

Folly 461

Chapter 461: A Lifetime of Being Good to You

Mu Danian was determined this time; if they didn't find him a wife, he wouldn't let his father have peace.

Anyway, the family was in chaos!

"You beast!"

Mr. Mu's smoking pipe clattered heavily against the table beside his right hand.

The table shivered slightly, then settled back into stillness.

This roar plunged the main room of the Old Mu Family into silence.

No one dared to even breathe loudly, all eyes were fixed on Mr. Mu.

They were waiting for what Mr. Mu would say next.

After a long while, just as everyone thought Mu Danian would be beaten, Mr. Mu finally spoke.

"Old woman, tomorrow give Matchmaker Sun ten eggs and a bag of red dates, and have her keep an eye out for any good girls nearby to propose a match for our family!

As for Danyan's marriage, it can't be delayed anymore either, let her suggest someone for him too.

For the arrangement of your marriage, we'll wait until the eldest comes back and discuss it, and have him act as the officiant!"

Mr. Mu spoke these words with particular skill.

Talking about finding a match for Mu Dalang, Mrs. Lin had previously mentioned it to Old Mrs. Mu, but it was dismissed with the excuse that Mu Danian, being the uncle, wasn't even married yet - how could they prioritize the nephew's marriage?

She brought it up several times afterward, all in vain.

Now Mr. Mu had opened his mouth, the second branch felt they owed a favor, Mrs. Lin was almost ready to soar with pride.

She grinned, revealing a mouth full of yellow teeth.

Mu Danian reluctantly accepted Mr. Mu's proposal.

"By the way, there's one more thing, the sixteenth of August is the wedding date for the brother of the third wife's brother, Sixth Son. The old woman and I will go to congratulate them; you all take good care of the house, we might even stay the night!"

"What? Old man, have you gone mad? You're going to Yu Si Niang's maiden family, the third branch has already split from us, why should we go?" Old Mrs. Mu was unhappy.

Attending the banquet meant giving money for the banquet.

Such in-laws could easily cost thirty wen, and Old Mrs. Mu wasn't willing.

"Why? Because over the years, no matter what the issue was, people from Old Yu Family were always there for us! Old woman, even though the third branch has separated, the third son is still my son, and the third wife is still my daughter-in-law."

"Nothing will change that, just like you, don't trouble the third branch in the future, just live your own life. Don't act like a shrew all day, cursing and beating people. The eldest can't afford to lose face like this!"

Mr. Mu vented all his feelings, rebuking Old Mrs. Mu thoroughly.

Everyone felt secretly pleased, but still maintained a solemn appearance on their faces.

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In the backyard, Third Branch of the Old Mu Family

The medicine Lu Yuanfeng brought back had been boiled by Mu Shuangshuang and given to the two little ones to drink; they should be fine.

Lu Yuanfeng sat next to Mu Shuangshuang, watching as she gently wrapped the two little ones in dry straw, lulling them to sleep.

Throughout, she was unusually gentle, completely different from her usual carefree self.

"Fengzi, take off your shoes!" Mu Shuangshuang leaned closer to Lu Yuanfeng and said.

"What?" Lu Yuanfeng was taken aback, fearing for a moment that he had misunderstood.

"What do you mean 'what'? Your shoes are so thick with mud, take care of it or you won't be able to walk later!"

"And your shoes are wet. If you don't dry them, you'll easily get rheumatism and arthritis later!"

Mu Shuangshuang's eyes weren't blind. To get medicine for Lai Mi and Little Black, Lu Yuanfeng got his feet and pant legs wet. It was still the afternoon, and dinner was still some time away. Was he going to stay wet like this?

"Never mind, my shoes are too dirty." Lu Yuanfeng shook his head.

"Fengzi, come on!" Mu Shuangshuang softened her tone, a hint of coquettishness in her voice.

She wore an expression that said if he dared to refuse, she would cry.

Lu Yuanfeng was amused yet helpless; if he refused, he feared Shuangshuang would be heartbroken.

If he didn't refuse, he worried about the dirt from his shoes annoying Shuangshuang.

Ultimately, he was defeated by her eyes, black and white, and brimming with tears that sparkled with vulnerability he had never seen before.

This side of Shuangshuang was new to Lu Yuanfeng; he handed his shoes to her.

Still uneasy, Lu Yuanfeng even considered bringing them to his nose to smell.

"Pfft~" Mu Shuangshuang chuckled, then said, "Are you silly? I'm not going to eat your shoes, so it doesn't matter if they're smelly!"

Mu Shuangshuang took a piece of wood from the stove, using the pointed end to stab at the mud on the shoes. Luckily, it was easy to clean.

Before long, the shoes were cleaned.

Lu Yuanfeng's shoes appeared older than Mu Shuangshuang's. The color on the tops was no longer discernible, with three holes to boot.

"I'll wash your shoes clean!"

Mu Shuangshuang stood up, fetched a basin of water, using Mu Dashan's foot basin from home, and grabbed the necessary tools for washing shoes.

Speaking of this basin, it was only after Mu Shuangshuang's strong demand that they separated its usage.

The customs of the Da Ning Dynasty were particularly feudal.

A basin used by a man for his behind or feet could still be used for washing vegetables, but not for a woman's.

Likewise, after a woman washed and wiped a man's feet, she was supposed to wash with the remaining water.

Just these few things were nearly enough to disgust Mu Shuangshuang to death.

Fortunately, Lu Yuanfeng didn't have such "bad hobbies"!

Afterward, Mu Shuangshuang made a rule: everyone in the house gets a separate face-washing basin and two foot-washing basins. Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang shared, and Mu Shuangshuang with the two children shared.

The wooden basin in the kitchen was not allowed to be taken out to wash behinds or feet.

Luckily, once she bought the basins and explained, everyone continued to respect the rule.

Thus, Mu Shuangshuang was full of confidence in the future.

She believed that by gradually changing the viewpoints at home, it would become clear that men and women are equal, daughters are not inferior to sons.

After putting Lu Yuanfeng's shoes in the basin, Mu Shuangshuang poured liquid from a bamboo tube labeled "laundry detergent" into the basin.

This detergent was made from juice ground from water plants that Mu Shuangshuang collected from the northern creek, very effective. As for a brush, since they never found suitable materials to make one, Mu Shuangshuang always used old loofah sponges.

Not perfect, but better than nothing.

"Shuangshuang... let me do it!"

Lu Yuanfeng had never had anyone wash his shoes before, especially not Shuangshuang. It made him happy, but how could his shoes be washed by Shuangshuang? He should be helping her instead!

Mu Shuangshuang smiled, without pausing her actions.

"Then wash with me in the future!"

She wanted to clarify in advance to avoid becoming a housewife in the future.

Lu Yuanfeng nodded heavily, his eyes shining with determined light as he said, "Shuangshuang, don't worry, I will treat you well for a lifetime!"

These simple words, filling Mu Shuangshuang's chest like something had filled it to the brim.

In fact, heartfelt words don't always have to be "I love you" or "I like you!"

If someone is willing to treat you well for a lifetime, it's much better than just saying they like or love you often.

Chapter 462: Xia Guagua Makes Amends

Two days later, the Huang Er brothers indeed went up the mountain to cut wood and build a latrine in Er Gui Village.

Lu Yuanfeng took Mu Shuangshuang to visit Old Lady Lu, and by the way, greeted Old Sir Lu.

Mu Shuangshuang had yet to meet Old Sir Lu, but she wasn't nervous.

The Old Lu Family hadn't divided the family, but they lived separately. Still, they ate together, and usually, it was Old Lady Lu who cooked.

This is the difference between people.

Old Lady Lu had a gentle personality, believing whatever her daughter-in-law said, while Old Mrs. Mu of the Old Mu Family barely lifted a finger apart from cooking for Mu Dade, daring anyone to speak out a bit more to receive a slap in return.

"Shuangshuang, my grandpa has a bad temper, no matter what he says later, let me handle it. I won't let you be bullied."

Lu Yuanfeng knew Shuangshuang's temperament; she wouldn't easily let herself suffer, though his grandpa's temper indeed wasn't good.

"Okay! I'll just listen beside you!"

Because the matter to ask about was quite important, this time, Lu Yuanfeng's third uncle's family and fourth uncle's family both came, only his second uncle didn't come.

Old Sir Lu had four sons and a daughter, the daughter married early, now only three sons were left around, and life was still manageable.

In the hall of the Old Lu Family, several relatives whispered to each other, all curious.

