

Folly 471

Chapter 471: Advancing and Retreating Together

After some searching, Mu Shuangshuang indeed found Wang Fugui's room.

However, the light in his room wasn't on yet.

Mu Shuangshuang guessed that he must not have woken up yet.

Gently jumping in through the window into Wang Fugui's room, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng slowly approached Wang Fugui's bedside.

By the moonlight, Mu Shuangshuang saw that the person on the bed was undoubtedly Wang Fugui.

The two exchanged a look, and Mu Shuangshuang found a cloth to blindfold Wang Fugui and then stuffed his smelly socks into his mouth.

"That's enough..."

Mu Shuangshuang whispered, and Lu Yuanfeng stepped forward and landed a punch on Wang Fugui.

With a "crack" sound, one of Wang Fugui's teeth was knocked out.

Waking from the pain, he discovered his mouth was stuffed, his eyes were blindfolded, and he couldn't see a thing.

Punches rained down on him like raindrops.

"Mmmmmm..."

Wang Fugui struggled to scream, but all that came out was this kind of "mmmmmm" sound, completely unintelligible.

After Lu Yuanfeng finished teaching him a lesson, he stepped aside, giving the stage to Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't use her hands, she took down the latch from Wang Fugui's door and smashed it on Wang Fugui's head twice.

"Bang bang~" Wang Fugui passed out directly.

"Phew~ finally vented my anger!" Mu Shuangshuang let out a long sigh and said, looking at the limp rag on the bed.

"Yeah, let's get out of here quickly!" Lu Yuanfeng said dotingly.

The two retraced their steps back to Old Wang Family's yard, and seeing the big fat dog lying in the shadows of the yard, Mu Shuangshuang felt playful again. She had Lu Yuanfeng carry the dog out of the Wang Family's yard, heading straight to Old Lu Family.

The mastermind behind this scene was Xia Guagua, so she had to send Xia Guagua a gift as well.

Getting into Old Lu Family was much easier than Old Wang Family; although Lu Yuanfeng didn't live at the old house, he knew who lived in which room.

By now, it was actually very late at night, but fortunately, Mu Shuangshuang had Yu Si Niang and the others go to bed first, otherwise, who knows how much trouble there'd be.

At some point, a few gusts of cold wind had begun to blow through, whistling, but it wasn't cold, in fact, it was quite refreshing.

Mu Shuangshuang followed Lu Yuanfeng to Xia Guagua's door. Because it was Xia Guagua's boudoir, Lu Yuanfeng didn't go in; only Mu Shuangshuang did.

She laboriously carried the fat dog from Old Wang Family, found two ropes in Xia Guagua's room, tied up the dog's legs, and tucked the dog into Xia Guagua's bed.

Thinking of Xia Guagua waking up early tomorrow to find a dog in her bed and being scared out of her wits, Mu Shuangshuang was so excited she couldn't sleep.

But indeed, she couldn't sleep tonight.

The matter with Lu Yuanfeng was still blocking her heart, she really didn't know when the right moment would be.

Leaving Old Lu Family, Lu Yuanfeng escorted Mu Shuangshuang back.

On the road, bathed in the white moonlight, neither of them spoke.

Outside the third branch's courtyard, Mu Shuangshuang finally spoke.

"Fengzi, if I knew a secret that someone desperately wanted to know, but telling them would surely hurt them, should I tell them?"

"If it were me, I would want to know that secret, even if it would hurt." Lu Yuanfeng answered truthfully.

"I see, Fengzi, come to my house early tomorrow, I have a gift for you!"

...

...

The next day, Mu Shuangshuang climbed out of bed with huge dark circles under her eyes.

Outside the window, birds chirped softly atop the tree branches, creating a harmonious scene full of life.

Upon leaving the room, in the yard, Lu Yuanfeng was carving wood. He must have been here for a long time, as Mu Shuangshuang had overslept today, having just fallen asleep in a daze in the morning.

Upon waking, she found that Yu Si Niang had already started cooking breakfast, so she went back to sleep.

And so, it was already this late by the time she got up.

"Why didn't you wake me up earlier?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"You've been tired these past few days, more rest is good for your health!" Lu Yuanfeng chuckled.

Looking at someone so concerned for her, Mu Shuangshuang sighed.

She went back inside, and came out holding a piece of xuan paper and a brush, along with ink and an inkstone she had bought for Xiao Han.

Xiao Han had always been reluctant to use the brush and paper that Mu Shuangshuang bought for him, always using a stick to scribble on the ground.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang, Lu Yuanfeng was puzzled, he really couldn't understand why Shuangshuang was bringing these things out.

"Fengzi, do you still remember what your mother looks like? I'll help you draw her."

Drawing portraits is a demanding skill, especially based solely on others' descriptions. Mu Shuangshuang couldn't guarantee that, after so long without drawing, she could still do it.

A long time ago, her skills in portraiture were never particularly stable, and now, without continuous practice, who knows how far they'd deteriorate.

Lu Yuanfeng fell into memories; his mother was a particularly gentle woman. Although the family was poor, and she wore coarse clothes, she was always clean, without a single speck of dirt on her.

Lu Yuanfeng remembered how she looked while sitting under the willow tree, holding Yuanbao and singing.

He had kept that image in his mind for five years.

"My mother has an oval face..."

Lu Yuanfeng spoke very slowly, as if recalling each detail.

Between, Yu Si Niang came to call for breakfast, but seeing how focused and serious they were, she couldn't bring herself to interrupt.

The entire morning, under Lu Yuanfeng's descriptions, Mu Shuangshuang modified and adjusted, and finally completed the portrait of Lu Yuanfeng's mother.

At the moment she put down the brush, Mu Shuangshuang felt utterly exhausted, but she still handed the xuan paper to Lu Yuanfeng.

"Thank you, Shuangshuang, it's very much like her! Really, it really is!"

The portrait didn't have much technique or embellishment, just that familiar face.

"Fengzi, there's something, I might have to tell you..."

Mu Shuangshuang shared what Matchmaker Sun told her, without omitting a word. He was right last night, he wanted to hear the answer.

Moreover, she had no right to decide his life for him.

Lu Yuanfeng's emotions in his eyes shifted from disappointment, to anger, to despair, and finally filled with hope again.

"Shuangshuang, let's find my mother together, let her live a good life! I'll go and tell the village chief later, I want to cut ties with the Old Lu Family!"

Cutting ties wasn't just splitting the family.

This was a dead end, but Lu Yuanfeng was willing.

After all, keeping such unrighteous relatives around was disgusting.

"Fengzi, I'll always stand by your side. If you want to find someone, I'll accompany you. We'll visit more places, and eventually, we'll find her."

"Mm!" A warm feeling spread through Lu Yuanfeng's heart, his greatest fortune was meeting Shuangshuang.

His greatest happiness was having someone by his side during his toughest times, and that person was Shuangshuang!

"Let's go, I'm starving, haven't had breakfast yet!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

At this point, her stomach was indeed growling, if she didn't eat soon, she'd starve.

Chapter 472: Severing Ties

The lunch was porridge cooked in the morning, which had gone cold by noon, served with a bowl of pickled cucumbers and a bowl of pickled beans, it was a rare delicacy.

Mu Shuangshuang served Lu Yuanfeng a big bowl of porridge and a bowl of pickled beans, pouring half into his porridge bowl.

"I pickled these beans myself. They go perfectly with porridge!"

Lu Yuanfeng didn't say anything, picked up his bowl, and scooped more than half of it with a spoon for Mu Shuangshuang.

He smiled, "I've had enough. You don't need to just think of me."

The two of them, looking at each other, enjoyed their meal sweetly.

After the meal, it was already noon. Lu Yuanfeng asked Mu Shuangshuang to write another letter to sever ties with the Old Lu Family.

Since Mu Shuangshuang didn't know how to write many traditional characters, she had to flip through books, and after looking through all the books Liu Zian gave her, she finally pieced together a letter of separation within a few lines.

It was like gathering the seven Dragon Balls to summon the dragon, and Mu Shuangshuang was exhausted after gathering all those characters.

Unreasonably, her face showed signs of fatigue and weariness.

Lu Yuanfeng felt deeply sorry and his gaze toward Mu Shuangshuang was as gentle as water.

If he wasn't worried about Shuangshuang's family returning, Lu Yuanfeng would have surely held Mu Shuangshuang tightly.

"Let's go!"

Lu Yuanfeng stood up. This time, he wanted to clear Shuangshuang's name and let the people of the Old Lu Family know that he would not be bullied by just anyone.

