

Folly 44

Chapter 44 Going to the Market

On the day before going to the market, Mu Shuangshuang woke up early, borrowed two large baskets from Aunt Zhao, who was close with Yu Si Niang, and took Little Zhi into the mountains, gathering a basket full of wild vegetables and another basket of wood ear mushrooms.

This time entering the mountains, she discovered some mushrooms growing on a meadow, specifically *Hericium erinaceus*, which typically grows on decayed wood or rotting branches and has some medicinal effects. Mu Shuangshuang only picked a small amount to take to town to assess the market.

If the market was good, she would pick more. After all, villagers didn't dare venture up Niuwei Mountain, so these things wouldn't become someone else's in a short time.

Mu Shuangshuang placed everything she gathered at Aunt Zhao's house, giving her some wild vegetables as payment, and agreed to pick them up early the next morning.

Early the next morning, before dawn, Yu Si Niang woke Mu Shuangshuang.

"Shuangshuang, why don't you stay home?" Yu Si Niang hesitated, wishing her daughter would change her mind even now.

"No way, Mom, we've already agreed." Mu Shuangshuang said, then jumped out of bed. At that moment, Mu Dashan also woke up; he was usually the earliest riser among the men in the house. Without breakfast, he would make a round in the fields, cutting a long row of rice before returning for breakfast, then working with everyone.

Mu Dazhong had reason to say he was foolish. Mu Shuangshuang watched Mu Dashan hunch his back as he quickly dressed in a room where they were too frugal to light an oil lamp. Didn't he feel tired?

"Dad, why don't you sleep in a bit today? Wait until Grandma calls for breakfast to get up?"

Mu Shuangshuang stopped Mu Dashan, who was preparing to get up and start work.

"Shuangshuang, Dad doesn't mind, but you and your mother must be careful. The town is not like our village. Stick with your mom, don't wander around, and listen to what she says, understand?"

Mu Shuangshuang nodded heavily.

Since she couldn't convince Mu Dashan, Mu Shuangshuang gave up. She had already arranged Little Zhi's lunch, leaving her morning bun for Little Zhi's lunch, and she would handle the rest when she returned.

Because she woke up early, the Old Mu Family hadn't woken yet, so Mu Shuangshuang smoothly picked up the two baskets left at Aunt Zhao's house.

"Hey, Si Niang, your Shuangshuang is really sensible, already knowing how to earn money for the family. Unlike my naughty boy, who only knows how to play with other kids all day, getting all sweaty and never wanting to come home."

Aunt Zhao, Zhao Yun, lived close to Mu Shuangshuang's house, and back then, when Zhao Yun was about to give birth while working in the fields, she was helped by Yu Si Niang as no men were home. The men were forced to guard the dike.

With no men at Zhao Yun's house, it was fortunate that Yu Si Niang carried her home and called a midwife from a neighboring village, saving the boy in Zhao Yun's belly.

All these years, Zhao Yun and her husband Zhang Yutou maintained a good relationship with Mu Family's Third Branch.

"Aunt Xiao Yun, Da Long is still young, at an age where he's just playful. Shuangshuang is different; she's already thirteen."

It's time for her to help her mother. Don't worry; when Da Long is older, he'll definitely help out at home, and then we'll be envious of you."

Upon hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words, Zhao Yun felt as pleased as if her heart was coated in honey. These years, she had been more anxious than anyone for her son to grow up quickly.

She'd find him a wife and enjoy some peace. But the boy still seemed so little, and who knows how many years before he could marry.

"Si Niang, Shuangshuang is such a good girl. She used to see us without greeting, but now she's different. Yesterday, I saw her greet many people in the village."

The two women talked more and more, so Mu Shuangshuang finally couldn't help but remind Yu Si Niang it was time to head to the town, else they would be late.

"You're right; it's getting late. Hurry up to go. Shuangshuang, thank you for the wild vegetables. Da Long enjoys them!"

Zhao Yun accompanied Mu Shuangshuang and Yu Si Niang a bit along the way before going back.

Mu Shuangshuang walked with two baskets, her heart full of joy, while Yu Si Niang carried a basket of eggs behind her. Those eggs were to be exchanged for silver by Old Mrs. Mu, and any silver gained would go straight to her.

Yu Si Niang anxiously advised Mu Shuangshuang, "Shuangshuang, slow down a little, you're still recovering from your illness."

"I'm fine. When we get to the town, I'll sell these wild vegetables and mushrooms and earn enough silver to buy some treats for Little Zhi."

Little Zhi had been longing for sugar cakes, so Mu Shuangshuang planned to sell the wild vegetables, exchange for a pot, and buy a sugar cake to let the little girl enjoy some.

"Shuangshuang, Xiao Han isn't a bad child after all. He's only a few years old; he doesn't understand much."

The other day, Mu Shuangshuang made Mu Xiaohan's backside swell like a bun. Since then, their relationship grew colder.

Xiao Han looked at Shuangshuang with anger, and Shuangshuang disdainfully turned away.

"Mom, don't worry. It's nothing. Last night, that rascal quietly sneaked and touched our rabbit."

If there was anything wrong, he would have already run to Grandma to complain.

Remember, there was an extra cup of tea on the table last night; he poured that, but didn't dare tell you."

Indeed, Mu Xiaohan deserved a good spanking, and after one beating, he became more obedient.

He stopped playing with Gou Dan from the second aunt's house; during the day, he stayed alone in the yard, even avoiding Gou Dan when he came by.

"Really?" Yu Si Niang's face lit up with a joyful look, her beautiful brows almost tearing up.

"Of course, Mom, relax. Once Xiao Han figures things out, he'll return to us, and I'll treat him better."

Just a little brat, wouldn't Mu Shuangshuang handle him?

The two chatted, and for the first time, Yu Si Niang didn't have to worry about robbers appearing while traveling.

For the first time, Yu Si Niang had a little voice accompanying her through the journey.

Feeling utterly satisfied, Yu Si Niang's smile reached its widest arc.

"Mom, what do you think would happen if our family separated from the Old Mu Family?"

Taking advantage of Yu Si Niang's delight, Mu Shuangshuang tentatively raised a plan she had been pondering.

Yu Si Niang paused, a fleeting emotion passing through her eyes before quickly reverting to normal.

"I don't think so. Now, Mom only hopes your first uncle becomes a scholar, then gets an official position."

Providing good futures for you and your siblings, as for us, your dad and I, we're not young anymore, spending a lifetime farming is fine."

"But doesn't Mom wish for the silver she earns to belong to herself, for the harvest from her fields, after paying tax, to be all hers?"