

Folly 531

Chapter 531: Fengzi Doesn't Think Highly of You

"What nonsense are you babbling? Get back there right now!"

Mr. Mu cursed aggressively, thinking Mu Xiangxiang would restrain herself, but instead, she hugged Old Mrs. Mu's leg and cried, "Mom, I want to be Fengzi's wife. I want to be Fengzi's wife!"

Off to the side, Mu Shuangshuang was speechless, this was the first time she'd seen someone so shameless.

The one involved was Lu Yuanfeng, yet she didn't ask him, instead questioning Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu.

Was she waiting for Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu to speak so she could force herself onto Lu Yuanfeng?

"Auntie, you're being too dramatic. With the way you act like a madwoman, even if Fengzi were blind, he wouldn't fancy you. Let alone when he isn't blind," Mu Shuangshuang blurted out plainly.

This Mu Xiangxiang had such an elevated opinion of herself, bursting in so early in the morning. If not shown boundaries, she wouldn't understand who Fengzi belongs to.

Upon hearing Mu Shuangshuang's words, Mu Xiangxiang burst into tears, flailing her hands and feet on the floor, mimicking the way Old Mrs. Mu would curse in public.

"Mom, I can't live on with this. The brat called me ugly. I can't live on..."

"Xiangxiang, that brat is blind, pay her no mind. You're my beloved, you're good-looking... Brat, how dare you insult your aunt like this! Are you even human?" Old Mrs. Mu harshly scolded Mu Shuangshuang while consoling Mu Xiangxiang.

"Grandma, I'm just stating the facts. Aunt is indeed ugly. The way she comes out without tidying up or washing herself, it's unbearable for anyone."

Mu Shuangshuang's words rendered Old Mrs. Mu and Mu Xiangxiang speechless with anger. Mu Xiangxiang, in particular, lay on the ground crying to the brink of breathlessness, hiccupping continuously.

Seeing she couldn't control Mu Shuangshuang, Old Mrs. Mu shouted for Da Shan at Mu Dashan's door.

Mu Dashan had been waking up late these days, naturally not getting up too early, and Yu Si Niang didn't allow him to rise early to ensure his health preservation.

Yu Si Niang arranged the breakfast and came out.

"Mom, Shuangshuang's father is sleeping. You..."

Before Yu Si Niang could finish, Old Mrs. Mu lashed out, "My son became lazy after marrying you, you lazy woman. You slack off and don't let my son be diligent. I shouldn't have let my son marry a jinx like you!"

"Grandma, how is my mom lazy? In the Old Mu Family, doesn't she always get up the earliest and work the hardest every day? Even when she goes to town, she finishes all the chores first!"

Although Mu Shuangshuang hadn't spoken against Old Mrs. Mu, it didn't mean she would let her have her way.

This old hag kept calling others lazy while the laziest were her and her daughter Mu Xiangxiang.

"You dare talk back to me, girl! Yu Si Niang, look at your daughter, rotten from head to toe. How did you raise her?" Old Mrs. Mu yelled at Yu Si Niang, hands on her waist.

Out of nowhere, Yu Si Niang found the courage to argue back against Old Mrs. Mu, "Our Shuangshuang speaks the truth, Mom. Shuangshuang's father can't work yet; his health hasn't recovered fully."

The atmosphere became somewhat tense, with Mr. Mu nearly fuming in the background.

It's preposterous for your wife to go over and curse at other homes so early in the morning, intolerable for anyone.

"Enough is enough! Stop embarrassing me!" Mr. Mu shouted angrily.

"What did you say? I'm embarrassing you? Your wife is being bullied right now, yet you criticize your wife for an outsider?" Old Mrs. Mu clung stubbornly, determined to cause chaos with Mr. Mu.

"What kind of nonsense is this? How aren't Si Niang and Shuangshuang part of the Old Mu Family? If you don't leave now, I'll give you a divorce letter today, sending you back!"

At the mention of a divorce letter, Old Mrs. Mu became even more agitated, trying to scratch Mr. Mu's face. Mr. Mu couldn't dodge in time and ended up with a chunk of flesh clawed off his face.

With his face burning with pain and Old Mrs. Mu making a scene in front of the children, Mr. Mu was utterly enraged.

He took a step forward, grabbed Old Mrs. Mu by the hair, and dragged her toward the Old Mu Family's direction, after a few steps, he turned and shouted at Mu Xiangxiang, still crying on the ground:

"And you, follow me back right away. If you continue to disgrace us, don't fault me for throwing you out!"

Frightened, Mu Xiangxiang obediently followed.

And so, the farce came to an end.

Mu Shuangshuang was exhausted, with such frequent troubles caused by her family. Old Mrs. Mu really had too much free time.

Fortunately, today she witnessed her mother's progress, at least daring to stand up to Old Mrs. Mu. She believed it wouldn't be long before her mother could handle Old Mrs. Mu on her own.

By then, the third branch could completely become independent!

"Mom, you should go inside and rest. Fengzi and I are preparing to head to the town," said Mu Shuangshuang.

"Wait a bit, I've just finished frying the meat pies. Have some with Fengzi before you go. The weather's cooler now, no need to rush," Yu Si Niang said with concern.

"Okay!"

These days, Yu Si Niang found some free time to reclaim a patch of wasteland near their home for a vegetable garden, so she was mostly home every day.

Knowing how hard Mu Shuangshuang worked, she wouldn't let Mu Shuangshuang cook, and despite Mu Shuangshuang telling her multiple times, it had no effect, so she just let her be.

With both the family dispute and breakfast delaying them, the sun was up by the time they left for town, meaning it was no longer early hours.

The two hurriedly went to deliver cold noodles to Jiu Si Xuan.

Unexpectedly, they were stopped by Zheng Xiu on the way.

Previously, Mu Shuangshuang thought her words had worked when she didn't encounter Zheng Xiu causing trouble.

Unbeknownst to her, Zheng Xiu, spoiled as she was, had been confined by Zheng Zhi afterward and only released recently.

Once out, she immediately sought trouble with Mu Shuangshuang.

Moreover, she deliberately chose Mu Shuangshuang's important days.

Today, Zheng Zhi had invited some landlords from Qingshan Town to dine at Jiu Si Xuan, showcasing their two specialties: cold noodles and popcorn. Zheng Xiu intended to stop them, ruin her brother's business deals, and force him to lose face, thinking he would surely terminate the contract with Mu Shuangshuang.

Then let's see how Mu Shuangshuang struts around.

"Miss Zheng, are you planning to escort me to Jiu Si Xuan or what?"

While speaking, Mu Shuangshuang was winking at Lu Yuanfeng.

The saying "a guest with ulterior motives" perfectly described someone like Zheng Xiu.

"You have two choices, bow before me for forgiveness, or leave your popcorn to me!"

This time, Zheng Xiu brought over ten brawny men, all well-trained.

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the robust and well-built brutes in front of her, momentarily at a loss.

It wasn't the difficulty of a fight, but where to hit first.

"Why are you all standing around? Whoever takes down these two today will earn a silver tael from me!" Zheng Xiu commanded with authority.

Mu Shuangshuang quickly retorted, "Whoever gives this girl a beating, I'll pay two silver taels!"

Chapter 532: Jiu Si Xuan Wants to Terminate the Contract

The burly men were momentarily stunned.

After all, they weren't Zheng Xiu's people, they were just following her for profit.

Now that someone was willing to offer more silver, of course, they wanted to earn more money.

Zheng Xiu herself didn't expect Mu Shuangshuang to speak like that, and she was a bit dazed for a moment.

But she had more money and could raise the offer.

"Whoever teaches those two a lesson, I'll pay fifty taels! Fifty taels is enough for you to buy a small house in town. Why worry about having nowhere to live in the future?"

As soon as Zheng Xiu finished speaking, Mu Shuangshuang heard the burly men drooling, and ten men rushed over together.

Lu Yuanfeng put the wheelbarrow aside and went to deal with the brawny men.

These ten were not the same as those from last time. Mu Shuangshuang found it a bit exhausting to fight. Mainly, they were all muscle, and her small frame couldn't inflict much damage.

The only effective move she had was a spinning kick to their necks, which took a lot of effort.

However, Lu Yuanfeng found it much easier, a few men weren't enough to tire him out, and with a few punches, he knocked down a bunch of them.

Neither of them noticed Zhongzhu walking over to Lu Yuanfeng's wheelbarrow, untying the popcorn bag, and knocking the cold noodles to the ground.

