

Folly 551

Chapter 551: Overdone Showing Off

By then, regardless of whether Mu Dade passes or not, he will be the most impressive person in Er Gui Village.

The village head and Fu Wu would have to bow their heads when they see him.

But Mu Shuangshuang believes more in the saying, 'Man proposes, God disposes.' With Mu Dade's character, even if heaven grants him good luck once, it won't last forever.

"Shuangshuang, I still can't believe Uncle passed the exam."

Mu Dalang was genuinely straightforward. These were words that Mu Shuangshuang dared to say because the third branch had already separated from the family, and whatever benefits the main branch gets won't affect them.

But Mu Dalang hadn't separated yet, and to put it bluntly, he might still rely on Mu Dade in the future.

By saying this, he seemed to disregard the wealth and status promised by Mu Dade.

"My parents have been acting crazy these past few days, telling everyone that Uncle passed the exam and that the Old Mu Family will live well now. That's not enough; they even have to dig up others' scandals to embarrass them and then laugh it off."

Mu Dalang was a sensible child, understanding that one could be hit and scolded, but not insulted.

This time, with Uncle passing the exam, the Old Mu Family might have offended everyone in the village.

The villagers say nothing on the surface because Uncle might become an official. But if he doesn't, the family may not even be able to stay in the village.

Mu Dade now just hopes his uncle would quickly take these people out of the village.

Mu Dalang doesn't want a lavish life, just a home with Huang Bitu, a piece of land, and the ability to raise sheep.

Mu Shuangshuang listened to Mu Dalang's heartfelt words and liked this first cousin even more.

She always knew that her first cousin had the most correct values at home, but she didn't expect him to completely disregard the little glory promised by the main branch.

"First cousin, stick to your own principles. I think you'll find out in at most a year that your decision was not wrong.

You don't always have to rely on others to live a good life; you can rely on yourself too.

Like Fengzi and me, we don't expect others to give us any benefits. As long as we keep working hard ourselves, Fengzi, don't you agree?"

Mu Shuangshuang directed the conversation to Lu Yuanfeng.

This young man had been quietly listening while she and Mu Dalang talked, without expressing his opinions, as if he wanted to be invisible.

Lu Yuanfeng smiled beautifully and nodded in agreement.

"Dalang, we have hands and feet. By relying on ourselves, we can support our wives!"

Mu Dalang scratched his head and grinned: "Fengzi, Shuangshuang, before I start raising sheep, how about I hang around with you guys? You don't need to pay me; I'll work for you for free."

This time, it was Mu Shuangshuang's turn to be surprised.

This first cousin is such a good person.

He's even willing to work for free.

However, she won't let him suffer a loss.

"What Fengzi and I would need help with is mainly the farmland.

If the daily wage is a certain amount, we'll pay you by that rate, and once the pond is dug and filled with fish, I'll supply you with a whole year's worth of fish."

"Alright, whatever Shuangshuang says, we'll do!"

The three sped up their pace toward Tie Dao Village.

On the way, they ran into a familiar face.

Lu Yuanfeng's army mate Ge Sandan, previously, the chicks Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng bought were from Aunt Ge's family, and they were really good.

Ge Sandan didn't see Lu Yuanfeng last time, so when he saw him this time, he was exceptionally excited.

Upon hearing that Lu Yuanfeng's arid land was bought in Tie Dao Village, he immediately wanted to go with Lu Yuanfeng to dig the pond.

"Sandan, your legs aren't great. You don't need to go. Dalang and I, the two men, are enough."

Lu Yuanfeng's words implied he wouldn't let Mu Shuangshuang dig the pond.

"We're all brothers here, no need to be polite. Besides, you know my leg issues are chronic. Maybe working will even make them feel better."

Ge Sandan's legs weren't too inconvenient, just that he lost a toe bone, making his walk somewhat unsteady and slower than the average person, appearing to limp.

But it wasn't too unsightly.

With the conversation reaching this point, Lu Yuanfeng couldn't refuse any longer.

The pond-digging team expanded a bit more.

The two acres of lowland still had water, but it wasn't deep, so it wouldn't be too bad to dig gradually.

Mu Shuangshuang handed over the hoes, dustpans, and shoulder poles to the three men.

Seeing them digging away, Mu Shuangshuang wanted to help several times but was rejected.

"Shuangshuang, you're a girl, standing on the bank is enough," Lu Yuanfeng said.

"Cousin, let the men handle the men's work. You should rest properly. If you want, take a walk or just wait for us on the bank!" Mu Dalang followed.

Ge Sandan was less talkative, but his stance was also to keep Mu Shuangshuang away.

With nothing to do, Mu Shuangshuang roamed around the nearby ditches. Coincidentally, she had time, and in her pocket was a piece of string, made by twisting several threads used for embroidery, strong enough.

She also found a mud toad and began fishing for crayfish.

While that side was busy, this side was catching with zeal.

By noon, both sides had results.

However, over on Lu Yuanfeng's side, they looked notably worse for wear, with each person covered in mud and their clothes soaked in sweat.

But it also proved the three men had put in hard work.

On the other hand, Mu Shuangshuang seemed much more relaxed, clean, with the bamboo basket she brought filled with crayfish.

"Fengzi, come over to my place for lunch at noon. We'll continue working in the afternoon. I have nothing to do over the next few days, so let's quickly finish this. What do you think?"

Ge Sandan had invited them several times for meals, and before today, Lu Yuanfeng always declined. But since they met this time, he agreed.

He'd just have to host next time.

"Okay, but let Auntie keep it simple. We don't need elaborate dishes, just some sweet potato rice is fine."

"Alright!"

The three headed to the Ge Family's house, inevitably passing by Wang the blacksmith's house.

In the courtyard, Mrs. Zhou was drying clothes.

Seeing Mu Shuangshuang and Lu Yuanfeng astonished her. She watched them enter her neighbor Ge's yard.

Not caring about her clothes anymore, she rushed into the house to call Wang Tiejiang.

At that time, Wang Tiejiang was still forging iron. Hearing Mrs. Zhou's words, he stopped and went to the Ge house to check things out.

Since they had helped him earlier that morning, they ought to at least take a look.

Aunt Ge greeted them happily.

"Finally, you're here. Fengzi, Shuangshuang, this old lady has been waiting for you until I'm nearly blind! Now you've arrived, today for lunch, I'm killing a chicken for you!"

In rural households, many keep chickens for sale, usually only slaughtering them during the New Year when guests come.

If you visit and the host kills a chicken for you, it means they really value you and cherish your company.

The three quickly stopped her.

"Auntie, the three of us are just here to work. Time is tight, so something simple for lunch is fine, don't trouble yourself too much!"

Chapter 552: I Have Never Had a Child

"How could that be? We may not have much else, but we've got plenty of chickens. There's this one chicken that's fond of going to others' vegetable gardens. If you take care of it for me, you'd actually be helping us!"

Aunt Ge finished speaking, went into the kitchen, and got a bowl with half a bowl of water in it. In her other hand, she held a kitchen knife. She marched straight up to a large white rooster and grabbed it at once.

Before the rooster could even make a sound, she swiftly slashed its neck.

The chicken's blood started pouring out, and her small bowl was perfectly positioned to catch all the blood.

After doing all this, Aunt Ge went back to the kitchen to boil water.

Lu Yuanfeng followed her in to help with the chicken.

Mu Shuangshuang took the small crayfish in her bamboo basket to the kitchen.

"What are you two doing in here? Out, out! I'll handle the work here!" Aunt Ge unceremoniously ushered them out.

Mu Shuangshuang quickly said, "Auntie, only I know how to cook what's in my basket. I'll prepare it in the kitchen for you."

"No, no, I'll stew a chicken at noon, maybe kill a fish too, that's enough food. You go accompany my daughter-in-law Xiuxiu for a chat. That girl hasn't seen a young lady in ages and is dreadfully bored."

While pushing Mu Shuangshuang out, Aunt Ge even assigned her a task.

To be honest, this old lady was rather endearing.

Unlike others who would be polite with you, she spoke as if giving orders, yet it wasn't off-putting.

In the back room of the courtyard, Mu Shuangshuang met Xiuxiu, whose belly was as large as a drum.

Xiuxiu was sitting on the bed embroidering flowers. Upon seeing Mu Shuangshuang, she excitedly stood up.

"Brother Sandan just spoke about you. You're really pretty."

Mu Shuangshuang's smile grew even brighter.

