.

"You're just realizing this? It's too late, our Little Zhi's already turned into a little puppy from the spiciness!" Mu Shuangshuang replied.

At this, Little Zhi got so angry that she stomped her feet, affecting Lai Mi, who was eating shrimp shells next to her, stepped on his tail, making him cry out in pain.

For a moment, the kitchen was in chaos.

Nobody noticed Mu Xiaohan, who had taken a cup of wine for himself and drank alone, collapsing straight onto the bench after a cup.

By the time they discovered him, Mu Xiaohan had already fallen asleep.

After dinner, Mu Shuangshuang escorted Lu Yuanfeng back, with Yuanbao thoughtfully running ahead and disappearing from sight in a moment.

Lu Yuanfeng was in a good mood along the way, especially during dinner when he thought there'd be trouble after he confessed liking Shuangshuang, but things went unbelievably smoothly.

It seemed Uncle Dashan and Aunt Si were not against him being with Shuangshuang.

Lu Yuanfeng's good mood rubbed off on Mu Shuangshuang. She couldn't help but tease Lu Yuanfeng: "Fengzi, why didn't my parents pose any challenges for you? Is it really okay for them to approve of you so easily?"

Unexpectedly, as soon as Mu Shuangshuang spoke, Lu Yuanfeng nervously gripped her hand.

"Shuangshuang, I'll be good to you for a lifetime!"

"If you want me to go east, I'll never go west!"

"If you want me to fight, I'll never back down!"

Lu Yuanfeng's confession was simple and sincere, lacking flowery words, but those simple words made Mu Shuangshuang feel content.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't speak, and Lu Yuanfeng thought she didn't believe him, so he actually grabbed Mu Shuangshuang's hand and placed it on his chest.

"Shuangshuang, I swear, I'll never deceive you. If I do, may heaven strike me..."

"Fengzi, you can't say the rest. If you lie to me, leave me, I'll tie you up and torment you day and night, and when I'm tired of you, I'll throw you away!"

Mu Shuangshuang deliberately put on a fierce front.

As expected, Lu Yuanfeng was amused.

The original tension vanished, but he refused to let go of her hand all along the way.

Under the moonlight, Mu Shuangshuang looked at the man beside her, his expression relaxed, the corners of his mouth gently curved into a smile.

Mu Shuangshuang knew that the road for them was long, and that even if they got married in the future, there would be many challenges to face.

But Mu Shuangshuang was confident.

In managing her life well and the future marriage!

When they reached Lu Yuanfeng's home, Lu Yuanfeng was still reluctant to let go of her hand.

Mu Shuangshuang saw that it was getting late, and since she had to see her uncle off tomorrow, she thought it would be best to part ways with Fengzi early.

Who knew that before she could speak, Lu Yuanfeng spoke first.

"Shuangshuang, let me walk you back. It's late, and I don't feel safe letting you go alone."

"..."

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly had black lines all over her head; it was just now that Lu Yuanfeng had her escort him back, and now he wanted to walk her back.

Isn't this like taking off your pants to fart, completely unnecessary?

But, she... liked it!

Mu Shuangshuang was filled with joy, letting Lu Yuanfeng hold her hand, retracing the path they just walked.

Since they had declared their feelings for each other, they were almost inseparable most days.

Of course, they both cherished this opportunity.

"Fengzi, I'm going in!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

"Alright, sleep early. Tomorrow, I'll move the stone mill to my house. In the future, I'll grind the mung beans, and if you need to exercise, we can find other ways that aren't so tiring. Or how about I accompany you for a walk every evening after dinner?"

Lu Yuanfeng wanted to accompany Mu Shuangshuang for walks, partly out of his own selfish desires, so he could spend more time with Shuangshuang.

"Okay!" Mu Shuangshuang finally nodded.

Lu Yuanfeng looked at the petite and lovely person before him, his heart stirred, and he suddenly hugged her waist, planting a goodnight kiss on her.