By the time Mu Shuangshuang realized, the goods on the cart were ruined.

Mu Shuangshuang was so furious she nearly exploded, and she charged at Zheng Xiu, but Zheng Xiu ran faster than a rabbit and disappeared in the blink of an eye.

The ground was full of groaning men.

Looking at the mess everywhere, Lu Yuanfeng was heartbroken.

"Shuangshuang, what are we going to do now?"

All these items were prepared meticulously by him and Shuangshuang, and now both felt distressed seeing them in this state.

"Fengzi, let's clean this up and go to Jiu Si Xuan to seek revenge on that Zheng Xiu. I have a feeling her goal today wasn't to just mess with us, but to target our goods."

Lu Yuanfeng nodded, having the same suspicion.

Evidently, these people were stalling for time. Mu Shuangshuang squatted down, stepped on a brawny man's back and demanded, "Speak, were you just acting?"

The man yelped in pain, "No, no, that lady said that as long as we held you up, she'd pay us silver."

"Then come with me!" Mu Shuangshuang grabbed the man's shirt and headed straight for Jiu Si Xuan.

At this time, Fat Chef was already sweating profusely, usually, Fengzi and Shuang would have arrived long ago, but today, not only hadn't they shown up, but the goods hadn't been delivered either.

Thinking of the owner's instructions, Fat Chef felt troubled all over.

As noon approached, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng finally appeared at the entrance of Jiu Si Xuan, and Fat Chef's suspenseful heart eased a bit.

Before he could express his relief, Mu Shuangshuang recounted the morning's events to Fat Chef.

"Oh dear, what do we do, our owner has invited quite a few people today, all to try Jiu Si Xuan's specialties!"

Fat Chef was frantic, spinning in circles on the spot.

Upon hearing this, Mu Shuangshuang instantly understood Zheng Xiu's plan was probably to force a termination of the contract with Jiu Si Xuan, cutting off her financial route.

What a vicious woman, with such meticulous thinking.

Mu Shuangshuang decided to go personally to see Zheng Zhi about this matter.

Zheng Zhi's expression wasn't very good upon hearing Fat Chef's explanation.

"I've already invited so many people here, and it's nearly lunch, how do you expect me to explain to them?"

Although Zheng Zhi was the son of the County Magistrate, few people knew.

Zheng Zhi had never used his father's name, having been on his own all these years.

If he offends these landlords, doing business would be tough for Zheng Zhi too.

"Owner, this isn't Fengzi and Shuangshuang's fault, this is..." Fat Chef didn't dare say the rest.

After all, this involves the owner's sister, and such matters are way beyond what Fat Chef can manage.

If the owner chooses to protect her, Fengzi and Shuangshuang would suffer.

"What do you mean by that? If it's not their fault, whose is it? Mine? People tasked with delivery can't even deliver on time and come up with excuses. Are such people suitable for collaboration with Jiu Si Xuan?"

Zheng Xiu came out of the room, loudly questioning Fat Chef.

Despite all the wrongdoings, Zheng Xiu wasn't nervous at all, coming out boldly instead.

Fat Chef instantly felt uneasy.

Sure enough, when Zheng Zhi briefly went through this with Zheng Xiu, Zheng Xiu burst out in anger.

"Brother, this is outrageous! Last time, she hit me in the restaurant, and now she's framing me? Brother, do you still want to do business with such a person?"

Zheng Zhi mentally assessed whether to continue the business, and decided to hear Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng's side first, inviting them in.

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang entered, she remained silent. The arrogant look on Zheng Xiu's face made her hesitate about continuing her collaboration with Jiu Si Xuan.

In partnership, mutual understanding is essential. If that doesn't exist, there's no point in continuing.

"Miss Shuangshuang, Mr. Lu, I'm just asking for a reasonable explanation. Since you claim it's my sister's doing, do you have any evidence?"

Lu Yuanfeng dragged the brawny man he had caught earlier and kicked him in front of Zheng Zhi.

"Tell everything clearly and truthfully!"

Zheng Xiu made a show of panic.

"Brother, you have to stand up for Axiu. They bullied me, wanting to find any random person to accuse me.

I haven't been here long; you can ask the carriage driver if I got off during the ride!"

Zheng Xiu spoke with a seemingly honest attitude, appealing to Zheng Zhi.

Zheng Zhi hesitated, knowing well enough how his sister behaves.

Without evidence, she wouldn't have dared suggest asking the carriage driver.

The driver was under his employ!

Only listened to him!

"Someone bring the driver here," Zheng Zhi ordered.

After a while, the driver came, naturally siding with Zheng Xiu.

Mu Shuangshuang kicked the brawny man again, prompting him to speak.

The man suddenly clutched Zheng Zhi's pant leg, pointing at Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, "Sir, I've been wronged! These two beat me up and made me identify a young lady. I don't even know her and didn't want to do such a heartless thing. Please help me..."

The brawny man's words stunned Lu Yuanfeng, who angrily grabbed him by the collar and loudly demanded, "Why lie? Why frame Shuangshuang and me?"

At this point, Zheng Zhi realized the truth and his gaze toward Mu Shuangshuang shifted. He even felt he had been blind to choose such a person to partner with.

"Miss Mu, our partnership..."

"Our partnership is over. I won't work with someone who can't differentiate between black and white. From today on, none of my goods will be sent to Jiu Si Xuan. All previous contracts are void!"

Chapter 533: Convinced Wholeheartedly

Mu Shuangshuang spoke boldly, everyone thought she was crazy.

Even Zheng Xiu was secretly laughing.

Who didn't know Mu Shuangshuang made quite a bit of money at Jiu Si Xuan; if she stopped working there, who knows how much Silver she'd lose.

But Lu Yuanfeng understood Shuangshuang's thoughts and supported her wholeheartedly.

This time, it was Zheng Zhi who was puzzled. Clearly, Mu Shuangshuang was in the wrong, so why was she talking about terminating the contract?

"Miss Mu, I need an explanation!"

"Explanation? Alright, first, Fengzi and I have no reason to intentionally damage what we are delivering, because every delivery means a source of income for us!"

With cold noodles, popcorn, and dried gold and silver flower, given to rural families, it's quite a wealth.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng had no reason to refuse.

"Second, you don't know the kind of nature your own servants have?"

Mu Shuangshuang was referring to the driver. She believed Zheng Zhi had the driver over because he trusted him, but unfortunately, the driver was bought off by Zheng Xiu.

"Third, we have no mutual understanding, I, Mu Shuangshuang, do business not just to make money, but also to make myself happy!"

Mu Shuangshuang listed three reasons, each of which Zheng Zhi understood!

For the first time being accused, he didn't know what to feel in his heart.

"Big brother, do you believe what she says? If she truly wasn't wrong, why would she wrong me? I say if we don't cooperate, then we don't cooperate, we don't work with insincere people!" Zheng Xiu said.

"Miss Zheng, right and wrong are determined by fate, whether you've done something, you know deep down!"

Lu Yuanfeng was getting more and more disdainful of Jiu Si Xuan.

He walked over to Shuangshuang to comfort her.

"Shuangshuang, let's go, let's take today as a reminder to find more reliable partners in the future."

Mu Shuangshuang, after hearing Lu Yuanfeng's words, felt even more determined to terminate the contract with Jiu Si Xuan.

"Wait, Fengzi, I still have a few words to say!" Mu Shuangshuang suddenly said.

This time, Zheng Zhi, who was initially doubtful, suddenly firmed up his thoughts. He believed Mu Shuangshuang was just putting on airs.

"Miss Zheng, you say you haven't met me and that I'm wronging you, right?" Mu Shuangshuang asked.

"Of course, this is our first meeting today, and we couldn't have met before!" Zheng Xiu replied confidently.

Mu Shuangshuang smiled lightly, her lips curling into a grin.

Suddenly, she did something everyone found baffling: she jumped up a few times, her hands swinging back and forth.

Just when everyone thought she was crazy, she suddenly walked up to Zheng Xiu, reached gently near the collar area, and a white popcorn appeared in her palm.

"This...this is popcorn, Shuang was just jumping earlier to let people know this popcorn wasn't what she used to frame the owner's sister!" Fat Chef exclaimed.

Not only was Fat Chef stunned, but Zheng Zhi was also taken aback. He squinted his eyes, looking at Zheng Xiu as if questioning, "What is this? You said you hadn't met her?"