...

...

The backyard of the Old Lu Family!

The whole morning, the Old Lu Family was in chaos. Xia Guagua woke up early and was startled by a dirty fat dog beside her, which made her scream sharply.

The events of the day before were still vivid, and several daughters-in-law of the Old Lu Family couldn't help but curse at Xia Guagua, accusing her of being undiscerning and not even sparing a dog.

Later, it was Gu Jiulian who came into the house and scared those sisters-in-law away with a kitchen knife. As for the fat dog, Gu Jiulian chopped off its head on the spot and let Lu Xiao skin it. Right now, the dog meat was being cut and prepared to be cooked.

The Old Lu Family, not having any Champion Scholars but scholars, wasn't living poorly, at least better than Mu Shuangshuang's family.

They wouldn't necessarily have to wait for a big festival or for relatives to visit to eat meat.

Besides, Lu Yuanfeng would hunt, and sometimes they asked for some meat and were never refused.

Everyone enjoyed this privilege, even Old Sir Lu was pleased with it.

"Sister-in-law, when will this dog meat be ready?" the fourth daughter-in-law of the Lu Family, Mrs. Chen, smacked her lips and asked greedily.

"Go away, fourth daughter-in-law. Our big house isn't obliged to serve you good food."

Gu Jiulian swung her spatula, forcing Mrs. Chen to retreat.

The whole Old Lu Family, the only ones easy to get along with were the second house, Lu Dadong and his wife from the Liu Family, who barely came out.

Lu the Third and Lu the Fourth were the hardest to deal with, and their wives were the same, adding Gu Jiulian made the Old Lu Family disharmonious.

Lu Yuanfeng led Mu Shuangshuang into the courtyard.

The dog's skin was carelessly thrown at a corner of the yard, and Mu Shuangshuang was stunned. Originally, she just wanted to scare, scare Xia Guagua, but didn't intend to harm the dog...

Inwardly mourning for a minute, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng continued to walk forward.

"Oh, who do we have here? Isn't this our village's pig-slaying hero? Oh, he's also bringing a young wife, what brings you here? Begging for food, drinks, or debts?"

Mrs. Chen, having just been put at a disadvantage, wanted to take it out on Lu Yuanfeng.

After all, in her impression, although Lu Yuanfeng was high-handed, he wouldn't talk back if scolded.

A verbal fight would ease the liver pain inflicted by Gu Jiulian's anger!

"Even if we were begging for food or drinks, it wouldn't be from you. With your miserable state, you probably can't even feed yourself, poor thing!" Mu Shuangshuang made a face at Mrs. Chen, nearly making her faint with anger.

"You brat, when did the affairs of our Old Lu Family become any business of an outsider like you?" Mrs. Chen asked persistently.

"Aunt Chen, what Shuangshuang is involved in is my business, she has the right! But you have no right to speak about me."

With one sentence, Lu Yuanfeng blocked all of Mrs. Chen's retreat routes.

Mrs. Chen felt today was unlucky for her; first, encountering Gu Jiulian who wouldn't let her eat, and now being countered by two young children.

How infuriating!

Lu Yuanfeng didn't care about the cursing people behind him and went straight into Old Sir Lu and Old Lady Lu's room.

It was during the old couple's nap time, so both were lying in bed.

Seeing Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang, Old Lady Lu got up from the bed, while Old Sir Lu snorted coldly, not even turning his head.

Clearly, he held this grandson in no regard.

Lu Yuanfeng wasn't frustrated, he took out the letter of separation written by Mu Shuangshuang from his pocket and addressed Old Sir Lu on the bed.

"Grandpa, I came today to remove myself from the Old Lu Family. From now on, I'm not part of the Old Lu Family!"

Upon hearing this, Old Sir Lu climbed up from the bed in shock, his face filled with disbelief.

"Fengzi, what are you saying? What are you doing?"

At this moment, Old Sir Lu lost his imposing demeanor, the supreme arrogance, and asked his grandson like an ordinary old man.

People say, when a child wants to care for their parents, the parents are gone. What if the parents don't love you, hurt the one you love most, what would you do?

"Grandpa, I want to sever ties with the family and break off relations with you!"

Lu Yuanfeng's words were resolute, each containing his disappointment in Old Sir Lu.

A person who would sell his wife for his son is unworthy of respect.

"Fengzi, do you want your grandpa to die? Do you know what you're saying? Is this brat egging you on? Grandpa always taught you not to be with people of poor character, did you forget?"

Mmp, Mu Shuangshuang really wanted to tear these people's mouths apart. Called a brat, called a brat, everything was blamed on her.

The eternal scapegoat, huh?

"Grandpa, this is the last time I'll call you that. Sign this contract today, and I'll record it with the village head. From now on, keep others from coming to my house for broken food."

"Besides, Shuangshuang isn't as boring as you think. I'd rather she egged me on to see you clearly sooner."

Lu Yuanfeng always protected Mu Shuangshuang.

No one could hurt his people.

Whether it was his family or anyone else.

"Fengzi, did someone say something to confuse you? Listen to your grandma, others want to harm our family, don't you dislike this family? Your grandpa and I let you live at your home. If you feel you don't have land, your grandpa and I have two acres; we'll give you our land."

Old Lady Lu tried to salvage the situation, although by now she had roughly guessed Fengzi's reason for coming.

"No need, I won't take anything bought with the money my mom was sold for! Old lady, don't persuade me either, I won't pursue past matters, and from now on, I'm not your grandson, and you're not my grandma."

"Also, don't use harming your body to threaten me. You know it doesn't work; in my heart, except for Shuangshuang and Yuanbao, no one else matters to me!"

Chapter 473: Clear Calculations

Lu Yuanfeng's words seemed to have drained him of half his strength. Fortunately, beside him, there was someone always accompanying him, giving him the courage to persevere.

Old Sir Lu didn't know why, but suddenly he got angry and shouted at Lu Yuanfeng.

"You say leave and just leave like that, ignoring an old man like me completely?"

"These years, raising Yuanbao, how much money have we spent? You give me every penny you've got."

Lu Yuanfeng's face suddenly turned cold.

"Old Sir Lu, are you really intending to settle scores with me by saying this? When I left home to join the army, the court gave a subsidy of one tael of Silver."

"When I returned, the court gave me ten taels of Silver, plus the money from the military camp, I gave you twenty taels."

"Every day I hunted, the game I brought back, just that alone was worth at least one tael of Silver."

"Yuanbao was raised by you for six years, how much did he eat from you, that it wasn't worth these twenty-two taels of Silver?"

Lu Yuanfeng felt pain in his heart, not because of what Old Sir Lu did that hurt him, but because Yuanbao had suffered too much under the care of these wolves all these years.

Fortunately, he had returned!

Fortunately, he refused the benefits given by the military camp, even if it meant he would not be happy being honored in the future.

Old Sir Lu glared viciously at Lu Yuanfeng.

"When your mother gave birth to you, I should have smashed that dog thing dead! Disloyal, unfilial, be careful or you'll be struck by lightning!"

Having said so much, Old Lu was still unwilling to press his fingerprint, Lu Yuanfeng confronted him, his gaze sharp and unyielding.

Mu Shuangshuang suddenly let go of Lu Yuanfeng's hand, formed her hands into a megaphone shape, and shouted.

"Everyone come and see, selling the daughter-in-law to get the son married, breaking news at the Old Lu Family..."

"Damn girl, shut up!" Old Sir Lu hurried to get down but stepped into the air, falling to the ground.

The people of the Old Lu Family all came out into the yard.

Lu Yuanfeng's fourth uncle, the idiot, wanted to cover Mu Shuangshuang's mouth and charged at her.

Mu Shuangshuang dodged, and he missed, pouncing on thin air.

"Everyone come and see, the heartless eunuch, selling his daughter-in-law..."

"Lack of virtue and shame, losing all conscience..."

Mu Shuangshuang shouted while dodging.

The villagers' ears were like dogs', as soon as there was any commotion, they became excited and started looking around for a target.

This time, Mu Shuangshuang's voice was loud enough, and the topic sensational enough, a big crowd was on their way.

"Stinky girl, I'll fight you!"

Lu Zizhang picked up a vegetable knife from somewhere and charged toward Mu Shuangshuang.

Inside the house, Lu Yuanfeng watched this scene, grabbed a stool, and rushed out. Before he could take action, Mu Shuangshuang was one step ahead, kicked a stone with her foot, and it smashed towards Lu Zizhang's knee.