Lu Yuanfeng moved quickly, and by the time Mu Shuangshuang reacted, he had already run off.

"Pfft!" Mu Shuangshuang couldn't help but laugh.

"Such a silly boy!" Mu Shuangshuang shook her head with a smile, turning back into the house.

She hadn't even had a chance to rest when Yu Si Niang anxiously rushed over.

"Shuangshuang, Xiaohan is in his room crying alone." Yu Si Niang said hastily.

"What? Why is he crying? Did he drink too much, have a headache, or is he feeling unwell?"

"I don't know, he's just crying there!" Yu Si Niang shook her head.

"Mom, why don't you go rest, and I'll go check?"

When Mu Shuangshuang said she'd check, she directly brought Mu Xiaohan out of the room, not wanting him to disturb others, and set him on two stools in the kitchen.

She grabbed a towel, prepared a basin of water, and after wringing it dry, handed it to Xiaohan.

"Are you having a headache, or is it too warm?"

It was indeed hot, but there was still a cool breeze at night, and after midnight, it would get cooler, maybe even needing a blanket.

Chapter 427: Mrs. Li's Conjunctivitis

Mu Xiaohan didn't speak, Mu Shuangshuang held a towel in her hand, and they were at a stalemate.

After waiting for a while, Mu Shuangshuang personally helped Xiao Han wipe with the towel.

Xiao Han struggled a bit, and his hands relaxed.

At this moment, the moon was covered by clouds, the moonlight dimmed significantly, Mu Shuangshuang couldn't see Xiao Han's expression, but she knew that the little guy was acting proud.

"You're a liar!"

Xiao Han suddenly accused.

Mu Shuangshuang wanted to laugh, it seems the problem was with her.

"How did I deceive you?"

Mu Xiaohan didn't speak, so Mu Shuangshuang continued to wipe his face. After finally wiping away the tears and snot, Mu Shuangshuang finally felt relieved.

"You said that our family would always be like this." Mu Xiaohan spoke again.

At this moment, Mu Shuangshuang completely understood.

This kid was jealous of Lu Yuanfeng.

Little jealous jar!

"We are still a family together now." Mu Shuangshuang intended to tease Mu Xiaohan or rather, she wanted to entirely correct Mu Xiaohan's thinking this time.

It's not good for kids to overthink.

"No, no, it's not like that!" Mu Xiaohan retorted.

"Then how do you say it is?"

Mu Xiaohan didn't speak again.

In this case, Mu Shuangshuang gained control.

"Xiao Han, I remember telling you at the beginning that no one can be alone for a lifetime, or be with family all their life. I will grow up, and you will too. We will all meet people we like and then build another family."

"Swallows grow up and leave the nest, beasts acquire hunting abilities and must go out to hunt on their own. You see, the natural order is like this, let alone humans?"

"You now only see me with your Brother Yuan Feng, possibly leaving you and this home in the future, but why not consider it from another perspective?"

"You don't have a biological brother, after I'm with your Brother Yuan Feng, he will be your brother. In the future, if anyone dares to bully you, he won't agree."

"You gain a family member, and Mom and Dad gain a son. He's part of our family, including Yuanbao. The bond between you and Yuanbao will be stronger than ordinary friends!"

Mu Shuangshuang patiently explained.

At this moment, the clouds dispersed, the moonlight shone back into the kitchen, Mu Shuangshuang saw a glimmer in Mu Xiaohan's swollen eyes.

It's the kind only a person filled with longing for the future would have.

It sufficiently showed that Xiao Han understood the reasoning she just explained.

He wiped the tears from his face and asked, "So can I say anything to Brother Yuan Feng? Can I share my secrets, and he can share his with me?"

The young boy actually preferred to share his feelings with another man, Lu Yuanfeng.

Just because of the previous barrier, he began to resist Lu Yuanfeng for no reason.

"It depends on whether you've let go of your prejudice against your Brother Yuan Feng."

"If you feel you can actively face everything you will encounter as a man, then you've grown, and you can openly communicate with your Brother Yuan Feng."