The popcorn stuck when Zheng Xiu untied Mu Shuangshuang's bag. Mu Shuangshuang saw it from afar but didn't stop it.

She never expected it would become evidence to prove her and Fengzi's innocence!

"Big brother, this...this is just ordinary rice puff, I was just greedy and bought some to eat, I..."

Zheng Xiu panicked, she never thought her seamless plan would fail and be exposed so easily.

"Miss Zheng, when lying, always prepare a draft first. The popcorn I make, apart from Fengzi and me, no third person knows. Even the recipe, I haven't given it to your brother yet!"

Zheng Xiu was completely panicked, her first reaction was to admit her mistake to Zheng Zhi.

"Big brother, I was wrong, I was just messing with them, don't confine me, I beg you..."

Zheng Xiu cried and begged Zheng Zhi, but alas, Zheng Zhi was a proud person, and the one thing he couldn't tolerate was being deceived.

"Someone, take Miss back to the county. Without my permission, don't let her out in the future!"

They were not born of the same mother after all. Zheng Xiu being punished didn't cause Zheng Zhi any pain, instead, he felt he had solved a big problem.

But an even bigger problem arose, remembering what he had just said, Zheng Zhi regretted it instantly.

"Miss Shuangshuang, our cooperation..."

"Our cooperation is over. We will look for other owners to work with. I know Mr. Zheng has a broad influence and can stop us from doing any business in Qingshan Town, but Shuangshuang wants to act with dignity and do what she wants to do!"

Mu Shuangshuang needed money but couldn't compromise herself for it.

And she knew that in business, the less of a bottom line you have, the more people think they can bully you.

"Miss Shuangshuang, we can discuss cooperation again, the price is negotiable, you won't find a partner as good as Jiu Si Xuan in a short time, right?"

Zheng Zhi's words were interrupted when the assistant rushed in urgently.

"Owner, it's bad! Those landlords said they lost appetite seeing the dishes we served and claimed Jiu Si Xuan is just a facade, saying they won't cooperate with us anymore!"

Zheng Zhi's head suddenly felt like it enlarged.

Those dishes were cooked by Fat Chef earlier, reaching his highest level, but those people visited Jiu Si Xuan too frequently.

Got tired of it and didn't want to eat anymore.

Just like a decorative object, used for ten years, seen day after day, night after night, the vision gets weary, and no matter how good it looks, it doesn't matter anymore.

"Master Liu, if you can resolve this, I will give you a raise. If not, you go, and I'll go to the Capital to hire a new chef to replace your position."

This time, more than just Zheng Zhi's head felt enlarged.

Mu Shuangshuang was indifferent to all this. She just waited for the shopkeeper to prepare the contract termination paperwork, she and Zheng Zhi could make a handprint.

But Fat Chef, out of nowhere, found the courage and suddenly grabbed Mu Shuangshuang's sleeve.

"Little girl, I know what you make is unique and delicious. This time, just help me; I'll pay you privately. What do you think?"

If you don't help me, truly no one will. If I'm out of this job, I'm afraid I'll never have a chance to succeed in life!"

Fat Chef's attitude was sincere, completely unlike Zheng Zhi, who even after making a mistake, maintained an arrogant demeanor.

She knew Zheng Zhi was proud, but wrong is wrong!

When wrong, one must apologize!

Mu Shuangshuang glanced at Lu Yuanfeng. Lu Yuanfeng had a good impression of Fat Chef, so he agreed with Shuangshuang helping him.

A matter is a matter, Zheng Zhi is Zheng Zhi, Fat Chef is Fat Chef!

"Alright, I'll help you, but only you!"

After Mu Shuangshuang said that, Fat Chef was almost in tears.

"Girl, thank you, tell me what you need, I'll make sure everything is ready for you!"

Chapter 534: Seeking New Partners

"No need to thank me, consider it Shuangshuang's way of thanking you for your help before!"

Mu Shuangshuang was not someone who lacked manners.

Before meeting this Fat Chef, she didn't know how to make money, and now that she had repaid the favor, she needed to find another way.

Along the way, she would also make her name well-known!

In fact, with Mu Shuangshuang terminating the contract with Jiu Si Xuan, Jiu Si Xuan might not benefit as much as they thought.

When Mu Shuangshuang earned more, Jiu Si Xuan also earned more, and everything she sent over was unavailable elsewhere.

It meant that if people wanted something special, they had to go to Jiu Si Xuan.

Once Jiu Si Xuan stopped supplying, the cold noodles and popcorn would go out of stock, and as the saying goes, the more you can't get something, the more you want it. It was possible that Mu Shuangshuang could even make a profit out of this situation.

At this moment, Zheng Zhi didn't try to persuade Mu Shuangshuang to stay. He believed the conditions he offered were already generous, and Mu Shuangshuang was only saying she wanted to terminate the contract because she hadn't thought it through yet; otherwise, she wouldn't be helping the chef named Liu cook.

This time, Mu Shuangshuang didn't allow anyone apart from Lu Yuanfeng to watch.

All the dishes were things no one had seen before: honey chicken wings, charcoal-grilled fish, and some specialty dumplings and local snacks. For this weather, which wasn't too hot yet, they were perfect.

Lu Yuanfeng still helped with the fire, feeling that Shuangshuang was especially serious this time.

Usually, she didn't pay much attention to the knife skills, as long as it looked fine.

This time, he noticed her cuts in the fish were of consistent thickness, and the fish scales were cleaned meticulously.

At this moment, even her facial expression was solemn.

These dishes were all big ones, and Lu Yuanfeng watched as each one was prepared, from the seasoning to cooking to stir-frying. Each time a dish was completed, he was amazed.

The Fat Chef felt like an ant on a hot pan.

He knew that in the eyes of others, he was taking a risk today, but he himself saw it as a chance at survival.

The Fat Chef was worried not only about today's lunch but also about how Jiu Si Xuan would manage in the future.

Although Mu Shuangshuang had only left two things here, both were incredibly popular at Jiu Si Xuan. If they were gone or taken by someone else, what would be the consequences?

The Fat Chef now blamed Zheng Xiu for doing all the bad things and causing trouble, hoping that the little girl would change her mind later.

It took Mu Shuangshuang nearly an hour to prepare a meal.

When the Fat Chef entered the kitchen to serve the dishes, Mu Shuangshuang clearly saw the surprise and delight in his eyes.

There were eight dishes in total, all made from common ingredients, but none were dishes the Fat Chef had seen before.

And they were all visually appealing, aromatic, and appetizing just from the smell.

"Little girl, did you make all of these by yourself?" The Fat Chef confirmed again, wanting to hear a definite answer from Mu Shuangshuang.

"Fengzi and I made them together. Uncle, hurry and take them out. Fengzi and I need to leave too!" Mu Shuangshuang said.

The Fat Chef then ordered someone to take the dishes out.

At this time, Zheng Zhi was in the private room with a few landlords. The previously served table of dishes had been untouched and was taken away as it was.

When the dishes made by Mu Shuangshuang were gradually brought out, everyone started to dig in.

"Today's dishes are really nice, quite appetizing!" And they felt very familiar.

Xue Yi was the first to comment.

The remaining people followed Xue Yi's words with compliments.

Zheng Zhi nodded slightly, "As long as everyone enjoys them, these dishes were made by our new chef."

Zheng Zhi believed he could keep Mu Shuangshuang, which made him speak confidently.

Xue Yi liked to stir up trouble; he knew it was Mu Shuangshuang who cooked the dishes.

Previously, he offered a high price to hire her as his private chef, and yet she refused. How could she settle down in such a small tavern?

"It seems Jiu Si Xuan's style is about to change, just wondering if next time I come, Xue Yi will still have the chance to taste the dishes from the head chef here?"

This was a trap set by Xue Yi; he could swear that next time he'd come, he wouldn't be able to eat these dishes anymore.

Zheng Zhi hesitated for a moment but still nodded.

Xue Yi was almost like the richest man in Qingshan Town, plus he had a brother who was a high-ranking official in the capital, even Zheng Zhi dared not easily offend Xue Yi.

At this moment, Zheng Zhi became even more determined to keep Mu Shuangshuang.

A hearty meal, although the two specialties Zheng Zhi mentioned were missing, the full table of dishes was enough to be considered special.

The grilled fish was crispy on the outside and tender inside. The honey chicken wings were smooth and delicious, thinking about it, everyone felt they wanted more.

Zheng Zhi's cooperation plan moved one step closer, though Xue Yi still wouldn't agree, saying that the next time he had such delicious food again, they would discuss cooperation.