"Crack", Lu Zizhang knelt on the ground, the vegetable knife in his hand cut a line across his chest, and blood started gushing out. "Ah... ah..."

Lu Zizhang went crazy, continuously making monosyllabic sounds.

In the yard, several people were scared out of their wits, Lu Yuanfeng acted as if he hadn't seen it, turned, and went back into the house to continue forcing Old Sir Lu to press his fingerprint.

Things had come to this point, Old Sir Lu was angry but that was useless, he pressed his fingerprint on the contract and threw the Xuan paper to the ground.

"Get lost, get lost, and never ask for old Lu Family again!"

After saying this, Old Sir Lu lay back down on the bed, huffing in anger. Lu Yuanfeng picked up the letter of severance from the ground, took Mu Shuangshuang's hand, and left.

Lu Zizhang was still howling, Mrs. Chen hugged him and cried a lot, but who could blame?

No one could be blamed, except to blame this idiot for being so ruthless.

Outside the Old Lu Family's yard, Lu Yuanfeng let out a long sigh.

"Shuangshuang, I've finally gotten rid of this family, but from now on, I only have you and Yuanbao as my family." Lu Yuanfeng murmured to Mu Shuangshuang.

"Fool, you still have your mother, you still have my parents, Xiao Han and Little Zhi, my sixth uncle, those people are all your family, whenever you need, they will help you!"

Mu Shuangshuang's words gave Lu Yuanfeng a new strength.

"Hmm, you're right, I still have so many family members, let's go find the village head first and handle this matter."

Severing ties is easier than dividing property, they went to the village head Wang Zhi's house, Lu Yuanfeng explained his intentions and reasons, and the village head agreed to handle it.

Deep down, Wang Zhi was quite moved by what Lu Yuanfeng said.

He hadn't been village head for that long, but he just didn't know of that matter.

"Fengzi, don't worry, I'll take care of this for you."

"Thank you!" Lu Yuanfeng said.

At this moment, Mu Shuangshuang spoke up. "Village head, you know a lot of people, could you help us check with the village heads of the villages you know, and help us keep an eye out if anyone has seen Lu Yuanfeng's mother?"

After all, time has spanned a long period, relying solely on individuals is like finding a needle in a haystack.

Moreover, in ancient times, with inconvenient transportation, finding someone was even harder.

If there are acquaintances, going from person to person, it should be much easier.

Wang Zhi was surprised by Mu Shuangshuang's cleverness, indeed, a village head knows the people in his village the best, he knows exactly who comes and goes.

"I know several village heads, but your portrait is not enough..."

"Don't worry, we'll go back and continue drawing, and send you plenty more."

Mu Shuangshuang promised, and only then did Wang Zhi set his mind at ease.

"Alright then, we'll settle it like this! You go back and wait for my news."

...

...

Time flew by for several days, Mu Shuangshuang spent any available time tirelessly drawing portraits of Lu Yuanfeng's mother, fortunately, many people were willing to help.

However, there still wasn't any useful information.

Today was the day arranged to build the outhouse, early in the morning, the Huang Brothers arrived.

In just ten days, Mu Shuangshuang noticed a big change in the Huang Brothers, they looked much paler.

"What happened to you all, did you apply powder on yourselves, getting so pale?" Mu Shuangshuang teased.

"How could it be, boss, we found work in town!"

"What work?" Mu Shuangshuang asked curiously.

"Working as bouncers in a casino, no need to go out every day, just watching over in the casino, whoever causes trouble, we brothers will beat him to death." Huang Er said proudly.

Next to him, Huang Da couldn't win against his words.

"You're such an idiot!" Huang Da said helplessly.

"How am I an idiot, can't I talk about what I do, we're not killing or arsonists, aren't we working with our own strength?" Huang Da puffed out his chest, shouting loudly.

"Huang Da, what job you do is your choice, Fengzi and I won't stop you, but we still hope you work in a good environment."

Such a place as a gambling house is ultimately filthy, best to avoid it!

Chapter 474: Building a Thatched Cottage

After breakfast, the three men carried the dried wood to the fields, heading towards the spot Mu Shuangshuang had already chosen for the latrine.

She had also reported to the village chief. The fields were quite a distance from the houses, so every time people went out to work, they either had to hold it in until they got home,

or go relieve themselves halfway, which for hardworking folks took 10 to 20 minutes. But for lazy ones like Mu Dazhong, one trip to the latrine took an entire afternoon or morning.

In the end, Mu Shuangshuang was doing a good deed.

At this moment, it was the busy season in the cotton fields. The first batch of cotton was the best, good for making quilts and winter clothes.

Since there wasn't much rain yet, once it started raining more, the cotton would get soaked, turn black, and sell for much less.

Following behind Lu Yuanfeng, Huang Da, and Huang Er, Mu Shuangshuang saw many people in the cotton fields picking cotton. Large white blooms twisted in their palms before being placed into burlap sacks.

Of course, there were also many people in the paddy fields, mostly digging ditches to prevent the rice from toppling over once the cold wind came.

The three men unloaded their tools from the cart under a big willow tree.

This was the spot where villagers would rest after work, and it was also where Mu Shuangshuang chose to dig the latrine.

"Let's get started!"

Huang Er picked up a shovel and began digging.

Huang Da grabbed a hoe and followed suit.

Farmers' latrines were simple to make: just dig a pit and bury a jar.

Lu Yuanfeng was digging a second pit a little farther away as Mu Shuangshuang suggested. One pit for men and one pit for women made it easier to manage.

In the end, it was to prevent peeping. After the last incident with Xia Guagua, it was clear there were some sleazy people around who might take a peek.

Separated like this, if a man went to the women's latrine, he would be criticized and have no ground to argue.

You have to admit, Mu Shuangshuang had thought it through.

But as soon as they started digging, some loafers came over to ask.

"Hey Fengzi, what are you guys doing here? Digging a pit to bury someone?" A rascal named Er Lengzi, chewing on a blade of grass, came over to ask.

"Burying shit!" Lu Yuanfeng replied seriously!

Er Lengzi laughed so hard his stomach hurt.

"Burying shit, my gosh, you're trying to kill me with laughter? Burying shit, I thought you were burying that stinky girl."

"Stinky girl" was a label the villagers forced on Mu Shuangshuang. Obviously, Mu Shuangshuang was doing better than many, and the third branch was gradually rising, but some people just liked to use such terms to describe her.

It seemed like doing so made them feel happier.

"What did you say? Say it again!"

The three men surrounded Er Lengzi, and Huang Er, more direct, swung his hand and knocked out one of Er Lengzi's front teeth, leaving him spitting blood.

"You dirty dog, and you call her that? Open wide your dog eyes and see how beautiful and good-looking our boss is."

"You dog, I bet you don't even have a wife. Looking like a smelly horse, there's no way you have a wife. And if you did, she would be with Old Wang next door. Your face isn't even as nice as my butt, yet you dare to talk nonsense."

After he finished speaking, Huang Da delivered two more slaps, leaving Er Lengzi face down on the ground, not daring to move.

Mu Shuangshuang was in a great mood now. She should have taught these people a lesson long ago, daring to call her such names to her face.

Hmph, they're asking for trouble!

Mu Shuangshuang squatted down in front of Er Lengzi.

"Ugly thing, remember, I, Mu Shuangshuang, have backers. If I hear anyone in the village calling me that again, I'll take your dog life!"

After saying that, Mu Shuangshuang didn't forget to give Er Lengzi a heavy kick.

Er Lengzi was already crying; he realized he messed with the wrong person.

Regret, oh how he regretted it.

But why should he be responsible for the villagers' mouths?

Mu Shuangshuang knew what Er Lengzi was thinking and kindly added.

"I can't stand you; you deserve your bad luck!"

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang was satisfied, Lu Yuanfeng picked up Er Lengzi and tossed him into the cotton fields far away, followed by a few more cries.

"Scram!"

Lu Yuanfeng ordered coldly.

Ignoring his lost tooth and his badly beaten body, Er Lengzi, clutching his waist, left.

The four of them continued working.

When the beating happened earlier, the nearby workers had already noticed. Once Er Lengzi was beaten, nobody dared to come closer.

The three continued digging. By the end of the morning, the two pits were done, just needing to bring in the jars in the afternoon.

Pushing the cart back, tired from working all morning, the four dragged their weary bodies home, with Mu Shuangshuang helping to carry some odds and ends.

Knowing there was a big task today, lunch was arranged to be cooked by Yu Si Niang, but when Mu Shuangshuang returned, the house was still cold and lifeless.