Mu Shuangshuang felt that the lesson she gave Mu Xiaohan this night was also an important turning point in his life.

Mu Xiaohan shouldn't just focus on the present.

He should look further afield.

"All right, it's late, you rest early. Sister hopes to see a new you tomorrow morning, not letting these non-existent small matters affect your mood, can you do it?"

Mu Shuangshuang looked expectantly at Mu Xiaohan.

Mu Xiaohan nodded solemnly, only then did Mu Shuangshuang relax!

...

...

The next day, at dawn, after breakfast, Lu Yuanfeng drove the cart, sending Yu Liulang and Feng Xiaohua back to Yu Family Village together, Mu Shuangshuang was also on the cart.

She held four taels of silver in her hand, the remaining unpaid money from the corn deal.

Now that it's the corn harvest season, she can pay for the corn and then get back some of the corn.

Mu Shuangshuang's corn only needs to be delivered this month, then the popcorn can be resold to Jiu Si Xuan.

The cart wheels rumbled, reaching Yu Family Village in half an hour.

Lu Yuanfeng, Mu Shuangshuang followed Yu Liulang and Feng Xiaohua into the village.

Soon they arrived at the Old Yu Family, in the courtyard, Old Mrs. Yu was busy with the chicken feed. After a series of clucking calls, she looked up and saw a group standing outside the courtyard.

"Oh, I said yesterday the roosters were fighting, guests would come today, and you all came, Shuangshuang, Xiaohua, Fengzi come in."

Old Mrs. Yu immediately smiled, warmly welcoming people.

Grabbing Feng Xiaohua's hand with one hand and Mu Shuangshuang's hand with the other, lovingly looking at the two girls.

"Old man, come out quickly. Xiaohua and Shuangshuang are here!"

"Old man, hurry and prepare the food, we have special visitors!"

Old Mrs. Yu shouted twice, and Mr. Yu came out of the house, also in high spirits.

"Quick, quick, come in!"

Mr. Yu shouted.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng saw this, exchanging a glance.

At Old Yu Family, the life they felt was entirely different.

Both Mr. Yu and Old Mrs. Yu were very easygoing, and treated their children and grandchildren equally, without bias or spoilage.

The male preference behavior from Old Mu Family wasn't seen here.

Mu Shuangshuang followed into Old Yu Family's main room, soon Mr. Yu brought out a plate of watermelon.

The children of the family ran over, grabbed a piece of watermelon each and quickly ran off.

After a while, Old Yu Family's second daughter-in-law, the ever uncompromising Li Erju, also came.

As soon as she entered Li Erju looked around, seemingly checking what Mu Shuangshuang had brought.

Seeing everyone was empty-handed, the expression on Mrs. Li's face wasn't pleasant.

"I say Xiaohua, you went to Si Niang's house, how come Si Niang didn't give you anything? She is, after all, a future sister-in-law and a family member!"

Having a shy nature, Feng Xiaohua wasn't fond of talking to strangers, but she couldn't bear to see Yu Si Niang being wronged, so she said, "Previously Shuangshuang gave a piece of red cloth, when leaving, and Fourth Sister also gave a tael of silver as a meeting gift."

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Li was furious.

"What? Si Niang gave you a tael of silver?" Mrs. Li's face twitched, then she wailed to Old Mrs. Yu: "Mom, we're all daughters-in-law, how can Si Niang be so biased? When I married into Old Yu Family, she prepared nothing, instead she took things from home."

"Now she gives a tael of silver to someone who hasn't even married in, not even engaged."

A tael of silver, how much tea leaves need to be picked, how many tasks to be done.

Yu Si Niang was truly excessive.

Feng Xiaohua realized she misspoke, wanted to explain, but didn't know how, could only seek help from Yu Liulang.

Chapter 428: Not a Single Stroke Yet

Yu Liulang was also unhappy. Mrs. Li said such things about his wife right in front of him, showing no respect at all.