"What do you think Fengzi means, making us come like it's something to make money?" said Lu Yuanfeng's third aunt.

"If it's making money, would it find you? Come on now, everyone knows Fengzi is good with the village's fool, giving that fool all sorts of things. We used to get a leg of meat at least, now we're left without even a pig's skin to eat!"

It was Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle speaking.

Actually, there wasn't much difference between the Old Lu Family and Mu Shuangshuang's family; the only difference was they didn't dare provoke Lu Yuanfeng, playing around only when he wasn't around.

Coincidentally, every word entered Lu Yuanfeng's ears just as he walked in.

He walked straight into the door, followed by Mu Shuangshuang with a calm look.

"Fengzi, we've waited for so long, what is this about?" Old Sir Lu asked.

"Grandpa, I want to ask, do you know what this is?"

Lu Yuanfeng took a handkerchief from his sleeve and handed it over to Old Lady Lu. Only a few here understood the embroidery of Mrs. Fengzi.

Even though the handkerchief had "Jiao" written on it, Lu Yuanfeng's mother was called Tang Jiaojiao.

"This... this is your mother's handkerchief..." Old Lady Lu carefully examined the handkerchief that Lu Yuanfeng gave her, then said.

"Yes! My mother's handkerchief, I found it in the mountains. What really happened back then? How did she end up in the mountains? Who saw her being taken away by wolves? Did anyone see it with their own eyes?"

Lu Yuanfeng had a series of questions all organized by Mu Shuangshuang.

Lu Yuanfeng asked, and Mu Shuangshuang observed the expressions.

Among several people, Old Sir Lu's expression was the most unusual, followed by Old Lady Lu and Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle.

Mu Shuangshuang frowned, wanting to speak, but remembered she promised Lu Yuanfeng to wait and see.

But Mu Shuangshuang wanted to give these people a chance, yet they might not necessarily take it.

"Fengzi, what do you mean by saying this? Suspecting us? Your mother's matter happened so many years ago, we only speak of what we know."

"You left for five years, we are not easy, ask others if you doubt, our village's years were tough."

"Your mother went to the mountains to find food for Yuanbao, no one wanted such a thing to happen."

Lu Family's fourth uncle started to defend himself first, speaking at length only to make Lu Yuanfeng believe him.

But he was too eager to clear himself, instead, making it easier for people to misunderstand.

"Fengzi, I said long ago not to mention this again. Why did you bring an outsider today?" Old Sir Lu questioned loudly.

"Shuangshuang is not an outsider, Shuangshuang is my future wife!" Lu Yuanfeng held Mu Shuangshuang's hand and lifted it up in front of everyone.

This scene made Xia Guagua purse her lips, a trace of malice flashed in her eyes.

But even so, she forced herself to squeeze out a smile, though the smile looked so miserable.

"Who allowed you to decide your marriage?" Old Sir Lu's hand slammed heavily on the table, clearly as a warning to Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

"Grandpa, I said upon returning back then, from now on, I make my own decisions about my affairs. If you think I'm in the way, I can separate and leave. But you still have to answer my question."

Perhaps because it involved Lu Yuanfeng's mother, so Lu Yuanfeng spoke with an imposing manner.

"You..." Old Sir Lu exclaimed angrily.

Old Lady Lu quickly stepped forward and tugged Lu Yuanfeng's sleeve. "Fengzi, let's just leave this matter alone, your mother died, and can't come back."

"If you want to marry a girl from Mu Family's Third Branch, you need parental orders and match-made arrangements first."

Until now, Mu Shuangshuang was completely ignored, if not for Lu Yuanfeng holding her hand, she felt she was here just to be scolded.

Mu Shuangshuang signaled Lu Yuanfeng with her eyes, meaning she had something to say.

Lu Yuanfeng immediately nodded, even though he had just told her to listen.

"Excuse me, interrupting, Shuangshuang has a few words to say!"

Before anyone could stop her, Mu Shuangshuang quickly said, "What Fengzi asked today had no problem at all. The owner of the handkerchief is his mother, he left home for years, came back to reunite the family, but found his mother gone.

The younger brother was raised into a paper thin figure, do you think he shouldn't ask about this? If it were anyone present here, you'd have taken the knife long ago, wouldn't you?"

Mu Shuangshuang slightly curled her lips, mocking as she looked at everyone.

"What are you, daring to meddle in our Old Lu Family's matters!" Old Sir Lu slammed the table angrily.

"Sir, don't be angry; anger is taxing on the liver. What am I? Fengzi just said it!

Don't rush to defame me, unmarried man, unmarried woman, we come and go together, in front of so many people, without any breach of etiquette."

Mu Shuangshuang disliked being pointed out and scolded, so she said the harsh words up front.

"Grandpa, you can curb your temper now, fury doesn't solve problems, I'm just asking for truth from back then, please tell!"

Lu Yuanfeng stared directly at Old Sir Lu, with no trace of fear in his eyes.

This day, since he stood here, the truth must be given to him!

"Fengzi, listen to grandma, time to move on!" Old Lady Lu said that for the second time.

Mu Shuangshuang had been hearing from Lu Yuanfeng that the old lady took good care of Yuanbao, sometimes when he wasn't home, Yuanbao ate there.

But these words she said today, every one stabbed into Lu Yuanfeng's heart like a knife.

"Can't move on anymore, grandma, I know you surely know what happened, please tell me why my mother went to the mountains, can you? Just think of it as me begging you!"

Chapter 463: Helping Fengzi Find Her Mother

"Fengzi, I... I don't know, don't force me!"

Old Lady Lu shook her head in pain, looking like she didn't want to bring it up.

On the side, Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle also said, "Fengzi, your grandma is so old, and yet you're forcing her. Do you want her to die?"

Or is it that fool from the Old Mu Family forcing you to ask? What kind of mind-altering soup did she give you that you'd neglect your own family?"

"You're the fool. Have you ever seen such a smart and eloquent fool?"

Mu Shuangshuang was not pleased, she wasn't foolish; she spoke normally, looked normal, and had a good head on her shoulders.

That bastard, always thinking the Old Mu Family had some oddballs, turns out, the Lu Yuanfeng family has quite a few too.

Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle didn't expect Mu Shuangshuang to dare to confront him, and for a moment couldn't find anything to refute against her, he just glared at Mu Shuangshuang.

Glare all you want, it's not like she'll lose a piece of flesh!

Mu Shuangshuang's smile grew even brighter; with enemies, you must never show weakness, that's her principle.

"Fengzi, go report to the officials, after all, it's a living person, and we can find Xing Beichen to help, let the government investigate, even if it means turning over this mountain, we can find some useful evidence."

"By then, if we find any evidence or anyone did something they shouldn't have, we'll let them rot in jail!"

Mu Shuangshuang looked directly at Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle.

She clearly felt Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle's body shiver, as if he was afraid of something.

The answer was getting closer.

"Get out, get out!" Suddenly, Old Sir Lu stood up, dragging Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang outside.

Seeing that Old Sir Lu was an elder, Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang stepped back and didn't squeeze inside anymore.

During this trip, Mu Shuangshuang focused on Lu Family's fourth uncle, Old Sir Lu, and Old Lady Lu, as these three surely knew the details of the matter.

"Fengzi, what do you plan to do about this?"

After all, it was Lu Yuanfeng's family affair, Mu Shuangshuang was not in a position to overstep.

"My mom must still be alive, but why is my family lying?" Lu Yuanfeng was puzzled.

"I think they might be protecting someone. Just think, your mom is the wife of the Old Lu Family. Ordinarily, they should have reported her disappearance."

"But your family didn't. There must have been something they didn't want others to know. From my point of view, if we want to know the truth, we either play dirty or ask the knowledgeable ones!"

"The knowledgeable ones?"

"Exactly! There's no wall that doesn't let air through. Tell me, what happened in your family for the past few years, I've analyzed it, two people might know the truth!"

Lu Yuanfeng stared intently at Mu Shuangshuang; at this moment, his chest felt like it was being clawed by a cat, eager to know the truth.

"The village chief and Matchmaker Sun, your mother's disappearance, the village chief definitely knows some inside story.

As for Matchmaker Sun, regarding your fourth uncle's marriage, she definitely knows, we need to ask how much betrothal gift was prepared for your fourth aunt!"

The two divided their tasks, Mu Shuangshuang went to find Matchmaker Sun, Lu Yuanfeng went to find the village chief.

Matchmaker Sun was not easy to find; after all, matchmakers live a transient life, today at this house, tomorrow at another, fortunately, Matchmaker Sun's family usually knows where she goes.