"I don't know where my mom went. I'll cook for you first."

Mu Shuangshuang said apologetically to the others.

"No worries, we'll just rest. Boss, just find us a spot to relax."

Mu Shuangshuang's home had no main hall and no yard, but fortunately, beneath the old tree where they tied the wild boar was some shade.

Set up a few chairs, a table, and some tea, and it was good for a break.

After arranging everything, Mu Shuangshuang went into the kitchen.

Lu Yuanfeng followed her in.

"Go rest outside. I'll get you some water to wash your face." Mu Shuangshuang didn't want Lu Yuanfeng to light the fire; he worked too hard.

"No worries, I'll get the water myself. Let's cook together, finish early, and get back to work this afternoon."

A trio of laborers at home was already impressive for any household.

Especially since these three were each worth several others, truly admirable.

So Mu Shuangshuang didn't hold back in the kitchen.

Usually, she cooked with little rice, pairing it with sweet potatoes and wild veggies, but when there were many workers, she'd use more rice to give them strength to work.

She had already planned the lunch menu. The dishes were neatly placed on the table, unwashed and untrimmed.

Thinking it over, she decided to check in Mu Dashan's room to see what's going on.

But when she got there, Mu Dashan wasn't there either, and the kids had gone out to play, not showing up until mealtime.

"What's going on?"

While she was puzzled, Mu Dalang's voice came from outside, shouting anxiously, "Shuangshuang, Shuangshuang..."

Mu Shuangshuang's heart skipped a beat, and she rushed out.

"Cousin, what happened, are my parents okay?"

"No, no..." Mu Dalang waved his hand.

"Then what is it?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Matchmaker Sun introduced a wife to our fifth uncle. She's coming for lunch to check out our place. The patriarch bought some good stuff, and they also invited third uncle and third aunt to help out,"

Mu Shuangshuang's forehead was instantly filled with question marks.

The Old Mu Family, inviting the third branch for lunch?

This can't be right!

Chapter 475: Mu Dalian Goes on a Blind Date

"Cousin, are you sure you didn't hear it wrong?" Mu Shuangshuang asked uneasily.

"Mm! I was surprised too. Grandfather and Grandmother are always stingy, but since Third Uncle and Aunt are both here, you should hurry over too!"

Mu Dalang didn't hide anything from Shuangshuang. He said whatever came to mind.

This, in turn, amused Mu Shuangshuang.

But even with Mu Dalang's assurance, Mu Shuangshuang still didn't believe it.

"Cousin, I just won't go. We have guests at home, and I need to cook!"

Only then did Mu Dalang notice the two men, one fat and one thin, sitting under the tree shade in the yard.

Mu Dalang wasn't entirely unfamiliar with them; he saw them from afar last time with Lu Yuanfeng.

"Alright then, I'll go back and tell Grandfather and Grandmother."

Mu Dalang left, and Mu Shuangshuang returned to the kitchen. Before she could fetch water for the Huang Brothers, Lu Yuanfeng had already stepped in.

Of course, Lu Yuanfeng was unwilling to let his soon-to-be wife serve others, so he would rather tire himself out a bit.

When Mu Dalang returned to the Old Mu Family, Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu had been waiting for a long time.

Especially Mr. Mu, who was even more puzzled when he saw no one behind Mu Dalang.

"Why didn't Shuang come? Didn't I ask you to invite her?"

Yu Si Niang stood up upon noticing Shuangshuang hadn't come. "Dad, Mom, I should go back. We have guests today, and I have to cook lunch."

Yu Si Niang had been pulled into the Old Mu family's main room early on and tried returning several times, but the Mu Family wouldn't let her. Now that her daughter was back, she was even more restless.

Mu Dashan felt the same.

He felt as if needles were pricking him, feeling entirely uneasy.

"Alright, Third Brother, Third Sister-in-law, you're just a branch of the family, not severed ties, you need to stay in touch! Last time when your mother sided with outsiders to slander Shuangshuang's name, I already scolded her. Considering her age, let's just let that go!"

Mr. Mu began explaining matter by matter, simply hoping Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan would stay.

Today was a big day for the Old Mu Family; it was the day the matchmaker brought someone. If it worked out, she would become the wife of the Old Mu Family.

Mr. Mu's real purpose was to let the third branch get accustomed ahead of time, because when Fifth marries, they would inevitably need to help out more.

Yu Si Niang didn't understand the intricacies and could only sit awkwardly.

After a while, Matchmaker Sun brought the person over.

The girl was from the Huang Family Village, her family too poor to afford food. Hearing that the Mu Family had money and a scholarly uncle, Huang Bitu told the matchmaker she wanted to take a look for herself.

Whether you're rich or not, one glance will reveal the truth.

Upon entering the main room of the Old Mu Family, Matchmaker Sun began introducing everyone.

"This is Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu. You can call them Uncle Mu and Aunt Mu for now. Once things are settled, you can change what you call them."

Huang Bitu nodded shyly, but her eyes furtively assessed everyone.

Whether rich or not, one can judge by the house and the attire of the family members.

Although the Old Mu Family's earthen brick house wasn't as good as a clay brick one, it was considered good in both Er Gui Village and Huang Family Village.

Looking at their clothes, Mr. Mu wore a set of new clothes only meant for festivities, his hair was neatly combed, and he wore a pair of old-fashioned yet new cloth shoes.

Almost everyone else wore their best clothes, even the third branch was required to wear their finest attire.

In fact, today the best-dressed was surely the third branch. The material was chosen by Mu Shuangshuang, who also personally guided the style, and Yu Si Niang sewed according to the style.

When they stepped out earlier, they were envied by a few sisters-in-law.

Even Mrs. Liu, who usually didn't care much about clothes, took a long look.

Today, neither Mrs. Liu nor Mu Dajiang was present for the meal because they didn't have presentable attire.

Old Mrs. Mu certainly wouldn't let them come.

"Go check on Danian, what's keeping him?" Mr. Mu whispered to Mu Dazhong beside him.

"Dad, Fifth isn't a child. He said he went to relieve himself and would be back soon. It's so hot outside, why make me go?"

"Haha, where's Fifth?" Matchmaker Sun glanced around, asking curiously.

Huang Bitu also noticed that everyone in the room was older and definitely not Mu Danian.

"This..." Mr. Mu hesitated, surely he couldn't admit that his son went to the latrine and hadn't come back all morning, right?

"What's up? Is he shy?" Matchmaker Sun waved the handkerchief in her hand, giggling.

"You wouldn't think it, but Mu the Fifth is apparently a bashful young lad. Never mind, let's take our time and wait, no rush for the meal!"

Actually, it wasn't about being unhurried, but since it was around noon, it wasn't precisely mealtime yet.

Meanwhile, Mu the Fifth was still outside, more precisely, he was with Chen Hong.

Last time, Chen Hong had abandoned Mu Danian and found a secret lover but was discovered by the man's wife, who gave her a harsh beating that became widely known in Tie Dao Village. Now everyone in Tie Dao Village called Chen Hong a coquette and wanted to dunk her in a pig cage.

Even though Wang Tiejiang's family stood up for Chen Hong, they wouldn't give her any good days.

On top of that, Chen Hong heard that Mu Danian was going on a matchmaking visit, and she hurried out to stop him.

"Mu Danian, you heartless man, you said you'd marry me, what's going on now?"

In the cotton field, Chen Hong pounded Mu Danian's chest, angrily questioning.

"My sweetheart, when did I say I wouldn't marry you? It's just that you abandoned me, I'm the one who feels wronged!"

Mu Danian passionately embraced Chen Hong.

He wasn't foolish. His family's introduction was for a wife, and wives shouldn't be spoiled in the vegetable field.

If he wanted spoiling, it should be with someone like Chen Hong.

"Damn, you're pinching me..." Chen Hong's secret area had an itchy hand that refused to stop pinching.

Soon, Chen Hong's body turned soft.

"My nemesis, you really are my nemesis." Mu Danian held Chen Hong and started taking off her clothes until she was completely undressed.

It was midday; no one was in the cotton field, so Mu Danian decided to make it quick. After finishing with Chen Hong, he planned to return, matchmake, and enjoy the best of both worlds.

After a tantalizing moan, Chen Hong lay weak in the cotton field.

Wearing his pants, Mu Danian ran off. By the time Chen Hong regained her strength and dressed, Mu Danian had already returned to the Old Mu Family.

As he passed by the lotus pond, he plucked a lotus flower before heading home.