It was actually the first time someone besides Lu Yuanfeng had said she was pretty.

But Xiuxiu wasn't lying; Mu Shuangshuang indeed became more beautiful the more she was looked after and as she gradually gained weight.

"How far along is your baby? When are you due?" Mu Shuangshuang took a few steps forward and stared at Xiuxiu's belly, trying to figure out something.

"Soon. My mom said it will be in the middle of this month."

Mu Shuangshuang nodded, "That's really soon then."

It's already early September, the blooming season for osmanthus flowers. Mu Shuangshuang remembered Liu Zian saying that when the osmanthus was in full bloom, the Autumn Examination results would be released.

By that time, Mu Dade's matters would more or less be settled.

"Shuangshuang, is your name Shuangshuang?"

Xiuxiu usually didn't have many friends and stayed at home to rest during her pregnancy. Suddenly having someone around her age, she naturally had a lot to say. Since Ge Sandan only mentioned Shuangshuang's name once, she needed to confirm it.

"Yes, Xiuxiu! By the way, do you want something to eat? Let me see if I can make something for you, like snacks or pastries."

Mu Shuangshuang was thinking of making osmanthus buns or baking cookies, considering she also wanted a bite to eat.

Xiuxiu swallowed her saliva.

"Can I? Will my mom say anything?"

"Of course... I don't know, but don't worry. I'll make it for you for sure when Aunt Ge is asleep."

Mu Shuangshuang thought that since they didn't allow her to work in the fields, she might as well make snacks for them at home.

The plan was set; it just waited for after the midday meal when Aunt Ge took a rest.

Half an hour later, a large pot of chicken soup was done. The aroma teased everyone's cravings.

Conveniently, Aunt Ge called everyone to set the table. Mu Shuangshuang supported Xiuxiu as they walked to the kitchen.

In the kitchen, the smell of food blended together. Lu Yuanfeng and the others helped move tables and set stools. Mu Shuangshuang got water for Xiuxiu to wash her hands.

With all these chores done, it was time to eat.

At the dinner table, Aunt Ge handed a big drumstick to Xiuxiu, reminding her, "After you finish eating, go rest. Tell me if you want anything to eat, and I'll make it for you. All that matters is that my grandson in your belly is doing well."

Xiuxiu originally wanted to say thank you, but the words got stuck in her throat.

Her mother-in-law was great in all aspects, except she was overly fixated on carrying on the family line.

From the first day Xiuxiu got married, Aunt Ge nagged her endlessly about carrying on the family line and having a grandson.

"Mom, why are you talking about this? The baby's almost born—whether it's a girl or a boy has long been decided," Ge Sandan disagreed.

"I'm just concerned about Xiuxiu, alright? I dreamt last night that Xiuxiu gave birth to a chubby boy, so I'm asking her to rest well today," Old Mrs. Ge chided Ge Sandan with a glance.

She then turned to Xiuxiu and said, "Don't mind Sandan, Xiuxiu. Women, you know, must give birth to sons. What's the good in having daughters? They end up as someone else's wife. If you have a son, he can even bring a wife into the family.

If you give birth to a son, I'll be your servant, looking after you for a lifetime."

Aunt Ge's words made everyone present feel somewhat uncomfortable.

Although everyone understood Aunt Ge's intense desire for a grandson, they knew she wouldn't genuinely dislike a granddaughter.

But saying this in front of Xiuxiu, a pregnant woman, made her uneasy.

"Auntie, you've worked hard today, have more vegetables." Mu Shuangshuang proactively offered Aunt Ge a piece of chicken.

She continued, "Auntie, I think Brother Sandan is right too. Both sons and daughters are your dear grandchildren, and they'll need the best grandmother in the world to care for them."

"Look, in just a short while, we've had both fish and meat, and it all tastes so good. Having you as their grandma, they'll be truly blessed."

"Hahaha, Shuangshuang, this girl, what a sweet mouth. If I had a granddaughter as obedient as you, there'd be no worries." Aunt Ge laughed heartily, her crow's feet becoming more pronounced.

The topic of grandchildren ended, and everyone took a sigh of relief in their hearts.

Secretly, Xiuxiu gave Mu Shuangshuang a grateful glance.

The meal concluded amid nervous anticipation.

The three men, after a short rest, went out to work in the fields, while Mu Shuangshuang was in Wang the blacksmith's courtyard tending to the osmanthus tree.

Suddenly, a scream came from Xiuxiu's room.

Mu Shuangshuang dropped the osmanthus she was holding and rushed into the courtyard, only to see Xiuxiu clutching her belly, writhing in pain on the ground.

"Xiuxiu, what's wrong?"

Mu Shuangshuang was stunned, quickly going forward to support Xiuxiu.

At the commotion, Aunt Ge also came out.

She said to Mu Shuangshuang, "This must be labor, Shuang, help me get Xiuxiu inside and look after her for a bit. I'll go to the neighboring village to fetch the midwife."

Mu Shuangshuang wanted to say that there might not be enough time to get someone now, but as soon as they got Xiuxiu onto the bed, Aunt Ge dashed out, too fast to call back.

"It hurts... Shuang, my belly hurts..." Xiuxiu cried out with a pale face.

"Xiuxiu, what do I do? I..."

Mu Shuangshuang had never given birth and had no experience. She knew she needed to boil water, but she couldn't just leave now—

Chapter 553: Good People Are Rewarded

"Xiuxiu, don't be nervous, take deep breaths, take deep breaths, think about San Dan..."

Mu Shuangshuang tried to calm Xiuxiu.

But childbirth is never an easy thing.

One after another, piercing screams sounded...

As neighbors, Wang Tiejiang and his wife naturally heard it.

"Wife, didn't you help our niece deliver her baby before? It looks like the Ge family's daughter-in-law is about to give birth, we should hurry over and help."

"Alright then, you wait outside, don't go in, it's hard to say what's going on in the backyard."

Mrs. Zhou, who was resting on the bed, got dressed and hurried to the Ge Family's house.

In the Ge Family's yard, it was chaos at the moment, big chickens flapping their wings frantically, dust swirling up from the ground, and little chicks running around aimlessly.

"Old man, help Old Ge's house watch the chickens, I'm going inside to take a look."

Mrs. Zhou went inside the house and began calling out.

After all, nobody was in the backyard at the moment, if she didn't make a sound, she could be mistaken for a thief.

Mu Shuangshuang tried to comfort Xiuxiu several times, although it didn't alleviate her pain, at least the screaming became a little quieter.

"Miss Shuangshuang, leave this to me, go prepare scissors and hot water for me." Mrs. Zhou entered Xiuxiu's room and said to Mu Shuangshuang who was standing at the Kang edge.

Mu Shuangshuang glanced over, seeing Mrs. Zhou, she felt suddenly at ease.

She found scissors in Xiuxiu's room and went to the kitchen to boil water. In the kitchen, she noticed a sack of spirits that Ge Sandan drank at noon; Mu Shuangshuang decided to take it to Mrs. Zhou for sterilizing hands and scissors when cutting the umbilical cord later.

Since it was the room of a pregnant woman, Mu Shuangshuang was afraid of infecting her, so once she went in, she didn't go back in.

The first pot of hot water was ready, Mu Shuangshuang carried it outside the room and handed it to Mrs. Zhou.

"San Dan... San Dan..." Inside the room, Xiuxiu started calling for her husband.

Mrs. Zhou, considering the vulnerability of women during childbirth, said to Mu Shuangshuang, "Miss Shuangshuang, go to the front yard and find my husband, let him call for help. A woman giving birth should have her man by her side; they should also witness the pain women endure."

"I got it, I'll go call!" Mu Shuangshuang replied.

In the front yard, Wang Tiejiang sorted out Old Ge's chickens and waited for news; suddenly, Mu Shuangshuang came out of the house.

"Mr. Wang, could you please go out to the field and call Brother Sandan, his wife is about to give birth, they are in..."

"Alright!"

Previously, the Wang family couple had been observing the Ge Family, knowing that Ge Sandan was not home.

During childbirth, a woman needs someone by her side the most, if her own man isn't there, it's not so easy to give birth.

Wang Tiejiang ran desperately to the field.

At that moment, Mu Shuangshuang was suddenly a bit grateful, grateful that she let the Wang couple see Little Zhi and Yuanbao in the morning; indeed good people get good returns, letting them help Xiuxiu.

Back in the backyard, Mu Shuangshuang began boiling the second pot of water.