Yu Liulang held Feng Xiaohua's hand and said to Mrs. Li, "Second sister-in-law, why are you speaking so unpleasantly? It's normal for my fourth sister to care for me since she raised me since childhood."

"Furthermore, Xiaohua and I have already set the date for our wedding; it's the eighteenth of next month. She's going to be my wife, your sister-in-law, so how can you say the engagement is not real?"

"When you got married, my fourth sister was in a difficult situation but helped the family pick tea leaves for half a month. Didn't that count as money?"

"When you were in your confinement period, my mother's health wasn't good. If it wasn't for my fourth sister washing clothes and diapers for your son, do you think you could have raised him?"

Yu Liulang brought up one thing after another, making Mrs. Li, who originally had the upper hand, lose her ground.

Her face turned from blue to white, looking awful.

Yet even so, Mrs. Li was still unwilling to concede.

"So what? Don't forget, the things Si Niang did are worthless. If she's willing to give me an ounce of silver, I wouldn't care about those things she did."

"You..." Yu Liulang was furious, and if the person in front of him wasn't his second sister-in-law, he would have slapped her twice.

"Second aunt, don't be angry, as the saying goes, a light gift carries deep sentiment. My mother helped you with all those things, which shows she had you in her heart."

"You also know, at that time, what our family's situation was. We hadn't split the family, and there wasn't a penny to spare."

"Also, that ounce of silver wasn't given by my mother. She has always been fair and just."

"Who gave it then?" Mrs. Li snorted coldly, determined to clear this up.

"I gave it. Two hundred coins were for the meeting gift, equivalent to the work my mother did when you got married."

"What about the other eight hundred coins?" Mrs. Li pressed aggressively.

"The other eight hundred coins were for buying duck eggs. Xiao Hua's aunt's family has many ducks, so I bought all their duck eggs, and together it totaled an ounce of silver. Earlier, she was agitated when she heard you slandering my mother, hence she mentioned giving an ounce of silver."

Mu Shuangshuang finished speaking and smiled at Feng Xiaohua, "Aunt Xiao Hua, am I right?"

Feng Xiaohua knew that Mu Shuangshuang was indeed fibbing.

However, she wonderfully helped to smooth things over.

"Yes, I was just too anxious earlier!"

"You are collaborating to fool me, do you think I'm stupid? Eight hundred coins for duck eggs, that would require sixteen hundred duck eggs!"

"How many ducks does Feng Xiaohua's family have? It might take an entire year to produce that many duck eggs!"

Mrs. Li muttered suspiciously.

"If Second aunt truly doesn't believe it, I could give you eight hundred coins, and you prepare sixteen hundred duck eggs for me, how about that?"

Mu Shuangshuang remained calm and collected, speaking reasonably and courteously before Mrs. Li, showing not a hint of disrespect.

In contrast, Mrs. Li continued being unreasonable and troublesome.

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't one to easily endure loss. She didn't confront Mrs. Li because she would not be staying with the Yu Family for long.

If she offended Mrs. Li now, it might cause trouble for Feng Xiaohua after she moved in.

Knowing this, there was no need for Mu Shuangshuang to argue.

At this point, Mrs. Li couldn't find a reason to act out, but her expression toward Feng Xiaohua turned increasingly hostile.

Seeing Mrs. Li's venomous gaze, Feng Xiaohua withdrew with fright.

Yu Liulang noticed and immediately glared back at Mrs. Li.

Amongst the family, Yu Liulang disliked Mrs. Li the most. She couldn't keep secrets, loved spreading tales, and worst of all, was stingy and greedy.

After the family finished eating watermelon and chatting, Mu Shuangshuang spoke with Old Mrs. Yu about the corn and proposed to leave soon.

"Shuang, can't you stay for lunch?" Old Mrs. Yu reluctantly wanted Mu Shuangshuang to stay.

"Grandma, Fengzi and I still have a ton of things, plus we can't leave the house unattended these days."