Mr. Mu was becoming increasingly flustered; it was almost mealtime, yet Fifth hadn't shown up, and if this continued, today's matchmaking would fall apart.

Considering the expenses for today, buying meat and fish, Mr. Mu felt the pinch.

"Mr. Mu, why isn't Fifth here yet?"

"Shouldn't we start eating? Bi Yao has traveled a long way, she must be famished by now."

Matchmaker Sun reminded Mr. Mu.

Chapter 476: Treated Like a Treasure

At this point, Mr. Mu couldn't say anything more.

He simply said, "Let's hurry up and eat, or we'll be hungry!"

At the dinner table, Mu Xiangxiang could hardly wait anymore, constantly eyeing the braised pork with drooling lips.

"Mom, I want to eat meat!"

Old Mrs. Mu, upon hearing this, was about to use her chopsticks to get some food but was stopped by Mr. Mu's gaze.

"What are you doing? It's just our Xiangxiang having some meat, what's the problem?" Old Mrs. Mu said with displeasure.

Mr. Mu felt a bit choked up, having lectured this woman last time, yet today, her old habits surfaced again with no reservations whatsoever.

"Bi Yao, don't mind it. Xiangxiang was born when your Aunt Mu was quite old. Xiangxiang was frail when she was young, and since the day she was born, her mother hasn't let her out of her arms. Plus, Xiangxiang is not married yet, so it's inevitable that she's a bit spoiled."

Huang Bitu shook her head understandingly, "No, I think Xiangxiang is quite nice. I am the youngest in my family, and my brothers are particularly good to me, so I can understand Aunt Mu."

Old Mrs. Mu sported a face full of pride, intentionally throwing a look at Mr. Mu, proving she wasn't wrong as even an outsider supported her.

She picked up a piece of braised pork and put it in Mu Xiangxiang's bowl.

"Here, eat quickly. Your fourth sister-in-law made this; I had her fry it longer so it's a bit crispy and chewy!"

Mu Xiangxiang looked at the still steaming braised pork in her bowl, drooling even more.

She picked up her chopsticks and began stuffing it into her mouth, but as soon as she took a bite, Mu Xiangxiang spat out half of the braised pork.

"Mom, the fatty part is not tasty, I don't like it."

"Alright, alright, mom will get the lean meat for you." Old Mrs. Mu's chopsticks moved like a mole-whacker in the braised pork bowl, stirring up a piece of lean meat after another.

She kept stirring, and even licked the oil on her chopsticks with her tongue, making the whole bowl of braised pork coated with Old Mrs. Mu's saliva.

Mr. Mu was beginning to find it unbearable.

"Old lady, save some for others, Bi Yao hasn't eaten yet."

Old Mrs. Mu was displeased, "There's still some in the bowl, isn't there? Our Xiangxiang hasn't had meat for ages, what's wrong with her eating a bit more?"

After retorting to Mr. Mu, Old Mrs. Mu gazed lovingly at Mu Xiangxiang again.

At this moment, Mu Xiangxiang was chewing on the lean meat in her bowl, oil dripping from her mouth, making slurping sounds with her tongue.

The rest of Old Mu Family harbored such resentment in their hearts!

What sat before them was just Old Mrs. Mu's saliva and fatty meat.

If it were a normal day, they might have just eaten, but now there were outsiders around, and if word got out, how embarrassing would that be?

So no one touched that bowl of braised pork, not even Mr. Mu.

"Xiangxiang, eat slowly, it's all yours. If you want something, tell mom, mom will get it for you."

Mu Xiangxiang nodded while burying her head and eating fervently, making it impossible to distinguish who was the main event and who was the supporting cast at this meal.

Huang Bitu, at this moment, had already decided in her heart that Old Mu Family was not a family to marry into lightly.

It was just too bizarre, with the main match not even showing up and leaving her waiting.

A whole dish served and no one ate, all given to the young daughter; marrying into this family would surely not lead to a pleasant life.

Forget it, it's hard to find a two-legged toad, but very easy to find a two-legged man.

Huang Bitu raised her head and inadvertently caught sight of Mu Dalang, who was seated across the table from her.

Mu Dalang hadn't spoken a word from the beginning till now, and having raised sheep earlier, he naturally exuded a certain tranquil aura.

Huang Bitu couldn't help but glance over a few more times.

She found Mu Dalang especially gentle, eating while chewing slowly, yet his arms didn't lack strength.

Despite not looking muscular, he had muscles, which made a lean person sturdy, unlike those overweight men who had meat but were practically useless, panting even while walking.

In reality, Huang Bitu could have skipped coming today; usually, when a matchmaker arranges a blind date, conditions are set to observe from outside. Huang Bitu was worried it might not be reliable hence she came in person.

Luckily she did come!

The father-in-law and mother-in-law were bizarre, even the young daughter too; being a daughter-in-law in such a family meant suffering.

Once the meal was over, Mu Danian hadn't even returned yet, and within Mr. Mu's heart, waves violently crashed against the shore.

For this affair, he had spent so much money, expended so much energy.

That Fifth, must be up to no good again.

Little did they know, Mu Danian was indeed in a rush to return, except he had a stomach ache halfway.

Went to relieve himself at someone else's outhouse and was mistaken for a thief, chased away without having a chance to pull up his pants, directly fell into the outhouse and got beaten, still couldn't climb out.

After the meal, Mr. Mu chatted with Matchmaker Sun, discussing Huang Bitu's family situation.

Huang Bitu's family had five kids, three brothers and a sister, with the sister married off, but the brothers hadn't yet wed, so naturally, the family conditions weren't well off.

Mr. Mu particularly cherished Huang Bitā's three brothers; men were productivity, with men around, work at home progressed faster.

Later on, when Huang Bitā married over, her brothers would undoubtedly come to help.

Thus Mr. Mu expressed great interest, immediately signaling that he didn't have any objections.

Matchmaker Sun was sharp, aware that Old Mu Family had no objections, but Huang Bitā being a young lady, this needed to be privately asked.

"Mr. Mu, this matter comes to an end today, later when Fifth returns, have a talk with him. Let's find another occasion to arrange a meeting; your family has seen the lady, but the lady needs to meet your Fifth."

To be fair, Matchmaker Sun was rather sensible and fair in arranging matches, at least arranging meetings between the parties.

Much better compared to some matchmakers who make decisions solely based on parental opinion.

"Indeed, a meeting is definitely necessary. Let's schedule a time next... Mu Dazhong..." Mr. Mu initially intended to have Mu Dazhong escort people but feared Mu Dazhong's clumsy mouth might mess up the promising marriage.

"Dalang, help escort Matchmaker Sun and Miss Huang."

"Alright!" Mu Dalang stood up, walked straight to Huang Bitā.

As soon as he approached, Huang Bitā caught a whiff of delightful soap scent from him; clearly a person fond of cleanliness.

Involuntarily, Huang Bitā's impression of Mu Dalang grew better.

Mu Dalang fetched an oil-paper umbrella from home, which Mu Xianxian had left behind last time, its first use by the family.

The trio exited Old Mu Family's courtyard, Mu Dalang handed the umbrella to Huang Bitu.

"Miss Huang, take this!"

Huang Bitu naturally declined, and amidst the refusal, she accidentally touched Mu Dalang's hand, jolting both of them.

They didn't even notice the umbrella falling onto the ground.

Mu Dalang blushed, hurriedly said, "I'll head inside first, Miss Huang, Matchmaker Sun, take care!"

Chapter 477: Seductive Fox

"Bitu, tell Aunt, what do you think of the conditions of the Old Mu Family?"

Matchmaker Sun picked up the umbrella from the ground and handed it to Huang Bitu.

Huang Bitu held the umbrella, feeling somewhat lost for a moment.

Matchmaker Sun had already started to make some calculations in her heart.

This little girl probably wasn't interested in the unseen Mu Danian, but in this Mu Dalang.

Matchmaker Sun was pleased. She was the type who only cared about making successful matches, regardless of whether it was for an uncle or a nephew.

"Bitu, since Aunt has taken the matchmaker's fee from your mother, whatever I do, I have to keep it confidential for you. Otherwise, my reputation as the top matchmaker would be ruined, wouldn't it?"

Matchmaker Sun particularly valued her reputation. Although she was gossipy, she mostly spread rumors that were hard to confirm, drawing people in but leaving them with nothing concrete to grasp.

This was how Matchmaker Sun managed to expand her business, covering the matchmaking needs of several nearby villages.

However, her only failure was with Mu Dashan's daughter.