By the time the third pot of hot water was ready, Ge Sandan rushed into the backyard.

Whether he ran too fast and fell, Ge Sandan's face was covered in mud, his face full of anxious expression.

The hairband used to tie his hair had long since fallen off, and his jet-black hair was messily disheveled.

He kept shivering, both from nervousness and fear.

Today, despite his lame leg, Ge Sandan's running speed exceeded that of normal people Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang, perhaps this is the power of a child and a wife.

"Shuangshuang, Xiuxiu is inside, I need to go in."

The man finished speaking and was about to rush inside but was stopped by Mu Shuangshuang.

"You need to wash up, you're filthy, it wouldn't be good if you infected the pregnant woman."

Ge Sandan didn't know what infection meant, but upon hearing it was not good for the pregnant woman, he hurried to the kitchen to fetch water to wash, shouting towards the house while fetching water.

"Xiuxiu, don't be afraid, I'm here, for our child, you must be strong!"

Inside, hearing Ge Sandan's words, Xiuxiu burst into tears.

Women's lives, inherently full of suffering.

Born, they are judged for their gender.

From a young age, they lack a voice, obey their fathers before marriage, obey their husbands after marriage, husband dies they obey their sons, still need to manage household affairs, take care of men, give birth to children, you could say women are destined to be busy from the day they are born.

But if one can find a man who treats her well, not asking for wealth, at least someone who can empathize with her in everything.

Understand her, embrace her.

Fortunately, Xiuxiu felt she had all these, despite having a mother-in-law longing for grandsons, she also had someone who treated her well, willing to reason with her mother for her.

"Xiuxiu, let's muster some strength, the amniotic fluid has broken, the baby seems close..."

Mrs. Zhou kept observing Xiuxiu, seeing her a bit distracted, couldn't help but prompt Xiuxiu.

Ge Sandan, after cleaning up, rushed inside.

Grabbing Xiuxiu's hand and comforting her, "Xiuxiu, don't be afraid, no matter what happens, I'm here, don't mind my mother, whether our child is a boy or girl, it's ours..."

As Xiuxiu gave birth, Ge Sandan kept murmuring comforting words beside her.

By dusk, the child was finally born.

It was a girl.

Though she wasn't a grandson, Ge Sandan loved her dearly, looking at the child and his wife, he didn't want to blink.

Aunt Ge had invited a midwife from another village, upon hearing the delivery was done, and that it was a girl, she fainted on the spot.

Mu Shuangshuang went to pinch her philtrum and fed her some ginger slices, only then did she wake up.

Upon waking up, tears started streaming down.

"How come it's a girl! I spent quite a bit of money going to the temple to ask, they said it was a son..."

The matter was a huge blow to Aunt Ge.

These years raising a son as a widow, the son went to the army for several years, every day fearing, finally the son had a wife, she longed for a grandson, but when he came out, he wasn't a grandson, she instantly felt the world turned dark.

The previous comforting words for her and her son, turned into mockery.

Mu Shuangshuang didn't know how to respond.

This matter, only oneself knows.

Aunt Ge is not bad, but she favors sons over daughters, like some people, genuinely kind-hearted, but hold some extremely radical views.

"Aunt, you should rest first, let's talk about this after you've slept, alright?"

As Mu Shuangshuang spoke, she signaled to Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang.

The two came over knowingly and supported Aunt Ge.

Aunt Ge, now limp like mud, was helped into the room.

But even lying on the Kang, she stared wide-eyed at the ceiling beam.

Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang sighed repeatedly, seeing such a cheerful person struggle over such a trivial issue.

"Shuangshuang, what about Aunt Ge?" Lu Yuanfeng asked.

"This matter, you don't worry about it, she needs to come to terms with it herself!"

Chapter 554: Go Find Your Mother

"This matter seems difficult!" Mu Dalang sighed.

From this, he thought about his own future with Huang Bitu.

He himself feels that boys and girls are the same, but his grandmother and mother absolutely prefer boys. Just his mother, if Bitu has a girl, she would absolutely not take care of her.

Thinking about this, Mu Dalang suddenly felt that he might need to plan for his future too.

"What Da Tang Ge says is true, but it's not absolute. After all, this is Xiuxiu and Brother Sandan's first child."

"But this matter is really disheartening. Xiuxiu gave birth for the Old Ge's house hoping to get a nod from Aunt Ge, but now that Aunt Ge is like this, she probably won't be able to care for Xiuxiu."

Lu Yuanfeng said a fair word.

This incident had caused quite a shock in his heart too.

He had known Aunt Ge quite early.

Usually, Aunt Ge seemed like a particularly kind person: good to her son, good to her daughter-in-law. But today's conduct, instead of disappointment, was more like fear.

Lu Yuanfeng lowered his head and looked at Shuangshuang, who was sitting in the living room and lost in thought, feeling that he hadn't cared enough for her.

The past moments he could not change, but he held the future tightly in his hands.

Feeling Lu Yuanfeng's warm and concerning gaze, Mu Shuangshuang returned him a comforting smile.

She was not Xiuxiu; she wouldn't wait for anyone to care for her voluntarily.

Even if she had a mother-in-law who favored sons over daughters, it didn't matter. After all, everything she ate and wore, she earned herself. As long as a woman is economically independent, she doesn't need to care about anyone's mood.

Not even her mother-in-law!

"You rest first. I'll make dinner. Fengzi, Da Tang Ge, we're probably going home late tonight."

Mu Shuangshuang stood up and said to Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang.

Lu Yuanfeng nodded.

In times like this, it's really impossible to leave.

Aunt Ge doesn't know when she'll recover, and Xiuxiu needs nutrition. Fortunately, Sandan can cook.

This moment really shows the advantage of Ge Sandan as a cook.

In the evening, Mu Shuangshuang found a large handful of soybeans at Old Ge's house and had Mu Dalang weigh two catties of five-flavor pork—half was used to stew soybeans, and the rest was for the men's dinner.

Also, the Wang Tiejiang couple—they really did a great deed today. Without them, by the time Old Mrs. Ge returned, the child and Xiuxiu might have been lost. So, Mu Shuangshuang included their share in dinner.

People are really strange sometimes. Previously thinking of various ways to teach these two a lesson, those thoughts are now completely gone.

Of course, important principles should still be upheld.

Using the Ge family's kitchen for the first time, Mu Shuangshuang felt unfamiliar, but she managed the cooking with ease.

When Lu Yuanfeng came in to help, Mu Shuangshuang had already ignited the fire in the kitchen. Due to the time crunch, Mu Shuangshuang used a quick flame this time.

"Didn't I tell you to rest? I'm handling things here."

"Waiting outside is just waiting; why not come in to help? Finish earlier, and we can return to Er Gui Village sooner!"

Saying this, Lu Yuanfeng rolled up his sleeves and started washing the vegetables.

Mu Shuangshuang knew that in summer it's uncomfortable to be the one tending the fire.

But in winter when it's cold, washing vegetables is uncomfortable. Right now it's cold; Lu Yuanfeng's action was really thoughtful.

Feeling warm inside.

After finishing the meal together, Mu Shuangshuang set the table while Lu Yuanfeng went to call everyone.

Ge Sandan initially didn't want to come out, but after Lu Yuanfeng explained that people needed care even more in the evening, and if he got sick, who would take care of Xiuxiu, he finally came out.

Of course, he only hurriedly ate a bowl of rice before retreating back indoors.

The Wang Tiejiang couple sat nervously at the table, not daring to eat anything.

Truthfully, still somewhat embarrassed.

"Please eat. These dishes are also prepared for you two elders. Thank you for your help this afternoon."

Mrs. Zhou and Wang Tiejiang were moved and felt increasingly guilty for what they had done in the past.

"Miss Shuangshuang, thank you! Actually, this matter was what my wife and I should have done. The Old Ge family has been good to us. When no one in the village wanted to associate with us, the Old Ge family treated us like before."

They say distant relatives are not as good as close neighbors.

Though the others might not know, the Ge family really has nothing bad to say.

Mu Shuangshuang nodded slightly—not expecting such a nod made Mrs. Zhou determined.

"Miss Shuangshuang, if the Ge family doesn't mind, I can come over the next few days to care for Xiuxiu. She knows me; although not familiar, it's better than someone else caring for her."

Having Mrs. Zhou look after Xiuxiu indeed has benefits: proximity and familiarity—no fear of mishaps.

Of course, this needs the Ge family's agreement. After all, given Mrs. Zhou and Wang Tiejiang's track record.