Xing Beichen was at Fengzi's house, and nobody cooked for him; starving him would be their fault.

The loss outweighs the gain!

"Well..." Old Mrs. Yu still hesitated.

"Grandma, we can visit next month, and I need to settle the remaining corn payment today, haul a few cartloads of corn back, leaving the rest here, okay?"

Old Mrs. Yu naturally agreed, not insisting since her niece had to go back.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng completed the corn transaction, destroyed the contract, and placed five bags of corn on the cart, weighing about four hundred pounds.

She and Lu Yuanfeng carried two bags each.

It was enough for Mu Shuangshuang to supply Jiu Si Xuan with popcorn for the month.

The remaining corn she intended to keep at home for her own snacks, to make breakfast: corn porridge, corn cakes, or corn dumplings, or feed the chickens, which could also raise them.

Currently, Mu Shuangshuang's family didn't have sweet potatoes; only the sack Yu Liulang brought over and those from the Old Mu Family, which would soon be gone.

Thinking of these, Mu Shuangshuang felt she couldn't slow down in making money, or else she might have to live on cold winds from the Northwest.

On the way back, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng discussed how to manage the few acres of land.

Lu Yuanfeng suggested using oxen to plow the additional three acres of dry land and plant vegetables.

As for the two acres intended for a lotus pond, they should start digging immediately, bit by bit, so by winter the pond should be ready.

"Fengzi, now that we have the extra three acres of land, I think we should consider fertilizers."

The best fertilizer in ancient times was always manure. Though Mu Shuangshuang's family raised pigs and chickens, their manure was still insufficient.

"Why don't we, as you suggested last time, build more latrines in the village?"

Lu Yuanfeng referred to public toilets.

Designed to collect waste from travelers and villagers.

"Sounds good, we'll find time to gather wood from the mountain, and I'll head to town to buy some cheap sandalwood or something to mask the odor. If the villagers find our toilets pleasant, they might prefer them over their own."

"Great, let's create the best, or we won't bother!" Lu Yuanfeng agreed.

"Perfect, I can't wait to see what we accomplish together!"

Mu Shuangshuang was thrilled at the thought of bringing modern elements into the ancient world.

Especially with solving the fertilizer issue, her enthusiasm grew even stronger.

"No rush, let's proceed step by step, slowly and steadily!"

"Fengzi, you're right, let's take it one step at a time."

Chapter 429: Mr. Mu Wants to Sell Land

Mu Dade's letter to the family arrived several days ago.

These days, Mr. Mu has been running around raising money, afraid to say Mu Dade needs money for exams, only claiming Old Mrs. Mu is seriously ill and needs money for treatment.

But as soon as Mr. Mu opens his mouth, he gets rejected.

What a joke, everyone's living so hard, no one wants to spend money on illnesses or disasters, why lend money for someone else's medical bills?

After facing countless rejections, Mr. Mu no longer wants to go out.

He's been sighing at home all day, which is really concerning.

Mr. Mu doesn't go out to work, so Mu Danian and Mu Dazhong have to go. Mu Dazhong still hides in the latrine as usual, staying there all afternoon.

Mu Danian can't stand it, hiding in the fields playing, and soon he's sunburned to a soy sauce color.

In his words, his handsome face is doomed.

So Mu Danian found a moment, pulled Mu Dazhong along to find their father and mother.

"Dad, we can't delay my eldest brother's money any longer, I've heard people nearby have already gone for the exams."

Because Mu Dade went to find a teacher, people in the village know he went quite early.

But now others have already gone, further delays may affect Mu Dade's exams.

Mu Danian's words made Mr. Mu even more anxious.

"Ah, what can I do, I've borrowed all I could, and your third brother is still letting a little girl boss him around, I can't possibly sell our family's land!"

Once selling land is mentioned, Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian's eyes light up.

They're eager to sell the land; if it's sold, they won't have to work.

Old Mu Family's land, both owned and rented, is around thirty or forty acres, and harvest is approaching. If they don't find some people to help them, they'll likely work themselves to death.