Thinking of her, Matchmaker Sun still felt a twinge of pain.

She was a difficult person to deal with, very harsh.

"Aunt Sun, please return it to me, I don't like this family, let's look at another one,"

Huang Bitā shook her head and expressed her wish.

"What? Don't like them? What's not to like? Could it be the old lady's favoritism towards the youngest girl? Honestly, I don't like it either, but that girl is someone else's daughter, no matter how much she's spoiled, she's still someone else's."

"Don't be fooled by the fact that the Old Mu Family isn't very glorious right now. They have a son participating in the Autumn Examination. If he passes, the whole family will move to the county. Won't your brothers be able to afford a bride then?"

Matchmaker Sun carefully analyzed the pros and cons for Huang Bitā, casually addressing her main concern.

Huang Bitā had three brothers who were all getting on in years.

The eldest was thirty, and the other two were sixteen and twenty. At this age, in any village, they were seen as undesirable and unwanted.

The eldest could barely marry someone who was physically disabled or had been divorced several times.

The second brother was in a similar situation, while the third, at twenty, still had hope. If they had money, he could marry a decent girl.

Seeing that Huang Bitu remained silent, Matchmaker Sun decided to use a trump card.

"Bitu, what do you think about this Mu Dalang? Although he's Mu the Fifth's nephew, the man is unmarried and the woman is unwed. It's just a matter of my word as Matchmaker Sun.

Besides, Mu Dalang is good-looking and whatever else is commendable, the umbrella was given to you by him.

Mu Dalang works as an apprentice in town, raising sheep, milking them, and shearing wool, which is a money-earning job.

Those without money wear cotton clothes, while those with money wear animal fur. That black fur is precious nowadays, costing over a hundred taels per garment!

This time he said he would raise sheep in the village and sell wool and milk once he got married.

Think about it, how much could one sheep sell for? And think about it, other wives go out to farm and work, but you just have to cook at home."

You have to admit, when it comes to persuasion, Matchmaker Sun was an expert, able to talk as if the dead were alive.

Huang Bitu was indeed tempted. She knew that if not for Mu Dalang, she would have to see many people, and no matter what, she had to find someone to marry.

Perhaps it would be an old gambling addict.

Perhaps it would be an abusive widower.

Perhaps it would be a lowly man.

Otherwise, her brothers wouldn't be able to marry wives at all.

Rather than being passive in the future, it was better to take this opportunity to find someone reliable, who could support her, and whom she could help in return.

However, Huang Bitā still knew how to be polite.

"But I'm older than him."

Mu Dalang seemed only sixteen or seventeen, while Huang Bitā was eighteen.

"Not by much, I asked, he's seventeen by traditional age, and you're eighteen. You're close in age, and an older woman brings fortune, marrying you is a good thing for him."

"But..." Huang Bitā still appeared troubled.

"But what? Aunt will make the decision for you. I guarantee we'll settle this matter. I'll send you back to the Huang Family Village first, and you just wait to become the bride!"

Matchmaker Sun swayed her hips and led the way ahead.

Mu Dalang still didn't know that he had become another target of Matchmaker Sun. When he returned home, he happened to hear his family discussing Huang Bitā.

"Wife, what do you think of the Huang family's girl?" Mr. Mu asked.

"What do you mean, 'what do I think?' It's not my daughter-in-law. We still have to ask the Fifth's opinion. If he agrees to marry her, then we will, otherwise, what can we do?"

Despite saying this, Old Mrs. Mu didn't like Huang Bitu at heart.

Huang Bitu was quite pretty, with an air of fragile beauty, thin build, fair skin, and a waist as slim as a willow branch.

Just her face alone was prettier than Mu's daughter Xiangxiang, and Old Mrs. Mu didn't want a daughter-in-law who was prettier than her own daughter.

"Old Three, what do you think?" Mr. Mu deliberately asked for opinions, of course.

Mu Dashan had no objections. "Dad, I think she's nice, seems like a sensible girl. With her support, the Fifth will definitely do well!"

"Yes, Dad, I feel the girl is simple-minded, a perfect match for Fifth!" Yu Si Niang added.

Mr. Mu thought the same in his heart.

But since it was a big matter, he decided to ask a few more people.

"Old Four, Old Four's wife..." Mr. Mu called out, then realized that Old Four's family was still at the stove because they didn't have new clothes.

"Second, go see if Old Four's family has eaten. Old Four's wife, it's been tough cooking today!" Mr. Mu instructed.

"Dad, you haven't asked me what I think about that Huang girl!"

Old Three and Old Four had been asked, so Mu Dazhong, as the elder brother, couldn't hold back and spoke up as well.

"Just go, why so much nonsense!" Mr. Mu glared at Mu Dazhong.

"Grandfather, Grandmother, I've returned!" Mu Dalang suddenly came in and spoke.

"Where's the umbrella in your hand?" Old Mrs. Mu asked sharply.

She clearly saw that Dalang left with the umbrella, and now it was gone. Could it have been given to that flirtatious girl?

"Dalang, the old lady asked you, why aren't you answering?" Old Mrs. Mu shouted angrily at Mu Dalang.

At this moment, half of her face was somewhat twisted, and as she spoke, the loose skin on her face kept shaking.

"Speak! Did you give it to that flirtatious girl? I knew that girl was no good. She hadn't even entered the door, yet she was already seducing the nephew.

If she enters, how will it be? I'm making it clear today, such a vixen isn't allowed to enter our Old Mu Family's doors!"

"Grandmother, what did Miss Huang do to offend you? It's just an umbrella, I can compensate you ten times over. Is it necessary to speak so ill of her?"

Mu Dalang couldn't bear Huang Bitu being wronged and spoke to Old Mrs. Mu with resentment.

Chapter 478: Finally Not a Pushover

"Revolt! Revolt! You little brat dare to argue with me and the old woman over a wench."

Old Mrs. Mu rolled up her sleeves, ready to teach Mu Dalang a lesson.

Just then, Mu Danian came in from outside.

"Dad, Mom, is Miss Huang still here?" Mu Danian asked urgently.

As soon as Mu Danian spoke, everyone covered their noses.

It was unbearably smelly, and Mu Danian was covered in sticky yellow dung.

Oh my goodness—

Did Fifth climb out of the cesspit?

"Ugh~ Mom, I'm going to throw up. Let Fifth Brother leave." Mu Xiangxiang shouted while covering her nose.

Old Mrs. Mu stood up and began to chase Mu Danian away.

"Get out! Get out! You heartless thing, are you trying to stink Xiangxiang to death?"

Mu Danian knew he stank, but he just wanted to see what Miss Huang looked like. If she was pretty, he'd marry her; if she was ugly, he'd pass.

"Mom, about Miss Huang?" Mu Danian asked again, not giving up. This time, Old Mrs. Mu hit him directly with a stick.

Mu Danian wailed in pain.

"Mom, why did you hit me? What did I do wrong?" Mu Danian shouted unwillingly.

"You stinky thing, you have the face to ask? Get back and take a bath before you come out again, or I'll hit you dead with a hoe, you dog thing!"

Old Mrs. Mu's face was fierce and menacing.

Mu Danian, in pain, rolled out of the hall room.

Back to his room, he took a bucket, went to the kitchen, forced Mrs. Liu to fetch him water, hastily showered, changed clothes, and returned to the hall room for information.

Mu Danian no longer stank, so Old Mrs. Mu allowed him to approach.

However, just as he approached, Mr. Mu's big slap flew over, stunning Mu Danian.

"Dad, what are you doing? Mom chased me, now you hit me too. Am I really your biological child?" Mu Danian covered his face, looking aggrieved.

"What am I doing? What did you do, you beast? The whole family was waiting for you, and you didn't show up, leaving Miss Huang in vain. You really are..."

Mr. Mu's mouth was crooked with anger; so much money wasted preparing that meal, all for the sake of completing the affair, and now—

Hateful—

"Ah, she's gone already? I haven't even seen her. Well, is that woman pretty? Is her butt big? Are her breasts round? Does she look like she can give birth to sons?"

Mu Danian, accustomed to vulgarity, spoke without thinking.

Mu Dalang couldn't stand it anymore.

"Uncle, can't you clean your mouth? Why are you insulting her when she hasn't provoked you?"

For some reason, Mu Dalang can't hold his temper when people speak poorly of Miss Huang.

Even though he used to endure his family.

"You little brat, your parents haven't said anything, and here you think you can speak up? You must be fancying your aunt, huh? I'm warning you, if you harbor any wicked thoughts, I'll skin you alive."