Despite being very shrewd, Zheng Zhi was just a teenage boy, no match for an experienced fox like Xue Yi, who was in his twenties.

After sending off the landlords one by one, Zheng Zhi went back to find Mu Shuangshuang.

Along the way, Zheng Zhi thought of many ways to keep Mu Shuangshuang.

At this time, Mu Shuangshuang was in the kitchen having lunch with Lu Yuanfeng; they were eating the same materials used earlier.

She wouldn't treat herself badly, having cooked a meal, she wouldn't let herself go without something to eat.

After lunch, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng went together to find the Shopkeeper to terminate the contract, and just in time, they encountered the returning Zheng Zhi.

Mu Shuangshuang stated her intentions clearly.

Unexpectedly, Zheng Zhi was in shock.

"You... you really want to terminate the contract with Jiu Si Xuan?" Zheng Zhi asked.

"When I, Mu Shuangshuang, say something, I mean it. If I say I want to terminate the contract, it means termination!"

Mu Shuangshuang responded assertively.

"But you just helped us through a tough time!" Zheng Zhi thought Mu Shuangshuang was seeking conditions, so he generously said, "I would like to invite you to be our head chef at Jiu Si Xuan. The things you make can all become Jiu Si Xuan's specialty dishes, and the terms are up to you!"

"I've already said what needs to be said. Though what your sister did might not involve Mr. Zheng, Mr. Zheng's trust in Shuangshuang was inadequate, leading Shuangshuang to feel that continuing at Jiu Si Xuan wasn't possible!"

"I hope Mr. Zheng will quickly sign the termination contract and give Shuangshuang the one tael and eight hundred coins from today and the last time at Jiu Si Xuan!"

Mu Shuangshuang was not one to suffer losses easily. The nine hundred coins left last time were because she thought Zheng Xiu could still be saved.

Now that Zheng Xiu did such a disgusting thing, she absolutely wouldn't let her off cheaply.

Zheng Zhi's heart was already in turmoil.

"Aren't you afraid that leaving Jiu Si Xuan will mean no one will cooperate with you, and you won't make money?"

Chapter 535: Yuanbao was stolen

"Shuangshuang is naturally worried, after all, Mr. Zheng is no ordinary person. With a slight word from him, I'm afraid no one would cooperate with Shuangshuang!"

Zheng Zhi nodded, as this was indeed the case. He had the ability to make everyone stop cooperating with Mu Shuangshuang.

But he wouldn't do that.

"Even if no one were to cooperate with Shuangshuang, she would still have other ways to make money. A basket of eggs can't all be in one basket. In short, Shuangshuang believes the future will be bright!"

Mu Shuangshuang spoke honestly.

Zheng Zhi indeed had connections, plenty of ways to ruin her business plans.

But no matter what, she couldn't give up her moneymaking plans just because of Zheng Zhi.

At this moment, Zheng Zhi suddenly admired Mu Shuangshuang.

But he regretted more, regretting being too indulgent with Zheng Xiu. Yet his pride stood in the way, making it impossible for him to apologize.

He never thought Mu Shuangshuang would be so resolute.

This time, Zheng Zhi suffered significant losses. Cold noodles would no longer appear at his Jiu Si Xuan, and the popcorn business he wanted to start couldn't take off either.

But for Mu Shuangshuang, she saw new opportunities for development.

As the weather got colder, cold noodles became harder to sell. As for popcorn, it was year-end profit-sharing, and she couldn't gain short-term wealth from it.

Zheng Zhi didn't know with what emotions he signed that termination contract. He opened his mouth several times, trying to keep Mu Shuangshuang, but gave up when the words were about to come out.

Exiting the Jiu Si Xuan with the contract, Lu Yuanfeng worriedly asked.

"Shuangshuang, will you regret it?"

After all, it was such a big business, and just like that, it was gone.

In the future, he and Shuangshuang would no longer have to go to town every three days.

No need to soak beans every three days either.

"Regret, maybe a little. But terminating the contract was bound to happen sooner or later. The cold noodles wouldn't survive the winter, and if we went hunting, we wouldn't be able to deliver the cold noodles so regularly."

"As for popcorn, I originally planned to use the money by the end of next year to open a shop. But after thinking it through, that path seems too far-fetched."

"We're not suited for long-term plans; we need to start with short-term ones."

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng had many expenses, and waiting for an annual payout was difficult.

But most importantly, working with Zheng Zhi felt off harmony-wise.

Zheng Xiu had done this kind of thing more than once, but he doubted Mu Shuangshuang and Fengzi. That was something she couldn't tolerate.

"Then I'll hunt more in winter. Although it doesn't earn as much as making cold noodles, it's not too bad."

After hearing Lu Yuanfeng's words, Mu Shuangshuang felt even more confident in her decision. By this time, they had already walked out of Qingshan Town's boundaries. Mu Shuangshuang threw herself into Lu Yuanfeng's arms.

She said, "Thank you, thank you for always supporting my decisions!"

Lu Yuanfeng was startled, then gently patted Mu Shuangshuang's back.

"Silly, you're my future wife. If I don't support your decisions, whose should I support?"

Hearing this, Mu Shuangshuang blushed a bit.

She quickly backed away from Lu Yuanfeng's embrace, her face instantly turning as red as a monkey's behind.

The two returned to Er Gui Village in this state, and before Mu Shuangshuang could discuss matters with her family, Yu Si Niang ran over anxiously.

"Shuangshuang, something terrible has happened! Yuanbao and Little Zhi..." Yu Si Niang's eyes were red from crying.

Mu Shuangshuang became anxious too.

"Mom, what's going on? Take your time and tell us."

Yu Si Niang was still very emotional.

"Yuanbao..."

Lu Yuanfeng also comforted her, "Aunt Si, don't worry, take your time. Shuangshuang and I are here."

Yu Si Niang took several deep breaths to calm down.

"At noon, Yuanbao and Little Zhi had meat pies and told me they were going out to play. I asked where they were going, and they just said they'd walk to the village entrance."

"Every kid in the village goes to the entrance; I didn't pay much attention. Who would've thought, the two kids left and didn't return by lunchtime."

"Xiao Han and I went out to look, but we couldn't find them. Where could two small children have gone..."

Upon hearing this, Mu Shuangshuang also felt uneasy.

Yuanbao always returned for meals, no matter how far he wandered.

Little Zhi too, wouldn't skip lunch.

"Mom, do you know which direction Yuanbao and Little Zhi went?"

Of course, Yu Si Niang didn't know. In her distress over losing the children, she even sought help from the Old Mu Family.

But she was chased away by the Old Mu Family.

The only ones willing to help were Da Lang and the fourth house.

"Your cousin and your uncle went to help find them, and Xiaxia went too. It's all my fault, I wasn't diligent enough..."

Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang were anxious, but now wasn't the time to discuss responsibility. Finding the children was the priority.

"Mom, Fengzi and I will go search. You stay home and keep an eye out in case they're hiding somewhere and fell asleep. If that's the case, quickly notify us."

"If two hours pass and we haven't returned, you must alert the village to search together. Tell them whoever finds them will get thirty coins!"

"Mom understands..." Yu Si Niang replied.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng went straight to the back mountain of Lu Yuanfeng's house. They searched the bamboo forest but found no trace of Yuanbao and Little Zhi, indicating they hadn't been there.

If they'd really left the village, how should they search? Plus, it was unclear if they left on their own or were taken.

In her past life, Mu Shuangshuang had experienced finding people, but it was mostly in populated or connected areas. In this ancient setting, finding a lost person was incredibly difficult.

Right now, Yuanbao and Little Zhi were tied up. Little Zhi only had her hands tied, but Yuanbao was completely bound, unable to move.

The two kids were just walking to the village entrance when a sack came down, capturing both of them.

"Brother Yuanbao, I'm scared..." Little Zhi's heartbeat raced, nearly in tears.

"Don't be afraid, Second Brother will save us, and Sister Shuangshuang will too."

Outside, the human trafficker and his lackey were feasting.

Two pounds of beef paired with a bowl of Shaodaozi wine, they indulged themselves.

"Big Brother, why did we capture that little girl? She's not even plump!"

The lackey asked with curiosity.

"What do you know? That chubby boy might not be wanted by the Wang Family, but with the little girl, we can sell them as a package deal. It's just a little girl anyway."

The human trafficker explained, pouring another bowl of wine.