"Dad, I think this idea works, sell the land and we'll gather enough money for eldest brother, and you won't have to endure people's grudges."

Mu Dazhong says sycophantically to Mr. Mu.

In return, Mr. Mu slaps Mu Dazhong hard, making him see stars.

"You beast, land is our family's foundation; sell the land and you'll be drinking northwest wind!"

Mu Danian watches the scene with amusement, sneaking a laugh at his second brother's foolishness.

"Dad's right, second brother, what are you talking about? Can we sell our land? That's dad and mom's lifeblood!"

"You..." Mu Dazhong didn't expect Mu Danian to betray their plan, and he's shaking with rage.

He says, "Fifth, you're good, who just said that I should..."

Seeing this, Mu Danian glares fiercely at Mu Dazhong, pinching Mu Dazhong's hand hard.

In his heart, he curses his elder brother as a fool.

Only listened to half!

"Ow~ Fifth, what are you doing?" Mu Dazhong asks in pain.

"Nothing, just teaching you a lesson!" Mu Danian replies nonchalantly.

After speaking, he turns to please Mr. Mu.

"Dad, I think second brother is talking nonsense but also makes sense! Right now our priority is getting big brother through this crisis; he must have a special urgency, or he wouldn't have sent a messenger."

"Think about it, if eldest brother gets a degree, it wouldn't be a problem for him to become an official in the county."

"Eldest brother can write, and he has knowledge; if he becomes a steward, our family will also rise."

"Think about it, the court-divided compound, three gateways, a red door, red bricks, endless riches and glory..."

Mu Danian observes Mr. Mu's face while speaking.

He knows his father envies this life, and he wants it too.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have spent so much silver over the years to make sure his eldest brother stands out.

Mr. Mu is hesitating, whether to sell the land for silver for the eldest or think of other ways.

"Dad, I actually have a way; we won't lose out by selling the land." Mu Danian squints, his eyes full of deceit.

"What way?" Mr. Mu asks.

"We sell the land to my third brother; hasn't he always wanted to buy land? Let's give him our land, and when my eldest brother comes back successful, won't he hand over the deed to please eldest brother?"

"Even if he doesn't, by then if our family has money, we can redeem the land, right Dad?"

Mr. Mu ponders Mu Danian's words, thinking it through can't find fault with the plan.

Selling to third wouldn't be taking advantage, so there should be no objection.

"Alright, I'll go to the third branch to have a look!"

Mr. Mu personally steps in, but coincidentally meets Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng returning from Yu Family Village.

Just as he requests, Mu Shuangshuang denies.

"Grandpa, it's not that we don't want to buy land, but Shuangshuang spent all her money on dry land. You hadn't said you wanted to sell the land, otherwise we wouldn't go far to Tie Dao Village to buy land."

Mu Shuangshuang speaks with a false heart, secretly guessing Mr. Mu's intentions.

As the head of the family, Mr. Mu undoubtedly failed, unable to be fair.

His heart always leaned towards Mu Dade, neglecting everyone else's fate.

Mu Shuangshuang believes she has no obligation to raise Mr. Mu's son.

Besides, the black-hearted couple once wanted to sell her to raise money.

Thinking of that Wang San, older than Mr. Mu, Mu Shuangshuang feels disgusted.

People like them, she won't help!

"Don't you have that formula or something? Selling it should bring quite a bit of money, right?"

Mr. Mu speaks with finality, essentially pinning hope on Mu Shuangshuang.

But—

Mu Shuangshuang shakes her head.

"Grandpa, that formula can't be touched; the third branch has nothing, the meals are paid for by that formula's earnings, even for simple sweet potatoes, the third branch doesn't have any."

The dry land Old Mu Family allotted didn't have usable crops.

It's already the cotton blooming season, but the half-acre of cotton is smaller than weeds.

"There's also oil, this year the third branch didn't have any seeds, oil costs money, plus winter clothes, except for ten years ago when my dad made a cotton coat, no one else in the third branch has winter clothes."