In the next few days, Aunt Ge might not calm her anger easily and might not take care of Xiuxiu and the child.

Before leaving, Mu Shuangshuang discussed this with Ge Sandan, also suggesting he feed Xiuxiu some soybean soup tonight.

Ge Sandan's intent was naturally to wait and see if his mother couldn't care, then do something.

Returning to the village, the moon was bright and stars were scarce. Walking home in the clear moonlight, surprisingly, everyone hadn't slept yet.

The third branch here, naturally, was waiting for Shuangshuang to return before sleeping. As for the Old Mu Family side, they were not waiting for Mu Dalang.

They were simply too excited to sleep these few days because Mu Dade passed the exam.

The Old Mu Family's second branch

Mu Dazhong held a pile of items collected from villagers, mostly mountain goods.

These are ordinary things from farm households, but for the Old Mu Family second branch, where everything had to be contributed, they were rare items.

Mrs. Lin held a bundle of unwashed winter dates, stuffing them into her mouth, not caring at all about Mu Qingqing and Gou Dan looking at her with eager eyes.

"Mom, just let me have one; Gou Dan is hungry." Gou Dan smacked his lips, drooling at the corners.

"Eat what? What if they're poisonous? Let mom taste them first, then you can have some!"

Mrs. Lin said, not stopping as she kept stuffing winter dates into her mouth.

Mu Qingqing opened her mouth, wanting to ask for one but felt her mom wouldn't give her any, so she turned to her father instead.

"Dad, I'm hungry..."

"Go ask your mom if you're hungry—didn't you see all those winter dates in her hands!"

Speaking of these winter dates, a woman surnamed Liu in the village gave them to Mu Dazhong, aiming for her son in town to follow Mu Dade and study for a few years.

Mu Dade hadn't returned, so she could only approach a few of Mu Dade's brothers.

After all, breaking bones don't sever tendons; what the brother says, the big brother must give face, right?

Though Mu Dazhong openly agreed, he wouldn't tell his big brother about it.

He'd collect the money but wouldn't do the work!

Chapter 555: Shuangshuang Wants to Stir Things Up

"But..." Mu Qingqing glanced at Mrs. Lin.

At this moment, Mrs. Lin's mouth was awash with juice, clearly with no intention of managing the two kids.

Moreover, those winter dates were getting fewer; at this rate, they'd soon be gone.

"No buts! You don't even live in our room, so hurry up and scram, scram, scram~" Mu Dazhong rudely started chasing her away.

Despite her pride, Mu Qingqing turned around and rushed out of the second room.

She happened to run into Mu Dalang coming back.

Mu Qingqing immediately felt extremely aggrieved.

"Big brother, you're back!" Mu Qingqing said softly.

Only then did Mu Dalang realize that it was his sister Mu Qingqing who had stopped him.

"What's wrong? It's so late, why aren't you asleep yet? How's little sister?"

Mu Qingqing has moved to the east wing now, quite close to Mu Xiangxiang, so Mu Dalang naturally asked about Mu Xiangxiang.

"Little sister and Grandma are hiding in their rooms eating good stuff."

Similar to the second room, recently Old Mrs. Mu had been bringing all sorts of good things home, anyway, all under Mu Dade's promises.

She planned to move to town later, making such empty promises, with no intentions to fulfill them.

All she wanted was to enjoy now.

Mu Qingqing's words naturally meant to complain that Old Mrs. Mu gave all the good stuff to Mu Xiangxiang.

But wasn't this known long ago to everyone?

Mu Dalang didn't know where to start comforting her, so he just told Mu Qingqing to go back and rest.

Just as he opened his mouth, Mu Qingqing said again, "Big brother, are you with the people from the third branch? Please don't hang out with them, especially not that awful girl, she has it in for me, she even hit me..."

Though Mu Dalang had been back for quite a while, Mu Qingqing hadn't had the chance to pour out her grievances to him.

This time, she told Mu Dalang everything, hoping he would comfort her or stop interacting with the people from the third branch.

Who knew, Mu Dalang actually defended the third branch.

"Qingqing, you're not that young anymore, don't keep those unpleasant words on your lips, besides, who I associate with is my right, you may not like it, but you can't stop me!"

"Alright then, it's getting late, if you don't go back soon, Grandma will scold you again when she finds out!"

After speaking, Mu Dalang walked towards his room.

Mu Qingqing watched Mu Dalang's back angrily kicked the stone underfoot, then stormed off towards the wing room.

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Mu Shuangshuang returned home and had some late-night snacks made by Yu Si Niang.

A small plate of rice tofu.

Rice tofu looked similar to tofu, but the ingredients and color were completely different. Moreover, Mu Shuangshuang actually preferred rice tofu.

The tofu-making process involves coagulants, but rice tofu is much simpler; soaked rice paste is continuously stirred to reach the desired thickness, then poured into molds, cooled, and cut into squares.

An unbelievably simple method.

Yu Si Niang accompanied Mu Shuangshuang while she finished the night snack, then prepared water for Mu Shuangshuang to wash up, and after Mu Shuangshuang finished washing, she entered Mu Shuangshuang's room.

And started chatting with Mu Shuangshuang.

Mu Shuangshuang talked about Xiuxiu having a baby today and Aunt Ge's behavior.

Who knew, this matter actually triggered Yu Si Niang's memories.

She said, "Back then when I gave birth to you, your second aunt had already had Da Lang for several years, not to mention your eldest uncle's house. Although your eldest uncle had two daughters, your grandma liked your eldest uncle, so she said nothing."

"But mom indeed felt the difference, the midwife said it was a girl, your grandma didn't even look at you, she didn't even send your second aunt over to help with the laundry."

"Luckily, it was summer when I gave birth to you, otherwise, doing laundry and bedding would really have left some illness."

In Er Gui Village, women who actually observed confinement were rare.

Many women gave birth in the morning and were back in the fields by afternoon.

But everyone knew to avoid cold water, for the aftermath could be harmful to one's body.

Originally, these were mother-in-law's duties, Old Mrs. Mu just needed to arrange them, but because it was a girl, she didn't even bother.

At that time, it wasn't Mrs. Jin who was called the hen that wouldn't lay eggs, it was Yu Si Niang.

For three days after Shuangshuang was born, there was no nutrition to help with milk production, Mu Dashan begged Old Mrs. Mu to cook a few eggs.

Not only did Old Mrs. Mu refuse to cook them, she also sold all the eggs at night.

Luckily, the next day someone from Yu Family Village came, Old Mrs. Yu helped Yu Si Niang with laundry, and busied herself with washing Shuangshuang's diapers.

Busy the whole day, she didn't even get a bite to eat.

When leaving, she made a pot of nourishing chicken for her daughter, who knew, as soon as she left, Old Mrs. Mu entered the third branch's room and gave the chicken soup to Mu Dade to nourish him.

With each of these incidents Yu Si Niang mentioned, she made herself feel cold-hearted.

Mu Shuangshuang's face changed even more listening to it.

Almost being enraged to the point of spitting blood by Old Mrs. Mu's actions.

This was no grandmother, she was clearly the Sect Hierarchy of the Five Poison Sect, specializing in draining people's blood!

"Mom, thank goodness our family is separated now, no need to put up with Grandma's moods, from now on, whatever you want to eat or buy, just tell Shuangshuang, no matter if it flies in the sky or swims in the water, no matter how many silver it costs, Shuangshuang will get it for you!"

A wave of comfort surged through Yu Si Niang.

She lovingly patted Mu Shuangshuang's head, "Mom doesn't expect you to give me much, as long as you're doing well, all those materials, to me, are just external things, pales in comparison to your well-being."

"Also, mom saying these things is not to make you hold grudges, because mom knows, hatred brings only pain, and mom doesn't want you to suffer."

"Mom, I understand, Shuangshuang will remember what you've said!" Mu Shuangshuang nodded.

"That's good, take care of your friend, if she lacks nursing things, we'll buy some, having gone through this myself, I know how hard it is without family support."

Whenever Yu Si Niang thought of her past self, she felt a shiver in her heart.

She didn't wish for others to share her fate.

Having a son is certainly important, but it can't compare to a woman daring to bear children for a man.

Mu Shuangshuang remembered everything Yu Si Niang said in her heart, after Yu Si Niang returned to her room, Mu Shuangshuang found herself unable to sleep.

She got up, dressed, and picked up Little Black from the foot of the bed.

On a dark and windy night, it was the perfect time for action.