Mu Danian spat a thick phlegm at Mu Dalang's feet, fuming towards him.

"Fifth, what are you doing, bullying us because Daddy Gou Dan is not here, right? My son doesn't need you to teach him a lesson, coward." Mrs. Lin saw her son being bullied, and bravely stood in front of Mu Dalang.

"Second Sister-in-law, you're pregnant, and as your younger brother, I won't bicker with you. But if you meddle more, don't blame me for being rude!"

The Old Mu Family was filled with smoke at once, and Mr. Mu heavily knocked the table leg.

"What's all this noise? You think the house isn't chaotic enough? Get out!"

Only then did everyone reluctantly move outside.

"Old Third and Old Third's wife, stay behind!" Mr. Mu left the two of them, even Old Mrs. Mu wasn't allowed to be present.

Mu Dashan was still angry about Old Mrs. Mu helping outsiders ruin his daughter's matters that day, and didn't want to stay, but Mr. Mu insisted, leaving him no choice.

"Dad, what's the matter? I still have to check if Shuangshuang has eaten lunch!"

It was the first time Mu Dashan rushed himself, making Mr. Mu somewhat uncomfortable.

Unhappy, but didn't show it.

"It's nothing, just that I quite like Miss Huang."

"Fifth is also your brother, I thought when he marries, you could help out."

"Aren't your bamboo baskets made well, Old Third? I heard you can make cool mats too? Why not make a set of bamboo baskets for Fifth, make bed mats, and see about furniture, if you can make them?"

"Si Niang cooks well, with flavorful dishes. I'm afraid Fourth's wife won't manage everything, so I want Si Niang to be the chef, letting outsiders know our Old Mu Family's daughters-in-law aren't to be trifled with."

Honestly, Mr. Mu has thought quite far ahead.

And his distribution saves quite a bit of money; it's hard for family to ask for wages.

Unfortunately, Mu Dashan isn't the same Mu Dashan anymore.

If it were in the past, no matter how exhausting, he would help.

But his heart died when his mother publicly said the third branch wasn't part of the Old Mu Family!

Since a lifetime won't win parents' recognition, he won't bother!

"Dad, I have no time, and I'm the only useless person at home. If I don't make more bamboo baskets to sell, the children will be exhausted.

Si Niang too, she manages the family's meals, several acres of land, bustling back and forth on her own, has no time to prepare Fifth's wedding.

You can hire someone, from making bamboo baskets to bed mats, to cooking, all are possible, it's all about wages!"

Mu Dashan spoke every word clearly.

All with one meaning, he disagrees.

Disagrees to do unpaid labor.

Disagrees with his wife being the chef.

Disagrees with being exploited for no reason.

"Old Third, do you know what you're saying? He's your brother, and even if bones break, muscles are connected. People say brothers united, strength is invincible, separated can't stand a piece of bark."

"Dad, stop saying, I can't do it, find someone else! Si Niang, let's go!"

The man stepped forward, holding Yu Si Niang's hand, now soaked with sweat.

First time rebelling against Dad.

Nervous, excited, and thrilled, these three emotions intertwined.

Almost made Mu Dashan faint.

Yu Si Niang was also incredibly nervous, first time witnessing her man defy his father-in-law.

She still remembers the twisted face of her father-in-law, driven by anger.

Outside the Old Mu Family's perimeter, Mu Dashan stopped, tenderly speaking to Yu Si Niang.

"Si Niang, from now on I'll be like a man, protecting you and our four children, preventing others from bullying our third branch."

"Hmm!" Yu Si Niang was heartened.

"Quickly, let's tell Shuangshuang, she'll definitely be delighted!"

Chapter 479: Showing Off Love

Third Branch of the Old Mu Family!

Mu Shuangshuang heard the 'battle report' from Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang, and she wasn't just happy.

She was practically ecstatic; a person who had always been reserved suddenly showed a stern face to Mr. Mu.

Isn't this something to be explosively happy about?

"Dad, Mom, if you keep it up like this, they won't dare bully you anymore!" Mu Shuangshuang said with a cheerful grin.

"Yeah, Dad learned from Old Mu! Today such a big event, we all went from the Third Branch, but since Old Mu didn't have a new outfit, Dad and Mom wouldn't let them at the table, leaving them only to wait in the kitchen until we finished to eat."

"I now feel that breaking out as the Third Branch was right. If Big Brother really becomes successful, without a good outfit, maybe Dad won't even let us enjoy prosperity!"

Mu Dashan had finally seen through it all.

His mom only remembers him as a son when she needs to drain him, otherwise she doesn't recognize him at all.

"Dad, your analysis is spot on. A single outfit puts close ties outside the door; how chilling can one be?"

"Uncle and Aunt struggled and worked hard for that family; what for? Isn't it just to have a meal together and live well?"

"Nowadays, they don't even give the chance to eat together. They have to wait in the kitchen until Grandpa and Grandma are kind enough to let them eat."

What Mr. Mu did today was really unfair.

No matter what, Mu Dajiang and Mrs. Liu are part of the family. Even if the Third Branch isn't invited, that's normal, but not inviting the entire Fourth Branch is not right.

Honestly, Mr. Mu is too biased; among several sons, Mu Dade has been studying since childhood and probably doesn't even know where the fields are, or when the rice in the field matures.

Mu Dazhong needn't be mentioned, lazing and messing things up, always sneaking off to the outhouse for half a day or the morning whenever there's work.

Mu Danian is also quite cunning.

In the whole Old Mu Family, the only ones who work hard are the Third and Fourth Branches. Before it was the Third Branch struggling to support most of the family, Mu Dashan worked himself sick without daring to rest.

Mu Shuangshuang doesn't believe Mr. Mu doesn't know these things; he should have been turning a blind eye to all these unfair situations.

So, you must resist to make Mr. Mu realize how wrong he is!

"Shuangshuang is right, from now on, Dad will try to say no to them when possible." Mu Dashan said with a genuine smile.

After a while, he suddenly said, "Shuangshuang, your sixth uncle sent someone in the morning talking about the banquet.

Also, buying jewelry and clothes for your sixth aunt, he asked if you have time tomorrow, if so, meet at the village entrance first thing."

"Of course, I have time. Tomorrow I'll deliver cold noodles, after that I can accompany Aunt shopping, for the menu, I'll discuss with Uncle during the day tomorrow, usually twelve dishes, right?"

Mu Shuangshuang wasn't clear on Da Ning Dynasty customs; she knew twelve from the modern era.

"Yes, twelve, meaning blessings every month!" Yu Si Niang nodded.

"Mom, you've helped as a cook at the rich families, what dishes do they usually serve?" Mu Shuangshuang was adept at gathering good experiences.

She had a bunch of dishes in her head, none of them pricey.

But she truly didn't know others' standards.

"Typically, it's chicken, fish, starter dish, and soup; these four are essentials, the others are more random."

Most rural families are generous at banquets, except a few stingier ones, but even they would have chicken, fish, meat.

Mu Shuangshuang nodded; she had a good amount of flexibility.

"Mom, I understand, I have to work later so I'll take a break first."

Just after lunch, the Huang Brothers had gone to Lu Yuanfeng's house, and Mu Shuangshuang was exhausted at the moment.

After washing her feet, she lay on the comfy bamboo mat, feeling entirely blissful.

Once finding Lu Yuanfeng's mother, things with him should get better.

After a short nap, upon waking, the cicadas were still noisy outside, the weather unbearably hot; stepping out made you sweat instantly.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't know if they had gone to work, so she decided to fill a kettle with water and bring two cups out.

As expected, when she arrived, three people had already buried the jar, now arranging it in place.

Lu Yuanfeng was hammering stakes, seemingly preparing for the outhouse.

Noticing someone watching him, Lu Yuanfeng looked up to see Shuangshuang with the kettle.

She was wearing plain clothes with no extra embellishments, not even a single embroidered flower.

But standing there, you felt the cleanest thing in the world was before you.

"What brought you here, didn't I tell you to rest at home?" Lu Yuanfeng stepped forward, pulling her into the shade.

"I'm well-rested! Plus, you surely didn't bring water, I brought some for you!"

Mu Shuangshuang raised the container she carried.

A whole jug of tea, should be enough for them to drink throughout the afternoon.

"But still, you shouldn't have made this trip, so hot, what if you get heatstroke?" Lu Yuanfeng chastised with concern.

"From now on, I'll handle the water. If you see the sun's too bright, stay inside. I'll finish and come back for you!"