Today she went to the nearby Xiajia Village, where Xia Guagua used to live.

Knowing Matchmaker Sun would return by evening, Mu Shuangshuang simply went to the village chief's home to find Lu Yuanfeng.

After a round of questioning, the village chief only said that he did want to report it back then, but Old Sir Lu begged him desperately, and in the end, it was just dropped!

From the village chief, they didn't learn much, but one thing was certain, the Old Lu Family had done quite a few things behind the scenes.

"Fengzi, let's go back, have lunch first. We can't rush finding people. Once we find Matchmaker Sun, and she tells us what happened, if it doesn't work out, I still have a backup plan!"

Last time, Mu Shuangshuang used Mandala petals on Mu Dazhong, afterward, Mu Dazhong hugged Mu Danian and kissed him passionately, at that time Mu Dazhong didn't know what he was doing.

Using this on Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle would surely reveal some things.

Alternatively, a good beating could do it.

"Alright!" Lu Yuanfeng felt heavy-hearted but agreed that what Mu Shuangshuang said made sense.

Everything needs to be clarified, what truly happened, only by doing this can they find his mother in the shortest possible time.

Returning home, Mu Shuangshuang began to prepare lunch.

The Huang Brothers were chopping wood for her, so she couldn't let them go hungry.

For lunch, she planned to make stir-fried wolf meat with chili, pickled cabbage tofu, a big stew, and bake a few corn pancakes.

The wolf meat she smoked in the mountains a few days ago could indeed be preserved for a long time, without worrying about it spoiling.

Lu Yuanfeng continued to assist Mu Shuangshuang, while she cooked, he managed the fire.

A meal took just two incense sticks of time.

Once done, the family gradually came back.

Every day, Yuanbao roamed around with Little Zhi; Xiao Han followed them, reading books nearby, the three children were inseparable, like true brothers.

Recently, Mu Shuangshuang hadn't paid close attention, but the three children had grown sturdier.

Their skin color used to be sallow, and their cheeks lacked flesh.

Now, their faces had more meat, and their complexion was much rosier, Mu Shuangshuang felt an immense sense of satisfaction.

"Hurry and wash your hands, then go inside and call Dad, your Yuanfeng brother and I are going up the mountain to take a look."

Mu Shuangshuang said to Little Zhi, who came in last.

Little Zhi rushed forward, washed his hands, and ran to Mu Dashan's room.

Leaving the third branch's courtyard, Mu Shuangshuang asked, "Fengzi, how many trees do you think those Huang Brothers can chop? It's been all morning!"

"Shouldn't be too little. The Huang Brothers might be sly, but they also have some strength. Maybe the trees they've chopped are enough to make a wooden outhouse."

"Alright! Let's hurry up and take a look!" Mu Shuangshuang urged.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng went to the foot of Niuwei Mountain, but they didn't see as many trees as they expected.

Not even a single tree branch, meaning the Huang Brothers hadn't made a trip down the mountain yet.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly felt that the two might have run away.

Hesitating whether to check up the mountain, two figures, one fat and one thin, appeared at the mountainside, carrying a thick tree trunk panting.

"They're here, Fengzi!" Mu Shuangshuang pointed to the mountainside.

"Shuangshuang, I'll go up to help, you wait at the foot of the mountain."

Lu Yuanfeng climbed the mountain, soon reaching the mountainside, and with someone helping, the wood was quickly brought down.

This was not the first tree, there were four remaining trees placed at the mountainside, after a few trips, they finally transported it all down.

Chapter 464: No More Sneaking Around

The Huang Brothers collapsed on the ground, their limbs seemingly limp, unable to move.

"Bosses, we're exhausted, really exhausted..." Huang Er panted like a cow.

To be fair, Huang Er truly has tough skin like Huang Da claimed; just within two days, despite being bruised, he could walk, run, jump, and even work again!

"Indeed, chopping trees is really not a job for humans!" Huang Da chimed in.

"Alright, I know you've worked hard, so I've prepared lunch at home, let's eat first!" Mu Shuangshuang teased.

Upon hearing her, Huang Er, who was feigning death on the ground, promptly stood up.

"Really? Really? There's food? Bro, let's go!"

This guy turns happy in just three seconds!

Huang Er now showed no sign of exhaustion, he rushed ahead alone but quickly returned.

"Boss, I don't know where your house is..."

"Just follow me!" Mu Shuangshuang laughed.

Watching Huang Er now being funny and comical, who would have thought that two days ago, he almost endangered Fengzi and himself?

The four returned home, coincidentally Yu Si Niang had also set the table.

For these sudden guests, Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan looked somewhat reserved, casting glances at Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

After all, Huang Da and Huang Er didn't look like good people.

With their daughter and future son-in-law mingling with such people, any parent would worry.

"Mom, this is Huang Da and Huang Er from Tie Dao Village, they're hunters just like Fengzi."

"They may look like bad guys, but they're not. You don't have to be reserved, Mom and Dad."

Mu Shuangshuang proactively introduced Huang Da and Huang Er.

The two politely greeted Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang.

However, Huang Er from the start had his eyes fixed on the pile of spicy wolf meat.

Yu Si Niang noticed this and knew he was hungry, so she spoke up, "Everyone, let's dig in!"

With Yu Si Niang's words, Huang Er started eating ferociously, like a wild wolf.

The meal seemed like a battlefield; once everyone was done, the table was a mess.

Luckily, everyone ate their fill.

But indeed, the Huang Brothers had quite a large appetite.

A pot of wild vegetable and sweet potato rice was completely finished, along with the ten corn pancakes, leaving half not even remaining.

Luckily, there's a one-month trial period. Mu Shuangshuang thought to herself, after a month, she'd have to find another job for the brothers, or they'd definitely eat her poor!

In the afternoon, Lu Yuanfeng brought the Huang Brothers to start sawing wood. The sawn wood couldn't be used immediately; it had to be soaked in the river for two days to solidify, then dried.

Fortunately, since they were building a latrine, it wouldn't require months, up to ten days soaking is sufficient.

In other words, after ten days, the latrine can be built in their farmland.

After soaking the wood in the creek not far from Mu Shuangshuang's courtyard, the Huang Brothers returned home.

They said they were heading to town to find some short-term work to sustain themselves.

They now pledged to Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng to stay on the straight path, no longer stealing, and promised to come over whenever needed.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng moved the chicks to Lu Yuanfeng's bamboo mountain in the afternoon, sprinkling realgar around to prevent snakes from eating them.

Lai Mi also moved into Lu Yuanfeng's home to help take care of the chicks.

As for Little Black, Little Zhi couldn't bear to part with her, so she was kept at home.

Yet, whether Little Black was home or not didn't make much difference, as Little Zhi would take her to Yuanbao's place daily; the few of them would find a clean spot in the bamboo forest to relax.

They'd spend the whole morning there, only heading home by lunchtime.

Finishing all these tasks, it was already dusk, the sky hanging a beautifully orange salted duck egg yolk.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng originally planned to go together to the village gate to wait for Matchmaker Sun, but were intercepted by Xia Guagua as soon as they stepped out.

No one knew what was wrong with Xia Guagua today, for once not scolding her, Mu Shuangshuang found this odd since this woman typically flips out upon seeing her.

"Sister-in-law, what are you looking at?" Xia Guagua asked gently, her face carrying an innocent smile.

Yet this "sister-in-law" made Mu Shuangshuang's skin crawl.

Xia Guagua had been eyeing Fengzi for ages; how could she possibly accept her as sister-in-law?

No good deed goes unpunished; Mu Shuangshuang continued to scrutinize Xia Guagua.

Xia Guagua wore a jade-green dress embroidered with a few bamboo sticks; today's attire made her seem more dignified than usual.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly felt that Xia Guagua had always worn new clothes lately, when she used to wear nearly washed-out old skirts.

Occasionally a new garment, though evidently not of particularly good quality.

"Brother Yuan Feng, Sister Shuangshuang, I've thought it through; there's no point in forcing things. Instead of futilely believing Brother Yuan Feng would be with me, better to face facts."

"I've spoken to my mother about changing my surname soon; I'll also be surnamed Lu from now on!"

Once Xia Guagua changes her surname to Lu, she and Lu Yuanfeng won't have any chance together.

While cousins could marry under the Da Ning Dynasty, siblings with the same surname on a family tree couldn't; otherwise, it'd be committing a grave crime.

Even so, Mu Shuangshuang felt no affection towards Xia Guagua.

This woman, even while speaking conciliatory words, showed no sign of remorse in her eyes.