But he couldn't shake off a bad feeling, especially from the moment he captured the chubby boy.

Oh well, maybe he was overthinking it, the trafficker thought to himself!

Chapter 536: When the Wall Falls, Everyone Pushes

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng went along the direction of the village entrance to search.

There are three roads at the village entrance: one leading to the town, which can be ruled out, as Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng just came back and didn't encounter Little Zhi and Yuanbao.

The remaining two roads, one leads to Tie Dao Village, where Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng's dry land is located.

The second road leads towards Huang Family Village, a direction with many mountains, which would be difficult to search if the two children really went there.

When leaving, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng asked Yu Si Niang, and Mu Dajiang and Mu Xiaxia went in the direction of Huang Family Village, while Mu Dalang took the route to Tie Dao Village.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng chose to search towards Tie Dao Village, calling out Little Zhi and Yuanbao's names all along the way.

There was no response along the way; instead, they encountered Mu Dalang returning.

Mu Dalang saw Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng and rushed up excitedly.

"Shuangshuang, Fengzi, have Yuanbao and Little Zhi returned?"

"No, Big Cousin, haven't you seen them either?" Mu Shuangshuang asked anxiously.

"No, I searched and called out all the way, but didn't see anyone, I went to Tie Dao Village and asked, they said no one had seen Little Zhi and Yuanbao."

Mu Dalang truly made an effort to find them, yet he couldn't find them the whole way.

Just when Yu Si Niang went to ask the Old Mu Family if they had seen the children, everyone said they hadn't.

When asked to help search, the group from the Old Mu Family was reluctant to go out and search. Mu Dalang was the first to stand up; Shuangshuang had been kind to him, and he had to help her.

"Big Cousin, you should go back first, Fengzi and I will continue searching."

"How could I go back? I'll search in the direction of Huang Family Village and call Bitao and Huang Family's three brothers along. Strength comes in numbers, Shuangshuang, Fengzi, don't be too anxious, at least the two kids are together, with company, they won't be scared!" Mu Dalang said.

Mu Shuangshuang nodded gratefully.

After separating from Mu Dalang, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng searched even more thoroughly, looking through bushes, under trees, but still found no one.

Asking around yielded no sightings of Little Zhi and Xiao Han either.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng almost went mad with anxiety; no matter how clever Yuanbao was, he was still just a child.

Would Little Zhi cry?

Could they have been abducted?

Various concerns arose, and Mu Shuangshuang felt increasingly powerless.

Lu Yuanfeng noticed Shuangshuang's emotional distress and suddenly felt upset as well.

"Shuangshuang, Yuanbao is sturdy and clever, he can handle anything himself, don't worry too much."

Worrying is inevitable, considering Yuanbao and Little Zhi are both young children.

But worrying won't change anything.

After searching like this for an hour, the sky darkened, and the children still hadn't returned.

Yu Si Niang had long asked the villagers to help search; everyone treated this matter as their own, except those shameless folk from the Old Mu Family, who acted as if nothing happened.

They continued eating and drinking as usual.

Midway, Mr. Mu wanted to inquire about matters of the third branch but was stopped by Old Mrs. Mu.

Old Mrs. Mu said, "Why bother with the third branch's issues? Didn't hear that Little Zhi went out with that chubby kid from the Old Lu Family, who knows if they just found it fun outside and didn't return."

"What nonsense are you talking? Don't you know what kind of a child Little Zhi is?"

In Mr. Mu's impression, Little Zhi may be young but is very sensible.

"What do I know? I know she's young and unwise, running around with a man and getting lost!" Old Mrs. Mu said irritably.

"Shut your mouth, you old hag, a madwoman, nothing good comes out of your mouth!"

After cursing, Mr. Mu saw Mu Dazhong hiding aside, as did Mrs. Lin, fearing being involved.

Mr. Mu was furious.

"What are you doing, isn't Little Zhi your niece? Isn't the third branch part of the Old Mu Family?" Mr. Mu shouted.

"Dad, don't meddle unnecessarily; hasn't the third branch always been capable? Let them find the children themselves, I'm injured after all," Mu Dazhong said pitifully.

"Dad, I'm still pregnant, if something happens during the search, it's a grandson you'd be losing, Little Zhi may be valuable but can't compare to a grandson!" Mrs. Lin joined in jeering.

Mu Danian wasn't around, lying motionless in the house, those two bloody holes on his butt were enough to trouble him, but he wasn't present, and the words from the two brothers and sister-in-law were unbearably nasty.

"Animals, you are simply heartless creatures. Wasn't it Shuang who found Gou Dan when he was lost?"

Mr. Mu was bitterly disappointed; these were kin to the third branch, people say that siblings remain connected despite disputes, yet...

"Alright, stop blaming the second brother and sister-in-law; they aren't wrong. Bad people deserve bad outcomes; didn't they take an acre of fertile land from us when searching for Gou Dan?"

If you want us to search, sure, return the fertile land intact, otherwise, forget it!"

Old Mrs. Mu was still brooding over the land Mu Shuangshuang had taken back then.

But she never considered that the land was given to protect Mu Zhenzhen back then, and had nothing to do with Gou Dan at all.

"You're a venomous woman, if we can't find the third branch's child, I'll divorce you, this wicked woman!" Mr. Mu said angrily, storming out of the courtyard.

Mr. Mu is a person with many faults, partial, protective of his favorites, yet he valued a harmonious big family.

Especially after talking to Shuangshuang those few times, Mr. Mu had been reflecting, wondering if some family members had grown crooked.

Such twisted minds.

Regardless of if they're children of the Old Mu Family, even if they were someone else's children, one should help out, put on a show, soothe one's conscience.

Mr. Mu went directly to the third branch; by then Mu Dashan wasn't in bed anymore, the body improved after the weather cooled, and for today's issue, Yu Si Niang didn't dare to tell Mu Dashan.

Afraid that Mu Dashan would get anxious and cause problems.

Yet Mr. Mu didn't know, he rushed into the house and directly asked Mu Dashan, still weaving baskets: "Old Third, have Little Zhi and Yuanbao been found?"

Mu Dashan's bamboo strips pierced all into his flesh, blood bubbled out.

Mr. Mu suddenly panicked, realizing Yu Si Niang hadn't told the third son about this matter.

"Dad, what are you saying, what's wrong with Little Zhi and Yuanbao?" The man's eyes widened more than usual.

He stared anxiously at the old man, his eyes full of worry for his children.

In Mu Dashan's eyes, Yuanbao was also his child; now hearing his children were in trouble, how could Mu Dashan not be anxious?

"Old Third, you don't need to worry about this matter; Shuang and Si Niang are out searching. You need to take care and not get worked up!"

Chapter 537: You are My Biological Father

But how can I not be worried? Mu Dashan, listening to what Mr. Mu said, couldn't care about anything else and insisted on going to find people.

Mr. Mu had no choice but to join Mu Dashan in the search.

The night was falling fast, the sky suddenly darkened, and everyone in Er Gui Village was searching so hard their eyes were nearly blind, yet they found no trace of anyone.

Everyone was anxiously worried inside.

Yu Si Niang cried several times along the way; if the villagers hadn't persuaded her, she would probably have fainted already.

The feeling of losing a child is something only those who have experienced it can understand.

By now, Mu Shuangshuang was certain that the child had been taken; this late, if the child had just gone out to play, he would surely have returned by now.

The first thing that came to her mind was the nearby human traffickers, even if it wasn't them, they would know who it was.

Mu Shuangshuang shared her thoughts with Lu Yuanfeng.

Lu Yuanfeng's thoughts were similar to Mu Shuangshuang's; after searching for so long, it shouldn't have been lost on its own.

"Shuangshuang, I know where the nearest human traffickers live. We should hurry and find them!"

Not far away, the people of Er Gui Village were still searching for the two children with torches, which warmed Mu Shuangshuang's heart significantly.

People say distant relatives are not as good as close neighbors. Even if they usually exchange harsh words, when faced with great difficulties, everyone takes the side that needs help.

This is probably a trait ingrained in one's bones, no matter how great the disagreements are daily, in the face of disasters, everyone is of one mind.

If there's any hatred, it can wait until the children are found.

Nothing is bigger than the children.

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After dark, the human traffickers carried Yuanbao and Little Zhi to Tie Dao Village.

Wang the blacksmith's house was brightly lit. With Chen Hong gone, life was much more comfortable for them. They no longer had to get up early to cook meals and didn't have to serve Chen Hong like a grandson every day.