With Little Black gallantly leading the way, she headed towards the Old Mu Family's house.

Eavesdropping wasn't Mu Shuangshuang's intention, but tonight, Old Mrs. Mu truly disgusted her.

If she didn't settle this score, she couldn't sleep.

Inside Old Mrs. Mu's room—

Old Mrs. Mu was busy counting her income from the past few days.

Dozens of copper coins were arranged in a line on the kang table, looking quite impressive.

Counting them again and again, Old Mrs. Mu nudged Mr. Mu with her elbow.

"Do you think those little brats know that my money is hidden in these jars?"

Chapter 556: Mu Xiangxiang's Dowry Money is Gone

"Even I don't know, how could they know?" Mr. Mu casually replied, ready to sleep soundly.

"True, if they knew, they would've emptied my money jar long ago. What a pity, the eldest took most of the silver last time, and the remaining silver is meant for Xiangxiang and Zhenzhen as their marriage dowry."

Speaking of Mu Zhenzhen, Old Mrs. Mu couldn't help but blame Old Man Mu: "It's all because of you, you stubborn old man. Why do you have to keep Zhenzhen locked up? Why not let Zhenzhen go out?"

A girl being kept like livestock, no one can endure that, let alone our pampered daughter?"

"A girl? She's already a cast-off woman, do you still want to tell people she's a young maiden?" Mr. Mu angrily retorted Old Mrs. Mu.

Among the family's children, some were spoiled endlessly.

Some were pressured into separate lives. Mr. Mu's internal anger was far from little and not just momentary.

"Oh hey, you old geezer, what's it got to do with you that I'm talking about my daughter? Are you perhaps happy-mad because the eldest passed the imperial exam? I tell you, Zhenzhen is the flesh of my flesh. I can prepare whatever I want for her, you have no say!"

Old Mrs. Mu made up her mind to find Zhenzhen tomorrow and tell her that good days are coming; she's going to find a good husband for Zhenzhen.

And so, Old Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu quarreled and unexpectedly fell asleep.

Mu Shuangshuang emerged from the shadows.

She had been listening to Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu's conversation and felt increasingly that Old Mrs. Mu was peculiar.

The daughter was treated like a person, while the sons were treated like weeds, with only Mu Dade being treasured.

"Little Black, it's your turn now. Did you hear what my granny just said?" Mu Shuangshuang patted Little Black's head and opened Mr. Mu and Old Mrs. Mu's window just enough for Little Black to enter.

Little Black flashed into the room, then swaggered over to find the jar that Old Mrs. Mu had mentioned.

In Old Mrs. Mu's room, various jars of different sizes were placed all around; finding her money was no easy task. Little Black dug open two of the smallest jars, extracting five copper coins, and handed them over to Mu Shuangshuang through the door crack.

Mu Shuangshuang was puzzled.

After all that trouble, only five copper coins came out. As she was about to listen closely to what was happening inside, she heard Old Mrs. Mu's scream.

"Oh dear, old man, something's peeing on my face."

Then came a cacophony of noise, prompting Mu Shuangshuang to run away.

Inside Old Mrs. Mu's room, chairs were knocked over, the mosquito net torn, jars shattered, and all types of sounds echoed endlessly.

By the time they lit lanterns in Old Mrs. Mu's room, Little Black had long hidden in Old Mrs. Mu's ramshackle cupboard.

As the lamp lit, the room was a complete mess, and Old Mrs. Mu's head was still dripping with urine, not even wiped off.

"I've seen a ghost, seen a ghost... oh dear, what's going on here..." Old Mrs. Mu's screams echoed through the Old Mu Family, Mu Shuangshuang pounded her chest vigorously.

Today almost scared her to death.

Darn little Black, couldn't even signal before causing trouble. It could easily hide because it's small, poor herself; if the inside lanterns were lit, they would've surely seen her shadow.

Being caught would be mortifying beyond belief.

Mu Shuangshuang cursed Little Black in her heart but kept waiting in the night chill for Little Black to return.

Though she spoke unconcernedly, she really did care for Little Black, fearing that if she left, it would be caught by Old Mrs. Mu.

After more than an hour of waiting.

As Mu Shuangshuang was nearing exhaustion, a small dark figure swiftly darted over, flashed in front of her, dropped a heavy object at her feet, and then ran towards the third branch.

Mu Shuangshuang squatted down and picked up the heavy object.

It was a little cloth pouch, quite hefty.

Mu Shuangshuang knew it was Old Mrs. Mu's silver, filled with joy, and took the silver home.

Little Black stood at the door gazing, and as soon as Mu Shuangshuang returned, it went to her, eyes expectantly waiting for something.

"Got it, got it. Tomorrow I'll give you and Lai Mi a treat, even make some fruit desserts for after meals, how's that?"

Little Black, unlike Lai Mi, must eat raw food as its main diet, otherwise it'd be bad for digestion.

Lai Mi's a dog and can eat all sorts of food, though it's best with cooked meals, otherwise not good either.

Generally, those two little creatures did nothing but eat and sleep.

If Little Black weren't so agile, Mu Shuangshuang would suspect she's raising a fake Black Mink.

Little Black squeaked for a good while and dashed into the house.

Mu Shuangshuang entered the house, first thing, she lit up to count the money in the pouch.

In actuality, there wasn't much inside, most of it was broken copper coins, with the only larger broken silver weighing just one tael.

Mu Shuangshuang counted, and from this trip, it was less than two taels of silver. Adding the previous five copper coins, it totaled one tael and three hundred fifty-four copper coins.

That said, it's understandable, since Mu Dade had long drained Old Mrs. Mu's wealth, having over one tael of silver wasn't bad. It could sustain a typical peasant household for half a year.

Thinking that Old Mrs. Mu would stir up trouble in the morning, Mu Shuangshuang felt delighted.

Per usual, the money was hidden by Little Black in the mouse hole.

But Mu Shuangshuang didn't take the cloth pouch, she tossed it to Little Black to stash directly in the second branch.

Thinking back to the last time Little Black stashed a belly-binder, Mu Shuangshuang remembered it vividly. If this time could involve others, that would be good.

After completing everything, Mu Shuangshuang fell asleep.

Early the next morning, Old Mrs. Mu screamed in her room.

Her face turned pale instantly.

The quilt was thrown on the ground, she couldn't stop asking: "Where's my money... where's my money gone?"

Mr. Mu was still groggy from sleep and wanted to ask what happened but was thrown off the bed by Old Mrs. Mu.

She flipped the mattress, threw back the quilt, opened cupboards, and checked all the money jars.

Old Mrs. Mu, like a madwoman, searched everywhere.

That was her last bit of silver. Without this silver, she was doomed.

A whole bag of bones already, nearly had his waist twisted by that toss. Opening his eyes, Mr. Mu saw Old Mrs. Mu searching wildly, the room increasingly chaotic.

Compared to last night, it was even worse!

"You crazy old woman, what exactly are you up to? What have you turned this house into?" Mr. Mu scolded Old Mrs. Mu angrily.

"Old man, the money I tucked into the quilt last night is gone... what do I do, this is the dowry money I saved for Xiangxiang, now it's all gone... all gone!"

"Who was it, who the heck stole my silver?" Old Mrs. Mu shouted in anger, and for a moment, the entire Old Mu Family felt like it was frozen solid.

Chapter 557: Confirming the Crime

This kind of thing has happened before.

Old Mrs. Mu was furious.

At first, it was her bellyband. Although later she found out it was Zhuangzi who took it, even now Zhuangzi refuses to admit it.

But Old Mrs. Mu believed it was definitely Zhuangzi.

Then it was her chickens, her eggs, and now her silver. These incidents made Old Mrs. Mu feel like she was being targeted.

This time, she was determined to catch this thief from her own family!

The people of the Old Mu Family gradually gathered at Old Mrs. Mu's place. After hearing what she had to say, each of them looked at one another in bewilderment.

"I have to conduct a thorough investigation today, to find out who has been causing trouble right under my nose. I want to search everyone's rooms, all your belongings must be searched by me!"

The people from the Old Mu Family instantly turned pale.

If it was the past, they wouldn't have had anything to hide, so they would've let Old Mrs. Mu search freely. But the situation was different now; everyone had more or less hidden something in their rooms.

The mountain goods Mu Dazhong collected yesterday were all in his room, and if Old Mrs. Mu went there, wouldn't she clean it all out?