Lu Yuanfeng never showed any affection for her, yet Xia Guagua stubbornly assumed otherwise.

Seeing Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang staying silent, Xia Guagua employed her trump card.

"Brother Fengzi, last night, I asked my mom and learned about the past events..."

"You know about the past events?" Lu Yuanfeng anxiously asked Xia Guagua.

His eyes showed eagerness and hope. When it came to his mother's matter, Lu Yuanfeng lacked a bit of reason, though anyone would struggle with it.

"Yes! But I can only tell you, not that I don't trust Sister Shuangshuang, but regarding this matter..."

Xia Guagua left the rest unsaid.

Though Mu Shuangshuang sensed Xia Guagua was likely playing tricks, she couldn't step back now.

"Fengzi, you should hear Xia Guagua out; I'll head to the village gate."

The matter with Matchmaker Sun needn't be disclosed to Xia Guagua, since she wasn't trustworthy.

"Alright! I'll come to find you later."

Lu Yuanfeng's words reassured Mu Shuangshuang; Lu Yuanfeng wasn't foolish, any deception by Xia Guagua would surely be seen through.

With that thought, Mu Shuangshuang went to the village gate at ease.

"Brother Yuan Feng, let's talk inside the house!"

Once Mu Shuangshuang left, Xia Guagua's address immediately changed, becoming considerably more intimate.

Lu Yuanfeng's face showed a hint of displeasure.

"Can't we discuss it outside?"

Chapter 465: Wang Fugui Plays Dirty

"Brother Yuan Feng, I do want to, but this matter is really too big. What if someone hears about it?"

Xia Guagua bit her lip, deliberately putting on a troubled expression.

"Right now, it's just you and me in the courtyard, no one else." Lu Yuanfeng shook his head.

Lu Yuanfeng is a particularly principled person, once he says something, he generally doesn't change his mind.

"Since Brother Yuan Feng doesn't trust me, I'll leave!" Xia Guagua turned to leave but was stopped by Lu Yuanfeng just as she reached the courtyard gate.

"Wait, let's go to the main room to talk!"

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Mu Shuangshuang waited at the village entrance and soon saw Matchmaker Sun dragging her plump body, holding a string of Copper Coins, occasionally biting them to check if they were real.

She walked very slowly, each step leaving a deep footprint; Mu Shuangshuang watched her, counting three hundred eighty-six steps until she reached her.

The distance was not far at all.

Upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Matchmaker Sun's first reaction was a shiver, retreating several steps.

"What... what... what are you up to?" Matchmaker Sun asked.

"Not up to much, it's just my hands are a bit itchy lately, don't know how to stop the itch."

With that, Mu Shuangshuang swung the wooden stick in her hand.

Matchmaker Sun already had a shadow in her mind from being beaten by Mu Shuangshuang before. With Mu Shuangshuang suddenly blocking her way with a stick, she became even more scared.

She turned to run away.

But unfortunately, she was too fat, and just as she turned, Mu Shuangshuang grabbed her hair.

The intense pain on her scalp made Matchmaker Sun beg for mercy instantly.

"Auntie, I was wrong, please don't grab me and hit me, okay? I'm just an old bag of bones, can't take the stick..."

"Just spare me, treat me like a fart, let me go, and when you get married, I won't want a matchmaker's red envelope."

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang not letting go, she changed her tune again. "I'll give you a red envelope... won't that work?"

Matchmaker Sun had been a matchmaker for almost thirty years, seeing all sorts of people, but none made her as scared as Mu Shuangshuang.

"Alright, I'm just scaring you, I won't really beat you!" Mu Shuangshuang was particularly satisfied with Matchmaker Sun's submission.

"I have a few questions for you, you must answer honestly, or if you dare lie, I won't hit you, I'll just break your wrist and ankle tendons, making you spend the rest of your life in bed." Mu Shuangshuang threatened.

Matchmaker Sun cried out even louder.

"Stop rambling, tell me, how much was the bride price when Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle, Lu Zizhang, got married?"

Matchmaker Sun's eyes darted around, and soon reported a number.

"Five taels!"

"So much? I remember it was famine during that time, how could it be so much?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"I can't really say, it's someone else's business!"

Just as Matchmaker Sun spoke, the stick pressed against her waist.

"Matchmaker Sun, we've known each other for so long, you know I like to be tight-lipped. If you tell me, I won't tell anyone else.

If you don't say, I'll tell the whole village you are untrustworthy, randomly telling others, spilling customers' secrets, the bride prices of various families, you've told me all.

By then, your matchmaker reputation will be ruined and I'll let my second aunt replace you. Anyway, my second aunt is good-looking and eloquent."

In Er Gui Village, the bride prices of each family, unless the host family is willing to say, generally matchmakers can't tell others, as it concerns industry trust.

If Matchmaker Sun were painted this way by Mu Shuangshuang, there'd be no one who'd still want Matchmaker Sun to be a matchmaker.

Matchmakers are indeed hard to find, but not impossible, nobody wants their family's assets to be known.

And Mu Shuangshuang even said she'd find someone to replace Matchmaker Sun, which made Matchmaker Sun even more scared.

"I'll say, I'll say! Actually, your boyfriend's father didn't care for his wife and was a heavy gambler, owing a lot of money. Plus, uh, her fourth uncle, Lu Zizhang, wanted to marry."

"That Lu Zizhang kid conspired with Old Sir Lu to let his sister-in-law remarry, calling it a remarriage, you know the ins and outs of it..."

Over the years, Matchmaker Sun had never disclosed this matter to others as it was the only time she considered selling a married woman.

"So you sold her?"

Mu Shuangshuang nearly bit her silver teeth off, no wonder everyone in the Old Lu Family spoke evasively; everything Lu Zizhang had was exchanged for Lu Yuanfeng's mother.

"Didn't sell... didn't sell..." Matchmaker Sun quickly shook her head.

"You're fooling me, without selling that fool where'd the money for a bride come from? Who repaid Lu Xiao's debts?"

Mu Shuangshuang tightened her grip on the wooden stick, she was very angry now.

She wanted to beat those bastards from the Old Lu Family to death.

What kind of mind comes up with such a deed.

"It's a coincidence, back then, that landlord prepared money, I remember it was twenty-five taels, quite a lot, nobody else had that price mainly because the Lu family's eldest daughter-in-law looked like a flower, having two kids yet looked like an eighteen-year-old girl with no difference."

Matchmaker Sun wanted to praise Lu Yuanfeng's mother but stopped seeing Mu Shuangshuang's terrifying gaze.

"Originally, it was all agreed, but Lu Yuanfeng's mother ran away, went up Niuwei Mountain, and couldn't be found after a few days, so the Old Lu Family told the landlord she was taken away by wolves. Maybe the landlord did like Lu family's eldest daughter-in-law, he didn't take back the bride price."

Mu Shuangshuang's grip on the stick tightened again.

With a blank expression, she asked, "Who were involved in the matter back then?"

"Since it wasn't glorious, only Old Sir Lu, Old Lady Lu, and Lu Family's Old Fourth knew. Lu Xiao knew too, but he's only concerned with money, doesn't care about anything else."

Having learned what she wanted, Mu Shuangshuang felt her steps became heavier.

When the Old Mu Family wanted to sell her, she hadn't felt this upset.

But since it involved Lu Yuanfeng, her entire body ached terribly.

Mu Shuangshuang felt somewhat lost, not knowing how to tell Lu Yuanfeng.

Right now, she was eager to see Lu Yuanfeng, to talk to him.

Maybe she was too absorbed, she didn't even notice someone approaching her from behind.

When Mu Shuangshuang realized, her vision went black, and she collapsed.

Wang Fugui tossed the stick aside, cursing.

"Little wench, I've waited for this chance how long, today I'll show you what I'm made of!"

Wang Fugui kicked Mu Shuangshuang, then hoisted her up.

It was twilight, but people were cooking and eating, so mostly everyone was at home, and Wang Fugui took a shortcut avoiding people.

Even if he encountered someone, given Wang Fugui's intimidating looks, no one dared stop him.

Wang Fugui swaggered ahead, dragging the person along!

Chapter 466: Fengzi Gets Angry

But even so, they were still seen by someone.

And this person was no other than Aunt Zhang, who had previously stolen Lu Yuanfeng's meat. Combined with the fact that Mu Shuangshuang had turned Ma Houhou's face into a honeycomb, Aunt Zhang had long been wishing to skin Mu Shuangshuang alive.