Plus, they were about to have a son, so the two elders of the Wang family were very excited.

Especially Mrs. Zhou, whose son had died many years ago. She had been longing day and night for a child to come.

That afternoon, Mrs. Zhou received a notification from the human traffickers. Originally, the child was to be delivered in the afternoon, but Mrs. Zhou was afraid of being seen, so she asked the traffickers to come at night.

Mrs. Zhou's idea was to raise the child at home, claiming to outsiders that the child belonged to a relative. After a few years, they would say the relative had died, and they would take care of the child themselves thereafter.

Wang the blacksmith also looked forward to the arrival of this child. They had been waiting for this day for too long, just like when their child was born.

"Old man, do you think the child the human traffickers are bringing us will look good? Will it resemble our little craftsman?" Mrs. Zhou asked.

"How could it resemble us when it's not our biological son!" Wang the blacksmith shook his head helplessly.

"True, it's not our biological child. Let's hope it's not like Chen Hong, an ungrateful wolf." Mrs. Zhou agreed.

Gradually, both Mrs. Zhou and Wang the blacksmith grew a little impatient waiting.

Mrs. Zhou opened the courtyard door, ready to go outside and take a look, when she happened to run into the visiting human traffickers.

The human traffickers around here weren't just one; in total, they were six, each with different tasks, like handling business, scouting, lookout, execution, and of course, their boss, who was the man initially scouting outside.

The human trafficker placed the sack in the courtyard of Old Wang's house.

"Oh no, how could you put them in a sack, what if they suffocate?" Mrs. Zhou exclaimed.

The two elders of the Wang family hurried to untie the sack.

Once untied, they were startled.

Inside the sack were two children, bound and with rags stuffed in their mouths. Upon seeing Mrs. Zhou and Wang the blacksmith, the children began to make muffled cries, seemingly asking for help.

"These... these are two children?" Mrs. Zhou asked.

"Yes, the girl is a gift to you, our boss said he'll charge you fifteen taels for the boy!"

Last time they sold Chen Hong for ten taels, and this time the human traffickers charged fifteen taels, meaning the Old Wang family only lost five taels of silver.

A sure-fire deal.

"But these children are so big, can they be raised to be familiar?" Wang the blacksmith said skeptically.

Not just him, even Mrs. Zhou felt they couldn't be easily assimilated.

They say children around two years old are best to raise; they don't need milk, don't need to be taught to speak, and you don't have to worry about them not growing attached.

But for six or seven-year-olds, they would know where their home is, how can you guarantee they wouldn't run back secretly?

Just as Wang the blacksmith was about to refuse, the human trafficker threatened, "You can refuse the children but you still have to pay. Do you think I'm doing you a favor by bringing you children for no reason?"

"If you dare not pay, I'll let the villagers know you sold your daughter-in-law, and let them scold you to death."

There have been cases of selling a daughter-in-law, but those were done privately. If it became public, people would still point fingers at them.

Wang the blacksmith and his wife had no choice but to do as the human traffickers said and pay the money.

The two children were brought back.

Before they left, the human traffickers reminded them, "It's better not to untie these two children now. If they run away, we're not responsible!"

Wang the blacksmith and his wife didn't dare to argue and just wished these people would leave quickly.

Once they were gone, Wang the blacksmith approached the two children with a candlestick.

Yuanbao couldn't move, but his eyes stayed fixed on Little Zhi.

Little Zhi was silently shedding tears, scared out of his wits.

"Old man, these children are quite pitiful, should we... should we untie them?"

Having had children, seeing the two tied up like this pained Mrs. Zhou deeply.

"Why don't you go prepare something to eat, I'll have a word with these children."

Yuanbao and Little Zhi had been tied up all day and were indeed hungry.

"Little ones, from now on, I'm your dad, and the person making food for you is your mom. You must honor me and your mom in the future."

Little Zhi shook his head vigorously, crying out inside that wasn't his dad, he already had a dad!

"I'm telling you, my wife and I have no other children. As long as you're obedient, whatever you want to eat, we'll make it for you. Whatever you want to play with, we'll buy it for you. But if you dare to run, I'll kill one of you!"

Wang the blacksmith, after all, was a blacksmith; his words were full of force, and Little Zhi was so scared he cried uncontrollably.

Yuanbao, although scared, remained much calmer.

He remembered what Sister Shuangshuang told him, never be afraid and face things calmly.

While Little Zhi was shaking his head, Yuanbao nodded emphatically, trying to appear compliant.

Seeing this, Wang the blacksmith, in a good mood, removed the cloth from Yuanbao's mouth.

As soon as the cloth was removed, Yuanbao leaned his head up.

"Dad, you're my real dad, those people earlier were so mean, they didn't give Little Zhi and me any food, and Yuanbao is so hungry!"

Yuanbao naturally looked sturdy and robust, and this call of "Dad" made Wang the blacksmith feel like a dead tree coming back to life, warming his long-cold heart.

He looked at Yuanbao in astonishment, almost not daring to believe that Yuanbao was calling him.

"Child, what did you say, say it again!"

Chapter 538: Finally Escaped

Yuanbao naturally called out "Dad" again in a sweet voice.

Wang the blacksmith was delighted and directly untied Yuanbao's rope, and Little Zhi's rope was untied as well.

Little Zhi pouted, about to curse Wang the blacksmith, but Yuanbao covered her mouth.

"Little Zhi, you promised to listen to Brother Yuanbao, no talking!" Yuanbao whispered.

Although Little Zhi wanted to cry, she held back.

Mrs. Zhou made a bunch of delicious food, and upon returning and seeing Wang the blacksmith had untied both children, she was about to ask questions when Wang the blacksmith spoke: "Old wife, from today on, we have two kids, Yuanbao and Little Zhi!"

"Yuanbao, Little Zhi, call mother quickly!"

"Mother~" Yuanbao said sweetly.

Little Zhi was unwilling to speak, she covered her mouth and shook her head desperately.

"Dad, Mom, my sister is still young and doesn't understand. I'll be filial to you in the future, Yuanbao is really hungry..."

While speaking, Yuanbao's eyes were fixed on the dishes Mrs. Zhou was holding.

The little bit of resentment in Mrs. Zhou's heart was completely melted by Yuanbao's call of "Mother." At this moment, she seemed to have returned to the time when she had just given birth to her son, Little Jiang.

"Come, come, mother has prepared food for you. Yuan...bao, Little Zhi, wait for me a bit, I'll go fry some eggs for you, and after eating, I'll get water for you to bathe."

Mrs. Zhou had not experienced the joy of having children give her company for too many years, and now her tears flowed continuously out of emotion.

Yuanbao pulled Little Zhi to the dining table, constantly placing various dishes into Little Zhi's bowl, fearing she would go hungry.

After not eating all day, the two kids didn't care about appearances and ate frantically.

Mrs. Zhou and Wang the blacksmith kept their eyes on the two little ones.

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Dark night, wind high

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng arrived at the human traffickers' spot, which was essentially an abandoned house, about a thirty-minute walk from Tie Dao Village.

The abandoned house was brightly lit at the moment.

Just selling Chen Hong and the two little ones had earned thirty taels of silver.

Wang San bought Chen Hong for twenty-five taels of silver, but the traffickers took most of it, only giving the Wang Family's elders ten taels.

In the center of the abandoned house, a row of meat and wine was set up, several human traffickers were eating meat and drinking wine, quite happily.

"Big brother, this business is really worth it, feasting off both ends; it's just that Chen Hong, that coquettish woman, we brothers haven't enjoyed her."

The underling said indistinctly while chewing meat.

"Enough, stop thinking about such matters. That woman had so many lovers; who knows if she's got any venereal diseases or something."

The human trafficker shouted loudly, and a few underlings instantly quieted down.

They didn't think about Chen Hong anymore, everyone continued eating and drinking.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng were eavesdropping outside, gathering that Chen Hong was sold, but there was no clear information on Little Zhi and Yuanbao.

"Shuangshuang, should we rush in, or wait a bit?" Lu Yuanfeng whispered.

"Wait a bit, it looks like they'll be drinking for a while. Let's go in when they're mostly done."

Mu Shuangshuang's reason for waiting outside was firstly not knowing the situation inside; rushing in on impulse might lead to someone escaping and possibly endangering Little Zhi and Yuanbao.

The second reason was that who drank a lot would eventually need to relieve themselves, and they could capture someone then for interrogation.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng lay on the grass, carefully observing the movement inside the house.