Afraid Shuangshuang wouldn't remember, Lu Yuanfeng emphasized it several times.

"Okay, okay, okay, whatever you say, I'll listen, isn't that enough?"

Mu Shuangshuang smiled helplessly but nodded obediently.

Rarely did Lu Yuanfeng take the initiative to nag.

"Fengzi, tomorrow I'm accompanying Aunt Xiao Hua for wedding shopping, come with me, we'll learn a bit from experience."

Saying this, Mu Shuangshuang felt a bit shy.

Speaking of others' weddings, she felt strong, but when it came to her own, she was a bit anxious.

But not as anxious as Lu Yuanfeng.

Lu Yuanfeng was both excited and nervous.

Shuangshuang meant learning this experience for when they get married.

Was Shuangshuang willing to marry him?

Knowing what Lu Yuanfeng thought, Mu Shuangshuang quickly explained.

"Talking about marriage after I'm sixteen, alright?"

After saying this, she lowered her head, avoiding Lu Yuanfeng's gaze.

Normally, she should act like a female rogue, embrace Lu Yuanfeng, shower him with kisses, then tell him he's her destined man.

Thinking it over, better not; Mu Shuangshuang didn't want to be labeled a female rogue.

"Big bro, I'm thirsty, stop hogging the water, let me have a sip." Huang Er eagerly leaned over.

Ruining the atmosphere just built.

Mu Shuangshuang turned with a killer glare, then harshly said, "Scram!"

Huang Er put on a face of grievance but felt gleeful inside; who told them to show affection before him? He'll split them up!

Humph!

Chapter 480: Wedding Preparations and Big Purchases

The next day, Mu Shuangshuang awoke from her slumber, quickly freshened up, and began preparing breakfast.

She was enjoying her mornings more now, with a thin pancake, a bowl of porridge, and preserved sour beans on the side. She had put a few pieces of chopped wolf meat inside the pancake.

The smoked wolf meat really kept well.

As she cooked, she hummed a tune, feeling incredibly cheerful!

Just as she put the rice into the pot, Lu Yuanfeng arrived pushing a wheelbarrow. Mu Shuangshuang was busy adding water to the pot and didn't turn around.

"Yuan Feng, find yourself a place to rest, I'll have the porridge ready soon."

Lu Yuanfeng responded softly, entered the kitchen, and skillfully found the rice jar in Shuangshuang's house, pouring in a bag of rice.

Mu Shuangshuang heard the noise and wanted to stop him, but it was too late.

"Yuan Feng, what are you doing?" Mu Shuangshuang was anxious.

To her surprise, Lu Yuanfeng just laughed. "How can I let my wife go hungry?"

Mu Shuangshuang blushed and turned her head away.

"Who's your wife, shameless!"

The sight of Mu Shuangshuang blushing and scolding had a certain coyness and maidenly shyness to it.

Lu Yuanfeng had seen Shuangshuang in her usual domineering and clever manner, but he rarely saw her in this girlish state.

Inspired, he pulled Shuangshuang into his arms.

"Shuangshuang, you promised me, to be my wife. We need to learn more experience today, you promised..."

Lu Yuanfeng's voice was somewhat deep and husky; at seventeen, he had already learned a lot.

He knew what it meant to want.

He knew what it meant to like.

He knew what it meant to hold on!

"Shuangshuang, let's be like this forever, marry me soon and be my wife!"

The large hand at her waist felt like an iron chain, holding tightly, leaving Mu Shuangshuang slightly breathless.

She thought Lu Yuanfeng was easy to talk to.

Whatever she said went.

Turns out he had an assertive side too.

Especially when it came to feelings!

"Silly, I was joking with you, you're holding too tight, I'm suffocating."

Lu Yuanfeng anxiously released Mu Shuangshuang, gently rubbing his hand on her waist.

"Does it hurt? It's my fault!"

Mu Shuangshuang laughed; after all, he listened to her.

"It doesn't hurt anymore, let's hurry and make breakfast, we'll probably be busy all day!"

"Then you teach me how to cook, just stand beside me and guide me."

Lu Yuanfeng had been learning to cook recently; he felt he couldn't let Shuangshuang cook for him all his life.

A wife is to be cherished, not just for cooking and having children.

Mu Shuangshuang's heart felt warm, in Da Ning Dynasty, men were revered.

Women had very low status; even someone like Old Mrs. Mu, the Five Poison Sect Leader, had to bow to Mr. Mu's authority.

Outside, they couldn't embarrass Mr. Mu, and inside, they had to take good care of him, doing laundry, cooking, and emptying chamber pots. All these tasks fell to Old Mrs. Mu alone, even if Mr. Mu was idle to the point of boredom.

He would never lift a hand to help.

But Lu Yuanfeng was different, he was willing to learn cooking.

As long as he was in the house, he was the one washing the bowls and chopsticks.

Even with clothes, he once offered to help, but Mu Shuangshuang declined when it came to private garments.

In conclusion, Lu Yuanfeng was indeed a gem in Da Ning Dynasty.

Mu Shuangshuang truly wanted to protect him from being snatched away by other women!

...

...

After breakfast, as they left the house, dawn had just broken. Truth be told, for the cold noodles business, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng always worked from dawn till dusk; it was really tiring.

Mu Shuangshuang was thinking of saving up some silver to buy a carriage.

When Xing Beichen returned last time, she inquired about the price. An ordinary carriage cost at least five taels, not including the horse. Adding the horse could cost over ten taels, equating the value of several acres of land.

Mu Shuangshuang was fully focused on saving for two children's gift, also unable to afford the carriage with horses right now.

Once they reached the town, Mu Shuangshuang expected to wait for Yu Liulang and Feng Xiaohua, but they were already there.

Yu Liulang was wearing a new outfit with wide cuffs.

In Da Ning Dynasty, outfits varied; wealthy and powerful people wore wide-cuffed clothing.

Those without money wore simpler garments, appearing like single robes.

Mu Shuangshuang guessed that Feng Xiaohua made the outfit because her clothes were similar to Yu Liulang's, differing only in color but the pattern was identical.

"Shuangshuang, Yuan Feng, thank goodness we're not late. Our two families have finally met up!" Yu Liulang said.

"Yeah, Uncle, how come you're so early! Aunt Xiaohua, you must've gotten up early, right?"

Feng Xiaohua was slightly taken aback; she hadn't expected Shuangshuang to think of her at such a moment.

"Not early, not as early as you and Yuan Feng. We came by carriage."

"Yeah, we were quick; with four legs running after all," Yu Liulang joined in laughter.

He knew his niece was doing business, so he calculated the timing and sent someone to inquire at Er Gui Village.

Thus, early in the morning, Yu Liulang spent ten coins to rent a carriage to town.

Unexpectedly, he got up early too.

"Uncle, Aunt Xiaohua, your carriage is impressive! Looks like Uncle has finally got it, knowing not to walk on two legs and switch to four legs?"

Mu Shuangshuang quipped.

"I didn't want your aunt to tire, Shuangshuang, let's head into town, your aunt Xiaohua hasn't eaten yet, I'll treat you to breakfast." Yu Liulang awkwardly scratched his head, feeling like a bride-to-be going on her first ride.

"Okay, but we need to deliver the goods first!" Mu Shuangshuang pointed to the wheelbarrow behind her.

The cart held a barrel of cold noodles and freshly sprouted bean sprouts. The sun hadn't risen yet, so there was no wet cloth covering the sprouts.

Yu Liulang spotted the sprouts and exclaimed, "Shuangshuang, did you make these? Your grandma was just saying she wanted bean sprouts, but they're too pricey!"

Old Mrs. Yu was frugal by nature; she rarely voiced her desires.

When she mentioned bean sprouts, Yu Liulang knew she really wanted them.

This time, he also planned to buy bean sprouts for the old lady.

"Ah? Uncle, you can take these home for grandma, I still have more at home!" Mu Shuangshuang bent down to fetch some.

Yu Liulang stopped her.

"Shuangshuang, these are for selling; just sell them. I'll come by your house to get them tomorrow."

Yu Liulang wasn't foolish; he could sell the sprouts in town for a bit of money, and the old lady had been craving them for so long, it wasn't urgent.

"Uncle, it's fine, I'll bring more to sell next time, I'm not worried about earning this round." Mu Shuangshuang waved her hand.

"You silly girl, sell them as I said. If your grandma knew these sprouts were from town, she wouldn't eat them." The honest man insisted, and Mu Shuangshuang had no choice but to comply.

The four headed towards Jiu Si Xuan!