"Oh wow, this pair of adulterers, hugging each other, let's see how I'll teach you a lesson today!"

Aunt Zhang coincidentally bumped into Wang Fugui and Mu Shuangshuang while she was stealing vegetables from someone else's field.

Aunt Zhang snuck behind Wang Fugui, stealthily like a thief.

Carrying the person on his back, Wang Fugui walked forward step by step.

But as he walked, he felt something was amiss, his whole body felt uncomfortable.

Even his breath felt short. He just thought the person on his back was too heavy, not considering that half an hour ago, he had drunk a cup of tea at Xia Guagua's house.

That tea was the one Xia Guagua had drugged Wang Fugui with.

The thought that Mu Shuangshuang would soon become the village's laughingstock, dragged to be drowned in a pig cage by the villagers, made Wang Fugui incredibly happy.

This whole scheme was initiated by Xia Guagua seeking out Wang Fugui.

She would hold back Lu Yuanfeng, then drug him; once they succeeded, she'd have her mother catch them in the act. By then, it would be difficult for Lu Yuanfeng not to marry Xia Guagua.

Once Lu Yuanfeng married Xia Guagua, she'd serve Wang Fugui for life in secret!

And Wang Fugui's job was to knock Mu Shuangshuang unconscious, and throw her into a deserted house they'd prepared beforehand. Then Xia Guagua would find someone to violate Mu Shuangshuang and lead the villagers there.

Seeing such a dirty scene, the villagers certainly wouldn't be kind to Mu Shuangshuang.

The deserted house had been adorned by Wang Fugui, purposefully making it look like Mu Shuangshuang and her adulterer had long been meeting there; once known, Mu Shuangshuang would have no face to stay in Er Gui Village.

Everything was going as Wang Fugui had planned. Xia Guagua was holding back Lu Yuanfeng, and he had indeed knocked Mu Shuangshuang unconscious.

As soon as they entered the deserted house, Aunt Zhang left.

The setup complete, it was time to catch them in the act!

Meanwhile, Lu Yuanfeng entered the house but did not close the main room's door.

He was wary of Xia Guagua trying something tricky.

With a satisfied smile, Xia Guagua remembered her mother once saying that men are hypocritical, and one just needs to stand naked before them.

She walked to the door, closed it, and as Lu Yuanfeng stood up ready to question her, Xia Guagua began unbuttoning her clothes one by one.

Lu Yuanfeng realized what Xia Guagua intended, angrily pushed her away.

"Xia Guagua, are you crazy? Is a woman's reputation something you can just ruin like this?" Lu Yuanfeng turned his back on Xia Guagua, making sure not to take advantage of her.

He wouldn't take advantage!

Lu Yuanfeng turned around to grant Xia Guagua a last shred of dignity, allowing her to put her clothes back on.

But instead of repenting, Xia Guagua tried to embrace Lu Yuanfeng's waist.

Fortunately, Lu Yuanfeng was quick to react, jumping away as soon as she came near.

"Brother Yuan Feng, what on earth does that woman have that's better than me? You don't even glance at me? Do you really dislike me so much?"

At this time, Xia Guagua's clothes were entirely shed, her fair skin exposed to the air, but even so, from start to finish, Lu Yuanfeng never took a single look at her.

To Xia Guagua, this was a kind of humiliation.

When a woman is naked, yet the man doesn't even look, that's the ultimate disgrace.

Hatred had filled Xia Guagua's mind entirely.

She resented that she had met Lu Yuanfeng first.

It was clearly him who was gentle with her at first.

How did everything get snatched away by that little bitch?

That little bitch has nothing good—no looks, no figure, no money!

"Xia Guagua, I've already told you before, I like Shuangshuang, from beginning to end. You used to be my sister, now you're a stranger!"

Put on your clothes right now and get out of my house. I'll pretend none of this happened today, otherwise, I won't be polite to you!"

Lu Yuanfeng said fiercely, realizing that in matters of the heart, he had to be utterly decisive, without leaving room for any misunderstanding by others.

Xia Guagua dared to do such a thing only because she believed she still had a chance. Thinking of this, Lu Yuanfeng added another sentence.

"If you're really eager to get married, I'll have Matchmaker Sun find you a man, and you can do whatever you like with him. If this happens again, I'll make sure the whole village knows what you've done!"

If not for considering Xia Guagua's reputation, Lu Yuanfeng would have opened the door long ago.

The breath of the person behind him was heavy with anger. After a while, he heard the sound of clothes being put on, and when the sound stopped, he suddenly opened the door.

Xia Guagua cried out. She hadn't put her clothes on properly since Lu Yuanfeng didn't see her body before; she managed to hold back. She thought if he really saw, he definitely wouldn't push her away.

So Xia Guagua had merely pretended to put on her clothes, knowing Lu Yuanfeng had good hearing.

Squatting on the ground, Xia Guagua felt as if her heart were being pricked with needles, tears falling unchecked.

Lu Yuanfeng walked out, shut the door.

Throughout it all, he never looked at Xia Guagua once.

Heaved a sigh; he missed Shuangshuang, and needed to go find her at the village entrance.

After crying, Xia Guagua put on her clothes and opened the door, just in time to see Lu Yuanfeng leaving the courtyard.

Summoning some unknown courage, Xia Guagua shouted.

"Don't leave, don't go find that bitch!"

"Xia Guagua, mind your words, calling her bitch over and over, then what are you? Don't think I won't hit a woman!"

Lu Yuanfeng rushed up and shoved Xia Guagua against the wooden stake used to support the roof of his house.

Her back stung intensely for the first time Xia Guagua realized that Lu Yuanfeng could also lay hands on women, and it was because of that woman.

"Hahaha... Lu Yuanfeng, if you have the guts, kill me! You still don't know, do you? That bitch and Wang Fugui are lovers, and right now she might still be *** beneath a man. If you go now, you should still be able to catch her beneath Wang Fugui..."

Xia Guagua's youthful and tender face had already twisted.

She let out a hideous laugh, and Lu Yuanfeng's hand tightened around her neck.

"What did you do to Shuangshuang? You bitch, speak..."

The grip tightened continually, Xia Guagua's face turned purple.

The aura around Lu Yuanfeng was filled with lethal chill. For the first time, he despised someone so much that not even the enemies he had killed on the battlefield evoked such revulsion in him.

This woman deserved to die!

"What could I have done? Clearly, it's that bitch who's unsatisfied with loneliness, it'd have been any man's turn..."

Chapter 467: Capture

"Smack!" Lu Yuanfeng raised his hand and slapped Xia Guagua across the face, leaving a huge swelling on Xiaxia's cheek.

"You better hope Shuangshuang is fine, or I'll take your life!"

With that, Lu Yuanfeng stormed out.

He ran straight to the village entrance, but there was no sign of Mu Shuangshuang there.

There was no one at her house either. Lu Yuanfeng didn't dare make a fuss because if Shuangshuang was really taken by Wang Fugui, her reputation would be ruined if the situation escalated.

Right now, Aunt Zhang was spreading the news all over the village.

"Everyone come and see, the shameless girl from Old Mu Family's Third Branch is fooling around with that boy from the Wang Family. They're in that dilapidated house of the Old Man's doing dirty deeds. Everyone, come with me to see."

The place she was publicizing wasn't anywhere else but right in front of the Old Mu Family's courtyard.

Yu Si Niang was in the kitchen preparing dinner. When she heard Aunt Zhang's words, she grabbed a spatula and dashed out.

"Pah! You rotten hag, stop talking nonsense. My daughter is pure and innocent. How dare you slander her, you heartless wretch! I'll kill you today, I, Yu Si Niang, swear it!"

The matter concerned Mu Shuangshuang's reputation, and Yu Si Niang couldn't stand it, no matter how useless she was.

"Look, everyone, this mother isn't doing the right thing and is even covering up for her daughter's misdeeds. What will happen to this Third Branch!"

Aunt Zhang clapped her hands as she spoke.

In a short while, quite a few villagers had gathered.

Mr. Mu heard the commotion and was so angry that his nose bent out of shape.

"Mrs. Zhang, you vile woman, my granddaughter is not someone you can slander. Third daughter-in-law, tear her mouth apart for me!"

It was the first time Mr. Mu publicly acknowledged Mu Shuangshuang as his granddaughter and even defended the Third Branch.

However, Mr. Mu's attitude didn't mean others shared the same sentiment.

Old Mrs. Mu was the first to jump out and dissociate herself.