By late September, the weather was getting increasingly cold.

Mu Shuangshuang lay on the ground, feeling the chill rising gradually from the earth, wondering if perhaps her clothes were too thin, anyway it was cold!

Just having such thoughts, Lu Yuanfeng took off his coat and handed it to Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang naturally refused; Lu Yuanfeng's clothes were much too large and might be a hindrance when fighting later.

Additionally, she feared Lu Yuanfeng would catch a cold in such weather.

As soon as Mu Shuangshuang refused, Lu Yuanfeng effortlessly pulled her into his embrace, Mu Shuangshuang's face blushed instantly, comparable to a monkey's red behind.

The smell on Lu Yuanfeng's body was at her nose, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly felt not cold anymore.

The two people stayed close like this, after a while, indeed someone came out to relieve themselves, choosing the exact spot where Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng were hiding.

The man, just as he was undoing his pants facing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, was covered in the mouth by Lu Yuanfeng; they dragged him further away.

Luckily tonight there was no moonlight, the starry sky was utterly dim, so the man didn't see Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng's faces clearly.

Once they reached a safe area, Mu Shuangshuang stepped on the man's stomach and asked, "Did you sell two kids today, one boy and one girl?"

At first, the man said nothing, but after Lu Yuanfeng gave him a punch, he became compliant immediately.

"Please spare me, Hero... we did sell two kids, but it was our boss who ordered it, we are not sure..."

"Still dare to lie?" Mu Shuangshuang slapped the man across the face, the sound loud, leaving him stunned.

"Speak, where were those kids sold?" Mu Shuangshuang pressed him.

"I... I don't know!"

The man was too terrified to tell the truth since the two people before him were truly fierce, attacking without saying a word.

"Fengzi, dislocate his jaw for me. Useless if all he does is lie!"

Lu Yuanfeng's hand held the man's jaw, with just a bit of force, his jaw could dislocate.

Finally, the man knew fear.

Crying out, he said, "Tie Dao Village, Wang the blacksmith's house..."

Mu Shuangshuang then knocked him out and tied him under a tree.

Right now, their urgent priority was to find Yuanbao and Little Zhi, as for these human traffickers, they could come back to deal with them later.

At Old Wang Family, Yuanbao and Little Zhi weren't asleep, accurately speaking, Yuanbao was waiting for an opportunity to escape, Little Zhi was scared.

The two lay on the kang at Wang the blacksmith's house, the kang having been heated during the night, was warm.

Wang the blacksmith and Mrs. Zhou slept on either end, but both had tacitly placed the two children between them.

The night grew darker, Yuanbao didn't know what time it was, nor whether Wang the blacksmith and Mrs. Zhou were asleep.

So he whispered, "Dad, Mom, Yuanbao needs to pee..."

Wang the blacksmith and Mrs. Zhou didn't react.

They were indeed exhausted from the day, and Yuanbao had made them so happy in the evening, as if their son was alive again.

At first, they were cautious but were now fast asleep.

"Little Zhi, accompany me to pee, I'm scared!" Yuanbao nudged Little Zhi's body.

Little Zhi followed and crawled off the kang.

The two children were cautious.

Yuanbao didn't really expect to escape, so he kept talking, and if caught, they would claim they were just answering nature's call.

Using this method, they ran out of the yard.

Once outside, Yuanbao grabbed Little Zhi's hand and they sprinted...

Chapter 539: Uncle Passed the Imperial Exam?

Because they were both children, they were especially scared, Little Zhi ran while crying.

So pitiful.

The two children ran and ran until they saw two figures ahead of them, too frightened to dodge.

Mu Shuangshuang, with her sharp eyes, saw they were two little kids.

"Yuanbao, Little Zhi..." Mu Shuangshuang shouted.

The two little kids suddenly burst into tears.

"Wah... Sister Shuangshuang, you finally came, Yuanbao was so scared..."

"Sister, Little Zhi is so scared..."

The children each hugged one of Mu Shuangshuang's legs, crying uncontrollably.

Lu Yuanfeng felt a mixture of emotions in his heart.

Such young children had to endure such things.

"There, there, don't cry. Sister Shuangshuang is here, Brother Yuanfeng is here too, this won't happen again in the future."

"Don't cry, there, there..."

Mu Shuangshuang spent some time calming the kids down.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng discussed and decided to take the children home first.

Lu Yuanfeng carried both children, not feeling tired, only feeling heartache.

Back in Er Gui Village, those who went out searching also returned one by one, those who hadn't returned yet heard the children were found and followed them home.

Such a big incident in Er Gui Village, even the village head was alarmed.

He personally came to understand the situation.

Mu Shuangshuang told the truth but didn't mention looking for human traffickers.

The village head gave some instructions, he said he'd go to Tie Dao Village tomorrow to discuss the matter with their village head, buying children is not a reputable thing, better for them to handle it.

Wave after wave of people concerned for Yuanbao and Little Zhi were sent away.

Everyone was exhausted.

Yu Si Niang bathed the two children and coaxed them to sleep.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng exchanged a glance, deciding to solve the problem.

Those human traffickers were too rampant, daring to buy and sell children like Little Zhi and Yuanbao not even sold by their families.

This time, Mu Shuangshuang was determined to teach them a lesson.

The two took tools, ropes, and bows and arrows to find the traffickers.

By the time they arrived, it was past midnight.

The night grew darker, but with Lu Yuanfeng the living map, they still found them smoothly.

As Lu Yuanfeng was about to rush in, Mu Shuangshuang handed him a piece of cloth.

"Wear it on your head, only your eyes should show."

It was made by Mu Shuangshuang herself, inspired by the hats worn by certain robbers.

Because Mu Shuangshuang felt that those capable of child trafficking were certainly not easy to deal with.

They might be vicious criminals, and they couldn't let anyone know their identities.

To avoid revenge on their families.

Once inside, they tied up the other people sleeping like dead pigs.

Mu Shuangshuang looked at the bound people, thinking of the inconsolably crying Little Zhi and Yuanbao, she immediately struck hard.

Finding a stick from the door seam, Mu Shuangshuang beat them mercilessly.

Such fierce behavior, Lu Yuanfeng had never seen before, but he still helped Shuangshuang beat them.

They beat them for almost an hour, Mu Shuangshuang's physical strength was almost exhausted.

Some traffickers woke in pain but were quickly beaten unconscious again.

As dawn broke, the two finally stopped.

Mu Shuangshuang was a bit weary, remembering the unhandled situation at Wang the blacksmith's house, she suddenly changed her mind to rescue Chen Hong from Wang San's place.

Chen Hong was no pushover, with her dealing with Old Wang Family, Shuangshuang didn't need to intervene personally.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng returned to the village, deciding to rest briefly and then rescue Chen Hong from Wang San.

Mu Shuangshuang was resting on her bed, while Lu Yuanfeng rested on a few stools in her kitchen.

As they say, food is essential, after a night of turmoil, the two were starving.

Yu Si Niang was up early before dawn to cook for the two children, when her meal was ready, she didn't even wake Lu Yuanfeng.

Yu Si Niang felt more heartache towards Lu Yuanfeng.

She thought Lu Yuanfeng was truly enduring hardships and genuinely good to Shuangshuang.

Breakfast included two extra eggs, and Yu Si Niang didn't rush to wake Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng.

But once breakfast was ready, they woke up.

They quickly had breakfast and went to finish what they hadn't done the night before.

Wang San's house was the farthest from Mu Shuangshuang's home.

It took some time to walk over.

Knowing Wang San lived alone and was old, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng kicked the door open.

On the bed, Chen Hong was stripped naked and tied up by Wang San, last night Wang San brutally tormented Chen Hong, leaving her covered in blood wounds.

After a night of screaming, Chen Hong was already in despair.

Now seeing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng, she cried out.

"Save me, save me..."

Chen Hong didn't care anymore about enemies or revenge, she just wanted to live.

Wang San, that bastard, was simply inhuman.

Wang San had just woken up, still groggy, as he blinked his eyes clear, Mu Shuangshuang lunged at him and kicked him in the stomach.

Wang San's head hit the bedpost, and he fainted from the pain.

With Chen Hong naked, Lu Yuanfeng kept his head turned away, Mu Shuangshuang found a sheet in Wang San's room for Chen Hong to cover herself with.

Before Chen Hong could speak, Mu Shuangshuang said, "Since Old Wang Family sold you to Wang San, you're Wang San's property, figure out how to escape yourself!"