Mu Danian was in a similar situation. He was enduring the pain on his backside, wandering around the village, and a few young wives had given him some goodies.

Even the honest fourth branch had collected some winter jujubes. The whole family couldn't bear to eat them and they were still in the room.

If a search happened, they would be caught in one fell swoop.

Mu Dazhong was the first to speak up.

"Mom, I think we need to look at this from a different angle. Your money surely wasn't stolen by one of us. We should focus on our neighbors."

"Big brother just passed the provincial examination, and God knows how many eyes are on our family right now. They're just waiting for us to mess up so they can laugh at us!"

Mu Dazhong's words were supported by Mr. Mu, who said, "Old woman, the second makes a point. Our family is the most scrutinized in the village right now, and if this escalates, even if it's not one of us, people will be quick to slander us!"

"No, I'm not letting my silver just vanish into thin air! How will we explain this to Xiangxiang? This is her dowry!" Old Mrs. Mu blurted out.

The hearts of the other branches suddenly felt that stealing it was well done.

Old Mrs. Mu's bias was clear. The other branches were reluctant to spend money when marrying a bride, yet now, when marrying a daughter, she was accumulating savings for Xiangxiang, who knows how much she'll be given.

Rather than benefiting Xiangxiang, it was better for it to be stolen, so nobody gets anything.

"Mom, my second brother means we should watch our neighbors and see who's the most suspicious, and then cause trouble for them later!"

"Our own family is honest and straightforward; we definitely wouldn't steal your money!"

Mu Danian tried to divert the trouble.

"Should I go search the third branch? Maybe it was that brat who stole it. I'll skin her alive!" Old Mrs. Mu rolled up her sleeves, appearing ready to move towards the third branch.

"Old woman, you're being irrational. The third branch isn't doing as well as us; if you go causing trouble there, what will others think? Will they think we deliberately split the third branch away back then?" Mr. Mu stopped Old Mrs. Mu.

At this point, Old Mrs. Mu wasn't having it.

"You're not letting me do this or that, are you all in cahoots to steal my silver?" Her tigress eyes scanned everyone's faces, as if to devour them alive.

Their hearts jumped in fear.

Even though none had stolen money, it felt no different from having done so.

At Old Mu's place, taking things without accounting for them came with dire consequences.

"Mom, I swear to God, if I stole your money, I'll never find a wife in my entire life!" Mu Dajian didn't want to drag it on further.

This matter needed to be resolved quickly!

"Since Fifth has sworn, I'll swear too. If I stole, let me be a mud-legged peasant my whole life in the village."

As soon as Mu Dazhong swore, Mrs. Lin nudged his elbow.

"You're crazy, making such a grave oath; what if you end up as a mud-legged peasant for life?" Mrs. Lin grumbled.

"Stop nagging, Mom's watching!" Mu Dazhong shot a glance at Mrs. Lin before turning back to Old Mrs. Mu, his face full of smiles.

Once everyone made their oaths, Old Mrs. Mu quit troubling the family and began to focus on the neighbors, to see if she could uncover any clues.

Third Branch of the Mu Family

Mu Shuangshuang waited in her room for a long time, but the outcome she wanted didn't come.

She was puzzled; given Old Mrs. Mu's character, she should have conducted a search. She was ready for the third branch to be searched and then drag the second branch into trouble.

Yet it passed so easily?

Unbelievable!

However, since Old Mrs. Mu didn't seem effective, Mu Shuangshuang couldn't delay her own business. She headed to the north side near the stream to catch fish, hoping to catch a carp to nourish Xiuxiu.

Early in the morning, stepping into the icy water, a chilly sensation struck. There were plenty of fish in the stream, but they were too small and slipped away easily.

Mu Shuangshuang spent quite some time before catching two fish, but unfortunately, neither was a carp.

After picking some random vegetables, Mu Shuangshuang was ready to head back.

Passing the abandoned house, she saw Xia Guagua and Wang Fugui rushing inside again. She had no interest in witnessing any unfolding drama.

Previously she was forced, now she had choices.

So she didn't know at this moment, Xia Guagua was being pressed under Wang Fugui.

"Bitch, you're really thinking of breaking off the engagement with me?"

Wang Fugui's face was slightly flushed, his eyes too.

Those were the eyes of a man who hadn't slept all night.

The night before, Wang Fugui had been enjoying himself with wine and women in town, only to return to rumors that Xia Guagua wanted to break their engagement. Even though the family didn't agree, he felt it was a slap in the face.

Many had seen him and Xia Guagua together. Although nothing significant had happened, a woman's reputation could be lost just by a hug, let alone being nearly naked together.

Xia Guagua winced from the pain of being pressed to the ground.

"Get off me, you bastard, Wang Fugui, you useless thing. If not for you, I wouldn't be this miserable right now. Can't even guard one woman, are you even a man?" Xia Guagua cursed.

"Calling me not a man? Today I'll show you true manhood..." Wang Fugui growled as he tore her clothes, revealing her red bellyband and a hint of white skin, like premium jade. His eyes reddened with rising desire.

The night without rest had him springing to life again, he clasped Xia Guagua's neck and yelled: "Today I'll cement our affair, see if you dare break off the engagement then. Once you're ruined, Lu Yuanfeng won't want you either!"

Chapter 558: The Wife Sent from Heaven

The mention of Lu Yuanfeng by Wang Fugui brought a surge of strength to Xia Guagua, who had been completely suppressed. She reached out, picked up a nearby wooden stick, and smashed it onto Wang Fugui's head with force.

With a dull thud, Wang Fugui fell aside, and Xia Guagua took the opportunity to climb up and run towards the door of the derelict house.

Wang Fugui's head throbbed with pain, and crimson blood gradually dripped down before his eyes.

He shouted angrily, "Xia Guagua, you bitch, I won't let you get away with this..."

Having nearly stepped out the door, Xia Guagua came back, still holding the wooden stick, and began swinging it at Wang Fugui again.

This time it was a reckless beating, hitting wherever she could.

This Xia Guagua was fierce, unfriendly, with eyes filled with coldness, as if she wanted to kill Wang Fugui.

Wang Fugui was in severe pain and begged for mercy, "Guagua, I was wrong, I won't cause you trouble again, I know I was wrong, whatever you say, I'll listen to you... ah..."

Xia Guagua hit Wang Fugui's head with a stick, this time, Wang Fugui let out a piercing scream, and then he lay motionless on the ground, under him, a stream of blood trickled out...

Only then did Xia Guagua come to her senses.

Full of fear and nervousness, Xia Guagua hurriedly stood up, not even bothering to wipe the blood stains from her clothes, and ran for her life.

At this moment, Xia Guagua was disheveled, and in her panic, she didn't even know where she had ended up.

Once Xia Guagua regained her senses, she found her path blocked by an old man.

The man had a head injury, but it wasn't bandaged, so the wound looked twisted and rather ugly.

"Wife, you are a gift from heaven to me." Wang San grinned and lunged at Xia Guagua.

Xia Guagua had already exerted all her strength beating Wang Fugui and had no energy left to resist.

She screamed and struggled, yet was dragged into the courtyard by Wang San.

In the struggle, her coat was pulled and thrown away by Wang San, leaving her only a large red bellyband.

Wang San lecherously stared at Xia Guagua's ample bosom under the red bellyband, drooling at the mouth, wiping his saliva while reaching out to touch, feeling an incredible sensation.

God treats Wang San so well, one wife ran away, and now he got another, this time, he absolutely won't let the wife escape.

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Mu Shuangshuang returned home, scaled the fish, gutted it, and handled the insides.

Since it's prepared for Xiuxiu, it's important not to add too much seasoning, otherwise the fish's original nutrients may be lost.

Mu Shuangshuang started the fire and put a little rapeseed oil in the large iron pot. Once the oil was hot, she placed two fish into the pot.

Cooking fish requires special attention to temperature, especially when first frying the fish; you can't use high heat but must use low heat until the fish is crispy on both sides, then start adding water to cook it.

During the fish's cooking interval, Mu Shuangshuang began preparing breakfast for her family, drinking hot soup in cold weather brings out a sweat and is good for the body.

Mu Shuangshuang planned to make boiled rice tofu, along with a few Roujiamo, the Roujiamo she made before, so preparing them was smooth and easy.

The rice tofu was brought over by Aunt Zhao Yun yesterday; Mu Shuangshuang ate one piece as a midnight snack and there were still two pieces left, enough to cook a pot for everyone.

Soon, the sound of chopping vegetables came from the kitchen in the third branch.