"Well, that shameless girl could do such a disgraceful thing. Let me, an old woman, declare on behalf of the Old Mu Family that we've long split from the Third Branch. What they do has nothing to do with us!"

With one sentence, Mr. Mu's face darkened, and he strongly countered, for if Shuangshuang's name was sullied, even the Old Mu Family couldn't protect her.

This old fool is out of her mind!

Yu Si Niang's heart felt like it had been slashed.

"Mother, Shuangshuang is your granddaughter. How can you slander her with outsiders?"

"You dog, what nonsense are you spewing! Since we've split, that shameless thing isn't part of our Old Mu Family anymore. Besides, I'm not the one who said that girl is fooling around with a man. What use is it to blame me?"

It's said that being betrayed by an enemy at most leaves a painful wound that will eventually scab over.

But when someone close betrays you, it can empty you entirely, even your heart.

Mu Dashan rushed over to support the stumbling Yu Si Niang.

"Mom, you said it yourself today that we, the Third Branch, have no ties with the Old Mu Family. I'll remember that!"

Mu Dashan's face turned icy cold, with a chill running through him from head to toe.

"Mrs. Zhang, you must apologize today for slandering my daughter. If you don't, I, Mu Dashan, will lay down my life to see this through with you!"

"Hey, are you two taking turns to mess with me? Let me tell you, this isn't how you defend your daughter. If your daughter truly did such a thing, it would be a disgrace not only to your family but to our whole Er Gui Village."

"If you want to prove your daughter's innocence, let her come out and confront me. If she's at home, I, Mrs. Zhang, will say nothing and immediately kneel and kowtow to you all!"

Aunt Zhang spoke with conviction, and with Old Mrs. Mu chiming in, the villagers shouted to follow Aunt Zhang.

"No one is allowed to go. If you do, it means you're doubting my daughter!" Yu Si Niang stepped forward to block Aunt Zhang.

The two started pushing and shoving until they broke into a full-on brawl, with Yu Si Niang desperately clawing at Aunt Zhang's face, causing Aunt Zhang to howl.

Suddenly, the fight became furious and intense.

The villagers were stunned. Yu Si Niang, usually gentle and amiable, was now fighting with everything she had.

"Mrs. Zhang, if you hurt Si Niang, I'll fight you to the death!" Mu Dashan, red-eyed, charged forward but was held back by Mr. Mu.

Mr. Mu turned to Mu Danian and Mu Dazhong, who were watching on the sideline.

"What are you standing there for? Pull the Third daughter-in-law away and don't let this foul-mouthed hag injure her!"

Yet neither of them moved until Zhang Huai Shu and Zhao Gouzi arrived to separate them.

Aunt Zhang wailed while Yu Si Niang's eyes burned red, seemingly ready to fight Aunt Zhang again.

The scene grew more chaotic, time passing by the minute, and people began steadily heading to the dilapidated house, as many were eager to see the drama unfold.

Lu Yuanfeng, upon hearing the news from the villagers, was nearly driven insane.

Meanwhile, the villagers blocked his way.

"Fengzi, you're with that girl every day. Does she really have a thing with Wang Fugui?"

Someone leaned in to ask.

Lu Yuanfeng's eyes turned cold, glaring at the person fiercely.

"Watch your mouth. Shuangshuang hasn't done anything to you, so why tarnish her reputation? If I hear similar words again, don't blame me, Lu Yuanfeng, for being heartless!"

Lu Yuanfeng angrily walked away, but only he knew how weak his steps felt.

He tried his best not to show his anxiety to the outsiders.

In these moments, if he lost his cool, even if Shuangshuang was fine, it would lead to misunderstandings.

When he was finally out of sight from the people behind, Lu Yuanfeng began to run wildly.

Sweat had already soaked through him, and now it poured like rain.

Finally reaching the front of the abandoned house, Lu Yuanfeng heard the voices of a man and a woman yelling from inside.

His mind roared, exuding an aura of bone-chilling frost, just as he was about to charge in.

A small hand grabbed his.

Lu Yuanfeng was stunned; the person holding his hand was none other than Mu Shuangshuang.

"Shuangshuang, you..."

"Shh, let's hide and watch the show!"

Mu Shuangshuang looked at Lu Yuanfeng like that, her eyes bright as the stars.

Suddenly, Lu Yuanfeng felt his heart calm down.

But another kind of thrill surged within him.

"Mm!"

Thankfully, this was an old house, surrounded by overgrown weeds and many trees. Mu Shuangshuang led Lu Yuanfeng up a tree.

No one would expect two living souls to be sitting among the dense branches, taking in the scene below.

"Here they come!" Mu Shuangshuang squinted her eyes and said.

The villagers arrived one after another.

It seemed they, too, heard the voices of a man and woman from inside the house.

Some villagers cursed, others became extremely excited, and a few who cared for Mu Shuangshuang turned pale with fear.

They all feared the person inside was Mu Shuangshuang.

Chapter 468: The Consequences of Adultery

"I told you, that shameless girl and Wang Fugui are inside, let's go in and catch these two adulterers!"

Aunt Zhang shouted.

A few sleazy guys from the village were already moving, but the Old Mu Family, held back by Mr. Mu, did not step forward.

Yu Si Niang, upon hearing the commotion inside, was so frightened that her face turned white and she collapsed, saved from falling only by Mu Dashan and Zhao Yun beside her.

The first person who rushed in quickly came out.

He shouted, "It's not Shuang in there; it's the girl from the Old Lu Family and Wang Fugui!"

"What? Impossible, I clearly saw Wang Fugui holding the shameless girl!" Aunt Zhang's face was full of disbelief.

Impossible!

How could it be?

I clearly saw Wang Fugui carrying that shameless girl into this abandoned house.

"I don't believe it!" Aunt Zhang rushed inside and upon confirming it was indeed not Mu Shuangshuang, she immediately panicked.

Thinking about boasting in front of so many people in the village just now, she was terrified and hurriedly ran outside.

Up in the tree, Mu Shuangshuang sat steadily in Lu Yuanfeng's arms, the two of them observing everything below.

As the voices grew more numerous and chaotic, Lu Yuanfeng's clenched fists made a cracking sound, yet she remained relatively calm.

"Fengzi, let it go for now. I'll tell you the truth later; don't be angry now!"

Mu Shuangshuang's voice was so low that only Lu Yuanfeng could hear it.

Listening to Shuangshuang's soft voice, Lu Yuanfeng immediately relaxed his fists.

"Shuangshuang, I'm at fault. I'm sorry for making you suffer!" Lu Yuanfeng lowered his voice, filled with remorse.

"Dummy, I already said I'm fine. I'm only the one who bullies others; there's no one able to bully me. It was that dog Wang Fugui who hit my head with a stick; it still hurts!"

Mu Shuangshuang spoke pitifully, and Lu Yuanfeng felt his heart might break.

He raised his hand and gently touched the back of Shuangshuang's head.

His touch was so gentle that Mu Shuangshuang almost felt nothing.

This time, Lu Yuanfeng made a vow in his heart that in his life, he would never allow anyone the chance to hurt Shuangshuang!

Yu Si Niang, hearing the village people's words, suddenly regained her strength.

She rushed into the house, seeing Wang Fugui embracing Xia Guagua, the two almost completely stripped, with villagers brazenly staring at Xia Guagua's fair skin.

Xia Guagua cried desperately, shouting not to, but Wang Fugui had taken the drug she gave him and lost all rationality.

For the first time, Yu Si Niang didn't play the good person.

But she drove the villagers away, leaving a few young wives.

Yu Si Niang ran outside, coincidentally spotting Aunt Zhang who had already separated from the crowd.

She rushed forward, grabbing Aunt Zhang's hair and cursed, "Didn't you just say the person inside was my daughter, was my daughter? You old wench ruining my daughter's reputation, today I will fight you!"

Beside her, Zhao Yun also joined in, pinning Aunt Zhang's arms while the other slayed her face.

"Slap slap" dozens of smacks later, Aunt Zhang's hair was undone, her face swollen.

Even up in the tree, Mu Shuangshuang could feel the intense force of the outburst.

She couldn't help but cheer inside!

Well done, that's how you should treat gossipy people, hit them!

"Do you know how hard my daughter works? Fourteen years old, bearing the family's burdens alone, waking early and working late in town, rushing back by noon."

"She walked so many mountain roads, earned money, but never spent it on herself, is there any daughter in your families who suffers like mine, who is as sensible as mine."

"Our third branch may be honest, but we're not cowards; we won't stand for your slander, you black-hearted woman, I'll beat you to death if I don't!"