"In the bitter cold, wearing a single layer might freeze; if they fall ill, it'll cost more!"

Mu Shuangshuang speaks with piercing truth, layer by layer diving deeper.

Mr. Mu feels as if a steel knife stabs his heart with every word.

Who's to blame for the third branch's plight now?

Who's to blame?

A faint voice inside tells him: it's him, Mr. Mu himself!

The sudden thought scares Mr. Mu, he flees without concern.

Watching Mr. Mu's hasty departure, Mu Shuangshuang's lips curl slightly in a smile.

She merely played a little psychological suggestion in front of Mr. Mu, and he can't handle it?

Chapter 430: Kicked an Iron Plate

Mu Shuangshuang felt Mr. Mu was running away too disgracefully.

This is just the trouble Mu Dade started for the Old Mu Family. Hard days haven't even come yet. With this kind of level, how will they withstand Mu Dade's future attacks?

After laughing, Mu Shuangshuang calmed her mind and turned to give Lu Yuanfeng a sweet smile.

Mu Shuangshuang was nice to her own people.

Cold to those who weren't good to her.

"Fengzi, what do you want to eat for lunch? I'll make it for you."

"Anything, whatever Shuangshuang makes, I love to eat."

Lu Yuanfeng wasn't picky; whatever Mu Shuangshuang made, he ate.

"Alright, then I'll make corn porridge, grind some mung bean soup, and each of us will have a bowl of sour, spicy, and refreshing cold noodles. How does that sound?"

"Couldn't be better, then I'll wait to eat."

Lu Yuanfeng rarely joked, and when he smiled, his big white eyes almost blinded Mu Shuangshuang.

As usual, they worked in cooperation, with Lu Yuanfeng starting the fire and Mu Shuangshuang cooking.

She went into the kitchen, washed her hands, and started kneading the dough.

Lu Yuanfeng helped to cut out the corn kernels one by one with a knife and soak them in water, waiting for Mu Shuangshuang to cook the corn porridge.

During his free time, he tilted his head, watching Shuangshuang busy beside him.

At this moment, Lu Yuanfeng's gaze was greedy, he always felt greedy watching the person focused on cooking in front of him.

He greedily believed that Shuangshuang would be with him for life.

Shuangshuang would cook for him, have children, and be raised white and chubby at home.

He would go out to work and earn money to support her and the children.

Lu Yuanfeng's mouth curled into a happy smile.

Mu Shuangshuang turned around to get something and saw Lu Yuanfeng laughing foolishly there, not knowing what he was thinking.

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

"Shuangshuang, what kind of betrothal gift do you want? I'll work hard to earn it for you." Lu Yuanfeng was a bit nervous, but compared to before, he was much better today, because there was hope in his heart.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly understood.

Turns out he was thinking about getting married.

"I hope my love is a hero who will one day wear a gold holy armor and come riding on colorful clouds to marry me..."

A scene from "A Chinese Odyssey," yet Mu Shuangshuang felt it was particularly fitting at this moment.

But she didn't know, what she originally thought was a joke rooted itself deeply in Lu Yuanfeng's heart.

Lu Yuanfeng clenched his fists tightly and secretly told himself that he would definitely prepare everything as Shuangshuang said.

"Fengzi, do you prefer a simple life or an up-and-down one?" Mu Shuangshuang suddenly asked.

Simple warmth.

The challenge of ups and downs.

Everyone might have different lives.

"Wherever you are, that's where I'll be. Whether it's a simple or tumultuous life, I'm willing to live it."

Deep emotion showed in Lu Yuanfeng's eyes.

His eyes were bright, his facial expression sincere, only gradually his gaze became more fiery, and the hot air passed from Lu Yuanfeng's body to Mu Shuangshuang's.

Mu Shuangshuang had never seen this side of Lu Yuanfeng; at this moment, she could feel his restless heart.