Yu Si Niang got up early to support Mu Dashan and take a walk.

Lately, following Zhang Huai Shu's instructions, Mu Dashan's medication hadn't stopped, making Mu Dashan feel he was almost recovered.

If he could endure this winter, he could help with the housework.

That's why the man had been particularly diligent recently and wanted to lighten the family's burden quickly.

The couple walked from the village head to the tail, chatting while they walked, enjoying a warm time.

Yu Si Niang was exceptionally joyful all along the way, unaffected by the endless issues at Old Mu Family these days.

"Shuangshuang's father, do you think standing here now so freely is thanks to our daughter Shuangshuang?" Yu Si Niang asked.

"Yes, if it weren't for Shuangshuang and the fact we divided the family, we'd be working by now, I'd definitely be handling cotton in the field, and you'd be headed to town, returning in the afternoon." The man said with a face full of emotion.

Previously, Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang were husband and wife, but compared to other branches, their time together was scarce, and they could only meet at night.

But how much can you talk at night?

Just the time it takes to soak your feet?

"We need to work harder too, save more dowry money for Shuangshuang, and we can't rely on her parents, our own daughter, we must cherish her ourselves!" Mu Dashan said to Yu Si Niang.

"Yes!"

The couple returned home after their stroll, and Mu Shuangshuang had already prepared breakfast, the aroma of Roujiamo wafting from the kitchen.

Xiao Han and Little Zhi were already seated at the table.

With fewer people in the third branch, there's no worry about snatching food, so adults and children ate together as one table.

"Dad, Mom, you finally came, Little Zhi has been craving for so long, Sister said if you didn't come back, Little Zhi couldn't eat." Roujiamo weren't something Little Zhi, Xiao Han, nor Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang had seen before, so it's normal for Little Zhi to be drooling.

However, Mu Shuangshuang insisted they wait for their parents to return, making Little Zhi stare at the gate longingly.

Luckily, they finally returned.

"Alright alright, let's quickly eat." Yu Si Niang stepped forward to help set the table, one by one, the colorful and aromatic Roujiamo were placed on the table.

Yu Si Niang stared at them for a long time.

"Mom, these are Roujiamo, the white with a touch of golden is the Mo, the time was a bit short, it didn't turn out particularly well, but it'll do, inside there's pork and green pepper, hurry and taste it."

Everyone sat down, Yu Si Niang originally wanted to ask Shuangshuang why Fengzi didn't come for breakfast, but upon seeing several buns wrapped in oil paper on the stove, she understood.

Just after breakfast, Lu Yuanfeng arrived with Yuanbao, Mu Dalang also came, everyone seemed to have made an appointment.

Mu Shuangshuang took out four buns.

Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang each got one and a half, Yuanbao only needed half.

Seeing the food wrapped in oil paper, Mu Dalang asked, "Shuangshuang, so early, did you go to town already?"

"No, I made these myself, cousin, you haven't had breakfast, have you?"

At this time at the third branch, it wasn't considered early, but at Old Mu Family, it was different, although Mrs. Liu got up early, she had to feed the pigs and wash clothes for a large family, only after finishing all this could breakfast be made.

So there's no chance she'd catch up.

"I haven't eaten, but I did drink some water when I left..."

Chapter 559: Something Happened to the Third Branch

"Drinking just water won't do, big cousin. If you're ever in a hurry and there's no meal at home, just come over here for breakfast. It's not anything fancy, but it'll fill you up."

Mu Dalang was a grown man with a big appetite, and Shuangshuang's offer to let him come over for breakfast anytime touched him deeply.

He made a mental note of Shuangshuang's kindness.

The youngest among them was Yuanbao, whose eyes lit up more than usual when he unwrapped the oiled paper package.

Meat and buns, both were Yuanbao's favorites. Holding a meat bun, he started munching happily, while Lai Mi, who had come along behind Yuanbao, was frantic because he hadn't had breakfast yet.

So he kept licking Yuanbao in hopes of getting something tasty.

Yuanbao ignored him, so he turned to Mu Shuangshuang.

"Your breakfast is prepared, go find Little Black in my room."

Lai Mi understood Mu Shuangshuang's words, and as soon as she said it, he dashed off, rushing into Mu Shuangshuang's room.

"Wow, this little thing may have short legs, but it's pretty fast! It must really get its energy from food,"

Mu Shuangshuang remarked on the side.

Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang laughed heartily along with her.

The buns in their hands were soon finished.

Mu Shuangshuang started to tidy up. The fish soup was served in a large bowl, placed inside a bamboo basket. As long as she was careful, the soup wouldn't spill.

When they reached Tie Dao Village, Mu Shuangshuang went to Old Ge's house to deliver the soup, while Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Dalang continued digging the pond in the field.

Mu Shuangshuang smoothly arrived at Old Ge's house and entered Aunt Ge's backyard.

Unexpectedly, upon entering, she saw Mrs. Zhou helping to dry the children's diapers and Xiuxiu's clothes.

"You... you're here so early? Have you had breakfast?"

Mu Shuangshuang couldn't warm up to Mrs. Zhou yet, given that the matter with Little Zhi and Yuanbao had just happened not long ago.

"Not yet, but I've cooked some porridge on the stove. For Xiuxiu's postnatal meals, I had my husband buy some meat."

These diapers Mu Shuangshuang saw were made by Mrs. Zhou overnight.

Xiuxiu had given birth suddenly, and Aunt Ge was unprepared. Plus, knowing Xiuxiu had given birth to a daughter, Aunt Ge was so weak from lying in bed that she couldn't get up, let alone prepare any of this.

"Thank you. Let me know how much Silver you spent, and I'll pay you back later."

Yesterday, Ge Sandan helped with a day's work without taking any pay, so Mu Shuangshuang felt it was only right to pitch in with the chores.

Upon entering Xiuxiu's room, Mu Shuangshuang found that Ge Sandan looked significantly worn-out.

His face was unshaven and dirty, but his smile was sincere.

When Mu Shuangshuang entered, Ge Sandan got up from the bed.

"Brother Sandan, here's the fish soup I made for Xiuxiu this morning. I strained out the fish bones with cloth, so it's safe to drink!"

"Shuangshuang, thank you for everything you've done for us," Xiuxiu called out, poking her head from the bed.

Since she was in confinement, a towel was draped over her head, and the little one in her arms didn't cry, probably because it had just been fed.

"There's no need to thank me. Sandan helped us with work yesterday, and we didn't say thank you either." Mu Shuangshuang shook her head.

She placed the bamboo basket on the table and took out the large bowl. Even after the long walk, the soup was still hot, just right for the new mother.

"I'll go get a couple of small bowls. Brother Sandan, you should have a bowl too."

Mu Shuangshuang went to the kitchen and, seeing the white rice and sweet potato porridge was ready, she served Ge Sandan a bowl of porridge.

Xiuxiu only needed the fish soup.

In the end, Ge Sandan didn't have any fish soup and gave it all to Xiuxiu.

The newborn needs Xiuxiu and Ge Sandan in many ways, so Mu Shuangshuang didn't ask Ge Sandan to help with the work.

Not only that, Mu Shuangshuang also checked in on Aunt Ge in her room. She was in the same state, lying on the bed with eyes full of gloom.

"Aunt Ge, are you hungry? I brought porridge for you, would you like some?"

Aunt Ge's eyes moved at the sound of her voice, and seeing it was Shuangshuang, she lowered her gaze again.

"Shuangshuang, did Sandan say anything?"

What Aunt Ge meant, of course, was the matter of having a daughter.

She was eager to get her son's approval.

"Aunt, there are some things Shuangshuang has to say, even though I shouldn't. Xiuxiu gave birth to a daughter, but she and Brother Sandan can have more kids in the future, and the next one could well be a son. Being like this is only torturing yourself and embarrassing Xiuxiu."

It's been nearly a day since the child was born. As a mother and mother-in-law, it feels wrong not to visit either grandchild, it would hurt anyone.

"If the next one is a girl, what then? Shuang, tell me what should I do?" Aunt Ge asked Mu Shuangshuang.

Aunt Ge was worried about this; what if her son only had daughters in the future?

Mu Shuangshuang did want to educate Aunt Ge, explaining that having a son or daughter isn't up to the woman; it depends on the man too.

But such awkward truths might get her kicked out by Aunt Ge.

Mu Shuangshuang had no intention of testing her patience.