Yu Si Niang slapped, each one filled with her dignity and anger.

Aunt Zhang's constant moaning begged Yu Si Niang to release her, but not only did Yu Si Niang refuse, she became even more ruthless.

The villagers felt she deserved this; Aunt Zhang's actions this time were too much, possibly even deserving government intervention.

In the Da Ning Dynasty's laws, ruining a daughter's reputation could result in a lifetime in prison or execution.

Upon hearing the commotion, Gu Jiulian and the Old Lu Family barged in, separating Wang Fugui and Xia Guagua, kicking Wang Fugui unconscious.

Once freed, Xia Guagua clung to Gu Jiulian, crying.

"Cry cry cry, all you know is to cry, after doing such shameless things, you can still cry. If I were you, I'd kill myself!"

Gu Jiulian pushed Xia Guagua away.

"Mother, it wasn't me, it wasn't me, it was that bitch Mu Shuangshuang who harmed me, it was her..."

Xia Guagua had come to the abandoned house after Lu Yuanfeng chased after her because she couldn't wait to see Mu Shuangshuang being ruined by Wang Fugui.

But when she arrived, she was knocked out by someone, and when she woke, Wang Fugui was already on her.

Originally, Gu Jiulian wanted to kill Xia Guagua today, but they arrived in time, and though Xia Guagua's clothes were torn off, real harm hadn't occurred; dress her up, and she could still marry.

So Gu Jiulian's anger transformed into scolding.

Xia Guagua's clothes were torn, she could only take Old Lady Lu's outer garment, and since everyone ignored the old woman, they didn't care.

Originally in the Old Lu Family Xia Guagua was freeloading, but now they despised her even more.

Old Lu Family's sisters-in-law carried Xia Guagua out, leaving Wang Fugui naked and unconscious on the ground.

In this situation, regardless of the wealth the Wang Family had in the village, even if his father came, there'd be no mercy, saying no saving meant no saving.

"Mother, let's go, let's go..."

Leaving the abandoned house, villagers pointed at Xia Guagua, and Yu Si Niang had stopped beating, fearing she might kill someone.

Aunt Zhang lay on the ground like a rag.

Her breath only coming out, not going in.

"Go back, go where, Wang Fugui has done such a shameful thing to you, can your mother still not get justice for you?"

Getting justice was actually scheming to have the Wang Family marry Xia Guagua, giving Gu Jiulian some dowry money.

"Mother, I won't marry Wang Fugui, I don't want to..." Realizing Gu Jiulian's intent, Xia Guagua shook her head desperately.

"You don't want? Silly girl, this is not up to you!" Gu Jiulian reached out and pinched Xia Guagua's waist, giving a hard pull.

Xia Guagua cried out in pain.

She cried, but crying was useless; Gu Jiulian was determined to cash in.

Up in the tree, Mu Shuangshuang had seen everything she wanted; now, she waited for the villagers to leave before exacting her revenge.

After a while, Old Wang Family's people arrived.

Chapter 469: I Like Shuangshuang Like This

The villagers were still gathered together, unwilling to leave.

With such big, explosive news, who would want to leave?

Xia Guagua and Wang Fugui had essentially become the talk of the village for the whole year.

Xia Guagua's reputation was ruined; she hadn't married yet, but was having an affair with a man, and in this abandoned house too.

Some villagers even said the house had clearly been renovated, implying they had been involved for some time and were intentionally scandalizing the Third Branch of the Mu Family's daughter, only to be discovered by Aunt Zhang.

When Old Master Wang arrived, the villagers didn't lower their voices; they spoke so audaciously even in his presence.

"My son?" Old Master Wang asked with some grief and indignation.

"Old Master Wang, you should be more concerned about my daughter. Your son tricked her into this broken place, intending to do something improper. If it wasn't for the villagers discovering it in time, my daughter would have suffered greatly!"

Gu Jiulian's single sentence exonerated Xia Guagua of any blame, making the incident entirely Wang Fugui's responsibility.

Old Master Wang, who was already only half-listening, found the situation consistent with his son's behavior, unsure how to explain.

He could only turn to his wife and his niece, Shen Rong, for support.

"Aunt Gu, things are as they are now, and the most important thing is to take them back home. With so many people watching, it's a disgrace to both the Wang and Lu Families."

Shen Rong's mind was sharper than most here.

Upon arrival, she noticed that some men in the village were looking at Xia Guagua with lecherous eyes, as if she wasn't wearing clothes.

Moreover, Xia Guagua was wearing an old woman's outfit, which inevitably led Shen Rong to think in the wrong direction.

"What Miss Shen said isn't wrong. My daughter, who is of a different surname, has only me as a mother to care for her all these years. If I turn a blind eye, won't my daughter be bullied to death?"

Gu Jiulian proved through her actions that she deserved an explanation today.

"Aunt, go inside and take care of my cousin. My uncle and I will discuss with Aunt Gu here."

Shen Rong naturally carried a strong, commanding presence that was difficult to refute when she spoke.

Even though she was raised in the Wang Family, she never felt out of place but instead considered the Wang Family her home.

"Let's talk business now, Aunt Gu—what do you intend to do?" Shen Rong asked seriously.

At this point, even Old Master Wang was unrestrained, as his son was being cared for.

This was completely different from the last time.

Last time, Wang Fugui hit Yu Liulang, and Mu Shuangshuang taught Wang Fugui a lesson.

Old Master Wang not only didn't hold them accountable but also paid for treatment.

Old Master Wang felt it was his son's fault.

But this time, upon careful consideration, Old Master Wang felt that no single party was to blame.

If this daughter of the Lu Family hadn't had some alliance with his son, they wouldn't have chosen such a secluded place.

This abandoned house had been empty for years; why else would anyone come here?

So the gaze Old Master Wang directed toward Gu Jiulian and Xia Guagua carried some scrutiny.

Gu Jiulian fearlessly stood tall.

Even though the embarrassing situation involved her daughter, she would not be defeated.

"What can be done? My daughter's reputation is ruined; no one wants to marry her anymore. Your son must take responsibility! Either prepare a compensation of one hundred silver taels, or marry my daughter with a dowry of thirty silver taels and an elaborate eight-carriage procession!"

As soon as Gu Jiulian spoke, the villagers exploded.

A dowry of thirty silver taels? What kind of pomp is this? In all these years, such a gesture had never been seen in the village. At most, villagers paid three to five taels for a bride, and well-off families might pay as much as ten taels, breaking the bank.

This... this was highway robbery!

Shen Rong shared similar sentiments with the villagers, believing Xia Guagua should be the one to suffer losses. How did Gu Jiulian have the audacity to demand such a dowry?

"What? Unwilling? Let me tell you, everyone in the village saw what happened today. It was your son, Wang Fugui, who forced my daughter. If you don't admit it, I'll report you to the government!"

Gu Jiulian was stubborn, demanding what she wanted, and if not given, she would surely cause a commotion.

Under the tree, one farce after another unfolded.

It was the matter between Old Lu Family and Old Wang Family this time, with Old Mu Family starting to withdraw.

Mr. Mu asked worriedly.

"Si Niang, where exactly is Shuang? Why haven't I seen her?"

Yu Si Niang's heart rang with alarm. "Dad, what do you mean? Still suspecting our Shuang? I've said it was the Lu Family's girl, and it has nothing to do with our Shuang!"

"You woman can't show a bit of care?" Old Mrs. Mu said.

"Enough! You old hag, the day's business hasn't been settled with you; I'll teach you a lesson when we get back!" Mr. Mu shouted at Old Mrs. Mu, taking the Mu Family back home.

Gu Jiulian couldn't reach a consensus with the Old Wang Family.

Gu Jiulian refused to compromise, no matter how much Xia Guagua cried and fussed.

In the end, the village head intervened; the matter would be discussed further when Wang Fugui woke up, and everyone dispersed.

Once the villagers left, Mu Shuangshuang jumped down from the tree.

Lu Yuanfeng followed closely behind!

"Shuang, what exactly happened just now? Tell me!"

Lu Yuanfeng was anxious, very anxious, extremely anxious!

"Let's go to your backyard and chop some bamboo; we'll talk while walking!"

Mu Shuangshuang told Lu Yuanfeng that she was hit by Wang Fugui with a stick but wasn't knocked out due to his lack of strength. So, she decided to see what Wang Fugui was up to.

He ended up carrying her to the abandoned house.

After a while, Wang Fugui was affected by the drug, and Mu Shuangshuang made a move, tying him up just in time!