"Fengzi, help me grind the mung beans. I don't have much time on my own."

The fire in Lu Yuanfeng's eyes instantly retreated, and he took the mung beans Mu Shuangshuang handed him and walked to the corner of the kitchen to start cleaning the stone mill.

He exhaled deeply, and Mu Shuangshuang touched her nose.

With how lovey-dovey she and Fengzi were, she was bound to get a nosebleed sooner or later.

Mu Shuangshuang busied herself with the table items, Lu Yuanfeng was not far away grinding mung beans, the sound of chopping vegetables and the grinding of mung beans.

The two combined became the simplest music.

A meal was prepared in a pleasant and harmonious atmosphere.

After lunch, Lu Yuanfeng went back to weaving straw mats and bringing food to Xing Beichen, while Mu Shuangshuang messed with corn in the house.

She had no place to put so much corn; the kitchen couldn't fit it, and her house didn't have a hall room.

After much dilemma, Mu Shuangshuang finally decided to put all the corn under her bed, using wooden boards to isolate it from the ground's moisture.

This way it wasn't taking up space, and she wasn't worried about thieves coveting it.

Mr. Mu was snubbed, and once back sent someone to contact Fu Wu, saying the Old Mu Family wanted to sell land.

Fu Wu had been waiting for the Old Mu Family to seek him, so naturally he wouldn't go out of his way.

He wanted Mr. Mu to take Old Mrs. Mu to apologize, otherwise, the matter of selling land was off the table!

"That little bastard Fu Wu actually said that, to have my old lady apologize?" Old Mrs. Mu's face didn't look good as she directly cursed at Mu Danian.

Mu Danian looked aggrieved. "Mom, I didn't say that, why are you yelling at me?"

These words were originally said by Fu Wu; what does it have to do with him?

Besides, Fu Wu wasn't wrong. Fu Xiaonan, a young maiden, was almost scarred by his mother, an old lady. In terms of both emotion and reason, she should apologize.

"That bastard dared to talk like that about me, the old lady. That Fu Xiaonan's mouth is filthy, daring to speak about Xiangxiang. It's good I didn't rip her mouth off. Now she dares to turn the tables."

Mu Xiangxiang, listening to Old Mrs. Mu's words, remembered that day when Fu Xiaonan humiliated her during the Qixi Festival.

She also remembered Fu Xiaonan's fair little face and the look of envy from the village women.

Mu Xiangxiang grew to harbor even more resentment.

"Dad, Mom is right. That Fu Xiaonan is no good; she humiliated my mom first. In my view, our Old Mu Family shouldn't bow down."

"My big brother is a scholar, while Fu Wu is just errand-running lackey. Without work, he'll eventually starve."

Old Mrs. Mu agreed with her daughter's reasoning and simply instructed everyone.

"That Fu Wu intentionally embarrassed me, I'm not going to apologize. If you want to, you can go yourselves."

"Mom, that's not how it is. Fu Wu is the one handling these matters. If we truly offend him, it'll be difficult for us to deal with the land business later."

"If the government issues any favorable policies for land exchanges or rewards, our family might end up with no benefits."

Mu Danian analyzed beside Old Mrs. Mu, and those in the Old Mu Family with better brains still felt he was right.

After the Da Ning Dynasty war ended, there was a start for swapping barren land for fertile land, and the Old Mu Family took advantage and got two acres of fertile land.

In recent years, although the decree was gone, it's hard to guarantee it won't happen again.

So it's best not to offend Fu Wu.

Though reasonable, it's all pointless as long as Mu Xiangxiang doesn't give in.

"Mom, I don't care, I won't let you apologize!"

"Sis, this matter concerns big brother becoming a scholar, don't meddle foolishly, stay on the side." Mu Daniao felt he had the reason and loudly scolded Mu Xiangxiang.

Old Mrs. Mu jumped up, and slapped Mu Daniao's face.

"You little bastard, daring to talk like that about your sister, right in front of me. Do you think I'm dead, the old lady?"