"Being like this doesn't help matters; Xiuxiu also wishes for a son to make you happy, but things are as heaven wills, what can we do about it?"

Aunt Ge stubbornly turned away when Mu Shuangshuang tried to reason with her.

Mu Shuangshuang's temper flared up. This old lady might seem nice, but on this matter, she just won't see sense.

"Madam, don't hold your breath waiting for Sandan to comfort you. He quite likes his daughter, you know, taking care of her without a break. If you must have a grandson, either wait for Xiuxiu to give birth again or divorce her and find Sandan a new wife."

"But I reckon you'd struggle to find someone who gets along with Sandan so well. If you bring in a malicious wife, your days might not be so good. Think about how Xiuxiu has been to you since she came along!"

Mu Shuangshuang was trying to knock some sense into Old Mrs. Ge, thinking maybe her life was too good, allowing her to harbor such unreliable thoughts.

If she really had to experience dealing with a difficult daughter-in-law, she would likely think differently.

Having said her piece, Mu Shuangshuang didn't spend any more time on Old Mrs. Ge and left her room.

Mrs. Zhou had basically finished all the chores in the backyard, and Mu Shuangshuang insisted on preparing lunch herself instead of letting Mrs. Zhou do it.

Just as she was about to serve the meal, someone from Er Gui Village showed up.

It was Zhao Gouzi, who'd spent the entire morning searching for Mu Shuangshuang and had finally learned she was at Tie Dao Village, at the Ge Family.

Without even pausing for breath, Zhao Gouzi urgently said, "Shuangshuang, trouble! Your parents... your parents have been arrested by the county government!"

"What, my parents were arrested by the government?" Mu Shuangshuang's face turned pale as she stared blankly at Zhao Gouzi.

Chapter 560: Heading to the County

"Uncle Gouzi, can you tell us clearly what exactly happened?" Lu Yuanfeng put down his chopsticks.

Mu Dalang stood up as well.

"Just after you left this morning, Wang Fugui was found lying in a pool of blood, covered in blood, and then someone went to call the people from Old Wang Family."

"The Old Wang Family was shocked and only then did they call a doctor. Uncle Zhang said Wang Fugui injured his skull, he might not recover for life or wake up. Old Wang Family only has this one precious son, and having him like this, they immediately decided to find out who injured their son."

"Someone said they saw your parents there earlier in the morning, and the Old Wang Family suspected it was your parents who hit him, so... so they reported it to the government. The government officials took your parents away on the spot, saying it's for some investigation."

After hearing the whole story, Mu Shuangshuang's face changed.

"This is simply nonsense, how could my parents do such a thing? Besides, just seeing them doesn't mean they hit anyone! Clearly, Xia Guagua and Wang Fugui were together in the morning."

This was everyone from their own circle, so Mu Shuangshuang spoke openly.

She told everyone about seeing Xia Guagua and Wang Fugui this morning when she went to catch fish and also mentioned Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang's walk.

This matter today is clearly causing unjust trouble.

"No, I must go to the county to find my parents."

Both Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan aren't particularly strong, if they go to prison, there's no return.

Mu Shuangshuang used to be a police officer and is very familiar with ancient penal systems; it's alright if they meet a fair official, but if the County Magistrate is unjust, using torture could lead to false confessions.

"Shuangshuang, we need to find Xia Guagua too. She was with Wang Fugui, it can't be unrelated to her."
Lu Yuanfeng said.

"But we can't delay with Third Uncle, Fengzi, you and Shuangshuang go to the county, I'll find Xia Guagua and once I have asked her clearly, I'll go to the county to find you." Mu Dalang took on the task voluntarily.

But Mu Shuangshuang felt if Xia Guagua did it, she'd definitely not admit it. Not only won't she admit, if she knows this matter is against the third branch, she might even make things worse.

"Big Brother, take people directly to bind her and bring her to the county if anything happens, Shuangshuang is in charge!"

Mu Shuangshuang set Mu Dalang up, deciding to set off straight to the town with Lu Yuanfeng.

Mrs. Zhou and Wang Tiejiang stood out.

"There's a family with a horse in our village, us old folks will accompany you to borrow the horse, it's faster than walking, otherwise it'd take a full day to get to the county."

Mu Shuangshuang thought about it, still deciding to go home once, she'd need money to manage things outside, just hoping those government officers will work slowly and won't interrogate her parents tonight.

After borrowing the horse, Lu Yuanfeng hurriedly drove it, and the two soon returned to Er Gui Village.

By now, the people watching outside Mu Shuangshuang Courtyard hadn't dispersed.

Everyone grabbed Mu Shuangshuang asking: "Shuang, did your parents really hit that young punk from Old Wang Family? Are they not being wronged?"

Everyone was actually well aware of the character of Mu Dashan and Yu Si Niang.

Especially Mu Dashan, who rarely comes out now, everyone was genuinely concerned about him.

"Everyone, please go back, my parents didn't hit anyone, the government will quickly investigate this, thank you all!"

Mu Shuangshuang bowed to the crowd.

Inside the courtyard, upon hearing Mu Shuangshuang's voice, Little Zhi, Xiao Han, and Yuanbao rushed out, all crying with red eyes and swollen noses, especially Little Zhi, whose voice had gone hoarse from crying.

The three children clung to Mu Shuangshuang's legs, crying incessantly.

"There, there, it's alright, sister will go find someone to get our parents out now, you hurry up and wipe your tears, they'll be back soon."

A villager said, "Shuangshuang, go beg your eldest uncle, he passed the scholar exams, he's destined to be an official, the government might give him face."

"Exactly, exactly, your uncle is amazing."

People were suggesting Mu Dade go rescue them, but only Mu Shuangshuang knew that Mu Dade, being just a scholar, didn't have that kind of power.

If he went to the government office, except for not needing to kneel to the County Magistrate, he wouldn't be of any help.

After comforting Little Zhi and Xiao Han, Mu Shuangshuang went inside to take out that fifty taels of broken silver.

Zhao Yun and Zhang Yutou also came over, saying they would help look after the three children, but the people from Old Mu Family didn't send anyone to inquire about the situation.

Not only did they not ask, but they also spoke sarcastically.

Old Mu Family people gathered together, Mu Dazhong was the first to say, "Do you think Old Third has the guts to commit those murderous and thieving acts?"

"Come on now, if he didn't do it, why would the government arrest him? We're all fine at home, no one's arresting us?" Mrs. Lin was causing trouble, just had to voice her opinion.

"Mom, what do you think?" Mu Dazhong asked.

"What should I think? If you don't raise your butt, will people say you took a dump? To me, Old Third has lived too comfortably, gotten reckless!"

Also blame that wife of Yu Si Niang, she's a jinx, their daughter is a fool, and now the man is in prison too, this third branch might be doomed." Old Mrs. Mu said with some regret, feeling her obedient son was ruined like this.

"Grandma, dad, mom, what nonsense are you spouting? Fourth Uncle and Fourth Aunt are under investigation, the villagers just saw them nearby, no one saw them hitting anyone. You're family, how could you not trust your own?"

Mu Dalang suddenly appeared in the main room; he had heard some of what was said inside.

Every word, he disagreed with.

Looking again, seeing that his grandfather wasn't inside, Mu Dalang knew that he probably hadn't returned yet, which is why the family hadn't gone to care.

"Grandma, is Grandpa here?" Mu Dalang asked.

"How should I know? Since you're on the third branch's ship, what are you coming back for? I old woman here don't want to be eating from two pots, either stay with Old Mu Family or the third branch!" Old Mrs. Mu spat out irritably.

Mu Dalang knew it wasn't time for arguments now, the important thing was to find Xia Guagua to clarify the matter.

"Grandma, I'm not arguing with you about this, anyway my Third Uncle's family is innocent, I'm leaving!" Mu Dalang finished talking and left, almost making Old Mrs. Mu explode with anger.

At the third branch, Lu Yuanfeng and Mu Shuangshuang gathered their things, mounted the horse, and headed towards the county.

Even with a galloping horse, they only reached the county in the afternoon, as the two went straight to the government office to ask for details, they were informed there would be no interrogation of Mu Dashan's case tonight.

Mu Shuangshuang requested to see them, but was refused by the constable, saying the County Magistrate wouldn't allow it.

Failing to find a way twice, Mu Shuangshuang suddenly realized, this matter couldn't follow the normal procedures.

If they really waited for the County Magistrate to interrogate, whatever happens, it could take days, Yu Si Niang and Mu Dashan could suffer severely!