Coincidentally, the first person to arrive was Xia Guagua. Mu Shuangshuang hid in the shadows, watching Xia Guagua's reaction to Wang Fugui and realized Xia Guagua was behind the mischief.

What followed was a natural progression; Mu Shuangshuang knocked out Xia Guagua and untied Wang Fugui.

She couldn't care less about what transpired between them; Xia Guagua had set her up!

After explaining everything to Lu Yuanfeng in detail, Mu Shuangshuang lowered her head, fiddling with her fingers.

"Fengzi, do you think I was too harsh on Xia Guagua, destroying her reputation?" Mu Shuangshuang looked expectantly at Lu Yuanfeng, caring about his opinion!

This lifetime, Xia Guagua could forget about marrying a decent person; it was impossible since many men in the village had seen her body.

Her choices were to marry Wang Fugui or find a pre-married man with children or become a concubine!

But in the Da Ning Dynasty, it was better to live simply, even in poverty, as a wife to the poor than as a concubine. Xia Guagua's life was seemingly ruined.

Despite that, Mu Shuangshuang didn't regret it deep down; whoever devised such a harmful scheme should bear the consequences themselves!

Chapter 470: Seeking Justice

"No, if it were me, I might be even more ruthless!"

Lu Yuanfeng shook his head.

If it were him today, he would definitely have cut off that thing of Wang Fugui's, and killed that woman Xia Guagua, even if... even if it meant facing a lawsuit, he wouldn't have minded!

Understanding Lu Yuanfeng's thoughts, Mu Shuangshuang knocked on his head.

"Are you silly? If something bad really happened, sacrificing yourself wouldn't change anything."

"Moreover, many things can't be done impulsively. You need to use your brain. Impulsiveness won't change the current predicament; you can only find a solution by staying calm!"

Mu Shuangshuang patiently explained.

As soon as she finished speaking, Lu Yuanfeng pulled her into his embrace.

"Nothing bad will happen; you're not allowed to say that."

Lu Yuanfeng said anxiously, making Mu Shuangshuang tremble because she noticed that Lu Yuanfeng was shaking.

He was scared!

The dark things in her heart suddenly vanished, and Mu Shuangshuang gently patted Lu Yuanfeng's back.

"It's okay, it's all over, let's go back!"

As for matters regarding Lu Yuanfeng's mother, Mu Shuangshuang didn't know how to bring it up.

She also didn't want him to associate with the people of the Old Lu Family, but she knew what happened was indeed not good.

Oh well, when the boat reaches the bridge, it'll naturally straighten; she'll tell him the truth tonight.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng each cut some bamboo sticks and carried them to Mu Shuangshuang's house.

At this moment, the yard was peaceful, the little black pig was happily munching on mud, Little Zhi and Yuanbao were playing in the courtyard.

From the kitchen, waves of cooking smoke rose, and Yu Si Niang was preparing dinner.

Upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, Little Zhi and Yuanbao approached them.

"Second brother, Sister Shuangshuang, you're finally back. Uncle Dashan and Si Niang were worried sick just now, and Yuanbao missed you too!"

Yuanbao ran over cheerfully, throwing himself into Lu Yuanfeng's arms.

Only then could he show how much he valued his second brother, Yuanbao thought giddily to himself.

How could Lu Yuanfeng not know? He knocked on Yuanbao's head, looking helpless: "Alright, Yuanbao, you need to act like a man, take responsibility, why are you always running to me?"

"No way, no way, in front of second brother, I'm just a kid, you need to take care of me and buy me food!"

The last sentence made Little Zhi laugh.

"Brother Yuanbao is so shameless, actively asking for food, like a little piglet!"

"Little Zhi sister, I'm not asking just for myself, I asked for you too, and also for Xiao Han."

Little Yuanbao declared righteously; reaching such a shameless level was truly rare.

"Alright, aren't you hungry? Get ready to eat!" Mu Shuangshuang's clear, gentle voice rang out.

In the kitchen, Yu Si Niang, who was still cooking the last dish, came rushing out in a hurry.

Mu Dashan too.

Both looked excited, not that they didn't trust Shuangshuang regarding that matter, but because they were scared.

Because they loved her so much, they couldn't bear to hear about even the slightest hurt.

"Dad, Mom, what's wrong? Why are both of you coming out? Did we make you worry by coming back late?"

"I was just cutting some bamboo on the mountain with Fengzi, we need bamboo to support our bean trellis later on, so I prepared in advance."

Winter beans are a specialty dish, and Mu Shuangshuang had to start preparing the necessary items ahead of time.

"You have no idea, Mom was scared to death just now!" As Yu Si Niang recounted the previous events to Mu Shuangshuang, she kept clutching her chest.

Mu Shuangshuang went up and comforted her several times before finally calming Yu Si Niang down. "Mom, just treat what they say as nonsense. Even if I were blind, I wouldn't fancy that fool."

"If anyone says it again, tear her mouth apart for me!" Mu Shuangshuang, worried about Yu Si Niang being at a disadvantage, added another comment.

"I know, today I gave Zhang Family's daughter-in-law a good beating! What kind of person is she, slandering you, and even came to our house."

Mu Shuangshuang subconsciously touched her nose.

This wasn't entirely correct, Aunt Zhang wasn't exactly slandering her because Wang Fugui had indeed carried her before.

But if blame was to be placed, it should rest on her malicious intent when faced with this kind of situation.

"Mom, is dinner ready? I'm hungry!"

Eager to change the subject and indeed feeling hungry, Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Ah, no, I still have a dish to fry..."

Yu Si Niang hurried back inside, where the cabbage had already burned and started to smell bad.

She quickly washed the pot, picked three eggs, and made a bowl of egg soup.

The golden egg skins floated on the soup, with a bit of scallion added, making the color look extremely inviting.

Seeing the eggs, Mu Shuangshuang remembered that she still needed to buy some preserved eggs.

The seventy preserved eggs last time had all been given to Xue Mansion, earning seven hundred coins, and she had made another 120 when she got back.

But it was still far from enough, there's also bean sprouts!

Their selling rate far surpassed that of Jiu Si Xuan's cold noodles.

Although they could also make eight or nine hundred coins on one trip with the cold noodles, earning about three taels of silver a month.

Currently, though, Mu Shuangshuang's household had nothing at all, buying rice, oil, and salt quickly used up the money.

Fortunately, she had already started saving for Xiao Han and Yuanbao's school fees now.

Then there's the money for dried meat, as the teacher here demanded a gift, and it had to include dried meat.

Who knows if these scholars couldn't afford it themselves, insisting on eating the students'.

Of course, this kind of thought was just Mu Shuangshuang talking to herself in her mind.

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After dinner, as night fell, Mu Shuangshuang took the opportunity to see Lu Yuanfeng off by heading out!

In the dark of night, she and Lu Yuanfeng set off towards Old Wang's house.

The issue of Wang Fugui ambushing her with a club was still stuck in Mu Shuangshuang's throat, so if she didn't get things even today, she couldn't sleep.

Lu Yuanfeng felt the same way, if he didn't seek vengeance today, he feared he wouldn't sleep well the entire night.

Old Wang's courtyard wall was rebuilt right after the opera troupe ended, and it was much taller than before.

Fortunately, there was a fatal flaw in his courtyard wall!

There was a towering camphor tree growing beside it, making it easy to enter Wang's courtyard.

The Wang family kept a dog, so Mu Shuangshuang saved a piece of wolf meat from dinner, putting in some knockout drugs she got from Zhang Huai Shu, ensuring the dog would sleep through the night.

When they arrived at the Wang family's place, Lu Yuanfeng climbed up the wall first; his power was strong, and he didn't need the camphor tree.

Sitting on the wall, hiding among the tree branches, he tossed the wolf meat in front of Wang's dog. Once it ate, it became drowsy.

Soon, it fell silent.

Lu Yuanfeng jumped down from the wall, ready to catch Shuangshuang so she wouldn't fall.

Unfortunately, Shuangshuang wasn't weak either.

After some exercise and better nutrition, Mu Shuangshuang had gained some muscle, and by using the camphor tree, she climbed up the wall as light as a swallow, jumped into the Wang family courtyard, and didn't make a sound.

Lu Yuanfeng gave her a thumbs up, clearly impressed with Shuangshuang.

"Fengzi, I should know where that beast's room is!"

During the opera, Mu Shuangshuang noticed where Wang Fugui came out from.

And since Wang Fugui was a man and unmarried, he generally wouldn't stay in the inner courtyard, so Mu Shuangshuang felt she should know where it was.