Chen Hong hadn't yet recovered from the shock, still scared.

Upon hearing Mu Shuangshuang, it seemed she remembered who caused her misfortune.

Wrapping herself in the sheet, Chen Hong took advantage of the early morning to walk back to Tie Dao Village.

Wang the blacksmith couple discovered early in the morning that Yuanbao and Little Zhi were missing and frantically searched for a long time.

Ultimately, they couldn't find them.

Most surprisingly was Chen Hong returning.

Chen Hong didn't even change clothes, but shouted loudly at Old Wang Family's door.

"Everybody come see, Old Wang Family is shameless, secretly selling wives ~"

"Vile Old Wang Family, sold me, Chen Hong, deliberately saying they treated me well just to sell the wife..."

Chen Hong had a loud voice and captivating words, within moments, the villagers gathered in Old Wang Family's yard.

Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng mingled in the crowd, witnessing the Old Wang couple's shock turning into fear, all emotions clearly visible.

Mrs. Zhou rushed to tear Chen Hong's mouth apart, but was slapped unconscious by Chen Hong.

Furthermore, Chen Hong publicly severed ties with Old Wang Family.

Not admitting she was sold.

She returned inside, took her belongings, and swaggered off toward Er Gui Village.

She intended to seek refuge with Mu Danian, letting people know she, Chen Hong, wasn't easy to bully.

At this moment, Old Mu Family was in an uproar.

Finally, news from Mu Dade, who hadn't been heard from, arrived.

This time, it was merely a simple letter.

The family gathered together, discussing the letter's content.

"Dad, Mom, did my brother pass the exam???"

Chapter 540: Don't Be Here Asking For Money Again

Mu Dazhong looked at everyone in the Old Mu Family with a face full of surprise and asked.

But no one knew!

After all, nobody in the family could read!

Mrs. Lin chimed in from the side: "Is it really, or is it just another call for money? After all, eldest brother's family hasn't returned yet, and the last letter was asking us for twenty taels of silver."

Mrs. Lin's words instantly dampened everyone's joy.

Old Mrs. Mu shouted angrily: "What nonsense are you spouting? How could the eldest not have passed? I'm telling you, if he didn't pass, I'll have the second son divorce you, you blabbermouth!"

Upon hearing Old Mrs. Mu's words, Mrs. Lin shrank back, scared, and didn't utter another word, no matter what others said next.

There's a knot in everyone's hearts; they can't read the letter themselves, nor dare to show it to anyone else.

If he didn't pass, what should we do? It would be such a disgrace!

"Why don't we ask the mailman?" Mu Dajiang suggested.

He had barely spoken when Old Mrs. Mu scolded him: "Fourth brother, are you intentionally trying to embarrass me? Let me tell you, you from the fourth branch have no authority to speak in household matters, go stand aside!"

Mu Dajiang's face turned red, and he stood up angrily, followed by Mrs. Liu.

Since the fourth branch wasn't welcome, they might as well leave.

Mr. Mu quickly spoke up upon seeing this: "Fourth brother, and fourth brother's wife, sit down, just listen to what your mother says."

In recent days, Mr. Mu seemed to have become a different person and began actively maintaining order in the family.

Originally, his word held the most authority in the family.

Moreover, he had reprimanded Mu Dazhong and Mu Danian last time, so when Mr. Mu spoke, Mu Dajiang and Mrs. Liu sat back down.

Everyone continued to discuss.

"Why don't we take it to the town today and ask the scholars selling paintings and calligraphy? They can read, and don't know us. If worst comes to worst... our family won't lose face." Mu Dalang chimed in from the side.

His suggestion was unanimously agreed upon by everyone in the Old Mu Family.

"Fourth brother, this afternoon, don't go to the cotton fields, take your wife to town and figure this out."

"Second branch, you will peel cotton today; you can't leave until the pile of cotton at home is finished."

Mr. Mu allocated the tasks and Mu Dajiang and Mrs. Liu were thrilled.

They never expected that the fourth branch would be sent to town.

Thinking that they still had twenty-eight coins in their pockets, Mu Dajiang decided to take the children along and eat something good in town.

"Dad, we won't peel cotton, that pile of cotton sitting there looks like crap, and it's full of bugs. Let the fourth branch do it; Lin and I will go to town without asking for a penny, ensuring the task is done well!"

Mu Dazhong refused to peel cotton at home and proactively shared his thoughts with Mr. Mu.

"You lazy bum, what I say goes. If you don't work, you won't eat dinner tonight. Fourth brother, get some five-flavor pork this afternoon; we'll have dumplings for dinner!" Mr. Mu said angrily.

Mu Dazhong had no objections now.

With food on the table, he had nothing to say.

That's how the matter was settled.

Meanwhile, Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng watched Chen Hong head to Er Gui Village.

No need to think; Chen Hong was going to seek refuge with Mu Shuangshuang's uncle, Mu Danian.

Mu Shuangshuang remarked: "Fengzi, you have to admit, Chen Hong is indeed clever. She's looking for my fifth uncle, the Old Mu Family's only scholar in the village. Not even the Old Wang Family dares to provoke him lightly. Wang San wouldn't dare to come and demand her either."

"Plus, my fifth uncle has two holes poked in his behind and needs someone to take care of him. Even my grandma couldn't drive her away!"

Lu Yuanfeng nodded in agreement.

"I suppose your family will be even more chaotic in the future."

Chen Hong isn't one to play by the rules; it's hard to predict how things will get with Old Mrs. Mu.

However, this has nothing to do with the third branch.

The third branch has split from the family, so no matter how fierce Chen Hong gets, it won't affect them.

"Shuangshuang, I think we shouldn't just let the human trafficker slide. Although we tied them up, we haven't checked the backyard yet. There might be kidnapped children from elsewhere held there."

Initially, Lu Yuanfeng thought the people the trafficker had were part of a voluntary trade, but now it seems that's hardly the case.

At least Yuanbao and Little Zhi were captured on the road.

Could there be others captured in the same way, including his mother...

Mu Shuangshuang understood what Lu Yuanfeng meant. At dawn, she struck each trafficker with a few punches, knocking them unconscious.

That's why they probably won't wake up for a while.

Furthermore, as traffickers, they had only just profited from involuntary trades, those silver pieces should still be untouched.

Such a good opportunity to make money, Mu Shuangshuang would hardly miss it.

The two quietly returned to the trafficker's place, checked to confirm they were still unconscious, and began searching the room.

After rummaging around, surprisingly there was nothing of value.

Mu Shuangshuang was puzzled.

Logically, traffickers should have had silver after selling Little Zhi and Yuanbao, not possibly empty-handed.

Mu Shuangshuang glanced around briefly, and eventually looked up to see a corner of black cloth dangling from the roof beams.

Mu Shuangshuang's eyes lit up; she pointed to the spot and said to Lu Yuanfeng, "Fengzi, there's something up there."

Lu Yuanfeng also noticed the black cloth on the beam.

Originally, Mu Shuangshuang wanted to look for a ladder or something in the corner, but to her surprise, Lu Yuanfeng climbed right up. He stepped on the wall corner, in a few swift moves, scaled the wall, and got onto the beam. Hanging from the beam, that little black cloth bag was full of silver.

Lu Yuanfeng threw the silver down and then jumped down from the beam.

Despite jumping from such height, he landed steadily without a sound.

Mu Shuangshuang watched in shock.

And blurted out: "Fengzi, do you know Qinggong?"

The kind of people in TV dramas who leap dozens of meters, climb walls and rooftops—simply amazing.

Unfortunately, things weren't as Mu Shuangshuang imagined.

Lu Yuanfeng looked blank when he heard the word Qinggong.

Upon further questioning on how he scaled the beam so effortlessly.

Lu Yuanfeng pointed to his pant leg.

"I used to tie sandbags here. This time I went out looking for Yuanbao and Little Zhi, fearing I'd encounter bad people, so I untied the sandbags and weights from my hands and feet!"

"What Shuangshuang described as flying over walls actually stems from practicing with heavy weights, running and jumping. Once the sandbags and weights are removed, walking feels especially light."

"However, there are drawbacks; you must rely on external force, like stepping on a wall corner or whatnot."

Mu Shuangshuang finally understood!

No wonder Lu Yuanfeng had stepped on the corner when scaling the beam.

However, realizing Qinggong doesn't exist was somewhat disappointing.

But it's actually better this way, since without those powers, success relies solely on skill.